



Foundation for Movement Intelligence

Wave and Axis, the Newsletter of FMI

Fall 2009 Edition of Wave and Axis!

"Wave and Axis"

Fall 2009

Volume 1, Issue 4

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Letter from Ruthy

Dear Friends and all Bones graduates since the very beginning,

This is a letter of gratitude to Gretchen, who is taking a leave from her function on the FMI Board after many years. It will be strange to imagine the management of FMI without Gretchen. She is so identified with the program from the beginning, with unconditional faithfulness, with an unshakable positive approach, with total commitment and trust in the importance of what we are trying to bring to the culture.

It all started with a fortunate phone call. I called Gretchen out of the blue: I knew her years ago from the New York training, where I was teaching a segment. Then we met again during a Feldenkrais® conference, when she brought me her hand-painted blanket in honor of the magic blanket process in my book. I remembered her enthusiasm-generating spirit . . . I asked her if she would be willing to organize **Bones for Life**®. I wanted to move the program from L.A. to be close to my son in Needham, MA. Before hearing any other details she said "Yes." She knew *Bones* from L.A. videos, and was eager to do something to bring the knowledge to the wide public. Gretchen always sees the wider picture, beyond organizing workshops.

A wonderful relationship of many years began. Always pleasant, we were thinking on a similar wavelength, where Gretchen took a bigger share of the adaptability towards my not-always-easy ideas and specific opinions, like my insisting on a particular color in a brochure. Being an artist in her soul, Gretchen took it on herself to do the administration, which is far less satisfying than teaching, and became fully available to all those who came to learn the new program. Her order came from another place; it was perfect order, but never swept so severely. Everyone knew that they would always find her listening ear and encouragement and be met straight on with flexible, cheerful cooperation.

Speaking of unconventional thinking, Gretchen initiated the interview at NASA. She found an editor for my abstract, and we went to Texas.

The two of us brought up the BFL community to the mature level of the first Trainer Training, during which the Foundation for Movement Intelligence was created, with greater aspiration towards professionalism.

Establishing the FMI Board marked a crucial shift. All the volunteers found themselves engaged in the overwhelming time-consuming formalities of creating a non-profit organization; endless emails, where the negotiation of every detail was discussed between all members in a transparent democracy. Gretchen was at the very center, with many tasks on her hands.

Today the brilliant Board members Doug Boltson, Kelly Feder, Linda Howell, Tyr Throne, Cici Runge, Sheila Zangara, and now also H el ene L evesque are so great at running FMI. We have a spectacular website, public events, and increasing public outreach. It is time to let Gretchen attend to her own teaching and art, release the responsibility from her shoulders, and free her home space from the hardware materials and files that occupy it; although she is always there for us until a good solution will be found. I want also to recognize at this point the previous Board volunteers from the harder pioneering times: Gail French, Deborah Lotus, and Richard Rogers — they supported the organization in its early stages, when we were not spared of beginners' mistakes.

Gretchen, together with all the FMI Board members, I am deeply grateful to you — not only for the devotion of paving the path, but also for your relentless perception of the bigger picture and its prospect for the future.

Be successful, you deserve to be carefree and to enjoy!

I would like to invite anyone in the *Bones* community to write a little piece, a memory, a shared moment with Gretchen, and together we give her a fond bouquet of "Thank-You's."

Love,
Ruthy



BONES FOR LIFE® AT NBC4 HEALTH EXPO!!!

The Foundation for Movement Intelligence (FMI) is delighted to announce that we have been awarded a not-for-profit booth to demonstrate **Bones for Life**® at the NBC4 Health and Fitness Expo, the premier health show in the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area, January 16th and 17th, 2010 at the D.C. National Convention Center.

This is a huge Health Expo (last year over 80,000 people attended NBC4 Expo) and a wonderful opportunity for us to showcase **Bones for Life**®. NBC4 TV will be aggressively promoting the event in the weeks leading up to the Expo with an on-air advertising campaign reaching more than 3 million viewers per week. We expect to see more than 85,000 people from the Washington Metropolitan area at this one-of-a-kind event!

Sandy Beber, Jane Johnston and Chris Kresge are coordinating the FMI exhibit, and we'd love for those of you who have trained in BFL to assist at the booth. FMI will have a standard 10'x10' booth in which we'll show BFL videos, pass out BFL literature, and teach mini-classes, both the standard 90 protocols and BFL for Chairs. We'll network with other health and fitness professionals, and we'll do our best to meet and greet as many of the attendees as we can.

If you are interested in working at the FMI exhibit, let us know. We can offer up to 16 hours of teaching credit for those working toward full certification as a BFL teacher.

Admission to this Expo is FREE!

If you're in the D.C. area January 16th and/or 17th, please plan to attend the Expo! Stop by our FMI booth and enjoy BFL classes (among the many other wonderful activities that will be available, including a rock climbing wall, and ski machine), sample new health foods and products, and see how hundreds of health and fitness modalities showcase their products and services. We'd love to see you!

