

The Dynamic Musician Series:

Dynamic Stability and Breath Volume 1

Four *Feldenkrais Method*® *Awareness Through Movement*® audio lessons and guidebook. For wind instrumentalists and vocalists of all levels and abilities.

Improve your sound quality, pitch and expressive capabilities, make practicing more comfortable and enhance your musical performance

By John Tarr

Table of Contents

Introduction	2
What is Dynamic Stability and Breath?	3
How to use this series	5

Part one

Audio Lessons

Guidelines for using the audio lessons	6
Lesson 1: Introduction and freeing the sides of your torso	8
Lesson 2: Folding and unfolding your torso while sitting	10
Lesson 3: Side lying and gentle twisting, breathing with a gentle twist	12
Lesson 4: Pelvic rolling with breathing	14
Where to go from here	15

Part two

Body warm ups

Guidelines for doing the body warm ups	16
Body warm-up 1: Side bending and breathing while sitting	18
Body warm-up 2: Side bending and breathing while standing	20
Body warm-up 3: Folding and unfolding your torso while sitting	22
Body warm-up 4: Gentle turning while sitting	24
Body warm-up 5: Gently twisting your torso while standing	25
Body warm-up 6: Circling your chest and elbows while sitting	26
Body warm-up 7: Exhaling and inhaling while rolling your pelvis	28
Information about the Feldenkrais Method®	29
Additional reading sources	30
About the Author	32

Introduction

I still remember the feeling while playing my trombone after the very first lesson. The others in the room noticed too. My sound was much bigger, clearer and easier to produce than before. And standing felt so pleasant and comfortable. “Wow, could lying on the floor and doing those tiny little movements really improve my sound that much?” During the lesson I had thought I was wasting my time, because the movements were so small and slow, and we kept taking pauses even when I could have done much more. After that experience, my mind was made up. I wanted to know more.

This pivotal experience took place in a Feldenkrais Method® (FM) workshop for musicians. While working as a freelance musician, I knew many friends and colleagues who were suffering from pain and injuries as a result of the long and stressful hours of practicing and performing. Most people accepted the discomfort as just part of being a musician. This didn't seem quite right to me, so I began to look for answers outside of the music profession. Of the many methods I investigated, the one that impressed me the most was the FM, partly because of my own personal experience and also that the FM is based on learning and experience rather than having to buy into a belief system or theory. I found out that there was a Feldenkrais® Professional Teachers' Training Program starting soon and promptly enrolled.

However, as I learned more and more about the FM, I began to realize that it has as much to offer in the realm of performance enhancement as it does in the prevention and alleviation of performance related maladies. After finishing the Training, I began using the FM in my private practice. I also started using the FM with my trombone students and found that having a student do a few little movements often corrected a problem much faster than when using verbal explanations or demonstrations. Students could feel for themselves what I was talking about. As more and more professional musicians began coming to my practice, I developed a series of lessons that I named the Dynamic Musician Series (DMS). The first part entitled “Dynamic Stability and Breath,” contains lessons that have proved to be very effective in increasing breath control and capacity while also improving posture, making practicing and performing more comfortable. After using these lessons with many clients and giving workshops, I decided to record the lessons so that other musicians could benefit from “Dynamic Stability and Breath.” Other forthcoming series are: “Dynamic Neck, Shoulders and Back,” “Dynamic Lips, Jaw and Tongue” and “Dynamic Arms and Hands.”

What is Dynamic Stability and Breath?

Dynamic Stability and Breath focuses on the two most fundamental aspects of singing and wind instrument playing: posture and breath. These two aspects are often thought of as separate functions, but in order to breathe well you must have a stable and free base of support while standing or sitting. If you improve your ability to sit or stand more freely and easily, your ability to breathe will also improve. My experience in working with myself, students and performers is that the most effective way to improve breathing is to include posture as well. The lessons are not a breathing method or even lessons on how to breathe correctly. Nevertheless, they will teach you how you can refine, deepen and improve your breathing which, will enhance your singing or playing and performing.

How do you define “good posture?”

A tricky question: “Good posture” is often associated with admonishments like “sit up straight” or “don’t slouch while you’re playing.” This kind of well meant advice is rarely helpful over the long term; because such advice does not help the person to whom it’s addressed find a way to be more comfortably upright. For others, “good posture” may mean holding one’s self up or being rigid and stiff, which is certainly not beneficial in learning to breathe more easily and effectively.

I would like to propose an alternative to the term “good posture.” When sitting or standing feels comfortable and breathing feels free and easy, we can say we have “Dynamic Stability.” For the remainder of this book, I will use the term “Dynamic Stability” rather than “good posture.”

Dynamic Stability means being stable and comfortable in an upright position and having the freedom to move in all directions as well.

You may not even feel that you are moving and adjusting when standing or sitting, but if you take a moment and just sit without leaning back on your chair, and paying attention to the position of your head, your breathing and the contact you have with the chair, you will begin to notice that you are making tiny little adjustments all of the time. This becomes even more obvious while standing. The mere fact that you are breathing also means you are in motion. Now try holding yourself “still” for a moment. You may notice that you begin to restrict your breathing, and actually tighten the muscles in your belly, back and chest just to keep from moving. If you do this for very long, it begins to get tiring.

At any stage in our development, regardless of age, we can refine and improve our nervous system’s ability to keep us balanced and upright. This in turn will enhance our breathing and hence benefit our singing/playing.

Next, we come to the question, “what does it mean to breathe well?”

There are as many opinions about breathing as there are teachers and performers. Some breathe the way they were taught; others have found ways that work well for them through experimentation and exploration. Is there one right way to breathe while making music? No. Do singers need to breathe differently than oboists? Absolutely. And of course, an oboist breathes differently than a flutist or tuba player. Because each person has his/her own body, habits and ideas about breathing, no two persons will ever breathe alike. Breathing is individual and changes from moment to moment. Breathing can be affected by mood, the time of day and most importantly, what you are doing. You breathe differently when you are walking than when sleeping. When hurrying, you breathe differently than when having a cup of coffee or tea. Different styles of music require various nuances in air pressure, rate of flow and breath control.

So how can you know when you are breathing well while playing or singing?

Now that is an interesting question!

At this point, I'd like to suggest an answer to the question above: You can say you are “Breathing Dynamically” when sitting or standing feels comfortable, breathing feels free and easy and you are able to produce a tone quality which is appropriate to the musical expression as well as pleasing to the ear. I use the term “Breathing Dynamically” because breathing, like stability in sitting or standing, is always changing to fit and support your actions according to the situation in which you are performing or practicing.

