Dive into Conference
–by Carla Feinstein

Have you ever experienced an Awareness through Movement® class or had a Functional Integration® lesson?

Perhaps there was a moment when you were turning your head or your foot or your shoulder and suddenly, there was a “shift.” Maybe this “shift” was something you didn’t even know that you needed and yet there it was: a new way of being in your world. And to think that can happen from a single lesson!

Now, envision yourself going to a Feldenkrais Method® Conference. You’re immersed in the Method for an entire day or maybe even an entire week. Imagine of all the possibilities for change. One thing is certain: you won’t leave the Conference as the same person who arrived.

This year, the Conference takes place at Loyola University LS campus in Chicago, along the shore of Lake Michigan. I find it to be a uniquely appropriate place for a Feldenkrais Method Conference because the Great Lakes remind me of the Method. Sitting along the shoreline, the calm, clear water stretches out before me and though I know that there is land on the other side, I’m unable to see it. There is such clarity in the water that I can see down to the lake’s sandy bottom. As (continued on page 2)
a child, I interpreted this visibility as a lack of depth, yet I was never able to dive all the way down to the bottom without running out of air.

As an adult, though I live a short drive from the Pacific Ocean, I find myself longing for the Great Lakes. Sitting at the beach, I can watch the waves roll in and out with the tide, but I don’t get to feel the same stillness. I have, however, found that stillness as a student of the Feldenkrais Method.

When I lie down on a table or a mat and turn inward for a body scan, I find in that calm environment that I am able to reach towards the depths of my own body and sense my way down to the core. From this place, my movements, my habits, are just ripples on the surface, easy to change not because I am suddenly aware of their presence but because I am aware that my natural state is change.

Please consider joining us in July! Below are the workshops open to the public. And don’t forget that each morning starts with a free Awareness through Movement class!

**Change Your Age! with Frank Wildman**

In Dr. Frank Wildman’s groundbreaking “Change Your Age” program, you will learn a series of simple, but powerful, exercises that will actually train the brain to send the correct signals to the body so it begins to move in healthier, stronger, more coordinated, and even graceful ways. Based on principles of childhood development applied to adults, this new “Change Your Age” program is flying through the USA, Europe and Asia. Throughout the two days, you will break away from physically limiting habits and progressively feel younger as you learn to perform movements that will increase your agility.

**Child'Space, a method for working with infants and toddlers, based on the theory of Dr. Feldenkrais with Chava Shelhav-Silberbush**

The ways infants perceive, organize and process information directly affect the development of their movement skills and the ways they relate to their environment. In recent years we are witness to a growing number of children requiring special education services, as early as in kindergarten. Supporting infants and their parents on this critical journey influences infants’ physical, social and emotional adjustments throughout their life span.

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The Child’Space Method emphasizes the importance of stimulating all biological systems in the critical developmental period of the newborn up to independent walking. Involving the parents in this process is at the heart of the method and an essential component of its success.

Expanding our Reach in Research: Working on Several Fronts with Pat Buchanan & Jim Stephens

Meet practitioners who are conducting research on the Feldenkrais Method in a number of arenas. This presentation will include a poster session and time to talk with the researchers. Jim Stephens will be reporting on new research involving mapping of body image and it’s relevance to our work. Pat Buchanan will lead a discussion of the FeldSciNet project and its potential for expansion. She will also give an update on the status and future development of the Esther Thelen Research and Education Fund for research.

A Happier Meals with Children: Workshop on Eating and Swallowing Disorders with Chava Shelhav-Silberbush

Mealtime is often difficult when someone in the family has a neurological or developmental challenge. Eating and swallowing are connected not only to motor aspects of the mouth, but also to the relationship between the organization of movements and breathing, and their coordination. This workshop deals with the connection between hunger, eating and the motor aspects of the mouth. We will learn through developmental movement exploration, observation and diagnosis skills, live demonstration of mother and baby, and hands-on work.