Ruthy at the National Osteoporosis Foundation Booth in Washington, D.C. 2007



News from the FMI Board

SAVE THE DATE!

To celebrate Ruthy's 80th year, FMI is sponsoring the 1st Annual *Bones for Life*[®] Conference

OCT. 20–24, 2010 at the Barbara Harris Conference Center in Greenfield, NH

You may have noticed that the date and venue of our conference has changed. In these economically tight times we are wanting to make the first conference and celebration of Ruthy's 80th year financially accessible to as many people as possible. After extensive research by Carolyn Sue Albin in Sante Fe, we found that New Hampshire offered us a venue at a cost that fits this intention and that Sante Fe is a city we will have to return to in the future for BFL conferences. Thank you, Carolyn Sue, for all your hard work and devoted effort on behalf of the Conference Committee!

Expect to hear announcements about the conference theme, program, call for presenters, and registration — with both “Early Bird” and FMI membership discount pricing — in the coming months. Save the date; it's sure to be an event you won't want to miss!

Kelly Feder
FMI Board



Photo by Fanny Elouz

Trainer Training this fall at the Barbara Harris Center in Greenfield, NH

Diana Sternbach interviews Ruthy Alon

This interview was done in June 2007, during Ruthy Alon's first Didactic in New Hampshire. Gretchen Langner was present, too.

Here we were: three people, three nationalities, three languages. In spite of it, just one passion: Ruthy's Method — "Bones For Life®."

I wanted to get deeper into the understanding of how she came to her incredibly rich ideas. The three of us were sitting on a huge bed in Ruthy's room at a cozy little inn. The room was decorated in a very romantic rococo style which fitted Ruthy perfectly, and helped us get into this wonderful, casual, respectful but quite funny mood. We had a lot of fun with Ruthy, as always.

Diana: My questions will not be about the method itself, but about you. For instance: Where were you born?

Ruthy: I happened to be born in Colombia, of all places. And the reason was, my parents married in Israel and then they decided to go to South America. I had an uncle who was already there looking for his fortune in life. And my parents went there from Israel too. My father, who was a teacher, created in Bogotá a Hebrew school. And I happened to be born in Colombia which was a fantastic thing probably, because when I went to visit there years later, I felt that this softness and the smiling, the hands work, and many things that I think I wouldn't have gotten then if I had just been born in Israel. My mother told me, I had a nanny. My mother was a midwife nurse; she worked a lot all the time. And the nanny loved to play with me gymnastics. What did she like to play with me? She would hold my feet upside down, me hanging in the air and I would raise my body in an arch over. I think I have this arching backward movement in me . . . and with it my sensitivity in the lower back, as well as the praise and applause I got for the strenuous acrobatics. [There was a lot of joy and laughter remembering this scene.] I was three when my parents returned to Israel and there I grew up and lived all my life (not counting the traveling all over.)

Diana: Who were your parents?

Ruthy: My father is the left side of the brain, the intellect. He came from Russia and he was already a teacher when he was 15. He was an idealistic Zionist, and came to Israel at the age of 17, at the time of the Russian revolution.

He was able to influence people, to sweep them along with him. My mother came to Israel from Morocco when she was 3 years old, on a family pilgrimage to the Holy Land. She was the right side of the brain, the pleasure of handicrafts and flow. And I think I got the intellect of my father and the harmony from my mother (but I hope it is not the other way around).

Diana: Do you remember any anecdote from your early childhood that might have stuck with you, and influenced the creation of *Bones for Life®*? Some habits you had?

Ruthy: It is really east-west mentality. I liked to jump rope; we had all kinds of games with it. I adored dancing, although I never studied formally. I never broke a bone either.

Diana: You have an axis inside yourself.

Ruthy: I am coming to think about it. The more I grew up I was not upright, my back was bent, my shoulders very rounded, actually I keep working on it until today, it is still my project. I know my improvement came through *Bones for Life*. I have a confirmation. I met again a practitioner who had been in my training in Brisbane Australia, about ten years ago. He told everyone that 10 years ago he gave me an FI and now, he said "I can see now, you are much better than then."

I visited Anat's intro when I was in San Francisco, she said to the people: "If you want to know anything about this Method" — she spoke about *Feldenkrais* — "just look at this woman. Ruthy how old are you, 78?" It reminds me how long I am in this Method, about fifty years. It is like this joke, where the little girl comes home and says: "Oh, Grandma! You probably remember the mammoths . . ."

Diana Sternbach interviews Ruthy (cont'd.)

Diana: Do you have kids?

Ruthy: I have two children and 5 grandchildren. And this is amazing how we forget the time when the children were totally “under our caring wings.” As Khalil Gibran said: “Your children are only short-term guests.” You cannot imagine how quickly the time with them passes. The one sorrow I have is that I got to *Feldenkrais* when my children were already teenagers so I could not learn the *Feldenkrais* from my children.

