

FELDENKRAIS GUILD® of North America

E2.3.2.1 THE *FELDENKRAIS METHOD*® OF SOMATIC EDUCATION STANDARDS OF PRACTICE

Preface

1. Any attempt to write a definition of the *Feldenkrais Method* might be seen as producing a somewhat static description of a highly fluid and dynamic method. *Feldenkrais*® practitioners/teachers continually evolve their understanding and practice of the Method and in offering definitive statements about the work we must not lose our perspective of dynamism and evolution. This document should be interpreted in this light.
2. Innovation and growth in this field are valued, especially when based on a solid foundation of understanding, sensitivity and skill embodied in the Method's present form. As valid innovations become accepted in the *Feldenkrais* community, these standards will be changed accordingly.
3. This document will be updated at regular intervals by a committee to be reappointed by the board of directors for the purpose of reviewing and making revisions to the Standards of Practice.

Introduction

1. The *Feldenkrais Method* assumes that human beings have transformational potential and that all people, regardless of their age or condition, have the ability to learn.
2. Moshe Feldenkrais wrote in Higher Judo, "In a perfectly matured body which has grown without great emotional disturbances, movements tend gradually to conform to the mechanical requirements of the surrounding world. The nervous system has evolved under the influence of these laws and is fitted to them. However, in our society we do, by the promise of great reward or intense punishment, so distort the even development of the system, that many acts become excluded or restricted. The result is that we have to provide special conditions for furthering adult maturation of many arrested functions. The majority of people have to be taught not only the special movements of our repertoire, but also to reform patterns of motions and attitudes that should never have been excluded or neglected."

Section 1 - What the *Feldenkrais Method* is and what it does.

1. The *Feldenkrais Method* is an educational system that develops a functional awareness of the self in the environment. The Method utilizes the fact that the body is the primary vehicle for learning.
2. The *Feldenkrais Method* is an approach to working with people which expands their repertoire of movements, enhances awareness, improves function and enables people to express themselves more fully.
3. The *Feldenkrais Method* directly addresses the question of how to facilitate the learning that is necessary for organizing the whole self and recovering excluded and unconsidered movement patterns or actions.
4. This is done by expanding the self-image through movement sequences that bring attention to the parts of the self that are out of awareness and uninvolved in functional actions. Better function is evoked by establishing an improved dynamic relationship between the individual, gravity, and society. Feldenkrais, himself, defined function as the interaction of the person with the outside world or the self with the environment.

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5. The Method enables people to include, in their functioning, movements and parts of the body unconsidered, forgotten or excluded from their habitual actions or images of actions. By allowing persons to learn how their whole body cooperates in any movement, the *Feldenkrais Method* assists people to live their lives more fully, efficiently and comfortably.
6. The improvement of physical functioning is not necessarily an end in itself. Such improvement is based on developing a broader functional awareness which is often a gateway to more generalized enhancement of physical functioning in the context of one's environment and life.
7. The *Feldenkrais Method* is based on self-organization and self-regulation in learning.
8. The *Feldenkrais Method* is expressed in two parallel forms: *Awareness Through Movement*® and *Functional Integration*®.
9. *Awareness Through Movement* consists of verbally directed movement sequences presented primarily to groups. There are several hundred hours of *Awareness Through Movement* lessons. A lesson generally lasts from thirty to sixty minutes. Each lesson is usually organized around a particular function.
10. In *Awareness Through Movement* lessons, people engage in precisely structured movement explorations that involve thinking, sensing, moving, and imagining. Many are based on developmental movements and ordinary functional activities. Some are based on more abstract explorations of joint, muscle, and postural relationships. The lessons consist of comfortable, easy movements that gradually evolve into movements of greater range and complexity. There are hundreds of *Awareness Through Movement* lessons contained in the *Feldenkrais Method* that vary, for all levels of movement ability, from simple in structure and physical demand to more difficult lessons.
11. *Awareness Through Movement* lessons attempt to make one aware of this/her habitual neuromuscular patterns and rigidities and to expand options for new ways of moving while increasing sensitivity and improving efficiency.
12. A major goal of *Awareness Through Movement* is to learn how one's most basic functions are organized. By experiencing the details of how one performs any action, the student has the opportunity to learn how to:
 - attend to his/her whole self
 - eliminate unnecessary energy expenditure
 - mobilize his/her intentions into actions
 - learn.
13. *Functional Integration* is the other form of expressing the *Feldenkrais Method*. Just as *Feldenkrais* practitioners can guide people through movement sequences verbally in *Awareness Through Movement*, they also guide people through movement with gentle, non-invasive touching in *Functional Integration*.
14. *Functional Integration* is a hands-on form of tactile, kinesthetic communication. The *Feldenkrais* practitioner communicates to the student how he/she organizes his/her body and hints, through gentle touching and movement, how to move in more expanded functional motor patterns.

