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## RIVITALIZING LIFE with Movement Intelligence

January 2014

### PRELIMINARY REMARKS

I believe it is important that, before describing the topic of this paper, I mention the meaningful moments of my learning process with Ruthy Alon.

I met Ruthy Alon in September 1988, as she started the Feldenkrais Professional Training Program (FPTP) Milan 1 where she was the Educational Director. I had never met or heard about her before.

As I was a certified teacher of the Chladek movement to dance Sytem, I thought I did not need any other body “techniques”, but as a human being in difficulty, struggling with yet another impasse in my own life, I decided to enroll in the FPTP Milan 1.

The first time I experienced a Feldenkrais process was with Rosalia Chladek in the 1980’s. It was about the relationship between eye movement and the function of seeing, head movements and the right arm, combined in various differentiation sequences.

This kind of dissociation and integration of different body parts intrigued me and this special methodological approach made a lasting impression on me.

I had great expectations and meeting Ruthy fulfilled them.

Every Feldenkrais Trainer in my training course had their own teaching characteristics and stirred my enthusiasm and wish to explore more.

I was hungry for knowledge. This led me also to go abroad, meet other Trainers and visit other Training Programs.

Once I graduated as a Feldenkrais practitioner (January 1992), I continued my learning process with Ruthy and attended the FPTP Firenze 1 – she was the ED there – for four years as a Practitioner Assistant and I gave Functional Integration lessons to the trainees.

Then, I completed Ruthy’s Master Class and attended her four-year Program *Free your Back*.

When Ruthy began to teach *Bones for Life* in 1999 I was enthusiast about it, as I found again the dynamism and rhythm that I had learned with the Chladek System.

Over time I happened to feel extraordinary tuned in with Ruthy, as if I met her constantly and shared intense cultural exchanges with her.

I qualified as a *Bones for Life* Trainer in 2006 and participated in *Chairs* program in 2009 and *Walk for Life 1* in 2013. I am very interested in *Mindful Eating*, about which I have been told dramatic effects, and I count on attending it in 2014.

All this variety of methodological approaches has rekindled my resources and creative capacities, rivitalizing my personal and professional life.

That is why I started to convey her original didactics by teaching *Bones for Life*. Its effectiveness inspired a group of my students who bestowed special praise on me in December 2012: I was given a pink band saying MISS OSSA DANZANTI - MISS DANCING BONES.

### INTRODUCTION

“The Bones for Life Program has been conceived to be simple and available to everyone, without any constraint of age or physical condition ... and it expresses the theoretical and practical conviction that movement – as nature meant but we have replaced it with habits – can give us back both awareness and freedom.” (from *Osteoporosis and Bones for Life* by Daniela Melchiorre and Debora De Nuccio, Lucca 2012)

“Bones for Life ... enhances the regeneration of bone tissue through a movement that has been specifically conceived ... to counter gravity. Bones for Life processes create an alignment that allows safe movement ... To acquire dynamic movement streaming through the entire axis of the body means to enhance **vitality** and a feeling

of self-mastering.” (from *Healing by eating and laughing* by Diana Gallone, Como 2009)

**Vitality** is the word that has been resonating in my personal experience, a faithful companion during my adventurous Bones for Life and Movement Intelligence journey.

In the third part of my graduation dissertation, “Rosalia Chladek: From functional movement to dance” – which I defended in 2011 at the Università Cattolica of Milan – I made a comparison between the Chladek System, the Feldenkrais Method and Ruthy Alon’s Bones for Life Program.

This is the source I will draw on to analyse the origins of Ruthy Alon’s thinking regarding Movement Intelligence and, in particular, Bones for Life.

Then, I will introduce my personal learning, teaching and dissemination process of Bones for Life.

## PART ONE: THE ORIGINS

### RUTHY ALON and the BONES FOR LIFE PROGRAM

RUTHY ALON, born in Cali, Colombia, on 25th January 1930, is an Israeli teacher, a Feldenkrais Method *Senior Trainer*<sup>1</sup>.

In Tel Aviv she is one of the first direct students (the group of 13) of Moshe Feldenkrais, with whom she trained since 1958.

She participated in the dissemination of the Feldenkrais Method worldwide bringing her contribution to the origin and the development of Feldenkrais Method Professional Training Programs in Europe, the United States, Australia and Israel.

For about 40 years she devoted herself to train Feldenkrais practitioners, as the Feldenkrais Method focuses on awareness about psycho-motor processes. In the mid-1990's she made a 30-minute video on the Feldenkrais Method called *Movement Nature Meant*.

Starting in 1999, on the basis of the somatic learning approach of the Feldenkrais Method, she began to develop the *Bones for Life* Program that aims to stimulate bone strengthening and a postural **reorganisation** through movement.

In an interview<sup>2</sup> Ruthy Alon describes how she developed her *Bones for Life* Program and how this relates with the Feldenkrais Method.

