

**Elizabeth Beringer Interview (Katarina Halm) Feldenkrais® Legacy Forum
Transformation of Training (ToT) Working Group January 31, 2023**

KATARINA

You were at the San Francisco training first and many of those people came to the Amherst training.

ELIZABETH

Yes, that is right. I have been to Vancouver where you are, a beautiful city.

KATARINA

I graduated from Berkeley High School, so not too far from where you are.

ELIZABETH

Berkeley High School is still there.

ELIZABETH

So can you get me a little more context for this interview? Who is going to see it and what are you guys up to?

KATARINA

As you know, we have already interviewed many trainers. Those interviews have been transcribed and the collected responses to the four main questions are being compiled.

ELIZABETH

And you have mainly done USA and North American trainers?

KATARINA

Also Roger Russell, who is sometimes in the USA but has his main centre in Germany.

KATARINA

The Feldenkrais® Legacy Forum Transformation of Training (ToT) Working Group project currently addresses four questions. We compile what you and others respond within each of these questions, and then we lift out a common thread and also unusual perspectives. The colleagues collaborating on ToT include two from

NATAB: Violet Van Hees and Bonnie Humiston, and additional practitioners Jaclyn Boone, Tracy Mulligan, and Katarina Halm.

By the month of April we plan to have responses to the four questions summarized and annotated. Then there will be a decision where to publish a document. The ToT committee meet every two weeks and if you would like to participate please let me know. The meetings are fairly short on Sundays at 4pm Pacific time, the next time will be Sun Feb 12, 2023 (Violet, Bonnie, Tracy, Jaclyn and Katarina).

ELIZABETH

Okay, good. So I will look forward to seeing some kind of report at some point.

KATARINA

First you will also see the transcript of this interview and decide whether you would like anything taken out or added before it is shared with Violet, Bonnie, Tracy, and Jaclyn.

ELIZABETH

I like that idea. Also a lot of times when I do things like this I think oh I should have said that or could have added that, so it is more relaxing to know I can edit it.

KATARINA

Yes, it will go to you first to edit as you wish.

Question #1:

What are the essential qualities and characteristics of the Feldenkrais® work – without which it would not be Feldenkrais work? What needs to be carried forward as the essence of this work?

- What distinguishes the Feldenkrais work from other professions?
What is the key thing that is still unique?
What is the gem that makes this worth being a named method?
- What are the “essential pillars” that guide us, no matter who we are working with, or in what environment/ situation?
- What is essential to the Feldenkrais “way of working”?

ELIZABETH

To my mind all the points under that question are essentially the same question, so I will just answer them all at the same time. It is just different ways of going into the same thing.

So first I would say that I do not think there is any one thing that makes the Feldenkrais Method® unique. I think it is the braiding together of many aspects that meld into the Method. Its power and depth comes from the interaction between all these various aspects.

I think if you look at any one aspect you find some other system that is utilizing, or at least claiming to use, that aspect. In effect, the other system may be using the particular aspect in a slightly different way than we do in Feldenkrais.

So I would start with '*learning to learn*', and the fact that we have '*an educational model*'. Many systems that are working physically are more [oriented to / closer to] a model of healer/patient. However, we are specifically oriented towards an educational model. And furthermore, we radically empower the person, give them the tools they need to work with themselves.

I think there are kind of two levels to that.

#1

The first level is people learn to do ATM® and start to have resources to take care of themselves better, things like that.

#2

Then the second step, which not everybody makes, is the ability to improvise and apply the method in all the different situations we find ourselves in life. Those who are struggling with pain - things like that - not only have resources that they learned from their teacher but to start to be able to make sentences and paragraphs themselves in the language of the method; to work with themselves somatically; and have more agency there.

