

# FELDENKRAIS AUSTRALIA

Journal of the Australian Feldenkrais Guild Inc.

2019



**CREATING CREATIVITY**  
**IMPROVISATION FOR EVERYDAY LIFE**  
**MOTHERHOOD OF INVENTION**  
**ART AND TRANSFORMATION**



# LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

By Shona Lee

Welcome to the 2019 edition of our Feldenkrais Australia Journal; my first edition as editor. I am very grateful to have had the generous guidance of Ralph Hadden, the previous editor, to show me the way. The undertaking would've been far more taxing if I had to invent the wheel from scratch, but luckily, I get to carry on from his know-how and interesting ideas in previous issues.

'Start with what you know' is a principle we frequently utilise in Feldenkrais. As my first exposure to Feldenkrais came via a youth theatre ensemble that I was part of in Melbourne, I guess I'm applying that idea in choosing Creativity as the theme for this edition. In my own creative process, I find the shape of something via the process of editing. First I jot down whatever thoughts come to mind (brainstorming pre-censorship) then I cut/paste/rearrange into a coherent narrative.

What a magnificent collection of contributions I get to arrange for this edition. Our articulate contributors share their insights on navigating the creative process, identifying common pitfalls / stumbling blocks. They

describe what it feels like to be in unknown territory (which accompanies true creativity) and how to grapple with the emotions that evokes. They examine what is creativity and how it's impossible to separate it from an embodied experience/state. How creativity is not set aside from, but rather intrinsic to everyday life. Susanne Herzog gives us a solid framework for understanding transformation - in relation to the transformation that occurs through a Feldenkrais practitioner training program. Mara Della Pergola highlights how our interactions with art transform us and Ingrid Weisfelt describes what's pertinent for performers/musicians to understand to transform the expressive experience of their art form.

Collaboration is often what brings a creation into being, offering the opportunity to arrive at something that you wouldn't have conceived on your own. So I love that in order to translate a couple of these articles, *cross-continent collaboration* was required!

Enjoy this collection of thoughts and ideas on Creativity. Inspiration to commence creating yourself - in whatever endeavours you desire to try - creating is a lot of fun.

THE EDITOR

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## ABOUT FELDENKRAIS AUSTRALIA

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Next issue is planned for 2020 on the theme of Learning - contributions are invited.

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Cover: 'Irony' by Arina Zinovyeva.  
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# FEATURE : CREATIVITY



## EXCERPTS FROM CREATING CREATIVITY – EMBODYING THE CREATIVE PROCESS

By Alan Questel

*Creating Creativity was first published in 2000. Alan Questel (Amherst 1983) was trained by Dr. Feldenkrais and is known for his clarity, creativity and down to earth style of teaching. He brings a depth of understanding, humor and a gentle human perspective to the learning of the Method, creating lively conditions for learning. He has trained Feldenkrais Practitioners in over 15 countries.*

### Taking action (Introduction)

This book offers you a unique doorway into the world of creating. It explores what it means to be creative, from many perspectives. It investigates the act of creation, the processes and inquiries involved in creating, and the results and consequences of creating. It also reveals what gets in the way of us creating effortlessly and easily, both as artists and in our everyday lives. Ultimately, this book is about beginning. It is about starting. It is about **taking action in a realm, any realm that extends us beyond our concept of the self.**

### Do you know anyone who is creative? (From Chapter 1)

This is a question I like to ask when I teach. The answer is always 'Yes, of course I know someone who is creative'. Have you ever considered what it is that makes them creative? Were they born that way? Or did they have some special training? Maybe they are creative in a particular domain or maybe everything they touch comes alive with a particular vitality.

What makes them different from you? Did you ever think of yourself as being creative? Was there any time in your life when you made something and you felt yourself to be creative? Often when I ask this question the answer is 'No, well maybe once, but I was just a kid'. When is it that most of us began to feel we were no longer creative? How is it that the creativity that is so evident in children does not always survive in us as adults?

Let me ask you another question. Do you think you have the potential to be creative? The response to this question is usually more positive, 'Yeah, I guess I have

the potential, but I don't know where it is'. I love that answer, as if potential resided someplace and we could just go and find it.

*I have not yet met someone who I did not see as having the potential to be creative, think creatively or act creatively.*

If you think about the people who you see as creative, what makes them different from you? Isn't it true that your perception of their creativity is in comparison to yourself? That you have placed them in some higher regard because they seem to be able to do something that you cannot do?

Here is one of the ways we discount our creativity and ourselves. We think, there is always someone else better than I am and those who respect me don't count. How can we possibly believe in our own potential when we so frequently place ourselves in this double bind?

Let's examine some of the characteristics we observe in creative individuals. They seem to think of things that we would never think of. They see things from different perspectives. They act in ways we would not consider. They get ideas that seem totally new. They go beyond what is considered the norm. They take more risks. They are able to predict better. They notice

things no one else seems to notice. They seem to listen differently. They ask different kinds of questions. They play more. They seem to enjoy what they do. They do things differently.

What is underlying all these observations about creativity? The simple answer is that **the creative person understands choice. They know how to see choices. They know how to create choices. They know how to make choices.** So in order to get a handle on creativity, we need to understand choice. Maybe those people who we think of as being so creative (and who themselves may not feel so creative) have the ability to see more choices than others do. Can we learn to do this too? Where should we begin?

**We need to have a palpable and 'felt' understanding of what it means to make a choice.** Just talking or reading about it doesn't suffice. We need to investigate the processes and the action of developing choices. By actually experiencing how to generate choices we will achieve a deeper understanding of what it means and how we can access choice as an ability, rather than just an idea.

Our creativity does not happen outside of our actions. It is expressed through our actions. Our thoughts and

feelings may contribute to and motivate our actions but it is only when we act, take action, act upon them....

**that we potentiate and manifest our creativity.**

It is essential to acknowledge that there may be a long incubation period, both in thought and feeling, that leads us to an act of creation. Unfortunately, what I have experienced personally and seen in others is that this incubation period often replaces the actual act of creating. Feeling creative or having creative thoughts becomes confused with being creative. Many people have great ideas and inspirational feelings, but never enter into the process of doing, expressing or moving (in any direction). When there is no action taken after a long incubation period of thinking and feeling, we often feel distinctly uncreative.

### Knowing....Not Knowing.... Knowing... (From Chapter 3)

We spend much of our time planning and predicting our lives. Whilst we must acknowledge the importance of such knowledge in many areas of our lives, when does this need to know become a hindrance to our creativity? Or better yet, when can 'not knowing' enhance our creativity? **In a truly creative process not knowing is essential.**

What do we mean by not knowing? For many people it is simply a lack of information - a blank to be filled in and then checked off, 'Good, now we know'. For others not knowing is a state of confusion and anxiety, something to be avoided at all costs. Some people experience not knowing as a terrain to be discovered and embraced. While others use it as a strategy to avoid making decisions or acting in the world.

There is something enticing about the unknown. It can lead to discoveries, new domains and new experiences. **It brings us to the cutting edge of ourselves and holds all the possibilities for the self that we can only imagine.** It offers us the hope of a future that will be better than our past or present.

But also implicit in not knowing is a certain amount of risk. It is a dark place that can be dangerous, where we can be injured or get lost. It lacks the safety of the past or present. What is known is an easier commodity to choose.

The feelings that accompany the unknown are unpredictable. The excitement of discovery or the terror of being lost, are both extreme states. There also exists the murky, vague place in-between - the middle of nowhere - a place where we have little or no sense of where we are or what we are feeling or where we are

going. I think the majority of us are not thrilled with the feelings that accompany that place.

As much as we like knowing what is going to happen or how things are going to be, when our world becomes too predictable we give up a good deal of our vitality and excitement. We enter into the mundane and we lose the element of surprise. The known is safe. It is home, recognizable and familiar. The unknown is a journey where we can get lost and possibly never find our way back.

The truth is, whether we want to admit it or not, we live in the unknown. No one really knows what will happen in the next 5 minutes, months or years.

To create something known is not so creative. It is replicating or re-doing something from our past or someone else's ideas. To create something new, to have a new experience of ourselves, demands that we step outside of our known boundaries into not knowing. And if we are to do this we must learn to tolerate the accompanying feelings. So how do we do this? What is it that might sustain us in the more difficult moments in the creative process?

The first approximation of this is to acknowledge that difficult feelings may arise as part of our endeavours.

We must accept the fact that our process will not be all peaches and cream. If this is not recognized, then when we do enter this realm of not knowing and its accompanying feelings arise, we will often bolt or retreat. But acknowledgement is only the first approximation. To sustain ourselves in not knowing we need more, something concrete that we can anchor ourselves to so we can weather out the storms.

### **If I could teach only one thing... (From Chapter 5)**

If I could teach only one thing, it would be enthusiasm, the ability for someone to generate their own enthusiasm. But enthusiasm isn't a thing or a concrete skill or information. It is an attitude, an internal directive, more of a feeling than anything else. It waxes and wanes and sometimes it bursts like a bubble and is gone. But where does it go? Or for that matter where does it come from?

Let's examine it from another perspective. What is it that interferes with our ability to generate enthusiasm? What is it that stops us from being passionate? Are there circumstances we create (albeit unknowingly) that constrict or constrain or disrupt our creative process?

Have you ever thought of yourself in any of the following ways: being ‘the best’, ‘really good’, ‘an expert’, ‘smart’, ‘clever’, ‘fast’, ‘quick’, ‘good at it’, ‘the first to start’, ‘the first to finish’, ‘original’, ‘unique’, ‘special’, ‘extraordinary’, etc., etc? Even if you don’t think that way about yourself all the time, perhaps there is some area in your life in which you feel that way. We can use these labels to motivate ourselves to act, to generate enthusiasm, or to enable ourselves to achieve something. When we feel stuck or when we are unable to find the impetus to continue, we may use these kinds of thoughts to keep ourselves going. We all do this to varying degrees. Are these ideas useful or destructive to the creative process? Do they encourage or impede what we do? What we think of as the means to bettering ourselves is also the shadow that can stop us from being truly creative.

Being the best and being special all have something particular in common. They are all comparisons that we make between ourselves and someone else, or someone else’s abilities or achievements. We could examine each one and recognize how we use these descriptions to inhibit ourselves not only within our process, but also from even beginning our process. Again we can remind ourselves that it is useful to be stirred or egged on by another’s success, but this use

of our attention orients us towards something outside of ourselves. In our creative process we need to look inside of ourselves for the source of our passion and enthusiasm.

It is easy to get stuck in this externally focused way of approaching our creativity and this tends to squelch our enthusiasm for what we are doing. At the same time it can also raise our anxiety and diminish the trust we have in our own abilities. We can get discouraged when we look out and see so many people who are already successful at what we want to do. We often wonder how we could ever get from where we are to where we can imagine ourselves to be?



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## Being inept... (From Chapter 1)

This leads us to another key factor, **the ability to allow ourselves to be ‘inept’**. For many people this idea seems absurd. What does being inept have to do with being creative? Don’t we want to be good and successful in our attempts to be creative? Of course we do! But what is really absurd is the belief that we must always be successful at being creative. In fact it is often through our multiple failures and our continued ineptness that we will evoke a moment of creativity. I love this quote from *The Dilbert Principle* by Scott Adams: Creativity is making mistakes, art is knowing which ones to keep.

I am not suggesting that we should intentionally do things badly, thinking that this will make us more creative. We need to be able to allow ourselves to fail and continue to attempt again and not judge ourselves harshly in the process. **We need to feel free to make mistakes and discover ourselves through our mistakes.** We need to embrace our inability and lack, as one of the main sources of our creativity.

I’ve heard so many stories about great inventions that were actually mistakes. From the weak and useless glue that became Post-it Notes to the melted candy bar in the scientists’ pocket that led to the microwave oven.

These stories convey the idea that we need to remain open to possibilities that we may not have originally considered. Our failures at one endeavour may lead us to a creative breakthrough in another.

This is easier said than done, as we are almost always in a context of some import. That is, we are rarely in situations where it is acceptable to fail repeatedly, much less deliberately. In most of our life situations we generally try to be good or be the best or succeed and this is most often well intended. But this intention is one of the greatest constraints and inhibitors to our creativity because it doesn't allow us to feel safe enough to discover and learn through our failures, mistakes and ineptness. We are usually judged for our failures and this further confirms our belief that we are not one of those chosen few who are creative.

Of course we shouldn't completely disrupt our lives in order to foster our creativity. If I'm flying in an airplane, I don't want the pilot 'allowing himself to make mistakes in order to explore his creativity!' So we need a very specific context where we can practice our ineptness, where we can be free from judgment, where we can fail miserably and it won't affect our lives or the lives of others in any detrimental way. We must be able to not only have the freedom to make mistakes but also

the time, understanding and patience with ourselves to be able to explore and discover both the roots and the results of our actions.

What is implicit here is that we can learn from our mistakes. In fact we need to make learning explicit and use it as the foundation of our creative process. Learning must become central to being creative, as it can take the focus away from achieving an outcome and bring us back to something more immediate. Learning can orient us in new ways by reducing some of the demand we place on ourselves and giving us a container within which we can flourish.

Our learning becomes more tangible when we can elicit our curiosity - our desire to explore and discover. Rather than focusing on answers, can we look for better questions? **Our curiosity can keep evoking our beginner's mind and become our guide into the unknown.**

Probably **the most demanding task throughout the process of creating is how we treat ourselves.** A great paradox exists here because on the one hand we need to be engaged in a significant degree of challenge so that we demand a little more from ourselves, while on the other hand we need to be respectful and caring towards ourselves and honour where we are.

It is important that we are kind to ourselves, and accepting of ourselves. We need to begin where we really begin, instead of so desperately wanting to change ourselves. A Zen teacher I had, Kwong Roshi, once said, 'We can view our desire to change as an act of aggression towards our self'. We must not be aggressive towards our self. We must be willing to create a context to practice, for a few moments at a time, how to treat ourselves with kindness, acceptance, affection and even love.

This sounds great and we would all probably benefit greatly from being treated this way. What needs to be pointed out is being treated this way does not come from someone else. It does not come from the outside world. It must come from within us. My experience has shown me that being compassionate towards ourselves is one of the most difficult things for us to do. It is easy for us to consider being kind or accepting towards another but to direct this kind of attention towards ourselves is often uncomfortable. As we will see, the creative process is difficult, but we can create greater levels of comfort and safety in it, through how we treat ourselves.

When we think of constructing a context of safety we must realize that this is an extraordinarily personal

thing. What one person considers safe may be frightening to another, and what is frightening to another may not be challenging enough for someone else. This is why we must be careful as to how we go about defining, or even identifying common characteristics of creativity. We also need to be extremely respectful of our subjective experience and of how we utilize the ideas of others for our individual processes of creating (and I would include in this any ideas presented here).

We must recognize that although we talk about the creative act, it is actually a process, not an outcome. We may view the creative act as one moment but we must realize that it is part of an ongoing inquiry. This moment is not independent of what preceded it or what will follow. If we are capable of taking on this idea then we have truly entered into the realm of creativity.

To act, to be inept, to make mistakes, to learn, to be curious, to be kind towards ourselves, to assess 'where am I now?', to create a context of safety for learning, and to let ourselves be in our individual process, begins to build the necessary foundations for being creative. None of this guarantees that we will be



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creative. However, without these factors, creativity is further from our reach and more difficult than it needs to be when we do attain it.

### It is simply being interested (From Chapter 5)

Instead of trying to live up to some external ideal, we can recognize that those who are 'great' got there by being interested in what they were doing. Think about

it, if your attention is somewhere off in possibilities for the future, what can you be doing right now? And when you return from the future you find that nothing in the present has changed or developed very much. At this point we either return to our dreams of how great we will one day become or we stay here and become discouraged with how little we have accomplished. Either way we are in fantasy or judgment and not engaging in the necessary process.