She talks about a relative, a medical doctor, who asked her: "Has the Feldenkrais Method something for osteoporosis?" She immediately answered: "No, it hasn't." When she went back home, though, she started to think about it. It was a challenge. The essence of the Feldenkrais work lies in awakening the brain, guiding the nervous system to find better movement solutions.

Ruthy asked some questions: "What is needed for the eyes to develop sight? Light. What is needed for the ears to develop hearing? Sounds. What is needed for the bones need to develop strength? **Confrontation with gravity**"<sup>3</sup>.

Human beings are able to stand upright due to the skeleton's ability to bear the mass of the body. Feldenkrais used to say that the function of the skeleton is to cancel gravity and facilitate movement. Mobilization of the skeleton is efficient and economical when the pressure onto the floor is rhythmic and is produced in springy pulsations that stream from one

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<sup>1</sup> [it.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ruthy\\_Alon](https://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ruthy_Alon)

<sup>2</sup> LINGMAN, Carol, *Biological Optimism in Aligning the Vertical Weight bearing Skeleton: An Interview with Ruthy Alon*, in «The Feldenkrais Journal», 15, Winter 2003, pp. 27-32.

<sup>3</sup> Vedi ALON, Ruthy, *The teacher Bones for Life Manual*, Firenze, 2007, Segment 1, p. 2.

polarity to the other «in a smooth transmission similar to a domino effect.»<sup>4</sup> The bones strengthen as long as they are used to sustain this pressure in both directions. «The need for strength creates the motivation of the organism to build bone tissue.»<sup>5</sup> This is basic neurological conditioning. With no demand, there is no incentive and the organism interprets the lack of dynamic confrontation with gravity as if there is no need for strength. What is not used is erased from the functional catalogue. A vicious circle is created: the lack of intense movement results in the lack of strength in the bones that, in turn, leads to a further lack of movement. Loss of bone density is equivalent to losing movement autonomy. Then the problem becomes how to stop this vicious circle and safely activate intense movement in a body that is not organized for it.

Ruthy started to explore the possibilities of safely apply pressure by using the Feldenkrais principles and came to design different movement processes.

She considered pushing against the wall while lying on the floor, sitting and standing. By pushing against the wall she tried to use hands and feet with the goal to transmit the force through the whole body from one end to the other. In fact, «the whole work concerns alignment »<sup>6</sup>.

Feldenkrais taught me how to be creative [...] how to come out with more and more solutions and resourcefulness. I started from myself, looking for movement that creates pressure, an organic pressure, a streaming pressure involving the whole body but using the perspective of integration, harmony and natural configurations. Then I began to do things with a wrap to replace a disorganised alignment, but it was too short [...] and finally I got to use a 7-meter-long wrap<sup>7</sup>.

The 7-meter-long and about one-meter-wide strip of cotton is called harness because, when wrapped around the body, it unifies it and enhances its ability to withstand pressure along the axis of the skeleton.

I developed the idea of the harness gradually, beginning with a small towel around the pelvis to help a person get out of the chair and come to standing. Going from sitting to standing requires a specific ability of coordination of the center of the body with its periphery, to succeed in raising the weight of the body against gravity, without excessive

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<sup>4</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>6</sup> Vedi LINGMAN, Carol, *An Interview with Ruthy*, op. cit., p. 54.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibi*, p. 55.

effort and without distorting the posture [...] From the small towel, I moved to a bigger towel so that I could also coordinate the chest to the trajectory of getting up. I used a scarf and also a sheet. With [these devices] I could maneuver more and more parts of the body and direct them to organize more efficiently around the winding axis of getting up. [...] The entire length of the cloth is wrapped and rewrapped around the body in a certain way. [...] The tightly wrapped cloth organizes the central axis of the body in a posture that can successfully deal with the challenges of gravity<sup>8</sup>.

Even people whose posture is not organized in the well-aligned axis needed for dynamic movement, can with the use of the wrap-harness, safely experience the movement that contributes to strengthening their bones.

Once a good alignment is acquired, one needs to attune with a specific amount of pressure and to be in a rhythm and a configuration that the organism understands and recognizes as a suggestion to serve life, to provide the bone with what it needs.

I find that rhythm is a great lever in learning. If I have people standing from a chair or rolling to come to sitting, I tell them to feel the rhythm and organize their movement in a smooth and continuous pace. Once they master the rhythm, all the movement, all the coordination becomes much more harmonious, appropriate and proportionate. So, rhythm has a great meaning for learning. Jumping has rhythm. Dynamic walking has its own rhythm. Each of us has it deeply inside and we can get in touch with the center that is easy to follow and maneuver<sup>9</sup>.

The vocal accompaniment of pressures, bouncing on the heels or jumping originated for Ruthy from the heart beat: *Pam-Pam, Pam-Pam*. The sound that we make serves to incorporate the breathing with a greater inflow of oxygen.

