

Feeling Whole Again, and Again

By **Bob Hunter**

Five years ago, John Pollard, at age 46 had always felt himself to be strong and capable. He had been running his own successful but physically demanding business, - Pollard Shelving, in Mercersburg, Pennsylvania, for over fifteen years. Then he had a truck accident. He was left with troublesome back pain that threatened his ability to carry on with his work. His doctor, who was aware of the *Feldenkrais Method*® and knew that it could produce remarkable results, suggested John try *Functional Integration*® lessons and referred him to me. At the time, I was newly established as a practitioner and John was one of my first students. He came to his lessons with an open mind and an eagerness to learn. He made exceptional progress during a series of only five lessons and, pain free, returned to work.

Recently when I checked with John to ask how our lessons had affected him then and since, he reported: “At first I couldn’t see how the things we were doing—movements that seemed far removed from and totally unrelated to the site of my pain - were helping me feel better. But I soon began to notice that I had been tensing myself in many ways against the pain and out of fear of further injury. I saw that my protective response, useful initially, was preventing normal movement and, therefore, complete healing. The *Feldenkrais* lessons taught me that the body has a mind of its own and that we often don’t pay attention to what it is trying to tell us. I learned to stop and pay attention. I learned that when one is injured one tends to protect that injury, consciously and subconsciously and that sometimes this overprotection damages more than it helps.

My experience with the *Feldenkrais Method* helped me to apply these techniques to subsequent injuries. I learned to look at the body and the mind differently, to see that neither is master, but that both work together to produce a unified whole. Conventional approaches tend to separate the two; *Feldenkrais* says that they are inseparable.” John especially appreciated this new way he could view himself and his interaction with his environment, not just in the physical realm, but the mental and emotional as well, and the many ways in which protective behaviors inhibit full functioning.

John further told me of a remarkable follow-up to our work together. About a year after seeing me, he suffered a serious leg fracture requiring surgery, with a guarded prognosis for a satisfactory outcome. He worried that he would never walk normally again. During his prescribed rehabilitation, he sensed that, as before, his protective responses were hindering full recovery. Assessing his situation, he began to pay attention to himself in the ways that he had learned in our lessons together. He was soon able to put his fears aside, and on his own put into practice the principles he had learned earlier, and thus, he feels, greatly facilitate his recovery. “The *Feldenkrais Method* is the thing that most helped me feel whole again!”

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