

# Feldenkrais® Legacy Forum: Transformation of Trainings Group

## Trainer Interviews

No identifying Trainer names

### Question 2

*What do you think is essential to consider and do to achieve the right balance in a Feldenkrais® training program between providing a personal experience of the Feldenkrais work and developing a professional competence to begin to work as a Feldenkrais practitioner?*

### Themes for Question 2

These common themes were identified by the Transformation of Trainings Group in their reading of the Trainer's interview transcripts.

- The personal experience and developing professional competence are inseparable
- Personal experience is essential, as a foundation
- Developing professional competence within Training Programs
- Developing professional competence between segments
- Developing professional competence after graduation – Lifelong Learning

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### Common themes followed by verbatim quotes from the Interviews

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#### **The personal experience and developing professional competence are inseparable**

I think the key, which I think took me a while to really get, is non-separation of the two, from beginning to end. So different ratios, strategies, perhaps, but non-separation. From beginning to end you are working on yourself, inseparable.

On the question of personal experience relative to the acquisition of competence, to tell you the truth I do not see them as different.

One of them is the general, all purpose, no matter what the question is, Trainer response – which is “it depends”. And what I mean by that is it depends. in part, for each student.

So, I think that means the training isn't one size fits all. And I think it needs, in some ways, to adapt for each person. Because this will be different depending on the learning trajectory, the background experience, the skills, the readiness to teach, for each trainee future teacher.

I felt a very deep conflict of interest between shepherding people through a process of personal growth and having conversations with them about their readiness to practice the method. I felt conflicted between anything evaluative *versus* supporting your process.

And see I really believed him when he [Moshe] said – this is about learning a particular way of thinking rather than learning a particular way of doing.

I don't think that it has to be Either/Or. There's one thing I learned from Moshe is a healthy doubt whenever somebody gives me an either/or choice – having only two choices, and not at least three. I think that way of framing it is incredibly limiting. It is hard to separate those.

I think that surely you can lean too far in the personal experience direction in a professional training, so people have at the end learned a lot about themselves but are not really empowered to practice.

On the other hand, if it is taught in a traditional way where it is just material you are learning, the depth and power of it to touch and transform us may also be lost.

So there is a balance there, and that is also something that varies in different trainings depending on the students we have. I think it is something we have to be mindful and careful about when we are organizing trainings, but I do not know that I have anything definitive to say about it

So, it's a funny notion of the right balance because that would kind of give us the notion that Oh, we could be too balanced towards the personal or too balanced towards the professional.

In a certain sense there have always been two kinds of students:

Those who come and are doing it primarily for themselves, many times without the difficulty of having to make a living because their spouse or significant other earns the living. So they have a kind of... they will work at the word of the teacher a little bit, but mostly it is for themselves they are doing it. That is a valid and wonderful thing if you can do it.

Then there are those who from the beginning say this is it, they are going to develop all their time and effort into a practice, and they depend on that for their living. That is not easy but there is a lot of satisfaction in doing it and the small steps that you make towards independence are rewarding.

### **Personal experience is essential, as a foundation**

The first thing I think is that our method is personal, without question.

We need personal experience. You cannot deduce from facts the experience the lessons offer you.

I am actually not spending a lot of time in the ATM on people's personal growth. They are growing, but we are not spending all our class time talking about it

So the training is a personal learning journey for each of us – meaning that it's not, as you know, it's not about applying the method to other people, but it's firstly, about applying the method to yourself. And so, one thing which is implied in your question is that each person going through the training is confronted with the question of "How do I make this mine?"

How is the training – how is this process, this learning process, going to be useful for me – for whatever challenges I have, whatever they may be?

I think a missed opportunity in many trainings is that it tends to be kept as a personal process.

I had a training where there were about 10 physical therapists referred by another physical therapist who was a practitioner. They came to the training to learn a technique. Five of them left after that segment, because they didn't expect a personal process. They just thought they were going to learn a technique they could apply to other people.

So I think that the personal part of it – that's essential to the work, too. I'm seeing other teachers teach in a way that's, from my point of view, it's more technique.

So. first of all, I wanted to say that for me, I believe it needs to be personal. I found that the vast majority of people who come to a training, come because it touched them in some way – is deeply personal. I know that was true for me. Like I said most of my students, and most people I know, we felt we couldn't understand it or make sense out of it, but it touched us.

That's personal. Moshe said clearly – if it's not personal, it's not worth anything. So that personal part is essential. And yet I've been party to this, too. I think I've gone too much in the direction of making it too personal.

And I think there is the personal aspect and the social aspect of the personal learning process.

The first year or so is almost exclusively devoted to people developing the ability to sense and feel themselves. So in the kinesthetic or sensory education, the hundreds of hours of that student's super awareness from movement, is a matter of education of the self, education of the self in sensation.

And what follows along with that, and not too heavily to begin with, are some theoretical constructs and some ideas. I try very hard not to take people into thinking too much, too soon, because it's habitual. People would rather think than feel. And that's just because it's familiar, at the very least.

But to take most of the first year and to understand that since the average person, most people, haven't had a lot of experience in feeling themselves in a sensory level. Being at their sensory expense experience of movement, emotion, thought, self-expression, any of that.

### **Developing professional competence within Training Programs**

So, from my experience live teaching is the development within a group of a generation of people that enhances the trust necessary to make all the errors you need to make to develop competence.

That was the emphasis of the training. It was meant from the beginning to be a Professional Training Program. It was not about having people come to have nice experiences. It was about producing people who were going to practice and who had the means, foundation and ability to go into their public and practice and help produce Feldenkrais-related experiences for their own public by again being smart in the way they ask questions to a person. And that their own anxiety be abated so they had the strength within themselves to come forward into public conversation.

I would say a training is not just the training and being a practitioner, but it's a training in being a reflective practitioner. That requires that we have a way of,

on our own and with our peers, and with whoever we're studying, of reflecting on our practice, and learning from what we're doing. That requires cognitive models.

We were so fortunate to have the sources in \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ to create programs that involved a lot of small group study processes that were really well structured and guided by well-written manuals. So the students study time was reflective and continued to move them along the path of what it takes to become a professional practitioner.

So now what we do is the first lesson that people prepare where they're teaching with other people, I ask them to give me their teaching summary for the lesson. Whatever plan they're going to teach from, and we go over that together before they teach.

So they get to reflect on the lesson from the teacher's perspective. And understand how in the score they've constructed, where there might be difficulties or where they might have got off the rails before they teach.

So that when they teach, they can get feedback about how they're teaching; how they're presenting; how they're responding to people around them. I think that's a way of addressing the professional side. I think that has to happen from the beginning.

So I am evolving more ways to think about how to get people ready to teach ATM. And the other piece is that we need way more supervision.

The process of competence is simply the process of reflecting on the ability to find out what it is that I lack, where I am weak or strong and where I most need to continue to develop in such a way that I am conscious about my development. So there is no mystery about the development.

I believe the reflection on one's experience is a part of deepening it. We are dealing here with profoundly integrated and deeply acquired patterns of behavior. I think the hardest thing in the Training Program is the process by which a person comes to deal with their insecurity and their anxiety.

And he [Moshe] said, but people aren't confident. And that's a different question. As I reflected on that question, I totally changed how I was teaching FI. So, instead of demonstrating something and having someone imitate it, which is a viable way of learning, I would put them in situations where they had to figure things out – to look for feelings of things to understand. Like how does this

person move in relation to the ground. What moves adjacent what's the sense of connection through them like this?

And it seemed that that kind of learning developed a different degree of confidence – that they felt I'm ready to do this. And they do that.

So I think, for it to be professionally competent, people need to be brought along enough that they can feel comfortable practicing. And they need to be encouraged, right. And that includes, this may sound off, that includes encouraging the people who I – they might think maybe they shouldn't be practicing yet?

