



SENSEABILITY

A Quarterly Newsletter of Applications of the FELDENKRAIS METHOD®

The FELDENKRAIS METHOD® is an educational system that develops a functional awareness of the self in the environment.

Moshe Feldenkrais D.Sc. (1904-1984), physicist, engineer, martial artist and educator, developed the FELDENKRAIS METHOD by studying the direct relationship between bodily movement and the ways we think, feel, learn and act in the world.

AWARENESS THROUGH MOVEMENT® is the group lesson form in which students explore movement sequences according to the verbal directions of the teacher.

FUNCTIONAL INTEGRATION® is the private lesson form combining instructive touch and movement with verbal cues.

These lessons help students become aware of old habits and provide choices for more efficient action.

GUILD CERTIFIED FELDENKRAIS PRACTITIONERS™ must complete 800 - 1000 hours of in-depth training over a three to four year period in a Professional Training Program regulated by **The FELDENKRAIS GUILD**.

The FELDENKRAIS GUILD is an international organization of practitioners which maintains the professional standards of practitioners and provides a range of informative materials for the public.

For more information, please contact your **GUILD CERTIFIED FELDENKRAIS PRACTITIONER OF The FELDENKRAIS GUILD** at (800) 775-2118.

Please Note: The FELDENKRAIS METHOD is an educational system. It is not a substitute for medical diagnosis or treatment. Consult your physician if you have pain or difficulty with movement.

Issue # 4: Applications with Children

Anat Baniel is world renowned for her FELDENKRAIS work with children. In this interview she clarifies many questions about FELDENKRAIS work with children. Following the interview, Anat shows us through Adam's Story how children enjoy FELDENKRAIS® work.

Interview With Anat Baniel

Anat, what is your unique, personal perspective on FELDENKRAIS® work?

Feldenkrais himself said that his work helped people translate intention into action. If I had to give one definition, I would say it gives you more means and options to achieve that which you intend to do. A lot of the work is training people to know what they feel and to know what to do with this knowledge, using feeling to organize perception and action.

I think it's important to emphasize that Feldenkrais has not developed a medical approach; he has developed a learning technique. If it so happens that someone has a disease, an incurable disease, I have no way of dealing with it directly. What I can do is look how having that disease has impacted the process of learning movement and intervene from that angle.

I am working with a girl from Chicago who came to me with a muscular atrophy disease at age five. She was wearing a brace, could not sit herself up from a lying position, and walking was difficult. By the fifth visit she had learned to sit up by

herself. There remain limitations from that affliction, but she's doing things now that were out of her reach and even her imagination.

The FELDENKRAIS METHOD really addressed this learning to act, although it doesn't pretend to replace medical therapy. Moshe tried to emphasize that he wasn't fixing a problem. There is something that the student is going to do to determine the outcome, and that's learning. It's not an easy transition for people to make.

What about improvement of self-esteem, especially with children who are aware that they are disabled?

What I've seen over time is the moment the children found they could move in new ways, they started feeling really good about themselves. It's not an external thing, like an adult making more money, but when the nervous system starts doing what it's supposed to do, and everything is working better, they have better self-esteem and their motivation improves.

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Anat, what is the earliest age you work with children?

Five weeks. I saw a child with arthrogriposis whose elbow joints were not formed and whose biceps didn't exist. He couldn't get his hands to his mouth. Through the lessons he has learned to use his arms together, one moving the other, to feed himself.

Given that the FELDENKRAIS METHOD has a highly intellectual, theoretical basis, how do you deal with children who are non-verbal or have cognitive involvement?

First of all, when there is a physical limitation, the corresponding neurological system is also underdeveloped. Feldenkrais thought that intelligence was the whole information processing capability of the brain, verbal and non-verbal.

In working with a very young child, the touch gives a lot of information. When I see a change, initially very slight, in the way the child is moving, we are in a sense having a conversation. It tells me that what I gave the child is relevant. The practitioner has a non-verbal language of communication via the kinesthetic and movement aspect.

Also, children have less interference in terms of inhibition and things they learned to do wrong. FELDENKRAIS work, done well, accesses that level of intelligence in anyone. For adults, this level has been neglected and inhibited, and a lot of our suffering, a lot of our difficulties are due to that.

