

Standing on One Foot: The Essence of *The Embodied Life*™

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The following is a well-known Talmudic tale beloved by Moshe Feldenkrais involving two famous rabbis:

A non-Jewish man approached Rabbi Shammai and said to him: "Convert me but first teach me the entire Torah as I stand on one foot." Shammai, feeling that he was not serious, sternly chased him away. This man then approached Rabbi Hillel with the same request but was met with a very different response—Hillel agreed. The entire Torah on one foot that Hillel taught him was "that which you hate, don't do to others—a paraphrase of the commandment "love your neighbor as yourself". "That is the entire Torah," Hillel told him, "the rest is simply an explanation. Go and learn it!"

“Love your neighbor as yourself!” Feldenkrais would joke: with the way most people treat themselves, the world would actually worsen if we loved others as we love ourselves. First, we must learn to love ourselves. At the end of our training in San Francisco, he said that “if you can teach others to love themselves and stand on their own two feet (not only one foot), you would be wanted anywhere in the world”. Of course, this love was not the artificial narcissism that many confuse with love, but the genuine respectfulness of our own capacities, boundaries, and unique gifts.

People often ask me to explain the essence of *The Embodied Life*. As with most deep teachings this is challenging to do, (especially standing on one foot).

If actually asked this question, what would I say? Something like:

“Approach each situation Freshly, by Presencing the moment, and do your best to lovingly take care of the most important needs that live in that situation”.

That’s it. The rest is an explanation.

Now for some explanation:

HOW we learn to “presence” the entire situation - including the diverse wants, needs, and unique configuration of each moment - is the study of *The Embodied Life*. Through many practices, including sitting still, moving, learning the language of the feeling body, deep listening and communicating with others, we learn **to respond freshly to life rather than react out of**

habit. In taking care of Life, we include our own needs without being biased toward ourselves. This seemingly impossible, yet essential calculus comes from the integration of all ways of knowing. It cannot come from thinking only, feeling only, bodily intuition only or from the external situation only; rather, it is the harmonious inclusion of all of these. We call this holistic knowing - The Wisdom Body. It is the integration of wisdom and love in action and is a life-long study.