



Feldenkrais
M e t h o d

The Feldenkrais® Method:
Testimonials from Scientists, Doctors
and other Health Professionals

August 2009



Schweizer
Paraplegiker
Zentrum

Centre
suisse de
paraplégiques

Centro
svizzero per
paraplegici

Swiss
Paraplegic
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Psychologie

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Nottwil, February 2nd of 2007
PSY/BKR

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

**APPLICATION OF THE FELDENKRAIS METHOD IN THE SWISS PARAPLEGIC CENTER
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Dear Mrs. Allison

Since over ten years the Feldenkrais Method is part of our rehabilitation program for Paraplegia, Tetraparesis, Tetraplegia, Pain Patients, and Patients with Multiple Sclerosis.

As it is a Method which works through Tactile Information to the ZNS and movement coordination, it demands from the Patient an attitude of learning. Many Patients report the importance of this method in their Rehabilitation Process, also because it uses their sensitivity and not the often painful muscle training. The general feedback of the patients is very positive. Also Physiotherapist often report better Coordination of Function during Physiotherapie after a Feldenkrais lesson. There is no research so far on the impact of the Feldenkrais Method in the Rehabilitation with Para or Tetraplegics.

The Feldenkrais Method is used to enhance:

1. The Self Image which is often distorted through the accident or illness which lead to the Paralysis.
2. Coordination of movement which has to be re-established with incomplete Para or Tetraplegics.
3. Breathing ability
4. To improve Stability either in sitting in the wheelchair or in learning to walk
5. To reduce Pain either through functional Disorder or Nerve Pain.

With kind regards yours

SWISS PARAPLEGIC CENTRE

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SCHOOL OF PHYSIOLOGY & PHARMACOLOGY

Medical Research Studies in Relation to the Feldenkrais Technique

Over the past several years my research team have been making a series of observations on persons undergoing training to teach the Feldenkrais procedures as well as on untrained subjects immediately before and after listening and following instructions in Feldenkrais movements delivered via an audiocassette.

An underlying principle in the Feldenkrais procedures is to direct the subject's attention to the nature and quality of a movement she or he is undertaking. This enhances proprioceptive or kinaesthetic feedback and leads to decreased effort since co-contraction of muscles is reduced. Part of this change seems to result in enhancing the tone of trunk extensor muscles (anti-gravity muscles) and decreased trunk and limb flexor muscle contraction. These latter muscles increase a sense of effort and are called into play when strength and heavy lifting are required.

Our studies examined trainee Feldenkrais teachers before and after one month's training compared with control subjects before and after one month of their accustomed activities. Other studies were done on untrained subjects before and after listening to an audiotape instructing the subject in Feldenkrais movements compared with measurements on subjects who watched a videotape.

We found that for the trainee and the person listening to the audiotape there was an increase in the standing position in back muscle activity (an extensor muscle, erector spinae) and a decrease in abdominal muscle activity (a flexor muscle, rectus abdominis) compared with their state before the training. At the same time, normal respiratory movement showed a change. After training, respiration was deeper and slower. These effects were not found with the control subjects.

An explanation for these effects is that improving proprioceptive feedback in a person's movements leads to better motor control with less co-contractions and less flexor muscle tone. For the trunk this results in enhanced back muscle activity, freeing abdominal and thoracic muscles so that respiration is easier, deeper and slower.

Medically, one can see beneficial effects from decreasing unnecessary muscle contractions, e.g. less sense of tension, less input from contracted muscles that can increase sympathetic drive to the heart and arterioles. Slower, deeper respirations are likely to improve conditions in the respiratory system itself. Also, slower and deeper respiration has been shown to be associated with improved mood states.

There are many muskuloskeletal and other chronic morbidity conditions in which there are inappropriate motor control strategies, e.g. excessive flexor muscle tone, inadequate extensor muscle tone. If these poor strategies are improved by a procedure such as that offered by the Feldenkrais technique then it is likely to lead not only to muskuloskeletal improvements but also to improvements for the cardiorespiratory systems and importantly to improved mood states and to an improved self-esteem and sense of personal control in having access to a procedure one can undertake oneself.

David Garlick

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TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN


Dr. Moshe Feldenkrais is probably the most important authority in the world today on what he terms human improvement. This encompasses not only an upgrading of flexibility, coordination, posture, voice and breathing but also, and above all, of consciousness-raising, sensing, feeling and thinking.

The Feldenkrais Method, which is unique, has improved the overall condition of thousands of people ranging from musicians, dancers, members of the theatrical professions to heads of state, writers and scientists.

Among those who have publicly expressed their admiration and gratitude to Dr. Feldenkrais are such personalities as Yehudi Menuhin, Margaret Mead, Peter Brook, and David Ben-Gurion, to name just a few.

But also, and not less impressively, the Feldenkrais Method has effectively helped senior citizens, athletes, the sick and the injured in dozens of countries, people who have made their way haltingly to Israel and have returned invigorated and healthier than ever before, their life span probably extended and their general sense of well-being re-established and maintained.

Additionally, the Feldenkrais Method has proved astonishingly successful in its ability to alter and improve chronic states of ill health and incapacity which have not proven amenable to any other form of therapy.