Well, how do you learn if you don't practice? Yeah, they're going to make mistakes. Everyone's worried that someone's going to hurt someone. Well, there are people who have been practicing for years who can hurt someone. So it's not just relegated to the new learners.

And I can say this has been across the board in every training I've taught in. The people by the end of the second year know more than I did when I graduated. I have to keep reminding myself of that, and saying you can do this.

Now I suppose we could be too balanced towards the professional if one is objectifying the work – if one is striving to objectify even the experience of Awareness Through Movement. So, there's no doubt that if you think of a structure of learning, (then) verbalizing, objectifying the learning is only something that happens after the learning.

In fact, objectifying the learning too early, I think will interfere with the learning, and make us vulnerable to believing that the method is one of correction.

### **Developing professional competence between segments**

So there needs to be a lot of homework – because somehow, we still seem to need deadlines. I wish we did not. There you have the balance between what is organic growth and deadlines.

I think I've gone too much in the direction of making it too personal.

So the professional aspect of it kind of falls to the wayside. And only those people who have enough drive and gumption to make it happen, make it happen.

So then, if I think of the professional aspect of it, I think there is some important things that need to occur professionally. They're beyond the content of the Training Programs itself, in several ways.

The first way is the need for people to practice.

So part of the balance of that needs to come from practice. People need to practice in between segments

### **Developing professional competence after graduation – Lifelong Learning**

Throwing people on to the floor a la Amherst as we did in the early days, people had profound experiences but did it make them ready to practice the method? If they went to a lot of advance trainings, like we ourselves had to do, then they could eventually put it together. A lot of us had to go to a lot of advance trainings to get enough skills that were not given in the early trainings.

We try to balance the training by letting people know that graduation is just the beginning of the learning rather than the end point. That is what we try to do.

So, I think for one thing you need to invite graduates to come to the trainings and make it a more open environment. A lot of the errors that were made in America were because it was very difficult afterwards to attend a training, so it did not become a sense of lifelong learning and connection.

It became very clear to me that I wanted to facilitate this experience for other people. And, like learning to play music, it was really up to me to make it my profession. It is like any other art.

What does that mean? It means my lifelong work. Instead of saying a profession, it is that thing with which I will interact and study and study and study all my life.

The experience was so powerful that it really became a calling. And as a Trainer, and Educational Director, I told people early on in the training that to make it their profession it is on them. I am there to facilitate their learning the best I could.

So that is how I think about it becoming a profession. I do not think that is actually for everybody who is interested in Feldenkrais and comes to a training. I came to the training completely for myself. I had no idea that I would become a practitioner. It was not in my mind.



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# TRANSCRIPTS

**INTERVIEWER:** *What do you think is essential to consider and do to achieve the right balance in a Feldenkrais Training Program between providing a personal experience of the Feldenkrais work and developing a professional competence to begin to work as a Feldenkrais practitioner?*

**TRAINER:** I think this is the question of the day. Such a big question. I've got my teeth really sunk into it.

We know there have to be a certain number of hours that we call immersion. You are given a series of lessons that go on and on ad infinitum. Or you are given certain series that connect in some way and you are given these conditions where you are not told what is what, but you have to kind of find your way and then each day you get another piece of the puzzle.

I think Amherst is the best example of those kinds of conditions, much more than [Moshe's] his previous trainings. So, learning through immersion.

But that is not enough.

I felt a very deep conflict of interest between shepherding people through a process of personal growth and having conversations with them about their readiness to practice the method. I felt conflicted between anything evaluative *versus* supporting your process.

That was partly the trainings as they were some years ago. I think the trainings have evolved. The whole question of self-evaluation of competencies is now in the foreground.

Throwing people onto the floor a la Amherst as we did in the early days, people had profound experiences, but did it make them ready to practice the method. If they went to a lot of advance trainings, like we ourselves had to do, then they could eventually put it together. A lot of us had to go to a lot of advance trainings to get enough skills that were not given in the early trainings.

At any rate the immersion is just one piece of it. I think a really open question is how do we make the interweaving of the more analytical, verbal exchanges with these non-verbal experiences. It is not necessarily best that you do an ATM and then get up and talk about it. Maybe you need to not talk afterwards or the next day or... this is kind of a subtle thing, but it is an open question for me.

So what we have found works really well are the Zoom meetings between the segments. They are great times to be able to think together, to pose a little something that we do,



and think about together when you are not in the middle of an immersion.

I think we need a lot more experimentation. If we analyze too soon then we are in jeopardy of missing the ‘thinking not in words’ piece, especially for the academic people who like to behave like that and do not really sense themselves enough. It is a big challenge to find the balance between verbalizing and sensory non-verbal thinking. It is thinking, just thinking in a different way.

Teaching my colleagues over the last ten years I have seen us certainly raise the bar in terms of the amount of stuff we ask people to do in between segments. We are now using a lot of dyads and triads where you go off and work on a problem together in between. You co-teach together, work on a talk together. Whatever. I made students in a five-day workshop go through and just match the principles with the lessons. So, just different kinds of things like that.

So there needs to be a lot of homework. In the old days that was not fashionable but now I really see that without that....

When I started my ATM training it was like ‘follow your passion’. If you are interested in something, make a talk or do this or that. And not one person went ahead and did it, like real self-starter, because somehow, we still seem to need deadlines.

I wish we did not. There you have the balance between what is organic growth and deadlines. I kept saying on the one hand do not worry, take as long as you need, it is organic growth. Then after they did nothing, I gave them a deadline. So it has been a real dance because it is not a school. It is not a university, and it cannot resemble that.

**INTERVIEWER:** It is life.

**TRAINER:** We can talk about it together, but each Director has to puzzle it out. I have seen where a particular Educational Director is so in love with their explanatory structures and homework and this and that, that I do not see the organic learning. It gets squashed out with all this busy work.

So it is a balance, but I think a great balance is to have the time to immerse. Now that we are in the whole ATM training we cannot spend the whole time immersing. We have too much work to do, lots and lots of exercises.

So I am evolving more ways to think about how to get people ready to teach ATM. And the other piece is that we need way more supervision, which is very tricky because of finding the funding to pay teachers to do it a lot of the time.

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**INTERVIEWER:** 2nd Question.

***What do you think is essential to consider and do to achieve the right balance in a Feldenkrais training program between providing a personal experience of the Feldenkrais work and developing professional competence to begin work as a Feldenkrais practitioner?***

**TRAINER:** Well, as you know, I was an instrumental part of the Feldenkrais practitioner profile. I just graduated a group of people from the Training Program I put on with an emphasis on a heightened professional standard for graduates. On the question of personal experience relative to the acquisition of competence, to tell you the truth I do not see them as different. The process of competence is not a process by which you teach or study competence. That process is the art of being in experience and being able to reflect on your experience and determine what, from your experience, to continue, to refine that experience to a higher standard for yourself.

The nature of the Feldenkrais Method means that we have to be clearly associated moment by moment in the experience of Awareness Through Movement in the practice of Functional Integration. The process of competence is simply the process of reflecting on the ability to find out what it is that I lack, where I am weak or strong, and where I most need to continue to develop in such a way that I am conscious about my development. So there is no mystery about the development.

That is not necessarily the case in our old model of training programs where, as far as I am concerned, we do not have nearly enough practicum experience. This program graduated, and the people who graduated documented 100 ATM lessons. They documented teaching 100 FI lessons. They documented their reading experience. They have over 70 mentoring sessions, between the live sessions. They had a year of the Amherst material. They had a business class with \_\_\_\_\_. They had an anatomy class with \_\_\_\_\_. In other words the professional standard was very high in the sense that we asked them to do more to graduate than in any the program has ever asked.

