



# SENSEABILITY

A Newsletter of Applications of the FELDENKRAIS METHOD® of Somatic Education

## The FELDENKRAIS METHOD® of Somatic Education

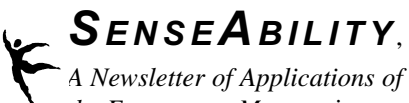
The FELDENKRAIS METHOD® is an educational system that develops a functional awareness of the self in the environment.

**AWARENESS THROUGH MOVEMENT®** is the group lesson form in which students explore movement sequences according to the verbal directions of the teacher.

**FUNCTIONAL INTEGRATION®** is the private lesson form combining instructive touch and movement with verbal cues.

**GUILD CERTIFIED FELDENKRAIS PRACTITIONERS™** must complete 800 - 1000 hours of in-depth training over a three to four year period in a Professional Training Program regulated by the **FGNA**.

**Please Note:** The FELDENKRAIS METHOD is an educational system. It is not a substitute for medical diagnosis or treatment. Consult your physician if you have pain or difficulty with movement.



## SENSEABILITY,

A Newsletter of Applications of the FELDENKRAIS METHOD, is produced by the **FELDENKRAIS GUILD® of North America** and distributed to the public by **GUILD CERTIFIED FELDENKRAIS PRACTITIONERS™** and by the **FGNA**.

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**Editors: Rob Black and Lavinia Plonka**

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## Issue #12: Applications in Yoga

### The Joy of Discovery

by Deedee Eisenberg, Ph.D.

According to Patanjali's Yoga Sutra, yoga is the ability to direct the mind without interruption or distraction; an ability cultivated in order to act decisively, with clarity, unimpeded by mechanical habits of perception. We develop this goal through physical and breathing exercises, self-inquiry, and quality of action. The FELDENKRAIS METHOD enhances all these means of yoga. Many of Moshe's movement explorations are akin to playful commentaries on classical yoga themes, and yoga teachers trained in the FELDENKRAIS METHOD expand their ability to bring yoga practices alive to both beginning and experienced students.

Yoga poses and movements are meant to unfold from the core of an individual's spine, breath, and awareness, rather than be copied from a model outside ourselves. The FELDENKRAIS® approach evokes this unfolding from within, gradually and steadily developing suppleness and release through the rib cage, stable balance through the limbs, shoulders, and pelvis, and fluid integration through the spine, tail to crown. These are the skills that make challenging poses easy! In fact, Moshe's promise, "to make the impossible possible" is listed in the Yoga Sutra as a benefit of yoga practice.

"I used to feel limited in my capacity to do these (yoga) movements. Now after the FUNCTIONAL INTEGRATION® work, I see that was just my perception. My perception has changed. I feel whole! These movements

are within my reach," Cathy Suttle beamed to me.

I love to witness students' delight as they discover yoga poses unfolding from within themselves. A FELDENKRAIS learning process primes their intelligence, readying the feet, hands, buttocks, eyes, mouth - the dynamic whole - to engage wholeheartedly, with great ease, in a practice sequence. No more pushing

and pulling in an arbitrary manner to achieve a form foreign to them: rather, a simple inquisitive process to unleash their own self-knowledge, which guides them to a new, stable and open balance. Since both the FELDENKRAIS METHOD and yoga explore unknown personal experience of the human nervous system, they delve deep

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into common ground:

- body as an expression of, and handle on, one's emotional and social makeup
- right and left sides of the body in an intricate dance of duality and union, conflict and cooperation
- breath as a bridge between upper and lower body, conscious and unconscious action
- imagination and inner gaze as an entry into and preparation for action.

**Donna Maeboori**, a physical therapist in Portland, Oregon, (<dobimel@teleport.com>) offers both **FELDENKRAIS** and yoga strategies to people who seek help with chronic pain. She finds that small **FELDENKRAIS** movements give subtle information that augments yoga poses and guides people to move smoothly in and out of a pose. Her **FELDENKRAIS** window on yoga deepens her kinesthetic descriptions, freeing her students to find ease, confidence, and spontaneous full breathing in their poses.

**FELDENKRAIS** lessons are akin to, and prepare for, meditation. Eryl Kubicka co-director of the Madison Zen Centre, who has decades of meditation experience, found that the quiet, relentless self-discovery process of an **AWARENESS**

## FELDENKRAIS METHOD with Yoga and Tai Chi

by Josef DellaGrotte, Ph.D.

Yoga, a practice that was developed well over three thousand years ago and formally organized into a methodological discipline is based on finding pathways that connect and integrate body, mind, and spirit. Taoist yoga, now known as Tai Chi qi gong, came from India to China, had a similar intention, and its own special application. Both utilized and cultivated a process of body movement awareness.