Meyer W. Weisgal
Chancellor

The Weizmann Institute of Science

Feldenkrais was a remarkable man and a genius. *Dr Norman Doidge, Research Psychiatrist and Psychoanalyst, author of "The Brain That Changes Itself". For full article visit <http://www.feldenkraiscentre.com/Doidge%20article.pdf>*

I have long been intrigued by this subtle form of retraining the nervous system, which I currently recommend to patients whose movement has been restricted by injury, cerebral palsy, stroke, fibromyalgia, or chronic pain. (I find it be much more useful than standard physical therapy.) I also believe that the Feldenkrais Method can help older people achieve greater range of motion and flexibility, and help all of us feel more comfortable in our bodies. *Andrew Weil, M.D. ,author of "Spontaneous Healing" and "Natural Health, Natural Medicine". For full article visit <http://www.feldenkraiscentre.com/Weil%20article2.pdf>*

I used the F(eldenkrais) technique to help recover my temporal mandibular joint on the side of my craniotomy. It was a lifesaver. *Dr Jill Bolte Taylor, Neuroscientist, author of "My Stroke of Insight"*

The system developed by Dr Feldenkrais...has as much potential for understanding the mind/body relationship as Einstein's general theory of relativity had for physics. *Bernard Lake, MD, Cardiologist*

(The Feldenkrais Method) is not just pushing muscles around, but changing things in the brain itself so that the patient can gradually adjust his whole muscular dysfunction to what we call a normal image...Feldenkrais transmits the image, and you organise your brain to meet it. *Professor Karl Pribram, MD, PhD, Neuroscientist, Stanford University, Nobel Prize nominee*

If I have ever met a genius in the flesh, it is Moshe Feldenkrais. *Avram Baniel, Professor of Industrial Chemistry, Hebrew University, Jerusalem.*

I had already come to appreciate how potent an ally a Feldenkrais practitioner can be to a neurologist. *Frank R. Wilson, neurologist and medical director of the Peter F. Ostwald Health Program for Performing Artists at the University of California School of Medicine. From his book "The hand: How its use shapes the brain, language, and human culture", p246*

The following testimonials were provided by Kim Wise. Kim is a Certified Feldenkrais Practitioner from Australia and has also been volunteering her time to National Council of The Australian Feldenkrais Guild Inc., for the past three years and is presently the Health Delegate to National Council of AFG Inc.

My experience with the Feldenkrais method extends over the last decade and more than 1,000 patients. The majority have had neuro-musculoskeletal problems. Again, a majority

of these had sought and not found relief with many other treatments and modalities. I have researched postural changes as a result of the method, and these are significantly different before and after treatment in patients with back pain, scoliosis and osteoarthritis (see accompanying papers). As regards to return of improved or normal function, the results have been as good as those reported for any appropriate current treatment, physical or surgical method. The notable additional value of the Feldenkrais method over other treatments is the active participation of the patient in the resolution of his/her problems. Assuming personal responsibility is fundamental to the method as it depends on kinesthetic processing. *Pari passu* it enhances confidence and return of self esteem. The power of the method is its diversity and flexibility of application on so many medical disorders. It uses gentleness of means to explore what is currently possible for the person, and moves at a pace dictated by the individual's capacity to continuing extension of these variables. *Bernard Lake M.B., B.S. (Syd), F.R.C.P. (Ed), M.R.C.P. (Lond), Consultant Physician, reproduced from Australian Family Physician Vol 14. No 11. November 1985.*

As a neuroscientist interested in the development and plasticity of the nervous system, it is gratifying to see how the Feldenkrais Method demonstrates these principles. The Feldenkrais Method has also greatly improved my personal quality of life – physically and emotionally – by reducing the restrictions and limitations I thought were permanent due to multiple sclerosis. *Marla Luskin, Professor, Emory University Medical School*

Dr. Moshe Feldenkrais has developed a system that is many years ahead of conventional medical understanding. *Martin Rossman, M.D., Author*

The Feldenkrais Method is the most sophisticated and effective method I have seen for the prevention and reversal of deterioration of function. *Margaret Mead, Ph.D., Anthropologist*

The Feldenkrais Method has had remarkable success in a wide range of complaints ranging from the debilitating to the merely nagging. *Science Digest*

One of the most exciting developments in the field of mind-body co-ordination is the work of Dr. Moshe Feldenkrais. *Elmer Green, Ph.D., Menninger Foundation*

The Feldenkrais Method is a remarkable, quick, and effective way to alleviate muscular tension and discomforts. *James Rice, M.D.*

The Feldenkrais Method Training Program has been a life changing experience, both personally and professionally. I have gained an understanding of the human body that no other discipline gave me and I am more effective with my clients. Knowing what a profound experience the training is, I am excited for anyone who is about to begin. *Marek Wyszynski, PT, Former National Fencing Champion of Poland, FP Graduate*

The Feldenkrais Method is an extraordinarily effective approach to enhancement of posture, balance, movement and behavior. *Sandy Burkhart, P.T., Ph.D.*

The following are extracts from testimonials on Anat Baniel's website. Anat Baniel is a psychologist who was trained in the Feldenkrais method by Moshe Feldenkrais. She then went on to train others in the Anat Baniel Method, based on the Feldenkrais principles. For the full testimonials visit <http://www.anatbanielmethod.com/medical-opinions.htm>.