Throughout that process, no matter what they did... If they did a practicum, they had the opportunity to go through the process of Professional Dialogue in which they were asked questions about how they did, what they did, where they did and when they did. No feedback was given unless they asked for it, but they were asked questions that continued to draw out of their experience their own understanding of what had taken place in the process. Then they had an opportunity to reflect about their experience relative to the FPP [Feldenkrais Practitioner Profile] the confidences that are developed.

As a result of every experience they had a chance to develop a learning plan for themselves, and that learning plan went between segments, or between competency periods, so there was something the person understood was an area of themselves they wanted to reflect on and develop, to come back with another set of skills to come into the next moment.

I do not see that as different. I see that as part of a whole entire system. So I do not buy the idea that people need to be in Awareness Through Movement lessons for two years in order to be in deep personal experience. It is not that in our training model people did not have personal experience – they had 12 segments and ten days apiece in which they were involved in deep personal experience. But they had the chance to reflect on their experience in a guided way, which is not necessarily the case in other Training Programs up to this point.

I believe the reflection on one's experience is a part of deepening it. We are dealing here with profoundly integrated and deeply acquired patterns of behavior. I think the hardest thing in the Training Program is the process by which a person comes to deal with their insecurity and their anxiety.

The training of experiencing ATM for two years does not necessarily bring us to the point where we actually grow in our maturation, of our sense of autonomy, in such a way that the difficulties we faced in our lives are shed like water off a duck's back. A sense where we can find our own composure and something authentic about ourself because so much is shed of the habitual way that one can sit in a moment of discomfort which would normally take one into a state of intense anxiety and instead meet that moment with a sense of acquired skill.

That is the ability to meet the moment and fail and then go looking to acquire the skills they need so they can come back and not fail and have themselves continually see for themselves throughout the training process an evolution in themselves. So, they can see the maturation and their growth. It is like they have tempered themselves like a fine sword has been tempered, so they become more capable of meeting their own demons and the public.

I do not see how that is separate. It boggles my mind to even think of it as some kind of separate process. It has to be extremely well-guided and well-structured to do that. We were so fortunate to have \_\_\_\_\_ guide us though the process. We were so fortunate to have the sources in \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ in this Covid time to create programs that involved a lot of small group study processes that were really well structured and guided by well-written manuals. So the students study time was reflective and continued to move them along the path of what it takes to become a professional practitioner.

That was the emphasis of the training. It was meant from the beginning to be a Professional Training Program. It was not about having people come to have nice experiences. It was about producing people who were going to practice and who had the means, foundation, and ability to go into their public and practice and help produce Feldenkrais-related experiences for their own public by again being smart in the way they ask questions to a person. And that their own anxiety be abated so they had the strength within themselves to come forward into public conversation.

That was the nature of the program and I believe that is the nature of the process. How is there a moment in that which is not deep personal experience? You are always in relationship to the history that you acquired and bring forward, so it is how you are going to make that history useful for you rather than continue to be binding you or to halt you from bringing yourself forward.

That is what I think.

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**INTERVIEWER:** *What do you think is essential to consider and do to achieve the right balance in a Feldenkrais training program between providing a personal experience of the Feldenkrais work and developing professional competence to begin work as a Feldenkrais practitioner?*

**TRAINER:** That is a difficult one, yes. Of course both things are needed in a training. Most of my experience is teaching in Europe and Mexico. Long ago I did a lot of teaching here when Mark [Reese] was around and Frank [Wildman] was doing trainings.

So from my experience live teaching is the development within a group of a generation of people that enhances the trust necessary to make all the errors you need to make to develop competence.

In a certain sense there have always been two kinds of students: Those who come and are doing it primarily for themselves, many times without the difficulty of having to make a living because their spouse or significant other earns the living. So they have a kind of... they will work at the word of the teacher a little bit, but mostly it is for themselves they are doing it. That is a valid and wonderful thing is you can do it.

Then there are those who from the beginning say this is it, they are going to develop all their time and effort into a practice and they depend on that for their living. That is not easy but there is a lot of satisfaction in doing it and the small steps that you make towards independence are rewarding.

So, I think for one thing you need to invite graduates to come to the trainings and make it a more open environment. A lot of the errors that were made in America were because it was very difficult afterwards to attend a training, so it did not become a sense of lifelong learning and connection.

In Europe they have done somewhat better with that. In Mexico we do a lot better with it but we make a point of our trainings being full of practitioners who come and who help out in all kinds of different ways, so they go on learning.

Our work was at one time the attraction of the best and the brightest minds, long ago. I do not think that is true anymore for the most part. We have a lot of very caring people, but once all the ideas were brand new and now they are very diffused in many fields and not only in therapy. Moshe's ideas were in a lot of different fields.

I don't know. We try to balance the training by letting people know that graduation is just the beginning of the learning rather than the end point. That is what we try to do.

**INTERVIEWER:** Right. I was in Mark Reese and Allison Rapp's training in Morgantown, West Virginia, and I was simply doing it as a hobby. I really enjoyed it, and couldn't get enough of it. But, I never thought I would teach it because I already had a profession in publishing, as a book designer and was making a good income, and was totally competent in that field. Then, something happened, and here I am 22 years later, a Feldenkrais practitioner for this long. I still do publishing stuff, but if it wasn't for Mark and Allison being an wonderful example for me, I do not know whether I would have continued. Mark was really great in encouraging me to be the best Feldenkrais practitioner that I could be. I am enrolled in another training right now just to do it all over again, just to see what comes on in terms of the layers of new learning . I agree with you that practitioners should be invited to come into trainings. They can be quiet and respectful and I wish they could do it on a volunteer level.

**TRAINER:** We do not really charge practitioners to come in Mexico but they help out in different ways. It is a cheaper place to come than in America.

**INTERVIEWER:** Do you think trainings should be free, or relatively free? If there was such a thing as let us put together a free training, would you think that was a great idea?

**TRAINER:** No. I think if something is free people devalue it as not worth anything. I do not think even free classes would move the work ahead. Certainly it is not an incentive for the teachers?

**INTERVIEWER:** Well, if they got paid.

**TRAINER:** Who would pay them? That is the other real crux of the matter of why it is very difficult to make a living, everywhere, here and in Europe. All the trainings are getting smaller because it is hard to make a living if you are not getting any kind of paid reimbursement. Certainly in America you do not and in Europe only in certain places can you even bill an insurance company; I guess maybe a little bit in Germany but less. So especially in hard economic times like we are in now, people find that hard. So a free training is an interesting idea, maybe, but I don't know.

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**INTERVIEWER:** Wonderful. Okay, the second question:

***What do you think is essential to consider and do to achieve the right balance in a Feldenkrais training program between providing a personal experience of the Feldenkrais work and developing professional competence to begin work as a Feldenkrais practitioner?***

**TRAINER:** I have been working on that for 45 years. I am not so sure what is built into that question is enough to actually bring that competence forward. There has been an interpretation of Moshe's work and some of his statements that claim he said the academic side of this work is not that important. I totally disagree with that. He was a very academically well-trained intellectual, a warrior and a thoughtful person.

So there needs to be some balance here between not just personal experience and competence, but personal experience and reflection on what the heck we are doing, on why the lessons are built like they are in a way that leads you to both being able to profit from the lessons yourself but also when you go back to them with questions, because his questions are informed by professional background knowledge, which he had.

His questions did not just intuitively come from heaven or from some dictating it out of the universe. His questions came from assertive curiosity along with a very wide range in education.