Could it be so simple...that instead of trying to be 'the best' or the 'expert' all we need to do is maintain our interest in what we are doing? The answer is a resounding 'yes'. Our interest is what guides us, directs us, and is the developer of our endeavours. We move to whatever is next as the result of our interest. What interests us is what we attach our attention to and it is our attention that allows us to continue and stay in our process. In fact it is almost impossible to sustain our attention without interest. As long as we are interested in what we are doing there is some level of enthusiasm present. At its most extreme, we are passionately interested, and as it swings the other way our interest is more detached, but throughout, interest is what connects us to what we are doing.

## How do we actually get ourselves to begin? (From Chapter 3)

This is probably one of the major, if not the major, deterrents to our being creative. The moment of beginning often exists within a small window of opportunity that is affected by all the feelings, mostly negative, that I spoke of earlier. **The moment of beginning is not the moment of deciding to do something but the moment of *actually doing it*.** I am now going to meditate, I am now going running, I am now going to clean the house. **These moments all need to be self-generated.** We need to be personally responsible for these actions. This doesn't mean that we can't have a teacher or coach or partner who helps guide us towards these moments, but it is our own personal responsibility to take the actual action.

So how do we take advantage of this small window of opportunity? For myself I have found that sitting down to meditate or go swimming or writing **requires that I do not think about it** or inquire as to how I feel about it. I **simply act**. Sometimes my thoughts and feelings

support my action and sometimes I act in spite of my thoughts or feelings. Once I am in the action, my thoughts and feelings may fully represent themselves, either for or against what I am doing, but it is now within the context of whatever it is I am practicing. I am engaged in a process that has within it the potential for something new to happen.

I spoke earlier of tolerating the accompanying feelings that occur in the state of not knowing. The preceding paragraph may lead you to think that I am suggesting that rather than tolerate, we simply ignore how we feel and just act. This is not the case. I am proposing that we **shift our focus from how we feel or think, to *creating movement, the concrete action*** that can bring us to the necessary context. And the movement I am referring to is not the completion of whatever dream you may have. It is simply the most basic action of taking the first step from wherever you are - literally! This shift in attention from completing a project to taking the first step is.....the seed for many new kinds of experiences.

These are just some excerpts from **Creating Creativity – Embodying the creative process**. The complete book explores other concepts in the creative process, includes illustrative stories as examples and goes on to give you concrete ways to experience these ideas through movement. It is available at: <https://www.uncommonsensing.com> along with free monthly lessons and CD sets. Alan is the creator of the DVD program '**Pregnant Pauses - Movement for Moms**' and has produced 17 CD sets of public workshops in the FELDENKRAIS METHOD®. He makes his home in Santa Fe, New Mexico

Learn more about his training programs at - [www.feldenkraisinsantafe.com](http://www.feldenkraisinsantafe.com), his Pregnant Pauses series at - <https://dvd.pregnantpauses.us> or email him at: [alan@uncommonsensing.com](mailto:alan@uncommonsensing.com) ■



## CONFUSION AND THE CREATIVE PROCESS

By Tiffany Sankary

*Tiffany Sankary (Berkeley 2006) is an artist, Assistant Feldenkrais Trainer and creator of Movement & Creativity Library - an online*

*resource/community with 200+ Feldenkrais Awareness Through Movement® lessons, Organic Intelligence practices and creative resources to help you reduce pain and stress, awaken creativity and expand your capacity to enjoy life.*

What happens when you don't understand something?

What is your reaction to confusion? Often my reactions are determined by how interested I am in learning and how curious I am in the moment. I can either shut down or open

myself to the discomfort of not knowing. The desire to understand and be with the confusing aspects of my life experience, drives my creative process and led me to create a book about the Feldenkrais Method® of somatic education.

I found the Feldenkrais Method during a confusing search for how to have a more loving relationship with my body after growing up in a family and society that taught me to hate it. The invitations the Method offered were liberating: feel without judgement, move without comparing myself to others, and sense internally instead of looking to others to validate if what I was doing was correct. Through permission and encouragement to imperfectly cultivate my own inner sense of knowing, I found grace in a clunky

un-embodied body. I found presence where I had been absent for so long. This coming home to myself was a creative, dynamic process.

**"You can't be creative if you refuse to be confused."  
– Margaret Wheatley**

There are many aspects to learning that are confusing. How do you sense your sternum when you don't know you have a sternum? How do you lift your head off the ground gently and easily, when it feels like a heavy bowling ball? How do you find support from

the ground if you are used to holding and contracting around your pelvis and abdomen? The "projects" in any given Feldenkrais lesson are a scaffolding for paying attention to yourself. You begin to shine a light in the dark areas of yourself (the areas that you don't know how to feel) and over time the light gets brighter; your self-image becomes more clear.

Both Awareness Through Movement® and Functional Integration® offer experiences of expanding space and time to be with the sensory-motor learning process. This expanded time allows for and even encourages making mistakes. The more we try to do something perfectly, the more unnecessary effort we bring to our action. Tracking this effort, really slowing down to notice it, can be uncomfortable. We would rather skip past and avoid confusion. How can we change ourselves if the desire to change evokes our habitual ways of acting? In Feldenkrais® lessons, if we have the patience to face our blind spots, the presence of our awareness melts habitual tension. New possibilities emerge that couldn't exist when the tension was held. More opportunities for learning arise as you can do more, feel more, and become more curious.

**“Only when in possession of the full range of functioning on each level or plane of action can we eliminate compulsion to the degree that our action becomes the expression of our spontaneous selves. All creative men and women know spells when they can act in this manner.” (Moshe Feldenkrais, *The Potent Self*, p 199)**

During the beginning of my training, I used drawing to deepen my understanding of Moshe Feldenkrais’ writings and philosophy. I would take a sentence and see what came out of my pen as I explored hand-writing his words and drawing simple figures moving through space. I didn’t intend to literally draw what he described, but to get at a feeling or some aspect of his ideas. It was a different way for me to be with his words. On a first read I didn’t always understand his writing. It was complex, multi-dimensional; dense.

When I broke a quote up into smaller parts, I could digest it more easily. This is a strategy in Feldenkrais lessons—breaking down complex movement. The process of simplifying and then gradually adding more complexity helps us learn to bring more of the whole of ourselves into an action. There were times when what I drew didn’t quite get at the feeling I was looking for, so I redrew the quote several times, trying to get closer to my intention. In the Feldenkrais Method, we

often repeat a movement to explore a variety of qualities and slight shifts in trajectory, attending to different parts of ourselves that are involved in an action. As repetition with variation makes our experience more multi-dimensional, drawing Feldenkrais’ words and going back to look at the drawings added other dimensions to my understanding.

The common response I got when showing colleagues, teachers, and friends these drawings was, “This should be a book!” This planted a seed in me that grew over time. I sought permission from the publishers to use Feldenkrais’ quotes and was pleased that they were supportive of my project. I spent several years continuing to draw as I read his books, accumulating more images. The drawings became a way for me to meditate on his ideas, observing where the themes in his books showed up in my Feldenkrais practice and life. What early experiences led me to my habitual ways of acting? What interferes with and contributes to my learning? How can I best support others in their learning process? How am I compulsive? What does it feel like when I am spontaneous? When do I add parasitic effort? Where can I do less?

There came a point where I tried to organize the hundreds of drawings I’d been working on into chapters, but because the quotes were taken randomly from different sources they did not read



*Artwork by Tiffany Sankary*

as a cohesive whole. I became overwhelmed with confusion. I felt stuck and did not know how to continue. As maddening as it sometimes felt, this stuckness was a valuable part of my process. How would I take a dream and shape it into a reality? What was missing? I eventually had an idea about how to continue. I resisted it at first, as it would require shifting to a different kind of process. So far I had been spontaneous, playful, whimsical, inspired. This was the way I liked to work. But the spirit of the book and the principles of the Method called on me to grow up, to expand beyond my comfort zone and my image of what a creative process looks like.

**Confusion keeps me searching for what’s next and what’s needed. I look for what to get rid of, what’s extraneous. I listen for the poetry and the moments of grace. It is not always clear and then there are moments when it is.**

In the next phase of the project I put drawing on hold and prioritized getting clear about the text. I combed through all of Feldenkrais' books and articles, cover to cover, to find all the possible quotes I might want to illustrate. From there, I organized the quotes by theme and crafted the flow of the book. There were many confusing moments in the editing process where I felt like my brain was turning inside out, so I sought support from a few colleagues, especially my husband **Matty Wilkinson**. We spent many nights reading Feldenkrais' words aloud and playing with multiple ways of arranging the quotes so that they would read cohesively, even though they were taken from different sources. The end result was 25 chapters representing key themes in Feldenkrais' philosophy, exploring what inhibits and supports our potential to become mature, creative human beings.

Then I got pregnant. I became aware of how precious my time was. I saw that I would no longer have the luxury of drawing whenever I felt like it once my child was born. I needed to learn how to call on the muse even when I wasn't feeling inspired. And I did. I spent every morning of my pregnancy drawing, inspired by Feldenkrais' ideas about maturity and creativity:

**“It is commonly believed that one must wait for the muse or some other inspiration to bring about such**

**happy moments. But mature, creative people have learned to know themselves sufficiently well so that they can bring themselves to the reversible state of acture. Thus, they can advertise months in advance the hour when the muse is going to function.”** (*The Potent Self*, p 199-200)

I had to keep moving regardless of how I felt (and thanks to the Feldenkrais Method I had a very active, comfortable pregnancy). In this push to finish the book, I didn't let moments of doubt or confusion stop me. I saw that the fumbling and scribbling were a necessary part of the process. Early drafts of a drawing were needed to get to the final version. I needed to be willing to let go of what didn't work in order to get to what did. By the time my son was born, I had completed the drawings, but there was still much work to be done. This work was mostly done during naps, late nights, and early mornings. (I am writing this as my son is napping). My son is now fifteen months and I am putting the final touches on the book.

After eleven years of playing, experimenting, being confused, frustrated, excited, inspired, reading, drawing, moving, editing, learning, my book has become a reality: *Feldenkrais Illustrated: The Art of Learning*. As I flip through it now, I am delighted and filled with hope that there is something magical on

the other side of the unknown. Confusion keeps me searching for what's next and what's needed. I look for what to get rid of, what's extraneous. I listen for the poetry and the moments of grace. It is not always clear and then there are moments when it is.

This article was originally published on the **Feldenkrais Guild website**.

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Tiffany lives in Boston, MA and is the editor and illustrator of *Feldenkrais Illustrated: The Art of Learning*, a visual guide to the philosophy and writings of Moshe Feldenkrais, Movement and Creativity Press, 2014.

Learn more about Tiffany's art, writing, teaching & collaborations: [www.movementandcreativity.com](http://www.movementandcreativity.com)

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# GOOD THINGS COME TO THOSE WHO WAIT

## How the Feldenkrais Method has an influence on self-regulation processes - an introduction to the results of my PhD

By *Dr. Phil. Susanne Herzog*

Original article '*Was lange währt wird endlich gut*' was published in the newsletter of the Feldenkrais Association Germany Pty. *Feldenkrais forum* No 96/2017. Translated by *Elisabeth Schmidt-Davies*.



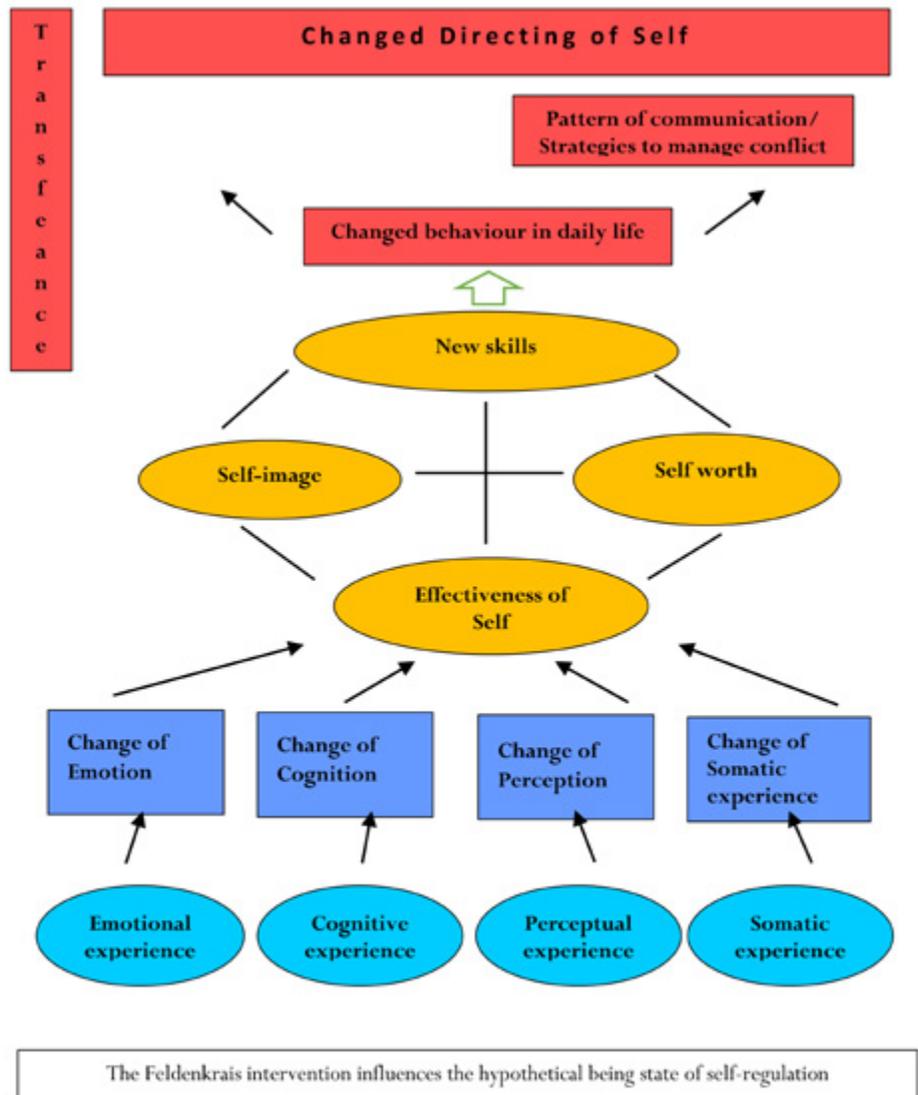
*Dr. Phil. Susanne Herzog (dob 1963) has 45 years of studying and working with people; assisting them in restoring their dignity as a human being through their ability to function as independently as possible.*

*Understanding how a person can rise above limitations caused by trauma or birth, physically, emotionally, and mentally, has been her professional life quest - leading her from Occupational Therapy (1985-1988), to the Feldenkrais Method (Briggs 1990-1993 with Roger Russel and Jerry Karzen, which was the first Swiss training organised by Lea Wolgensinger.) to studying Psychology (2005-2009) and finally training for becoming a Psychotherapist (2010-2018).*

*Susanne Herzog has been a Member of the board of the German Feldenkrais Association (FVD e.V.) and European delegate in the EuroTab Council (2000-2005). She now works as a Psychotherapist based on Depth Psychology (Tiefenpsychologie) 1) in private practice in Hamburg Germany. She has a son, is married and lives in Hamburg, Germany. The Feldenkrais Method still plays a part in her practice: She gives one ATM group and 1-2 FIs per week. In her Psychotherapy sessions she uses Feldenkrais's body scanning with people with dissociative disorders.*



*Elisabeth Schmidt Davies (Sydney 1990) has more than 40 years' experience working with people. Prior to migrating to Australia in 1989 she worked for 18 years as an Occupational Therapist in Germany. She started her professional Feldenkrais journey in the first London training program, made up a segment in Washington DC with Jerry Karzen where she met her husband to be, and graduated from Ruthy Alon's training program in Sydney.*



**Process-orientated result overview**  
See dissertation, page 356

At the beginning of my Feldenkrais training in Brig (Switzerland) in 1990, my main interest was in studying movement in general, how to move again after a stroke using this Method and to help people with congenital or acquired damage to the central nervous system. In my first job as an Occupational Therapist, I was familiar with training people's functionality in everyday life. Due to a new job in neuro-paediatrics, my focus then shifted to developmental movements of children. Inspired by the development of my own son, I spent a few years giving babies and their mothers' individual lessons at their homes. I gained further knowledge by observing their interactions, by talking to my clients, through Feldenkrais Master Classes and sharing with colleagues. Starting in 2000, I followed a Feldenkrais training with Roger Russell and Ulla Schläfke. There I had the opportunity to monitor how students developed, issues that emerged and group discussions. The whole subject of learning has changed for me, from learning to move, to developmental learning, to learning as a whole person, i.e. learning to change behaviour. I became more and more interested in the psychological aspects of bodywork. I clearly felt that I lacked decisive tools and began to study psychology.

