

CONTINUOUS LEARNING

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A publication of the International Feldenkrais Federation Information Bureau

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

CONTINUOUS LEARNING AN INTRODUCTION .....	4
NONVERBAL PEER GROUP FI.....	4
Peer group learning: STUDENT – PRACTITIONER CO-OPERATION .....	5
MOVEMENT MATTERS: LEARNING TOGETHER .....	6
STUDY GROUP TEMPLATES AMHERST VIDEO STUDY.....	9
APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY: A TRANSFORMATIVE PARADIGM .....	10
SOME IDEAS ON USING THE AMHERST VIDEO TAPES .....	13
SELF STUDY.....	16
NOTATION SCHEME FOR FUNCTIONAL INTEGRATION .....	18
SUPERVISION AND CONTINUOUS LEARNING: FOUR YEARS OF A PROFESSIONAL TRAINING PROGRAM, AND NOW WHAT? AN EXPERIENTIAL REPORT .....	19
SUPERVISION OF OTHER FELDENKRAIS PRACTITIONERS.....	21
MENTORING MENTORS .....	23

*Peer group  
Learning  
Self study  
Supervision  
Mentorship*

## CONTINUOUS LEARNING AN INTRODUCTION

by Stina Njaastad

At the 1998 IFF Assembly in Malmö, the topic of continuous learning was discussed in a variety of ways. There was a general agreement in our international community that ongoing learning after graduation is of vital importance to every practitioner's development. The years after the Professional Training Program are often critical for practitioners.

The IFF survey, "Success and the Feldenkrais Method®," showed that the majority of practitioners never had received any kind of supervision after completing the training. However, 80 percent reported that this was something that they really wanted and painfully missed in their process of learning.

When asked if they had a mentor, many practitioners replied that they had none. Quite a few among those who make a living from the Feldenkrais Method say that one of the main reasons that they have managed to do so, is through contact and support from other Feldenkrais practitioners. The intention of this publication is to give you some ideas/suggestions about how to work with the Method either by yourself, with peers or through supervision/mentorship. The articles are divided into four categories:

1. Peer group learning
2. Self study
3. Supervision
4. Mentorship

In each category there are some practical examples, written by practitioners, assistant trainers and trainers, all based on personal experiences. We hope these suggestions will inspire you to find new and creative ways to deepen your knowledge and understanding of the Feldenkrais Method. Our intention is to continue this project. Therefore, we encourage you to give us more ideas and suggestions, based on your experiences, so we can produce more publications on continuous learning.

Finally we would like to thank those of you who have shared your experiences with us in this publication. Some of you do not have English as your mother language, and we really appreciate your contributions.

## NONVERBAL PEER GROUP FI

by Daniel Čižnin

The idea behind this kind of peer group learning is the development of communication skills, especially nonverbal ones, as a most important aspect of our work. This learning leads to further clarify how hands-on work can really be communicative.

The setting is as follows: a group of peers meets around a Feldenkrais table. One person is the client, who introduces in a usual way his/her wishes or complaints. Then any verbal communication ends.

**Part 1.** Now one of the peers, who has an idea, starts with a first nonverbal communicative contact, like a

## CONTINUOUS LEARNING

first part of a Functional Integration session. The others watch and follow the ongoing FI. After five minutes the latest (maybe one practitioner needs to take a side role as facilitator to watch the time frame) the first practitioner withdraws and another one, who has an impulse to follow on with the started communication, continues. Like this, the process goes on. A practitioner can approach the client several times, but should also give chances for others to jump in. The single interaction can be just a “word,” a “sentence” or more. The whole communication without talking can last half an hour or some more, like a usual FI.

**Part 2.** Before anything is verbally exchanged, the group divides into couples and informs nonverbally to the partner what was exchanged during the FI. The focus here is not on showing all the details but to “explain” the thread that was seen during the lesson.

This shall only last 5 to 10 minutes, and then the partner will “explain.” The difference here is, that you have to “talk” about something that does not happen between you and your partner, but that happened with another person just before. So you have the demand to create a slightly different way of nonverbal communication towards your partner.

**Part 3.** Then you may want to exchange verbally about your experiences. You might expect the “client” to have difficulty being touched by different people in such a short period of time. My experience is that using a really communicative approach, never a “client” had difficulties with letting these changes happen. On the contrary, they report it as a very fascinating experience to sometimes feel the differences of style, and sometimes not even, because the change was so smooth and consistent. In the exchange with a partner (Part 2.) you can feel very free to create most adequate ways for nonverbally communicating a series of functionally integrating elements. It also helps to summarize a longer sequence to its essential parts. An added version is the following: you have a video camera running during the first part. Then after the partner exchange you watch the group-FI from the video, with the possibility to discuss what you and your peers understood in certain moments. Focus first on what the others understood, before the active practitioner explains what he/she meant in this moment. For the video phase, because sometimes watching a video can get a bit tiring, you try to let your recording play in double or triple speed. Interestingly enough, this does not only make it last shorter, but sometimes you can follow communicative threads much easier, because you can better watch the ways they take.

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The author of this article must be contacted regarding translation.

### **Peer group learning: STUDENT – PRACTITIONER CO-OPERATION**

When we look for people with whom to cooperate, we often seek those who are on the same level as we ourselves. Yet, in the real world, it has often been shown that different positions can be an equally fruitful basis for working together. When I started my Feldenkrais training, I already had good contact with the only Feldenkrais practitioner in Trondheim, Stina Njaastad. It was she who introduced me to this method and I was well on the road to recovery from a whiplash injury from which I had been suffering for a number of years. I had attended her ATM classes and had some Functional Integration lessons.