So I think there are three things. We need personal experience. If we do not experience, there are things in the lessons that... I am interested in all of these questions and rub shoulders with a lot of academics who are much smarter than I am. One guy here who is a friend of ours is a professor doctor. He has doctorates – in Philosophy as well as a medical doctor in Psychiatry. But his understanding is based on what he has read, which is not the same as you can personally find out about your own breathing and your entire self through the lessons about breathing in Alexander Yanai. You cannot deduce from facts the experience the lessons offer you.

You have to have those surprises – and the puzzlement and difficulty of finding out how to understand that it is not built into Alexander Yanai. It is just the phenomenological experience of trying it out. We need to explore on an understanding basis and use that to go back to the same lesson.

In this breathing example, it is experiencing how the diaphragm is attached to the lower ribs and the lumbar spine and therefore pulls on the ribs that are also being pulled on by extensor muscles of the spine that go to the pelvis. So the extensor muscles and the diaphragm and all the muscles involved in breathing need to be adapting the breathing to the balance function which is part of their job.

So how do we understand now that lesson? If you then look at the neurology you have a much richer idea of what you can do with that lesson. It is not just a breathing lesson, which is the way people tend to describe it while Moshe gave all sorts of odd names to the lessons just to reflect something happening in a lesson.

So I think there needs to be not only a development of practical competence. There needs to be a development of theory that goes beyond whatever you are familiar with. I find I keep running into fields of knowledge I did not even know existed and that I should know about to at least make an informed interpretation of what a lesson might actually be about.

I think that is third pillar there. It is not just personal experience developing the competence of teaching the lessons, which nowadays is very simple: You read the lesson from the notes a couple of times, try it out and go teach it. That is one way to start learning it. But when I was learning there were no Alexander Yanai documents. There was not even an Amherst training yet. There were no transcripts. We had to take what we were teaching out of our experience and then make sense of it and all of us had to try to draw on knowledge that was familiar to us.

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**INTERVIEWER:** *What do you think is essential to consider and do to achieve the right balance in a Feldenkrais training program between providing a personal experience of the Feldenkrais work and developing professional competence to begin work as a Feldenkrais practitioner?*

**TRAINER:** I think the key, which took me a while to really get, is non-separation of the two from beginning to end. So different ratios, strategies perhaps, but non-separation. From beginning to end you are working on yourself, inseparable. Yet at the beginning – and I did not do this in my early training programs as much as I would do it today – to help people from the beginning to open the curtain, look behind it. What makes this an ATM lesson? What would deviate from this lesson?



This was the challenge. What if you have 50 people in a room and 25 of them think it could be a profession and 25 are just there for themselves? How do you address both well?

I realized that even for the folks who are not interested in guiding others, a deeper understanding of the work will deepen self-awareness. That deep understanding done in certain ways helps self-awareness for everybody.

So, there is a way, especially at the beginning of the program, it is mostly about your own learning which includes some more understanding of the work.

By introducing more understanding from the beginning, you are helping those who want to teach. When you begin, as the program goes along spending more time teaching others, this basis is already there.

Then again, even as the ratio changes and as you move toward third and fourth year, if it stays in the same format, and there is more interest in how to become a professional, there still needs to be a strong emphasis on self-awareness. People who are there just for themselves, even the Functional Integration work can be taught as a self-awareness practice.

I do not think it has to be – now we go into the professional part. I think it is a real error we were in the everybody's learning part and now we are in the professional part.

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**INTERVIEWER:** *What do you think is essential to consider and do to achieve the right balance in a Feldenkrais training program between providing a personal experience of the Feldenkrais work and developing professional competence to begin work as a Feldenkrais practitioner?*

**TRAINER:** These are thoughtful questions. So, I want to give you the kind of – well, I think there's two answers. One of them is the general, all purpose, no matter what the question is, Trainer response – which is “it depends”. And what I mean by that, I think is it depends. in part, for each student.

So I think that means the training isn't one size fits all. And I think it needs, in some ways, to adapt for each person. Because this will be different depending on the learning trajectory, the background experience, the skills, the readiness to teach, for each trainee future teacher.

I think one of the distinctions that we don't make clearly is the distinction between the student's perspective and the teacher's perspective.

So the training is a personal learning journey for each of us – meaning that it's not, as you know, it's not about applying the method to other people, but it's firstly, about applying the method to yourself. And so, one thing which is implied in your question is that each person going through the training is confronted with the question of "How do I make this mine?"

How is the training – how is this process, this learning process, going to be useful for me – for whatever challenges I have, whatever they may be?

And with some people those challenges, are perhaps more obvious. You can see them from across the room. But I think we all have challenges, in physically in terms of our – you know nobody's self-image is perfect. That's not the aim but our self-image is distorted through our life experience. So honing that, making it more in line with where we are and what's going on in the world.

I think that's an important part. I think a missed opportunity in many trainings is that tends to be kept as a personal process.

What's wonderful in the training is that everyone is going through their own process. The more that be brought into the room that people can witness, support, follow, each other's learning. The unfolding of their learning; the challenges that people meet; the dead ends; the plateaus; the wrong turns; all of that – then the more each person, each trainee, will realize that their way of learning isn't the only way.

And I think there is the personal aspect and the social aspect of the personal learning process. The more that is a part of what's happening, the more that can be something that, over the course of the training, we can reflect on. And people can begin to recognize different ways that we learn.

That's so important because otherwise you end up thinking – the danger is you can end up thinking that the way you went through the process is the way that everybody goes through it.

Making the distinction between the student's perspective and the teacher's perspective. Often when somebody asks a question in a training, the answer they get is the answer that a student would get. Which is to bring them back to focusing on their learning process and what's going on to support and challenge that. At some point that's not enough. Because teachers need to know something different than students need to know.

What teachers need to understand is how to facilitate the process for the students. That the student goes through a lesson and it's always a going forward process. They're discovering and reflecting. They're having understandings. They're getting lost or frustrated.

The teacher, in order to be able to guide the student, needs to have some understanding of the process, needs to be able to understand that along that journey– not just in a lesson, but through time – what kinds of challenges people face; the different kinds of discoveries that are possible. What a future teacher needs to understand as well. The Trainer needs to understand that.

My job as a Trainer is to prepare somebody to be a teacher. Part of that is to integrate the learning for themselves. I tell my students at the end of the training that it doesn't matter if their professional practice happens in their home; or in a physical therapy clinic; in a dance studio; on a factory floor; in a stable. It doesn't matter if their professional practice is around Functional Integration or Awareness Through Movement.

What I think is important is that, however they're working, that they practice the method in their personal life. I would rather they be a Feldenkrais practitioner in terms of using the work for themselves and not teach, then be a teacher and not practice.

What I've learned in the years of as a Trainer, half of my time as a Trainer is doing advanced trainings and half of it is teaching in and running teacher training programs – is that people need maps. When I went to the training, I had started studying systems and cybernetics, and neuro-linguistic programming. I had the idea that I could, like John Grinder and Richard Bandler had done with Milton Erickson, and Virginia Satir, Fritz Perls – I could make a model of Moshe's method.

I failed. And it was a great failure, because I realized that the territory is too rich for one model. If you try to put everything on a map – the roads, the bike path, the pedestrian paths, elevation, precipitation, landmarks – the map is useless. I think what we need is an atlas of maps. We need a way to be able to think about the method.

To reflect on – there's a term of art in the soft sciences, the reflective practitioner. I would say a training is not just the training in being a practitioner, but it's a training in being a reflective practitioner. That requires that we have a way of, on our own and with our peers, and with whoever we're studying, of reflecting on our practice, and learning from what we're doing.

That requires cognitive models.

The question you asked me was about the personal and professional – I think is the way it was framed. In my kind of overall curriculum for trainings, I start by being Moshe's emissary – we start, the faculty, by being Moshe's emissary – introducing people to Moshe. His history, the classic Awareness Through Movement lessons that he taught, the method from his perspective.

