

**THE FELDENKRAIS METHOD®**

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Movement is life. Without movement life is unthinkable.

—Moshe Feldenkrais

The Feldenkrais Method is a unique blend of science and aesthetics. Pioneered over fifty years ago by Dr. Moshe Feldenkrais, it is based on our innate human capacity for lifelong development and growth. It is the means to moving beyond our self-imposed limitations and uncovering our untapped potentials. While our ability to move more efficiently is definitely enhanced, movement is simply the medium for cultivating more effective ways of sensing, thinking, feeling, and knowing. Through movement and the use of attention, self-image is refined, sensory acuity is heightened, and natural curiosity is evoked. As you will discover, it is a process that brings the conceptual into the realm of experience. It is based in learning and gaining insight into how we have “learned how to learn.” Through the recognition of how our whole self is involved in everything we do, we can learn to more easily bring our intention into action. The method continues to find growing recognition and wider applications throughout the arts and the sciences.

**The Development of the Method**

Dr. Moshe Feldenkrais was an extraordinary individual, a Renaissance man with a broad range of knowledge and a true original thinker. He emigrated from Russia to Palestine (now Israel) at the age of thirteen. Working as a laborer and mathematician, he eventually earned degrees in mechanical and electrical engineering and received his D.Sc. from the Sorbonne in Paris, where

he assisted Joliet-Curie in early nuclear research. He studied with Professor Kano, the developer of judo, and was one of the first Europeans to earn a black belt in the martial art in 1936.

An avid soccer player as a young man, he destroyed his knees in his dedication to the sport. This disability became the source for his inquiry into human functioning and consciousness. His interest was captured by the fact that some days one knee would hurt, then on other days the other knee would hurt; sometimes both knees hurt, and sometimes neither. At the time the medical profession offered him little hope, so he set off on his own journey. Based on the assumption that “on the days my knees hurt, I must be doing something different,” Moshe began to investigate what he was doing and how he was doing it.

While developing an understanding of his own self-use, one of his favorite pastimes was to watch the children playing in the waiting room of his wife’s pediatric practice. He observed that while the children had an intention to move toward something—let’s say a toy—they were more involved in the actual process than in achieving their goal. While getting the toy was the initiation of the action, the texture of the carpet or the negotiation of a step was what held the child’s interest. Retrieval of the toy might or might not be the end result.

It was this kind of attention that Moshe brought to his personal exploration. Drawing from his extensive range of knowledge in movement, learning theory, neuroscience, physics, and psychology, Dr. Feldenkrais made revolutionary discoveries regarding self-image, the ability to function more ecologically, and our capacity to become more who we imagine ourselves to be.

Functional Integration<sup>®</sup> is the first modality Feldenkrais developed. Later, he created Awareness Through Movement<sup>®</sup>. It is these modalities that comprise the Feldenkrais Method.

## **Functional Integration® and Awareness Through Movement®**

*Functional Integration* (FI) lessons are a hands-on, noninvasive, and interactive process where the practitioner uses what he feels and sees to guide a person to a more diverse, more whole, and more well-organized use of herself. The person, referred to as a student, is fully clothed and is usually lying down or sitting. What occurs is tailor-made for the student and is the direct result of the interaction between the practitioner and the student. The applications of this modality range from orthopedic and neurological difficulties to professional athletes, dancers, actors, musicians, and everyone in between who has the desire to improve and grow.

*Awareness Through Movement* (ATM) lessons are a series of guided movement sequences that people are led through verbally, either in groups or individually. There are over a thousand lessons, and they are done slowly and gently, usually lying down or sitting (some standing), with an emphasis on reducing effort and developing awareness. The student's attention is directed by the practitioner to areas of herself that may be other than the ones she usually attends to, to bring about a more complete sense of what she is doing and how she is doing it. The results are improved breathing, increased range of motion, reduction of pain, a greater sense of well-being, and feeling more connected with oneself.

### **Why Movement?**

Feldenkrais observed that within us there is a continuous stream of thinking, feeling, sensing, and moving or acting. We may not be aware of these things going on at times, but if we really focus our attention, we will find that these processes are ongoing. A change in any of these aspects of the self potentiates a change in the others. It is certainly possible to change how we think, how we feel, how we sense, and how we move. The question becomes, how can changes be accessed and sustained?

