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THE MOBIUS STRIP



Leadership & Somatics

“Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly. I can never be what I ought to be until you are what you ought to be. This is the interrelated structure of reality.”

—Martin Luther King, Jr.



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Somatic Practice: A Path to Mastery for 21st Century Leaders

By Jen Cohen, Mobius Executive Coach and Jason Gore, Mobius Consultant and Executive Coach, both Transformational Leadership Faculty

In order to succeed and stay competitive in today's fast-paced business environment, organizations launch big initiatives, create high-profile goals, and reach for new outcomes on all levels. These initiatives stretch us, pushing us to innovate and use limited resources very effectively. They require everyone in the organization to reach beyond their usual comfort level, embrace change, and navigate ambiguity.

To successfully meet these demands requires optimism, curiosity, a willingness to make mistakes, flexibility, and a long list of characteristics and skills that enable a leader to embrace change as an opportunity – to be able to move through the discomfort of uncertainty towards the future as an exciting possibility.

Sufficiency and Scarcity Mind/Body

When leaders develop and adopt a particular mind/body alignment – one that we define as “being centered and in sufficiency” – we see

a marked increase in the success of organizational efforts. With this mind/body alignment, a leader is oriented around what is already available as resources. It is founded on realistic optimism and a curiosity that prompts leaders to look at how to use what is presently available to them rather than focus on what is missing or the lack of what they need, such as time, money, talent, or by-in. Because it's hard to consistently come from this mindset, leaders must also practice “coming back to center”: the ongoing alignment of head, heart, and gut, as well as an alignment of values, mind state and behavior. From center, the leader is acting with his or her whole self, from a centered place, and can act coherently from a mind/body alignment of being centered and in sufficiency.

“Center is a basic bodily presence, and it is on this presence that the other bodily states are built.”

Richard Strozzi Heckler,
Anatomy of Change

The sufficiency mind/body generally leads towards having the success of all stakeholders' in mind and finding ways to move forward together rather than fighting over limited resources. It also generates an environment of collaboration, creativity, innovation and productivity because leaders have an expanded viewpoint that allows them to see possibilities and options that are often overlooked when

A mind/body alignment:

This particular mindset is a perspective based on being aware of and oriented around what is already available as a resource. It is founded on realistic optimism and curiosity that has leaders look at how to use what is presently available to them rather than focus on what is missing.

overly focused on lack or caught between seemingly polarized choices.

However, this mind/body alignment is not widespread. In fact, there is a fundamental tension between the organization's desire for growth and more typical human tendencies that tend to be based in scarcity—a risk-adverse mind/body state. Human beings are biological and neurological creatures. In today's world we often are in roles that require action contrary to some of our hard-wiring.

Case in point: David is a VP of Operations at a small, U.S.-based manufacturing company. He is in a meeting with the senior management team and the CEO is announcing his intention to pursue international expansion, starting with Mexico and Canada. Even while listening to the CEO explain the strategy, David becomes tense. His breath becomes shallow and his body contracts, although he doesn't notice. David's mind races as he anticipates the risks



involved and all the possible ways the expansion could fail: the company has insufficient cash flow, people, talent, and expertise. He looks at the downsides: a failed market entry would be a disaster for the company and his individual career. He quickly arrives at the conclusion that the CEO's intention is simply a bad idea, and he decides to set up a meeting to persuade the CEO to move more slowly and stick to expanding domestically this year.

David is reacting to the situation, operating from a scarcity mind/body, which is primarily based in fear and survival. This mind/body creates a lack of willingness to fail or take risk, a discomfort around ambiguity, and a desire to “know” prior to taking action. From this contracted mindset, David is likely to make less than optimal business choices and to potentially damage his professional relationships. So how does David get from his scarcity and fear to sufficiency and center?

Most often the leaders with whom we work already have some awareness of the habits and patterns that get them in trouble. They may even have had moderate success in modifying some of their less than optimal behaviors. That said, many leaders are still struggling to shift into a new way of thinking, being and acting that will serve them and their organizations more fully. We suggest that including the body in all of its wisdom will greatly enhance any leader's ability to shift to optimal performance.

Creating Change & Embodying New Practices

We are what we practice, and we are always practicing something. Often referred to as habits or behaviors,

we repeat these actions over and over again. We practice breathing in certain patterns; we practice talking about ourselves in certain patterns; we engage with others in patterns; we move physically in certain patterns; we think in certain patterns; and so on. These patterns form the matrix we experience as our “reality”.

Top performing athletes understand this intimately – the practice of self-doubt versus self-confidence can radically alter their performance in the game. Athletes learn to re-pattern themselves and their thoughts. In addition to being coached to shift their weights, do warm ups, and change their moves, they are also coached to shift their self-talk. They practice these moves over and over again until the new patterns become the norm.

That said, our bodies are optimized for physical survival. When the stakes are high and change is on the table, there is a tendency to let our biology lead the way. We tend to operate from our past rather than embracing change from a place of creative, reflective thinking.

David, our hero, is engaging with expansion as a threat. His body tightens and his breathing shallows—reactions that were embedded during his childhood and are part of his legacy as a biologically-based organism. He immediately starts focusing on the risks and why the proposal is a bad idea. This is all automatic. He doesn't actively make this choice—it's just what arises because it's already embodied through past actions and experiences.

David's mind/body limits his ability to think creatively about the opportunity. The human organism is optimized for homeostasis and stability. As biological creatures



we attempt to stay stable and resist change.

“This condition of equilibrium, this resistance to change, is called homeostasis. It characterizes all self regulating systems, from a bacterium to a frog to a human individual to a family to an organization to an entire culture—and it applies to psychological states and behavior as well as to physical functioning.”

George Leonard,
Mastery

If something is not a threat to survival, it's better to keep everything as it is rather than take the risk of making a change.

Our somatic training becomes deeply embedded in our bodies, our breathing, and our patterns. Every interaction tends to reinforce the patterns so that they become unconscious habits. The word “somatic” comes from the Greek word *soma*, which means the unity of mind, body, and spirit. Embedded

so deeply, this patterning shows up without thinking and most often when we are under pressure or threat. And we've been "practicing" these reactions so long that often we don't even know how to choose anything different, especially in the heat of the moment.

"Under pressure we do not rise to our expectations; we fall to the level of our training."

Bruce Lee

This poses a dilemma for leaders and organizations that want to create change. How does an organization that is designed to seek stability thrive in the face of constant pressure and growth-inspired change?

If David was in a mind/body of sufficiency and center, he would engage the CEO's request quite differently. Instead of trying to persuade the CEO to lower the goal, David would be more likely to use his time and energy to figure out a way to manage the risk while pursuing the upside.

The result is that new possibilities could emerge quickly. David might talk to his team members who know something about Mexico and Canada. He might begin looking for expertise, for possible expansion partners, or explore possibilities of a merger. When he sees it as an opportunity, he can use his energy first to explore possibilities, gather information, and take a moment before responding to his boss at all. He will have time later to fine tune all the details, and perhaps ultimately negotiate with the CEO an optimal solution.

This may not be natural for David, so to switch into this mind/body alignment, David would first need to recognize his automatic re-

actions and the context in which he is acting.

We are contextual beings. As human beings, context is always operating as the background of thinking, feeling, and doing. If the context is one of scarcity, change will be avoided. If the context is one of sufficiency, change is more likely to be embraced.

Our body is our primary context. All of our experience in this life is experienced through the body.

All external events are interpreted within one's context. These interpretations, in turn, drive our conversation and actions—and essentially cause us to shape our reality. It is indeed a self-fulfilling prophecy. We shape our world and are shaped by it simultaneously. The context we bring shapes both interpretation (how we see the world) and behavior (how we change and shape the world around us through our actions). For example, if we think someone doesn't like us, we start acting as if they don't like us. We may avoid eye contact, speak curtly, make assumptions, etc. Soon enough the person who we thought doesn't like us will indeed start not liking us. A feedback loop forms that creates a world fully consistent with our own context.

Science has proven over and over again that our mindset influences our body. The placebo effect, for example, is the most documented correlation in all of medicine. If you give someone an inert, inactive pill that the person believes will improve his condition, his or her condition has a high tendency to improve. We

shape our reality in incredible ways that science can show, but not fully explain.

So, if we can learn to shift our context, we shift how we see and shape our world.

Most of us see our body as something we have. Our perspective is different: *we do not have a body, we are a body.* Even though the business environment and the daily actions required in business may seem intellectual or strictly mental exercises, our context and mindset arises in and through the body, shaping all of our decisions, actions, and interpersonal communications.

This idea might seem quite radical in a modern mechanistic worldview where we abide by Rene Descartes' words, "We think, therefore we are." Descartes' words were symbolic of the birth of rationalism and the subsequent divorce of mind and body. Ironically, modern science, a direct offspring of rationalistic thinking, is now definitively showing that all of our experience happens from within the framework of the body.

For example, in one research study, people were sitting in a waiting room and were asked to take a pill in preparation for the experiment. For some, the pill was inert (a placebo), but for others, the pill slightly increased their heart rate. People that were given the heart-rate increasing pill had a much higher tendency to be anxious and report being nervous about the experiment. The sensations they felt in their body impacted how they were seeing and experiencing the world. The placebo group did not report anxiety.

