

Elizabeth Lipski, Ph.D., CCN

Synergy in Health

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Access to Health Experts Teleseminar Series

With special guest **David Kamnitzer, DC, CN,**
founder of Synergy In Action

Surgery... or Repatterning Movement?

Liz:

My son recently had a slipped disk, and we went to see an orthopedic surgeon. He said, "You can have surgery and you'll feel better in three or four weeks, or you could tough it out. The end result in a year is going to be the same. You're going to feel the same whether you have surgery or you just tough it out." And that was actually true. Once his sciatica had calmed down with Qigong, chiropractic, acupuncture and other things, then movement was the thing that healed him. Recently, there was a big study showing that if people have back pain and sciatica, one of the best things that they can do is actually exercise and move more. Do you want to talk a little bit about how movement helps cure back pain?

David:

I would like to talk about the fact that movement may or may not cure back pain.

Liz:

Okay.

David:

First of all, obviously, the acute inflammation has to die down to the point where the person can move without being in agony. Secondly, if you take someone who probably has a lot of dysfunctional patterns of movement in the first place that gave rise to the problem, and you get them back moving again (especially if they're still in pain), very often they will just recreate the patterns. Often, movement will help in the sense that it allows people to feel things, and when you feel things there are healing mechanisms that get activated. Movement does move the lymphatic system. Movement in and of itself, however, often will simply recreate the pattern that caused the problem, and the person

will have a recurrence of the injury. That's one of the reasons that I'm so excited about methods for repatterning neuromuscular movement that take the person out of the gravitational field to repattern. Even better, there are now some breakthroughs that allow you to repattern in gravity. There are machines that actually take over the function of the anti-gravity muscles so you get the best of both worlds: you actually can begin to repattern movements in gravity, but without the stress of gravity. To me, that is a huge breakthrough.

Liz:

So some of the kind of therapies that you're talking about would be things like Feldenkrais, Rolfing, or Aston repatterning. But you were also telling me about a machine called the "ATM2" that allows you to do some repatterning in gravity. My guess is that most people on this call have never heard the concept of "repatterning" or "unwinding" at all. Why don't you talk a little bit about that?

David:

When you are under stress, it is very difficult to learn new things. Have you ever been in a classroom that didn't feel safe? It's very hard to learn in a classroom where you don't feel safe. Have you ever had thousands of pieces of stimuli coming at you at one time and you just can't integrate it? You have to slow things down, and you have to get quiet in order to be able to get the information you need, or in order to be able to hear the signal.

Let's take that principle and apply it to what we're talking about. There was a very brilliant Israeli named Moshe Feldenkrais, and what he did was to take people out of the field of gravity. He had people lie down, and then he moved that person's body in ways that they wouldn't be able to do themselves. Plus, he did it in such a way that the person having it done to them could just relax, pay attention, and just feel. Feldenkrais took the point of view that there is intelligence in the body, and if you showed it different ways of doing things that worked better, the person could pick up on that on some subconscious level and begin to adopt the new patterns of movement.

Feldenkrais would very gently and consciously move someone's shoulder, or ankle, or knee for half an hour. Very often there would be miracles, but some times the miracles wouldn't happen, or they wouldn't last that long. Part of the reason is that he was repatterning outside of gravity. He did it for all the reasons that I mentioned, but the transition back to gravity was so severe that all the old patterns of adaptation to the gravitation field would kick in, and that was the limitation in that form of therapy. The problem is that if you try to repattern movements in gravity, it is very difficult because about 70% of the neurological and neuromuscular activity is simply the anti-gravity muscles responding to anti-gravity reflexes. There is so much static on the line, it is hard to hear the signal. It's hard for the body to learn anything.

There has been a breakthrough in the last five years with the discovery that through a combination of belts, harnesses, and positioning, you can take over the anti-gravity functions and still have the person in gravity. Then you can either actively or passively begin to make movements that have been painful, awkward, or stiff. What happens is that you get the best of both worlds. You get the things that Feldenkrais was trying to accomplish by taking people out of gravity, but you're doing it in gravity. Having these new experiences in gravity without the static of the anti-gravity reflexes allows people to learn and repattern how their body is moving in profound ways. After a few minutes of

these repatterning exercises on this ATM2 machine, you then take the person outside of the machine. They are not belted or compressed anymore, and you have them walk around. Then they feel much lighter. They feel like they've had a lube job, because the sensory system and the motor system are so tied together. Then, you can ask them to do the movement that was painful or stiff to them, and almost everyone will experience a remarkable quantum leap in functioning. If you do that about six times over a period of a few weeks, movements can be relatively permanently repatterned. That is a very exciting breakthrough that not too many people know about.