Diana: But you could with your grandchildren.

Ruthy: Yes. I think it was in Alexander Yanai once Feldenkrais said to the people: “You are all working too hard. What are you doing to yourself? You need to treat yourself like good parents do.” To be sensitive to them, to consider, to not making them sorry, don’t make them do too much, not to hurt. You have to treat yourself like you wish ideal parents would. He then said: “All it takes is to have an intuition of a mother that knows what her baby needs, before he can talk.” And at the moment he said it I could relate to it, and understood that essence of the method. I knew how to be a mother, so I could believe I can perceive the training.

Diana: Strange because he didn’t have kids.

Ruthy: He didn’t have kids and he knew all about them. [She thinks . . .] You know, about my kids, none of them did *Feldenkrais*; they are doing each their own things quite well. I have some hopes with some of my grandchildren that they will do it some day. Like the one who was here today, she showed an interest to see the class. My other grandchild, the boy from England, he visited once the Italian training when he was 15 and he enjoyed it. He was there two weeks, everybody loved him, and he started to learn to give FIs. He is a surfer in the cold Atlantic. He gets into the sea and comes out after three hours all blue and happy. Constant worry! For me! If you have children you can never be free of worrying.

Gretchen: Do your grandchildren know how famous you are?

Ruthy: Yah! My granddaughter, the middle one, the one who was independently arranging for herself to go to Ecuador in an interchange of students, at the last year of high school, she wrote an essay: “My grandmother’s wings.” I was astonished.

I am very close to her. She was a premature baby, in the hospital for 11 months. My daughter in law Shoshi was there in the mornings, my son, Guy went in the afternoons, and I could enter the premature ward only after midnight. It was the only time I was permitted. At the beginning they put the preemies on a breathing machine, which is a terrible thing; it takes them a long time to recover. So I thought I have to do some *Feldenkrais* with her. I took her arm and she immediately relaxed.

One day I thought I will give her a bath, and she started to undulate like a dog — quick, fast movements, splashing the water, alternating hands and feet. Wonderful! Every time I came I gave her a bath because that was the only thing that produced movement. The nurse said “You do not need it; I and the mother already washed her today; the father also washed her.” But that was the thing, giving her the water. The water evokes the movement, it’s amazing!

You know, about premature babies, there is some research: what they need is *movement*, and *touch*. These are the conditions in the womb, everything is being touched and there is, all the time, unpredictable movement all around. I wrote it in my book: *Mindful Spontaneity*. This is also what we do in *Feldenkrais*: we do movement, and we do touch. I was very attached to her.

Gretchen: Is she very attached to you?

Ruthy: She is attached to me. She had a difficult life. I mean she had eleven months growing up in the hospital, being pricked in the heel every day to take out blood. She had not a simple life. She is a survivor . . . If you come from the beginning of life with this input, you cannot take anything for granted. She is all the more vulnerable.

End of Part 1. Look for Part 2 in the next issue of *Wave and Axis*.



Upcoming 2009/10 *Bones for Life*® Trainings

**Integrative Learning Center
of Mid America**
www.integrativelearningcenter.org

<p>Segment III December 3–6, 2009 Cincinnati, OH Trainer: Cynthia Allen</p> <p>Segment II December 4–7, 2009 Gainesville, FL area Trainer: Denise Deig</p> <p>Mentoring Workshop January 25, 2010 Seattle, WA Trainer: Denise Deig</p> <p>Segment II February 4–7, 2010 Tucson, AZ Trainer: Cynthia Allen</p>	<p>Segment III February, 2010 (dates to be confirmed) Gainesville, FL area Trainer: Denise Deig</p> <p>Segments II and III April 20–27, 2010 Seattle, WA Trainer: Denise Deig</p> <p>Segment III April 22–23, 2010 Tucson, AZ Trainer: Cynthia Allen</p>
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For information and to enroll, please contact:

Cynthia Allen, GCFP, BFLT/T
support@ilcma.com
www.ilcma.com
Tel: 513-541-5720

Bones for Life® – Segment 1
taught by Marcia Giudice, MS, OTR, BFL Trainer and Feldenkrais® Practitioner

- **Optimize your Bone Health**
- **Put a “Spring in your Step”**
- **Improve your Posture, Balance, and MORE . . .**

TREAT YOURSELF to 4 transformational days exploring the first 30 awareness-based movement processes in the BFL curriculum. (See www.bonesforlife.com)
These 20 hours can count toward BFL teacher certification, or you can participate for your own personal health and wellbeing.

Dates: Jan. 8–9 and Feb. 5–6, 2010

Times: Fridays 1 pm – 6 pm and Saturdays 9:30 am – 3:45 pm

Cost: \$375 (\$350 with early registration by Dec. 8th)

Location: 78 Loker Street, Wayland , MA

Registration: Pre-registration required. Send check to 78 Loker St. Wayland, MA 01778

Instructor: Marcia Giudice, MS, Occupational Therapist, Certified **Bones for Life**® Trainer, FELDENKRAIS® Practitioner, and Core Integration Teacher

More Info: visit www.lifelongwellness.com, call Marcia at 508-358-5314, or email mlg2001@yahoo.com to request a brochure and registration form.