The preliminary studies gave me insight into theories. Here, for the *empirical practical course*, I used

standardised questionnaires to examine a Feldenkrais training group in regard to changes in body-image and self-acceptance, i.e. I learned to calculate and compare averages, comparing the actual conditions at three measuring points: before, after and after that.

The whole thing was a sobering experience, especially since the small number of subjects did not show any significant results. After this experience, I am approaching scientific evidence and studies more critically. Since the Feldenkrais practice was close to my heart, I took the seminar *Painting Pictures* in a qualitative research course during my main university studies. I asked each child to draw a human body after having received their FIs. The changes in progressive differentiation of their body image became visible. This brought me closer to qualitative research and led me to meet my fellow student and Feldenkrais colleague Stefanie Gloger, who was also looking for a subject for a thesis for her psychology diploma. It soon became clear to us that we wanted to teach Charlotte Rehbock's and Dr Bernd Steinmeier's *Stress Reduction Program* they had developed a year earlier, and then to investigate its effect on the eight participants using Prof. Inghard Langer's *Personal Interview*.

Our diploma thesis *Evaluation of a Feldenkrais Program*

*for Stress Reduction* was published in 2009. While Prof Langer, who supervised my diploma thesis, made no secret of the fact that he did not know what the Feldenkrais Method was, he subsequently suggested to me to begin a PhD project based on this thesis.

We discussed the topic including the changes participants had already mentioned after completing the stress reduction course. We developed new research questions: What is changing in respect of key competences? Does SELF-USE on the mat change and perhaps the person's SELF-ORGANISATION (self-regulation) in life? Where does transference occur?

Thus, the basis for the investigation had now been established; and these questions were later modified to serve as guidelines for the interviews.

#### **My working definition of Self-Regulation**

The subject *Self-Control* was introduced, and I was often asked what it was. The definition I have worked with is as follows: *Self-Control, Self-Regulation, Self-Direction* means dealing mentally with feelings and moods, the ability to realise intentions through purposeful action, recognising needs and subordinating them to long-term goals. In psychology, the term *Self-Regulation* refers to unconscious (implicit) and conscious (explicit) psychological processes with

which people control (direct) their attention, emotions, impulses and actions. *Self-Motivation* is a result of the discrepancy between the intended and actual state, which is caused by goal setting and thus motivates us to eliminate the discrepancy. The self-efficacy is increased by successfully achieving goals. The *Self-Regulation System* becomes active whenever obstacles arise on the way to the goal. The main components of *Self-Regulation* are *Self-Observation, Self-Assessment, Self-Enforcement* and *Self-Resolution*. Other skills include self-determined and autonomous action, frustration tolerance and impulse control. These are higher mental or cognitive functions that serve self-regulation and action control. Motivational functions such as decision-making and initiating action are also part of it. Moshe Feldenkrais was convinced that through learning processes, man can lead a self-determined life. He promises that his Method would enable him/her to develop his/her potential for action (Feldenkrais, 1994, p. 95).

In addition, he claims that "to train a body to perfect all possible forms and configurations of its limbs does not only affect the strength of the skeleton and musculature, but also leads to a profound change in the self-image and the way the self is directed" (Feldenkrais, 2013, p. 108).

This led me to my basic research questions:

- Do the respondents have experiences during this organic learning process that in their opinion change the way they deal with themselves?
- Which newly acquired skills are being consciously perceived and identified?
- How do the learning experiences affect their interaction with other people, their opportunities for relationships and the forms of relationship?
- To what extent can the participants expand their capacity for action and self-management, also under stressful personal circumstances?
- Can mentally ill people also benefit from the Method in terms of their capability of self-regulation?

I examined the technique of the Feldenkrais approach using these questions. Feldenkrais wrote that his aim was to enable people to lead a self-determined life (Feldenkrais, 1987,p.18).

Sensing, feeling, thinking and moving should be experienced and changed with awareness. Explicit movement objectives are given in the form of an indiscriminately worded movement task that is to be solved, while implicit objectives, the improvement of self-use, which are hidden therein, are not stated.

This stimulates a process of finding solutions on the one hand and on the other hand is to prevent other people's behavioural objectives from having to be fulfilled. During this process of exploration, the client clarifies his or her intra-psychic state of motivations by physically identifying opposing, simultaneously existing motives.

The motivations should be clarified so that he does not work against himself or against counteracting muscle contractions with effort. The resulting generation of intentions and intentional action should be directly linked to the Self.

#### **The Self according to Feldenkrais**

According to Feldenkrais, the Self consists of all life experiences accumulated to date (Feldenkrais, 1991, p. 13,1987, p. 63). Movements that are connected to the Self are distinguished and perceived by qualities such as ease, effortlessness, flow of movement. These phenomena are experienced as belonging to the Self if the changes are not too big or unexpected to what the Self has experienced up to now. If the differences between the past and the changed Self are too great or are assessed negatively, there is a danger that they will be psychologically repelled and not integrated into the Self-Image. If a movement task is successfully solved, the client experiences Self-Efficacy and gains

confidence in his or her abilities. These lessons thus meet the criteria of a qualitative scientific experiment according to Kleining 1986. Qualitative experiments were popular in the first half of the 20th century, i.e. during Feldenkrais' lifetime, before being replaced by behaviourism (Mey, 2010, p. 245). Even though evidence of psychological changes has been found regarding self-concept, body schema, confidence in body signals, anxiety regulation and self-esteem in scientific research on Feldenkrais, I was interested in the significance of these changes for the subjects with regard to their living circumstances and what forms of action resulted and/or what changes to their life perspectives arose.

Feldenkrais uses the term of Self-Use or Self-Organisation as synonymous with Self-Regulation/Self-Direction, or rather it was translated into German in this way. The task of the Self is to sort the continuously incoming and changing stimuli. The Self is dependent on the influence of important and close people, on processing sensory inputs and environmental factors (triangulation, or bio-psycho-social model). The Self must bring order into the mobile, ever changing world as well as into its own mobility and does this through movement (Feldenkrais 2013, p. 93). Compulsive or immature Self-Use expresses itself in bodily

misalignments, which are all based on an emotional state of mind, or also as a lack of something, for example, explains Feldenkrais.

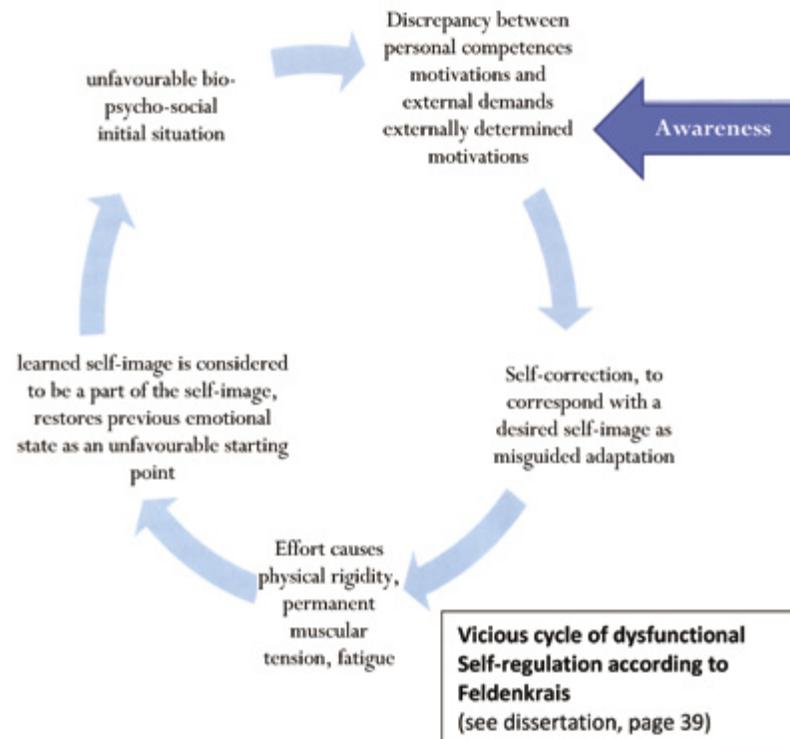
He describes a vicious circle of dysfunctional Self-Control, from which man would not escape without awareness or reflecting on his motives. Feldenkrais describes the inhibited development process of the Self as follows: Man establishes a discrepancy between personal competencies or motives and the external requirements and external motives. He then makes a Self-Correction matching a desired Self-Image - as a misguided act of correction. This is strenuous, leading to physical rigidity, permanent muscular tension and finally to exhaustion. The learned Self-Image is deemed to be a part of the Self restoring former emotional states of mind, so an unfavourable condition is established as a bio-psycho-social starting-point, e.g. a latent overload. He explained that this vicious circle must be interrupted with awareness, so the impaired learning process can be reactivated. He also described the optimal Self-Use of a mature person. Primarily one should clarify one's motives using awareness combined with direct regulation of muscle tension and indirect regulation of emotions, one should learn the reversibility of movements to increase control, establish a neutral state, rhythmic breathing, wholeness

and freedom of all joints should be achieved to attain functional Self-Direction for every spontaneous action.

### How I proceeded

I was interested to what degree this method is successful, so I set out to listen to students in Feldenkrais training program and clients who had at least four years of experience in ATM and FI. I used the qualitative method of an unstructured, open interview,

the personal interview of I. Langer (2000), in which the subjects were free to choose their topics without being limited to a specific focus. They chose important topics according to their respective priorities. Some participants enjoyed this unstructured framework, others tried to cope with the non-direction by preparing for the conversation and by bringing notes, which they usually did not use after a few minutes.



The sense of time was often lost during these conversations due to active listening, summarising and following up questions for the purpose to deepen my understanding. I edited these ascertained statements retrospectively, i.e. I transcribed and then arranged them into main and secondary topics and formed inductive categories based on the material. This resulted in a process-oriented overview of the results.

#### **Four Levels of Self-Regulation/Direction**

The material revealed four different levels:

1. **Level of Experience,**
2. **Level of Change,**
3. **Level of Self,**
4. **Level of Action,** which contained transfer services into everyday life.

At the **Level of Experience**, the participants described a. somatic, b. emotional, c. perceptive and d. cognitive experiences they had made during the intervention with the Method. At the **Level of Change**, changes were also reported in these four areas. At the **Level of Self**, changes and corrections of Self-Image, improvements in Self-Esteem, improvement of Self-Efficacy and new abilities of the Self were reported. At the **Level of Action**, in **everyday life**, changes in the ability to cope with stress, new coping strategies to reduce stress

and new communication patterns in dealing with other people were described as transferences of those abilities learned on the mat. The following examples have been reported.

#### **Regarding the level of experience: Karolin:**

*“Feldenkrais triggered a lot of fear in me, but nonetheless I always stayed with it. There was always a curiosity there, I wonder where I am, what is this?”* (emotional experience)

**Regarding the level of change: Katharina:** *“Yes, and to experience something like that, like the..., this Integrated, like I really... (that) all body parts are allowed to move and then... Mm, I can still remember well the twenty years before, when I moved everything in such an isolated fashion and everything was so strenuous.”* (change in perception)

**Regarding the level of Self: Maria:** *“Then I was in B. and I was especially moved by the fact that I was able to do something like this after a lesson, which I thought would be over forever. That was really very... moving.”* (Self-Image/Self-Efficacy)

**Regarding the level of action: Lea:** *“So, not just sitting there like a frightened rabbit and having to endure this situation... But to be able to change something on my own... (...)... In the past I used to stay sitting in front of*

*my PC.... It’s not good for you. Today I’m getting out of this situation.”* (new Self-Control capabilities)

#### **The following Self-Regulatory abilities have been developed according to the testimonies:**

- The ability to recognise personal needs/intentions, to name them, to admit them and to act accordingly
- The ability for self determination (by decision according to motive/needs) The ability to distinguish oneself from others/tasks without feelings of guilt
- The ability to self-soothe (after emotional agitation)
- The ability to accept oneself
- The ability to take personal responsibility
- The ability to develop creativity and act creatively
- The ability to be or remain calm
- The ability to establish connections with individual components
- The ability of caring for oneself
- The ability of Empathy/Mentalisation
- The ability to be tolerant
- The ability to playfully interact with oneself and others
- The ability to create emotional detachment from the object of conflict or other people

### **Three hypotheses**

From these results, I have been able to generate the following hypotheses, which would now have to be verified quantitatively:

**H1:** The Feldenkrais Method affects the development of self-regulation processes.

**H2:** The Feldenkrais Method changes thinking (cognition/convictions), sensing (perception), feeling (emotion) and acting and the interrelationship between these areas.

**H3:** Learning with the Feldenkrais Method can initiate behavioural changes and improve interpersonal interactions skills.

### **My questionnaires and three case studies**

Based on the results, I developed a short and long version of a questionnaire, which can now be used for the evaluation of trainings and public courses, so that it can be further developed in terms of test theory and used in quantitative research. I investigated the question whether psychologically ill people can also

be helped to further develop self-regulation processes using the Feldenkrais Method; this I investigated with the documentation protocol SOLIDE, which was developed (2000) by Dr med. Norbert Klinkenberg, behavioural psychotherapist and Feldenkrais Practitioner, in psychosomatics.

I present three case studies, one person with a depressive symptomatology, one person with Anxiety symptomatology and one person with pain symptomatology all received three FI and three ATMs. I evaluated the process from the first to the third FI lesson; I evaluated the observed and reported changes and the insights of the participants and presented them in reference to their symptomatology.

