

Pati Holman: Just a little background Mia...you completed the first training with Moshe in Tel Aviv?

Mia: No.

Pati Holman: Tell us.

Mia: I was not in that Israeli training. I worked with Moshe for 15 years before that training. This training took place after I took a break with Moshe.

Pati Holman: What year did you begin your studies with Moshe?

Mia: In 1957. In 1957 I started working with him but there wasn't a training. We just started working together and I worked with him for 15 years. And then my family and I left for Japan and that's when he did that training that you're talking about.

Pati Holman: Did you attend the ATM classes at the time at Alexandar Yannai?

Mia: Yah, Yah. All the time. In the 15 years prior to that training I also did FI with Moshe and myself, and I came to the ATM's with him when he was teaching. I watched his teachings, I didn't participate in giving ATM's, but I worked with him at his private house and gave FI's with him together.

Pati Holman: We'd like to hear you talk about the period which brought you to study with Moshe. What inspired you to meet him or come to him?

Mia: Yah, The thing is before I met Moshe, I was married, and we lived in England. I became interested in the Alexandar Method, and I studied the Alexandar Technique there. It so happens that my Alexandar teacher was a good friend of Moshe's. His name was Charles Neil. When I left London I moved back to Israel. Charles Neil visited there soon after and brought Moshe to our house. It so happened that Moshe was looking for someone to work with him, as he was working by himself. Moshe said, "Will you come and work with me?" And that's

how it started. But it was nothing formal like there was teaching program at that time or anything like this. I just watched Moshe working.

First I wasn't so sure I wanted to work with him as I was a new mother. When he first said, "Will you come and work with me?" I said "No, my son's just born and I don't know..." But Moshe said, "come and see what I am doing". And I must say that from the first moment I saw what he was doing, I thought "Well, I've got to be involved in this!"

Pati Holman: So there were no reservations from your experience with the Alexandar Technique?

Mia: Not at all. Not at all. My Alexandar teacher was very impressed with what he saw with Moshe. And they were friends. And Charles even wrote to me and said, "Please stay with him and maybe I'll come and study with him too". But he died, very shortly afterwards at a very young age. And I continued working with Moshe.

Pati Holman: Was Charles Neil a direct student of FM Alexandar's?

Mia: Yes he was. Though he split from Alexandar, Charles (Neil) was sponsored by Sir Stefford Cripps and Isabelle Cripps. Sir Stefford Cripps was the minister for the colonies. And his wife, Isabelle sponsored Charles Neil. And at the time he had students like Aldoux Huxley, and some really well known people who also left FM Alexandar and went to take lessons with Charles in the Isabelle Cripps Center.

Pati Holman: And that's how you came to know Charles Neil? At the Isabelle Cripps Center?

Mia: Yes. Charles Neil said to me, "Look. I don't have formal courses. Come and watch me and let's see." And after a few years he said, "Okay, I'll give you a room here and you can work as one of the staff." So I did the Alexandar thing and *then* I came to Israel. I knew very little about Moshe at that time. But the first moment I saw him working, I thought it was amazing. It was...amazing. Look...it's as simple as this. I felt like staying and watching. And I did this for I don't know how long because I said to Moshe, "I don't really want to work...I'll just watch you. And he did it so gently with me that I really don't remember when I started *working*. Also Moshe became very good friend of my family so that most of the weekends he was at our house. This became a very central part of our lives. My parents used to be there on the weekends, my kids, my husband and everybody

would talk about Moshe's work... With Moshe around you couldn't but talk about it.

Pati Holman: Were you born in Israel?

Mia: Yes, obviously before it was the Nation of Israel. I'm a Palestinian, by passport. I mean not today, today I'm Israeli. But when I was born, it was Palestine.

Pati Holman: Interesting. Can we go a little further back Mia? Because I think it's interesting for us to hear what motivations draw people such as yourself to somatic work. What was it that brought you to Alexandar's work. Was it an injury?

Mia: Yes. It's because my husband had asthma. How simple.

Pati Holman: And *you* came because your husband had the asthma?