Usually Ruthy mentions the experience of the space engineer Mikuyan who, to cure his heart complications, had an intuition about the valuable role of bouncing on the heels.

Bones also need nutrients to renew their cells. Do the nutrients that we absorb in the system get everywhere equally? It's very difficult to penetrate the firm bone tissue. So, once the whole circulation is weak and slowed down, the bone is the first one to be

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<sup>8</sup> ALON, Ruthy, *The tweacher BfL manual*, p. 252.

<sup>9</sup> LINGMAN, Carol, *An Interview with Ruthy*, p. 56.

overlooked in terms of nutrients and minerals it needs. [...] And without movement there isn't the certainty that it will be distributed to the bones [...] We know that a shaking movement or another bouncing movement will do it. Dynamic movement opens the stream and makes the nutrient distribution much more equal. This is an aspect of vitality<sup>10</sup>.

Each bouncing accelerates the renewal of the organism and at the same time stimulates bone strength. To bounce on the heels in a double rhythm, *Pam-Pam, Pam-Pam*, like the pulsation of the heartbeat, not only refreshes the body and releases it of the burden of waste, but also «builds trust in a reliable skeleton.»<sup>11</sup>

One of the terms that Ruthy uses more frequently is “biological optimism”. But what does she mean?

There is a direct connection between the quality of your autonomous movements and your state of mind. When people experience walking in a springy way and the body follows, I call it the joy of “biological optimism.”

Ruthy urges us to not wait until it is difficult to move and to start right away to create our own reserve of wellbeing.

A comparative research shows that African women, accustomed to bearing heavy weights on their head gracefully and effortlessly, are subject to fractures about 100 times less than Western women, despite their bone density is lower than the bone density of the latter.

After some preliminary tests in Israel, the *Bones for Life* program was presented in the United States at the NASA (Huston, Texas 2004), at the Scientific Meeting of the Aerospace Medical Association (Kansas, 2005) and at the National Osteoporosis Foundation Conference (Washington, D.C. 2006).

Ruthy Alon is the founder and president of the *Foundation for Movement Intelligence* – a non-profit organization, focusing on osteoporosis prevention and reversal by using natural strategies based on movement.

This ten-year-old program is now taught and practiced in over 30 countries thanks to her teaching and through the trainers that she has prepared worldwide.

Ruthy's creativity seems to be relentless: see, for example, a variation (or sister program) of *Bones for Life* called *Chairs*, that is, a number of exceptionally effective processes in or with a chair.

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<sup>10</sup> *Ibid*, p. 54.

<sup>11</sup> ALON, Ruthy, *The Teacher Manual*, Segment 1, p. 7.

In Prato, Italy, in April 2009 the five-day *Chairs* workshop only in the chairs, without ever lying on the floor, gave us the possibility to experience our astonishing ability to stand upright effortlessly and with a feeling of wellbeing that lasted for a long time once we were back home.

On that occasion our fellow practitioner Diana Gallone from Rome asked me to teach a short movement sequence from *Chairs* during a conference on osteoporosis that she was going to hold in May in Lugano, Switzerland, at “Tisana – the Wellbeing Fair in the Italian Switzerland”.

It turned out to be a very interesting experience, that was documented with a short amateur documentary film<sup>12</sup>, which has some audio problems but still gives a feeling of the work I did.

Personally I get very good feedback from the people who, after more or less severe accidents, have used these processes and got an immediate relief.

From November 18th to 21st, 2009 the Bones For Life Italian Association participated in the 9th SIOMMMS (Italian Society of Mineral Metabolism Osteoporosis and Skeletal Illnesses) National Congress that took place in Turin.

Isabella Turino, Anna Benzi and Marina Cacciotto, our spokespersons, showed how to use the wrap and stirred curiosity and considerable interest in the audience.

When Ruthy Alon, in 1999, proposed *Bones for Life* I was immediately enthusiastic about it because I found the dynamism and the rhythm that I had learned with the Chladek System. My work of dissemination started right away with my “historical” students and the physical therapists at “Riabilitazione Oggi” in Milan.

Since 2006, once I earned the *Bones for Life Trainer* diploma, I have been running Training courses for BfL teachers in Cologno Monzese, at the Cultural Association MoviMente of which I am one of three founding members, and with a group of physical therapists in the city of Pescara.

In 2008 I was invited to teach some *Bones for Life* lessons in the summer classes at the University of Carmona, Seville, Spain. Having to teach to an audience of young women and men my Chladek experience was very helpful and it was easy to involve everyone in a great *ensemble* of *pam-pam*, jumps, bouncing and accompanying vocal canons, creating sensational dynamic forms.

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<sup>12</sup> See the video on *YouTube* clicking Gina Cecalupo or aloisia 1.