In another study, when participants hold a pencil in their teeth engaging the muscles of a smile, it increased their reported happiness.

They comprehend pleasant sentences faster than unpleasant ones. And, it works in reverse: holding a pencil in their teeth to engage the muscles of a frown has them comprehend unpleasant sentences faster than pleasant ones.

We are “structurally determined” creatures. The shape of the body itself—posture, breathing, facial expressions, neuronal pathways, etc.—gives rise to our experience of life.

“The body is the living shape of the self.”

Jeffrey Maitlin,
The Spacious Body

Renowned leaders often talk about leading “from their gut” and following their instincts. We now know that there is a reason that this is so effective: our bodies have information that we can access if we slow down and learn how to listen.

Research suggests we have cells throughout the body that resemble human brain cells in shape, size and function. Biologist and researcher Dr. Candace Pert reveals that most of these cells are clustered in the gut and the heart and operate much like a second and third brain.

When we assume the body is simply a complex and perhaps even cumbersome transportation system, we are missing huge amounts of information—data, intuition, deeper knowledge, etc.—that is constantly being offered by the body.

When we take the time to get acquainted with our bodies, we get access to huge amounts of subtle but relevant and important data. This can translate to intuition, knowledge, and even wisdom that can be of great service to the wholeness of our self and of course our leadership.

Even though cognitive biologists like Humberto Maturana and Francisco Varela will tell us we are structurally determined and limited, we are also tremendously elastic and malleable. We can and do change and this changeability is as much a part of our biological imperative as is stability. Knowing how to work skillfully with the dynamic tension between stability and change is a key ingredient to the art of embodied leadership and stepping into a mind/body of sufficiency and center.

It is important to become an observer of how we are participating in creating our world. That world—an amalgam of our structurally-determined bodies, our contexts, our thinking, and our feelings—impacts how we relate to our employees, and how we relate with managers, spouses and children. Once we can see and feel all the parts of the whole, we can learn to shift ourselves and leverage our elasticity. This gives us tremendous power in the face of being an embodied human. There are specific steps you can take to shifting your own mindset.

Six Steps to Shifting to a sufficiency Mind/Body State

1 Observe your patterns under pressure, in both your behaviors and in your body:

Although you may be eager to create change, first you have to learn what you do when under pressure. Only by becoming aware of these patterns, can you change them. We distinguish this from learning about *why* you do what you do. That is the work of psychotherapy. In our investigation, we ask you to turn

your attention to *how* you do what you do. And you can begin by being curious about your own reactions within the pressure of daily life, the modern day equivalent of the tiger chasing us in the tundra.

After something happens, ask yourself how you responded. How did you respond when asked to innovate, do more with less, were given bad news, or felt threatened? Did you:

- Move faster and make quick decisions? Or hold off on important decisions?
- Get bossy and bark orders? Or pull back with a wait & see attitude?
- Delegate more? Delegate less?

Although everyone’s expression is unique, there are a finite number of patterned responses to the pressures we face. When the sympathetic nervous system is aroused, heart rate increases, respiration rate increases, and cortisol, a stress hormone, is released into the bloodstream. Essentially, the body prepares to react. What happens next varies by person, but almost always, people react in one of four ways:

1. **Fight:** Push for what you want, often through attacks, getting bossy, etc.
2. **Flee:** Although it might be “running away,” flee almost always looks like someone trying to end the conversation quickly. They may make an excuse to end the meeting or may appease the other person so that they can leave.
3. **Freeze:** This is when the brain responds by simply taking your thoughts away so that you don’t act or do anything to worsen the situation. You may find yourself

speechless, unsure how to react, or caught like a “deer in headlights.”

4. Flock: You scramble to find other people that are in your “in group” and associate with them. In our experience, flocking is more often done by women than men.

Which of these do you most relate to? Where awareness goes, attention flows.

2 Catch yourself in the act. Be aware, in the moment, of how you are responding

Once you are aware of your pattern, you can see it in action – how it functions and how it hijacks your best intentions. In the beginning, you may notice the pattern long afterwards, then you’ll get better catching yourself just a few minutes into the reaction, and then finally, you’ll catch yourself just as the reaction is arising. Once you can catch your pattern in the act, rather than just react from within your pattern, you can use that awareness to shift your attention. Choice and power start by catching yourself in the act.

3 Center yourself

When you catch yourself in the act, you have the opportunity to choose a new behavior from a centered and powerful place. Instead of reacting from being off balance, center yourself first, so that you can move from a place of clarity, openness, strength, and determination.

We center ourselves by dropping our attention into our anatomical center of gravity, usually around the belly area. From center, we can generate momentum with ease, power, and economy of movement. In Ai-

kido and in other Asian martial arts and traditions, the anatomical center—the *ki*, pronounced “key” – is where we have our greatest life force. Coming from the center or the *ki* opens up new possibilities that require less force because we can access our natural power. With practice, centering takes only a short moment, often with breath and attention. Over time we can become agile at shifting from a survival/scarcity/fear biology and mind state to a place of center and a mind state of sufficiency.

With training this becomes not just a good idea or concept but an actionable set of practices a leader can use to create the mood, direction and trajectory of a top performing team.

Human beings are an “open loop” system, which means our nervous systems are greatly influenced and impacted by other people, and vice versa. We tend to mirror each other.

David reacted to the CEO’s response with a mild fight response – as a result, he was going to try to get the CEO to change his opinion. If he catches himself in the act, he will notice that he wants to push back. He will pause, center himself, and then decide what course of action is really best in the situation.

4 Open with width & a relaxed stance

Where our attention goes, our energy follows. Instead of focusing on the boundaries and constraints of a situation, start by focusing on the possibility

and opportunity. Somatically, this is placing attention on your breadth and widening your physical frame and field of vision – literally relaxing your eyes so that instead of being narrowly focused, they are soft and you are able to take in a lot of peripheral information. Hunters use this technique so that they don’t spook their prey.

As you soften and release—opening instead of contracting – you are cultivating the leadership mindset critical for leading yourself and others through change. Relaxing under pressure opens up new actions and possibilities, and creates a wider perspective so that you can see the forest through trees, choose the best course of action, and then change direction whenever appropriate.

If David softens, he will start to see that there are many choices available to him. He could push back, but there are many other actions he could take instead, including doing more research, engaging others, etc. With a relaxed, centered stance, David realizes that there is no need to resist the initiative immediately. Instead, he’ll collect more information and re-evaluate the situation when he knows more.

5 Connect

We are all connected already, but in times of crises, we often disconnect. Articulated so beautifully by Martin Luther King, Jr., even when we think we are not connected, we are deeply affecting one another.

“Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly. I can never be what I ought to be until you are what you ought to be. This is the interrelated structure of reality.”

Martin Luther King, Jr.

In our leadership case, David’s

mind/body will impact everyone on his team and the people around him.

Human beings are an “open loop” system, which means our nervous systems are greatly influenced and impacted by other people, and vice versa. We tend to mirror each other. Spouses’ heart rhythms start to match. And if two people are sitting in a room, the electromagnetic energy (as measured on an EKG) of one person’s heart impacts the other persons. Changes in one person’s EKG are seen and can be measured in the other person’s EKG.

Likewise, when a baby comes in contact with a primary caregiver, the baby’s heart rate changes, relaxation hormones are released, and blood pressure changes. This reciprocity in our regulatory systems does not change when we reach adulthood. While we do learn to self-regulate, we remain an open loop, influenced by the nervous systems around us.

“Adults remain social animals; they continue to require a source of stabilization outside themselves. That open-loop design means that in some important ways, people cannot be stable on their own - not should or shouldn’t be - but can’t be. The prospect is disconcerting to many, especially in a society that prizes individuality as our does. Total self sufficiency turns out to be a day dream whose bubble is burst by the sharp edge of the limbic brain. Stability means finding people who regulate you well and staying near them.”

Amini, MD, Lannon, MD,
and Lewis, MD,
A General Theory of Love

This has huge implications for leadership. If your body as a leader

is contracted, shaped by scarcity, fear or cynicism, how capable will you be of inspiring others to change? And if the leaders in your organization have the mind/body of scarcity, the whole organization will mirror that mind/body.

To shift yourself most quickly from one mind/body alignment to another, we assert that the most effective and efficient way is through the body – by practicing something new and learning how to use the plasticity of our body/mind to access new mind states, new behaviors, and therefore new worlds.

Leadership at its best is with full awareness of this connection. By skillfully cultivating their open loop nervous system, leaders can inspire others, build trust, and move people into action in the face of ambiguity and challenge.

Even through difficult conversations, it is possible to maintain a connection with the other person while also being tough on the problem itself. David can push back on his CEO while maintaining his connection with him. This will generate an engaged conversation where both the CEO and David can learn together.

6 Investigate what is enough and where is enough already present:

The art of leadership starts with relaxing under pressure and inviting leaders to investigate for themselves when there is enough: enough change, enough pressure on the team, enough direction, enough empowerment, enough delegation, enough tough

love, enough stretching and reaching forward. With too much of any of these, we flood ourselves and our team members, causing them to resist.

Too little attention or care or pressure and the system remains so stable that nothing moves forward. Just enough and we can maintain connection to ourselves and others, and invite them to shift with us.

