

We walk a little taller

Karon Shear, left, and Marilyn Berger. (photo by Binny Goldman)

Moshe Feldenkrais is quoted as saying, “When you know what you are doing, then you can do what you want!” How appropriate that some of us who spent the two nights of the Passover seders sitting at the table – or reclining, as directed – were now being taught to sit properly.

On April 13, about 50 people gathered at the Oakridge Seniors Centre (OSC) to attend an event co-hosted by Jewish Seniors Alliance of Greater Vancouver to learn the helpful movements of the Feldenkrais Method.

Alexandra Henriques, manager of OSC, graciously welcomed the audience and called upon JSA president Marilyn Berger, who said how impressed she was with the surroundings and the newsletter put out by OSC, and said she would come back to sample some of the lunches being offered at the centre. Berger then acquainted those gathered with the aims of JSA, mentioning its advocacy for the betterment of the quality of life for seniors and the peer-counseling courses being offered.

Berger then introduced Vita Kolodny, a nurse and a movement educator, who gently eased the audience through the mindful movements that can be used to ease back pain. By a quick questioning of the audience, we learned that almost all in attendance had suffered from back pain at one time or another.

We all sit so much during the day, doubling the stress placed on our back compared to when we stand, Kolodny explained. That is why we may prefer to stand when experiencing back pain.

Kolodny led those gathered through the correct way of positioning our bodies and ways of strengthening the skeletal muscles. It is important to reeducate our brains to the new ways of sitting by repeating the movements we learned, slowly and with awareness of how our whole body participates, with a rest in between the exercise.

A question was asked by Lou Segal: “Is it better to train one’s body to sit in the new and correct way, even while resting, so it becomes our natural way of sitting?” The answer was yes.



Feldenkrais instructor Vita Kolodny. (photo by Binny Goldman)

Dr. Norman Doidge’s book *The Brain’s Way of Healing* was recommended reading if attendees cared to learn more about neuroplasticity and the Feldenkrais Method.

Some constructive and supportive suggestions were made during the demonstration. For example, sit forward in a chair with feet flat on the floor. A pillow may be placed behind your back, remembering to maintain the arch in your back. As well, it helps to sit on an armless chair, stool or exercise ball while maintaining good balance.

Gyda Chud of JSA thanked Kolodny, using her penchant for alliteration, saying “Vita was vital, vivacious and vibrant in her presentation,” echoing the feelings of the audience, all of whom were visibly sitting upright, already making the changes suggested by Kolodny that afternoon.

Not only were our hearts smiling – as suggested in the theme – but our spines were, as well.

Discussions followed over dessert and hot drinks.

Berger, in thanking “the gregarious Gyda Chud and our ever incredible Karon Shear,” reminded everyone of the JSA Spring Forum on April 26, which will take place at the Jewish Community Centre of Greater Vancouver. The theme is YOLO: You Only Live Once.

So, let’s live it tall!

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