This of course is a simple answer to a very complex question, but the feeling of freedom and ease and tone quality are important and reliable indicators in guiding us to finding our way along the complex and sometimes confusing road to Dynamic Breathing.

Because this series is based upon awareness and experience, the best way to understand what I'm talking about is to do the audio lessons.

How to use this series

Volume 1 introduces you to the DMS lessons and focuses on Dynamic Stability in sitting and standing. You will begin to notice improvements in your posture as well as your breathing.

Volume 2 builds upon the previous lessons with more emphasis on Dynamic Breath, which explores different types of breathing so you can further refine and deepen your own personal way of breathing.

The first time through, do the lessons in the given sequence. Allow a few days or a week between the lessons and use the body warm-ups to reinforce the learning between lessons. If a particular audio lesson seems difficult or unclear, you may want to repeat it before going on to the next lesson.

After going through the lessons, you may want to go back and repeat some of the lessons to clarify or reinforce something you noticed the first time. If you feel one or more of the lessons were particularly interesting and beneficial, you can repeat the lesson(s).

I highly recommend having your instrument handy so you can play a few tones or a scale before and after each audio lesson to feel the effects. Singers can sing a few phrases or tones for the same reason. After doing this, I recommend taking a break before further practicing. Start up playing/singing slowly so you can feel the changes from the lesson and incorporate them into your singing/playing.

If it is not possible to play or sing directly after the audio lesson, be sure to do one of the corresponding Body warm-ups before starting to sing/play the next time. This will recall the material from the audio lesson and help you to integrate the learning into your singing/playing.

After you have finished the series, you can integrate the Body warm-ups into your daily practice routine. From these, you may pick and choose which ones seem most useful. You may also want to review the audio lessons from time to time to refresh your learning process. Eventually, you may come up with your own body warm-ups or integrate movements from other sources.

I have not included theoretical and anatomical explanations of “Dynamic Stability and Breath” because in depth explanations of the DMS process would greatly increase the amount of text in this book. If you need more information in this area you will find several sources on page 30, which deal with anatomical and verbal explanations of breathing.

Guidelines for using the DMS audio lessons

Before each audio lesson, read the lesson introduction in this booklet.

Find a quiet time and place where you will be undisturbed. Arrange your time during the lesson to be as distraction free as possible, ie. turn off the phone, etc.

For some of the DMS lessons, you will be lying on the floor, so you will need enough room to comfortably lie with your legs long and your arms outstretched to the sides. The floor surface needs to be soft enough so you will be comfortable, but firm enough so you can feel your contact with the floor. A hard floor (such as wood, linoleum or concrete) can be made softer with a few blankets. A mattress is too soft. The most important thing is that you are comfortable. You may also use a folded towel if you would like some support under your head (a pillow is too soft). You may find that the floor becomes more comfortable as you progress through the series of lessons.

Other lessons will be done while sitting in a chair. Use a chair or stool with no armrests and of a height that allows you to place your feet fully upon the floor. Also make sure that the seat of your chair is not sloping downward to the back. This tends to rock your pelvis backward and round your spine, making it difficult for your spine to support you head, shoulders and arms.

Wear comfortable, loose fitting clothing. Remove your shoes, glasses and belt if you have them. Make sure you are warm enough while doing the lessons.

Because these lessons are about feeling and paying attention to how you move, it is important to move slowly and gently. If you move too quickly or strain, you will miss valuable opportunities to learn. The benefit these lessons offer come from sensing and feeling, not from stretching and strengthening, which means less is more.

Rest more often than you need to. During the lessons, you will be given many opportunities to rest. You may not even feel tired or that you need a rest. Take one anyway. If you feel tired before a pause is given, you can pause earlier. You can even stop the CD and rest longer if needed. Rests are very important because they allow your nervous system to integrate the changes which will occur from doing the movements. The feeling of fatigue or strain interferes with the learning process because your nervous system becomes preoccupied with feeling the tiredness, instead of the effects of the movements.

If you have chronic pain or injury and find that doing some of the movements aggravates your condition, you may need to modify the movements to suit your particular abilities. You may experience some improvement or elimination of chronic pain symptoms from doing the lessons. If you have serious symptoms, you should seek the advice of your physician, before starting the lessons.

Each lesson begins and ends with a body scan while sitting, lying or standing. The purpose of the scan is to guide your attention to certain areas of your body and to provide a context in which you may feel the effects of the lessons. During the scan, I will be asking questions like: “Does one leg seem heavier than the other?” “Notice where you feel some ease in breathing,” or directing your attention to certain parts of your body. You may not sense some of the differences I mention, which is fine. You may also sense some things that I don’t mention and this is perfectly normal. As you progress throughout the lessons, your ability to sense and feel yourself will grow and become more acute.

Because some of the lessons are done while lying on the floor and others in sitting, the positions will be listed at the beginning of the lesson introduction so you can prepare your working space before starting the lesson.

Each introduction has a few photos, which I call “visual cues” to help orientate you to some of the positions and movements during the lessons. These are suggestions and do not have to be exactly as in the picture.

When breathing during the lessons, make sure your breath is free and easy. In some parts of the lessons, you will be asked to coordinate your breathing with your movement or you will be asked to breathe while staying in a certain position. There is no need to make a sound or breathe in a special way while doing this. Make sure your throat and lips are open if you are breathing through your mouth. I suggest doing some breathing through your nose as well.

In some of the lessons you will need to get up from lying to standing. This transition is very important for bringing the learning from lying into being upright. It is important to get up by slowly rolling to one side and then coming up to sitting. Sit for a moment and then slowly come up to standing. When you are standing, take a few moments to feel your feet on the floor and your breathing. Take some time to walk around before continuing with your practicing or daily activities.

If you decide you want to repeat some (or all) of the lessons, you can skip the introduction on the CD.

Now you’re ready to get started!

