

Marketing Outreach to Yoga Studios

by Lavinia Plonka, GCFP and MaryBeth Smith, GCFP

Marketing the Feldenkrais Method® offers unique challenges.

A Feldenkrais® teacher could go into any environment: dance studio, tennis clinic, dental office, or a yoga studio -- and offer ATM® lessons that would help improve a person's performance. Conversely, trying to attract people to a workshop you are creating and marketing, without having the "cred" in that field, can be challenging.

Furthermore, when you are invited as a Feldenkrais teacher to present somewhere, people are looking at you as an expert at Feldenkrais. When you are marketing your own workshop, people expect you to be an expert at golfing, playing the violin, or kayaking. So if you have never practiced yoga, creating a workshop about yoga and Feldenkrais is, perhaps, not the place to start

Whether you are a yogi or not, you can:

- **Research.** Don't know any yoga teachers or studio owners? Go meet one! People do business with others whom they know, like, and trust. Build

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relationships before you ask for anything. Google, and online rating sites like Yelp, might give you insights about the yoga studios near you, which ones have high customer satisfaction ratings, and may even list the name of the owner. Search LinkedIn for “Yoga Studio [YOUR TOWN].” You will find studio owners and teachers who are open to meeting new people and developing new opportunities. Connect with them on LinkedIn, and message them there. Don’t offer or ask for anything initially. Simply make the connection so they’ve heard of you. Later, you can ask to meet or drop in at their studio.

- Visit the studio’s website and look at the pictures. Does the studio look welcoming, clean, well-lit, nicely appointed, big enough? Have a look at their class schedule and plan a visit. You’ll know from the website whether you can just drop in, or whether you have to register in advance. Do they offer yoga classes exclusively, or do they also host some classes in other movement disciplines? If all looks good to you, go take a class, meet the teacher afterwards, and be friendly. Relationship and connection first.
- **Educate.** Contact your ‘short list’ of yoga studios and offer to give a free ATM class. There are many ways to do this. The studio could give you a slot during some of their down time. A teacher may offer you a portion of their class. In either case, make sure there is plenty of advance notice, at the

studio, on social media, in your own circle. Promote it as an event.

You can be as elaborate or as simple as you wish. I (MaryBeth) started an ATM series at a Houston yoga studio after one of my ATM students introduced me to the yoga studio owner. We co-hosted a mini-breakfast with coffee at the studio on a Saturday morning. After snacks and gathering, I presented a short ATM lesson for them to experience, and concluded with Q &A and an invitation to sign up for the new weekly class. The studio owner was thrilled to promote the event, earn extra money from studio rental, and share in the proceeds of the new class. It was win/win for all. When I (Lavinia) first tried to engage the yoga community, I followed the plan continued below, won over the teacher, AND (this was key) made sure to advertise and attend the yoga classes for at least a month before the event. In that way, I could build curiosity, answer questions about the flyer, and establish that my work was allied with the studio.

- **Collaborate.** Perhaps you already know a yoga teacher or two. Ask them if they might like to collaborate with you to create a class or a mini-workshop that explores ATM in relation to asana. Take the time to give them the ATM in advance so that they feel the benefits.

- **Donate.** Offer to give one or more teachers a free class at their convenience, then leave time for discussion and brainstorming.
- **Dedicate.** See if there is a yoga studio that will give you a time slot for a few weeks. Show up ready to teach. This can be challenging, sometimes no one shows up for a while. Offer it as donation-based. Be patient. Attend some classes there and learn more about this audience.

What's the payoff?

- The obvious, immediate result is the learning you will acquire.
- You will expand your network and meet new collaboration partners.
- Many yoga students come to yoga because of pain. They may become your private clients.
- Your name will be associated with ATM among a very social population that talks to each other. This may not yield big bucks in the beginning, but as your name gets repeated, recognition grows, and your students will refer others

You don't have to be an authority on yoga to help yoga students via the Feldenkrais Method. Take the time to do your homework, make social connections, and offer something specific and useful to their "avowed and unavowed dreams."

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS

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