The (Im)Possible Dream with Lavinia Plonka

Moshe Feldenkrais often said his method could make “The impossible, possible, the possible, easy and the easy, elegant.” But this doesn’t just apply to movement. He wanted us to “realize our avowed and unavowed dreams” in our lives. How can Awareness Through Movement lessons help us reach what seem to be impossible dreams? In this workshop you will learn how to apply Feldenkrais® principles such as “less is more,” “stay within your comfort zone,” and “pay attention,” towards physical, personal and professional goals. Other tools, including dialog and writing will round out this “Feldenkrais” approach for your aspirations.

The Intelligence of Moving Bodies: How Somatic Learning Allows for Less is More with Carl Ginsburg & Lucia Schuette

Recently neuroscience has begun to catch up with Moshe Feldenkrais’ contention that developing kinesthetic and kinetic awareness stimulates our system to learn new patterns of action in life. Using Awareness Through Movement lessons and discussion of systems biology we will explore how ‘less is more’ when evoking the plasticity available to ourselves for improving our lives. In their new book The Intelligence of Moving Bodies, Carl and Lucia explore space, time, perception, affect, coupling, and animation as keys to somatic methods. In this workshop these themes will be brought to life – within your own body.

Music Performance and the Feldenkrais Method with Steve Duke

Moshe Feldenkrais identified four components of the waking state— sensing, feeling, thinking, and moving. This workshop will show how these components apply to musical performance, and why musicians respond well to Feldenkrais Method lessons. Through demonstration and Awareness Through Movement lessons, participants will examine abstract ideas, imagination, perception, touch, rhythm, attention, technique and expression in music performance. Understanding how performers think “in” music and learn music can provide practitioners insight on ways to explore and interpret ATM lessons.

Seeing Clearly - a Feldenkrais Method Exploration of Vision with David Webber

Vision is the primary sense through which we experience the world. The quality and clarity of our vision can weaken and degrade without our knowing how or why. In this workshop you will learn how to eliminate common habits that interfere with easy, effortless vision and experience a quiet, more receptive nervous system. We will investigate three interdependent functions that enable the eyes to optimize vision: muscular effort, movement and focus. We will integrate the use of the eyes into our Awareness Through Movement and Functional Integration work and observe that as vision improves, our movement, flexibility, coordination, and balance will improve as well.

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As a Feldenkrais® practitioner, I often work with people who have chronic conditions and unexplained pain. They come from different walks of life. They have different personal histories and life experiences. They have different strengths and weaknesses and different temperaments and moods. They are different. Their pain is different. And yet the first words they speak are often the same: “I’ve tried everything and nothing helps.” Sometimes it’s as if I’m being offered a fair warning, “Don’t feel badly if what you do doesn’t work. Nothing does.” Other times, I feel as if I’m being dared to make any difference at all. Always present is the hesitant hope that the Feldenkrais Method® will be the something that finally helps.

In recent decades, the biopsychosocial model has become the most accepted model for viewing chronic pain. The biopsychosocial approach says chronic pain is just part of the experience of a whole person living in the world. Hurting bodies cannot be understood in parts or in isolation of the thinking, sensing, feeling person walking around in them and the environment in which they live and ache. Personal histories, feeling management strategies, relationships, and beliefs are no less a part of felt pain than an old injury or a job that requires repetitive movement, and getting better is not a linear process of problem identification and symptom removal.

Research suggests a multidisciplinary healing strategy. Many people take that to mean they need a physical therapist, psychotherapist, massage therapist, energy healer and breath coach (to name a few). My belief is that less is usually more. Doing more won’t make what you do more helpful. Doing more won’t make it more likely that you will stumble onto the one approach or combination of approaches that “fixes” your problem and ends your pain. Doing more makes you tired and it isn’t necessary. Doing well is much easier and will yield much better results. I suggest beginning by banishing the hope of being fixed. People can’t be fixed like kitchen appliances and old cars.

It may feel as though all your pain exists in one or more parts of your body and if you could just fix those parts, you’d be flying high. Indeed, if you were a ’69 Mustang or a toaster oven, you could have those parts repaired or replaced and be on your way. Not so with the parts of you that hurt.

