

SENSEABILITY

A newsletter of applications
of the *Feldenkrais Method*[®]
of somatic education
written by *Guild Certified
Feldenkrais
Practitioners*[™]

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Embodying Life An Interview with Russell Delman

-by Cynthia Allen, GCFP

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Russell Delman provides fresh insight into how the *Feldenkrais Method*[®] can meet the needs of a changing world. In the 30 plus years since he began his study with Dr. Moshe Feldenkrais, he has trained over 2500 *Feldenkrais*[®] Practitioners around the world and maintained a private practice in California. Along with his wife, Linda (also a *Feldenkrais* Trainer), Russell developed the *Feldenkrais-India* Project teaching Mother Theresa's Sisters of Charity to work with brain-injured children. Russell's approach to his own life, steeped in Zen, Focusing and Gestalt Psychology, is ever present in his understanding of Dr. Feldenkrais.

CA: Russell, what is your description of the *Feldenkrais Method*?

RD: I don't care for general descriptions because they hide as much as they reveal. Yet, starting broadly, the *Feldenkrais Method* is a way of learning that uses awareness, sensation, and movement. There is emphasis on embodied learning, a learning happening through the whole person.

I find it fruitful to talk about the human needs the Method can address. The *Feldenkrais Method* is relevant for so many different people. This week I will be seeing a young child who has cerebral palsy who is learning to feed himself and to crawl. There is somebody else who has chronic pain in the back. I saw someone this morning dealing with an autoimmune difficulty that includes rheumatoid arthritis. I will have someone later this week from the San Francisco Symphony who began because of carpal tunnel difficulty and stayed because her sound is improving as she moves with more lightness. Let me see... There are some other people who have had strokes, others who come with a sense of depression, anxiety or basic disconnection from life. I've had people who came because they heard that their golf might get better. The range is huge.

CA: As a young man the body/mind/spirit connection drew you to Dr. Feldenkrais and his work. Yet, it appears that people mostly seek you for a "physical" concern. How is it that the mind/spirit aspects are opened up for the individual?



Russell assisting a student in Germany to sense the skeletal interconnections from foot to head.

RD: I can describe it this way: people often bring their body to be fixed like a car to a service station. The body begins as an "it".

Right from the start it can be revolutionary when I ask people to sense the living reality of what they are experiencing in the moment. Not just where it hurts but also... "What do you notice as you are sitting here right now?"

"I've got this pain. I told you about that and that is what I am here for."

"Is there anything else?"

"No that's all."

I might say, "Feel where you're touching the table, where you are sitting there on your bottom."

"Yeah, I can feel that"

"Does one side feel heavier than the other?"

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Embodying Life...

(continued from page 1)

“Wow, I never noticed that. Yeah, this side is heavier.”
And we continue from there expanding the experience of now. We might also include feelings, sounds and other aspects of the living moment.

Just in this simple beginning, what do we see? In that moment the inner life is coming alive. It’s not a mind or a body or a spirit but it’s a living unity that the person is entering. That’s the beginning of the *Feldenkrais Method*.



Vitality: Working with gravity and the anti-gravity response

CA: And yet, it seems a leap to accept that simply this awareness makes a significant impact. Can you take us just a little bit further and talk about how awareness is integral to healing and health?

RD: Absolutely. Dr. Feldenkrais held that human consciousness was evolving, and awareness was a relatively new human capacity. We are still just infants in appreciating its potential. This is central to the paradigm shift that this work brings to humanity.

Awareness brings us towards the fresh vibrancy of life while impacting the brain and its functions. The human being is a functional reality. If we look, we see that most of us are separated from the immediacy of life because we are lost in repetitive thoughts and emotions. We think that mind is separate from body is separate from spirit. The *Feldenkrais Method* brings us back to a more complete experience of living.

CA: You also highlight emotions in your work.

RD: I do. Emotions originate as bodily phenomena. Imagine: you hear a strange sound at night, you are alone, you hold your breath so that you can hear better, your heart races preparing for action, alert tension permeates your limbs as you ready for battle or running – we then learn to call this combination of sensations “fear”. Nature uses emotion to bring about action as in E-MOTION. The *Feldenkrais Method* can help bring balance to the emotional life and offers an approach to mental distress from a truly different and effective perspective. Moshe found that any emotional state was expressed in a bodily organization. Changing the body pattern can uproot the unsatisfying emotional habit.

