A Feldenkrais lesson for the foot, on 7 July 1975 during the San Francisco training.

Notes by Lauren M. Butler, July 2020.

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The original audio of this Awareness Through Movement lesson is in two parts, labelled 707AM1p153 and 707AM2p170, from Week 4 of the training. These notes include both parts and omit most of the conversation and commentary. That which is included is in italics. In brackets are my additions/clarifications from listening to the audio many times, but which Feldenkrais does not state explicitly. Where I believe he made a mistake, I’ll put his word in quotes and my version in brackets.

This lesson may be called “Standing at the wall and prone, turning the foot”.

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*In this lesson, we will do movements that we can all do, but we don’t know how we do them. We will occasionally test that we are able to do it in standing, but find that it’s hard in a different configuration.*

**Stand** facing a wall and touch it with your hands. Support yourself so your legs can relax. Don’t try to balance.

Lift the L foot repeatedly while the heel stays on the ground.

Lift only the L toes.

Lift the foot up while the toes go down.

Lift the left heel.

“Evert”[invert] the R foot- stand on the outside. Then “invert”[evert]. Then do both.

**Lie on your back.** R leg in the air with knee bent. Flex and extend the foot.

Let your lower leg hang. Flex foot while you extend toes.

**Lie on your front.** Bend your R leg so your foot is towards the ceiling. We want to find the middle position for the foot, where it is flat to the ceiling. So flex and extend your foot as much as you can, then gradually make it smaller and smaller until it is still.

*One woman thought she was at the middle but was actually extended. This tends to happen with dancers. They have become habituated to have so much tonus in the calf that it’s like an instrument with an offset zero.*

Flex and extend the foot, but doing it with the heel. Faster, then as fast as you can. [Everything from here on is the R foot.]

Flex and extend from the foot. Faster, then as fast as you can.

Flex and extend the toes. Faster, then as fast as you can.

Flex and extend the foot, paying attention to the heel. When is it closer to you, when it is closer to the ceiling? Keep going, but switch the attention to where the foot is. Then pay attention to both the foot and the heel. Go faster, but only so long as you can keep track of where both the heel and the foot are. This means slowly at first.

Do the same thing with the heel as with the toes; when the heel goes down, the toes also go down. When the heel goes up and the foot goes down, the toes go up with the heel.

See where else you can let go of tension. Tension correlates with holding your breath. To see if you were holding your breath, **put your foot down** and see what happens. Now in that relaxed state with easy breath, **bend your leg** again without changing the breath.

Recall what we were doing before with the heel and toes doing the same thing. Imagine doing it, with your foot in the air but still. Then, do it. *It is not the way we usually move. But hands can do it easily. Imagine what it would be like to do that with your hands. There is anatomic similarity between the foot and hands, legs and arms. That indicates that improvement is possible in the foot. Many people use their feet adroitly like hands. You can watch babies, or dancers.*

**Rest.** Notice which way your head is lying. Change the direction. Notice where you’ve chosen to place your arms. Some people have them by their head, some down at their sides.

**Bend your leg.** Move your foot right and left. It stays flat. *No one is doing it.*

**Stand,** touching the wall. Move your foot R&L in a large arc. Don’t do it by twisting your body. *Everyone can do it*.

**Return to the floor.** Move your foot R&L. Then turn to look at your foot while you do it. Then keep doing it, not looking.

**Stand at the wall.** What are you doing in order to do it correctly? How are you doing it? Stand on your L knee [**kneel on your L** knee, right leg bent in front of you with the foot flat on the floor]. So that you take out the hip rotation.

**Lie on the floor**. Move your heel R&L. *You must know what you are doing so that you can do what you want.*

**Stand.**  Move your heel R&L. Imagining there’s a peg between your 1st and 2nd toe. **Kneel** and do the same. The knee doesn’t move side to side.

