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## Making time for something that is interesting and feels good

A Feldenkrais movement sequence, a lesson as we call it, takes you down an interesting path. To begin, the sequence often feels familiar, but then it develops in a new way.

A good example is the sit-up. Wikipedia defines it as "an abdominal endurance exercise". We see it instead as a vehicle to

- optimize whole body coordination &
- expand kinesthetic awareness.

Let's say we are in a group class. We often begin standing, and then I ask the students to lie down on their mats. After a few minutes rest, I say: "Bend your knees and place your feet on the mat, join your hands and put them behind your head, and then do just one-third of a sit-up. Lift and lower your head easily. Notice what it is like." For most people this is a familiar move; for some, it is easy, and for others, uncomfortable. Then I say, "Do the same thing, and this time notice what is happening in your sternum." For most people this instruction is unfamiliar. But everyone tries, and most people see that the sternum, meaning the center of the chest and everything connected to it, isn't doing much. The instruction has called attention to what one does. I call it the Natural Scientist Approach.

Next comes the Experimental Scientist Approach: "On purpose, just before you lift your head, move so that your sternum shifts downward. The down is a combination of toward your feet and toward the center of the earth." In other words, I ask them to make an intentional partnership with the sternum, and see how that affects the feeling of the move. Usually, people experience that the partnership makes it easier to lift the head. Really, much easier. This element has put us on the path of a better, whole body action.

Then, in another type of variation, I ask the students to turn their heads to the right, and keeping the head always to the right, and including the coordination with the sternum, to gently raise and lower the head. First the right side, then the left side. Most of the students find this small change very odd. You have to think about your body in a new way. It's a puzzle. This element has put us on the path of expanded kinesthetic awareness.

The benefits? They are many and individual. After an hour-long class, some people verbalize that they feel less pain, or more limber, or lighter or taller. But many say, in all simplicity, "I feel good."