

# A Student FAQ for *Feldenkrais* workshops with Nick Strauss-Klein

## **What happens in a *Feldenkrais*® workshop?**

We'll do two or three *Feldenkrais Method*® *Awareness Through Movement*® lessons (known as ATMs), each using different body configurations and movements, to explore our topic through experiential learning. Please remove your shoes and belts during the ATMs, and make sure you've got a folded towel for head support, and as many yoga blankets as you need to lie on the floor comfortably. Rubbery yoga mats usually create too much friction for our purposes, but you can use them under a yoga blanket.

We'll do a lot of our work lying down because it's much easier to notice and change movement habits when our nervous system isn't busy keeping us upright. Since we learn best when we're fresh and at ease, we'll take frequent brief rests during the ATMs, and we'll have one or two 5-10 minute breaks between ATMs.

I'll also give a few brief talks to orient you to the neuromusculoskeletal principles at work in our study. Don't worry about taking notes or remembering all the movements. I'll send an email later this week with principles, lesson notes, and links to free recordings.

## **You called me a student. Isn't this an exercise class?**

No, *Feldenkrais* is an educational system. We use movement to stimulate your brain to learn new habits. Traditional exercises (strengthening, stretching, cardio) challenge your body tissue. *Feldenkrais movements challenge your attention*, which spurs your innate curiosity and helps you discover novel movements, sensations, and relationships within yourself as you develop greater awareness. This process prompts your brain's neuroplastic ability to get free of habits which aren't useful, and begin finding new, personalized ways of better coordinating and regulating your whole self.

## **You're not modeling, and I can't see the other students. Am I doing it right?**

Probably! Even if you're not always sure you're doing what I'm describing, if you are moving pleasantly, curiously, and well within your limits of comfort, you will learn and improve. Remember *LESSS is more: Light, Easy, Soft, Slow, Smooth* movements are far more effective at creating neuroplastic change than faster, more powerful, or mindless rote movements. So...

1. *Only do what's comfortable*, and rest whenever you want to.
2. Breathe! If you're not breathing easily it's a sign that you're straining.
3. Be creative, curious, and kind to yourself as you interpret my instructions, taking all the time you need to figure out a way to move that works for you.

Most people who grew up in our culture have at least a subconscious belief that if you're not suffering you won't improve. It can be hard to trust that quiet, minimal movements and directed attention are potent tools for change. For these few hours you may need to suspend your disbelief. *Feldenkrais* movements aren't gentle because I'm nice! They're gentle because it's the most effective way to help you notice and change your undiscovered self-destructive habits.

**But seriously, is there a “wrong” way to do it?**

Yes: if you are moving in a way that creates *any increasing unpleasant experience* such as pain, strain, tightness, frustration, or even boredom, stop what you are doing. It's not worth it. Escalating negative sensations and feelings take over your nervous system (even the ones you wouldn't call pain). You'll pay attention to them automatically, and you will miss out on valuable, pleasant sensations and learning.

**OK, if something feels unpleasant, I won't do it again, or I'll find another way.**

Great -- you'll be amazed at what's possible if you turn toward comfort! *I expect that everyone will alter or skip some positions, variations, or entire sections of the workshop.*

**What's next after the workshop?**

Please move into your evening gently, drink some water, and get a good night's sleep. Mundane tasks after the workshop are often the best time to notice and generalize on your learning, which helps integrate the improvements into your regular life.

Sometime tomorrow and the next day, spend at least a few minutes improvising and playing with any of your favorite or most memorable parts of the ATMs.

Please check that your email address is legible so I can send you the workshop's principles, lesson notes, and free home study recordings. Spend some time with this material soon. You'll also get a monthly newsletter from me featuring more free lessons you can do at home, and upcoming workshops and classes.

There is a cumulative benefit to practicing *Feldenkrais*. Consider dropping in to my weekly classes (ongoing year-round), be on the lookout for upcoming workshops, and use my free online resources at home! There are dozens of hours of lessons available.

Thanks for this opportunity to study together! Please email me with questions.

- Nick