

SOMATIC WISDOM®

Or

***I'M NOT SURE I KNOW EVERYTHING
THAT I UNDERSTAND ABOUT THIS SUBJECT***



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The Feldenkrais Method®
My Perspective

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Introduction & Acknowledgements

Have you ever found yourself brewing tea that you don't remember heating the water for? Well, this booklet is the enjoyment of that tea. Unknown even to myself, I began "brewing" this short booklet on the Feldenkrais Method with a poem I wrote to Moshe when I met him in Dallas in 1980. Even today, I still take pleasure from the smile of acknowledgment he gave me as he tucked my poem, written on a torn sheet of paper, into his pocket. Here is the poem I wrote:

*Thank you for the seed of knowledge,
perhaps it will sprout in my garden,
and blossom in theirs.*

The seeds planted in Jean Houston's Keynote address to the 1997 Feldenkrais National Conference furthered the writing of this booklet. The seeds sprouted, and the seedlings were cultivated at a workshop about emotions and our work by Yvan Joly in September of the same year. I have found Jeff Haller's poetic way of presenting the essence of what Moshe taught to be inspirational. Hafiz rules. The clarity in this essay comes from the editing of Katya Walter. She helped me fulfill a dream that I did not know I had. This booklet would be one long sentence without the revisions and corrections from "The Diva of Commas and Punctuation" of Southwest Texas State University, Mary Beth Smith. Mary Beth also provided the encouragement, and the last bit of impetus and momentum necessary to finish this project. Thanks for the shove MB. The years of instruction from Larry Goldfarb can be read throughout this entire work. Precision and comprehensiveness are the hallmarks of these teachers. Thank you all for your encouragement to continue to learn, and for your way of making my learning fun when possible, easy when difficult and meaningful at all times. I am grateful.

THE FELDENKRAIS METHOD®

A UNIQUE SYSTEM OF SELF-EDUCATION

- Is your back or neck often sore?
- Would you like to reduce tension?
- Would you like to be more flexible?
- Would you like to be more energetic?
- Would you like to be better coordinated?
- Would you like to find a way to slow down?
- Would you like to be healthier and feel better?
- Would you like to improve a physical skill?
- Would you like to be more creative?

If this is your first look into the Feldenkrais Method, welcome. You must be an adventurous soul if the uncommon name **Feldenkrais®** does not scare you away. You will find your sense of adventure and curiosity appreciated here. This booklet is intended to entice you further into the Feldenkrais Method, and answer some commonly asked questions, such as: What is the Feldenkrais Method? Who founded it? Who can benefit from it? How does it work? What results can I expect?

The ***Feldenkrais Method of Somatic Education®*** is a unique system of self-education. This method gives you the ability to recover from an injury, alleviate a recurring or nagging pain, or lessen the effects of a disease. It also gives you the capacity to improve a physical, athletic, or artistic skill. Many who seek Feldenkrais treatments have no gross dysfunction, but merely want to move with more freedom and flexibility. This method is also beneficial for people with learning difficulties, people with chronic pain or stress, or children who are hyperactive or are neurologically injured.

If you study this method, you will learn how your nervous system, muscles, skeleton, and self-image interact while you are moving. You will learn to move in ways that are efficient, effective, and eloquent. In the process, you will discover what you are doing that is contributing to your difficulty, and alternatives that will allow you to do what you want with more pleasure and less physical wear and tear. You will become more flexible, better coordinated, and feel more relaxed. In addition, your overall sense of vitality and health will be enhanced.

*The **Feldenkrais Method** is designed to assist people in becoming more aware of the way they move, so they can be more effective in their actions, more creative in their mental activities, and more comfortable within themselves emotionally.*

MOVING NATURALLY:

**AWARENESS THROUGH MOVEMENT
& FUNCTIONAL INTEGRATION**

There are two modalities in the Feldenkrais Method: “Awareness Through Movement” (ATM) classes, and private “Functional Integration” (FI) lessons.

Awareness Through Movement classes are generally conducted with the student lying or sitting on the floor. In these classes, you differentiate small movements from one another and explore the subtleties and components of an action. Through this process, you become aware of easier, more pleasurable ways to move. You slow down the pace you are moving in order to discover what is essential in an action, and how to discard what is not. You reduce the effort while moving in order to learn to use only the force necessary to produce unencumbered integrated movement. The most surprising result is the sense of calm alertness that is a product of increased awareness.

In private hands-on “*Functional Integration*” (FI) lessons, the fully clothed student lies or sits on a padded table. The process of differentiation and integration is the same as in Awareness Through Movement classes. However, in an FI lesson a skilled practitioner uses a listening touch to guide a student, gently and slowly through a series of movements. The intent of this non-verbal process is to suggest more pleasurable alternatives to a student's habituated movement choices. These alternatives are inherent in an action but are not being utilized by the student and these unnecessary restrictions create excessive stress and difficulty. Because of this individualized attention, the FI lessons fit the individual student's needs more precisely; and, just like ATM classes, produces unconstrained natural movement.

Regardless of your reason for studying the Feldenkrais Method, you will discover it is an easy and effective way to slow down the pace of life and reduce stress in order to find more enjoyment and gratification in whatever you do.

The Feldenkrais Method is designed to assist people in becoming more aware of the way they move, so they can be more effective in their actions, more creative in their mental activities, and more comfortable within themselves emotionally.

All these improvements are possible from studying the way you move. That is a great deal to promise from one method, so before we discuss in more detail how this method can be of benefit to you, let me introduce you to the founder of this method, Dr. Moshe Feldenkrais.

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MOSHE FELDENKRAIS ***The Founder***

The Feldenkrais Method® is named after the man who developed it, Dr. Moshe Feldenkrais (1904-1984). Moshe was intensely curious, and had a way of awakening in others an enthusiasm and passion for learning. He was a physicist, engineer, author, judo master, avid soccer player, and educator. As a scientist and explorer of the human condition, Moshe studied many things, including anatomy, biology, language, hypnosis, and judo. He synthesized a coherent system of beliefs about health, which he taught by pragmatic and experiential methods.

Due to a sport-related injury to his knees, Moshe began looking for an alternative to surgery to improve his ability to walk painlessly and to alleviate his difficulties. In his personal exploration, he discovered that we all have an innate ability to overcome our challenges and live healthy lives by paying attention to, or becoming aware of, the way we move. Thus, the name for one of the modalities of the Feldenkrais Method® is “Awareness Through Movement.®”

As with many great discoveries, necessity was the motivating force that pushed Feldenkrais® to invent a profound process. Chance, effort, and attention guided Feldenkrais through the door of invention and on a path to discover a process of healing through learning. He was an expert at creating conditions that allowed learning to happen organically--as a natural consequence of the students’ own actions. That way, the students discovered something for themselves. They were not taught: they learned.

Feldenkrais deciphered the language of movement and touch, thereby creating a new and precise way to dialogue in a native tongue common to all of nature. He vigorously developed his personal teaching style of movement lessons, imbedded in stories of human achievement and failure, art and science, biological development, and evolutionary progress. **Moshe believed his greatest achievement was turning abstract ideas like balance, integrity, and beauty into concrete actions:** actions that could be sensed, and would be instrumental in helping us realize our full potential.

He believed that through a dialogue of movement and touch, a person could discover and integrate a new and better physiological, psychological and emotional balance. As a social artist and inventor of a new human technology, he witnessed the emergence of a newly transformed human, not just a newly transformed body. Even beyond that, he envisioned a newly structured society because of his influence.

HOW THE FELDENKRAIS METHOD WORKS
Awareness, Habits, Self-image, Somatic Learning & Acture

The human system has the flexibility to learn an infinite variety of actions--from gymnastics to brain surgery, from cooking to playing the piano, from speaking Swahili to speaking Cherokee. The subtle distinctions necessary to create these actions could only happen through years of apprenticeship of an individual in our species. There is a great deal to learn in order to live and mature in a human society, and we must learn quickly. This is as true today as it was ten thousand years ago, for us as individuals and as a species. In the remainder of this article, three important aspects of learning are implicit:

Opportunities for learning abound.

Patterns nested within patterns are the result of learning.