Adam's Story

Nine year old Adam Girard has cerebral palsy, a non-progressive condition in which voluntary movement is impaired, often as result of prenatal brain damage. He remembers well his first FUNCTIONAL INTEGRATION lesson with Anat, even though he was three years old at the time.

"I used to drag one of my legs," recalled the youngster. "After the lesson I didn't have to drag it any more, and I could run."

His mother remembers the moment, too. "After the lesson, he ran to the stairs. I started to help him because he'd never climbed stairs alone before, but the teacher held me back. He struggled but he made it. Then we went to a park and he just ran up and down a hill there shouting over and over, 'This is fun, this is fun.'"

Now he will suggest to his mother that he'd like another lesson when there's something he'd like to be able to do. "I want to learn to whistle and snap my fingers," said Adam. He also wanted to improve his performance in a gymnastics class where he already does handstands, front rolls, and back flips.

In recent school placement tests, Adam was evaluated as intellectually gifted. His mother credits the FELDENKRAIS METHOD.

"We all use such a small portion of our brains," she pointed out. "Adam has needed to develop new parts of his brain to find alternative neural pathways to the ones that don't function. I really believe it's developed his intelligence as a secondary result." ✎

What I am after is to restore each person to their human dignity" - Moshe Feldenkrais D.Sc.

The Special Rapport with Children

Leslie Wilder, (<LES2wild@aol.com>) a pediatric physical therapist for over 10 years, is now using the FELDENKRAIS METHOD almost exclusively in working with children in an Early Intervention Program in Brooklyn, New York.

The children she sees, who range in age from 6 months to three years, have developmental problems due to conditions such as cerebral palsy and genetic anomalies. She finds that FELDENKRAIS has made her more successful in working with the children.

First, it is easier for her to gain rapport with the children now because she does not have to be as goal oriented. "With other developmental methods, there is more or less a 'right way' to do something," she says. "If the child can't do the movement the 'right way' then the perception is that the child has failed." Critical rapport may be lost as the child senses this.

"With FELDENKRAIS the child is introduced to a variety of movements." The rapport develops and is enhanced through the delightful movements. "It is so fascinating to feel a baby latch on to a previously unknown trajectory!" The child learns and changes more rapidly once she has gained rapport.

As Feldenkrais wrote in The Elusive Obvious,

Organic learning is essential. It can also be therapeutic in essence. It is healthier to learn than to be a patient or even cured. Life is a process not a thing. And, processes go well if there are many ways to influence them. We need more ways to do what we want than the one we know -- even if it is a good one in itself. ✎

Emily's New Crutches

In his book, *Articulating Changes*, **Larry Goldfarb**, a FELDENKRAIS Trainer, (<movable@csi.com>) described an impromptu lesson with a student named "Emily," who has cerebral palsy.

He had been working with her for six years, when she got a new pair of crutches. Although she was excited about having crutches that might enable her to get from one class to another more quickly in school, she was having tremendous difficulty moving smoothly with them. She insisted that she just wasn't used to them, but Larry observed that *how she used herself* made walking more difficult.

In the lesson, Larry taught Emily how to notice differences - in how she felt the weight of the crutches, how she used her arms to make them seem heavier or lighter, how much tension she used. "By learning what to notice, Emily's ability to move changed. Once

how she moves changes, what she notices (that is to say, how she feels) changes."

Larry taught Emily this ability not by making her walk over and over again with the crutches, but by creating a series of tiny explorations of her relationship to the crutches and the floor. "...Can you draw a square on the floor with the tip of your right crutch? From where the tip is, move it to the right and then back. Good, now move the tip to the left and then slide the tip forward. Keep going, tracing around this square."

As Emily tried this she discovered her difficulty moving the crutch forward. Larry suggested she "hop" the crutch forward. The lesson became a game of discovery for both teacher and student.

Moving Across the Page

Movement Artist and FELDENKRAIS Practitioner **Lavinia Plonka** (<LaviniaP@att.net>) finished a special three year program in 1996 which explored how movement can improve literacy.

Moving Across the Page, created by Plonka as an artist in residence as part of the Guggenheim Museum's Education program was funded in part by the National Endowment for Arts (NEA).