UNIVERSITY OF CARMONA    September 2008

Summer Classes      **JUMPING**    Bones for Life



(The excerpt from my graduation dissertation ends here)

## **PART TWO: THE DEVELOPMENT**

### **MY PERSONAL EXPERIENCE**

#### **1. LEARNING**

My learning process with Ruthy Alon has been progressively unfolding over time, segment by segment, year by year: in 1999 Bones for Life 1, in 2000 Bones for Life 2, in 2001 Bones for Life 3 and in 2003 BfL Didactics (not the current one, but the Didactics version still developing in Ruthy's thinking).

On that latter occasion we were all asked: "What is the process you have mostly enjoyed?"

When I was to speak, I showed my favorite process, but Ruthy said that she had never taught it, and my hard-working colleagues, after checking their notes, confirmed Ruthy's words. Still, she decided to promote my alternative.

She developed the theme that I had mentioned, reframed it and gave it a title: "Spiral with the back, foot on the wall", as it appears in the transcripts of 2013 Didactics (see Appendix I).

I learned a lot from this experience. I also told this episode to my students and now I follow the same strategy with them.

In 2005 I completed the Perfectioning level, that is, I repeated BfL 1, BfL 2 and BfL 3. What surprised and at the same time attracted me were the variations that Ruthy taught us every time, improved versions of the same processes.

Finally the Master Class to become a BfL Trainer was held in 2006, but it was just another step in Ruthy's teaching. It turned out to be so intriguing that it made me want to repeat the Didactics in 2007, when the Competencies were introduced in its final current form.

Having been able to follow step by step the evolution of Ruthy's thinking is a great privilege and a very educational process for me to. I have witnessed the processing and perfectioning of her teaching methodology based on experiential research, where every form of academic erudition is banned.

The three Teacher's Manuals regarding BfL 1, BfL 2 and BfL 3 published in Italian in 2007 allowed me to better understand Ruthy's conceptual project in its almost final version.

I stress the word 'almost' because Ruthy has always invited, from the very beginning, Trainers and Practitioners to highlight any mistakes and to suggest variations and improvements coming from one's teaching experience.

In fact, in teaching the Bones for Life program I simplify some intricate passage, when it is possible, and I indicate the changes, keeping into mind the contributions, the interventions, the remarks, the sharing and the questions made during the group work.

Also, I choose one common theme around which I teach several processes, instead of strictly following the sequence of the listed processes in the Manuals. In some way, I go back to the origins, that is, to the instructions which I experienced at the beginning of my learning, when there wasn't any written codification and Ruthy followed the experiential path of her research.

The educational methodology that I have adopted was confirmed during the *Chairs* program that took place in Prato in April 2009, where Ruthy was generous with her suggestions and invited us to be creative and to not follow word by word the list in the table of contents of the three Manuals.

With the recent Walk for Life and Mindful Eating programs my learning process is enhanced: novelties and enriching processes are presented and stimulate a personal deepening of my own learning.

Health and wellbeing are the area that benefit the most. I have experienced it with myself in September 2013 when Ruthy taught in Italy the first segment of Walk for Life which I attended.

In the last two years I have suffered from neuropathy in my lower limbs.

On the first day of class I immediately started feeling some improvement that progressed during the five-day workshop, and after almost three months of weekly training I still feel it 80%.

#### **2. TEACHING**

"Start to teach what you have learned at once" was Ruthy's advice since the very first segment of BfL 1 in 1999. The enthusiasm stirred by her original teaching led me further in this direction and it was interesting to watch my

students' responses, as they were accustomed to the classic Feldenkrais ATM lessons, whenever I introduced Bones for Life processes in my teaching.

I had been periodically holding basic Feldenkrais Method classes for physical therapists in the center "Riabilitazione Oggi" in Milan since 1996 and I gradually introduced some parts of the Bones for Life program as I was learning it with Ruthy.

An Italian physical therapist living in Spain, after she experienced some BfL lessons that I taught in the center "Riabilitazione Oggi", invited me to teach a BfL summer class at the University of Carmona (Seville), Spain, in September 2008.

As I have already described in the final section of my dissertation, it was a successful experience.

The young women and men along with older adults attending the course were enthusiastically involved in the BfL final jumping with great dynamism after only three days of preparation.

As a BfL Trainer I have been promoting training courses for Bones for Life Practitioners and holding BfL weekly classes called "Rivitalizing your bones" (separated from the Feldenkrais Method groups) on the premises of the Cultural Association MoviMente in Cologno Monzese, of which I am one of the three founding members.

Of course, the teaching manuals have been extremely helpful. Also my experience as one of Ruthy's students "in continuous education" has prompted me to look for and find alternative solutions, such as "The Roman Sandal lying on the back with one foot standing on the wall" that I conceived for a person with difficulty in standing (see Appendix II).

