

What Reuven Feuerstein meant to me

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Reuven was like a father to me, a teacher, leader and true friend in my personal and professional development.

I was deeply affected by Feuerstein's theories and through me his influence is carried on within my students, and through them on many consumers of mental health services and their family members. Feuerstein's theories have affected us, and will continue on doing so. He instilled in us not just theory, but beliefs and a way of life. The core components of his theory are true love for all human beings and passionate faith in the ability of people to learn regardless of their age, disability and health status. Feuerstein was a pioneer in fighting for the rights of people with disabilities to live life fully with full integration into the community. He was sure in his belief in us, his pupils: Parents, teachers, therapists to be able to carry out the miracle, a miracle performed by human beings.

When I remember Reuven, I mostly recall small, moments, our first meeting and his promise to teach me everything he knew: "half of the universe" as he said then...And for many years I would travel once a week to Jerusalem to study with him, to hear him and watch him interact with children...parents...and always the feeling that won't take place, and then, like Moses, striking the stone and the water flowing freely out. I remember meeting in his office, with various professionals sitting around the table, from Israel and abroad, impressive people from different cultures, speaking different languages, and his concentration solely on the young boy before him, and together with this he was speaking with everyone in the room, in Hebrew, English, Spanish, French...switching from language to language.

And I remember how during an important meeting one young fellow entered to empty the dustbin, and Reuven stopped the meeting, turned to the young man inquiring how he was progressing and conveying interest in his

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family, his parents and relaying encouraging words. And all those in the room, watching quietly without interfering, just learning, and after hearing the young man's full reply turning his attention back to those present at the meeting.

I remember his trying to convince me to study a single individual for my PhD...in an effort to prove that cognitive therapy can change the individuals' brain and not just his behaviour, and I backed off out of fear. But he was right, as Eric Kandel, the Nobel Prize winner years later attested to.

I remember how glad I was to receive my PhD that proved that people with severe mental illness can develop and improve using Feuerstein's theories and methods.

And so many other meaningful moments...

So with deep sorrow and longing...and feelings of gratitude for the fortune of having Reuven in my life- I say goodbye.