More Upcoming 2009/10 *Bones for Life*® Trainings

Somatic Discovery of the Pelvis taught by Denise Deig, MS, RPT with Marcia Giudice, MS, OTR

In this 3-day workshop, we will take a somatic journey through the pelvis. Experiential anatomy will serve as our guide and foundation as we release through movement and informed touch significant layers of fascia, muscles, joints, and viscera to bring into embodiment a three-dimensional awareness, improved function and freedom of your pelvis. The 'hands on' component will be based on Positional Release Techniques, as developed and taught by Denise Deig. The movement piece will integrate this new found freedom into the rest of your body and will be based on *Feldenkrais*® lessons and *Bones for Life*® processes taught by Marcia and Denise. At the beginning and end of this class we will be sculpting our baseline and the newly awakened somatic self-image of our pelvis into a clay representation blindfolded, a most insightful practice which originated with Gerda Alexander, founder of *Eutony*.

For: MassageTherapists and Bodyworkers, Physical and Occupational Therapists, Feldenkrais Practitioners and Somatic Educators, and other Healing Arts Professionals

Dates: March 26–28, 2010

Times: Friday 10 am – 6 pm, Sat. and Sun. 9:00 am – 5:00 pm

Location: Watertown Center for Healing Arts, 17 Spring Street, Watertown, MA

www.watertowncenter.net

Cost: \$425. (\$375. if paid in full by Feb. 10th)

Registration: Mail check, payable to 'Somatic Therapy Services', to Denise Deig, 7410 E. 106th Street, Fishers, Indiana 06038. Or, to pay by credit card, visit: www.denisedeig.com

About the instructors:

Denise Deig, MS, PT, GCFP

Denise is a Registered Physical Therapist, Guild Certified Feldenkrais® Practitioner, and *Bones for Life*® Trainer. She has extensive postgraduate training in orthopaedic physical therapy, manual therapy, and other healing disciplines including Craniosacral Therapy, Functional Technique, Visceral Manipulation, Energetic Osteopathy, and Myofascial Release.

Denise currently teaches 'Positional Release' and 'Bones for Life'® courses nationally, serves as adjunct faculty at the University of Indianapolis, is author of *Positional Release Technique, from a Dynamic Systems Perspective (2000, 2006)*, and has a private practice in Fishers, Indiana. She can be reached at 317-255-7800, denisedeig@comcast.net, www.denisedeig.com

Marcia Giudice, MS, OTR, GCPP

Marcia has a Masters degree in Occupational Therapy and is certified as a *Bones for Life*® trainer, Feldenkrais® Practitioner, Core Integration Teacher, and Kripalu Yoga and YogaDance Instructor. Marcia has over 30 years of experience as a therapist and educator. She currently has a private practice in Wayland, MA and offers ongoing *Bones for Life*® trainings and classes. Marcia can be reached at 508-358-5314, mlg2001@yahoo.com, www.lifelongwellness.com

Conscious Eating: The Inner Game of Chewing

Presented by Ruthy Alon, Oct 16–17, 2009

I had the pleasure of attending this transformative workshop held at the Sheraton Hotel in Wakefield, MA. Ruthy guided us to explore, through reflection and discussion, our experiences, beliefs, and concepts around topics like eating habits, deprivation, dieting, and more. We explored some **Bones for Life**® processes to improve alignment and posture, and an ATM differentiating our skull from our lower jaw. I enjoyed the group, the discussion, and the movement. But most transformative for me were the two guided meals that we ate together. I remember eating with my non-habitual hand, putting my utensil down between each bite, chewing slowly and really tasting the food, using half as much pressure while chewing, counting to ten as I sensed my level of satisfaction or fullness, and actually leaving food on my plate!!

I was particularly pleased with the change in the organization of my spine and head when I chewed with half-pressure, and the amazing amount of saliva that showed up to help the process. And, I was happy to discover that putting the fork down actually increased the pleasure to be had from each bite!

Although I haven't been eating all my meals like this, I enjoy taking at least a few bites using the strategies I learned at the workshop at each meal. And I love feeling that I can manage what I eat without feeling like I am depriving myself!

Bon Appétit!

Marcia Giudice

BFL Courseware

BFL [NYC] 2007: \$300 (24 DVDs)

TT [NH] 2006: \$300 (30 DVDs)

Chairs [MA] 2005: \$150 (10 DVDs)

Movement Nature Meant DVD: \$15

Teachers Manuals

\$200 complete set

\$100 — Segment I

\$100 — Segments II & III

Checks made out to BFL, and sent to:

Gretchen Langner

87 Pine St.

Portland, ME 04102

Dear **Wave and Axis** Readers,

I would like to let you know there will be a fourth Mexican "Bones for Life Basic Training" — segments 1,2 & 3 — in Zipolite, Oaxaca, Mexico at the Feldenkrais Retreat Center of La Loma Linda from December 26, 2009 through January 12, 2010. Please see the advertisement on page 16 for further details regarding the schedule and training site.

