

November 26 – December 1, 2024 in Bratislava

# MAKING CONNECTIONS

Body-Mind Centering® and Diversability

LABORATORY Nov 26–29

Body-Mind Centering® is an integrated approach to the study and analysis of movement, touch and vocal expression based on experiential learning. At the center of BMC® is the exploration of developmental movement from conception to walking, and the process of embodiment of the different body systems, like bones, organs, or the nervous system. The understanding of development from an embodied perspective is at the base of understanding how to support children with challenges. It provides a frame for stimulating what is needed to make the logical next step to perceive what movements could be organized more efficiently and what support can be given to facilitate how a child wants to move or what it wants to express.



Anka and Carla with Rebeka, Bratislava February 2023

Making Connections supports children in their psychophysical development, including the families and care givers. During these days, there will be a strong focus on practice, learning together and applying key principles of Body-Mind Centering® (BMC®) to the work with children with diverse abilities. We will meet families, observe, and discuss sessions. There is also time for movement explorations and hands-on practice with each other.

## Learning objectives

- Understanding a dynamic approach to working with children with diverse abilities and their families.
- Facilitating with respect for the child and the family
- Enhancing the child's sense of self and relationship to others
- Working through play and enticement.
- Understanding how to support movement and expression.
- Exploring different body systems like bones or organs to facilitate movement.
- Understanding facilitation from the perspective of the development in the first year of life.
- Facilitating bottom-up processes in relation to top-down processes.
- Understanding the importance of touch and care for development and change.
- Experience the relation of movement and touch.
- How to use the senses to stimulate the child's curiosity and sense of discovery
- How to work 4-hands with a child

The application of BMC® to the work with children with special needs goes back to the founder of BMC®, Bonnie Bainbridge Cohen, who as an occupational therapist, is specialized in this application. Even though BMC® has been applied in many fields, like dance, the arts or education, the work with children is still in development. One of the main places involved in the research of this work has been Babyfit in Bratislava, mainly Anka Sedlačková and Angelika Kováčová, who also participated in the European project SPARKS (Somatic Practices Arts and Kreativity for Special Needs) 2014 and 2015, together with five BMC® centers in Europe: SOMA (France), Leben (Italy), EmbodyMove (UK), and Artman (Hungary). Out of this project grew MAKING CONNECTIONS, a platform for research and application of BMC® and Diversability, initiated by Thomas Greil and Anka Sedlačková in 2019. Today, Making Connections is based on the collaboration of different people in different contexts and countries.

The project is curated by Anka Sedlačková, Angelika Kováčová and Thomas Greil, with the participation of Carla Bottiglieri and Ferenc Kálmán. The six days together include a 3,5 -day laboratory and a weekend workshop. The laboratory and weekend workshop are addressed to somatic practitioners (BMC® and others). The weekend workshop (description below) is open to anybody else, especially parents, therapists, and educators. The laboratory and the workshop can be taken individually or as a package.

Dates: November 26 – December 1, 2024

Laboratory: Nov 26–29, 2024 Tue-Thu 9.30-17.30 Fri 9.30-13.00

Weekend Workshop: Nov 30-Dec 1, 2024; Sat 10-17.30 and Sun 10-16.00

Location: Bratislava, exact location t.b.a.

Costs: Laboratory: 300 euros, Weekend workshop: 200 euros, both together, Lab and WE: 400 euros

Places are limited: Please apply asap, at least before October 31, 2024.

Registration: Angelika babyfit@babyfit.sk

# MAKING CONNECTIONS

Body-Mind Centering® and Diversability

## TOUCH FOR CARE

The significance and practice of touch in the field of care

November 30 - December 1, 2024 in Bratislava

Workshops for Parents, Therapists, Educators, and other Professionals  
with Anka Sedlačková and Thomas Greil

The first and most important sensory modality that humans share with other animals is the sense of touch. Without touch, we cannot exist. Touch gives a profound sense of knowledge and existence. Before becoming a means of doing or getting something, touch expresses the attitude of caring. When an infant cries, when a child is hurt, when we are in pain or lonely, touch gives us comfort. It makes us feel safe and accepted, it allows the transformation of previous unpleasant experiences. Whether in the context of caring, education and/or therapy, touch is the modality that elicits our inherent capacities for receptivity, and resonance. Touch is essential for learning new ways of being in the body and acting in the world. The underlying functions of touch are key to prepare the conditions for the emergence of new abilities.



Soňa, Bratislava February 2023

In this workshop, we will explore the fundamental potential of touch and its specificity as an educational and therapeutic tool. The workshop is based on Body-Mind Centering® (BMC®). It is part of the international project MAKING CONNECTIONS – BMC® and Diversability, born in 2019. The project is especially addressed to families with a member with diverse abilities, parents, as well as educators, and therapists, with the idea that real change can only happen in the entire constellation of relationships around the person. And that only through cooperation can these changes integrate to support the person and his or her environment.