To change how we think presumes we know how we think. It can be done, but since the evaluation of how we think is through our thinking, it is easy to trick ourselves.

To change how we feel presents a different kind of dilemma. We first have to know what we are feeling and how we come to feel it. Our feelings are quite changeable from one moment to the next. Do we really understand how a change in them takes place?

To change how we sense is probably the most obscure. To understand how information comes into us and how we process it requires a lifetime's study. The stimuli that influence this kind of processing are so varied that it is almost impossible to keep track of them and their interrelationships.

To change how we move is immediate. We know it in that moment. It is something concrete, something that is observable, not only to ourselves but often to others as well.

### **My Own Journey**

I was an actor, attended SUNY College at Purchase, and had the good fortune to work with people like Jerzy Grotowski (The Polish Theatre Laboratory) and Paul Sills (Second City and Story Theatre). But as a living, well, it wasn't a living. I had been introduced to the Feldenkrais Method through my acting teacher, George Morrison, but to be honest, I didn't think much of it.

Not until I hurt my back while I was wallpapering George's bathroom (it *was* a living). He recommended I see a Feldenkrais practitioner—so off I went to see a chiropractor. The chiropractor didn't help, so I tried Feldenkrais. My immediate response was that it was a waste of money. The guy obviously didn't know what he was doing. He barely touched me and wasn't doing anything near where the pain in my back was. I stood up at the end, and I had absolutely no pain. I could easily straighten up. I said to him, "What did you do?" He replied, "You did it." I said, "No, really, what did you do?" And again he said, "Really, you did it." So, now I thought, okay, it's a secret!

Well, it didn't end there. Two days later, I was driving on the FDR Drive in New York (the equivalent of a pinball machine for cars), when I suddenly noticed that I wasn't getting angry when people were cutting me off. Not my usual response; all I could think of was that in some way, it was related to the Feldenkrais lesson. I returned for another session; even though I had no more pain, I was hoping to gain some insight into what he was doing with me.

The second lesson in no way resembled the first. I was in a different position, and while the overall quality of how he touched was the same, the ways in which he moved me were completely different. At the end of the session, he told me to get up when I was ready. I slowly moved my head left and right indicating no. He said to me, "No?" And I said, "No." He asked me why, and I explained that I didn't want to go where I was going. I was on my way to give an estimate for a carpentry job at my uncle's office, and at that moment, all my feelings about doing that kind of work crystallized into a very clear and quiet "no."

Subsequently, I returned for a third lesson, after which I decided I wanted to learn how to do this work, thinking I would much prefer to do this, rather than carpentry, to support my nascent acting career.

I can honestly say I had no idea what I was getting into. After four years of study, I began my practice of the Feldenkrais Method, and it is all I have been doing ever since. My work with actors developed over the years with assorted groups, in different universities, and for several years, at a wonderful laboratory in the New Actors Workshop in New York City. The synthesis of the Feldenkrais Method and its specific applications for actors has become somewhat of a specialty of mine, but as you will see, working with any Feldenkrais practitioner will provide you with the means toward becoming more embodied.

## **Applications for the Actor**

In addition to personal development possibilities it offers to all, this method has several significant applications for the actor, the first being “the tuning of the instrument.” Most actors spend a great deal of time getting themselves in shape or learning how to move more in the way they think they should (or worse yet, how someone else thinks they should). This sort of training has its place, but it offers a very limited understanding of what is really available to us in terms of really tuning our instrument. The way in which we use ourselves is so intrinsically related to our habits that the more we work out or exercise, the more we become the same. When we take on a particular style of movement, we tend to “layer it” over ourselves and most often need to use a great deal of energy to maintain it. In the end, we actually begin to narrow our expressive range.

To my mind, “tuning the instrument” is to prepare it to play *any* piece. Maybe it is even more accurate to say that it is to be able to *be* any kind of instrument, as the need presents itself. The body, as a source of expression, is so recognizable by others that we can see a silhouette of someone at a distance and know who he is. What we want is the ability to produce a shift that is significant enough that we are not recognized—and at the same time be able to fully inhabit ourselves.

