

Feldenkrais Zeit 2025 – WORKING with CHILDREN in Europe

Nancy Aberle

“At best, one can hope to gain a vague idea of the whole by focusing on a particular detail.” – Lucien Hervé, photographer of Le Corbusier’s work

In the book *Illusive Obvious*, Moshé Feldenkrais wrote about the idea that a system which consists of many parts has a better chance to recover and survive.

The “whole” that I want to gain a vague idea of, is the future of Feldenkrais’ work, as it relates to children in Europe. The “particular detail” that I want to focus on is my view of the current situation and new possibilities that are emerging.

In 1997, when I moved from California to Switzerland, I searched for other practitioners in Europe, who specialize in working with children and had a full-time practice. I found no one. Now, the list in many countries is long. This organic geometric growth simply makes sense. It is based on the successes that children have with this method, especially children with disabilities. The parents network effectively spreads the word about this gentle approach that is based on brain-plasticity. The success that the children have with this kind of learning brings a kind of unstoppable enthusiasm. Parents and professionals who work with children need support to understand the theory and practical applications of Dr. Feldenkrais’ work. This often leads to a paradigm shift from focusing on a child’s limitations, to focusing on a child’s ability to differentiate and learn. This is a huge shift from a “mechanical model”, to an “information model”.

The other day, I was working with a 14-month-old baby who was born with a genetic syndrome that affects the growth of her brain. Her mother said she wondered if her daughter would ever learn to walk, then she said, “I am optimistic”. A few minutes later I said, “Walking has a very long apprenticeship, it begins while we are babies. In a lying position, we humans move, notice what we can, and our brain brings order into the disorder again and again. We first learn to deal with gravity while lying down.” A little later, I said, “Hope is not in the future, it is in the new possibilities that your daughter has right now.” The next day, the baby could roll to her belly, lean on her elbows, lift her head with ease and look around. The mother said, “I never saw her do that before”. I said, “Her brain is changing itself with each new ability.”

My current situation is that I specialize in working with children, and I enjoy doing this full-time in Zurich. I have given presentations at international and interdisciplinary science conferences for pediatric professionals. I have observed over the years that the curiosity and openness of other professionals is best met with something that they can experience, combined with specific success stories and the science-based thinking of this method.

In my professional life I have helped create and lead various teams of people. Together we have given many workshops for parents and professionals, we have started Feldenkrais and NeuroMovement Centres in many countries, we have volunteered our time to give free lessons for children, with as many as 27 families participating in one “Feldenkrais without Borders - Children’s Project”.

The trajectory of our progression as a group of like-minded people is in response to the changing environment. When we are enough “parts” who can work well as a “whole”, hope is not in the future, it is in the new possibilities that are opening up right now.

Where we got our training and certification from is less important than the effectiveness of our work with children and their families.

At this point in time, I know of teams that are forming to work in schools, teams that work together in countries with less resources, or network with others who work with children, near where they live. Each part and each team create their own intention about how they want to work with children. When we focus on our generosity of spirit and willingness to share knowledge, we can have less and less disruption between our intention and action.

“When we dream, anything is possible.” - Jaume Plensa – sculptor

First we dream, then we figure out the “how”.