I began the last lecture I gave on chronic pain with the following quote from the NOI group, “Discs do not cause pain anymore than genital stimulation causes love. Discs contribute to the pain experience.” If discs in fact merely contribute to the pain experience (as I believe they do) then consider the following:

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Fixing the disc may not fix the pain
and
Working with any other part of the
person who lives with and around the
disc might make a difference

So, why might trying everything lead
one to the conclusion that “nothing
helps”? If working with any aspect of
functioning affects the whole, then
shouldn’t everything help? Yes…but…
only if the person seeking help has
the ability to feel something other
than pain and the capacity to measure
improvement. That is the nearest I will
come to offering a solution to chronic
pain. If you suffer with a chronic
condition and want to feel better,
you must develop your ability to feel
something other than pain and learn
to measure improvement or you will
continue to try everything and nothing
will help.

Feeling something other than pain

Every person is capable of noticing
a wide range of sensations in their
body. Movements and feelings have
qualities that we can describe as
heavy, light, easy, effortful, fluid,
ergized, sluggish, open, closed and
so on. Often, when someone hurts
for a long time, all they are aware of
feeling is pain or no pain. If all one
can feel is pain or no pain, chances
are that any intervention that does not
result in no pain will be tossed in the
“didn’t help” pile.

Feldenkrais Method Awareness
Through Movement® classes and
one on one, hands-on Functional
Integration® lessons are designed to
wake people up to sensations in their
bodies. As Feldenkrais practitioners,
we ask our clients questions about
what they sense and feel. We help
them become aware of their habitual
patterns (i.e. all I feel is pain or no
pain) and we guide them toward new
ways of noticing themselves.

Measuring improvement

Improvement doesn’t mean no pain.
Improvement can mean a shift from
sensing a movement or a feeling as
heavy and closed, to noticing a feeling
of lightness and openness—even if
there is still pain. If feeling light and
open feels better to someone than
feeling heavy and closed, then being
able to remain available for noticing
lightness and openness means feeling
better more often.

Feldenkrais practitioners don’t
teach people how to move or
sense themselves correctly. We
offer experiences that help people
create options, direct them to
notice what they feel in their bodies
and leave them to choose what feels
right to them.

As a Feldenkrais practitioner, I use
movement and directed attention
as means of self-exploration and
measuring improvement. Does that
mean I believe movement exploration
is the only approach to improving the
way you feel or that the Feldenkrais

Method offers the only answer to a
chronic condition? No. However,
Feldenkrais principles can be applied
to many different educational and
therapeutic approaches, making
whatever road you choose toward
feeling better the something that
helps.

Bridget Quebodeaux has a private
practice in West Los Angeles, CA. Visit
her website at www.feldenkraiswestla.
com Bridget will be one of the
presenters at the 2010 Feldenkrais
Method Annual Conference. Entitled
“Toward Healing Chronic Pain,” her
workshop will look at the past decade
in research into chronic pain and
current literature on chronic pain
management. Participants will explore
the benefits of using strategies from
Feldenkrais Method lessons for their
own growth and healing as well as for
that of their clients or loved ones.
A really good Feldenkrais lesson is an entire paradigm unto itself and explaining what it is in 1000 words or less would be par with describing the immune system or Greek mythology in 1000 words or less – you just can’t. The Feldenkrais Method® is not black and white. It certainly isn’t linear and it’s even more than three-dimensional because it brings into play:

1) The human being and all its parts
2) The environment in which that human being lives and functions
3) Putting together 1 & 2
4) All the in betweens and shades of grey of 1, 2 & 3.

If you mix up those four points you could call it human life on planet Earth.

But let us get to more important matters: Can you sense yourself?

If you have yet to attend an Awareness Through Movement® class, it starts with what is called a body scan, and it goes something like this:

Take a moment to scan yourself, to track what you feel, your sensations. Where does your attention go? Does it stay in one place, or does it travel - Inside your body, outside your body? Can you sense your contact with the ground? The imprint you make with the floor under you? Are you breathing?

