



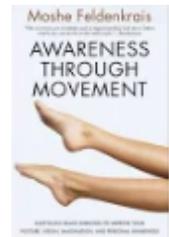
NOTES

# Awareness Through Movement

BY MOSHE FELDENKRAIS

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173 PAGES



## KEY POINTS

**How many languages can you speak?**

30-70!!

**Is Adequate Good Enough?**

Are you operating at 5% of your potential?

**What do you think of yourself?**

Do you have a growth mindset?

**Alignment Matters**

Are you correctly lined up?

**Good Movement**

vs Poor Movement.

It's Easy

**What is Good Posture?**

It's not straight!

*"Each one of us speaks, moves, thinks, and feels in a different way, each according to the image of himself that he has built up over the years. In order to change our mode of action we must change the image of ourselves that we carry within us"*

Moshe Feldenkrais from Awareness Through Movement

I have been aware of Moshe Feldenkrais and his input into the development of human movement science since I was studying movement at University. However I did not really pay much attention to his books until my Anatomy Trains Structural Integration teacher, Tom Myers started to talk about his methods in my ATSI training. Moshe had been one of Tom's teachers and Tom's unique insight into Moshe really got me intrigued. Moshe was ahead of his time in describing how the nervous system is responsible for producing behaviours. And many of his early theories have since been 'proven' by scientific investigation.

The above quote is really his whole book in a nutshell. It is the image we have created for ourselves (based on our past experiences) and what we have concluded about our selves (based on how we reacted to those experiences) that forms the basis of our self-image and drives our behaviour. So how do you think about yourself? Are you who you want to be in the world? How is the way you think about yourself influencing how you behave and interact? These are some great questions to think about! Take a minute here to get out a piece of paper and ask yourself these questions.

## How Many Languages Can You Speak?

*"Our Self-image is essentially smaller than it might be, for it is built up only of the group of cells that we have actually used"*

Take a moment and think about this! This is a really cool idea. Our self-image is smaller than it might be because we have not used all of our cells. It is therefore only possible to experience the part of ourselves that we have used and so our self-image remains smaller than it could be. To experience the potential of our self-image we must literally use all of our cells. A fully functioning somatic being is one that has control over each individual sarcomere. The ability you have to use all and every part of your muscles' complete range will be measured in the fullness of your self-image.

*"Our self-image is in general more limited and smaller than our potential. There are individuals who know from thirty to seventy languages. This*

*indicates that the average self-image occupies only about five percent of it's potential"*

Ok, so how many languages do you speak? I speak one and understand a little of two more but imagine being able to speak 30-70 languages. Imagine what a different experience life would be. Feldenkrais believed that most of us only use about 5% of our total potential. ONLY FIVE PERCENT!

Lets do a little thought experiment? Take a seat, breathe deeply and think about what percentage of your capacity you are currently using? Reflect on the fact that some humans can speak 30 languages. If you are like me and can only speak one language... wow! There is so much more room for us to grow. Now think of this in other areas of life. What percentage of your potential mobility and strength does your body show or express? How much of your concentration do you use? How much of your capacity for love are you expressing? How much of your capacity for creativity? Are you only using five percent! Do you want to start expressing a little (or a lot more) of your full capacity?

*"Only the unusual person will continue to improve his self-image until it more nearly approaches the potential ability inherent in each individual"*

I'm totally sweet with being unusual if it means I can continue to grow and learn and develop. Who wants to be weird? Who wants to be one of the unusual people who will continue to improve their self-image? ME! And YOU TOO, RIGHT?:) Sweet! Lets find out more.

### **Is Adequate Good Enough?**

*"How is such a vicious circle created, which at one and the same time stunts men's powers, yet permits them to feel reasonably self-satisfied for all they have limited themselves to, a small proportion of their capacities? It is a curious situation"*

This paragraph really struck me. It made me sit back and ask myself this... Do I feel reasonably self-satisfied? And, if Feldenkrais is right and most of us are only using 5 percent of our full capacity or self-image, is it ok to feel reasonably self-satisfied when only performing at 5 percent. It's a doozy of a question because I think it's important to feel satisfied but I also think it's important (and fun) to challenge ourselves to new and interesting experiences that will again help us to feel satisfied but also help us to use more of our full potential. If its true that we are only using 5 percent of our potential, imagine a world where we used 20 percent of our capacity or even 70 percent. It would be really cool right. Yip, we would all be healthier, more mobile and capable of complex movements. We would be more interesting and more interested and the coolest thing is that we would probably feel really amazing. So are you letting yourself feel satisfied despite the fact that you are only using 5 % of your potential!

## What Do You Think Of Yourself?

*“These considerations must be borne in mind to appreciate fully the overwhelming influence of the individual's attitude towards himself once he again seeks to foster his own growth, that is, to allow his specific qualities to develop to real fruition”*

If we are trying to grow it is important to note that the attitude we have towards ourselves is going to have an overwhelming influence on our ability to actually carry out any growth or learning. This idea is what Self-Efficacy Theory is all about “all behavior changes are mediated by a cognitive mechanism of perceived efficacy” which means that in order to be effective at something you have to believe that you can do it. If you don't believe that you can grow, you can't. This reminds me of Carol Dweck and her great book ‘Mindset’. If we adopt a fixed mindset we believe that we are born with our potential within us and there is nothing we can do to become more proficient in the different areas of life. We don't want to live with a fixed mindset, instead we want to inhabit a growth mindset and take on the fact that we can learn and grow and become who we want to be.

