

FELDENKRAIS AWARENESS THROUGH MOVEMENT® USER GUIDE

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You will need a firm surface to lie on, preferably the floor. You may use padding such as a blanket, mat, or towel to make it more comfortable. If you cannot lie on the floor you may lie on a bed. You may also use a flat pillow or folded towel under your head for lessons that take place in a side-lying position.

1. DO THE MOVEMENTS SLOWLY.

This will allow you to sense with accuracy how you are moving. If you go too fast you won't be able to pay attention to how you are doing the movement, you will only notice arriving at the end of it. Going slowly allows you to follow guideline #2, reducing your effort.

2. REDUCE YOUR EFFORT.

Unlike conventional exercise during which we often try our hardest, in these lessons we want to weed out unnecessary effort. By reducing effort we are improving the quality of a movement, making it smoother and more fluid. So *don't try too hard*, instead direct your "effort" towards using the least amount of effort possible. Improving the quality is the most important aspect of these lessons.

3. JUST DO WHAT IS EASY.

Don't strive, strain, or stretch. Stay within a comfortable range of movement. By doing only what is easy and not forcing yourself to do more, you will improve much faster. The range of movement that feels easy will grow naturally and easily when you follow this guideline.

4. PAUSE.

It is important to pause briefly between each movement that you do. When you pause you want to let go of any effort remaining from the previous movement. In this way each time you do a movement it is different from the next one, and your brain can make more distinctions between your movements.

5. REST.

The rests in the lessons are very important. They allow you to pay attention to the changes that have taken place as a result of doing the movements slowly and with minimal effort. You are likely to feel more parts of yourself resting on the floor, signifying a reduction of chronic muscular effort or holding in your body. The rests also give your attention a break so that you can truly focus when you begin to move again. You don't have to wait for the instructor to tell you to rest; make sure to rest whenever your mind begins to wander or you feel fatigue.

6. STOP IF YOU FEEL PAIN.

If you are feeling pain or discomfort it means you are doing too much. Make the movements small enough and slow enough that you can reduce your effort and do the movement comfortably. You may find that only by imagining or visualizing the movement can you be comfortable. That is fine. There is plenty of research demonstrating the effectiveness of imagination. By imagining, your brain is still sending messages to the muscles about how to coordinate the movement. The pattern of efficient movement will still be learned when using your imagination. In some cases the learning can be more effective than when you actually do the movements. And in some Feldenkrais lessons the instructions will require that you only imagine the movements, since it can be such an effective learning device.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. HOW OFTEN SHOULD I DO THESE LESSONS?

It depends on your goals and your available time. We recommend people start by doing two to three lessons per week. This could be done as one lesson every two to three days, or it could be several lessons over the course of a weekend. Lesson series that were taught in a one-day workshop are useful to do in this weekend format. Some people benefit greatly from the lessons and prefer to do one every day, which is fine. On the other hand, busy people may only find time to do one lesson per week, which is also fine. One lesson per week is the minimum that we recommend in order to establish consistent learning.

2. SHOULD I KEEP DOING THE SAME LESSON?

It can be good to repeat a lesson a few times because you will get more out of it each time. However, variety is also good. You may want to do a series of lessons and then come back to ones that you have done previously. You will find that when you come back to a lesson it is usually easier, demonstrating that you have learned something.

3. WHEN SHOULD I DO A LESSON?

You can do lessons any time of day, although it best not to do them right after a meal. It's best to find a convenient time of day so that you can easily make them a part of your daily or weekly routine. First thing in the morning or right before bed are the most popular times. If you tend to wake up stiff it can be nice to start your day with a lesson and feel the effects throughout the day. If you have a hard time getting comfortable when going to sleep it can be useful to do a lesson before bed.

4. WHAT SHOULD I DO AFTER A LESSON?

For people who suffer chronic pain it is best to rest or take it easy after a lesson. For others it can be useful to take the new learning into action, such as taking a short walk to feel the effects of the lesson. If there is another activity which you do regularly you can use that as a reference to sense the changes which have taken place. Directly after a lesson it is important to take a few minutes to pay attention to yourself and the changes you feel from the lesson. You don't want to get up rush into doing the next thing on your agenda. The more clearly you sense the differences in yourself the longer lasting the benefits and the more easily you can recreate those sensations later on.

5. HOW LONG WILL IT LAST?

People often ask how long the positive changes will last after a lesson. This depends on a number of things. First of all it depends on how long you can stay with the feelings and sensations directly after a lesson. It is beneficial to try and move with the same quality and attention that you have developed during the lesson. The learning is cumulative so the more lessons you do, the more the effects tend to stay with you. Just like learning to do anything, the more you practice the better you get. By practicing your ability to move without effort and the ability to sense what you are doing, you get better at these skills.