And then we slowly begin to build up skills. Learning anatomy through touch, and through ATM and observation. Learning basic aspects of touch, not by doing, but by listening and following. Introducing, like starting with Moshe's ideas, in the feeling, acting, sensing, and thinking model.

The action component Moshe breaks it – he does it in different ways. And sometimes he talks about that as timing, orientation, and manipulation.

We start with Moshe's models. They're there and then we build on that. So, people learn, as we go, to be able to reflect on lessons.

I think for people to be able to teach an ATM lesson means more than doing it over and over again. It means more than following the script. We are not actors playing the part of Feldenkrais teachers.

A lesson is a score that the teacher brings to life. More or less, improvisation. Being able to respond to the students that you're teaching and adapt the lesson to the students. So, you're teaching students and not teaching a lesson.

One concrete way that I do that in trainings is – for the longest time in my experience in my training, and then in working in other trainings, when we did Awareness Through Movement practicum – they did their practice teaching, and got feedback. They got feedback about their understanding of the lesson, and how they taught the lesson at the same time. I realized at some point that that was just too much at once.

So now what we do is the first lesson that people prepare where they're teaching with other people, I ask them to give me their teaching summary for the lesson. Whatever plan they're going to teach from, and we go over that together before they teach.

So they get to reflect on the lesson from the teacher's perspective. And understand how in the score they've constructed, where there might be difficulties or where they might have got off the rails before they teach.

So that when they teach, they can get feedback about how they're teaching; how they're presenting; how they're responding to people around them. I think that's a way of addressing the professional side. I think that has to happen from the beginning.

It seems to me that – well, it's Fritz Pearls. To go back to him, he said, somewhere back in 1969 – Fritz Pearl said "lose your mind and come to your senses". And that was a rallying cry for the Human Potential Movement.

I don't think that it has to be Either/Or. There's one thing I learned from Moshe is a healthy doubt whenever somebody gives me an either/or choice – having only two choices, and not at least three. I think that way of framing it is incredibly limiting. I don't think we have to choose between sensing and thinking.

I think that the reflective, the cognitive, the putting things into words, which is not easy, is why I think, having a systemic approach is so important, because there we have, concurrent with Moshe developing the work and perhaps even before then, a long history of thinking in a system's way.

That's something that family therapists do, that ecologists do, that other kinds of teachers do. I think that gives us a platform, that gives us a framework for work, for understanding what we're doing. I endeavor to introduce that in an organic way.

One way to do that is to start with fairly simple models. As trainees discover that the world is more complicated than those models, then we can develop them further. So that the impetus for having a better, deeper, wider understanding of the work comes from the students – and it's not imposed from the outside.

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**INTERVIEWER:** *What do you think is essential to consider and do to achieve the right balance in a Feldenkrais training program between providing a personal experience of the Feldenkrais work and developing professional competence to begin work as a Feldenkrais practitioner?*

**TRAINER:** Okay? Well, certainly the first can do without the second, not for a teacher in training.

But people can take up this work, not necessarily in a training program, like a teacher training program, but can take up this work as a means of self-inquiry, and to enjoy and to benefit from. But to turn out people who are then going to be teachers to other people, there's much more that needs to be added. Some of it is a little paradoxical to the pure process – to the process, which is about the individual only, the consumer, if you will, the client, the patient, where there's more structure.

And this is something I thought about for a long, long time because I've been doing training programs now for a long, long time.

And your question, your email prompted me to look back on my own website, where something that I wrote 25 years ago is still sitting up there, under the heading curriculum.

But what I put up for our very first training program, which began in 1992, was a brief description of the major elements of the curriculum. There were five educational tracks. In my opinion, it's an assist to thinking to have things – to make distinctions and differentiations between different ways of thinking and different ways of experiencing.

In the end they're unified in life. A practitioner, after some years of practice, is going to have these things flow seamlessly within them and out of them, and back into them.

But the way I can see to it to try to explain it to people was that the first thread was what I called a kinesthetic sensory education. In the back of my mind, the first year or so is almost exclusively devoted to people developing the ability to sense and feel themselves.

To be able to see other people. And I don't mean that any mystical sense but just to be able to better see how people move; where they start the movement; where they interfere with their movement; how they interfere with their self-expression; when they swallow or blink; when they want to do, is laugh, or scream, or cry, or jump up and down. Whatever it may be, and so I'll start there.

So in the kinesthetic or sensory education, the hundreds of hours of that student's super awareness from movement, is a matter of education of the self, education of the self in sensation.

And what follows along with that, and not too heavily to begin with, are some theoretical constructs and some ideas. I try very hard not to take people into thinking too much, too soon, because it's habitual. People would rather think than feel. And that's just because it's familiar, at the very least.

I mean there's exceptions to that for sure. Some people would rather feel than think, and those require something. Those people require something special, too, in order to become professionals.

But to take most of the first year and to understand that since the average person, most people, haven't had a lot of experience in feeling themselves in a sensory level. Being at their sensory expense experience of movement, emotion. thought, self-expression, any of that. That is going to be a little bit of a sensory stew.

And that people, by and large, if they are left alone, which I think they do not entirely know – but if they are left primarily to do the Awareness Through Movement, feel the changes. Hear how other people are different than they are, how they receive the same lesson differently. And to do that without judgment. Just to see what a wide array of differences there are in people and that everyone's fine and everybody's due their dignity and respect.

So there's that. And then, as that becomes a little bit more familiar, we add some things to it. But I'm actually jumping ahead.

The other elements of the sensory, and what I'm calling the kinesthetic sensory education, besides, Awareness Through Movement, are the lessons that students get from the staff and faculty – FI lessons which I think are extremely important.

I know that in my own training with Moshe Feldenkrais, the lessons that I received from him, and I was fortunate enough to be able to get about 15 from him. So this I think, really brought a lot of things together in ways that were not going to happen in any other way.

Now, that may just be me, but I carry that into our training program – by understanding or by believing that it is potentially extremely powerful, and I think, usually very powerful way, for people to be integrating, if you will. It's an overused word in our work, but to be able to integrate what it is that they have felt in ATM, to be able to integrate what it is they observe in themselves.

The next level, that comes on a little bit later is that as people practice FI with each other more and more, which cannot be done in online trainings. As students practice with each other before class, at lunchtime, after class, they begin to feel the differences in quality of touch. They can begin to feel the differences in degrees of intention, and of respect, and of skill, of differentiation in handling. So they can begin to do that and, hopefully, not to judge their fellow students. That's not the point, but to see what I can learn as a student, from that student.

I learned so much in my training from being touched by all the other people in the class, and things that I wanted to be sure I didn't do, and things that some people did on one day, but not another. But on the day they did it and I didn't like it, okay, that's not something that I find pleasant and really got in my way. Whatever.

Also, there's lessons that I remember to this day more than 40 years later, and the person who practiced with me that day that changed the way I understood myself. And it may have been through my ribs, my spine, whatever, my head-neck relationship, but added something that was bright and illuminated and important. So that kind of practice in class and out of class and the day-to-day practice.

There's, I believe, a very good reason for this training not to be 160 days, which is our format from the training accreditation boards, not to have those days compressed too much in time but to have them spread over time, so that people have those periods between training sessions, to continue to observe themselves, to see how their lives are changing. How it's easier to get the chocolate from the hiding place up in the top shelf and maybe to put one's shoes on, or maybe to sink a basketball, or whatever it is that somebody's interested in or vitally dependent upon, along that whole spectrum. So all of these things come together in my mind, even though I'm splitting them up into categories just for convenience.

