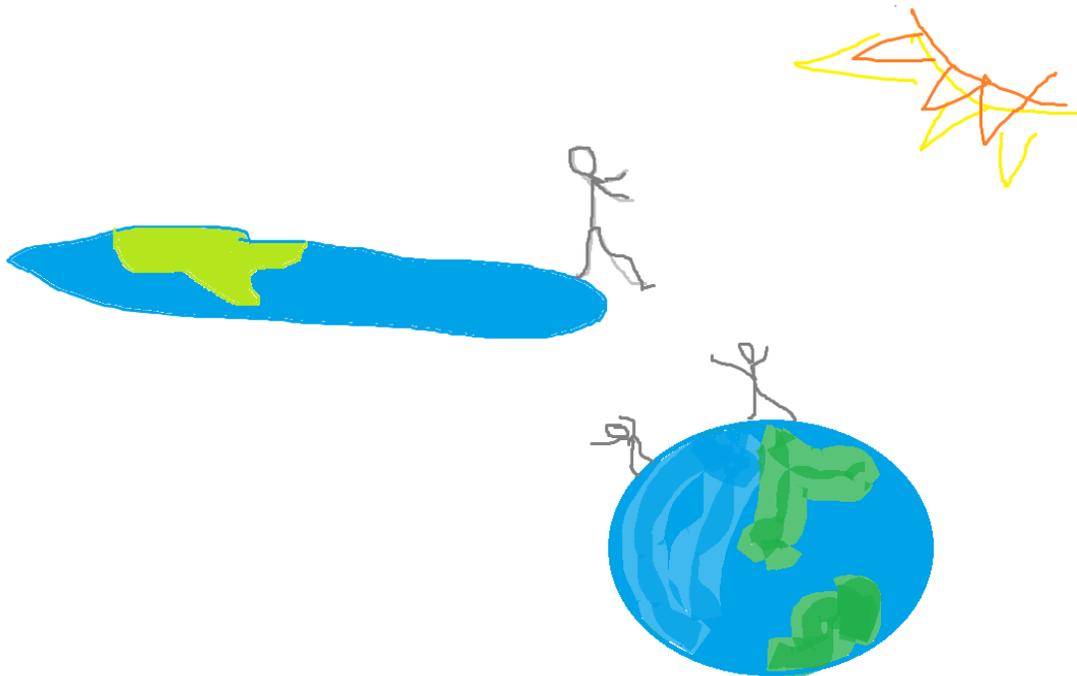


# Living the Language of Wholeness



Wholeness in Motion™ with Babette Lightner

*We are Nature • Nature is Wise*



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# Deep Play – Seeing the Earth Turning

Face the eastern horizon some clear, sweet summer dawn. Choose a tree or rock formation on the sky line. Notice the glow of the dawn light in relationship to the tree or rock you've chosen. Then – stop – slow yourself down – as if making space between every pulse – feel the earth beneath your feet, the whole planet right there supporting you.

Remind yourself that the source of the light you see is a still point in relationship to you. Locate the sun right there beyond your field of vision. As more and more light emerges, watch the tree or rock you've chose tilt toward the light. Keep in mind the relationship between the fixed point of the sun and the moving point of the tree or rock until you feel that you along with the tree or rock are moving. The anchoring sun comes in to view as you roll towards it. The sun does not rise, your turn toward it. You are experiencing the earth turning.

Breathe in this felt knowing, you are riding the spinning blue planet as it turns toward the sun.

On a clear, crisp winter dusk face west and do the same thing. Chose a landmark in the west. Locate the sun and remember it is in a fixed location. The fixed sun, the turning earth, you. As the sun disappears from sight, sense that you and the tree or rock are rolling away from the sun. The sun is not setting. The earth is turning.

After you have felt the earth turn start seeing and feeling this truth at each dawn and dusk. Invite others to come watch the earth turn. Show them how to feel it, recognize it. You can begin sensing this at high noon. When you note the location of the sun, fix it in place, and watch how you move under it. This is the reverse of the experience of being in a parked car and the car next to you begins to move. For a moment it feels like you are moving. You have to do a little double-take to realize you are stationary and it is moving. Earth turning is the same illusion, just in reverse. You can realize that you are moving and the sun is stationary relative to you. That you are the still center around which the sun rises and sets is the illusion.

Spend some months more accurately experiencing and naming the moving of the planet.

What is it like to *feel* sun as the anchoring center of the solar system rather than you or the earth?

Has your sense of your place in the universe begun to change?

Is there any advantage to interpreting your perception of your place in the solar system more accurately?

We have known the earth orbits the sun for centuries. When we say 'sunset' we are still speaking from the mind of the long, invalidated belief that the sun revolves around the earth, that we are the center of the universe. What would change in our lives and our culture if we perceived more accurately our place in the universe? What would change in our lives and culture if we all felt ourselves on the spinning planet?

The Language of Wholeness invites us to make the experiment of aligning language with the most accurate understanding we have of the nature of nature. The premise for this practice is that aligning and harmonizing with nature supports a deep, rich, thriving life. You can fight the way the world works. It is just harder than working with it.

# Welcome to this text

Welcome to the Living the Language of Wholeness text. This text is designed to support the experiential work of the Language of Wholeness. It is a collection of articles, essays, charts and illustrations written and collected during the past few decades. As more people explore the Language of Wholeness more material will be added. As you read, imagine what you might contribute to this collaboratively created pedagogy.

Each section has a basic organization: starting with Deep Play, an activity that lets you ‘feel’ the topic first, followed by articles on the *heart* of the topic, articles on the details or *anatomy* of it, application stories, lastly resources you can use like exercises, charts and images. You can skip around the text. But we encourage you to eventually go through it all because each offering gives you a slightly different experience.

## Language of Wholeness – An Introduction

The Language of Wholeness is a teaching approach that is aligned with the understanding that the human system is a Whole system. The language and methods are reflective of this premise of wholeness.

Like most methods, approaches or pedagogy The Language of Wholeness developed out of a need to fill a missing piece. In my case, it was my experience of studying and eventually teaching a variety of movement and somatic practices. The premise behind the approaches was body/mind integration. The instructions and methods were still embedded in body and mind separated language. I experienced primarily two approaches: one was essentially directive or instructive; the other approach turned attention inward cutting the person off from the world. Since my core intention was to understand how people thrive, I found myself dealing with too many ‘side effects’, too many clean-up instructions. Something was fishy.

During this time new ways of understanding our human system came to my attention. Together they pointed back to seeing ourselves as whole. I wondered if I could I approach teaching in ways that truly aligned with these radically different ways of understanding human beings? For the past 30 years I have been exploring this question.

Recently, it has become clear a method has developed which I call, The Language of Wholeness. It is a method with precise, teachable tools, and attention to language, that are consistent with human WHOLENESS.

For example, we rarely say ‘body’; we say ‘system’. This small language shift makes a difference in how we experience ourselves and see our students.

Another example is instead of instructions telling another person how to position, move or stand, we teach comparisons and contrasts. We don’t impose positions and rules; we help others access the information in sensation that allows them to make informed choices about their own system. People learn to more accurately interpret their sensations. Sensations are the language of the system, of one’s compass. This self-knowledge is the underpinning of choice, of agency.

The Language of Wholeness is designed to set-up the conditions for a person to thrive in a learning environment. It is a fluid, collaboratively created evolving approach. Information and understanding about the

human system are constantly changing. The premise of The Language of Wholeness asserts that teaching techniques aligned with how the human being functions is the foundation for creating strategies and an environment in which a person thrives and learning happens.

Excellence is rooted in a person who can freely learn; the freedom to learn is rooted in a person who is able to thrive. Aligning techniques and language with the fact of our innate Wholeness solves many of the struggles people encounter in teaching and learning. The effect of this accuracy is people feel more empowered, have more clarity in times of struggle, learn without fear. It is like discovering JOY! It is joyful when you aren't fighting yourself or the universe, even in times of struggle and pain.

The heart of the shift in methodology of The Language of Wholeness™ rests in:

*Supporting the student's ability to navigate to clarity and safety in relationship to the world around them, as the first and most important 'technique' for them to learn. This is well-being, choosing well-being is a skill, a technique that predicates the success of all other technique. The Language of Wholeness believes understanding well-being is primary in creating the conditions for students to sing any pitch, play a scale or any other technique that would serve their artistic goals. It is the foundation for excellence.*

The Language of Wholeness can be applied to things you already do: yoga, leadership, teaching.

It is essentially a contribution to the conversation about how we thrive, a conversation that has been going on since humans began to think and reflect. The Language of Wholeness is one voice among many voices attempting to support the Seeing and Feeling of beauty and love in ourselves and this great planet.

In essence the Language of Wholeness is a means to remember: "We are Nature and Nature is wise."

## Deep Play

Is the Language of Wholeness for you?

Deep Play is a means to *experience* the material being presented in this work. Conceptual knowledge is an important aspect of understanding but it is NOT a complete picture.

A concept without experience is like describing food rather than eating it or talking about music rather than listening to it or knowing the earth rotates as it orbits the sun and still perceiving the sun as the mover.

To know the Language of Wholeness you live it and describe it; you know it experientially and conceptually; you let the understanding unfold.

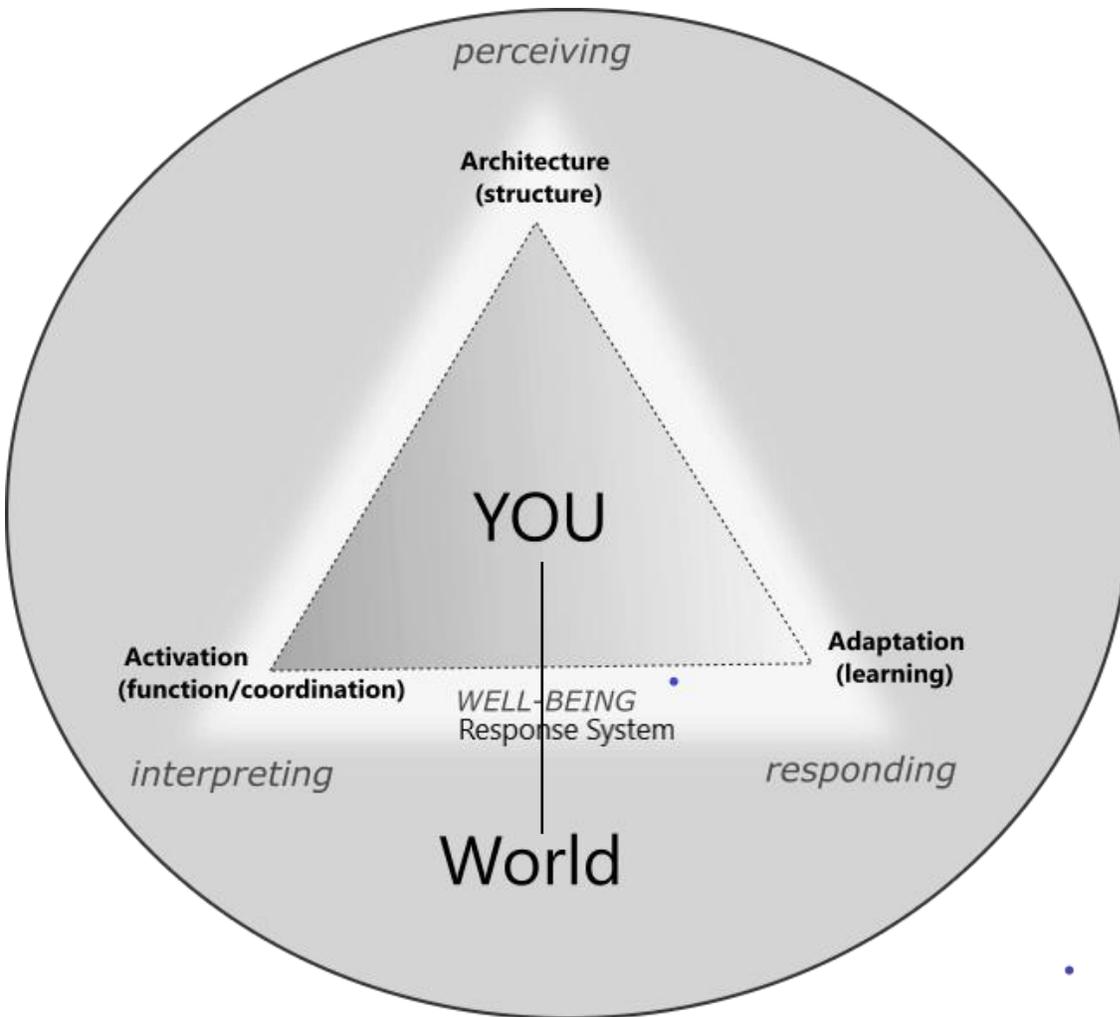
In a culture where conceptual knowledge is valued higher than experiential knowledge it can be challenging to honor the experiential work. In a culture where external sources of information (a teacher, book, research paper) are valued over personal sources of information (experience, sensation, gut feeling) it can be challenging to value your experience over being told something. You may notice responses in yourself or others like: "This is a waste of time." "Just tell me what you want me to know." "OMG, how touchy-feely." "This is so subjective, it is useless." "I have no idea what I am supposed to be doing here."

These statements of feelings are beautiful examples of the cultural bias toward intellect over action, the mistaken idea that intellectual/conceptual knowledge is complete knowledge and that external sources of information are more valid than your own self-knowledge.

If you resonate with the idea that information can come to you from many sources and that understanding combines experience and the ability to describe it, conceptualize it, then join us in the beautiful dance with your wholeness.

For a powerful discussion on “Ways of Knowing” Listen to this Episode from the Science show, Science Friday: <https://www.sciencefriday.com/segments/indigenous-science/>

## Language of Wholeness Pedagogy Framework



Wholeness is simple. Articulating and working with aspects of our wholeness can feel complicated. In order to keep track of and organize your experiences it can be helpful to sort them into the four core territories. As we work together note what information, Deep Play, and experiences emphasize one aspect or another of the four core territories: 1. Well-being/Response System, 2. Structure/Suspension System, 3. Activation/Coordinating System. 4. Adaptation/Learning System.

# I Once Was Lost... but Now Am Found

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Have you ever had one (or more) of those moments when you feel totally whole and totally free? When everything seems to be doing itself with utmost ease? When you are totally present and at one with the moment? When amazing skill and coordination is just flowing out of you?

Over many decades of working with people, mostly performers, I've explored these moments of "optimal functioning" hundreds of times, and I've come to see how almost everything we need to know about good use and functioning is revealed in those moments.

Those experiences are one of the hallmarks of Alexander Technique lessons, but of course they also occur in other methods like Feldenkrais, etc., and in moments of performance when a musician is "in the music" or a dancer "in the flow" or an actor "in the scene", sometimes they occur at intimate moments of sex, or even during a lovely sunset at the beach.

Recall those moments and you'll note that most or all of the following things are happening, and they are happening all together all at once:

- You experience a **wholeness and unity** such that you have no parts;
- You experience **ease and freedom** such that there is no effort and everything seems to do itself;
- Your **performance is high quality** and your ability to express your skill is up there with the best you have done
- You are **present in the moment**, so much so that often things seem brighter, more colourful, more 3D;
- You experience **an expansion** out into the space around you, **an openness** to, and a **oneness** with, your environment, the others on stage, indeed, the world; and...
- You feel **joy and delight**, a sort of yummy appreciation that this is **really good** stuff.

We've all had these moments. No one has to tell us that they are wonderful. We'd like to live more of them. But it's relatively rare because, while we've certainly had the experience, we've usually missed the meaning of the experience. To jargonize it, we've *failed to reliably appreciate the sensory experience we just had*.

For instance, in those moments there is an undeniable wholeness — I have no parts, I am just me all the way to the ground and out into the room... And at the same time, I'm not doing anything, everything is doing itself... And it is all happening with total ease and no effort, and with a quality that is a lot better than I manage when I've tried to do it...

Of course we like that experience and are disappointed when it begins to fade. And we want to experience it again. So, immediately after that experience fades, what do we do to try to get it back? We go straight back into parts to try to free ourselves, to release this bit and that bit, to tell various parts what we think they should be doing, all guided by the memory of that yummy experience. And we hope that this will get it back

for us. If that doesn't work, we start studying various methods or works in the hope that they can show us how to "have" that experience more often.

Did you ever wonder why those moments are so elusive and seem so "hard" to get back to? Is it that the methods or the work is so difficult to master it takes decades (it is called the "work", after all)? Or is it rather that we have completely failed to understand the significance of the experience we had?

We got the "it's good" part alright. It's hard to miss that, especially in comparison to our usual "not so good" experiences. But, we missed the bit that in wholeness there are no parts. And we missed the part where the wholeness does itself without us having to do anything. What could those two together possibly mean but that *we ARE whole!* It takes no doing to be whole. Being whole is easy and does itself... It's right there in the experience, plain as day.

Unfortunately, what keeps us from seeing the full significance of that experience is we are still trapped in the biggest habit which is invisible to most people. That is the habit of trying to get somewhere better (to get to better use, to being successful, being perfect, being loved... you name it). The habit whispers that we are not where we should be. We could get over there to the promised land where the grass is greener, if only we could work out how. *Then* we'd be OK and we could relax and just enjoy life.

We fail to see that our own system is showing us every time we have one of those "optimal experiences" that it already knows (and has always known) how to be whole without effort, and that this goes with, and *is inseparable from*, openness and presentness and oneness.

This is not a far-off land, it has happened to us many times and is available anytime. Of course, it feels good, but we fail to see what exactly it is that our own system is telling us is GOOD. It's saying to you in the only way it knows how, "*Feel this? How's this for a good way to be? Go ahead, go for it, just live what is happening now — be whole, be easy, be present, be open... And just to make sure the message is clear, compare this yummy wholeness, easiness, presentness, openness, freedom, oneness to that "normal" effortful, horrible way you feel so you can see how you are straining against yourself to do more than you can do, or be better than you are, when you are all parts and tension and reaction to the moment, full of effort and trying*".

The message doesn't get any clearer than that.

But, of course, with our habitual inaccurate (i.e. unreliable) way of understanding (appreciating) our experiences we miss the real message again and again and default back to the habit of thinking we have to do something (or undo something) to get to that lovely yummy state, and so we react the same way the next time we find ourselves in a present moment which we don't like. We have already pre-judged that moment to be wrong and we start to try to do something with the parts we are already caught in, in order to get to a better moment we think we will like, a moment later...

It does not occur to us that our system has just showed us exactly how to live in that "optimal functioning", and how to live it right now. Instead, the habit sucks us into taking the next step in the vicious circle by doing more parts, making more effort, trying more trying, while narrowed to that future better moment about to come. There we'd be happy to stay in that better moment and wallow in its yumminess. But wait, how come our strategy only works once in a while, and when it does, that wonderful moment doesn't "stick" very long?

What we need is to realize is that the wonderful experience is not the "result" of some path. It *is* the path itself! *It's not the end, it's the means!*

You, the conscious choosing you, need to lead the way by living what you want first. You cannot "get" the experience and then live in it once you have it. That is, you must inhibit the habitual tendency to try to "fix" the moment (under the mistaken idea that it is somehow "broken" or a "bad use" moment and therefore needs fixing by you). Instead, learn from that yummy experience and follow the path by starting to live, right now, what your own system just showed you about the way it works.

That means choosing to live the whole you just as you are in the moment of choice, whether you like how you currently feel or not — in other words, start being whole RIGHT NOW.

That means choosing to stop all the doing, releasing, striving... all the stuff whose sole purpose is to change something you don't like into something you'd like better — in other words, to let your system do itself — be itself — RIGHT NOW. How easy is that?

That means choosing to be present in the moment as it actually is (for the simple reason that *it is*, whether you like the present moment or not) and fully and willingly accept it RIGHT NOW.

If you think for a moment, this is about the easiest and simplest thing you can possibly do. In fact, there's really nothing at all to do. It is a challenge, for sure, in the face of the habit, in the face of your feelings, in the face of what you've been taught, but it is possible to inhibit your reaction to the moment and follow the means-whereby which your very own highly-evolved system keeps showing you — which is to open up to the present moment, to your wholeness, and to give your system a little bit of faith that it seems to know what it is doing, and that it can do it really well without your "help".

Remember the part of that optimal experience where everything is easy and seems to do itself? What can this mean but that your system is taking care of everything wonderfully well, and you have nothing to do but to be present?

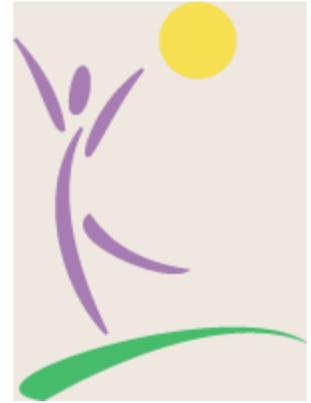
I can tell you that after you have truly put this to the test for a while you won't need faith any more, you'll have the experiences to know that you can trust it. In fact, you'll no longer be thinking of it as trusting *your* system or "using" *your* system. You will BE your system... You'll just be YOU... in the world... and not separate from it nor from yourself.

The ultimate learning is not that you will have finally figured out how to get back in touch with your system and use it well, but you'll realize that it was YOU who were lost, and your system was trying to contact you and let you know how to find your way back.

You once were blind, but now you see. So give a heartfelt thanks that it managed to wake you up and show you the way home and to show you how utterly amazing and capable you are in such a beautiful, seductive, and loving way.

***A note from Babette: This article and many beautiful and brilliant articles that are the roots of The Language of Wholeness can be found at David Gorman's site: [www.learningmethods.com](http://www.learningmethods.com). I cannot adequately express my debt, appreciation and gratitude to David Gorman, my mentor and friend. His work, teaching and wisdom permeates every page and every day of my life.***

# Wholeness in Motion™ — The Nine Underpinnings & The Three Movement Flows



Wholeness in Motion is the work developed by Babette Lightner to test out what would happen if principles of the coordinating suspension system were applied to teaching movement.

*"It makes a wonderful difference whether we find in the body an ally or an adversary." Johann Wolfgang von Goethe*

*"To see a world in a grain of sand  
And heaven in a wild flower,  
Hold infinity in the palm of your hand  
And eternity in an hour." William Blake*

## 1. Wholeness of Being — Your coordinating system

You are at all times one whole, perfectly coordinating being. Wholeness in Motion™ is designed to evoke the easiest, most whole and natural coordination of any given moment. In this way you discover what conditions allow for easy functioning and for strained functioning; giving you the information you need to make healthy choices for yourself.

*"Our life is what our thoughts make it." James Christian*

## 2. Your innate Navigation system • Your relational system

Your system continually perceives, interprets, evaluates, predicts and responds to the stimulus of every given waking moment. From this flood of stimuli arise important signals (sensations like pleasure/pain, likes/dislikes, excitement/calm) as part of your inbuilt navigational system, guiding your life actions and choices, keeping you safe, showing you how to thrive. Because many of us are often unaware of (or override) our own system's signals, Wholeness in Motion™ invites you to listen to, understand and follow this inherent inner guidance system; helping you literally become more in touch with yourself and your surroundings.

*"As we impose our somewhat limited concepts on to ourselves, we gradually lose touch with ourselves, denying our natural urges and ignoring our feelings and generally trying to control things. As we cease to 'be' our bodies, but now 'have' our bodies, we lose touch with our ability to sense what is appropriate and of value to us." David Gorman*

*"When training to live in our world of constant change, training to enjoy the everchanging relationship movement demands may be the most comprehensive training for basic intelligence." Peggy Hackney*

## 3. Pre-sprung Elastic Suspension System

The pre-sprung elastic suspension system is a description of the way we are designed to be stable and mobile creatures. In Wholeness in Motion™, movement instructions are intended to support this open, free,

supported design of your system. This very new articulation of your fundamental design is a radical departure and great leap from alignment and postural models of the human body.

*The pre-sprung elastic suspension system model shows that the "real resolution between the **seemingly conflicting demands** of stability and mobility is complete support at all times with no holding while simultaneously having total openness in your being and freedom in your actions." David Gorman*

#### 4. Elasticity & Voluminous Torso

One of our most fundamental properties is elasticity. Wholeness in Motion™ helps you regain your lively elasticity. The freedom to allow the springy elasticity of your nature is a particular powerful foundation for experiencing your fully, spacious, voluminous torso without the stiffening side effect of many alignment-based approaches. Breathing, physiological functions are free to flow without structural interferences and postural tensions.

#### 5. Balance and Support

The earth comes up underneath you to support you at all times. Learning to evenly distribute your contact on this ever-present support is the foundation for all movement; it is effortless balance. Exploring easy balance in relationship to strained balance gives you the experiential information you need to choose effortless balance in all aspects of your life.

*"This function of supportedness or stability is primary in one sense, in that it needs to be present all the time in everything we do... support is a prerequisite and underlying foundation for all movement." David Gorman*

*"Each time you pick up a book from the table, you effortlessly overcome the combined gravitational exertion of an entire planet." Bryson*

#### 6. Freedom of Movement • Resilience

Wholeness of Motion™ provides simple movement frameworks from which you can find on-going possibilities to move freely and feel free to move and to bounce back from strain and constriction.

*"When movement is liberated from the constricting armor of stylized, pre-conceived gestures, an innate feedback process between movement and feeling is generated." Anna Halprin*

#### 7. Adapting Learning Being

On every level from neural pathways to muscle fiber length your system is continually adapting to how and what you are doing. You are always learning. Wholeness in Motion™ is designed to help you develop the Sensory Landmarks to recognize and choose healthy movement and to expand your expressive, emotional and spatial vocabulary and range.

*"If we can learn to read our own responses to our own experience – a test we are writing unconsciously every day we spend on earth – we will receive the guidance we need to live more authentic lives." Parker Palmer*

#### 8. Exploratory Method

Wholeness in Motion™ is guided through an exploratory approach. By making explorations you discover for yourself what is useful and good for YOU. You develop your own criteria for assessment, which gives you the foundation for confidence and independent learning.

*"So according to Socrates, the teacher assists the inquiring mind of the learner to give birth to knowledge, facilitating the process of discovery on the learners part." Mortimer Adler*

*"Only when teachers realize that the principle cause of learning that occurs in a student is the activity of the student's own mind, do they assume the role of cooperative artist." Mortimer Adler*

## 9. Perceptive Possibilities • Avenues of Information

Movement is a doorway to perceiving yourself and the world around you from different sensory pathways. As you perceive differently you also access different information channels opening up to new possibilities of experiencing and understanding yourself and your world.

*"Attending to sensory communications from the world dissolves the boundary between self and the world."  
Harrod Buhner*

*"The mystery of life isn't a problem to solve but a reality to experience." Frank Herbert*

## Wholeness in Motion™ — The Three Movement Flows

The forms and content of Wholeness in Motion™ (WIM) are designed to be a comprehensive way to experience the innate capability of your system to BE well-being, to be perceptive, responsive, clear, strong, expressive and rooted in love and joy, to move with ease and intelligence, to be free to be yourself.

The core themes of WIM are like a braid weaving three threads through the movement. These three themes, principles or threads are:

- Well-being Perspectives (AKA Meta-Patterns - Patterns of Joy)
- Sensory Landmarks to recognize and choose healthy movement (Opportunities to experience Body Mapping and Anatomy of Wholeness™)
- Expressive and spatial availability, expressive, emotional and spatial vocabulary and range.

Here are some examples of the threads you experience in WIM:

1. Well-being perspectives
  - Remembering your elemental nature, that you are made of the universe
  - You have an inner-compass you can rely on when you learn to interpret signals accurately
  - You have many avenues for information and insight one of which is your senses, your body-based information (embodiment)
2. Sensory Landmarks.
  - Identifying the different sensation of being in the center of support or off the center of support
  - Feeling smooth versus choppy movement as an indicator of efficiency
  - Detecting the difference between having integrity through the torso or feeling disconnected
3. Expressive Availability.
  - Exploring pushing, floating, directed or quick movement with various intentions and contexts
  - Feeling the difference between gripped dynamic expression and open, free dynamic expression
  - Dancing the planes of movement

**No right or wrong just what is true for you in this moment of your experience and understanding.**

## 1. Earth to Sky Flow™

The Earth to Sky Flow takes you from simplicity to complexity as you flow naturally from maximum contact with the planet to minimum contact. These movement patterns reflect our developmental and evolutionary journey from elemental web of life to single breathing cell to our full upright stature. As you traverse this range you become in touch with many of the underpinnings of lively healthy movement. Through the flow you change, repeat and sustain supported and free shapes creating your unique and personal "asanas". Benefits of this flow range from deep, presence and ease to developing powerful, dynamic, practical strength and flexibility.

*"This series of evolutionary metamorphoses is a kind of time-lapse animation of your history, each period still contained and embodied in our structure and in our nature today." David Gorman*

*"Heredity is nothing but stored environment." Harrod Buhner*

## 2. The Animal Sequence™

This form blends movement principles and shapes from several martial arts, South Indian classical dance, Yoga and a Korean Health sequence. The form evokes an alertness of yourself and the world around you, a kind of lively centering. It is demanding and animated with images to encourage you to use your fullest physical range. Because there is specificity in this form there is an opportunity to use these shapes to systematically bring forth anatomical and movement principles. The form can be used as a daily practice to remind you of balance, freedom, mindfulness and functional strength and flexibility.

*"Oh, beauty before me, beauty behind me, beauty to the right of me, beauty to the left of me, Beauty below me. I'm on the pollen path. Pollen path is the path to the center." traditional*

*"There is one place in all the Universe that has been made just for you. And it is inside your own feet." Harrod Buhner*

## 3. Meta-patterns — a movement meditation

*"A meta-pattern is a pattern so wide flung that it appears throughout the spectrum of reality: in clouds, rivers, planets, in cells, organisms and ecosystems, art and patterns of patterns" Tyler Volk*

*"Ourselves, (that is our particular hundreds of millions of years old family line). David Gorman*

We dance the shapes(patterns) and resonate our being with patterns of the Universe. We anchor conceptual perspectives in physicalized metaphors and archetypal images so that we can access healthy perspectives in the stressful moments when what we need to remember eludes us. We remember our wholeness and gain a tool to recall these perspectives when all hell breaks loose. When these perspectives root our being, joy arises of its own accord.

**Layers** - horizontals/mesas – elemental being – part of a greater whole

**Fluids** - inner-outer rivers - forming - what is true for me/my response

**Trajectories** - clarity/line tree- clearing the way - here I am, there you are – relational health

**Threshold** – pause/entrances to listen, see, perceive

**Spirals** - embracing/releasing/chrysalis - cycles – compassion

**Spheres** – abundance/earth - being with what is rather than what isn't - gratitude

**Wave** – change/waves – crests and troughs - resilience

**Suspension** – possibilities/space between a breath - space for mystery

**Space/Vibration** – float/space between atoms – back to elemental being

# Beyond the Body • Back to Wholeness

*We need look no further than ourselves to see a miracle every day!*

What's beyond the body? It's not the emotions or the spirit. It's you! The whole you. This article, written in 2007, describes the insights and experiences that opened Babette up to a new understanding and a new work.

How do you imagine yourself? Do you have a body? Are you separate from or connected to the world around you? Are you a mental, physical, emotional, spiritual being? Do you have good or bad posture? How you imagine/understand the way you work impacts all aspects of your life from how you take a step to how and where you seek help when you are in trouble.

We may not explicitly think we have an idea of how we work but our culture and language is imbedded with images of how we function. This implicit image of ourselves and how we relate to the world around us is a primary contributor to the quality of our life. This “functional self image” is so implicit that it is mostly invisible and unquestioned. Yet, it is perhaps one of the most important questions we can ask ourselves, for how we answer it has implications for the fabric of our being. This article tracks a change in my understanding of human functioning and the implications of that change.

Over the past twenty years I have worked with people who have wanted relief from pain and those who have wanted to enhance their performance; people who want to live a good life but a particular symptom was in their way. My students have included everyone from an office worker suffering from neck tension, to a nurse with chronic low back pain, to a singer wanting a freer, fuller sound, to a runner wanting to improve time and stamina. Occupations and symptoms have been broad and wide-ranging. People came to me because I was trained as an Alexander Teacher, an approach aimed at helping people change the underlying habits that might cause or contribute to their symptom.

Years ago demonstrating to people that their whole body affected their functioning (their pain or performance) was often met with skepticism. But with years of many whole-body approaches inundating the culture there is less and less resistance to this concept, especially in the arts. Most people, to some degree or another, are open to the possibility that their symptom, pain or weakened performance, may have something to do with what is happening in the whole of them, not just the symptomatic part. As someone who spent years wanting to develop this point of view, first as a dancer and later as an Alexander Technique teacher, it is wonderful to be able to start a class or workshop from this different starting place. I owe much to Alexander and other body/mind disciplines for spreading this perspective.

Throughout my years of teaching Alexander Technique I began to feel a nagging disquiet. In my studio or at a class or workshop I could easily bring someone out of pain, help them move with freedom, or improve their sound with voice or instrument. Sometimes the change was permanent. But, more often than I liked to admit, people found it difficult to apply what I was teaching when they were back in the activities of their lives, especially in moments when their attention was on their work. Students sitting at a computer could be easy and free in my studio as they typed but back in the work place they couldn't figure out how they could think about their body, have awareness of their body-use and at the same time think about what they were writing. It was slightly frustrating for them and made them feel like they weren't getting it. For years I explained this to myself with ideas like “*Alexander Technique takes time, it's subtle*” and so forth. Now I see that in fact they couldn't do both. There was something inaccurate in the “functional image” that this and many other “body/mind” disciplines are based on.

Even more disconcerting was my work with performers. I taught for ten years in the Professional Actor Training Program at the University of Minnesota, taught classes for the music department there, as well as at a Minneapolis arts center and many other arts institutions. Here again I could quickly help someone out of a tension pattern that underlay her pain or performance problem. I would use my hands to guide her body into a different organization. This is referred to in Alexander Technique as using “hands-on”. It often felt like “wow”, what an amazing change. People felt the change as a sense of lightness or absence of tension, as freedom, power, and confidence. One could get addicted to those “wow” moments.

No matter what I said or cautioned, the power of that feeling was so strong most people wanted it again. So they either kept coming to lots of lessons or they continually fiddled with themselves in ever more subtle ways to recapture that amazing moment. Their attention turned from the music they were playing or the scene they were acting to themselves, with the firm belief that changing themselves directly would get them not only that great feeling, but also a better performance.

I teach in an annual weeklong summer voice course in which people often come back year after year. I’ve had the opportunity to observe how people took the initial material and experience away and worked with it on their own. The vast majority of people, no matter how many other ideas and principles they’d been introduced to, came back having spent the intervening years fiddling with their bodies, often becoming stiffer and more self-conscious than ever before. I hated to admit this. I wanted people to experience how beautifully made they were and, of course, sometimes a real change did occur. But the all too common interpretation was “*Sure I’m beautifully made, but I’m always interfering with that beautiful, inherent design so I’m really a mess and need to fix myself*”. This wasn’t what I was after at all. What was going on?

What saved me to some degree during this time was the “Body Mapping” work of Barbara and Bill Conable.<sup>(note1)</sup> In this work I could help students get a clearer, more accurate idea/experience of how they were made and there was less misunderstanding and “clean-up” if I kept it at that and didn’t do too much hands-on. So some of the wow “miracle” moments were easily explained and not so mysterious. If a person had believed that her shoulder blades should be held back and in, close to her spine, I could show her that the shoulders were actually made to move. Pain she’d had for years would go away almost instantaneously. A singer who thought she should lift her sternum to enhance breath capacity could be easily shown that contrary to her idea lifting the sternum was actually constricting and limiting her breath. We were updating a faulty image and when that image changed to a more accurate one the change was often permanent.

A distinction became very clear for me. Alexander Technique, Body Mapping, and many other types of bodywork could be very useful when people had wrong ideas (and therefore practice) about how their body worked. If the symptom was caused by an inaccurate self-image a more accurate image solved the actual problem, the cause. But there was a whole slew of issues that seemed at best not addressed well by either approach and at worst exacerbated by them.

I wasn’t sure where to turn, when a friend brought me an article by David Gorman, *The Rounder We Go, The Stucker We Get*. In a nutshell this article looked at the circular nature of habit. It showed how, when we perceive a negative feeling, we want to change it and, especially if we’ve had some kind of body/mind training, will tend to go into ourselves to direct or fiddle with body parts. This strategy may work temporarily but the circle comes around again because we really never got to the cause of the problem. In subsequent work with Gorman I found the clarity to solve this dilemma that had been nagging me concerning the all too common tendency to be quite helped by a body work approach in a particular moment but then enter a new habitual cycle of attention and constant body vigilance. Over time the goal fades from getting out of the symptom to becoming good at “bodywork” and in the case of Alexander constantly “inhibiting and directing” one’s self.

The simple idea from Gorman's many insights that revolutionized my work is that the human system works as one whole coordinated system. By coordination I mean that the generally divided aspects of our system are absolutely integrated. Our mind isn't doing one thing, our feeling another, our skeletal-muscular system another and our biochemistry another. At any given moment our whole system is one living activity in which thought, feeling, structural form, muscle activation, and bio-chemistry are all coordinating together to give us one moment. At any given moment a person is in the exact/perfect coordination for whatever he is actually doing. "Perfect" in that it is a precisely accurate coordination for a specific intention, not necessary perfect in the way we might think as in "comfortable", "efficient for the task" " or "to get the best result". This "coordinating system" works to allow us to do what we want at any given moment. The trick is to discover what we are actually intending in those moments when we don't like what has happened (the moment of the symptom). As a way of seeing this perspective in action I am going to use two examples. The first is a common scenario when many people find themselves in an unhappy coordination. The second is an example of teaching from this point of view.

The first scenario is somewhat typical and I am making generalizations, not everyone responds in these ways. Imagine someone driving to a meeting glancing at the clock or hearing the time on the radio and suddenly realizing he is going to be late. Instantly he grips the steering wheel, his shoulders go up a bit and his jaw is clenched. He's tight all over in a "stressed out" or "rushed" and "worried" feeling in which his heart rate is increased as chemicals are released through the system. When he becomes aware of this uncomfortable tight feeling he does some self-talk: "relax", "loosen up", "let go of my jaw." Especially if he thinks being tense is a bad thing. Then he remembers he's late and the tension is back in an instant, then he notices the tension and tells himself to relax, he remembers he's late (all the while trying to get to the meeting as fast as possible) and gets tense, he says relax, remembers he's late and gets tense, and an all too common cycle has started. Does this sound at all familiar?

Let's look at this closely. At the moment he thinks he's late he has an instantaneous whole system response that he feels as tension. He didn't volitionally say, "Now I'm going to tighten up". It just happened, he didn't do it. This difference between what he did and what happened is a key distinction in the coordinating system point of view. It makes no sense to relax or loosen up the symptom/tension if he didn't DO it, because as soon as he goes back to whatever it was he was doing at the moment this tension happened the tension/symptom would return. If he wasn't DOING the "symptom", then what WAS he DOING at those moments?

That is, if he understood the coordinating system model he would instead, at the moment he notices he's had this tension response, see it as a symptom of something. He is clear that a symptom is the exact/perfect coordination of something he is doing. His body isn't being bad to him; he isn't bad because he's tense. From this coordinating system model he can ask a useful question. What is he doing that explains this unpleasant (but appropriate to something) response? Why does it makes sense that he is tense? The tension isn't the problem, it is the message of something else.

How does he find what it is a message of? For demonstration sake I'll choose one common cause of this pattern. We need to go back to the moment when he is driving along and not tense, then he is alerted to being late and boom, the tension response happens. If he takes a look at his perspective at that moment and the thoughts that start to spin after he realized he's late. He'll see he was wishing he wasn't late. It is logical wish; he doesn't want to be late. In that moment he is in the perfect coordination of wanting reality to be different from what it is. He doesn't want to be late and wishes he weren't — talk about a tension-filled moment!

The fact is that he is late. Reality is as it is, pleasant or not. As soon as he can be clear that all he can do is accept the facts of the situation, make a phone call and not get a speeding ticket, he sees that no amount of gripping will get him there faster. As soon as he stops fighting the facts of reality the tension goes away by itself, as does the entire neuro-muscular-bio-chemical response. He doesn't like being late, but he is accepting

the facts — he is late. The coordination (feeling) of being late and wishing he weren't late and continuing to wish it, is totally different from the coordination (feeling) of realizing he is late and accepting that not so pleasant reality and then adjusting to it. By the way, "accepting" doesn't mean "liking" it, it is just seeing that facts are as they are and stopping the wishing they were different (as if you could change reality).

This coordinating system perspective has added benefits. The initial tension response is actually quite useful; it alerts us to some actions we can take. Once we've done what we can do, then we can simply accept the moment exactly as it is. If this situation occurs often we may want to learn from the situation. The unpleasantness is a great signal inviting us to say, "Hmm, what would I need to change so I'm not late so much?" Rather than getting stuck in a cycle of tension and trying to release, we wake up to the tension, use it to alert us to take necessary action, and then accept the way things are. If this situation becomes common, we can use the same process to see why it makes sense we find ourselves habitually late. What would need to change? We need to get up earlier, not get distracted or any number of reasons a person might be late. By tying the question to the precise situation, we eliminate speculation and false assumptions.

From this perspective our system's tension-bio-chemical response is a "good" thing. We don't have a messed up, broken body or bad use. We have a wonderfully, responsive system designed to alert us to our misconceptions of our selves and the Universe. The very fact we experience the moment as unpleasant shows us another amazing and under-recognized aspect of our being. We have right within our responses to the world a way to evaluate what is "good" for us and what isn't, our personal inner compass or value register. This is an essential subject also opened up by Gorman's insights into human functioning.

I'd like to give an example of applying this coordinating system perspective in teaching, in this case to a singer. A woman is singing and senses tightness in her tone. She notices her whole body is reaching forward, especially from her head, causing a compression in her neck. She senses that this forward tension is affecting her sound. So, she tries to keep her neck long or stay back when she sings. At first this may work while she's thinking about the changes and oh what a lovely sound she might get. But as soon as she gets "into" the song or goes to an audition she is back in this tension configuration. She mistook the physical coordination and tension for the cause of the tense tone.

Her body-use, her tension, is just one part of a total moment of coordination that includes the tight sound, her feeling of tension and the forward reach in her head area. This whole coordination is a coordination of something. But of what? Remember the distinction between what a person is doing and what happens in them? She didn't do the pull forward; some people might call what happened an "unconscious habit". However, from the "coordinating system" point of view it makes absolutely no sense to try to physically change her state of being or her body since she didn't volitionally do it as in "*Now I will pull forward, and tighten*".

This begs the question: if her forward pulled head is not the actual cause of this particular coordination, what is? Which brings us back to that question: why does it make sense that this is happening? What could she be up to — thinking, intending, reacting — that is coordinated "perfectly" by her system?

As teachers when we ask this question, we must also ask, who has this information, she or I? This is the key distinction in the teaching situation. She is the only one who knows what she was up to, and it usually takes only a few questions to her to reveal why she was in that coordination. She might be trying to sing well, or wanting others to like her voice, or trying to be loud, or trying to get the feeling across to the audience. There are many possibilities, and with some simple investigative tools,<sup>(note2)</sup> it is not very difficult to find what her actual intention was that would make that tense sound, head-forward coordination happen.

For demonstration's sake let's say she wanted the audience to like her singing. If we look under this for a moment, we can see that although it is a common desire, she cannot actually ensure their response. In the first

place, the whole idea of an “audience” having “a” response is a fallacy. An audience is made up of individual people all of whom will have unique responses.

Second of all, responses to her singing are based on each individual’s life story. One person may love the song because it was sung to her in her crib, another may hate it because his past lover sang it, another may hate it because she hates the genre. Responses often have very little to do with the singer.

The third misconception is that a person’s response to the singer says something about the singer. When people assess the song as good or bad they are only telling the singer something about their own criteria. Even if they say, “*You sang so beautifully*,” they are really only saying that how she sang fit their criteria for beautiful singing. They experienced the “beauty”; the beauty was not a property of the song or the singer. This is very confused in most people’s understanding and hence in their language.

When the singer can see the following three perspectives clearly:

- There is no single audience that will have one response,
- The response to the song happens in the other people based on their personal criteria and their past experience,
- The response or assessment only says something about the person responding and his/her criteria, not about the song or the singer,

her problem will begin to unravel on its own.

Hearing their value assessment, she may learn how the song fits their criteria, which can be useful information, though, crucially, this information always comes after the performance. It is important for the singer to see that she does not have and cannot have that information as she performs. So she cannot possibly ensure a positive response, especially considering the likelihood that some audience members are very likely to have directly opposing criteria.

Once these facts are seen clearly what can the singer do? The desire that others enjoy the song remains true and is a natural enough desire. But all the singer can do is sing the song to her own criteria, which is information that she does have access to through her own responses, her own value register. The individuals in the audience will or will not enjoy it, according to their own tastes and their state at the moment. She cannot ensure their response and she’ll only find out afterwards what it was.

If she understand all this, what she can do is this:

- she can focus on the music and allow herself to respond to her own criteria, knowing that this will be what others see as her interpretation;
- she can detect when she starts to sound tense or tries to reach out toward the audience to ensure a positive response from them;
- she can use that detection to come back to her own criteria and her own center.

