Research on the *Feldenkrais Method*®

There is a growing body of research to support the effectiveness of the *Feldenkrais Method*®. The following summaries and references represent a sampling of the many studies that have been conducted.

**Chronic Pain**

Patients who had been experiencing chronic pain participated in a six-week *Awareness Through Movement*® (ATM) course. Results included significant increases in mobility accompanied by significant decreases in pain both immediately following the course, and in a one-year follow-up. Patients also reported less depression and anxiety, and an improved ability to relax.


**Stroke**

Prior to and following a 6-week *Feldenkrais*® program, stroke patients who had chronic neurological deficits were evaluated using the Berg Balance Scale, improving an average of 11%. They also improved, on average, 55.2% in the Dynamic Gait Index and 35% in the Stroke Impact Recovery Scale. Findings demonstrate that gains in functional mobility are possible for individuals with chronic stroke using *Feldenkrais* movement therapy.

Effects of *Feldenkrais Awareness Through Movement* on Balance in Adults With Chronic Neurological Deficits Following Stroke: A Preliminary Study Glenna Batson, PT, MA.

**Balance**

A study with older women demonstrated improvement in the Berg Balance Scale as well as improved walking speed, movement time and quicker correction of balance. Participants also reported greater confidence and strength.


**Injury**

*Feldenkrais Awareness Through Movement* and *Functional Integration*® lessons have been shown to help patients avoid developing protective, maladaptive patterns to an injury. In other words, *Feldenkrais* lessons can be instrumental in helping patients form beneficial and adaptive patterns during recovery integrating total body movement into the recovery process.

Fibromyalgia
Patients with Fibromyalgia moved more easily, efficiently and with less effort after learning to reorganize the biomechanics of their movements during 15 weeks of Feldenkrais sessions and classes. Immediately following, and six months after completion of the class, improvements in balance, posture and gait were reported. Also reported were reduced pain, increased sleep and reduction in fatigue.

Dean, J. R., Yuen, S. A. & Barrows, SA. "Effects of a Feldenkrais Awareness Through Movement Sequence on Fibromyalgia Patients".


Multiple Sclerosis
In one study, steadiness and comfort with daily movements, self-esteem and overall quality of life improved in patients with Multiple Sclerosis who used Feldenkrais bodywork and/or participated in Awareness Through Movement sessions.

In another study, a group of patients with Multiple Sclerosis participated in an Awareness Through Movement group. The results demonstrated significantly improved mCTSIB scores and improved balance confidence compared to controls. There was a marked improvement in all other measures in the Awareness Through Movement group compared to controls.

Results: This type of motor learning intervention can be effective in improving a variety of physical and psychological parameters related to balance and postural control in patients with MS.


Low Back Pain
After four Feldenkrais sessions, 76% of participants with chronic low back pain improved to normal activity. All had tried a variety of other therapies without success and all had experienced discomfort, restriction and stiffness prior to these sessions.


Neck & Shoulder Pain
Thirty normal female employees took part in a neck and shoulder pain study, participating in six weeks of Feldenkrais Awareness Through Movement classes. Results included increased range of motion in a neck flexion task, significant positive changes in the neck-shoulders-index, and a decrease in complaints from neck and shoulders.

Lundblad, I., Elert, J., Gerdle, B. Randomized controlled trial of physiotherapy


**Arthritis**
A subject with Rheumatoid Arthritis participated in several *Feldenkrais Awareness Through Movement* sessions. As a result, the patient learned to rise from a chair without assistance from the upper extremities, and to use less kinetic energy. Walking speed increased and there was a 30% decrease in pain intensity. Findings: *Awareness Through Movement* lessons improve functional movements in spite of long term disability.

Twenty-one subjects with Rheumatoid Arthritis were tested after a series of *Awareness Through Movement* lessons. The results: significant change in both the muscle activity and the perceived effort of the task (using electromyographic equipment during trunk flexion.) Two years post-treatment, a large percentage of subjects had increased function, continued to maintain higher levels of function, continued to use the skills they learned and felt that the *Feldenkrais* lessons helped them with their pain problem.


**Parkinson's**
This study demonstrates that the disabilities of Parkinson's Disease can be lessened with early *Feldenkrais* intervention as gains are made in musculoskeletal flexibility, alignment and functional movement. Early intervention is important and can delay the need for pharmacological intervention, which, because of long-term use, is associated with potentially unwanted and toxic side effects. The study illustrates improvements in balance, gait, and functional movement made by an individual who was not yet receiving medication for Parkinson's disease. A second case study illustrates improvements of balance gait and functional movement made by an individual who was already receiving medication for the disease. These case studies illustrate the dramatic improvements that *Feldenkrais* intervention can achieve in the patient with Parkinson's disease.


**Anxiety, Depression and Mood**
Early research suggests that participation in a single *Awareness Through Movement* session may reduce anxiety levels, with increased effects after six to eight sessions. A study involving 147 female general curriculum and physical education teachers enrolled in a one-year enrichment program at a physical education college revealed improved mood after *Feldenkrais* lessons. *Feldenkrais* lessons seem to ease depression and anxiety, and improve self-esteem in multiple sclerosis patients.


**Senior Movement**

A group of 31 older adults were studied using a prospective, repeated measures control group design. The SF-36 was used to assess health status - quality of life. Video motion analysis was used to collect data on walking and on a floor-to-stand transfer movement. Coordination of the transfer movement improved significantly in the *Feldenkrais* group. Vitality and mental health scores also improved significantly in this group. The *Feldenkrais Method* has been shown to be an effective method for improving coordination, mobility, economy of movement and quality of life in older adults.


**Eating Disorders**

Preliminary research suggests that in patients with eating disorders, *Awareness Through Movement* sessions improved self-confidence and increased contentment with regard to problematic zones of their body. Patients experienced increased sense of contentment in regard to their health, accompanied by decreased sense of helplessness.


**Flexibility**

Studies identified increased flexibility through the use of *Awareness Through Movement* classes. In a study of neck flexion in normal subjects, a significant increase in the amount of flexion after a single one-hour class was shown, as well as significant positive changes in muscular activity in the trunk.