Feldenkrais had a phrase in his book, *Awareness Through Movement* where he talked about the four elements of consciousness. He talked about sensing, feeling, thinking,



and moving. That was great. But what was important to me was what he said after that. He said, these things are inseparable. These things can be divided only in language.

That's an important thing to do, so that we can think about them as something less than concrete. So we can guide our thoughts around this amazing swirl of what it means to be a human being. But not be trapped by it, thinking that thinking is separate from feeling, from sensing and so on.

So, I carry that also into the way that we try to conduct our training programs in terms of the curriculum.

We do split the Awareness through Movement lessons roughly into threads.

Developmental threads having to do with how you know onto the genetic threads – how people learn to wiggle around and eventually roll over, and eventually sit up. And to make that something that we don't teach, so much as people are given that opportunity to discover.

This is how me and my body shape can do this now. And look around. Oh, yeah, that person's tall and thin, that person's not, that person has a leg that is compromised for whatever reason. Etc. And to see all the different ways that these basic functions can be learned and carried out.

The phylogenetic thread, for lack of a better word, is just to talk about how the brain developed. How we go from basically the shark with a notochord, almost no brain at all – and all the way up through the stages of evolution.

One of Feldenkrais' very committed fields of study was ethology, along with the comparative anatomy of the nervous system of various animals. Their physical form from the fish to the amphibian, and the lizards, and so on, and so on. What we think of as up the chain of evolution. And how the anatomy and the behaviors went hand in hand. How the ability to learn evolved as the nervous system and the physical stuff, skeleton, and muscles, and so on also evolved. And he [Moshe] spoke about it a great deal.

And see I really believed him when he said – this is about learning a particular way of thinking rather than learning a particular way of doing.

Although there had to be some of that because like anybody who has a skill, whether it's to play a musical instrument, or to draw, or to cook, or to dance. Whatever it is, they need both. They can be technicians. They can be a musician who reproduces the notes on demand in a studio, or in a pit, orchestra, or whatever. And they can also be artists. who paint, draw freely, who sculpt, or dance, or sing, or etc.

So my own goal from my life has been to be someone who has that kind of expression available to me, to be able to touch somebody and to build on a communication that is

about them. One hundred percent about them. And to offer them ways of feeling and seeing themselves in ways that they can perceive, that they can accept, even if not at the conscious level right away. So that's how it proceeds in our training programs.

And then, along with that – see these things are not linear. So, we've got this kinesthetic education going. And accompanying that is an education in seeing.

I'll take another little detour for a moment. [Moshe] Feldenkrais was a great admirer of the Swiss psychologist, Jean Piaget, who some people have believed that he's discredited in some ways or another, that I don't particularly understand.

But what Feldenkrais particularly admired about him was his belief, based on observation, that different kinds of learning leapfrog each other in the maturation of an individual – that emotional education, cognitive education, motoric education, sensory organ education don't proceed one at a time.

Each one enables the next stage of the other. I think that's very important for us to know so that you could even say that was one of the pillars. Certainly, one of the pillars of the education.

So we'll look at each other in our training programs, with a very clear understanding that it's not about judging who's doing it right, who's doing it wrong. But, hey, look! they can do it that way, and they can do it that way. And look how this otherwise incredibly skillful person gets in their own way.

And then, if you've got an opportunity to demonstrate, you show, Oh look! What somebody needs to do is be able to have an arm free to reach, or, you know, to reach, say, on the keyboard of a piano. Look where the difficulty or the obstruction is in the middle of the thorax – there's nothing supporting that hand in that direction, and that little pinky to striking that key way over there.

So there's a learning of a certain kind of systems thinking in a certain kind of way or a number of different kinds of ways.

Along with that comes the education perception through touch. So in our programs we start touching and we've been doing this for since we started with our first week of our first training. On the third day we had people touching each other, but with an idea of developing hands that could feel rather than hands that were doing.

And again, we're raised in cultures primarily we're doing is valued, and the part of sensing and feeling differences is, how can I put it, is overshadowed, I guess is the word I'm looking for.

And then there's a cognitive education. It's important to study about development, Human development. It's important to study about "the brain". It's important to study some anatomy.

Interestingly, some of the assistants Moshe Feldenkrais brought to the training that I took from him in the middle 1970s. The three primary assistants were very different in what they considered to be important, what they considered worth while studying.

And Moshe respected them all. He respected them, as he put it, what he said he was going to do for us, was to teach us an alphabet. But we needed to develop our own handwriting for it to be the Feldenkrais Method, and not mimicry, and not to be thinking in a certain, set number of ways.

So when we tried to get out of him, what should we be reading? He said, what do you want to know what I'm reading for? You should read what you're interested in. And we said, yeah, but we want to know. So, finally, he came up with a list of books that he thought were formative to himself and their philosophy of science, Systemology. How can we say we know something? How do we go about finding out something that we can then say we know more about it than we did before? Investigation. Inquiry.

Certainly some anatomy, and he did have a skeleton in class hanging there on a stand beside him. I came up to him one day during a break, and he was sort of staring at the skeleton. I said, Moshe what are you looking at? Because I thought maybe he was thinking something in particular. He said, I'm just contemplating my future.

Anyway. So to all of these things that people, different Trainers and different teachers, want to bring as mandatory to the forefront – Feldenkrais said No. You learn what interests you. And as long as it's a human interest, and as long as it's an interest that is pertinent to learning about how human beings mature, how human beings function, how human beings learn, then that's a legitimate viewpoint on how to do our method.

So that was a long one, but I had time to prepare.

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**INTERVIEWER:** All right so we'll go further. Now onto Question 2.

***What do you think is essential to consider and do to achieve the right balance in a Feldenkrais training program between providing a personal experience of the Feldenkrais work and developing professional competence to begin work as a Feldenkrais practitioner?***

**TRAINER:** That's a good question. The first thing I think is that our method is personal, without question.

I had a training in \_\_\_\_\_, and there were about 10 physical therapists referred by another physical therapist who was a practitioner. They came to the training to learn a technique. Five of them left after that segment, because they didn't expect a personal process. They just thought they were going to learn a technique they could apply to other people.

So I think that the personal part of it – that's essential to the work, too. I'm seeing other teachers teach in a way that's, from my point of view, it's more technique.

And you know what – where it became technique for me. When Covid happened, I had one group that had a short time left to graduate. I got permission to finish it online because I didn't know how long it was going to last, when we'd meet again.

This office here I had set up with five cameras. I had quarantined people who could stay safe, and I could work with them and show different things. And it was tricky because I had people in Hawaii, the States, Taiwan, Australia. So the time zone was like two hours where everyone could meet. I actually think I covered more material on Zoom, than I would have live – in terms of that kind of content.

But quality wise. I felt like I was just teaching technique. I was demonstrating something – you have to go off on your own. I can't go over and help clarify something or influence your learning in some way. There isn't the time of being together that we could talk about it more in a break, that they come up to me. It was professional, but it really lacked the personal, I think.

And I know for myself, I felt that if this is what we're going to continue like this, I'm not so sure I want to do it. And thank God, right now. I'm back to teaching my trainings live again, traveling again, and doing that.

Look, there's a connection on Zoom. I can feel a connection with you right now. But it's not the same for me as when I'm in the same room, and time passes, and it's not constrained by the hour, or whatever time we have together.

So, first of all, I wanted to say that for me, I believe it needs to be personal. I found that the vast majority of people who come to a training, come because it touched them in some way – is deeply personal. I know that was true for me. Like I said most of my students, and most people I know, we felt we couldn't understand it or make sense out of it, but it touched us.

That's personal. Moshe said clearly – if it's not personal, it's not worth anything. So that personal part is essential. And yet I've been party to this too. I think I've gone too much in the direction of making it too personal.

So the professional aspect of it kind of falls to the wayside. And only those people who have enough drive and gumption to make it happen, make it happen.