In due course, we became good friends and it seemed perfectly natural to be in contact with her while I was taking my training. Together, we came up with the idea that, since I was learning about Functional Integration, we should meet and go through it. At the end of each segment, we got together and worked on my new knowledge. We met on a weekly basis and spent two or three hours together each time. I demonstrated what I had learnt, and we tried it out on each other. Stina referred to her own knowledge

## CONTINUOUS LEARNING

of the subject and evaluated what was the same and what was different from what she had learnt. As a result I had to think exactly about the essence of what I had learnt in order to be able to explain it. These were challenging and informative hours for us both.

When I told my fellow students about this, many of them said that they thought I was brave to work with a practitioner in this way. This thought had never occurred to me. Eventually, I came to realize that it is not every day that a practitioner is willing to receive information from a student in the way Stina does, unhesitatingly. It was necessary for both of us when working together that we set aside feelings of relating to status and position. We both profited enormously from this. As a student, I had the opportunity to work on and practice everything I had learnt in my training. Stina, for her part, obtained many new impulses and ideas. The simple “techniques” we exchanged were not the most important benefits. Another benefit came from taking time to go into details, to share experiences and to take turns being at the receiving end on the table. Perhaps the most important result was the development of a good co-operative relationship where both of us felt safe and where we found a common rhythm. This is a resource that we both now enjoy as practitioners. In retrospect, the fact that we already knew each other was not necessary in order for us to be able to work together as student and practitioner. We believe that this form of co-operation may also work with people who do not have any specific relationship to each other. What makes this form of co-operation relatively uncomplicated is that it is not necessary to discuss what one will be working with. It goes without saying that the student needs to practice what he/she has learnt, and thus both have more than enough to work with.

The most important condition for good cooperation is that we lay aside the huge and unnecessary expectation we often have about ourselves to be clever. Big egos should be left on the doorstep!

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## **MOVEMENT MATTERS: LEARNING TOGETHER**

by Larry Goldfarb

(Reprint from Fourth Quarter 2000, In Touch, a publication of the FGNA)

Recently, in the process of continuing to unpack after my move back to Santa Cruz a year and a half ago, I ran across the index cards I used for teaching my first ATM class, over fifteen years ago. Tucked away in the back of a file, these cards still held my outlines made from Moshe’s lessons in the book *Awareness Through Movement*, which was the only printed record of ATM’s that I owned at the time.

My idea of preparing for the class was to do the lessons a few times and then write a synopsis (complete with questions to ask) on the cards. I didn’t have much of an understanding of the inner workings of the positions and movements and only a vague notion of the strategies and tactics underlying the lesson. I hoped that by following the plan set forth in the book, I could somehow manage to present a lesson that was a compelling educational experience.

## CONTINUOUS LEARNING

It wasn't until years after my training that I really began to understand the lessons. For instance, back then I didn't know that changing the order of the lesson could change the dramatic structure of the lesson and that changing the constraints in the lesson changed the nature of the lesson itself. These realizations came only from working with other practitioners in various ways. In the last MOVEMENT MATTERS column, I wrote about the importance of mentoring relationships for the development and improvement of practitioners' skills and abilities.

Though advance trainings, apprenticeships, and supervision give us ways to work together, they are certainly not the only way in which we can learn from each other. When I think about the kind of relationships I want to have with other practitioners and the kind of culture I would like us to develop as community, I think about the possibilities for, and the importance of collegial relationships. Besides my affiliation with my mentor, Edna Rossenas, I also had the good fortune to share an office with David Moses in San Francisco in the late 1980's. David and I used to get together in our office to do and discuss ATM lessons. We would choose a theme, such as flexion lessons, and, before meeting, rummage through the materials we had collected for lessons related to that theme. David had a remarkable ability to collect materials back in the days when they were still scarce and closely guarded, so he came with tapes from various sources and with notes from workshops he hadn't even attended. We would do some lessons and look at some others, collecting a large number of variations on a theme and doing our best to investigate the underlying theme. Our project was helped by an attitude that I had developed between the first and second year of the Amherst training when I participated in a small class ATM and anatomy that Norma Leistikio taught for us trainees. In this class, Norma gave me the first glimmer of seeing the logic inside the lesson, of the way in which each lesson clarifies something about how we are all made for moving. Norma's teaching gave me a certain kind of courage regarding a lesson, in knowing that there was a sense to each variation that I could discover by looking and touching, thinking about anatomy and developing a sort of X-ray vision.

My idea of this kind of direct hands-on investigation of ATM developed further in one of Mia Segal's advanced trainings in Berkeley a few years after Amherst. During this period of time, Dennis Leri organized a study group in the San Francisco Bay Area. A group of Northern California practitioners met in San Francisco and sometimes Berkeley on a monthly basis, working on the material from the second year of the San Francisco training. The group, which included a wide range of practitioners, from relatively old-hands to neophytes, paid to have the materials transcribed.

Our meetings consisted of working with that material together, doing an ATM and practicing some specific aspect of FI. The content of each meeting was determined in a unique way. For each session a team of three practitioners—one from San Francisco, one from Amherst, and one from a later training—selected the material, designed the teaching, and presented it. The process of preparing for a class was a wonderful venture: we chose a section, read it, discussed it with each other, often by phone before meeting, and then worked through the material together, decoding what it meant with the help of someone who had been there, and figuring out how to present it to the rest of the group. The senior practitioners were generous with their time and knowledge; we juniors were eager with our questions and interests.