The ability to direct change through learning is a necessary skill for the survival of the individual, and for the survival of the species.

In order to understand how the Feldenkrais Method works, we need to explore a few abstract ideas and common themes, including awareness, habits, self-image, somatic learning, and acture.

Awareness:

The complexity of our nervous system is the result of our need to learn quickly in order to survive. In response to that need, our species evolved a highly developed ability, that ability is "Awareness." Feldenkrais used the word "Awareness" very specifically. To him, **awareness meant knowledge aligned with action.** Simply put, awareness is the ability to know HOW you are doing something WHILE you are doing it.

That sounds interesting, but you may be wondering, "How can 'awareness' help me in my daily life?"

When you are tense, injured, have a disease, or a central nervous system disorder; your movement becomes restricted and sometimes even painful. During these times, we unconsciously learn to limit our movement and overall functioning in order to protect ourselves. Often, we protect ourselves from moving a damaged or a seldom-used area. Thus a cycle of protecting ourselves leads us to limiting our movement even more. How to change the cycle is where Awareness is helpful. **When you find it difficult or painful to do what you want, or when you are learning or improving a skill, then the AWARENESS OF HOW YOU MOVE is very important.** Awareness is the first step in making our habitual choices conscious, and creates the possibility for change. Awareness of the way you are moving can lead you out of your pain as well as a clearer understanding of yourself.

PAIN WE NEED IT AND WE DON'T

The practice of the Feldenkrais Method® is an important aspect in the study of pain relief and functional restoration. Indeed, pain relief is very likely the main reason why most people seek this work, and why Dr. Feldenkrais started studying movement so intently.

In “Awareness Through Movement” classes and private “Functional Integration” lessons, you become *aware* of your restricted movements and how these restrictions contribute to your difficulty or pain. Pain is not seen as an enemy, but as a warning signal from your nervous system. Pain is the signal from the body through the brain that something is amiss. Pain is tricky: **we need it and we don't**. If ignored, it will lead to more difficulties. But pain relief is not the only intention of this work.

People with central nervous system disorders, such as multiple sclerosis, cerebral palsy, and attention deficit disorder, and people with neurological injuries, use this method to improve the way they move. Others study this method wanting to improve their movement for athletic skills or for the performing arts. Still others study this method for the pure enjoyment of moving with more freedom, flexibility, and grace. Everyone attends the same classes no matter what their movement capabilities or skill level. What is offered is so essential that everyone finds the improvement they are looking for, as the cantankerous Moshe himself use to say, “Whether they want to or not.”

The relief of pain, and even the improvement of your movement, is by-products of your awareness. There are additional emotional and mental benefits of increasing your awareness, and they will be discussed later in this book. Next let's talk about habits.

HABITS:

Often we are not truly aware of how we move when we do something. We have an idea of what we would like to do (an intention), so we act. We learn from these actions and create habits (patterns) from what we have learned. We then act from habit, without much awareness or consideration of how we do things.

It is necessary to act from habits. If we didn't form habits, we wouldn't be able to tie our shoes in the morning, much less get to the coffee maker. Walking, breathing, carrying things, using our hands, talking, and even thinking are very complicated actions. The intricacy and relatedness of all habits and actions is never more evident than when we are learning a new skill, or when we find it difficult or painful to do what we want.

Many habits we learn initially provide stability in one-way or another. When we are injured, we create compensating habits that are temporarily useful, but often outlive their usefulness, and end up restricting our choices unnecessarily. At these times, our habits can create problems. As the saying goes, "Yesterday's solutions are today's problems." Habits that have outlived their effectiveness limit our general functioning. Learning to review habitual actions for their usefulness is necessary if we are to continue to develop and mature. To quote Dr. Feldenkrais:

We tend to stop learning when we have mastered sufficient skill to attain our immediate objective. Thus, for instance, we improve our speech until we can make ourselves understood. But any person who wishes to speak with the clarity of an actor discovers that he must study speech for several years in order to achieve anything approaching his maximum potential.... An intricate process of limiting ability accustoms [us] to make do with [a small part of] our potential.... (Awareness Through Movement, p. 15)

The Feldenkrais Method is concerned with:

**How we learn to do things,
The habits formed during learning, and
The alternatives inherent in our actions.**

SELF-IMAGE:

Before you can move anything, whether it is the contents of a house, the Brooklyn Bridge, or your hand, you must have an image or perception of what you want to move: when you want to move yourself, that perception is your self-image. This "self-image" is not the image that I see when I look in the mirror. It is not the image that I present to others, such as--am I dressed appropriately to make a good impression on my job interview, or handsome enough to catch a mate? It is not my style, my reputation, nor my personality. It is not my self-esteem. It is not my ego. It is not the metaphorical or symbolic understanding of myself. All of these concepts of "self" are built on our self-image, therefore, all of these concepts of "self" change when we change our self-image.

In this discussion, self-image is a perception I present of myself to myself while moving. It is the neurological basis of "self" and is necessary in order to move, think, feel, or sense. It is a sense of oneself produced through the entire brain, nervous system, and body. Our self-image (or self-perception) is not fixed, but is in constant flux. The malleability of our self-image is perhaps our species' truest advantage. This flexibility enables the individual to learn many skills quickly, and to adapt to many environments and situations--allowing the individual and our species to survive.

Most of the time, this representation of "self" is left in the background of our awareness by necessity. If we were aware of it all times, we would not be able to do much else. **In "Awareness Through Movement" classes and "Functional Integration" lessons, we bring our self-image into the foreground of our awareness.** We do this by slowing the pace of our movement, and appreciating the quality and effort of each movement. This *internal search* gives our central nervous system the time to correct any misperceptions we have of our self-image. We are aligning our self-perception more closely with reality. A somatic honesty is encouraged and developed.

Awareness of our movement leads us to an improved and refreshed self-image. And again, if our self-image changes--our experience of the world changes. We become more effective in our actions by learning to use our entire self-image in whatever we do. Indeed, through this process we learn to integrate our entire "self" into what we do. We are integrating our moving, thinking, sensing, and feeling. We feel "more present" because more of our self-image is present.

Surveying this landscape of our self-image is central to the Feldenkrais Method. Explicitly staking out the territory of the sensation of movement is one of Moshe's greatest contributions to the understanding of ourselves. He believed that the physiological, psychological, and emotional changes from his work resulted from an essential change in one's self-image. **Change the way you move, and you change the way you think, feel, and sense as well.**

The Feldenkrais Method is designed to assist people in becoming more aware of the way they move, so they can be more effective in their actions, more creative in their mental activities, and more comfortable within themselves emotionally.

SOMATIC LEARNING:

The basis of self-image is created while we are learning to move and creating movement patterns and habits as infants. We are “learning to learn” during the earliest stage of our development. As infants and children, we are learning to lift our heads, sit up, roll over, walk, and run. Learning these early motor skills creates the fundamental neurological pathways of our sensations, feelings, thoughts, and movements. We are learning to coordinate our actions in space, time, and gravity. We are growing our brain and developing our self-image. We are becoming aware. Our later actions are based on these early sensations, perceptions, and habits.

When we were young, we paid close attention to the sensation of our movement. **We were interested in the internal feeling of the quality of our movement.** If, during our explorations, we found a particular action required less effort, felt better and did what we intended, then we incorporated that action into a larger pattern. When we developed an *internal sensation* of moving in an aesthetically pleasing and integrated manner, we felt pleased with ourselves. We were learning how less could be more.

In Feldenkrais work, we look for the same quality or characteristic in choosing a movement. In a preferred movement, the internal sense is that the action is aesthetically pleasing to *us* and we still accomplishes what we intend. Our intention is to improve our awareness. Movement is the specific focus, or what we attend to. **Intention and attention are allied.** This somatic learning requires introspection about the most primary function of life--the function of movement. To quote Feldenkrais, **“Movement is life. Without movement, life is impossible”.**

We often take our movement for granted because it seems simple, when actually it is very complicated. First, we have an intention to move--to act. Then, as mentioned before, we need an image of what we want to move. If we want to get anywhere or do anything, we must also understand the laws and forces governing our environment, including the objects, people, and the customs of our culture. As children, we are learning our movement habits, cultural habits and emotional habits together. We are creating body and mind simultaneously.

