

THE FELDENKRAIS METHOD

This method was introduced about thirty years ago. However its application in the field of equestrian sports is an absolute novelty. This is due to the collaboration between a riding instructor and a trainer qualified to use this method.

The F.M. emphasises “how” learning takes place. Since the beginning of evolution, each living species has had the ability to “organically” learn: it is this ability that allows children to walk.

When applied to equestrian sports, this method sets the stage for learning the basic technique. Riders work on the ground, simulating their position on the horse and can directly experience balance, how to use their hands and the reins, how to look and general body strategies to be adopted under different circumstances. All this without worrying about managing the horse.

Immediately afterwards, they proceed to the riding lesson in the wake of what they have experimented. As a result they have the possibility to practice and strengthen the patterns acquired, in a situation in which concentration and promptness are of primary importance.

After the lesson, the work is repeated on the ground to memorize this experience and clarify the process through which the new patterns have been adopted.

This helps riders develop their own rules and their own organization, that is a true discipline, in search for their purpose-oriented sensations.

In this way, planning any single detail of actions on horseback becomes a habit. Riding becomes more pleasant and harmonious, more effective, thus rewarding our sensitivity and ability to feel.

Very soon the so called parasitic components of actions fade away:

- muscle hypertension
- attention deficit
- rushing
- strain
- ineffective skeletal alignment and poor use of the aids
- breathing alterations
- inadequate use of the eyes

It is possible to eliminate parasitic actions in a very short period of time. It will suffice to experience it.

“If you know what you do, you can do what you want”, as Feldenkrais used to say.

“You must do that...” is an unfortunate sentence that is repeatedly used in riding schools. Often riders try to obey this command without obtaining anything good, and possibly becoming increasingly frustrated.

In the U.S., this method has already been successfully used in modern dance and in track and field sports too, in particular to improve racing.

This method makes it possible to learn through two types of work: “Awareness through movement” group lesson where trainees are put in a condition to assimilate and explore the idea of movement and to integrate it according to their skills without dissipating their energy – and “Functional Integration” – individual lessons during which the learning process is guided by the hands of the teacher, in a non verbal dialogue that allows them to discover their structure and their most intimate functioning.

Ultimately, this Method provides for:

- greater awareness of movement and of psychomotor processes;
- greater confidence in one’s skills and freedom of choice
- more flexibility and coordination and better motor organization
- enhanced sports performance
- improved learning skills

In particular, the combination of the TOTAL CONTACT and of the FELDENKRAIS methods have proved to be particularly useful and effective in coaching riders when they advance from the basic certificate (brevetto) to the 1st certificate (I° grado).

Specifically, riders attend functional integration lessons both on the Feldenkrais bed and on their own legs, by simulating their position on horseback, with a light seat and by holding the reins in a bridge, connected at a fixed point.