



## Optimum Positions For Feldenkrais Awareness Through Movement Lessons

This short document is for the purpose of giving you a “visual” of the ideal position you want to be in for lessons on your side, your stomach and your back. You may be asked, in the context of a lesson, to do something different from what you see here. What follows is generally the IDEAL STARTING POINT.



Keep in mind that if you need to alter these “ideal” positions, because it is painful for some reason to be in this “ideal” position, please do so. **Pain creates a “noisy brain.”** One gets distracted by this “noise” just like one might be distracted by the noise of a “leaf blower” outside their window, if they were attempting to have a conversation with someone inside.



If you are in pain in the starting position for a lesson, your attention will be drawn to the pain, instead of the quality of the movement that you are being asked to do. That, in turn, means **less learning -- less improvement -- less change in your brain -- and quite likely -- less reduction in your chronic tension and/or pain.** All to say – the ideal positions shown here, are optimum, but not necessary. Your comfort is more important than being in the ideal position.



These “ideal positions” are “ideal” for a number of reasons. Some have to do with not causing you to use more effort than necessary (for example, to stay on your side).

Or, they might be “ideal” because they do not inhibit you from doing certain movements during the lesson.

Or, they might be "ideal" because they do not inhibit your breathing.

But again, each individual can do what they need to do to be as comfortable as possible.



Have confidence, that gradually, over time, if you continue to do regular lessons, you will, at some point, no longer have to adjust yourself in this manner. You will be able to start the lesson in the optimum position shown.



## Optimum Position For Feldenkrais Side-lying Lessons

In side lying lessons, the position of your neck - -  
the orientation of your head - - has a tremendous influence  
on the muscular tonus of your body. In the following slides,  
you can see the optimum position of the head and neck, as  
well as the ideal alignment when on your side.



**Notice:**

**There is a direct line  
from my ear -- to my shoulder -- to my hip.  
And from my hip – to my knee . . .  
And from my knee to my foot.**





## Notice:

**The side of my face  
is parallel to the ceiling.  
My cervical spine is aligned  
with the rest of my spine.**

My neck is neither lower nor higher  
than the rest of my spine.





If you have trouble lengthening your arm like this (if it is uncomfortable) you can use a pillow. But the pillow must be thin enough that your head is neither raised, nor lowered.



**Notice:**  
**The side of my face**  
**is parallel to the ceiling.**  
**My cervical spine is aligned**  
**with the rest of my spine.**

**My neck is neither lower nor**  
**higher than the rest of my spine.**





In the following photo, I am using too much pillow. The spine of my neck is higher than the spine in the rest of my back. When the spine of my neck is higher than the spine in the rest of myself, this will have a substantial effect on any movement that I make from this position.



**Notice:**  
**The side of my face**  
**is no longer**  
**parallel to the ceiling.**

One side of my neck is  
lengthened, the other  
shortened.

**Not  
Optimum**





In the following photo, I am using neither my arm nor a pillow to support my head. So my head is dropped toward the table. Now the spine of my neck is lower than the spine in the rest of my back. Even if I am comfortable in this position, again, having my head dropped like this, distorts the shape of my spine. This, in turn, influences the musculature of my back. My back muscles are not in a neutral position.



**Notice:**  
**The side of my face**  
**is no longer**  
**parallel to the ceiling.**



One side of my neck is  
lengthened, the other  
shortened.

**Not  
Optimum**



**Notice:**  
In this photo,  
my head is rotated  
a bit toward the ceiling.



**Not  
Optimum**



**Notice:**  
In this photo, that my head  
is rotated a bit toward the pillow/table.



**Not  
Optimum**



## Why Do We Stand The Hand In Most Side-Lying Lessons?

We want our musculature to be free. If your musculature has to be involved in keeping yourself balanced on your side, that will restrict the movement of your chest -- your spine -- your pelvis -- your whole self.

By standing your hand on the floor you are able to be secure and your musculature will be more stable. In short, your musculature can rest and not work so hard!



## Standing The Hand vs. Standing The Fist

We often stand our hand in side-lying lessons. For some people, it may be uncomfortable (in the wrist) to stand their hand. So often times people stand their fist instead. That is fine, if that is what one needs to do to be comfortable. Both are shown below. Notice that in both cases, the lower arm is perpendicular to the table.