As Buckminster Fuller suggested 50 years ago, if you stand in the reality that there is already enough – food, water, clean air, goods, etc., and *you* are already enough as an individual – many subtle and not so subtle shifts in body, mind, and behavior ensue.

If we could get inside David’s body/mind, we would see that the reason he thinks the company’s international expansion is a bad idea is partly generated from self-doubt. He wonders if he’s a good enough leader to pull this off. If David allows doubt and scarcity to prevail as his fundamental state, this will have tremendous impact on his approach. It will influence the questions he asks, and ultimately the mood of his whole team. He may go to one of his teammates and ask, “Do you think we can pull this off?” This very question is projecting his doubt. Instead, if David is standing in sufficiency and coming from a clear, connected, and open space, he would ask a forward-looking question, such as “What ideas do you have to successfully make this happen?” A question like that will generate a different mood – one of possibility, and a different response – one of new information, in the conversation.

If your body as a leader is contracted, shaped by scarcity, fear or cynicism, how capable will you be of inspiring others to change? And if the leaders in your organization have the mind/body of scarcity, the whole organization will mirror that mind/body.

As the Zen master tells the student: “Not too much suffering so that the student is flooded and unable to learn and not too little so there is no incentive to practice. Just enough suffering so that the student may fully awaken.”

Summary

These six steps are practical ways to find your center in the face of a difficult situation and have more choice. By practicing a sufficiency mind/body alignment in low stakes conversations, it is more likely you can generate that mind/body when the going gets tough. Identify your core pattern of relating under pressure, and design a regimen that cultivates a more desired pattern:

1. Observe your patterns under pressure – in your behaviors, thoughts, and in your body
2. Catch yourself in the act.
3. Center yourself

4. Open with width and a relaxed stance
5. Connect
6. Investigate what is enough and where is enough already present?

We all lose balance. There is a story of a student standing in front of Satomi Sensai, the founder of Aikido, who asked, “Sensei, why is it that you never go off center.” He looked at the student and replied, “It’s not that I don’t lose center. We all do. It’s just that I come back to center faster.” This is the result of lots of practice. Fears, contraction and moments of scarcity will inevitably arise no mat-

ter how skilled you are. The goal is to regain your balance quickly.

Working through the body is a potent gateway to reshape your context and capability to embrace change, inspire others, and reach goals greater than you previously thought were possible. When physical patterns, mental clarity, emotional acumen, and spiritual connection are all lined up, you can increase your ability to produce results and inspire others to do the same. By practicing these steps, you will be able to stay centered, open, and connected in a much wider range of situations and engage with choice from a sufficiency mindset.

As with all arts, those who practice wholeheartedly and with rigor rise to the top of their game. Being masterful at leading others from a centered place is a task well worth the effort. ■



Jennifer Cohen, a Somatic Coach and Transformational Leadership Faculty member with Mobius is a leadership and organizational coach and consultant with over 20 years in the field coaching individuals and groups. Jennifer’s fresh approach is informed by communication

theories ranging from quantum physics and philosophy to neuroscience and Somatics. She loves working with entrepreneurs, visionary thinkers, and leaders who know they must develop the capacity to shift with this quickly changing landscape.

Jennifer is certified as a Master Coach by the Strozzi Institute for Learning and Mastery, where she studied for more than a decade. She is the author of the chapter “From Surviving to Thriving” in the book *Being Human at Work*, edited by Richard Strozzi Heckler. She has a master’s degree in Applied Psychology with an emphasis on systems theory from the Antioch New England Graduate School, and she did her undergraduate work in philosophy at Oberlin and Barnard.



Jason Gore, a Mobius Consultant and Coach, specializes in helping organizations achieve business results by improving communication, collaboration and negotiation skills. He has been leading training programs, managing change initiatives, and facilitating executive retreats since 1993.

Jason teaches negotiation, conflict resolution, and collaboration programs globally for corporations and non-profits. Academically, he has taught Negotiations as a Graduate Student Instructor at the Haas School of Business and at Harvard Law School as a TA. He also taught Organizational Psychology at the Institute of Transpersonal Psychology. When not teaching, Jason spends much of his time facilitating executive and board retreats.

Prior to teaching and facilitating, Jason was a consultant specializing in restructuring Fortune 500 companies. Jason earned a B.A. in Psychology from the University of Pennsylvania focused on interpersonal dynamics and holds an MBA from the Haas School of Business, U.C. Berkeley, focused on business strategy and organizational development.

Do It Anyway

*People are often unreasonable, illogical and self-centered;
Forgive anyway.*

*If you are kind, people may accuse you of selfish, ulterior motives;
Be kind anyway.*

*If you are successful, you will win some false friends and some true enemies;
Succeed anyway.*

*If you are honest and frank, people may cheat you;
Be honest and frank anyway.*

*What you spend years building, someone could destroy overnight;
Build anyway.*

*If you find serenity and happiness they may be jealous;
Be happy anyway.*

*Give the world the best you have, and it may never be enough;
Give the world the best you've got anyway.*

*You see, in the final analysis, it is between you and God;
It was never between you and them anyway.*

– Mother Teresa



Leadership Embodiment: An Interview with Wendy Palmer

by Robin Athey, Senior Consultant, Mobius Executive Leadership

Eight years ago, while I was leading Deloitte's global research on organizational performance, I came across the work of Wendy Palmer, a sixth degree black belt in Aikido. I was struck by Wendy, who in her 60s could still toss 250 pound men. But what really caught my attention were the power, elegance and practicality of her work.

We know how important it is for leaders to see the big picture, to include others, to make wise decisions, and to take clear action—especially under pressure, when there are no easy answers. Here was a practice that taught leaders how to build these leadership capacities by embodying them – not just thinking about them. In essence, leaders could ‘reprogram’ unskillful patterns to consistently take wise and effective action, no matter the circumstance.

I was delighted by what I learned, and so were hundreds of other leaders I witnessed that day. The results are immediate. And the practice is easy to integrate into daily life, whether you're in a board room or with your spouse. It has profoundly shifted my own capacity for leading during crises.

For over a decade now I have been scouring the globe, seeking the most powerful approaches to cultivate leadership and innovation for a sustainable future. I've directly experienced and certified in dozens of these methods, including Leadership Embodiment, which I now teach. It remains at the top of my list.

Robin Athey,
Transformational Leadership Faculty for Mobius

The below article is a Q&A with Wendy Palmer, excerpted from her forthcoming book *Wisdom to Go: How the Way we Sit and Stand Changes the Way We Think and Speak*

Q Wendy, What is Leadership Embodiment?

Formally speaking, Leadership Embodiment draws on the traditions of Aikido, a non-aggressive martial art, and mindfulness practice to offer simple yet deep techniques that help you recognize how your mind and body habitually react to pressure, and to access more skillful and unified responses.

What we do is study the body's response to stress. By doing this, we can shift our patterns, because the stress response shows up in the body before it arrives in our conscious awareness. It may seem unlikely that we can transform ourselves. But we have proven that it can happen. By recognizing our patterns at the very beginning (as they show up in the body), and learning to be friendly toward them, we can make a clear shift to center – which accesses our higher functioning brain.

When we do not explore our bodily responses under stress, we are often relegated to laminating nice

behavior on top of a basic survival reaction. It is never pretty when the laminate breaks and the reactivity rushes out. We want to consistently act with confidence, compassion and wisdom. So we study ourselves and train in a practice we call centering.

To train, we simulate stress in two-person exercises. One person applies mild physical pressure to another. This flushes out a pattern. The person receiving the pressure learns how to become friendly and familiar with it, and practices shifting to center – while under pressure.

Stress shows up in the way our bodies organize, more than in the stories or feelings we have about what is happening. We can never analyze our way out of stress. However, by re-shaping the body, we can profoundly shift our response. And by simulating pressure, we are taking a shortcut to re-pattern people's conditioned responses. In this work, rather than ask “What do you feel?” we ask, “What shape is the body taking?”

Q In Leadership Embodiment we focus on many qualities that are important for leaders, such as seeing others' perspectives and advocating a point of view. You also place a lot of attention on Inclusiveness and Presence. How do you describe these?

We all recognize how important it is to collaborate and work together in organizations. Inclusiveness is the energetic aspect of collaboration. As a coach and facilitator I am often asked to help leaders increase their Leadership Presence, that is their ability to be expansive and inclusive while keeping attention to details. Presence

is an important non-verbal capacity that can significantly influence any work outcome, whether it's a board meeting, a performance review, a presentation, or writing an email.

Inclusiveness

Inclusiveness is the non-verbal message, 'We are in this together.' Every leader knows that people will work harder if they are inspired and feel included. But just knowing this and thinking about it doesn't make it happen. The question we ask is, 'How do you increase your capacity to inspire and include in stressful situations?'

Leadership Presence

Think of people who are good at leading. What do you notice about their leadership presence, their non-verbal behavior – posture, body language and most important of all, the way they occupy their environment? Relating to our environment as an extension of ourselves is what neuroscientists call 'peripersonal space.' To get a sense of what I am talking about here is an explanation from *The Body Has a Mind of Its Own* by Sandra and Matthew Blakeslee.