There was a sense of collaboration and learning from each other—from the very start when we

talked about questions we wanted to address and what we wanted to teach to the finish when we taught the group. Last year, continuing in this spirit, in Santa Cruz six practitioners met once a week for several months taking turns teaching from the Alexander Yanai lessons. Each time, we discussed the lesson's structure, means of realizing it's intention, relations to other lessons, and our experience in doing it. These situations of learning with my peers have been incredibly important to my own development. They gave me a chance to explore the material with fellow travelers, allowing us to get lost and found together. Each person brought a different perspective and history so that together we could develop a richer mapping of the territory. Since we were more or less equal, we had permission to not know. I think it would be a terrible shame if the only way for us, as a community, to learn was in an expert-novice relationship. Besides creating opportunities for personalized teaching situations, I think we need also to make ways for us to learn from one another as colleagues. Training programs are the natural place for this kind of learning to begin. Many trainings are now asking students to participate in study groups between segments and to work with each other in creative ways, laying the groundwork for learning together. For example, in the second Strasbourg training program that Elizabeth Beringer and I codirect, we ask our trainees to work together between segments in study groups. Most of them get together once a month or perhaps for a weekend, in groups of two to eight, to work on the assignments they have been given. We ask them to teach each other specific lessons (taken from Moshe's published materials or from the training curriculum), to discuss certain topics related to their learning process, to prepare presentations for class, and work on FI skills. One of our objectives from the beginning of the training is to give the trainees a rich experience of working with ATM, one that goes beyond simply repeating lessons several times. We all know that the first time each of us does an ATM, it is our personal lesson and that we learn something about ourselves. For most of us it is only after we have done a lesson a few times that we learn something about THE lesson, it's structure and logic, how it effects our perceptions and movements, revealing blind spots, and altering our image of our self and of what is possible. So the study groups permit us to give the students many ways of experiencing, discussing, and teaching lessons, something that we wouldn't have time to do within the training structure. For instance, early in the training process, we ask the students to co-teach a lesson during the study group with one of them giving the instructions about positions and movements and the other providing the guidance about qualities of movement and what to notice.

**“These situations of learning with my peers have been incredibly important to my own development.”**

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Besides making use of the study group format, I have been interested in integrating ideas from recent innovations in education into the training. I am especially interested in cooperative education, situations the teacher constructs in which the students learn together and from each other.

Cooperative learning challenges the traditional division between teacher and student by giving the students the sense that they are already competent and can learn from themselves. In cooperative learning situations, students learn from and teach each other. In this way, they are preparing for their future roles as teachers and also learning to work together as colleagues. In a future column, I'll write more about these ideas. (This idea of working together and learning from each other is not something only for the trainees; it extends beyond what happens in the training room. Yesterday, during the weekend between the two weeks of the current winter training segment, the faculty [including the assistants and those practitioners here to give extra lessons] met to prepare for the coming week. Since the "head through the gap" series is on the agenda for the week, we explored different ways in which we could address problems the students might have with these ATM's through FI.) The challenge we face as community is not only to create the kind of mentorship situations I discussed in the last issue of IN TOUCH, but also to create ways for us to work together and learn from each other. I know from friends and contacts around the Feldenkrais world that many of us are working with each other in study groups and other configurations. It would be wonderful to have resource materials that supported this kind of activity; for instance, some kind of study guide that related Moshe's videotaped FI's to specific Alexander Yanai materials or suggested collaboratory structures for developing specific skills. If we want to live up to the promise of being a community and to the responsibility of being a profession, it behooves us to find ways, as a fellowship of learners, to support each other's learning.

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### **STUDY GROUP TEMPLATES AMHERST VIDEO STUDY**

by Richard Ehrman

Watch a video of Moshe giving a Functional Integration lesson. Watch in fast forward to see the outline of the lesson. Then watch in real-time to see detail.

- Have a general discussion on what people noticed, found of interest, had questions about.
- Answer questions respond to comments, debrief. After general discussion answer these questions:
  - What is the request?
  - How does Moshe take request into movement
  - How does the first thing he does relate to the request?
  - What is the functional pattern or movement gestalt he is working with?
- Identify strategy or strategies, overall plan for lesson.

- Identify tactics—what he does to support his strategy.
- Discuss pacing—when does he stop, when does he push on?
- Identify related Awareness Through Movement lessons.
- Propose Awareness Through Movement lesson related to the FI.

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## **APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY: A TRANSFORMATIVE PARADIGM**

by Janie Randerson

Appreciative Inquiry was developed in the late 80's and some members of our community have been trained to use it. In the past year or so, it has been used extensively in the Feldenkrais community as a creative way to look at various processes, valuing the "best of what is." I have only experience, not formal training, but it seems to be working well enough for me to share it with you.

At the 1999 IFF Assembly, Appreciative Inquiry was used to clarify and develop the community's values, needs, concerns and dreams for the expression of quality and competence in our work. Although new to the process, I was soon impressed by how quickly it drew information from people and opened creative thinking. Appreciative Inquiry searches for the success, the life giving force, the moments of joy. I have always enjoyed the fulfillment gained from doing things I am passionate about and this process has helped me concentrate more passion into many areas of my life – try it in your personal life as well!

The process has four steps of inquiry. Firstly, determine a topic, theme, event, activity or experience: let's call it X that you wish to explore with this process. The questions you use will help to differentiate the information you receive from this process. As a general guideline, try the following:

### **Step 1.**

- Ask when did you feel most alive, most fulfilled, or most excited by X.
- What made X exciting?
- Who else was involved?
- Describe how you feel about X

The intimacy of this part of the process can produce surprising results. Try to stay with the intensity of your experience or, if you are the interviewer, elicit as much detail as you can. Look for the particular rather than the general; find those moments, events, and stories of the best there is. You may like to make notes to confirm with the interviewee or yourself later that you have included as much of the story as possible.

