



Moving Beyond Your Limitations

Regaining and Maintaining Ageless Agility

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A return to that time before age, injury, and stress interfered...

In the fitness world, flexibility is a popular topic. There is a huge market for flexibility or exercises that stretch a muscle here or there with the promise that someday you'll touch your toes and be able to do all the yoga postures you see friends or people younger and more pliable than you perform.

Today, many of us like the idea of being flexible (as well as trim and fit) and we are surprised and concerned when we begin to feel stiff and less able to move than we did before. This creates a cycle; do we do less because we are stiff ...ordo we become stiffer because we do less?

Is it flexibility or is it 'agility' we are looking for? Perhaps for many these terms are interchangeable. However flexibility is about bending over and touching your toes, agility is about being in that position and being able to move from point A to point B quickly and easily, mind and body.

As a physical educator in the early '70s, I administered the President's Fitness Test which measured strength, flexibility, endurance, and agility. Do you remember? Endurance was running the track, strength was chin ups on the horizontal bar and sit-ups and flexibility was touching your toes. With the agility test you had to, within a time limit, move a block from one line on the floor to another and then quickly return. You were bent over and shuffling your feet as fast as possible. Being measured strong, weak, or flexible from other tasks, did not predict how well you would perform on the agility test. This test required all aspects to come together in a quick coordinated action.



In the study of kinesiology/movement, there is a principle called reciprocal innervations. This is a neurological process, coming from the brain that stimulates one muscle group (called agonists) to contract. Automatically this same stimulation inhibits the opposite group (called antagonist) from contracting. For example your biceps contract when you flex your arms and your triceps (antagonists) need to let go. If they don't, your bicep needs to work overtime. In a movement action, when the 'antagonist' does not receive the message to stop contracting, the synergistic relationship is interrupted and either there is excessive resistance which stops the action before it is designed to do so, OR twice the amount of effort on the agonists part

is required. When this continues, movements become more and more limited and you begin to feel stiff, tight and inflexible.

This naturally designed relationship between your muscles (elongating and contracting) allows for easy bending, flexing and freedom of movement. Agility is much more than stretching or being flexible. It's about moving in a coordinated natural way that is not bound with too much muscle holding or too much flexibility. It is *AGILITY* that allows us to move swiftly, physically and mentally, in a balanced way.

Classes, workshops and individual lessons in The *Feldenkrais Method*® are more like 'movement awareness' laboratories. In this laboratory you learn to use less effort and attend to your actions with curiosity while you look for variations, using minimum effort so the brain can sense the differences. It is a unique process that asks you to recognize your habitual patterns of action *that do not seem to be in harmony with the intention that you wish to perform*. Once you recognize actions that are interfering with light effortless action, you are guided to find easier, more natural ways of moving. When being agile once again becomes routine, you will find more joy in your everyday movements and experience fewer injuries.

Clients are continuously surprised at how they can re-establish the natural, easy movements they knew before age, injury and stress interfered. They are excited to be able to regain their agility and experience the power they had in their younger years.