As she goes about singing this way she will no longer be up to a misconceived intention and consequently her coordination will be different — more centered, more free and easy — all on its own.

On the other hand, if I, the teacher, thought her pulled-forward head was the problem and believed she could just change that habit I might have brought her attention to her body, whether it was through hands-on work or by showing her the atlanto-occipital joint. She may very well have a “magically freeing” moment. That great feeling would support the idea that her head was the problem and it would then be very logical for her to invite her head to be “free and back” when she sings. She might just start frequently checking her head before and while singing.

But notice something here. If as we saw in the coordinating system example when her head was forward her attention was on what the audience was thinking. When I use my hands or she thinks about her neck she also is no longer thinking about the audience she is thinking about her physical freedom. When her intention, and consequently her implicit attention, changes from focusing on the audience to focusing on her neck her coordination will change.

However, the problem in this approach is that the free sound isn’t attributed to the change in intention/attention but is attributed to the change in her structure or worse yet, to me the teacher. This strategy can often seem magical to people because if they put their attention on getting a free body they feel so free. They certainly are no longer trying to influence the audience when they are thinking of their body, which is a totally different activity, leading on its own to a different coordination. Yet what they end up stuck with is always having to remember to monitor themselves and make the physical change — they have one more job than they did before, because you can bet they still have the misunderstandings about getting the audience to like them, just now they are trying to have a free body to improve their singing so the audience will like them.

In other words, this getting the body free idea will be reinforced by this approach, and so will another idea. When they operate this way, they end up always finding themselves slightly wrong, in a sense, as if their body will disobey unless they keep checking up and correcting things. Thus a distrust in their own system gets reinforced. At the minimum they won’t have their full attention on the music. At any moment when they do get caught in that unexamined intention to ensure the audience likes them the “head forward” coordination will return only to be “corrected” again. “Darn that bad neck habit.” So, the cycle feeds itself.

On the other hand, what has been ultimately freeing for people is to help them find the actual misconception that is expressed in their performance and in their structure. Instead of having a body to check and fix, they find themselves a whole, perfectly coordinated person who can put their attention on the music. When a signal arises, whether they hear it in their sound or feel it in their body, they can simply use that either to find another layer of misconception or to remind themselves that they are up to an old habit of thinking and quickly come back to a more accurate relationship to the situation and reality.

When we understand that our symptoms are the way our system alerts us that we are misconceiving something, then it makes no sense to directly change the symptom. In fact, to attempt to do so actually teaches people to interfere with their own personal navigation system. If we shoot the messenger, we lose access to the message and to the information we need to find the problem and to be in touch with our real responses to the world around us. If we use the symptom to awaken us in the moment, we can then investigate it or remember what we’ve already discovered about it. There will be no stubborn unconscious habits to worry about over and over and to reprogram, just a small handful of easily found misconceptions to update and quickly clear up.

Many wonderful teachers get at this territory instinctively by asking singers to “*Trust yourself*”, or “*Imagine the audience in underwear*”, or “*Don’t try, do*” or other corrective thoughts. These ideas can save people in a pinch but ultimately, they are a bag of tricks that once again has to be remembered to be effective. Since most of the time these are the teacher’s ideas being given to the student, the new thought isn’t really what the student was thinking when the symptoms happened so it does not get to the actual issue and works only temporarily. At best it is overlaid on top of the still-existing problematic ideas.

What this new approach asks is that we get to the cause of a symptom by asking the student, who after all is the real expert on what he or she is up to. In working with teachers, I invite them to notice those moments when they want to advise the student with phrases like “trust yourself”. Instead of saying it aloud, let it alert them to the fact that they are sensing a symptom in the student. And then, ask a question of the student instead to check out their hunch. The student is the one with information about what they are actually thinking in that exact moment that may be causing the symptom. Simply asking a few questions of the student is often the most useful tool to make a real change.

There are many situations in which human structure and function information is helpful, even critical for change, however, you can be the foremost expert on free body use but as soon as you begin to rush or worry about the audience or what another person is thinking you will find yourself in the un-free but perfect coordination of those thoughts.

Some people have trained themselves to change instantly their symptomatic state of being, to shoot the messenger, because they think that state is not as good as some other state of being. I did this endlessly. I’d be on the lookout for the slightest inefficiency and immediately try to “improve” it. I essentially spent much of my life to some degree thinking about and changing my use or state of being. I was exquisitely trained to go in to feel or check out how I was doing — “am I grounded, free, present?” — as if there was some ideal way to be. Unfortunately, it was almost never here where I was living, though I kept going because I felt I was constantly arriving.

These days I don’t have a body or body/mind or “self” in the common sense of the word. I certainly don’t have an ideal way to be. I am just functioning in the world in all kinds of configurations and coordinations, responses and states of being — free to do what I do and open to be awakened and appropriately responsive when I am off in misconceptions.

I do continue to teach structure and function material, but in a much different, more whole way. This area of my work has also been radically influenced by the new understanding of our human system articulated by Gorman in his Anatomy of Wholeness workshops and his upcoming book, Anatomy of Wholeness/Revealing the Obvious (see footnote below about pre-publication availability of parts of this book)<sup>(note3)</sup>. His pre-sprung elastic suspension system description of human structure and function is the underpinning of the coordinating system model. I teach this material under the name Wholeness in Motion. It too has drastically simplified teaching people about their structure. It comes down to the cooperative process of uncovering and eliminating pre-existing interferences as well as working with whole-person balance mobility, and is less and less a teaching about and changing of body parts/joints. It utterly revolutionizes issues of posture, alignment, breath, emotion, and learning.

After five years of teaching from this new understanding of how we work, employing tools from LearningMethods and the Anatomy of Wholeness material I can say that people often make simple and permanent changes quite quickly. They no longer come back a few years later still having the symptoms, still chasing the good feeling and still fiddling with their body. Often years of chronic back pain is gone because someone was able to identify his habit of rushing through the day, for example, and stop it when he sees what it causes for him. Or they become free of long-standing chronic tension in performing because they identified the misconceptions they had about making the audience respond, or about trying to be perfect, and stopped trying to do the impossible.

As for me, I personally come back to the question I asked you at the start. How do I imagine myself? I am (we are) always in one dynamic, whole, coordination of being within myself (ourselves) and within the Universe. If I begin to work against the universe or against myself, I am designed with an in-built signaling system to wake

me up in the moment. My system and my symptoms guide me toward the learning I need to get back to the free, alive, whole being that I am. What could be better than that?

**We need look no further than ourselves to see a miracle every day!**

Endnotes:

(Endnote 1)

For more information about Body Mapping see their main web site at [www.bodymap.org](http://www.bodymap.org).

(Endnote 2)

LearningMethods is an investigative approach developed by David Gorman out of his many insights into the nature of human functioning. See this web site ([www.learningmethods.com](http://www.learningmethods.com)) for more information.

LearningMethods is an extremely direct and powerful set of tools any educator can use to help students see clearly the underlying misperception that interferes with their free functioning.

(Endnote 3)

Extracts of this new book by David Gorman will be available soon in both e-book and print formats. More info about the book and ordering is at [www.learningmethods.com](http://www.learningmethods.com).

# 1. Well-being • Our Response System • Our Inner Compass



# Deep Play - Listen to Yourself

Can you recall a time when you got hurt and realized later you'd had a back-of-the-mind thought to stop or change something but didn't? How about a time when you had a gut feeling or sensed the possibility of an injury or illness and you kept going and ended up sick or injured? How about a moment when you thought "I should stop for gas or get the car checked", some kind of warning message which you ignored and later realized, "Yes, I should have."

What would your life be like if you followed the guidance coming to you through your system's sensations and back-of-the-mind thoughts? Put another way, what would your life be like if you didn't ignore your system's messages?

Is it possible that the millions of bits of information your perceptive system picks up but doesn't bring to your conscious attention gets just one new signal and then sends you a back-of-the-mind thought to alert you to something? Those thoughts might not be magic or psychic but the accumulation of lots of other-than-conscious perceptions that aggregate to a useful message.

Here are a few suggestions for discovering how wise you are if you don't ignore yourself.

1) Listen to your back-of-the-mind thoughts and gut feelings as if that flash-of-a-thought was a coming from a wise advisor. See what happens if you follow that message rather than the companion argument to ignore the thought and keep it in the 'back' of your consciousness because you "don't have time" or "can't deal with that right now". Bring the back-of-the-mind thoughts forward. (What I refer to here as back-of-the-mind-thoughts and gut feelings are like a quick flash. They are not the same as spinning worries.)

2) When you feel the start of an ache or pain, stop for a moment and change something, like the pace at which you are working. See if you can determine why you are hurting before you keep doing what you are doing. Pain is commonly caused by 'how' you are doing what you are doing.

**When you change the 'how', you change the pain.**

3) Take time in your day or week to be still and silent, 'to be' for a few moments without purpose or accomplishment or doing. Conceive of this in the same way you might take time to exercise or eat well. Stillness/silence is part of fitness. Fitness for life. Fitness for your whole being.

4) Ask yourself what gives you joy? If you can't answer this question decide to find out.

5) Decide to have more joy in your life. How often do you give yourself the time and energy to follow your joy? If the answer is "rarely", find some ways to do things you love to do. From the point of view of listening to your system's signals, the sense of joy and ease is one of the most powerful ways your system tells you what you need for your deepest wholeness and health.

As the great comparative mythology scholar Joseph Campbell said many years ago to his students at Sarah Lawrence:

*"Your bliss can guide you to the transcendent mystery, because bliss is the welling up of energy of the transcendent wisdom within you. So, when the bliss cuts off, you know that you've cut off the welling up; try to follow it again. And that will be your Hermes guide, the dog that can follow the invisible trail for you. And that's the way it is. One works out one's own myth that way."*

*"Follow your bliss. You'll have moments when you'll experience bliss. And when that goes away, what happens to it? Just stay with it, and there's more security in that than in finding out where the money is going to come from next year. For years I've watched this whole business of young people deciding on their careers. There are only two attitudes: one is to follow your bliss; and the other is to read projections as to where the money is going to be when you graduate. Well, it changes so fast. This year it's computer work; next year it's dentistry and so on. And no matter what the young person decides, by the time he or she gets going, it will have changed. But if they have found where the center of real bliss is, they can have that. You may not have money, but you'll have your bliss."* Pathways to Bliss by Joseph Campbell, p. xxiv

## Try Delight!

Sometimes the simplest choices have the deepest results. Here are a few explorations to enrich your life.

EXPLORE DOING THE FOLLOWING, as if your health and well-being depended on them, (it just might):

1. Laughing often.
2. Doing something you love.
3. Taking time for joy.
4. Choosing stillness
5. Learning poems by heart

If you want to know the reasoning behind the suggestions read on.

1. **Laughing Often** — There is neuroscience, immunology and psychology research looking at the health effects of laughter. A fascinating body of research comes to me from [Leon Thurman](#), one of my mentors, a groundbreaking voice educator and a brilliant synthesizer of neuroscience.

Jack Pettigrew discovered, by accident, the effects of laughter on interhemispheric switching in the brain, a key theory in understanding bipolar disorder. Here are links to articles about his work: [http://cogweb.ucla.edu/Abstracts/Pettigrew\\_01.html](http://cogweb.ucla.edu/Abstracts/Pettigrew_01.html) and <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1444-0938.2005.tb06662.x/pdf>.

There are many general articles, like the one below, discussing various studies on laughter and health: <http://women.webmd.com/guide/give-your-body-boost-with-laughter>

In the spirit of self-knowledge and embodiment your experience is more than enough. You can find out if your life is more or less enjoyable when you laugh more. Is your health and well-being in any way effected when you laugh more often?

*Thanks to Katharine Grant, who said she was choosing to laugh more often. Her story inspired me to do this experiment.*

2) **Doing something you love, take time for joy** — There is an article in Dive Training magazine,

(September 2011) called *Your Brain on Scuba*. It is full of scary statistics about how Americans don't take time for fun.

Here are some highlights: Americans average 13 days off per year, English 26, Germans 27, French 38. Several studies found that the "most significant predictors of heart health was whether women took vacations." For men, another study found that, "Men who took vacations were 21 percent less likely to have disease than those who didn't and 32 percent less likely to suffer heart attacks."

In the article they correlated vacation with pleasure. Doing joyous things is good for health. It is also good for happiness. "*Studies show experiences can make us happier than material things.*" Frequency of experiences is more important than intensity.

This relates directly to the fundamental question underlying this work: Does your system give you accurate signals to guide you? If so, is it possible that joy, fun, and pleasure are reliable guides to show you what is good for you? This is a radical proposal in a culture with a history of marginalizing joy as frivolous, at best, and selfish, at worst. It seems that the Calvinist/Puritan perspective may be bad for your health.

Barbara Fredrickson is a pioneer in the investigation of positive emotions. Here's the link to her Positive Emotions and Psychophysiology Lab: <http://www.unc.edu/peplab/>. The following link is to a research center here in Wisconsin, Center for Investigating Healthy Minds: <http://www.investigatinghealthyminds.org/>. We have years of research into illness. These two centers are in the forefront of researching health.

### 3) Choose stillness now and again.

Just try it.

### 4) Learning poems by heart — No science for this one, just personal experience in the depth of relationship that happens when a poem is in my heart.

Climb Mount Fuji,  
O snail,  
but slowly, slowly  
- Issa

## Sensory Intelligence

'I feel, therefore I am.' 'I feel that I am.' Dr. Bud Craig

The Language of Wholeness work often starts with a 'locating' exercise. These are activities to transition into the present activity, to arrive and set the tone for what comes next. One of the basic exercises is asking you to look around the room, listen to the sounds of the moment, note your mood and how warm or cold you feel. We are essentially asking you to come to your senses, awaken you to your sensory information, your interoceptive awareness, your felt sense. Sensory information is the foundational of your ability to manage your well-being, to determine your safety and to make personal artistic choices. It is the foundation of The Language of Wholeness.

In our culture information coming to us from NPR or the BBC or a research article or some external expert is given great validity. It is as if the only source of valid and true information is external to us. Your system is also giving you information through your senses. This is an essential source of information. It allows you to make choices. It gives you the information of what does and doesn't serve your purpose; what does and doesn't give you joy or power or anything you want.

This is not to say external information is less valid. This is to invite you to have access to as many sources of information as possible to navigate your life. This is about revalidating our inner-compass as the foundation of well-being.

Below is a quote from one of these external, research sources, Dr. Bud Craig, (note: better heartbeat perception is a method of measuring someone's *interoceptive awareness* or body awareness):

"Better heartbeat perceivers function better not only on an emotional level but also cognitively. They make better decisions based on subtle environmental cues, they perform better in tasks of selective and divided attention, and they respond more quickly to intuitive choices. They also have a more accurate subjective sense of time...they expend less energy than poor heartbeat perceivers." -- Dr. Bud Craig. *How Do You Feel? An Interoceptive Moment with Your Neurobiological Self*, p 6-7.

Neuroanatomist Dr. Bud Craig, in his book is [How Do You Feel? An Interoceptive Moment with Your Neurobiological Self](#), has put forward a whole new paradigm for understanding how we feel, literally. What he has discovered couldn't have been mapped before because we didn't have the instruments to see the tiny, tiny tissues he has mapped. His work is vast and complex.

In his introduction Craig writes: "*'I feel, therefore I am,' or more aptly, as I will explain, 'I feel that I am.'*"

An understanding of embodiment isn't revolutionary anymore. Craig makes a thrilling contribution to the field. *The Language of Wholeness* is about developing practical strategies to apply new information about our system to daily and artistic life.

## Foundations for Well-being • Locating Practices • Tools for Transitioning • Your 'Felt Sense'

(These are examples of possible locating practices. Perfect to do in groups.)

### Coming to Your Senses • Developing Sensory Intelligence

**Sound Attention:** Ring a bell and ask people to raise their hand when the sound stops. Do that several times.

**Visual Attention:** In the air, slowly and evenly draw a shape, like lines up and down, with both hands. Ask the group to move with you, follow you. Move up and down, in a comfortable range, slowly, with both arms, as if you were lifting something, then pressing it down. Do this slowly, gently, repeatedly as you look at the group with an easy smile. If you change the shape, warn the group, "Now I'll change shapes." Draw to half circles. The goal is to be predictable and easy. Note the change in the feeling in the group. This is the kind of

activity that helps someone shift from stress and fear to calm. Activity with a long slow exhale can do the same thing.

## Felt Sense:

Take a moment and very simply look at the scene before you.

Do you see anything you haven't noticed before?

Gently listen to the symphony of sound in this space.

How awake are you?

How tired?

Notice the sense of the earth coming up under you to support you, the feeling of the chair, the ground. What is your state of being? Alert, bored, annoyed, interested? If you give your state of being a name like happy, where do you feel the happiness? Indicate with your hands where you feel the sensation of your state of being.

Do you know what anxious feels like? Where do you feel it? Notice we have a word – anxious. This is a concept. The feeling of anxious, the experience of anxious is in your being. It is a sensation. Can you describe it?

As you receive the information of your sensations explore finding descriptive words for these sensations beyond easy and tense. How about: bubbly, light, dark, rigid, fluid, tingly, grinding. Developing your sensory vocabulary is a powerful tool toward sensory intelligence and navigating life.

*Theory interlude: When you started seeing the space, listening to sounds, you were perceiving the world around you. The head is the limb for perception. It is like a periscope giving you lots of information about the world around you.*

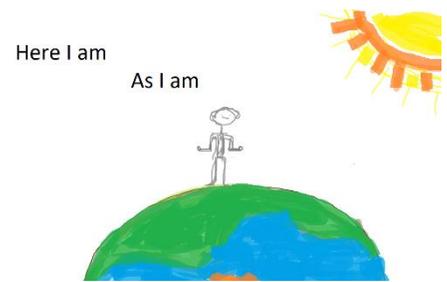
*There are lots and lots of other senses. These are dispersed throughout your body. They tell you about how you, your internal balance, your hunger or temperature, your balance. They give you your feelings. They give you the sensations of how you interpret the world around you at every moment. Dr. Bud Craig calls this 'interoceptive awareness' Dr. Eugene Gendlin, 50 years ago called this our 'felt sense'.*

*When you recognize and name these sensations you develop more access and facility with your 'felt sense', your 'interoceptive awareness', your ability to navigate life. This ability is the foundation upon which all the other exercises and experiences in the Language of Wholeness stand.*

*You perceive the world. You interpret or make meaning of these perceptions based your experiences up to this moment. You experience sensations of the meaning you've made of the moment. These sensations are your feelings. They guide your response to the world. This ability to perceive, interpret and respond is an ancient and foundational ability. It is in every cell in your body and every living cell everywhere. It is a fundamental information source.*

Here I Am Sequence or Anchoring in Yourself in the world as you are, as it is.  
 Transitioning from one activity to the next and choosing how to step into the next.  
 There are 3 aspects to this sequence:  
 M - A gestural movement, W- words and F-focus for your attention.  
 Everyone stands. You can lead and they follow one gesture/phrase at a time.

1. M. Lightly stamp right foot while doing gesture of putting down a staff and say first phrase, "Here I am". Repeat movement with left saying second phrase, "As I am."  
 W. "Here I am, as I am."  
 F. Feel your presence on the ground in the moment with each movement and the words.



2. M. Open horizontal circle with 1st right then left arm saying 1st phrase with right, "In the world" and 2<sup>nd</sup> phrase with left, "As it is".  
 W. "In the world, as it is"  
 F. See/ feel/hear the world around you.



3. M. Hands together.  
 W. "Supported by the planet."  
 F. Sense the same pressure between your hands as you do the pressure between you and the earth under your feet.



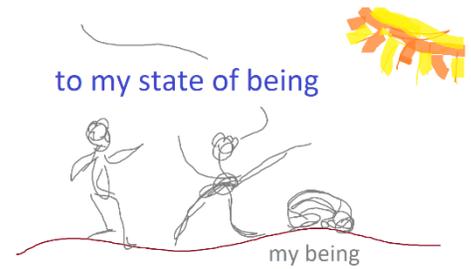
4. M. Open arms up over your head like touching the sky.  
 W. "Floating in the multiverse".  
 F. See yourself from the perspective of the moon, standing on the earth, under the earth. Imagine all time past and future



5. M. Prayer hands to level of forehead or open beside your head.  
 W. "Awake"  
 F. Sense an alert glow between your eyes.



- 6. M. Prayer hands to heart level.
- W. "to my state of being."
- F. Feel your current state of being, sensations of your being.



7.MWF - woosh exhale any movement feels good. Stepping into the next moment.



### Attention: Thinking or Perceiving

Remind yourself:

"This is my time. There is nobody to please or satisfy other than myself."

"Here I am as I am; here is the world as it is."

Let yourself get comfortable. Make any adjustments you need. Gently let yourself BE.

If it feels appropriate to you, observe where your attention wanders when you aren't directing it in any way. Let your attention roam freely.

- Notice when your attention is drawn to thoughts, imagination, ideas?
- Notice when your attention is drawn to sounds, sensations in your body or any other perception?

For a few moments, gently be with this meandering of your awareness. No right or wrong attention. Linger in this field of non-judgemental awareness.

Identify when your attention is with thoughts and when your attention is with perceptions by saying, 'thinking' or describing the perception, 'air on my arm'.

Neither attention is better or worse. Each focus of attention is an essential ability of your amazing being.

"Thinking, thinking, buzz sound, heat, thinking, belly grip, thinking..."

Gently invite your attention to your perceptions.

"Here I am perceiving the symphony of sound, sensations that surround me in this moment.

I am coming to my senses, literally."

There are the family of senses telling you about the world around you (sounds/sight/smell/taste/touch) and senses telling you about your inner milieu, (tension/ease/belly gurgles/sensations of emotional states/buzzy/heavy/chilled/spacious)

You might notice how easy it is to be drawn back to thoughts. That's perfect. When you are aware of attending to your ideas simply ask yourself to attend to perceptions again.

"Oh, I'm thinking again. Thinking. Thinking. I feel the chair under me. I feel my belly expand."

### Attention • Being with What Is.

Here I am as I am

having had the morning I've had

the night sleep or lack of it

the life I've had up to this moment.

Here I am being with myself as I am, pleasant, unpleasant; relaxed or stressed.

I'm feeling the sensations I'm experiencing at this moment that tell me I am energized or fatigued

no right or wrong in this moment.

Here is what is, is as it is.

Here is the earth supporting me.

Here is the ocean of air surrounding me.

I feel the gentle rhythm of expansion and gathering in my body, like a cell breathing through the pores, expanding into earth and air; earth and air coming with me as I gather in again.

In this moment no coming or going

simply being with the gentle rhythm of the breath and movement like waves rising and receding on the beach.

here I am

as I am

Locating from Becky Bailey Conscious Discipline Chapter 2 and Section 1 Safety:

The Developmental Question, "Am I Safe"

*For the brain to develop optimally, children need to feel emotionally, socially and physically safe.*

*The Developmental Question: "Am I Loved?"*

*The answer to Am I loved? Determines whether we use our energy for processing information in the higher centers of the brain or for self-protection in the lower centers of the brain. To transform our education system, each child must be able to say, "Yes, I am loved, loving and lovable. I belong." This "yes" answer impacts the brain in two very important ways:*

*"Yes, I am loved" creates healthy set points and skills for managing stress.*

*"Yes, I am loved" encourages the flow of energy toward and executive state.*

*Some children come from homes where the question, "Am I safe," is consistently answered, "Yes." With a little reassurance at school, these children connect, engage and actively participate in learning. Other children come to school from homes where the question is often answered, "No." These children come to school armored up, explosive, oppositional, physically aggressive or shut down. They defend against both connection and learning.*

*Every child must feel the felt sense of safety for optimal learning. The Skill of Composure allows us to see misbehavior as a call for help, while the Skill of Assertiveness allows us to vigilantly focus actions and outcomes we desire. These skills work together to lay a foundation for a felt sense of safety in our schools.*

*Composure, the ability to self-regulate, is essential for safety. Without composure no one feels safe.*

**When You are Out of Your Mind, Get into Your Skin. The Recuperative Power of Your Tactile Sense.**

Next time you feel pain instead of doing prescribed stretches or exercises explore the Tactile Sense practice. Next time you feel stuck in a problem or out of sorts instead of trying to think it through, take a little break with this Tactile Sense exploration.

Over the years the power of this practice has proven useful in many ways. People report using the practice to reconnect with themselves when life is chaotic, others have found doing this practice has significantly reduced physical ailments, and others report feeling like they feel safe in their own skin for the first time in years. The results surprised me.

The instruction to move from the tactile sense came in a response to watching students move in a way that felt to me disconnected and ahead of themselves or internal and narrow in their attention. Movements looked prescribed or controlled even when the instruction wasn't prescribed. I was looking for a way to ignite physical presence without having people focus internally, cutting off the world, the way a focus on breath instruction often does. Attending to the feeling of the ground and the world thru the skin while registering the pleasure of the movement did the trick. Here was mindfulness in motion with a broad field of attention. It can take a little time to switch to this attention. When a person does there's a recognition of something powerful going on. So simple. So good. So whole

**This is Mindfulness in Motion:** Moving from your tactile sense, especially when felt as your whole skin surface, brings you to the moment. This is a direct experience of mindfulness in motion. In this experience

your attention isn't internal or external. You are in an expanded field of attention.

**Recuperation:** Visual, auditory senses dominate most of life's activity. The senses located in your head, the limb of perception, coordinate most of your activity. They give you information about the world around you - sight, sound, smell and taste. The tactile sense is also an externally focused sense. But it is dispersed throughout your system, more like the senses that are internal, telling you about you, telling you how you are responding to the world. Moving from this field of sensation is deeply recuperative.

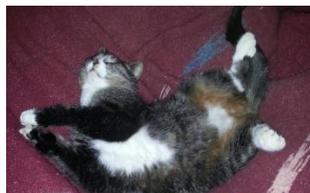
**Self-righting:** Letting your skin sense lead and lingering in pleasant sensations makes space for your inner-compass to be heard and felt. Small micro-movements unravel strain or a tiny turn releases a distorted joint, insight about a problem at work pops into your mind. This practice is a preventative healing practice. It seems to unravel troubles before they take hold.

### **Preparation or a simple method to switch from fear to ease:**

Draw shapes in the air with a continuous unbroken smooth easy movement at slow pace, like you have all the time in the world. Draw waves, circles or free form shapes. You could simply sweep to one side of you and back to other like you are showing the waves on the beach rising and receding. A slow simple continuous movement will calm you, will extend your exhale naturally.

### **Step 1. Your Tactile Sense:**

1. Choose a surface near you. This could be the edge of your laptop, the fabric on your thigh, a table top or cushion on the couch.
2. Feel along the surface as if you are feeling for a slight chink in the surface.
3. Whatever pace you were moving the first time, slow it down by half as if you realized you wouldn't be able to detect the little chink at that first speed. It is as if you are listening with your touch, seeing with your skin.
4. Switch from feeling for a chink to simply noticing what the surface feels like. Is it warm or cold? Soft or hard? Bumpy or smooth? What can you learn about this object by touching it?
5. Now instead of touching the surface with your fingertips, touch it with more of you, all the sides of your hand, your forearm. Move quite slowly, like you are listening with your skin. Perhaps linger in the pleasure of the feeling of the object touching you, like an animal scratching her back on a tree. Notice how contact is both ways; you touch the surface and the surface touches you.



### **Step 2. Whole Body Skin-sense, Mindfulness in motion:**

1. Lay down and be still for a moment.
2. Sense the earth underneath you, supporting you. Notice the ocean of air that surrounds you.
3. Gently feel the contact of the ground next to you with your hand, as you did in step one.

4. Once you feel you are really moving from the tactile sense, this can take a moment, begin to use more and more of your skin surface. Move as if you were discovering the world around you through your skin sense. You might imagine being a single cell creature morphing and moving. You are curious about the feeling of the ground and the feeling of the air. You aren't 'deciding' where or how to move, you are feeling the world thru your skin. Your interest, your sensation moves you. Sometimes it can help to compare moving from sensation with moving from the idea of moving. Explore the different feeling between moving by saying: "I am going to curl into a ball." with "I am feeling the ground on my side, enjoying the changing shapes I feel." It can take a little time to switch to this whole skin surface tactile sense.
5. Simultaneously to this sensing of the contact with air and ground, your system will give you information about your experience of the movement. Some shapes will feel so good others not so good. You don't have to put your attention on your 'body'. Useful information about your movement will come to you. All you are doing is feeling the world through your skin and following whatever feels good. I call this following the 'yum factor'. Linger in shapes that feel delicious. You might be curled into ball at one moment, arched back the next and expanded like a star after that. No right or wrong, just following your curiosity or your sensations. Have you felt the ground with your back, your belly, your side? If you were painting your body with the ground, are you all painted? If you were getting a massage from the planet, are you fully massaged? Pause and rest now and again. Let movements be tiny. Let movements be large.
6. As you move this way play with your speed or pace. If you ask yourself to feel more details or linger in the pleasure of a shape you will find yourself moving in slow motion.
7. Stop whenever you are done.

**Going Deeper:** The Introduction to the Wholeness in Motion™ class starts with this process. If you like this process, I encourage you to experience it in the context of a whole class.

# A Letter to Agnes De Mille from Martha Graham

*There is a vitality,  
a life force,  
a quickening  
that is translated through you into action,  
and because there is only one of you in all time,  
this expression is unique.*

*And If you block it, it will never exist through any other medium and be lost.  
The world will not have it. It is not your business to determine  
how good it is  
nor how valuable it is  
nor how it compares with other expressions.*

*It is your business to keep it yours clearly and directly  
to keep the channel open.  
You do not even have to believe in yourself or your work.  
You have to keep open and aware directly to the urges that motivate YOU.*

*Keep the channel open...  
No artist is pleased...*

*There is no satisfaction whatever at any time  
There is only a queer, divine dissatisfaction  
a blessed unrest that keeps us marching.  
~~and makes "us" MORE alive than the others.~~*

– Martha Graham

(Editorial choice to cross out the last line to keep this beautiful message in the spirit of this work.)

# Navigating Feelings or What I wish I'd Learned in Middle School

## The Mechanics of Your Response System

We are feeling creatures. What are feelings for? Would understanding what feelings show us and how they work be useful in living a thriving life?

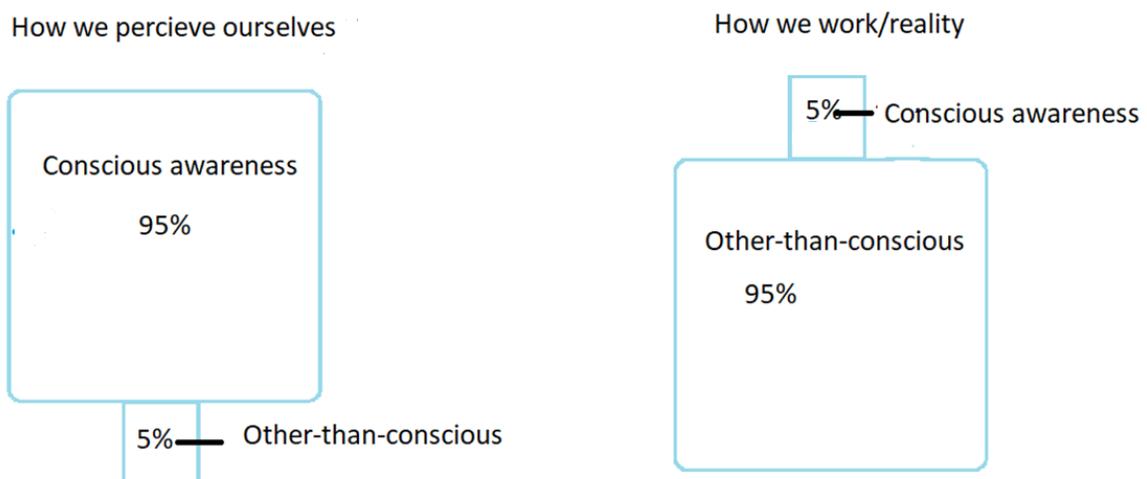
In the Language of Wholeness, we identify our feeling system as one aspect of our wholeness. This aspect is our response system. Understanding how this response system works can be a powerful tool for having more choice in our state of being, our well-being and supporting well-being in others.

### Underlying the response system

The diagram below illustrates how you **experience** consciousness compared with the accurate proportions of what is conscious and what is not conscious in the functioning of your whole system. Most of the activity of your system is other-than-conscious, you can't sense it. This is a bit like driving a car, the car is doing lots of work that you aren't controlling. You just need to put it in drive, steer, adjust the gas or brakes. The car's mechanicals are taking care of the details like fuel management, temperature etc.

What is conscious is what you are aware of. You feel 'you' as your consciousness. It feels like most of you is conscious and just a little bit is unconscious as in the image on the left. But luckily this isn't true. A more accurate understanding of this proportion is the one on the right – most of what is going on in you, is not in your conscious awareness. It is like you being at the helm of the Titanic. You as the conscious part of you and the whole ship as the other-than-conscious part.

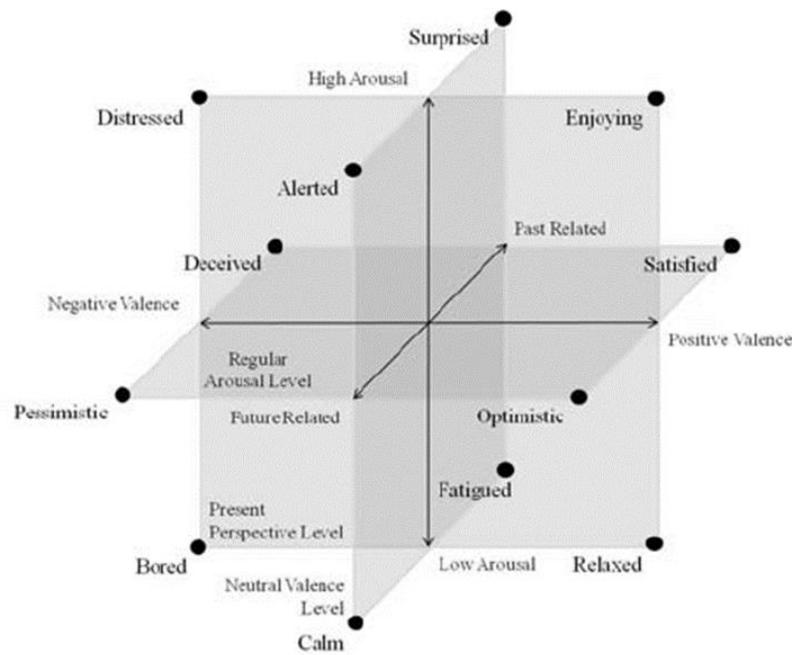
### Conscious awareness and other-than-conscious processes



The 95% of you that is other-than-conscious is occupied with keeping you alive. It is occupied with two main activities: Homeostasis and Safety/Thriving.

Homeostasis is the job of maintaining a stable internal equilibrium. This includes activities like controlling blood pressure, blood sugar, hormonal balance, temperature, digestion, elimination, and so much more.

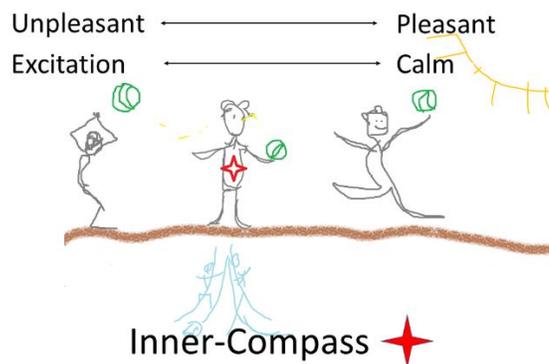
The safety/thriving system is about alerting you to threat and bringing you calm in safety. This safety/thriving system is your response system. The language of the response system gives you sensations of pleasant and unpleasant and excitation and calm. The combination of these sensations gives you your rich range of feelings.



(The above diagram was found on the web and I can no longer find the source. I am using without permission and with gratitude. I can't find a better one. If you recognize the source please let me know so I can ask permission to include here)

In the schematic of feeling diagram above Positive and Negative Valence is what we call Pleasant and Unpleasant.

This range of feelings is your Inner- Compass.



The two aspects of your other-than-conscious processes work together. Feelings affect your homeostasis. If you are constantly stressed there are effects like high blood pressure and inflammation. If you are thriving then you have a stronger immune system and the homeostasis system can work better. It works the other way around too. If you have something awry in your homeostasis, internal chemistry, your feelings are affected like being 'hangry' or emotions related to hormonal changes and brain chemistry.

Understanding the Response System can help you be safe, healthy and happy when well-being is threatened. In essence if your response system is like a compass you can use it to navigate your life.

One of the most powerful feelings we experience is fear. Fear is crucial for survival. It is well practiced by the time you are born.



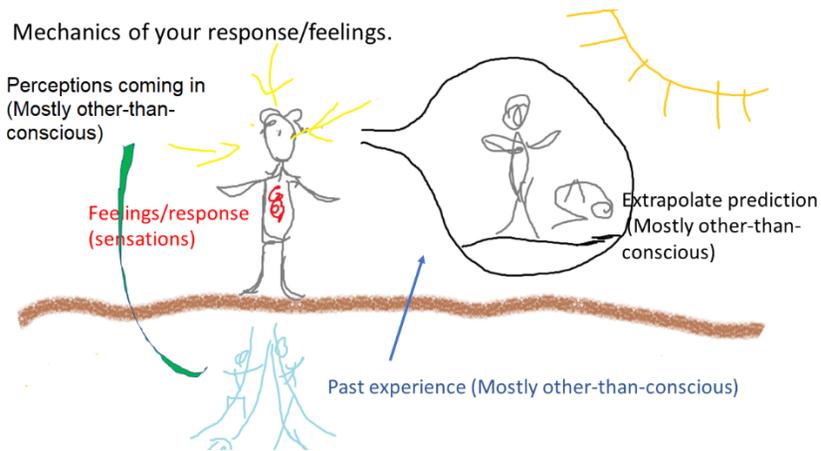
The basic expressions of fear are fighting, fleeing and freezing.

The pausing/planning part of your system takes twenty-four years or so to develop. This makes sense for survival in that you need to detect threat quickly or you will die. If you find yourself caught in fight/flight/freeze fear and you are safe then slow predictable movement, long slow exhales and shaking or jiggling can help bring the pause/plan/ calming part of your system on board. This will give you access to more choices in a scary time.

The mechanics of your responses/feelings.

In any given moment, including right this moment your response system is doing four basic activities. These happen almost simultaneously but we need to describe them in an order.

1. Current Perceptions: Your system is perceiving lots of information about the present moment. Most of that information is sifted out as unimportant and does not get to your conscious awareness.
2. Past Experience: Your system combines this current information with what it knows from your past experiences.
3. Prediction/interpretation: Then it extrapolates or predicts the future based on the combination of current perceptions and past experience.
4. Feelings/responses: That prediction arrives to your awareness as feelings/sensations or put another way as a response.



The extrapolation or prediction about the future your system is making creates an interpretation of the current situation. It is the meaning you make of your current experience. This response/interpretation/meaning is information for YOU! It is true and useful for you, not for others. It is your compass speaking to you for your safety and benefit.



Understanding that everyone has their own compass giving them information about their life is a key part of the Language of Wholeness. A fundamental role of a teacher or parent is to support the student or child to understand and develop their own compass and not impose yours. As an artist, your job is to discover and listen to your own compass, your own responses. Identifying your compass, your criteria, your values, is a foundation for making artistic choices.

When you know what matters to you, what you want to say, you set yourself up for expressive freedom and clarity. You have agency.

A quick route to fear and struggle is to try to use another's compass: "What do they think is right for me?"

If you are wondering if you are right, good, bad ask yourself:

"Right for whom and by what criteria?"

If you answer 'is right for another person', notice that most often you don't have the information about what another person thinks is right/good. If you don't have that information then it is impossible to do. If you do

have the information and it isn't right for you, by your criteria, then doing the other person's right way can be soul killing. If the other person's 'right' is the same as your 'right' then just do your 'right', for you, by your criteria. Using your compass is easier and more effective than using another's.

There are many layers to this subject but on a simple level being able to discern what is your compass gives you crucial information to make healthy decisions in any particular moment.

### What do responses tell you?

As we saw above responses tell you what you are predicting. They don't tell you about the present moment or current situation. They tell you about how your past experience influences how you see the next moments. You are essentially a predictive creature. This is why you can be in the same situation with other people and everyone has a different reaction.

Three people could be asked to sing a song to the group. One person feels excited, "I can't wait to sing this song." One person is neutral and annoyed, "Oh come on, I don't want to sing anything right now." Another will feel anxious, "Oh NO, I can't sing, please, don't make me."

Here is the same situation and three totally different responses. Let's plug in our mechanics of the response system. When we see that:

- each person is feeling the meaning they have made of the request to sing
- based on their past experience
- then different responses make total sense.

#### Past Experience:

The first person has had fun sharing songs with others. Loves to do it.

The second person hasn't enjoyed singing. Would rather doing other things than sing and doesn't like singing.

The third person has had embarrassing experiences singing and being judged badly for singing.

#### The prediction of:

The first person is "Singing in front of the group will be fun."

The second person is "Singing in front of the group isn't what I want to do. I wish they hadn't asked me to sing."

The third person is "It could be dangerous for me to sing in front of others"

Below is a chart of this set-up.

Situation is the same	Past Experience	Prediction	Feeling
Asked to Sing	Joy sharing songs	Singing will be fun	Excitement
Asked to Sing	No pleasure singing	I will end up singing when I don't want to sing.	Annoyance/frustration
Asked to Sing	Embarrassed and judged badly when singing	Singing puts me in danger of being embarrassed and badly judged.	Anxiety

Can you see the feelings of excitement, frustration and anxiety are not the feelings of being asked to sing. They are **not** the feelings of the **situation**. They **are** the feelings of the **predictions**.

## Misattributing Feelings

In life we usually don't have this clear. We attribute what we are feeling to the situation. Singing for a group makes me happy. Singing for a group makes me frustrated. Singing for a group makes me anxious.

This misattribution of the feeling to the situation makes sense on a survival level. When in danger you want to attribute the feeling to what you are sensing so you act fast.

This makes sense for survival. When in danger you don't want to contemplate the danger, (the cave area) you want to act, (get out of the area where the Tiger ate your family.



It is useful to attribute the danger to the cave.

Most of the time it doesn't matter that you attribute your feelings to the situation. But when your response interferes with what you want to do in the world, then the fact that you aren't feeling the situation but, are feeling the interpretation of the situation, is a wonderful fact. Interpretations/predictions can be changed. This mechanism for response is another example of how amazing your system is. It serves your survival but when the response isn't useful to modern times, it can change and learn. You can override or update a survival mechanism to adjust to the current reality.

If person three actually wanted to sing for others because they have something to share but are afraid to share it, then figuring out how to change the interpretation can be the means to do this.

There are many approaches designed to help people change this meaning.

Here is a basic format based on understanding the mechanics of your response system.

1. Meet the facts of the moment.
  - a. Acknowledge and feel the feeling: "I feel afraid. My chest is tight"
  - b. Remind yourself: "This feeling make sense to my life at this moment. It is my system trying to keep me safe."  
(If in fight/flight/freeze do slow movements, long slow exhales and shake out or jiggle. Of course get help if you are panicking.)
2. Make sense of the facts.
  - a. At this moment am I safe? "Yes"
  - b. What am I believing about this moment? "If I sing everyone will judge me as terrible."
  - c. What am I afraid of specifically? "People will hate me and I will be rejected."

- d. Is this true? “Probably not. I sing well when I am by myself. I love this song.” (If the prediction is true then it is smart not to sing. We ask questions rather than override the fear. There are times it is accurate.)
  - e. How likely is my predicted outcome to happen in this circumstance? “10 % - Very unlikely since this is a loving group of people.”  
(Tools from LearningMethods™ can help one to do this step.)
3. Update the interpretation to currently reality.
    - a. Am I safe at this exact moment?
    - b. Can I feel the ground under me, the air? What do I see, hear?
    - c. What is a more accurate prediction of what is likely to happen if I sing now?
    - d. How can I understand the situation in a way that my prediction set me up for feeling ok to sing?
  4. Apply the new interpretation. This is training your system to update your experience.
    - a. Locate yourself in the moment. “Here I am, as I am”.
    - b. Expect baby steps – each time is a little easier if you take the time to reinterpret the experience or reframe it all together. One person said he spends the moments before performing naming and feeling all the things he appreciates about the current situation like the people, the room, the music etc. It can be useful to connect to your ‘lofty goal’, why you sing, “I sing to bring beauty into the world and tell this story.” It is a goal bigger than ego.
    - c. Over and over ask “Am I safe at this exact moment and will I be safe in the next?”
    - d. Locate yourself in your sensations by feeling the feelings of the world around you like the ground, the air, your breath, your skin, the sounds in the room – whatever helps you pull back from the scary future prediction to your present safety and your lofty goal.
    - e. Create locating practices that remind you of present reality, (see Meta-patterns/perspectives of health in Wholeness in Motion)..

