



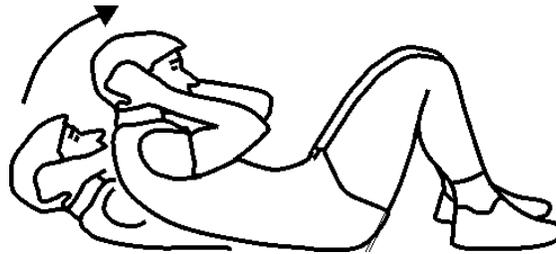
Maureen A. McHugh

Feldenkrais Practitioner

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“Where the spine can surrender”



In performing a sit up, or any similar movement, what is necessary to be able to lift the head? Most systems focus on the contribution from the abdominal muscles. The instructor says, “The abs need to be strong.”

Moshe Feldenkrais marched to the beat of a different drummer, and he saw it differently. How do we know? Fortunately, we have a voluminous record of his teaching. Beginning in 1950 and extending over thirty years, Feldenkrais taught movement classes in a studio on Alexander Yanai Street in Tel Aviv. He recorded the best of these lessons. After his death in 1984 his students transcribed the AY lessons and translated them into English (from Hebrew).

On an unmarked date many years ago, as in the drawing above, the students were lying on their backs, with their knees bent, feet on the floor, and hands supporting the head. Moshe gave an instruction: move so that the head comes toward the knees. He observed their movement and then offered this advice:

“Pay attention. Do not lift the head to a place where you feel the head cannot bend any more. Organize it so that the spine and shoulders will lift the head to a place where the spine can surrender and allow the head to be lifted easily. We want to lift the head like this, easily, to the degree that the spine is able to surrender.”

A few minutes later he added:

“We want to learn to organize something, and if it is done with power, with speed, nothing improves from this.”

Can you see in the drawing that the person has partially changed the shape of his spine? And that there is still more room for it to bend?

Does this sound interesting to you? This is what we do in Feldenkrais classes, both group and individual. We are looking for the way that the whole body can be organized in each action. To move so that raising the head is an action of the whole body. So that reaching is an action of the whole body. Everything expresses the *whole*. And to get to that place, very often, what is needed is for the spine, in a certain way, to surrender.