CA: For many years, Russell, you’ve had some very popular Embodied Life™ audio CDs. You have brought the *Feldenkrais Method* to Zen monasteries and retreat centers such as Esalen and the Omega Institute. In those settings, you use both meditation and *Awareness Through Movement*® lessons? Why?

RD: Dr. Feldenkrais encouraged us to bring our own history and passions into our presentation of the work. My connection to Zen, meditation and spirituality is really important and not at all separate from my experience of the *Feldenkrais Method*. They live in me as a unity. When teaching *Awareness Through Movement*, some of that depth of my years of sitting practice comes forward as I encourage people to deepen in the reality of the moment. And the next. And the next.

When I am leading meditation, what comes through is that fleshiness of life so that the experience of meditation is embodied. Zen and the *Feldenkrais Method* are both based in the movement of attention. Zen monks find this approach really deepens their practice and helps them be more comfortable.

CA: How do you find the *Feldenkrais Method* relevant for people on a spiritual path?

RD: People are hungry to enter the “reality” of life, the direct experience of being present. So many of our chronic stress disorders are connected to a disconnection from life, a constant racing to nowhere. The *Feldenkrais Method* can help people to reconnect to the immediacy of the present moment and with the depth of being human.

I love when I can help people who are in pain or not able to do things that they want to do. Yet to be truly healthy and feel truly connected to life many of us need to move from simply feeling good to the larger questions.

I wish to nurture the full human experience so that we can care for the self and our neighbor and the world at large. This is a very important stage in evolution where we are learning to move beyond exclusive self-concern and care for our family/tribe etc. into universal care for all of life. I believe the *Feldenkrais Method* has a great deal to offer in this regard.

To hear Russell and Cynthia talk about the *Feldenkrais Method* and more, visit <http://explore.ILCMA.com>. Find out more about Russell’s work at www.russelldelman.com

Awareness Through Movement® classes at a Nursing Home

—by Louise Vesper, GCFP

“What you can do you can imagine, and what you can imagine you can do.” – Moshe Feldenkrais

Over a year ago, a colleague informed me that a local nursing home was interested in weekly *Feldenkrais*® classes. Because both of my parents are in a skilled nursing facility, I was reluctant to teach at a nursing home, afraid it would make me too sad for myself, my parents and the residents that I would be teaching. I decided to meet with the Activities Director with an open mind. The minute I walked in the door, I knew that I was in a place of healing and life. Her enthusiasm, compassion and excitement for the learning offered to the residents inspired me.

The week after Thanksgiving 2005, I taught my first *Feldenkrais Awareness Through Movement* class for approximately 15 residents. I have continued to teach each Tuesday at noon and we recently celebrated one year of learning together.

“The *Feldenkrais Method*®, rather than giving fixed solutions to our problems, invites us to explore ourselves in a deep way, to discover within ourselves possibilities of which we never dreamed, possibilities that can lead us to a new and better life” Carl Ginsburg, Ph.D., *Feldenkrais* Trainer.

Initially, it was difficult for class members to sit quietly, focus, and pay attention to themselves. Their eyes wandered. I broke each movement down into many pieces to help the class understand the lesson.

Anyone observing a class might think at first glance that some of the residents are sleeping, but the elders are in tune with themselves and each other. Whether they are moving in their imagination or in actual movement, they are benefiting, because the brain is receiving the same messages.

Early on, to get to know each other, we started each class with a question: their city of birth, favorite singer, movie, color, season, or holiday. These opening questions quickly established a closeness and comfort level in the group.

Throughout and after the class, I compliment everyone individually and collectively on the level of self-care and attention that they are capable of now, and continue to grow in.

After many months of classes, residents are able to sit quietly, “move small,” move in their imagination, pay attention to themselves, and follow verbal instructions. They display increased awareness of their surroundings, as shown in a sense of directionality (looking/moving toward the ceiling, right and left) and smiling at each other. I now teach in a quiet manner. I observe the class responding to the quietness by their breathing becoming slower and deeper, their weight settling into their chairs,

and many of them coming in and out of the movements in the lesson.

In the last three classes, we did an *Awareness Through Movement* lesson that involved the voice and breathing. Class members loved it. Even the people that did not use their voice expressed sound with their eyes, hands, or feet. Their familiarity with it increased each week that we did the same lesson.