## **Expanding Our Self-Image**

While I was teaching theater games in an acting and improvisation class at Princeton University, what stood out for me is that people tend to repeat the same sounds and movements. Kind of an ironic discovery to make in an improvisation class. It almost becomes predictable as to who will do what. At the time, I was just beginning my studies on the Feldenkrais Method and decided to try it out with these acting students. I began to observe something quite remarkable. I would begin with a theater game, then teach the group an Awareness Through Movement lesson, then return to the same theater game. After doing the ATM, they were doing completely novel sounds

and movements. Different uses of themselves emerged spontaneously. It didn't end there.

Throughout the semester, they continued to develop new ways of moving and interacting.

Following is a mini-ATM to give you a taste of the Feldenkrais Method. It is possible to read this yourself and do the movements, but it would be better if you had someone slowly read it to you. Whether you do it yourself or have it read to you, really pause after each instruction to consider what it is you are feeling. Some of the questions posed won't have answers; still, take some time to ponder them.

### **A Taste of ATM**

Sit in a chair and simply notice what you can about how you sit there. Don't change or correct anything, simply observe what you are doing. Maybe observe how your weight is distributed, notice the shape of your back, is it rounded or arched or maybe you're not sure. Where are your feet placed? Are they under you, in front of you, someplace else?

Sit at the edge of the chair and feel what sitting here feels like. What is the shape of your back? Where are your feet placed? Slowly come to standing, observing what you can, and return to sitting. Do this several times slowly and gently, listening to yourself throughout.

Come in and out of the chair again, but this time look up the whole time. Do it several times and observe how you feel.

Now, do it keeping your eyes looking down the whole time. What does this feel like? Different? Can you name a few differences?

Sitting at the edge of your chair, move your feet an inch or two further underneath you. Feel what that is like. Does it change anything in your sitting? In the shape of your back? In how you are balanced? With your feet in this new place, come up to standing a few times. Go slowly, so you can pay attention to what you feel. Is it any different, not only in terms of how you move,

but also in terms of how you feel internally and how you imagine you would be perceived by others?

Keeping your feet placed as they are, get in and out of the chair with your eyes looking up. Observe if this changes anything in the shape of your back, in your balance.

Now, do it with your eyes looking down. Notice any differences that this presents for you.

Pause and rest for a moment.

Move your feet another couple of inches further under you, and again, come to standing and back to sitting a few times. Has this changed anything in how you sense yourself? Do you get up more easily? Quicker? Are you more unstable or more mobile? Could these both be the same thing?

With your feet in the same place further under you, get in and out of the chair looking up a few times and then looking down. Does it influence the way you get in and out of the chair?

Pause and rest for a moment.

Come back to sitting on the edge of your chair and, this time, place your feet a couple of inches further in front of you from where you initially started, and come to standing and sitting a few times. What is this like? Is it preferable?

Do the same thing looking up and then looking down, sensing where you feel any differences.

Move your feet a couple of inches further out from where you last placed them and continue to come to standing and sitting. What is this like? Can you still get out of the chair? Do you feel heavier doing it? Do different parts of you come into action?

Again, play with where your eyes look as you get in and out of the chair with your feet placed here. Note where you sense any differences.

Pause.

Return to where you initially placed your feet, and come to standing and back to sitting a few times. Is it different? Does your attention move to other places in yourself? Do get in and out of the chair differently? Do you feel lighter, heavier, or something else?

Before you did this exercise, did you ever consider the placement of your feet or where you looked and how these might influence your movement, its quality, or how you feel doing it? If you felt lighter or more mobile with your feet more under you, or heavier or more stable with your feet placed further out, could you imagine this being a choice that might influence your characterization?

### **Repetition, Repetition, Repetition, Repe. . . .**

One of the greatest challenges an actor faces is having to say the same lines and repeat the same behavior night after night after night. How do we do it again and keep it alive, vital, and interesting, both to ourselves and the audience? Anything that is repeated has a good chance of becoming mechanical. There is a bit of a paradox here, as we hope to be familiar enough with what we are doing that it isn't taking all of our attention, and yet not so familiar that we become bored while doing it.

It often comes down to where we place our attention that helps us remain present with what we are doing. Our ability to have a mobile and fluid attention that can bring us back (or forward) into the present moment is what we need to develop.