This may be taken by those on the "Teacher Track" as an 'advanced' or 'make-up' training or for one's own personal health benefit. To take advantage of the site, we will specifically address learning to go up and down stairs more easily (great heart and bones exercise!) and Ruthy's "new way" of learning to "fall well" — as taught in her most recent 10-day Trainer Training in New England.

It will be a small intimate training with people from Mexico and a few others from all over the world — taught in English and translated into Spanish, with German and French translation also available. It will be 4 days (5 hours per day) with 3 days off between segments to enjoy the beach; the wildlife (turtles) preserves of Mazunte close by; day and overnight trips; or just relaxing in the 'greenhouse of learning' that this paradisiacal spot provides. We will observe sunset high over the Pacific every evening. This is a great way to bring in the New Year, and the New You!

All the Zest,

Deborah Elizabeth Lotus

*Certified: Feldenkrais Teacher/Practitioner, Bones for Life®
Teacher/Trainer*

A Report on my Bones for Life® Didactic on Salt Spring Island, Canada in July 2009

by Anna Haltrecht

At last it was warm and July on Salt Spring Island.

After teaching my first group of students the *Basic Program* and the *Advanced Study* over the past 3 years in my studio, it was time to teach the Didactic. I organized it to follow Part B after a day off. Several more participants, who had studied with Ruthy and other BFL Trainers, also then joined us.

I created a plan of topics for discussion, and projects to do using ideas from the Didactic I took with Ruthy, and from discussion with other Trainers. Each student taught 2 processes, one by themselves and one as part of a small group. They also had projects to work on in pairs — creating a 6–8 week lesson series for a particular group and/or a plan for an introductory workshop.

Each day over the 5-day training I taught a process using material from the Trainer Training and the Chairs program. We spent time with Practice Teaching, and discussed various topics, including the program concepts and their related processes; questions about individual processes; safety issues; use of language in teaching; practical issues connected to teaching; particular physical difficulties with students; and possible solutions, e.g., using hands on wall for support.

We took time on the first day to learn the “Process Explorations” by using the 10 points for Analyzing a Process with Process #11. This set the stage for the Practice Teaching to be taught using these points. After each person or group taught we discussed the lesson. Many lively discussions took place. Even seemingly simple processes like # 40 “Rocking in One Unit” became a resource for animated discourse and creative ideas. Variations were created to ensure that anyone could enjoy the benefits of the lesson, even someone with limited neck movement. The accompanying photo shows Judy Ralston with the wrap around her head to give more support to her neck from the material.

I had gathered together a list of questions that Ruthy had asked us when I took the Didactic, and I turned it around so that I was now the questioner. This offered yet another opportunity to jump into more discussions about the work, and the wider implications of bringing the BFL material to a diverse population.

Several of my students had never been to a training taught by Ruthy, so one day we followed a process from one of Ruthy’s DVDs and later watched her give a demonstration in the Australian training. After class another day, we watched “Movement Nature Meant” and a different time I showed “When the Moment Sings.”



Rocking in one unit

Teaching Didactic on Salt Spring Island (con't.)

I created projects for each person to do to count toward their Mentoring hours. I asked each person to write up the lesson plans that they taught in the Didactic, and to choose a topic to research and write up as a report. Some of the topics chosen were marketing, working with the elderly, nutrition and research. I also asked them to write a list of personal pointers that would help them with their teaching, and to list insights gained from the Didactic training.

Teaching the Didactic in my own studio was very empowering. It showed how much we all know and how important it is for us to come together and share our ideas and knowledge. It made me pay even greater attention to how I teach, and how I choose my words to convey ideas.

The Didactic is important to do together as we all learn from each other in a supportive environment. It gives us an opportunity to share our knowledge with each other. The experience inspires us to go back to our community and continue to spread Ruthy's wonderful work of Bones for Life®. We find how it can become our own, how we can integrate it into our life, and we truly embrace the beauty of teaching. And we know we have each other to call upon for when we need additional support.

I look forward to finishing the Mentoring with my students, getting their reports from their various projects, and sending them their Bones for Life® Teacher Certificates!

Some comments from my students at the end of the Didactic:

"I know now that I am on the right track, and I really understand the work. It feels good and empowering."

"Two weeks, attending Part B & the Didactic together, was not too long or too much! I now have a workshop plan and a series of lessons to teach. All I need to do now is set the date!"

"It was great to be connected with such a stimulating group, and to now have people I know with whom to share thoughts and bounce ideas off."

"All the discussions were so inspiring; it makes me want to come back and do another Didactic."

Anna Haltrecht
Bones for Life® Teacher/Trainer
Feldenkrais Practitioner & Assistant Trainer



In 15 Seconds, What is Bones for Life®?

