

World-wide Recognition and Research

About the Feldenkrais Method

The Feldenkrais Method is known and used successfully in places all over the world. Currently, there are over 80 professional training programs in the Feldenkrais Method being held all over the world; in Japan, Germany, Austria, Switzerland, France, America, Holland, Argentina, Hawaii, Australia, Israel, Mexico, New Zealand, Sweden, and the United Kingdom. In Italy, a city council has approved and paid for Feldenkrais movement lessons for the elderly and for young school children as a city-wide program. The Swiss rehabilitation center for people who have been paralyzed uses the Feldenkrais Method as an established part of their reeducation and healing program. San Francisco Symphony members have taken a year-long program of Awareness Through Movement and Functional Integration lessons to prevent repetitive-motion injuries and to improve their overall functioning.

It is individual people and their particular lives that are changed so dramatically by this Method. For example, parents bring their child, who has been labeled "severely disabled," to see a well-known practitioner because they heard about this work from a friend. The child is given lessons with accurate kinesthetic information and new challenges that her nervous system can make sense of. Over time, she not only becomes a child who can coordinate the movement of her eyes, or crawl across the room to something she wants, or walk next to her parents, she is a person who is curious and active in life. Many infants whose parents were told that their children would not walk or talk are now vibrant children going to school or young adults going to college and making career choices.

Here is one example:

"My daughter Elizabeth began seeing Moshe Feldenkrais in 1980, then Moshe assisted by Anat Baniel, and since 1982 has been seeing Anat exclusively. In spite of a very grim prognosis by pediatric neurologists, Elizabeth is now a happy and active student in a regular school. We are thankful and delighted by Elizabeth's progress and feel many other children could benefit from it. Unfortunately very few have the opportunity," says Lou Natenshon, father and architect.

As a baby, Elizabeth was diagnosed with global brain damage by two top neurologists and given a totally bleak prognosis. Through her work with the Feldenkrais Method, she has learned to function very well. Elizabeth was an honor roll high school student and has enjoyed performing in the theater arts for many years. At age 16, she had an MRI, which showed that she indeed does have a small cerebellum. The doctors were correct in their assessment but not in their idea about what was possible for Elizabeth. At age 18, she had to choose between several top level colleges that she was accepted to.

The success stories are many. Elizabeth's father is just one of the many parents who attest to the profound effects of the Feldenkrais method for their children. Often, parents have come to this method after trying many disciplines, including surgeries and different kinds of therapies that left them still searching.

Countless people with different physical ailments have benefited dramatically from the Feldenkrais Method and now function at levels that had been deemed impossible by other disciplines. Highly performing people such as dancers, musicians, and artists develop greater levels of excellence with this method. For example, a professional violinist who was unable to work for months because of pain in his hands, arms, and shoulders was able to return to the work that he loves after several Functional Integration and Awareness Through Movement lessons from an experienced practitioner.

There are no specific populations or types of people who can benefit more from this Method than others. The Feldenkrais Method is powerful, safe, and relatively inexpensive. It is based on scientific assumptions and has proven to support people's optimal functioning, to relieve symptoms, and to prevent future injuries. It has also been exceptionally effective in reversing limitations associated with old age. Through its use, adults and children have learned how to move with more ease and comfort, how to increase their strength, and improve their overall health. The Feldenkrais Method gets the startling results it does because its theories and practices are based on such radically different premises than those of traditional disciplines.

The Feldenkrais Method is based on scientific observations about how the human nervous system functions. Moshe Feldenkrais was a brilliant scientist who understood about learning and human development in a way that few did while he was alive. The current technology that is available to scientists allows them to develop measurable biological explanations for how the brain functions. In the last 10 years, neuroscientists at University laboratories and educational and medical facilities have conducted studies that support the understandings that Moshe Feldenkrais based his method on.

They use PET scans to measure the activity in different parts of the brain, they count synaptic connections from pin-sized brain samples, and monitor brain activity with MRI and EEG techniques.

Now, it is accepted scientific fact that the human brain is organized into more than 40 different physical 'maps' that broadly govern such things as vision, language, muscle movement, and hearing. Electrochemical signals coming into the brain from all parts of the body influence the organization of these 'maps' and the physical structure between the brain cells. Another "discovery" that many researchers have found is that the brain is a self-organizing organ, that it gets better and better through use, and that the ability to build brain power lies within each person, irregardless of age. The plasticity of the human brain enables it to constantly undergo physical and chemical changes as it responds to its environment. Many scientists who study motor coordination and human development emphasize the dynamic-systems explanation of development. As an infant explores and finds solutions to new environmental demands, the nervous system can reorganize itself. It is the repeated cycles of perception and action that bring about new behaviors, movements, and learning.

Dr. Feldenkrais understood these concepts over 40 years ago. He learned about the human nervous system through years of careful observation, study, and experience. In some ways, the scientific community has now caught up with the way of thinking that the Feldenkrais Method is based on.

The Feldenkrais Method is one of the most effective ways to access the dormant potential of the nervous system to learn and organize action. This is extremely valuable for infants, babies, and small children because that is their job, that is what they do in those first years. When there is interference in the function of learning itself, the loss can be enormous, and making it up in later years is very difficult. However, if it can be caught while the child is small, the capacity to learn kinesthetically in movement and in thinking can increase: The improvement can be 100%.

Scientific research has shown that the physical shape of a baby's brain is created by experiences. After a human being is born the brain is very busy constructing trillions of synaptic connections between brain cells each day. From birth to about age 12 the brain reorganizes itself with particular ease. Connections between brain cells are being made and broken down at an enormous rate. The brain learns and remembers throughout life by using the same processes it uses to initially shape itself. The human nervous system changes the network of trillions of connections between brain cells as a result of stimuli from its environment.

For many health professionals, the Feldenkrais way of thinking and understanding these realities is a leap from their previous training but can enhance and expand their abilities to help move their patients to dramatically new levels of healthy functioning. People who have been trained in the medical model often discover that the Feldenkrais Method and techniques are more pleasurable for their clients than their traditional ones and have farther-reaching and faster results. The outcomes that they have witnessed are often beyond what they previously believed within the realm of possibilities for their clients. With the Feldenkrais Method, people can go way beyond the prognoses of top medical professionals. The changes in outcome that have been witnessed by these professionals require a shift in their perspectives of what is possible for their clients, and a shift in their way of thinking.