Movement lesson

Angela 2 — Week 5, Day 3, Session 5 — 44 minutes

Summary: On the back, the inner and outer edges of the feet are differentiated so the knee does not swing. That ankle movement is joined to turning the head, to one foot resting on the other leg, and to the knees opening like a frog. Standing, people notice new support through the feet.

The right foot

[Russell:] Please come onto your back.

Bend your legs, feet standing, please.

Push off your right foot, turning your pelvis towards the left. Feel that movement. Keep the knee vertical.

Feel that movement freshly through yourself. Feel how the movement goes through your foot and ankle as well as through your knee.

That knee stays over the heel, so there's a verticality there. Just feel that movement across your pelvis.

So your right foot's staying on the floor and you're pushing off of it. Keep it in neutral. Just turn your pelvis towards the left.

Now, do that same movement, emphasizing the outer edge of your foot. So you're lifting the inside a bit — not the toes, distinguishing there — but you're lifting the inside of your right foot, so there's more weight going through the outside.

Your ankle — you'll notice that your knee functions differently in this position.

And then begin to feel how you can push off the inside of your right foot, and how the pattern through your pelvis and knee and foot alter.

These movements are really key for Feldenkrais working with his knee. And continue to use them whenever he would get swelling in his knee, to vary the pressure through, and alternate whether you're using the outside more or the inside more. Feel as you go back and forth.

Listen to how those patterns are different. All the way from the foot through the leg, pelvis, back, breathing.

We're pushing off the right foot, and the toes stay on the floor.

And if you just go a little bit, kind of quickly back and forth between pushing off the inside and out, just a little bit, you'll feel this twist or this shifting in your knee that is an important movement, and also how — which parts of your hip joint you're pushing through.

That's good.

Okay, leave that for a moment. And then bend both legs.

Lengthen your right foot so that it's still on the floor, like we did yesterday, so you don't have to go to your absolute limit, but the leg gets long, the foot's still on the floor. And how can you shift from the inside and outside edges with your leg long like this?

The sole is still in contact with the floor. You're shifting at a different angle than when the knee is above the heel.

How can you — not so easy.

And as we're doing these movements, we're going to see — how minimal can the movement of the knee be as the ankle makes this movement?

For some, the knee swings left and right. For some, it's just a very slight movement, only a little movement, but we want to minimize that as we differentiate the ankle more finely.

And then bring the foot closer to your pelvis, as close as is comfortable, and in this position, do that same — how can the knee somehow get longer rather than go left and right?

So it, like, turns a bit in itself, but not swinging in space. So we're not turning the pelvis as much as just lifting the inside and outside of the foot, and feeling that shifting. What do you have to do to lift the outside of the foot?

Feel — there's this turning in your lower leg and into that knee that also radiates into your hip joint, if you listen well.

That's good. Okay, leave it. Lower down.

[Silence 36 seconds]

Of course, noticing any shifting in your right side as compared to the left.

Just feeling how that settles in your whole self as you're lying here.

The left foot

That, in both legs.

And feel the movement of lifting the inner edge of your left foot. Feel how that goes through you.

And again, minimize the movement of the knee, as much as you can, in terms of a left-right movement of your knee. It will rotate around itself almost in place, and also lift the outer edge. So feel that movement across you.

If you can't figure out how to move the ankle without the knee swinging, do the movement smaller, and just have an image of the knee turning. And it requires a kind of movement in the hip joint as well for the knee not to swing. It's like an internal spiraling action.

That's it. Good. Nice.

And then move the foot — slide the foot down away from you. Still, you don't have to go as far as possible, just that it's clear that you've slid down. And then from there it gets a little bit harder to find how to navigate without the knee making a big movement.

Let's see if you can find something in the differentiation of that ankle that allows movements in both directions — lifting the outside and lifting the inside.

Breathing is still a good thing to do, occasionally, probably. Once in a while.

Good, and then bring the foot quite close to you, quite close to your body. And breathe.

Great. Okay, leave it. Lower down.

[Silence 52 seconds]

Both feet

Notice if there's anything different for you in the way your hips and pelvis are lying here.

And then bend both legs, and at the same time lift both insides and then both outsides of your feet, and listen to how the two legs function differently.

Listen to your toes. We don't want your toes lifting. How does that happen?

I mean, you'll feel some movement through, but not a lifting.

Feel. Go slow, go slow, so you can really feel how the two legs go differently.

Can you feel it on the right leg? The left toes lift. On the left leg — down?

Well, you have to be able to listen to it. To what? 'Cause that's a real help from the surgery, to let this side teach this side.

See, if some information — it might not be a completely physical constraint. Might be a pattern in your brain.

That's one of the ways, in Feldenkrais work, we really help people recovering from surgery — by feeling these movements, and then the side that wasn't operated on can often be remodeled for the other side.

And then quick and light, back and forth like that. Both insides and both outsides at the same time.

The inside of both feet — it's not lifting the pelvis, just the inside of the feet, and then the outside of the feet.

That's it. And minimize movement for the knees.

And this is a great way, with not lifting the pelvis. With the pelvis — so we're differentiating the ankle.

