

Toronto *Feldenkrais* Community Attends Yoga Show

—Marion Harris, GCFT, Toronto

It has always been my belief that the only way the Guild can launch a successful advertising campaign is with the support of *Feldenkrais* practitioners. One way we can provide this support is to do our part to make ourselves more visible.

This is one of the reasons why, after a highly successful 2-day “*Feldenkrais* for Yoga” workshop last March in Naples, Fla., I proposed a workshop for the Second Yoga Show and Conference to be held in Toronto in November.

Fortunately, my contact was a Yogi who had been amazed by a *Functional Integration* session he had been given by an unidentified, wandering *Feldenkrais* Practitioner in, I believe, Bali—my thanks to him! Then another thought occurred to me: wouldn't it be wonderful to have a booth at the show, rather than just a workshop? And, as synchronicity would have it, fellow practitioner Judith Dack called me with the same idea.

With no idea of the enormity of the task we were undertaking, we two innocents held our noses and plunged in feet first. All we knew was that we shared a clear vision of what we wanted to achieve. First and foremost, we wanted to publicize the *Feldenkrais Method* by making a big splash at the Yoga Conference.

In Toronto and the surrounding area, practitioners were expressing feelings of being isolated and discouraged. They felt that they were floundering and totally lacking support. We decided from the beginning that our focus was:

- To use this show as a vehicle for bringing the community together
- To promote the *Feldenkrais Method* and the community, NOT our own practices, and
- To present the *Feldenkrais* community as a united, strong, viable presence.

We initiated the project by renting a 15 foot by 10 foot booth well located for \$2,300. Then the fun began! We were shocked every step of the way at the costs, not only in dollars, but in time, effort, sleepless nights, and money lost by having to cancel clients and have classes taught by others.

It was important to visually demonstrate the differences between the *Feldenkrais Method* and Yoga, and Ruthy Alon's flowing illustrations in her book, “Mindful Spontaneity,” seemed perfect. Even though Ruthy gave permission in her book to use the illustrations, as a courtesy I asked her for approval and, being Ruthy, she generously gave us carte blanche.

My first call was to a genius—a brilliant, and totally reliable contractor—to enlist his services to set-up and take down the booth. (Again, we had no idea of what this entailed).

The second stroke of luck appeared in the form of one of my clients who was recovering from a motor vehicle accident. A part-time Yoga teacher, she is also a full-time architect who

specializes in large-scale trade shows. When she heard about our project, she immediately offered her services, which proved to be invaluable.

In August, we enjoyed a barbecue with ten practitioners at Judith's home where we presented our ideas. At that time, only our goals were clear. How to achieve them was still unknown. Although enthusiastic, everyone was concerned about the costs involved.

At first, we thought we could calculate our costs, and divide them among the participants, which we foolishly estimated at \$5,000 tops, in the end it was double that. We quickly realized this plan was not going to work. In one moment of panic, I said to Judith, “Let's look at the worst scenario: it could cost us each \$2,500 which neither of us can afford, but it wouldn't be the end of the world.” Little did I know how close I was.

We set what we felt was a fair and affordable fee: \$300 for each practitioner and \$150 for each of three trainees. All told, sixteen practitioners participated, which far surpassed our expectations. Two more were too late to be included in the directory (our main handout, which included bios of all participants). Another five practitioners, unable to fully participate, enthusiastically volunteered their time. One of them, Jennifer Payne, actually traveled two and a half hours by train to put in a six-hour shift.

The Yoga show was huge, with attendance upwards of 15,000, and almost 300 booths filled with wonderful color, sounds, sights and smells. We saw all kinds of merchandise, classes, workshops, and pictures of yoga postures that, as *Feldenkrais* Practitioners, made us shake our heads and wonder, “What for?”

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The Toronto, Canada *Feldenkrais* community pooled their resources and built a very successful booth at the Yoga Show and Conference in November. For more information, go to www.feldenkraiscentre.com.

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One of the smartest things Judith and I did, was to share a room at the Intercontinental Hotel, adjacent to the Convention Centre. All the lead-up work culminated with four 12- and 14-hour days. The exhaustion showed when, to our horror, a couple of display panels went up out of sequence. Luckily, the sequencing still worked and only one practitioner noticed.

Our back drop was created by mounting seven 5 foot by 8 foot white panels of special plastic sheeting imprinted with a foot-high "Feldenkrais Method" and logo in royal blue, Ruthy's illustrations magnified to four-feet, descriptions of the work, testimonials and two pictures of Moshe. You can view the whole display, along with more pictures, on the website at www.feldenkraiscentre.com, and clicking on "Yoga Show." As the pictures show, we were amazingly color coordinated.

We had two matching blue FI tables, a blue skirted display table, and broadloom in a complementary shade of mauve. Videos, from the Guild and Ruthy, played non-stop and were a great attraction. And books, tapes and videos all sold. The finishing touch was our matching royal blue t-shirts. With white lettering and the Guild logo front and back, we definitely stood out. The whole presentation was highly professional and our designer/client/helper was not alone in being surprised that we didn't win "Best of Show."

To the surprise of many practitioners, they found they were having a good time. They talked to people, answered questions, handed out materials, invited people to enjoy a ten minute FI, and to fill out raffle tickets for free classes, which included permission for follow-up. Even the recently graduated practitioners took turns doing the ten minute FIs and everyone walked the aisles talking to people and handing out hundreds of directories, articles, and business cards.

All around, our effort was a huge success. Thousands of attendees visited our booth and we stirred up a lot of interest. We all enjoyed the experience and, perhaps most importantly, recognized the value and strength in working together.

To date, the follow up has not been huge but, as with all advertising, results are cumulative, and we feel positive enough to book into a show for next year and possibly the Fitness Show in the summer.

My workshop was well accepted and I received some great testimonials. One teacher brought her whole class of 20 seniors for an ATM at my Centre with an invitation to teach a class at their Community Centre. (I will also be conducting a one-day "Feldenkrais For Yoga" workshop at the Indiana Conference).

The huge cost and the major work is behind us. We have the template for the directory and the display panels and rugs are safely stored, ready to be used again. And the next show will feel like a piece of cake.

We were in awe that we really did it and thrilled that the community felt good about itself. In fact, the most rewarding thing for Judith and I was the acknowledgment we received from the practitioners, who were united and vocal in their appreciation that we took the initiative and actually did the Show.

At www.feldenkraiscentre.com under Yoga Show, you can access the checklist we prepared if anyone who wants to do a show in their community. The display panels are available for rent. They are recorded on CD and can easily be used again, adapted to a smaller or corner booth, or even altered (e.g. if you want to put in your own testimonials or descriptions). On the web site you will also find copies of the two articles we gave out, along with the directory we developed as our main handout.

With all the work, the exhaustion, the worry, and the costs, it was at the same time exhilarating, rewarding, fun, and a huge learning experience. Would we do it again? - You bet we would - and will! **DD**



*Members of the Toronto, Canada Feldenkrais community in Toronto, Canada at the Yoga Show and Conference.
Standing L to R - Araceli Landaburu, Anne Higginbotham, Maya Zimmerman-Litman
Seated - Peter Jennings, Marion Harris, Judith Dack, Patricia White, Susan Free*

"Some of the great intelligences have recognized that their ability was mainly due to their method of using themselves."

Moshe Feldenkrais, "The Potent Self"