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Can Feldenkrais help me with my balance?



Patricia invited me to lunch last week, and I accepted gladly. In our twenties we worked together closely, and over the years we have stayed in touch.

“Thank you so much for the birthday card,” she said. “Turning fifty is a big deal. Bigger than you might think.” “I know,” I said. “Remember, I’ve been there.” We talked about her children who have grown up and our parents who have gotten so much older.

Then she said, “Well, besides getting together, I have a purpose for this lunch. You’re going to say ‘Finally!’ Because finally I want to talk to you about Feldenkrais. I know you have been doing it for years and love it. My neighbor Rosemary takes your class, and she raves about it because it does her back so much good. But I don’t have back problems. Knock on wood. What’s bothering me, though, is my balance. When I get up in the middle of the night, I’m wobbly. Last night, for instance, I almost fell. Also I have been taking a Zumba class. It is so much fun. But my balance is not what it used to be. It makes me feel old! Is this something Feldenkrais can help with?”

“Absolutely,” I said.

“Ok! Details, please. How?”

“It’s about making time to focus inwardly. When you go to my class, you slow down and pay attention to how your body works. It’s meditative movement. It’s mindfulness.”

“That’s what you’ve said before. But what do you really do?”

“We do part of the class standing. You stand with your feet about shoulder width and sense your alignment. This means your spine and all of the skeleton. You listen to your breath. Then, very consciously, you shift your weight to one side

and then the other side. You sense how the weight shifts from one foot to the other. It’s soothing.”

“It sounds soothing. But how does it improve your balance?”

“It works because you are paying closer attention to your body than you usually do. ‘Paying attention’ really is a kind of payment. Ordinarily we live with the mind and body practically divorced. Through Feldenkrais you bring them back into relationship.”

“That sounds interesting. What else do you do?”

“Most of the time you are lying down. You do moves that are rolls, twists, crunches. They often look familiar from exercise classes, and they aren’t difficult. But they emphasize becoming more aware of yourself and more coordinated. Especially we work to coordinate the core of the body with the limbs. The torso gets to loosen up.”

“Oh, that will be good for me. My torso has gotten stiff; I have noticed that.”

Patricia was quiet for a moment and then said, “All right, Maureen! I am going to give it a try. I will register online and see you soon.”

Good news! I am glad for me and, mostly, I am glad for Patricia.