

THE FELDENKRAIS METHOD



A few months after her release from rehab, Chani began weekly Feldenkrais sessions. “It was a big part of my recovery,” she said.

“Physical therapy was choppy and it was hard to know if I would make progress, but Feldenkrais addressed my whole body. I really started to heal.”

Donna Eshelman, the guild-certified Feldenkrais practitioner, with whom Chani worked, explained why the method was effective:

“The Feldenkrais Method is a technique for neuromuscular reeducation. This means that we work with the part of the brain that controls the patterns of movement and the tension levels in the muscle. In a typical lesson, we take the client through very slow and tiny movements that work with the motor cortex so it will notice where and how we are moving and then can change the pattern. It happens in a deep place in the brain. The client can even be asleep and the improvements in movement patterns will still occur.

“When someone has an injury or condition making walking difficult, he develops a pattern of taking small steps so he can feel secure, which doesn’t use the largest and strongest muscles in the legs. The person will often remain weak and unstable. For Chani’s condition, she needed to improve her balance and basic pattern of walking that would use all of her leg muscles in a coordinated manner. Physical therapy can strengthen the muscles but it’s only temporary because the pattern of walking remains the same.

“With the Feldenkrais Method, a person learns to articulate all of the joints in the foot, ankle, knee, hip and spine in a coordinated manner, which causes all of the muscles in those limbs to work. This increases the strength and immediately improves balance. As a result, the client’s confidence and comfort improve dramatically. That is what happened for Chani.”