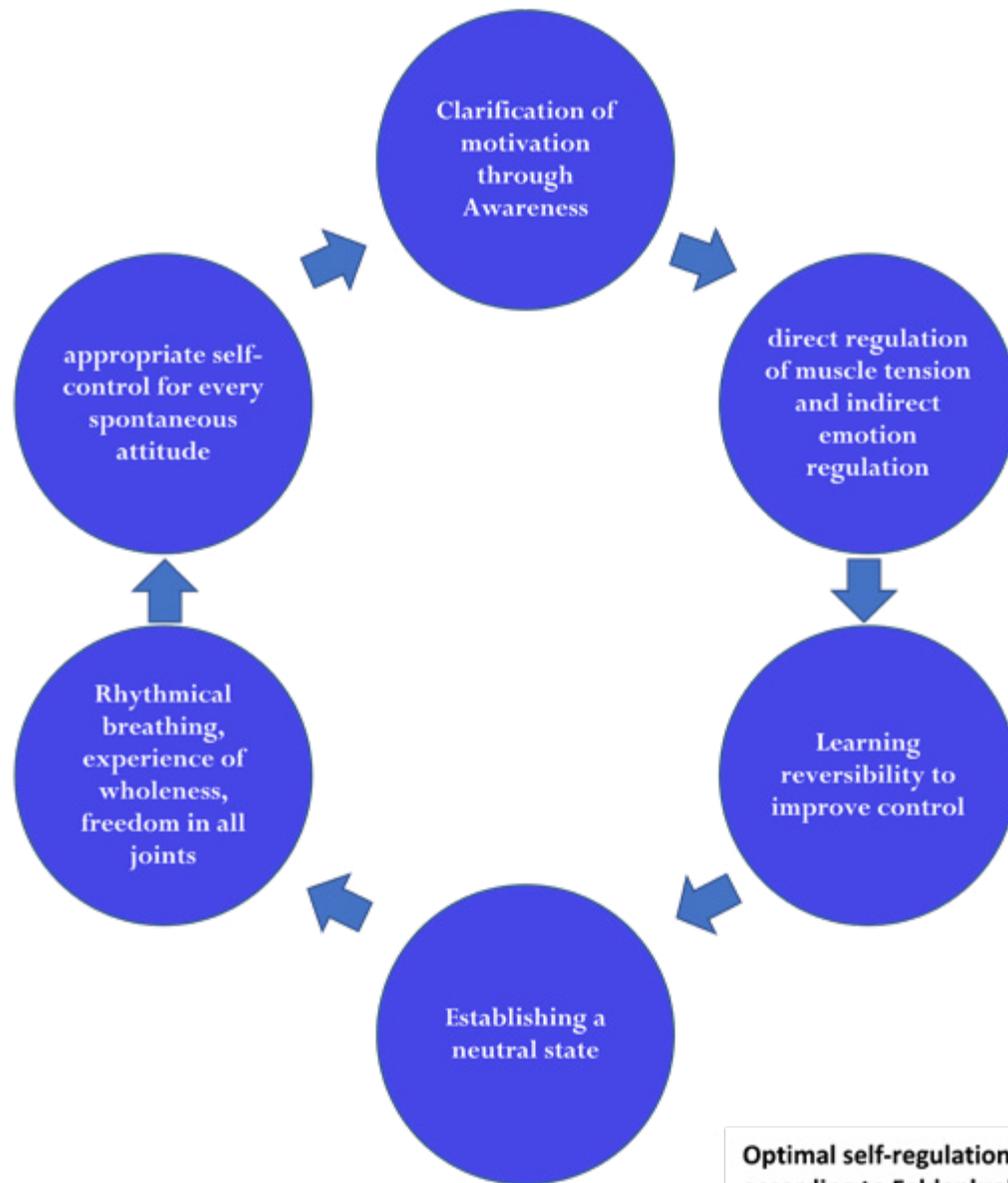
The results suggest, or rather the fourth hypothesis, that psychologically ill people can also benefit from the method relating to self-regulation abilities. All results are formulated as optional statements, since they are only valid for the investigated group of test persons and must not be transferred to a population of all those who are learning or will be learning with the method. The results come from the qualitative survey and do not correspond to the quality criteria of quantitative

research, i.e. the data collection is subjectively coloured, the respondents were highly motivated, they told of the subjective experience, the researchers listened subjectively, and the reader will read into it subjectively what he understands or perhaps connects with what he has experienced. [As in qualitative research Ed] Neither objectivity nor reliability are given (reliability in case of a new survey at a later date). Validity is only given to a limited extent and can only be increased by communicative validity, i.e. that the participants have corrected and rectified the summaries of the interviews before they were used further.

### **Relevant statements for FELDENKRAIS Practitioners**

For Feldenkrais teachers, the most relevant statements are, in my opinion, the comments about the state of mind during the course or training. In some participants, self-exploration on the floor caused fears, frustration, self-devaluation and other unpleasant emotions.

These could be mitigated through conversations with instructors/course leaders and group members and made bearable by positive emotions such as curiosity, joy in movement and perceived ease.



**Optimal self-regulation according to Feldenkrais (see dissertation, page 43)**

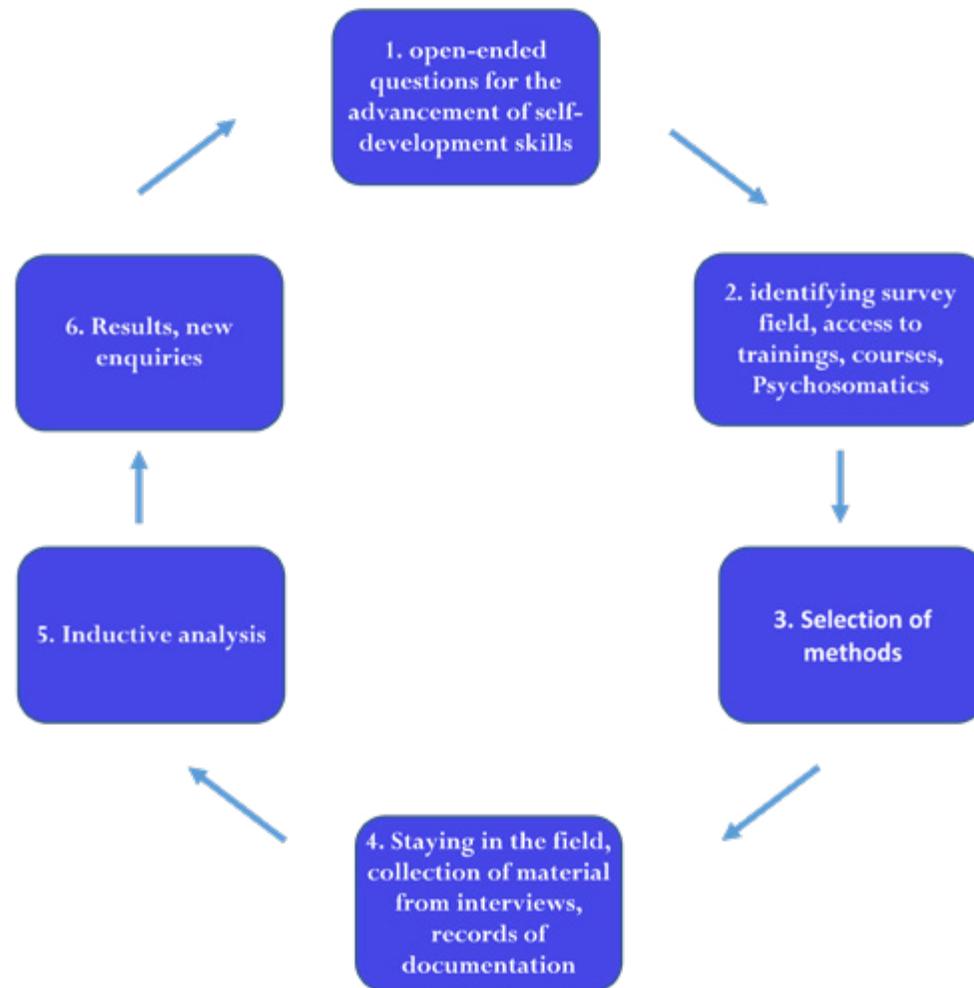
The transference process played a major role in determining **whether** and **how** someone could learn, e.g. a person learned well with an older trainer because she reminded her of her beloved grandmother, another person fell in love with a trainer who triggered positive feelings in her, from which she had to distance herself again in order to be able to continue learning. Several graduates even changed their training programmes due to negative feelings of transfer and insults during the lessons, because they were vulnerable during their self-exploration. Unfortunately, I did not speak to participants who had dropped out of their training programme or course, so possible reasons for the drop-out have remained unknown. Those I spoke to were convinced about the Method, but were looking for an environment where they could learn without too much interference. Most of the time, the test participants rated the switch as a new accomplishment in their search for what was missing. While the feeling of evaluation or devaluation by the teacher led some people to change, others reported that through praise and positive feedback from the teacher, the hitherto low self-esteem stabilised

and improved and confidence in their own abilities grew. This means that the relationship between teacher and learner plays a special role, which I believe has been insufficiently considered or addressed during the Feldenkrais intervention. According to some participants, the group also played an important role. It can be seen as supportive and helpful, some participants felt accepted and connected in one group, in another group not to belong to it, or during the FI exchange with group members patronised, judged and uncomfortable. Those who could learn better were the ones who spoke about it in a group where they felt comfortable.

This means that both the attitude of the teacher and the group atmosphere can have a beneficial or detrimental effect on personal learning processes.

#### How my teaching has changed

I have changed my personal teaching due to the results; I observe the participants in the ATM lessons more closely, how they deal with themselves during the ATM, and I always draw their attention to the fact that they decide whether and how they want to move.



**Sequence of research**  
(see dissertation, page 57)

I often include an observation level/meta level in my work, where clients can observe whether they are under pressure to perform, what feelings and thoughts they are dealing with during movement, what self-assessment they subject themselves to. I invite them to personally recognize patterns and clarify their motives and address efforts against contradictory movements or cross motivations. I use complex movements and the setting of obstacles/limitations more consciously to complicate situations and to provoke psychological stress in the sense of a challenge in the exploration process. When I notice a disturbance behind the possibly adverse feelings of transference, I address this as quickly as possible in order to leave no room for speculation, offer no projection surface and restore the ability to work. I hold it with Ruth Cohn's findings from the topic-centred interaction, "disturbances have priority", even if fears, anger, disgust, rejection etc. come to light, I try to clarify this as quickly as possible, so that it does not affect the learning atmosphere and the student feelings having been taken seriously. However, for me there are special features in teaching psychosomatic patients, which are usually more limited in their self-regulation abilities.

I work with patients with pain using an attention-directed approach to reduce their focus on pain, to learn to distance themselves from pain, to perceive physical phenomena and to describe them in a neutral way so that a cognitive re-evaluation can take place. At the same time, I try to notice my own feelings of transference, take an observer's position during the teaching and consciously adjust the way I teach to the group or to the individual.

According to Dr Moshe Feldenkrais, the student should improve his health, state of mind and to be enabled to cope with his pain, fear and difficulties and to overcome them (cf. Feldenkrais, 1985, p. 22). Feldenkrais' basic assumptions were confirmed, and new hypotheses were generated for the development of a new theory. This pilot study closes a research gap in basic research. The qualitative results are conditionally to be generalised as optional statements and evaluated as "possible" results. The participants report on their experience during the intervention, on their experiences, on changes in everyday actions and on behavioural changes in conflict and stress situations. They discovered new possibilities for action through self-exploration, clarification of motives for action, through muscular and thus conditioned emotional

regulation. Self-image, self-esteem and self-acceptance changed through experiences of self-efficacy. They generated new skills that they implicitly and explicitly adopted in everyday actions. In everyday life, this led to an increase in competent ways of acting, which led to experiencing self-efficacy, e. g. to coping with difficult life situations.

The observed behavioural changes and the development of patients' potential for action show that the Method can also make an important contribution within the clinical-therapeutic settings and can be used specifically for the optimisation of dysfunctional self-regulation processes. The questionnaire, which was developed from the inductively gained possibilities for change with regard to self-regulation abilities and is available in the appendix of the dissertation, captures the actual state of self-regulation abilities and can serve as a basis for further quantitative studies for the evaluation of changes with regard to self-regulation processes. Finally, I would like to thank all those who made this work possible, the participants who allowed me to be part of their experiences, those who gave me access to the empirical field, and all those who gave me scientific advice and support or encouraged me time and again.

Quoted LITERATURE: (translator's comment: the reference numbers given in this article are by year of publication in Germany. I am unable to quote the correct page numbers in the corresponding English versions of these publications. I therefore decided to quote the literature by their German titles and provide literal translation into English in brackets. I found that the German publications are slightly different to the English ones.

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**Reference Material**

Here is the short version of Susanne’s Questionnaire on Self-Regulation:

The rest of the associated reference documents, including the long version of the questionnaire, the guiding questions she used for her research and information letters to participants can be found on the AFG website - <https://www.feldenkrais.org.au/resources/reference-documents-susanne-herzogsresearch>

An illuminating read for your own understanding and practice of the method.

Susanne Herzog encourages practitioners “to use and possibly further develop the questionnaires”. She would be interested to be informed about the experiences of the group from time to time.

**Questionnaire on Self-Regulation (Short Version)**  
 Below you will find statements on self-regulation. Please read each statement carefully and make a decision. There are six different possible answers.

Please tick the appropriate boxes Bitte kreuzen Sie das Zutreffende an.	1 fully applicable (trifft voll zu)	2 mostly applicable (trifft meist zu)	3 just about applicable (trifft gerade noch zu)	4 fully applicable (trifft eher nicht zu)	5 rather not applicable (trifft überwiegend nicht zu)	6 does not apply (trifft überhaupt nicht zu)
<b>I do not take a break when I am tired</b> Wenn ich müde werde lege ich keine Pausen ein.						
<b>I can compromise well.</b> Ich kann gut Kompromisse schließen.						
<b>I pursue my goal, even in difficult situations in my life</b> Auch in schwierigen Lebenssituationen verfolge ich trotzdem mein Ziel.						
<b>I make my decisions regardless of the expectations of other people.</b> Ich treffe meine Entscheidungen unabhängig von der Erwartung anderer Menschen.						
<b>I follow my interests without feelings of guilt.</b> Ich verfolge meine Interessen ohne Schuldgefühle zu haben.						
<b>When I am anxious I can hardly calm myself</b> Wenn ich sehr aufgeregt bin, kann ich mich kaum selbst beruhigen.						
<b>I find that I am not OK as I am</b> Ich finde mich so wie ich bin nicht okay.						
<b>I like to take responsibility for my actions.</b> Ich übernehme gerne Verantwortung für mein Tun.						
<b>When high demands are asked of me, I am not able to maintain a good mood.</b> Bei hohen Anforderungen bleibe ich nicht gut gelaunt.						
<b>When problems arise, I can think of creative ideas for solutions.</b> Treten Probleme auf, fallen mir kreative Lösungsideen ein.						
<b>In difficult situations, I trust myself and my abilities.</b> Ich vertraue in schwierigen Situationen auf mich und meine Fähigkeiten.						
<b>I am often at odds with myself and behave differently to what I would like.</b> Ich bin mir oft uneins und verhalte mich anders, als ich es gerne würde.						

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<b>I know what I want and what I don't want.</b> Ich weiß was ich will und was ich nicht will.						
<b>Oftentimes, I don't know why I am pursuing a specific goal.</b> Ich weiß oft nicht, warum ich ein bestimmtes Ziel verfolge.						
<b>Oftentimes, I do not perceive myself as a whole person.</b> Ich nehme mich selbst oft nicht als ganze Person wahr.						
<b>I can regulate my emotions and muscular tension.</b> Ich kann meine Gefühlslage und muskuläre Anspannung regulieren.						
<b>I feel disconnected to myself.</b> Ich fühle mich mit mir selbst unverbunden.						
<b>I can disengage from difficulties.</b> Von Schwierigkeiten kann ich mich innerlich freimachen.						
<b>In conflict situations, I can remain calm and take the situation with humour.</b> In Konfliktsituationen kann ich gelassen bleiben und die Situation mit Humor nehmen.						
<b>I often feel that I am not at eye level with other people.</b> Ich habe oft das Gefühl mich mit anderen Menschen nicht auf Augenhöhe zu befinden.						
<b>In groups, I feel comfortable and secure</b> Ich fühle mich in Gruppen wohl und geborgen.						
<b>Mostly, other people do not interest me.</b> Mich interessieren andere Menschen meist nicht.						
<b>It is difficult for me to allow anyone to be and live as he is.</b> Es fällt mir schwer jeden sein zulassen wie er ist und lebt.						
<b>I find it easy to put myself in other people's shoes.</b> Es fällt mir leicht, mich in andere Menschen hinein zu versetzen.						
<b>Oftentimes, I can't address conflicts.</b> Ich kann Konflikte oft nicht ansprechen.						