A characteristic of the Bones for Life Training program that we have put in place was shifting from three training days in a row to a training class only on Sundays to meet the needs of the participants in terms of their health conditions or professional needs.

It was a successful solution that facilitated many enrolments in our training courses since 2008 to date and allowed nine BfL candidates – Feldenkrais practitioners or not, and a colleague who had attended only the Didactics 2003 – to attend the five-day Didactics in December 2011 and to experience it with commitment and willingness in such a galvanizing climate that nobody felt any exertion.

As a teacher I was ready: I had repeated the Didactics program with Ruthy twice and with Isabella Turino once, but I was not ready to my students' appreciation and affection that overwhelmed me – it was a regenerating and revitalizing bath.

In 2014 another Didactics is planned, from April 25th to May 4th, just before my departure to Israel.

### 3. DISSEMINATION

The Cultural Association MoviMente was founded in 2004, but the Feldenkrais Method, Yoga and the Chladek System classes had been directly managed by the Municipality of Cologno Monzese for twenty years. Now our courses are under the aegis of the Municipality.

To spread the Bones for Life Program in the community, emphasizing its validity to control and prevent osteoporosis, we have organised public presentations that also some medical doctors attended.

A flyer (see Appendix III) was handed out to the audience who watched with great interest the *slides* I projected to illustrate both the theory and the practice of Bones for Life. Some of my students were ready with their harness to show the pam-pam live and the efficacy of our work.

In 2011 a recently graduated BfL practitioner made use of the experience and support of our MoviMente team to organise in her city, Cremona, a public presentation about osteoporosis that aroused great interest and led many attendees to enrol in her classes.

In Spring 2013 we invited a young press photographer working for a local newspaper to take pictures during a BfL 2 segment and he was really surprised when he saw that the students – interested in the issue of osteoporosis – were not elderly women but in fact young and dynamic ones.

Currently one of our practitioners who graduated in 2011 is teaching weekly BfL classes in the morning, and in the next months we will start off with BfL evening classes by general request, so that also the working population will be able to attend our courses.

“That is how stooped and depressed people turned into happy moving individuals ... We all have a choice, an alternative ... that is, to take care of ourselves ... using the ability of the body to self-support.”  
(from *Osteoporosi e Bones for Life* by Daniela Melchiorre and Debora De Nuccio, Lucca 2012).

## APPENDIX I

Excerpts from the transcription of the Didactics seminar  
Published by the “Associazione per lo studio del Metodo Feldenkrais”

DIDACTICS  
Firenze, December 3 – 7, 2003

Ruthy: Now we'll start in small groups. I will give to each group a process to study. Each group will show the movement and then will talk about its dynamic. If you don't remember something of the process, come to me or call me. Maybe, if you have your notebooks, take them out.

Please now come to sit here around. What group is ready to show the movement and talk a little about what you have found? Which group is ready? Come here and one of you will be the teacher.

What is the name of your process?

**Spyral with the back, foot on the wall (Giovanna – Gina)**

**Stabilizing the hip joint within a variable movement.**

**Stabilizing within a complex mobilization**

**Giovanna:** I have very good students, they are already in the starting position. Wonderful, you see that we have already done it!

We want to feel the hip, in particular the right hip and we want to push, like Ruthy taught us, for this Bones for Life process.

Let's start simply by pushing the foot onto the wall and see what this does. You feel your left hip, feel your lower back and its arch and then the head. Try to leave

your chin free, so that it can go to the chest, when it feels it needs to do it. And feel the push from your foot, and feel where your foot is leaning.

**Ruthy:** Do you have any rhythm for this pushing? Usually we take the rhythm of the breathing.

**Giovanna:** You can match this movement with your breathing. Feel what happens to your breathing when

you push. Try to breathe in when you let go and to breathe out when you push.

We thought that the second movement is to feel the push of the foot, the leg, the hip, the spine to the right shoulder and let the arm start to straighten. Let also the head and the eyes go with it and look toward the right hand. I would leave the arm on the floor and I would go back and forth pushing with the foot.

Now, please feel what part of your foot touches the floor. Feel the inner border of the foot, and slowly start to pay attention also to your left arm.

The hand of your left arm is over your head.

See what happens further. When you are pushing further, you see that your heel lifts and the toes are pushing.

Good. Another thing that we are going to add in this process is to feel the right leg, the right knee that needs to straighten for you to go more easily on the side, to allow the movement of the body onto the side, but in general the attention goes to the left hip and the lengthening of the left hip.

We have decided not to go onto the stomach, because it is already difficult to keep the legs.

Instead, feel the rolling of your head onto the right arm... and where your eyes are going... and where your eyes want to look toward the wall behind you.

At the end we also lift the head to look better and see

further.

Feel the transmission from the toes to the fingers through the left hip and the whole spine.

