



Maureen McHugh

Feldenkrais Practitioner

## *Testimonial*

### Mind – Body Integration Or How Maureen Saved My Life

*By Ann Steers*

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I am a naturally athletic person, and I love the outdoors. Here I am on a recent trip to the Grand Canyon, a place that touches me deeply.

Unfortunately, despite my love of nature and physical activity, I have struggled with lower back pain and tightness most of my adult life. I realize now that an initial injury to my lower back in my mid-twenties set me up for future inefficient body mechanics that would eventually lead to plantar fasciitis and knee pain. Over the years, I've remained physically active: hiking, biking, cross-country skiing and gardening.

However, the specter of injuries past and the fear of future muscle spasms continued to restrict my movements and I could tell that my physical freedom was not going to improve with age.

I've had several private sessions with Maureen and have been a faithful participant in her weekly classes in Arlington. My flexibility and awareness has improved steadily and at an encouraging pace. I'm now able to bend at my waist with confidence and ease instead of feeling like the tin man from the Wizard of Oz without his oil can! I am rediscovering that my body can bend, fold and twist in subtle and obvious ways without "breaking". I'm also developing a better sense of balance and stability when I stand and walk because I'm not trying to "hold myself up". This is due, largely, to my renewed trust and comfort in my body. My biggest reward came this past weekend when my husband and I were walking barefoot in the wet sand at Rehoboth Beach. I wasn't wearing my usual knee supports or orthotics and yet my knees were completely pain-free.

I've tried yoga in the past because I have very tight hamstrings and have been told that flexibility would solve my problems. Flexibility is still important, but Feldenkrais allows the mind and the body to provide feedback to one another in a focused and deliberate, yet gentle, way. This mind-body integration results in increased mobility which doesn't force anything. I still admire people who practice yoga, but I am having so much more success with Feldenkrais, and it is this practice that I will joyfully do the rest of my life.

My home is in Colorado, but I have been in northern Virginia for about 10 years. I sought out Maureen this past September. I had been cued into Feldenkrais by a physical therapist I worked with in Colorado who is also a Feldenkrais Practitioner and with whom I had experienced some success. Maureen embodies a grounded confidence that is warm and approachable. She talks the talk and walks the walk. Knowing that she too is spared ongoing stiffness and pain through Feldenkrais helps create an authentic bond with her students.

Now, I know, Maureen would want to say that it is Feldenkrais that saved my life, not just her. However, this is MY story and just like the “mind – body” integration that we talk so much about, my journey toward increased mobility and health is a testament to a “Maureen – Feldenkrais” integration! Thank you, Maureen.