Hatha Yoga took functional movement actions of life, human and animal, and turned them into structural postures (asanas) that are then held in stillness and concentrative attention to cultivate a meditative awareness state. The greater


purpose was to create a somato-spiritual process which would serve the cultivation of higher levels of consciousness and mastery in the service of awakening. This later came to include higher levels of healing, health and wellness by enhancing energy flow (prana ).

Tai Chi, however, kept the essence of functional actions (martial arts) and turned these into a Taoist-oriented awareness of effortless movement flow in combination with structure, strengthening, internal relaxation, mindfulness, and energy circulation (chi). As with several practices, from sports to performance to meditation, **AWARENESS THROUGH MOVEMENT**, considered as a complementary process, can be used to enhance both. The only requirement is that the practitioner has a good grasp, an experiential familiarity with the traditional or conventional forms of each discipline.

Take any yoga or Tai Chi posture and you can see the basis on which it is constructed, and that basis is natural biological movement with all its biomechanical, physical, and psychophysical aspects: resonant frequency of motion, ever-present, even in apparent stillness.

Contemporary yoga is changing. Yoga teachers, long accustomed to the holding of structural postures, are now showing interest in functional movement dynamics; how the body works; and how yoga postures can be facilitated through this different view. In modern society, natural functional movement is being compromised by too much sitting and sedentary tendencies. Structural stillness which once worked now needs to be balanced with functional flow. The **FELDENKRAIS** process has the potential to greatly enhance the learning, the awareness, the experience, and the benefits of yoga practice.

Tai Chi is based on awareness, structural integrity, strengthening through energy flow (chi), meditation and application. Tai Chi looks flowing, but is

**THROUGH MOVEMENT**® lesson reminded her of the intimacy engendered in meditation practice. "We encounter the same resistance, and must navigate our way through." Yoga means attentiveness in action, and it shares with the **FELDENKRAIS METHOD** a thoroughly practical approach to improving one's life, step by step. *Deedee Eisenberg teaches yoga and FELDENKRAIS in Califon, New Jersey.* (<newmoves@mindspring.com>) 

## Friends of Feldenkrais<sup>sm</sup>

Friends of Feldenkrais is a way for the public to become more connected with the **FELDENKRAIS METHOD**.

Individual memberships:

**\$25** - Basic benefits: Quarterly Newsletter (**SenseAbility**), 10% discount off books and tapes, article, "*The FELDENKRAIS METHOD*" by Moshe Feldenkrais, and discounts on Annual Conference workshops.

**\$50** - Basic benefits plus **FELDENKRAIS** logo T-Shirt

**\$75** - Basic Benefits, plus ATM Audio tape by Moshe Feldenkrais, and Friends of Feldenkrais® polo t-shirt.

To join, call **the FELDENKRAIS GUILD of North America** at (800) 775-2118.


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## FELDENKRAIS for Yogis

by Deedee Eisenberg

**Kachina Abeita**, of Dallas, Tx, who practiced yoga meditation in India for many years has offered several workshops on *FELDENKRAIS for Yogis*. ('Yogi' is Sanskrit for yoga practitioner).

In one such workshop, Kachina focused on **ATM** lessons to enhance the invigorating upward-facing bow pose. Vicki Johnson, a workshop participant recalls her experience:


"The weaving of **ATM** and asana produced a profound opening, and facilitated graceful movement into the pose. I have never forgotten the feeling of being so graceful in upward facing bow pose! Nor have I experienced a similar release in the pose since." 

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often stylized into fixed functional sets. The common human ground of true functional resonant motion is not so easy to teach by traditional methods. Many students who begin with fascination and enthusiasm succumb to the stresses and strains of the discipline. They need to learn how to access a different sensory-motor feeling, and to modify uncomfortable or even painful sensations.

The **FELDENKRAIS METHOD** provides just what is most needed: getting in touch with the natural functional patterns of action; experiencing differentiation and contrast; connecting disparate parts, and letting the resonant, oscillatory movement improve the integration.

The larger context which the process serves is quality of life: in somatic terms, quality of movement. What is good movement? It contains many elements, from balance to strength to effortless grace and poise. **FELDENKRAIS** seen as background process supports more viable yoga and Tai Chi practices.

*Josef DellaGrotte, Ph.D. FELDENKRAIS Trainer, also teaches yoga and Tai Chi using the FELDENKRAIS METHOD.*   
(see Resources)

## FELDENKRAIS in a Yoga Class

by Ofer Erez

Yoga classes have always been a gathering point for people with widely diverging abilities, interests, and states of health. Two of my yoga students with very different problems found benefits from **FELDENKRAIS** work.