Mia: Hah Hah. That's how it goes! Huh? Because I knew very little about all these kind of works and medicines and sicknesses and all these things. I was very apprehensive about his asthma. It scared the daylights out of me really.

Pati Holman: And did it help him ultimately?

Mia: Yes. It did. Well, the first time he saw Charles Neil. After that it was never as bad as it was before. So that's how I got involved. I said to Charles "Look, okay, so you helped my husband but we're going back to Israel one day. What am I going to do?" He said "I don't know". I said, "Can I see what you do?" And that's how it started.

Pati Holman: Was Moshe able to see your husband with his problem?

Mia: Oh! Absolutely, I mean he was he was practically in our house most of the time.

Pati Holman: Can we talk a bit about your time in Japan? When did you live there?

Mia: In 1968 or 1969. We lived for three and a half years in Japan.

Pati Holman: Did you practice Feldenkrais and Alexandar in Japan?

Mia: No, not at all. Only Judo and a form of Japanese theater called Kyogan. I attended the Kodokan in Tokyo. Both my daughter and I are black belts from Kodokan.

Pati Holman: Do you practice Judo anymore?

Mia: (Laughs) No. No, I can't travel and work like this and continue.

Pati Holman: Was your practice of Judo a result of meeting Moshe?

Mia: Oh I should think so. Yah.

Pati Holman: Did you look for a relationship between Moshe and FM Alexandar's work in the practice of your Judo?

Mia: No, I simply enjoyed Judo tremendously. I loved it and I loved doing Kyogan.

Pati Holman: Can you tell us a bit about what Kyogan is?

Mia: In Japan they have traditional theaters. One is called Kabuki and one is called "NO". And Kyogan is part of the "NO" theater. It is always performed together with "NO". Actually the Kyogan and "No" can have distinct performances on their own, but on the whole Kyogan is the comical part of the "NO". "NO" is very serious and then they have, in-between, they always have these comical, more comic side-like theater and that's the Kyogan. It's a story that's sung as well as spoken. But spoken in a traditional sort of way.

Pati Holman: Can you recall a memorable FI you had with Moshe?

Mia: (Hearty laughter) Are you Kidding? I had, what, nearly forty years of FI's and what's the most memorable? I didn't get FI's from anybody else. They're all from Moshe. I had very little from other people. I couldn't really say. How can you say such a thing? Let me tell you. I received few 'proper' FI's from Moshe. But what we did most of the time is discuss what is going on in myself. Moshe would ask, 'Look, if I do this to your neck, or if I move you like this, look what is happening there and look Just what I'm teaching you here in this class. Exactly. So we did this with each other a lot. A lot. But one FI as a session is considered today? No we never did this. We just did endless discussions of, "Look what happens when I do this", and "How do you feel when I do that?" This sort of thing.

Pati Holman: So you're saying that the structure of the FI was different for you then, not like for us today where it is a contained piece...finite and complete.

Mia: Yes. Definitely. It was never a structured teaching. It was just talking about it and analyzing it.

Pati Holman: Did Moshe develop Functional Integration first?

Mia: FI first. Absolutely. It was years *before* I met him that he already did FI's in England when he was there working. And I suppose he developed FI and ATM nearly simultaneously. Like when I teach it, I teach it like this also. It's simultaneous. I mean, one doesn't go without the other. It's a simple way of expressing something in different modes, but it's not, it's not dissociated. It's together. This is why I teach it like this. Because I have never learned it another way.

You know, the time when he started really structuring how to teach was when I went to Japan, and he had his Israeli training group. But before this he never even thought of making it a structured method of teaching. And I think one of the main reasons, he kept the FI later in the training groups is because he was simply scared of the responsibility of people handling somebody and doing something irresponsible, and then he's responsible for that. You know? So he felt that when he teaches in San Francisco, in Amherst they should first have a basis of feeling themselves, of being aware of this sort of thing, and then, once they feel what it does to them he can trust them maybe to do it to others. This is why people think the FI came later, but No. He started by finding out that he can help friends, he had many friends who he helped and many amazing people who came there to ask his advice for different difficulties. That's how it evolved.