The first thing is really powerful by itself, but the second element, where the method just takes off for you... I will give an example of that:

A couple of years ago a former Functional Integration® student of mine called. I had not spoken to him for at least twenty-five years. He said, "I was just thinking about you so much because I was in my backyard taking out a tree trunk. It was a lot of really heavy work and all along the way I was using elements of the Method in how I rested, how I took care of myself, how I listened to myself and my limitations. And I got the trunk out and I felt great afterwards." He had not been in touch with me all those years but he said to me, "I use it every day in my life."

Now, that is the potential. We do not always reach that potential with everybody but that is the powerful empowerment potential that the Method has.

So, that is what I would say for Question #1.

Obviously, part of that, and a really important part that is very trendy now, is the element of mindfulness. We did not call it mindfulness. We talked about awareness, which we perhaps take in a slightly broader and different direction, but they are greatly overlapping and it is a wonderful thing that this has taken off in the popular imagination at this time.

So I think in the Method are we not only utilizing and cultivating the practise of awareness, but having done it for many many decades we have a sophistication in the way we utilize that, combining it with movement and kinaesthetic sensation and dynamic action that is part of the magic and transformative potential of the Method.

That would be the second step.

I would say another unique element is the incredible variety of Awareness Through Movement® lessons that we have access to. Many of us have been practising for decades to where we are generating our own lessons also. So now there is this incredible variety of ATM lessons that can be utilized for learning and can give new perspectives on the same situations.

I do not know of any other system that has that kind of variety. The system goes from the incredible subtlety of just using the imagination to large dynamic movements and everything sideways and in between.

Of course all these things overlap, but another element is that ultimately we are going for independence from the teacher. The plan is to not have someone in our Functional Integration practise keep coming to us forever, but to pass along the tools they need to take care of themselves and help themselves when they are in trouble rather than always having to run to a professional.

So ultimately, back to the first point, they will start to generate for themselves self-care and awareness experiments as they are in different environments, as they get older, get hopefully better and as they evolve.

Again, not everyone makes that leap but that is where we would like people to go, to be no longer needed in the same way at a certain point. We can maybe be more a cheerleader than in the same kind of relationship.

I would say next on this braiding of sensation, movement, thinking, feeling - bringing in as many aspects of the person as we can to have the learning be more complete; that ability in an ATM lesson to come from different perspectives on the same thing. So to look from behind or underneath, to use different metaphors and different language so that the tapestry that is created can be very rich and multi-dimensional. One language maybe does not speak to a person but there is another way of talking about an emotion or action. Each person has the openness to a certain kind of language or perspective that touches them.

Then is our relationship to habits and the sophistication we have over many years of developing the Method in terms of deconstructing habits that are either explicit that people are aware of or ones they are not aware of. There are all kinds of tricks and processes to help people develop new and healthier habits. So the degree to which we, I think, have delved into and studied habit formation and its deconstruction and reconstruction is not something I see other systems delving into or talking about very much, even though it can of course just happen in all kinds of ways. There are so many different roads into that.

Coming back to my first *learning to learn* point, is just to say again that there is that one step of having things you can do to help yourself and then there is the additional step of really being able to create yourself.

For practitioners I think this means the ability to improvise around what we have been given and inherited of the Method and then make that our own enough that we can improvise around it and really make it for an individual. That happens organically in Functional Integration and sometimes for some people less so in Awareness Through Movement, but it is the same thing.

We want to be able to take a lesson and respond to the group we have in front of us. It can be the same lesson and it can be a group of 85 year olds sitting in chairs or a group of teenagers sitting on the floor and everything in between - people with pain, with serious injuries, athletes... It is the same lesson but taught in a different way for each of these different groups.

I think that is an area which could be developed further and articulated more clearly in the Method because there seems to be a line where people think that if you do not teach the lesson the way Moshe taught it fifty, sixty, seventy years ago that somehow we are violating some holy standard. I think that can hold us back. You do not start changing things or improvising right away. You get a solid basis in the Method and understanding it, which then brings us into the teaching element. Eventually then it becomes an improvisational method and nobody should be ashamed for applying it to each learning challenge at hand.