Lavinia combined AWARENESS THROUGH MOVEMENT approaches with movement theatre arts to help lead at risk children in the South Bronx to higher reading levels, greater self esteem and improved writing skills.

Teachers were astonished to find children, especially bilingual and illiterate ones, suddenly leaping up to write new words on the board, or volunteering for a chance to read.

Movement as a Model of Learning

"It has always been my dream to introduce FELDENKRAIS to the schools' main curriculum, as a subject in its own right", wrote **Chava Shelhav**, (<shelhavc@netvision.net.il>) who has done extensive research on the FELDENKRAIS METHOD with children.

She has found that "FELDENKRAIS offers a process of organic learning through action, thereby teaching the ability to learn, and not just learning to be taught."

At the University of Heidelberg, Chava developed the *Movement as a Model of Learning* program which was given to first-grade children with learning disabilities. In the program, the class had daily 1-hour AWARENESS THROUGH MOVEMENT lessons for approximately 6 weeks.

At the end of the school year, the class showed significant improvement in a number of important skills including

posture, balance, and coordination.

This class, which, in 1991 had been problematic in terms of learning ability and social background, had become one of the most advanced classes in the school -- and a favorite with the teachers. The social atmosphere was high; the veteran children quickly integrated new children who had been problematic in other schools. On the other hand, the class used for comparison in the original year showed no development in its social structure or learning ability.

As Chava wrote, "By emphasizing the children's capabilities rather than disabilities, it becomes possible to consciously return to suitable age appropriate organic development, thereby making new integration possible and thus allowing a child to fully utilize his/her capabilities in overall personality development."



Friends of Feldenkraissm

Friends of Feldenkrais is a way for the public to become more connected with the FELDENKRAIS METHOD.

Individual Memberships:

\$75 • Basic Benefits, plus ATM Audio tape by Moshe Feldenkrais, and *Friends of Feldenkrais*® polo T-Shirt

\$50 • Basic benefits, plus FELDENKRAIS Logo T-Shirt

\$25 • Basic benefits: Quarterly Newsletter - *SenseAbility*, 10% discount off books and tapes, article "*The FELDENKRAIS METHOD*" by Moshe Feldenkrais, and discounts on Annual Conference workshops


To join, call **The FELDENKRAIS GUILD** at (800) 775-2118 or email: media@feldenkrais.com

The Story of Johannes

Johannes came into the world with no arms... two deformed legs and feet... and a future that seemed to hold out more disappointment than hope. Countless therapies had been tried and had not helped him to function better.

FELDENKRAIS Practitioner **Diana Razumny** (<Diana@movement-educators.com>) met Johannes when he was eight. She sensed in him a spirit that seemed to transcend limitations. She learned from the boy that he had a longing to run fast with his prosthesis. Diana explained that the first step was for her to touch and move him, directing his attention to his pelvis and spine. Communicating with hand and heart, she began an exploration that has evolved over two years. In that time, in more than 50 sessions, Johannes' scoliosis has improved, and he has learned to use his spine in a much more flexible fashion.

Johannes' doctors have noticed the improvement in his scoliosis and his mom told them it was from the FELDENKRAIS lessons. They said, "Keep it up!"

Through their work together, this spirited boy has discovered how to do a "judo roll," so that he can protect his head in the event of a fall. Recently, Diana received a joyful phone call from Johannes' mother, explaining that her son had fallen from the sofa, that he rolled and came up smiling, saying, "That's what Diana taught me!" 



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Editor: Robert Black **Contributing Editors:** Paris Kern, Kira Charles, Lavinia Plonka, and Deborah Leoni.

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RESOURCES:

BOOKS:

VIDEOTAPE: *Move Like the Animals* and *Monkey Moves* by Stephen Rosenholtz. The videos, used widely in daycares and schools, use a multisensory approach to develop children's sensory-motor skills including balance, coordination and motor sequencing.

AUDIOTAPE: *FELDENKRAIS in the Classroom* by Debbie Ashton has four 5 -10 minute "alertness breaks" to use in the classroom or any learning setting. These "Alertness Breaks" afford students increased capacity for learning, self-regulation, creativity, focus of attention, and ability to concentrate.

To order these tapes and books call The FELDENKRAIS GUILD at (800) 775-2118