

# ***MAKING THE ABSTRACT CONCRETE***

## ***A Sense of Oneself & Organic Learning***

When a child reaches for a shiny object or a ball on the floor, she may lose her balance and fall as she reaches. Through this imbalance, she learns to crawl in order to recover. She is learning about an abstract idea, balance, in very concrete terms. She is **relating experience with thought**.

Before a child can stand on her own two feet, she must concretely understand flexibility, stability, effort, power, time, space, integrity, orientation, habits, inhibition, friction, acceleration, deceleration, speed, resistance, gravity, order, and chaos (to name just a few: we are very busy as infants). These qualities describe movement. Physicists use these abstract terms to describe the cosmos. Our explanation of existence is a projection of abstract ideas made concrete through our experience while learning to move and relate to our environment.

By experimenting with crawling, a child is developing a sense of herself as being balanced. Her self-image can now include more of the idea of balance because she is better balanced. **Balance is felt as an internal experience of an external law.** The metaphorical or symbolic idea of being balanced now has meaning. The more clearly we sense these abstract ideas, the easier it is to live them. It is never too late to learn. By the way, the same abstract ideas are used to describe the functions of businesses, governments, weather systems, and economies. We describe other systems by the qualities we know organically-- abstract ideas made concrete through our physical experience.

### ***Organic Learning:***

Children, through their own initiative and exploration, learn ideas and laws that are of value to them when they need them. The Feldenkrais Method uses the same perspective while creating conditions for learning. Conditions are created so the learning happens organically, as a natural consequence of the students' own actions, in a time frame, and at a pace that makes sense to the student.

**That way, the students discover something for themselves. They are not taught: they learn.**

While learning as children, we were sometimes praised, and found the affection and nurturing we needed. At other times, we were ridiculed, made to feel guilty, or shamed while learning. We were forming our personalities by making sense of the forces and events that shaped our lives. Our personality is built on our self-image, and it was developed while we were learning to move. We still embody those lessons as ideas of ourselves, which are reflected as emotional, mental, and physical attitudes in our posture and acture today.

Our posture/acture is determined by both evolutionary factors and learned responses. Our individual experience is of greater consequence than in other species, because the growth of the brain after birth is so considerable. As a result, humans have a much wider variety of responses and choices of actions than does any other species. Feldenkrais used this knowledge while training people in judo and self-defense. He noticed the unique posture his students would spontaneously return to when threatened. Some crouch, some bolt, some freeze, some even faint. Each individual crouches differently while preparing a defensive or an aggressive posture. Feldenkrais taught to the each student's individual needs and responses, not to a concept of how humans "should," respond. There wasn't an "ideal" way or a mold to fit into. It was the teacher that remained flexible enough to the students' needs to accommodate the uniqueness of each student.