**Ruthy:** What is the main thing in this process? What is the problem? What is the contribution it makes? Let's write on the board:

**Spyral with the back, with the spine, one foot on the wall.**

**Practitioner:** The first thing that drew my attention is the quantity and quality of the push, and where I push with the foot on the wall, so where and how much. How much pressure to feel the transmission of the push to the hip.

**Ruthy:** You are talking about the interaction between the foot pushing onto a surface.

**Practitioner:** To feel it in my hip, I realized that the more pressure I put, the less I felt the transmission of movement to the hip. For me it became a quest for the right quantity of pressure to be able to be affective, to feel the transmission of

movement in the hip, to feel the spirals in the hip.

**Ruthy:** Then the goal is the transmission in the hip. How does the hip interpret the pressure? How does the hip joint respond to pressure? How is the quality? Where is the pressure coming from and when? What is the specific condition, the kind of pressure here?

**Practitioner:** I found the differentiation that Giovanna did interesting. At the beginning we pushed with the whole bottom of the foot, to feel the push up to the head. As soon as the arms intervened, we pushed with the internal border, the medial line of the foot that immediately gave to the femur a push slightly in rotation inside the hip, also the trochanter. At some point you find yourself with pressure only in that place.

**Ruthy:** Show us. The line of pressure of the foot.. She said that she used the medial line of the foot. Let's see. Pressure to do the movement... what is your thought?

**Practitioner:** The medial part, the hip lifts, the knee lifts.

**Ruthy:** That's it. The foot needs to be in the same plane as the thigh, the lower leg and the foot. The leg goes and the foot also goes, the heel needs to change position. The front of the thigh, of the lower leg and of the foot are all on the same line when she pushes.

Come. Find a way to keep your heel in place and change the position of the forefoot on the wall. You see that you change position of the foot to have this plane?

What really connects the skeleton is the heel, not the forefoot. So, we can use this as a reference at the beginning.

Come back here, as a group you haven't finished yet.

I did not think that this process was for the alignment of the foot up to the hip, in connection with the alignment with the whole body.

### **Ruthy:**

- Try to stand up for a moment.

Stand with parallel feet, put the front of the feet more open and the heels closer. Not together, first one foot and then the other. The heels stay in place, only the forefoot changes position. The heels don't lift. Many people, when they want to walk like Charlot, move only the front of their feet.

Stop for a moment and stand.

- Now create the same position, but moving the heels. Feel how the whole skeleton feels this movement.

Our particular interest here is in the hips and the lower back.

Then, put one hand in the lower back and feel that there is movement in the lumbar when you start from the heels.

- Then do it from the front of the feet and feel what happens in the lower back.

Can you feel what is the difference? The lumbar arches in and there is compression. It responds too strongly.

So, at the beginning of the lesson you can do this, then you go to the wall and you have a reference point.

- Continue to walk around and think where you lean

with the front of the foot.

Now continue to walk and think where you lean the heel. What is the difference?

Do you feel that you are talking to your skeleton, to your spine?

Stop for a moment.

- Now feel your hips, you hold them with your thumbs at the groin, the index fingers point to the knee and the fingers behind. We are on the trochanter, also the heel of the hand touches the pelvis. This is a bridge between the pelvis and the leg.

Now with the heels that don't move, open and close the feet from the forefoot. Feel the response from the hip. What happens there?

What is the movement? What opportunity is there to align in one single continuation or to break this line?

Now let's do the same from the heels. What is the sensation in the hips here? What are you finding?

When does the hip joint have a better possibility to be aligned? If you are not sure, try to do it again from the forefoot.

Come back and sit for a moment.

**Ruthy:** But the moment of pressure is a very valid aspect that in fact takes place in this process.

What other things have been useful in this process? What was the most important thing?

In this process the hip joint is the one with the hardest challenge. It is not just to step forward, it isn't just bending or straightening, but to transmit a pressure in an ever changing line as the movement is occurring.

So, the first process that we chose is the most difficult, because it is about the gradual articulating that depends on how much spirals there is in the body.

Let's say that we keep this line, this plane of the lower leg and foot while we are spiralling, but we also keep in a single continuation the thigh, the pelvis and the chest. Everything rolls and comes back.

Gina can you show us if you move everything together? When the leg moves too much and the pelvis doesn't come. Can you see this?

The lower back is very compressed, the chest is not coming yet, the leg is not turning. The proportion is broken. How can we guarantee that we can move all together?

Can you use your left hand on this bridge?

Now you see that it is the same, it is proportionate. The wrist touches the pelvis. With this constraint of the hand she has a better chance to learn everything together. The use is proportionate. She can train her body to a better coordination:

the shoulder, the pelvis comes, all together in a very complex movement coordination . Thank you.

**Ruthy:** Do you still have something to add about the dynamic of the movement?

You have something to say about the eyes.

**Practitioner:** I misunderstood your question, because the eyes arrive later, but when you have emphasized that the side moves together I understood why I needed to do that movement and to believe I did it in Bones for Life.

