

**“The Transformational Leadership course is a wonderful example of learning by experience. It has the potential to help leaders learn how they lead by focusing on the ways in which their movement allows them to key in to the stress we experience and how to reduce it. Less stress gives me more energy for us as leaders and frees us to enjoy our leadership roles and to enact them more effectively.”**

— Linda Lederman, Director  
Hugh Downs School of  
Human Communication

### What is embodied leadership?

How do we stay present, healthy and whole as we learn to lead ourselves and others ethically and with integrity? What can embodiment teach us about living, learning and leading in a rich multicultural environment?

Mary Margaret Fonow, director of the School of Social Transformation at Arizona State University, and Rich Goldsand, a Guild-certified Feldenkrais practitioner have developed an innovative approach to embodied leadership and transformational learning that is helping faculty, students and staff develop ethical leadership capacities, improve self-awareness, reduce stress and foster successful interpersonal skills.

Their approach - a unique combination of the Feldenkrais Somatic Method, reflections on transformational leadership and mindfulness meditation - was first developed as an academic course at Arizona State University and is now available as a workshop for other colleges and universities.



### What is embodied activism?

Embodied learning takes advantage of the body's ability to give the individual feedback. Through movement, breathing and other mindfulness practices, the individual can use the body and its tacit knowledge to stay in the present moment, which is crucial for the development of ethical leadership capacities. Embodied leaders are in touch with themselves and, by becoming more congruent with their core values, are able to lead with compassion.

Suppose that you've taken on a new leadership role in a student organization or in administration that is stressful. If you were aware of the cues from your body – shortness of breath, tightening of the chest and throat, elevated heart rate – you could take steps to reduce the mental and physical manifestations of stress. You would be in a better state of mind to listen actively and proactively address challenges.

Feldenkrais provides the skills to become more aware of your mind, body and movement, allowing you to act instead of react, lower stress and create a more productive environment for yourself and others.

Mindfulness practice is employed by universities, nonprofits and top companies such as Google, Facebook and Cisco to improve well-being, workplace satisfaction and performance.

### Who would it benefit?

Many individuals – athletes, dancers, musicians, college deans, department chairs, professors, academic advisors and graduate teaching assistants – have used the Feldenkrais method to improve their performance.

Ideal for leaders across all disciplines, these workshops have three main components:

#### Feldenkrais lessons:

The lessons conducted by a Guild-certified Feldenkrais practitioner consist of verbally directed movements that are comfortable and easy, gradually evolving into greater range and complexity.



#### Guided meditations:

These informal guided meditations last 12-15 minutes, and are specifically selected for deepening our experience of the “moment,” important for developing transformational leadership.

#### Discussions:

Discussions of leadership implications from these lessons, led by an ASU professor with expertise in leadership, diversity and social change.

#### Learning objectives include:

- Acquire basic knowledge about the connection between the body, the mind, leadership and activism.
- Discover how to orient oneself to the process of learning and doing rather than working towards a goal.
- Learn to direct awareness toward sensing differences and perceiving whole interconnected patterns in movement.
- Develop the capacity to be present during difficult conversations and disagreements.

**“Rich and Mary Margaret facilitated our spring retreat and the results were extraordinary. Ours was a mixed group consisting of faculty, administrators, and students—and each and every one of us departed having been subtly transformed. Their combination of ethical commitment, humor, and deep understanding of the body creates a space where real change can happen.”**

—Dr. Mike Lamb,  
Macaulay Honors College, CUNY



## How can I bring this to my organization?

Mary Margaret Fonow and Richard Goldsand can bring these strategies to any university or organization. Each workshop can be adapted based on your needs to fit content, time and space requirements.

Workshops typically last between one to two days, however they can be as long or short as needed.

This workshop has successfully been brought to Arizona State University and the City University of New York; it is a reoccurring course in the Phoenix area.

## About the instructors



### **Richard Goldsand**

Richard Goldsand is a Guild-certified Feldenkrais practitioner with 25 years of experience. He is a faculty associate in the ASU Department of Dance where he has a course that teaches the Feldenkrais method and in the School of Social Transformation where he co-teaches a course on Transformational Leadership and Embodied Activism with Mary Margaret Fonow.



### **Mary Margaret Fonow**

Mary Margaret Fonow is the director of ASU's School of Social Transformation and professor of women and gender studies. Her research and teaching covers leadership, organizational change, social movements and cultural diversity. She has developed leadership curriculum for universities, labor unions and nonprofit organizations.

If you are interested, please contact us at [mfonow@asu.edu](mailto:mfonow@asu.edu), 480-965-7682 or [Richard.goldsand@asu.edu](mailto:Richard.goldsand@asu.edu), 602-803-2410.

My Feldenkrais and mindfulness practice have helped me to become more aware of myself and my habits. I've developed a clearer understanding of learning and how movement pervades life. As a musician, this helps me to practice more efficiently and avoid injury and discomfort from practicing too much.

—Alexandra Toenniges,  
bassoon performance major  
Arizona State University



# Transformational Leadership and Embodied Activism