"Put your arms straight out in front of your body, as far as they can reach. Keep your hands flat, fingertips extended straight ahead. Now wave your arms up and down and sideways..... This is the personal space around your body—what neuroscientists call peripersonal space—and every inch of it is mapped inside your brain. In other words, your brain contains cells that keep track of everything and anything that happens within the invisible space at arm's length around your body."

–*The Body Has a Mind of Its Own: Highlight Loc. 1988-93.*

Although the following quote per-

tains to athletes, it can also apply to leaders. We all know leaders who fill a huge space with their presence.

"When athletes are on the court or field, they are mapping the space around them and people in that space in ways that most of us cannot match. Their personal space and body maps, along with a newly discovered mapping system called grid cells, seem to be exquisitely developed, which may be one reason they score so many baskets and goals."
–*Highlight Loc. 2011-13*

For great leaders who have a developed *leadership presence*, their field of awareness is larger than those who seem less expansive. A strong leadership presence can create a feeling of inclusion for others. Whether the interaction is in a meeting room, a big auditorium or a conference call, the group has an experience of being included in that leader's personal space. When this occurs, people have a felt sense that they are part of something bigger than just themselves. They feel a sense of connection that is the antidote to a feeling of isolation and separation.

Have you ever been in a place where you could feel someone's presence? Have you been near someone who was very happy or angry and you could feel their energy radiating out into the room? Their presence affects you and others in the room without saying a word. How can you manage your personal energy so you can effect your environment in a positive way, non-verbally?

This is what we practice in *Leadership Embodiment*. Some people have asked, "How big can my space get?" My answer is, huge. Think of the Dalai Lama or the president of



a large country when they speak in front of tens of thousands of people. I have been in a crowd with about 25 thousand people when the Dalai Lama was giving a talk. His presence was palpable and it affected everyone in the room. His leadership presence is huge and has a positive affect on thousands of people at the same time. He has practiced and continues to practice many hours a day to maintain his strong and vivid presence and the message implied is, 'we are all in this together.' His brain continues to map everyone as being in his personal space. You may not be able to match the expansiveness of the Dalai Lama's leadership presence but you can strengthen and increase a more expansive presence starting with what you have right now.

Here is a great way to grow your presence. Whenever you enter a room look at the corners, assess the size of the space and then extend your personal energy to fill the room expanding out and into the corners. Then anyone who enters that room will be welcomed into your personal space. You will automatically be giving them the non-verbal message – we are in this together.



To develop this capacity for leadership presence it is helpful to study what gets in the way. That is, what keeps you from showing up as a leader living up to your full potential? To learn how skillful and unskillful behaviors manifest in the day-to-day stresses of leading, we distinguish between reactive and pro-active behaviors. In this model they are called *Personality* and *Center*.

Personality

As a leader you affect the people around you. When you are centered, clear and confident, things can go well. But when you become stressed and overwhelmed you revert to baseline survival reactions, some variation or combination of flight, fight, and freeze. This is personality responding to stress. We develop these patterns in early childhood in an attempt to have more security. Children want the maximum acceptance and approval, and minimum criticism and abuse, from their family members.

Personality is the part of you that focuses on managing the stuff of

life – people, things and concepts. It is afraid of loss; it is always looking for security. You each have a particular way of organizing your body energetically to achieve maximum security and minimize perceived threats. When you are under pressure or stress, your muscles constrict and your perception narrows. This somatic constriction triggers a shift from connection to individuation. Suddenly you are isolated and must manage the world around you.

This pattern shows up in your body before it comes to conscious awareness. You know this because small children and animals know before you know when you are mad, sad, glad and afraid. By the time you realize that you are irritated, you have been running that energy for between 10 and 30 seconds. However, if you can tune in to your body's energy patterns, you can recognize your stress response before it gains momentum. It is easier to shift it when it is still in the beginning stages. In other words, when you notice the tendency of a pattern beginning, you can offer your body an alternative energy pattern. We call this alternative pattern *Center*.

Center

If *personality* references on managing things, then *center* focuses on interconnection, and the expansiveness and fluidity of space. Space is the common element that unifies everything in existence. There is more space than particles everywhere in the universe, even in our bodies. Remember learning in grammar school that everything is made up of atoms? An atom contains protons, neutrons and electrons, but is primarily made up of space. When a

person studies an art – music, poetry, painting, sculpture and photography – they are taught about space. The utilization of space enhances objects, words and notes. It also activates a perception that can calm or stimulate the nervous system, which effects how we relate to a word or object. It is simply not true that things are solid and that space is empty.

Our premise is that space contains an intelligent self-organizing principle. You may have experienced this self-organizing intelligence at times when you were working (perhaps even struggling with a task) and suddenly it became easy. This phenomena is called the 'zone' in sports and the 'flow state' when it appears during mental work. It is a shift from exertion to effortlessness and is often described with phrases such as – "suddenly there was plenty of time and space and everything became clear and easy."

Our experience has shown that the practice of centering restores the capacity for long-term, higher functioning aspects of the brain such as big picture thinking, innovation, morality and intuition. Stress mutes these higher functioning capacities and activates short-term survival aspects of our brain such as narrow focus, hyper vigilance and defensiveness. By essentially shifting the energy in the body from contraction (narrow focus) to expansion (big picture thinking), we access far more resources, allowing us to lead more effectively. We also shift the way our three major centers – head, heart and core – respond to internal or external input. Our head shifts from control to perception, our heart shifts from approval to compassion, and our core shifts from safety to confidence.

Understanding the need to shift with your mind is not enough. If understanding was enough then you could simply read about how you should behave and manifest that behavior any time. Clearly that is not the case. Your *body* needs to understand how to activate expansive confident behavior – and here is the important caveat – while under pressure, in stressful situations. And so we return to the importance of practice and repetition.

Q Will you share more about the importance of practice and repetition?

Just like a muscle, your leadership presence can be strengthened and developed. And like any muscle this occurs through practice – and practice is training sustained over time. In his book, *The Talent Code* Daniel Coyle clearly stated the importance of repetition.

“There is, biologically speaking, no substitute for attentive repetition. Nothing you can do—talking, thinking, reading, imagining—is more effective in building skill than executing the action, firing the impulse down the nerve fiber, fixing errors, honing the circuit.”
– *The Talent Code*, Daniel Coyle

Statistics differ on the amount of repetition it takes to become fluent in a new response when you are in a threatening situation. The US military says it takes about 500 repetitions to be able to repeat an action fluidly—and about 5,000 repetitions to repeat the same action fluidly in a stressful situation. Malcolm Gladwell says that it takes 10,000 hours. And some brain scientists say that it can take 100,000 hours for a response to become a reflex. In any case we are talking about a lot of repetitions.

The good news is that each repetition of the exercises we do in this work can take just five to ten seconds. So depending on how many times you practice each day, you can get to 5,000 in a few weeks.

Because so many repetitions are needed in order to make the centered state a valid option it is important that the centering process be quick, easy and appealing. The last thing you need is another chore and so make sure that centering doesn't become a chore.

To allow the brain to access the creative, innovative and inspired part of its capacity, it helps to have a focusing device.

Here is a quick three-step practice:

- Uplift your posture,
- Extend your personal space to fill the room
- Relax your shoulders

When you do this practice, you change the way you are organizing your energy which can actually change how you access parts of your brain.

We can think of the practice of strengthening center as working with numbers, percentages. For example, I can ask myself, “On a scale of one to 100, what level of intensity is a situation?” Let's say that the situation is a 75 and I can only activate 65 watts of center. I will likely revert back to personality. On the other hand if the situation has 50 watts of intensity, then I will probably be able to maintain my centered state and listen and speak with clarity and presence.

The good news is that the more we practice, the stronger our center becomes. We can raise our numbers. Soon 75 watts of intensity are workable, the bar has been raised and we start practicing for 80's. ■



Wendy Palmer, a member of the Mobius Transformational Leadership Faculty, holds a sixth degree black belt in Aikido and has practiced mindfulness for over 30 years. She has worked with executive teams and individuals for Twitter, The Gap, NASA, Oracle, Genentech/Roche and The Daimler Chrysler Group. She is also an author of two books, *The Intuitive Body* and *The Practice of Freedom*.

This article is from a book she is currently writing – *Wisdom to Go: How the Way we Sit and Stand Changes the Way We Think and Speak*.



Robin Athey, a Mobius Senior Consultant, co-creates cutting-edge leadership development programs, coaches executives, facilitates groups and leads public workshops. Over the past 27 years, she has led global research in organizational performance at Deloitte, been a VP Production at Cole-Haan, a consultant with Kurt Salmon Associates, published dozens of articles, lived and worked

in 28 countries, been a fellow at Harvard University, and become committed to daily meditation, yoga, and Aikido warm-ups.

Somatic Leadership

by Fred Mitouer, Founder, Transformational Bodywork and Member, Mobius Transformational Leadership Faculty

Many years ago while hiking, I was scratched by a stinging nettle. Another hiker passing by noticed my dilemma, took out his knife, cut the stalk of the nettle and scraped out some of the pulp, then deftly applied it to my wound. Immediately the pain vanished and left me not only relieved but also with this insight: A precious gift awaits each of us in

the very center of our emotional wounds. If, for example, our wounds are anger based, then forgiveness lies in the core of our anger; if our pain is fear based, then faith can be found in the heart of that fear. By running from the emotional or psychic pain of our wounds, we miss an incredible opportunity to deepen our life experience. Ironically the running

both intensifies the emotional pain and also depletes the body's energetic resources.