Lesson 1

Introduction and freeing the sides of your torso

CD 1: Introduction Track 1
Lesson 1 Track 2

Lesson Positions: Standing and Lying

Corresponding body warm-ups

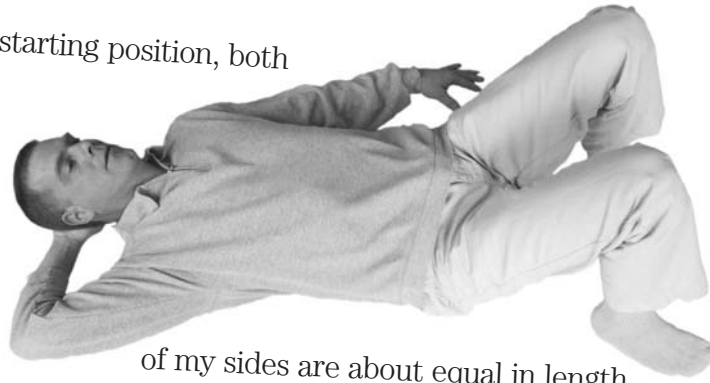
- | | |
|--|---------|
| 1. Side bending and breathing while sitting | Page 18 |
| 2. Side bending and breathing while standing | Page 20 |

The lesson begins with a short body scan in standing and then proceeds while lying on your back. Make sure you have your floor space set up before you begin.

This lesson will introduce you to the DMS lessons and begin with stability and freedom in standing. You will also begin to sense differences between your left and right sides. Because we use our right and left sides in very different ways, we are not entirely symmetrical, and never will be. Most of us have a preferred hand for writing; one of our eyes is more dominant than the other. One ear is better able to hear than the other. Our right lung has three lobes and our left has two to allow room for the heart. In the standing part of this lesson, you may notice that you seem to stand more comfortably with your weight distributed slightly more on one leg than the other. In the playing of an instrument, we also use ourselves in a non-symmetrical fashion. With some instruments, this is more pronounced than others. The flute and horn are two examples. Other instruments may seem more symmetrical, trumpet or clarinet for example, but the use of the hands is very different in playing. Singing may seem to be the most symmetrical, but if you observe carefully, you may find that you tend to have one foot a bit more forward than the other, or stand with more weight on one leg than the other.

During this lesson, and subsequent lessons, you will feel some subtle and perhaps some not so subtle differences between your left and right sides. Becoming aware and recognizing these differences is a very important aspect of the lessons. Some of the differences you feel may even lessen. Other differences will accompany us through our lives, but we will be more aware of them and understand their value in learning.

Here in the starting position, both



of my sides are about equal in length.

Here, my left side is shorter,

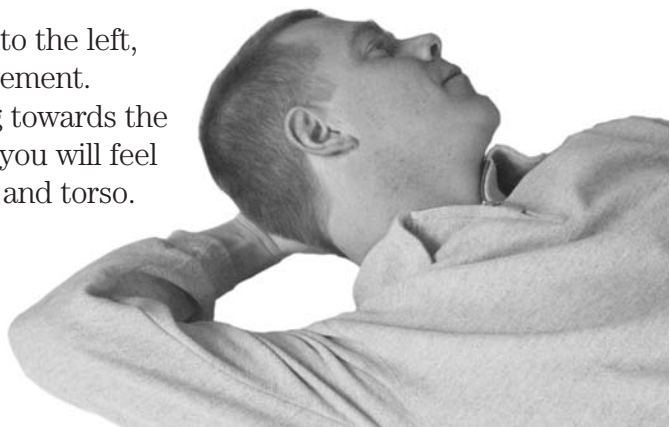


and my right side is longer.

With both arms supporting your head, alternate lengthening the right and left sides.



In this photo, I have turned my head to the left, which changes the nature of the movement. Make sure you keep your head facing towards the ceiling as in the other photos so that you will feel the side bending in your whole spine and torso.



Lesson 2

Folding and unfolding your torso while sitting

CD 1: Introduction Track 3
Lesson 2 Track 4

Lesson Positions: Sitting and Standing. Have your chair ready for the beginning of the lesson.

Corresponding body warm-ups

3. Folding and unfolding your torso while sitting	Page 22
4. Gentle turning while sitting	Page 24
6. Circling your chest and elbows while sitting	Page 26

The ability to fold and lengthen your spine and trunk enhances ease in standing and sitting, as well as freeing your ribs for stability. You will also feel how the position of your pelvis affects both stability and freedom of breathing.

While doing this series, you will be able consciously and subconsciously to increase your kinesthetic acuity, which means your nervous system is working on two different levels at the same time. Some of the differences and changes that occur during a lesson are immediately noticeable while others might be noticed later in the day, the next day or next week. The lessons can also have a cumulative effect so that something you may have unconsciously learned in a previous lesson will become consciously noticeable later in another lesson. Additionally, although this series of lessons focuses on Dynamic Stability and Breath for music making, you may well experience improvements in other areas of your life.



Lesson 3

Side lying and gentle twisting, breathing with a gentle twist

CD 2: Introduction Track 1
Lesson 3 Track 2

Lesson Positions: Side lying and standing with feet crossed

Corresponding body warm-ups

- | | |
|--|---------|
| 4. Gentle turning while sitting | Page 24 |
| 5. Gently twisting your torso while standing | Page 25 |

The ability to turn freely in both directions is an important aspect of Dynamic Stability as well as everyday life. The turning movements in this lesson focus primarily on the chest and ribs and pelvis. When these are freer to turn, you will experience more freedom in your neck and shoulders and it is much easier to experience the feeling of length while being upright. It is important that the turning movements in this lesson are done slowly and gently so as to maximize their effect. If you have a history of discomfort or pain in your lower back and/or neck, it is especially important to move slowly and gently.

The first three lessons focus on softening and freeing the chest and spine through gentle bending and turning. Having the freedom to turn and bend in the chest is essential to Dynamic Stability, and will make being upright even easier as well as free up the movements of the ribs. There are some schools of breathing which advocate holding the chest open and up, or even holding it still while breathing when playing or singing. Followers of these schools may question the usefulness of this series because it encourages gentle movements in the chest, back and sides as well as in the abdomen. Holding your chest still or open while breathing not only restricts some of your natural lung capacity; it also interferes with Dynamic Stability. Breathing which includes movements in the chest does not have to be dramatic or induce the raising of the shoulders.

I have put some support under my head so that my neck is roughly parallel to the floor.



In the starting position, both of my arms are long and my left hand is resting on the right.



While sliding your arm forward and back, make sure it stays long.

Gently twisting just as far as is comfortable.



You may need to adjust the position of your feet so you feel stable and balanced. If having your feet crossed is too unstable or uncomfortable, you may place your feet parallel to one another. Make sure that your pelvis stays facing forward while turning your chest and head.

