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This article refers to the lesson that can be heard here: [Release the burden of your shoulders - treat yourself](http://www.feldenkrais.co.uk/audio_viewer.php?whichAudio=86)  
([www.feldenkrais.co.uk/audio\\_viewer.php?whichAudio=86](http://www.feldenkrais.co.uk/audio_viewer.php?whichAudio=86))



We are all experiencing most unusual times for more than a year now - challenging at the very least.

I realised lately how much more time I spend in front of screens, either working online or meeting with friends and family to make up for the missing closeness; the effect: hunched shoulders and a stiff neck. On top of this worries and anxieties end up like a weight on my shoulders.

So when contemplating what I could contribute to the IFW I thought you might feel the same and would enjoy a treat to comfort your shoulders, - a treat I enjoy when I become aware that I just put my shoulders through the grindstone.

A little sequence you can easily incorporate into breaks between online meetings. It illustrates the uniqueness of the Feldenkrais Method and even combines the two Feldenkrais approaches, as they are 'awareness through movement' – taught to groups of people, opening a space for discovering movement patterns and exploring new options and 'functional integration', which

describes the hands on individual approach.

Pause for a moment and think about what you normally do, when you sense that your shoulders are stiff..

You might find yourself pulling your shoulders up, or circling them; you might circle your head as well. But how are you doing it?

Probably somewhat forcefully, as if you could shake off the pain by harsh movements; it seems almost a built in reflex to circle hastily and strong, accepting or even ignoring the grinding noise in the neck and fighting against tensed and hurting muscles.

But did force ever help healing pain?

The Feldenkrais Method offers a different approach, which starts with pausing for a moment. It invites you to listen; just listen with kind attention to how you are in this very moment. Not to change anything – let alone forcefully.

How you are doesn't only refer to physical sensations, but also to mental activity and arising emotions. All being part of the picture.

It's not only the posture.

Imagine yourself in your workspace – which might not even be in an office at the moment, but your kitchen or dining room table. The main part of your attention will be drawn to the task in front of you. Maybe time pressures or home schooling kids in the background adds to the picture.

As our mind is busy we forget about our body and posture. As the eyes are drawn into screens our head protracts and loses its organic position and support from the spine and the whole torso.

The neck pays the bill. The shoulder/neck area gets tensed and painful in the attempt to prevent the heavy head from bending forward. But besides what this means anatomically, what is the internal – mental and emotional situation – we might find ourselves in?

Our mental activity tends to be constantly raised, while our body stays practically immobile. Our attention is focussed on a very tiny area; we often experience time pressures or jump back and forth with our attention in an attempt to multi-task.

Let's stop with this scenario. I promised to offer another approach - an approach of sensitivity and kindness towards yourself.

By gently exploring the area of your neck and shoulder with your hands in a non – judgemental way, you are laying the foundation to basically accept how you are in this very moment.

You enter a respectful dialogue with yourself without immediately manipulating your muscles in the attempt to force tension out. In the end this is an encounter with yourself. How would you like this encounter to be? Gentle or forceful? Kind or harsh? Curious or impatient?

This is the starting point of a movement sequence, in which you offer the tensed muscle relief, as you explore a variety of movements.

A light easy movement needs lightness and ease from the beginning.

We create ease through ease, lightness by lightness, a smile by smiling...



The lesson I have recorded is one I did first in my Feldenkrais training with Ruthy Alon. Ruthy was one of Moshe Feldenkrais's original 13 students. She was a beacon of creativity and poetic teaching in the Feldenkrais world. She died on December 31, 2020, at the age of 90. This lesson is dedicated to her memory.

If you would like to get a sense of this extraordinary teacher, have a look at this video <https://vimeo.com/27691970>

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