This is just one example of a prediction or interpretation that can get in the way of you being able to do and be how you want to be in the world. These inaccurate predictions for your current reality make sense based on your past, but are interfering with your future. We call these interferences misinterpretations of current reality. Luckily, misinterpretations can be updated.

If you want to live a life with more ease, clarity, joy and freedom it is useful to understand the mechanics of the response system and the common interferences embedded in our culture to living a thriving life. These interferences effect areas of life like: communication, judgement, blame, jealousy, performance anxiety and so much more.

As educators we can inadvertently teach people interferences that set them up for fear and struggle. Below are examples of the kind of statements that we make, with all the best intentions, that can actually set a person up for struggle and alternative statements based on more accurate understanding of how things work:

Well Intentioned Statement	Possible future struggle	Useful alternative statement
Good. Now make sure you do that again.	Tension of trying to ensure an outcome before it has happened, which is impossible	Give it another go and see out it goes? (You can’t ensure an outcome in advance, you can up your chances of success.)

Great job. Wow wonderful.	Fear of another's opinion. Performance anxiety. This is teaching another to look outside themselves for assessment. Imposing your compass on them (praise and criticism are two side of the same coin.)	How did that go for you? I loved that, but that is my opinion, what did you think and why? (My job is to support the student to access their own compass, develop their agency.)
Stand up tall and bring your shoulders back.	Physical tension. Imposing your idea on to another person.	Are you ready to bounce a ball, move in any direction? (Based on the Suspension System model)
You are irritating me. You made me mad.	Blame and shame. Misattributing your feelings to another.	When you do that I feel hurt. Is it possible to see my point of view in this moment? (Response system info)
He is a jerk	Misattributing your feeling/annoyance on to another.	When someone cuts in front of me I hate it. That person is just rushing to the hospital and didn't see me. (Response system info)
She's a bad dog.	Misattributing your judgement on to the dog.	It is bad for me when the dog pees on the rug. Maybe I should let her out more often. She's just peeing on the rug because she needs to pee. (Response system info)

These examples are provided to give a flavor of how understanding our response system can help us navigate life and be a skilled leader. They aren't precise and universal. There are nuances to all. The key here is to see the flavor of the possibly inadvertent misunderstandings that can arise or be perpetuated by these statements and perspectives? Even more crucial, can you sense the possible clarity and power of being clearer on these perspective to support agency, clarity and healthy communication and assessment? The Language of Wholeness is based on aligning our teaching to more accurate understandings of how things work. The content of the Language of Wholeness is all about understanding in more depth the subject of the chart above. LANGUAGE MATTERS!

Blame, judgment, misunderstandings.

Gracie isn't a 'bad' dog.  
She's just napping on the plants.

My attribution on her that she is bad,  
just shows me what matters to me.  
I don't want squished plants.

I feel the 'badness', not her.



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People act based on their own compass.

The people who littered my road with these cans aren't 'idiots'.  
They were just doing what they do, not caring about litter and enjoying their beer while driving.  
My fury just shows me what I care about: beautiful roads, sober driving.  
With that information I can now take action.



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If you don't agree with another person's actions ask yourself or better yet the person why that action makes sense to them. What would they have to be believing for this to be good or true for them? (This is a fabulous tool for understanding a character. What would this character have had to have lived through up to this moment to be saying these words, singing these words, this way?)

Sometimes we just make things up when we don't understand a situation. Our system wants a story or to make meaning of our experience. For example:

Situation: I walk by Joe and he doesn't say "hi".

My Response: I felt ignored, hurt and mad.

Conclusion: Joe is a jerk. He ignored me. Or worse yet, he hates me. I suck.

Now with all that bad feeling as a wake-up call, I can bring in the response system information.

I Stop and ask:

- Do I like this feeling?
- Do I have the information to draw these conclusions?
- Do I really know what Joe was doing, thinking and feeling?
- Who has the information about what Joe was up to when we passed?
- Can I see I am making up a story here?
- Is it true?
- How do I know it is true or not?
- What are at least three other explanation for why Joe didn't say 'Hi' to me.
- How can I find out what was up for Joe?

When it comes to stories or conclusions we make about what other people are feeling or thinking it is important to recognize:

1, Your system is trying to make sense of something. It is in the act of making up meaning based on **your** life, not the other person's life.

2, You don't actually have the information.

I have seen people suffer years of isolation because they erroneously made a conclusion about what someone else was thinking about them because of an innocent action on the part of that other person. Do you recall someone concluding something about what you were thinking or feeling that had nothing to do with your reality?

The sooner we can ask: WHO HAS THIS INFORMATION, the sooner we can get useful information.

When it comes to assigning blame, feeling shame, jealousy, embarrassment and the whole host of feelings that have to do with guessing or assuming what another is thinking or feeling my favorite bumper sticker is wisdom:

*Don't believe everything you think!*

On a survival level it makes sense that we try to guess what other people are thinking about us. We are social animals. Evolutionarily, if we were left alone in the wilderness, we were more likely to die than when we were part of a group. Social signals and assumptions and guessing others' signals is essential for survival and social engagement. Ask anyone who has trouble reading social signals. You or I aren't bad because we guess, make assumptions. What is important in this work is recognizing this tendency and then putting it to question when it is interfering with healthy communication and community. Oddly the story-making ability can work against the very survival feature it is designed to serve.

As educators we naturally make assumptions about what is going on in our students. In this work when we notice the assumption we stop and ask "Do I have that information?" I recognize that I have a hunch based on all my years of teaching. If I can stop and ask the student a few questions it is surprising how often the hunch wasn't accurate. It saves so much confusion to ask the student information about what is up for them rather than constantly offering suggestions based on a hunch. Instead of saying "Trust yourself," when we have a hunch the student isn't confident, we ask the student "How are you doing with this work right now?" Who knows what they might say? It could be anything from "I am out of it today, I haven't slept" to "I am nervous about this section". We might be confirmed in our hunch but with the questions our suggestion is now rooted in something the student has recognized and acknowledge.

Understanding our sensitive, flexible, brilliant response system is a powerful tool for thriving and supporting thriving.

Change your perspective, your interpretation, change your life.

Below is another article about the response system. It has a slightly different territory.

# Your Internal-Compass • Patterns of Joy

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## Introduction

*“Everything we see is a perspective, not the truth” – Marcus Aurelius*

*“The sorrow is the same for someone who doesn’t have salt for her gruel, as for someone who doesn’t have sugar for his coffee.” – Tamil saying.*

Joe has spent years learning beautiful old Irish songs. His friend Sam is getting married and asked Joe to sing at his wedding. Joe would love to help Sam, but says, “no” because he is afraid to perform.

Mary is careful in how she moves. She had an injury years ago and feels like she has to protect her back. She feels like she has a ‘bad back.’ She doesn’t go dancing any more.

Asha is often annoyed at her kids. Why can’t they put away their clothes or get ready on time? She feels like she’s becoming an irritated person. She knows that isn’t who she is.

Fred is full of road rage. His friends don’t want to drive with him anymore because he is always yelling at other drivers.

Cindy is nervous about her friends coming for dinner. “Is it worth it?” she thinks. She’s not sure she’ll have dinner parties anymore.

Carol feels like she and her daughter are constantly fighting. “Why can’t that girl ever say a single word with respect”, she thinks. Then she wonders if she is a bad mother.

Raj is self-conscious about dancing. He’d like to go to that party but the invite said there would be dancing. He feels weird dancing.

Martha isn’t happy in her job. She’s constantly stressed. She feels like she’s losing herself.

Hubert is always tense when he plays second trumpet in the orchestra. He wants to relax more even though in order to match the first trumpet he has to play flat.

There are many stories of people struggling in our affluent world. The scenarios above have either happened to me or to someone I have taught. While these stories may seem like different issues with different causes, there is a common thread through all. The connecting thread is the human response system and how it works.

As long as I can remember I have been interested in how things work. A love of dance focused that curiosity to a fascination with how the human body works. This curiosity about human design led me to years of exploring almost every somatic discipline from Yoga to BodyMind Centering to developmental movement to Alexander Technique.

Most somatic approaches talked about how beautiful the human system is designed and proceeded to teach all kinds of techniques to improve this system. I believed the idea of our beautiful design. Yet, the way I and others lived life was full of constant monitoring and trying to improve our bodies. It was as if there was this beautiful design and we needed to do something to get it. Lengthen my spine, tighten my abs, tuck my tail, breathe, adjust my shoulders, think tall, free my neck, pause. Even as approaches got subtler and subtler there was a flavor of mind bossing the body. We believed the human system was beautifully made, but spent our lives trying to improve it.<sup>i</sup>

My curiosity about human design also led to an interest in awareness. I spent years exploring various meditation practices from Vedic, Kundalini, Zen to mindfulness training, rolling on the floor in body awareness work, and also doing various forms of therapy from Freudian based psychiatry to transpersonal psychotherapy. An experience common to all of these explorations was having stunning, often revelatory “aha” moments of insight. Those insight moments felt so good and clear. They gave the illusion that life would be different from that moment on. It was as if the insight was the change. It kept me and others a bit addicted to “working on awareness” because the insight moments were such a reward.

As time passed, I began to ask: “Is the quality of my life really changing, true long-term change, not just momentary change? Are problems actually going away? Am I happy?” What I observed in myself and others was that problems were going away at moments, but another version of the same thing would eventually pop-up. We had all sorts of explanations for these ‘back to the drawing board’ times. Despite my intellectual idea of how beautifully we are designed, the awareness work, just like the somatic work, had a tendency to keep me wanting improvement.

In 2000 I began to apprentice with David Gorman who articulated a holistic perspective on human design (Anatomy of Wholeness™) and a method of inquiry (LearningMethods™) that taught me how to learn from my own experience. I learned how to pinpoint questions to get to the root of the problem. Rather than focusing on an insight made by a teacher, this work taught students how to have their own insights. The anatomy and the awareness work were woven together in this approach to self-directed learning and clarity.

After years working with this material personally and as a teacher of the work, I have seen long term permanent change in myself and others on all levels of life. I have damaged cartilage in my knees, but no symptoms. My computer crashed and years of writing and contacts were lost. I felt calm. At that moment, I realized the clarity work was part of me. I had changed. Poverty, injury, divorce, deaths all have come

and gone in recent years. Life has not always been easy, but the knowledge of how my system works has made these circumstances rich in gratitude and joy.

Over the years I have found that one of the most common reasons we have trouble making long term change is that we don't see the relevance in understanding how we work. We mistake the symptom for the cause of our distress. We just want the symptom to go away. Permanently removing a symptom happens when we remove the cause of the symptom. It is easier to find the root cause of a symptom when we understand how the system works. If our car stops moving it is useful to know cars needs gas to run. We can fill it with gas rather than trying to push it down the road.

One important and misunderstood aspect of how we work is the purpose and meaning of our responses. This article is about the response aspect of human design. When you understand how the response system works for you, many troubles fall away and are replaced with access to an incredible innate guidance system.

We mistake the symptom for the cause of our distress...When we understand how the response system works many troubles fall away and are replaced with access to an incredible innate guidance system.

As you read this material, I encourage you to see if the hypothesis of an inner-compass is true for YOU. Explore this material for yourself. Finding out what is true for you is the root of empowerment.

## Your Internal-Compass • Your response system.

Pretend you are reading the following advertisement:

*We offer you a fantastic new app for hassle-free fuel management for all your vehicles. Our app senses your average driving patterns and then tells you when to stop for gas in a soothing voice. You no longer need to remember to look at your fuel gauge or worry about the annoying fuel gauge blink. In fact, just ignore that pesky blink. Use our app and you'll enjoy hassle-free fuel management.*

Imagine using this app. It might work when you stick to your average driving habits, but it's useless in other circumstances, like one long trip or hours stuck in traffic. On these occasions you'll run out of gas if you use the app. Here's an app designed to over-ride your car's built-in gas gauge. It won't work and will cause you more hassle and distress than the original guidance system built right into your car.

Many of us live a life in which we constantly ignore the guidance system built into our bodies. It isn't even so much that we ignore this system, we don't even know it exists.

Gifted artists are unheard because of unnecessary fear. People spend more time angry and irritated at each other rather than joyful and grateful. People never meet their own expressive self because of self-consciousness and doubt. People are limiting their movement or constantly trying to improve their bodies. Others stay in unhappy jobs or burn-out in ones they used to like. The tragedy of all this self-limitation and suffering is that much of it is based on overriding our guidance systems.

Your built-in guidance system is your response system. The response system is designed to help you navigate in the world. You have a circulatory system, a digestive system, a nervous system and you have a response system. All these systems inter-relate and combine to be your whole interacting system, your Self.

If your response system is like a built-in compass then you can use it to navigate to wholeness and joy. The system gives you a homing signal to joy.

Finding out what is true for you is the root of empowerment.

## PHYSICAL SENSATIONS OF EMOTIONS – THE LANGUAGE OF THE RESPONSE SYSTEM

Can you tell when you are happy? Think of a time when you were happy. Picture the situation, the people and a few other details that come to you as you recall the time. How do you know you are happy? What's the feeling of being happy?

When I feel happy, I would describe the sensations I feel like this: light, a lively feeling in my chest, spacious, buoyant and energized. I don't have a sense of density in my body, but more a sense of a lively self.

How about anxious? Recall a moment when you felt anxious. Describe the sensations of anxiety. I'd describe anxious as: tight everywhere, gripped jaw, jittery in my gut, speedy, lifted shoulders.

When you identify that you are experiencing an emotion you are also experiencing physical sensations. Many of us don't register that there is a physical sensation connected to emotion. When I ask people to describe the sensation of various emotions I am usually met with a blank stare for a few moments, especially when asking about positive emotions. So, I start with: Can you tell the difference between feeling frustrated and happy? Describe the difference? Where in your body do you feel: frustration or anger or joy or peace? How do you know you are feeling it? Describe the sensations of the different emotions?

Sensations are what we experience. Jittery, tight, spacious, calm, soft, easy, open, stiff, and so many more sensation words. Emotion words like happy, sad, afraid are words we use to describe a collection of particular sensations. The emotion word is the concept. The sensations like tight, gripped, easy, open are the experience of the emotion.

Sensations are the way your response system communicates with you.

What if your sensations were a reliable guide?

What if your response system is like an inner-compass that can help you do everything from detect danger to recognizing beauty? What if you have an inner-compass that over and over again shows you your innate love and joy.

## THE ARCHITECTURE OF THE RESPONSE SYSTEM

### *Rainy Day Story – Misattributing our Sensations*

Three people are standing in the park talking. It begins to rain. One person smiles and dances for joy. Another shrieks "Oh no!" and pulls her shirt up over her head to cover her hair as she runs for cover. The third person dives under the nearby bench, freezes in a fetal position in terror. Three people in the same

situation, rain starting in the park, with three completely different responses.

We ask each person about his or her reaction. Number one says, “The rain is great! I am so happy. I have been in a drought area and haven’t seen life-giving rain for years!” Number two says, “The rain is so frustrating. I just got my hair dyed. It cost me a fortune. I have to keep it dry for 24 hours.” The third person can barely talk. But given time, the story comes out that the last time he had been in rain a friend had been struck by lightning and was killed. Faster than thought his system says, “Rain is DANGEROUS! You may die now!” In summary:

1. Rain is good, life-giving.
2. Rain is frustrating, wrecks my hair.
3. Rain is life-threatening, very dangerous.

Let’s look closely at what is going on here. A person feels a certain way in a particular situation and attributes the feeling to the situation. People literally attribute feelings, responses to the object/situation they believe is causing them to feel a certain way. Rain is good; rain is frustrating; rain is dangerous.

Rain is just rain being rain. Rain doesn’t possess an attribute like good or bad or frustrating or terrifying. You are feeling the physical sensations of good, bad, frustrating or terrifying rain in your body. You feel the good, bad, frustrating, terrifying response in *you*.

It is common to misattribute **feelings** to the objects/situations being **experienced**. You might say “good dog”, “annoying driver” or “rude waiter”. These are all examples of misattributing a feeling you have to an object: the dog, driver or waiter. You feel the good, annoyed, rude feeling in your body. The dog, driver or waiter don’t feel good, annoyed or rude.

It is useful for you to have the feelings to tell you about what you like or don’t like in the world around you. Your response system is showing you what you do or don’t value. But, if you attribute those qualities to others you will miss the point of your response system, at best, or blame the world for your troubles, at worst.

*Beauty’s definition is not a democratic experience; we are all czars in this realm.*

*If there is a bee in your hand, what’s in your eye? Beauty. Because beauty is in the eye of the bee holder.*

*See, I think that joke is beautiful. You are entitled to think otherwise. From Green Profit,*

## WHAT RESPONSES TELL YOU

If your feelings aren’t showing you an attribute of situations, people or objects, what do they tell you about? Let’s go back to the rain in the park scenario. There is the situation – the rain. There is the feeling/response of each person – happy, frustrated, terrified. You can see the rain and you can see the different responses. These parts of the response system are visible.

<i>Visible</i>	<i>Visible</i>
Situation	Feeling/response
Rain-----	-->Happy
Rain-----	-->Frustrated
Rain-----	-->Terrified

Rain means something different to each person. The people in the park don't respond to the rain. What they each feel is their individual interpretation of the rain.

Look at the chart below:

<i>Visible</i>	<i>Invisible</i>	<i>Visible</i>
Situation	Prediction/Interpretation /meaning	Feeling/response
Rain	Rain is good Rain gives life ----- -	--->Happy
Rain	Rain will wreck my hair -	--->Frustration
Rain	Rain kills me -----	--->Terrifying

Can you see that the feeling/response each person had was caused by each person's individual interpretation? This interpretation of what rain means to each person is based on the combination of the current situation, their past experience and combining those to predict the next moments. This prediction is the interpretation of what the present situation means to the person, based on their past experiences.

<i>Visible</i>	<i>Invisible</i>	<i>Visible</i>
Current Situation Sensory perception	Past Experiences	Prediction → Feeling
Rain	Was in a drought, where absence of rain was bad. -	Rain is good →Happy
Rain	Salon told me I can't get my hair wet for a day. Rain will wreck my hair -	Rain will wreck my hair →Frustration

Rain	Lightening killed my friend when we were out in a storm.	Rain will kill me →Terrifying
------	--	----------------------------------

The invisible column, the interpretation/meaning/construct, is literally invisible to each person. They don't even know they made meaning or have an interpretation or a construct because meaning-making/interpreting life happens in the other-than-conscious processes. No wonder people get confused about what feelings are telling them.

If rain created the feeling then everyone would feel the same in the rain. It can NOT be the rain that caused the feeling. Each person FELT the feeling of his or her specific INTERPRETATION of rain based on the meaning s/he had made or constructed about rain throughout life up to that moment (Past Experience).

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In living life your system takes in information from the present moment, compares that information with your past experiences and predicts the next moment. This happens automatically, unconsciously. It isn't a verbal process. It isn't intellectual. The meaning that you form becomes the way you understand the world and yourself in it. It is how you: construct your Self, construct your story of the world, construct your understanding of the world, and construct your values.

You **feel** the meaning you've made; you feel your understanding. Responses tell you about your **interpretation or prediction** of the world, not about the world. Another person's response to something tells you about how she interprets the experience. It tells you about her life, her way of seeing, her perspective, her point of view, her values. Her feeling is **true for her**. Her current construct is true for her, even if it isn't true for you. Responses/feelings are part of an internal compass designed to help each individual navigate their own particular life.

Sometimes the meaning made at a particular time of life is no longer useful. It might have been perfect to survive a particular situation. But now the interpretation is no longer accurate and is getting in the way of living life.

For example, if like the person in our rainy-day story, you are afraid of the rain then the tense feeling of fear would be a negative message. You don't like the feeling of fear. Your intellect says "I want to get over my fear of rain. I know this rain isn't dangerous and I want to go to my kid's soccer game." But the fear sensation of the inaccurate interpretation is strong and gets in the way of living your life.

In this situation the common reaction is to try to relax, to change the feeling. So, you try to relax, calm down; you try to change the feeling directly. "I don't like this feeling." "I want a better feeling." This approach can help temporarily but doesn't change the root problem. The root of the 'bad' feeling is the no-longer-accurate construct you have of rain based on the terrible experience in a storm. Remember, you feel your construct – the construct is what feels 'bad' – not the rain. Changing a feeling is mistaking

the symptom for the cause. When you try to change the feeling, you are shooting the messenger.

When you try to change the feeling, you are shooting the messenger.

If, instead of shooting the messenger, you recognize and stop to understand the significance of your symptom in the moment it is occurring you can bring your 'invisible' construct to conscious awareness. When the invisible construct becomes visible, you have options.

Your system isn't broken or wrong because you feel a bad symptom. It is working beautifully to wake you up to your interpretation. The fear, feels bad and alerts you. It is like your inner- compass says "Hey, are you sure this is true?" If it is a dangerous situation you can take action. If it isn't, you can investigate your interpretation.

Interpretations can be changed! In fact, it is often easier to change an interpretation than external reality.

## THE HEART OF THE RESPONSE SYSTEM

### Thrive and Safety System

The most fundamental purpose of this meaning-making – predictive ability is the need to stay alive, to stay safe. To serve this fundamental need your response system works as a built-in threat-benefit-analyzer or value-register.<sup>iv</sup> Essentially your system is evaluating your experiences for threat or benefit. It is like a compass pointing you toward safe and warning you of danger. When your system interprets a situation as a benefit, you just carry on without any impulse to make a change; when your system interprets an experience as threatening, you get a loud signal to wake up and watch out. It serves to help you thrive.

In our rain in the park scenario, the meaning each person's system makes of the rain, (the prediction they have of rain) is what they are responding to. Each person feels the feeling of the prediction they have of the rain. Every similar experience and the meaning made in those past moments contributes to the interpretation/prediction being made at this particular, specific moment.

In our scenario the threat-benefit analysis of Person One who dances is one of benefit, Person Two who covers her head is one of mild threat, and Person Three who panics is one of life-and- death threat. The compass of each person tells each person how to deal with the rain based on what the rain means to each person. The compass is personal.

Our third person experienced a friend dying in rain by lightning; he had a traumatic experience associated with rain. On the simplest level trauma is the threat/benefit analyzer carving a fast and powerful interpretation into our systems to protect us; to help us make swift predictions of similar situations. It makes total sense that our system is designed to quickly and faster- than-thought alert us to danger. Not only do we have a threat-benefit-analyzer, but it is biased toward giving us a loud signal/strong sensation when it detects threat.

Think of this evolutionarily. A tribe walks by a cave and a saber-tooth tiger eats someone. From then on everyone who was there gets strong fear signals when near similar environments to warn them of possible saber-tooth tiger haunts. Fear, anxiety is a fundamental survival mechanism. This survival demand even helps explain why we attribute our feelings to the object. It is a survival shortcut to simply label tiger as bad, dangerous, terrifying.

The same kind of fear/stress response and misattribution of feelings that we used to need to survive living with life-threatening saber-tooth tigers, we now apply to modern worries like: being late, serving the less-than-perfect meal for someone, believing you know what another person 'should' do or performing for an audience. It is as if our compass was perfectly designed for another era. It still works beautifully but to keep it from killing us we need to know how to interpret the signals/sensations we get from our compass.

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### *Interfering Interpretations and First Steps to Change*

The rainy-day scenario lays out the architecture of the response system on the whole continuum of threat to benefit. When all appears well, happy, beneficial or neutral you don't need to understand your interpretation. But, when you don't like what you are feeling or when what you are feeling interferes with living your life, updating your interpretation of your experience is the key to change.

In the rain example you would NOT want to train the system not to fear rain at all times because some rain situations are dangerous. It would be smart to be afraid enough to go take cover. You don't want to stop feeling fear in case the current situation is actually a dangerous one. Instead, when you feel fear in the rain, stop and assess the current reality. Is there danger? If yes, the fear is a perfect signal to take action. Find shelter now! If no, there are processes to learn to teach the system a new construct. You would NOT want to be rid of signals. That would be like dismantling your gas gauge because you ran out of gas.

When you don't like what you are feeling, understanding how your response system works can be a powerful tool for making change where change can be made, at the level of you and your interpretation of your experience.

A challenging but crucial step to working with your guidance system is to remember that your negative sensations aren't the problem. The feeling of fear isn't the problem. "This feeling of fear, that I don't like, is a signal my system is sending me. Fear is the feeling of an interpretation/prediction I am making." How to change interpretation/predictions starts with recognizing that *what* you are feeling is the feeling of an interpretation of reality. *You feel your construct*. So next time you feel something is 'bad', 'good' 'frustrating' see if you can test this out. "What is the interpretation of the experience that would explain the feeling I am having?" "Why might my system predicts this?"

Below is the scaffold for the basic process of updating an interpretation:

- Perceive Sensation – Wake up in a moment of the response, identify the sensations of the

feelings. *I am terrified. I can't breathe and am gripped and shaking.*

- Discern – Separate the response from the stimulus. *I am terrified but, it isn't the rain that is terrifying.*
- Clarify – What is my interpretation/prediction of the moment that is causing my feeling. *I am interpreting the rain as dangerous. Is this true?*
- Assess & confirm or update – Is this interpretation/prediction accurate to the current, exact felt moment of life. *"Am I safe in this moment when it is raining? Yes, I am. Feel the feeling in your body of how safe you actually are. I can feel the ground and my breath and hear the kids on the field. I am not in any danger. At this moment – there is no thunder and lightning. I know how dangerous lightning can be so I'll keep a watch out to see if it starts. But, for now I can enjoy this day as it is."* If when you assess, you discover your fear response is appropriate to the situation, I am in danger. Then you take cover or do whatever else is necessary to stay safe.

This work is not about always having happy feelings. It is about the happiness that comes from the clarity you feel when working intelligently with your internal-compass. It warns you of real threats and guides you toward benefit. As you understand how your compass works you can navigate your life toward joy and peace, and if you so choose, toward suffering if that is what you want.

*"You don't need to look any further than yourself to see a miracle every day."*

I wrote that line to my mentor David Gorman after exploring this material through LearningMethods™<sup>v</sup> and suddenly "getting it", suddenly feeling the significance of being able to transform my well-being myself. I was feeling my very own inner-compass and it seemed to be guiding me to health, to joy, to my wholeness with the universe.

This work is not about always having happy feelings. It is about the happiness that comes from the clarity you feel when working intelligently with your internal compass.

I didn't have to "breathe", "calm down" or try to change my symptoms. Symptoms didn't really exist in this response system perspective. I didn't have to improve myself; I just met my system as it was. What had felt like problems, stresses, confusion, feeling lost, were actually signals to wake up, look more closely at the moment and see clearly how I was interpreting my experience. I was waking up to life. In harnessing the beauty of this system I was literally awestruck. My system was whole and in kinship with all that was around me.<sup>vi</sup>

When you can utilize this system you have the key to freedom from being trapped in patterns of pain. When you can navigate using your inner-compass you experience the miracle of your own being. When you harness the beauty of your response system, you will be led toward wholeness, peace, and joy.

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## SUMMARY

1. Sensations are the language of the response system. Notice the physicality of your emotions.
2. Blaming the situation or another person for what you are feeling is an indicator of misunderstanding your response system. Good dog, annoying driver, terrifying rain. This is misattributing your sensation to the situation.
3. Your response system is a predicting interpreting, meaning making system. It is how you self-construct.
4. You feel the meaning/prediction your system has made, not the situation or the person/object that seems to stimulate the feeling.
5. To change a feeling you don't like or is interfering with your life, you need to update the interpretation.

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<sup>i</sup> For more on this fundamental question of human design see David Gorman's articles: <http://www.learningmethods.com/lost.and.found.htm> and <http://www.learningmethods.com/question.htm>. The article that started my journey questioning improvement was: <http://www.learningmethods.com/circular.htm>

<sup>ii</sup> See my article the Coordination of Bliss: <http://www.learningmethods.com/bliss.htm>

<sup>iii</sup> For more information about ways to work with me see: [www.lightnermethod.com](http://www.lightnermethod.com) or contact me at [babette@lightnermethod.com](mailto:babette@lightnermethod.com) or 612.729.7127

<sup>iv</sup> See Dr. Leon Thurman at [www.leonthurman.com](http://www.leonthurman.com)

<sup>v</sup> LearningMethods™ is a trademark of David Gorman all rights reserved. [www.learningmethods.com](http://www.learningmethods.com)

<sup>vi</sup> For more information about my work please contact me: [babette@lightnermethod.com](mailto:babette@lightnermethod.com) or 612.729.712 or [www.lightnermethod.com](http://www.lightnermethod.com). I apply this material to music education through The Center for Sound Music Education™ – A Pedagogy of Empowerment. Sound Music Education™ is trademark of Jen Moir & Babette Lightner, all rights reserved. Patterns of Joy™ is a trademark of Babette Lightner, all rights reserved.

# Good For Whom?

## A Chronicle of Stage Fright, People Pleasing and Other Anxious Moments

by Elizabeth Garren

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My heart was in my throat as my turn to take the stage approached. I'd been relatively calm during the first five speakers' presentations, staying in control of my usual debilitating fear of public speaking. I was last of seven dancers invited to talk about their dance careers at the prestigious Walker Art Center, a contemporary art museum. Speaker number six was half way through her presentation. I was next. What I planned to say was condensed to a pile of notes clutched in my hand. But what was now unfolding on stage threw me into chaos. The poised and articulate dancer, the one I had to follow, chose to punctuate her talk with a bang up slow motion silhouetted movement sequence, accompanied by a hypnotic tribal beat ... the audience was mesmerized. When the music ended, she held her pose for a moment of electric silence, during which I felt the life drain out of me. The audience erupted into whoops and shouts. It should have been the end of the show, but little ol' me was next, with a low-key talk on my cerebral, avant-garde no-music dance experience. I was doomed and I knew it. These people wanted drama, action, passion! I had to get out of there, but couldn't move. I was trapped. I knew in my bones my talk was a disaster ready to happen, in full view of my colleagues, family and friends, and there wasn't a damn thing I could do about it ... or was there? **In a gesture of survival, I reached down deep, not for courage, but for clarity...**

My first instinct, when invited to speak at the Walker was NO WAY! Although honored to be asked, I'd always feared speaking in public. In spite of years performing with a well-known dance troupe on stages around the world, speaking my mind alone on stage was another story. Did I really have anything to say? Would the audience like me? Would I be good? I knew from experience what these concerns could mean: weeks of anxiety preparing a talk, accompanied by the inevitable fear, dread, and possible near panic during the event itself. I'd be exhausted, even sick, afterwards. Why would anyone say yes to this?

But I did say yes. I wanted to see if I could finally speak in public *without experiencing stage fright*. Over the previous year, I'd radically changed the way I viewed what I had always feared about being onstage: *the possibility of being judged negatively by an audience*. During all the years of my stage fright, I'd operated under the assumption that other people's evaluations of me (or of what I say or do) held the key to how *good* or *right* or *of value* I was. Instead of registering my own responses to the world around me, my sensitive antennae were often tuned to what other people were experiencing as good or right, so I would know what to aim for. The slightest signs of approval/disapproval, agreement/disagreement, or interest/boredom in others would shape my words and actions to better ensure I'd be regarded positively. To be clear, I was not aware of thinking or doing any of this. I was only aware of the anxiety or fear I felt whenever everyone's eyes were on me as I spoke, and there was the possibility of a negative response.

I often had felt this anxiety or fear in my personal life as well. Concern for how I might be perceived has influenced my interactions with other people (often called *people pleasing*), including my ability to make decisions, to form opinions, to choose what to say or write, and even to know what color to paint my kitchen walls. I can trace nearly every problem in my life, big or small, back to my concern about how my words or actions might be valued or not valued by others. Would I be *good*? Would I be *right*?

I see so many people who suffer from the same *dis-ease* I had, I can almost smell it when I am with them. I see it in my granddaughter already, and she is only seven.

What I didn't see, in the years of my stage fright, was that I was leaving my sense of identity and worth to be decided by the opinions and whims of other people. I didn't see what shaky ground I was on, or that fear might be a logical result. I needed help to uncover the specific misconceptions that were driving my fear, and found it in a remarkable work called *LearningMethods*, founded by gifted teacher David Gorman. During workshop settings with other performers, I learned simple but radical information that shifted the way I view audiences or anyone else who may be evaluating me, positively or negatively. I learned that if and when other people evaluate me, they are defining *themselves*, not *me*. Their assessments of me reveal useful information about who *they are*, what *they value*, and how *they see the world*. In other words, they are learning information about themselves, which they can use to actively navigate their lives toward what has value to them. I realized we can all learn about ourselves this way.

What a truly liberating thought this was! And how obvious it appears to me now. How could I not have known this? Alas, I had to inch my way incrementally toward the *obvious*. For me, the path to freedom was in the details.

I am using my story to share what I have learned in a non-abstract way. Not all individuals who experience stage fright or *people pleasing* will find their paths to freedom in the exact way I did. Nevertheless, the simple information that has transformed my life should be available to all. Half of my story describes the information itself and how it was laid out for me. The other half describes how I turned that information into the practical clarity I reached for the night I spoke at the Walker.

It all began one day when I brought my stage fright to a *LearningMethods* workshop, and encountered a simple, clarifying question...

### **Good for Whom?**

In a *LearningMethods* workshop, people learn tools of inquiry to bring to bear on whatever problems they want to solve in their lives. On day two of the workshop I attended, I brought up a recent stage fright experience, so we could search it for possible clues as to why it was happening. I began by recalling the moment-to-moment sequence of thoughts and perceptions that led up to my first anxious moments. Could we find anything in the way I was *seeing* the situation, rather than the situation itself, that was *fear-making*? At one point, when I mentioned my concern about how good a speaker I'd be, the teacher asked me a pointed question:

"Good for whom?"

I remember it sounding like a strange question. I'd never thought to pin the word *good* onto anyone in particular. It felt more like a free floating kind of *good* that I aspired to, as evidenced by the audience enjoying my performance. I responded:

"Good for the audience."

At this point, so early in the discussion, I had no idea how penetrating and pivotal this simple question, and my response to it, would turn out to be. From where I stood then, trying to be a good performer was something I valued, and it had a lot to do with pleasing and satisfying the audience.

We looked closer at my idea of *being good for the audience*, since it occurred at the same time I was feeling fear. Several interesting observations emerged from this reality check. First, although I was trying to be *good* for the audience, I had no actual information about what precisely would elicit a *good* response from their point of view. At any given moment, only *they* had access to that information. Hmm...

Also, I thought of the audience as if it were a single entity with a single response to my performance. In fact, an audience is composed of a number of separate real individuals, each of whom might have quite different and conflicting ideas about what is *good*.

Not only that, even if I knew in advance what would be *good* for each person, how would I go about fulfilling all these different expectations of *good* at once? What if someone's notion of *good* changed halfway through my talk? Let's say a member of the audience was feeling sleepy after eating lunch, in which case *good* for that person might mean leaving the room to take a nap. Of course, I would have taken this as a negative statement about me.

With all of this out on the table, my desire to be *good for the audience* suddenly seemed a lot like trying to hit a moving target with blinders on, all to ensure a certain response. Impossible. Yet that's what I was assuming I should be doing, scoring a bull's eye on each and every person's *good* target with every word I spoke, so I could avoid a negative response from even one person.

But how could the thought of being criticized by even one person hold such power over me? One look of disinterest, one scowling face could suck the life out of me. Real or imagined, the way I saw it in that moment I was not *good* at all. I would feel defined and written off as boring, wrong, off the mark, and left with no way to recover. Not a good feeling to someone whose goal was to be a *good* speaker. Given the way I was seeing it, no wonder I feared getting up in front of an audience! There was always the possibility of someone not liking what I was doing, and a certainty that I would take this personally.

But was I seeing the situation accurately? Here was a question I'd never thought to ask myself — about anything!

So at that point in the workshop, we looked more closely at what I feared most: being assessed by someone else as a *bad* speaker. We sorted out four basic elements that appeared to make up such assessments of value. These elements were to become a grid of clarity to sort out my confusions, as well as a key to making sense of my fears.

#### **Four Elements of any Value Assessment**

- 1) The **valuer** (the person doing the assessing or evaluation)
- 2) The **valued** (the someone or something being valued)
- 3) The **evaluation** itself (good/bad, etc.)
- 4) The **criteria** being used for making the evaluation

Let's say I am onstage. Someone in the audience ("Jane") is checking her watch, thinking my presentation is too long (low value), and we'd sort it out like this:

Who is doing the evaluation? *Jane*

What is being valued? *My presentation*

What is the evaluation? *Too long, bad*

According to what criteria? *????*

Hmm... Good question. We don't know what criteria Jane is using for what constitutes *bad*. Only Jane knows that! She may prefer facts to personal stories and thus dismisses my story-filled presentation. She may be at my presentation through no desire of her own. Meanwhile I presume her clock-watching to mean I am boring her, that my presentation is *bad*, that I am a *bad* speaker. One thing is sure: *I am not factoring in that Jane is judging my presentation according to the particular criteria she brought with her that day.*

Here is another example:

Picture two friends (Jack and Jill) walking out of a movie. They each have strong opinions about the movie.

To Jack, it was a *bad movie*, boring, at two hours lasting way too long.

To Jill, it was a *good movie*, much better than the one she saw the night before, and even at two hours, not long enough.

Was the movie *good* or *bad*? If you answer BOTH, think it through. In a factual sense, can the same movie be *good* AND *bad*? If it's *good*, how can it be *bad*? The only way to make sense of a movie being both *good* and *bad* is to realize that the goodness and badness does not exist IN the movie, but IN Jack and IN Jill as a *reflection of how the movie matches their individual criteria.*

Since Jack loves action and speed, he was bored... Thus it was a *bad* movie.

Since Jill is comparing it to the lousy one she saw last night, the movie was *good*.

But you can bet Jack and Jill don't realize this. They argue about whether it was a *good* movie or a *bad* movie, not factoring in they are each judging the movie using different criteria! Meanwhile the movie just sits there being itself in all its *movie-ness*, not taking the conversation personally.

That day of the workshop I didn't fully understand that every value judgment was inextricably linked to the criteria the *valuer* was using; it was not a factual statement about the person or thing being valued. True understanding would come later. What I did sense was a shift of focus away from me and how *good* or *bad* I was and onto something called *criteria* — something that was way over in the other person's court.

Or was it? If ensuring a good time for the audience was an impossible endeavor, and their judgments of me did not define my worth, the ball was actually back in MY court. What did *I value*? What would be *good* from *my viewpoint*? Where would I find the answer to such unfamiliar questions?

I had never heard the term *personal value register*. But it seems we all have one built into us so we can answer such questions. The term *value register* refers to an aspect of our being that seems so normal that we take it for granted, or never think to name it. It explains the personal nature of our likes and dislikes. It would be the compass that would guide me out of stage fright.

### **A Personal Value Register**

If someone tries a new flavor of ice cream, they usually don't have to think before they know whether they like it or not.

Each of us has the ability to register our own personal responses to what we encounter in life, be it ice cream, a performer, a movie, an idea, our current physical state, the weather ... you name it. These responses can be experienced as positive, negative or just plain neutral, reflecting the amount of worth or value something has for us. If we like something, find it attractive, pleasant, or interesting, we register a thumbs up kind of response, i.e., high value. If we dislike something, find it unappealing, unpleasant, or boring, we register a thumbs down response, i.e., low value. This inner registering of value or worth can be used to navigate each of us through the many choices we are presented with every day. What to eat for breakfast? What section to read first in the paper ... what to wear, what to do, how to do it, for how long, with whom ... and, contrarily, what to avoid. Imagine a sliding scale of *value responses*, from high value to low value, with neutral (no particular value being registered) as the steady center.

What most captured my attention about these *value registers* was the notion that they are absolutely personal to each of us. That is, only *I* can feel *mine*, only *you* can feel *yours*. Given how my *sensitive antennae* were usually tuned to what other people were valuing, this was intriguing information. *I had been tuning into something I had no direct access to, and as a result I was missing out on what I did have access to ... the information from my own inbuilt value register!* This would explain why I wasn't at all sure what was *good for me* (except trying to be *good for others*, which my fear was letting me know was not so *good for me* after all) ... oh, the convolution of it all!

All sorts of *what ifs* came to mind. What if I have *my own value register* that lets me know when something nourishes, delights, or enlightens *me*? What if I used this information to steer my life as I would use a compass in the wilderness? What if I did all this in the presence of other people? Finally, what if I stopped trying to get other people's compasses to register *yes* when they encountered me, onstage or off? Where would that leave me? Would I be better off? Would I still have stage fright?

All this was almost too much to imagine. I walked out of this workshop session dizzy from the rigor of sorting through and examining my own ideas, like breathing pure oxygen. I knew I had some very basic homework to do. Nothing could be taken for granted. First, I needed to find out on the most elementary level if *value assessments* could really be sorted into four elements. Second, I needed to find out if I really had my own *value register*. My everyday life was going to be my laboratory. But I knew deep down that something profound had already been set in motion.

### **HOMEWORK SESSIONS...**

#### **Stacked Dishes**

That night I caught my first *value assessment* in the act. My husband was washing the dinner dishes and stacking them to dry in the WRONG WAY. Heavy things on top of light things, silverware akimbo. I'd have to sort them out like pick-up sticks to put them away without breaking something. Normally my judgment would

have registered as a *fact* about his way of stacking. But I was primed to run a background check on the assessment I'd just made ... **WRONG WAY ... for whom, according to what criteria?** I sorted the four elements, counting on my fingers:

Who's doing the assessing? *Me*

What's being assessed? *The way the dishes were stacked*

The assessment? *Wrong, bad*

According to what criteria? *Hard to put away, they might break*

So there! Once I'd clarified the four elements of my value assessment, the tables turned instantly. My focus changed from my husband and the badly stacked dishes to me and my criteria! My judgment had just clarified something about myself (I like unbroken dishes and less work). What an entirely new way to experience passing judgment. It made me wonder what my husband's criteria were for the right way to stack dishes. I sensed all this may apply to more than stage fright.

### **Miserable Weather**

Next I observed other people making value assessments ... about food, books, weather, etc. I heard someone say, after three days of rain, "What miserable weather!" Again I sorted out the basic elements: miserable for whom, according to what criteria? When I asked, this person told me he preferred sunny weather so he could play golf without an umbrella.

Was *miserable* a property of the weather? Or was it a property of this person's criteria? Put another way, where was the misery being experienced, in the weather or in the person? It was clear to me that *miserable* was not a fact about the weather, but a description of the low value experience this person was having, because rain did not match his criteria for *good* weather.

I sorted through many more such value assessments. The way they were phrased made them sound like statements of *fact* when they were actually descriptions of personal preference. Being clear about this helped me in the moment I felt I was being judged by someone. I could see the judgment contained information about *them*. When I became more clear about that, I felt curiosity about them instead of fear.

But still something was missing. I was letting go of my concern about being judged and my hyper-sensitivity to what other people thought was *good* or *right*. There was still the question, how would I know what was *good* or *right for me* without peeking over someone else's shoulder? Did I actually have a *value register* of my own? Could I discern my responses to the world around me from those of others?

### **Prairie Grass**

I started quietly, walking by myself through a neighborhood, past homes and gardens, along sidewalks and streets. I wanted to see if anything caught my eye, if there was any little bump of interest, curiosity, attraction, repulsion, maybe a house that I particularly liked, or didn't like. What surprised me was how *neutral* most everything seemed. But just as I was thinking that, my eyes focused on a clump of wild prairie grass on a manicured lawn. And there, it had already happened ... I had indeed *registered* (that word seemed exactly right) a subtle but palpable stirring within me. It wasn't *neutral*, it got my attention ... a definite thumbs up response. The prairie grass was beautiful, *to me*.

## Chimayo Red

I didn't know what color to paint the kitchen wall. As I picked out and tested each new possibility, I was never sure what worked, or if a certain color was *right* or not. I had never trusted my sense of color before. Now I realized why. As I looked at each new color, any registering of my own response was overshadowed by what I imagined my sister would think, or my daughter, or my niece ... all people I thought *knew color*. They weren't even in the room, but their *voices* threw me into doubt. I just couldn't tell what I liked on my own. No wonder. My criteria for *right* were based on what Joanne, Sara, or Gen might think. I was seeing through everyone's eyes except my own.

Then I tried *Chimayo Red*. Surely too dark (for my sister), surely would make the kitchen appear small (to my daughter), surely not exciting enough (for my niece). I'd be thrown into doubt about the color, was it *right*, *not right*, etc., etc. *Chimayo Red* would be the fourth layer of paint on my test wall. When I woke up the next morning to get a first-thing-in-the-morning spontaneous impression ... I LIKED IT! I felt it clearly; it was rich, soothing, dramatic, and it brought the whole room together ... for ME! There was no mistaking the palpable *high value* bump in my register. This was *good*. This was *fun*. I knew I liked *Chimayo Red* even if no one else did! I finally understood what creativity was based on, and what I'd been missing out on. I was making it complicated when it's so simple ... letting my own responses, rather than everyone else's, guide me! I went out and bought two more gallons of *Chimayo Red*.