I have observed Anat's work with severely challenged individuals over a period of more than two decades, and have witnessed transformations that are simply stunning...My hope is Anat's book will also help to make Feldenkrais' approach and its extensions over the last two decades by Ms. Baniel and by practitioners she has trained a part of academic teaching, training and research programs in rehabilitation medicine departments and in physical therapy departments in universities in the U.S.A. and abroad, and the sooner, the better. *Dr. Daniel Graupe, University of Illinois, Chicago, Professor of Bioengineering and Adjunct Professor of Neurology and Rehabilitation Medicine at the University of Illinois, Chicago, inventor of the Parastep FES (functional electrical stimulation) system for ambulation by thoracic-level complete paraplegic. Associate Editor of Neurological Research and was Associate Editor of the IEEE Transactions on Neural Systems and Rehabilitation Engineering.*

Anat's brilliant and bold Method of teaching and employing Feldenkrais' system led me almost immediately to the realization that much of what I had taken for granted as the foundation of rehabilitation medical science was neither scientific nor even logical. My foundation was not simply shaken: it was pulverized...As much as I pore over medical science and research, and as much time as I spend acid testing Anat's statements in my naturally skeptical mind, I have yet to find logical fault or lack of scientific foundation. I am not swayed by New Age psycho-babble, and neither are my long-suffering patients. Above and beyond any conceptual fascination I may have with Anat Baniel's Method, the most important thing is that it is effective. It is effective where other treatments have not been, and it is at times almost miraculously effective where medical science has either given up, or where, out of desperation, painful and often counterproductive measures have sadly become the standard of care. It helps adults, and it has helped many children whose parents have been told that there is no hope. The families with previously incurable children are stunning testimonial to the real world utility of this Method. *Christopher Ryan, M.D., Denver, Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation*

My third child, Dougy, was born with a genetic disorder which caused him to have many developmental delays including delayed speech, delayed motor development, ADHD, sensory integration disorders, and a host of learning disabilities both verbal and non verbal. He was not diagnosed until age four. He was in traditional therapy for two years with limited results....

...For over nine years, I have been leaving my other two children, my husband, and my practice six to seven times a year to bring Dougy out to California to continue working with Anat. Over these years, Dougy's progress has been steady, often bordering on the

miraculous. His coordination is now like that of an average normal child his age. He never stops talking, and has a wonderful sense of humor. He is able to think and reason, read and write. Dougy is going to be Bar Mitzvahed in November and he already knows his Torah portion—he is doing unbelievably well....

...The theory underlying Anat's work is scientifically based, as well as it is a new paradigm. As a medical doctor, I am trained to observe and make sense out of what I see. What Anat does makes complete sense. How she does it is inspiring and often ingenious. I hope to see her knowledge benefit as many people, children and adults, as possible. *Dr. Cheryl Cooper, M.D., O.D.*

...I had seen DVD's of her work with children with special needs; the results of which are, in comparison with anything I have encountered in the “conventional” medical field, nothing short of miraculous. My training taught me always to approach such things from a point of skepticism but since starting the training that standpoint has been continually and utterly overwhelmed. *Neil Sharp, M.D., M.A., M.B., Ch.B.,*

Our daughter, Elizabeth, was born with *cerebella hypoplasia*, a diagnosis of a condition that would be expected to limit her brain development and her capacity to move, learn, mature and develop. At 4 months of age, her prognosis from the most prestigious pediatric neurologist in the city of Chicago was dire: the medical profession predicted that there was no recourse for this child but to become profoundly retarded, ultimately requiring institutionalization....

...Through her potent work, Baniel bypassed the damage in the brain to create new and healthy neural pathways, offering Elizabeth new opportunities to learn and to grow. As a testimony to Baniel's work, Elizabeth has grown up to become a beautiful, brilliant, independent and highly functioning adult. She is currently working towards her second Master's degree and is engaged to be married. *Abigail Natenshon, MA, LCSW, GCFP, psychotherapist, founder and director of Eating Disorder Specialists of Illinois*

...I had given up on walking this hilly golf course about a year earlier because my arthritic problems made walking too painful. I was curious, however, to see what the effect of Anat's lesson, if any, might have on my walking the course. The effects proved to be nothing less than remarkable. Walking the course was not only pain free: it was positively pleasurable....

...This experience encouraged me to continue with weekly lessons with an excellent practitioner who has been trained by Anat. I regularly walk the nine holes of my local golf course—most recently on four consecutive days. I am 79 years old. I still carry a diagnosis of “severe spinal stenosis.” The lessons keep me limber and enable me to keep fit by swimming or walking on the Nordic Track for 45-minute sessions, several times a week. *Lawrence Epstein, Ph.D. Training and Supervising Analyst at the William Alanson White Institute for Psychoanalysis in New York City*