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## SHINING A LIGHT ON OUR UNDERSTANDING

By Susan Roxon

*Susan Roxon (Sydney 1990) graduated from Ruthy Alon's training a couple of weeks after the birth of her daughter. This perfect*

*piece of timing meant she spent several years after the training, not practising and feels she's never really caught up with where she imagined her class mates were/are. But participating in the training changed her irrevocably and helped her to grow up.*

I first heard the FK meme "it isn't about the movement" during my training, over 30 years ago. It was said to me by a man from another training, who added "*He (Feldenkrais) could just have easily made it all about maths*". This didn't make any sense to me at all. Of course it was all about the movement, and what was this 'it' anyway, if not a way to learn how to move more efficiently, gracefully, elegantly. Because I didn't understand what he meant, I dismissed him with the arrogance of youth, as a smart-arse, but over the years I did occasionally wonder what he meant.

In our initial training, we all noticed the way we changed as a result of the work. I certainly felt more

alive and energetic, if not always happier (but more capable of joy, spontaneity and impulsivity- not always a good thing!).

Many of us puzzled about this over the years of practice. Questions were often asked in advanced trainings about the effect of changing 'the body' on 'the mind', and about Moshe himself's interest/ awareness/ or lack of interest in the topic. He once said something along the lines of '*Free the body and you free the mind*' (I am more a reader of Moshe quotes than a reader of his books- though I have pored over '*Awareness through Movement*'). I was content with the liberating, and indeed life-changing effects of changing old habits of movement by becoming aware of them, and of the way these effects spread to the rest of my life through some unconscious process, without needing to analyse this process anymore carefully.

It was 30 years before I heard the phrase '*It isn't about the movement- he could have just as easily made it about mathematics (except that mathematics isn't as accessible to everyone as movement is)*' again, and that was from Zoran Kovich in his Sydney workshop on March 23&24 2019. I was intrigued by the first

line of the flyer:- "*Feldenkrais said...the physical experiences people usually report after lessons are actually collateral benefits of the ATM process.*" Wow! My smart-arse colleague was right? It isn't about the movement after all?!

I hadn't done an advanced training for years, because I do not consider myself advanced in my practice- still at kindie level, but this statement required further examination. A whole weekend's worth in fact. I was well rewarded.

Since my original professional Feldenkrais training, my work with survivors of profound trauma and loss has enabled me to become comfortable with the concept of an integrated mind/body. Working with highly traumatised people is made very difficult, if not impossible, if the practitioner and the traumatised person continues to think of 'body' and 'mind' as separate, though somehow connected, parts of a person. At least the new understanding of brain neurophysiology has given the world a clear, if sadly unpoetic, understanding of the nonsensical nature of attempting to separate the self into 'body' and 'mind'.

In his workshop, Zoran expressed clearly and succinctly, in words and practice, how the very slow precise 'pixilated' nature of ATM's- the breaking up of actions into such tiny repeated particles that our habits are revealed and challenged, and then changed about and played with and built up into larger and different actions- reveals to us a deeper understanding of who we are, and, quoting from the flyer, 'how we truly act'.

Zoran used a wide variety of sources and styles of presentations, as well as ATMs of course, and the use of slowly zooming out from a collection of highly magnified and unrecognisable pixels to reveal a famous image, provided an unforgettable metaphor for an ATM- as well as a brilliant trigger to thinking about the integration of the digital and analogue.

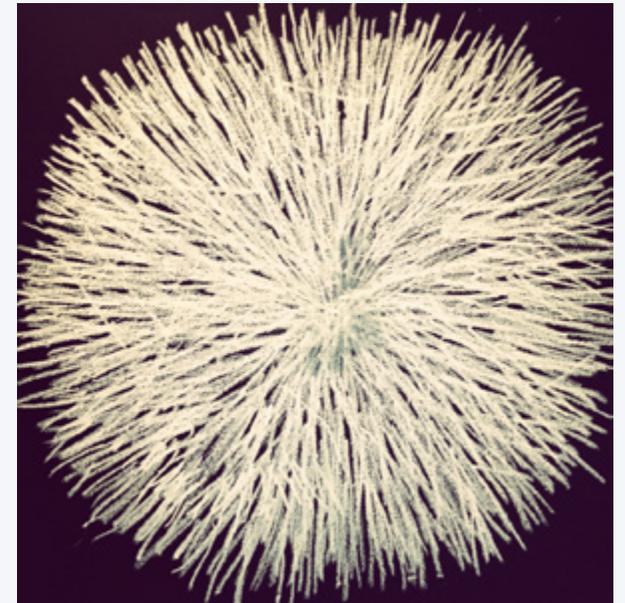
Zoran's language demonstrated his deep thoughtfulness and striving for honesty and accuracy- and mirrored the precise attention to minute detail that is demanded in an ATM. In writing this I have been reminded how

limited language often is in expressing the nature of our experience, which fills me with admiration for Zoran's ability to find the words. I have struggled to find the words to describe the workshop but I would like to finish with a quote that Zoran gave us from Mark Reese.

*"Gurdieff and Moshe taught a path of psychological growth based on a disciplined training of awareness. The aim was the harmonious development of all parts of the self. The keystone was the training of the attention and self-observation."*

So, how could Feldenkrais have used maths to illustrate what he was teaching instead of movement? You'll have to attend Zoran's next workshop to find out!

See page 52 for opportunities to attend one of Zoran's public workshops. ■



*Artwork by Tiffany Sankary*



## AWAKENING WONDER, SPARKING CREATIVITY: Adopting Awareness Through Movement as a personal practice

By Zoran Kovich, MSc. CFT

*Extract adapted from an article first published in Interaction: the Australasian Feldenkrais Journal. Number 1, 1998. pp. 20-27.*

*Zoran Kovich (Melbourne 1991) loves sharing conceptual and experiential knowledge he's acquired through over 45 years of study, personal inquiry, professional practice, and teaching. He is the educational co-director of two Australian Feldenkrais training programs, and manages the Sydney-based Mindful Action Studio.*

To take up Awareness Through Movement (ATM) as a personal practice is to purposefully and skillfully engage in the intimate act of self-observation to better

know yourself and thus act autonomously, agentively, and wisely in the world. The kind of self-knowing that arises through self-witnessing depends on being in a world that is inseparable from your body, your language, and your social history - in short, from your embodiment. This is an 'enacted' conception of self-knowing. It is you as an embodied person who knows. It is you who brings forth a world through a process of embodied action. Knowing through the animate, lived body resonates deeply with ATM. What follows is an evocation intended to illuminate, not explain, the kind of human creativity that is inevitable when ATM awakens in people the spirit of wonder.

The knower and the known [are] engaged in a dynamic, symbolic dance, connected by means of the human body ...it is by means of this 'dancing' that together we actually create as well as come to know experience and reality.  
J. Gill, 1993:40

Like the Feldenkrais Method itself, creativity cannot be explained with a single level theory. Creativity is grounded in our biology, but it is not just a matter of biology. The concept of creativity is a cultural construct, but it is certainly not just a matter for social science. Neither is it the exclusive domain of neurophysiology, psychology, sociology or any other discipline. What follows is an overview of what creativity might be from an embodied action perspective. This perspective that implies that:

- all that we know and can know depends on the kinds of experiences that come from being a body with a particular structure and organisation. Our human form and function affords us certain kinds of experiences and precludes us from others.



- our embodiment always situates us in a particular time and place within an ecological-cultural matrix, further constraining our range of experience.
- perception and action are fundamentally inseparable. Perception is not a passive process. We don't receive impressions of the world. Experiences do not happen to us. We act in order to perceive. In a circular, enfolding fashion, our actions shape what we perceive, and those perceptions in turn guide our actions.

We are inherently creative. Interacting is an inevitable part of our embodied action. It goes with the territory. Knowledge emerges, is created, in the dynamics of interaction. The number of degrees of freedom in our body structure allows us to be in a multiplicity of different states of being. As we interact with the world and others, new states of being are continually created. Each emerging, transient state is subtly different to any other we have been in before. Claiming our creativity may partly be a matter of reclaiming our sensuality, that is, becoming sensitive to the subtle differences of being we bring into existence through action.

Claiming our creativity is also a matter of acknowledging that the order we perceive in the world

is of our own making. Moshe Feldenkrais's view that the function of the nervous system is to create order out of disorder is increasingly finding support in those branches of the biological sciences that emphasise self-organisation in their theories. Such theories suggest that in an operationally closed nervous system, the imagined and the 'real' cannot be differentiated. To verify this we need only remember our most vivid dreams and the lived experiences associated with those dreams.

We create an ordered world through the dynamics of bodily experience. Our conceptual frameworks, through which we comprehend and understand the world, are metaphorical extensions of our bodily experience. Meaning is our own creation. The structure of our human embodiment, the structure of the world, and the kinds of interactions that can take place between those structures, constrain the kinds of realities we can construct. How do we foster creativity? Can we learn to be creative? Perhaps it's not so much a matter of learning to be creative as it is a matter of becoming aware of the ways in which our constructed conceptual frameworks tend to ensnare our actions and perceptions. Applied awareness is the primary means of liberating ourselves.

We can also use the notion of knowing as 'doing relationships' to get to the heart of creativity. Introspective accounts of creativity often refer to inspiration. We tend to speak of it as something we receive from an outside source - one of those well-known and much called upon muses perhaps. A somatically based epistemology suggests a more proactive view of inspiration. Inspiration is born out of our lived experiences which arise through our multi-dimensional interactions with the world. However, we are not necessarily conscious of all these dimensions of interaction, and this is what tempts us to think that our new ideas, our new intentional behaviours, have 'come out of the blue' when in fact they are the product of our own embodied action.

ATM lessons deliberately perturb our habituated sensibilities, opening new spaces for experience. Different images are juxtaposed to stir our imagination and move us along new paths of action. Different body spatio-temporal relations are explored, their decontextualized composition calling us to meaning making. We mindfully move through these relationships, noting the nuances, sensing differences. We intentionally place ourselves in different orientations to gravity in order to glean new

understandings of familiar actions. We come at an idea from all directions - and this is meant as more than just a metaphor. It is almost literal in meaning, reflecting the embodied nature of human knowing. Through these processes we have the potential to experience different ways of doing and being. The experiences are immediate, manifest in our tissue and sensation, and capable of jolting or gently coaxing us into a different reality. More importantly, we learn how to create appropriate contexts for such experiences to emerge, and in that ability discover the power to break through the habits of thought and action that entrap our creativity within their invisible barriers.

ATM as a personal practice is aligned with the highest ideals of education and human aspiration: individuals excited by the spirit of inquiry, people respectfully interacting to bring forth knowledge. This ideal is fostered by developing peoples' ability to apply their awareness to their lives. Along the way people rediscover the authority of their own senses, finding in their sensuality a rich source of knowing and wisdom. As independence and self-authority grow so too do feelings of empowerment.

Karl Marx claimed that power lies in the hands of those who own the means of production. Like Marx, Moshe Feldenkrais traced loss of personal potency to socio-economic dependence. However, for Feldenkrais the means to self-empowerment was through commitment to personal transformation rather than social revolution. For Feldenkrais, potency is recovered and maintained by learning how to apply one's awareness to bettering one's life. Ultimately, ATM offers us a practical means of creating the kind of life we dare to desire in our vowed and unavowed dreams.

#### **Recommended Reading**

Gallagher, S. 2005. *How the Body Shapes the Mind*.

Gill, J. 1993. *Learning to learn: toward a philosophy of education*.

Harre, R. 1994. *Physical Being*.

Johnson, D. 1994. *Body, Spirit and Democracy*. By

Lakoff, G. & Johnson, M. 1999. *Philosophy in the Flesh*.

Margolis, H. 1993. *Paradigms and Barriers: how habits of mind govern scientific beliefs*.

Maturana, H. 2008. *The Origin of Humanness in the Biology of Love*.

Maturana, H & Varela, F. 1988. *The Tree Of Knowledge*.

Sheets-Johnstone, M. 2011. *The Primacy of Movement*.

Varela, F. 1992. *Ethical Know-How: Action, wisdom and cognition*.

Varela, F., Thomson, E. & Rosch, E. 1991. *The Embodied Mind*.

Thompson, E. 2007. *Mind in Life: Biology, phenomenology, and the science of mind*.

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## DEVELOPMENT PROCESS AND OUTLINE FOR: FELDENKRAIS FOR MUSICIANS HEALTH WORKSHOP Melbourne Conservatorium of Music, Melbourne University

By Ingrid Weisfelt

*Ingrid Weisfelt (Amsterdam 2002)*

*is a Feldenkrais Practitioner and Assistant Feldenkrais Trainer with a dance and theatre background. She runs the Melbourne Feldenkrais Studio, works as a Movement therapist at Warringa Park School and teaches Feldenkrais at the Victorian College of the Arts School of Dance, Melbourne University.*

Early in 2018, I was invited to teach a three-hour workshop to the Masters of Music (Orchestral Performance) students at the Melbourne Conservatorium of Music. The Feldenkrais workshop was part of a course entitled Musician's Health. The two main learning outcomes of the course were that students should be able to:

1. Understand and develop the mental and emotional capabilities necessary for consistent skill execution and positive performance experiences;

2. Identify, prevent and manage health risks resulting from playing an instrument for extended periods of time.

As well as learning about the Feldenkrais Method, the students also had classes in Occupational Health and Safety, Pain and Performance, Auditory Health, Musculoskeletal Health, Alexander Technique, and Yoga.

The student cohort consisted of ten musicians; five string players, two woodwind players, a bassoonist, a clarinetist and a percussion player.

Having been a professional dancer I had extensive personal experience of both the physical and mental pressures an artist has to manage when performing at an elite level. I have also had many years of experience of how a practice in the Feldenkrais Method has supported me to train and perform at my best.

There are two fundamental and often conflicting requirements of artists performing at an elite level: their need to strive for technical proficiency and their desire to be expressive artists. The Feldenkrais Method provides us with an approach of working with our bodies that can support the development in both these areas, and in fact reveals to us how integral one is to the other. Through movement, the Feldenkrais Method provides us with a sophisticated tool for learning and developing greater body awareness. With this tool at our disposal, improved movement coordination and organisation means better technical proficiency, and improved body awareness and self-awareness creates the potential for a more nuanced and sophisticated artistic expression.

With only two, one and a half hour sessions to give these musicians an understanding of the Feldenkrais Method and how it might be of benefit to them, I was

certain of only one thing - that this workshop was going to be experiential, and with very little theory and talking. My planning for this workshop began with seven questions that I wanted to attempt to answer both for myself and for the students in relation to being a musician:

1. Why Feldenkrais?
2. Why movement?
3. How do we know we are moving?
4. How does the Feldenkrais Method work?
5. Why should we improve our body awareness?
6. How do we listen to music?
7. What would be particularly useful for a musician to understand about their body to support their musical practice and performance?

Prior to the course I asked the students to read "The Teaching of Moshe Feldenkrais: Seeing Movement as the Embodiment of Intention" by Layna Verin. (First published in *The Graduate Review*, June 1978). This is an excellent article that explains so succinctly what goes on in a Feldenkrais lesson, why and how it works. I also asked them to read "Meadowlarks, Minds, Muscles and Music" by Eloise Ristad, chapter 9 from "A Soprano on her Head: Right Side Up Reflections

on Life and Other Performances" (Real People Press 1982). This chapter gives specific insight into the world of a musician and her personal experience with the Method. I also asked them to watch Evelyn Glennie at TED2003 "How To Truly Listen" ([https://www.ted.com/talks/evelyn\\_glennie\\_shows\\_how\\_to\\_listen](https://www.ted.com/talks/evelyn_glennie_shows_how_to_listen)). This remarkable TEDTalk so clearly demonstrates that 'listening/playing' music (or anything, really) is a whole body experience, and not just something that happens in isolated body parts such as the ears, or in the hands.