These childhood experiences are our first experiences with learning. We are literally “learning to learn”. It is a very important job. All children; black ones, brown ones, yellow ones, green ones, polka-dotted ones, striped ones, Germans, Mexicans, Chinese, and Africans, boys and girls, are preoccupied with learning to move. It is our first passion. It is truly human. Indeed, all of nature’s young, from coyotes to fledgling storks, are absorbed with learning to move. We call it play. It is a very complicated process: at times frustrating, at other times very rewarding. Play is learning to survive. Play is nature’s way of insuring that learning continues.

Play = learning = flourishing while surviving.

ACTURE:

As an alternative to the word “posture” Feldenkrais coined the word “acture”. Posture is fixed or static. It describes the way you hold yourself. Acture describes the process of how you move. It is a dynamic description of systemic relationships. It is a more accurate term when describing the processes of movement, human development, maturation and evolution. It requires you to think of the process of your life as constantly changing, not fixed. How to best direct the changes is important knowledge when dealing with such fluid concepts.

This discussion of the abstract ideas of awareness, self-image, and somatic learning, as well as the professional jargon of “Functional Integration” and “Awareness Through Movement” may leave you feeling a little dizzy. Here are a few questions to provide some firm ground to stand on in order to slow the spin down, or perhaps as a short cut to make it easier to find value in these diverse concepts.

Do you walk the same way when you are happy and confident as you do when you are extremely depressed or worried? Of course not. Your physiology is quite different in the two extremes. When you are depressed, your shoulders are drooping and forward, your head is tilted downward, and you walk as if you have the weight of the world on your shoulders. Your movement is heavy and labored. Yet, when you are happy, your head is held high, your shoulders back and there is a certain bounce to your step.

Would you walk the same way across a stage in a bathing suit with five thousand people watching, as you do when you walk outside in your bathrobe in the morning to get the paper? Is their more apprehension in your walk across the stage? Is there more ease in your walk to get the paper?

Would you putt differently in the Masters than when out for a friendly round of golf with your buddies? Does your sense of confidence affect your game?

Do others notice the sense you have of yourself through your posture and acture?

As mentioned earlier, the foundation of these responses to our environment is learned. They therefore can be unlearned or revised.

MAKING THE ABSTRACT CONCRETE
A SENSE OF ONESELF & ORGANIC LEARNING

When a child reaches for a shiny object or a ball on the floor, she may lose her balance and fall as she reaches. Through this imbalance, she learns to crawl in order to recover. She is learning about an abstract idea, balance, in very concrete terms. She is **relating experience with thought**.

Before a child can stand on her own two feet, she must concretely understand flexibility, stability, effort, power, time, space, gravity, integrity, orientation, friction, resistance, speed, acceleration, deceleration, order, and chaos (to name just a few: we are very busy as infants). These qualities describe movement. Physicists use these abstract terms to describe the cosmos. Our explanation of existence is a projection of abstract ideas made concrete through our experience while learning to move and relate to our environment.

By experimenting with crawling, a child is developing a sense of herself as being balanced. Her self-image can now include more of the idea of balance because she is better balanced. **Balance is felt as an internal experience of an external law.** The metaphorical or symbolic idea of being balanced now has meaning. The more clearly we sense these abstract ideas, the easier it is to live them. It is never too late to learn. By the way, the same abstract ideas are used to describe the functions of businesses, governments, weather systems, and economies. We describe other systems by the qualities we know organically--abstract ideas made concrete through our physical experience.

Organic Learning:

Children, through their own initiative and exploration, learn ideas and laws that are of value to them when they need them. The Feldenkrais Method uses the same perspective while creating conditions for learning. Conditions are created so the learning happens organically, as a natural consequence of the students' own actions, in a time frame, and at a pace that makes sense to the student. **That way, the students discover something for themselves. They are not taught: they learn.**

While learning as children, we were sometimes praised, and found the affection and nurturing we needed. At other times, we were ridiculed, made to feel guilty, or shamed while learning. We were forming our personalities by making sense of the forces and events that shaped our lives. Our personality is built on our self-image, and it was developed while we were learning to move. We still embody those lessons as ideas of ourselves, which are reflected as emotional, mental, and physical attitudes in our posture and acture today.

Our posture/acture is determined by both evolutionary factors and learned responses. Our individual experience is of greater consequence than in other species, because the growth of the brain after birth is so considerable. As a result, humans have a much wider variety of responses and choices of actions than does any other species. Feldenkrais used this knowledge while training people in judo and self-defense. He noticed the unique posture his students would spontaneously return to when threatened. Some crouch, some bolt, some freeze, some even faint. Each individual crouches differently while preparing a defensive or an aggressive posture. Feldenkrais taught to the each student's individual needs and responses, not to a concept of how humans "should," respond. There wasn't an "ideal" way or a mold to fit into. It was the teacher that remained flexible enough to the students' needs to accommodate the uniqueness of each student.

CORROBORATION

Related Fields and Altered States

Feldenkrais believed that the result our injuries and habits is often a limited self-image, which unnecessarily constrains our emotional, physical and mental capacities. The Feldenkrais Method aims to reverse these limitations and stimulate further growth by simultaneously cultivating thinking, feeling, sensing, and moving. Many psychologists, psychiatrists, therapists, and social scientists have demonstrated the interconnectedness of one's psychology and movement. Some of these notable therapists and doctors include Fritz Perls, Wilhelm Reich, Ida Rolf, and Milton Erickson. (*I am indebted to the author whose insights are quoted extensively below. I wish I could find the book that I stole this from, but I think my dog ate it. If I find the book, an addendum will be published with the proper citation. But don't hold your breath.*)

Fritz Perls, a noted psychotherapist, focused on facial expressions, and often informed his clients of their muscular restrictions or abnormal movements. He emphasized bodily awareness, and instructed his clients to pay close attention to their sensations while they were discussing their emotional and psychological difficulties. He believed these muscular restrictions were the result of the client having two opposing urges to action. This idea is closely related to Feldenkrais idea of "cross motivation" in which an action is accompanied by an unclear intention. Perls also believed that it was essential to express verbally and recognize the interpersonal situation or urge involved in a bodily complaint before long term recovery could take place.

Wilhelm Reich introduced the idea of "character armoring" and "muscular armoring" as the patterning of an individual's psychological defenses, the means by which the individual protects against perceived threats in the environment, and how one learns to protect oneself. Individuals use these recurrent patterns of physical tensing and bracing to block emotional expression in an attempt to protect themselves emotionally.

Ida Rolf believed that poor posture and emotional trauma contributed to psychological blockages. She used deep massage of the musculature and sought to restore the body's structural alignment. She believed that both mental and physical well-being was enhanced by structural realignment. Like Reich, she believed that specific emotional blockages produce specific muscular distortions, and that these distortions could not be released until the muscle tensions were released. The result of the change in muscle tension is evident as a change in one's structure or posture.

Milton Erickson was a leader in the field of psychiatry and clinical hypnotherapy. He routinely used movement as a clue to unvoiced thoughts and corresponding emotions. The physiological display identifies emotional reactions, which remain outside conscious awareness. Milton Erickson was a master at using altered states to introduce new thoughts to his client's unconscious thought patterns--thoughts that might have been rejected otherwise--deeply subjective thoughts that included both reason and intuition.

Like Erickson, Feldenkrais also used altered states to introduce the possibility of a newly integrated human and society. During moments of extreme relaxation in *Awareness Through Movement* classes, Feldenkrais told personal stories and gave examples from others' tragedies, joys, and accomplishments. These stories demonstrated the integration of a person with their environment through the understanding of science, art, and nature. Moshe believed that everyone could live an integrated, creative, and potent life, regardless of limitation.

The *Feldenkrais Method* gives us the tools to change the sensory/motor responses, which are the physical echoes of our underlying thoughts and emotions. It does this by bringing our mental and physical awareness very gently back to a consciousness of itself. The *Feldenkrais Method* “re-grounds” us in the world of experience.