**Ruthy:** Good. Do it again Gina. This time do everything very nicely, but without the eyes.

You see what happens. So, it was very good that you, the teacher, gave this instruction: “Let your eyes follow the hand”. And then you can look at the horizon... some people will stay with their head leaning on the arm, others will lift their head. These could be two different stages of the process.

Do it with the head staying on the arm. Come back. This is easy but not very functional.

Now turn for some reason. You really want to look at the environment surrounding you to control it. Now you can do it and look around you. Come back.

Think that you want to look around before getting to the end of the spiryal... this is an impatience typical of people. If you lift the head before, you break the coordination. So, find the right moment to lift the head. What could give the idea?

Gina do you have an idea about what you could say to the students to give them the idea of not breaking this line?

**Gina:** Let roll your head in continuity with the side and let the arm lengthen. When you are on your side, lift the head to look at the horizon with the ear toward the floor.

**Ruthy:** This can mean to lift the head too early. You know that the neck always wants to do a lot, so when she starts... ..turning the nose before the chest so that the head is always on the line of the chest. You all know where the nose is, it is easy to control. Beautiful!

If you noticed, the rhythm was constant: when you do a movement – also a complex organization – always listen to the smooth constant rhythm and this will give you a better coordination.

It is much more difficult for us to think where the hip is, where the head is; it is much easier just to follow the rhythm. It is something we can always use.

I'd like to say something else about turning.

In some way turning is the safest movement for our spine. The easiest thing is a proportionate rotation: coordinating a rotation, rather than bending forward or to the side, because it is easier for the vertebrae and it gives us ideas about where we can get in every place, one after the other.

I can bend forward and down and move the whole back in one single piece, not one part after the other. But in turning there is always an invitation for each vertebra to come in its own time.

The spiryal can be healthy if we know the proportion without exaggerating in the lumbar. So, I would say that the spiryal encourages the activity of every vertebra and we just have to be careful not to do too much.

Now, just to finish, go to the wall and practice this process, on your own, a few times. Try it. Thank you to this group!

Take your time, feel what's in this process, just for a few minutes.

Don't forget to stabilize your hip.

**Isabella:** In this position you are not standing, you are not bearing all your weight and you can really work on the hip in all the places, by carrying the pressure coming from the foot.

**Ruthy:** You want to try to do the turning without articulating too much between the leg and the pelvis. Using the hip joint as little as possible, so that the pressure going through it is always safe. Let your body do the turning and keep your hip always safe, this is the contribution to the process.

- Now please, come to standing. Nobody wants to stop!

- Come to standing and feel how you are feeling. We didn't do any test before. So, hold the trochanter with your hand, the way we did, just with one hand, and also the heel of the hand is in contact with the pelvis. Keep your leg like an axis, and with the other leg take a step forward and a step backward.

- Feel how you can maintain the stability of this hip joint with the turning of the whole body. Let it go.

Now, without the hand do it on the other leg. Feel how this hip behaves. Maybe it tends to go out of the line a little? Put your hand just to feel, not to stabilize.

Now stabilize also this one and do it with this stabilization of the bridge. Feel the difference. This is a hip that does not make any friction, and so it does not

erode.

-You know that sometimes one needs to put a prothesis because the hip has been eroded.

So, now stabilize both your hips and just walk. Feel how it is to invite both hips to do the minimum.

How also the limitation can be an improvement. But walk in your own pace, enjoy, don't let it move too much.

-Change direction, walk forward, backward, to the side. Turning with the hips in a safe place. Do you know this dance? One step forward and bend the knee and then the other...

- Let's do the same thing walking backward...And just walk around and gradually make your hands lighter

until you can take them away.  
Continue to walk and feel what the message is.  
If you want to say something, say it.

She hasn't got the hips any more! This is great! What  
else? Light / bigger / aligned. Good.

**Ruthy:** Please come back and sit here around in a big circle.

Gina, I'd like to invite you once again to come. Let's add something. See if the last process can take you more to walking. Some formula, a pattern of walking.

Put the foot on the wall: before starting, bring your left knee and right elbow a little one toward the other, and from this movement go to the spirals. Do it again.

Come back, take them together, the other hand acts like a bridge on the trochanter. Shortening and lengthening. This can be a good end, the foot is not always there, it lifts and then it comes back like in walking.

## APPENDIX II

### APPENDIX TO PROCESS n. 15

#### **The Roman sandal lying on the back, one foot standing on the wall**

The path of transmission of the pressure from the heel and the metatarsal standing on the wall in lying on the back.

On the back: Foot on the wall, lower legs at 90°.

Test: Pushing with the soles of both feet and feel the transmission of the pressure through the leg joints and the body up to the top of the head.

Process: Stand one foot on the floor and keep the sole of the other foot on the wall with the knee in line with the heel and the knee bent at 90°.