To answer my questions I explored the following themes and ideas, keeping in mind the specific needs of my cohort of students.

## WHAT:

### Why Feldenkrais?

Playing a musical instrument is a highly physical act. The musical instrument becomes an extension of the physical self. For a musician to perform at their optimum, their physical skills and abilities need to match their expressive and artistic intention. A practice in the Feldenkrais Method can support this so beautifully in two ways:

1. Teach new and novel movement pathways and coordination.

2. Provide a process by which to practice, work and learn new things.

As we become more able to hone and improve our ability to sense and feel ourselves move, we improve our body awareness and therefore our self-awareness. The Feldenkrais Method is a practice of repetitious movement with the vital ingredient of variability. Capitalising on the Neuroplasticity of the brain, new neural pathways are established and established pathways expanded. The brain structure itself changes as we learn. The variability offers increased options to respond and act. Learning music and playing an instrument is also a repetitious practice. The ability to keep expanding pathways instead of just laying down habituated responses is what a practice in Feldenkrais can offer within a practice of music. With variability comes increased options and range of expression. "If you know what you are doing, you can do what you want" Moshe Feldenkrais.

There are other factors influencing the optimization of the neuroplasticity of the brain that can be integrated into a music practice. All of these are intrinsic within the structure of a Feldenkrais lesson and can be transferred easily to a music practice session. These are; the amount of practice, the schedule of practice, the

variability of practice, speed and quality of practice, and, breaking the task down into smaller components. All of these factors require self-regulation and self-reflection, giving agency to the artist as a self-directed and mature learner.

### **Why movement and how do we know we are moving?**

To move is to live. If we are breathing, we are moving. We know that we are moving because of the complex interaction of the various sensory and motor systems at play in our body: Musculoskeletal system, Motor system, Vestibular system, Visual system, Proprioceptive system, Kinesthetic system. Movement exists in every human moment. Thinking, acting, sensing and feeling all involve movement. Thinking, acting, sensing and feeling are all indivisible aspects of our neuro-functioning. When we influence one, we influence all.

### **How does the Feldenkrais Method work?**

Moshe Feldenkrais devised such an astounding way of improving human action, feeling, sensing and cognition "... in the most delicate, the most ingenious way. By enabling you to become more sensitive to differences. By devising a configuration of movements that cannot be performed without this refinement. By making you aware of the minute interval between

the time your body mobilizes itself for a movement and you actually do that movement - the minute interval that allows you to exercise that capacity for differentiation and to change." ("The Teaching of Moshe Feldenkrais: Seeing Movement as the Embodiment of Intention" by Layna Verin).

We learn, or in other words, we build our brain maps by being able to make the smallest possible sensory distinctions between movements. We capitalise on the neuroplasticity of our brains to create change and new possibilities. A Feldenkrais lesson uses several methods to activate new learning. It uses novel and non-habitual movements and body positions. It utilises constraints, and sets up an explorative learning environment where mistakes are encouraged and intrinsic feedback is the guide. It also settles our brains to be in a neurologically receptive state optimal for learning and discovering new possibilities.

### **Why should we improve our body awareness?**

With improved body awareness comes more options and possibilities for movement, and with that, a more varied and nuanced pallet from which to choose from to express your intention. With more parts of your body there are more possibilities to support your

action and intention. With greater understanding of how to utilise and coordinate individual parts, or local parts of the body, and how these local parts can be supported better by the whole body, or the global-self, a beautiful feedback loop between local and global is created, powered by sensory/perceptual motor learning. By improving our understanding of our movement we improve our somatic awareness of our body. Not only do we expand our movement options, but also our psychological and behavioral responses. For a musician, this provides the opportunity for delivering a single note with a vast variety of different tones, depending on how the movement of the body is organised.

### **How do we listen to music?**

The quality of our listening to others and to our environment will only be as sophisticated as our ability to listen to our selves. Our expressive abilities will only ever be as varied and nuanced as our ability to recognise and perceive ourselves listening. In her TED Talk, Evelyn Glennie gives a beautiful demonstration of a passage of music that she plays at first with absolute correct technical proficiency. She demonstrates correct stance, postural alignment, arm position, wrist position and stick holding technique.



*Jess Randall is a violinist (The Crooked Fiddle Band, Devil on the Rooftop) who performs barefoot. She finds this helps her to move around - jump and navigate the uneven surfaces, pedals and leads lying on stage. Being barefoot helps her with balance and to feel free.*

She plays the passage with immense technical precision and it is at a standard that you would expect from a professional musician. She then plays the exact same piece of music again, however the second time she plays it, she plays it with her whole body. She 'listens' in a way that we 'listen' to ourselves when we do ATM and F.I. The quality of her sound is sublimely altered. It is like hearing the music again for the first time. She becomes a truly outstanding expressive

artist that gives the audience the gift of beautiful music. An experience that can transport an audience from a purely cognitively based experience of music, to an experience embedded in a sensory, perceptual and somatic response, as only the best musicians and artists can.

**What would be particularly useful for a musician to understand about their body to support their musical practice and performance?**

- Feel their feet on the floor and the weight of their body on the floor
- Understand their hip joints and how their legs connect to their pelvis
- Understand how their pelvis can shift and move to facilitate and support the movement of their spine and arms
- Understand how their spines can be supple to respond to and support the movements of their arms
- Understand how their ribs can be soft and responsive to the movements of their breath, their weight shift and the movements of their arms
- Understand how the movements of their breathing can support the movements of their pelvis, torso and arms

- Understand how their arms connect to their torso and how to find proximal support for the movements of their arms
- Understand how they can keep their neck and head as free as possible within the constraints of holding and playing their instrument
- Understand how the movements of their eyes can improve so that they can easily change and shift their focus within the room
- For a sitting musician it would be helpful to understand all of the above as well as understanding how their pelvis supports their weight on the chair and how their hip joints can be free

With these ideas at the forefront of my planning, I came up with the following outline for my workshop. I also wanted to provide the musicians with a couple of other movement-based activities that were separate from playing their instrument. In these activities they would have the opportunity to integrate their new skills and body awareness just learned in the ATM. The movement activities would require the participants to listen and respond spontaneously and sensitively to their co-participants.

## Session 1

**Discussion:** Short introduction of the themes and ideas outlined above.

**Test to measure change:** Play a familiar and enjoyable short passage of music on your instrument.

**Theme:** Posture VS Acture

**Test movement:** Sensing weight on feet in standing and weight shift in standing.

**ATM:** Frog Legs.

**Play/Improvisation:** Simple and fun rhythm game in pairs.

**Test:** Sensing weight on feet in standing and weight shift in standing.

Break

## Session 2

**Theme:** Whole body listening

**ATM:** Reaching arm across the body to roll onto side.

**Play/Improvisation:** In pairs, lightly holding a long bamboo stick between the two of you and moving through the space, changing levels and directions without dropping the stick.

**Test to measure change:** Play the same familiar and enjoyable short passage of music on your instrument.

## What we discovered.

- The musicians were able to attend to their movement during the ATMs at a highly focused level, even though many of them had not had any previous experience with a physical practice or somatic based practice before this workshop.
- They were very open to learning about the Feldenkrais Method, although prior to beginning, some of the musicians expressed how uncoordinated and poor movers they thought that they were.
- They all expressed some change that they felt in their bodies throughout the ATM, or some change in how they felt themselves in standing at the end of the ATM. Physical changes that were noticed by the students were that their instruments felt lighter to hold. That their arms felt more supported and were easier to move. They also reported that they felt more balanced and grounded in standing, also while holding their instruments.
- They enjoyed the Play/Improvisation games.
- When they returned to their instruments and played the same passage of music they played at the beginning of the workshop they were all astounded at

their experience of playing. They felt that they could hold their instrument with greater ease and lightness. Some said that they didn't need as much physical preparation to make a note. Some said that the note came much more directly and easily. We could all hear the improved quality of the sound. There was much greater clarity and simplicity in the sound, a sense of space and lightness around the notes.

I really enjoyed devising and teaching this workshop. It was a challenge for me to distill my knowledge of the Method into a framework that could give the students as full an experience of the Method as possible in just a few short hours. It was also a challenge to find a way that I could transfer my understanding of how the Method can support one performing arts practice (dance) to another performing arts practice (music). It was delightful to see how well the students participated in the ATMs, even though some were at first very unsure and insecure about moving their bodies. It was immensely satisfying for all of us to hear the improvement in the quality of their sound and to see them realise and acknowledge their own improvements in how they used their bodies to create their sound and express their music.

I believe that this workshop was successful in meeting the two main outcomes of the course as much as was possible within the time frame and within the larger structure of the course. The musicians had an embodied experience of how a practice in the Feldenkrais Method helps connect mental and emotional capabilities with physical activity. They seemed to understand that with practice this approach could support them to achieve more consistent skill execution and positive performance experiences. They had an experience of this when they found greater lightness and ease in their posture and handling of their instrument following the ATM lesson. With an expansion of body awareness they would be much better equipped to identify, prevent and manage health risks resulting from playing an instrument for extended periods of time. Most importantly, the musicians also heard and felt how their expanded understanding of their body and the improved quality of their movement had a significant impact on their sound production and artistic expression.

[https://www.melbournefeldenkraisstudio.com/Melbourne\\_Feldenkrais\\_Studio/Home.html](https://www.melbournefeldenkraisstudio.com/Melbourne_Feldenkrais_Studio/Home.html) ■



## IMPROVISATION FOR EVERYDAY LIFE

By Seth Dellinger

*Seth Dellinger (Baltimore 2016) is a Feldenkrais practitioner in Washington DC, dedicated to helping clients take increased ownership of their practice through a deeper understanding of the experimental process of Awareness Through Movement. He offers classes and workshops exploring the intersection of Feldenkrais practice and improvisational movement as well as online programs. He completed Jeff Haller's 18-month IOPS program in 2017 is currently enrolled in his Feldenkrais Training Academy in Seattle.*

I've thought a lot about what it takes to act creatively in the world. Creativity is more of a buzz word than it used to be, but it has always been absolutely essential to the human experience. Given that we have become inarguably the most domesticated species on the planet, it's truly our creativity that sustains us. Falling prey to the idea that modern life has taken care of all concerns and 'its ok to just go along with the flow' is the fastest road to soul death. Unfortunately, there are plenty of opportunities for us to go lax in our level of engagement with the surrounding environment. But that's hardly news.

*So how do we reconnect with the incredible vitality that we all knew as children?*

I just heard about a study that found that the average child laughs 300 times a day, while the average adult laughs just five times.

*How often do you laugh?*

It's not a bad question for each of us to ask ourselves.

What would make us suppress laughter or hold ourselves so tightly that it couldn't arise in the first place? How far away from the surfaces of our skin would we have to hide in order not to be touched by the joys of the world?

Of course, the "joy of the world" is a relative thing. There is no question that the best way to support our playful nature is to create a safe and welcoming environment. Many of us haven't experienced enough of that support in our lives. In all cases, we could benefit from having more of it.

*What could you do to create more warmth in your daily surroundings?*

Children who feel safe spontaneously create games out of thin air. They spontaneously create songs out of snippets of conversation. They create dances with their feelings.

So why don't adults do the same?

We *know* how to do these things. That's not the issue. The problem is knowing how to give ourselves permission, especially if we've developed the idea that acting like children takes us away from safety. It's not hard to get that message after 12 years of schooling to learn how to pass tests. It's not hard to get that message after years of social life with implicit and explicit ranking processes. It's not hard to get that message through the ongoing experience of depending for one's livelihood on the ability to faithfully do what one is told.

Creativity bucks all these trends, but it's not because creativity is such a radical act. It is, in fact, the act of returning to our humanity, returning to the state of being that was natural to us when we first entered the

## IMPROVISATION FOR EVERYDAY LIFE *By Seth Dellinger*

world, and our mere presence brought joy to everyone around us. Sadly, many of us didn't always have that joy reflected back to us by those closest to us.

Here and there, and sometimes everywhere, we have all encountered other humans whose humanity has been wounded to the point where they became afraid of creativity. We've all received messages suggesting that the playful pursuit of our curiosity is a danger to ourselves and others.

Healing the wounds that make us ashamed to proudly express what is most unique inside of us to the external world is best accomplished in community where acceptance and positive reflection is abundant and intentional. When this atmosphere is created, we discover that we don't have to work hard at creativity. We simply follow our natural curiosities to their logical conclusions – and find ourselves in magical places.

The most natural starting point for any such exploration is the same place we all began as infants. Just as we did then, we can become curious about our bodies, the ways they move and the sensations they produce. If we also treat our bodies as infants do – not as tools to accomplish tasks, but as vehicles for play and learning – we will very quickly find ourselves in new territories.

Just like newborns, we can have the experience that the world is continuously new. From this place, our instincts can guide us.

Ideas and impulses come to us without the need to dig for them. If we don't resist them with socially conditioned concepts of right and wrong, each of these pulses of energy becomes an opportunity to create a vibration that can resonate far beyond ourselves.



If we are mindful of the safety of our playmates, we can create generous vibrations that invite resonance and community, creating an ongoing virtuous cycle where we begin to act the way humans naturally do: reflecting back and forth to each other how joyful it is to be creative, and making it seem like the most natural thing in the world.

After all, for us humans, it is the most natural thing in the world!

### **Website**

[sethdellinger.com](http://sethdellinger.com) – he has 100+ blog posts at this site

### **Contact**

[sethdellinger@gmail.com](mailto:sethdellinger@gmail.com) - reach out if you are interested in his online programs – he is currently offering practitioner discounts that are not available to the general public. ■



## MOTHERHOOD OF INVENTION - A MEMORY, A REFLECTION, A DIRECTION

By DonnaRose McAneney

*DonnaRose McAneney (Brisbane 1993) brings to her Feldenkrais practice combined skills as a Remedial Massage Therapist 1985-1993, Infant Massage Instructor, Yoga student, and the skills and service of the Jeremy Krauss Approach of working with babies and infants with special needs. Based on the Gold Coast Queensland, she has lived, worked, studied and offered services in the USA, New Zealand, Hong Kong, and parts of Europe.*

Nothing kicked my butt more than Motherhood. My brain and thinking got a decent punch out of it as well. Now that would not necessarily be an original thought about parenthood in general; after joining the world's largest exclusive club, I have heard somewhat similar comments parroting or paraphrasing mine to a certain degree, or maybe even stronger statements. But let me say now, it is the biggest most loving journey I've ever taken and I wouldn't change it for anything. As a reflection of my early parenting world, it's fair to summarise with something along the lines of, the challenges were many, but we attempted to face them and I met some with grace, skill and humour,

(although many other challenges were met without any of those qualities too and some outcomes were better than others!) some challenges were delicately stepped over or maybe folded over into something more manageable.

Somewhere in the midst of the chaos and sleep deprived lifestyle of early motherhood, I recognized I was feeling like a living example of one of my mother's favorite quotes. I remember my mother as the person who introduced me to this phrase, "Necessity is the Mother of Invention".

Did I even know what she meant by that saying when I was a young girl? My adolescent scholarly thinking back then, called up visions of inventors who were part of our educational curriculum at the time. The likes of Thomas Edison, Ben Franklin, Leonardo Da Vinci and others we know the name of. Did I think my mum was in that league at the time? In hindsight I will say, that not only did she share that quote often, she seemed to demonstrate it as well. For an American housewife of the 50's & 60's, she was certainly leading a life of inventive and creative behaviors. Raising 6 kids while

we relocated homes around the world every 2-3 years had her well placed for managing a life of inventive adaptability....