Cynthia Allen, Trainer

At each of the segments taught through Integrative Learning Center of Mid America we encourage participants to get comfortable describing BFL. Using the old marketing idea called the "15-second elevator speech" we invite participants to imagine a friend asks "What are you doing this evening?" Of course, the answer is "Going to *Bones for Life*® class" and this leads to "What is *Bones for Life*®?"

We create an open sharing environment for these tentative first attempts by foregoing feedback. It's a joy to sit back and bask in the variety that comes forth.

At the Tucson Segment I in August, these incredible responses were shared after a brief five-minute writing break. I always find these descriptions to be so inspiring, and this was no exception. I am guessing you will also be renewed by reading them.

"Bones for Life® was created by Ruthy Alon to help empower people to lead a pain-free life and be their true selves. It uses gentle micro-movements to align the structure to work optimally."

"BFL is a series of movements that I can do in a chair or the floor that make my neck and pelvis get better aligned so I feel less pain in those areas when I walk."

"Bones for Life® is an active program for improving posture. Since bones keep us upright and good posture keeps bones healthy, they'll last a lifetime without wearing out or causing pain."

"It's learning new and improving old ways of using your bones/skeleton to keep you upright, instead of your muscles. It improves your efficiency as you move, your posture, and overall comfort."

"Bones for Life® is an amazing series of movement lessons that help improve alignment through a person's skeleton. This assists in improving balance, stability, and bone health."

*"There is a cloth used in *Bones for Life*®. I get to wrap myself up nice and snuggly in different ways to help me organize myself better so when I start bouncing on my heels the vibration will go up through the skeleton and help me ward off osteo."*

"Bones for Life® is an amazing system of unusual, fun exercises that helps improve your posture, balance, and bone health and you walk more comfortably and easily and safely afterwards."

"Bones for Life® is a class which makes us aware of how our body can move effectively. It reminds us to 'act or move' naturally."

*"I'm taking my *Bones* to class to teach them how to live strong, healthy and alive."*

"Bones for Life® is a fun way to strengthen your bones. It teaches you better posture, body alignment, and improved balance. It can empower the person."

"Bones for Life® is an incredible learning process that helps bring alignment, stability and flexibility back into our bodies in a gentle caring way. These long pieces of colorful material help soften and support our bony sore spots during the exercises."

The above statements were compiled by one of the participants (unfortunately without the authors' names). I don't know who wrote which one any longer, but I can give group credit to Bonnie Angelie, Mary Lou Batiz, Lori Black, Susy Bogie, Jeannie Hills, Jean de Jong, Kathleen McLoughlin, Joan Peet, Susan Schmugge, Carolyne Slayton-Knox, and Julia Wilkinson. Look for some great teachers coming from this group!



Case Study: Bones for Life® by S.K. Loeb

Introduction

In 2007 I was contacted by a former Feldenkrais® student about her bone density status. She had decided to stop taking Fosamax and nine months later had shown a drop in bone density. Before her doctor advised her to go back on medication she suggested waiting another year, since nine months was not a long enough time to make an evaluation. If, at that time, her bone density continued to go down, she would recommend medication. My former student — whom I will refer to as Sylvia¹ — did not want to be on medication and had called for advice on alternative methods for increasing her bone density.

I was a *Bones for Life*® teacher², had taught several classes in the program, and had taught various processes from the program to private students. I was enthusiastic about it, and suggested to Sylvia that she might try this program. Since she had a year, I introduced the idea that we use it as a case study, bookended by bone density tests³. Sylvia agreed and this paper is a report of our working together and the results of that year of work.

What Is Bones for Life®?

Bones for Life (BFL) is a program of 90 movement processes or lessons developed by senior *Feldenkrais* teacher Ruthy Alon. These lessons are devised to stimulate bone strength through teaching the ‘hows’ and ‘whys’ of each movement, not just as a series of separate movements that are to be repeated for a certain number of times. Which is to say that the goal is to better align the skeleton and teach the nervous system that directs it to execute these processes.

Vigorous, weight bearing movement is one of the avenues bones use to absorb essential nutrients that they need for strength. But vigorous movement performed by a skeletal and nervous system that is poorly aligned — and thus unable to register kinesthetic differences and changes — can result in sore muscles, injury, and, not atypically, a lack of motivation on the part of the mover to continue to move in this way, i.e., abandoning a movement program because it feels unpleasant, difficult, and boring.

In the case of osteoporosis, a regular program of vigorous movement may be indicated⁴. BFL — which offers a variety of increasingly challenging processes based on developing kinesthetic awareness of alignment — begins to address these issues directly. BFL also takes the issue of safety very seriously. Many of the processes are performed while lying on the floor using pressure from a hand or foot pressing against the wall, thus protecting the spine. One of the major protocols of the program is the use of a long cloth, referred to as a “bones wrap.” This wrap is used in various protective and inventive ways: to girdle the torso, to act as a light structure to balance on the head, and to use between individuals in a group setting while working in pairs. It provides a kinesthetic feeling of easy upright posture, and allows for safe, secure jumping.