Both in *Awareness Through Movement* classes and private *Functional Integration* lessons, an opportunity is given to rest and contemplate. An altered state of heightened awareness is created and time is taken to be quiet, to pay attention, to reflect on action. Your attention is invited to wander and connect ideas. During these times it seems as if nature is conspiring on your behalf. An artistic appreciation of life is acknowledged and nourished. **There is a chance for intuition, imagination, and meaning to come together to be felt, touched, and learned from.** There is a chance for the creative, self-transcending juices to start flowing in widening circles of expanding context. This state of rest gives a place for movement to begin again.

**WHY STUDY MOVEMENT?
EMOTIONS AND THE BODY**

Why study movement for emotional health?...because the movement of our body is the most accessible place to create changes in self-image. As Carl Jung, the Swiss psychiatrist, said, “The psyche is distinctly more complicated (a point I disagree with) and inaccessible (a point I agree with) than the body”. Or, as Ida Rolf said, “It’s the body that I can get my hands on”. The one common thread of these innovative theories and practices is that their training disrupts a number of complex, maladaptive patterns causing not just the release of muscular tensions, but the change of one’s psychological nature. Changes in one’s emotions are accompanied by changes in one’s body states. It may not be as obvious, but the inverse is also true. Changes in one’s body states change one’s emotional states.

You don’t need to be psychiatrist or neuroscientist to understand this: it is verifiable through your own experience in life. For instance,

If you meet an old friend, your heart may race, your skin may flush, the muscles in your face change around the mouth and eyes to design a happy expression, and muscles elsewhere relax. If you hear of an acquaintance’s death, your heart may pound, your mouth dry up, your skin blanch, a section of your gut contract, the muscles in your neck and back tense up, while those in your face design a mask of sadness. In either case, there are changes in the function of viscera (heart, lungs, gut, skin), skeletal muscles, vestibular mechanism, and endocrine glands (such as the pituitary and adrenals). A number of modulators are released from the brain into the bloodstream. The immune system also is modified rapidly. (“Descartes’ Error.” p. 135)

These somatic markers of our emotions originated early in our species’ development, and were necessary for our survival. Our emotions were necessary devices in decision-making. If you were not in touch with, or did not trust your somatic responses and your emotions, your chances for survival were greatly decreased. That law is still true. It is true for individuals, businesses, economies, and for our species.

***SURVIVAL
INTUITION, CREATIVITY AND EMOTIONS***

Nature has equipped us with a quick, automatic, and continuing process in order to improve our decision-making capability: that process is intuition. Intuition is our internal guidance system. It is a felt sense that something is a beneficial choice, or not. It is dependent upon our ability to sense our emotional signals from our body. In our childhood play, we used intuition to guide our imagination. We created enchanted realities from there. **Intuition is the basis of creativity and spontaneity.**

There are billions of stimuli being received in our nervous system every second. From this stimulation, we (just as our ancestors did) have to decide what is of value and what isn't. Our ancestors survived because they were very sensitive of themselves, and therefore, of their environment. Their emotional responses from their bodies were the signals that told them whether they were in danger or not. Their survival depended upon their ability to respond to their emotional signals or somatic markers.

Our intuition is still important for our survival today. While driving, have you ever done something quickly that saved your life? How did you decide what to do? From all the competing stimuli, you must decide instantly which is the most relevant. You don't have the time to decide rationally. You quickly sort through the choices, not by rationality in this case, but by intuition. Not being aware of our somatic responses cuts us off from our intuition, and makes decision-making rely only on rationality. Our intuition is a shortcut in decision-making that originated for our survival, but it can also be used in decision-making for other reasons.

Einstein said that his most productive thoughts came to him while he was shaving, or not thinking of anything in particular. Given a choice between logic and intuition, he relied more heavily on intuition. It was intuition that led him to the idea that starlight bends as it passes through the gravity field of another planet or star. This idea was not proven until years after its discovery. To quote Einstein, ***“Not everything that can be counted counts, and not everything that counts can be counted.”***

Intuition can be helpful when creating solutions to our day-to-day dilemmas, as well as to the difficult situations in which we find ourselves. It is invaluable in times of chaos or ambiguity. It is also beneficial when we feel stressed because of insufficient information, or when we do not have the time necessary to make a rational decision. In addition, intuition is a necessary component for innovation. Our intuition helps us choose in almost every situation, but especially in new circumstances. It is a helpful shortcut to arrive at plausible alternatives. We do not often recognize it, and therefore we do not cultivate it. Intuition is an invaluable ally in today's fast changing climate.

Intuition is often called street smarts or a gut sense. It's an intuitive understanding of the realities on the ground. And it's what great leaders often depend on. Having an informed intuition can help decision makers transcend conventional wisdom and see opportunities that others can't.Wired to Care by Dev Patnaik page 36.

Today, not paying attention to our emotions, their somatic and multisensory responses, and our intuition in decision-making, reduces creativity and our ability to make complicated decisions that rely on more than rational thought. Our rationality is enhanced by this shortcut to decision-making. Emotions and intuition can save our life in times of danger, or help us design a better product, a better relationship, or a better life. Again, this is true for the survival of organisms, organizations, and for our species.

BODY AND MIND INTEGRATION MOVEMENT AS ONE OF THE MANY BRIDGES

We are entering an era in which physical health and psychological well-being are seen as synonymous. Neuroscientist Karl Pribram estimates that ninety percent of the activity of the brain is preoccupied with movement. If that is true, then when we improve the way we move, we are improving the way the brain functions.

Changes in the way we move are changes in the nervous system, which are observable as changes in the skeletal muscles' responses. The skeletal muscles complete the external picture of an internal emotion in facial expressions, body posture, and in acture. Since an emotion has both physical and mental qualities, if we change one, we change the other. In other words, if we change the skeletal muscles' responses (the way we move), we change the way we sense, feel, and think. Thinking, feeling, sensing, and moving are inseparable. We can change the recurrent thought of being anxious by changing our acture: with practice, we can apply that knowledge while anxious. Some psychotherapy's recognize this fact, and have the client move, or perhaps change their position in the room, while discussing their difficulties. Even small eye movements are recognized as instrumental in promoting psychological change.

Skeletal muscles' responses can be consciously controlled, and are easier to change than any of the other responses to an emotion. Try to change the other parameters of your emotions (your visceral, neurological, and immune response), and see how easy it is. Try to stop sweating when you are tense and upset. Try to change the way you think about someone, or a situation you dislike, and see how complicated that is. Try to change the feeling of disappointment when someone hurts you emotionally. But changing the way you move is relatively easy. Additionally, skeletal muscles' responses are externally verifiable. Anyone can see when you move differently. An observer has clues, but no direct way of knowing if you have changed the way you feel or think. But changing the skeletal muscles' response, that is, the way you move is easily verifiable.

Most often, the change in the skeletal muscles' response is a decrease in muscle tonus (tightness). With the muscular tension reduced, it is easier to move, so we produce less wear and tear on our body, and it is easier to sense our emotional state and to be more available to our intuition. To quote Antonio R. Damasio:

The action of biological drives, body states, and emotions may be an indispensable foundation for rationality. ... Rationality and intuition are... shaped and modulated by body signals.
("Descartes' Error." p200)

Changing the way you move is not the only change necessary in learning to be more creative and emotionally healthy. It is, however, a fundamental change. A few of the simplest shifts to notice when people are relying on their intuition, (their internal guidance system) is they smile more, stand more erect, hold their head up, and are more spontaneous in their actions.

***MOVING NATURALLY
EFFICIENT, EFFECTIVE, AND ELOQUENT***

After attending a series of Awareness Through Movement (ATM) classes, or perhaps after a series of private Functional Integration (FI) lessons, people often discover that they have happened upon something totally unexpected. They discover that not only will they be able to regain their lost ability or improve a skill, but much more. They discover there is something mysterious and enchanting about this work/play, and at the same time, there is something very familiar--something that is ultimately practical which must be felt to be comprehended and appreciated fully.

Removing ineffectual habits creates effortless movement. This is the central experience of the Feldenkrais Method.