Fast forward to my 8th segment, the completion of my Feldenkrais Professional Training Program in 1993, which was followed shortly by the birth of our first son. I had already relocated homes 4 times in 6 months (nothing like the environment in which one is raised to support familiar habits of behavior!) I was believing and trusting in favorable DNA passed on, to support and supply me birthing and motherhood skills. My maternal grandmother did an amazing job as a mother of 7 in the 1930's & 40's, including 3 sets of twins!! I was now living far away from the family networks and the shared wisdoms that are offered when extended family live closer to each other. With my Feldenkrais training under my belt, I entered parenthood with a ridiculously optimistic attitude of, 'Yeah, I got this!' Okay parents, your turn to smirk sideways at me for that one and trot out that other famous quote, 'Ignorance is bliss'.

I was so very keen to get into my new, curious and only partially honed skills of offering Awareness Through Movement Lessons, with its new challenge of 'how was I going to do this and who was going to attend?' What creative and inventive new ways was I, a stay-at-home-mum who was re-settling in a new city,

with her high-demand first born child, going to come up with to make that happen?!

My solution? I went to the local child care centre where I had placed our son's name on the waiting list to attend later in the year and offered 30min 'Animal Play Moves' classes. These classes were based strongly on the popular "Move like the Animals program by US Feldenkrais Practitioner Stephen Rosenholtz.

As a graduate of the Brisbane 1 FFTP, with our first born child in tow, I began my first ever ATM classes - delivering them to 3 year olds! This led to regular sessions in the 4yr olds rooms as well, and often I found myself in the infant and babies' room for every opportunity to observe, learn and play. That gig lasted about 14 months, and then life moves and changes. We relocated homes again plus there was the arrival of our second child, and of course more sleepless nights and exhausted days.

Soon I was in my lifetime role of mother of two, and there, early into that journey I found myself remembering my mothers' quote - "Necessity is the Mother of Invention". I think I was beginning to have a bit better insight as to why a housewife and mother of 6 traveling the world in the 1960's & 70's would find that saying so quotable. In those early years of fresh faced Feldenkrais Practitioner and Mothering



far away from family home(s), and family networks where traditions and wisdom are shared, and access to friendly support is all around, I found I was often reflecting on a different version of that saying I first learned from my mother. I began to say "Motherhood is the Necessity of Invention"

Those days of being a new mum and new Feldenkrais movement teacher for 3 year olds were some very creative times in my thinking and doing. I relish those days of finding the spontaneity of the moment to meet the children where they were at. To be real in their world of fathomless creative and curious behaviors and activities, and to use that kind of thinking and doing in my parenting. Like when your school child gives you an average 30 min notification for a costume they must have that day, or the late delivered request for the community contribution of a homemade something or other. Or supporting their passionate desire to be

onstage that day at the school assembly but what are they going to be or do on stage? Many countless times being a mother necessitated quick creative inventions of support and encouragement.

I am more than 25 years as a Feldenkrais practitioner and still it is the most interesting and rewarding work for me. In 2018, after watching on the sidelines for several years, reviewing the work of many skilled practitioners, and waiting for the right time in my life, I've taken on the exciting and extraordinary work of studying with Jeremy Krauss - graduate of Amherst Feldenkrais training- in his program '*JKA for babies and special needs children*.

I feel like I am coming home, back to one of the places that brought me real joy and delight and one of the places I felt the most creative in my work as a Feldenkrais Practitioner - working with babies and children and bringing myself back to their creative world.

**DonnaRose welcomes all conversations:**

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## MOVING VISION The Feldenkrais Method, Art and Transformation

By Mara Della Pergola

Translated into English by Anastasia Bernadi & proof-read/revised by Scott Clark.



*Mara Della Pergola (Amherst 1983) Feldenkrais Trainer, studied with Dr. Moshe Feldenkrais. For more than 30 years she has directed the Istituto di Formazione Feldenkrais in Milan Italy, where she lives,*

*directing ongoing training programs and conducting a varied private practice. She teaches in Europe, North and South America and is known for her clarity, creativity and the accessibility of her teaching style. Mara has written several articles on the Method and the book 'Lo sguardo in movimento. Arte, trasformazione e metodo Feldenkrais' (Moving Vision. Art transformation and the Feldenkrais Method). Her background is in the psycho-social field and theatre. She has served as President of the Italian Feldenkrais Guild - AIIME.*



*Anastasia Bernadi (Melbourne 2018) studied Yoga in an ashram in South India for almost a year in 1991, after 7 years of Karate. She completed a Master of Education in Italy and a Master of Teaching in Australia. Author of 'Yoga il*

*respire della vita' published in Italy in 1997.*



*Scott Clark (London 1990) is a Feldenkrais Trainer living in London, UK, and the organiser of the current training programme there.*

A few years ago, while visiting a museum, I spoke to my companion about some details of a painting that struck me, details that made me feel more grounded but at the same time lighter. Taken by surprise, my companion said she had never perceived so clearly the connections that I brought to her attention. She suggested that I write about "the art of observing art"; she pointed out that the general approach to a work of art is to analyse it culturally, and no one considers the processes taking place in the observer at the moment of observation.

Her suggestion pleased and inspired me. I had long wanted to share some of my exploration of the physical, psychic and cognitive experiences that belong to us as a species, and that accompany us in the process of maturation and becoming aware human beings. Now I could suddenly see my own personal and original way of writing; I could link two of my major passions, the Feldenkrais Method and Art. As a Feldenkrais teacher I could speak about what is important to me, applying the principles of the Method to writing, offering the reader a multidimensional experience; not only cognitive, but also sensory and kinaesthetic.

The eight themes that I call in Italian the *Fondamenta*, our "foundations" (note1), that are always present in my teaching – *feeling supported, differentiating and integrating, identifying one's core, orienting, inhabiting inner volumes, realizing an intention, imagining and imagining oneself, meeting the other* – are described in my book and explored further, beginning with my observation of works of art that represent them beautifully.

Ordinarily, if these "foundations" are mentioned, they are considered either as something that can be recalibrated through correction or therapy, or they are seen as abstract/metaphorical values unconnected to physical experience. Identifying these foundations, physically recognizing them, becoming aware of them through guided self-listening – these are the first steps toward learning to transpose them into new dimensions, integrating them into our actions, thoughts and feelings.

### **Observe Art to find yourself**

The awareness that results from observing a work of art with subtle and timely attention enchants us; we find sensations leading to emotions, organizing themselves into thoughts and questions. In such moments a

dialogue begins, not only with the artwork, but above all, with oneself – and this dialogue can continue far beyond the present moment.

Both figurative and abstract art can go beyond the will or imagination of the artist and generate a moment in which we can sincerely surprise and listen to ourselves.

Some details magnetically attract us and change our habitual mental horizon, orienting us towards a new vision, bringing us into a resonance with the painting. A previously dormant or inattentive part of us must pause there, simply waiting, and in that very moment we become aware of it and acknowledge it.

We offer the artwork a further dimension, that of our bodymind. We allow it to come inside ourselves, through the gaze, involving the senses and the breath, and we transform it into an embodied experience, alive and vibrant. Coming close to an artwork in this way allows us primarily to perceive and see ourselves, and the progression unfolding through our sensations. We see our reflection in the artwork, and in turn, the artwork awakens us and makes us think.

Before the work of art we momentarily transform ourselves, as if we were meeting a person: subtle

changes, often imperceptible, but if carefully observed, precise sensations can be found, localized or global, that constantly accompany our thinking and the doorways into our emotions. Without a body that feels and expresses, surely we would not understand, interpret or even imagine many abstract concepts. We would not be able to compare or distinguish, we would not be able to think and to name.

Therefore imagination, cognition and the senses are united in us, influencing each other. Of course this is already confirmed by neuroscience, but our personal way to profoundly understand is through practical experience.

### **Exploration: moving to feel**

In *Moving Vision*, I catalyze this embodied mode of observing the works of art with some short self-exploration practices (ATM), with the intention of moving the reader's gaze in two directions: towards the artwork and then back inward.

Through slow, unusual movements, free of any goal-oriented trying, it can be possible to refine our perception and to obtain a richer, more precise, more personal understanding of the artworks.

In order to deepen the act of feeling and listening to oneself, I urge the reader not to neglect the experiential part. It is principally through such a child-like exploratory action that one can truly bring together sensation and intellect, and in so doing, come back to oneself again. Without this small practice, the text would be incomplete and inadequately integrated because, as always happens when reading, the mind would once again prevail over the somatic experience that I am suggesting.

Hence Moving Vision is a text overlapping the teachings of Moshe Feldenkrais, meditation and other disciplines for improving self-awareness through physicality and movement, with the observation of artworks, to enable a concrete expression of ideas and feelings.

Following the concept of organic learning (note 2) coined by Moshe Feldenkrais, I enriched the cognitive aspect with notes about child development, and wishing to share the results of my approach, I also talked about people and groups with whom I worked.

This article summarises the chapter that in the book describes the first "foundation". The practical part has been conceived for the general public.

### **Feeling supported**

An extraordinary experience begins at birth, when the newborn, who has floated in his mother's womb for months, suddenly finds himself in a colder, brighter environment, exposed to new sounds and to a new presence: gravity. To be immediately embraced in the mother's arms while still curled in a fetal form feels whole and calming. That embrace itself becomes a primary source of nourishment. In the best possible case, the child may be supported without any limit to his exploratory movements. Such a feeling of being loved and protected will start the child on the long journey toward maturity.

Once on the floor, the child will discover a new and solid support that allows him to roll, sit, and move; to reach for an object or a person, to get up and walk toward another place, but also to fully rest. These external supports – first the arms of the parent, and later the floor – become internal – the skeletal structure and the sense of the self – and so become a source of autonomy throughout life. If the child's need for support is not adequately met, or if the child is stimulated too early to keep himself upright, he may prematurely activate his still immature musculature.

This activity can become a great tension, an unconscious effort, continuing even into his future life. Like loading oneself with a heavy weight without realizing it, any activity becomes more complex; imagine turning or walking with a heavy weight in your hands or on your shoulders. And since all our spheres of activity are interrelated, every action of exploring, of being curious and learning becomes more challenging. If, on the other hand, the support becomes excessive or hyper-protective, the risk is symmetrically opposite: the child will not have the freedom to explore and follow his curiosity, and this might delay the discovery of his own creativity.

Such support would no longer be a good nourishment, but would become a restraint. Of course, there are numerous components in growth and maturation, and I do not intend to imply any absolute cause / effect relationship. I would, though, like to draw the attention of those who work with children and adults to the somatic aspects that influence cognitive or relational abilities.

### **Observing art**

Raphael's Madonna of the Chair and van Eyck's Madonna of Chancellor Rolin are two masterpieces that we are going to observe because they so



*Raffaello, Madonna of the Chair, 1514*

beautifully represent a mother holding a child. For this purpose we will not consider the religious theme of the two paintings, nor the different eras, regions or cultures in which they were produced. For a moment let us suspend the cultural filter and, employing all our senses, observe the two mothers, each holding their baby in their arms. Look at one work at a time and then compare them. What strikes our attention at first? Where does our gaze go? And how does it move within the painting?

In Raphael's work we observe a very close mother-child couple; the mother holds the child on her right thigh and supports the child's back with her left knee and both her hands. In addition, their heads are touching at the temples. The contact is soft and stable. The child seems to be well supported yet still free to move. Notice his left foot and his hands; he could be playing with the mother's breast or her shawl. The child is protected by his mother, but not limited. Her gaze towards us communicates her desire to protect him. But now let us pause and observe our sensations, first as if we were the mother, then as if we were the child. What mood is triggered in us? Which thoughts come to us? How do we breathe?

And now let us look at the van Eyck painting. How do we see the manner in which this child is held? What kinds of glances are there? The mother looks down and directs the child towards the very elegant Chancellor Rolin, who gazes straight ahead. The mother's contact with the child is limited to her left fingertips, the right hand is not visible.

The child does not seem to be sitting on his mother's lap, rather, he appears suspended, even self-supported. He holds an object in one hand and makes a gesture with the other, but his back is not yet ready to support him in order to have his arms really free. So he is making an effort, perhaps unconsciously. It looks like he has been set in a role, rather than simply inhabiting his own childhood. What do we feel? What are the emotions triggered in us? What kind of thoughts run through us? What kind of future do we imagine for these two children?

Raphael's child seems to be loved in all his parts, and we can imagine a future of games with another child, a future already present in the work. Whereas for the child of van Eyck, we can only imagine the encounter with the cold gaze of Chancellor Rolin. Warmth is not shown to this child.

This is how life starts for these two children; and we feel it in the very cells of our bodies. Let us try a small



*Van Eyck, Madonna of Chancellor Rolin, 1435*

practice, and after that, we can go back to the two paintings with greater presence.

#### **Sit comfortably**

1. Sit forward on a chair, with your back away from the backrest, with your legs slightly apart and your feet below your knees. Do you feel comfortable, or do you feel like you are starting to sag, rounding your back? Is the sensation of the length of your back equal to that of the length of your front? Become aware of how you keep your shoulders, neck and head. Where does your gaze rest on the horizon? What comes into the visual field? How is your weight distributed on the chair, does it seem

that you have more weight on one side than on the other? Do you feel like you're sitting in front of or behind the sitting bones? Put the back of the right hand on the chair and place the right buttock on the palm of the hand; you will feel the hard presence of a bone: it is the sitting bone or ischium, which is located at the bottom of the pelvis. Now reach your left hand across to the upper right side of the pelvis, the iliac crest, and sense the distance between the two hands. In this way you can sense how tall the right side of your pelvis is. Make some small movements with your pelvis forward and backwards, and you will feel that the ischium moves in relation to the hand. Remove your hands; perhaps the contact with the chair has changed, perhaps there are differences between the two sides of the pelvis and of the back.

2. Repeat all this on the left side of the pelvis. Notice how you are sitting now and what you feel on your left side and in your back.
3. Imagine the pelvis as part of a sphere, open at the front. Place your hands on the upper part of the pelvis, on the right and left, on the two iliac crests; roll the pelvis slightly forward and then return several times to the starting place. The shoulders and the head need not move forward, they remain where they are. Imagine that

the ischia are two ball bearings and you feel how their contact with the chair changes. Leave the abdomen free and soft. The movements are slow and the breath continues freely. Note how the lumbar area arches slightly forward. Reduce the strength and let this very tiny and small movement of the pelvis involve the spine.

