

Feldenkrais – Cathy Paine, Instructor



The Weston Senior Activities Center offers many exercise, health and fitness classes, including something called Feldenkrais. What is Feldenkrais anyway? I asked some gym enthusiasts and got a blank stare. Two people remarked “Sounds like a terrible soup!” and “Sounds like a torture device!” A physical therapist even answered me, “It has to do with movement but how I don’t know.” I find it fascinating how many people are unfamiliar with even the name and here it is on the Activities Center schedule and WELL attended.

Cathy Paine, an instructor of Feldenkrais at the Center, said it was probably the most difficult activity to explain. It does not entail intensive or programmed movements. There is no one pushing you to move faster, harder, lift higher, or push longer. Cathy has been a professional modern dancer for 35 years. She developed severe arthritis in her hip joint in her late 30’s. Not unlike Moshé Feldenkrais who sustained a sports injury in 1929, declined surgery and rehabilitated himself, Cathy did not want surgery. She wanted to dance!

Moshé Feldenkrais stated, “Movement is life. Life is a process. Improve the quality of the process and you improve the quality of life itself.” Cathy connected with a fellow dancer who had studied this method. Within a short time, with simple directions on how to change her foot movements, she was pain free! Feldenkrais instructors are certified undergoing 800 hours and 4 years of training. This is a trademarked method so anyone offering “Feldenkrais” must have undergone this training. It is complex embodying the knowledge that “thought, feeling, perception and movement are closely interrelated and influence each other.”

Cathy states she is NOT a healer. She is a “movement expert recognizing that pain is a distraction. There is no pain with this method.” It is exercise that aims to improve human functioning by increasing self-awareness through movement. We are all bundles of neurons, muscles, programmed by our years and by the life forces that have created movement habits within us. If we can become aware of these habits of how we move, we have a choice to make changes. These very subtle changes, sometimes minute, create new neural pathways and elicit improvement.

“Awareness leads to change ...if you choose,” Cathy said very quietly to me. Cathy’s dancing improved after her studying and teaching of Feldenkrais. At age 50 she earned more awards for her improvisational dance than at any other time.

Cathy is calm, clear in her directions and focused. Most of all, she cares about making a difference for others. She works with diverse clients: dancers, people in wheelchairs, those with balance issues, and the aging, helping us learn how to get off the ground again. In addition to teaching at the Center, she has a private studio in Norwalk. She offers evaluations taking into account all the parameters of what makes up a person’s life and their personal goals.

Come experience the Feldenkrais Method for yourself!