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## How do you bend to pick something up?

My Feldenkrais colleagues and I often have a hard time defining what it is that we do -- briefly. For us, it is a huge universe of exploration and discovery, and hard to summarize.

Recently help has come from an unexpected source. One of my colleagues posted on our listserv an excerpt from a Missouri law that defines professional requirements for massage therapists. The law also lists the types of practitioners which are not included. One specifically exempted category is those

**“Persons who use touch and words to deepen awareness of existing patterns of movement in the human body as well as to suggest new possibilities of movement.”**

That’s us! Well described, and so briefly!

So, to take one example from our universe: an important pattern of movement is how you bend to pick something up.

But first, please, let’s back up for a moment. In the broad overview -- how does movement occur? In any structure that has rigidity, movement occurs where there is a joint. In other words, movement occurs where there is an element that allows both discontinuity and continuity. A clear example is a door. It is rigid, and the wall in which it hangs is rigid. Movement is needed between them, and the hinge is the solution.

So, back to the question: how do you bend to pick something up? Please look at the illustrations. The young woman in the first drawing, as you can tell, is picking up the ball badly. And the woman in the second drawing is doing it nicely. What’s the difference?

In the badly-done example, the woman is placing the hinge in her mid back. This is bad for the low back, as indicated by the "X" and also for the neck. It causes strain in the moment and damage in the long term. In the well-done example, the woman is placing the hinge where it is meant to be – in the hip joints. This makes her feel strong and secure, both in the moment and over the long term. Many people, unknowingly, use the first pattern. They feel a lot better when they shift to the second.

This is the type of thing we study in the Feldenkrais Method. Many problems can be solved, and many opportunities can open up as you “deepen your awareness of your existing patterns of movement and develop new possibilities of movement.”