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15. The *Functional Integration* lesson should relate to a desire, intention, or need of the student. The learning process is carried out without the use of any invasive or forceful procedure. Through rapport and respect for the student's abilities, qualities, and integrity, the practitioner/teacher creates an environment in which the student can learn comfortably.

16. In *Functional Integration*, the practitioner/teacher develops a lesson for the student, custom-tailored to the unique configuration of that particular person, at that particular moment. The practitioner conveys the experience of comfort, pleasure, and ease of movement while the student learns how to reorganize his/her body and behavior in new and more effective manners.

17. In *Functional Integration*, the practitioner/teacher's intention is instructive and communicative.

18. *Functional Integration* is usually performed with the student lying on a table designed specifically for the work. It can also be done with the student in sitting or standing positions. At times, various props are used in an effort to support the person's body configuration or to facilitate certain movements.

19. The Method is based on principles of physics, biomechanics and an empirical understanding of learning and human development.

Section 2 - What the *Feldenkrais Method* is not.

1. The *Feldenkrais Method* is not a massage, bodywork technique or medical practice. It is a learning process which has been shown to have therapeutic benefits. The Method may function as a complement to medical care.

2. The *Feldenkrais* practitioner has no sexual intent and does not touch the sexual or other intimate parts of a person.

3. Chemical or mechanical aids are not used in the practice of the *Feldenkrais Method*.

Section 3 - What a *Feldenkrais* practitioner knows, understands and does in practicing the *Feldenkrais Method*.

The practitioner/teacher:

1. Understands that all actions in the *Feldenkrais Method* are a product of a way of experiencing and thinking as originally developed by Moshe Feldenkrais, and structured in the curriculum of *Feldenkrais* Professional Training Programs. All expressions of the *Feldenkrais Method* in the design and teaching of *Awareness Through Movement* or in the implementation of a *Functional Integration* lesson, represent that way of thinking.

2. Is sensitive to the interdependency of acting, sensing, thinking, and feeling that constitute human activity, and recognizes that changes in movement influence all these factors.

3. Understands the rationale, design strategies and principles of *Functional Integration* and *Awareness Through Movement* lessons. This understanding can be implicit and/or explicit, empirical and/or cognitive.

4. Understands the effectiveness of and can communicate the basic learning strategies of the *Feldenkrais Method* in teaching *Awareness Through Movement*, such as:

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- a. orienting to the process of learning and doing rather than working towards a goal
 - b. using slow, gentle movement
 - c. directing awareness toward sensing differences and perceiving whole interconnected patterns in movement
 - d. allowing the student to find his/her own way with the lesson
 - e. directing students to move within the limits of safety by avoiding pain and strain.
5. Observes and interacts with students from the initial contact and interview in a manner that leads to the development of *Functional Integration* lessons coherent with the principles as stated above in Sections 1 and 2. This means the practitioner/teacher knows how to translate the way students present their problems into the framework of thinking of the *Feldenkrais Method*.
 6. Distinguishes between solving a problem that the student presents and evoking a response designed to create a new way of thinking, feeling, sensing and moving.
 7. Knows the difference between learning to accomplish a particular skill or function and learning how to achieve new strategies and possibilities for action in relation to one's intentions in the environment.
 8. Uses his/her voice, body, presentation and presence in relation to the student's, to encourage a supportive environment for learning.
 9. Continually reorganizes him/herself in relationship to perceived changes in the student undergoing *Awareness Through Movement* lessons and *Functional Integration*.
 10. Contacts another person through touch in a manner that is supportive, non-invasive in intention, and non-corrective.
 11. Meshes his/her movements with the easiest directions in which the student moves.
 12. Becomes aware when support is given to the student, when quality of action improves, and when function becomes more integrated.
 13. Alters his/her self-organization in order to evoke greater feelings of comfort, greater capacity for learning and improved ability to function in the student.
 14. Has the necessary skills to evoke the student's self-regulating abilities.
 15. Determines what movement patterns a person needs to learn in order to learn a function.
 16. Makes distinctions between a more or less efficiently executed action, becomes aware of the presence of extraneous efforts and can feel where a student interferes with intended actions.
 17. Detects changes in muscular patterns, skeletal configurations, respiration, and autonomic nervous system signs in both him/herself and the student.
 18. Makes basic distinctions about differences in muscular tonus throughout the student's body and more importantly, knows how to find those differences by increasing one's own sensitivity when needed.
 19. Is sensitive to the amount of input a student can receive during each lesson and regulates the intensity and duration of each lesson accordingly.