While performing my “great role” as Jakov in Chekhov’s *The Seagull*, I was waiting for the cue for one of my six lines. Irina Nikolayevna was speaking; in the meantime, I was looking at Nina Zaratchnya and internally pondering her name, repeating it over and over to myself in a kind of singsong way. Suddenly, I heard my cue from Irena Nikolayevna: “Here is a ruble for the three of you.” My response was supposed to be “ God bless you, Irena Nikolayevna.” What came

out was “God bless you Irena Ni!” I was about to say Irena Ni-na Zaratchnya. Of course, there was an awkward pause, maybe not even noticeable to the audience. I could argue that, if I had more lines with more meaning, I might have been more attentive, but I think not.

The vast amount of associations and the infinite number of places our mind can carry us makes it unreliable resource for bringing us back to the here and now. Processes like meditation can help, but when onstage, we need something more immediate. Our kinesthetic sense is also quite rich, and while it, too, may distract us, the immediacy of it is more likely to connect us to where we are and what we are doing.

Suppose that during a scene, you placed your feet differently as you got out of a chair; and as a result of that, you moved more quickly toward the actor you were speaking with; and as the result of that, he responded by shifting his weight back or even taking a small step backwards. If your awareness is focused so that you are attentive to these details, you will find that both of you are more present, even if it's the four hundredth performance. Of course, this needs to occur within the parameters of how the play was directed and blocked. To be able to sense subtle distinctions, rather than having to change whole pieces of behaviors, not only keeps the play intact, but also allows for a deepening of the experience night after night. Through a more refined understanding of how we move, and the enhanced ability to sense ourselves, we can more effectively remain present with what we are doing.

### **Taking Better Care of Ourselves**

Part of our ability to use ourselves well as “an instrument” is to be able to tolerate new and varied uses of ourselves. Many actors end up sustaining injuries, perhaps because they are performing in a long-running show and because of how the character needs to move. When we take on a new physical characteristic, we generally approach it from the point of view of the audience: How will they see it? While this is necessary, the characterization is often taken on without an

understanding of how a person might have actually developed such a physicality. Whether we are taking on a limp or a hunched back, the expression of these traits must be created through the use of our entire selves. If it doesn't incorporate one's whole self, the audience usually doesn't believe it.

To take on a limp means much more than taking on a limp. Has the playwright determined the cause of the limp? Is it an old injury or a new one? Is the injury in the foot, the knee, the hip? The answers to all of these questions will create a different use of self.

Any injury results in compensatory actions that can often lead to other difficulties. The kind of compensatory actions one takes on depends on old habits. These determine what we do and how we do it. The unveiling of our habits is one of the core investigations we pursue in the Feldenkrais Method. The more we come to know what we are doing, the more we will be able to do what we want. When we can understand what our arms do, how our head turns, how we distribute our weight in relation to a limp, we will have created something that will be recognized as an organic part of who we are portraying. This kind of understanding produces degrees of reversibility, so when we come off stage, we can return to ourselves, as a choice, and help prevent unnecessary injuries, both onstage and off.

### **Embodiment and Presence**

What do we mean when we speak of becoming more embodied? When you see someone who appears "more embodied," what makes it recognizable? How do you know when you are more embodied?

The words to describe these experiences are not so easy to come by, yet the experiences themselves are recognizable to us all. In these moments, we could say we are more connected to ourselves; we know what we are feeling, and we can feel ourselves more fully.

To be more present onstage is to have more presence. The ability to fill a space so that an actor is seen and heard by the audience and other actors comes naturally to some, but can be developed by all of us. Through the Feldenkrais Method, we can learn to more fully inhabit ourselves in a sensory way.

How does this happen? We could say that in doing the Feldenkrais Method, we are practicing our sensations. It may sound odd, but it isn't something we typically do. We can take the time to quietly listen to what we feel and to let the sensations of some of the more unknown parts of ourselves slowly emerge. This results in the ability to feel ourselves more, while expanding our self-image.

### **Clarifying Our Personal Processes**

The quality of the environment created by Feldenkrais practitioners is central to the method. It is one of safety, where one is free to make mistakes and explore without having to succeed.

Placing ourselves in an environment where we are free from the normal constraints—of being good or doing something well—allows us to experience ourselves at a level that we don't normally attend to. It does not mean we are free from the constraints we impose on ourselves. In fact, when doing the Feldenkrais Method, it is quite common to find that we have quite an internal dialogue: *How am I doing? Am I doing it right? What should I be feeling? Others are better than me. I am better than the others.* The internal dialogue that shows up is reflective of what we do in most situations. The difference here is that there is no great importance placed upon succeeding or achieving a particular movement. We have the chance to witness what we do and discern if it is helping or hindering our intentions. Generally in life, we do not take the time to make these observations. Here, we can investigate how we bring ourselves to a situation, begin to make new distinctions, and start to choose those that serve us more.