BFL also addresses issues of balance, both directly and indirectly. The kind of kinesthetic awareness which BFL cultivates inherently develops balance throughout the program; in its final segment the issue of falling is tackled directly — albeit under very safe conditions. For further and more detailed information on BFL, I refer you to the program’s website www.bonesforlife.com.

¹ This is not her real name.

² See bonesforlife.com for teacher training procedures and qualifications.

³ See the Appendix for before and after bone density tests.

⁴ Levin Pamela, *Perfect Bones* (Berkeley: Celestial Arts, 2002) pp 180–200.

History

Because she was unable to obtain prior medical records, I have asked Sylvia to write in her own words what she recalled of her medical history before we began the program:

“I was sixty when I was first diagnosed with osteopenia in my hip. My gynecologist put me on Fosamax, which I took for about 7 years. Subsequent bone density tests showed that bone loss had not increased while on the drug. However, I became worried about taking Fosamax after hearing of the study that linked it to necrosis of the jaw. My gynecologist suggested substituting Evista for Fosamax, but I refused. I stopped the medication and nine months later I had a bone density test. It showed a drop in bone density, particularly at the wrist. She felt that this was not enough time to really determine the full effect of stopping the drug, and she gave me another year to see what resulted. It was at this point that I contacted Susan Loeb.”

Hypothesis, Methodology, and Rationale

The hypothesis I set out was that by learning a better skeletal alignment to produce springy pressure on the bones Sylvia could stay off the medication she so deeply desired to discontinue.

In order to facilitate this hypothesis, I consulted with a professor of physical therapy who helped me to design the following guidelines⁵:

1. The program was set up for approximately a year, until Sylvia’s next bone density test.
2. Sylvia would have one private BFL lesson with me every other week.
3. She would repeat that lesson, or another lesson, on the off week. In order to facilitate this, the lesson would be recorded on tape.
4. She would bounce on her heels 100 times a day. (*Bouncing on the Heels* is one of the primary processes of the program.)
5. In May I added two to four pushes on the wrist per day⁶.
6. Records would be kept.

The rationale for this set-up encompassed both my concerns and interests as a teacher, and Sylvia’s concerns as a student.

BFL is a relatively new program, with very little research to validate it. While there is some promising anecdotal evidence, there is only one significant pilot study noted on the website. The study shows improvement in bone density in three women — ages 69, 50, and 46 — who studied BFL with Ruthy Alon for four months in Israel. They met once a week for four hours and in addition practiced at home on their own. The study does not specify if these women were pre-or post-menopausal, and in what kind of home practice they engaged.

From my perspective I had some concerns about using this time frame in American society. I doubted whether many people could make a four hour weekly commitment in what was at that time a busy, frantic culture. Since I was not teaching a group course, I decided to make our sessions 45–60 minutes long (depending upon various factors such as discussion), which is the usual duration of my private sessions.

Sylvia, who worked in the arts, had a limited income and could only afford to come every other week. (This is why the taped sessions evolved.) Given our current economy in 2009, the issue of financial constraint makes her situation that much more understandable and relevant.

Bouncing on the Heels, a process taught at the beginning of the course of instruction, is, as Ruthy Alon says, “the bread and butter of the program.” It is easy to do at home, efficient, and not terribly time-consuming. While Sylvia was encouraged to work with the principles of BFL in her daily movement, and to work with the other BFL processes, she agreed to do 100 bounces a day, the taped lesson every other

⁵ From a private conversation, May 2007.

⁶ Evans Dr. William J, Astrofit: The Astronaut Program or Anti-Aging (New York: Free Press, 2002) pp.185–188.

week, and to make records of her practice. The number of bounces was selected because of the information from a previous study on heel drop, cited in the book *Astrofit*.

Our program began in April 2007 and ended in February 2008. It encompassed nearly all of the processes of Bones I, and several from Bones II. The program was stopped a month-and-a-half earlier than scheduled because Sylvia's child became seriously ill.

Outcome

Though technically Sylvia should have had her follow-up bone density test in March or April of 2008, she was quite busy caring for her family at that time. Psychologically and physically exhausted, she did not go for follow-up testing until September 2008. Nonetheless she kept up with her bounces, six or seven days per week. She also did arm pushes against a wall regularly, from May 2007 onward⁷. The results of her final bone density test showed no further deterioration in her bone readings — no increase in bone density, but also no decrease. Her doctor considered this lack of change a very positive outcome for a post-menopausal woman of her age. Given the stabilization of Sylvia's bone density, her doctor did not recommend that she return to using medication.

Challenges

Life does not mold itself to fit the demands of a case study, and Sylvia and I had our challenges in order to complete it. She had minor surgery on her lower leg and had to stop practicing for several weeks. We also could not have foreseen the tragic illness of her child which forced her to stop the program prematurely, and to wait six months after that before taking her final bone scan. It is a credit to her determination that she continued the bouncing even throughout the hard losses she sustained during those six months.

