

When Working Out

If you train for competition or for your own general fitness, the Feldenkrais Method® includes some familiar principles. Bruce Richmond, Certified Athletic Trainer and Guild Certified Feldenkrais Practitioner, offers these helpful pointers on how to improve faster and get better results from your workout:

- Differentiate: Avoid the “no pain, no gain” myth. There is a big difference between progressive overload and injury. An injured body develops inhibitions and compensations that restricts learning of skills.
- Customize: Your body will learn in its own way, influenced by your own physical traits and your unique history. Don’t expect that your body will be able to do each exercise exactly the way your coach could, or the book you read described.
- Focus: A casual workout will bring casual results. Know the purpose of each exercise, whether it’s to strengthen, stretch, or develop muscles or to improve your coordination or balance. Be sure that you are doing what you are intending to do.
- Refine small movements: Each sport has small movements and skills that are its integral parts. Even drills can often be broken down into more specific portions. Create routines which allow you to refine each small movement, so that your body knows each one backwards and forwards, literally!
- Allow the body to learn naturally: Start each exercise with its simplest movements, using repetition to anchor the pattern of movement. Gradually add the more complex or intense elements. Don’t feel you have to rush.
- Increase your Precision: Attend to the details of your skills - your breath, the shifts in your weight, the stretch through various muscles and the corresponding contraction of other muscles. Awareness is the difference between “going through the motions” and really experiencing the skills. Coordination developed through the use of awareness with precise movement is recalled in a competitive situation.
- Rehearse Mentally: Use your imagination to refine your skills. Being able to create your ideal performance state (including thoughts, emotions and muscles) enables you to regain control in a sport setting.
- Rest: Your body integrates what it learns during rest periods. Take care to give yourself adequate time. You’ll be surprised how much better you can do after a little break.

Make your training a habit. If you choose a convenient time, you will be able to abide by regular exercises. If you make it difficult, you will soon find a-hundred-and-one alternatives instead. Occasionally break the regularity. Do not make your habit a compulsion.

- Moshe Feldenkrais

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