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Regaining comfort and ease through a more complete experience of self

Years ago when I was a beginning Feldenkrais Practitioner, a client returned for her fifth session and announced, “I am doing much better!” At that time I was working in my living room, and she made the pronouncement as she flopped heavily onto my sofa. I was already sitting on the sofa, so I felt it bend with her suddenly-dropped weight. Flashing with anger at disrespect to my furniture and looking to her on my right, I challenged: “How do you know?” With equal heat and looking left, she replied, “Because I am *forgetting* that I have neck and shoulder pain.”

We both laughed, happy for the success, and ready for a nice beginning of the lesson.

Some time after that, I moved to an office and left behind drama about my furniture. Happily, the success stories continue. While few people since have spoken about forgetting pain, many report regained feelings of comfort and ease.

How does this change come about?

In our Feldenkrais work the key to success is to develop a broader and more complete experience of the self.

The neuropsychology of pain is that it concentrates attention. Where it arrives, it takes over the foreground of your awareness; and the rest of your body drops into the background. This intense local focus is a useful signaling strategy.

But – and this is a key insight of Moshe Feldenkrais – it is often not the best strategy for bringing about improvement.

As Feldenkrais taught, in many cases, improvement comes fastest by recalling over and over that the whole body is one. How to do that in the face of pain and restriction? It's not easy! It is a detective story and different every time. We are guided by these basic insights:

- * each part affects every other part and
- * where there is pain, it is often best to work indirectly.

In the case of being with you and, let's say, your painful shoulder, I ask myself: “What else is connected to the shoulder that is part of the pain equation and yet unnoticed? I may begin by exploring a movement in the foot and find that it reveals a restriction in the hip joint. I ask you about the hip joint, and you remember an injury there, so many years ago. We agree that probably a pattern of guarding was set up, and over the years the guarding has created an imbalance that has made the shoulder vulnerable. The hip joint is in the moment not stressed, so with another easy movement, it is likely to release. And so the healing path begins for the shoulder.

Our Feldenkrais work is an ongoing search for a broader awareness. This is the key to forgetting that you have pain and returning to living with comfort and ease.