Pati Holman: Still in today's practice as I see it, Feldenkrais practitioner's give either an ATM class or FI session. Hands off or hands-on. A separation. What advice can you give to this generation of practitioner's who really dissociate the mode of the method, that is into FI only or ATM only?

Mia: I think it is a tragedy. I think it's the very bad how that happened. I think one enhances the other. I think the thing (method)is ONE thing. It's not two things.

Pati Holman: To practice as we did today in the workshop? Beginning with the group doing ATM work, noticing an interesting movement from an individual and then having this person and perhaps a few others do the movement and all of the rest of us observing the variations of action with intention. You then clarified with

these individuals in hands on work with each of these demonstrators, exploring the ideas of clarifying action with intention. Then having each of us go back to self-directed movement, to investigate the ideas further that you presented in the hands-on portion of the lesson.

Mia: That's right. What did we do today. ATM or FI?

Pati Holman: Exactly. I see your point. It's impossible to distinguish the modalities when you teach it this way. It's a flow of ATM and FI not separate, but One thing.

Mia: Look, I don't know. I have been to his training in San Francisco and Amherst as an assistant, but I've never been really trained. And the only way I know to teach it is how I was taught. And I was taught in this way. Finding out. Exploration, exploration, exploration. Investigation. Nearly, detective work. Watch and notice and then you do what's appropriate. So I don't have a boundary for that because that's how we did it. That's how he did it with me and that's why I did it with him and that's how I watched him doing it for all those many many years.

Pati Holman: Where would you say that you've made this work your own? How have you brought it to another level?

Mia: (laughter). Who says I have? I don't know if I've brought it to another level. I think I've found a clearer way of communicating it. I think it's maybe in the clarity of how to communicate it. Maybe that's the difference. Because for me, the work seems very simple and I would like it to be presented in real simple, clear method. Which it is. Kind of obvious. When he says "Elusive Obvious" it's obvious. It's all the obvious that's around us and I'd like to take away the elusive.

Pati Holman: So your interest is to create more precision and to convey the information to the person that comes to you in order that they live their life more ...what would you say here?

Mia: Maybe it's easier to describe it in the negative way? So that I live the life with *Less* troubles, pains, hindrances, confusion. I think that's actually the aim.

Let me speak from my own personal experience. I was hoping that getting involved with this work, that I would be able to easier make the shifts from the kinesthetic awareness to the emotional realm of self-limiting behaviors. I can feel the shifts kinesthetically, but I cannot seem to make the leap to behavior changes. Perhaps they are too small for my consciousness. For example, I can sense " my

ribs do that when she moves me here”. And, “I feel so much lighter from this lesson”, or, “this lesson was difficult for me and I tried to hard and it resulted in this difficulty in movement”, and so on. But how do we make these the transition to the emotional realm? To actually change self-limiting behaviors? Do you see what I’m saying?

I hear you very well, and I think you misunderstand a little bit and make a dichotomy in a place that it doesn’t exist. Your pain in the back does not exist without your emotional life. It does not. It’s totally completely one thing. In order to, to explain things, we, we separate them and we give them names, but,,, Let me say it like this. This woman today that I demonstrated on and at the end of the lesson. She has difficulty walking. That’s obvious. Her emotional life and her walking is one thing. In other words, I cannot change her way of walking unless she will be emotionally changed as well. It will be... it’s not possible. It’s not possible. Before you looked at her in the class, what happened was that I saw her walking. And I understand that her difficulty was not standing on her heels. Her heels were not touching. I saw her walking and I said to her, “Do you know what? “You’re walking **only** on your heels! Walk on your toes” . The moment she thought of walking on her toes she walked completely straight. So you can say that emotionally, she saw herself as somebody who walks on toes and has to walk on heels. And if you change that, you also change her emotional state which is walking flat on the whole foot.

