Feldenkrais for back pain

Description

Feldenkrais for back pain?

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Dear Reader,

Feldenkrais for back pain. My neurologist, head doc for theUniversityofWashingtonsports teams, suggested I see Becci Parsons, former dancer, now Awareness Through Movement and private Feldenkrais practitioner. “Watch out for your pants,” she said. “Your clothes can be dangerous to your health.” Her levies were on the baggy side. You could put your balled up fist between flesh and belt when she sucked in her breath. I remembered that when I put a new (ValueVillage) pair of genuineLevis, hip hugger style, which I love, and my back talked to me nastily.

She laid me on a low table just wide enough for me with her kneeling next to me to move my legs, my head, my shoulders. Her movements were minuscule. I struggled to let go, to allow her to be the conductor. I attempted to refrain from guarding, tensing, pulling back or from anticipating her next move and helping her lift, roll, twist. My only job was to let her have my body, let her move it and pay attention.

When the session was over, I could identify my surroundings but I seemed to inhabit Oz's Scarecrow navigating uneven ground. A dreamy hand opened the car door. Taking the wheel, putting on the gas, I began to reengage with this road, this stop sign, this merge onto the freeway.

Subsequent sessions began lying on the table with the gentle rocking, lifting, moving by Becci while I slowly allowed her to propel my limbs in tiny unchecked movements. She taught my muscles to reclaim movement appropriate to healthy, uncomplaining joints. She brought me to homeostasis. On the table. To teach me to roll out of bed, to sit on the side of the bed, to lift myself off the bed, to take steps, find the bathroom, lower myself on the toilet and rise again, she gently rocked my hips, held my hands, lifted my leg and set in down. Retraining.

As a girl, I proudly walked to school several blocks with a marble held tightly between my buttocks. In 4th grade, I could carry that marble clamped tight all day as I sat at my desk and walked to the black board, to the coat closet, out the door for home. What glut control! My father, the orthopedist, had a cartoon on his office wall of a woman whose naked breasts sat on top of a dresser. The top drawer, open just a little, pressed her ribs; the second drawer down, open about half way, pressed her waist; the bottom drawer pulled out all the way pressed her pelvic girdle forcing her butt to tuck under. The female version of the military stance. I aspired with all my 9 year-old might to conform my body to this most unnatural posture.

As a slouchy teen ager, my father poked my butt every time he passed by and commanded, "stand on two feet." "Tuck your bottom in." I danced tap and ballet and swam all summer, movements that relax and produce flow. Or should. Again constant reminders of "stroke, kick, kick, kick; stroke, kick, kick, kick. Lift your bottom" (I was a back stroke champion).

Feldenkrais method took me back, back to the earliest movements. A gentle curve relaxed down my spine. I learned the pelvic clock where you tilt your pelvis from 12 to 6, from 3 to 9, back and forth in ever smaller movements until the mind images and the body feels the suggestion.

"Becci, now come and show me how to get in my car," I entreated after successfully getting in and out of a chair with no pain, no firing of the muscles in jerky movements. It took about six months of weekly sessions for me to graduate to private and semi private

Pilates.

I strove fiercely for pain free movement and returned strength. My daughters Ruth and Eleanor and I planned the hike around Mt.Rainier on the Wonderland Trail. I had to be strong enough to carry a 35 pound pack and walk 95 miles in 11 days, each day gaining and losing around 2200 ft or more in elevation. We wanted to make this trip in August of 1990, one month short of a year after the injury.



Burroughs Mt. hike from Sunrise Visitor Center on Mt. Rainier, August 2009

Burroughs Mountain from Sunrise visitor center, Mt. Rainier, August 2009

This reminiscence of the Feldenkrais process is fresh in my mind. I just had a session with Erik LaSeur, Alki Moves, Feldenkrais practitioner here inWest Seattle. I met him at a West Seattle Chamber meeting and was drawn to investigate his work as a way of refreshing my body's acceptance of organic flow. I have developed my own set of muscle and posture strategies designed to avoid chronic, daily pain. I wanted to discover how I was getting in my own way. Erik's session helped enormously. A salsa CD has me dancing, hips swaying, legs gently and loosely swinging.

What is your experience of Feldenkrais? Ready to try it to see if it would lessen your chronic pain? I would love to hear your comments, questions and suggestions.

Be Well, Do Well and most of all Keep Moving.

Betsy



Category

1. Be Well health tips

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