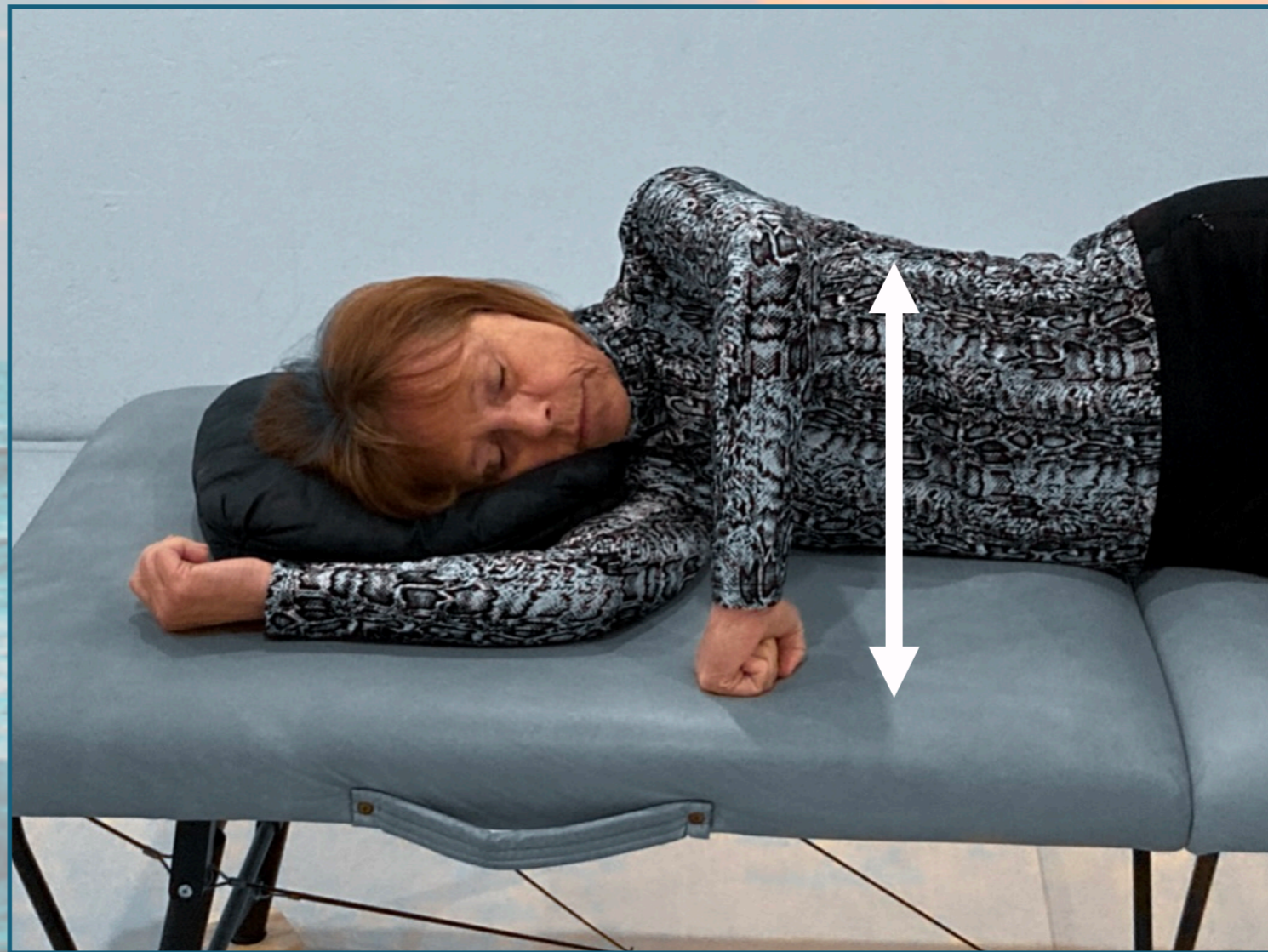


## Close-up Standing Hand





## Close-up Standing Fist





## Alternatives To Standing The Fist

Again, standing your hand is ideal, but if you cannot stand your hand comfortably, three alternatives to standing your fist instead are:

- Stand your hand, but on something softer than the floor.
- Put your hand a little bit further away from your chest.
- Place a large pillow, in front of your chest, and then lie your arm, over the pillow with your fingers pointing upward. The position of the arm is “as if” it is standing. But there is no pressure on your hand or wrist.

In these alternatives, your lower arm may not be perpendicular. But these three alternatives might still be preferable to standing your fist, or not standing your hand at all.

**Photos of all three alternatives follow.**



## Standing Hand On Something Softer





# Standing Hand A Little Further Away From Your Chest





# Using Large Pillow To Support Your Standing Hand





## Optimum Position For Feldenkrais Lessons On Your Stomach

In lessons where you are lying on your stomach, you may be asked to have your head and neck in various positions. Ideally you would not have any extra padding underneath yourself because this might inhibit the movements you are asked to do in the lesson. However, again, **your comfort level is most important.**



If you have trouble lying on your stomach, because it is **painful in your neck**, you can add a little extra padding underneath your chest

**See Photo Below.**



## Pillow underneath your chest





If you have trouble lying on your stomach, because it is **painful for your low back**, you can add a little **extra padding underneath your pelvis**.