When you leave Awareness Through Movement classes or Functional Integration lessons, you look younger, breathe easier, and feel relaxed. You move with a sense of effortless coordination, flexibility, balance and freedom. Your mental and physical attitude has improved. Your posture is more erect, your acture more fluid. There is naturalness to your walk. Your head is balanced through your entire skeleton, freeing your neck and shoulders. Your skeleton supports your weight, with muscles doing only the work necessary to produce efficient, effective, and eloquent movement.

It seems as if a weight has been removed, which allows you once again to be spontaneous. You feel a sense of harmony. Timing, intuition, even gravity is working for you. Your self-image has become more complex and realistic. You literally create or refresh the sense you have of yourself. You revive a somatic honesty. You feel healthy, balanced, alert, energized, creative, and relaxed--you feel more present.

You feel supple, agile, and graceful; like a cat just after it awakens and bows in its morning greeting, or as it moves in the yard, alert but not on alert; or when it is keenly alive, awake and potent, just as it prepares to pounce. You move as nature intends.

Startling simplicity, tangible results. After a few visits, students notice that they are using this method of "learning to learn" as one of their tools for living a healthy, mature and creative life. To quote Dr. Feldenkrais:

Through awareness we can learn to move with astonishing lightness and freedom--at almost any age--and thereby improve our living circumstances, not only physically...but emotionally, intellectually, and spiritually.

***AN INVITATION TO HEALTH
JUMP IN, THE WATER IS FINE.***

At the beginning of this, I promised that we would discuss movement and how to live a healthier life. In conclusion, I will leave you with a few quotations about health: one from Dr. Moshe Feldenkrais, one from Henry David Thoreau, and finally, one from Eric Klein.

When asked, “What does it mean to be healthy?” Moshe Feldenkrais replied, “**Healthy people are people who are realizing their vowed and their unavowed dreams**”. Health is seen as a continuing process of following one’s dreams only to uncover more dreams. Perhaps that is why Moshe began his lessons with, “What do you want today?” He could have asked, “What do you dream of being able to do?”

Thoreau said, “**If one advances confidently in the direction of one’s dreams, and endeavors to live the life he has imagined, he will meet with success, unexpected, in common hours.**” Healthy people dream, and continue to advance closer to their dreams, because of the confidence they have in their imagination and intuition.

To be healthy is to be made whole. Ultimately, the Feldenkrais work at its heart is, learning to skillfully and compassionately reconnect with the whole of oneself and from this basis to be able to connect with others more compassionately. Transformation follows from that introspection and discovery. Healthy people are transformers of themselves and their culture. By that definition, Moshe was very healthy.

I hope this booklet has raised many questions, and maybe even answered a few. Movement and the components of action are rich subject matter, with many points of view to be discussed and appreciated. Each Feldenkrais practitioner brings his or her own interest to their work, and so each integrates their practice into their community differently. Some practitioners are in clinics, schools, universities, dojos, or athletic departments; others are in private practice or alliances with other health practitioners. The mix is endless. The work they do is meaningful. If you look, you will find one that suits your needs.

This booklet is intended to entice you further into the Feldenkrais experience. However, reading about an experience is not the experience itself. I invite you to attend a series of Awareness Through Movement classes, or receive a series of private Functional Integration lessons. Whether you want to be more creative, reduce stress, improve a physical skill, get rid of a recurring pain, feel better emotionally, be mentally more alert, or just slow down a little, this method has a great deal to offer. Come and investigate whether changing the way you move can make your life easier. If you do, you will be in for a treat.

Finally, a quotation from Eric Klein, from his books “The Inner Door”. “**All teachings serve only as signposts created by those who have gone before, pointing the way toward a mastery each student must achieve in their own unique way.**” Good luck on your journey and remember to have more fun than you should! Oh yeah, I almost forgot: What have you been dreaming of doing lately?

TESTIMONIAL BY KIM FERGUSON
AWARENESS THROUGH MOVEMENT
& FUNCTIONAL INTEGRATION

What if someone told you that an increase in the awareness of your movement could help you deal with pain and perhaps even eliminate that pain? That awareness of movement could increase your strength and coordination, decrease the damaging effects stress has on your body and improve your sense of well-being. Would you be interested?

Perhaps, like me, you would be skeptical. Awareness of movement could produce all those benefits? Oh, really.

But then again, like me, you might be a little intrigued. Movement, huh? Well, it couldn't hurt to hear a little more about this.

Those were my exact thoughts when Pat Siebert first told me about something called Feldenkrais, a method he teaches at a community center, Casa de Luz, in downtown Austin. Although I had never heard of the therapy before, I have since learned that Feldenkrais is a highly respected method of treatment practiced throughout the world.

The treatment was developed in Europe during the 1940's by Dr. Moshe Feldenkrais, a degreed engineer, doctor of physics, judo practitioner, professional soccer player, linguist, and author (what a combo!). Resisting the recommendation of surgery for a chronically painful knee injury, Feldenkrais set out to discover alternative methods of healing his knee. Using his vast knowledge of physics, cybernetics, and the human nervous system, Feldenkrais began using various movements to retrain and restore function to his knee. The knowledge he gained through these movements eventually developed into the therapy known today as The Feldenkrais Method®.

But I knew none of this when I went for my initial session with Pat at the Feldenkrais Center of Austin.

We started our conversation with the normal pleasantries and then Pat asked how long had I had the pain in my lower back. My jaw fell open. Just that morning I had developed a strong, painful ache in my lower back. But I hadn't mentioned it to him at all. How did he know? Pat explained that by observing the way I walked, stood, and carried myself, he could tell I was experiencing the pain. I sheepishly found my skepticism decreasing while my curiosity increased tenfold.

Pat asked me to lay face down on a padded table and then to push my head and torso up with my arms. Then he asked me to lower myself back down. After watching me do this a few times, he asked me to raise and lower my head only. After a few repetitions, I started to feel a bit smug. Using these actions as a starting point, I assumed that because I could do these movements with such ease, Pat's other clients must be really messed up.

Pat then placed his hands lightly on either side of my spine and asked me to continue the movements. Each time I lowered my head back to the table, Pat moved his hands up or down one vertebra. I was taken by surprise when I discovered the changes in my ability to perform the simple movement. Although Pat exerted no pressure with his hands, I sometimes found it more difficult to move my head and body. When he moved his hands to a different spot on my back, the movement became even more simple and fluid than when we began. As we continued, I found myself becoming more aware that the muscles required just lifting my head extended all the way to the end of my spine.

A few minutes later, Pat moved to the head of the table and asked me to relax completely. He took one of my arms and began to slowly move it up and down and side to side with gentle movements lacking force or pressure. While I thought I had "completely relaxed", it was soon clear that I had not. Pat explained that he wanted to move my arm, and that I needed to let it fall limp in his hands. I tried! I promise! But the muscles in my back and neck and shoulders kept trying to assist. With incredible patience, Pat continued to move my arm. He would stop halfway at times; I think to highlight the fact that my muscles would try to kick in to complete the movements. Unknowingly, I was resisting my own efforts to relax. As he continued, ***I realized that the more I could relax my mind's focus from the resistance I was feeling, and focus on letting him lead the actual movement, the more fluid the movement would become.***

After a while, Pat repeated the motions with my other arm and then with my head and neck. Finally, Pat moved to the foot of the table and repeated similar motions with my legs, moving them back and forth at the joints of my knees. I found myself drifting into a deep state of relaxation as he gently moved me. Oddly, this relaxation was coupled with a heightened sense of the interaction of the other muscles in my body.

As the session ended, I sat up and Pat asked me to walk around in the room for a minute. It was amazing! My head was held high; my shoulders were no longer in their usual slightly hunched position. My spine felt loose, fluid, and movable. The backache was gone! I felt great--and strangely, I felt taller. Pat explained that the simple movements had worked to release the contractions of the muscles, allowing my body to move more freely and naturally. I felt that wonderful rejuvenation that follows a full body massage, although I was fully clothed and no pressure was exerted on my muscles.

Pat cautioned me that experiencing Feldenkrais could change my life, and I had skeptically nodded my understanding of his words. Sure, this felt great, but change my life? I must now admit that I am beginning to grasp the magnitude of his statement.

