

With Feldenkrais we touch the essence of life

ETC Board of Directors members Beth-Karin Danielsen (representative of Norway) and Andrea Melita Thiem (representative of Italy) interviewed Franck Armand (chair person of ETAB for 3,5 years) on 28th June 2021, shortly before leaving this position.

Franck, you entered your work at ETAB with a deep and rich knowledge resulting from divers approaches to work with the Feldenkrais Method. This gave a varied background to your understanding of the method.

I have a scientific background, after a PHD in Japan, during 15 years, I did research on organic materials for electronic applications. Since I've been a kid, I have been a lot into arts playing the piano and singing in a choir. It actually was my singing teacher who made me acquainted with the Feldenkrais Method which was fascinating for me because I found in it the combination of my structural side and creativity.

I started teaching ATM in 1998 and was graduating in 2000 though during the first few years I was not working as a fulltime practitioner. From 2012 on I was involved in the Assessment Tool project together with Anat Aviv Yeffet & Eitan Sarig regularly meeting in Switzerland before I joined ETAB in 2015.

During my PhD in Japan I've started meditation practices, Zazen, and tea ceremony. I am a tea ceremony master and I also teach ATMs to my tea ceremony students. I've been building short and intense 48 hours workshops in which I propose Feldenkrais and fairy tale wisdom as complementary approaches to our main questions in life. I love to identify in the various fields I am interested in, how the Feldenkrais approach can give a larger and deeper view on what we do. Life is movement and change which is the centre of the Feldenkrais Method. With Feldenkrais, we touch the essence of life.

According to your experience, what does the chair position require?

The function of a Chair is very much connected to communication with other TABs, the educational community and other groups. This interaction requires both structural ability and creativity. In my point of view structure without creativity is dead, creativity without structure leads to nowhere.

What have been the most important aspects or issues you have taken care of over the years?

1. Taking care of training applications and applications from practitioners willing to become Assistant trainers, Trainer candidates or trainers. This is the main task of EuroTAB members.
2. Alternative Pathway project which intended to provide senior practitioners, a different path towards trainership.
3. The work with of the others Tabs about TAGs (Training Accreditation Guidelines), the emergence of new TABs,...
4. Covid 19: in the recent years, the biggest changes in how trainings are being led has been due to the Covid 19 crisis, coincidence that this happened at the same time as the InterTAB is working on an extensive review of the TAGs. Covid 19 and all restrictions resulting from it gave new questions to the group working on this.

Where do you see progress?

Currently the ETAB is in a very good state: it is formed of six members who benefit from a great working atmosphere within a very balanced group. With this EuroTAB group, the European Feldenkrais community has an ideal base to go on with different projects and changes.

Where do you see challenges?

In the communication flow: when ETAB wants to communicate with the Guilds it always needs to go via the reps and through ETC Board of Directors which is too complicated. The ETAB needs to build direct and fruitful contacts with the various groups of our community. This is essential for us so that everyone understands what we do.

What do you see as important issues ETAB and other TABs should address to keep and enhance the Method in this everchanging world?

- Putting up a good and more regular InterTAB communication which has always seen periods of big intensity (f.i. the work on the Assessment Tool in 2016-2017)
- The necessity to found new TABs (South America, Asia: China, Japan, India...)
- In the future InterTAB will have to become more and more important to facilitate and share knowledge with the new emerging TABs. It will be very important to make sure that we share the same idea of quality.
- The Feldenkrais Method in the future: part of the method is based on what Asian people are naturally familiar with due to their roots (taking into account that parts of the origins of the method are coming from Judo). This means that the method should be adapted to the culture where it is taught (copy & paste European or American ways of teaching won't really work for other cultures and the other way around).
- There are plenty of very experienced practitioners who have developed a very rich teaching but who are never even thinking about to continue attending trainings or applying to become an Assistant Trainer or Trainer. This richness is existing but doesn't enrich our professional trainings. Like this the method gets smaller and resources are lost. The path to get on to become a Trainer is too restraint, variety and richness of other ways is too little present at the moment.

Many thanks to Franck Armand for this interview and all the precious time and energy he has dedicated to the Method throughout his years at ETAB!