Lesson 4

Pelvic rolling with breathing

CD 2: Introduction Track 3
Lesson 4 Track 4

Lesson positions: Lying, propped up on your elbows and sitting (Have your chair ready for the end of the lesson)

Corresponding body warm-ups

3. Folding and unfolding your torso while sitting	Page	22
7. Exhaling and inhaling while rolling your pelvis	Page	28

In this lesson, you will sense how you can separate your breathing from the movements of your pelvis and your strong abdominal muscles. Doing this allows your pelvis and spine to support you in being upright and your breathing to be free and flexible to adjust to the musical demands of your singing/playing. Some of the movements may feel strange or unfamiliar at first, so make sure you do the movements slowly and gently.

You may have sensed in lesson two that while gradually reducing the rocking of your pelvis you found the place where being upright felt easy and comfortable. You may also have sensed that certain positions inhibited your breath capacity, which demonstrates that your pelvis needs to be free to adjust to the small movements you make while sitting or standing.



Where to go from here

So now that you have completed the audio lessons in volume 1, I hope you are feeling that being upright and breathing have become easier and freer, i.e. more “dynamic.” To further your improvement and learning, I recommend volume 2 of this series. Volume 2 builds upon and develops the process started in volume 1 with greater emphasis on the movements of Dynamic Breath.

You may also have noticed that after an audio lesson you feel the improvements quite clearly and then as time rolls on the effects begin to “wear” off. There may be several reasons for this. One is that after a lesson you feel some clear changes which enhance your singing/playing and then, as you integrate them in to your normal self, the changes feel less dramatic. Another reason is that you may be dealing with strong habits developed over many years. These habits have been more or less successful so far, so your nervous system may not see the need to change.

For example, if you feel more comfortable or secure standing more on one leg than the other and have done this for a long time and in many situations, you will most likely resort to that pattern in times of pressure or stress. One way to change this pattern is to first be aware of it and then to review some of the lessons from this book. Changing such patterns often takes place over a longer period of time.

After workshops I am often asked, “how can I make the improvements stick?” My reply to this question is to ask, “how do you make improvements for example in your embouchure or tone quality stick?” The answer is usually that you have to keep working to improve for the whole of your musical life. This is the same with breathing and being upright, there is no one “right way” and then you are finished. My goal is to stimulate you to look for new possibilities and answers, as you would learn new music and in refining your technique. Another possibility would be to seek out the help of a Feldenkrais Practitioner (or other practitioner) to continue your learning. There are also many Feldenkrais Awareness Through Movement® lessons available on cassette and CD. I firmly believe that some sort of body awareness practice should be an integral part in the study and practice of music.

Body warm-ups

Body warm-ups are to be used between the audio lessons to reinforce the learning process and as a short preparation for practicing/performing. These lessons are short and can be done wherever you are practicing or warming up. After you have gone through the audio lessons, you may use the body warm-ups in any way you feel suits your needs that day.

A few guidelines

Do all of the movements slowly and gently. Make sure you are comfortable while moving.

Never strain or stretch while doing the movements.

Pause or rest before you feel any signs of fatigue.

Use the Body warm-ups before singing or playing at the beginning of your practice session.

You can also use the lessons during or after a practice session to refresh yourself or take a break.

Body Warm-up Table of Contents

1. Side bending and breathing while sitting	18
2. Side bending and breathing while standing	20
3. Folding and unfolding your torso while sitting	22
4. Gentle turning while sitting	24
5. Gently twisting your torso while standing	25
6. Circling chest and elbows while sitting	26
7. Exhaling and inhaling while rolling your pelvis	28

1. Side bending and breathing while sitting

1. Sit so that your back and pelvis are free from the back of the chair. Have your feet resting fully on the floor and a comfortable distance apart from each other. Make sure your knees are over your feet so that your lower legs are roughly perpendicular to the floor. If your feet do not easily rest on the floor then sit a bit more forward on the chair.
2. Notice your ease in sitting now. Where do you feel that sitting is comfortable, where could it be more comfortable?
3. Feel your breathing and notice where you feel ease, notice where you might like to feel more ease. Where is the movement of your breath most prominent, in your chest, belly, back or sides?

Notice if you feel some slight sense of expansion and contraction in your sides as you inhale and exhale. Does one side seem freer or more noticeable than the other side? Does one side of your torso feel longer than the other?

4. How is your weight distributed on your pelvis? Do you sit with more weight on one side of your pelvis? Does one side of your pelvis seem to rest more fully on the chair or have more contact with the seat of the chair?

Shift your weight a tiny bit more to the side that is already bearing more weight and back. If you don't feel a difference, choose one side. Do this slowly several times and then rest. Shift over to the other side several times to compare the sides. Does one side seem easier than the other?

Come back to the middle and rest.

5. With your L arm hanging relaxed at your side, begin to raise your L shoulder a little bit towards your L ear and slowly let it return. Your L arm will slide a bit up and down along your L side. Repeat this movement slowly and gently several times.

Stop and rest for a moment.

6. Raise your L shoulder a bit towards your L ear and let your head bend slightly so that your R ear moves closer to your R shoulder. Make sure you keep your face facing forward so that there is no turning in your neck. Your R arm and shoulder may slide down a bit to the right.
7. Place the palm of your R hand on top of your head so your elbow is pointing to the right. While keeping your face forward as it is now (this is very important), shorten your R side so that your elbow moves in the direction of the floor somewhere just to the right of your chair. Allow your L side to lengthen. Both feet stay fully on the floor and make sure both sides of your pelvis stay in contact with the chair. Breathe out as your R side shortens and inhale as you come back up to the middle. Your L arm is relaxed and hanging from your shoulder. Repeat this slowly and gently several times.

Come back to the middle and rest your R arm.

8. Place the palm of your R hand on top of your head so your elbow is pointing to the right. Bend to the right shortening your R side 2 or 3 times. The next time you bend to the right, stop for a moment and notice how it feels to breathe in this position. Compare the feeling in your R side as compared to your L side. Gently breathe into your L side and let the air help your L side to lengthen and soften a bit.

Come back to the middle and rest. Your arms can rest on your thighs if you want. Notice if you feel some more differences between L and R, or less.

9. With your R arm hanging relaxed at your side, begin to raise your R shoulder a little bit towards your R ear and slowly let it return. Your R arm will slide a bit up and down along your R side. Repeat this movement slowly and gently several times.

Stop and rest for a moment.