## **Living in the Unknown**

Awareness Through Movement lessons parallel the creative process. In the creative process, we spend a great deal of time in the unknown and engaging in a process that unfolds unto itself.

While we may know this, it is something difficult to trust. When we are faced with the unknown, our tendency is to find something known. We are not so comfortable hanging out here. What we need is a safe place to let this happen. A large part of the structure of many ATMs is that we don't know where we are going to end up or how we are going to get there. This puts us in the unknown and gives us time to get accustomed to ourselves in this experience. The more we place ourselves in this type of environment, the more we can find increasing comfort in not knowing and all the feelings that accompany it.

## **Creativity**

In working with actors, I always start out asking the same question: What is the actor's job? The most agreed-upon answer is: to tell the story. The next question I pose is: What is the actor's second job? This answer is usually more debated, and I have yet to hear an answer that I think describes something as essential as "telling the story." So, what am I thinking?

Before answering this, let's for a moment look at how we view others whom we consider more talented, better actors, or more creative than ourselves. What makes talented actors different? Their capacity to express themselves through their voice, their movement, their use of words? All of these are part of their ability to tell the story and are certainly part of what makes them talented. To do this, however, they have to do something else as well.

Most directors I have known appreciate actors who come in with ideas, actors who thinks for themselves and are willing to stretch. This is not as simple as it sounds. We make choices all the time, but to come up with new ones, original ones, ones that exist outside of our habits is not so easy.

The Feldenkrais Method increases our options and create more choices for how we do things. Any time someone has taught us the “right” way of doing something, a limitation has been imposed upon him. Not that there aren’t “right” ways of doing many things, but most often, the “right” way eliminates further investigation and squelches creativity.

This line of thinking then begs another question: How many possibilities do we need to have a choice? I’ve heard many answers—two, ten, one hundred? Most people say two, but actually, one variable implies two. That is, with one choice, I can do it or not do it, so it really is two. But is that really a choice? That means onstage, I can behave in a particular way or not. To really have a choice, we need at least three possibilities. With three, we have a much better chance of not feeling stuck. With five or ten choices, we can really begin to explore.

Let me share an instance of how I began to understand this.

The part of Jakov, in *The Seagull*, was the smallest part I ever had. In the beginning of the play, Masha and Medvedenko are having a conversation, while somewhere else, Jakov is building a stage for the play within the play. They don’t know he is there, until Jakov interrupts them. There were no directions from the script as to the nature of this interruption. As Jakov, I burst onto the stage, screaming, having just hit my thumb with a hammer. It was the most obvious intrusion I could think of, and it made sense, as I was in the process of building something.

I had quite a bit of time before we returned to rehearsing the scene and I could make my entrance again. An interesting thing occurred during all that time with nothing to do. I came up with another idea. When I heard my cue, I ran about in frenzy, pretending to be chased by bees. More time passed until my next opportunity to enter, and lo and behold, something else came to me. This time, I stumbled onto the scene, laughing and laughing, as if I had just heard the funniest joke, and abruptly stopped, embarrassed that other people were around.

This time, the other actors were shocked. They did not anticipate another variation in the interruption. My small moment began to take on new meaning, as the director began repeated rehearsing of my entrance. Each time, I did something new. I would accidentally toss something and go to retrieve it; I had a sneezing fit; I came out just to observe my handiwork as a builder. By this time, the actors playing Masha and Medvedenko were becoming quite annoyed. What was this scene about anyway? The play was not the story of a servant making an entrance. They were central to the scene, and they were being ignored.

But the director saw something. I was in the process of creating. In that moment, I had accessed something seemingly intangible, but it would be many years before I would understand it. What was I doing?

I was discovering choices, creating choices, acting on my choices.

Here was a situation where I wasn't very concerned with my part. I felt freer to experiment. In most of our situations in life, we don't feel this degree of freedom. What is needed is a place to evoke this. A place where we can begin to observe how "important" we make things and a place where we can feel free to make as many mistakes as we can without any repercussions other than discovering our greater creative potential.

Let's do a more complete ATM. As before, I would recommend that you have someone read this to you, or record it on a tape to listen to. I'll start with guidelines as to how to approach this process.

