

Innovative LIFE program transforms children with neurological disorders from disabled to 'abled'

TORONTO (November 2009) – His approach is controversial in some circles and difficult for some parents to embrace. But Natan Gendelman, an osteopathy manual practitioner and kinesiologist, and director of Health in Motion Rehabilitation clinic in Toronto, has had such success treating children with neurological disorders and injuries that patients are now coming to him from as far as Europe and Asia.

Gendelman has developed a uniquely innovative treatment program called [Learning Independent Functions for Everyday](#) – or LIFE for short -- which takes a two-pronged approach to treating patients with conditions such as cerebral palsy, Down syndrome, or brain injuries. Instead of the exercise-based approaches used in conventional physiotherapy, Gendelman teaches patients how to perform everyday tasks – such as sitting, walking, eating or getting dressed – by breaking down these actions and imprinting them sequentially into patients' minds and bodies.

At the same time, Gendelman's LIFE program addresses the social and psychological aspects of a disability or disorder by breaking the often well-entrenched patterns of dependency that patients tend to have on the people around them.

"This can be very hard for families, especially for parents who are used to doing everything for their child," says Gendelman, whose clinic offers a range of services that includes massage therapy, functional rehabilitation, speech language therapy, and homeopathy. "But often people don't realize that by treating their child as disabled, they are reinforcing the child's self-image as a person who cannot do things independently."

After just a few months of intensive LIFE treatment with Gendelman, children who were medically assessed as disabled for life have improved to the point that they can perform everyday tasks – such as sitting, walking, eating or getting dressed –with little or no assistance. In some cases, the children were in a near-vegetative state when they first came to Gendelman's practice, and were expected by their doctors to remain helpless and bedridden for the rest of their lives.

"I'm not performing miracles," explains Gendelman, who was an elite boxer and member of the National Team of the Russian Federation in the 1980s. "But I strongly believe that everyone is 'abled' and that no one is disabled."

Gendelman's approach was influenced largely by his own experiences. After he was seriously injured in 1986 while fighting in Afghanistan for the Russian Army, Gendelman was told by doctors that he would need a walking cane for the rest of his life. But with the help of a local healer in a Dungan village near the Chinese border, Gendelman recovered in the three months and was soon walking on his own – and without a cane.

After this life-changing experience, Gendelman decided to pursue a career as a healer. He studied at the faculty of remedial gymnastics at St. Petersburg's Herzen Pedagogical University before moving to Israel, where he enrolled in a physiotherapy program and worked for seven years in various hospitals and clinics in Jerusalem. After moving to Canada in 1997, Gendelman became certified as an osteopathy manual practitioner and kinesiologist. In 2001, he opened Health in Motion, a multidisciplinary clinic with a team

of experienced and certified specialists.

To schedule an interview Gendelman about the LIFE program, please contact Health in Motion at 416 250 1904. Or email Gendelman directly at natan@healthrehab.ca. If you wish, Gendelman will also be happy to write an article about this subject. Samples of his writing are available upon request.

Learn more about the [LIFE program](#) at Health in Motion Rehabilitation.