## Jazz

I worked with several jazz musicians early in my dance career and became *someone who liked jazz*. Thus it was disconcerting to realize, from the privacy of my own register, that in fact I DON'T like jazz. I'd always WANTED to like jazz, felt I SHOULD like jazz, even made myself turn to 88.5 FM in the car. But one day, listening to the car radio, it became clear that I always secretly wanted to change the channel. I felt a moment of shame, like I was now a simpleton or an easy-listener. But it was so freeing to lift that dishonesty off of me that I accepted it. I was a non-jazz lover, plain and simple. Ironically, once I stopped trying to like jazz, I found myself being truly curious about jazz; what were those sounds, and why are some people so in love with it? I was free now to really experience jazz for itself, and like it or not.

By now I was pretty clear what it felt like to experience my own *value register* right in the moment, within myself, by myself. And to recognize when other people's *voices* were hogging the spotlight from my real responses. I wondered what would happen in the presence of an actual other person who had views of their own?

## Amy

One day, on a supposedly relaxing walk with my friend Amy, I recognized a feeling of tension in me that felt something like stage fright on a smaller scale.

Amy, who comes across to me as deeply committed to her political views, was talking about xyz. Suddenly I noticed a knot of tension in the center of me. My face was jutting out toward Amy, nodding yes, yes, in agreement with what she was saying. I felt like I was straining to find and agree with what the *right* opinion was, since I didn't seem to have one of my own. I remember thinking, *Oh, I'm all caught up in Amy's value register ... and then thinking, if hers is over there in her, where's mine?* The clarity of my question (and my previous experiences with prairie grass, chimayo red, and jazz) was all it took. The knot of tension in the center of me changed to ease and to a sense of heft and intactness, as if a paperweight was keeping me from fluttering back over to Amy. There had been no effort involved in the shift back to my own register ... just the clarity that *my register was in me*, and *Amy's was in her*.

I was still walking with Amy, listening to her, but from what felt like an unfamiliar distance. It struck me that even though Amy and I were side by side together, she was looking out from *her* eyes, and I from *mine*. We each brought our own backlog of life experiences, mood of the day, and personal *value register* to how we viewed xyz, or anything else. There was no need to reach out and grab Amy's point of view of things, because I had my own point of view, which was a good four-feet of airspace away from hers!

I now felt much more connected and comfortable with Amy as we walked side by side, partly because I didn't have all that tension and strain, partly because I didn't have to agree or disagree with her. I still didn't know my exact opinion on xyz, but now I sensed where those opinions would come from, and it was not from abandoning my own register to match someone else's. The thought of living my life with other people in this separate but together way felt like an adventure waiting to happen.

This walk with Amy reminded me that ideas are tested by how they perform in actual lived moments, because that's where reality speaks. My experience had shown me the strain and tension of being caught up in someone else's value system; the relative ease and freedom of operating out of my own. To me, the message was clear: I have no business trying to read someone else's register! If I really want to know what's going on for them, I can ask.

Step by step, I was recognizing long held confusions and replacing them with new clarities. I was feeling more pleasure and fun, less anxiety, as I learned what worked for me. Still, I had a ways to go. All of my research had occurred in the relative safety of my personal life. It was time for a new test. Sure enough, one came knocking when I was invited to speak at the Walker Art Center. Feeling confident that I could bring what I had learned into a more public situation, I accepted the invitation. Alas, after an initial few hours of calm excitement, I awoke in the night with a gripping sense of dread inside me. Why had I said yes? What did I possibly have to say, especially compared to all the other speakers, who of course would be more in touch with what was *right* and *good*. Fortunately, I was determined to find out how my new insights would work during my pre-performance stage fright. The next day I began to prepare my talk.

### **Preparing the Talk / What to Say?**

Talk about a flip-flop. One moment, with my notes spread all around me on the floor, I recalled a funny story to tell about my dance experience and a glimmer of enjoyment passed through me. The next moment, seemingly out of nowhere, I was flooded with dread and scrambling for reasons to back out of my commitment. What had been a funny story now seemed embarrassing and silly, not funny at all. What was I thinking? How could it change so quickly?

I knew from my experiences so far that such a jolt of feeling most likely did not come out of nowhere, but was a reaction to something. But what?

I searched the moments right before the change happened, as I'd learned to do in the *LearningMethods* workshop: I'd been cruising along just fine, sitting on my living room floor, enjoying writing out my funny story idea. Suddenly, out of nowhere it seemed, the fun had changed to dread. I sat quietly now, waiting to remember ... did *anything* happen in those *out of nowhere* moments between *having fun* and *dread*?

"Having fun" ... .. "dread" ...

(The dotted line represents those few moments I was trying to recall.)

“Having fun” ... .. “dread” ...

And then it clearly came to me ... a split-second image had flashed across my mind ... of people in the audience judging my story! I hadn't even registered it. The sense of dread had hit me at that exact moment. Wow!

I sat back in wonder at the power of a fleeting image to set off such a huge reaction in me. Not even a real audience! I looked around at all my papers on the floor. The dread had vanished. Suddenly my situation felt sadly poignant. Inadvertently flipping from my own *value register*, where my story was funny, to the value registers of the *audience* where it might not be, had literally stopped me in my tracks. A great barrier had come down. From this place I would never create a story to tell, never share what gifts I might have to give, never have fun being who I really am, except in the privacy of my own living room. And now, not even there! It wasn't just my Walker Center talk that was at stake. It was my whole life.

I calmly took stock of what I knew. When I was enjoying my funny story, it told me everything about the kind of things I found funny (corny, off beat, simple, personal), not whether my story would be considered funny or not to anyone else. More importantly, when I was using my own criteria for funny I actually had fun planning my talk. The more I went toward what was fun for me, the more I could imagine having fun being in front of an audience, even if no one liked my funny story! It was that simple.

It occurred to me later that if I could bring the clarity I'd just applied to preparing my talk into an actual performance situation, the audience would be experiencing a wholly different person speaking to them. Instead of listening to someone who was scared, tense, and rushing to get offstage, they'd be hearing someone speaking freely from her own passion and interests, curious about but not defined by how *good* she was *for the audience*.

I realized also that a person sitting in the audience would have a wholly different experience if that person understood that the *value* they usually ascribe to the speaker was actually information about *themselves*. Audience members could then discern what was *good* for them and move toward what delights them, inspires them, or piques their curiosity as they move through their lives.

I continued shaping my dance experiences into stories and movement for the upcoming performance. My trusty stage fright alerted me whenever I became so concerned about whether the audience would *like* my stories or not that I'd lose touch with how I felt about them.

### **Lynchpin**

In spite of steady progress leading up to the Walker talk, my daily interactions with people made it clear that something still had its hooks in me. I wasn't free yet. Right at the moment when I'd be about to express myself in a way that might get a negative reaction from someone, I'd pull back, not prepared to accept the possible consequence of someone not valuing me. What if they walked away from me in favor of someone more interesting, more supportive, more compatible, better *for them*? The reality of someone being better without ME in their life seemed too stark to deal with, illustrating just how self-centered a *people pleaser* can be!

Who would I be in their absence, as they walked away?

I had to accept that, like everybody else, I'd be an ordinary person, to whom some people were drawn and others were not. But this was no longer such a bad thought. I had found a replacement buddy in my own personal *value register*. Waking up to *Chimayo Red* that morning and really liking it, then covering my whole

wall with it, was such a simple act of happiness. I knew I had something I'd never lose, no matter who walked away. I undid the final lynchpin.

I finally had my speaking notes in order and practiced the phrase of choreography I planned to perform. Now I just had to show up.

### **Back To The Walker**

Every inch of me yearned to flee the auditorium as the audience broke into whoops and shouts for the mesmerizing speaker who preceded me. But I didn't flee; I reached for the clarity I knew was in me somewhere. Suddenly all the awfulness of my situation sparked a flash of recognition. I didn't want to live another minute like this. If I were going to have any fun at all in the rest of my life, I had to sort out what I was in the middle of NOW. It was clear to me I'd gotten lost in the dark void of the audience and its applause, and how I wouldn't meet the audience's high expectations of drama and passion. I knew I needed to get back to the only thing that would save me. **What did I value about my talk?**

That's all it took. I felt the life flow back into me, the ease and heft in the center of me. I was home. From here *my* connection to my stories came alive. From here *I* could feel the pleasure I'd had dancing the most fascinating delicious choreography ... yes, *in silence*, unaccompanied by any musical score ... in the midst of a provocative avant garde dance scene for small and passionate audiences around the world. I truly had something to say!

My mouth was dry as sand, but I was ready. The applause died down, and I with my notes in hand walked toward the podium. Amazingly, a silly joke occurred to me as I crossed the stage, something about being the last of seven presenters. I sensed no one might get this joke, but I told it anyway. No one got it. IT DIDN'T MATTER. *My* connection to the joke catapulted me to the next moment. I recognized some people in the first few rows. I said hi to someone. My stories flowed out, I improvised, I danced. My mouth was still dry, but it didn't matter. Something quite unusual was happening. I was being myself in front of an audience, knowing that all those in the audience were having whatever experiences they were having, and I was having mine, together with them. Then it was over. Afterward, as people came up to me saying this or saying that, clearly I was hearing about their experiences, not about mine. I'd shared who I am; now I was learning about them. Boy, was I exhausted. Time to go home.

### **Summing Up**

Looking at my situation from the outside, even though I knew I was liked and respected, I nevertheless walked on shaky ground. No amount of praise from others could fill in what I needed first and foremost, the navigational system within myself, the capability to know and value my own responses as a foundation for being with other people. Understanding when I assess others for *value*, I am learning about myself. When others judge me for *value*, I'm learning about them. This is simply how it works. I have all the proof I need, at least for now. In this sense my stage fright was my true ally. It kept knocking at my door until I finally invited it in, sat it down, and listened to what it had to tell me. *LearningMethods* helped to translate. Now that I use what I learned that day in the workshop along with what I learned from all my investigations afterwards, I live my life from a different perch.

I'm not afraid anymore. I look forward to sharing what I've learned with my granddaughter.

***A note from Babette. I cannot honor Elizabeth Garren enough. She has been my teacher, my older sister, my deep friend. Thank you my beloved Elizabeth.***

# Navigating Performance Anxiety

## 7 Tools to Freedom

The following are take-away explorations for the Navigating Performance Anxiety workshops. After reading the preceding three articles see if you can try out these tools.

### 1. Reboot My Compass • Finding My Inner-Compass

How we misattribute our sensations to the objects, experiences we think cause our feelings.

- Identify a response you have: “I like this movie.”
- Deconstruct the parts:  
Object—movie  
Response/sensation----good  
Criteria or Meaning or information for you---I like romantic comedies.

Can you notice you are feeling the good feeling, not the movie? Goodness is in you not the object.

*Significance: Your response tells you about what you want, like, need. It is for you. It is your compass. You have a value-register or threat-benefit-analyser to guide you.*

### 2. Anatomy of a Misconception • Misattribution of response to object or others • Everyone has a compass.

- a) When you notice someone else having an opinion:
1. Do the break down as in exercise one: Object/response/interpretation.

Then ask:

2. What must they be believing to have this opinion?
  3. Is this similar or different than my own?
  4. If it is the same notice this isn't truth, you and they just have similar interpretations of the world at the moment. If different notice they aren't wrong. They just have a different compass. It may be wrong for you. But isn't wrong for them.
- b) See this in media. Notice how people don't understand this way we work. They think their sensation tells them about another person. See if you can see “their compass in action.”
- c) Recall a time when someone judged you.
1. Deconstruct the judgement into parts
  2. Notice that the person judging you doesn't have this assessment information clear. They are feeling the judging feeling, not you. Notice the judgement says nothing about you, just how you meet their compass. Their judgement is for them, is about them.

*Significance: Other's responses tell other's what is important to them. Others' compasses are for them, not for you.*

### 3. Practice Clarity • What's my business? What's your business?

When you are with another person in a relatively easy moment:

- “Come to your senses”  
Feel ground coming up to meet you; the air around you.

Picture/feel your root, the river of your life story flowing up and out and through you.  
I am here, over my being, as I am. I am in my business.

- See/picture the person you are with on the planet, in the air, rooted and in the flow of his/her story of life – his/her business.

**Gesture:** Use the gesture of one hand, palm up in front of your belly and the other hand, palm up out in front of you, toward the other person. Close hand = my business; far hand = your business. I am here you are there.

*Significance: Seeing each of us as having our own, unique story. Validating our self and other.*

#### 4. Reality Check #1 • What's Possible? • Self Expectation

When you notice yourself feeling like you 'should' be better than you are or any time you are aware of having a high expectation for yourself:

Write down a statement of that should or expectation. "I should be able to sing this by now."

Then Ask:

1. How likely is this expectation to happen right now? Give it a real percentage.
2. Have I ever done this?
3. If yes, how consistently and in what circumstances?
4. If not, how will I get there?
5. How does learning, skill-acquisition work?
6. Considering my current state of being, state of health how likely am I to meet this expectation?
7. Anything else that helps you notice the difference between your idea and reality, your wish/should/need and reality.

**Gesture:** Use the two-cupped hand gesture.

One hand is my wish/want/expectation/should: "This is what I wish was possible. It is unexamined and imaginary and not rooted in reality."

The other hand is reality: "This is what I know and can do at this moment considering how well I know it, how I feel and what has happened today".

*Significance: We often think our wish/should/expectation is "GOOD". But the actually feeling of wanting reality to be different than it is, is bad. When you align your expectation/ want/need with reality it may not be pleasant or happy but it is easier than being stuck in the wishing for something that isn't.*

#### 5. Reality Check #2 • What's My Job? • Clarity in the Judgement of Others

- Know that others will judge you. Remember we are assessing judging being. We have a compass, a value register, a threat-benefit-analyzer.
- Their judgement is their business. It tells you about their criteria, their world view. Not about you.
- Getting judged negatively is not pleasant but it isn't your business.

When you are in a situation when you may be judged, like performing, anchor yourself to your business, to what you can do, to what you care about, to your lofty purpose, to your joy.

Ask yourself:

- What is my job right now?

- What meaning can I make at this moment so I feel easier rather than tense?
- Why am I singing?
- What is my lofty goal? If it is having others enjoy the music – be clear you can only give them the opportunity to enjoy it by freely singing to your criteria. It is their business whether they enjoy it. You can up your chances of reaching your goal but you can't control a response in another. You cannot *make sure* they like it.
- What are my criteria for this piece? How close can I get to that today?
- What do I love about this piece and how I express it.

**Gesture:** Use the putting down staff gesture, the 'Here I am, as I am' gesture, to anchor yourself to you and your compass, your artistry, your joy and life force.

*Significance: Your job is to do what you can at your exact current capability and preparation and health and well-being. No more, no less. I am as I am, doing what I am doing, the way I want and can do this. I hope you enjoy it, but that is entirely up to you.*

## 6. I AM • Separate Self from what I do • My Worth is Beyond Measure to Me.

- I am beyond worth to myself. I have to divide myself to esteem myself. I simply AM.
- I do things, better or worse. I can assess what I DO, that is learning. I am learning being.

Look in the mirror for a full 5 minutes and see that you are light, love. Say I am love.

*Significance: LOVE IS. You are the light. I am the light.*

## 7. Patterns of Joy Practice

Anchor yourself in healthy perspective through gesture.

See Metapatterns below.

# Metapatterns • Perspectives of Health

Metapattern (Movement Shape & Concept)	Mind of the Pattern Perspective of Health	Feeling of the Pattern	Image of the the Pattern in Nature, in Body	Counter patterns of fear/pain
Horizontal layers (Connection)	I am stardust. I am woven in the web of the universe.	Safe - Oneness - no separation - rooted grounded	Mesas, clouds, galaxies, diaphragms, tail, nervous system	Isolation Loneliness
Fluid Flow (Access to value system, True Self)	Here I am. I feel, I taste, I love.	Free - absence of fear- feel sensations easily	Rivers, lava, arteries, organs, fat	Lost - no/self in negative aspect=no worth
Line (True self in context of others, Confidence)	I am here; you are there. I know what I know and you know what you know. I clear the clutter.	Confident - powerful in own truth at moment	Oak tree, Lightening, silk thread, clear plan, bone, light	A pleaser, confused, judging, critical
Stillness - staff (Calm•Peace)	Pausing.	Breath - stillness - spaciousness	spaces between	Chaos, busy, burned out
Spiral (Non-attachment, Compassion)	Air flows out, air flows in. I embrace, I release. I am flexible and lively and free to move and breath and stop and go.	Compassionate	Cycles of life, of breath, of all the elements, heart, circulatory system	Rigid, stuck, narrow. judging, angry
Sphere (Acceptance•Gratitude)	Here I am as I am, here is the world as it is in this moment.	Grateful	Earth, tear drop, cell, thymus, arms, immune system	Unsatisfied, angry, frustrated
Wave (Change•Resilience)	This crests will fall; this fall will crest; change is flowing. I meet the highs and lows of life. I am joyful for this goodness, I am sad for the loss. I am alive and able to feel and flow with sorrow and joy.	Accepting the moment, Creative	Ocean waves, sounds waves, heart beat, breath flow, thyroid, vocal system, voice, regulatory system	Vulnerable, depressed, stuck, clinging
Suspension (Insight•Mystery)	I notice the spaces between density, between my breath. I feel my connection to the mystery of the universe, to wisdom. I feel connected to some wiser, pool of knowledge because I didn't know I knew that.	Wise beyond self - voice of universe in me	Suspension, spaces between density, spaces between your molecules, between the nucleus and electron...atomic space, pituitary gland	Blocked
Vibration•dissipation	“sssss”, “hmmm”, sounding on the outgoing airflow. No self, I am universe.	No-self, bliss, empty	Atoms, particles, sound, atomic vibration, life force, pineal gland	Dense, afraid



**The Metapatterns**, (Perspectives of Health) practice explores shape and form within you and in the universe that makes interconnection with self and the world obvious, accessible and experiential. The Metapatterns take you through a series of nine simple shapes/patterns. Each pattern is associated with a perspective that promotes well-being. The movement and gestural patterns are like a physical anchor to each perspective. The practice of these patterns is designed to give you access to these well-being perspectives when you really need them by simply doing the gesture or movement.

Each shape has an associated Natya (Dance) Assanas (Poses) to evoke the immediate power of character and archetype. This is a means for manifesting change and drawing on strength in the moment you need it. It is a shorthand for a concept; when you do the archetype you are reminded of the whole concept in a second.

Each shape is connected to an endocrine gland. Awakening the endocrine glands or centers of life force (Chakras/padmas/sun centers) opens you to a big picture perspective that helps you keep from getting caught in the net of stress and narrowed thinking.

You can play in the material from any number of perspectives. It can be a way to:

- Simply move and have fun
- Access a larger perspective
- Give a stress over to these core aspects of being
- Discover your dynamic range
- Expand your spatial comfort
- Explore expression thru movement
- Experience a moving meditation
- Open energy and healing pathways
- Nourish yourself by following what comes to you, feels good to you.
- Tap inner resources
- Receive information
- Anything else that comes to you

There are essentially eight basic movements as follows:

1. Layers-horizontal-parallel motion-diaphragms-rhythm-pulse - halos"
2. Fluids - squishy- inner motion-knead-pump-squeeze-mush
3. Lines - laser beams-lines-be the beam-direction-focus (and a gentle transition here of stillness/the sage - "here I am as I am" - sweet pancreas)
4. Spirals-going and coming
5. Sphere-universe-teardrops
6. Waves- small/large, crescendo/decelcendo, phases, phrases, living/dying
7. Suspension - momentariness-stillness
8. Vibration -Space-emptiness

We move dynamically in everything we do from shoveling snow to hanging ornaments. We all have dynamic affinities in which we are most comfortable. You may be quick, direct and strong while someone else tends to be indirect and sustained and light. Exploring dynamics is a way to expand your comfort with your expressive range. Dynamics are also the vehicle to finding comfort in expression through movement. As we explore the

specifics of dynamics, you'll notice that different dynamics evoke different emotions, different emotions evoke different movements. It feels different to punch than it does to tap for example.

Dynamics:

Time - quick and sustained - dab/ tap/ flick -- wring, glide, press

Weight - strong and light - shovel, move piano -- bubbles, float

Space - direct and indirect - shoot and arrow -- meander Flow - bound and free - robot -- drunk

The key to allowing the Movement Patterns to develop is to allow yourself to simply do whatever comes to you as you move. This is a personal "dance". The shapes are only a framework intended to evoke different experiences, not specific ones. Your response is the perfect response. There is no right step, no right way. If you feel self-consciousness arise, awkwardness arise notice and allow that to move thru. Can you accept this moment, this way of motion, exactly as it is without judgment? (Of course, allow yourself to respond to pain or discomfort). Can you find your meta-patterns, your archetypes, your wisdom? Metapatterns

The shapes: Layers, fluidity, line/trajectory, pause, spiral, sphere, wave, suspension, dissipation, these are movements; these are patterns; these are metaphors; these are archetypes. In 1995 Tyler Volk published his book Metapatterns. The word metapattern comes from the work of Gregory Bateson,(1904-1980) who used it in his book Mind and Nature. He was describing patterns of patterns or "patterns that connect." Tyler Volk defines a metapattern as *"a pattern so wide-flung that it appears throughout the spectrum of reality: in clouds, rivers, and planets: in cells, organisms, and ecosystems; in art, architecture, and politics. The third set representing all of human creativity."*

I came across Volk's book in 1996. The metapattern concept resonated in me in ways I didn't have a language to describe. I knew this sense of layered patterns like a child does who learns about an atom and connects it with the shape of our solar system and then wonders, "Are we just an atom in some giant being?" As a dance based person, I wondered if there were movement metapatterns. I decided to dance shapes. I started with circles, lines and at first it was a lovely daily dance. Then something shifted and for the last 20 some years it has felt more like "the patterns dance me". The patterns reveal themselves and expand and implode showing me their depths and saving my life. Almost every time I do the metapatterns a new perspective, connection, possibility unfolds. Along with perspective and nature, over the years each pattern has connected with a structure in the body, a gland, with an archetypal character like Shiva.. Recently someone is making sound connections. The possibilities are endless.

Because of the ongoing discovery process of material, I think of the Metapatterns as a flexible framework. It is a framework of movement, imagination, contemplation and insight to support you to embody patterns and insights of a healthy perspective. It offers the perspectives that exists in you when you are supported, resilient, capable, creative, compassionate, grateful and thriving. In time the patterns become a tangible way to access these perspectives when you really need it, when you don't have it, when life throws you a curve ball.

The movements become an embodied short hand for concepts that we can't access when we are challenged. Recall those moments when you "know better" but you behave from some mysterious source of destruction, some old pattern? These are the moments the Metapatterns Movement practice can come to your aid. Metapatterns movement acknowledges that you can be stuck, stressed, anxious, aggrieved, lost. Embedded in the work is the understanding that these painful responses, the ones that feel so awful to live through, often guide the way to another way of being. Instead of avoidance or denial you can harness, translate your response, to navigate your life. Metapatterns movement complements work like LearningMethods™, Cognitive Therapy, Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction™ by creating an embodiment practice for your

insights, physicalizing your realization. They work the other way around too. A person can practice physically and then have insight. It is literally a body/mind/spirit practice of wholeness.

## The Coordination of Bliss

Have you ever had a sudden experience of ecstasy or oneness? Felt yourself wondering what it was an experience of? Or been drawn to try to recapture it but found that difficult? Here is an essay I wrote in 2002 on how I came to reassess what happened to me and make sense out of her experiences of "bliss".

For centuries and across cultures humans have had experiences of bliss, ecstasy, oneness, of mystical realization and transcendence. Myths, religions and self-help books tell guiding stories and draw conclusions about living life based on such heightened experiences.<sup>(note1)</sup>

These moments stand out in human life because suddenly we perceive the world in which we've been living completely differently. It is as though we've entered a better, truer and deeper state of reality. The bliss experience is commonly interpreted as a state of being showing us a better way to live, if we could just find it. Sometimes it is interpreted as union with God or an unveiling of the illusion of separateness. The individual's interpretation of these moments is generally taken for granted and rarely questioned. The consequent emphasis in our culture has been placed on how to gain this state and keep it. The bliss experience, which in its essence contains no desire and no interpretation, now fuels our deepest desire to regain this better state of being which we believe exists. In the trying to get something that has no getting in it, we usually fail. I call this contradiction the "bliss experience trap".

Recently I have been examining a model of human structure and function articulated by anatomy and physiology maverick, David Gorman. His model takes an in-depth look at the details of our anatomy and physiology but from the overall point of view of how all these parts fit together in the whole living, sensing, responding, intending human being.<sup>(note2)</sup>

This structural model sheds new light on the nature of our experience and brought me to question if I was accurately interpreting my own bliss experiences. Is a bliss moment a state of being? If not, what is it? What were the precise ingredients of this experience? Have I, along with humans through the ages, fundamentally misunderstood the nature of these moments because of the power of the feeling? Could a more accurate interpretation resolve the bliss trap and have implications on the nature human experience as well?

By looking precisely at a particular bliss moment in my own life I uncovered the fundamental flaw of the "state of being" interpretation. I also gained the means to step out of the "bliss experience trap" as I came to understand what really caused that intensity of feeling. I saw that there is no state to attain. Instead I found a means of learning built into us, into the very nature of our structural and functioning system. The yearning for those high moments of bliss dissipates as I learn to navigate my life from my own experience rather than from precepts, commandments and other external guides. The conclusions may ultimately be the same, but the means of learning is drastically different.

There are three aspects of human functioning that are key to accurately interpreting my bliss experience. First, is an understanding of how our system is designed to coordinate us to our intention. The second is our ability to register and evaluate our own experience. Lastly, is an understanding of how we are designed to perceive contrasts and changes rather than a particular state of being.

When we look at human structure from the point of view of how we function in the world it becomes necessary to define what we mean by human coordination. Human coordination is the sum total of our functioning at any given moment: our muscular-skeletal-postural tone, our neuro-chemicals, our hormones, our feeling-state and our thinking, all functioning together as one coordinated self. We could zoom in to dissect these seemingly distinct functions separately, but if we step back and see the whole human they are always working simultaneously and in concert. This total response to any given moment is the coordination of the self to whatever particular something we are doing, to our intention.

Crucial to our responsiveness is our innate ability to detect and evaluate our experience. This property is so basic to our nature we overlook it as a fundamental capability that allows us to be drawn toward some things and repulsed by others; this feels good; that feels bad. In this way the capacity to detect and the propensity to respond function like an in-built navigation system. This aspect of our system lets us register the value of our experience, detect problems and navigate our life from our own experience. It is a key to understanding, interpreting and acting from the information already available to us from our own life. It is a key to freedom as long as we don't override or ignore the messages our system is giving us.

There is a phenomenon of feeling change in human movement that applies to interpreting any experience of change like a bliss experience. We perceive where we are in comparison to where we just were. When a person has imposed an idea of "good posture" onto herself with directions like "shoulders back, chest up" her habitual standing posture is usually a slight backward lean. But she feels like she is squarely upright and uses the words "I feel straight". She has been leaning back for so long she no longer perceives the effort it takes to hold herself in this backward lean. If I guide her out of leaning backward to where she is more over her feet she will feel like she is leaning forward and feel light or like she is floating.<sup>(note3)</sup>

What is commonly misunderstood is that the floating and lightness is the experience of stopping working against herself. It is the experience of the shift from all the effort of working against her in-built balancing system, of imposing a posture, to letting her design balance itself. In other words, she experiences the contrast from the effort of working against her design to the ease of working with her design. There is no floating state in and of itself to achieve. Instead, she is more light (than she was before), she is more floating (than she was before). If she lets her system balance itself more efficiently, over time she will no longer feel like she is floating because there's no contrast to her effort anymore.

### **The Wrinkled Quilt Story:**

I was home alone. For several weeks my work life had been tumultuous. Dreams of fixing up our old farmhouse were in discussion, but bills were coming in and my income contributions were less than I expected. As a self-employed person this roller coaster of income was not unusual. But there I was in what I call a spin of thoughts. I would jump from thinking about construction to: "oh no, we don't have the money...", "which is all my fault...", "I know better than to let this thinking get me all caught up...", "so maybe now I'll do this or that..."

I was uncomfortable. My stomach felt shaky, my jaw was clenched, my emotions distressed. I sat down to quiet myself and began to write a list of how many students and classes I might need to make more money. At this moment I saw I was responding with my usual strategy to get out of discomfort. I make hopeful lists or close my eyes or say affirmations or pray or breathe consciously. I attempt to make myself feel better; to alter my state; to get from this bad moment to a better moment.<sup>(note4)</sup> Sometimes I try to understand and change my discomfort by focusing my attention internally and observe myself, my body or my feelings, as if I can split my whole functioning self into an observer and observed.<sup>(note5)</sup>

My experience of these various strategies for change—going internal or making lists—is that I might get temporary relief but rarely solve the problem or learn from it. This time it really struck home that my methods

had not been working, so I chose not to try to go in and observe myself in that old way. I asked myself the one question I was capable of asking: "I wonder what would happen if I didn't try to get out of this uncomfortable state?" So I stopped trying to change anything and let all my strategies drop away.

Interestingly, almost as soon as I did, my thinking cleared a little. I was able to ask: "What am I doing, the coordination of which is this discomfort?" Based on the definition of coordination as being the sum total of my system's response to my intentions, to what I'm doing, there is an important distinction to make between what I am actually doing as distinct from what is happening to me.<sup>(note6)</sup>

It was clear to me that I wasn't doing the discomfort, though I was feeling it. In other words, I wasn't saying to myself, "clench my jaw, belly shake", but I was doing the worrying about negative outcomes and the confused thinking about solutions. My attention was narrowed to all these ideas about the future and away from the world around me. That's what I was actually doing. The coordination of doing that created all those symptoms of jaw tension, gut wrenching, bio-chemical soup. The discomfort was happening to me as a result of what I was doing; it was a coordination of what I was doing.

Here I was awake to the whole experience of my activity. The discomfort and the action of confused, fearful thinking were all one coordination of my self. I began to be aware of what was actually around me—of the tree branches outside the room moving in the wind. I didn't attempt to see what was around me, it was just what was there for me when I stopped concentrating my attention inward to try to change.

I looked at the quilt on the couch in front of me and saw a wrinkle in it. Hundreds of times over the years in this house filled with rambunctious kids and dogs and cats I've unwrinkled that wrinkle. I saw that wrinkle and suddenly I was in one of those instantaneous shifts of perception. There was no longer anything in me drawing me to change the wrinkle. It was as it was.

I began to register a huge shift of my entire being. Discomfort was no longer a concept. There was simply no impulse to change anything. Interestingly, that was also what I had decided to do—not change anything. It seemed that by some quirk of the moment I had dropped my usual way of perceiving. This felt like a moment of grace because it had happened to me—I hadn't done it. What I had done was to stop trying to change anything, which in turn resulted in an opening up to what was around me.

To write this I use words which are symbols for objects, actions, experience. They are, in a sense, the map of the world as we perceive it. At the moment of that experience the concept of tree or quilt or wind stopped existing. I could distinguish the impulse to name something from that of simply experiencing existence. It was like seeing the actual territory, not the map. It was clear that the symbol would interfere with clear seeing. There was no hierarchy. No smooth quilt better than wrinkled quilt. The bottom dropped out of any sense of problem. It was the bliss of the absence of identification... no-self... oneness... isness.

In the past, my interpretation of this kind of experience was that it was somehow a truer, better way of being; that this was what it felt like to be fully present. And it felt so good. My interpretation that this good feeling came from a better way of being also led me to want to repeat the experience or keep it. When I wasn't in this lovely state I often felt like I should be. This became the refueling of my bliss experience trap.

I'd had two distinct experiences—the clenched, shaky, distressed one and the present blissful one. One was more pleasant than the other, which normally would have led me to want more of it. While the unpleasant one naturally would have led me to want to get rid of it.

But now with my new understanding of our human function, I had a chance to re-examine what these experiences meant. What if each experience was a different coordination of myself, each perfectly coordinated to what I was doing?

The unpleasant experiences we have are specific, they have symptoms, and wake us up to ourselves. They grab our attention and we are wired to want to change them. Here was my navigation system in action, not a problem to get rid of. In contrast, when we feel good we tend not to notice parts of ourselves but to be in interaction with the world around and we rarely have a desire to change things.

At this point I was clear that the first uncomfortable experience was the coordination of a narrowed, worried thinking. But I wasn't exactly clear what the second more blissful experience was the coordination of. On the surface I could say I was seeing the world around me as it was. But, what I actually had done was stop trying to change anything directly and attempt to perceive as clearly as possible what I was actually doing. But if I simply concluded I can get this blissful feeling by being more present and noticing the world around me, I would be skipping over the facts of the context of the experience and something important would be missing.

I realized that my bliss phenomena was not a state in itself, but an experience of change from one way of being to another, just like the feeling of lightness when someone has stopped holding their posture so tightly. As a measure of a change, the feeling of bliss was proportionate to the degree of being caught up in distress or misunderstanding. This implies that the experience of bliss of the wrinkled quilt moment was simply the contrast from being caught in a spin of many simultaneous thoughts to the moment of opening up to where I actually was and what I was actually doing.

And as Gorman points out, our coordination experiences have a value register to show us what is good for us so we can navigate our lives. Interestingly, from this point of view, the wonderful bliss component of this experience shows me that my built-in detection system has a bias toward me being present with what I am doing.

In our culture there is a lot of talk and advice about the concept of "being present" vs. "not being present". In this model, we can't be "not present". We are always present to something and what we are present to determines or organizes our coordination. What seems to be true is when we are present to what is actually happening at this particular moment, what we are actually doing, sensing and so forth, our coordination seems to be easy and pleasant. Hence all the focus on being in the moment, being here now, being present. But, if I try to be present I'm already not where I am. I'm wanting a better moment than the one I'm in. This becomes the "be-in-the-present trap".

Understanding that the extent of blissful feeling is proportionate to the previous discomfort explains why at other times when I have not been in a long prior period of distressful coordination the same kind of shift was experienced with less contrast, less difference. I've noticed too when I've had several days in which I've been existing with less of the distanced "symbolic" looking at the world and more "isness", there isn't an ongoing experience of bliss as much as a sense of absence of problems.

The ramifications of interpreting my blissful experience as the experience of a shift of coordination rather than divine grace or better state of being to aspire to has liberated me. I experienced literally how my system is absolutely designed to lead me toward ease of being as long as I don't override the messages from my system or try to divide myself into parts. When I'm experiencing discomfort it is so much less intense because I know my system is somehow waking me up to my working against myself or against the way the Universe works. Now I can simply ask myself, "what am I doing that is coordinating me into this discomfort?" The question lets me be where I am—pleasant or unpleasant. It gives me the tools for gaining understanding of what it is I'm actually experiencing in its fullest context allowing me to navigate my life from information available to me from my

own experience. It becomes clear there's no state to attain, no enlightenment to achieve. Everything is all here at any moment when I use my own in-built navigation system.

The model of Human Structure and Function articulated by David Gorman, author and teacher, gives us a process for beginning to look at the "anatomy" of our experience. The details of this model explain the interface between our physical molecular structure and our everyday experience of being one self living in the world. This contribution to the body of knowledge has implications in every area of human behavior. It is a truly holistic model in which thinking, feeling, understanding and the physical structure are never divided but always seen as one expression of a self in action. In this model there is no wonderful end-state to attain, but rather an ongoing means of learning to acquire more and more wisdom and harmony. It is a means for liberating a person from the traps of faulty interpretations and assumptions so they can take in precisely and clearly what is actually available to them in their experience at the moment of being.

## **Acknowledgements**

This article could not have been written without David Gorman's articulation of human functioning. Many of the concepts conveyed come directly from his work, LearningMethods. You can find out more about his discoveries in the other articles and pages of this web site ([www.learningmethods.com](http://www.learningmethods.com)).

I also could not have written this without the mentorship and friendship of Elizabeth Garren who led the way.

## **Endnotes:**

### **(Endnote 1)**

*"The Power of Myth"* by Joseph Campbell covers a vast array of myths across religious lines; A myriad of spiritually based self help books start with a "bliss experience" story on which the philosophy and advice of the book's author is based.

go back to text

### **(Endnote 2)**

See *"Patterns of Being"* materials by David Gorman

### **(Endnote 3)**

Another interesting response people have when they are shifted to an easier upright is to say "Well this is easier, but it isn't right." I've often worked with people who have been instructing themselves to "pull my shoulders back" and have also been in a lot of pain. When they are guided to stop pulling their shoulders back they've instantly felt relief of pain. Almost as instantly said "But this isn't right". Their idea of "right", usually given to them by an outside expert, has over ridden their ability to respond to their own system's information about what they are doing and the effect of it on them.

### **(Endnote 4)**

See *"The Rounder We Go, The Stucker We Get"* by David Gorman

### **(Endnote 5)**

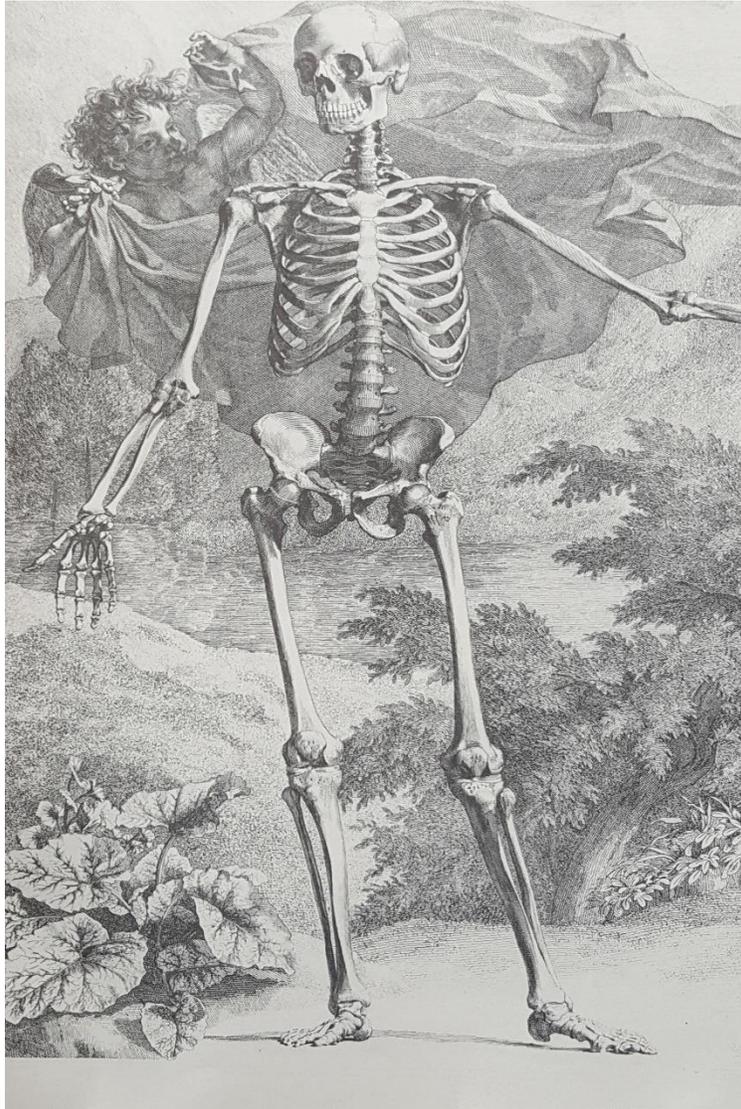
This self-observation if looked at accurately is really an attempt to separate my whole functioning self, which is impossible. When I think I'm feeling my body I'm actually experiencing what it feels like to try to split myself

into parts—body, mind, feelings—or split myself into an observer and an observed. I'm feeling the feeling of narrowing my attention to my body or feelings. In other words I am feeling my system coordinating me to my intention to feel myself.

**(Endnote 6)**

An everyday example of this distinction is when someone may say, "I'm tightening my shoulders". But on further inquiry we can see that they didn't tighten their shoulders; the tightened shoulders happened when they became afraid of making a mistake, for example. Yet a common result of someone thinking that they are tightening their shoulders is to go around loosening the tight shoulder without ever figuring out what caused the tightening in the first place. Consequently the person will have to keep on loosening shoulders and never really get out of the loop of the problem.

## 2. Structure • Our Pre-sprung Elastic Suspension System



# Deep Play – Exploring balance and mapping in activity.

## 1. Lifting or Me and My Instrument

One of the most helpful ideas when it comes to lifting objects without injury is the idea  
*"move myself, not the object"*

When you pick an object up off the ground you are supporting it.

When you support it, the object is literally part of your system.

When you move, it comes with you.

This thought - "I move and this object comes with me." - coordinates your system differently than thinking you are holding and carrying an object. It is a powerful shift in focus.

Several students have said, *"This is like magic."*

See for yourself with this comparative exploration:

a) Go over to a chair and, while thinking, "I am going to lift this chair and carry it." Then pick it up and walk a few steps. Put it down and step away.

b) Now go back to the chair:

1. Bend so you can grasp it gently but do not lift it yet.

2. Take a moment to see if you are easily balanced by noticing if both feet are evenly contacting the ground and your joints are flexible. If you are familiar with my work, remind yourself of the "center of support" idea.

3. With the chair in your gentle grasp come to standing while saying/thinking, *"I stand and the chair comes with me"*. Then as you walk, think/say, *"I walk and the chair comes with me."*

c) Notice if there is a difference between a) lifting the chair and moving it, and b) you moving and it coming with you (the "move yourself" version).

It may take going and back forth between the two versions a few times to notice a difference. Many people report that the chair feels lighter and there isn't as much strain or effort in the upper body in the moving yourself version.

At first the move yourself method may seem to take longer because it is a new idea. Once you play with it, it can become the way you work, a new way of functioning.

If you play an instrument do the same comparison but apply it to your instrument. The instrument becomes part of you when you are supporting it.

Have Fun Exploring!

## 2. Thriving/Surviving a working at a desk and other sitting tasks



The adjustable work area:

- Three orientations when possible: Sit, Perch and Stand • Be able to switch orientation between sitting, perching and standing with ease. Sit on a chair or ball or other support. Perch on a stool. Stand. Get chairs and stools that fit you. Many people find it feels better to have a chair high enough so that the knees are lower than hips. You decide what works for you. I use an air cushion on my chair.

Adjust the following to accommodate your changing orientations to the work area. Adjust to where you feel easy, comfortable, free:

- **Line of Sight** • Be able to move what you are looking at so your line of sight is easy and comfortable in all 3 orientations. (Check you vision-many people have neck and head aches because they are straining to see. Get the right glasses, put screen at distance that lets you see without strain and adjust font size)
- **Orientation of your hands** • Be able to move the surface on which you use your hands, like the keyboard or desk top, in all 3 orientations. Generally, you'll be more comfortable if your hands are lower than elbows – but you need to figure out what feels good to you.
- **Freedom of movement/support** • Be able to move freely on the supporting surface whether it is a chair, stool or the ground. This means being able to stand up easily and moving on the chair. I call this the first joint – the joint between you and the planet, you and the chair. Be able to slide and turn on the chair rather than at your waist.
- **Set-up situations that force movement** • Put your water across the room, have your files behind you or your phone far away. GET UP OFTEN!

There is no perfect or right ergonomic set-up. Change things up. Move. Recollect some other tasks you do that don't cause strain and use same principles for your desk/sitting work.

Check out this informative and interesting book: *The Chair- Rethinking Culture, Body, and Design* by Galen Cranz

### Your Structure:

When sitting, perching or standing being able to tell when you are balanced and freely mobile at your joints. When you are in balanced relationship with the support and have spring in your torso, allowing all the joints to move easily, the system is: 1. comfortable and easy, 2. forces are distributed, 3. there is movement so the discs of the spine are nourished and mental activity stays energized. Here are some principles to know about your structure so that you have the information to allow yourself to adjust with ease:

**Center of Support** • Can you clearly identify when you are in the center of support? This is the same as being able to tell if you are in even-distribution-of-contact with the supporting surfaces in any given orientation. Possible contact points in **seating**: feet with floor, sit-bone/thighs with chair seat, possibly your back with back of chair. **perching**: feet with floor, sit-bones/back of upper thighs with stool seat. **Standing**: feet with floor. (More on this is this chapter)

### Moving at Joints or 3 Useful Physical Landmarks:

1. **Hip-joints/sit-bones or what is my bottom?** – To be able to move freely at your hip-joints contact the seat of the chair with your sit-bone area or the actual bottom of your pelvis, (like horseback riding). This is much further forward than most people think. In sitting lean forward and put your hands under you where you think the top your thighs are. Push up in that area until you feel the big pointy bones of your pelvis, we call sit-bones. Keeping one hand on a sit-bone, put the other hand on you lowest back, the sacrum area. Take a moment to feel the difference between what faces down, bottom of you/sit-bones and what faces back/back of you-sacrum. Many chairs tend to slump people back on to their lower sacrum. This is sitting on your back not the bottom of you. Compare the difference between 1. contacting the chair with the back of your upper thighs and sit-bones and 2. contacting the chair with your lower sacrum. Notice the effect of each on: the shape of your torso, your ease of mobility, the freedom to move at your hip joints, and your comfort.
2. **Where is my head? or the Atlanto-occipital joint** – To be able to see and orient visually with ease it is helpful to know about the freely mobile joint where your head meets your spine. The joint is called the atlanto-occipital joint. It is much higher and central than most people realize. Put your index fingers on each side of your ears, just above and in front of the ear hole. Imagine a line through your head at that level. Now put one finger on the bridge or you nose and the other on the back of your head at bottom of occiput (bumpy bit at back). Imagine a line through your head at this level. Where these two lines cross, is roughly the location of the joint. There are many ways to locate this joint. Another is to point your tongue backward and just behind and above where it can point back is the joint area. It is high and forward – closer to the roof of your mouth than the back of your head. Draw tiny circles with your nose, you can feel the location of the head way up there. Feel the difference when your draw a bigger circle and your neck comes along.
3. **Length and depth of my Torso** – Put one hand on a sit-bone and another at the front of an ear at level of A/O joint. Squish down, arch up and back, wiggle around and then come to gentle ease, not squished or lifted. Take-in the dimension of your length.....take-in your width and depth, the volume of your torso. Explore rocking forward to work at the computer or tilt when standing and sense the volume of your torso, the tilt of your torso at the sit-bones, the length of your neck and the buoyant nodding of you head at the A/O joint.