The objective of this workshop is to experience and understand ...

- a dynamic approach working with children with diverse abilities and their families.
- the fundamental importance of touch for learning, relating, communicating, and caring.
- how touch can provide safety, comfort, and stimulate curiosity
- how touch supports the regulation of the autonomic nervous system, balancing rest, and activity
- how touch supports awareness and clarity, inviting a kinesthetic dialog
- the way different qualities of touch underly attunement.
- the relational aspects of touch.
- the significance of touch and care for development and change
- bottom-up processes in relation to top-down processes
- how to create a respectful relationship with the child and the family

Dates: November 30/ December 1, 2024

Times: Saturday 10-17.30 and Sunday 10-16.00

Location: Bratislava

Language: English/ Slovak with translation

Costs: 200 euros

Places are limited: Please apply asap, at least before October 31, 2024.

Registration: Angelika babyfit@babyfit.sk

# MAKING CONNECTIONS

Body-Mind Centering® and Diversability\*

Making Connections is a project for children with disabilities to accompany them in the process of developing and improving their motor, cognitive and interpersonal abilities. It supports the child in his or her physical, mental, and emotional learning experience by involving the family and caregivers in the discovery and learning of new resources in relationship and communication. Making Connections was founded in 2019 at the initiative of Thomas Greil and Anka Sedlačková, within "Babyfit", a center for developmental movement in Bratislava (SK), and further developed with the involvement of different people, especially Carla Bottiglieri, BMC® practitioner and teacher, and Rolfer. The project is based on the tools of somatic education, a disciplinary field based on awareness in movement, and which is inspired by various somatic practices, mainly BMC®, with a specific system of sensory stimulation and gentle manual techniques, to invite interaction through touch and play, guided exploration of movement and the environment.



Anka and Thomas with Alicia, Bratislava, February 2020

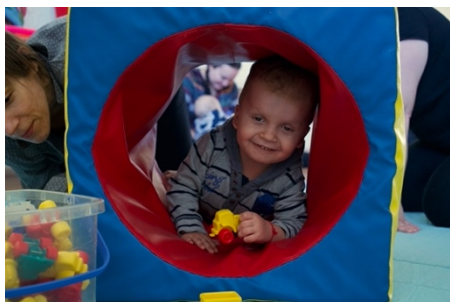
**MAKING CONNECTIONS is developed around four axes of activity.**

- Individual sessions/meetings with children and parents/caregivers
- Individual sessions/meetings with parents/caregivers
- Experiential workshops for parents/caregivers, social and health professionals
- Meetings between parents/caregivers

## Sensorimotor integration in the perspective of somatic education

At the crossroads of movement arts and experimental pedagogy, rehabilitation therapies and developmental psychology, and informed by contemporary clinical and neuroscientific research, somatic approaches offer a variety of intervention resources for integrating sensorimotor experiences. The approach is inspired by learning as an embodied experience of continuous formation of connections between mental, emotional, and physiological processes.

Experiential learning is a process of forming "felt meanings" through the organization of an emerging sense of self concerning the body, its unity, its actions, and its affective and emotional states. Confirmed by research over the past fifty years in the field of neurology, the plasticity of the nervous system is the key to understanding the integration of perceptual and motor dynamics in the reorganization of movement that is consistent with the kinesthetic, vestibular, tactile, visual, and auditory stimulations offered by the environment. This approach to brain plasticity needs to take into account the physical, affective, and social environment in which the child's experience unfolds, no matter what the child's developmental skills are.



Zrinka with Timko, Bratislava, February 2023

The environment includes the family, the social fabric and its spaces, schools, and institutions, as well as educators and/or therapists involved. It is this net of dynamic relationships that forms the background of learning processes and allows a variety of growth. From micro-movements to locomotion in space, from chemical and metabolic communication processes to distinct and correlated movement of body parts, from verticality to walking, from reflex to intentional activity, from orientation in space to coordination of movement with proprioceptive feedback:

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\* This text was written by Carla Bottiglieri and Thomas Greil to present Making Connections in Italy

The view on movement embraces the whole range of dynamic dimensions to read the ways in which gestures, postures, habits, and uses of the body are formed and crystallized. The process of attention and listening directed toward kinesthetic experiences creates a particular state of sensory awareness in which movement becomes a matter of exploration and discovery, beginning with the minimal distinctions of quality, direction, expression, and relationship. Each somatic method chooses a different type of relationship with the body in order to improve its functionality.

The intent of MAKING CONNECTIONS is to gather and articulate the elements of each practice according to their relevance and effectiveness, in order to compose each time, the approach appropriate to the situation of the child and his or her family. In this sense, it is not the simple application of a given technique, but the situated and dialogic construction of pedagogical proposals according to circumstances and their variability.

## Forming new neural maps

*How to form new neural maps, opening pathways to, and from, the brain?* As Carl Ginsburg, teacher of the Feldenkrais® method, writes: "If every act involves dynamic organization, action is described not as a fixed pattern or program, but as an envelope of dynamic possibilities that integrate all the levels involved to create a coherent pattern of mobilization and action."

