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Cool Feldenkrais Video!

Our friend and colleague, Irene Gutteridge, made a lovely video montage of a little baby named Liv doing what babies do during their first year of life. This YouTube video is entitled: *Feldenkrais Class by Baby Liv: Foundations of The Feldenkrais Method - Human Development*. To view, please click here:

<http://www.youtube.com/embed/D9Ko7UipLlg?rel=0>



At a Glance

The Feldenkrais Method Schedule of Awareness Through Movement Classes

Fall Term: Sep 21 to Dec 9

Weekly One-Hour Classes:

Wednesday 7 pm - Arnie Lade

Friday 11 am - Diane Lade

Details & Registration:

www.greenspiritresources.com/

The Feldenkrais Method: Movement, Learning & Habits by *Arnie Lade*

We naturally have different abilities and requirements for movement in our lives. The way we move reflects our physical structure, culture, environment, education and personal history. Indeed, movement is an essential part of our individuality. It's our silent signature, revealing who we are – in every move we make. We may move with pain or comfortably, with effort or effortlessly, with agility or stiffly, with elegance or awkwardly. But one thing is certain: move we must.

The Feldenkrais method essentially uses movement to increase awareness and facilitate learning. The method helps free us from our compulsion to follow established patterns of action in the world. Those habituated patterns are reflected in our movement and behavior. Through this work you can learn to move more comfortably and in a more satisfying way, and to change behavioral patterns that are no longer needed. You can learn to improve everyday activities, such as walking, sitting, playing a sport, writing or working at a computer. You can also use this approach to enhance already refined abilities, such as dancing, singing or playing an instrument.

This is the unique beauty of the Feldenkrais method.

Learning occurs quite differently in this method than in traditional education, where rote (or repetitive, and mimicked) learning is the norm. In school, a student usually learns by repeating a set of actions

until he or she achieves the intended goal. Most instruction follows this approach, from learning to write, to playing a musical instrument, doing mathematics, or acquiring an athletic skill. From a neurological perspective, this strategy is tremendously useful. Repetition organizes the neural pathways in the brain so that activities are done smoothly and automatically. For example, in martial arts a student learns a counterblow intended to ward off an attacking thrust by continually repeating that particular movement pattern until it is automatic. This is called a habituated response.

Once automatic precision is achieved, the necessity for deliberation (which leads to doubt and hesitation) is eliminated. Without such precision a warrior is vulnerable - an unaffordable situation in combat. Another example is that of learning to write. A child learns by diligent repetition to reproduce a mental image of a letter on paper. As we know, writing involves the coordination of several different faculties, as well as the ability to move in a highly organized manner. Such a task requires years to master.

Much of what we have learned in life has been acquired by the body's intrinsic learning capacity. Just think of the enormously complex task of making sense out of the information that enters through your ears and eyes. No one teaches a child to see and hear, yet a healthy child learns from experience how to make order out of the noise and light that reaches the senses.

We also learn through self-exploration, by imitating others and by responding to our emotional and physical environment. For instance, rolling over, crawling and walking are mainly acquired by a child's exploration of what is physically possible - by trying this and that until the child can do something new. Children learn by trial and error what is satisfactory, rewarding and enjoyable for themselves or others, and what is not. Thus a child's exploration will lead to ways of moving that, when sufficiently repeated, become ingrained patterns within the nervous system.

These firmly embedded habits are often carried for years, into adulthood and old age - unless, of course, something occurs to alter or replace them.

Habits are extremely important. Both acquired and innate patterns get us through daily life. Acquired patterns are those that we have adopted in the course of life, as I've described above. Innate patterns are reflexes that we are born with, such as the startle reflex, which is involuntarily triggered. In fact, the nervous system is only functional because of habituated impulse patterns that give order to the brain. It's a remarkable achievement, given that the brain has at least as many neurons as there are stars in the Milky Way.

Unfortunately, the problem with habits is that they're not always beneficial and at times are even harmful. What was a useful and rewarding way of doing something in the past may no longer serve our needs today.

As an example, many years ago I injured the Achilles tendon of my right foot. This injury severely limited my ability to stand, to walk and bear weight on the right leg. I learned to transfer my weight onto my left leg, a useful strategy that kept me mobile and working. The tendon healed slowly and my new habit of walking became solidly ingrained. In fact, I unconsciously kept up this particular habit of walking for many years after the tendon healed. In time, my right side began to feel a continual tension, which later developed into right hip pain and stiffness. Fortunately, through the Feldenkrais method, I found a way to alter this injurious pattern of moving.

First, I learned how to recognize my movement habits by becoming aware of what I was doing. This awareness was born out of learning to sense change within myself. At the same time, I found new ways of moving to replace those patterns that were harming me. Gradually, as my awareness increased with practice, I discovered new possibilities of movement. This has given me a level of flexibility,

comfort and strength that I've not had for years. In this process of learning through movement, a newfound curiosity about life and my own place in it has arisen. All of this has led to my letting go of old behavioral patterns, including ways of thinking and feeling that no longer serve me. This experience reinforces my conviction that any notion of duality between mind and body is illusory. We act, feel, think and sense as one whole being.

From my experience, we can see that injury, physical and emotional trauma, repetitive strain and poor posture can limit our ability to move freely. We become increasingly constrained in our activities, more and more areas of unwanted tension develop, joints lose their smooth functioning and range, and our nervous system attends more and more to the habituated struggle of moving. We lose the ability to use our entire self in action. Movement itself becomes a burden instead of a joy.

This is where the Feldenkrais method can help us, refining our ability to move in the

world in a way that's internally satisfying. We can learn to do what we want, not what we are compelled to do. We start learning how to use our whole self effortlessly and completely. And, most importantly, we work with our intrinsic ability to learn. Our nervous system is so adaptable that even when damaged by injury or disease, alternate neural pathways can be made available to do the same functions.

As you can see, an important part of this work is in becoming mindful and present. Such awareness enables you to notice what you are doing and how and when it changes. It is difficult to alter your actions unless you clearly sense change - and it's through the recognition of differences that change is noticed. ☯

*Extracted from Arnie's unpublished manuscript: **Awakening Your Inner Healer.***

For more information on the Feldenkrais Method visit our website:

www.greenspiritresources.com/feldenkrais



A recent picture of Arnie working with a newborn infant.