

Feldenkrais: New Relief for Pain

by Paul Moniz / CBS 2 News

Imagine ridding yourself of neck, back, even knee pain by re-learning how to move your body. A new therapy called The

Feldenkrais Method is teaching people how to break free from pain.

Two years ago, Susan Barnett couldn't walk one city block without excruciating pain, "Not only did my back hurt, my legs hurt and various joints hurt."

Susan was diagnosed with chronic pain disorder, suffering in agony for 15 years, she was desperate for relief. CBS 2's Paul Moniz reports.

"I've done acupuncture, I've been to the major hospitals, their pain programs, I've had epidurals, trigger point injections," says Susan.

According to the American Pain Foundation, more than 50 million Americans suffer from chronic pain caused by various diseases and each year another 25 million experience acute pain as a result of injury or surgery.

Susan says she has finally found relief with this mind-body therapy called The Feldenkrais Method, it combines yoga-like movements and meditation.

It was her last resort before getting back surgery.

The method, developed by physicist Moshe Feldenkrais teaches the importance of posture and body movement.

Physical therapist and Feldenkrais

instructor Marek Wyszynski says that many sources of pain are caused by poor body mechanics, "Many of us will sit incorrectly, we'll sit in a way that will contribute to neck pain, to headaches, to lower back pain."

Feldenkrais can be practiced in a group or individual session.

Both Marek and Susan work together to explore subtle movements while noting and avoiding areas of strain.

"How I move my pelvis, how I move my chest, how I move my shoulders, it all contributes to how well I will be able to turn," says Marek.

Common movements are practiced like bending, turning, leaning, and breathing to help each person discover how he or she moves most easily.

Pain specialist Dr. Alan Leff says that while Feldenkrais is gaining popularity it may be useful only as an adjunct combined with other medical treatments depending on the severity of pain.

"With any pain syndrome, movement will help the pain, the worst thing a patient could do with a chronic pain syndrome is to have no movement at all," says Dr. Leff.

As for Susan, she says relief has come gradually over the last 2 years. She still takes 2-3 sessions a week. A routine, yes, but it's helped her avoid the surgical knife, "It's completely changed my life."

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