There is no perfect posture for sitting, there is no one right way to be in your structure so you won't hurt. Listen to your sensations, move, change, follow your system not some book or this article:). You may have legs crossed on the chair one moment,

then perched on a stool, then hunched over your work....allow change – no right or wrong/ just lively or shut down/ comfortable or strained.

## Your Mind, Well-Being or State of Being

The primary determining factor of your comfort at a desk job is your moment by moment state-of-being. You can have the most ergonomic work area and knowledge of your physical structure but if you are in a strained, rushed, frustrated or other negative feeling state than the physical structure will reflect this state-of-being. *Your body is always in the coordination of your state of being and focus of attention.* This is an important fact to observe. Is this true in your experience?

What is essential in The Language of Wholeness is that this understanding of your experience and your design is NOT ABOUT TRYING TO CONTROL OR MANIPULATE YOUR STATE-OF-BEING! It is about SEEING YOUR STATE OF BEING AS YOUR INTERNAL COMPASS AND LEARNING TO USE IT.

Do you ever experience:

- Too much to do in the time allocated
- Co-workers not doing work the way you hope – frustration
- Communication snarls – frustration to anger to depression
- Not understanding, trying to problem solve, learning – can lead to narrowed attention and efforting

The scope of this article cannot unravel these and other common workplace factors that cause physical discomfort. (A LearningMethods™ class or sessions can.) But here are a few ideas of ways to use your state-of-being to make productive and enjoyable change.

1. Recognize that your state-of-being is useful information, even if it feels negative and all you want to do is change it.
2. Take a moment to feel the sensations of your feeling: like all crunched up, tight jaw, tension and short breath. This accelerates your ability to wake-up to your state-of-being.
3. Ask why this makes state makes sense? What were you just up to? In the above crunched example, it might be because you are suddenly struck by something you are reading on the computer. You want something to be different. For example: you wish you understood what was being said or you suddenly realize you don't have enough time to finish this but are trying to anyway. When you find yourself squeezed forward and crunched it is usually when you are narrowing your attention right into the computer screen. It is almost as if you could just climb in there and make the change you want.  
Narrowed attention whether it is into a computer or over into another person is often the coordination of wanting to make change where you can't at the moment. It can be helpful to ask how will this change happen?
4. Ask a clarifying question like: How will I learn this? How much time will it take? How will the other person do the task or will they? Are my expectations accurate to the situation? What happens is I adjust my expectation to the reality of the situation versus continuing to wish reality would fit my expectations? If reality is as it is, not pleasant to me, what is a useful strategy to gain my goal? The list of clarifying questions is endless.
5. Experiment with different strategies and notice the effect of each on your state-of-being.

As you explore the relationship between your state-of-being and what you are doing or paying attention to you become more facile making useful choices and getting out of ruts of thinking/feeling. The best part is you experience how trust worthy your system is to guide you. Discomfort or “negative” sensations are designed to get your attention. They are wake-up calls. They are perfect. Don’t cover the symptom by trying to relax, or be present or let go or such. Pause, get clear and your system will change because you changed.

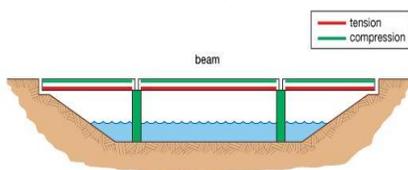
A life changing article about this territory is by David Gorman called [The Rounder We Go, The Stucker We Get.](#)

Happy exploring!

# Human Structure & Function:

## Choices in Approach and Purpose

**Alignment or Coordinating-Suspension Model:** The Alignment model and the Coordinating-Suspension model are both presented with the best intentions. The premise underlying each model determines how the model is applied in life, in choir. Currently the Alignment model is prevalent because the Coordinating-Suspension model is relatively unknown.



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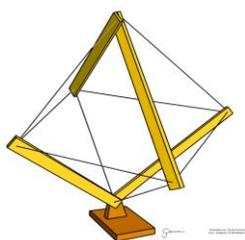


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**Alignment Model** • The basic premise of alignment is that consciously aligning our body helps singing and many other functions. We do something with our body to get ready to sing like standing straight and tall. The instructor says: stand with feet shoulder width apart, head tall, shoulders loose. The students attempt to do the instructions, even if they feel uncomfortable. Power is with instructor. While not explicitly stated, the strategy of this approach is to consciously manipulate our body to improve it.

**Coordinating-Suspension System Model** • The premise of the Coordinating-Suspension model is the system is already perfectly designed to sing. Consciously you can create the conditions that allow the suspension to work without interference, but you can't put your body in suspension. The activation of our suspension is the property of our other-than-conscious processes. The Coordinating-Suspension System model gives a framework to ignite healthy stature without the rigidity and struggle of the alignment model. It is so simple; at first it doesn't seem like enough. But when you teach closer to how things work many issues just fall away. What you can explore and teach is:



- The basic principles of human design.
- Ways to determine what is and isn't working for you from the information you get from your sensations.
- Ways to more accurately interpret your sensations.
- Ways to set up conditions to allow the system to coordinate action freely, which is the job of the other-than-conscious processes.

If alignment is NOT how we are made, it explains why on one hand 'good posture' is so allusive and a struggle and on the other hand why, when 'good posture' becomes habituated there is often rigidity. The tension required to hold alignment makes all functions harder. It will be harder to breath, move and be expressive when aligned or positioned compared to being in buoyant suspension. When the system is in a coordination that interferes with a function like singing, the Coordinating-Suspension approach looks at why the system would be in that interfering coordination. Change the cause of the postural coordination and the system will come back to healthy homeostasis. The "bad" coordination is a perfect coordination of what the singer is attending to at the moment, whether that is trying to be in a good position to sing or making sure not to make a mistake. **The beauty of this approach is after getting the ground work in place, you spend much less time addressing the body and voice and more time on the music.**



**If the Coordinating-Suspension System is a more accurate model for human design than the alignment model, what do I do? Where do I start?**

The first place to start is with yourself. When you have explored the two approaches and if you decide the Coordinating-Suspension model is more effective for your purposes then begin to explore the approach with others.

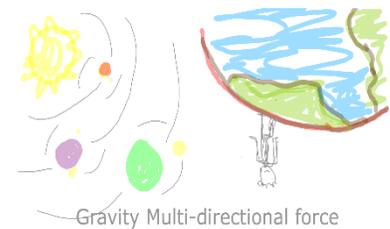
**Coordinating-Suspension System Pedagogy • Self-Assessment, Self-Knowledge and Personal Choice:**

(Please note that all the questions below can be used for curriculum building and external assessment. You could teach one area a week. Students could write answers out, demonstrate in partners, draw diagrams, and apply to singing?)

**Gravity and Suspension Conceptual Basics:**

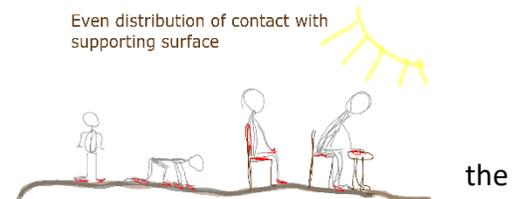
(compare by doing and describing the feeling of a and b in each comparative question below)

- What is the difference between thinking of yourself:
  1. a. supported by the planet, the planet coming up to meet you equally to you coming to meet the planet and b. gravity as a downward force against which you have to hold yourself up?
  2. a. sprung in tensegrity and b. aligned?
  3. a. already on the ground and b. needing to ground yourself?



**Comparative Self-assessments:**

- Can you tell when you are in *even distribution of contact* with the supporting surface (*in support*) and when you are not (*out of support*)? Do this in sitting, standing, crawling.
- Can you tell when you are leaning and not leaning?
- Describe the difference of being *in support* and *out of support* on your torso organization, your singing, your breath flow, the focus of force on different parts of your body.
- Can you tell when you are moving from your joints (hip socket-head to spine joint/A/O joint) or moving from middle of spine (neck, waist)?
- Can you tell when you have full volume of your cylinder/torso or when you are compressing either in the front(slumping) or back (opening front at expense of back).
- Can you tell when your diaphragms are coming together in the front, back or side and when they are parallel?
- Can you tell when you have gained height at expense of freedom of movement/elasticity?
- Can you tell the difference between being shut down/collapsed/unengaged/heavy and stiff/lifted/gripped and free/balanced/buoyant/available/lively?
- Can you tell if you initiated movement from the shoulder or from fingers?
- Can you tell when your attention is *internal* on ideas and thoughts, *external* - out ahead of yourself in what is next or *inclusive* - here in world as it is, where you are in this moment?
- Describe the difference in your stature in the different locus of attention.





Moving from one paradigm to another often demands new language. Naming the subject area in curriculum can pose a problem. If it isn't posture, what can you call it? Here some possibilities: Stature or Structure and Singing or The Suspension System. Verbally articulating the topic can be a hurdle too. The words just aren't on our lips. This first sentence to say "Today we are going to look at \_\_\_\_\_" can stump people when the old framework was "Today we are going to look at posture or alignment." Here are a few alternative suggestions to finish the topic sentence that starts: "Today we are going to look at:

- Your structure or your architecture."
- What is useful to understand about yourself to sing easily."
- Your elastic suspension system."

Being clear for yourself of your purpose is important step in setting up a learning process. Is your purpose:

- To get everyone in the "right" or "good" position to sing? (Right or good for whom? By what criteria? Putting you in charge of another's body.) OR
- To set up a situation so your students can learn about how they work and have the information they need to choose for themselves how they want to be in the world. (Empowering them. Developing their own criteria from which to assess – they become cooperative collaborators rather than obedient collaborators).

**Framework and language of the two models. Top is Alignment model. Bottom is Suspension Model.**

Topic	Result	Implied POV	Descriptors - words
Posture Alignment Stature Stance Place	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Tends to result in fixed positions, limits flexibility, tends to create self-judgement.</li> <li>•Can actually injure your student.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Belief implied in this is you can consciously position or direct your body into an optimum organization and it will stay there.</li> <li>•The goal is some kind of good body use. That is considered good.</li> </ul>	Tall, straight, string on head, grounded, lengthen, and words like: keep, or any words suggesting some 'position' to remember or right place to be in.
<b>Stature</b>  <b>Architecture/structure</b>  <b>What is useful to understand about how you work to sing.</b>  <b>Coordinating Suspension system</b>  <b>Poise</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Tend to result in greater understanding of self.</li> <li>•Choice remains with individual based on sensory information.</li> <li>•Less likely to cause injury, more like to feel empowered and truly flexible.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Implied belief is that stature is property of the other-than-conscious system.</li> <li>•Accurately interpreting sensations, clear mapping and remaining fully responsive is the goal to support making art.</li> </ul>	<b>Buoyant, available, mobile, lively, springy, free, can you move in every direction? Lots of comparisons to ignite sensations – am I more or less strained? Am I on or off support? Earth comes up to support me – already on the ground.</b> <b>Voluminous torso, full volume, cylinder or torso, Relationship of diaphragms</b>

# Balance and Support and The Nature of Our System

## WHAT IS BALANCE?

LEANING EXPLORATION: The purpose of this exploration is to demonstrate several key properties of how your system is designed as related to balance and support. It is a format you can explore with yourself and your students.

1. Come to standing.
2. While looking around the room can you tell if you are standing more on any part of your feet: more forward, back, more on one foot or another? If you can what area is it? (If you cannot, that is not a problem. We'll keep going).
3. Now purposely lean a little bit forward, not so much that you are off your heels.
  - Why aren't I falling over?
  - Where do I notice the activity in my body that keeps me from falling?
  - Describe it?
  - How much of my body do I feel is involved?
  - What would happen if I let go of the holding/tensions I feel?
4. Lean back and ask the same set of questions as above.
5. Come to standing where you aren't leaning in any direction.
6. Come to roughly an even distribution of contact with the floor.
  - Another way to say this is to come into the center of your support. (Center of Support is the concept; Even distribution of contact is the experience of the concept. These are useful phrases to have and understand).
  - The ground is the supporting surface. You, through the contact with your feet, are over the center of that support.
  - Is the activation of muscles the same when you are in the center of support as when you were leaning?
  - What is different?
  - Why is there a difference?

You can use this leaning exploration to demonstrate many different principles about human design. Below are a few examples of possible principles you can teach from this leaning exploration.

1: How automatically our systems works, The Coordinating system.

You can point out that when you were leaning you didn't fall over.

The significance of the experience or What the experience shows you.

The fact that your system didn't fall over shows you::

- Your system automatically activated exactly the response you needed to lean and not fall over. The key here is automatically. You didn't have to say, "Calf muscles hold." This simple activity demonstrates how naturally and automatically your whole system responds to your intentions both explicit (I want to lean) and implicit (I don't want to get hurt). Your system works as one whole web. It is a coordinating system.

2: How efficiency feels, how we can misinterpret the feeling and how sensation is information.

Point out or ask about: When you are leaning you feel more tension than when you aren't. People describe the former as effortful and the latter as effortless.

Significance or What the experience shows you:

- When you are in balance there is much muscular activity but it is distributed throughout your system. Whereas when you are off balance fewer muscles do more work, effort. It is the difference between having 10 people moving 50 chairs and 1 person doing the same job.
- Efficient movement feels effortless, empty, light, floaty. There is activation it just isn't designed to grab your attention.
- It is like a smoke alarm. If you felt a lot of sensation when you are functioning well it would be like having a smoke alarm go off to tell you there isn't smoke in the room. Our system gives us signals of strain to get our attention.
- We can go a long way toward functioning well if we learned to hear them and not assume that is just the sensation of life.
- Many people confuse the sensation of effortless with less muscle work. They interpret the easy sensation by saying, "When I'm balanced I'm more relaxed." This is an inaccurate interpretation of the sensation.

Theory interlude: SENSATIONS ARE SIGNALS • THEY ARE A KEY DEMAND FOR AWAKENING AWARENESS

Misinterpreting sensation:

- The experience of the difference in effort when you are "on and off support" (not leaning/leaning) also shows you that your system has built right into it a means to signal you about what you are up to. The feeling of tension when you are off the center of support IS this signal telling you that you are off balance. **The key for you is to accurately interpret the meaning of the signal.**

Habituated misinterpretation:

- The interpretation of sensations/feelings/experiences is the area in which many of us get into trouble because we often ignore the signal or misinterpret it. The sensation of tension of the leaning for someone who has habituated a lean into his upright stature is sometimes interpreted as the feeling of standing up and that leads to an idea that standing is hard work. In this way a misinterpreted signal (feeling) can lead to a cascade of misconceptions about oneself and the world. **Learning to accurately interpret the ongoing flood of signals you are receiving is one of the core purposes of this work**

Awakening awareness:

- This kind of comparative exploration and **articulation of the significance of an experience (this latter step is often left out in teaching)** is key to bringing to your consciousness the details of experience your system may have previously designated as unimportant. Since you can't be aware of everything in a particular moment your system has to prioritize what is and isn't useful to bring to your attention. If something seems unimportant then it is easily ignored and not even registered by you. When you see "Oh that familiar feeling of strain is a sign I am moving in a way that may lead to pain" your system

begins to bring it to your attention. In this way a previously ignored sensation gains significance to your system and you have a key tool for changing an interfering habit. More about this in the “Hot Cup Theory” of changing habits article.

## THE NATURE OF THE SYSTEM AND HOW TO SCAFFOLD CHANGE AND LEARNING

The purpose of these explorations is NOT to show you how to move in some “right” way. The purpose is to show you about the nature of your system so you can register, understand and respond to your experiences. If you take this information and simply try to stay in the center of support all the time, you’ll miss the point and easily go off into a whole realm of misinformation, corrections and side tracks.

It is important to go off support lots!

The key is that you recognize the sense of strain: “Amazing, I feel the strain. It is perfectly telling me I’m out ahead of myself.”

Once you recognize the sensation then you can do with it what you will.

- A. You don’t have to go around trying to be right to avoid injury or move optimally.
- B. All you have to do is be curious and awake to the meaning of the signals with which you are constantly being flooded.
- A. You don’t have to be aware of your body or movement.
- B. You can just go about what you are doing how you are doing it.

You’ll begin to notice that strain signals just arrive and wake you up. This happens as long as you periodically register that this signal has significance.

It is certainly true that one way of operating is less efficient and can cause damage and pain. The other way is generally efficient and prevents injury. The point isn’t to try to operate one way and not another. That approach usually leads to endless correcting and not being ok where you are. This work offers another possible strategy which is to see that both ways happen for good reason. You have choice as long as you begin to investigate what your sensations are telling you. The “good” thing will do itself when you become alert to what is

# Stature Poise Spring (alternative to posture)

Current research strongly suggests that the common method of postural improvement based on manipulating body parts (lift your spine, shoulders back, head straight) is not effective. Generally, it works only as long as someone is thinking about the positioning; if habituated it leads to excess tension and a held stature- making it actually harder to breath, move and be expressive.

## TOOLS FOR HEALTHY STATURE

Self-Assessment, self-knowledge and awareness

- Can you tell when you are in even distribution with the contact surface and when you are not? Explore this in sitting, standing, crawling. Notice the effect of each on your torso volume.
- Can you tell when you are moving from your joints (hip socket-head to spine joint) or moving from middle of spine (neck, waist)?
- Can you tell when you feel free to breath?
- Can you tell when you have full volume of your cylinder/torso or when you are compressing either in the front(slumping) or back (opening front at expense of back).
- Can you tell when you have gained height at expense of freedom of movement/elasticity?  
There are many more useful self-assessments.

Body Mapping - know thyself • Be able to identify::

- Horizontal dimension or torso - diaphragms: pelvic floor, thoracic diaphragm, vocal folds, base of brain, crown of head.
- Elastic nature of spine and torso.
- Location of hip-socket-nearer pelvic floor than waist.
- Head on spine joint (atlanto-occipital joint) between ears, behind nose, near roof of mouth.

Fundamentally this work is about developing your own authority in understanding how you work. The key to this kind of empowerment is gaining the information to help you determine for yourself what does and doesn't work for you...vs. focusing on trying to get someone else's, usually the teacher's perspective, right.

# Sound Music Education • The Pedagogy of Empowerment

## A Pedagogy for the New Science

This is an article written for the 2016 winter issue of the Star of the North a publication of the Minnesota chapter of the American Choral Directors Association. It looks at the implications of the Language of Wholeness material in a choral setting.

## **LOFTY GOALS**

What is the lofty goal for your choir? How does the pedagogy you employ serve your goal?

Here is a possible lofty goal: *The choral setting creates the opportunity to make music in an environment which allows each member of the community to thrive, while the larger community is enriched. The more beautiful the music, the more the members thrive. The more each member thrives, the more beautiful the music.*

## **PREMISE**

It is the basic underlying premise of Sound Music Education – The Pedagogy of Empowerment – that by empowering the individual artists, the pedagogy serves the making of great music. All the individual artists come together to create, as a group, the experience we define as choral music.

In the art of singing, the artist is the instrument; the vocal instrument. In order for the instrument of the human system to be able to sing as fully and capably as possible, the human system needs to be able to function freely. To function freely, a person needs to feel empowered within the choral setting.

One aspect of the choral director's job is to create the conditions to allow each singer, each artist, each instrument to function fully with the least amount of interference. In order to do that, the choral director needs to know something about how the human system works to function and to learn.

## **UNDERPINNING**

The underpinning of Sound Music Education – The Pedagogy of Empowerment – is the on-going curiosity about what allows the human system, in this case the singer, to thrive. At its root, sound music education is curious about how the human system works, how it is designed, how it learns, how it sings.

This core idea is captured brilliantly in the work of Leon Thurman, who for years has articulated the idea of "Human Compatible Learning/Teaching." Human Compatible Learning/Teaching is based on the idea that the closer your learning/teaching is aligned with how things work, the easier, safer, and healthier your learning/teaching will be. Embedded in this idea is the willingness to throw out inaccurate ideas and update one's approach as the science changes. Since science is changing on a daily basis, it is also imperative that the learner/teacher/director states clearly that all she can teach is a current point of view. We have a current point of view that is always subject to further proof.

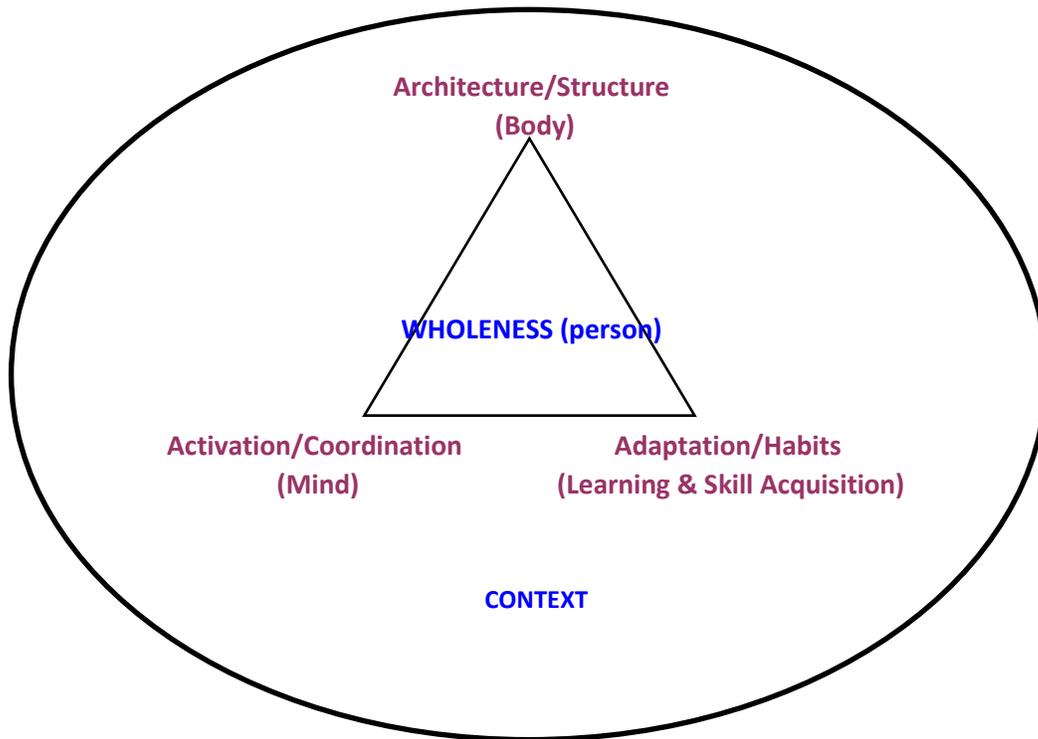
The pedagogy is based on four pillars:

1. Curiosity about how humans work to learn, to thrive, to sing.
2. Openness (Willingness) to update inaccurate information, no matter how convinced we are of its accuracy, so that our teaching is as aligned as closely as possible with our current knowledge of how the human system works.
3. Clarity that all we have to work with is a current point of view, not the ultimate truth. This point of view is based on the newest science to which we have access.
4. Community - We serve the music, the individual singers, and the community that is the choir.

Making curiosity, openness, clarity, and community the foundation of our educational system allows us to educate teachers, their individual singers, and their choral community as a whole.

## THE PEDAGOGY AS APPLIED TO MOVEMENT FOR SINGERS

The following diagram is the scaffold for understanding Sound Music Education – The Pedagogy of Empowerment:



This pedagogy is about empowering the whole person (triangle) within a context (circle). The triangle breaks down the whole person/the human system into three parts:

- The architecture or the structure of the body
- What activates and moves that structure (intention/mind)
- How the system adapts, learns, and unlearns. This encompasses acquiring skills, as well as how habits are created and changed.

These three aspects of our system serve as a scaffold for our teaching.

In this article we will look at how we can use these three aspects of the human system to explore a pedagogy for teaching fundamentals/understanding of physical structure. I would like to begin by looking at the current common pedagogy about structure. This will help us see the distinction between different pedagogical points of view.

The current and most common idea about physical structure for singing is referred to as posture or alignment. Many pedagogy books start with this topic. Students are often instructed to stand with one foot slightly forward, shoulders back, neck free, in a tall, noble performance-ready stance. One of the challenges of this approach is that people get the idea that there is something called “good posture,” and that they should have it.

Many singers come to me for lessons because they want better posture. When I ask them why they want better posture, they look puzzled. Through the lens of the old science, good posture has become a virtue in and of itself, so it takes a few minutes for them to even understand the question. They often start by saying, “Because my voice teacher says I need to improve my posture.” I’ll ask a series of questions like, “Why would your voice teacher want you to have better posture?” Eventually, we get to the root idea that good posture is supposed to help facilitate good singing.



The premise behind good posture is the idea that the shape of the body (posture/alignment) affects the ability of the instrument to sing. This makes some sense, since we have established that the whole body is the instrument – and it needs to coordinate freely to sing well.



### **ARCHITECTURE**

Let’s apply our triangle pedagogy scaffold. It is essential that we understand the architecture of the body.

It turns out we aren’t a postural system.

Current research about human function and design calls into question posture/alignment models. Anatomist David Gorman synthesizes this research into a model he calls the pre-sprung-elastic-coordinating-suspension system (coordinating-suspension system, for short).

The rules of physics for a postural system and a suspension system are TOTALLY different.

Think of two bridges: one built on columns and the other a suspension bridge.

If a construction crew went out to fix a suspension bridge as if it were a column design, it wouldn’t work.

But this is exactly what we do when we apply postural instructions onto the human body. From the coordinating-suspension system point of view, you can’t create the conditions for easy, efficient singing by teaching good posture!

If the goal of our pedagogy is to serve the artist by aligning our teaching with the way the human system works, it is essential to learn about this coordinating-suspension-system model.

**THE TOP CORNER OF THE TRIANGLE: KNOW ABOUT THE ARCHITECTURE, AND KEEP UPDATING YOUR UNDERSTANDING.**

### **ACTIVATION**

Now let's go to the left corner of the triangle and look at activation. In the postural model, people are told to position (control) a part: bring (for example) shoulders back and down. The implied belief at play here is that you can use your mind to put your body parts in a place and that the parts will stay that way. If you stay in this improved organization, then you will be able to sing better.

Let's investigate this. Try staying in free, good posture and rush. Try staying in good, free posture and concentrate on your E-mails. Try staying in good posture and do just about anything other than thinking about "good posture."

Our architecture is coordinated by our intention, and therefore shifts and changes constantly, affected by what we are attending to. In other words, we are always in the perfect coordination of what we are doing with our intention or attention.

A common singing example of this can occur the moment a singer begins to sing. Just before the beginning of the song, the singer is in the "proper singing stance." Then he begins to sing, and his head moves instantly forward.

If you see this singer from the postural model point of view, you might interpret this event as evidence that he had lost his good posture, or that he has a 'bad or inefficient habit' for singing. You might conclude he needs to learn to keep his head aligned to sing.

The coordinating-suspension system model interprets this event differently: a teacher working from the new science point of view would conclude that the singer began to sing and his attention or intention brought him into this head-forward coordination. If it is true that the singer is in the perfect coordination of whatever he is up to, then it would follow that **he** didn't **put** his head forward. He didn't **do** it; it **happened**. This distinction is key to working with the coordinating system. The singer had an intention, and his system coordinated his head forward. If the singer didn't **do** (actively consciously putting his head forward), it makes no sense for him then to actively, consciously keep his head aligned.

In the postural model, a well-intentioned teacher might then go to great lengths to help him become aware of this inefficient habit. Subsequently, he would practice keeping aligned, thinking his head and neck to be free. To achieve this freedom, the singer has two options: thinking of his alignment, which means he isn't focused on the music, or by using lots of tension to position his head. Before you know it, he'll need to work on being free to express the song. Can you see the quagmire of this postural pedagogy?

Like the postural model perspective, the coordinating-suspension system model's perspective, realizes that the head coming forward will interfere with the suspension of the larynx, breath flow, and other parts of the architecture that need to be able to function freely to sing optimally. But unlike the postural model, the coordinating-suspension perspective holds that the problem is not the position of the head. In other words, the position of the head is not a postural problem.

If the singer is in the coordination of something that brings his head forward, we need to find out what is going on in his thinking to help him not to interfere with his architecture.

We need to bear in mind that the singer is the only person who has the information about what he is up to. When there is an interference, the singer has the information to make change, even if he doesn't know it yet.

In the empowerment pedagogy, there is a method of inquiry to help teachers and students make sense of interferences. When you see the current organization of the architecture as a function of the person's intention, you can look to the root of the interference. In this way the head-forward issue becomes a vehicle for the student to learn more about how his system works. The more he understands his system, the more he is empowered to make discoveries and choices. Instead of having a bad habit, the student may discover he has an amazing system that gives him useful information.

**THE ACTIVATION/COORDINATING CORNER OF THE TRIANGLE:  
THE ARCHITECTURE EXPRESSES THE ATTENTION AND THINKING OF THE PERSON. REMEMBER: THE PERSON HAS THE INFORMATION ABOUT WHAT SHE IS UP TO.**



### **ADAPTATION, LEARNING**

If you aren't going to teach posture or alignment in choir, what *do* you teach? Learning about the coordination-suspension system model is important. Unlike learning a skill, we are innately designed to have full, easy, buoyant stature. We are designed to stand, sit, breath, move. **Being free to sing isn't a skill – it is a birthright.**

The pedagogy of stature is mostly a job of removing inaccurate ideas about stature. It is also a matter of teaching more accurate ideas about human design, so that students don't impose misconceptions onto themselves. It is about giving students ways to explore and self-assess. Perhaps most important of all is creating the conditions in the atmosphere of the choral setting in which students feel safe, engaged, successful, and autonomous. These last criteria are what research shows create the conditions for learning.

A basic tool of this pedagogy is creating explorations as a means to teach information about human design. Setting up comparison experiences is one method of exploratory teaching. We can, for example, ask the choir to, "Lean forward, lean back, and come to relative balance." We then ask them for information about the experience: "What was the difference between these three experiences?" Through discussion, we can help them to see the significance of their observations and experience. "Can you see how your system gives you different sensations to tell you about your balance?"

Through the exploratory process, singers learn from their own experience. They not only learn principles about their amazing design, but they can also experience that assessing is fun and useful. Healthy assessment is essential to autonomous learning. Autonomous learning is an essential ingredient for thriving. One four-minute exploration activity in choir per week can add up to significantly increased self-knowledge.

Instead of learning a list of postural instructions, students can learn to self-assess. Here are assessment questions that would indicate a certain measure of self-knowledge. I have put the purpose of the assessment in italics:

- Can you tell when you are in even distribution with the contact surface and when you are not? Do this when sitting, standing, crawling. Notice the effect of being in and out of support on your torso volume. *This is an assessment about balance and support, the foundation of suspension.*
- Are you free to move in any direction? *This indicates levels of positioning and holding.*
- Are you free to bounce a ball? *Same purpose as above.*

- Can you tell when you are moving from your joints (hip socket-head to spine joint) or moving from the middle of your spine (neck, waist)? Put another way, “Where are you bending?” *This is the key to what posture is generally about: the ability to retain the volume and elasticity of the torso.*
- Can you tell when you have full volume of your torso, or when you are compressing either in the front (slumping) or back (opening front at expense of back, lifting sternum, noble posture). *This is another way to assess torso volume.*
- Can you tell when you have gained height at expense of freedom of movement/elasticity? *This reminds students we need flexibility as well as shape to sing and move freely.*
- Can you tell when you feel free to breath? *Assessing relationship of structure to breath function.*
- Do you feel more or less human? *This is to help detect any rigidity or what we call the “singer’s (or conductor’s) set.”*

There are many more useful self-assessments.

Before a student can answer these self-assessment questions, they’ll need to know some information about their architecture. Here are just a few useful architectural landmarks:

- Identifying landmarks of your horizontal dimension: Where is your pelvic floor, thoracic diaphragm, vocal folds, base of brain, crown of head? We call these diaphragms. When you can feel the relationship of these horizontal dimensional landmarks (diaphragms), you have a means to assess your volume.
- Understanding the elastic nature of spine and torso so that you can feel holding and interference.
- Do you understand natural sequencing of movement? This is absolutely crucial for conductors!! If you understand this, you will never do another ‘shoulder roll’ in your life.
- Location of hip-socket nearer pelvic floor than waist. Where do my legs begin and end?
- Head on spine joint (atlanto-occipital joint) between ears, behind nose, near roof of mouth.
- Do you know gravity works in both directions? Can you sense the light contact you have with the planet?

The list of this kind of knowledge is long.

When I work with students, I say to them: “Fundamentally, this work is about developing your own authority in understanding how you work. The key to this kind of empowerment is gaining the information to help you determine for yourself what does and does not work for you, versus focusing on trying to get someone else’s (usually the teacher’s) perspective right.”

**THE RIGHT CORNER OF THE TRIANGLE: LEARNING HAPPENS IN THE STUDENT. THE STUDENT HAS TO DISCOVER FOR HERSELF HOW SHE WORKS, WHAT’S TRUE FOR HER.**

This article touches on the application of Sound Music Education – A Pedagogy of Empowerment™, to our physical structure. I have witnessed educators explore the application of this new material to many aspects of music education. The primary result of updating ideas and pedagogical methods has been more success and inspiration. Best of all, it tends to result in empowered students. Students who leave lessons and choir excited

and feeling good about who they are in the world. Students who can learn on their own. They are intrinsically empowered – not empowered by external praise and a teacher-centered pedagogy.

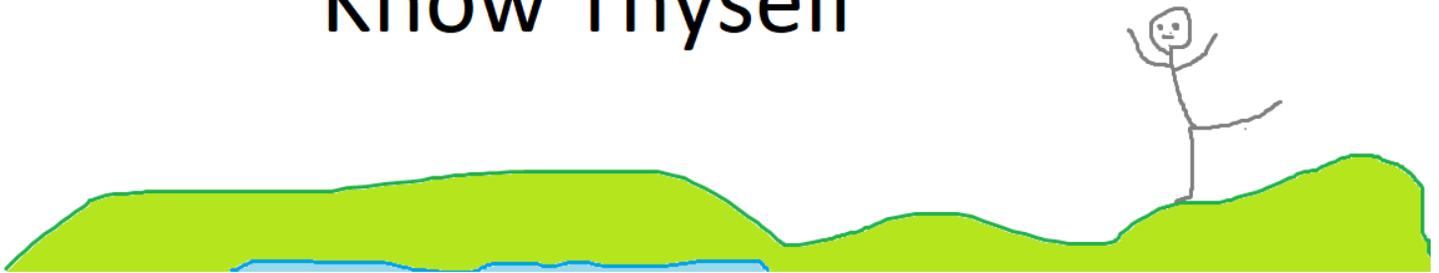
It is an exciting time for research on the human system. As we learn new facts from science, we have the opportunity to examine our practices to reflect the new knowledge. In some cases, as for me in the shift from teaching alignment to teaching suspension, we have to invent new pedagogy. The heart of Sound Music Education – A Pedagogy of Empowerment™ – is not so much a new method you need to learn; it is a perspective to help you discover the pedagogy that works for you and your students. It is a living, dynamic pedagogy.

**Notes:**

Thanks to Jen Moir and Axel Theimer for their contributions to this article. The triangle scaffold diagram is a copyright of Babette Lightner, 2015. The pedagogy suggested here is an integral part of the BodyMind and Voice summer course with the VoiceCare Network.

Anatomy Images • Our Architecture

# Experiential Anatomy Body-Mapping or Know Thyself



## THE ELASTIC MUSCULAR SUIT

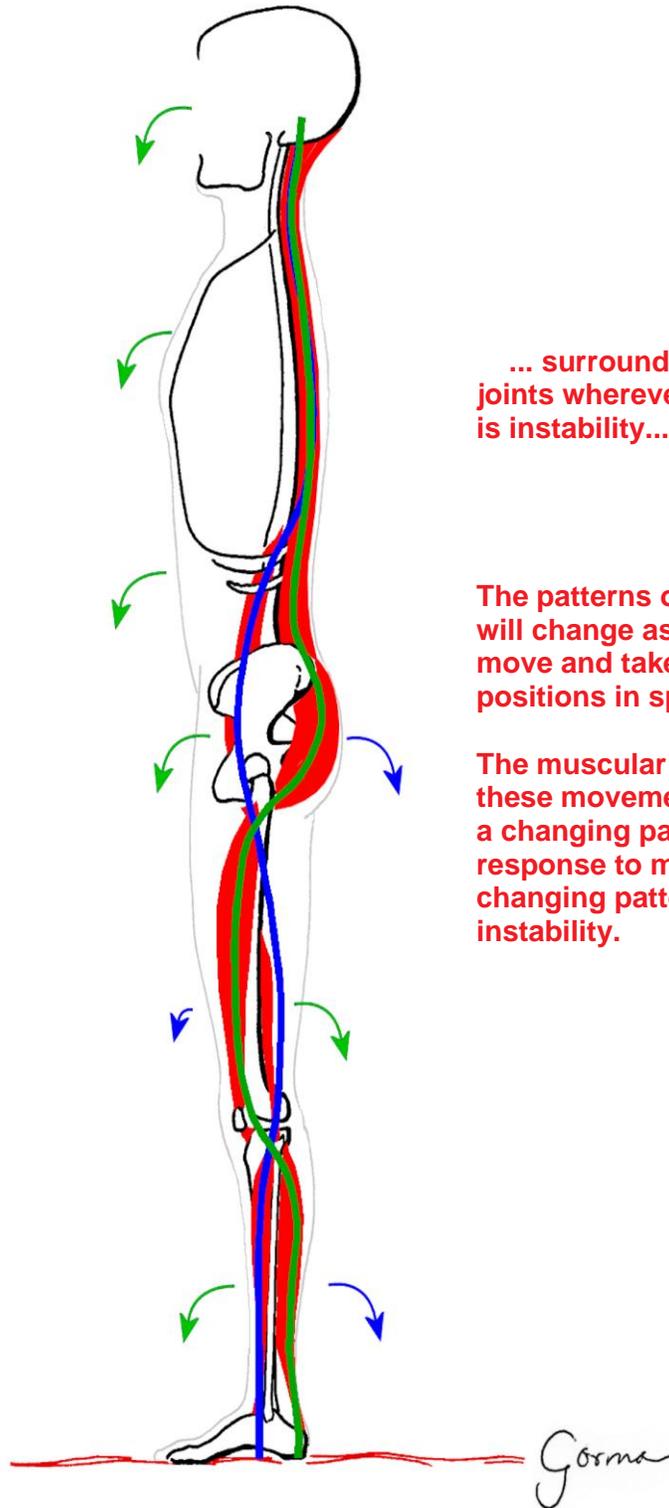
The muscles flow on opposite sides of the directions of instability...

... in effect, creating a muscular suit which weaves around you supporting you...

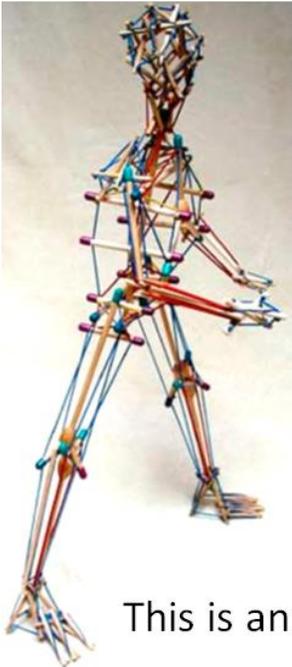
... surrounding the joints wherever there is instability...

The patterns of instability will change as you move and take up other positions in space.

The muscular suit follows these movements with a changing pattern of response to match the changing pattern of instability.



# Coordinating Pre-sprung Suspension System



It is our active, aware opening to the world around us and to the support of the earth that elicits an interplay between gravity and our structure that activates us into an entire web of tensional support which springs us into our dynamic, responsive, mobile uprightness.

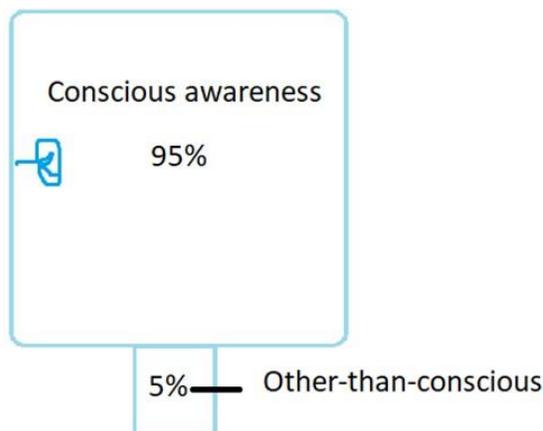
- David Gorman

This is an other-than-conscious process.

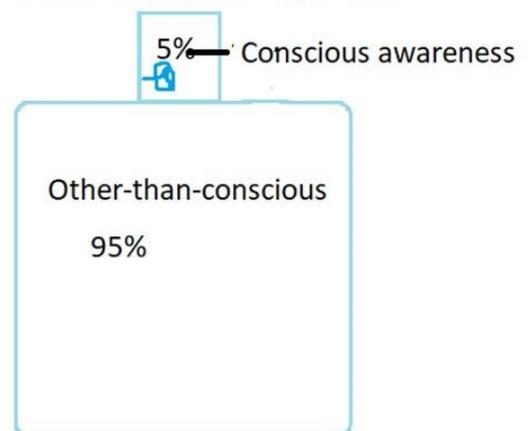


## Conscious and other-than-conscious processes

How we perceive ourselves & root of corrective approaches.



How we work/reality & root of Coordinating System approach.