These seemingly innocuous questions of “how do you feel right now” carry a lot of punch and can give us so much information. For instance, stop a moment. Since turning on your computer, opening this email and reading this article, have you sensed and paid any attention to your body comfort, your ease of movement, a clenched fist or a pressing thought that is imprinting a wrinkle on your brow? So stop and just sense your body. Don’t think it through. Don’t force. Just notice. Your breath. Your life. Sense. Look away from the computer for 60-90 seconds and simply scan and track your bodily sensations. What do you notice? Not so sure? Well, it’s not your fault. This skill set, which can be so nourishing to have in times of stress, anxiety and fear, is rarely, if at all learned in our upbringing and in our classical school systems.

Hawken eloquently brings to the surface the connection between the environment and human biology in this commencement address. Worldwide, an important education is going on in our attempt to keep the planet healthy. The importance of having awareness of our external world is paramount: our oceans, streams, lakes, wildlife, forests need our attention. Interestingly, we are rarely asked to pay attention to ourselves and take stock of our internal world, our biology. This self-attention, or lack thereof, greatly affects the quality with which we can pay attention and take appropriate action. We’ve become good at becoming aware of our environment, but rarely do we turn such awareness towards ourselves to see how bringing these together can truly alter, inform and transform ALL our relationships.

Moshe Feldenkrais understood the need to address and look at the body not just from the perspective of the muscles and bones, brain and nerve impulses, but also how we relate with our surroundings, including other human beings and our planet earth.

Feldenkrais wrote in The Potent Self,

Although we should do our utmost to produce the necessary reformation of our society, it is obvious from the present rate of change that no significant improvement will occur before a sufficient number of people have changed their attitude towards change, difficult as that may be, it is (continued on page 7)
...the power of
a simple scan
(continued from page 6)

not impossible, when dealing with changes of environment, it must be kept in mind the entity in respect to which the change is intended is the nervous system.

I wonder how our world would change if for every 10 hours children spend memorizing facts and conjugating verbs, they had one hour in school learning how to sense and monitor their bodily sensations, feelings, and how to best diffuse and harness such energy.

What if everyone had been taught such key elemental pieces along with the advent of industrialization and the eventual technological boom? Would there be a difference in the Western world?

Hawken is correct in writing that it is amazing that so much goes on in our bodies. We can ignore so much: our brainstem keeps critical processes going and we have an array of reflexes that keep us safe and ticking along without even a thought. How exquisite this is! Yet because of the luxury of autonomic processes, we sometimes transfer such automation to other aspects of our lives. We ignore the aspects of human function that we have control of. Our thoughts and daily actions that cause pain and suffering or joy and compassion are under our voluntary control. This is the evolution of our human brain: the ability to learn how to pause between an intention and an action. This ability may be rusty or asleep, but the intelligence is there, just waiting to be expressed. When honed and harnessed, these characteristics can create a quality that I dare call “humanness.”

Hawken writes, “Who is in charge of your body? Who is managing those molecules?” Do you need to have your body shut down with illness to take notice? If I parallel an example from our environment to our own body think of it this way: We didn’t wait until coal was gone to tap our oil sources, nor are we waiting for oil to be gone before harnessing different energy sources, so why wait to get injured, infirm, sick, neurotic, out of alignment or simply out of shape before taking care of yourself?

Of course, no one is perfect.

And in his book Awareness Through Movement:

“The possibility of a pause between the creation of the thought pattern for any particular action and the execution of that action is the physical basis for awareness.”

We have the potential to be attentive to how we do things and to become mature adults according to Feldenkrais’ definition. We are responsible for ourselves; we are responsible for our environment. Functionally integrating these pieces is critical for our future.

Now can you sense yourself? If you can’t, make sure you are on time for that first Feldenkrais class you attend. It could make all the difference in the world.