**Step 2.**

- Ask yourself, or the interviewee, what do you value about X? This may be many things, both specific and general and link to other experiences also.

**Step 3.**

- What do you experience as the core values of X?

**Step 4.**

- What 3 wishes would you make to heighten the vitality of X? In other words, what would you wish to happen to make X even better. Wishes are wishes – the sky is the limit!

As a result of the responses to these questions, you may find themes and topics recurring, as often happens, particularly in a pair or group context. If these in turn are gathered into groups they can then become a basis for forming what is known as Probability Propositions. These indicate the next step to take with X, which can be as small a progression, or as large a leap as you wish, much as ATM or FI lessons progress. What is important is that it is a concrete action that is possible and comfortable. It may be that the next step is to set this issue aside. That's okay but I find it useful to set a time to review the wishes—sometimes it is only a matter of hours before a creative and feasible idea comes to mind. Initially, the process was developed for organisations. However, I became curious about how I could use it in my own personal and professional life. In the latter, these are some of the ways I have used this process to increase my own learning:

Self-reflection. After teaching or participating in ATM or FI.

Interviewing a client. This has been very useful learning for both of us after a single or series of lessons.

Debriefing an FI session. This has provided a useful structure to concretise the learning and an interesting way to share experiences with another practitioner, one giving and one experiencing the FI. Focussing the ideas and learning shared. In peer groups this is a way to develop knowledge from sharing a book, article, videotape, audiotape, ATM lesson, working together with a particular group or environment etc. Evaluation. (Workshops, ATM series, FI series

## CONTINUOUS LEARNING

Group building.) Encourages individuals to both express and value their own experience.

Visioning. For my own practice and professional development.

Each of the above situations has required me to explore with different questions and inquiries.

For example, recently a colleague and I reviewed an ATM lesson we had done. Using the guideline above we asked:

1. What were you curious about during the lesson? What did you learn or discover about yourself during the lesson?
2. How does this relate to what you previously knew or understood about your organisation? How can you use this knowledge to improve your life? Your comfort? Your pleasure?
3. What makes this lesson unique amongst other Feldenkrais lessons in the Method? How does it relate to function?
4. What three wishes would you make to heighten the vitality of this lesson?
  - To understand more about the body relationships explored in the lesson.
  - To receive information, through F.I., to increase understanding of the above.
  - To experience a symmetry of ease and action on both sides of the body. We then discussed how we could start with the “next step” to further our learning. The next step has meant many things for me:
    - Repeating X
    - Reading
    - Supervision with peers, more experienced practitioners.
    - Supervision with practitioners of other modalities
    - Researching ATM materials around X
    - Receiving FI around X
    - Linking to other experiences
    - Discussion with family and friends
    - Exploration in other media e.g. journal writing, drawing and painting, dancing, building in sand, music, etc.

These are just a few suggestions—I am sure you will come up with many more. Like the Method itself, there is not necessarily any “right” way, but a direction to the function you have oriented towards. I wish you creative exploring. I would love to hear from you regarding this process and if it is useful or valuable to you.

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The author of this article has given the permission for translation to be made.

## **SOME IDEAS ON USING THE AMHERST VIDEO TAPES**

by Francesca White and Chris Lambert

Two years ago Chris Lambert was asked to give an advanced training for Australian practitioners in Sydney. The request specified the use of the new IFF library of the Amherst Training material. On looking through the catalogue she settled on the video tape of Hazel Biddle’s lesson with Moshe. The lesson was given over 18 years ago, and whilst the lesson was fascinating to watch, there was no sense of the context in which it took place. The video of Hazel Biddle was marked “Tape #.36, 7th July 1981.” Chris then checked the catalogue of the Amherst Training, matching the date of Hazel’s FI, to find that on that same day Moshe had taught an ATM called ÇBridgingÈ. This exciting discovery opened a doorway to many learning opportunities for continuing education: matching the FI’s that Moshe gave to the general public, with the ATM’s taught on that same day. Chris’s meticulous system evolved out of scrutinizing the FI and the ATM video tapes, stopping the FI tape and taking notes when she saw a relevant point made, or question asked by students in the training program. All this she did using the video player counter as a reference for example:

### Time Sample of Interesting Content

00.01.0 Start of the tape.

00.05.15 Class question: “Why does tonus in the neck improve when heels are lifted and rotated?”

00.16.40 Moshe talks about the polygram of forces, mentioning that some people learn in order to know and to ask and answer questions, not in order to feel and know internally– which is done by a shift of consciousness.

00.26.45 Moshe refers to the skeleton and the shape of femur reflecting optimal use (Buckminster Fuller).

00.28.48 Bridging ATM.

## CONTINUOUS LEARNING

00.40.00 Moshe gives a sitting demonstration with Anat Baniel.

00.56.30 He speaks of the relationship of FI to ATM.

This means that, as a study group using this material, you can stop at any point and deepen into the learning that is of interest to you or to the group. In the Amherst Training videotapes, you could be as specific or as general as you like. For example, if you wanted to record the main points of the ATM on that day, you could notate it in this way:

Amherst Video Tape # 36, ATM Bridging, session length 100 minutes.

00.59.00 ATM, movement of arm backwards, (in sitting), to tap power for bridging from the back, using right hand.

00.59.33 Same thing with left hand.

00.07.26 Both hands, one forward, one backward.

01.13.04 ATM - two hands together and move head forward.

01.14.56 ATM - do hands and head opposite to above, that is, hands back and head back.

01.31.05 Talk by Moshe: "If you know what you are doing you can do what you want. Where is truth? It does not exist. It's in language."