10. Raise your R shoulder a bit towards your R ear and let your head bend slightly so that your L ear moves closer to your L shoulder. Make sure you keep your face facing forward so that there is no turning in your neck. Your L arm and shoulder may slide down a bit to the left.

Stop and rest for a moment.

11. Place the palm of your L hand on top of your head so your elbow is pointing to the left. While keeping your face forward as it is now (again, this is very important), shorten your L side so that your elbow moves in the direction of the floor somewhere just to the left of your chair. Allow your R side to lengthen. Both feet stay fully on the floor and make sure both sides of your pelvis stay in contact with the chair. Breathe out as your L side shortens and inhale as you come back up to the middle. Your R arm is relaxed and hanging from your shoulder. Repeat this slowly and gently several times.

Come back to the middle and rest your L arm.

12. Place the palm of your L hand on top of your head so your elbow is pointing to the left and bend to the left and back several times. The next time you bend to the left, stop for a moment and notice how it feels to breathe in this position. Compare the feeling in your L side as compared to your R side. Gently breathe into your R side and let the air help your R side to lengthen and soften a bit.

Come back to the middle and rest your hands on your thighs. Notice the contact you have with the chair now. Notice the length of the sides of your torso.

13. Interlace your fingers and place the palms of your hands on top of your head. Your elbows are pointing out to the sides and your hands and arms are soft and as relaxed as possible. Make sure that your arms and hands are light enough so that your head and neck feel comfortable.
14. Begin to slowly shorten your L side and lengthen your R side bending over to the left. Make sure your face stays looking forward. Come back to the middle and gently bend over to the right. Make sure you are allowing your sides to lengthen without stretching them. Both feet stay fully on the floor and both sides of your pelvis stay in contact with the chair. Repeat this slowly and gently several times.

Come back to the middle and rest your arms on your thighs. Compare your breathing and sitting now with how it was the beginning. Shift your weight a few times.

While singing/playing, experiment with noticing if you shift your weight more onto one side of your pelvis or the other. Perhaps this changes as you sing/play, or do you mostly stay with more weight on one side of your pelvis? Try shifting a tiny bit while playing/singing and notice if there is change in your breathing or sound quality.

2. Side bending and breathing while standing

1. Stand with your feet a comfortable distance apart. Let your arms hang down at your sides. Notice the way your weight is distributed on your feet. Does one foot or leg seem to be bearing more of your weight than the other? Does the weight distribution seem to be about the same on both feet?
2. Notice how standing feels and if you would like to adjust your feet a bit, perhaps placing one or both of your feet closer together or farther apart.
3. Notice your breathing, where do you feel ease of movement, where would you like to feel more freedom to breathe? Notice if you feel some slight sense of expansion and contraction in your sides as you inhale and exhale. Does one side seem freer or more noticeable than the other side?
4. Slowly and gently shift your weight onto the foot that already bears more weight and then back to the middle. If your feet feel the same, choose one foot. This shifting is very small and both feet will stay in contact with the floor. Repeat this several times, noticing if anything changes in your breathing while shifting.

Come back to the middle and rest for a moment.

5. Slowly and gently shift your weight to the other foot and back. How is this side different than the other? What happens with your breathing?

Come back to the middle and rest for a moment.

6. Shift your weight a bit to one side, back to the middle and then to the other side. Notice if your breathing affects this movement, or if the movement affects your breathing. Does it seem easier to breathe while shifting to one side than to the other?

Come back to the middle and rest for a moment.

7. With your L arm hanging relaxed at your side, begin to raise your L shoulder a little bit towards your L ear and slowly let it return. Your L arm will slide a bit up and down along your L side. Repeat this movement slowly and gently several times.

Stop and rest for a moment.

8. Raise your L shoulder a bit towards your L ear and let your head bend slightly so that your R ear moves closer to your R shoulder. Make sure you keep your face facing forward so that there is no turning in your neck. Your R arm and shoulder may slide down a bit to the right.
9. Place the palm of your R hand on top of your head so your elbow is pointing to the right. While keeping your face forward as it is now (this is very important), shorten your R side so that your elbow moves in the direction of the floor somewhere just to the right of your R foot. Allow your L side to lengthen. Both feet stay on the floor and make sure your pelvis stays facing forward. Breathe out as your R side shortens and inhale as you come back up to the middle. Your L arm is relaxed and hanging from your shoulder. Repeat this slowly and gently several times.
10. The next time you bend to the right, stop for a moment and notice how it feels to breathe in this position. Compare the feeling in your R side as compared to your L side. Gently breathe into your L side and let the air help your L side to lengthen and soften a bit.

Come back to the middle and rest. Let your R arm hang down at your side. Notice if you feel some more or less differences between your L and R sides.

11. Shift your weight a bit more onto the R foot, and then onto the L foot, comparing the sides now.
12. With your R arm hanging relaxed at your side, begin to raise your R shoulder a little bit towards your R ear and slowly let it return. Your R arm will slide a bit up and down along your R side. Repeat this movement slowly and gently several times.

Stop and rest for a moment.

13. Raise your R shoulder a bit towards your R ear and let your head bend slightly so that your L ear moves closer to your L shoulder. Make sure you keep your face facing forward so that there is no turning in your neck. Your L arm and shoulder may slide down a bit to the left.
14. Place the palm of your L hand on top of your head so your elbow is pointing to the left. While keeping your face forward as it is now (this is very important), shorten your L side so that your elbow moves in the direction of the floor somewhere just to the left of your L foot. Allow your R side to gently lengthen. Both feet stay on the floor and make sure your pelvis stays facing forward. Breathe out as your L side shortens and inhale as you come back up to the middle. Your R arm is relaxed and hanging from your shoulder. Repeat this slowly and gently several times.
15. The next time you to bend to the left, stop for a moment and notice how it feels to breathe in this position. Compare the feeling in your R side as compared to your L side. Gently breathe into your R side and let the air help your R side to lengthen and soften a bit.

Come back to the middle and rest. Let your L arm hang down at your side. Notice if your sides feel more even now.

16. Shift your weight a bit more onto one foot, and then onto the other foot, comparing both sides now.

Come back to the middle and rest.

17. Interlace your fingers and place the palms of your hands on top of your head. Your elbows are pointing out to the sides and your hands and arms are soft and as relaxed as possible. Make sure that your arms and hands are light enough so that your head and neck feel comfortable.
18. Begin to slowly shorten the L side and lengthen the R side bending over to the left. Make sure your face stays looking forward. Come back to the middle and gently bend over to the right. Repeat this slowly and gently several times. Make sure you are allowing your sides to lengthen without stretching them. Both feet stay fully on the floor and your pelvis stays facing forward.

