

Feldenkrais Method® of Somatic Education Guides Successful Political Campaign

An Interview with Linda Flanders, GCFP

Moshe Feldenkrais imagined that his students would take his method into every walk of life, and every corner of the public sphere. He expected that the Feldenkrais Method® would evolve and adapt, even saying “You will write my work in your own handwriting.” A Midwestern Feldenkrais® teacher has done just that, on the campaign trail.

In November 2019, Linda Flanders was elected County Commissioner in rural Goodhue, MN, population 46,000. With a professional background in law enforcement, she has been a Feldenkrais practitioner for 28 years. **SenseAbility** caught up with her to find out how the Feldenkrais Method helped her to run a successful campaign.

SA: Was there something special, or historic, about your campaign?

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LF: I am the first female elected in 20 years and only the second female elected in the 150-year history of the county. We have 5 commissioners, but have been down to 4 since last April when a commissioner passed away. So most votes have been deadlocked since then, 2:2 with government not doing much.

SA: What inspired you to run for office?

LF: I got involved because I saw our rural community getting left behind in a very rapidly moving world, dealing with global issues at the local rural level. I believe with my Feldenkrais, human development, and criminal justice backgrounds, I had more to offer than others who still want to keep things like they were 20 years ago.

SA: Did voters know, or care, that you are a Feldenkrais practitioner?

LF: I mentioned my Feldenkrais background of 28 years in my campaign literature, though only 1 person ever asked about it, and I did hand out 1250 door hangers! That person, however, looked up Feldenkrais on the internet. She also tried out a free Awareness Through Movement® lesson that she found.

SA: What was your campaign strategy?

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LF: I tried using the principles of the Feldenkrais Method in my campaigning: the same information (or movement) from a variety of perspectives, building towards a functional goal. I used literature, personal contact, private home meet and greets, public forum, newspapers, door knocking, social media, and video. A supporter approached me who was willing to sponsor a picture ad on Facebook. I suggested that movement was a much better medium, so I made three short videos. Once he saw the difference, he agreed. We boosted the ads and reached thousands of people.

SA: What other elements of the Feldenkrais Method guided your campaign?

LF: I used the idea of Proximal/Distal [working from the center outwards]. There are 9600 people in my District. I knew I could not reach them all. I began nearest to my house and introduced myself as a close neighbor. Then I went to the farthest corner of my District, to reach those who often feel isolated. I kept doing that, back and forth. I didn't reach everyone, but I did connect with every neighborhood.

I also used the idea of "options." People from different groups or viewpoints have different perspectives on how problems should be solved. I have tried to frame that as differentiations – different ways, or variations, of the same idea.



SA: A campaign can be physically and mentally grueling for a candidate. How did the Feldenkrais Method help you?

LF: I began with what was easy for me and slowly moved my way to more complex things. I made sure I rested, paid attention, and learned from what I was doing, one step at a time.

SA: How does the Feldenkrais Method shape your view of the task of governing?

LF: As for governing, my goal is to take issues and view them as systems. What's feeding them, how is everyone affected and how can we tweak those things that feed the system to be able to change the system? From what I have seen of government so far, at least here, so many people really do not know how to view things from different perspectives, as an overview. I truly believe that my Feldenkrais training has a lot to offer government thinking. Now I just have to figure out how to do it. Especially within a system that is adverse to change.

My main point in my campaign is that the world is moving very fast, and we need to move with it so we, in rural America, can thrive rather than get left behind.

SA: What's the next challenge?

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LF: I've used the Feldenkrais Method to guide my campaign tactics and strategy, and the way I communicated about the issues to educate the citizens. It was exciting to try and use our principles to effect change on a larger level. Now I have to actually apply it — and I will admit, it is a daunting task! I'll be doing a lot more Awareness Through Movement lessons for myself to keep my thinking clear and organized. I'm looking forward to it.

SA: Congratulations, Commissioner Flanders!

ABOUT LINDA FLANDERS



Linda Flanders, GCFP, author and entrepreneur, has been a Guild Certified Feldenkrais Practitioner for 28 years. She was a police officer and detective for 17 years. That experience led her to her second career, incorporating media arts education to start an innovative program for at-risk youth. The program was recognized by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Service Agency (SAMHSA) as "most promising in the Midwest." She was elected in 2019 to fill a seat on the County Commission of Goodhue County, MN.