In contrast, by choosing to directly explore the nature of our wounds, we can discover deep insights about our personal realities and about life in general. More significantly, the rewards for taking this journey go far beyond expanded awareness. Our

Somatic Leadership By Fred Mitouer, Ph.D.

At the birth of this millennium, *Yoga Journal* featured my writing about my hands on work of changing lives by transforming bodies in the article that follows this essay. Since then, much has changed in our socio-economic world, especially in technology and in our scientific understanding of the relational dynamic between consciousness, molecular biology and psychological states of awareness.

Today we are witnessing a much wider appreciation of what it means to be somatically intelligent, as we have earlier discovered with *emotional intelligence* and *social intelligence*. And this is good news for all of us who have lost faith in the human adventure.

Although “Somatic Intelligence” is not exactly a buzz word yet — like *transformation* has become, as of late—it will. And with it, a whole new appreciation of what the body has always offered up for our enlightenment—personally and collectively. Simply stated, it is *presence*. To be present is to be right here, right now—not somewhere else or in some memory or fantasy but to be seated in this breath, and this breath, too.

It sounds so simple, doesn't it?

But ask anyone who has sat in meditation for an hour, or a day or a week, how easy it is for them to get distracted by thought forms of past and future that arrive all too quickly. It is because of this top centered consciousness that we have to work so hard to get present. And it explains why everything is so *psychosomatic*—to make the body based experience a very mental confabulation.

But what if...

What if the truer of the consciousness networks was actually the world of *somato-psychic* phenomenon—more of the “bottom-up” way of knowing, not unlike the way a plant grows from the “bottom up” to meet the light—wherein our symptomatic thought forms that we identify with can be seen arising from our body's configuration patterns from genetic propensities to the cellular memories of our physical life experiences.

Imagine that.

For almost four decades now, as a bodyworker I've been mining the somato-psychic consciousness of the human journey through many thousands of people; and I find it heartening to witness the rising placement of body-based insight that is now evolving within the cultural zeitgeist. And I dare say, it gives me hope that we, as a species, might awaken, hopefully soon enough, to not self-destruct. But for this to take place we need to grow our collective body wisdom through our personal cultivation — each individual in his or her own way.

For this to happen we need somatic leadership that can inspire the kind of mutuality and collaboration that leads to enhanced ways of socializing in all areas of human endeavor — especially in the business culture where most of us, out of necessity, are stake holders in our own experience.

Surely an emotionally healthy workplace where personal satisfaction and even fulfillment are present is a most worthy goal. But what inhibits this from manifesting—even when we “know better” intellectually, are the archaic somatic patterns that habituate us from earlier times in our lives but still hold sway. Indeed, many of our habits are just coping patterns while others, which may have once been creative, are no longer appropriate to the circumstances presenting themselves in the present moment.

It is humbling to realize that change and transformation doesn't happen simply because we intellectually “know better”. Understanding this is of small consolation when we watch missed opportunities pass us by as we observe the “stuckness” in ourselves, and our colleagues and, thus, in our situations. We watch an emotional outburst or a streak of shyness in us, (or in a colleague), sabotage an otherwise promising moment; we act impetuously or over promise what we can deliver because we misread our actual resources such that our eventual actions don't match what we had envisioned. The resulting chasm between the “possible” and “what happens” can be narrowed and traversed if we knew more about how to read our body's *Book of Knowledge* with greater literacy.

senses become more acute because our life force is not being consumed by wound maintenance; and our feeling life becomes a rich and spontaneous realm where we can re-create and learn how to co-create with this mystery we call our life.

But first things first. What is a wound?

A wound is an energetic constriction of life force. Wounds can be temporary or long term. When healing energy makes contact with

a wound, a cleansing and rebuilding experience naturally occurs. This happens on biological, psychological, emotional, and spiritual levels which mutually reinforce one another. When healing energy cannot make contact with the wound, for whatever reason, the wound is isolated from cleansing and no rebuilding can take place. The unhealed wound must then be managed.

Managing unhealed wounds becomes, over time, a lifestyle char-

acterized by coping behaviors and unconscious reactions. This state of woundedness is crippling to the spirit, depleting to the physical body, and sadly is the source of humanity's spiritual malaise and social decay. But there is another kind of wound, or perception of our wound, that need not be crippling and that, ironically, is the source of great healing. The "fertile wound" occupies the painful territory between the emotional and psychic dimensions of >>

The body language is rich with sensation and meaning that is accessible to any human being willing to invest the time and energy to learn the language. Sensations are the letters of the somatic alphabet and meaning is derived by the consciousness that reads the "words" made up by these letters. Hence a real and important story is told at an energetic level that bears much insight, promise and empowerment to those with somatic literacy.

Obviously, the various traditions within the hands on healing arts and martial arts have the most to contribute to this end but there are *tuning in modalities* that can also be quite effective such as breathing awareness, bio-feedback and mindfulness meditation. The primary reward that comes from these engagements is the cultivation of the inner witness—and from this we are able to respond, rather than react, to all kinds of external stimuli. This ability to respond makes us *responsible* and we are perceived this way thus creating the psychic environment for natural leadership to emerge within a social dynamic.

To summarize:

- 1) Human perception and behavior takes place on a great many subconscious levels that we often overlook. As a result, our ignorance about how to perceive and act in the present moment—appropriately in the "here and now"—accounts for the many and expensive missed opportunities that abound in our collective lives.
- 2) Core to somatic literacy is the capacity to recognize the energetic semantics of body sensation.
- 3) When an individual or a group becomes somatically literate, presence increases thereby developing leadership qualities in individuals and greater cooperation and cohesion in groups.

In the stories in the *Yoga Journal* article, there are examples of how emotional memory is accessed through the skillful means of Transformational Bodywork. Each of those individuals moved through his

or her unconscious material to become leaders in their respective lives and also more effective and compassionate participants in their families and communities. And they did it rather quickly and dramatically. And the results were permanent because the body reprogrammed itself in holistic ways from the bottom up—or, more accurately from the inside out on a cellular level—in a word, "somato-psychically."

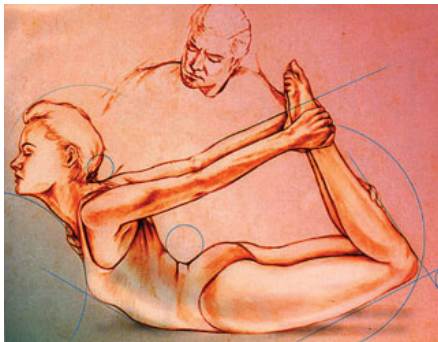
I believe that we humans don't need more information from without but rather real wisdom from within in order to fashion the better world we yearn for but mostly pay lip service to instead.

I believe that by cultivating somatic intelligence we can invoke the best promise for this "better world." And, though it will take some real work from us to achieve, my own experience has given me a measured optimism.

Today, we see healing and therapeutic human touch everywhere from corporate settings to airports—at the same time we have watched insurance companies follow the discretionary spending of millions of people who have sought alternative health care because of their disillusionment with the American medical arena.

The macro-trends for this increased body-based awareness are encouraging; but the challenge I see is that the human ego structure cannot be fully trusted unless it is challenged in new ways by our higher bodymind consciousness. I speak here of the need to understand our shadow impulses that also live within the cellular matrix of our human bodies. Unless we tackle our wounded natures at their core, we run the risk of turning all of our body based questing into yet another self-indulgent fantasy of congratulatory vanity.

If we are honest about our personal and collective shadow worlds—and address the propensities for manipulation and aggrandizement that reside therein—then there is real hope that we might actually learn to tame the dragon within and humbly embrace humanity's great challenge: to heal into oneness so that we can live in alignment with the laws of nature and thrive.



our mortality, most notably our felt sense of separateness in this world and, concurrently, our hunger for the experience of unity to assuage this feeling of separateness.

Unlike the unhealed wound, in which we identify with our pain, become bonded to it, and feel victimized by it even as we numb ourselves to it, the fertile wound opens us to feeling our pain in a way that opens our hearts, tempers us, and reveals to us what exactly needs to heal. This revelation is simultaneously humbling to our notions of self and empowering to the evolution of soul. What catalyzes this revelation is usually a shift in perception, somewhat analogous to seeing the glass half full rather than half empty.

Yoga and massage are transformational practices that can serve as catalysts for shifting perception because they can bring the experience of unity to the physio-emotional sense of separateness. With these practices we have the capacity to bring core vulnerabilities to the surface where they can be successfully channelled into personal strengths. In a quarter century of practicing bodywork, I have found that skilled loving touch can facilitate this shift in perception and help people transform their pain into a deeper understanding of their possibilities for happiness. Most of us who have been on a personal healing journey have realized that when

the body is left out of the therapeutic equation, deep cellular angst remains in our energy field, ready to present itself in yet another configuration.