So then, if I think of the professional aspect of it, I think there is some important things that need to occur professionally. They're beyond the content of the training programs itself, in several ways.

The first way is the need for people to practice. I know programs now where people are required to teach a certain number of ATMs. I actually think that's a great idea. I love that idea. Except it's a little bit in opposition for people to develop their own authority and their own learning style.

So how do I encourage people to do that without making it a requirement – which becomes a Pass/Fail. You're going to graduate, not graduate. That's the system of learning that I think Moshe, and I think most of us, have tried to get away from. But then, like I said, it's fallen too much into this touchy-feely kind of thing. Where people get up and what do I do with this; how do I do that?

So part of the balance of that needs to come from practice. People need to practice in between segments. Because I know that when people practice, they come back with different questions. I don't know they are better questions, I think I want to say that. But different questions that guide them, that moved them and take them further along the path to understanding.

But for them to practice they have to feel good enough about what they're doing, that they understand enough, to go out there and do it.

So like how do I do that? Well I'm in the third year of one of my trainings now. Usually at this point in the third year – four times I have them working with the public. No feedback. It's not like a practicum or anything like that. But they're putting the field to the public to find out that I can do this. Because people get afraid they don't know enough, they're not ready.

And I can say this has been across the board in every training I've taught in. The people by the end of the second year know more than I did when I graduated. I have to keep reminding myself of that and saying you can do this.

I've developed a whole practice with that. What I consider – I didn't consider to be a little amount of knowledge. I had nothing to compare it to. They think it's too little. But I was also a little more driven too, younger, a little more hungry, something like that.

Back when I first moved to \_\_\_\_\_, I had lunch with Carl Ginsburg. He said to me, Trainings aren't good enough. And I said, Carl come on. They're better than they've ever

been. We're better at teaching; we can articulate the work more; there's more materials; there's more understanding. Across the board, trainings are better.

And he [Carl] said, but people aren't confident. And that's a different question. As I reflected on that question, I totally changed how I was teaching FI. So, instead of demonstrating something and having someone imitate it, which is a viable way of learning, I would put them in situations where they had to figure things out – to look for feelings of things to understand. Like how does this person move in relation to the ground. What moves adjacent, what's the sense of connection through them like this?

And I did that. The first training I did that was in \_\_\_\_\_. I did that for two years. Then I started demonstrating things. And it was a disaster. I thought, Oh, my God, I've wasted two years. And the assistant trainer, who's now a Trainer, \_\_\_\_\_, kept saying, Wait, wait, be patient! The third day it kind of clicked.

It reminds me of the work of, I always get these confused, I think it was Hansa Gerger [?], who had children and she let them during World War II just meander in their own environment, makes sense out of things, as opposed to being shown how to do everything.

And it seemed that that kind of learning developed a different degree of confidence – that they felt I'm ready to do this. And they do that.

There was one meeting in Garrison, New York with Training (part of the Feldenkrais Legacy actually). I forget who, someone said that only 10 percent of graduates are practicing. I thought our trainings had a far higher rate than 10 percent.

So what's the difference? How do we get people to feel confident enough?

Some people like to use the word competent. That's a tricky word. Have you read the article – *The Current Relevance of Merleau-Ponty's Phenomenology of Embodiment*.

You haven't read it? No? Can you say it? I mean it's even hard to say. It's written by Hubert Dreyfus, a linguist from Berkeley, and he describes – I mean a lot of it is jargon. But he describes these five stages of learning from, I think, novice; advanced beginner; competent; proficient; and expertise.

In the competent one – I can only paraphrase it. He says something like at this point, the competent learner feels so overwhelmed by the number of possible choices available in a real-life situation, that they become completely overwhelmed, and they wonder how anyone can ever learn this.

I think, Oh, that's competence. That means most people are competent, right? They just have a strong internal dialogue around things.

So I think, for it to be professionally competent, people need to be brought along enough that they can feel comfortable practicing. And they need to be encouraged, right. And that includes, this may sound off, that includes encouraging the people who I – they might think maybe they shouldn't be practicing yet?

Well, how do you learn if you don't practice? Yeah, they're going to make mistakes. Everyone's worried that someone's going to hurt someone. Well, there are people who have been practicing for years who can hurt someone. So it's not just relegated to the new learners.

People have been learning for a long time still can do something that's not so great. Like I had a woman in a training, and she lived on an island where she was the only one there. And it was the third year of the training, and she had the chance to work with this woman who had an extreme scoliosis, and she sent me the X-ray, and my first response was, Don't!

And then I thought. Well, what am I doing here? She's the only one there. I said, Do it, and let's have conversations about it. She helped the woman tremendously, and it was like again another testament to me, like I need to have more faith in the people I train. And I think we all do.

And that's part of the personal and the professional to do something like that. So, if it's just professional it's like when I was teaching online.

Say, I can teach a technique. Do this, do this. Put your hands here. Look there, that's what I'm thinking about, blah, blah, blah. I don't know- I don't think that suffices enough. But it's a tricky balance for sure.

Did I answer the question?

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**INTERVIEWER:** *What do you think is essential to consider and do to achieve the right balance in a Feldenkrais training program between providing a personal experience of the Feldenkrais work and developing professional competence to begin work as a Feldenkrais practitioner?*

**TRAINER:** So, the first part of the question is about the individuals learning?

**INTERVIEWER:** Yes. And how to balance that individual personal experience with creating a professional person.

**TRAINER:** That's pretty complicated.



I mean the individual is learning at his or her own pace within the setting of the Feldenkrais training. We know that. I believe they need to be in a situation with a group of people, because the group is grappling with a new way of conceptualizing. Not only themselves, their self-image, and how to then eventually present the method, through their learning and hearing their classmates learning, to their future students.

So the group dynamic is extremely important. The way the training is conducted with the Trainer being able to manage group process and communication – creating safety, respect, patience, and tolerance. And a lot of information, both information of the Feldenkrais Method itself and current science – neuroscience- that upholds Feldenkrais's original ideas.

And the more we do that, the more respect we gain. Not only from people in our trainings, but from the outside, from the community when they're learning about the method.

So I believe Trainers must be well informed about current neuroscience and learning approaches to teach well in training programs.

**INTERVIEWER:** What is essential to balance the training program between the personal experience and the professional development?

**TRAINER:** It is hard to separate those.

I think that surely you can lean too far in the personal experience direction in a professional training, so people have at the end learned a lot about themselves but are not really empowered to practice.

On the other hand, if it is taught in a traditional way where it is just material you are learning, the depth and power of it to touch and transform us may also be lost.

So there is a balance there, and that is also something that varies in different trainings depending on the students we have. I think it is something we have to be mindful and careful about when we are organizing trainings, but I do not know that I have anything definitive to say about it.

How would you codify it in some way and constrain people. I am not a big fan of that. But I think it is an important theme and important for us to be thinking about it.

I think the time for experiencing the power of the method happens especially in the first year, but that does not mean you cannot start understanding the lessons and the method behind the magic. Sometimes I hear my colleagues talk about it as if that kind of process is somehow going to interfere with their personal processes. That is certainly not my experience. Humans are more versatile than that.

There is a timing issue. You do not do a really powerful ATM lesson and then go into an analytical process. That does not work very well, but when you have a long day and have time to create spaces for different kinds of processes for people to shift into different orientations, then you do not really have to be choosing between those two things.

They can complement each other. They can have personal growth experiences and also hear what happened for their fellow students to help understand a lesson if it is facilitated well.

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**INTERVIEWER:** So second question.