Come back to the middle and let your arms hang down at your sides. Compare your breathing and standing now to the beginning. Shift your weight a few times.

While singing/playing, experiment with noticing if you shift your weight more onto one foot or the other. Perhaps this changes as you sing/play, or you mostly stay with more weight on one foot? Try shifting a tiny bit while playing/singing and notice if there is change in your breathing or sound quality.

3. Folding and unfolding your torso while sitting.

1. Sit so that your back and pelvis are free from the back of the chair. Have your feet resting fully on the floor and a comfortable distance apart from each other. Make sure your knees are over your feet so that your lower legs are roughly perpendicular to the floor. If your feet do not easily rest on the floor then sit a bit more forward on the chair.
2. Notice where you feel the movement of your breathing. Do you feel movement in your chest, belly and or back? Where would you like to feel more movement?

Notice where your eyes are looking, are you looking at the horizon, or slightly above or below the horizon?

3. Let your eyes sink down slowly as if you wanted to look down toward your thighs. Gently let your head follow and come back up. Repeat this several times exhaling as your head and eyes sink to look towards the floor and then rest for a moment.
4. Begin to move your eyes as if you wanted to look up to the ceiling and let your head gently support the movement of your eyes. Look up only as far as is comfortable and easy, it does not matter if you see the ceiling. After repeating this several times, come back to the horizon and rest.

Feel the contact you have with the seat of the chair. Look up and down a bit and notice if the contact with the chair changes as you look up and down. Does your pelvis roll a bit on the chair?

5. Place the palms of your hands softly on your forehead with your elbows facing forward. Make sure your fingers are pointing towards the top of your head. Begin to slowly roll your pelvis back a bit while you lower your elbows and head together in the direction of your thighs. Your palms stay in contact with your forehead. Let your chest soften and your whole back round a bit as you sink down. Repeat this slowly and gently several times, exhaling while lowering and inhaling when coming back. Rest after repeating this movement a four to five times. Let your arms rest on your thighs.
6. Bring your hands up to your forehead as before roll your pelvis back while letting your head and arms sink down a comfortable amount. Do this 2 or 3 times and then stay with your back rounded. Notice your breathing in this position. Where does the movement of your breathing feel more restricted because of this bent position? Imagine the air coming in and massaging the inside of your upper and middle back. Use your breathing to gently soften and fill your upper and middle back. After several breaths, come back up and rest your arms on your thighs for a moment.

7. Bring your hands back up to your forehead as before and roll your pelvis a bit forward while raising your head and elbows in the direction of the ceiling and come back. Make sure you stay in a comfortable easy range of movement. Inhale as you look up and let your breast bone slide up and your belly get a bit rounder. Continue this movement several more times and then rest.
8. With your hands back up to your forehead, begin looking up towards the ceiling while raising your elbows with your head. Do this 2 or 3 times and then pause while your elbows are pointed comfortably above the horizon. Notice where your breathing feels more restricted because of this position. Breathe into the front of your chest and belly, letting the air gently massage and soften the front of you. After several breaths, return to the horizon and rest your arms.
9. Notice your sitting and breathing now. Does sitting feel a bit easier than before? Does breathing seem a bit freer? If so where do you notice that it feels freer?
10. Notice where you are looking relation to the horizon now. Look down and up slowly and gently, notice if your neck feels freer. Do you sense more of your spine supporting your neck as compared to before?

4. Gentle turning while sitting

1. Sit so that your back and pelvis are free from the back of the chair. Have your feet resting fully on the floor and a comfortable distance apart from each other. Make sure your knees are over your feet so that your lower legs are roughly perpendicular to the floor. If your feet do not easily rest on the floor then sit a bit more forward on the chair.
2. Slowly and gently turn your head to look a bit to the right, and then to the left. Your pelvis stays in contact with the chair and your feet rest fully on the floor. Notice if one side feels freer or easier than the other side. Notice if you feel other parts of you turning with your neck and head. Rest after repeating this movement several times.
3. Place the palms of your hands on your forehead with your elbows facing forward, fingers resting softly on your head and pointing towards the top of your head. Begin to turn your head, arms and shoulders to the right, and back again. Repeat this several times and then rest with your arms in your lap.
4. Place the palms of your hands on your forehead with your elbows facing forward, as before. Begin to turn your head, arms and shoulders to the right, and back again. Repeat this several times and then pause turned comfortably to the right. Take several breaths in this turned position and notice where your breathing feels more restricted. Gently breathe into the L side of your back several times. Come back to the middle and rest with your arms in your lap.
5. With your hands resting in your lap, turn your head to look to the right and left several times to compare. Rest for a moment.
6. Place the palms of your hands on your forehead with your elbows facing forward. Begin to turn your head, arms and shoulders to the left, and back again. Repeat this several times and then rest with your arms in your lap.
7. Place the palms of your hands on your forehead with your elbows facing forward. Begin to turn your head, arms and shoulders to the left, and back again. Repeat this several times and then pause turned comfortably to the left. Take several breaths in this turned position and notice where your breathing feels more restricted. Gently breathe into the R side of your back several times. Come back to the middle and rest with your arms in your lap.
8. Place the palms of your hands on your forehead and turn once to the right and then to the left. Repeat this several times noticing the turning in your shoulders, chest and sides. Come back to the middle and rest.
9. With your hands on your thighs, turn your head to look to the left and right, comparing this to the beginning of the lesson. Does turning feel freer, easier or smoother? Come back to the middle and notice what it feels like to sit now.

Notice if you tend to turn a bit to the left or right while singing/playing. Experiment with turning a bit to one side then to the other and notice if this has an effect on your breathing and/or sound quality.