- Connecting the paths and movements of body parts to produce kinesthetic clarity and proprioceptive awareness.
- improving orientation in the field of gravity and in space.
- Coordinating motor planning and sensory feedback in the slightest gesture that the child is motivated to perform; paying attention to the timing of events: these principles inform somatic approach interventions with the goal of tuning attention, intention, and action to build coherence and meaning each time.
- Increasing awareness of the body's physiological movements, from the perspective of Body-Mind Centering®, helps to connect the functional dimensions of motility in space to the vitality of presence, rooted in its psychophysical wholeness.

In order to establish new connections, it is crucial to start with the recognition of each child's latent potential. This may be minimal signs in which a sensory modality is expressed, as well as his or her rhythm of attention, tonal quality, attitudes, and mood states: the facilitation of somatic integration starts from the premise of creating the conditions essential for learning, namely a sense of support and security. Once established, safety allows the introduction of small kinetic changes that require subtle adaptation to the proposed change. In contact, based on mutual feedback during movement, the relational dimension is essential to affective regulation and learning.

It is therefore necessary for the child to be welcomed in its entirety, with its abilities and resources, and for the rest of the family to be allowed to play an active part during the session. It is through dialogue with the environment that the child forms a more or less stable sense of self, which differentiates and integrates new levels of experience. We create an identity by internalizing and representing the external world, other people, environments, and objects. Attachment and bonds form the fundamental safe ground to the process of learning and growth. The relationship to self and to caregivers, mother, father, siblings, even pets, are the deepest connections that reveal the constellation of interdependencies of which we are made.

For this reason, the MAKING CONNECTIONS project is aimed not only at children with special needs and psychophysical frailty, but at all those involved in the daily and at the same time particular experience of their caregiving--family members, educators and therapists--with the certainty that making connections is also about forming a space for mutual recognition of skills, and the assembling of knowledge, resources and tools.



MAKING CONNECTIONS is based on the principles of Body-Mind Centering® and other somatic approaches and is characterized by a gentle, nonintrusive approach embracing the wholeness of the person and the process, involving parents, family members and caregivers. Making connections supports a wide range of learning processes, from micromovements to locomotion in space, from neuro-muscular organization to talking, getting up and walking. It combines a structural approach working with the different body system (like organs or fascia) with sensory integration and functional alignment of the neuro-muscular system.

[www.making-connections.org](http://www.making-connections.org)

Body-Mind Centering® is a gentle, non-intrusive approach. It is rather enticing than demanding. It is highly specific to the individual child and family. BMC® does not force, but engages, interacts, and seeks to spark the child's inherent curiosity and interest. BMC® supports self-directed learning, stimulating, independent of the abilities of the child, the process of discovery. It always looks at the whole person and fully embraces the process of each child and their caregivers, parents, and family.

Body-Mind Centering® (BMC®) was developed by Bonnie Bainbridge Cohen, an occupational therapist and movement artist. BMC® explores the foundations of learning, the organization of movement and its development from pre-natal to walking. Each developmental step leads to the next. BMC® is a study from an embodied and experiential perspective, from everybody's own experience: Life, from conception to walking, from embryonic stages to adult anatomy and physiology. The principles of Body-Mind Centering have been brought into many fields of activities like dance, sports, acting, physical therapy, education, birth preparation, baby-parent groups, and many more.

[www.bodymindcentering.com](http://www.bodymindcentering.com)

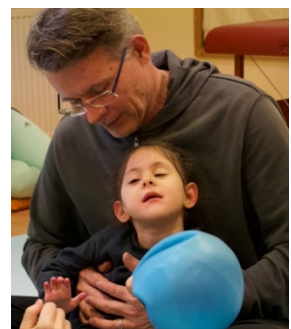


Anka Sedlačková is a dancer and performer, teaching in the Academy of Arts in Bratislava. She has been studying BMC® since 2000 and graduated as an Infant Development Movement Educator, BMC® Practitioner and BMC® Teacher. In 2003 she started to work with babies and children with special needs. Together with Angelika Kováčová founded non-profit organization Babyfit which is focusing on the education in the field of developmental movement. She has been teaching in France, Japan, Czech Republic. [www.babyfit.sk](http://www.babyfit.sk)

Thomas Greil is a practitioner and trainer of Body-Mind Centering®, especially for the work with babies, and a JKA practitioner. He works with all ages since more than 20 years. His interest in children and their families comes from his research of human development, neuroscience, healing trauma and embodiment. He lives in Faenza, Italy, where he directs together with Carla Bottiglieri minima somatica, a nucleus of somatic research in practices and narratives of embodiment.

[www.minimasomatica.org](http://www.minimasomatica.org)

[www.making-connections.org](http://www.making-connections.org)



Thomas with Rebeka, Bratislava, February 2023