**On the floor,** bend your knee. This takes the knee and the hip out of the equation. Move your heel R&L, small at first. *Don’t try to go fast right away. The first will be last and the last will be first. Give yourself a chance.*

**Rest.** Find real comfort on your stomach. *Your foot is already good enough. It got you here. We’re not here to tell the foot it’s bad. We’re looking for iterative improvement, to bring out the capabilities it already has. The genetic makeup, the brain, the muscles, and bones are already there.*

**Bend your leg.** Move your big toe R&L.

**Get up, walk around**. See the improvement we’ve already made.

**Lie on your stomach**. “Evert”[invert] your foot and bring it back to center. *Some are moving it R&L, the very thing they couldn’t do before.*

**Stand.** “Evert”[invert] your foot. Curl your toes while you do it. Your foot shortens and lengthens. Do the same **kneeling.**

**Lie down.** *I am trying to make your brain better, not trying to make your foot better. We’re looking for sensory changes, changes in the impulses. That’s why we’re doing a 1-sided lesson. If I was looking to improve the muscles, we’d have to do both sides.*

**Bend your leg,** think it through. Start small, “evert”[invert] your foot. Do it small so that it can be soft, and general. *If you make it big, there will be uneven tension. More tension in one place. In a good foot, the movement will be general like it is for us now[moving small], but in the whole range.*

*If you are holding your leg not at 90°, it requires tension.*

With your foot still, imagine now standing on the inner border. Then do it.

Do both- switch between the inner and the outer borders.

Move your heel R&L.

Imagine the dial of a clock facing your heel. Starting at 12 at the top, move the dial clockwise with your heel. That means that 3:00 would be to the right, so you would go from the top towards the R side of your body and continue around [if doing the lesson with the L foot, the side of the body corresponding to clockwise is still R]. Make it small. It can be a small clock, a wristwatch. Notice, is the circle uniform? Are some hours faster? Is it essential that the toes flex so much? Reduce the power anywhere except the thing you want to do. No one needs the extra exertion.

Reverse the direction of the clock.

**Turn your head to the other side**. *Most people now have their heads facing the same direction. Most are now resting their head on the L ear.* [It’s unclear to me whether that refers to before he told them to change or after.]

Move the hands of the clock clockwise with your heel. Do it faster. It’s okay if it’s less perfect.

**Rest.** Notice your R foot on the floor. Notice the contact it makes with the floor compared to the L. Notice it’s length.

**Bend your leg,** now imagine a clock facing your big toe. Move the dial clockwise. Now 3:00 will be to the L.

Move the dial with your small toe.

**Put your foot down.** See if you can sense your middle toe. Sense your big toe, then the space between your 1st and 2nd toe. Sense your little toe, then the space between your 5th and 4th. Between your 4th and 3rd. Then sense your middle toe.

**Bend your leg**. Move the dial with your middle toe. Reverse the direction. *This is the hardest to do. Even the middle finger of the hand is the clumsiest.*

**Rest.**

**Bend your leg.** Flex and extend your foot. Then flex and extend your toes. Feel the middle toe as you do it. Sense the space between the middle and the 2nd toe. And the space between the middle and the 4th toe. Then the middle.

Flex and extend your foot, but toes moving with your heel as we did before.

Hold your foot still. Then flex and extend your toes only. Naturally, what would move in the same direction as the toes? The foot or the heel? It would be the foot. Let the foot join the direction of the toes now, as big as you can. Feel your heel as you do that.

Now flex and extend with your heel. Compare to the start. *Now most people are moving in the full range of human capability with the heel.*

Invert and evert your foot.

Move your foot R&L.

Move your heel R&L.

**Stand at the wall**. Do all the movements, in the order we just did them if you can remember. You can skip the circles with the foot and heel, but you may try them if you want.

**Kneel,** and do all the movements.

**Lie on your back.** Feel your R leg and L leg on the floor. Lift your L leg, straight. Do it a few times. Lift your R leg a few times. Just a little bit is enough. Lift your L leg, turn it in and out from the hip. Do the same with your right.

**Get up, walk** around. Feel the difference. You can try hopping on each leg. *The R leg is as you really are. L is what you did with both, before. It has the restrictions imposed on ourselves not through any fault of our own or others, but by experience of life.*