In the days following our session, I found myself noticing certain movements I made and the chain reaction of the muscles involved throughout my body. I noticed when tightness in my lower back would cause an adjustment in the way I turned my head to the shoulder after I rested my head on the pillow at night. I found myself integrating what little I had realized from this first session to other movements my body makes. I found myself noticing the slight adjustments my body makes almost continually. I truly found a new awareness of my body, which continues today.

In a subsequent session with Pat, we explored strength and coordination questions to help me as I competitively race sailboats on Lake Travis. He helped me understand that my true power and center of movement comes from my lower torso, the hips, and pelvic area. Learning how to use this power again helped me realize we were working with more than physical strength.

Pat is really a facilitator for learning. In a non-invasive, non-stressful session he gains your trust and confidence. There is a level of non-threatening intimacy achieved in which one is open to exploring their movements and developing a greater sense of self-awareness. I can say with certainty you are in for a "treat" if you visit Pat for a treatment.

Kim Ferguson,

Testimonial by Mary Beth Smith

Dear Pat:

Would love to talk to you about my recital. I am still on energy high 20 hours later. Several very close friends of mine commented: "It's not just that your singing is different--YOU are different."

Another friend (and singer) said that she had never seen me perform with so much energy, yet effortlessly. Yeah, Baby! That's what I'm talking about. I did have a few more "butterflies" before the performance that I usually do: In retrospect, I believe my body was just getting ready for things to be different, and I wasn't quite sure in what form the difference(s) would manifest. I was also a little nervous because I just did not feel like following my usual pre-performance routine, and that sort of spooked me. However, I was excited because I knew I was altering a habit to make room for something new----

So---my accompanist and I were in perfect unity. The German set was particularly hot--as we walked off stage, he said he felt like he needed a cigarette. (Stark contrast to my recital in York PA last month.) He and I always have "chemistry" together, but there was a special electricity and energy that was present that we just fed off of each other, to the delight of the audience. I hadn't realized how much I have missed performing, and how hungry I was for the experience. Well, it turned into a feeding frenzy for both the audience and me, as each group of songs built upon the last. The house was packed--the ticket-takers had to turn some people away. I don't think I've ever been able to give more to an audience and receive so much back. My body and breath felt very free--so free, in fact, that I felt a bit distracted at times (but I can definitely get used to it). I'd love for you to hear the recording. Of course, I hear all the imperfections, but I'm also able to be extremely pleased with the result. And of course, the "diva" part of my personality absolutely basked in being able to pull an hour of non-stop adoration from a couple hundred people. (The rational part of my personality is going to have to do a lot more to earn it's keep, I'll tell you.)

OK, I'm done rambling and gushing. But Pat, I know that our work together is having a profound effect on me (body/mind/spirit/voice), and I believe my singing/artistic expression has reached a whole new level. Thank you so much for the extra time yesterday, you are so generous; and the good-luck smooch kept me smiling the rest of the day/evening. I'm going to be processing all of this for a while. I have another recital (different program, different pianist) in Waco on Tuesday evening (9/19), so it will be very interesting to see what else happens.

Love you bunches-thank you!

MBS

Compassionate Touch-Compassionate Communication

In the moments of chaos in my life, I feel both confusion and fear. I can feel my stomach, back, and jaw tighten. I notice a restriction in my chest. I feel something in my gut that is uncomfortable and difficult to describe: churning is the best word for the sensation. Intimately connecting with others lessens my sense of fear, and replaces it with trust and acceptance. In those moments, my need for connection is satisfied. My muscles relax and I breathe more fully. I feel clear and insightful. Expressing all my emotions and needs spontaneously is a difficult thing for me to do.

This dance of expression exists in all aspects of my life, and particularly within my practice. It is a dance I am enjoying within myself, as well as with others. How to continue to dance in intimate conversation is the subject of a book by Dr. Marshall Rosenberg. This book review creates connections between the book, Non-Violent Communication--A Language of Compassion, and my practice, which I feel is important to share with my clientele and my colleagues. I am a beginning student of Nonviolent Communication, and not a trainer of the method. It is from that perspective that I write.

My Feldenkrais training left me with the ability to connect with people physically and emotionally, but not a clear way to communicate verbally with my students. (That word "student" still seems inadequate to me, for they are not my students because I am not a teacher. They seem more like fellow travelers on a never-ending tour bus ride to full and healthy living. I feel more like an assistant bus driver or a navigator than anything else.) We both learn when I do not "teach".

So, fellow travelers, in dealing with my own emotions, I find it necessary to address my concerns both verbally and non-verbally. I believe the same to be true for the people I see in my practice. When to speak and when to remain silent during a lesson is difficult to determine. I rely on my intuition to inform me if I need to speak. Practice makes my intuitiveness reliable. However, what to say and what to listen for is a learned skill, and a necessary one if you are working with people as intimately as we do. How to stay fully connected with others and myself when communicating verbally is the subject matter of Non-Violent Communication--A Language of Compassion. In his book, Dr. Rosenberg clearly outlines, explains, and exemplifies the four steps of communicating compassionately.

In this model, the first step is noticing the observation of our senses (just the facts please), the second step is expressing our emotions (anger, hurt, joy, energetic, enlivened, peaceful, appreciative), the third step is verbalizing our needs (autonomy, connection, freedom, safety, comfort, encouragement, celebration), and the fourth step is making a specific request for action to get our needs met (Would you be willing to _____?).

This process is not about solving psychological problems, as Feldenkrais work is not about removing pain. Problems are solved as a byproduct, or result from, increasing our awareness of how we communicate. The intent of Non-Violent Communication--A Language of Compassion is to connect with others by listening for and understanding their feelings and needs, and discovering what we can, and cannot do to meet those needs. At the same time, I must remain conscious of communicating my feelings and needs, and making sure I get my needs met. This is also true within the context of a Feldenkrais lesson. As a practitioner, I have feelings that must be expressed, and needs that must be met within a lesson. Page 24

Just recently, while working with a woman who has had a radical mastectomy, there was a moment of stillness in our lesson together. My hands just stopped. I waited. Her breathing was rather shallow, and something in me knew that a question was appropriate. I asked, "What are you feeling?" She was lying face down on the table, and from under the mass of hair came a few snuffles and the response, "I feel as if I have been torn apart." Indeed she had been. As part of the surgery, the surgeon had removed a large portion of the muscle from her back, and, had used it to reconstruct her breast.

My guess was that she needed a sense of herself as being integrated or complete, so I asked her if that was true. In a whisper, again from underneath the jumble of hair, and this time with a few muffled tears, came the response, “Yes, I would like that very much.” This was about the third session with this woman, so I knew many of her likes and dislikes. I knew she was a vegetarian and a wonderful cook, so I described the preparation and cooking of a beautiful meal, complete with table settings and a quiet ambiance, with her very supportive mate. The telling of that story was a wonderful moment of intimate connection. At the time I didn't know it, but the story was a dream of hers. She could now make a request to have her dream come true. This depth of emotion does not run through every lesson, but in cases where there is a great deal of fear and apprehension, it is important to spontaneously know what to listen for, and what to say.

In the following weeks and months, she filled in aspects of her life that she was afraid she would never be able to experience again. She began to make clear request to get what wanted. Her life was returning to normal, and was as rich as it ever had been.

At the beginning, or sometimes at the end of a lesson, we continue to talk about what she needs. One of her needs (or perhaps a dream or wish of hers) is to be able to carry her own luggage while traveling on vacations. The FI reestablished the sense of herself as being integrated or complete. Our conversations about her needs were instrumental in turning the abstract idea and the felt sense of herself (being integrated) into concrete actions (going on vacations and carrying her own luggage). I consider the conversations of my clients' needs as a helpful verbal component of an FI.

One of the more day-to-day skills I found helpful from studying the process of compassionate communication is how to express appreciation and approval in a way that adds value and encourages more progress. Read [Non-Violent Communication--A Language of Compassion](#) in order to learn more about that. If you do not read the book just remember listen for “needs”, and do what you can to fulfill those needs in your lessons. I recommend reading [Non-Violent Communication--A Language of Compassion](#). Thank you for your attention, and as Roy Rogers and Dale Evans use to sing, “Happy trails to you, until we met again.”