Let's see if that's a problem. Yeah. Well, I see it's also the solution.

You see it? Yes, that — you can do that. Yes, there, that's it, and that's it, and that's it, and that's it.

Go ahead, and go a little bit slower, a little more gently.

See, when we have something that doesn't function as well, we tend to push it. We want to go the opposite direction — bring more care, more listening, because it's getting — it is.

That took a walk, right?

Okay. Great, lower down, leave it for a few.

And then — somebody can explain how I spilled coffee on the back of my shirt. I would appreciate.

Looks like coffee. It's called clumsy when you get it on the back of your shirt.

This went straight through.

Head and right foot

Bend both legs.

Let your left leg open, let the knee come out towards the left, and put the left foot in the space between your right foot and your pelvis.

Now, you might need to move your right foot a little bit further away. So your left foot is kind of in that space, between your right heel and your pelvis.

It doesn't have to go way under or anything, but it's not right next to the foot. It's closer to your pelvis. That's it, if possible.

If that's not possible, then — okay, so the left knee is open out to the side, if that is possible.

That okay? Yeah, good. Okay, that's good.

Now, in this position, lift the inside of your right foot. Lift the inside, just the inside of your right foot.

Do the movement, yeah? Not the toes — the inside of the foot, and then the outside of the right foot. Go back and forth, thinking of minimal movement near the knee.

Do you want me to get you a support for here?

You're okay? Feels okay?

Now, let's see. Put your right hand on your forehead, and as you lift the inside of your right foot, bring the head towards the right. And then come back to neutral, and then as you lift the outside of the right foot, put your head towards the left.

But let your neck be passive to your hand. So you're not just turning your head with your hand sitting on it. Your hand is turning your head. Your hand and arm are doing the action, and your neck, as much as possible, is passive.

Okay, so again, it's an attention challenge — to be in your foot and leg, and all the way through to letting your head be free at the same time.

Okay, so the inside of the foot lifts as your head goes right. The outside of the foot lifts as the head goes left.

The inside of your right foot lifts as the head goes rightward. You feel how that's a congruent pattern. In other words, your foot is inviting a movement in this direction. And this way, your foot is inviting a movement in that direction. Yeah?

Of course, we'll change that in a little bit.

But see if you can track that from your foot through your knee. Don't let the knee just drop down, right? It's a differentiation in the ankle that makes all the difference for this lesson, and will really impact what happens in your back when you walk, and in your pelvis when you walk.

There's breathing.

And now, just last few movements, opposite direction. So as you lift the inside of your foot, your head goes left. As you lift the inside of your foot, your head goes left. As you lift the outside, the head goes right.

So in terms of direction in space, which your brain is very interested in, we're now making it more complex.

Breathing. Let the head be as light and smooth, even if it needs to be smaller, and be clear that the knee is not going left and right in space, okay?

It's much easier to do with the knee moving, but that doesn't bring the work in the ankle that we're looking for. See the possibilities in the ankle that we're looking for.

That's good. Okay, that's enough. Lower down.

[Silence 2 minutes]

Head and left foot

Bend both legs.

Open your right knee out to the side. Let's do the congruent movement, and just start with lifting the inner edge and outer edge of your left foot, so you go back and forth, just clarifying that you can have your pelvis open and do this.

That's it. And it's okay if you're still kinda working out how to lift the foot. That in itself is a pretty complex action, how to differentiate the ankle like that.

And then put your left hand on your forehead, and very gently begin. So it's left hand on the forehead, very gently. You're turning — as the inner edge lifts, the head goes left. As the outer edge lifts, the head goes right.

And you're really paying attention. It's fine if the head movement is very small, but the most important thing is that the neck is passive to the arm.

And then reverse the direction, so that the head goes left as the outer edge lifts, and the head goes right as the inner edge lifts.

And you're breathing, and everything else. Your jaw is at ease, your eyes, and do a complex action without freezing up in your skull and face and head.

That's right. Okay, that's good. Leave that and lower down.

[Silence 38 seconds]

Foot on the lower leg

Bend your legs, left knee out to the side, right leg standing.

And this time, stand the right foot on the left lower leg, maybe near the ankle, or a little above if you can.

Standing on the left lower leg, and — in this odd configuration, once again, lift the inner edge and the outer edge. Just feel that movement.

For a number of times. Just see what this means.

Really pay attention. Inner edge, outer edge. Differentiate the knee as much as you can, so as that inner edge lifts.

If we go unconscious, the knees start going left and right. They'll start swinging. It's much easier to do it that way. Sometimes we need a help.

Beware of your toes. The toes are not doing a lift, right? We're differentiating the toes. They want to take over.

That's it, right there. That feel right there. That's it, right?

Okay, and put your right hand on your head and see if you can have your head freely moving, and this strange movement of your foot.

Breath gets softer.

Feldenkrais really had this — I still find it an incredible insight — that it's really how you do the movement, that for it to get integrated, your breath needs to be free while you're moving. Your head and neck can't be clamping. Your eyes can't be fixating. It needs to get organized through the whole brain.