One of the reasons that the *Feldenkrais Method* is so successful with people in wheelchairs and/or with dementia is that it’s not about what the movement looks like. There is no right or wrong way. It’s about sensing movement inside, moving in your imagination, or smaller than you ever thought you could do. It’s about paying attention to yourself. Many people may assume that elders who are limited physically by wheelchairs or cognitively by dementia cannot move, follow instructions, or change. I witness successes each week. I see people continually changing.

Now, the class understands questions such as: “What does the back of your neck feel like when you open your jaw? Can you turn your head and feel movement in your back?” The residents are able to sense the connection between different parts of themselves, and feel more comfort and ease.

Equally important for me is the level of gratitude expressed by the elders. They throw kisses, applaud, and smile. The class knows that I care and pay attention to each person. After class we often take a few minutes to talk about old movies. Recently, class members working collectively remembered the cast of “On the Town”.

Each week, I suggest that class members take one movement from the lesson to do when they feel pain, anxiety, or stiffness. This movement might be breathing, wiggling toes, or just gently turning the head from side to side. One class member reported that she uses movements like this before bed and sleeps better—just one example of how *Feldenkrais* movement can be self-soothing.

Our weekly class is an opportunity for consistency, and a way for the class members to feel successful while learning, feeling and sensing movement. I’m grateful for this amazing opportunity and I look forward to Tuesdays.

Louise Vesper is a Guild Certified Feldenkrais Practitioner^{CM} and a lifelong Ballet dancer living in Berkeley, CA
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Featured Region: S. California, S. Nevada and Hawaii

—by Laura McMurray, GCFP, Regional Representative

- Southern California Regional Expo Announcement
- Bridget Quebodeaux speaks about her vision for the *Feldenkrais Method*®
- Stacy Barrows speaks about a Fibromyalgia study
- How the *Feldenkrais Method* helped Cathy Sweetman's recovery

What is commonly abbreviated as the *Feldenkrais Guild*® of North America's Southern California region actually includes all of Southern California, Southern Nevada and Hawaii. Our region's 200 plus *Guild Certified Feldenkrais Practitioners*™ are as diverse as the geography itself. The Region is focusing its energies on its So Cal Expo 2007: Increase Your Awareness—Move to Connect Body, Mind and Spirit Through the *Feldenkrais Method*.

This special event will take place on Sunday, April 22, 2007 from 10:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. at Cedars-Sinai Medical Center, Thalians Auditorium (Plaza Level), 8730 Alden Drive, Los Angeles, California 90048.

The Expo is being hosted by internationally recognized author and Chaplain of Cedars-Sinai Medical Center, Rabbi Levi Meier, Ph.D. A licensed clinical psychologist and a marriage, family and child therapist, Rabbi Levi's books include *Seven Heavens - Inspirational Stories to Elevate Your Soul*.

This event is free and open to the general public. In addition to informative lectures and demonstrations about the *Feldenkrais Method*, attendees will have the opportunity to experience both group *Awareness Through Movement*® classes and one-on-one *Functional Integration*® lessons with *Guild Certified Feldenkrais Teachers*®.

This is a great place for those already familiar with the *Feldenkrais Method* to send curious people. Many people struggle to explain the benefits of the *Feldenkrais Method* to friends, family and other care providers. Some students may have taken group ATM classes for years without trying a private *Functional Integration* lesson, and vice versa.

A group of enthusiastic, skilled *Feldenkrais* Practitioners have come together to make this unique community outreach event possible. I had the privilege to recently discuss the event with a few of the key organizers: fellow Southern California *Feldenkrais* Practitioners Bridget Quebodeaux, Stacy Barrows and Cathy Sweetman.

Bridget Quebodeaux

When asked why she was personally devoting time to an event of this kind, Bridget Quebodeaux replied, "I have a dream. I want to meet new moms in the sandbox and have our conversations go something like this:

New Mom: 'Are you a stay-at-home mom?'

Me: 'No, actually I work, but my schedule is rather flexible.'

NM: 'What do you do?'

Me: 'I'm a *Feldenkrais* Practitioner.'

NM: 'Oh, I love the *Feldenkrais Method*. My *Feldenkrais* practitioner was a lifesaver during my pregnancy.'

This is instead of the usual...Feldenwhat?!

My hope is that events like the Expo will give the *Feldenkrais Method* the exposure we need to make our life's work a household name. No one knew what Pilates was 15 years ago. My grandmother knows what Pilates is and yours probably does too."