**See Photo Below**



## Pillow underneath your pelvis





If **both** your **neck** and your **low back** are **uncomfortable or painful**, when you are lying on your stomach, then you can put some extra padding under both your chest and your pelvis.

**See Photo Below**



**Pillow underneath  
both your chest and your pelvis**



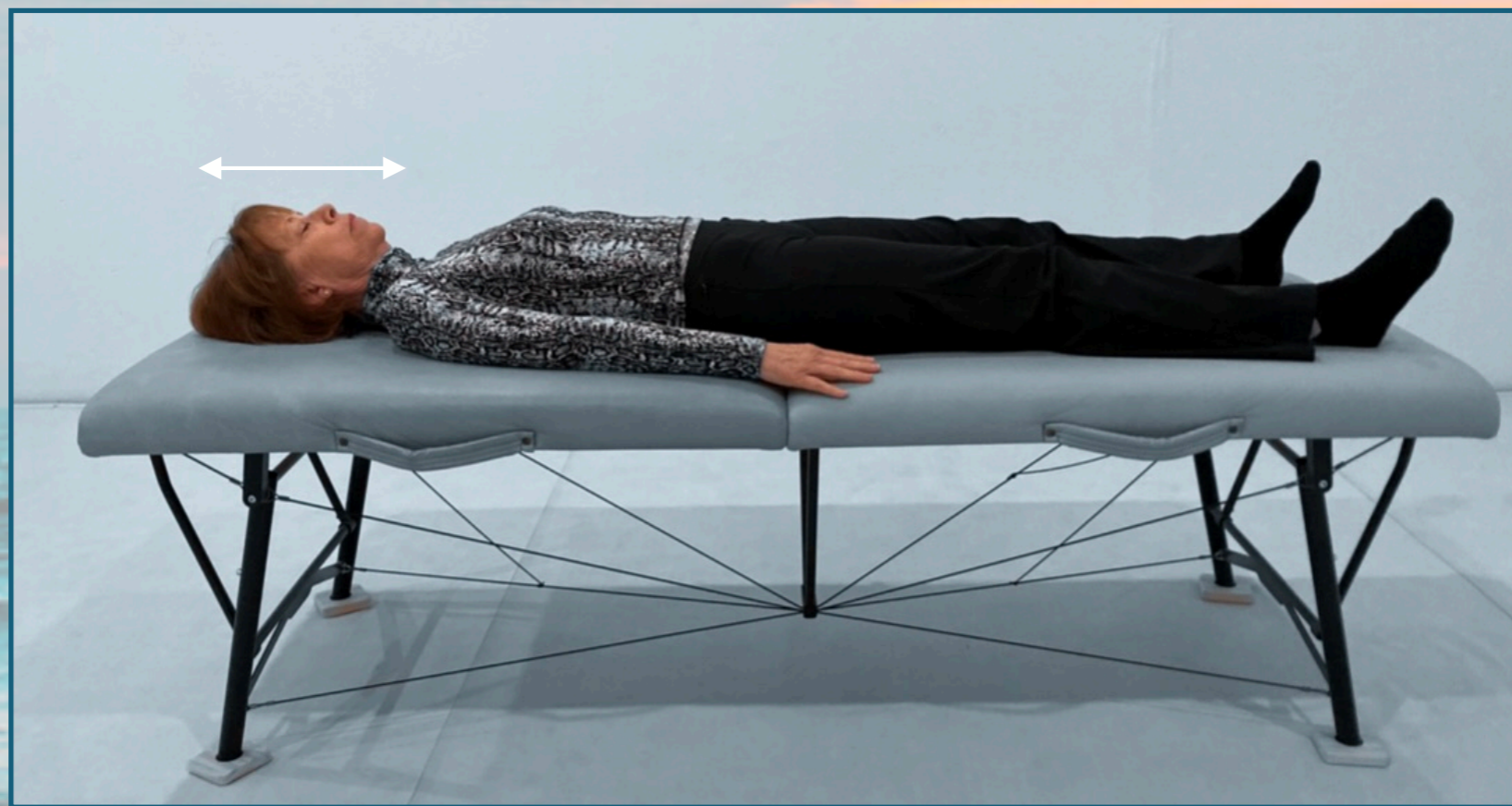


## Optimum Position For Feldenkrais Lessons On Your Back

In lessons where you are lying on your back, ideally you would not have any padding or a pillow underneath your head.



**Notice:**  
**My face is parallel to the ceiling.**





If you absolutely feel that you need some sort of padding underneath your head, you want to make sure that your face remains parallel to the ceiling. A small towel, folded up, generally works better than a pillow, to serve this end.