Learning Compassion and Functioning Fully
How Do I Insure That What I Am Doing
Is What I Intend And
Is Getting Me What I Want?

I revitalize. I bring life back into people who want to do easily what they cannot. I do that by teaching the Feldenkrais Method of "Awareness Through Movement" and Marshal Rosenberg's method of Compassionate Communications. What I have learned from Moshe and Marshall is profound. While studying with them I learned to sense what others need in their self-representation in the most direct manner possible: through the sense of touch and observations through listening.

As Feldenkrais Practitioners, we are taught to touch and sense in order to connect compassionately. It is an exceptional and emotional experience to be listened to in this way. As students of Marshal Rosenberg we learn to listen to the meaning in the words. The needs underlying the confusion or upset.

While I am working, I move slowly, quietly, mostly sensing or listening to what the other is doing or saying. At other times I am deeply sensing what I am doing, thinking or feeling, and occasionally what we are doing together. When in this state, I am simply relating as one human to another, not as teacher to student. I am thinking, feeling, acting, and communicating differently. I am not evaluating, interpreting, or diagnosing. I am not being moralistic about what is right or wrong, or ideal, but rather I am empathetically relating to another. I do this because I enjoy the sessions more when this spirit is alive in me. My clients also comment on their appreciation of this nonjudgmental way of looking at things.

Learning more about compassion and its interplay with awareness, and relating with each other is my current passion. This pursuit seems profound. This way of "functioning fully" is what I am after.

How do I insure that what I am doing is what I intend and is getting me what I want?

When watching Moshe on tapes, one can see that his state of awareness was heightened while he was working. He was more vital in those moments. His eyes were brighter; there was a visible twinkle and gleam in them. That's what I look for in the responses of people that I work with.

The response I am looking for may be a look in their eye, or the ease with which they can walk, or perhaps the pleasure in a breath that recognizes how incredible what we are doing is. I look for the movement and grace of someone who, five minutes ago, was immobile, stuck, hurting and is now more aware of their own internal and external grace. Often I am inspired by a serene look or smile of deep appreciation when someone realizes they can do something that was impossible just a moment ago.

While working with a young girl today I was struck by the richness and spontaneity in her voice as she talked about her ability to sit quietly because she no longer had pain in her legs. It was both hearing the words and the quality with which they were spoken that I celebrate. Noticing the spoken and unspoken clues is what enlivens me today. I saw this understanding and compassionate way of being in Moshe. I see it in young children's way of being, and I see it in others during our work.

By the way if this article were a poem by Rumi or Hafiz, it would be much simpler, and might read like this:

I am afraid
this awareness stuff has
untied in me a greater respect
for being alive
and living compassionately.

INQUIRY INTO SELF:

This is an invitation to join a six-week course to improve your communication skills by exploring the integration of perception, emotion, thought, and action.

At times life is less than wonderful. When we are feeling depressed, angry, confused, or anxious we find it difficult to get what we need and want. At other times we feel calm, vibrant, energetic - potent. In those moments we find we are realizing our dreams and potential. Life is wonderful. Our emotional states are accompanied by different ways of perceiving, thinking, and acting. We even move differently in accordance with our varied emotional circumstances.

COMPLETE COMMUNICATION is the study of how we generate our emotions and thoughts, which create our inner world and affect how we communicate. This course combines the Feldenkrais Method of Somatic Education with Marshall Rosenberg's method of Compassionate Communication. The Feldenkrais Method and Compassionate Communication both use a nonintrusive systemic process of exploration to discover actions that would benefit one's life. The blending of the two methods creates a concrete template of an integrated life.

This course is designed for each student to discover how he or she is relating with themselves and others in order to communicate more compassionately. The gift of this inquiry is a more creative, imaginative, satisfying and emotionally spirited life, thereby opening the door for us to collectively bring about more of what we value, desire, and need.

I invite you to this course to experience the benefits of learning a more compassionate way of expressing yourself and of understanding others. The actions you take with this understanding will produce results you can't help but enjoy.

The Intimate Conversations Course with Pat Siebert

*Intimate C*onversations is an interactive course in which you will learn through practice a proven and effective way to resolve conflicts and enhance communication with your family members, coworkers, friends, and loved ones. You will learn “how” to communicate so everyone (including yourself!) will get what they need, value, and want.

What “Intimate Conversations” participants are saying...

“I was overjoyed when my 17-year-old daughter asked me to join her in this communications course. The benefits of communicating honestly multiply when you take this course with someone that you are in a long-term relationship with.”

“I resolved a long lasting difficulty within the first hour of class and I continue to use the skills I learned daily. Pat creates an atmosphere that makes the learning fun when possible, easy when difficult, and meaningful at all times.”

“After Pat’s class I began to judge others less and discovered that I could now empathize with colleagues in a wonderful and effortless way. One of the things I enjoyed most from this course was learning to check in with my body to insure my mind and heart are in agreement with what I am about to do or say.”

Course Information:

Six consecutive Tuesday evenings from 6:30-9:00 pm, starting Tuesday, June 3rd

\$345 for one participant -- \$545 for two

Registration and Information

Patrick F. Siebert

The Intimate Conversations Course

512-347-1859

About the Course Leader:

“In the courses I facilitate you will learn a process that integrates the body, mind, and heart. This integration will assist you in communicating honestly and creating the relationships you desire. Actions that I hold in high regard are: expressing values, being compassionate, and having fun.

“I am grateful for the work of Dr. Marshal Rosenberg-Compassionate Communication, and Dr. Moshe Feldenkrais-Awareness Through Movement, from whom I draw the inspiration and education for this workshop.”

SHORT DESCRIPTIONS AND SYNTHESIS

My most valuable assets are my relationships with people. What I want is to be able to connect more authentically and communicate more compassionately with the people in my life. I want to be able to speak, listen, and be heard in a way that honors my emotions and needs, as well as the emotions and needs of others. I find more joy when I communicate and experience life in this manner. If you have the same desire for your life I invite you to read the following short descriptions of the work I have studied, and the synthesis I have created in order to better understand my perspective.

In the courses I facilitate you will learn a process that incorporates the body, mind, and heart and learn to:

- Transform potentially disruptive conversations into productive dialogues.
- Change the way of thinking that leads to misunderstanding, anxiety, depression, and anger.
- Make request in a way that everyone is more likely to get what they want.
- Be more aware physically in order to connect with yourself and others more completely.

Compassionate Communication : The intent of Compassionate Communication is to create more satisfying personal interactions. This process focuses our attention on compassion as our motivation rather than fear, guilt, blame, or shame. It emphasizes taking personal responsibility for our choices in improving the quality of our relationships. With this method we learn to honor our values and the values of others by creating solutions based on cooperation, safety, mutual respect, and consensus.

Feldenkrais Method of Somatic Education . The Feldenkrais Method is a system of self-education whose practitioners teach “Awareness Through Movement” classes and private “Functional Integration” lessons: because, to quote Moshe Feldenkrais, “*Through awareness we can learn to move with astonishing lightness and freedom--at almost any age--and thereby improve our living circumstances, not only physically...but emotionally, intellectually, and spiritually.*”

Compassionate Conversation : The intent of Compassionate Conversation is to become aware of the connection between our observations, emotions, and needs so that we can articulate to others what we value and want. It is also the intent of Intimate Conversation to provide the listening skills necessary to understand clearly what others need, value, and desire in order to see how we can contribute to their life. This awareness is important at all times but is especially important in moments of emotional strain and discord.

Patrick F. Siebert opened the Feldenkrais Center of Austin in 1985 where he leads ongoing classes and sees people for individual sessions. Pat's current focus is formalizing clear insightful experiences to assist people in moving effectively, efficiently, and eloquently.

Pat has been studying Dr. Marshal Rosenberg's method of Compassionate Communication for four years and is in the process of becoming a trainer in that method. His passion in that field is working with organizations, individuals, and couples wanting to fully integrate their ideas, values, and actions by having more satisfying personal and professional interactions.

UNIFIED IN DIVERSITY--dedicated to improving the communication skills of individuals, families, and organizations. Actions that we hold in high regard are, expressing values, being compassionate, integrating ideas, and having fun.