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Irene is currently the founder and producer of “The Next 25 Years” a film project that will document the principles, practice and history of The Feldenkrais Method. For more info on this exciting project, to find out how you can support it, and to view some preliminary footage please visit website: www.thenext25years.com

[W]e do have the ability to take control of ourselves and make some choices that serve our future, both in relationship to our body, mind and our environment.

Unnecessary habits creep in; grooves become stuck. We get busy. But we do have the ability to take control of ourselves and make some choices that serve our future, both in relationship to our body, mind and our environment.

To end, a few words from Moshe Feldenkrais

Moshe Feldenkrais wrote in his book Higher Judo:

“(adult maturity) is an ideal state rarely reached, where a person is capable of dealing with the immediate present task before him without being hindered by earlier formed habits of thought or attitude.”

And in a little booklet called Learn to Learn:

“In general it is not what we do that is important, but how we do it.”
Ideas about the human brain have shifted dramatically over the last few decades, in leaps equivalent to the shift from believing the earth was flat to the realization of a spherical world. Less than 30 years ago, most scientists assumed that the brain was fixed or “hard-wired.” The belief was that after childhood the brain ceased to grow new cells and thus the brain’s only significant change was its decline down the spiral of old age.

Cut to 2010, when scientists are able to use high tech scanning devices to observe how the brain functions in response to various stimuli. Scientists now know the brain can continue to grow throughout our lives and that it’s extremely changeable with the right stimulation. This new science has been labeled neuroplasticity; neuro as in neuron and plastic as in changeable, malleable or modifiable.

With new technology, scientists have been able to “map the brain,” or stimulate micro segments of a body part to see exactly which area of the brain lights up on the scan. It was during brain mapping research that the idea of neuroplasticity was first encountered. In his book, The Brain That Changes Itself, Norman Doidge, M.D., describes a process whereby the brain maps of several monkeys’ hands were produced. Scientists then surgically crossed the nerve (or physical wiring) for the index finger with the nerve for the thumb. After this alteration, scientists expected that when they stimulated the index finger (with the nerve for the thumb) they would see the thumb portion of the brain light up. Instead, the index finger portion of the brain still lit up. The brain had overridden the hardwiring and changed it's processing of the information—the brain was not fixed, but adjustable and changeable.

Scientists also discovered that when one finger was completely restricted from use, the brain maps for the adjacent fingers began to grow and take over the portion of the map now unused by the finger. This proved that not only is the brain changeable, but there is competition in the brain for utilization. Suddenly the phrase “use it or lose it” has real meaning. If portions of brain maps, or neuro-pathways, are not used, they will be taken over by maps or pathways for other body parts, motions, and actions that we actually do utilize.

What does this mean to us “every day folks”? Think about your average day. You get out of bed, probably the same way each time, drive to work (often on auto-pilot), and work, which for many people means sitting at a desk, moving very little, and performing repetitive tasks (including repetitive thinking). The average day for many does not include much novelty and thus does not stimulate the brain to develop new neuro-pathways or strengthen areas of brain maps that are beginning to fade. Our brains are not growing; they are, in essence, dying. We then wonder why we can’t do all the things we used to be able to do. It’s simply because the pathways or maps for those actions were taken over by the maps for the actions that are repeated over and over and over.

So, how do we keep our brains growing and changing in order to “grow young”? The answer lies in our ability to continue learning. By learning, I am talking about the function of organic learning, such as solving a problem, coming to a realization, discovering something novel, or finding a way of doing something through your own exploration; not the function that is usually referred to as learning, which requires only the act of memorizing or copying something that another tells you.

The Feldenkrais Method® offers an avenue for the type of organic learning necessary for continued brain growth. Dr. Moshe Feldenkrais understood the necessity of learning in the continued development of the nervous system. He defined learning as the ability to change our response to the same stimulus. In his book Body & Mature Behavior, Feldenkrais presents his fundamental theories regarding human development and learning. Early in the book, he compares man and other animals, and notes “it is the nervous system of man that is different.” He points out that at birth the human brain weighs about 300 grams or approximately one-fifth of its ultimate weight as an adult. In contrast, the brain of a new born gorilla or chimpanzee is already about two-thirds of it ultimate adult weight. Humans, of all animals, are born with the smallest fraction of their ultimate adult brain.