## Preparing for the Lesson

- Use a mat or blanket to lie on—something that allows you to lie comfortably on the floor, without excessive padding.
- Always move slowly and easily.
- Let your own sense of comfort and pleasure be your guide.
- Do only what you can do with ease—do not push or strain.
- As much as you can, let what you are *actually* doing be okay, rather than what you *think* you should be doing.
- Rest as often as you need to. This means to take a break when you feel your attention starting to wander or if you feel yourself increasing your effort or not breathing.
- Follow your attention gently. If you drift off, simply come back and start again.
- The repetition of movements is to provide you with the chance to make observations. Do them as an exploration, not as an exercise.
- The directions are in reference to yourself—for example, *up* is always in the direction above your head, not necessarily to the ceiling, and *down* is always in the direction of your feet.
- If you have any discomfort, make the movements smaller and slower. If discomfort still continues, try imagining the movements.
- There is generally no wrong way to do these movements other than hurting yourself or others.
- There is also no right way to do these movements. This is not meant to confuse you, but to free you from the constraints of trying to do them “correctly.”
- If you get confused, slow yourself down, and notice what you are doing in the moment. If you discover that you have been doing a movement differently than I described, congratulations! You just learned something.

- Make mistakes.
- Be inept.
- Be curious.
- Be kind to yourself.
- Stay in the process.
- Enjoy yourself.

### **ATM Lesson**

Lie on your back. Observe what you notice about yourself. Is your attention on your thoughts?

Your feelings? Your sensations?

Bring your attention to how you are lying on the floor. Can you feel spaces between yourself and the floor? Where are they? Maybe there is a space behind your knees, your ankles, your neck, your shoulders, your lower back. Maybe in only some of these places, maybe in other places not mentioned.

How do the two sides of yourself compare to each other? Is one side longer or shorter? Wider or narrower? Higher or lower? Thicker or thinner? Do you have some other way of discerning some difference between one side and the other?

Bend your knees, and place your feet so they are “standing.” Notice if where you have placed your feet feels stable and easily supports your legs.

Lift the right side of your pelvis a little bit away from the floor and back again. Do this slowly ten to fifteen times. How do you do this? What do you feel when you make this movement? Where do you feel it?

Now, lift the right side of your pelvis by pushing your right foot into the floor. Do this slowly ten to fifteen times. Is this different from what you initially did? Does this feel different? Is it harder or easier?

Now, lift the right side of your pelvis by rolling the left side of your pelvis toward the floor to the left. Do this slowly ten to fifteen times. How does this differ from your previous movements?

Now, imagine that there is a ribbon tied around your right knee and someone is gently pulling that ribbon downward and to the left, so that it starts to lift the right side of your pelvis. Do this slowly ten to fifteen times. Is this any different from the previous ways of lifting your pelvis?

Straighten out your legs and rest. Observe as you rest: What does lying on your back feel like now? Are there any differences compared to when you first lay down?

Bend your knees again, and put your feet in standing position. Explore the different ways of lifting the right side of your pelvis. Find the easiest way for you. You can combine the different ways if you like. Lift the right side of your pelvis the very first way you lifted it. Is it your preference?

Straighten out your legs, rest, and observe how you lie on your back.

Bend your knees again, and put your feet in standing position. Place your left arm, palm up, on the floor, diagonally up to the left (about 45 degrees from your head, where it can rest comfortably on the floor). Slowly and gently, begin to lengthen your left arm in the direction it is pointing, and bring it back to where you started. Do this slowly ten to fifteen times.

Continue lengthening your left arm, and at the same time, begin to lift the right side of your pelvis (in whichever way is easiest for you). Think of connecting these two movements so they become one, as if lifting your pelvis lengthens your arm or that lengthening your arm lifts your pelvis. Do this slowly ten to fifteen times.

Straighten out your legs, rest, and observe how you lie on your back now.

Come back to the same position. Lengthen your left arm as you lift the right side of your pelvis. Begin to roll your head to look at your left hand as you do these movements. Roll your

head back to the middle as you lower your pelvis and shorten your arm. Do this slowly ten to fifteen times, again trying to connect these movements.

Straighten out your legs and rest. Is the floor telling you something different than when you started?