So that is what I have to weave together to make this beautiful tapestry of Feldenkrais practise.

KATARINA

Thank you so much.

Question #2

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

ELIZABETH

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 practise.

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 sometimes a little different in different trainings depending on the people 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 a lot of reflection on 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 experiences. That is certainly not my experience.

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.

KATARINA

Question #3

Then where do you see the work going and how do training programs evolve and need to evolve?

You have a special perspective here since you have done the first two years of developing ATM teachers, and some of your students now want to go around and find the Functional Integration component.

ELIZABETH

Some do, some do not. Yes, this is the question I am really most interested in.

I would say first of all, we are all about options and I think we need to have a lot of different options in how we do trainings. If you think about it we are basically just copying what Moshe did. We copied the Amherst Training for a long time and people did not teach Functional Integration. Then gradually that changed. We still have that ability. People do not have to teach it in the beginning. Some still do not, but many many do and can do it in the ways they want to do it.

I think having the ability to experiment is really important. Fundamentally the model has not changed very much in all these years and I am disappointed in some of what I have heard about the response to the ATM trainings. There are some countries in Europe and some people I have spoken to where they are 'like we would be killing the father' by doing that [separating ATM from FI®]. We have to change for the 21st or 22nd Century, wherever we are going. We have to be able to be nimble and offer different kinds of programs. I think there are plenty of people who can come forward with good new ideas.

It takes time. I feel even more excited about the ATM program now than when we started it. Some of the reason for that is because we have been including people who really would not do a four year trainings. We force people to do four year trainings to be ATM trainers, but if you look at the statistics more people become ATM teachers than Functional Integration teachers. So if we separate them we can have people in that program who actually really want to teach FI and not include

people who really just want to teach ATM. [However, until] Now that is their only chance to train, or else they drop out and teach ATM but call it something else. There are a lot of people out there who are not interested in a hands-on practise.

Examples of that are people who teach voice, acting, and certain kinds of athletic activities. They are excited about ATM. They see the transformative potential, but they like the job they have and want to integrate the Method into that job.

Think about it. Acting or voice teachers, musicians who are teachers, are going to expose hundreds and hundreds of students over time to the Method. We want these people to become ATM teachers and to understand what they are doing.

Otherwise sometimes they listen to a lesson and then teach it without really knowing how to teach it. Some people are very clever. They figure it out, but may or may not start calling it Feldenkrais.

So to have people really properly trained in, and understanding, just that [ATM] element of the Method is one new option we could have.

In Germany, it is interesting, they are trying this modular system. I am not sure what I think about it, because I think people really need individual tracking and I am not sure who is tracking them in a modular system.

I do think we have to experiment though and have the possibility of making new discoveries.

So I think we need new options around the four year programs. I think we should have options of two year programs.

But I think the biggest challenge is how are we really assessing the success and I do not think we have answered that question. That is going to need some serious work. If we let a lot of experimentation happen, then how are we assessing the success there?

At the moment we really do not know what people do in their trainings. On the one hand, as an educational director, I really do not want a group of bureaucrats telling me what I can and cannot do in my training. On the other hand, I see that we have to maintain quality and need a way of assessing a pilot program. If somebody has a new idea I would really like us to have the ability to help that group develop that idea and have a way of assessing it.

In the same way, how are differences being assessed when people are teaching within a model. I do not think that is a simple question. For somebody like me, if someone is going to come in and start telling me how I should teach or not teach I would be out, I would not put up with it and I think a lot of my colleagues would

not put up with it either. So how do we find our way with this? I do not have a simple answer for that.

I think it is much easier with pilot programs and new structures to have a way to assess them, but I do not think it is set up for the current pilot programs. I do not think Jeff's program was really evaluated particularly as something different. I also do not think the ATM programs will necessarily be either, because I do not think we know how to do it yet.