And so on, to the end of the ATM. This way, you have everything you need at your fingertips. Thus, if you are not clear about a section, you can wind the video back to a part of the ATM.

Notice what we learn by considering the class notes just before the FI with Hazel. We might be intrigued with the class lesson just before as well:

Video Tape #35, Lecture, session length 48 minutes. In this video, the lecture has a philosophical nature. Moshe talks about the pelvis being the source of power and goes into the discussion about well organised action, genius being expressed by movement, thinking for yourself without words, carrying over from one discipline to another, the difference between hypnosis and consciousness. He also talks about Bateson's notation of "Double Binding," the terrible drawback of words, restoring the ability to feel by movement and not rely on words, loving someone for 15 years but nothing happening until you do something about it.

Now let's consider the Hazel Biddle FI, given on July 7th, 1981. The session length is 48 minutes. This is a brief example from Chris's notes.

0.01.02 Interview with Hazel Biddle.

## CONTINUOUS LEARNING

0.01.30 MF: "Where's your cane?"

HB: "I left it behind. I brought my husband."

0.04.29 First touch.

0.05.35: (Look at intensity of gaze.)

0.10.41 Start of hands-on part of lesson. (Consider significance of interest in the musculature in the back of the armpit, in view of "freeing arms" section later on in this video.)

0.13.13 Head to shoulder, shoulder to head (reverse origin and insertion).

0.17.00 Moves Hazel from the chair to standing.

0.18.00 Stepping. (Good place to make the video fast-forward and fastbackward to gain an impression of movement pattern, style, space.)

0.20.33 Involves head, highlights her behaviour. Head side tilt with sideways stepping. Pelvis and head. (Good opportunity to practice FI in supine, pushing through Th1 to explore concomitant tilt in pelvis.)

0.28.15 Dancing.

0.29.35 HB walks from middle of room to the couch without holding onto Moshe. He holds her upper arm. (Issue of trust.)

0.30.58 Moshe swaps places with Hazel and asks her to teach him how to shift, from head, feeling head/pelvis, amount of folding at the hips. MF makes the point that the spine and head don't need to be stiff.

0.42.50 MF remarks, "Make sure you keep your husbands arms free."

At the end of her notes, Chris specified some of the underpinning themes and trends, such as:

- Dependence on the thinking and the diagnosis of her neurologist, her cane and her husband.
- Going from more holding on to less holding on.
- Issue of trust.
- Free arms, breathing and ribs to be able to balance over legs. Consider less effort reduces associated reactions.
- Weight back. Pull self forward with breath and arms.

- System in conflict. Interested in bridging hips/pelvis into a position of power. Chris and I later gave this advanced training in Melbourne and we combined observation of parts of the two videos with our own ATM and then went on to practice FI which participants explored in groups of three, finding as many ways as they could which were relevant to Hazel's FI. This led to enormous creativity. The participants learned much from observing and feeding back afterwards, talking about their thinking processes and linking in to Moshe's lectures. It was a rich and fruitful way to work, with ready references and possibilities for further independent or group study.

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## SELF STUDY

by Eva Bleicher

When I started practicing after the Amherst training, there was no other way than self study, with only twenty European practitioners spread all over Europe. It became a habit, a culture, I would not want to miss. My idea was, to do it in a Feldenkrais way, structuring the process like in an ATM or in FI. Learning through doing, through self-experience of course was the first choice, but also to gather information on the background of this work, study anatomy and so on. I was the student and the teacher at the same time, which was not always so easy. Sometimes I felt like a little child that experiments, guided by intentions, with no, or in my case only some, idea of what would come out in the end, like a child that does everything it needs to do to learn how to get up, without yet the idea of getting up in his mind. So I decided to do it in a playful mood, having the idea to improve what I knew best and to study with curiosity. I used to pick up one idea, choose a question and explore around it from as many perspectives as possible. The criteria for the outcomes was their viability: how could they be integrated in my practice in a useful way, improve the quality of my work, possibly leading to the next question. There were two major resources for questions to study: those that came out of practice – from personal experiences or from the work with students – and those developed on a theoretical base. In other words: there were two directions of asking: practice € theory leading to a spiral process: practice <—> theory <—> practice. Let me give you some examples, one about a theoretical question, leading to practice, one arising from my work, guiding me to a theoretical question.

Practice —> theory

A woman had called me, asking if I could help her. She had vaginism (spasms of her vagina), had managed to get pregnant and now was afraid of giving birth. A very delicate case. When

she talked, she sounded strange, she didn't open her mouth, produced the sounds through her teeth. I suggested (built the theory) that there was a connection. I decided to work mainly on her jaw instead of focusing on the problem, which was a big relief to her. In the end she gave birth to her baby in a regular way and was very proud and happy.

What had I discovered? Both, the floor of the mouth and the pelvic floor are antigravity structures. While working with this woman I used another one, the diaphragm—her breathing was my most important feedback. Talking to a colleague, I learned about a fourth one, very important for singers, the arch of the foot. So of course my next step was to experiment with members of my actors class, who wanted to work on voice, resonance, and presence.

Theory → practice

My theoretical studies were inspired by a frame I had developed when writing my thesis in psychology, a grid that allows you to compare different approaches in psychotherapy. It included different elements such as roots of the work, anthropological and ethical aspects, concept of man's nature, definition of health/disease, techniques, aims, etc. My idea was to explore, what I could discover by using this frame to have a different view on the Method. Looking for the roots of this work I found out about the tradition of storytelling in the Hassidic culture and compared it with Moshe's art of using stories in his work.

