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From where does reaching begin?

An investigation of the kinetic chain



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This man, photographed in New York City, is nearing the end of a Feldenkrais lesson. With his teacher, who is not visible to the camera, he has been exploring the theme of reaching.

He has a nice, sunny room for his lesson. Some pillows, in the back near the Japanese screen, are available, if needed.

The question of the lesson is: "From where does reaching begin?" Or, stated differently, "What parts of the self are involved in reaching?"

Before talking more about him, how about trying an experiment yourself?

- * *Put your hands on your lap. Sit quietly for a moment.*
- * *Look at something a little distant from you.*
- * *Begin – just the very, very beginning aspect -- to reach for that something.*
- * *What part of you moves first?*

There are a lot of answers. It might be your weight. Or your intent. Or your eyes. Your hand. Your shoulder. Your back. Your ribs. It's amazing how many possibilities there are.

In making a similar study while lying on the floor, the man has explored, for sure, the contribution of his right foot and leg. Look how intentionally they have been placed. He has asked, through movement, if it is possible for a push from that leg to ripple through his torso and result in elongation of the left hand. He has become better acquainted with his belly, back and ribs, sensing how they need to be so the force can flow through. He has also looked at the contribution of his head. Notice that it, too, has a definite orientation. Which way, and when, should the head turn to help the movement? And what about the right arm? What should it do to contribute to the whole?

At the end of the session he links all the details together in one flowing chain of movement. The chain can begin from the bottom and flow upward; this is the most common pattern. Or, it can start at the top and flow downwards; this takes more focus. Or, it can begin in the center and flow simultaneously up and down; this is for the advanced student!

Does this sort of thing appeal to you? If so, you will find an hour-long Feldenkrais class a very satisfying experience. And at the end, you'll feel better overall; probably lighter and more upright. You'll feel that in the moment, and for some time afterward.