Collaborative Communications *Creating a Culture of Collaboration*

When we first commit to working on a project together, there is a great deal of enthusiasm and camaraderie over our proposed collaborations. There is energy, a sense of power we all seem to like while we are creating something together. However, once the excitement from the initial commitment dies and inspiration wanes, faction's form, conflicts arise and power is diluted. Sharing power, or collaborating with others is inextricably linked with conflict, disagreement and emotionally charged situations.

If we are to truly collaborate where everyone shares a voice in the decision making process it is crucial to have clearly articulated and a mutually agreed upon way to communicate while we are in conflict or disagreement, and our emotions are running high.

What makes - collaborative communications - unique is its simple four-step model that guides us when our emotions are running high and when the stakes are high and we care about the outcome. This model clearly focuses our awareness on what unites us rather than what sets us apart from each other. This empathetic connection is the essential component of all communication skills and an indispensable skill for leaders and community members alike wanting to create and sustain a culture of collaboration.

CREATING COLLABORATIVE COMMUNICATIONS WILL ENABLE COMMUNITY LEADERS AND MEMBERS TO:

- Develop cohesiveness by communicating empathetically and showing concern for everyone's needs
- Make clear and relevant requests for action based on those needs
- Express themselves in ways that inspires them and others to self-motivated action
- Build trust by listening and empathizing with dissent in a way that makes it safe for people to disagree
- Mediate conflicts and help others develop mutually satisfying resolutions in disputes
- Give and receive both positive and negative criticism with respect
- Foster curiosity, humor, gratitude and cooperation
- Use hierarchical structures to generate potent actions while meeting the needs of everyone concerned
- Expand horizontal power structures to demonstrate fairness and inclusiveness
- Create opportunities for everyone to willingly contribute what he or she wants to contribute
- Develop possibilities for everyone to learn, mature and advance in the organization
- Open the doors for organizational structures and the ideas that improve human relationships at all levels.

The communication skills of – *COLLABORATIVE COMMUNICAITONS* – assist us in building the new culture that values the leadership and creative capacities of all members of the group. A mature organization that acts in accordance with these values attracts and retains the talented people needed to innovate in a highly competitive local and world market place. Most importantly, it creates a culture where people are productive because they enjoy their working environment.





EMOTIONAL INTELEGENCE VALUE TO AN ORGANIZATION

Egon Zehnder International, a leading executive search firm concluded in a study involving over 500 senior executives "emotional intelligence was a better predictor of success than either relevant previous experience or high I.Q."

Imagine the benefit of being skilled in the basic emotional competences-being attuned to the feelings of those we deal with, being able to handle disagreements so they do not escalate, and having the ability to get into the flow states while doing your work. Leadership not domination is the art of persuading people to willingly work toward a common goal.

LEARNING COLLABORATIVE COMMUNICATIONS WILL ENABLE LEARDERS TO

- Exprese themselves in a way that inspires others to action.
- Organize and inspire productive meetings.
- Communicate with confidence in both big meetings and while working one-on-one.
- Combine understanding and empathy while making clear and relevant requests for action.
- Listen and empathize with dissent in a way that makes it safe for people to disagree.
- Mediate conflicts and help others develop mutually satisfying resolutions in disputes.
- Give and receive both positive and negative criticism with respect.
- Foster curiosity, humor, gratitude and cooperation.
- Use hierarchical structures to meet the needs of everyone concerned.
- Develop horizontal collaborative power structures.
- Create the opportunities for others to learn what they want to learn.
- Open the doors for organizational structures and ideas that improve human relationships at all levels.

**Contact Pat@PatSiebert.com Austin, Texas 512.347.1859
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QUALITY RELATIONSHIPS & BLAMING

Most of us are hungry for skills that can improve the quality of our relationships, deepen our sense of personal empowerment, or simply help us communicate more effectively. Unfortunately, many of us have been educated from birth to blame, judge, demand or diagnose that there is something wrong with another when we do not get what we want. Or, the most insidious trait of all, we find ourselves blaming ourselves when we don't get what we authentically desire? These behaviors are habitual, mostly hidden from our view, but we do not know what else to do so we "keep on truckin'". We keep on "playin' the blamin' game".

This blaming often comes in the form of labeling others, or ourselves, in either words or often just in our thoughts. Common blaming labels are "you are; inconsiderate, a jerk, a liar, lazy." Or "I am; stupid, unlucky, bad, foolish." Almost everyone that I know does this, myself included. We diagnose that there is a problem in ourselves or with another. There is something **WRONG**, something that **SHOULD** or **SHOULDN'T** be, or something we are lacking, and then we blame. We persist in this folly, even though what we are doing does not work.

So what to do? Give up? Rebel? Stick with the status quo? Try something magical and instantaneous? Become mad, depressed or melancholy (my personal favorites)? Become violent? Go to war? Let's be honest, we all, either individually or collectively have tried these strategies. Each one seems to provide some kind of momentary relief, some energetic stimulation, some connection with oneself, but we still find ourselves not getting what we truly desire.

NonViolent Communications (NVC) helps us reach beneath the surface and discover what is vital within us and how all of our actions are based on human needs that we are seeking to meet. In NVC classes or in private appointments we learn to develop a vocabulary of feelings and needs that helps us more clearly express what is going on in us at any given moment. In addition, in the NVC model you will learn how to listen for the needs of others rather than blame or criticize them for your discomfort. When we understand and acknowledge our needs, and the needs of others, we develop a shared foundation for much more satisfying relationships.

I hope you can join in on the education that can transform your ways of communicating with yourself and others.

NVC classes are held from 7-9pm at Pat Siebert's house on Tuesday night-406 Brady Lane, Austin, Texas 78746. \$10-\$40 sliding scale. Phone 512-347-1859 for more information or to make an appointment.

HOW YOU CAN BENEFIT FROM STUDYING THE FELDENKRAIS METHOD:

- ⌚ If you *have a nagging, persistent back pain*, you can learn to become more flexible before your difficulty leads to more serious problems.
- ⌚ If you *sit at a computer for long periods*, you can improve your posture and learn to sit effortlessly so you can concentrate more on your work.
- ⌚ If you *have asthma or difficulty in breathing*, you can find the freedom of movement in your ribs, which is essential for spirited relaxed breathing.
- ⌚ If you *are an athlete or martial artist*, you can improve your coordination by learning to use your central nervous system more effectively.
- ⌚ If you *are a runner*, you can run farther, faster and easier by learning to use only the force necessary to produce unencumbered natural movement.
- ⌚ If you *are a golfer or tennis player*, you can develop the touch necessary to improve accuracy and the timing necessary for power without strain.
- ⌚ If you *are a dancer*, you can learn to be lighter on your feet while creating spontaneous and graceful movements.
- ⌚ If you *have a central nervous system injury or disorder*, you can learn to move efficiently which will leave you with more energy to do what you enjoy doing the most.
- ⌚ If you *are a child or adult with HDAD*, you can learn to pay attention to the way you move, which will assist you in focusing your concentration on other tasks.
- ⌚ If you *feel tense, anxious, or depressed*, you can learn to trust your emotions by improving your sense of balance, revitalizing your self-image, and becoming more realistic.
- ⌚ If you *are a musician or artist*, you can play with more skill, finesse, and dexterity and refine your interpretive, intuitive, and creative skills.
- ⌚ If you *feel that your life is hectic*; you can learn to slow down so you have a sense of direction, freedom, and grace.
- ⌚ If you *are an actor*, you can learn to move in a variety of ways, making the conveyance of emotions effortless, spontaneous, and truthful.
- ⌚ If you *are an educator*, this method outlines the process of learning and clearly defines ways to make the learning experience less intimidating and more enjoyable. It also brings out your innate creativity and ways to be supportive of yourself and your students.
- ⌚ If you *are a leader*, you can enhance your creativity and tune your intuition, which will help in your interpersonal relationships, as well as in product development and business decisions.
- ⌚ Finally, just a short reminder. *Health is not a static condition that is achieved once and for all, but a dynamic ongoing process of exploring for optimum functioning and compassionate exchanges at all levels.*