Physical touch that is aimed at neuromuscular holding patterns can interrupt this cycle of angst and create a shift in a person's life on all levels. By probing muscular armature to find the "resistance wall," a practitioner and subject can uncover an aspect of personal history that became frozen behind that wall. Through breathing into the resistance, an energetic charge can build from inside the subject's musculature. Simultaneously, the practitioner can soften and erode the hardened muscle wall until the held back energy breaks through and reveals a whole series of emotions, thought forms, and dynamic impressions. Underneath all of these is usually a yearning for freedom and a hunger for unity.

Softening Your Body Armor

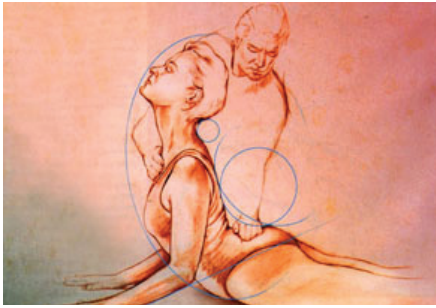
Many years ago along with my yoga teacher, Tracey Coddington, I developed a form of yoga massage called Transformational Bodywork, which is more an "approach" to healing the body/mind split than a "technique." Essentially it involves massaging



a person's musculature while he is engaged in a yoga asana. However, unlike most yoga orientations, which focus upon performance of a particular asana, yoga massage is aimed at helping an individual work his muscular threshold into a multi-dimensional release, an experience that is rich with emotion, physical change, and psychological insight. By riding the breath while I manipulate the muscle origins, bellies, and tendons, the person begins to play with his therapeutic "edge." The client and I work this edge into a breakthrough consciousness. This shift in awareness evokes personal transformation and invites fresh physical, psychic, and emotional possibilities.

When I do yoga massage, I contact the muscular tension of my client's body by facilitating his achievement of a particular asana. Each person's muscular tension has a unique electromagnetic charge that is his personal signature. To sensitive hands, this charge can be read as an intimate expression of a person's energy moving outward against the organic envelope of his muscular walls, much like the air pressure within a balloon moves against the inner walls of that balloon. When the inner pressure grows to a point of alarm, the individual's muscle walls harden to adequately contain the energy or repress it. Over time these muscular walls become an armature that holds onto dangerous feelings.

My job is to neutralize the danger and accentuate the opportunity for change. I feel for many things that are clues to this person's state of being. Certainly the quality of respiration is one factor, but there are numerous physiological cues that together form the individual's unique holding pat-



tern. I observe where there is an easy flow of energy and breath and where it tends to be blocked. In a phrase, "I go with the flow," and feel where the blockage to flow is most available for manual contact. This meeting ground of my client's blockage and my physical intervention is where the real work of therapeutic transformation happens. The blockage is the psycho-physical manifestation of an unhealed psychological wound. Sometimes the wound is archaic and unconscious and sometimes it is known and relatively recent, but it is always the cause of the feeling of separateness.

Case Study #1: Susie Arms Aching to Hold

Little Susie's arms are full of tension because her desire to reach out for Daddy's hug is held in check by her memory of Daddy hitting her and Mommy when he was out of control last night. Susie, a senior leader in operations at a global chemical company, still has difficulty reaching out and experiences anxiety when she is embraced tenderly by someone she loves. In my work with her, this story pours out of her pectoralis major muscles as they are stretched and manipulated.

Most of her life, Susie has felt cut-off at the arms, separated from heartfelt intimacies because of her childhood history of domestic violence. When she first came to me for

help, Susie mentioned her feeling of separateness as her primary reason for receiving bodywork. She had been in psychotherapy for years and knew her shoulders held the "cellular memory" of her unhealed wound. Deep in her muscles was a story of distrusting men, of wanting to strike back and see justice prevail, and of desiring to cave in to her chest to find solace. The instinct to collapse into her "heart cave" was checked, however, by Susie's pride which would not permit it. Therefore, her upper back muscles worked to retract her shoulders into a forced posture of unnatural confidence.

This profile of an unhealed wound is, at a deeper level, a story of alienation and soul yearning. As a bodyworker my job is to talk to this person's held wound and help it to transform from being unhealed to being fertile. The first thing I do is create a safe feeling of unity by massaging my client's area of tension with quiet, nurturing touch. This nondirective and simple touch engenders a feeling of ease and integration which contrasts with the muscular sense of separation.

The feeling of unity is essential to healing a wound because it reminds us that there is a natural state of physical ease and psycho-emotional comfort that can be remembered or achieved and that by going through this process a state of ease and flow will be the reward. This juxtaposition of this feeling of expansion and support with the sense of contraction, separateness and loneliness catalyzes a profound awakening. A light goes on in the person's head and reveals what needs to happen in our session, and the incentive to experience unity in a sustainable way is born.

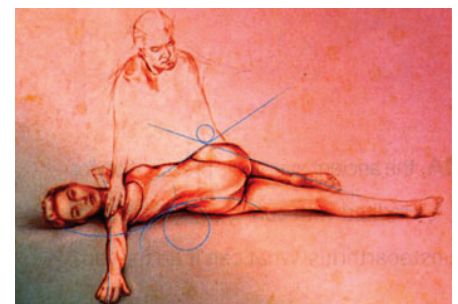
If the individual has no cellular memory of his or her sense of

unity because of severe trauma in early life, for example, this physical experience of flow becomes a new foundation upon which to build a healthy, fresh identity. If they are reminded of what they once knew, but forgot, then we have more potential to work with.

Initiating this flow state involves a specific series of bodywork techniques that unblock the jaw, diaphragm, and pelvis by employing energetic repatterning protocols akin to acupuncture, massage, cranosacral work, and polarity. Once this flow state is established, a healing journey begins and ultimately becomes an odyssey of the soul.

On this journey, I remind my clients, we don't want to get lost in mental obsessions about our destinations or the rate at which we traverse our real or imagined paths. Nor do we want to identify with the significance of each rest stop on these journeys. What really matters is that we are taking this journey.

It is understood that the major factor in this transformational journey is the expanded consciousness that grows within the person's direct experience. Complementary to this basic understanding is the principle that transformation involves learning about the factors that have contributed to the circumstances that are present. Through this awareness, it is possible to develop more positive



approaches to life challenges, create more and better choices about what goals are more worthy of our attention, and cultivate support to realize these goals in their fullest expression—a healed life being foremost. Greater connection will, in turn, allow Susie to be a greater leader and heighten her leadership presence and magnetism.

Case Study #2: Jim Running from Intimacy

Jim volunteered to be the model for a demonstration on the pelvic and leg segment of the body. After demonstrating the movement sequences on Jim, I noticed that his body had stiffened and he was breathing rapidly. I moved him into a version of Paschimotasana (Seated Forward Bend) on the massage table. I kneeled in back of him and reached forward to push and extend the quadriceps and pull and lengthen the hamstrings. Within a short time Jim's mouth puckered up and his hands became rigid with his thumbs stiff but tucked into his palm. These physical symptoms are referred to as "tetany" in transformational bodywork, and they indicate that a major release of energy is underway. Unresolved intensity in the body/mind can be

experienced can be experienced as sensations of inner heaviness, heat, electric itch, and others.

Jim began to get very anxious. I asked him if he was with us in the room. He replied, "Not really, I'm somewhere else. I'm scared. I feel small. I'm really pissed but I'm much more scared." I reminded Jim that he was safe and that he was experiencing some unconscious cellular memory of a frightening time. I explained that something that was being held in his leg was leaving him and that when it left he would feel much better than he has for a long time.

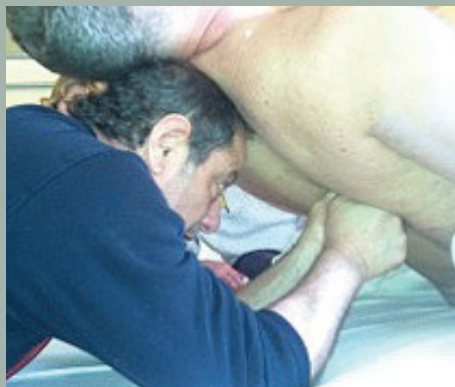
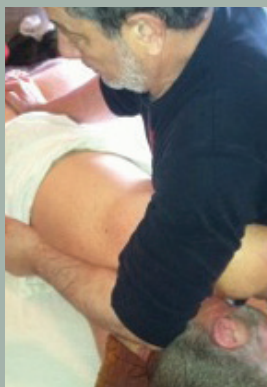
Suddenly, Jim's legs stiffened as if to run away but couldn't and he began to shake all over, squirming as if to get away from something. It took all of my strength to restrain him. "Oh my God! Oh no!" Jim shouted, "It smells so bad! What is that smell?"

During the next half-hour, Jim recalled the forgotten scene of a childhood incident. At about age eight, Jim's mother and he were in a taxi on their way to visit an uncle. On the way they stopped at a hospital presumably to visit a friend of Jim's mother. Once inside the hospital Jim was taken away to have his appendix removed. He was totally

shocked. He tried to run away. His legs were energized to flee, like in a dream where he couldn't move his body but tried nonetheless to get away. His legs held this frozen history of terror, outrage, and betrayal. The memory complex of these negative emotions was muted by what turned out to be ether.

