

## Get the Best Results from the Movement Lessons – Use Your Brain and Don't Strain!

Read these instructions once before doing the lessons, then again after you have done the lessons a few times. The instructions will make more sense after you have done the movement sequences several times.

### 1. *Suspend your ambition while doing the lessons.*

It's important that you do the lessons for the **purpose of learning**, not to accomplish any specific goal. Although this may be confusing, this is the secret behind the *Feldenkrais Method*. Most of the time, people rush their learning process because they think it will help them achieve their goals. This usually produces the opposite effect, because they don't ever learn the action well enough to meet their goals effortlessly. Trust that the more you tune in and temporarily suspend your ambition, the faster you will feel better.

### 2. *Slow and small is best.*

The biggest challenge of *Feldenkrais* is doing the movements *small* enough. They're small enough when it feels like you're only imagining moving. *Feldenkrais* movement lessons don't stretch or strengthen muscles: they **exercise your brain**. *Feldenkrais* lessons do take effort—an effort of *attention*. Paying attention in this way sends new messages from your brain to your muscles, which changes muscular contraction. Your muscles relax and you feel flexible and light. Your range of motion expands and pain diminishes as your body spontaneously reorganizes. Doing the movements too big or too fast bypasses these brain changes and gives disappointing results. Therefore, make only **very, very small movements**—even when you feel you're only imagining it. Trust me, the smaller you go, the bigger the results will be.

### 3. *Reduce your effort.*

People who have pain contract many extra muscles and thus work against themselves in every single movement. So don't try hard to do it "right." With every repetition of the movement, **let go more**. If you do the lessons this way, you'll feel like you've sprinted onto dry land after running in knee-deep water.

### 4. *Widen your attention.*

Don't over-focus. Even when you move one area, expand your attention to **include your whole body and even your thoughts**. Search for extra tension, especially in your hands, face and breathing. Let go of all "parasitic" movements—unnecessary muscular contractions—anywhere in your body, not just the part you're moving.

### 5. *Rest before you feel tired.*

*Feldenkrais* lessons give your brain a workout, and your muscles are already fatigued from overwork. So rest! Frequently! If you feel drowsy, let yourself **sleep a little**. Feeling tired is your brain's way of telling you it's full. Give your brain time to integrate the new input before learning anything else.

6. *Never move through pain.*

Instead of pushing harder when you feel pain, do the movement in your imagination. Athletes know that "visualizing" activities improves performance. This is because your brain sends the same signals whether you are doing a movement in reality or not. When doing an actual movement, your brain just amplifies the intensity of the signal to create a bigger muscular contraction. If a movement hurts, do it smaller and smaller until it doesn't hurt anymore. If it still hurts, imagine doing the movement. If even imagining it hurts, then imagine it smaller and smaller until you can **image doing the movement without pain**. Then slowly enlarge the movement until you can do it life-size without pain.

Use this same technique in the garden: for example, imagine lifting something easily before you do it. It's a lot faster and easier than overdoing.

7. *Find at least three ways to do each movement.*

Having options is central to the *Feldenkrais Method*. Find three different ways of doing each step. For example, lift your arm. Now lift it with your palm up, palm down, or palm to the side. "Lift your arm" is the same instruction, but each orientation of your hand uses different muscles and a different part of your brain. Maybe one will be more useful in one situation than the others, so it's best to have an **abundance of options**.

8. *There is no "right" way.*

Although *Feldenkrais* lessons are based on the commonalities of the human brain and anatomy, each of us has our own history. Injuries, family example and emotional upsets leave their mark on our movement. For this reason, what is easiest for you may be different than what is easiest for your partner or your friend. Neither of you does it the "right" way--because even the same chore can require different muscles on different days. Any job will become effortless if you **make variety a habit**.

9. *Notice small differences.*

Not only does reducing your tension and effort make you feel better, it also improves your ability to perceive differences. Knowing the difference between one sensation and another is how we learn to move in easier ways, and **perceiving differences** is how we learn all things. When we learn to read and write, we must see the difference between a "d" and a "b," or a "p" and a "q" and a "g". If we can't perceive those differences, we cannot read nor write. Sensing the difference between heavy, light, jumpy, and smooth is the **alphabet of doing Feldenkrais lessons**. Learn the movement alphabet, and soon you will be gardening elegantly and easily.

10. *Your breathing is your guide.*

Easy, effortless, full breathing is the sign of well-organized movement. Halted, forced breath shows effort. Monitor your breathing, and keep your breathing easy. **Peace in your breath** gives you room to move.