Kathleen Clute had been coming to my yoga classes for several months. Being in good health, she enjoyed the classes but found her lack of flexibility annoying. She had done yoga for years and regularly included the Salute to the Sun (a series of 12 consecutive movements, coordinated with breathing, that are repeated several times) both as a warm-up and to get in shape. One of the more difficult movements starts in a push-up position. From there a foot is brought forward and aligned with the hands.

"I have been doing the Salute to the Sun for many years and have always found it difficult to bring my leg to the front," she said. "Do you have any suggestions?"

I have noticed that this is a common difficulty for many yoga students and have done experiments myself in order to find the source. It seems to result from a lack of rounding in the lower back at the proper time.

I immediately suggested she could bring the foot from the outside instead of from in between the hands, for increased comfort and ability. The suggestion proved helpful for Kathleen. She wanted to find out more about what the **FELDENKRAIS METHOD** can do for her and decided to try a **FUNCTIONAL INTEGRATION (FI)** lesson.

She came to the lesson saying, "I don't have any specific problems except some pain in one leg and one foot that is always pointing inward. Can you do something about it?"

I noticed a connection between the in-turned leg and the difficulty in the Salute to the Sun. Both movements involve the lower back and ribcage in a direct way. If they do not participate well in the action, there is

difficulty with most movements of the legs as well as with rounding the back. The muscles connecting the legs to the torso tend to become stiff and stubborn. Her FI lesson involved discovering the mobility of the hip joints and lower back. A lesson of this kind can be gentle yet powerful. It improves mobility of the legs and aids posture, balance and walking.

After the next yoga class she sounded very excited. "I did it!! I brought my leg forward without any trouble... the easiest move in 28 years... better than when I was in college."

Kathleen now comes to class with a new interest: looking for easier and simpler ways to do the Asana and other exercises we do in class. She is also continuing her FI lessons.

The second student, Marie Mollart, was very stiff due to the effects of Parkinson's disease. She started doing yoga in order to improve her situation, reduce the effects of the illness and

return to the active life she had in the past. "I didn't want to use the drugs that are usually prescribed," she said. "They have unpleasant side effects. I decided

instead to change my lifestyle." She had been attending yoga classes for about a year and her progress had been consistent yet slow and arduous. "Bending in any direction has been very difficult for me," she says, "But the backward bending Asana are the most difficult. I am improving but would like to improve faster."

Seeing that her progress was frustratingly slow, in spite of her regular attendance in class, I decided to offer more specialized help — to try a **FUNCTIONAL INTEGRATION** lesson.

The first lesson I did had to proceed very slowly. Aside from the stiffness and tremors that are common to

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Parkinson's disease, I know there is also a slowing down of the reaction time of the brain which tends to cause general instability and discomfort with fast movements. Within these constraints, I developed a lesson relating to her interest in bending backward. I was careful to incorporate the legs, lower back and ribcage in a useful, functional action. The lesson helped Marie sense the lengthening that is possible through the thighs and chest in front while using the back for movement. This introduced the possibility of a more comfortable posture and faster movement.

At the end of the lesson she felt taller, had more space for breathing and her posture and walking were better. The change was clearly visible during the next yoga class. Considerable improvement could be observed in all of the asana that call for any sort of

bending backward — even several twisting ones.

Marie was very pleased with the improvement in the postures as well as the added ease with which she was able to perform them.

She remembers how she felt after the FI. "It was a very surprising feeling! I felt taller and lighter. My posture and walking were easier, softer and seemed simpler. I quite hoped it would stay for a very long time, and I still feel it now."

She decided to come for several more FI lessons to continue her improvement in yoga and reduce the effects of Parkinsons' Disease in her life.

*Ofer Erez maintains his FELDENKRAIS practice in Pleasant Hill, California. (<ofer@healthetc.to>)*

## Resources

### TAPES

*Yoga Using FELDENKRAIS®* by Josef DellaGrotte. A four-cassette series available through: Somatic Training Associates 1(800) 873-2398.

*Tai Chi Using FELDENKRAIS* by Josef DellaGrotte. A three-cassette series also available through Somatic Training Associates.

### Further Reading

"Talking to the Brain". by Lela Aum. Yoga Journal, Nov/Dec, 1991.

A review of **Mindful Spontaneity** by Rothy Alon.

"Do-it Yourself FELDENKRAI" by Anne Cushman. Yoga Journal, July/August, 1991. A review of **Relaxercise** by David Zemach-Bersin, Kaethe Zemach-Bersin, and Mark Reese.