I am excited though. I think there is a lot of interest in expanding our options and trying new models. Being able to use Zoom... For me the pandemic was just an example of learning through constraints, because I would never ever have done a lot of the things I ended up doing and I think would have just been against them. Now, doing an ATM supervision online is great. And in my last training students recorded FI lessons they had done, so I could just look at one lesson with them rather than supervising a couple of people at the same time and we could stop and start as we went along. I loved that and I never would have done those without the pandemic.

So I hope we are able to exchange what we learn and keep developing and having new options.

KATARINA

There has been talk of a psychometrician, a professional who would create a metric of variables and organize them.

"A psychometrician is someone who practices the science of educational and psychological measurement, or in other words, testing." "They may be involved in all aspects of the development of the program, such as defining the knowledge, skills and abilities (KSAs)

"— <https://www.altalang.com/beyond-words/psychometricians-what-they-are-and-what-they-do/>

ELIZABETH

I do not know.

KATARINA

So you are open to new ways of people broaching what they are doing and how it might be assessed.

ELIZABETH

Yes.

KATARINA

Is there anything we have not discussed that you would like to include?

ELIZABETH

Not that I can think of right now. Maybe when I read the transcript I will think of something. I just think the world is changing and we know we have an incredible method that is unique and powerful and poorly understood, so we need to figure out how to move forward with that in this still essentially new century.

KATARINA

Thank you, that is what we will do. I will send you the transcript and we will go from there.

ELIZABETH

Good, thank you and I look forward to getting the transcript. Take care.

AUDIO Topic: Tuesday January 31, 2023 at 10AM PST Elizabeth Beringer ToT
Legacy Interview with Katarina Halm

Time: Jan 31, 2023 10:00 AM Vancouver

<https://www.dropbox.com/s/7rcrfmi1ncng8in/>

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Feldenkrais® Legacy Transformation of Training ToT ~ the Questions:

We would plan to spend 30-60 minutes.

The four (interview) questions are as follows:

1. What are the essential qualities and characteristics of the Feldenkrais® work – without which it would not be Feldenkrais work? What needs to be carried forward as the essence of this work?

- What distinguishes the Feldenkrais work from other professions?
What is the key thing that is still unique?
What is the gem that makes this worth being a named method?
- What are the “essential pillars” that guide us, no matter who we are working with, or in what environment/ situation?
- What is essential to the *Feldenkrais* “way of working”?

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 to work as a *Feldenkrais* Practitioner?

Please now take a moment to reflect and speculate about the future.

3. Where do you see the work going, and how do training programs need to evolve?

4. Is there anything that we have not discussed that you would like to include today?

Tracy Mulligan and I (Katarina Halm) have been compiling the responses to each of the four interview questions (from all the Trainers interviewed to now). We are creating a composite of anonymous responses to bring to the next ToT meeting “*Transformation of Trainings*” group of the *Legacy Forum* on Sunday January 29 at 4pm PT. I plan to let you know more specifically where the responses to Interviews will be shared with colleagues.

Meanwhile, below are listed the standard format and responses to some questions:

From the “Transformation of Trainings” group of the *Legacy Forum*

Q’s and A’s:

How would the information from the zoom interviews be handled?

- We will record the interview, prepare a transcript, and send the transcript to the Trainer for review and editing if requested by the Trainer.

What happens to the videos from the Trainers who choose to respond?

- We will prepare transcripts of the recordings, and both the videos and transcripts will be provided to the Legacy Forum to support the various projects.

What is the Legacy Forum?

- The Feldenkrais Legacy Forum is a grassroots group of *Guild Certified Feldenkrais Practitioners*[™] who are taking the initiative to ensure the future of our work. We are volunteers, not an official policy-making body.

Who are the current members of the “Transformation of Trainings” subgroup of the Legacy Forum?

- Jacklyn Boone, Jeff Haller, Katarina Halm, Bonnie Humiston, Carmen Llerenas, Tracy Mulligan, and Violet Van Hees.

With appreciation,
Katarina

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