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## **Feldenkrais Method and Recovery from Addiction**

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Feldenkrais Practitioner

A pattern of self-abuse is often ingrained in substance abuse. The Feldenkrais Method helps let go of many self-abusive patterns that often continue long after one has quit the substance abuse. In my own experience, I have done many years of 12-step recovery work, which helped me immensely, but the Feldenkrais work contributed extensively to my personal transformation and behavioral health. I am not suggesting that the Feldenkrais method should replace the 12-step recovery process but I do think it is very complimentary as a powerful nonverbal means of communicating self-awareness. The method works on a deep sensory level bypassing the intellect to deliver information directly to the nervous system. In a very non-intrusive and non-offensive way Feldenkrais Method first helps us become aware of how we are in the world and then offers alternative ways to be in the world through movement.

My own experience of these kinds of patterns ranged from obvious behaviours like verbally or mentally berating myself for the simplest mistakes like making a wrong turn while driving, to a habit of ignoring my body's signals of fatigue and driving myself to the point

### **At a Glance**

#### **Schedule of ATM Classes**

Weekly One-Hour Classes:

Winter Term: Jan 14 to Mar 30

Spring Term: Apr 1 - Jun 8

Wednesday 7 pm - Arnie Lade

Friday 11 am - Diane Lade

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#### **Sunday Workshops**

10am to 2pm

- ◆ Jan 23 : ATM as Mindfulness Practice - Diane Lade
- ◆ Feb 13 : Healthy Back and Neck - Diane Lade
- ◆ Mar (TBA) : Use It Or Lose It - Diane Lade

For Details & Registration:

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of pain or exhaustion, to more subtle patterns of choosing relationships with people who were really not capable of supporting or loving me in healthy ways.

Self-abusive patterns are addressed through an underlying message of gentleness that is articulated in both Functional Integration (FI) lessons and Awareness Through Movement (ATM) lessons. Students in ATM lessons are told to move slowly, with less effort to gain more ease. They are taught to try less and rest often, not to use effort and strain, thereby being gentle with themselves. In Functional Integration a practitioner gives a lesson by way of very gentle small movement to allow the student to sense and feel themselves and their own patterns of movements. This is a missing link for many – to slow oneself down, to allow oneself to feel and sense – interrupting a long-standing pattern of ignoring one's own inner cues. This is the beginning of a new ability to be present, and new behaviour can arise from this kind of awareness. The Feldenkrais Method has taught me self-acceptance in the whole of my being as well as ways to love and honor myself at a deep level.

I recently listened to a talk by Dr. Moshe Feldenkrais where he expresses how difficult it is to let go of bad habits or patterns - but we can if we become aware of them and are able to observe them without judgment or emotion. For me it was important to receive information in ways other than through the intellect because often my rational thinking interferes with my ability to change. Feldenkrais Method helped me to let go and change patterns by delivering messages directly to my brain and nervous system through paying attention to myself in very subtle gentle movements. So my nervous system was able to reorganize and let go of

patterns without interference from my thinking, as often my intellect tends to provoke emotional judgments.

Moshe said change will not stay unless we are able to change our view of ourselves in the world. Here lies, I think, the key to personal transformation and behavioral health in people suffering from substance abuse. Alcoholics and addicts often hang on to certain images of themselves associated with their substance abuse long after they have quit the substance abuse because they do not know any other alternative ways of being in the world. Acting out of the old self-image, they repeat habitual self-abusive patterns. As the Feldenkrais method brings about changes in the motor cortex the old self-image changes, and the old behaviours and patterns that were attached to that former image are more easily let go of as well. It is in letting go of these images of ourselves that we are able to experience true personal transformation. ☯