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20. Can discuss and describe to others what his/her intentions are or were during a *Functional Integration* lesson.
21. Organizes *Functional Integration* lessons understanding both the symbolic and bio/mechanical aspects of self-expression and how they are interwoven.
22. Most importantly, knows how he himself or she herself learns.

Section 4 - Organizing Processes of the *Feldenkrais Method*.

1. At the core of the *Feldenkrais Method* is a state of mind that fosters a process of inquiry rather than one that seeks to define solutions. The practitioner and the student join together to discover and promote the awareness necessary to improve functioning in the student.
2. The following questions are unique coordinates for the *Feldenkrais Method*. When they are all brought together as a constellation they represent a unique signature of the *Feldenkrais Method*. Practitioners teach the *Feldenkrais Method* by translating the answers to these questions into actions, whether the questions are asked or answered explicitly or implicitly.
3. These questions might never be brought into language by a *Feldenkrais* practitioner but rather form a sea of thoughts which might occasionally bubble to the surface in an articulate form, and be asked by the practitioner of themselves or another directly.

Questions practitioners/teachers refer to themselves.

1. How am I presenting myself in relationship to my student?
2. What can I do to achieve greater rapport with my student?
3. What must I do with myself to create the environment for learning for any lesson?
4. How am I organized to make contact with another person?
5. How do I organize myself to be able to feel more sensitively (for feedback)?
6. How am I organized to communicate and to act (for feedforward)?
7. What can I do to communicate support and ease with my student?
8. What must I do to evoke a response from my student without being overly directive?
9. How can I work so that my intention is clear but not imposed on the student?
10. What feelings are evoked in myself while working with my student and how is this affecting my actions?

Questions related to observing the student.

1. How can I discover the needs or wants of my student and how can I arrange myself to address them?
2. How does the student succeed in his/her life or in any particular actions of importance in life?

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3. If the student feels unsuccessful, has he/she felt successful previously and how did he/she organize himself/herself to succeed in the past?
4. What can I sense in the way of differences about this person that reveals what is needed, e.g., one side compared to the other, high and low tone, between this person and others, etc.?
5. What can I see, feel or sense that will allow me to discover for myself and to reveal to my student the pattern of organization he/she is currently maintaining? And how can I feel and reveal the direction he/she might be moving towards from their current pattern of organization?
6. What can I feel, see, or sense that will allow me to move the student in the direction that will evoke greater learning and increased ability?
7. How can I perceive what is missing or unattended in the student's self-image as it is revealed in his/her body?

Cognitive questions in the mind of the practitioner/teacher that he/she con-siders.

1. What is the student doing and not doing to fulfill his/her intentions in life?
2. How can I find what the student wants in the context of his/her life? What function or functions might be involved?
3. What movement sequences can be organized around a theme which can create a possible learning experience for the student, that will help complete what is missing or unattended in his/her self-image?
4. What kind of lessons are most appropriate for this person's needs?
5. Is there a major function I would like to explore with my student and what steps are necessary to embark on the exploration of that function?
6. What movement possibilities and/or what functions are developmentally required prior to working with the function we intend to restore?
7. What can this student learn right now? What is the time frame for his/her learning and what would be required to deepen it?
8. What are the distinctions I need to make and what are the categories and abstractions I might need to form in order to continue my and my student's learning?

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