Sylvia also had difficulty complying with the protocol we set up. I found out after the fact that she had rarely used the tapes and never used the wrap at home. Further complicating the parameters of the study, Sylvia began to take a T'ai Chi Ch'uan class once a week for an hour. She mentioned this to me casually, after having done it for awhile; unaware this might impact our study. I checked with the P.T. I had consulted, who felt we could proceed if this was noted. Though not ideal, I had to accept that a life-promoting case study should not interfere with one's life!

Because Sylvia was strongly focused on wrist bone loss (from her scan results), I taught her *Climbing the Wall* from Bones II (8). The process consists of gently falling into a wall, catching yourself with your hand and wrist and gently pushing away. Cautioning her to use only 20% of her potential pressure, I suggested doing this two to four times a day. But in her determination to improve, she did many more and developed tendonitis. We both learned from this: Sylvia learned to err on the side of caution; I learned to be extra careful in judging when a student is too focused on results.

Conclusions and Recommendations

From Sylvia's perspective this course of study was a success. It was from mine as well. She was a year older, had not taken medication, and still was able to maintain her density readings. Nonetheless, her density reading did not increase. I think the question this poses is: "Could it have?"

Of course each individual is unique, but even so I think the study raises further questions around this theme: What was the effect of her age on the effectiveness of the program? In other words, if she had been pre-menopausal would the outcome have been different? If she had strictly followed the protocol, would her density have improved? What would have happened if she had bounced 200 times a day? Or if we had met just twice a week? Or for two hours, instead of one?

⁷ The reasons for doing this process and the description of its action are included in the next section: Challenges.

From this study, and from anecdotal evidence written on the Bones Forum⁸, I think that questions regarding the influence and effects of age, amount of homework done, and class time are all well worth investigating.

Special Note for BFL Instructors

Concern has been raised that research narrows our focus as teachers, and prevents us from deeply resonating with all the rich ramifications of the BFL program. I certainly agree that we must take care that this does not happen. Nevertheless, I think it behooves our community to embrace this aspect of investigation in order to better legitimize our work — both for those who need it, and for those who need to become aware of it (primarily the medical profession). We are claiming that our work can strengthen bones, after all!

I had never done anything like this before, but when the opportunity arose I found that I was willing to take the time and effort — both out of great respect for the work, and out of personal curiosity. I encourage all of us to develop this curiosity, to keep records, and to let those records pose questions. I would encourage any teacher to begin a case study, if possible, and to involve herself with more elaborate research whenever possible. Not everyone can, or will be able to, do this, but I am hoping that more BFL teachers will take on this challenge — for the sake of the future growth and recognition of this promising work. (For more examples of writing case studies in alternative medicine I refer you to *Groundworks* edited by Don Hanlon Johnson.)

Last but not least, we need to acknowledge that we currently live in troubled economic times, and that everyone has less money with which to experiment. All of us want to know that we are spending wisely, and that our investments are legitimate. We want to know if we can really help others avoid the negative effects of Fosamax and other similar drugs⁹. The better we, as BFL teachers, understand the program — its potential for efficacy and the path to its efficacy — the more we have to offer those who are seeking health with limited means to do so.

Bibliography

Alon, Ruthy. *Bones for Life Teacher's Manuals*, I,II, III, 2007.

Evans, Dr. William J. *Astrofit: The Astronaut Program for Anti-Aging*. New York: Free Press, 2002.

⁸ Anecdotal evidence has been collected in a file on the Bones Forum.

⁹ Levin, Perfect Bones, pp.28-60. Levin, Pamela. *Perfect Bones*. Berkeley: Celestial Arts, 2002.

Editor's Note:

A very special thanks to Susan Loeb for writing up this Case Study. We had hoped to put it in the last issue of Wave and Axis, but it was impossible owing to space limitations. Susan shortened the article quite a bit, and now I am happy to present it to you. If you wish to read the entire case study, along with some of the supporting documents, please contact Susan directly at SKLoeb@aol.com.

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Towel Jump

Photo by Fanny Elouz

Wave and Axis is published quarterly. We welcome all your articles (setting up a practice, lessons learned, insurance issues, finding wraps and weights, processes explored more fully, etc.) as well as your anecdotes, research projects, photos, interesting links, upcoming BFL training dates, personal milestones (e.g., birthdays or births), news of travel and teaching *Bones* in new places, recommended reading, reports from trainings you have attended, discussions of processes, use of BFL in daily life, etc. Any reasonable submission will be considered, space permitting.

The deadline for the next issue is January 15th, 2010. Please send your submissions to:

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With thanks to all for your contributions, help, and encouragement!

Chrish Kresge,
Editor



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In the Next Issue of *Wave and Axis*:
Part 2 of Diana Sternbach's Interview with Ruthy