Come back to the same position. Lengthen your left arm as you lift the right side of your pelvis while you roll your head to look at your left hand. As you look at your left hand, begin to move your chin toward your left hand. You can also think of this as sliding the back of your head toward your right shoulder. Go slowly, and find out how you can make all of these movements part of the same action.

Straighten out your legs, rest, and sense any differences in how you contact the floor.

Come back to the same position, and do the same movement. As you do this movement, begin to lengthen your right arm downward. Can you make this part of the whole movement? Does including this arm bring more of your back into action?

Straighten out your legs and rest.

Bend your knees, and put your feet in standing position. Slowly lift the right side of your pelvis and see what it is like now. How does it compare to when you first lifted it? Lift the left side of your pelvis only two times, and notice any differences between the right and left sides.

Keep you feet standing, and *imagine* that you are lifting the left side of your pelvis in the three different ways you explored earlier.

Bring your right arm overhead, diagonally up to the right, palm up (about 45 degrees from your head, where it can rest comfortably on the floor), and imagine that you are lifting the left side of your pelvis as you imagine lengthening your right arm.

Continue imagining this movement, and add the movement of your head, turning to the right, with your chin going toward your right hand.

Finally, add the imagined movement of your left arm reaching downwards.

Imagine the whole movement. Starting with an imperceptible amount of movement, begin to actually do the movement. Notice any differences between what you imagined and what you are doing. If it is different, go back and imagine it with this new information.

Straighten out your legs and rest.

Bend your knees and put your feet in standing position. Gently lift the left side of your pelvis and find out what it is like now. Lift the right side a few times and feel how they compare.

Keep your knees bent and bring the left arm diagonally upward on the floor, as you had it earlier, and the right arm diagonally downward alongside you, both with the palms up. Begin to lift the right side of your pelvis, lengthen your left arm upward and your right arm downward, and look to the upward hand. As you bring your pelvis, arms, and head back, switch to the other side. Lift the left side of your pelvis, and lengthen the right arm upward and the left arm downward, and look to the right hand. Begin to go from side to side, observing any differences or similarities.

One last time, with your knees bent and feet in standing position, lift one side of your pelvis, and think of the different ways of initiating the movement. Do you have a different sense of how you might choose to lift it? Has incorporating more of yourself in this action helped clarify how you do it?

Lengthen your legs, and sense how you are lying on the floor now. Has it changed from the beginning? Do you notice different things? Slowly roll to your side, and come to standing. Walk around, and find out if anything is different in your movement. How do you sense yourself? What is your experience in your walking?

If you are having a different experience of yourself, let it run its own course. Try not to hold onto any sensations (even if you prefer them), and let yourself observe any other differences you may feel throughout the rest of your day or evening.

## **Experiencing the Conceptual**

The ATM lesson you just explored provided you with the chance to sense yourself differently, not only in your sensations, but also in your attitude toward yourself and the world. For many, it is an unusual experience to do slow, gentle, and seemingly inconsequential movements that can produce such a shift in one's sense of oneself.

There is, however, more here than may meet the eye. Prior to the lesson, I spoke of the actor's second job, an essential part of being creative: developing the ability to create more choices. The lesson itself could be taught from many perspectives. It could be taught as a way to evoke a greater use of your whole self, reduction of effort, more connection through yourself, and gaining insight as to how to make and develop choices.

Part of my intention in offering this particular experiential lesson is to give you the experience of choice. *Experiencing* a concept or idea allows for another kind of understanding than does reading about it.

Feldenkrais himself took great pride in the fact that he could create circumstances, through movement, where an idea could become an embodied experience. To make the abstract concrete is a kind of learning that is not so prevalent in our culture. Most of our learning is informational—facts and ideas that we take in through books, lectures, and other media, where we listen to someone else tell us what we should know and understand.

Real learning, the kind we all experienced as children, comes from our ability to make distinctions and create new relationships to the world we live in. Through this kind of learning, we can develop a sense of self based on an internal criteria and an inner authority.

We have touched on many applications of the Feldenkrais Method for the actor, both in theory and practice. Whether the movement explorations were fascinating or only mildly stimulating to your curiosity, I encourage you to seek out a local practitioner to have a live experience of the work. For a practitioner in your area or a guild in another country, please see the contact information below for the Feldenkrais Guild of North America and Feldenkrais Resources. In addition, there is plenty of material available if you choose to continue to explore the work on your own, including books, CDs, audio, and videotapes.

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