Bridget Quebodeaux receiving a *Functional Integration* lesson as part of a mentoring session with Ellen Soloway

Stacy Barrows

One of the key organizers and presenters at this year's event is Stacy Barrows, PT, GCFP, CPI. Serving as the director of Century City Physical Therapy, Inc., Stacy just successfully patented a unique foam roller design called the Smart Roller®. Although Stacy's *Awareness Through Movement* classes have a waiting list, she still strives to get the *Feldenkrais Method* more recognition in the general public and among health professionals. She was clinical director of a recently completed research project measuring the "Effects of *Awareness Through Movement* with People Diagnosed with Fibromyalgia".

LMcM: Stacy, Do people with fibromyalgia make up a significant part of your *Feldenkrais* practice?

SB: Yes, a lot of them are categorized as myofascial disorders as well. Fibromyalgia tends to be a catch all diagnosis but it has very specific diagnostic criteria. I have found the *Feldenkrais Method* to be extremely beneficial for these people, especially to improve their quality of life, and to assist them in being active.

LMcM: Do you perceive a change in how the medical profession understands the *Feldenkrais Method* because of research or is the research driven by the medical communities growing curiosity about the method?

Featured Region: S. California, S. Nevada and Hawaii

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SB: Both. The reason I thought fibromyalgia was a good entity to study is that there is very little research that demonstrates conservative effective treatments that help this population. I knew that the medical professionals would love to have an effective modality that is cost effective and accessible to share with these patients.

LMcM: What is the easiest way for readers to find the study and read it? Is there an abstract available?

SB: The study has been donated to the *Feldenkrais Guild*® of North America and to the library of the Southern California region of the Guild.

LMcM: Are there audio recordings of any of the lessons used for the study?

SB: Yes, they are available on tape and CD. The lessons for the study were developed and recorded by the late Mark Reese, a *Feldenkrais* Trainer. The research could not have happened without his help. The series of 16 recorded lessons is called:

Moving Out of Pain with The Feldenkrais Method
by Mark Reese, Ph.D.

They can be ordered directly from:
Feldenkrais Resources
Phone: (800) 765-1907
E-mail: info@feldenkraisresources.com

The study showed that working directly with a practitioner is more effective, but the important point is that tapes are effective as well. It is good for people to know they exist as another resource for their experience of the *Feldenkrais Method*.

Cathy Sweetman

Coincidentally, practitioner Cathy Sweetman was first introduced to the *Feldenkrais Method* through audio-taped lessons. I asked her how she came to try the *Feldenkrais Method*.

CS: For about eight years I underwent unsuccessful "traditional" physical rehabilitation for injuries to my pelvis and lower back. I should mention that I tried about every non-conventional treatment as well. Chronic pain and fibromyalgia confined my once active, vital self to my bed. I was living in Muskegon, Michigan at the time and someone gave me the name of a physical therapist who sent me some *Awareness Through Movement* tapes. I had no knowledge of the method but listened to the tapes and tried to do the movements as best I could. I was very intrigued and thirsty to learn more. I traveled eight hours in a snowstorm, lying down in the back of a Chevy Blazer to attend a workshop with Michael Purcell. I was excited; finally something made sense even though I couldn't explain it to myself or anyone else. He recommended a practitioner (the closest one was

four to five hours away) who told me about the training programs in 1993. The seed was planted.

LMcM: What led you to make the commitment to start a professional training?

CS: I completed one year of the training in 1994. I wanted to reclaim my life back, to learn how to move without pain. I have to admit I wanted healing and if I had a new profession afterwards that was icing on the cake. That year was just the beginning of a long hard journey but it was transformational. It was so freeing to hear that I had options about my movements as well as my thinking and that they were so interwoven. Although for years I couldn't do much, I loved the exploration; I felt like I was discovering the real me. Upon the recommendation of Educational Director Jeff Haller, I came out to West Los Angeles to work with incredible practitioners at the Center for Physical Health and I worked closely with them for about three years. I was very fortunate to work with Pat Barragan, GCFP, who was so flexible—I'm speaking of her mind—and imaginative. I was inspired to do what had transformed and enthused me. I studied *Bones for Life* with Ruthy Alon and was certified to teach. I became a Pilates instructor so I could make a living. And when I wanted to offer more to my clients and continue my learning, I was informed that a weekend training program was starting with Mark Reese & Donna Ray. I never hesitated. I graduated in August of 2005.