***What do you think is essential to consider and do to achieve the right balance in a Feldenkrais training program between providing a personal experience of the Feldenkrais work and developing professional competence to begin work as a Feldenkrais practitioner?***

**TRAINER:** I think Moshé knew a lot of anatomy, and it would be nice if we included more of that in the trainings.

Lots of people have specialized in working with children, because that was a necessity for living and working in the world.

So I think we could use a little bit more of that in programs

There could be a little bit more time bringing in people who have difficulties into an FI, practicum or whatever you want to call it: that thing probably could be enhanced in some way.

But I think it's clear to most Trainers that there are people who are good. You know that they will, with time and practice, function better. And there are people that are not and I don't know how [unclear] that has to be.

But there has to be a willingness of the people who are running the training programs to tell people that you need to work on this, you need to work on that, and be willing [unclear] to not graduate the people, I think. But I don't see that happening too much because of financial considerations.

But otherwise programs ... I mean, it would be nice to have everyone, including myself, have the capacities that Moshe had, and that would be a good training program, and you could be assured that it would be worthwhile. But some of the Trainers are very good, some not so good.

I think it would be nice if the Trainers would be willing to spend more time with each other and not be in little groups so they could share more of what they know or how they [unclear].

Okay, I think it sounds – could even make it necessary that you have to go to another training and see what's going on there once now for a week or two, and to see how other Trainers see as the ED [Educational Director] which I am. I don't get to see anybody. The only people I get to see, is occasionally an assistant.

Some of the assistants are great, of course, but then I get used to using certain ones, and I don't really get to see Trainers so much. How do they [unclear]? So I would say that there should be maybe a requirement for that.

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**INTERVIEWER:** *What do you think is essential to consider and do to achieve the right balance in a Feldenkrais training program between providing a personal experience of the Feldenkrais work and developing professional competence to begin work as a Feldenkrais practitioner?*

**TRAINER:** You remember our training, yours in \_\_\_\_\_ and mine in \_\_\_\_\_, I did not call it professional training. I come from the world of music and very much find myself thinking like that.

I started the training with Moshe teaching through the Amherst videos. My training was the first one after he died in the US. There were two of us, one on the east coast, in Toronto, and one on the west coast. So we studied the first two years from his videos. He [Moshe] was actually the teacher, even though he was not there.

It became very clear to me that I wanted to facilitate this experience for other people. And, like learning to play music, it was really up to me to make it my profession. It is like any other art.

What does that mean? It means my lifelong work. Instead of saying a profession, it is that thing with which I will interact and study and study and study all my life.

The experience was so powerful that it really became a calling. And as a Trainer, and Educational Director, I told people early on in the training that to make it their profession it is on them. I am there to facilitate their learning the best I could.

And the process of learning is very subjective. I go to this again and again, when people talk about professionalism and the knowledge that one needs to have. There are no two brains alike and if you agree that it is an education and it is a process of learning, it has

to go through that individual's particular brain and it will come out from that individual particular brain. There is no objectivity in it.

That was very clear to me for a long time. Then after I started to mainly be the Educational Director of the training, I saw there is some universal information that is needed that might make it more professional. That information is the universal effects of biomechanics, and organic developmental learning of infants.

I thought that could be.

I do not know how much you remember, but we... and also Moshe did, not just from me. I studied a lot with Anat Baniel and Jeremy Krauss. So the work with children, the way of thinking, was very familiar, and we did a lot of developmental movements, and Moshe did it in Amherst. He started with sucking.

What I would have done differently now, I would put more emphasis on skeletal anatomy and biomechanics, just to have the images of how the muscles move one on top of the other and the joints and really have a map of that.

It is also very beautiful to me. It is an incredible invention. It is unbelievable. And it does help me a lot.

**INTERVIEWER** Yes. It is like an x-ray or an MRI. I was thinking of an image a moment before you said it. It gives an image of what you cannot see directly in front of you.

**TRAINER:** Exactly. So that is how I think about it becoming a profession. I do not think that is actually for everybody who is interested in Feldenkrais and comes to a training. I came to the training completely for myself. I had no idea that I would become a practitioner. It was not in my mind.

I had a profession, which I found was quite similar – in the sense that you have to learn all your life, and have to get better all the time. You have to learn until you can actually either play it or do it in music or, in our case, especially the FI work.

The way I understood the relationship between personal experience and what is more professional was different for FI. This is why quite a few years ago I actually talked to some of my close friends among the Trainers about, not a different format, (at the time I did not think about a different format), but thought about separating certification between ATM and full practice that includes Functional Integration.

I will read what I wrote:

“I have questions about the way Functional Integration is taught. I agree that the principles of ATM and FI are similar, but I did not find in my experience that the skills of the practitioner are the same. Moshe said that he made himself into an accurate

measuring instrument. For most people it takes years and the best way to develop it is through apprenticeship or mentoring, not so much through class time with 50 other people in the room.”

I will continue to explain.

I thought about this and talked to people about it way before the idea of having a separate ATM training came up. To this day, I actually do not think it should be separate. I think it should be two certifications – you finish the time for ATM, maybe two years, maybe 90 days instead of 80 days. And you get authorization to teach ATM.

Some FI is introduced in relation to ATM, but some.

Then at the end of the two years, anyone gets authorized to teach ATM, even if they choose to end there. Not having this choice resulted in a big number of students not practicing at all, mainly because they did not feel skilled enough to practice FI and did not have the authorization to teach ATM in the long run, even if they were very good at it.

I saw it all around. You know how many trainings I did, as assistant, as Trainer and Educational Director.

I would estimate that given a certificate to teach ATM, once they are given that, only about half or less will want to continue for two more years.

Now of course if they did not have some experience with FI during the first two years, they would not know what they are missing, so you have to introduce it so they can make a decision.

This means the number of students will be much smaller in the last two years. Because of that there will be more personal instruction and more physical interaction in FI between the staff and the students.

I would also include a plan for each student to work with a mentor outside the training.

Then the question would be if I have so few students, how do I make the training viable? What I wrote is that the students would have to know in advance that the tuition would be higher for the last two years. I think that will promote professionalism because it will show a commitment to becoming a professional. Is that clear?

**INTERVIEWER:** Yes.

**TRAINER:** I had it all planned in my head but as you say people are quiet... we do not talk to each other enough.

**INTERVIEWER:** Quite habitual, yes. And in some ways, we all are.

**TRAINER:** Yes, very. It is a process. A process that has to be integrated into the way you think, which means it's a life process. There are effects, but they are a process.

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**INTERVIEWER:** *What do you think is essential to consider and do to achieve the right balance in a Feldenkrais training program between providing a personal experience of the Feldenkrais work and developing professional competence to begin work as a Feldenkrais practitioner?*

**TRAINER:** The domain of concern of the Feldenkrais Method is learning, and how a human being can grow and learn – as a way of finding solutions to difficulties and questions they have throughout their lifetime.

Finding the right balance in the training program should be something that, when one rises to the title of Educational Director of the program, this should not be a difficult question. We learn through doing and experience. For me, Awareness Through Movement is always forefront, even as a way of understanding Functional Integration.

So, I don't see, nor did Moshe see, Awareness Through Movement and Functional Integration, as two distinct and separate – somehow standing on separate pillars.

Nor do I in my teaching. And from the beginning of the training program, I'm informing any discussion of FI, any exploration of FI, through Awareness Through Movement.

So, it's a funny notion of the right balance because that would kind of give us the notion that Oh, we could be too balanced towards the personal or too balanced towards the professional.

Now I suppose we could be too balanced towards the professional if one is objectifying the work – if one is striving to objectify even the experience of Awareness Through Movement. So, there's no doubt that if you think of a structure of learning, (then) verbalizing, objectifying the learning is only something that happens after the learning.

In fact, objectifying the learning too early, I think will interfere with the learning, and make us vulnerable to believing that the method is one of correction.