You cannot have somebody that was traumatized in some way without it having some sort of stamp let’s say either on the way they breathe, or on the way they turn their head, or somewhere there is a stamp from that pivotal emotional event. Okay. The moment you bring to the person, the awareness... and you know why it’s so much easier through the Feldenkrais Method? Because if I went to somebody and said, “You know what? You were traumatized, or because of this you can’t breathe.” They’ll say...” Excuse me. You and your philosophy doesn’t help me at all.” Let me put it another way. If somebody was abused and as a result they have let’s say trouble in the back or between the shoulders or in the chest. Right? If they go to analyze their emotional life, first of all it takes a long time. Secondly, there is a resistance because they are worried about their emotional life that many times they resist to listen and to hear. They came to me for a backache...no resistance! They don’t come for abuse, they come for the back. So whatever I do, I’ve already got an entrance. And when I touch this place, and I say “Look, this released in this sort of way”. Then you’ll find that their memory will work. Their association will work. But by the time it works and they have to face it that place is released already. And this is why the emotional side gets ‘sold’ sometime quicker and in a round-about way immediately. It can happen where it’s not as well. But on the whole, I find that with this work, there are a lot

of emotional difficulties that are solved. First of all, because there is no resistance. Of course, I should be aware also, and I should know something about psychology, or let's say, language and behavior to realize this is not something that they fell on the back and it's an injury, but it's something much deeper. Or it started from something long ago. To be aware how the mood shifts if I work with them. But I think that my biggest advantage is that there is no resistance. The other thing is also, talking about awareness. There is a big mistake to say that if somebody comes and let's say that they have knee trouble. And you say "Okay, we'll make them aware of their knee trouble and they'll be okay". But it's not like this. They are very aware of their knee. It's the thing that they're most aware of. What aren't they aware of? And when you discover, how much the percentages is this knee of the whole body? And when you discover all the other places that are good, you can compare. By the time you get to the knee it's soft. So and in the knee it can also be something emotional. And the person may find that he got that knee when he felt that he's not so good at football as all the other kids. Maybe. I don't know. Things happen, and because you cannot cut the emotion from the physical, from the thinking. It's one thing.

Pati Holman: People like to tell their stories. And these stories can reinforce old behaviors. When is the story an important piece?

Mia: It depends. With some people, yes, you should listen. With some people you can see it's a tape recorder. A Gramophone record that's repeating, repeating. I think there are no two people alike, you cannot approach two people in the same way. I think with everyone, I start from the beginning like he's the newest. It depends how they tell the story. You look at them. You watch how they tell it, and sometimes I don't know you have here a big class. You can see that some stories are really important. And you see that some stories that have nothing to do with what's happening. You know what I mean? There is nothing wrong with telling your story. Maybe it's exciting.

Pati Holman: You have been practicing how many years?

Mia: 44-45 years

Pati Holman: You've been here long enough to see the impact Moshe's work has had.

Mia: Yes.

Pati Holman: Currently, there are hundreds of body-mind modalities. The popularity of each seems to be cyclical as well as the emergence of new ones.

Where does The Feldenkrais Method fit in this milieu? And where do you see its importance, say 200 years from now? In the context of all these other types of information?

