

I want to do what I love doing!

by Jamie van Dam

How often do you hear yourself or a friend say *I can't do what I love to do because of a physical injury* ? I was talking with a friend; Johanne R. and she shared the following story with me...

My life was really busy for awhile. I wasn't taking care of myself, I was working as a silviculturist and doing lots of physical activities. Every once in awhile when I was stressed out and working hard I would hurt my neck and back. I would then go to town to see a health care specialist who could put me back together, but inevitably, I would go back to work and re-injure my neck and back. I was frustrated because I couldn't figure out what I was doing to hurt myself, which meant I couldn't help myself! Eventually I tried Feldenkrais and found that in the slow, gentle lessons I would learn about myself, to notice which foot felt heavier or more in contact with the ground. I noticed how I was contributing to the re-injuring of my neck and back! There were many blank spots in my awareness. The Feldenkrais lessons helped me to sense more of myself. I found I could start to help myself through awareness - so I wouldn't have to stop doing what I love doing; which is being in nature and working as a silviculturist.

I found in Johanne's story something revealing and challenging --- that awareness heals! How can it be that when she became aware of what she was doing, that then she was able to help herself? It sounds so simple and straightforward!

Consider this question... Do you find yourself hunched over and tight in your belly when you are gardening or working at the computer, pushing beyond your limits to find yourself in worst shape than when you began? Wouldn't it be nice to separate the process from the achievement and yet still be accomplished in the activities you do? In her life-example she became aware of the process. She was then able to change *how* she did things, *not what she was doing*.

Would you like to try a small portion of a Feldenkrais lesson?

Come to standing, and if you can, comfortably close your eyes. Bring all of your attention to the bottom of both of your feet. Notice if one of your feet feels flatter or different in some way from the other foot. What is the difference? Okay, open your eyes and swing your arms and body lightly from side to side, moving from right to left a number of times. Feel your body move and notice when you are swinging from side to side what happens in your feet. Pause and rest. You can rest in standing or come and lie on your back for a moment. Come to standing, touch the floor with your right big toe and continue to have full contact with your left foot. In this position, swing your arms and body right and left. What is the feeling in your left foot while doing this, how does the movement go through your left foot as you swing from side to side? Pause the movement and rest. Switch to having your left big toe touching the floor and have full contact with your right foot. In this position swing your arms and body from left and right. Notice the

movement in your right foot as you move from side to side. Pause and rest. Try to swing your arms with both feet on the ground again, same as when you first began this lesson. Has this swinging movement changed in some way from when you first did it at the beginning of the lesson? Walk around, notice what five minutes of an awareness through movement lesson can do.

Sometimes we do many actions in the day without really paying attention to them. Some movements can become habitual, and this way of moving can cause pain and soreness in your body. Did you notice a difference in the way your feet, legs or pelvis felt after the short lesson? Sometimes it is very subtle and sometimes not! But, as with any activity, notice that in swinging your arms and body from side to side you have an automatic way you do it.

So, as you move through your day, take a moment to pause and notice how you are using your body. You may find yourself surprised as did Johanne, who found that not placing attention in her actions may have been creating habits of movement that eventually manifested in pain. By simply taking moments to pause in her life and to place her awareness on her actions, she experienced more possibilities and choices, opening to a life with more ease and comfort.

Jamie van Dam practises Feldenkrais on Galiano Island and Victoria. Jamie is teaching Feldenkrais at the South End Community Hall from 7:00 pm to 8:00 pm on Thursdays, January 7th, 14th, 21st and 28th. You can find out more by visiting www.jamievandam.com or calling 250-472-8399