Like in process n. 15, “Roman sandal on the wall”, follow the path of transmission of the pressure between the heel and the metatarsal channeling the push along the line of each toe.

Emphasize the inner/outer border of the foot on the wall and the optimal direction between the big toe and the second toe.

Repeat the pressure with the entire sole of the foot.

Switch leg.

Check here the path of transmission along the line of each toe.

Repeat the pressure with the entire sole of the foot.

Final test: Push the wall with both feet on the wall like in the beginning.

Inbetween tests: Move every toe, after having experienced the path of transmission between the heel and the toe, as if you are playing the piano, and compare with the other toes as the foot is resting against the wall.

Final check in standing: Alignment and PAM PAM.

# Rivitalizing Life, APPENDIX III

## BONES FOR LIFE®

Ruthy Alon

### *The program to stimulate bone strength through the natural movement and a weight-bearing posture*

The “Bones for Life”® program, although inspired by the Feldenkrais Method®, emphasizes the functional aspect of bone strengthening and the dynamic movement in relation to antigravity action.

To develop strong bones we need a **dynamic confrontation with gravity** through an organization that supports springy walking.

This implies a special attention to the alignment of bones and joints protecting the vulnerable parts such as the neck, the lower back and the knees.

To get a bear-wearing posture, avoiding compression and possible deviations, we need **dynamic movement** that motivates the organism and allows the rich-in-nutrients-and-oxygen blood to penetrate in the bones at the cellular level and to support the growth of new cells.

Bone growth is stimulated by dynamic movement that motivates the organism to regenerate bone tissue in its density and strength.

The need for strength creates the motivation of the organism to produce bone tissue.

#### **It is basic neurological conditioning.**

Without this demand there isn't any incentive and the organism interprets the lack of dynamic confrontation with gravity as if there is no need for strength.

#### **What is not used, is being deleted from the functional catalogue.**

A vicious circle is produced: lack of intense movement results in lack of strength that, in turn, leads to further lack of movement.

The loss of bone density is the loss of movement autonomy.

Then, the problem is how to stop this circle and safely activate intense movement in a body that is not organized for it.

The “Bone for Life”® program incorporates the strategies of **organic learning** by awakening the resourcefulness of the organism to invent efficient solutions, similar to the way babies learn how to satisfy their needs at the beginning of life.

**The code of organic movement** that stimulates the formation of bone tissue is a **springy and rhythmical pressure** exerted at the rate of dynamic walking.

The configurations of the movement used in the Bones for Life program are taken from patterns that evolution selected because of their efficiency and economy over millions of years.

The cooperation of all body parts according to a harmonious proportion is indispensable to support the learning of dynamic movement performed in the vertical plane.

The transmission of pressure from one polarity to the other (head/feet) in the vertical plane is essential to have an impact on the bones, so as to create a “domino effect” that efficiently conveys dynamic strength through the body and produces an alignment consistent with posture.

#### **The BONES FOR LIFE® program emphasizes the functional aspect.**

Structure and function are interdependent: **the structure** is the muscle-skeletal apparatus, **the function** is the movement that meets our needs through an economical and efficient organization.

#### **Personal safety is at the core of the program.**

In a relatively short period of time you can be trained to do dynamic movements safely with an efficiently aligned skeleton.

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The program provide greenhouse conditions for protected learning by using a **7 meter-long stripe** that is

wrapped around the body and connects and protects it as some kind of a harness.

The BfL wrap keeps the body together providing it with the reliability of a supporting axis. It also allows people with poor coordination to experience the result of a more efficient posture by moving with no risk.

It enables people with a limited degree of mobility or in frail functional conditions (osteopenia and osteoporosis) to safely experience the springy pulsations underlying the health of bone tissue.

Special configurations lying on the floor, in chairs, standing by a wall and by using a roller or the BfL wrap have been designed.

Learning alternative motor patterns foster the alignment of the skeleton, a correction of posture and the recovery of the walking function.

**WALKING**, with its rhythmical stimuli, is the natural resource to stimulate the reconstructive bone metabolism.

A comparative research shows that African women, accustomed to carrying heavy weights on their head gracefully and effortlessly, are subject to fractures about 100 times less than Western women, although their bone density is lower than that of the latter.

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## WHAT IS IT FOR?

### Natural and harmonious movements

- To regain the biological optimism of your vitality
- To regenerate your bone tissue
- To relieve springy and easy walking
- To awake your resourceful adaptability
- To regain your balance
- To discover an efficient coordination
- To enjoy a spontaneous upright posture
- To age in a way you like

**DON'T WAIT UNTIL IT WILL BE DIFFICULT TO MOVE  
START NOW  
TO CREATE YOUR RESERVE OF WELLBEING.**

*This text was written by Gina for the Public Presentation on May 21st, 2009*

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