

NEWSLETTER SPRING 2011

WANT TO MOVE BETTER? FEEL BETTER? TRY THE FELDENKRAIS METHOD

By Deborah Quilter, Certified Feldenkrais® Practitioner

Many people accept pain or stiffness as an inevitable part of their job, or getting older. For some, finding pleasure in movement is like seeking the Holy Grail. But what if you could feel better, and move freely, without painful exercises?

Even if you are not in pain and consider yourself to be fairly fit, as I did when I took my first Feldenkrais lesson, the difference in the quality of my movement before and after the lesson was stunning. My teacher taught a classic side-lying twist, and halfway through the lesson, I said, "So this is arabesque (a ballet step)!" For the first time, this position not only felt completely natural, it was also long, fluid, elegant and effortless!

Feldenkrais lessons can help you move more easily without effort or strain, as well as improve sport or dance performance. The Feldenkrais Method can relieve chronic pain, or make daily activities such as driving, sitting, walking, going up and down stairs easier. Many students report near miraculous results with chronic pain, and it is used to aid functional improvement for people with serious neurological disorders.

One woman, Peggy D, who was referred to me for chronic shoulder pain and poor posture is now a firm believer in this gentle, easy work. Peggy, a self-described life-long couch-potato, was amazed to find herself evolving into an exercise enthusiast because Feldenkrais made movement so pleasurable. After her first lesson, Peggy exclaimed, "I felt taller for two days!" This happened without conscious effort from her.

The following week after another lesson, when she got up from a chair, her knees felt "light and strong." Using her newfound awareness, she was able to recapture the length and effortlessness she felt after the lesson through sensory memory.

The lightness and effortlessness happened because Peggy was aligned through her bones, and thus did not need to rely on sheer muscular force to stand or move.

Peggy was very pleased with her progress, but wanted to keep the results longer. The next time we met, I showed her some exercises designed to strengthen certain muscles and lengthen other muscles so that the bones would stay more aligned. Peggy instantly saw the value of this work. "For the last three weeks I've seen appreciable progress," said Peggy. Using this holistic approach has helped much more than her shoulder. "When I woke up this morning, I wasn't stiff," she added. "Later that evening, I bounded off the couch without thinking about it!" Previously, getting up usually required several tries.

There are two ways to do Feldenkrais lessons: Awareness Through Movement (ATM), which is often done in groups, and Functional Integration, which is done one-on-one. In an ATM lesson, a teacher gives verbal instructions for small, easy movements within a comfortable range of motion. Students are instructed to go slowly in order to notice what is happening as they

move. Feldenkrais lessons are non-competitive. You go at your own pace, rest frequently and avoid any discomfort. If a movement is difficult, you can simply imagine you are doing it.

Functional Integration (FI) is similar to ATM except that a certified practitioner leads the student through gentle, pleasurable movements in a pain-free range of motion. Functional Integration is usually performed on a table and the student is fully clothed. This approach is often used for severe neurological problems and chronic pain, and also by professional athletes and dancers - and people who simply want to feel good. As professional dancer and physical therapist Dustienne Miller, MSPT, put it, "This is like candy for my body!"

Feldenkrais lessons teach people that they can feel good – without undue effort or strain. It can reveal habitual patterns of muscular tension that can relieve pain. Best of all, you can become your best healing ally through your own awareness.

For more information about the Feldenkrais Method, visit:

<http://www.feldenkrais.com/>
[http://www.feldenkrais.com/method/frequently asked questions/](http://www.feldenkrais.com/method/frequently_asked_questions/)

Deborah Quilter is an author, consultant, certified yoga teacher, movement therapist and Guild-certified Feldenkrais® teacher. She has successfully helped many people with various injuries achieve a greater level of fitness without exacerbating pain. She has written two books, The Repetitive Strain Injury Recovery Book and Repetitive Strain Injury: A Computer User's Guide and has appeared on many television and radio programs. Ms. Quilter has worked with professional dancers and musicians as well as many other clients to help them with hip, back, shoulder and neck pain and other chronic conditions. Ms. Quilter is the Director of Yoga at the Martha Stewart Center for Living at Mt. Sinai Medical Center in New York City, where researchers have just concluded a study on her work with balance in the elderly population. She is also Director of the Center for Healing Arts in New York City. For an appointment, call 212.769.8177

BBPT NEWS:

"Welcome to the Windy City!"

Stacey Futterman, our clinical manager, and Dr. Deborah Coady, of Soho Obstetrics and Gynecology, took a quick trip to Chicago in October to present at the International Pelvic Pain Society annual conference. Stacey and Dr. Coady introduced their hypothesis that there is an important relationship between hip disorders and pelvic pain. The theory is that a hip disorder creates a movement impairment, which causes a muscle imbalance. When there is a muscle imbalance, the obturator internus muscle is usually involved and can spasm. A spasm of the obturator internus can irritate the pudendal nerve and could potentially manifest as pelvic pain.

The presentation was very well received! There were over 250 physicians and physical therapists who attended, all of whom are specialists in pelvic floor dysfunction. Dr. Coady and Stacey are continuing to work closely together to educate physicians on the orthopedic considerations when diagnosing pelvic floor dysfunction.

Stacey was also asked to be a faculty member for "Advances in Hip Preservation and Rehabilitation" at the Hospital for Special Surgery. She continues to teach for the Herman and Wallace Institute, training hundreds of physical therapists around the country. We are so lucky

to have her on board here at our clinic!

TEAM BBPT DOES THE REVLON RUN/WALK

TEAM BBPT enjoyed participating in the Revlon Run/Walk for Women on April 30, 2011. We raised money to be donated towards funding research for all women's cancers. It's not too late to donate money to the cause! Please go to www.revlonrunwalk.com!