5. Gently twisting your torso while standing

1. Stand with your feet a comfortable distance apart. Gently turn your head to look to one side and then the other. Does one side seem easier or freer than the other? Do you feel yourself turning in your neck? How about your shoulders, chest, pelvis?
2. Cross your R foot in front of your L foot. You may need to experiment with the position of your R foot to find a place where you feel stable.
3. Place the palm of your R hand so that your fingers are pointing to the left and your elbow is pointing to the right. Your L arm can hang down at your side. Gently turn your head, shoulders and chest to the right and back several times. Make sure your feet stay fully in contact with the floor. Rest your R arm and uncross your legs.
4. Cross your R foot in front of your L foot and place the palm of your R hand so that your fingers are pointing to the left and your elbow is pointing to the right. Gently turn to the right 2 or 3 times and then pause turned to the right. Take several breaths noticing where your breathing feels more restricted because of your chest being turned like this. Is there somewhere where your breathing actually feels freer? Come back to the middle, uncross your legs and rest your arm down at your side.
5. Turn to look right and left to compare that to your turning in the beginning. Rest.
6. Cross your L foot in front of your R foot. You may need to experiment with the position of your L foot to find a place where you feel stable.
7. Place the palm of your L hand so that your fingers are pointing to the right and your elbow is pointing to the left. Your R arm can hang down at your side. Gently turn your head, shoulders and chest to the left and back several times. Make sure your feet stay fully in contact with the floor. Rest your L arm and uncross your legs.
8. Cross your L foot in front of your R foot and place the palm of your L hand so that your fingers are pointing to right the and your elbow is pointing to the left. Gently turn to the left 2 or 3 times and then pause turned to the left. Take several breaths noticing where your breathing feels more restricted because of your chest being turned like this. Is there somewhere where your breathing actually feels freer? Come back to the middle, uncross your legs and rest your arm down at your side.
9. Compare turning to both sides now and notice if you feel more of your whole body turning with your head.

While playing/singing, notice if you tend to turn your head, shoulders, chest, pelvis or whole body a bit to one side. Experiment with turning a bit to one side and then the other. Does this have an effect on your breathing and/or sound quality?

6. Circling your chest and elbows while sitting

1. Sit so that your back and pelvis are free from the back of the chair. Have your feet resting fully on the floor and a comfortable distance apart from each other. Make sure your knees are over your feet so that your lower legs are roughly perpendicular to the floor. If your feet do not easily rest on the floor then sit a bit more forward on the chair.
2. Notice if you have a sense of ease while sitting. Are there places in your body that would begin to feel fatigue if you were to sit this way for 15 minutes or longer? What might you need to change in order to sit more comfortably?
3. Notice the sense of ease you have while breathing. Is there a correlation between the places in your body where you feel that they might become less comfortable sitting for a longer period of time and the movement of your breath?
4. Place the palms of your hands on your forehead with your elbows facing forward. Rest your fingers softly on your head so they are pointing towards the top of your head. Begin to slowly roll your pelvis back a bit while you lower your elbows and head together in the direction of thighs. Your palms stay in contact with your forehead. Let your chest soften and your whole back round a bit as you sink down. Repeat this slowly and gently several times, exhaling while lowering and inhaling when coming back up. Rest after repeating this movement a couple of times. Let your arms rest on your thighs.
5. Bring your hands back up to your forehead as before and roll your pelvis a bit forward while raising your head and elbows in the direction of the ceiling and come back. Make sure you stay in a comfortable easy range of movement. Inhale as you look up and let your breastbone slide up and your belly get a bit rounder. Continue this movement several more times and then rest.
6. With your hands on your forehead again, combine the previous two movements. Let your pelvis roll back as your elbows sink down towards your thighs while exhaling. Reverse the direction slowly and begin to roll your pelvis forward as your elbows move to point a bit above the horizon. Repeat these up and down movements several times. Make sure that you are staying in a comfortable range of movement, your feet rest fully on the floor and that your breathing is continuous. Come back to the horizon and rest your arms.
7. Place the palms of your hands on your forehead again and begin turning your elbows, head and shoulders to the right and then to the left. Stay within a comfortable easy range with your pelvis staying relatively quiet on your chair. Feel how your chest and ribs can support the turning of your shoulders. After repeating several times, rest your arms.
8. With your hands on your forehead again, roll your pelvis back as you lower your elbows a bit in the direction of your thighs. Begin to turn to the right while raising your elbows as if you were to begin to describe two quarter circles in front of you with your elbows. Your elbows stay roughly parallel and fixed in relation to each other. When your elbows are approximately at horizon level, continue raising them while turning towards the middle describing a half circle.

When your elbows have reached your mid line again, begin lowering your elbows and going to the left.

At horizon level continue sinking, but your elbows will move back towards your mid line completing the circle. Continue to circle in this fashion feeling the movements in your chest, ribs and belly. Make sure your breathing is soft and continuous. After several more circles, stop and rest.

9. Place your hands on your forehead again; lower your elbows and this time begin circling to the left so you are circling in the opposite direction from the last time. Circle slowly and in a comfortable range. After circling several times in this direction, begin to reverse the direction again. Notice if one direction is easier than the other. Begin making your circles smaller and smaller and then come to a stop and rest your hands on your thighs.
10. Notice if your sitting has become more comfortable. Is your breathing freer or easier? Perhaps you feel more balanced or lively.

When signing/playing, notice the freedom in your chest to move slightly in different directions. Do you tend to move more easily up and to the right, or left? Or do you prefer down and to the right or left? Notice if having a sense of freedom of movement in your chest influences your sense of freedom of breath?

7. Exhaling and inhaling while rolling your pelvis

1. Sit with your back and pelvis away from the back of the chair, feet resting fully on the floor. Rest your hands in your lap. Take a moment to notice the movement of your breath in your abdomen. Notice how your belly expands and contracts as you inhale and exhale.
2. As you exhale, gently roll your pelvis back and let your head sink down a bit as your back rounds. Inhale as you come up to your starting point. Notice how the contact between your pelvis and chair change as you roll back. After repeating this several times rest for a moment.
3. Begin to roll your pelvis forward as you begin to look up in the direction of the ceiling. Let your belly round as you inhale and allow your breastbone to move up a bit too. Exhale as you come back to the starting point. Rest after repeating this movement several more times.
4. Begin exhaling and rolling your pelvis back and letting your eyes look towards your thighs as your back rounds a bit. Inhale when you begin to reverse the direction and move towards looking up to the ceiling. Make sure your breathing is soft and relaxed. There is no need to make any extra sounds by breathing more forcefully or stiffening your lips and jaw. If possible, breathe through your nose. Stop and rest after repeating the movement several times.
5. This time begin inhaling as you roll your pelvis back and look downward and exhaling as you roll your pelvis forward looking up. This may feel a bit strange at first so make sure you keep the movements soft and slow. You won't be able to sink down as far when you inhale so reduce the range of movement a bit.
6. The next time you roll your pelvis back while inhaling, pause for a moment and hold your breath. Then release slowly the air (through your nose if possible) and notice if your back rounds and head sinks a tiny bit more. Come back up and repeat this 2 or 3 times and the rest.
7. Notice the movement of your belly now as you inhale and exhale. Notice if you feel tiny traces of movement in your spine and pelvis as you breathe.