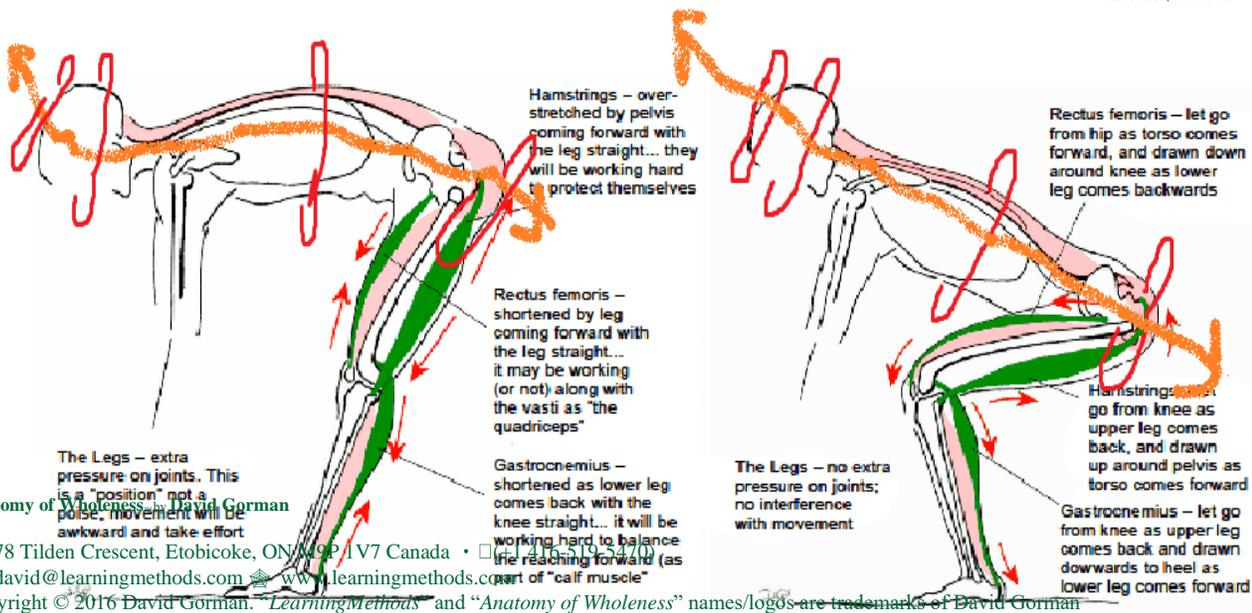
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## The Two-Joint Muscles (Movement)

**Two-joint muscles when bending by using the back**  
 Different areas doing different things, all are ineffective and/or damaging

**Two-joint muscles when bending by using the legs**  
 All areas are doing the same, without an change in length; just as ready for locomotion as in standing

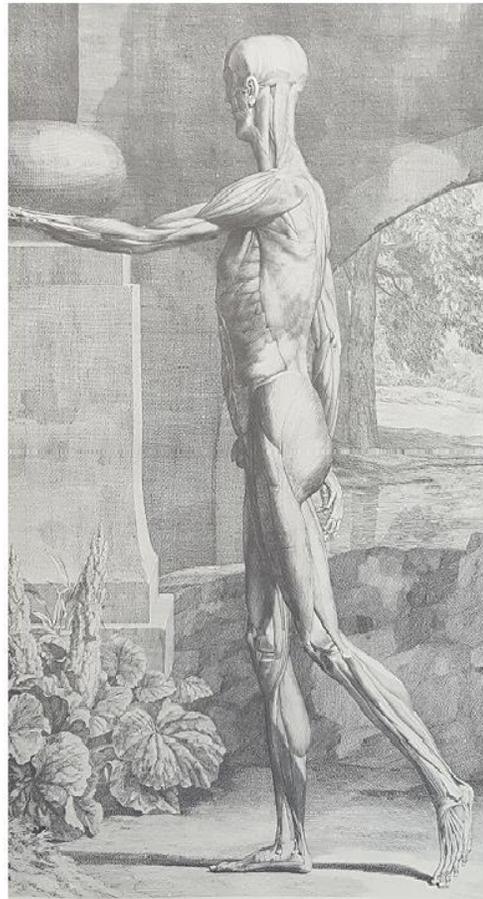
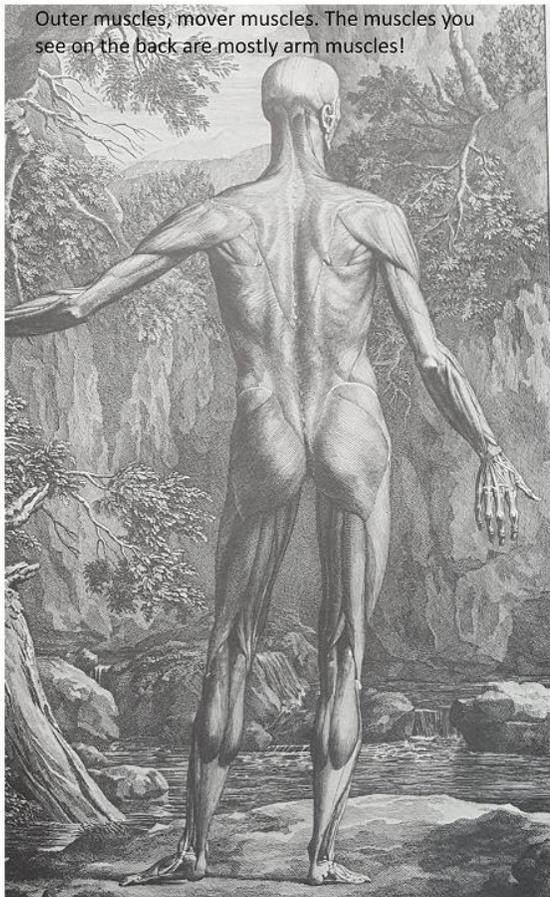
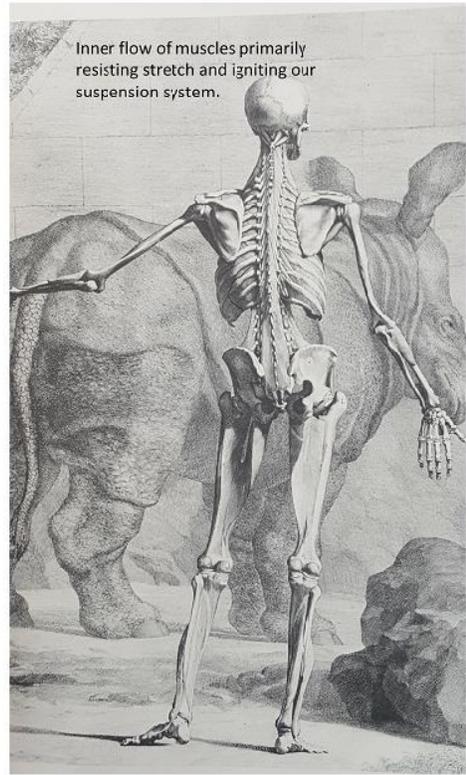
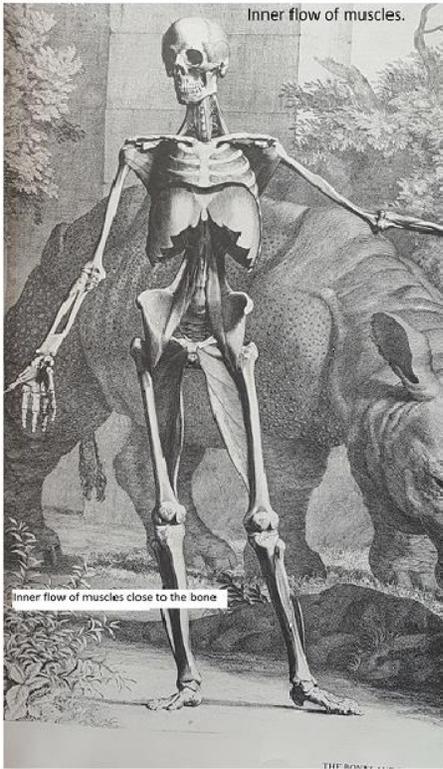
Illustration by David Gorman, from "Anatomy of Wholeness"



Anatomy of Wholeness™ by David Gorman

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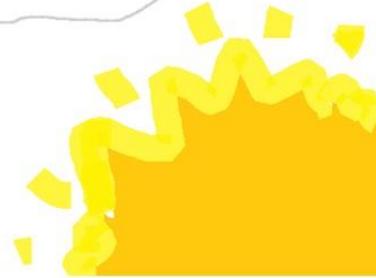
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Gravity is multi-directional.

It is an attractive force.



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You are supported by the planet.



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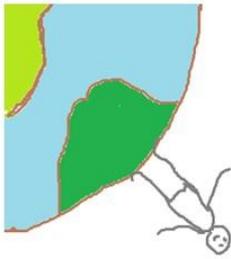


Balancing is built into you.  
Your system balances you.



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Balance feels easy, not strained,  
when you are in:

- *the center of support.*
- *even distribution of contact with the supporting surface.*



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When you compare movements you learn to recognize and understand your sensations, how something feels.



You develop your experiential knowledge to make informed choices based on your system.

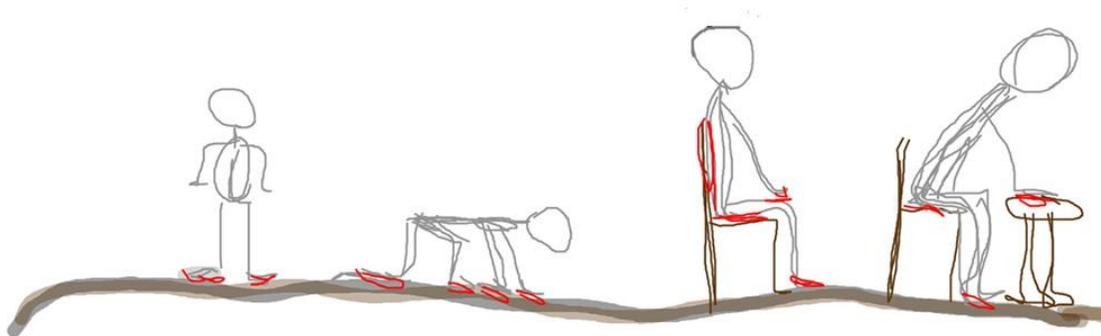
This is the foundation for personal agency.



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Am I in even distribution of contact with my support?

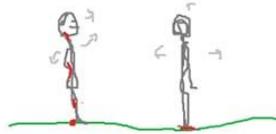
How can I tell the difference between being in or out of the center of support?



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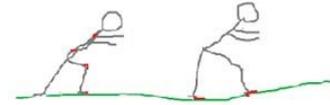
43

Am I leaning?



Am I in support or out of support?

Do I feel strain anywhere?



Can I move in any direction?

Learning happens with comparisons and exploring a continuum of options.  
Ask yourself questions and feel differences to learn what does and doesn't work for YOU



I call this the Goldilocks approach: Too small? Too big? Just right for me?

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## Language based on different Points of View (POV)

<b>Postural POV:</b> <b>(Instructions – Teachers Criteria)</b>	<b>Suspension POV:</b> <b>(Comparisons to develop Student's Criteria)</b>
Lift your sternum. Bring your shoulders back. Tuck your pelvis. Don't lock your knees. Have your feet shoulder width apart. Have your weight over your toes. Center your weight. Pull in your abs. Release your abs. Sit up straight. Think tall. Open up.	Sense the earth coming up under you. See the world around you. Roughly come into even distribution of contact with the planet. Can you tell when you are leaning and when you aren't leaning? Where are you bending? Can you move in all directions? Can you easily bounce a ball? Do you feel more or less human? Compare 'this' and 'that' and notice the effect of each?

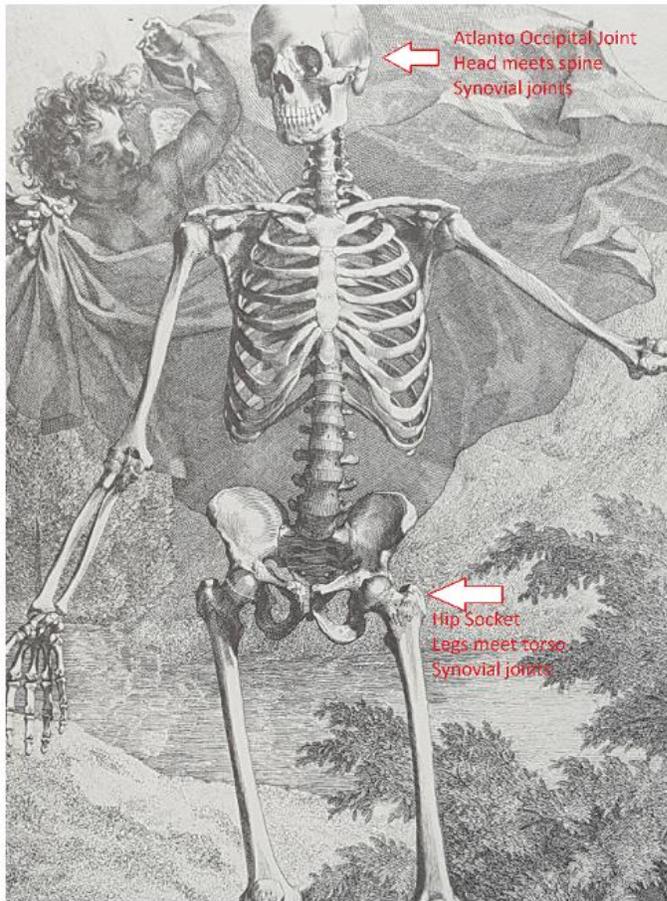
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If it isn't posture or alignment what do we call the topic or unit in curriculum?

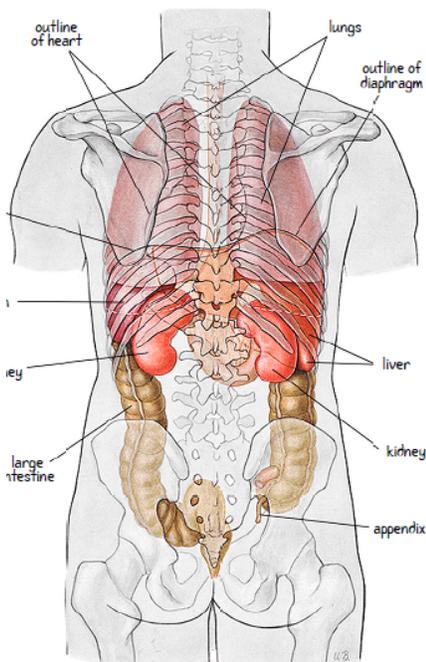
- Stature
- Architecture/structure
- What is useful to know about your system for singing, playing, dancing.
- Poise
- Uprightness



Experiential Anatomy is a means to more accurately understand yourself, your structure, so you function freely and efficiently.

The process weaves:

- Moving the parts while naming and feeling them.
- Looking at anatomy in images, skeletons, model.
- Relating images to your body and feeling the location and function.
- Seeing and feeling in another person (when appropriate)

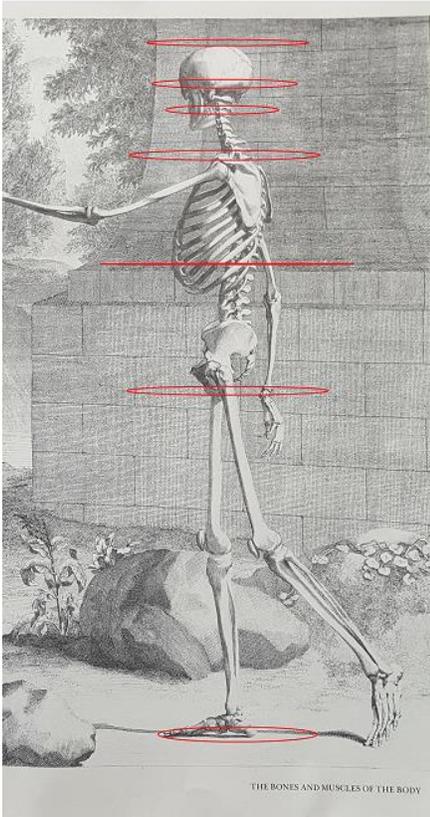


THE ORGANS - BACK VIEW

Your torso is a flexible, container for your life support organs. Its design priority is volume and elasticity, room to breathe, to digest, reproduce and so on.

Some ways to Map Torso are to:

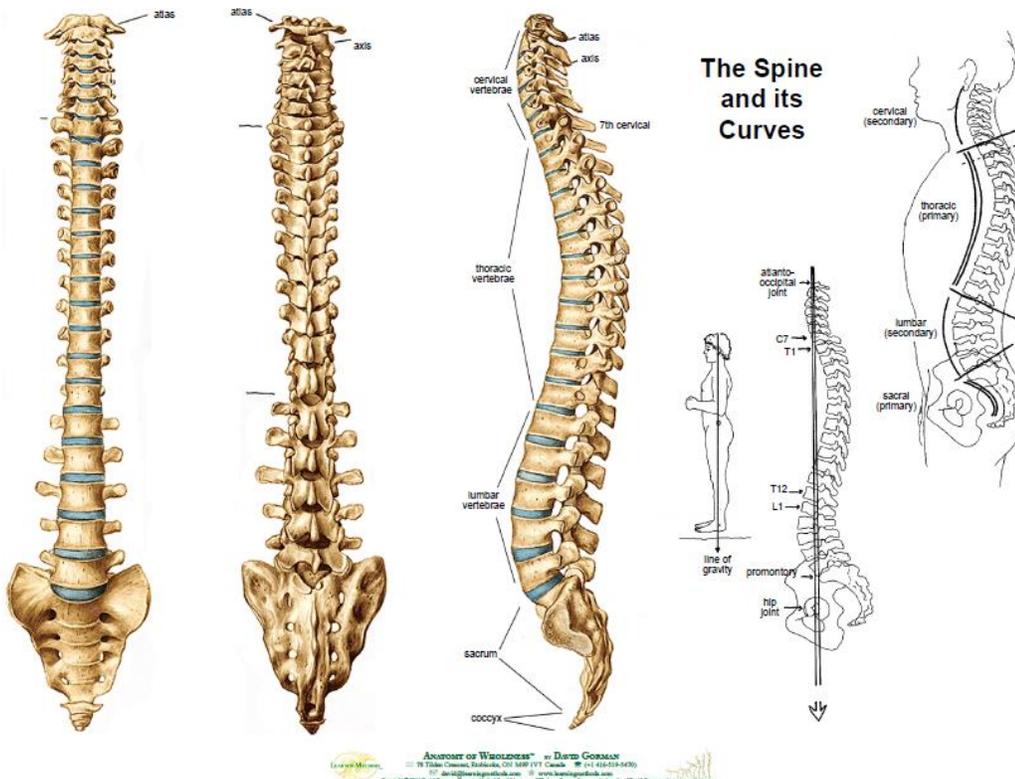
- locate dimensions of torso with diaphragms
- locate joints where limbs connect
- nature of the spine
- locate organs



The Torso is dimensional. It is designed for length and depth and width - Voluminous. The image of diaphragms or horizontal tissues across the body, like the cross sections in bamboo can be useful to help us include volume in our sense of ourselves.

The red horizontal sections correlate to horizontal layers in the body.

- Soles of feet
- Pelvic floor
- Thoracic diaphragm
- Vocal folds
- Roof of mouth/base of brain
- Crown of skull



Springy spine is a flexible lengthener.

Your Head  
Your limb for perceiving the  
world around you.

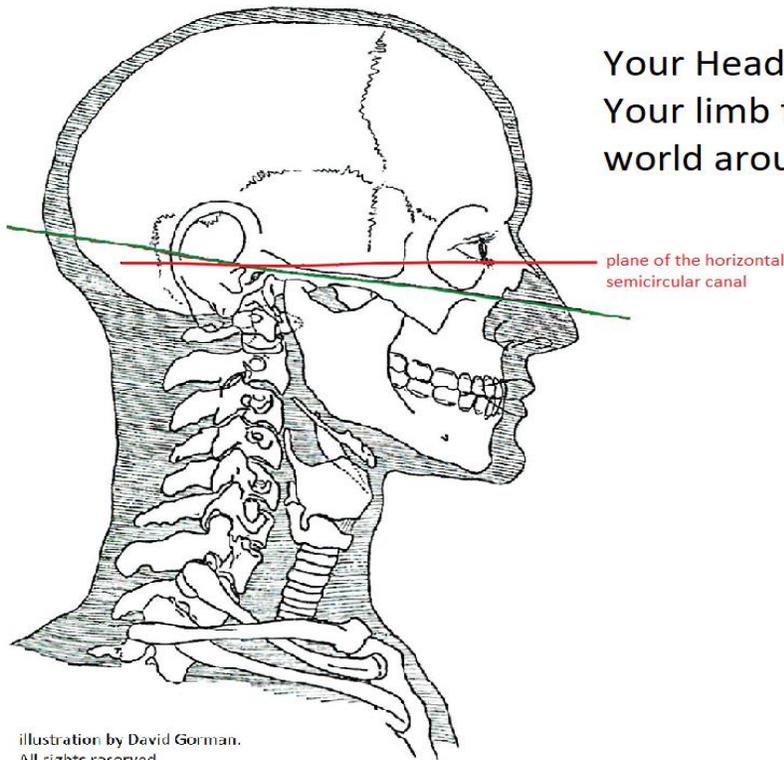
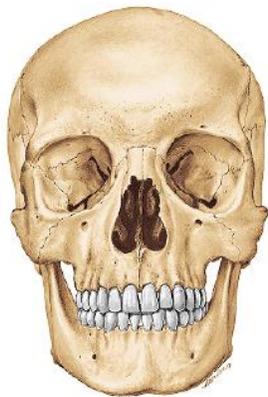
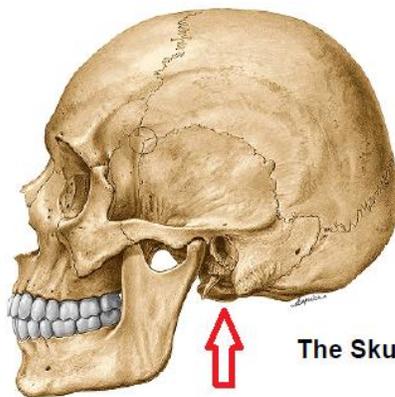


illustration by David Gorman.  
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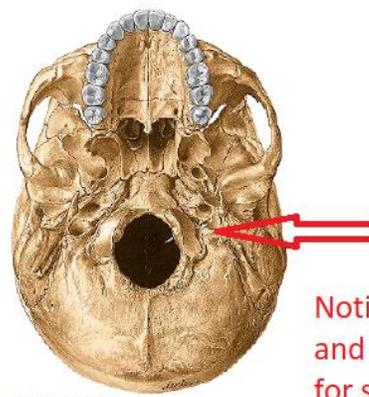


Front view



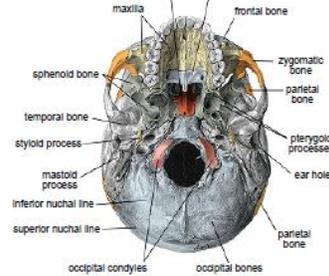
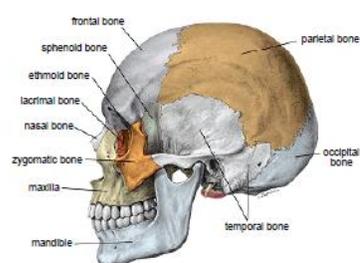
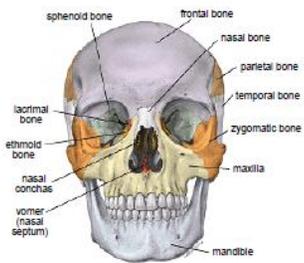
Lateral view

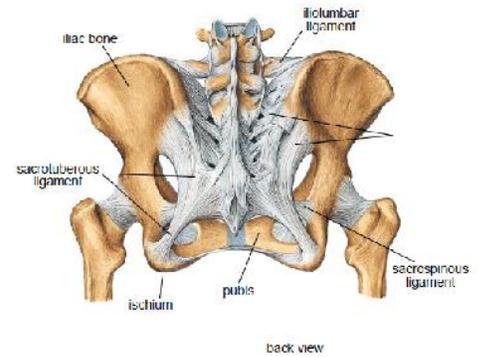
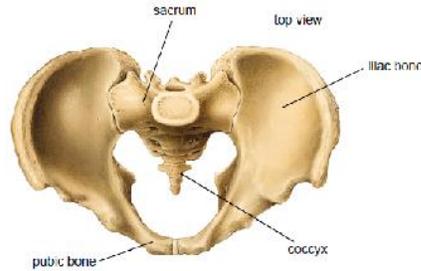
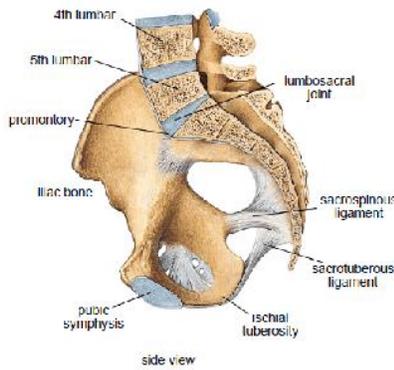
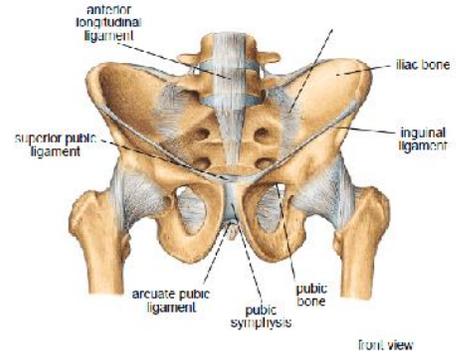
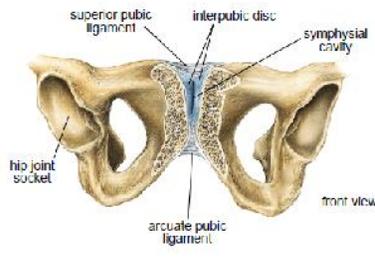
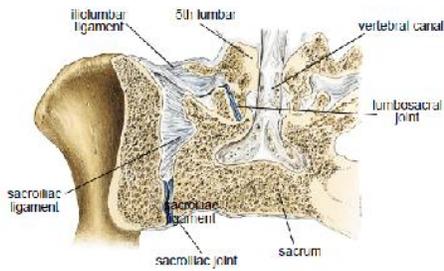
The Skull



Inferior view

Notice how central  
and forward the joint  
for spine and head,  
atlas to occipital joint  
is. Locate in you.

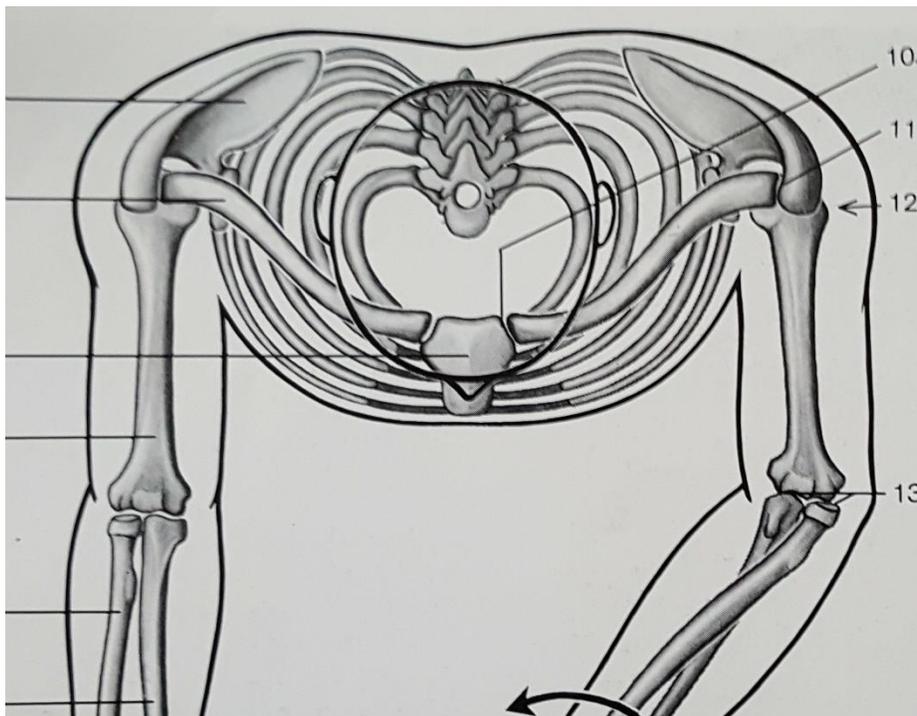




## The Pelvis



ANATOMY OF WHOLENESS™ by DAVID GORDAN  
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- A Pectoral girdle
- B Arm
- C Forearm
- D Wrist
- E Palm of hand
- F Finger

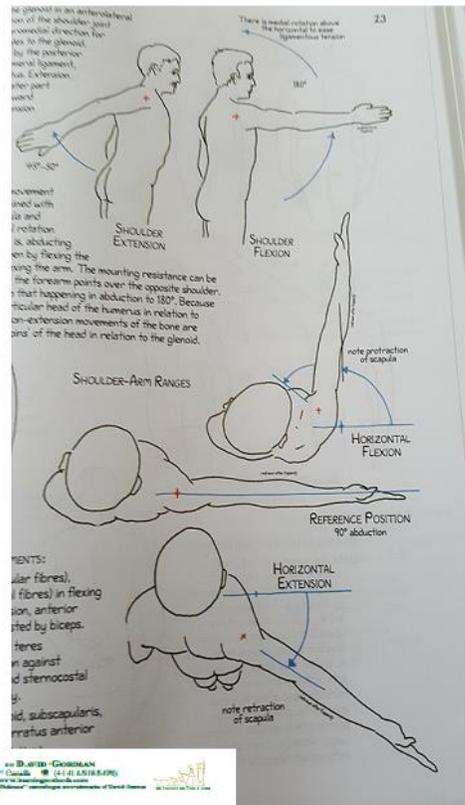
### Bones

- 1 Scapula
- 2 Clavicle
- 3 Sternum
- 4 Humerus
- 5 Radius
- 6 Ulna
- 7 Carpals bones
- 8 Metacarpal bones
- 9 Phalanges

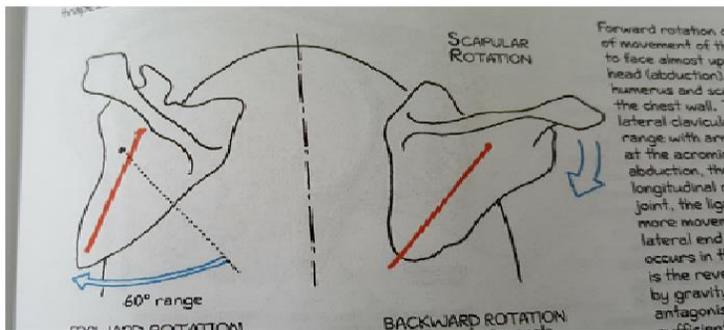
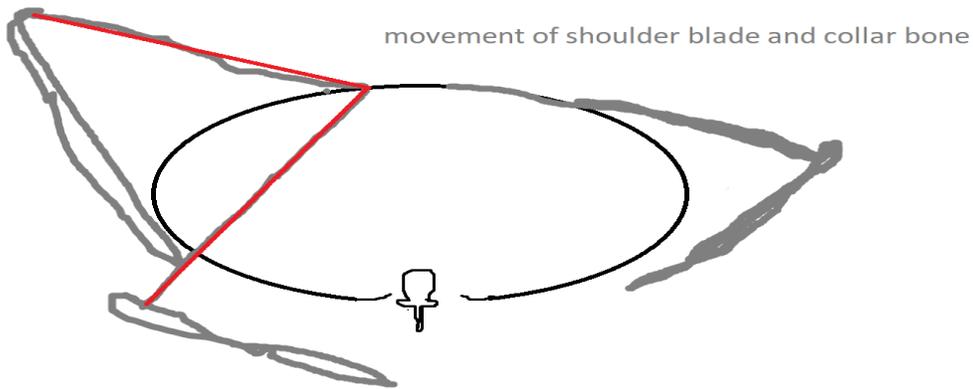
### Joints

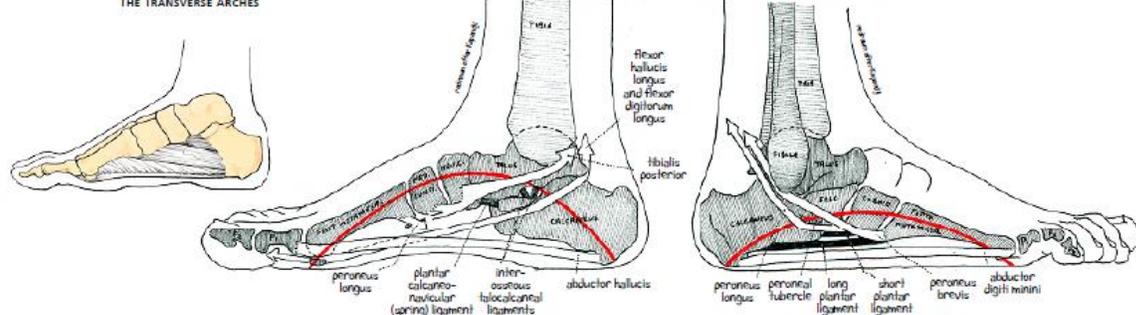
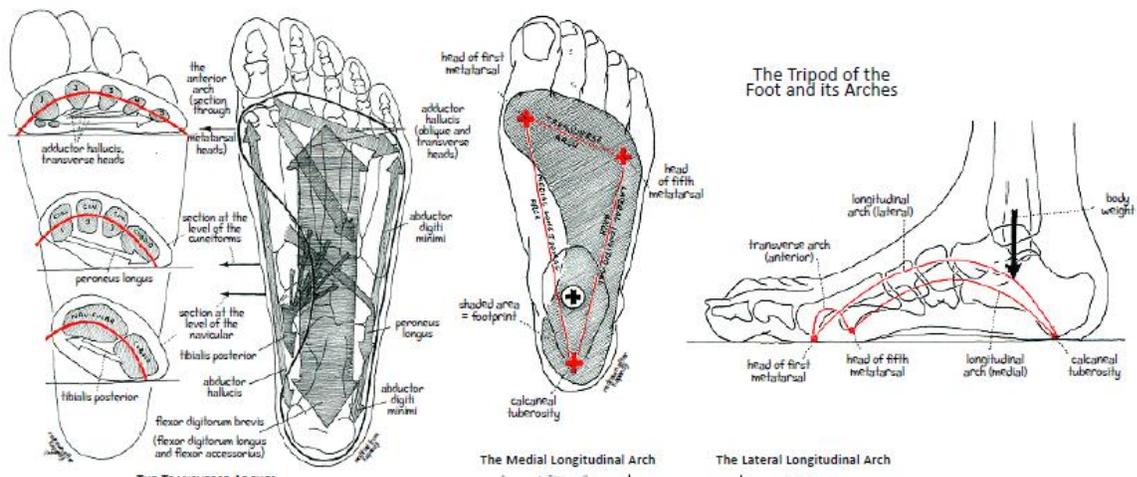
- 10 Sternoclavicular
- 11 Acromioclavicular





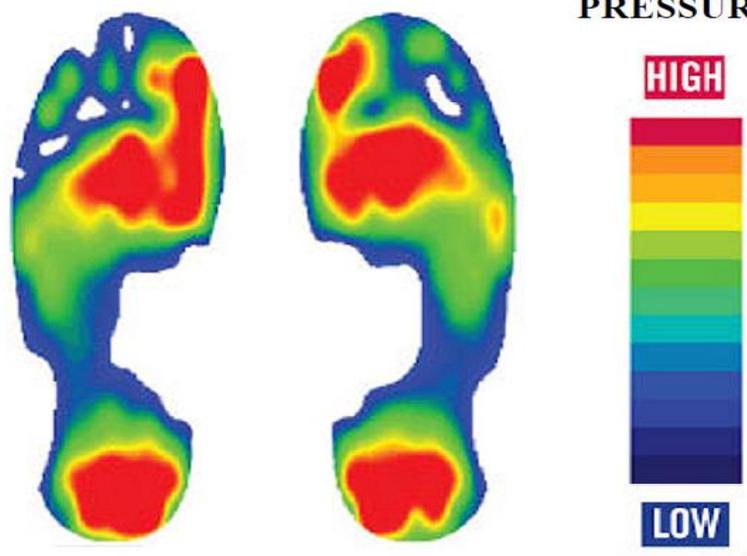
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**PRESSURE**



**CENTRED SUPPORT**  
 Even distribution of contact — as much to the back as the front, and side-to-side

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### 3. Activation • Igniting Action • The Coordinating System



# Deep Play – Listening, Try Wholeness, How Rushing Slows You Down

## Listen to Your System

When you get a back-of-the-mind message like "*I should stop now.*" Listen! Stop for a bit. The best way to GET hurt or strained is to let the "*I have to get this done now*" message override the "*I need to stop*" message.

Learn to detect rushing. Rushing is strain.

Can you do what you are doing in the time it takes to do it?

*"Here I am and I want to go there. I am not there yet. The distance is closing but I am exactly where I am. I am getting closer."*

Be where you are in space and where you are in how much you have gotten done.

Have Fun Exploring!

## Try Wholeness

Below is an experiment in what wholeness means on a practical level. What happens when you do the follow things:

a) Experience what it is like to see yourself as one whole, to literally say, "*I don't have a separate body I have a responsive self.*" If you tend to take your attention inwards to feel your body, don't for a week or two and see what happens. (That experiment utterly changed my life.)

This is NOT about ignoring sensations. Sensations are key. If you are hungry, eat, if you are tired, sleep. You get responses/sensations — YOU act... not your body.

b) Receive sensations rather than look for them by turning your attention inward. If you have a practice that invites focusing attention internally, such as watching your breath, see what it is like to not go in with your attention to perceive and focus. Receive the perception of the breath. You can close your eyes and get quiet, but instead of going in to feel your breath just stay open and receive the sensation of you breathing.

Sensations come to you rather than you going to find them. What happens?

c) Continue an open attention when pain narrows you to itself. If pain calls your attention to a body part, see what it is like to NOT let the part pull your attention in to the part. Try saying, "*I hurt*" rather than "*my neck hurts*". You may notice that saying, "*I*" rather than "*my neck*" invites a different, broader sense of being.

d) At that moment you notice pain instead of narrowing into the sensation and the location of the pain include more into your awareness — the sensation of the earth under you, the colors in

the room, the sensation of moving. The moment you notice you hurt, you are no longer attending to whatever you had been attending to seconds before, your attention switched to the sensation of pain. You've already changed, the whole of you.

e) See what it is like to experiment with conceiving of yourself as one whole being at every given moment, exactly as you are, rather than having a body that somehow needs improvement.

### Some wholeness musings:

Lightning and thunder is the classic example of a whole experienced as separate parts. A high-voltage discharge of electricity between the clouds and the ground is perceived by us as light and sound. Because light travels faster than sound there is a delay between what we see and hear. Experientially, lightning and thunder seem like separate events. We see one thing, hear another. Neither gives us the whole.

There is a parallel between our experience of high-voltage electrical discharge and our selves. I hear my voice, I see my body, I feel my body, my feelings, my thoughts. Often in our lived experience and reflected in our use of language we experience a collection of parts and perceptions. Just the expression — my voice, my body, the possessive pronoun — demonstrates this separated experience of our selves.

At first glance this seems logical. It is the way we seem to be. Yet on some level we also know that just as thunder is not separate from lightning — it is one moment experienced differently by our senses — so too, there is no me and my this or my that. There is one moment of me, one moment of being. Anatomically we can name parts. But functionally we are whole even while we can name the parts.

Recall a time when you performed the way you've always wanted to, or if you aren't a performer, a time when you felt utter joy and contentment. During that moment were you experiencing yourself as a collection of parts: body/mind/voice/feelings?

Having asked this question of hundreds of people over the last 30 years, those moments of life are usually felt as moments of wholeness. In that wholeness you experience Being. In many cases there is a sense of inter-being, of unity not only within you but with the world around you. These moments show you there is no me-and-my-anything; there is simply you, one whole being.

As someone who has been in the dance field my whole life and in the somatic field for 45 years I have spent countless hours in exercise that essentially perpetuated the separation of me and my body. We were learning to *embody ourselves* (which is rather fishy when you think about it for a moment — aren't we innately embodied)?

We were learning to get out of our heads; we did body scans and spent hours turning our attention inward to feel our bodies to gain body awareness. Ironically, these exercises were essentially in the pursuit of wholeness, while at the same time asking us to feel parts. I recognize that for anyone who has spent more time in thought, imagination and ideas these exercises can be illuminating and recuperative. I am sure there are people whose lives were saved by spending time "coming back to their body". For centuries the human body was seen as lesser than mind and in some cases as the source of evil/sin. Embedded but seldom

recognized in this idea is the idea of being separate parts like lightning and thunder. In this historical/cultural context it has been an incredible gift to celebrate our bodies, reclaim the miracle and beauty of sensation.

However, going in to feel our body or reclaim our body is still rooted in the same faulty body-as-separate-from-self construct. The alternative to disconnection from the body isn't to connect with the body. It is to see there is no body on a functional level.

You don't actual feel your body, you feel your functioning. This is a fundamental point. There is just one whole you that is perceiving and experiencing as a whole when you simply stop going in to feel parts.

At any moment, thought, sensation, chemicals, feelings are individual perceptions coming through different senses of one moment of being. Each sense gives us one view of one aspect of a greater whole. Like the blind men feeling different parts of the elephant. The snake of the trunk, the tree of the leg, the wall of the side, these are accurate experiences of parts. Individually they aren't an elephant any more than a thought, a feeling or a neck is you.

When we make a part a whole we are vulnerable to misinterpretations and partial solutions. When we can interpret our experience from a construct of a whole harmonious system we are liberated from one of the great root misconceptions of our time.

## How Rushing Slows You Down!

Do you ever find yourself in a rush? Can you describe the feeling of rushing? Rushing is often confused with speed. Rushing isn't the feeling of being fast; rushing is the feeling of being ahead of yourself.

*Rushing is the feeling of being where you are not!*

The tension and grip of rushing interferes with speed. It also causes the tendency to knock into things and have minor accidents since your attention is somewhere else--out ahead of you. Friday afternoon is the most common time for workplace injury. Moving quickly requires freedom of movement, ease and balance. It isn't at all what rushing feels like.

People often work with me to address physical concerns. Many times, the cause of the symptom has less to do with what they know about the body than how they are going about life. You can be the Master of Body-mechanics and if you are rushing you will move inefficiently. You cannot be physically efficient and rush. It is impossible because your body is always in the coordination of what you are up to with your intention and attention, both of which are ahead of you when you rush.

It can seem impossible not to rush. Once a you feel the uselessness of rushing and experience the ease that is speed, it can practically change itself. A student described rushing on her way to work. She said, "I noticed I was in a rush and asked myself, "Do I need to rush?" The answer was, 'no'. I wasn't even late! So, I just stopped." How often are you rushing erroneously?

The next time you find yourself in a rush:

- Notice the specific sensations of rushing: tension in your jaw, gripping in your body, being off balance.

- Notice what your focus is on. Are you ahead of yourself or thinking about what is coming next: the next bite, already in the car, what you'll do after you read the e-mail...?
- Ask yourself if you need to go quickly now. If no, then just stop rushing.
- If yes, then notice where you physically are and where you want to be. Say to yourself "Here I am and I am on my way there. I am getting closer with each step." In a demonstration I have people see the distance closing as they walk to the destination. If you are doing a task, like stacking firewood, say to yourself I am loading this piece and this piece and so forth. This isn't about slowing down, it is about being where you are even as you hold the intention to get where you are going.
- Lighten up to move quickly. *Find out* how quickly you can move rather than move as fast as you can. The later framework tends to invite a rush.

Do you often have more to do in a day than is possible to get done? Do you even know what is possible? This is a setup for stress and rushing. The stress isn't the problem. The stress is the sensation of trying to do the impossible. Your tension is NOT the problem; it is a wonderful signal alerting you to what you are trying to do. Your idea that you can get so much done in a day is the problem. As my teacher David Gorman says,

*"Nice idea, wrong universe."*

The sooner you align your idea/desire with reality, the easier life is.

## Cooperating with Your Coordinating System

What kind of focus of attention allows for most skilled and efficient movement for the task at hand? The following exploratorium is an opportunity to discover for yourself the implications of different points of view regarding human movement or human coordination.

- 1) When practicing or learning a skill, whether it is golf, singing, or yoga identify when you give a direction to a part of your body, an internal focus. For example, say to yourself, "Bring my shoulders back or use my abs or take a breath."
- 2) Experiment with broadening your intention from the body part to the larger purpose of the skill, the external focus, such as where you want the ball to go, or where you want to go, or the meaning and quality of the musical phrase, or the over-all shape in space of your body.
- 3) Compare the felt experience of these two different approaches. If you aren't familiar with the broader intention approach it may take a few goes before you can tell any difference.

The underpinning for the above exploration is the question of how your body is designed to function. Do you have a system that works best when parts are manipulated to produce results, or does it work best when the system is free to coordinate to your intention to produce results? If you enjoy a skill, answering this question can be one of the most important clarities you'll ever make. Coming to an answer to this question isn't an intellectual exercise. To truly answer it, you need to experiment for yourself and feel the differences.

Here's some information to inspire your investigation: There is a growing body of research

pointing to the answer that our human system is a Coordinating System.

Coordinating System is not the term given in motor learning research. It comes to me via David Gorman's articulation of how the system seems to be designed to coordinate the billions of bits of information into action when left free to organize around intention. Personally, I think the term would be an asset to the motor learning/skill acquisition field.

The following link is to a PDF file of a paper by Hossner and Wenderoth called "[Gabriele Wulf: Attentional Focus and Motor Learning: A Review of 10 Years of Research](#)" which summarizes ten years of Wulf's research. Here is a short excerpt from the article:

*"Importantly, not only performance, but the whole learning process seems to be affected by what the learner focuses on while practicing a skill (for a comprehensive review, see Wulf 2007). That is, how fast a skill is learned, how well it is retained, is largely determined by the individual's focus of attention that is induced by the instructions or feedback given him or her. The present article reviews the findings from studies, conducted over the past decade, that have specifically examined an internal versus external focus of attention. As originally defined by Wulf, Hob, and Prinz (1998), an internal focus is one that is directed at the performer's own body movements, whereas the external focus is directed to the effects that his or her movement have on the environment. As I will demonstrate in this review, there is considerable evidence that an external focus of attention is more effective for performance and learning."* - Hossner and Wenderoth [my italics].

Same point from Sandra Blakeslee [The Body Has a Mind of its Own](#)

*"The best way to make a good golfer into a bad golfer is to ask him whether he breathes in or out before hitting the ball...You need attention at the beginning of training, when the movements are being orchestrated by you motor cortex; but as the skill migrates down to lower-level motor maps, attention tends to just get in the way and muck things up.*

*When not a novice, your body schema just doesn't need your conscious thoughts or second guessing trying to interfere with your well-practiced motor programs.*

*You don't need to pay attention to your breathing, limb position or other postural minutiae. An expert plays the goal of the action, not its components."*

Most studies are applied to sports like golf, volleyball, jumping and others. This motor learning research is confirming what [David Gorman](#) observed and articulated 20 years ago. I created the [Wholeness in Motion™](#) movement class in the early 2000's to see if it was possible to teach movement, based on my experiences with Gorman, with minimal body-part directed teaching and maximum whole system, intentional or external focus. I was using different words to describe the difference between internal focus and external focus than that of the motor learning world but was essentially asking the same question applied to Yoga and dance like movement as well a "postural" re-education. Anecdotally, and experientially, the evidence was mounting that it was not only possible but preferable to scaffold movement teaching away from body parts manipulation (internal focus) to the whole system in action (external focus) as the root pedagogical approach.

