

Fireman Meets the *Feldenkrais Method*

By Charles Velez, GCFT, FDNY

As a New York City Fireman and *Feldenkrais*® practitioner I have had the experience of using the *Feldenkrais Method* in my work environment to help my co-workers eliminate injuries and improve their work habits. Firefighting is a very stressful occupation and many injuries occur.

After 9/11, I made a bigger attempt to teach group sessions and individual sessions in the firehouses in New York. Firemen can be a very tough bunch, the idea of moving slowly is not part of their vocabulary, especially when the bell rings and time is an important factor.

I came up with some interesting ideas. You can still move fast but without internal tension, without trying too hard. In one experiment we worked with an *Awareness Through Movement*® lesson from lying to sitting. A lot of firemen just jump out of bed at night and add more stress to themselves.

We explored using the pelvis to initiate the roll out of bed while keeping the spine soft, the head being the last thing to leave the bed. Many said they watched children roll out of bed like this. Yet the experience was a real eye opener for them.

They have appreciated my efforts to bring a table to work and give mini *Functional Integration*® lessons. They have to be mini because the bell can ring at any time. The percentage of fireman that do come for lessons is usually about 50 percent. They do recognize the fact that they have cut down their work injuries by 90 percent and have reduced their stress levels tremendously.

I became interested in the *Feldenkrais Method* after sustaining a serious injury in 1997 in a major fire. After trying physical therapy, chiropractic, and massage, I went to see a *Feldenkrais* practitioner. After three lessons my pain was gone and I could return to work 100 percent. My interpersonal relationships also improved and made me realize all stress patterns can be changed through choice and having options in life.

In the *Feldenkrais Method* we are learning new ways of movement and acting in the world. One fireman asked me after a session, "How come something so simple is not well known?" I told him if you share it with other people, it will be and you will love yourself at the same time.

[View all SenseAbility Newsletter issues](#)

[Contact Us](#) | [Service Marks & Terms of Use](#)

Copyright © 2001—2007 The *Feldenkrais*® Educational Foundation of North America and the FELDENKRAIS GUILD® of North America

5436 N. Albina Ave, Portland, OR 97217 | 800-775-2118 (toll free)

[site by NetRaising](#)

[Photography by Rosalie O'Connor](#)

[accessible menu by Brothercake](#)