Okay, and just change over your legs and change over your hands. So the right knee out to the side, left foot standing on the lower leg somewhere.

And if the lower leg is too much, you can stand on your ankle.

And just see if you can find a way to have that right leg open like that, and you're differentiating your left leg in this way.

Breathing comfortably. Checking into the knee.

Left hand on the head. See what it's like to turn the head cleanly.

As you breathe, see how this mobility of attention is so key. Everything — be with the breath, and the head, and the foot.

Okay, that's enough. Lower down. Enjoy resting here on the floor.

[Silence 53 seconds]

Ankle on an angle

Bend both legs, left knee out to the side, and this time put the outer edge of your right foot on your left leg, someplace kind of near your knee, but not above your knee — on the lower leg, someplace near your knee.

And so the outer edge of your right foot. The right knee will be oriented rightward, very rightward.

And in this position, could you find a way to bring the inner edge forward?

Now the knee's gonna have to move in this position.

[Student:] What do you mean, forward?

[Russell:] Just what we've been doing. Just like that, and then the outer edge.

So you're doing the same movement of your ankle, but now you're not on a flat foot. You're on an angled foot.

And you feel how you can bring — how you can really differentiate your ankle in this unusual position. The knee will move more, but still not just swinging the knee. It's more the feeling.

So we begin within this position, and then you're moving like this. But the knee moves as little as possible, but it's going to probably move more than if they go forward.

So the right knee is quite open, if possible.

[Student:] When the foot — the sole of the foot is on the leg instead of the floor, it's a lower sensation. And the toes are curling much more. I'm like, you know, like I go like that, I go like — yeah.

[Russell:] So in this direction, it's okay for the toes to come down, just not to lift them. It's not that mechanical. So we're not lifting the toes, that's it. It's like the toes could sweep under, that's it.

And feel how you can let that right knee be quite open and still move the ankle. Yeah.

And leave it, lengthen your legs, and see if this maybe also influences the folding of your legs when you're sitting.

[Silence 41 seconds]

Bend your legs, the right knee open, and then have the outside of the left foot on your right thigh, near the knee, the left knee open out.

Pay attention that you don't strain.

[Student:] Rest up in the leg, just rest, or?

[Russell:] Yeah, that's right. The leg can be open, as open as it's comfortable.

And then from there, find how you would bring the inner edge. You know, do the same movement of your ankle. So now you're bringing the inner edge up. And then the outer edge. That's right.

And feel how that goes through your knee, through your hip joint, to move your ankle with the knee open.

That's right. Yeah. And less lifting the toes, if possible. Right.

Breathing, please, sometimes.

That's great. Now, give it again. Much more. That's good. That's good. Yes.

That's good. Okay. Nice.

Okay, move it. Lengthen your legs. Like that.

Opening like a frog

And just with your legs long like that, push out the insides of both feet, and then the outside. The inside and the outside. Just go back and forth like that.

Can you turn through the leg? There'll be some movement through your leg, but you're not intentionally opening the knees. You're just letting it go through your legs into your hip joints. That's right.

And let those — now, when you move the outer edges forward, feel that turning all the way through your hip joints. There, less with the toes.

This is where we — so we're looking at this movement, this. Yes. You're right. So, into the outer edge, and that's that movement, right there. That's it.

And then — now we're going to change this. With the outer edge coming forward, let the knees open. Just let the knees open, and then lengthen the legs again.

So let the knees open as if the opening is coming from this turning of your ankles. That pattern goes all the way through, and it's like the outside edges of your feet slide up a little bit towards your pelvis. Like your heels come a bit towards your pelvis, and your knees open wide.

That's it. That's it.

So your feet — your heels get a little closer to your pelvis. As if you're — huh? Yeah. They have to move up to get closer to your pelvis. That's it. That's right.

Just like a frog's legs opening. The opening from way down the feet, and that goes all the way through. That's beautiful.

You know, this will impact your pictures. That's — yeah.

Okay, let's leave that. Pause here.

Standing

Okay, roll to your side. Come up to standing.

You ever heard of that? Works in you.

Feel the pattern through your body all the way into the ground, and experiment in whatever ways are interesting to you — to just stand, or to step.

You know what parts of your feet you're standing on?

[Student:] It's really different.

[Russell:] It's really different, yeah. What kind of support do you get?

[Student:] It's a really big shift in my left and right hemisphere.

[Russell:] You really feel it up there, yeah.

Feldenkrais had this tremendous notion that other healing systems have. He articulates it a little differently — that if your nervous system is given an option, given a choice of a pattern of movement, or a new possibility, all things being equal, it will choose a more optimal pattern.

And so what his idea was, not to tell you what to do, but to free your system enough that — oh, I could be on this part of my foot, I could be on this part of my foot. My knee can take weight through here, my knee can take weight through — it can go through my hip joint this way.

Okay, now stand and walk, and feel. Does your system kind of take in some of that possibility and work with it? Not that you direct it, but you go, oh, that's occurring.

What's your clear note?

[Student:] I feel so much support. Like I feel like I'm touching the ground for the first time. So much support there.

[Russell:] With it, yeah.

Okay, let's go have lunch.