*Laura McMurray is a Guild Certified Feldenkrais Practitioner^{CM} and the regional representative for the Southern California Region.
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So Cal Expo 2007

**Increase Your Awareness—Move to
Connect Body, Mind and Spirit Through
the *Feldenkrais Method*.**

Sunday, April 22, 2007
10:00 a.m. – 3:30 p.m.

Cedars-Sinai Medical Center,
Thalians Auditorium (Plaza Level)
8730 Alden Drive, Los Angeles, CA 90048

Reservations for the Expo are highly recommended.
To make a reservation, or for more information, please
contact: Carey Haskell or Marci Spiegler
at 323.463.4469
E-mail: feldexpo@mindspring.com

Workshops and Events Around the Country

All classes are taught by certified *Feldenkrais*® Practitioners.

SE Region

A Flexible Spine - Forward Bending: A Workshop in the *Feldenkrais Method*®

Relax and lengthen your back muscles, neck muscles and the back of your legs

Taught by: Sibyll Hoch

February 18th, 9-11 AM

Green Tara Yoga, 925 White Street, Key West, FL

Registration: Sibyll Hoch Phone: 305.393.9392

The *Feldenkrais Method* - Step, Walk, Stroll Through the Basics: An Introductory Workshop

Taught By Elaine Alexander

March 10, 1-4 PM

The *Feldenkrais* Loft

2856 Sadler Road

Fernandina Beach, FL

Register and request information from

elaine.alexander@comcast.net

Movement-Based Bodywork: Understanding The TMJ (Jaw)

Taught by E. Ann Harman, GCFP, D.O., LMT

Gentle exploratory sequences to relax the mouth, face, and jaw and help you to understand their relationship to the rest of the body.

March 24, 10 AM-5 PM

Florida School of Massage, Gainesville, FL

To register: Contact Florida School of Massage 877.589.2713 or

www.floridaschoolofmassage.com

For information contact Ann: afn29901@netzero.net

Walking Your Talk: Changing Your Life Through the Magic of Body Language

Taught by Lavinia Plonka

Based on her new book, exploring posture and gesture via the *Feldenkrais Method* and related research.

March 31, 12:30 PM-6:30 PM

(March 30 - Author talk: 7 PM)

Rosemary Court, Sarasota, FL.

Register and info: www.laviniaplanka.com, 941.952.5280

Northern CA

Training for Certification as a Teacher/Practitioner of the *Feldenkrais Method* in San Francisco.

Co-Educational Directors: Paul Rubin, Julie Casson Rubin and Deborah Bowes

Begin in January 2008

Information: www.feldnet.com ; 415.333.6644 or

paulrubin@feldnet.com

NW Region

The *Feldenkrais Method* of Movement in Everyday Life

Move with greater clarity and precision, gaining relief from pain and stiffness using the power of your own awareness

Taught by Peggy Z. Protz

February 4, 1-3pm

East West Bookshop, 6500 Roosevelt Way NE, Seattle, WA

Register: (206) 523-3726

Information: (206) 533-0820 or pzprotz@comcast.net

The Embodied Life – The *Feldenkrais Method*, Meditation and the Emotional Body

Human Transformation requires the movement from fear to love as our basic operating principle.

Taught by Russell Delman

February 24 – 25, 10 AM-5 PM

Seattle Mountaineers Club, 300 Third Ave W,

Registration and more info: LeeAnn Starovasnik,

Feldenstar@yahoo.com

The Embodied Life – The *Feldenkrais Method* and Meditation

A public workshop to enhance one's capacity to experience the beauty of the present moment through embodiment - learning to feel our physical sensations in the NOW moment.

Taught by Russell Delman

May 5 – 6, 9 AM-4 PM

Bend Senior Center, Bend, Oregon

Registration and more info: Donna Hoitsma, supai@coinet.com

or 541.385.5721

The Embodied Life – The *Feldenkrais Method* and Meditation

A public workshop to enhance one's capacity to experience the beauty of the present moment through embodiment - learning to feel our physical sensations in the NOW moment.

Taught by Russell Delman

May 7 – 11

Breitenbush Hot Springs, Breitenbush, Oregon

Registration and more info: Donna Hoitsma, supai@coinet.com

or 541.385.5721



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