While paying/singing, think of your spine and pelvis being free to support the movements of your breathing. Your pelvis can roll a bit forward and backward so you can find dynamic stability in sitting.

Information about the Feldenkrais Method®

The Feldenkrais Method® (FM) was developed by and named after Dr. Moshé Feldenkrais (1904-1984) who, in addition to being a mechanical engineer and physicist, was one of the first Europeans to hold a black belt in Judo. Dr. Feldenkrais began to develop his method as a response to a series of knee injuries. Determined to rehabilitate himself but unsatisfied with traditional medical solutions for his injuries, he began to study human development, evolution, physiology and neurology as well as many other schools of thought. In addition to facilitating his own recovery, he discovered that his ideas were applicable to many other people with a wide variety of difficulties and interests. Two of his most famous students were Yehudi Menuhin and Peter Brooks.

Dr. Feldenkrais realized that the motor cortex (the part of the brain responsible for moving muscles) is flexible and can change and adapt throughout a person's whole life. This idea is now being confirmed by modern neuroscience. What Dr. Feldenkrais also discovered is that people who engage in activities requiring a high level of skill and precision refine their movement patterns for that specific activity, but often fail to include the parts of themselves that support these functions. Of course, in order to perform at high levels, a certain degree of specialization is absolutely necessary. For musicians, this specialization in combination with stress factors (stage fright, pressure to perform, long and tiring rehearsals, etc.), may lead to overuse, and possible pain/injury.

For a long time, it was thought that the one and only way to improve musical performance was to practice, practice harder and practice longer. More recently, because many performers and even students suffer from performance and practice related maladies, enterprising musicians have been searching for answers beyond the field of music teaching and investigating other realms of learning. What many teachers, students and performers are discovering is that looking outside of the musical world not only brings relief from the maladies associated with countless hours of practicing, rehearsing and performing, but actually can enhance the study and performance of music. One realm that has proven to be very beneficial is the Feldenkrais Method®.

For example, a flutist may have cultivated his finger dexterity to a very high level, but has neglected the use of his legs and pelvis while standing. This leads to a lack of support and freedom in his shoulders, which in turn begins to limit the nimbleness of his fingers. If our flutist feels that his fingers are not working as quickly as they should, he may begin to emphasize finger exercises in his daily practice routine. Now he is working overtime with his hand and fingers to compensate for his lack of awareness in his pelvis and legs.

However, by improving the use of his legs and pelvis, standing will become easier, his shoulders freer and he will be able to improve the use of his fingers. Additionally, because standing has become easier and more comfortable, his breathing will improve, his neck will feel longer and his tongue becomes lighter and faster. So in working with parts of his body seemingly unrelated to flute playing, the flutist has prevented possible injury or damage to his fingers and improved his overall playing ability. This is one simple example of how the FM® is useful for musicians.

Additional reading:

Books by Moshé Feldenkrais on the Feldenkrais Method®

Feldenkrais, Moshe. 1991, *Awareness Through Movement*.
San Francisco: Harper San Francisco

_____. 1994, *Body Awareness As Healing Therapy: The Case of Nora*.
Frog Ltd

_____. 2003, *Body & Mature Behavior: A Study of Anxiety, Sex, Gravitation & Learning*.
International Universities Press

_____. 1981, *The Elusive Obvious*. Cupertino, California: Meta Publications

Feldenkrais, Moshe and Michaelleen Kimmey. 1992, *The Potent Self: A Guide to Spontaneity*. San Francisco: Harper San Francisco

Feldenkrais, Moshe, Michaelleen Kimmey and Mark Reese. 2002, *The Potent Self: A Study of Spontaneity & Compulsion*. Frog Ltd

Books about the Feldenkrais Method® from other authors.

Nelson, Samuel H. and Blades-Zeller, Elizabeth. 2002 *Singing with Your Whole Self*.
The Scarecrow Press, Inc.

Shafarman, Steven. 1997, *Awareness Heals*. Addison-Wesley Publishing Co., Inc.

American Suzuki Journal

“The Feldenkrais Method®, Linda Case Speaks with Paul Rubin”
Volume 23, Number 2 - February 1995

Other sources on the anatomy and theory of breathing.

Calais-Germain, Blandine. 1993, *Anatomy of Movement*. Seattle: Eastland Press Inc.

Conable, Barbara. 2000, *The Structures and Movement of Breathing*. Chicago:
GIA Publications, Inc.

Frederiksen, Brian. 1996, *Arnold Jacobs: Song and Wind*. Windsong Press Limited.

Todd, Mable. 1937, *The Thinking Body*. Pennington, NJ, Princeton Book Co.

For more information on the Feldenkrais Method® , Awareness Through Movement® tapes, books about the Method or to locate a practitioner in your area, contact:

The International Feldenkrais® Federation
www.feldenkrais-method.org

The Feldenkrais Guild®
www.feldenkrais.com
1-800-775-2118

Feldenkrais® Resources (no practitioner referrals)
830 Bancroft Way, Ste. 112
Berkeley, CA 94710
1-800-765-1907
www.feldenkrais-resources.com



About the Author

John Tarr studied Trombone Performance at the University of Northern Colorado and the San Francisco Conservatory of Music (Bachelor's and Master's Degree in Music Performance respectively). Additionally, John is a Guild Certified Feldenkrais Practitioner^{cm} working in private practice in Basel, Switzerland. He also maintains a small trombone studio and gives workshops in The Dynamic Musician Series and the Feldenkrais Method[®] in Europe and the U.S.A.

If you would like to schedule a DMS workshop at your school or in your area, find out about scheduled workshops or have questions regarding the DMS please visit the DMS web site: www.dynamicmusician.com

The Dynamic Musician Series:
Dynamic Stability and Breath-Digital Version
© 2007 by John Tarr
All rights reserved. Published 2007

CD mastering: Hans Jörg Lutz, Sky Music
Photos: Paul Rubin

Feldenkrais®, *Feldenkrais Method®*, *Awareness Through Movement®*, *Functional Integration®*,
and *Guild Certified Feldenkrais Teacher®* are registered service marks of the *Feldenkrais Guild®*
of North America;
Guild Certified Feldenkrais Practitioner^{CM} is a certification mark of the *Feldenkrais Guild®* of
North America.