Jim was anesthetized with ether. After coming out of the operation he was met by a smiling mother and ice cream. Like so many of us, little Jim went on from the experience to live out the remainder of his childhood, while his legs "froze" the impulse to run away; froze it, that is until, this massage table thaw.

The unfolding of this story was exhilarating, but somehow the energetics didn't feel quite complete. After a while Jim relaxed and opened his eyes and with sincerity said, "Boy, this really explains a lot. I'm thirty-two years old, I've been in at least half a dozen long term relationships and about two dozen short ones. Every time I feel close to a real commitment, I freeze up and run away. I've been running away from women all my life because I feel, down deep, they just can't be trusted. Oh wow, all these years I've been carrying this wound, this feeling that every woman is going to set



Transformation involves learning about the factors that have contributed to the circumstances that are present; and that, through this awareness, it is possible to develop more positive approaches to life challenges, create more and better choices about what goals are more worthy of our attention, and cultivate support to realize these goals in their fullest expression.

— Fred Mitouer

me up, betray and abandon me, and pretend with me."

Jim healed something deep inside from his work during this session. His body's wisdom sensed that he could handle the presentation of this charged cellular memory and it went into release mode. Riding atop the energetic wave of release was a package of specific psychological content: betrayal, rage, and fear.

In my work I seek out, with my hands, an energetic field of charge and then invite the mystery to express itself. My intent is to understand and effectively transform the client's energetic field. After expression there is a relaxation cycle that is ripe for awareness and reflection. Much healing occurs during this time of heightened awareness and physical discharge.

You're Not Alone

Over the many years of practicing bodywork, I have been amazed at how much fragmentation, abuse, and pain exists in the lives of ordinary people. The unhealed wounds that people carry get passed on through negative relationships which become a stage to act out further abuses ad infinitum. So to stop this cycle of reactivity, we must return to our original wounds, do the work of ripening them into fertile wounds, and then do the necessary healing work.

Anxiety and depression, two of the most pervasive therapeutic presentations usually arise out of life conditions where a person feels unbonded, lonely, and scared. Most adults who suffer from anxiety and depression, for example, are in some way reacting to issues of intimacy—the fear of it and the desire for it that began in their early life. As in-

quiring adults they usually come to see that their preoccupations with safety in relationships is equated with how well they feel protected against intimacy. Because intimacy is both feared and desired, the experience of vulnerability becomes suspect. In yoga massage sessions, the experience of vulnerability is transformed from a liability into an asset. At the physical boundary of muscle tissue is often an issue that is an amalgam of sensation, story, yearning, and choice. Because the stretching of boundary is occurring within the context of another human being's loving and skilled intent, the person feels safe with in his or her vulnerability. As a result, a metaphysical alchemy takes place that allows real feeling to become a force for change. And it is the befriending of feeling in general that is the pivotal therapeutic reward.

Really feeling one's wound within the company of a compassionate witness reminds us, as Buddha taught, that pain is inevitable. In realizing through our vulnerability, our humble connection to everyone and everything else, we are brought face to face with the hurtful, but sweet secret: None of us escapes unscathed. Too bad, but there it is. Or maybe not too bad, for it confirms to us that we're not alone. We don't need pain and suffering to be reminded that we exist, but neither do we need to fear it. Without fear dominating us we can have all of our feelings; we can take life as it is with all its paradoxes, contradictions, and tensions.

No longer at the mercy of our emotional systems, we can fully invite our feelings with all their richness and diversity into our daily lives. That's a lot different

Rubbing up against thousands of embodied lives from my box seat perspective, I have been fortunate to watch this dance of light upon darkness. Under my hands and before my eyes, I have witnessed many men and women who have met themselves at their edges and have moved their rocks with courage and dignity.

– Fred Mitouer

from trying to stay in control. It's true acceptance, and our bodies love it; limberness in the muscles and joints develops, and we feel relaxed and alert with energy to spare. But the moment we begin to fake it again by holding our pain at a distance while pretending we're relaxed, our bodies respond by showing symptoms of illness.

Case Study #3: Tom Choosing Life over Death

Tom came to see me for low back problems, a calcified neck, and a mental attitude which included suicidal predispositions. His anger would explode when he forgot to take his lithium, a mood-elevating drug. He could not access any of his depressive feelings that ordinarily governed his life when the drug was operative. Tom had been in all kinds of talk therapy but had never really explored healing bodywork, done breathing exercises, or hung out in feeling states in silence for extended periods of time; nor had he ever been manipulated into yoga postures.

Tom had served in Laos and Cambodia as a counter-insurgency paratrooper before the Vietnam War heated up and was full of the horror stories of war. A big man

with a 6-foot, 2-inch frame, Tom had a desire to heal, but so much habit to overcome and a body that moved like a rusted Sherman Tank. When Tom first came to see me, he was driving his fifth wife crazy, and it was November, the month of his birth and the fading light of the sun. His emotions had begun to dip dangerously low.

Through Tom's lithium-induced haze, I would rub and probe his body with my elbows and knees until it showed signs of life, always staying within his tolerance level. Sometimes I was gentle and just "vibed" him and coaxed his body to present itself organically, moment to moment. Tom began to trust his experience after a few sessions, but he couldn't access his anger although that was his reason for working with me. I told him that I couldn't do transformational work with him if his feelings were numb and that he needed to check with his psychiatrist before dropping his prescription medicine.

Tom wrote in his journal: "I took to this stuff like a Cape Buffalo that wants to be tamed but I had eons of genetics and beliefs saying 'the cyclical suffering is safer.' I am intuitive more than analytical. I knew this work was positively changing me. Knowing the shrinks say you must take lithium for the rest of your life to avoid a life ending depression, I dropped it in the hope of being able to learn to be with the sensations

in my body and the feelings it had stored."

By our fourth session, Tom had quit his lithium announcing that he had not felt so limber since he was ten years of age. He also wanted to talk about his sexuality. Over the next three sessions, I worked on his low back, legs, groin, and belly. A great deal of early life history became unveiled, especially his shame and fear of being vulnerable with women. Tom, I learned, was slapped across the face as a small boy very hard and often by his mother. In progressive sessions, his face grew sadder and sadder. I thought about how silly his lithium

grin looked compared to the real life sad face that had begun showing itself. I worked with Tom in variations of Marichyasana on a yoga mat to lengthen his spine evenly and draw his concentration inward. As the layers of armature began to peel away, both of us got to meet, unexpectedly, an overwhelmed little boy. Like a deer caught in the headlights, little Tommy was stuck in frozen flight. Working with Tom's breath and massaging his belly elicited deep moans and feelings of profound magnitude. Tom shut down to these powerful forces, but he did not want to stop our work. In one session he stopped the

breathing exercises just as he was accessing some powerful memory. I felt certain that his mother beat him quite severely the last time he had experienced this much intensity.

Tom's "tension space" had ripened into a potential creative breakthrough but his beaten little boy could only see an imminent destructive breakdown. Tom could not go on further until he had integrated what he had learned. He was accessing his power in our work, but as a boy that had gotten him into trouble with his mother. He was also accessing his vulnerability, and that made him feel he might lose control and be taken advantage of by his wife. He did not want to put on more armature because he knew

*It feels as though I make my way
through massive rock
like a vein of ore
alone, encased.*

I am so deep inside it

*I can't see the path or any distance:
everything is close
and everything closing in on me
has turned to stone.*

*Since I still don't know enough about pain,
this terrible darkness makes me small.*

If it's you, though--

*press down hard on me, break in
that I may know the weight of your hand,
and you, the fullness of my cry.*

Book of Hours 3,1

--Rainer Maria Rilke

that would not provide him with any more security. He also did not want to take off any more armature because that would make him too vulnerable to the old feelings of suicide and depression.

Tom could not move forward or backward. Nor did he want to go up above his experience through transcendent meditation or with drugs. Tom was experiencing his "dynamic tension" for the first time while being supported, and he stood at the precipice of a new life feeling both terrified and in awe of the fact that he could actually choose the kind of life he wanted.

Tom's fearful personality wanted to remain in a reactive state though his soul yearned for his newfound flow state experience. I told him that sometimes flow state experience is not necessarily pleasant, but at least it's real. It is the only place where real healing and loving can happen; and this is what Tom wanted most.

For many of us the childhood bonding patterns with our parents and our observations of how our parents treated each other have so distorted our perceptions of relationship that we go into automatic pilot in intimate relationships. My work with Tom was about supporting him unconditionally in exploring a new vision of his life where he could show up and be vulnerable and feel loved. Old childhood memories of shaming from his mother surfaced right alongside war memories of jungle parachute drops through clouds of bullets. Tom finally went with the deeper breathing with less and less resistance, and his body loosened up as a result.