During this time I was also working extensively with singers in private practice, through residencies, as well as through the [VoiceCare Network](#). A few voice teachers began to shift their approach toward teaching with a Coordinating System perspective. Together we are seeing results of not only fine skill acquisition and retention but students gaining autonomy as artists and confidence as learners. Granted this is anecdotal, but it is

enough evidence to suggest that a study in the application of the Coordinating System to arts education would be well warranted.

The key isn't really in examining these anecdotes or studies; it is asking yourself how do you go about your practices, teaching, coaching, artistry, or sport. Almost every movement class I witness, from aerobics to Yoga to personal trainers, is embedded with the manipulating point of view. It is how we have understood body and movement. Many classes are wonderful and important and life saving for people. My goal in writing this and in teaching is to invite the possibility that what is already lovely can be fantastic and give even greater benefits when more aligned with how we actually function. The fact is focusing on a specific body part and particularly trying to align it or put it in a better position interferes with the freedom of the whole to be able to most efficiently coordinate movement. Our system is too complex a system to think we can tell parts what to do. Someone says, "Your body is perfect and this class teaches you to be free," and in the next sentence asks students to, "lengthen your neck, open your chest, drop your tail". All of these directions are part driven and override the fantastic ability of the system to function in open suspension and to freely coordinate action.

What you feel is the way you go about action. You don't feel your body *per se*; you feel your current state of functioning. That is why you can feel heavy and strained in one moment and open and light in the other. You feel your current coordination. So how you go about an exercise completely determines which muscles fire, which lengthen, which move. Two apparently same movements will elicit very different coordinations depending on how you approach it.

Let's say the movement is to touch your head. If you simply touch your head, like you are scratching an itch, your movement will be different than if you instruct yourself to take your hand to the top of your head and move your fingers back and forth on your scalp.

Scratching an itch is an *external focus* with a single intention that allows the whole system to coordinate the movement. Taking your hand to your head and moving your fingers is a parts-based *internal focus* in which you are focusing on the hand moving to your head. Almost anyone doing this experiment will feel the ease and effortlessness of the former and the greater strain and "arm feel" of the latter. These are not the same "exercise". In other words, when you exercise you are exercising different things depending on how you go about the movement. THIS HAS HUGE IMPLICATIONS FOR ALL MOVEMENT TRAINING AND EXERCISES FOR REHAB!

The question arises. "*What do we do when habitual patterns have organized the body in a harmful way?*" The Language of Wholeness addresses this question.

## An Interlude on Attention by David Gorman

( *from a workshop, August 2002* )

"It often happens that we innocently try to do two things at once, for example, a violinist needs to be paying attention to the actual music she wants to play yet also tries to attend to controlling her fingering on the strings, or an archer knows he should be paying attention to the target but tries to also pay into unconstructive habits. In the cases above the misconception is that they know their main focus or "primary" attention should be on the music or the target. They think they have indeed directed it there and "left it running" while they bring a secondary focus onto the details of the fingering or the breathing. That this is an illusion is easy to show, for when we help them to really stay with their main

focus and resist the temptation to go off to the other details, they not only register how different that is and how much more present they are with their goal, but their functional coordinations are better and the resulting music or archery is also much better. Somehow the system took care of the details when they got out of its way and simply stayed clear about and focused on the goal. You, the conscious attentive being, are the boss and you need to lead. How can the ship function unless the captain is up on the bridge steering where he wants to go — if he goes below-decks to tell the workers exactly how to shovel coal, who is up on the bridge leading? Another aspect of the problems that can arise from this illusion is when people say, "I wasn't present", or "I couldn't concentrate" as if there is a state called "not being present" or "not concentrating". When we look closely it turns out that they were in fact present, just not with the task at hand. Rather they had been distracted and were present with something else, maybe their feelings of nervousness or their thoughts of how to do their techniques, or thoughts about how well they were doing or what others were thinking, etc. Once a person realizes that she has only one attention and if it wasn't directed where it should be it must have been placed elsewhere, she is on the first steps toward being aware of what she is aware of, then she will be able to consciously perceive her attention shifts and to recognize what thoughts, feelings or emotions have dragged her away from what she intended to do. Only then can real understanding of what is happening and real choice and control become possible again."

## Change in Action - Changing a Walking Pattern or the Hot Cup Theory of Changing Habits

This article is the story of a student who made real change in a short time. She had participated in several choral and conducting classes I was teaching during a University residency where she got basic information about this work. We then had a private session. During that session I asked her what she'd like to work with that would support her art. She said that knee pain and back pain gets in her way. We started with a simple diagnostic tool I use to assess overall coordination by having her walk. The goal being to see why it makes sense her back/knee hurts. Indeed, her habitual walk was a slight leaning back that focused forces on her lower back and knees, a common cause of pain. As we explored further that global pattern was evident in singing and conducting. I took her through some explorations to awaken her awareness of the sensation of the habit.

As we ended the lesson, I asked her what she understood she would explore on her own. She said what most people say after they've had a contrast experience in which a new way of going about things feels good and better. She said something like, "I'm going to practice walking over my support and looking around." Her focus at that moment was on practicing the new, better way. Logical, right? From my years of experience this "improvement approach" will soon turn into another fixed position and often a state of mind that there is something wrong with her walk (or worse with HER) and she needs to directly fix it.

We took a bit more time to clarify that the entire purpose of the contrasting experience was less about what she "should" do to be right and more about feeling the sensation of the habit and naming it accurately. This also experientially shows her what an amazing signaling system she has. Her body is fine. She just needs to know how to read the signals. Kind of like when a kid touches a hot cup you don't have to tell her to not touch the cup again. The bad sensation of heat takes care of that. This is a way of turning the invisible habit into a hot cup. Her assignment was to:

1. Be awoken more quickly to the sensation of habit.

2. Stay in habit a bit and ask a few questions: where do I feel pressure? Strain? Force? Where was my attention just then? (Turning the invisible habit into a HOT signal.)

3. After getting a broader sense of the moment and the sensations of habit, then all she needed to do was let herself come out of it. There wasn't a specific "better" to get to just allowing herself move out of the strain, the heat. In this way the change is happening because of her awareness of the "not good" of the discomfort. As she changed her perception and felt the "discomfort of the habit" change did itself, her system wanted to get out of discomfort, just like a kid who has touched a hot cup. It is as if the "good" does itself! There is nothing wrong with her body or her. She just needed to experience her habit as discomfort which is like giving her a more accurate internal compass.

When I saw her a few months later she wasn't walking in habit. I asked her about it and she reported lots less pain in her back and knees. I asked her what she had done and she beautifully described doing the above process, which at the time of that first lesson was foreign to her and didn't even make much sense. Why wouldn't you just go for the improvement? Noticing habit and staying there can feel like a waste of time at first? But she stuck with the "hot cup" approach. She became clear about letting the system do the change and her job was to be specifically aware when she found herself in habit. As she learns to apply the approach to herself, she is learning how to apply it with her students.

The bigger up shot to observing habit was her discovery that when she was walking and thinking about other things she tended to go into habit. As she was more awake to the world around her, she was no longer in habit. Both were possibilities and both had effects on her. In this way the "hot cup" approach gives a person tools to continue to learn about their patterns on their own. "Why does it make sense I find myself leaning back? Oh, because I'm off thinking about my next task." As she began to be clear about that relationship of attention to physical orientation, she could simply use the sense of strain to decide where she wanted to put her attention on thoughts or on the world around her. No remembering to be right or present or anything. Just using her built-in sensory system/compass to make choices.

In the end once habit is revealed your job isn't to change it so much as to redefine it as sensation. This isn't walking this is leaning back. As you shine a more accurate light on it, the system will shift away from the "heat" toward less heat.

The heartbeat of my work these days isn't to show people an optimal way to function as much as reveal to them how beautifully their system is already designed to guide them to optimal functioning by helping them understand the signals the system gives them through sensation, thought, and feelings. Wholeness in Motion™ and LearningMethods™ are a means to navigate from your built-in compass which in the end is a much more reliable guide than any externally acquired guideline be it postural instructions or life rules.

## The Coordination of Being — Conducting

A narrative of a seminar given in 2004 for a group of 70 choral conductors working with the *Anatomy of Wholeness*™ model of the whole-person "coordination of being" and shows how the LearningMethods tools let us get underneath the symptoms and "poor body use" to a deeper level where we can really change problems permanently.

Conducting is dancing. I saw this clearly recently when I asked seventy conductors to conduct the same song at the same time. Suddenly there was a roomful of movers, everyone dancing their unique version of the same piece. Some arms were high and wide and flowing others low and calm and others swaying and bending, the arcs and strengths changing and turning — dancing. Imagine the different sound and song each of these conductors would hear from their version of the piece.

The conundrum of conducting seems woven within this observation. Does a conductor express in herself what she wants to hear? Why do the musicians sound tight? Why aren't they feeling pianissimo here? Why does my back hurt? How the conductor understands the problem she perceives and how she responds determines the effectiveness and sustainability of her solution. One thing that seems to be true is that conductors often communicate information unintentionally that affects their musicians.

I am not a conductor. A conducting friend of mine suggested I be sure to let you know this right up front. This article will not address anything about how to use your gesture to convey specific musical concepts — the vocabulary of conducting, so to speak.

So what am I doing writing a conducting article? Essentially, I know something about two things that can be useful for conductors. I know something about how our bodies work well in healthy movement and what causes unhealthy or harmful movement — for instance, why do you ache between your shoulder blades after a concert?

I also know something about how things we do intentionally cause particular unintentional symptoms. For example, why do your shoulders keep coming up when you keep telling them to go down? Why do you lean forward when you tell yourself to stand balanced on two feet? Why does the choir sound tight when you keep telling them to flow and breathe?

I am a certified Alexander Technique Teacher<sup>(note1)</sup> and I also have a lot of dance and movement training. But the core material I present here comes out of the extraordinary work of anatomy maverick David Gorman, author of *The Body Moveable* and *Looking at Ourselves*.<sup>(note2)</sup> Gorman took a new, in-depth look at human anatomy from a functional point of view that led him to a new understanding of how we coordinate our actions and what causes the problems people have. There are many ways this information and other recent scientific research challenges much of Alexander's work. So, I can no longer say that what I do is Alexander Technique, although I am certainly informed by what is useful from that body of knowledge. In essence, this article is not about a particular technique. I am simply exploring how some aspects of our current structural and functional knowledge about our human system, its balance and mobility, can enhance your skills and the pleasure you find in your conducting.

There are two basic facts that underlie this change in approach from the traditional postural model and even the newer body/mind approaches like Alexander Technique.

First, anatomically and functionally we are not built to operate in positions. We can't hold a posture or try to get in "alignment" and still function efficiently. Optimal functioning is based on an interplay between stability and mobility, all naturally coordinated and integrated by our attention and intention on the activities in which we are involved. This interplay is more accurately represented by a model of an elastically sprung web of suspension, a sort of *tensegrity* structure for those of you who know Buckminster Fuller.<sup>(note3)</sup>

Second, there is no functional separation between body/mind/emotion. You cannot give your body a physical instruction that it will maintain, as if it is something separate from you, while you go on paying attention to something else or experiencing myriad thoughts and feelings. In other words, you only have one attention. (note4)

While these two perspectives are familiar to many people conceptually, i.e. in an "intellectual" sense, they continue to use language and operate from a pedagogy about body that does not reflect these concepts. As soon as a direct physical instruction is given, like "take a deep breath", "relax", "release your shoulders", we are back into an erroneous approach to ourselves and to our students.

What do we do? We need to develop a new language, a more accurate perception and an exploratory pedagogy that truly reflect the facts of our coordinating system. How would this work? Let's take an example. A conductor is standing talking to the choir. We see an alert, open, mobile person who is breathing freely, who is balanced and engaged. The conductor looks at the clock and turns to the choir and says, "OK, time to rehearse." Now we see the conductor standing behind the music stand, baton in raised hand, and an overall sense of holding permeates her. Her chest is raised. There is very little breathing except for a few forced take-a-breath kind of breaths. She is forward on her toes, eyebrows raised. She is ready to start in a lifted, held, leaning-forward sort of way.

What is going on here? If we were to help this person from the postural or body/mind separated approach we might tell her to relax or come back over her feet or release her elbow and breathe. If, on the other hand, we come from the "whole-being as a coordinating-system" point of view we start with a question to ourselves. The coordinating system perspective implies that we are already beautifully designed for efficient action. If someone is in a seemingly inefficient coordination for what they want to do then we first must ask ourselves why would their system be in this current coordination — in other words, not what we can do to fix it, but why is it happening in the first place?

Let's come back to our conductor. We know she wants to feel free and balanced as she conducts (she already told us). Yet as soon as she starts to conduct, even in that first preparatory stillness, she has lost her freedom and balance. If we stop her and ask her about this she may not even notice that she is stiffer. To help her notice, we could create a moment of comparison by having her replay how she is when she is just talking to the choir and then compare it with the very next moment of starting. She then may say, "Yes, I can feel I am forward on my toes and not breathing. But, I feel ready. When I am just talking to the choir I don't feel ready yet."

Now, we ask, "Feel ready? Ready for what?"

"Ready to conduct", she replies. What we are doing is sleuthing out what she is doing, what she is intending and what she is thinking at the moment she turns to the choir. In this case, what she intends and what she feels she is doing is becoming "ready" to conduct. As we continue to ask a few questions it becomes clear that her idea of ready has two parts. One is her conducting and singing training in which she was told to lift her sternum or stand straight ("good posture" territory). The other is her desire to connect with the choir.

We'll take one aspect of the situation at a time.

First, we discover her stand-straight postural habit is so ingrained that she no longer has to think "stand straight". She, in a sense, becomes a conductor by taking on this lifted holding. We would then have her look

closely at her resulting experience to accurately assess if her idea of good posture is actually giving her the freedom and balance she wants. One simple experiment so that she could begin to experience the holding and effortful part of her habit would be to have her start to conduct as if she was just talking with her choir; for her to go about it as if she wasn't a conductor. She would compare her "conductor" posture with her "just being herself" way and assess the relative mobility and balance in each. This would probably be an appropriate time to introduce some of the principles about her structure, about her elastic suspension and dynamic balance, and about supported movement. So rather than telling her a new and "better" way to position herself or free herself (relax), we are helping her discover her already-existing free and upright nature. [\(note5\)](#) As she stops imposing her conductor posture she will be able to assess for herself which approach actually allows her to be ready. In this way "ready" will get redefined as she sees it includes mobility, ease, and support. In the same way "posture" will be redefined as she experiences her imposed holding and how it impedes her freedom.

In fact, by the time we get to this point, we have what we need to be able to take the next step to help her discover how posture interferes with the freedom in her choir's sound as well.

Remember, that other aspect of her "ready" was her desire to connect with her choir. As soon as she wants to connect she leans over into them. That pull forward with raised eyebrows is how her system coordinates her deep intention to connect. People often refer to this kind of pattern as doing too much or getting in our own way.

However, it is important to see clearly that this is not quite what is happening here. She is not pulling herself off balance and tightening her face the way she had consciously trained herself to lift her chest. The leaning forward, in a simplistic sense, is her unconscious whole-body response to her desire to connect with the choir. It is as if her attention flies out of her into them. If we asked her where is her attention at the moment of "connecting" we would see that she has all her awareness way over in the singers.

There is nothing wrong with her body, no bad "body use". What is happening as she does this is that her system perfectly coordinates her into the shape and posture of someone who is trying to connect by narrowing their attention out and into the choir. She is, in fact, in the "perfect coordination" for this kind of connecting.

If she wants to change this habit what does she do? The old way might be to say, "Do less, relax, stay over your feet or lean back". This correction may be useful temporarily but generally leads to a whole new clutch of problems and an ongoing series of further corrections. The problem or cause of the leaning forward strain does not lie in her body or her posture, it lies in her understanding of connection with the choir. If we can take that apart and see clearly what is necessary for the act of conducting she will find a real and permanent solution.

What does she mean by connecting with her choir? She wants the choir to know she cares. She wants them to know she is ready. She wants them to be energized and ready. She wants to make sure they come in to the music on time. She wants essentially to communicate multiple messages in that first moment. So we dig a little with more questions. How does a choir know their conductor cares? How do they know she's ready? How do they get energized and ready or come in on time? If she answers each of these questions in turn and specifically it won't be long before it becomes clear that leaning forward and raising her eyebrows has little to do with achieving any of these specifics.

First and foremost, connection is already occurring just by the mere act of being in the same vicinity. We see and we hear. Humans are innately and automatically perceiving and communicating creatures. She doesn't have to narrow her attention over into them to be seen or heard or to "connect". If she simply is there in the role of conductor, looking and listening, that's all she needs to do. Her attentiveness will be visible without having to show it. Their attention will follow.

This applies to "caring" too. She doesn't have to show she cares. If she cares it will be expressed and perceived without any added expression that she cares. As we see in her habit she shows much more than ready when she leans and intensifies her face. Typically the choir will stiffen in response to being readied by this kind of conductor.

But this is not enough to change her pattern completely. We already learned that part of what she means by wanting to connect is that she wants to make sure the choir comes in together and on time. She wants control of the choir.

Ah, but can she actually "control" them? It is helpful to be clear of what she is in control of and what she is not. A conductor can control her own movement, her own understanding and what she teaches or prepares. In other words, she can control herself. The choir will or won't come along. She can not control them from behind the stand or make sure they do something.

She CAN be clear. She CAN guide and lead them. That's the chance she takes in this profession. This may seem terrifying to her. "I'm a control freak", she shouts. But if she goes one step further and looks closely, she'll see that she doesn't really NEED to control them. Is it a 50/50 chance they'll come in or 95% chance they will? If she simply recognizes that the chances are quite good they will come in on time — after all, this is what they want too — she will see that it is more a question of trust than of control. Trust, plus the easy and unforced clarity of her lead and guidance, will do more to bring about the result she wants than any tension and trying on her part.

Accurate and specific assessment of how things already work, as well as making peace with and accepting the facts as they are will help her step out of the whole trap of worrying or trying to control what is out of her control.

At first exposure to this exploring, questioning and discovering approach some feel like this sort of analysis takes too much time, is too complicated. But if we look at the hour or two it takes and then take in the new level of understanding and the profound and permanent results, we can see that the time is well spent and ultimately saves much more time and suffering.

Our conductor is now experimenting with not positioning herself, just allowing herself to be, as she is at this moment, with no need to change anything, simply because this moment is as it is. She also has cleared up misconceptions about connecting with and controlling her choir. So this next time as she turns to begin the rehearsal, she remains in her innate, effortless, balanced and supported coordination to conduct the choir! She can now put her attention on the music and guide her choir from her own center rather than be over in them trying to control them or inside herself trying to fix or direct her body.

When she can operate this way, she will find that she now has access to the enormous wealth of information available to her from her own system. This is the marvelous by-product of following this coordinating system perspective. A person simply goes about living life and when something is amiss their very own system wakes

them up with a signal (usually with a symptom of some kind). Then they can begin the journey of exploring and discovering the cause of the signal or symptom and changing it. End of problem. Beginning of more knowledge and understanding. Plus they don't have to get stuck in the vicious cycle of symptom, adjustment, another symptom, more adjustment, where there is an endless series of more sophisticated and subtle, though usually temporary, attunements.

This conductor example has many tributaries of interesting implications into which we could paddle. But I am choosing to stick to the main points for demonstration purposes. Yes, as you listened to me work through this piece of work you may have thought of other explanations or had other responses to questions. You may have noticed other possible misconceptions. After all, there are almost as many responses as there are people and here we have just followed the path of one of them.

Sorting out misconceptions is the heart of much of this work. The unraveling begins to almost do itself once you start to work from this different point of view. This is the point of view of a whole-being coordinating system rather than a separate body and mind or even an integrated body/mind/spirit/emotion model. We are one being, a coordinating being, who is always in the perfect coordination to how we frame this particular moment. From this point of view, it makes no sense to make a direct change in your body (relax your shoulders) or a change in your feelings (calm down). Instead, what makes sense is to look closely, and through learning a new understanding comes and your framework changes. Your beautiful system and its functioning follows. As a bonus, this kind of change is much more integrated, complete and connected to the activity at hand than body/feeling directed changes.

The postural body-directed approach often masks the signals you get because you changed the symptom before you've even learned its significance — you shot the messenger. If you relax your shoulders or direct them to widen, you'll miss the message that tight shoulders are the perfect coordination of something. But of what?

With the coordinating system approach, you simply let the message wake you up and you notice, "Hey, my shoulders hurt. I don't like this feeling. Maybe something is happening that is not good for me." Then you take the next step to explore what the message means: "Hmm? I wonder what I'm up to that is causing this feeling of tight shoulders?" In this way you are acknowledging there is nothing wrong with your shoulders or your body even though you hurt. In fact, the messenger is there to give you an important opportunity to learn.

There is no such thing as bad body use. The wrongness, the problem lies somewhere else. As you take a moment to reflect and explore you will discover what and where. For instance, you may discover you were worrying about whether or not your performance would be good and imagining a negative outcome. Shoulders tighten when you worry and anticipate the negative. When you are in touch enough with your own system so the symptoms guide you to look with greater clarity at the situations and correlate them with your thoughts, you not only have the key to being permanently free of specific symptoms, you have the key to learning about yourself and ultimately great freedom.

In my experience with this approach results are quicker, more permanent and liberating in the largest sense of the word. Having spent years believing the previous work I was doing was coming from a whole person perspective yet constantly bumping up against contradictions, this new point of view is a great relief. When any new approach brings greater clarity of explanation and easier application, when it is simpler, more powerful and without apparent contradictions it would indicate we have found a more accurate direction,

closer to the way we function. If we are lucky, the work will continue to grow more and deepen as we learn even more.

As I said in the introduction this articulation of the coordinating system is the work of David Gorman. In the many years he has been exploring and working from this perspective he evolved an approach to help people quickly and effectively sort through misconceptions and misperceptions. His work starts at the level of the symptom, the wake-up call, working specifically from the particular moment when the symptom occurs in order first to make sense of what is happening to find the cause of the problem and only then changing that cause.

The coordinating system model is a description of how we work, of our inherent nature as whole integrated human beings. In that sense, this approach which Gorman has called LearningMethods isn't so much a system or a technique as it is a set of methods of... well... learning. Learning how to more accurately understand our system in this new way and allow ourselves to function accordingly.

The hallmark of this approach is that he is always teaching you how to use your own intelligence and your own awareness to make sense of the problem and gain more knowledge of yourself. Many mindfulness and bodywork approaches talk about awareness but LearningMethods is the tool kit for the most direct and practical way to be aware, showing you exactly where to look and how to sort it out. LearningMethods classes are more than sessions helping you to solve specific troubles — they hand the tools over to you and teach you how to solve your own problems.

## Endnotes:

### (Endnote 1)

Alexander Technique has been used by musicians for many years now. There are many resources available on the internet — simply search for: *Alexander Technique*. The LearningMethods work is now being taught in many music and theatre schools and conservatories in Europe and North America ([see list](#)).

### (Endnote 2)

*The Body Moveable* by David Gorman is a 600-page illustrated musculo-skeletal anatomy reference book. *Looking at Ourselves* is a 123-page collection of articles and essays. Both are available online from [LearningMethods Publications](#).

### (Endnote 3)

The pre-sprung elastic suspension system model of human structure is articulated by Gorman in his [Anatomy of Wholeness](#) workshops (now also as an [online streaming course](#)). He originally wrote about this in a series of articles in the early 1980's called [In Our Own Image](#) (included in his [Looking at Ourselves](#) book) and currently is writing a book about this system and its implications. Essentially, the model shows how it is our active, aware opening to the world around us and to the support of the earth that elicits an interplay between gravity and our structure that activates us into an entire web of tensional support which springs us into our dynamic, responsive, mobile uprightness. While Gorman's model is definitely built on the up-to-date scientific facts of our musculo-skeletal structure combined with its molecular neuro-muscular activation and coordination, he has added a profound new level of insight by looking at it all from the point-of-view of the whole, thinking, choosing, responding person.

(Endnote 4)

Here is a wonderful articulation about attention by David Gorman (from a workshop, August 2002):

"It often happens that we innocently try to do two things at once, for example, a violinist needs to be paying attention to the actual music she wants to play yet also tries to attend to controlling her fingering on the strings, or an archer knows he should be paying attention to the target but tries to also pay attention to controlling his breathing. They are both caught in one of the most common fallacies — that we have more than one attention and hence can pay attention to more than one thing at once. This illusion arises because what people are doing when they think they are paying attention to several things at once is instead to be quickly switching back and forth, but so subtly that they usually do not realize.

This ability to quickly shift focus is very helpful in certain circumstances, but when people mistake this as if they have multiple attentions they can be led into unconstructive habits. In the cases above the misconception is that they know their main focus or "primary" attention should be on the music or the target. They think they have indeed directed it there and "left it running" while they bring a secondary focus onto the details of the fingering or the breathing. That this is an illusion is easy to show, for when we help them to really stay with their main focus and resist the temptation to go off to the other details, they not only register how different that is and how much more present they are with their goal, but their functional coordinations are better and the resulting music or archery is also much better. Somehow the system took care of the details when they got out of its way and simply stayed clear about and focused on the goal. You, the conscious attentive being, are the boss and you need to lead. How can the ship function unless the captain is up on the bridge steering where he wants to go — if he goes below-decks to tell the workers exactly how to shovel coal, who is up on the bridge leading?

Another aspect of the problems that can arise from this illusion is when people say, "I wasn't present", or "I couldn't concentrate" as if there is a state called "not being present" or "not concentrating". When we look closely it turns out that they were in fact present, just not with the task at hand. Rather they had been distracted and were present with something else, maybe their feelings of nervousness or their thoughts of how to do their techniques, or thoughts about how well they were doing or what others were thinking, etc. Once a person realizes that she has only one attention and if it wasn't directed where it should be it must have been placed elsewhere, she is on the first steps toward being aware of what she is aware of, then she will be able to consciously perceive her attention shifts and to recognize what thoughts, feelings or emotions have dragged her away from what she intended to do. Only then can real understanding of what is happening and real choice and control become possible again."

(Endnote 5)

I am not going into the detail of how to re-educate this conductor about the suspension system at this point. It would demand an article of its own. Leave it to say the approach is radically different than most experiential anatomy and does not leave a person attending to ways to make their body better by directly becoming more aware of body parts and so forth.

## Communication – A lifetime of Vocal problems

Ever since I can remember I had a somewhat hoarse voice. It only became a problem for me when I was in my early twenties living in south India studying dance and singing. My singing teacher lived around the corner from where I lived. I went for lessons twice a day in the morning and evening. When my voice began to give

out, I could hardly make a sound, his advice was for me to come more often. So, I came in the afternoons as well. As anyone who understands voice injury this was the absolutely wrong thing to do. I lost my voice completely for a time. Luckily, I was also studying another Carnatic instrument so we switched to that during my three visits a day. I worked with him for three years. He was a gem of a human being, who didn't know anything about vocal health. When I returned to the States. I went to see an ear, nose and throat doc who scoped my throat. I was told I had bowed vocal folds. He said my vocal folds didn't meet together when they closed like two bows meeting rather than two lines, hence the breathiness in my voice. That is what I was told and the understanding I went away with. <sup>(note1)</sup> I went to a few voice therapy sessions and then looked for voice teachers. To make this long story shorter, I ended up deciding to train as an Alexander Technique teacher. F. M. Alexander had had vocal trouble at the turn of the century. In trying to solve his voice problem he had insights into human functioning and developed a method to help people change habitual patterns that were interfering with their functioning.

I entered the three-year full-time training program required to become a Certified teacher of the Alexander Technique. My voice problems lessened through that work. The primary aspect of Alexander Technique that helped me the most had to do with pausing before I verbally reacted to stimulus. In Alexander jargon it was the principle of inhibiting my responses, pausing. I used to say Alexander saved my relationship with my mother. But in all honesty if I was teaching a group, I would quickly become hoarse again. In fact, there were multiple situations that would find me in vocal trouble.

It wasn't until I worked with David Gorman and LearningMethods that things began to fundamentally change for me. In a workshop with Gorman I brought up my voice problem and said one of the frustrations for me was that as an Alexander Teacher I knew that it was damaging to pull my head forward when I spoke. I didn't think I was doing that but when I saw pictures of myself speaking or asked others it became clear despite 3 years of training and 13 years of teaching, I still had that habit. In my conception at the time I thought I should be able to prevent or inhibit that habit, keep my head back and speak. I just wasn't good enough at the Technique yet.

As Gorman worked with me, he asked me a series of questions. It wasn't long until it was clear that right there in the conversation I was having with him at the workshop, I was in that head forward habit. Gorman began to find out what I was up to as I spoke. He wasn't trying to teach me to keep my head back. I had tried that for 16 years. He was trying to find out why it made total sense that my head arrived forward when I spoke. One of the first clarifications he revealed was the flaw in my idea that if only I was just better at Alexander I would indeed be able to keep my head back.

David Gorman,(DG), asked: Was I actually telling myself to move my head forward?

I, (BL): No, I wasn't.

DG: If you aren't moving your head forward directly by telling yourself directly "now I'll bring my head forward" does it make any sense to bring it back?

BL: But my head is forward. Yes, I can just bring it back.

DG: Does it stay back?

BL: No, not for 16 years anyway. But I just haven't got it yet.

DG: If you can see that you didn't *Do* the head forward but it is *happening* we just need to find out what it is you are in fact up to that explains how your head ends up forward.

BL: OK

DG: So right now, as you are talking where is your attention?

BL: On you?

DG: Roughly speaking about how much of your attention is over toward me?

BL: All of my attention. (This took me a little while to figure out. At first the question didn't make much sense to me.)

This questioning went on in some details. The first major area that was revealed was that as I spoke to David, I literally narrowed my attention up and forward into Gorman. Anyone whose attention is so narrowed has a similar forward head tension orientation. That forward head tension orientation is the coordination of narrowed attention.

That was revelatory in itself. The crucial question became why am I a narrowing my attention over into the other person. Put another way since I didn't decide to narrow my attention it just a *happened*. What was I *doing* that expressed in that narrowed coordination?

Here again Gorman was vigilant with the clarity that I was the only one with the information about what I was *doing*. In hindsight I realize I had had many friends and teachers who had seen something about my attention as I spoke and had given me advice on what they guessed I was up to. "Babette take your time" as if I was in a rush or "trust yourself" as if I was trying to prove something. In many ways they were close but were missing the skill and the insight to get the information from me by asking me in a precise way what I was *doing*. That skill would have saved years of circling the issue. In that circling I was always trying to either fix the symptom or add something, like trust.

As Gorman asked questions that took me underneath my narrowing it boiled down to **I was trying to make sure Gorman understood me.**

Gorman helped me look at the nature of how understanding occurs in people. This is the key moment in LearningMethods™ when the teacher's role changes from pure investigation to sharing facts and understanding of how things work. It is the moment when the misconception is revealed. The misconception doesn't often seem misconceived to the person with the misconception. So, in my case I didn't notice any problem with wanting to make sure the other person would understand me. In fact, it made perfect sense. If you are talking to someone wouldn't you or anyone want to make sure the listener understood you?

Gorman asked: Where does understanding occur?

BL: Seemed like a weird question to me. You or the listener is the one that understands what I am saying.

DG: When you were speaking to me just now, were you very clear that the understanding occurs in me?

BL: What? (Total confusion)

DG: When you were speaking were you clear that the actual act of understanding is happening inside of me?

This is when I began to get confused. What was he talking about? But as he kept at this it became clear that while I was talking, I was narrowing right over into him. It was as if I was over there inside him. As if I could just go inside him and “make sure” he understood me.

This leads to another area of looking at the nature of understanding. The listener may or may not understand what I am saying. Because understanding occurs in people based on their way of thinking, their past experiences, their openness at the moment and a whole host of other contributing factors. Understanding is a response or activity in the person listening. The primary misconception that was trapping me was the idea that I could “make sure” of an outcome. In this case “make sure” he understood me. I was trying to make sure he had a particular response – understanding.

There was no problem in wanting David to understand me. It is the common purpose for communicating. The problem was in thinking I had control of the other person’s understanding. Understanding is a response that happens over there inside the other person.

There is much I can do to make the chances more or less favorable for the other person to understand me. There are real actions I can take like speaking clearly and at a medium pace, knowing the information I am sharing, having a clear order. But no matter how clearly I present what I have to say I cannot guarantee a result, an understanding, in the other person.

It isn’t a problem to want someone to understand me as long as I am clear I cannot *make sure* or in any way go over into him to influence the result. All I can do is develop my speaking skills.

As this material unfolded, I did a few experiments right in those moments attempting to speak without that *added making sure Gorman would understand me*. At first, I felt like I was miles away from him, a dissociated kind of speaking. Yet Gorman and the others in the room didn’t in any way sense I was removed.

What I had to do to explore this was to speak *knowing that it was possible that Gorman wouldn’t understand me*. *It felt like a risk*. Yet there isn’t a risk at all. It is in fact, a fact when I speak he may or may not understand me.

Phew, not only was there so much less pressure in my neck and body as I spoke with this foundational idea changed, I began to feel a huge wave of relief. I was sitting over here in my chair, a fact. He was over there in his, a fact. Air was taking my words in to his ears. He would or wouldn’t understand me. But once those words left my lips there wasn’t anything I could do.

Needless to say, after this initial investigation, I explored many aspects of what I was up to when I spoke, especially as it related to understanding. The amazing thing was that after a lifetime of being desperate to be understood for the first time I actually began to work on real skills to improve my speaking. I am not kidding when I say lifetime. I have kindergarten thru high school teacher comments that essentially said, “We know Babette has so much to say, we just can’t understand her”. My desperation about it manifested in wanting to *make sure* I was understood, the coordination of which expressed as me with my head pushing over into the other person and often included speaking faster and faster and louder and louder and tenser and tenser. All of which impeded being understood.

Aligned with this desperation to *make sure* was an added effort of *trying* to make sure. Trying isn't an act in and of itself. We can do or not do. We can speak or not speak. Trying is an abstraction the coordination of which is always extra effort. My initial statement was "I was trying to make sure he understood me". Once the making sure misconception was cleared up, I was no longer trying either.

**The very things I was doing to be understood were the very things keeping me from being understood.**

Pushing over into someone with my body language often resulted in someone pulling back; faster speech was less clear and being louder was just plain obnoxious, the vocal effort caused a unpleasant tone and eventually hoarseness.

I didn't need to go into my family history, (although connections did come up in my consciousness and were interesting to explore. The history helped me understand how I might have learned the misconception but it didn't make the change in the moment when I needed it.)

- I simply needed to detect the misconception at the moment it was occurring.
- I needed to see how what I was doing at the moment of speaking was creating actions that interfered with my communication goal and also hurt my voice.
- My vocal symptom in the most literal way was a perfect signal to tell me I was up to a misconception.
- A misconception about the nature of human communication and what it takes to get a desired result.
- A misconception that I can't ensure an outcome in another person.
- I can set up a more or less probable situation to get the result I want.

The other amazing side effect of researching from the symptom to the root from my own experience is that otherwise ignored signals became available to my conscious awareness.

- Now I can use those ignored signals, the strain and sound, as early warning signs that I may be back to trying to convince someone of something.

We seem to be flooded with all manner of sensory input. Our system only brings to our attention what we deem as valuable. Like riding a bike, at first you are taking in all kinds of sensory feedback and eventually you process it in such a way that it is mapped in your brain and you can have conversation while riding a bike. Skill acquisition.

What I've noticed about LearningMethods™ is a remarkable ability to tease out the minute details of the moment when the symptom is occurring. Many of those details only come up to the level of consciousness when we go over the moment precisely. It isn't guess work. It is as if the implicit intention flashes images that we respond to in a moment by moment way. So for me when I put the slow motion eye of LearningMethods™ <sup>(note2)</sup> on a moment of speaking I see "oh she isn't getting it" "I grab my being to go get her to get it." It is like a simultaneous flash I only know happened when I look back and link it to the moment I felt the grip. It happens so fast I never knew I had had the thought until I take it apart. This isn't hindsight or guess work. It is really a hooking up the felt experience-the moment I felt the tension, that lets me flash to the moment the implicit intention was made visible for second. Doing that exacting work gives significance to that little and in the past ignored grip. It has been reinterpreted by my system as significant. So now my system is more likely to bring that to my attention as I go about speaking. In this way a destructive cycle can transform into a productive cycle.

Amazingly enough I don't have to go around remembering to speak a certain way. Instead I carry on speaking but use the signals that come to me as guidance system. Since that initial clarification I have uncovered other ways I interfere with easy speech.

## From Voice to Life – Broader Ramifications- Allowing Outcomes vs. making sure

The misconceptions I discovered during my work with my voice had ramifications to all areas of my life. The tendency to want to know and ensure an outcome before it occurs is really the underpinning of *trying to make sure of something*. It could be having someone understand me or it could be making sure I don't miss a note in a song or make sure I don't make a mistake or make sure I get a goal. But the fact is, in this universe you can't know the outcome until it occurs and you can't ensure it in advance. No amount of *trying* will help. Trying has doubting built into it, as if unless I try I won't be enough.

What if we see how incredible our system is. We get clear of what we want and we allow ourselves to have exactly the level of understanding or skill we currently have and accept the results of these facts. If we don't like the results, we can get clearer about what we want, get clearer of what we need to learn, and take action again. Over time we will gain more of the results we want without all the effort and unspecific trying. We are now working with the principles of the universe.

Getting comfortable with the possibility that we might not get our outcome is a huge step toward ease in life and performance. Oddly many people who are trying to make sure of an outcome are actually picturing not getting it. Therefore, they want to try or make sure. If you ask someone precisely "what do you think the chances are of singing this song the way you want- 80/20% 50/50% what? It is often 90% and if it isn't 90% they might need to reassess the goal. With the chances of success cleared up it makes more sense to simply sing the song and find out if you get the note or remember the words. Trying and making sure is simply wasted, interfering effort. As a wonderful voice teacher Jennifer Moir often says: "Sing this as if you are perfectly adequate to sing just as you are in this moment." Do that and find out. Address the results as they come. The whole process of learning and doing becomes a joy and profoundly self-confirming, on-going learning process.

This is really an introduction to a powerful understanding of what allows our system to learn and perform skills. The learning section will delve into this. But it is important to point out that unraveling one symptom, my hoarseness, led to realizations that transformed all my performing and teaching. Just helping people see the fallacy of making sure and trying and replacing that with actual clear goals that they realize may or may not happen can transform years of strain and disappointment in a moment.

The realization that I can't make another person have a particular response, whether it understanding me or liking me or liking what I am doing, has been a deep liberation. I can set-up the conditions to up my chances of such a response. But I don't have to put attention of the other person's response, I can put in on my what I want to say or express.

I recently received an e-mail from a choral director who had taken a summer workshop. In that workshop we put up to question many sacred ideas in choral directing, one of which was the need to teach breathing. I said the only way to find out if you need to teach something is to take the risk of doing something different and assessing the results. If it doesn't work that is just as important information as if it worked.

Here's what she reported:

*I have also changed my vocabulary in the classroom to do away with “try,” “make sure,” “be careful,” and so forth. My students are enjoying this and so am I. I have not said anything about how to breathe or how to sing, but simply allowed them to breathe and sing. And guess what? They sound beautiful. I now think that I was “trying” too hard to help them with their sound production and I was sending mixed messages with my words and body language. Not only are they freer, but I am, too. I still have a long ways to go, but I am definitely on the right track. – Thank you Sue Z*

## Making Connection-The Head Forward Issue - A group of Physical Therapists:

Over the years I have worked with many people who have come to me because they have been told or have noticed themselves that they have a head pulled forward pattern, just like the one I was dealing with in my voice issue. Sometimes that pattern manifests in shoulder tension or pain. It is really a total coordination just the most visible shape in the body is the head out forward of the torso.

While the coordination is similar with most people the reasons people are forward are very different. I conducted a class with Physical Therapists in which a large group of them had this head forward pattern. They also had symptoms like fatigue and headaches after a day of work. As we investigated what was going on it turned out many had been trained to “connect” with their clients. They were actually told to lean into their clients to show they were attentive, to make rapport.

We began to address this by going underneath the concept of connection. What was the actually goal with this idea of connection? They agreed it was to set up a situation in which clients felt safe and comfortable because the work goes better when that relationship or rapport is established. We began to look closely at what conveys a safe sense of relationship/connection.

The first area was just to help them see that pulling themselves off balance into that strained orientation might be creating their objective of connection but it was harming them in the process. Each person could feel the strain and imbalance as we explored looking and talking to another person with that “connecting” coordination vs. remaining centered over their support, balanced as they spoke. But this step wasn’t to teach or direct them to do the balanced sitting position instead of the pulled forward habit. We did this to simply open the question: Is it worth getting what you want from another by hurting yourself? Certainly, some people would say a resounding yes. Which was surprising and interesting itself for the group.

The next question became is the head forward actually giving you what you think it is giving you? Is it connecting or creating rapport? Connecting is a *code word*. A code word is a word we use but don’t often really know specifically what we want or mean by it? Identifying a code word is one of the tools of LearningMethods™. I find it invaluable. Often, I may not be familiar with a situation I have been asked to help someone navigate. This workshop is an example. Before that I hadn’t realized that patient-therapist relationship training included this “how to make rapport” aspect and that connecting with a client was a goal in and of itself. Identifying the code word “connecting” revealed all kinds of information that helped us sort out the situation.

When I asked the question, “What do you mean by *connecting*?” it was a real question. I wanted to know what their goals were.

Was this the only way to do it?

Was it actually giving them what they wanted?

They said the general goal was to as quickly as possible establish trust so the patient would feel comfortable to work. Under establishing trust was showing that you are interested and listening to the patient. (Trust is another code word that is often very revealing when taken apart. But for the purpose here I'll stick to looking at *connecting*.)

We began with a most simple level of looking at *connecting*. The very fact they were in proximity to another person meant there was some sort of communication occurring. Clearly under the code word *connecting* they meant in a positive, supporting successful communication sort of way. It was important to point out that the very act of being in the same room with another person is an actual step in this *connecting* they wanted.

Beyond being in proximity, other aspects of human communication are eye contact and facial expression.

Are you looking at the person with an easy open friendly expression?

Then there is your tone of voice and body language.

Are you speaking with ease?

We are in a sense breaking down all the aspects that make up one moment in communication. About 94% of what is happening in communication is happening in the other than conscious level. In the training in which they were told to lean forward the leaders were emphasizing just a portion, the body language part, of human communication. They were necessarily understanding what the body language of leaning forward actually conveyed or at least the effect on the therapists own health.

When you think of it for a moment, what would be the simplest and easiest way to show you are interested?

**It would be to actually be interested in your patient.**

You don't have to do some separate act called *showing interest*. When you are interested your system will generally orient naturally into all the things we identified: eye contact, facial expression, body orientation, alive tone of voice when asking questions. Your system coordinates you as a truly interested person.

They had been trained to *make sure* they *connected*. But as each person sat with a pretend client and compared the trained *connecting* with simply allowing the *connection to occur*, (since it is already occurring), they felt waves of relief. It might take time for each of them to trust that this lack of effort was actually enough to be *in connection with the client*. But the old way was clearly causing the therapists many problems. It would be up to the therapists to experiment and find out what was necessary to create a conducive environment for their patients. Could they find a conducive environment that included themselves, their health? Could the therapy environment be conducive not just for the patient but for the therapist as well.

## End Notes

(Endnote 1) Over the years I also learned I had an underlying health issue of Gastro Intestinal Reflux that also contributed to my hoarseness. Working with diet has brought this reflux issue under control.

(Endnote 2) While I recommend the more formal LearningMethods™ to any educator, what we do in the Language of Wholeness is modified form using many of the LearningMethods™ tools of inquiry. This modified version is what I describe in the workshop with the therapists.

# ANATOMY OF A MISCONCEPTION

YOUR PERSPECTIVE IS YOUR OPERATING SYSTEM - IS IT HELPING YOU DO WHAT YOU WANT TO DO.

As we consider a method of teaching, a pedagogy, it is important to look at the various levels of the human being we are addressing.

Levels of working from broadest to smallest.

- Whole person relating in the work level--the person's state of being and relationship to the world
- Action level – doing the task, making the music or dancing the dance
- 'Body' the architecture/balance/mapping
- The cellular/molecular level

Much of music education works at action level and the body level. This is the territory of teaching breathing, posture, technique etc. This level of functioning is important. If working on this level it is crucial to be updating how these systems work, stay current with the science.

What is less common is working from the person in the world level, the state of being of the student level. It seems to be true, subject to further proof, that this is a primary level since the person's state of being coordinates the functioning of the body and how the action is taken, how the music or the dance is made. It is primary because clearing up a problem on this level often takes care of the trouble you see in the details on the body/voice/performance level. Conversely if you start at the body/action level without seeing this broader perspective you can possibly contribute to new interferences.