*“We may learn from persons crippled from birth or childhood how an individual may view himself in the face of obvious shortcomings. Those who succeed in looking at themselves with a sufficient, encompassing humanity to achieve stable self-respect may reach heights that the normally healthy will never achieve”*

Makes me think of the famous Henry Ford Quote “Whether you think you can, or think you can't---you're right”

## Alignment Matters

*“Good bodily organization makes it possible to carry out most normal actions without any feeling of effort or strain”*

Katy Bowman the American biomechanist (you can check out my notes on many of her books), I think, would love the above quote. One of her books is called ‘Alignment Matters’ and I think if we replaced ‘Good bodily organization’ in the quote above with the words ‘correct alignment’, we would see that Katy and Moshe hold some similar ideas when it comes to movement. Katy and Moshe together might sound something like this....

**Correct Alignment makes it possible to carry out most normal actions without any feeling of effort or strain.**

I'm sure Katy would also agree with the following idea. *“Forces working at an angle to the main path cause damage”* Loading the body when the body is in correct alignment creates forces that the body is accustomed to handling. Loading the body in poor alignment leads to damage. How's

your alignment? If you need more help with your alignment, I recommend both Katy and Moshe for great alignment education.

## **Good Movement vs Poor Movement**

Feldenkrais believed that good movement or good action had several characteristics. He believed that all good movement was reversible.

*“We shall agree that the movement is satisfactory if it is possible to interrupt and reverse it at any point, to continue it again in the original direction, or to decide to make some altogether different movement instead”*

He believed that efficient and effective movement was light and easy.

*“It is important to learn how to turn strenuous movements into good ones --- that is, into movements that are first of all effective but also smooth and easy”*

He believed that when we found a movement too hard and therefore gave up on it we were limiting ourselves in ways that we would never really understand.

*“The feeling that something is “too difficult” will spread and engulf other activities. It is difficult to estimate the importance to the individual of the qualities he lacks and of the things he therefore never tries, and thus the losses he incurs without knowing are incalculable”*

And he deeply believed in the opposite: that there is no limit to improvement.

*“Every time that we expand the limits of our knowledge, our sensibility and the precision of our actions increase and the limits of what is considered natural and normal also expand”*

How much control do you have over your body and your movement? Is your motion effortless or interrupted by the fact that you are firing muscles not needed for the task at hand? Can you turn off the muscles in you that are constantly on? Are your quadriceps constantly on when you are standing, is your abdomen constantly sucked in? Are your psoas muscles on all the time? Is your movement irreversible, full of strain and jerky motions? If you don't know the answers to these questions is it worth finding out, especially if you suffer from a sore back or sore knees.

## What Is Good Posture?

Straight is an aesthetic concept! Do we want straight posture? What does that even mean?

*“The word “straight” is misleading. It does not express what is needed, nor even what we expect to achieve or see after improvement has taken place. “Straight” is used in a purely aesthetic sense in connection with posture, and as such is neither useful nor precise, thus it will not serve as a criterion for the correction of faults”*

Again I am reminded of Katy Bowman. In her books and classes she is constantly saying, “Posture is about how something looks, Alignment is about how something works”! The next time someone tells you to stand up straight ask him or her what he or she specifically mean by that. Good Alignment therapy takes into consideration all the bends, tilts and rotations within a body and gives the individual a series of steps to restore correct alignment. What many perceive as good ‘looking’ posture is actually poor alignment creating stress within the system.

Feldenkrais asserts that in correct posture the skeleton should be counteracting the pull of gravity so that the muscles are free to be used in movement. He continues that in poor posture the muscles have to do some of the work of the bones.

It is common in our sedentary culture for bones to be pulled out of alignment by muscles that have become too short due to the chronic positioning frequented for sitting. The hip flexors become short, limiting extension of the hip joint. The hamstrings become short restricting flexion of the hip joints and many respond by flexing through their lower back, which leads to premature wear and tear or injury. Restoring the correct length to muscles is imperative for ideal musculoskeletal function.

## Pain And Posture!

*“Pain that undermines confidence in the body and self is the main cause of deviations from the ideal posture. Pain of this kind reduces the individual’s value in his own eyes. Nervous tension rises, which in turn reduces sensitivity once more; so we do not sense continued small deviations from the idea position, and the muscles tense without the individual’s even being aware of the effort he is making. Control may become so much distorted that while we think we are doing nothing we are in fact straining muscles needlessly”*

Pain can indeed take us out of the ideal alignment but so does the constant sitting most of us do on a daily basis. Every time we stand up after a long bout of sitting we are not returning to our original standing position but take with us some of the seated position that has been mechanotransduced into our cells. Sitting and a lack of movement change our alignment, then our

new alignment creates friction, which causes pain and we adjust again. We start down a negative spiral to worse and worse alignment that can only be stopped by a program that returns our muscles to their resting lengths and tonus states.

### **About the Author of 'Awareness Through Movement'**

#### **Moshe Feldenkrais**

Moshe Feldenkrais (1904-1984) is world renowned for the system of body-awareness and exercises he developed during his lifetime. He is the author of many other books. He was an engineer and a physicist and the founder of the Feldenkrais Method, which is claimed to improve human functioning by increasing self-awareness through movement.

### **About the Author of This Move Note**

#### **Hazel Boot**

Hazel has a degree in Exercise and Sports Science. She is also an Anatomy Trains Structural Integrator and a Restorative Exercise Specialist. She works with clients to improve movement and reduce pain. She loves reading and geeking out on movement books. She writes notes on the books she loves to help others learn faster.

Find out more at [www.mindinmovement.co.nz](http://www.mindinmovement.co.nz)

I hope you enjoyed the content of this note but please remember that it is not medical advice and should not be used as such.