In the following photo, I have a small folded towel, underneath my head. This provides a little more padding. It tilts my chin down toward my throat, ever so slightly. But if this is what you need to be comfortable, this is absolutely fine.



**On back with small towel  
(folded over)  
Underneath my head**





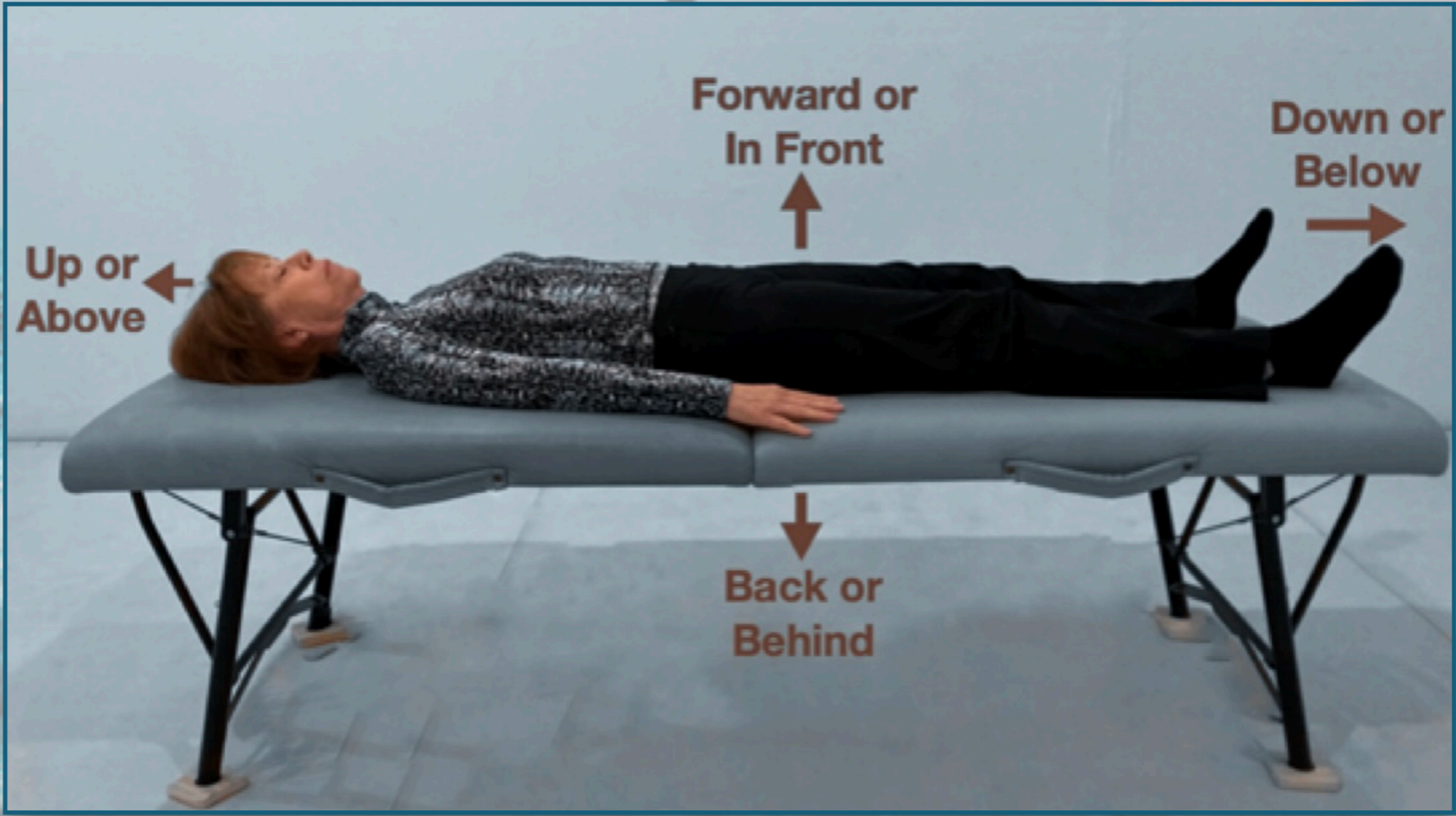
**Notice:**  
**With this much padding underneath my head, my face is no longer parallel to the ceiling.**



**In this position, with too much padding, my chin is strongly tilted toward my throat. This restricts the movement of my chest and my diaphragm.**



**Instructions During ATM**  
When you are lying down, instructions are given "as if" you were standing. So, for example, "up" means above your head.





“Movement is life . . .

Life is a process . . .

Improve the quality of the process . . .  
and you improve the quality of life itself.”

~ Moshe Feldenkrais ~



*We hope this was helpful!*