



## THE WELLNESS SALON

Musings on wellness from Donna Simmons, Feldenkrais® practitioner

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September 2, 2013

Dear friends,

Welcome to the *Wellness Salon*. A salon is "...a gathering of people under the roof of an inspiring host, held partly to amuse one another and partly to refine the taste and increase the knowledge of the participants through conversation."\* As the "inspiring host" (!) I will use this forum to share my views on wellness, on the Feldenkrais® Method, and on the effective engagement of mindfulness, Cranial-Sacral therapy and other modalities for relieving pain, improving function at all levels, leading to a more embodied life.

Let's start with a definition. Here's one picked at random from the internet:

well-ness /'welnis/ *noun* 1. the state or condition of being in good physical and mental health. "when you come right down to it, stress affects every aspect of wellness"

Here's another that I prefer (underscore mine):

1. the quality or state of being healthy in body and mind, especially as the result of deliberate effort.
2. an approach to healthcare that emphasizes preventing illness and prolonging life, as opposed to emphasizing treating diseases.

Deliberate effort, what I will call mindfulness, can in fact improve your chances for avoiding illness and injury (and, yes, stress is a big factor in wellness...)

In "Answers for Aristotle", Massimo Pigliucci notes that the ancient Greeks pursued *eudaimonia*, a state of thriving that flows from "doing the right things for the right reasons", and that a significant obstacle to *eudaimonia* is the lack of willpower (*akrasia*).\*\*

This certainly coincides with my own observations garnered from a life of engagement with body and mind.

My journey in the pursuit of holistic health began with a successful career teaching dance and exercise to the general public as well as training professionals. From 1983 to 1986, I was responsible for an ambitious program to establish a chain of aerobic and dance studios as well as the first dance and exercise teachers training center in Japan. My focus was on discipline, strength, flexibility, balance and the integration of mindfulness. I was at the peak of my physical condition, as were all my instructor trainees. Nevertheless, while I was quite successful at rolling out a cadre of professional fitness instructors, it was clear to me that discipline, strength, etc., alone were not sufficient to assure a healthy life (wellness). Pain from repetitive motion, impact, twisting injuries and fatigue were frequent companions. And sometimes, pain would arise that had no apparent origin or cause.. So much attention being paid to the physical body ( what I refer to as the "container") and so little, if any, being paid to the inner body ( what I refer to as the "contents") ;

\* Wikipedia: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Salon\\_\(gathering\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Salon_(gathering))

\*\* Answers for Aristotle – How Science and Philosophy Can Lead Us to a More Meaningful Life, Massimo Pigliucci, Basic Books, 2012.

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attention being given only when pain demanded, insisted on a break. I knew instinctively that something was lacking, the dance, if you will, between the container and the contents.

Upon my return to the U.S. I took 6 months off and returned to my dance roots to study with Anna Halprin, a pioneer in using dance as a healing art form. Then I was happily introduced to Moshe Feldenkrais' work, ( thank you Dr. Rossman) a method based in awareness through movement. This was a turning point in my life.

In future installments I will discuss how I integrate Feldenkrais® and the other modalities that I use in my practice. In the meantime, let me leave you with this thought:

*"Wisdom is Experience applied"*

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