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Why is it important to relax?

It is important to relax -- so that you can have a more creative relationship to your own life.

Everyone knows how it is when you are tense and in pain: all your focus is there. It is very hard to stay in the present moment. The imagination looks to the past and says "if only." It looks to the future and catastrophizes. Even during sleep, you barely get relief.

This is not a creative way to live.

Is there a way out? For many people, the Feldenkrais Method is a way out. It is a way to find a fresh experience of life, to renew and vivify.

The new experience comes from relaxing, not in the sense of vegging out, but by engaging in conscious, growth-affirming activity. Moshe Feldenkrais, the founder of the Feldenkrais Method, formulated his strategy like this:

"It is important to learn how to do the familiar thing in an unfamiliar way."

Does this sound easy? It is not! It is difficult because for each of us it is hard to "see around our corners." Left to our own devices, we repeat. Thus, it is important to have resources from the outside.

In a Feldenkrais session, as an example, you may explore the sit-up. Most people think of such as an abdominal crunch, which it is; but what if you think about it from the other side -- from the back? Crunch the abs = lengthen the back. When you try this, you see that it gives a different feel.

Another approach to sit-ups is to vary the placement of the head. With the thought of directing the head toward a knee, you can focus on aiming different parts of the head toward the knee -- the nose, the chin, the forehead, the top of the head. With each variation, the use of the eyes changes and so does the overall experience.

While engaged in these variations, the brain is not repeating. It is being invited -- *seduced, even* -- into seeing a new point of view. This opens up something inside. You find yourself feeling more relaxed. You find yourself having more options, as you engage in life.



Maureen McHugh has been teaching the Feldenkrais Method since 1990. She offers group classes through Arlington County Parks & Recreation and individual sessions in her office in the Landmark section of Alexandria.