Feldenkrais states “animals with a more fully grown brain come with
ready-made reactions to external stimuli.” Animals thus have little capacity for learning. Humans must acquire or learn most of their responses to stimuli, even basic responses such as eating, walking and talking. Humans are capable of learning any possible combinations of functioning, which is clearly evident in the individual styles of walking, talking, posturing, behaving and thinking of each human.

Infants and children are natural learners; always playing and exploring with various ways to walk, talk, roll, make faces, laugh, sit, and stand on their heads. Children are constantly “testing the waters,” taking in new information, and thus stimulating new patterns or new combinations of neuro-responses. As adults we stop playing, our actions and thoughts become rote; we stop learning.

In his book *Awareness Through Movement*, Feldenkrais states that “for every person who feels the need for change and improvement, it is within the limits of practical possibility, bearing in mind... that the learning process is irregular and consists of steps, and that there will be downs as well as ups.” Perhaps one reason adults stray away from true learning is this process of ups and downs – we are no longer willing to fall off of our preverbal bikes. We stop finding it funny to fall flat on our faces as we did as kids. The outcome is that our self image, which is constructed at least in part by our brain mapping, is as Feldenkrais states “smaller than it might be, for it is built up of only the group of cells we have actually used.” He goes on to say that “the various combination of cells are perhaps more important that their actual number.”

So, how do we continue to engage in vital learning throughout our lives? In the words of Abraham Maslow, “one can choose to go back to safety or forward with growth. Growth must be chosen again and again; fear must be overcome again and again.” In his foreword to *Body & Mature Behavior*, Feldenkrais practitioner Carl Ginsburg, Ph.D. states “the simple message of Feldenkrais is that we do not have to know all the scientific details to live well... he (Feldenkrais) developed the notion of awareness as the key to opening a learning space to transcend conditioned behavior and action.”

This idea of awareness as the key to learning is also supported by neuroplasticity research. In one experiment, presented in Dr. Doige’s book, researchers mapped a monkey’s sensory cortex. They then trained the monkey to touch a spinning wheel with his fingertips using a specific amount of pressure for ten seconds in order to receive a banana-pellet reward. For this task, the monkey had to pay close attention, as only the correct amount of pressure for the correct amount of time would yield the reward. The researchers found that the brain map of the monkey changed significantly in response to learning this new activity as new neurons began synchronizing together and firing more powerful signals. Additionally, the change in the brain map was long lasting. In contrast with other experiments where the task at hand did not require much attention and could be performed automatically, the monkeys’ brain maps changed but the changes were not long lasting.

The Feldenkrais Method offers a way of learning, through movement, that allows for significant, overarching, and lasting changes in the brain and entire nervous system. The Method employs the use of the whole self. Thoughts, feelings, senses, and movements, with directed awareness, engage the entire nervous system in a way that causes new neurons to fire together, creating the development of new or strengthened neuro-pathways. In 1982, Feldenkrais stated, “I’m not interested in the movements themselves, but how you do them. Any movement that is different and is explored over and over again can actually reorganize molecules in the brain and alter the way we send impulses. Reorganizing the sensory motor part of the nervous system to a state where you can begin to function better makes you feel better; not because of the exercise, but because you’re reprogramming and reorganizing the nervous system to heal the muscular system.”

In Feldenkrais classes, we are offered a safe place, a sort of laboratory, where we can learn again to roll on the floor, grab our feet with our hands, re-sequence an action, reverse a behavior, think in a new way, and even stand on our heads if we like, without the worry about anyone seeing us acting childlike or looking silly. To feel younger, you must act younger. After practicing the Feldenkrais Method, most find they feel more vital, stimulated, and somehow younger. Our brain maps can once again be full of boundless pathways, highways, avenues, throughways, expressways, intersections and roundabouts. This allows us to respond to our environments more youthfully, in many various ways, and to start using it instead of losing it.

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