

The Crazy Wisdom Calendar

New Movements Bring Relief, Surprise...

Joanna Myers on the Feldenkrais® Method

Photo by Sarah Neeley



Joanna Myers is co-leading a class on *Raising a Balanced Child*, which is listed in the 'Parenting section'. Her *Feldenkrais* class is listed in the 'Bodywork' section. Her *Stress Management* class is listed in the 'Stress Management' section.

When I went to my first Feldenkrais® class, I was at the end of my rope. I was ready to let go of a career as a classical violist and move on to something less, well...torturous. And I'd certainly tried a lot of things.

It started with a repetitive stress injury in college that morphed into a tremor in my left hand. I'd always been a natural player, but the protective mechanisms I built up around this injury persisted for years, robbing me of my former ease and spontaneity. And yet I persisted through two performance degrees and into freelance orchestral life. Meanwhile, I developed a nasty case of depression and anxiety.

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I amplified my emotional intelligence tenfold!”

But with Feldenkrais, I began to think differently about my situation. Here were minimal movements making huge physical changes and bringing sensation where none was before. Chronic tensions melted away. I felt what it's like to be truly kind to myself in movement, to work within my limits rather than frantically pushing at their edges, and to give authority to my own experience in the moment, not compare myself to anyone else.

The Feldenkrais Method uses movement and sensation to re-train the body to function more efficiently and skillfully. In group Awareness Through Movement® lessons, participants are verbally guided through a precisely-structured sequence of movements while their attention is brought to different places in the body, different ways of doing movements, and how to bring qualities of ease and connectedness into these very novel patterns. In hands-on, one-on-one Functional Integration® lessons, Feldenkrais practitioners communicate the qualities of ease

and skill through touch and passive movement. Because both types of lessons work at the level of the nervous system, the Feldenkrais Method is great at unscrambling holding patterns and habitual tensions that get people stuck and vulnerable to injury.

As a classically trained musician, I recognized not just the benefits of this method, but the rare depth and artistry of it. Here was a discipline that carried infinite possibilities for both my own cultivation and for helping others. One year after my first lesson, I entered Feldenkrais professional teacher training.

Over the course of the 800-hour intensive program, both my movements and my personality took on a more natural quality. As my body became less rigid, I began to explore some of the ways I'd protected myself from really living.

For example, I could feel how my posture related to the assumptions and emotional landscape of my

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family. I noticed how allowing my ribs to move with breath related directly to permission to being more myself in the world. By re-educating my body, I amplified my emotional intelligence tenfold!

Ultimately, my tremor went away. Not to mention the “fringe” benefits of running faster, standing taller, and having all sorts of little kinks worked out. I now walk my own jaunty walk, and continue to learn and improve weekly. Finding new movement patterns is positively addictive, because I'm always experiencing my body, and therefore life, in a new way.

I recently asked my students whether they missed our weekly class when I was on vacation. I got a resounding “YES!” Two clients shared their stories with me:

“I am so glad that I joined your classes this past year. When I first started taking Feldenkrais, I was unable to lie on my back with my legs straight out without excruciating pain in my lower back. A lot of that was due to the fact that through daily life and working out, I was forcing my body to do things that hurt more than helped. I now feel that I have a better understanding of how to let my parts work together as one, instead of trying to force them to do my bidding. I no longer have difficulty lying on my back...I feel that I am definitely on the road to recovery.”— Joan Miller

“After our last Feldenkrais session, I sat in my car and cried...for joy at being completely pain-free for the first time in many, many years. I have a debilitating myofascial pain disorder that has left me in nearly constant pain for the last ten years. The treatment for it has been a collection of painkillers, which only mask the pain and never really take it away, not to mention the numerous bad side effects. So, imagine my joy at discovering that Feldenkrais is actually getting to the source of the pain and alleviating it! Just a month ago, I was able to forego the Botox injections I've been getting in my head, neck, shoulders, and upper back every three months for years. I can't begin to thank you for this priceless gift, and can't imagine ever NOT doing Feldenkrais! Thanks again for all you've done for me. It is nothing short of giving me back my life.”

— Karen Cass

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(Joanna Myers MM, GCFP has been teaching Feldenkrais® classes and workshops since 2002. In her private practice, she combines the Feldenkrais Functional Integration® method with energy healing, Core Transformation, and Flower Essences. A dedicated collaborator, she recently opened the Trillium Center for Balanced Health in SE Ann Arbor, featuring classes in movement, nutrition, and natural remedies. Joanna can be reached at 734-395-8486 or feldannarbor@gmail.com, or visit www.feldannarbor.net.)