The tendency to get stuck in our own habits of doing and thinking is another problem. How could I, as my own teacher realize my blind spots, find ways to experience and integrate nonhabitual patterns? The most useful instrument in this respect was to look for input from outside, from other resources, not only from obviously related fields. When I read books, went to congresses, seminars or performances, I always kept in mind the question: how could this be useful for the practice of the Feldenkrais Method? I once found a beautiful metaphor for the self-perception from inside when I went to an exhibition of Russian jewelry and precious stones. There was a huge stone. It had quite a rough surface and a light rose tone. One side was cut, completely plain. The inside was transparent and you could look through until the border. I talked about this experience in my classes, adding, "Our habit is to look at ourselves from outside, in the mirror, or at pictures, but we also have the possibility to change the perspective and perceive ourselves from inside out."

I want to mention one more idea regarding self-study. It is very interesting and pleasant to do things other than FI and ATM in a Feldenkrais way. For instance I created "mind ATMs" when working with my colleges in a workshop called "Unavowed dreams, or my life as a Feldenkrais practitioner in the year 2004."

In summary, some possible approaches for self-study are:

1. Develop questions out of your practical experience with yourself or in working with your students

2. Do theoretical studies and see how you can use them for your work
3. Use inputs from outside to find non-habitual ways of thinking and acting
4. Try to do other things in a Feldenkrais way, i.e. self-study.

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## NOTATION SCHEME FOR FUNCTIONAL INTEGRATION

by Barbara Pieper

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Ever since I started giving lessons in Functional Integration in 1989, I took notes of the lesson afterwards. While writing, the lesson re-passes in my mind giving me the opportunity to digest, to structure and to clarify to myself what happened during the lessons and how I perceived it. Sometimes I understand only when writing why some of the procedures I intuitively chose turned out to work while others did not. Furthermore, writing down facilitates to draw a clear line between the student and me: it gives me time to say goodbye and to be ready for the next student or my private life. Over the years this habit of "awareness through writing," produced some kind of notation scheme serving me as a red thread while writing.

Sometimes it suffices to put down a few lines in order to characterize an FI in retrospect. Other times I accurately account for the lesson step by step because I want to recapitulate the situation I was in. Thus, I handle the scheme rather flexibly. This avoids getting caught by the structure provided by the scheme, to narrow down my own perception to ever-similar aspects of the lessons. Any notation inevitably registers only a particular part of the real-life FI. The crucial aspects of what happens take place within the person and thus cannot be properly denoted. We can at most get an idea of what was going on when reading between the lines. Who knows what really happened during a lesson? However, this is not my point. To me, writing is a form of self-directed learning. My perception and my view of the lesson create a new version of the lesson's "reality." Isn't this another intriguing thing about writing?

Having made these introductory remarks I now would like to present my FI-Notation-Scheme for discussion.

1. Self-evaluation. The demands, wishes and complaints expressed by the student; previous experiences/lessons, reason(s) for coming (again); report on what happened in the meantime, all with careful regard to how they are being presented.
2. My estimation. The practioner's own preception of the student: what was different last time? What was special today?

## CONTINUOUS LEARNING

3. Idea. Which idea came up to meet the student's demands and transform them into a Feldenkrais specific setting?
4. Function. Which individual feature of the student is suitable to help transform the idea into an FI? Which did I choose, why, and which peculiarities did I focus on?
5. Course of the lesson and strategies. Hands-on sequence: how did it work? Did I have /want to change idea and/or function?
6. The student's findings. What did the student sense, explore, discover, require etc., in the course of the lesson?
7. My findings. What did I discover about the student's process of learning? Did I satisfy his/her wishes and needs? Did I choose appropriate functions, strategies and hands-on techniques? Were there any difficulties or highlights in the lesson? How did I feel after the lesson?
8. Ideas for the next lesson. Your feedback and exchange of experience is most welcome.

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### **SUPERVISION AND CONTINUOUS LEARNING: FOUR YEARS OF A PROFESSIONAL TRAINING PROGRAM, AND NOW WHAT? AN EXPERIENTIAL REPORT**

by Sylvia Weise

In 1992, my Feldenkrais training was drawing to its close and the question arose: And now what? All of a sudden I became aware that a four year training program does not last forever, although at the time it was often my impression. The feeling of timelessness and the practical demands of reality just do not go hand in hand, ever.

Even during my training I felt the desire to have some sort of supervision and the opportunity of detailed feedback. I did not like the idea of being without any type of assistance nor the possibility of exchange. Then, after completing the training, the whole thing seemed to just be starting—the experience, the learning, everything! At this point it may be interesting to mention that a worldwide IFF survey in 1997 showed that 80 percent of the Feldenkrais practitioners sorely missed supervision during and after their training.

Only Feldenkrais practitioners who consider themselves successful were asked this question.

## CONTINUOUS LEARNING

What would the results have been had that stipulation not been made?

At the end of our training, fortunately, many of my colleagues felt the same, so the obvious thing to do was to take action. Therefore, for somewhat more than two years, I organized a supervision group which was lead by a Feldenkrais assistant trainer. We met for one day, four to six times a year. After the normal fluctuations at the beginning, the constellation of the group was more or less consistent.

At the beginning, the meetings were composed of lamentations and doubts. Again and again we realized that we were thinking in clinical terms and diagnosis. But slowly we developed more trust and felt more comfortable in our new roles. It was very helpful to hear from other colleagues that they were troubled by feelings such as insecurity and doubts. More o v e r, it was enlightening to learn about which strategies they used to develop a different attitude. The assistant trainer accompanied us with his appreciative nature.

