

## ABSTRACT

This qualitative study utilized a phenomenological methodology to investigate the experience of integrating the Feldenkrais Method into the life and practice of seven physical therapists, trained first in physical therapy, and later as Feldenkrais practitioners. A pilot study was conducted, using in-depth, face-to-face, structured interviews and a convenience sample of three dual-trained physical therapists/Feldenkrais practitioners (named dual-trained therapists for the study). Interviews were audio taped, videotaped, or both, depending on the participant's preference, and conducted in the participant's home or office. Based on the pilot study, three additional questions were added by the researcher to the full study inquiry with seven additional dual-trained therapists, and followed the same pilot study, interview format. Full study research-participants were selected by the researcher as representative of different locations throughout the United States, a variety of kinds of practice, and gender proportional to both the physical therapy and Feldenkrais communities. The phenomenological analysis that was chosen utilized a process outlined by Clark Moustakas. Following individual analysis of each participant's experience, all were combined to create one composite textural description, one structural description, and one synthesis statement that represented the essence of the experience. Results indicated five transitional stages, eight themes, and 41 invariant qualities as common to all seven participants. Themes included a readiness for a new approach to patient care, paradigm clashes and shifts in practice and identity, and finding deeper meaning and effectiveness in practice. Participants shared feelings of joy, creativity, and a sense of purpose that they associated with their Feldenkrais experience. An interview with the researcher (a dual-trained therapist), and analysis of this interview can be found

in the Appendix. Similarities and differences between the practices of physical therapy and the Feldenkrais Method also are included, as well as implications of this study for the education and practice of both physical therapists and practitioners of the Feldenkrais Method are suggested.