Mia: You know, 200 years is a long time. But what I want to tell you is I'm amazed at how much advanced Moshe was in his time. Okay I met him 45 years ago? But he started long before I met him and how he saw that common. Today it's common that you cannot make a dichotomy between mind and body that you can't ignore, that you can address a person through the body that you can ... Look, there are many things that happen through this work that I think he didn't even expect. I think that the fact that let's say we have a class of Feldenkrais people, and they all learn eventually, what do they learn? Many Feldenkrais related things. But they also learn that we are all human beings. That we all have pains and aches. That we all suffer, we all strive for things. We all, when you say "I don't know", you don't say "You're stupid. You don't know". You realize what it means not to know. Because a minute later you suddenly know how to move your body or how to turn around. Where were you before? And people start to understand each other on a level, that I think, if people would be like this there won't be wars and there won't be so much hate. So I think things came out of it that didn't even, he didn't even maybe he did. But with all our discussions, I don't remember touching on that thing. The idea of looking at a person next to you doing something that you think is impossible really impossible and suddenly you can do it afterwards also like them. What do they think of you? What do you think of them? You think... We are all human beings, we're all able to learn. Why should I not like this person? I think it teaches a lot of tolerance. That we did talk about, I remember asking him..."So what, what do you want us to get to? He said, "Maybe more tolerant." I think this is a great thing. So if you say, what is it in years to come? I think that if we achieve that, it will be great. And then, not only that, but the thing that he proved is that there is no end to improvement. As long as we're alive, we can always improve, a tiny bit, or a big bit, or a little, little bit. But we can improve. And that how the mind that we have can lead us to areas that are unbelievable. I think that's what he showed. I don't know, but 200 years I don't know because already today my grandchildren can do things on the computer that I think I'm a dinosaur. What is 200 years? A long time! But he certainly was ahead of his time, people didn't completely understand him, people didn't accept him, except some people of course came from many distances and great people came to work with him. And I met a number of them. Who realized that there's something special here. Well, as from overseas, I remember Igor Markevich, the conductor, he had scientists he worked with. In Israel of course he had Ben Gurion and Dayan a little. But, Ben Gurion was the man who wished and wrote about the fact that if people we take him into the educational system this method would have a good healthy generation in mind and body. He really wanted

to bring it into the education system. I believe it will happen one day. There were scientists who came. Katzeil, who was a scientist and a very brilliant man and a friend of Moshe's. There were people like this. Actors, like Hanna Rovena Meskin.

Pati Holman: Where do you think this work has its most direct application outside of training's and master classes?

Mia: Where? Anywhere and everywhere. Because this work is so universal, it doesn't have to do with any diseases. It applies to life itself as a process of growth and understanding and tolerance. And this applies to babies to old people to all professions, it doesn't stick to a certain type or a certain person. It's for the sick, it's for the healthy. Across all cultures. I wonder about black Africa, I never thought about that. But I'm going there. To South Africa

Pati Holman: Again, just to rephrase. In your imaginings, what do you feel is Moshe's legacy? Where is your legacy?

Mia: I hope growth. I hope this will enable people to grow together. I'm not so crazy about the idea of excellence as I am about improvement. Improve everything that you do. If you do everything with a little bit of improvement, more efficiently, more beautifully, more in a sensitive way, What more do you want? It's all about improvement. And that's what I keep saying. Anyone can benefit from that, anybody and everybody.

Pati Holman: Have you observed the level of proficiency in training's is at a level you'd like to see? What would you like to see changed?

Mia: I don't know. Because I'm really not involved in most of the communities of the Guilds and organizations because personally, I find that my time is not endless. And I'd like to concentrate on what I do best, and that's pass this work as the way I got it from Moshe. The way I got it from him to me was really the essence of the work, and it's fantastic work, and I think, yes, In a way, I have a sense of a mission. That it will pass in this way. Because there is a danger with works like this, that they get diluted, that they turn into water, they lose the core. So, my aim is that it will pass like this. Look. At the moment, I work with my daughter, who grew up with him.

As a child, he was in the house all the time and she saw all these investigations and explorations and she listened to the conversations. So I work with her because we understand it in the same way. I work with many of my students today who have been with me for many years and today we understand it in the same sort of way.

So, I'd like it to go on like this. I hope, that they, my daughter and all the people that I teach will continue delivering it in its essence, in this sort of way. And quite honestly, I'm not involved enough with other teachers and other schools of Feldenkrais to really know exactly what goes on.

Pati Holman: Mia, I think that's enough. Do you have any books or videotapes, audiotapes that you would like us to know about?

Mia: Yes, they did some videos, which I didn't do as videos, but they were pieces of how I'm teaching this work. Just how I'm teaching it. And now I'm putting it on DVD's and I'd like to spread it around because I think you'll find it interesting. I'm making DVD's that are more precise than my previous videotapes that the North American Guild distributes. I'd like to substitute those for the previous ones. I'll let you know when they are available.

Pati Holman: Well, thank you Mia for your time.

Mia: You're very welcome.