Looking back, I think his approach was essentially to offer the space in which we could experience how, always and without exception, a structure unfolds when space is allowed. At this point most likely both the assistant trainer and the participants would have a completely different opinion of what was essential. Something along the lines of: "Oh no, it was essentially about ...!"

The next experience that I had with supervision was the training in the guided conversation method of Milton Erickson. Part of this training was 40 hours of group supervision. This meant to gather together in small groups and present case studies which were interesting or complicated. This style of supervision is, on the one hand, helpful to reflect on one's own way of acting, and as a result, finding new paths to take. On the other hand, it's an opportunity to prove one's own skills and to demonstrate that the learned method can be applied successfully. A sort of examination, if you will.

My third opportunity to experience supervision has been in connection with my activities on the board of the German Feldenkrais-Gilde. At regular intervals for the last three years we have invited a professional supervisor to work with us. This has proven valuable, and not only at critical times. In addition, this way of pausing and reflecting turned out to be a suitable means to stay on track in the business of everyday life, or rather to find it in the first place ! Based on my experience in these three areas I have decided to do the training to become a supervisor and I have chosen a training with a system and constructive approach. I see this as my personal opportunity to master this situation. One possibility of many. My experiences up until now lead me to the following considerations and further questions:

1. The fact that after the Feldenkrais training, many of us take part in supervised groups leads us to conclude that there is an enormous call for it.
2. The supervision process has a broad range of variation, both in design and in content–

independent of any standards. Rather it is based on the respective background of the supervisor and his/ her creativity.

3. To what extent would the use of case studies be useful for the quality of our work? (As in the Erickson training and many others.)

4. The same question applies to professional supervision, meaning vocational counselling, which focuses more on interpersonal processes (ie. the supervision of the German-Gilde board).

“This style of supervision is, on the one hand, helpful to reflect on one’s own way of acting...”

©

5. According to which criteria should supervision take place both in, and after the training?

6. What qualities define a supervisor?

7. What structures and processes would be necessary to address and decide upon the questions raised here? And how can we manifest the outcome together in a practical manner?

Your experience in this field interests me a great deal. In addition, I would like to open a discussion about supervision, as well as the importance of constructive feedback: what role should it play in the future, during and after the trainings. It is important to me that the quality and professionalism of our work continues to develop. To that end supervision is a vital building block from my point of view.

Translation from German into English under the “supervision” of my friend Lisa C. Steindorf.

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## **SUPERVISION OF OTHER FELDENKRAIS PRACTITIONERS**

by Edward (Ned) Dwelle

The need for further training and education after completing a Feldenkrais training program is widely experienced and acknowledged in our community. At present, however, we have no formally organized continuing education program to meet the interests of practitioners or the requirements of Certification which some Feldenkrais Guilds have installed. The following discussion is a report of my offering in this area of our common interest. In 1989, after having had a private practice for 12 years and having assisted in the trainings for six years, I was asked by some beginning practitioners to support their becoming autonomous by meeting with them on a regular basis to discuss and improve their work with their clients. The prospect excited me

## CONTINUOUS LEARNING

as I had had no similar opportunity myself, and I was certain to learn a great deal from the process. I had no clear picture of what I could offer and of what was needed by my colleagues. My own experience of examining my relationships with my clients occurred with the feedback of a Jungian psychotherapist. At first, I combined the classical model of a therapeutic advisory position with that of a practitioner reflecting his experience and sharing his insights and knowledge. However, this mixture turned out to be more demanding and more involved than our meeting time would allow and than my competence would support. So, I reoriented my intentions to how the practice of the Feldenkrais Method involves the development of personal skills, expertise in the application of ATM and precision in FI strategies. I developed a format that had time for discussion as well as time for topics I prepared. In the discussion time, we may look at aspects of a particular FI case from someone's practice or more general questions about FI or of teaching ATM. Then we move on to the prepared topic which is usually about issues concerning the transfer of ATM to FI and, more seldom, from FI to ATM. We explore an ATM together allowing space for questions during the ATM and, after a pause, I offer a demonstration of possible FI transfers. I stay with the ATM theme in the FI and, as much as possible, the body position of the ATM. In the course of the Supervision session, we do not attempt to transfer each and every variation from the development of the ATM. We speak about what fits to the "client" and, in this sense, what he needs. As in an FI session in my practice or in a training, I always try to agree with my client on a theme which is the theme of the FI. Sometimes this is explicitly named. Sometimes I discover it in our conversation at the beginning or, more seldom, in the course of the FI.

My experience with this form of continuing education proves to be very fruitful for me. I use the more mature viewpoint of the exchange in the supervision to continue to improve my instruction options in training programs. As so often in our work, we "teachers" need as much opportunity to learn from the "students" as they from us. My supervision colleagues tell me that they experiment and use the FI applications intensively in the weeks after each session, and we follow up on these experiences in a following meeting of the supervision group. I encourage the development of the ability to report the FI as a case study with emphasis on the practitioner's plan for the FI. Difficulties are approached from as many perspectives for solution as possible.

At present, two formats have emerged. One format meets the needs of more experienced practitioners and the other format fits well for recently graduated practitioners. The more experienced practitioners want two sessions devoted to a single topic with a total of four to six meetings a year. The recent graduates meet every four weeks, and a theme is carried over several sessions, according to the needs for development of the individual members. We have found that five hours is a very workable frame for the length of the sessions, and we always allow a longer pause for social exchanges and refreshments.