4. After a short pause, do the same movement in the opposite direction, bringing the top of the pelvis slightly back, and then return. Observe if the movement is only the pelvis or if your back also participates, rounding backward. The head and shoulders can remain where they are. Then rest and feel if the contact of your pelvis with the chair has changed.
5. Move in both directions several times, as fluidly as you can find. When the upper part of the pelvis comes forward, the pubis descends towards the chair, your weight goes forward in the chair in front of the ball-bearing ischia, and your back arches slightly. When the upper part of the pelvis goes backwards, the pubis rises slightly, your weight rolls behind the ischia, and your back starts to round. Reduce the range of the movement until you come to a rest. Don't correct your posture. In which of these two positions are you sitting normally? Take a break by leaning back on the chair.
6. Return to the front of the chair and look towards the floor, slowly bringing your head down, and then looking up, lifting it several times without making any effort. Take a visual reference point on the opposite wall to see where the eyes reach, both up and down. Observe if you move your head only with your neck or if you can let the movement include your back, even down to your pelvis.
7. Place your right hand on the top of your head and tilt the head down; at the same time move the top of the pelvis slightly backwards several times. Each time, return to the starting position. Your back rounds backwards and gets longer. The front of the thorax shortens, and the sternum descends towards the abdomen, which slightly retracts. You can put your left hand behind your waist and then on your sternum, to feel if and how they participate. Notice if you prefer to tilt your head while inhaling, or while exhaling. Take a rest.
8. With your right hand on your head, move your head as if to look upwards and move your pelvis forward, leaving your abdomen free. Each time, return to the starting position. The back arches and shortens while the front of the chest opens and extends, and the sternum moves away from the belly and rises towards the head. You can feel it with your left hand behind your waist or on your sternum. Continue in both directions.
9. Put your left hand on your head and do the same movement with your head and pelvis, at first moving in only one direction from neutral and then alternating directions.
10. Remove your hand from your head and move your pelvis back and forth again, imagining a portion of a sphere that can roll in all directions. While moving the pelvis also allow the chest to participate spontaneously. Does the movement reach the neck and the head? Now initiate the movement from the head and the eyes, without activating the neck more than the rest of the spine. Coordinate your breathing with the movement of your pelvis, head and eyes. Shortening the front of the trunk is easier if you let the air out. The chest is like a balloon full of air, which must be slightly emptied to reduce its volume in order to bend. Take a rest.
11. Are you sitting more comfortably on the chair? Note the link between the head and the pelvis, through the spine. Where is your gaze resting? Stand up and see how the weight is distributed on the ground. Take a few steps.

Now look at the two artworks again, one at a time, paying great attention to how you are sitting. It is possible that, through being able to perceive some new details in yourself, you will be able to resonate more with the two paintings. Where does your gaze stop or move? What strikes you about the masterpiece? What other details emerge from the painting? What other details do you perceive in yourself as you look at the artwork?

Now exaggerate your posture and keep yourself upright as in van Eyck's painting. What changes do you feel? Where do you stiffen or shorten? Do you let all of your weight go into the chair? What effect does it have on your breath? And in what mood do you feel you are in right now?

Now imagine being held by loving hands in just the right way, as in Raphael's painting, and make a comparison of your reactions.

### Conclusions

I invite the reader to start from the sense of pleasure and integrity that comes from exposure to artworks, to deepen the quality of self-attention and also the attention toward inner spaces – spaces that are too seldom experienced. Then transpose this awareness

from figurative art to any other activity, even including activities that apparently have nothing to do with physicality.

This path restores the body's dignity, without overestimating it and without adapting it to external models, but considering it as our tool for understanding and communicating with the world, together with thought and emotions.

By learning to observe ourselves we will be able to discriminate what is authentically integrated from what comes mainly from the mind that loves to consider itself in charge of the body; or what comes mainly from the body, which in turn knows many tactics to impose itself. This is a perspective that allows us to direct the attention to ourselves in relation to the environment.

Moving Vision is my personal contribution to the knowledge of the Feldenkrais Method and I hope it will generate interest for our work. People will be attracted by the marvellous artworks and they will be able to approach the Feldenkrais Method, not by the sense of a malaise or pain they want to get rid of, but intrigued by a pleasurable experience.

**Note 1.** Fondamenta (the foundations) are the streets that line the canals of Venice; they delimit the city, separate the ground from the water and are a solid support for walking.

**Note 2.** Della Pergola, M., "Organic learning according to Feldenkrais: how to inhabit perceptions for the emergence of actions", AIIMF National Conference, Milan 2004, [www.istitutofeldenkrais.it/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/CONFERENCE\\_COLOR11.pdf](http://www.istitutofeldenkrais.it/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/CONFERENCE_COLOR11.pdf)

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## IF AN IMAGE SPEAKS A THOUSAND WORDS.....

You might be interested to learn more about the image on the front cover of the Journal and the story behind it's creation. The creative process described by the artist seems to draw on many of the attributes we practice in Feldenkrais.

**Artist:** Arina Zinovyeva

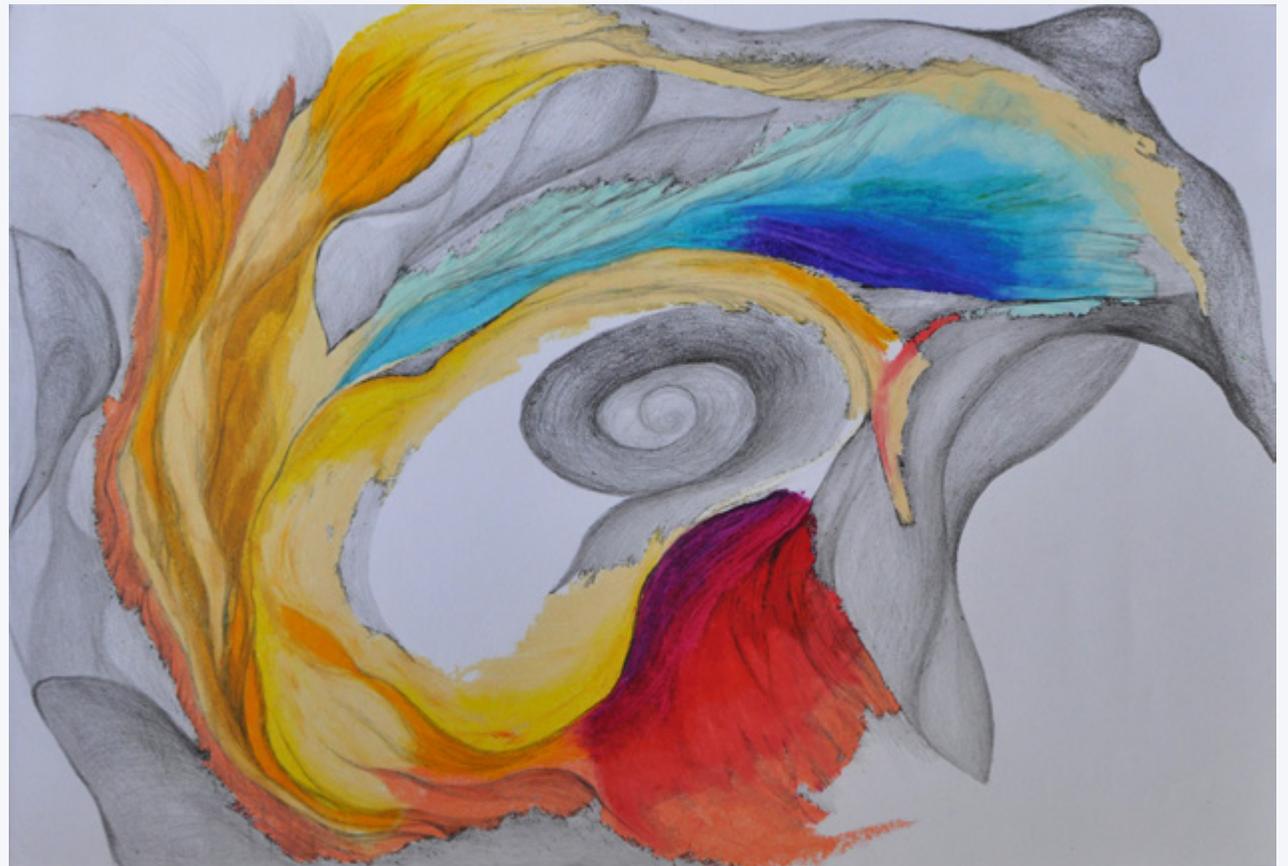
**Artwork title:** Irony

**Dimensions:** 29 cm x 42 cm

**Medium:** graphite pencil and oil pastel on paper

**Year:** 2014

**Description:** This work was initially started in Bulli NSW on the 30th & 31st of January, 2013. I created around 50 sketches, paintings and drawings during the two days spent in Bulli Beach Touristic Park. Essentially this trip was the first time away from a busy Sydney life. Bulli seemed to be a quiet, carefree place with a beautiful beach that was never crowded. The first thing I noticed when arrived in Bulli was many blond children around. There were suspiciously too many of them! Two days away from an overwhelming plethora



of daily responsibilities were indeed productive and joyful, although at times melancholic. Having lamented the lack of social interaction in this isolated place, I embraced the situation and used it to my advantage. I had no choice but create and oh man I did.

After returning to Sydney, I put these drawings in a folder, occasionally looking at them and showing them

to other artists. Only in November 2014, I looked at them again and picked ones that were the most compositionally sound. I chose pencil to balance the bright colours of oil pastel. I tranquilized some out of control sections in the composition with steady shapes. A circular effortless motion pushed energy around and created enough air for a painting to become alive.

## IF AN IMAGE SPEAKS A THOUSAND WORDS.....

The title "Irony" was given with purely synesthetic reasons. The sound of the word "irony" in my mind is associated with a circular motion and with occasional interruptions of flow.

### About the Artist:

Arina Zinoveva is an artist born in Komsomolsk-on-Amur, Russia. She has been creating abstractions in Russia, UK and Australia. She absorbs the environment around her and reflects these spatial impressions in the form of a painting or drawing. **Walking through the space, moving your body through places gives an experience that is easily translatable into an abstract form.** Having lived and worked in three countries, Arina finds her inspiration in the challenges every day life presents. She always seeks a balance of intense intellectual pursuit and quiet state of mind. Both are essential for a healthy life. She loves being challenged and she finds that **overcoming challenges creates mental imagery that she can then translate onto the paper.** Arina doesn't use reference images; when she paints, she has only a canvas or paper in front of her, so in order to create a unique abstract arrangement, **she looks inside her thoughts and through the process**

**of awareness and decision making she arrives at compositionally sound artworks.** Arina is not only an artist, but also a teacher and she often applies the same method when she teaches. She connects with her students on a personal level and through the process of intellectual and emotional exchange she finds ways of helping people with their academic ambitions. **One of her greatest values is helping people understand their passions and having tools to realise their potential.**

Creativity is a combination of materials. Like in the painting "Irony", oil pastels are combined with pencil and in the tension and balance of these two media, we can see lively movement that **can take us to an unexpected place. Listening to one's body and allowing it to move in different directions, exploring the world and ourselves can lead to incredible results in achieving creative expression.** Moving to a foreign country is exciting, and very challenging at the same time, but if my body asks for it, I let it go to places! Creative process is full of contradictions, confusions and struggles; the key is to embrace it all and be at peace with it. Giving space to all sorts of emotions, letting them go wild or on the contrary, letting them be numb, can give us an understanding of who we are.

**Her bibliography:** <http://www.arinazinovyeva.com/about/>

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# NEXT ISSUE

## THE THEME FOR OUR 2020 JOURNAL IS: LEARNING

The process of learning, different learning styles, what's involved, what's important, what's often overlooked; creating optimal conditions for learning and what you're currently learning through practice! How does learning set us apart?

You are invited to submit your contributions by May 31st 2020.

Email contributions, comments, feedback, suggestions to [nationalnewsletter@feldenkrais.org.au](mailto:nationalnewsletter@feldenkrais.org.au) or post a comment on the Feldenkrais Australia Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/FeldenkraisAustralia/>

From 2020 we will be offering an advertising upgrade offer for Journal contributors – pay for one size and your ad will feature in the next size up, in appreciation of the time and energy you've put into writing your article for our publication.

I'd like to leave you with one of my favourite quotes on creativity:

*“You can't use up creativity. The more you use, the more you have”*

Maya Angelou



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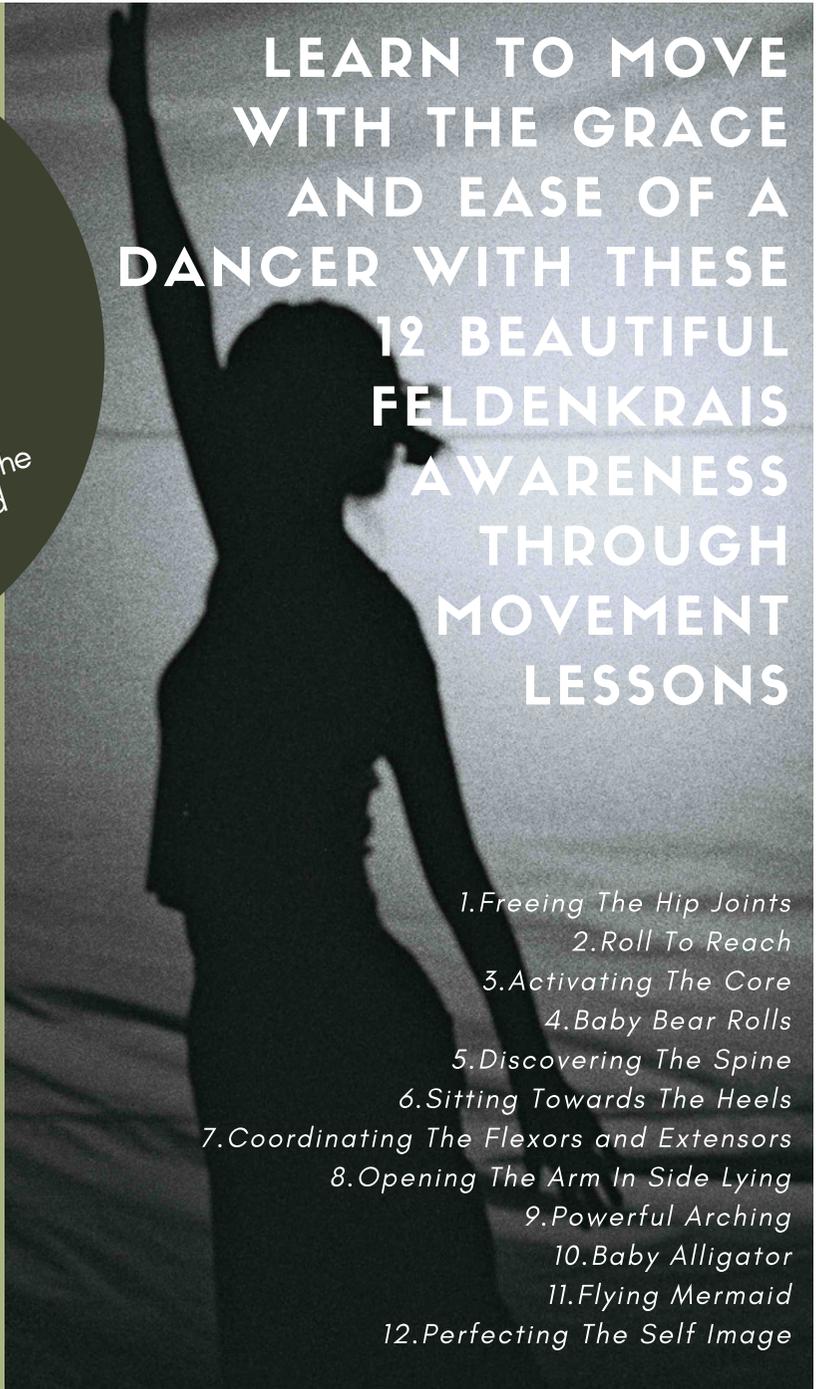
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"What Ingrid does so well is to invite participants to tap into their own sense of somatic artistry (in a very down to earth way). Her voice conveys encouragement to trust my own body's felt knowing of figuring out the movements so that they suit me and I love that! I get up off the floor feeling restored and inquisitive." Anna

for more information visit [melbournefeldenkraisstudio.com](http://melbournefeldenkraisstudio.com)

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Physiotherapist

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[mindfulactionstudio.com/studiohire](http://mindfulactionstudio.com/studiohire)



The Mindful Action Studio is managed and directed by Zoran Kovich, MSc, Certified Feldenkrais Trainer, and Educational Director



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Desktop publishing by The Wizarts ([wizarts.com.au](http://wizarts.com.au))

**FELDENKRAIS AUSTRALIA**

**Journal of the Australian Feldenkrais Guild Inc. 2019**