By relaxing his armature, Tom gained energy to use for his fam-



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Resolution. His writings have appeared in *Perspective*, *Massage Magazine*, *Common Ground* and *Yoga Journal*. He is a co-author of the book, *Healing the Heart of the World*, Elite Press, 2005

For nearly forty years, his work has transformed the consciousness of countless individuals in diverse arenas spanning the creative arts through the shamanic depths to the corporate world. The New York Times has called him, "The Hollywood A list's favorite guru...a master." He and Cheryl live on California's Mendocino Coast where he sculpts in metal and stone and rides his dragons. He can be found at:

<http://www.bodyworkmassage.com>

ily life; and Little Tommy was given a second chance to have a happy childhood. Tom now exercises occasionally, does his yoga, and is learning to pace himself more moderately. In his journal, Tom summarizes his transformational journey with this: "I have had a couple of long bouts with depression in the last several months. There is a more 'let it be, this too shall pass' quality to all my mood swings. They don't have me; I observe them. The flip side to the constant threat of self-destruction was always the apparent fight for survival when I was not depressed. Now I live with the certainty that the major threats to my life are inner and that living with my own natural rhythms makes the world a safer place to be in. Living more in the present, I respond to my three-year old son's antics with joy in my heart. My wife is relaxed, knowing I am here for the long haul;

we are planning and working together for our family. As I write this, gratitude is swirling through me, for in a sense I am being born anew each time I disengage from past reactivity, forgive myself, and go on with my day."

As a bodyworker I have found the body's deep capacity for healing and regeneration to be an amazing mystery. Countless people speak of healing experiences in spiritual terms because a real turning point occurs in which traditional language fails to contain or describe what transpired. I am convinced that what we call our wounds and our suffering are in most cases passports to a more conscious and whole hearted way of living. May we all come to appreciate that, with a little help, our wounds can turn into blessings. ■

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Developing Your Sensitivity: Understanding Energetics

by Samuel Bartussek, Pantomime Artist and Mobius Transformational Leadership Faculty

The “Szysh - Phenomenon” in Body Language

Do you recognise the following situation? You meet someone you’ve never met before and decide from the first instant that this person is unpleasant.

How is this possible?

Clearly, within fractions of a second, an exchange of information has occurred.

How does this information reach me?

This happens through body language, appearance as I observe it, but also through the aura of this person which I feel! It appears to be so that not only the physical body, but also the energy shell surrounding them shares information.

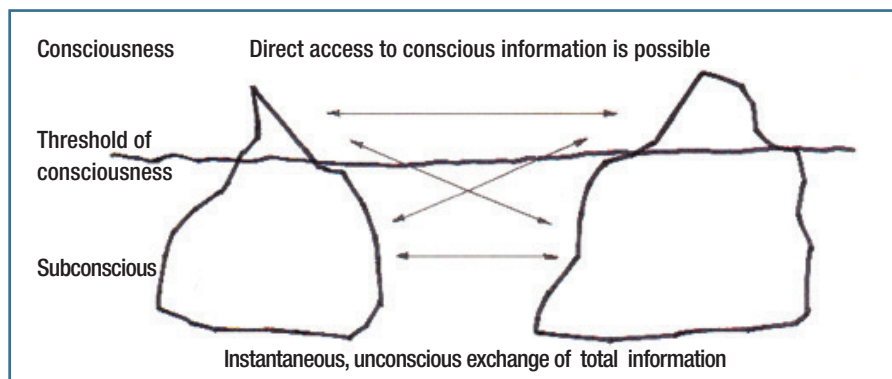
Where does this ‘felt’ antipathy come from?

Often we do not know exactly, and can hardly say anything about it. This is just the way it is, we can feel it! We experience clearly that something is happening and is having an effect that we can not, or can only partly be conscious of.

This is due to the “Szysh Phenomenon”, which occurs between two persons at first sight, when their eyes meet.

The “Szysh - Phenomenon” and the Iceberg Model

Let us compare the entirety of each person’s available information to a floating iceberg. (See above.)



The “Szysh Phenomenon”: The blink of an eye is enough to perceive and judge this entirety of information (including the unconscious part), i.e. to “accept as true” and to pass a “judgment” on it: “I don’t like you”. It is fascinating, how that is done with a single glance.

Important: You notice above all, those characteristics that you yourself are especially sensitive to or capable of resonating with. It is very rewarding to see yourself mirrored in the people of your environment. For this you need an important readiness and practice, as the mirror image has to be recognised at first.

How to Become Aware of Your Own Iceberg

1. Exercise “She is...”

The next time you walk the streets of your town or sit in a café and observe all the passers-by, please note all the people who you notice and your judgements! Allow these phrases to form in your thoughts, but really!- those phrases that you really

don’t allow yourself to think, as this is “not done”. However, these phrases are despite this, very present! They tend to start like this: “Her over there is...” (Minimum categories: Interesting - not interesting, sympathetic - unsympathetic).

Yes, this happens at the first look!

2. Exercise “You are...”

When you work in groups, observe the members of the group even when you already know them well. What standards of judgement do you have? Write down your criteria below and take enough time to do so! The phrases could begin with...”NAME, you are simply too...for me.”

Yes, these thoughts occur over and over again.

3. Exercise “Am I...?”

Observe all the people in your group or let your friends pass through your thoughts. Write down the characteristics of the person you find the most uncomfortable and the one you find most admirable. Take this assumption:



You yourself possess your own resonance-capacity for the characteristics you have written down, otherwise you would never have been able to detect such “vibrations”. Let this further assumption take hold in you: In some way, these people whom you have chosen and judged are there as your mirror: You have (hidden somewhere maybe, but nonetheless) exactly the same or similar characteristics in you, that you uncover in others.

Take enough time to play around with these assumptions.

The Body and Subconscious Sensations

Do you know the following situation? You are sitting, slumped into your work, hearing and seeing nothing else – and then suddenly you have the feeling that someone is standing behind you.

Yes, someone has approached you.

How is that possible?

Clearly the knowledge, or information over the presence of another person has reached you, perhaps first after a certain distance. It seems to be the case, that the aforementioned ‘aura’ is able to be felt here, even when you are not looking! This aura obviously influences, amongst other things, our sense of distance. It is fascinating how this all operates without looking!

How actually does this aura work?

Quite often we don’t exactly know why we seek to be close to another person or otherwise choose a greater distance, in order to feel comfortable. Our mostly

unconscious attitude to this behaviour pattern is for example clearly recognisable in people, who repeatedly move closer to us during a conversation, even though we move away from them. Therefore the aura has an effect also on our sense of wellbeing.



How close is too close?

This is self-regulating on a quite unconscious level. We feel this quite precisely when we find ourselves in a concrete situation. Expressions like ‘don’t breathe down my neck’, ‘keep your distance’ or ‘stay away from me’ are testimony to the importance of our sense of distance.

Again, it is our senses, on which we rely, that regulate many things in the environment with other people automatically (unconsciously). It is important to practice observing these events and your own sensations over and over again.

Developing Your Sensitivity

1. Exercise: Bamboo helps

In case you count yourself amongst those people who “feel nothing” (I know this thought – thoughts come from the head!), you can try the following practice:

Get hold of a stick of bamboo, ideally about 30 cm long and 5 cm in diameter. Hold this between flat hands, so that the ends of the stick are in the middle of each palm.

Now concentrate on the ‘centres’ of your hands and register all sensations that come to your senses in this region

of your hands, even if your thoughts interrupt (“this is simply imagination”). Imagine you are sending energy from one hand to another through the stick.

In case you now don’t feel anything, don’t judge yourself or the book, that you are now reading. As long as you have patience and discipline enough to read the book through to the end and exercise as many of the recommended exercises as possible (that’s why they are called exercises), you can come back to pick up the bamboo stick again at another time.

2. Exercise: The space in between

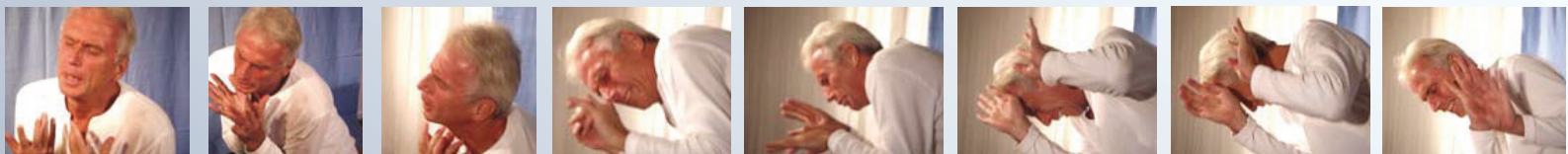
If the bamboo has helped you to any kind of “sensation” (sense also connotes to feel; sensible also connotes to receive; and ‘sensation’ could also stand for perception or experience), now try the same without the stick. Hold your hands as if you were hold-

ing a large ball, and sense the space in between as well as the centres of your hands. Experiment with expanding and contracting this energy ball and

– importantly! – keep breathing throughout (don’t hold your breath).

3. Exercise: Sensations for two

Research your “sensations’ further as you allow your hands to come near the open hands of your partner. Give yourself enough time for this and repeat the process of approaching several times. In between, shake out your hands and keep them loose and relaxed. Share your experiences and note with which words you can most accurately and honestly describe your perceptions. ■





“The purpose of life is to discover your gift; the meaning of life is to give your gift away. The worst thing one can do is not to try, to be aware of what one wants and not give in to it, to spend years in silent hurt wondering if something could have materialized - and never knowing. The only thing that stands between a man and what he wants from life is often merely the will to try it and the faith to believe that it is possible. You must begin to think of yourself as becoming the person you want to be. If you have the courage to begin, you have the courage to succeed.”

—David Viscott

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