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## MENTORING MENTORS

By Larry Goldfarb

Soon after I started teaching advanced trainings, I became dissatisfied with the normal weekend format. It became clear to me that it was only by working with practitioners over time that we could forge relationships and explore the material to the extent necessary to develop the skills and competencies that we all want. I created multisegment advanced trainings, including the fifteen-day TRILOGY, which I've taught in Europe, North America, and Australia, and WORKSHOPS THAT WORK, a new course about designing, presenting, and marketing successful workshops or classes. Two of the Trilogy courses turned into longer groups, including one in Munich that continued to meet, once or twice a year, for seven years. My experience teaching these courses, and the experiences of the participants, convinced me of the benefits of working with folks over extended periods of time. When I completed my graduate studies in movement science (kinesiology) and moved back to California almost four years ago, I began to explore other structures for ongoing learning. I've done some tutoring with pairs of practitioners focusing on specific topics or issues, such as understanding ATM or refining hands-on skills, in regular meetings a few hours at a time a few times a month for four to six months. I also started teaching weekend FI coaching groups for practitioners. In these groups, we focused on lesson structures and explored different ways of developing sensory acuity, technical precision, and conceptual understanding.

Over the past few years as I have become less interested in traveling, I've started to wonder how I could keep my commitment to development of our profession and community. Unlike many other professions, we do not have a culture of supervision and mentorship. With the method so new and there being such a small number of practitioners spread so sparsely across the world, it has been hard to imagine another way for things to go. But as our numbers have grown, I have begun to wonder if there might be another possibility...

Even before graduating from my training, I had the good fortune of being taken "under the wing" of Edna Rossenas, a graduate from the San Francisco training who had studied with Moshe in Tel Aviv after that training. Edna served as my mentor, inspiring and guiding my development as a practitioner. Not only did she give me many lessons over the years and serve as one of my model teachers, but she was also there for me when I had questions or needed to talk about the work. She was the first practitioner to whom I gave a lesson. She was patient, both kind and precise with her feedback, and generous with her time. To this day, her wise counsel guides and supports me as a practitioner.

So my inspiration for the MENTORING MENTORS project was the realization that we could be ready to address the growing need in our community: the necessity for support for new practitioners after they graduate. My experience of working with Edna was such an important part of my becoming a practitioner that I knew, in my heart of hearts, that I wanted to make this kind of learning available to other practitioners. While teaching advanced trainings around the world for the past years, I began to appreciate the often large gaps between the philosophy of

what trainees are supposed to learn and the actual outcomes. And I realized that no training could ever be good enough. A professional training can only hope to prepare someone to be ready to go out to learn what it means to be a practitioner. What we need after the training is support and guidance.

## mentorship

Certainly some of this can be, and is being, provided by peer study groups and “study buddies,” but would we benefit from a choice of other continuing education options: experienced practitioners serving as mentors or coaches; newer practitioners could be doing internships or being counseled by more experienced colleagues. In these ways, and others, we can develop ongoing collegial relationships, the kind that would allow us to get to know and trust each other so that we could work more closely. The idea was to create a program focused on ways in which experienced practitioners can help others develop the perceptions, skills, and understandings necessary to give competent Functional Integration lessons. MENTORING MENTORS meets for twenty days a year for three years, which makes for a total of sixty days of training. The first two programs, in New York and Santa Cruz, meet for five days every quarter. The participants are all practitioners with five or more years experience and come from all over the United States and Europe.

The first year is like a supervision group: we work on learning the structure underlying specific FI's. This includes learning certain lesson templates— the positions, techniques, tactics, and strategies that make up a lesson—as well as specific test movements and their everyday functional frameworks that link to this structure. The second year we begin to discuss the learning of functional integration—developing an explicit model of what folks need to know in order to give effective, memorable lessons—and the process of working with other practitioners. In the third year, participants work with a small group or with an individual, as mentors or as peer participants, sharing the knowledge they have acquired and the skills they have developed.

The way I am teaching the mentoring project has benefited from what I have learned coaching and supervising other practitioners over the last ten years. Originally, I thought of teaching classical FI lesson structures much like we teach ATM, that is to say, following a more or less pre-determined course. My understanding was that this was how Moshe taught the participants in the Tel Aviv training; I was intrigued by how it would fill in the missing aspects of lesson composition for many practitioners. I wanted to focus on the actual craft of giving FI: where and how we place our hands and what we do with them, how these procedures and skills address the movement behind the lesson, and how to put it all together to both be useful and memorable.

My thinking has changed considerably. Having clear lesson structures is one good strategy for teaching about the work, but it's an approach of limited benefit. It certainly helps develop an understanding of what makes a lesson a lesson, but it neither encourages creativity nor

## CONTINUOUS LEARNING

develops problem-solving abilities. The analogy that I am working with now is that, at first, teaching how a lesson works is like giving someone new to the neighborhood directions to the store. You are very explicit and detailed about every step of the way, describing the landmarks and making sure to give indications about how to know if they've gone too far. But after you've lived in the neighborhood in for a while, you get to know many ways of getting to the store. You know that the way that is normally the longest becomes the shortest at rush hour. You learn alternate routes for when there is work on the road and you know where the all night store is for those after hours necessities. You know the shortcuts and ways to go by foot as well as by car. So now I'm thinking about teaching FI lessons as giving tours through the neighborhood.

In other words, understanding the composition a lesson is about learning the geography, "the lay of the land," of the movement behind the lesson and the relationships that comprise it.

Both MENTORING MENTORS groups are now at their halfway points. Not only are most of the participants already working with colleagues, but they also report considerable changes in the effectiveness of their lessons as well as increased pleasure and satisfaction in giving them. I find teaching these groups one of the most exciting and productive projects in which I've ever been involved.

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