When there is an interference at the whole person level it is often based on a misconception of how the world works. This conception/belief is acting as the person's current operating system determining how the architecture functions. By 'the world' we mean anything from how stature is organized (posture), how the voice or the instrument works or how time, space, assessment and many other aspects of our world. Clearing up the physical/vocal misconceptions demand knowing how the structures function at your current 'level of ignorance'. We call this mapping or science-based education which is constantly being updated.

There is another family of misconceptions that interfere with music making that are less understood in the field. Neuroscience, motor-learning research, psychology, physics and so much more research helps us update our beliefs. There are many tools one can learn for doing this updating. Gorman's work LearningMethods™ has a powerful tool kit for identifying and unraveling misconceptions/the person's current operating system.

We propose that powerful music education program would require each student to understand and unravel in their own life, the common misconceptions that undermine music making and learning. This is a study of the meta-level, the you in the world level.

Below is a sample of some of these. These charts are to help you move from one level of awareness to another: from "I just need to learn how to say the right words" to "words show me how I or my student is thinking". You can discover and deconstruct misconceptions if you take the time to investigate what the perspective of the student is in a moment of interference. Perhaps even more importantly is finding out what your operating system is. Where are you clear, where is there something to clear up.

# Perspective Charts

To support you to unravel misconceptions and set-up  
teaching with accuracy

The Language of Wholeness aims to align our language with our current understanding of how things work.

<b>Current perspective</b>	<b>Current Language</b>	<b>Past Perspective</b>	<b>Past Language</b>
The earth rotates around the sun	Earth-turning	Earth is the center of the universe	Sunrise
We are a functional whole	Your system	Body and mind are divided	Your Body – your mind
We are a springy-suspension system	Comparisons and questions	We are a postural system	Stand straight and other directives

## Structural Perspectives Chart

Perspective or belief	Language	Results/experience
<p>Postural, alignment, body separate from mind – illusion of a body and a mind.</p> <p>(implicit – not-conscious)</p>	<p>Instructions to position or direct your ‘body’</p> <p>“Shoulders back, feet apart, tighten abs”</p>	<p>Rigidity, struggle with body, lack of trust.</p>
<p>Suspension system is best coordinated beyond conscious awareness – ask questions and system coordinates you.</p> <p>(explicit - conscious)</p>	<p>Compare this and that</p> <p>Learn self-assessments and landmarks</p> <p>“Am I in or out of support?”</p> <p>“Where am I bending?”</p>	<p>Personal agency, empowered</p>

## Recipe for Strain • Recipe for Ease

Perspective or Belief	Language	Results/experience
<p>Conscious mind best controls functions. Mind and body are separate</p> <p>(implicit – not-conscious perspective)</p>	<p>“Lift you arm”, “take a breath”, “relax” and other instructions are to tell you ‘how’ to do things</p>	<p>Tension, attempting to control the movement.</p>
<p>Intention best ignites system to coordinate movement – we are a whole system</p> <p>(explicit – conscious perspective)</p>	<p>What do you want to say? Aim for target. Intention based instructions like touch your nose, what do you want to say and why are you saying it.</p>	<p>Ease, Exploratory mind.</p>

## Recipe for Fear • Recipe for Curiosity

<b>Perspective or belief</b>	<b>Language</b>	<b>Results/experience</b>
<p>You can control an outcome before it has happened, often motivated by not wanting to make a mistake. (implicit – not-conscious)</p>	<p>Don't want to 'be flat' so I want to make sure I..... Try to.....again.</p>	<p>Fear, Struggle, tension, discouraged</p>
<p>You can set up conditions to up your chances of getting the desired outcome. May or may not get it. (explicit - conscious)</p>	<p>Give it a go. Do this and find out what how it goes. I am learning.</p>	<p>Curiosity</p>

## Recipe for Strain or Recipe for Ease

<b>Perspective or belief</b>	<b>Language</b>	<b>Results/experience</b>
<p>Cling to your wish or idea over unpleasant reality. (implicit – not-conscious)</p>	<p>Should, Have to .... Need</p>	<p>Grip, Tension</p>
<p>Ability to recognize reality even if unpleasant. Adjust to the situation.</p>	<p>That's how it is. Clarity language. Acceptance of facts.</p>	<p>Relative ease in not so pleasant reality</p>

## Recipe for Frustration and Recipe for Acceptance

<b>Perspective or belief</b>	<b>Language</b>	<b>Results/experience</b>
Wishing reality was different when something happened you don't like. (implicit – not-conscious)	Cuss word	Anger
Recognizing this unpleasant reality is a fact. (explicit - conscious)	Adjusting to the current facts.	Action plan

## Recipe for Perfection and Recipe for Being You

Perspective or belief	Language	Results/experience
<p>Perfect is good. Not being perfect is bad. (implicit – not-conscious)</p>	<p>Trying Hard! Not good enough language “I suck” not able to hear success. Yes but... Misunderstanding improving.</p>	<p>Self Doubt Cycle of dissatisfaction and constant striving.</p>
<p>Perfection is a illusion. Being as we are feels good. (explicit - conscious)</p>	<p>Here I am, As I am Allowing yourself to just be as you are is as good as you can be for this moment in time. Improving happens naturally.</p>	<p>Joy Self presence</p>

## In Learning: Recipe for Shame • Recipe for Joy

Perspective or belief	Language	Results/experience
<p>Misunderstanding how learning works. Confusing knowing or getting it right with learning.</p> <p>(implicit – not-conscious)</p>	<p>I made a mistake and that is bad.</p> <p>I should have known better.</p> <p>I am bad at this.</p> <p>I am a failure.</p>	<p>Frustration, anger, regret, failure, worthlessness</p>
<p>Learning is built into me. Learning is developing new neural networks. It happens in my system. Learning happens through experience - 'target practice.'</p> <p>(explicit - conscious)</p>	<p>Go again. Give it a whirl. Are you on or off target? If off what direction, or how are you off target?</p> <p>How close did you get?</p>	<p>Learning is playful and creative. Developing accurate recognition of current ability and how to set up continued targets so you can learn.</p>

# Recipe for Failure • Recipe for Opportunity

Perspective or belief	Language	Results/experience
<p>Misunderstanding how learning works. Misinterpreting the feeling of recognizing you didn't get what you wanted as a problem rather than as information. (implicit – not-conscious)</p>	<p>I am wrong. This frustration is bad. "I shouldn't even be doing this."</p>	<p>Frustration, anger, regret</p>
<p>Recognizing a learning moment, that quick signal of frustration that says "I am not getting what I want." Quickly shifting to how do I figure out how to get my goal. (explicit - conscious)</p>	<p>Oh woops, I see, here is something I know and here is what I don't know. Where do I go now?</p>	<p>Curiosity, awe at learning system, clear strategies to take the next step of learning.</p>

## Recipe for Failure • Recipe for Opportunity

Perspective or belief	Language	Results/experience
<p>Misunderstanding how learning works. Misinterpreting the feeling of recognizing you didn't get what you wanted as a problem rather than as information.</p> <p>(implicit – not-conscious)</p>	<p>Start comparing myself to images of others – “Everyone is better than me, learns faster...”</p>	<p>Feeling like as failure, worthlessness, giving up</p>
<p>Recognizing a learning moment, that quick signal of frustration that says, “I am not getting what I want.” Using that to figure out how I might get my goal.</p> <p>(explicit - conscious)</p>	<p>Oh woops, I see, here is something I don't know. Where do I go now?</p>	<p>Curiosity, awe at learning system, clear strategies to take the next step of learning.</p>

## Recipe for Narrow Awareness • Recipe for Inclusive Awareness

Perspective or Belief	Language	Results/experience
<p>To be aware, you need to narrow attention internally. You feel your parts by narrowing attention inside.</p> <p>(implicit – not-conscious)</p>	<p>“How does your tongue (jaw...)feel? What do you notice in your breath?</p>	<p>Momentary but unsustainable changes. Cutting off from the world in the context of the problem.</p>
<p>Sensation comes to your attention, gives you useful awareness. You feel the feeling of your attention, not the body part.</p>	<p>Comparisons. Open/inclusive awareness and register what comes to your attention.</p>	<p>More accurate interpretations of sensations and ability to aim toward root of problem.</p>

## Recipe for Shame/Self-Doubt/Fear • Recipe for Empowerment

Perspective or belief	Language <i>(italics is voice of another/teacher perhaps)</i>	Results/experience
Getting my worth, validation or happiness from others. <i>(Others get their worth from my opinion of them)</i> (implicit – not-conscious)	Doubt language. Self-consciousness. <i>(You did a good/bad job - praise or judgement language to another)</i>	Fear, anxiety, tension <i>(Power over another)</i>
I am in charge of my happiness. I am beyond worth to myself. Others can decide my worth to them. That is their business. <i>(Others have their own worth to themselves.)</i> (explicit - conscious)	I have an opinion I know my criteria Here is what I know. All I can do is my criteria and I know what that is. <i>(What did you think of that? – Questions to support another to develop their own criteria.)</i>	Fundamental presence <i>(Cooperative guide)</i>

## Recipe for Blame • Recipe for *Response-ability*

Perspective or belief	Language	Results/experience
<p>Not understanding how response system works. (implicit – not-conscious)</p>	<p>Blaming another for how you feel.  “You made me mad.”</p>	<p>Fleeting joy, anger etc. absence of sense of self.</p>
<p>Understanding the response system and how feelings and sensations are information. (explicit - conscious)</p>	<p>Asking myself why this feeling makes sense in this moment?  Not needing to feel good all the time.  Feelings are messages not goals.</p>	<p>Joy is not temporary or dependent on others or the situation. Joy isn’t about happy-it is a deeper relationship to experience.</p>

## Recipe for Rushing • Recipe for Speed or Being *in* Time

Perspective or belief	Language	Results/experience
<p>Wanting to be where you are not. Being ahead of yourself.</p> <p>Having attention where you want to be, rather than where you are.</p> <p>(implicit – not-conscious)</p>	<p>I got get going. Hurry up.</p> <p>I never have enough time.</p>	<p>Rushed, gripped, stressed</p>
<p>Accepting unpleasant fact you are, where you are no.</p> <p>You are not where you wish you were.</p> <p>(explicit - conscious)</p>	<p>Here I am and there is where I want to be. I am heading there.</p> <p>The distance is getting closer.</p>	<p>Quick but not rushed.</p> <p>Organized</p> <p>Less stressed in stressful times.</p>

## Recipe for Burn-out • Recipe for Sustainability

Perspective or belief	Language	Results/experience
<p>Time: Not doing the math about what is possible to do in a day or not including your own well-being (rest) in that math. Inability to say 'NO' when asked to do more even when you sense this is too much.</p> <p>(implicit – not-conscious)</p>	<p>I am exhausted. I need to do everything I am doing. I never have enough time.</p>	<p>Burned-out exhausted, feeling guilty, gripped, stressed</p>
<p>Doing the math about what is possible in a day/week/year. Including time for well-being/rest/joy in that math. Able to say 'no' when a request doesn't support big picture joy and health.</p> <p>(explicit - conscious)</p>	<p>I can do what I can do and not more. My well-being matters in my life.</p>	<p>Accepting reality feeling clear. Quick but not rushed. Organized Less stressed in stressful times.</p>

## Fill in the blanks • Your Perspectives Chart

<b>Perspective or belief</b>	<b>Language</b>	<b>Results/experience</b>
(implicit – not-conscious)		
(explicit - conscious)		

## 4. Adaptation • The Learning System



*To learn well we need to feel safe, successful and capable.*

Adaptation of Leon Thurman's articulation of our requirements for thriving in learning. We need to feel Empathetic Relatedness, Competent, Autonomous.

# Deep Play • Teaching Notes and the Wisdom of Alice Pryor

I moved every two or three years until my thirties. Every move was an opportunity to decide whether I wanted this bowl or book or not. Now that I am not moving, I still find myself culling my material possessions every two or three years. I also attribute this pull to cull to the death of parents when I was in relatively young. My brothers and I found ourselves on the beach on Penobscot Bay burning boxes of long saved papers. They had carried around these papers for sixty years. I find myself looking around my office or holding a notebook or letter wondering “Is this something my girls will burn on the beach?”

In my recent culling, I found a notebook of my teaching notes from 2001. I am lucky to have been mentored by a brilliant teacher, Alice Pryor. She is an Alexander Technique teacher but she had been an Art teacher for years. She is a TEACHER in the fullest sense of the word. What I discovered in this notebook is a summary of her feedback over a year or two of watching me teach. I share her comments with you because she is wise, observant and succinct. I am and will be forever grateful for her example, guidance and most of all her honesty.

Choose one or two of the **Notes from Alice** below and explore them for a day or decade. I still am.

1. Notice the receiving. How are people receiving the information?
2. Sacrifice the detail for the central concept.
3. What is your expectation?
4. What is your core message? How can you say it clearly, in one sentence or two?
5. What’s your purpose?
6. Trust the flowering of the details. The details will come from the students. Your fun will come from fostering the flowering.
7. Your role is to guide learning rather than pour in and overly direct.
8. Say it one time. Then ask questions.
9. One question at a time!!!
10. Alice’s asks people: “What did you notice about your thinking process? What influenced your movement?”
11. Sift and sort old ideas.
12. In responding, honor and affirm them. “Thank you, that’s helpful.”
13. You (*Babette*) are caring more for the information than the learning.
14. Did you finish any sentence during that class?
15. Don’t talk over them. Find a means of getting their attention without shouting.
16. Take care of yourself, (*This is an Alexander concept. It means watch my behavior when I don’t see what I want in the student. Generally they aren’t the problem – I am.*)
17. Self-question – gentleness to self.
18. When someone is sidetracking, honor and redirect: “Thank you, that’s real interesting hmmm....What would it be like for you to....”
19. When listening to someone, accept the answer. It is true for them.
20. Your job is to draw out clarity. Make sense of what they felt as the core thing: “Those are your inner-thoughts, how did you talk to yourself?”
21. Be inclusive. Give permission to feel a wide assortment of responses. “Some of you may have...”

# Learning • Target Practice

## TARGET PRACTICE

Dr. Leon Thurman articulates a useful image for the nature of learning based on neuroscience research. He refers to learning being a matter of taking target practice. When learning a skill you have to go off target to learn the coordinations, synaptic connections, neural pathways that let you learn the skill or hit the target. Mistakes are just human constructs often surrounded with negative connotations. “Don’t make a mistake.” “Mistakes are bad.” Worse yet: “I’m bad because I made a mistake.”

A “miss-take” is what your system has to do to find the target; you have to go off target to learn where the target is. When your system registers “ah that dart went slightly to the left” then your system makes an adjustment, it learns what isn’t the target. Your job isn’t to say, “Now I’ll move my hand to the right.” You just need to keep your eye on the bull’s-eye and allow your system to learn how to throw the dart and hit it. Your system learns to throw the dart and hit the bull’s eye by taking target practice, by going off target.

## BALL PLAY DEMONSTRATION

(Purpose) To evoke an optimal Learning Environment and demonstrate Target Practice as another way to think of learning.

1. Hold a Ball (Can you hold it successfully?)
2. Play with the ball and find a few things you can do with it that are easy to do and a few that you can’t quite do. (Is there a difference between doing what you can do and what you can’t? If so, describe it?) note: it can be useful to ask people if they’ve noticed a difference between something and then ask to describe. A more open-ended question like: What did you notice, can feel vague to people or take the group off on another track.)
3. You have a minute to do whichever play you’d like either to the activity you already can do or keep working on the one you are still figuring out.
4. What choice did you make? Why?

Most people choose the one that is unknown, the one that is the act of learning. The room is laughing and playful in the working on the not-skilled play.

(Significance) This activity demonstrates the fun that is learning. Sometimes it is recuperative for people to do the activity that is known. Over all one can experience the ease, energy and delight of learning through this demonstration. In the playful learning skill is being developed through play, which is in essence target practice.

# The Mechanics of Adaptation • Learning.

The following is a simplified, almost schematic, look at some of the mechanisms of how your amazing system adapts or learns. A basic of sense of this capability can help people:

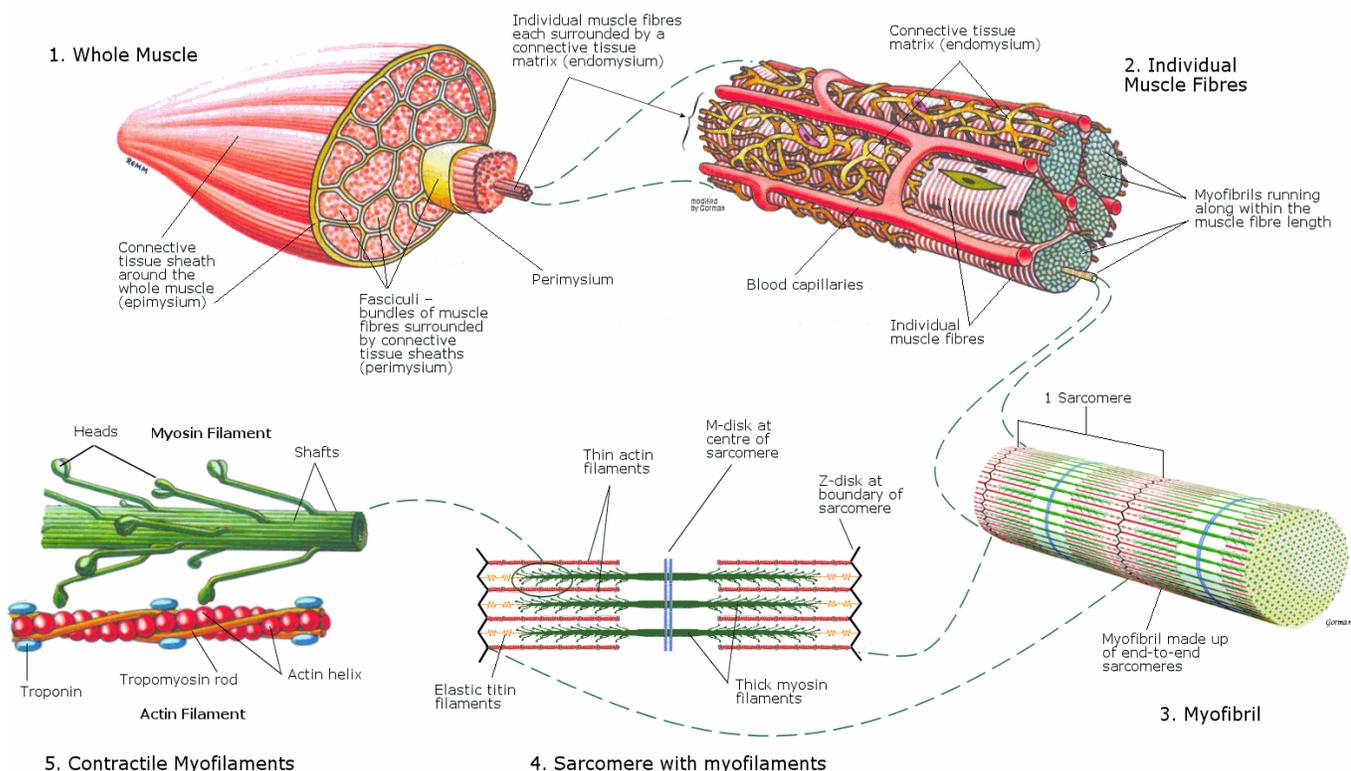
- Be easier on themselves in learning situation.
- Teach more efficiently and with less aggravation
- Make more effective physical choices.

Your tissues continuously adapt to the activities you do; muscles add or decrease length, bones add or decrease thickness, cartilage wears away. Change is constant and ever adaptive. We have little to no control of some of these changes. We age. We have genetic propensities. But we have control of many more changes than most people think. How we go about our life has powerful effects on our physical condition. Understanding our adaptive nature can help us make choices to support our health, ease, flexibility and power.

Let's look at muscles to see how this works. A muscle is like a large collection of sausages within sausages. At the smallest level you can see is the individual muscle cell or muscle fiber—long like a hair but about 1/4 its thickness. Each of these muscle fibers is covered in a surrounding connective tissue sheath. Then bundles of these muscle fibers are gathered together like a ponytail in '*fasciculi*' with a connective tissue surrounding each bundle. Then these bundles are in turn gathered up into the muscle as a whole with a connective tissue sheath that surrounds the body of this whole muscle. (If you eat meat, it is usually one level or another of these 'sausage casing' connective tissue sheaths that gets stuck between your teeth).

There are still tinier 'sausage' levels inside the muscle fibers but you would need a powerful microscope to see them (10,000 to 15,000 times magnification). Each single muscle fiber contains many long bundles called 'myofibrils' which are surrounded by a complicated network of tubes that reach from the surface right inside the fiber to each myofibril. And each myofibril is in turn made up, at the molecular level, of massive numbers of parallel myofilaments (100,000 to 200,000 times magnification). Myofibrils are made up of end-to-end sarcomeres. Sarcomeres are the contractile unit of muscles.

See the David Gorman's diagram below.



To get a simplified sense of the action in a sarcomere:

1. Bring your two hands up in front of you. Your palms are facing you and the tips of your fingers are pointing toward each other.

2. Slightly overlap the fingers so that the right pinky can slide between the left pinky and index finger, the right index finger between the left index and middle finger and so on down the line.
3. Your fingers should be able to slide and hit the webbing of the opposite hand and slide out so they are barely overlapped.

You now have a very schematic model of half of a single sarcomere. (see diagram above) This is the contractile unit of a muscle; the fingers on one hand represent actin and on the other side represent myosin. These molecules slide in and out of each other in a kind of ratcheting motion activated by a flooding of calcium ions and chemical energy and other amazing molecular interaction details that we don't really need to cover for this schematic picture.

Slide your fingers so that they touch the webbing of your palm, this is a contraction. Bring fingers apart so they barely overlap, this is lengthening. Bring them midway between full contraction and full length, this midrange where the fiber is strongest. It is where it likes to be most of the time. Sarcomeres don't like extremes.

Imagine ten people with hands in this sarcomere configuration, lined up like a chain. They represent a single section of a myofibril. If all those ten people slide the fingers together it is as if a person is doing something that is shortening the muscle. Then they all spread their fingers apart and the fiber they represent gets longer. Then they bring their fingers to the midpoint, not contracted in or stretched out. This is a simplistic way of describing moment by moment adjustments in muscle length. Sarcomeres can stop anywhere in that range. The number of sarcomeres determines the functional range of your system at any given time.

Muscles can change their structural length and thus change their functional range. You can have more or less structural capacity by adding or decreasing the number of sarcomeres in the chain of sarcomeres. In our ten people chain of hand sarcomeres, if four people step away, they take their sarcomeres away, we now have six sarcomeres, instead of ten. The myofibril is structurally shorter. When your system adds sarcomeres, your muscles are structurally longer; when sarcomeres decrease your muscles are structurally shorter.

What stimulates the process of changing structural length?

You do!

If you switch from an active job to a sedentary job so that more of your average activity puts the sarcomeres in the squished together position, your system will remove sarcomeres so that they can be in the middle region more often. Remember they don't like extremes. The opposite is also true. If you suddenly start to be more and more active the sarcomere will be in the slid open/lengthened relationship which also isn't optimal. The system adapts to the new level of movement which pulls on the sarcomeres by adding in a few sarcomeres and voila the sarcomeres get to be in that midway range again. The muscle is structurally longer having built more sarcomere segments. Adaptation works in both directions. It gives you less length or more length depending on what you are doing and how you are going about it.

**You are always in the perfect flexibility for the average of how you live your life.**

Muscle also adapts to the demands you place on it. If you start to take on tasks that require strength like lifting heavy objects your muscle will build bulk, the bulk is adding protein bits, more stuffing. Like range of flexibility you gain and loose strength based on your system's needs. You are in the perfect shape for the demands you ask of your body. By the way, adaptation happens in the tiny vocal muscles in the larynx too.

The other key adaptation, which is a somewhat recent discovery, has to do with stamina versus power or fast and slow twitch muscle fibers or slow fatiguing versus quickly fatiguing fibers. This is the white and dark meat on a chicken. Dark meat is dark because it has lots of mitochondria in the cells and can create its own energy. Hence it is slow fatiguing. White meat is for speed and bursts of power but fatigues easily. A sprinter has fast twitch power muscles. A marathoner has slow twitch, slow fatiguing muscle fibers. For years it was thought that people are born with a certain proportion of these kinds of muscles. But it is now clear that there is adaptation on this level as well. It is a complex story but the key

practical point is that there are certain conditions necessary to turn muscles into slow twitch or slow fatiguing muscle fibers.

We have fast twitch fibers by default (evolved from fish who only need darting muscles). A muscle has to be activated and under stretch (lengthening) in order to change from a fast fatiguing muscle to a stamina muscle. This is useful information to help you choose how you go about your activities and exercise to invite the maximum result from your choices.

Many people practice passive stretching, (lengthening without activation – like grabbing your arm and pulling it with the other hand across your chest or putting your leg up on a ledge and pushing down on it). Passive stretching doesn't stimulate the change to stamina tissue and ironically doesn't stimulate adding structural length either. What it does do is stretch the protective connective tissue, (the casing in our sausage model) and makes the muscle tissue protein portion more vulnerable to injury. This is why many aerobics classes stopped doing passive stretching before classes, too many injuries.

Others tighten to stretch. They activate and shorten, (like shoulder rolls or reaching up and pulling, this is often accompanied by a grunt sound). Shortening to stretch not only doesn't give you more structural length, (not adding sarcomeres) it doesn't invite the shift stamina tissue either. This explains what might be going on for people who have "stretched" for years and never gained flexibility. They might have one of two things going on. 1) The way they stretch doesn't actually ask for lengthening. 2) The way they go about life is so shortened that the length of time stretching doesn't counteract the daily shortening.

**"IF you want to feel flexible and free you actually have to live flexibly and freely.**

It is important to note that all kinds of structures in your system adapt to how you live life. Ligaments, tendons all have adaptations they make. Bones also change form in the course of your activity over time. **Many conditions seen as symptoms and problems are actually what happens when your system is adapting to forces placed on it based on the way you go about things.** If you function by putting excess and unbalanced forces on your feet, bone will build up or fascia can rip, which can then be painful. The same thing happens anywhere and is common in the neck and spine.

**You are fundamentally an adapting being. Every moment your system adapts what you are doing, whether it is healthy or not.**

This adapting nature is what happens when you learn a skill. Your brain has the ability to change neural networks, called brain plasticity. People often use the phrase '*muscle memory*'. Your muscles don't have memories. It is that your system has created efficient neural networks for the skill you have practiced. When you repeat something again and again, like practicing a scale, your brain develops these efficient neural-pathways. The brain plasticity adage is "what fires together wires together." You don't have to track and focus on details because your system as 'learned' the predictable path to carry out the task you ask of it. The muscle doesn't know, YOU know. The system needs time, needs many goes at a task, to figure out how to organize the task/skill efficiently. Understanding the way your systems adapts/learns is crucial for scaffolding learning with ease and efficiency. You usually don't have to "try harder." You just need to do the task again and then again, with ease and clarity! You need to give your system the time and useful, precise attention for it to organize the pathways it needs to learn to do what you want to do.

Dr. Norman Doidge has played a large role in bringing the understanding of brain plasticity to the general public. His seminal book on the subject, *The Brain that Changes Itself*, is a must read for anyone interested in the Language of Wholeness. His later book, *The Brains Way of Healing* is enlightening as well.

**Your system adapts to and learns from what you do and how you do it.** “You are the boss” as Gorman often says.

Wholeness in Motion™ is about learning how to go about the activities of life so that you have easy, free, dynamic availability in your system to move healthfully. Embedded in the pedagogy of The Language of Wholeness are approaches to support healthy adaptations and efficient learning.

## Do Singing Teachers Need to Teach Breathing?

Learning: Skill Acquisition or innate learning process. An example with Breathing and Singing.

We are learning beings. Much of what we learn happens from simply living our lives. You would have to interfere with a baby to keep it from coming to standing and learning to walk. This isn't a skilled activity in a sense. We are innately learning creatures.

There are other activities that we call skilled activities, playing sports or an instrument, activities that generally aren't innate. But the means to learning a skill is built into our system. The more accurately we understand our skill acquisition system the more targeted we can set up the conditions for acquiring that skill.

There is research going on in many areas of skill acquisition. Most of it seems to be aligned with the fundamental premises of the adapting coordinating system we are presenting here. The research is not articulated in those terms but the mechanisms are the same. Taking the research and then applying what was discovered to actual teaching or training is the area in which the Language of Wholeness excels. It is where we have an important contribution to make. We are developing the pedagogy for the new model of skill acquisition.

The implication of the idea that our system is designed to coordinate action based on our intention has profound implications for skill acquisition. Let's go straight to a specific example.

I often work with choral directors and voice teachers. Almost across the board in the vocal field there is the belief that voice teachers and choral directors need to teach breathing. It is seen as one of the pillars of vocal training. How breathing is taught is in no way consistent across the board. In fact, when I have people come to me for lessons to deal with their tension in singing, they often express total confusion about breath. Every teacher they've had gave them a different idea. Each one believing his/her way was the best way to think of breath as it relates to singing. Most with great intentions and good will. Most are teaching their idea, telling student what to do, rather than giving the students a means to assess for themselves what does or doesn't help singing.

Breathing is automatic. Your system is hard wired to breath. Certainly, we can interfere with breathing, hold breath, try to initiate breathing from different places, control it. Breathing is also one of our best barometers for our state of being. It changes when we're afraid, relaxed, eager and so forth. If you want to shout for your dog or talk quietly so only the person next to you can hear you, your system will give you exactly what you need in terms of breath. You don't have to say “Now take a big breath.” Generally, the only time most people have breath problems, other than sickness or conditions like asthma, is when they decide to breath a certain way or are taught to breath or have their attention directed to their breath.

I'll give an example with a specific student. He came in as a beginning singer who felt like he was having trouble breathing. This session represents hundreds of sessions I've conducted in which the overall gist of the concern is "I don't have enough air for the phrases I want to sing." I asked him to describe when he actually noticed his trouble. He said it came up in certain phrases of songs when his breath just seemed to peter out before he got to the end of the phrase.

I asked him if he could show me this. I asked him to bring out his music and sing and when the problem occurred to stop singing so we could look at it closely. (Finding a specific moment when a problem is occurring is core tool of this pedagogy.)

He pulled out his music and began to sing.

When he ran out of breath on a phrase he stopped.

I asked him how it went.

He said it was the same issue.

Then I asked what was he attending to as he sang.

He described that even just looking at the music reminded him of his breathing issue.

He said he was trying to make sure he got enough breath, especially right before the phrase.

I asked him how he made sure he got enough breath.

He talked about opening up low in his belly and quite a few other details.

I talked with him about his many ideas about what he needed to do to breath.

While he gave lip service to the possibility that his system was designed to breath, he felt strongly that he needed to assist in breathing when it came to singing. Yet so far, his assisting wasn't reliable. He had the sense he just didn't get it yet.

I once again brought up the possibility that his system was designed to give him enough breath for tasks whether that's swimming under water or shouting or singing. Of course, there's a limit but the phrases he wanted to sustain breath on were within that range of human capability.

Since his attempts to assist his breathing at best weren't reliable, I asked if he would be willing to do an experiment.

He said "yes".

I asked him some questions about the music like:

- What was he singing about?
- What was important to him in the music?
- What was his purpose for singing?

It surprised him that he had some trouble answering these questions. He realized he'd been so caught up with having enough breath/running out of air he'd really forgotten his purpose and other important aspects of the music.

This is a common tendency when someone detects a problem. They can lose sight of the bigger picture and get fully trapped in the problem.

We recaptured some of the details of what he wanted with the music.

I asked him to put his attention on the music and what he wanted musically. When he began to notice the fear about the breath rise up in him, I asked him to remind himself that in this case whether or not he gets enough air is unimportant. He may or may not have enough air for the phrase.

He began and stopped himself immediately because he felt his fear about breathing rise up.

I asked him to reestablish his focus, remind himself breathing didn't matter in this moment.

He began again.

When he finished he had a rather startled look on his face and said "That was weird."

I asked "How so?"

He said "The whole thing was easier and I almost had enough breath."

I said "Notice what that experience might tell you about your system and what you've been up to. Here you were not attending to your breath and it was no worse and possibly better than all the trying to breathe right that you've been doing. At the very least this might tell us that however you are trying to help isn't actually helping.

Student: "I know and that's why I want to learn to breathe right."

BL: "Well in this experiment you didn't think of breath and it happened. Could it be that your system knows how to coordinate the billions of bits of information necessary for the act of singing better than any imposed ideas we have to try to control the details? Could our system be designed to control the details and our job is to be clear on what we want, in this case the song and the arch of the phrasing?"

Student : "That makes sense but how do you do that?"

BL: "Start again being clear of what you want in terms of the music. See the length of the phrase. Your system is actually quite capable of sustaining the release of air for the length of that phrase. But it hasn't had enough easy goes at it to learn the coordinations just yet. So, let's just give your system time to figure it out. Start anytime"

He sang and once again he felt much greater ease in himself and the music.

I asked him what worked and also what would he like to be different.

He said the tonality could be better.

I asked him to gently intend more accuracy in the area he was less clear.

He sang.

He assessed.

He re-clarified his intention.

He sang again. All the while not much focus on the breath. But as no surprise after a few go- rounds he was easily singing the phrase.

The problem hadn't been with his breath. Perhaps the first time he sang it he ran out of air. Then he or his teacher focused on that "problem" and tried to fix it, which was done by manipulating his body, some detail of what is actually an entire coordination. Sometimes it just takes a few go-rounds for our system to learn a new coordination. There is nothing different to do when we don't produce what we want. We simply refresh the intention and give the system the time it takes to learn the skill to coordinate that particular intention. Skill Acquisition in a nut shell.

In this case it was his interference that was creating a vicious cycle that was discouraging him and making him feel like he wasn't a good singer. By finding the interference, his false idea that he needed to manipulate his body to sing, and allowing himself to let his system sing, he began a virtuous circle of learning.

If you are a teacher reading this remember this is just one common example. There are other interferences with singing a phrase other than having enough breath. There might be moments when I have an anatomy book out to show someone how the system is made to breathe. But the all too common tendency is to start with teaching breathing even when there isn't any problem. It is almost as if we create problems that student then takes years to unravel. Others who are teaching voice and directing choirs from this point of view are reporting amazing sound success and over all ease with the singers and are never starting with breath and rarely teaching it. What they find is students are singing well. The real bonus for the teacher is now they can get on to the job of teaching music and nuances of music.

Aside note on breath.

While this text won't go into great detail about the anatomy of breath. (See Gorman's Anatomy of Wholeness work for that). There is an important aspect of ideas of breathing that I want to address. Because hand in hand with breath training is training in how to stand for optimal singing. In the past in voice training there has been a lot of emphasis on a slightly lifted sternum and directions like be a little forward on your feet. (Pick up almost any vocal pedagogy book and you can see the list). This sternum lift happens often under the code words "open up" or "stand tall" but stay free and don't lock your knees.

The result is generally a person ends up slightly off balance backward with the front of the body open and the back slightly squeezed. The knees have to lock to keep the person from falling over. The person then unlocks the knees and the pelvis drops.

Try it. Lift your sternum slightly. Notice the affect on the whole body. Knees tend to lock, the pelvis arches and so forth. But for breath implication of this postural lift is that the abdominals are over stretched and the lower back muscles gripped and the whole system is working to keep the person from falling in this subtle imbalanced stature. This makes breathing more difficult because the whole cylinder of the torso is distorted. Thus, in order to get the breath a person needs to actually activate and work the abdominals. This is usually referred to as breath support. **The entire lower abdominal idea of breath comes out of the misunderstanding of uprightness and the interfered with structure.** Breath support is only necessary if you are out of balance

and interfering with your system. This may be impossible to believe if you come from that tradition. I have demonstrated it hundreds of times.

If a person is easily upright without any lift or collapse and the whole cylinder is available in its naturally elastic state then there is no need of this idea breath support. The system is fully available to naturally give the length and amount of air necessary for the song. The earth supports the breath; the story you are telling supports the breath.

## A Coordinating System Learning Process

Explore the following process for learning a skill.

1. Intention: Have a clear intention of what you want to do – a target or bull's eye.
  2. Do: Take action, throw the dart. You go for your intention. You do.
  3. Assess or Locate where you are in relationship to the bull's eye: Is what happened what I wanted to happen? If 'yes' then you, simply carry on. If 'no' then you get specific, you clarify!
    - How close did I come to my target, my intention?
    - Specifically, what didn't I like and what do I want?
1. Clarify and specify the new, revised intention and repeat the process with this new intention.

THE LEARNING CYCLE:

You intend.

You do.

You assess your results.

You clarify or refresh your intention.

Do again.

Put another way:

You choose a target.

You take aim and shoot.

You identify where you are in relationship to the target.

Refresh your target.

This cycle gives your system time and freedom to learn the conditions and coordination necessary for the desired task. It lets you makes appropriate and efficient neural networks for the skill.

Some pitfalls to be aware of:

Step three of the cycle, assessing what happened, is the moment when it easy to get off the learning cycle.

Realizing that what happened, wasn't what you wanted, is an absolutely necessary aspect of learning. It often

feels like frustration. (If something happens that isn't on target but you don't realize it is off target, you'll just keep doing the off-target thing and never learn the coordination for hitting my target. No Learning.)

**If I can recognize that I didn't hit my target and simply refresh and clarify my intention - I learn.**

That feeling of frustration that I didn't get what I want, shows me what I want. Sometimes I have trouble learning or developing a skill because I haven't clarified the target. Surprisingly I can use frustration to help me identify what I want. **Frustration in learning situation is usually a signal there's something to learn**

Assessment-judgment is NOT the problem. Misunderstanding what the assessment means, what that bad feeling means, is the problem. You have to assess to learn.

It is crucial to learning to be able to assess whether or not you did or didn't hit the target. The uncomfortable "gut wrench" feeling commonly associated with missing the target is not a feeling to avoid. If it is very strong and terrifying it is important to understand this feeling. Fear, anger makes perfect sense if your system learned that missing the target meant being wrong and being wrong meant being a less worthy person, (or some variation of this common interpretation of mistake). In this case your "gut wrench" should be outright terror, because your system has associated making a mistake with being worthless. Put another way your system has the essential ingredient for learning, assessment, interpreted as dangerous; mistake equals pouncing tiger, (see the well-being chapter if this isn't clear to you). You may not believe this intellectually but if making a mistake and a gut wrenching feeling go together there is some negative association with not hitting the target.

If you can stop in the moment and identify you are in one of these learning moments. You can Clarify: *"This gut wrench is just telling me I have something to learn here"*; you reinterpret the instantaneous detection of "off" target as a **learning moment** rather than a wrong moment or self-worth moment.

You are practicing seeing a "mis-take" sensation as a healthy alert signal, like a smoke alarm saying *"Hey there's something to here to learn."*

THIS IS THE FEELING OF A LEARNING MOMENT. It is time to slow down and assess what just happened and clarify your intention and give it another go.

**As you engage in this 'virtuous circle' you can transform fear of being wrong into joy of learning.** As you meet that moment with clarity and reinterpret the sensation, the sensation will change and ease up. It won't be a gut wrench but a sensation of normal dissatisfaction or simply *"This is not what I wanted. What now?"*

Intend

Do Assess

Assess Clarify

Clarify Do

Intend

Another trap in learning is wanting to be right or good. Being right or playing "well" as goals don't work well. They are vague targets. There isn't anything specific the system can coordinate to or intend. We need to attach specific criteria to playing "well" if we want a clear intention to aim for and assess. If I say I want to hit

the bull's-eye then I have a clear intention. I can assess the result. I want to sing in tune or with feeling or in a particular tempo. These are clear intentions that can be assessed. I

## Learning by Playing • Details in the Context of the Whole

I invite you to make an experiment that a violinist friend made with this learning as follows.

She wanted to see if she could learn a new piece with this intend-do-assess process.

She chose a piece to learn.

She played it through from beginning to end keeping her intention clearly on the music.

She registered when she didn't like what she was hearing. She didn't attempt to change the playing directly.

She accepted the fact of the quality of her playing whatever it was at that moment, pleasant or unpleasant.

She didn't try to play better than she was playing, or wish she were playing better (a misconception that often got in her way of playing).

She returned her attention as often as possible to the music.

She did this over a period of time without any expectation of how long it would take her to learn the piece.

She wasn't clear she could even learn a piece in this so simple a manor. She was absolutely astounded how quickly she was playing the piece reasonably well. She had been trained to work small section and control all kinds of details. Instead this process was asking: *"If my goal is to play the music, be free to focus on the music, what would happen if I practice that intention from the start?"*

The key and hardest part for her was to accept the off-target sounds, to not play well, to literally allow herself to play 'badly' compared to her goal. She let herself play exactly the way she was playing, to the degree she knew the music at that moment and allow her system to improve in the time it takes to learn.

She let herself 'take the time it takes to learn'.

To her surprise playing the piece reasonably well was much faster than she expected. She has been doing this approach with her students for several years now and getting similar results. Of course, there are times to work on small sections and in detail. But this whole-music-learning approach wasn't even an option before. Now it is a foundational tool for learning and practice.

The experiment is quite useful for anyone but particularly for people who tend to want it to be perfect before they even know the piece or for people who have strong reactions to making mis-takes.

In essence it is an exercise in accepting exactly what is happening as it is happening, not enjoying it but not getting caught in useless resistance. It is also about getting a feeling for the whole of the piece, for coming back to the details only after the details have been felt in the context of the whole.

### **The Implication for Music Education**

Much music education begins with the details, getting details right without any context for them. The meaning, the story, the expression, the wholeness of the music is often left to last. The Language of

Wholeness proposes that if we early on we work with the purpose, the whole of the piece, then the details will come much more easily. A crescendo makes sense because there is a powerful point to make. A high note soars because it is exactly the note necessary to tell that moment in the story. The rhythm is a triplet because that is how the message feels. Some educators have said taking time to read the poetry and discuss the meaning or to move to the music and feel how it moves you takes too much time in the often rushed environment of performance.

**We propose that this expressive foundation, based on the understanding of how intention and feeling facilitates and coordinates skill, develops musicianship and leads to excellence and efficiency in the long run.**

## Directed Exploration • Inquiry Tools • Order of Discovery Teaching

Directed Exploration is used when the teacher has information to offer to the students, a topic to teach. This is the area of teaching how things work from physical structure to how vowels are formed.

These explorations can be used in group settings to teach curriculum or in an individual setting when someone has a misconception that needs an 'information update'.

Learning happens through the "order of discovery". (Mortimer Adler)

The purpose of setting up a DISCOVERY process is so that student gains experiential knowledge and can access their own criteria for making choices. It is a process that develops a student's inner-compass, the root of artistic choice. Students learn to learn independently.

We will set up an exploration to teach about the Coordinating Pre-sprung Elastic Suspension System as an example.

STEPS (As guideline not rule)

1. Decide what you want to teach and what you tell students:

Information for you: What are you wanting student to know...you have discovered this. This might have an opinion in it – like the right way to do something. In this work we ask: How can I scaffold and experience so they come to this conclusion too.

This step in the Language of Wholeness perspective is being clear for yourself of your purpose. Is your purpose to get everyone in the "right" or "good" position to sing? (Remember right or good for whom? By what criteria?) Which puts you in charge of another's body – Not the Coordinating Pre-sprung Elastic Suspension System model. Or is it to set up a situation so your students can learn about how they work and have the information they need to choose for themselves how they want to be in the world. (Empowering them. Developing their own criteria from which to assess – they become cooperative collaborators rather than obedient collaborators). There is a difference between teaching someone 'how to stand to sing' or 'the right or correct way to stand' and teaching how 'standing works – you can stand in or out of support'. It takes time to make the shift from teaching the best way to teaching how the best way happens. Once you really see the difference it changes everything.

2. What principle (fact) about the system underlies this opinion or conclusion? What do I want my student's to understand about their amazing system and how it works. This is the principle or fact about the system that underlies your opinion – which is your lesson. It could be about stature, coordination, voice, learning. It is the take away. You can think of this as a fact like: how balance works, where a particular joint is, how vowels are made. For students: Tell them the topic area and why it might be useful to them:

*"We are going to look at something that can make singing easier for you."*

The Coordinating Pre-sprung Elastic Suspension System is a different paradigm than postural, alignment, or good-use paradigm. Moving from one model to another often demands new language. Below is a rough guideline to give you some information to begin exploring how to teach from The Coordinating Elastic Suspension System perspective.

In this step you are in essence naming the topic or subject you are in. This can be surprisingly challenging when a concept is new. What do I say if not posture or alignment?

Even just this first sentence to say *"Today we are going to explore \_\_\_\_\_"* can stump people when the old framework was *"Today we are going to explore posture or alignment."* Here are a few alternative suggestions to finish the topic sentence that starts: *"Today we are going to explore:*

- *Your structure or architecture*
- *What is useful to understand about yourself to sing easily*
- *Your elastic suspension system*
- *Stature, poise, balance, spring, how we are upright, structure, architecture."*
- 

3. Set up a COMPARATIVE ACTIVITY/CONTRAST MOMENT to demonstrate the principle in action.
  - a. Old paradigm action. (posturing – positioning) Give a simple instruction that gets a person to go into their idea of "good posture" or 'good alignment' like *'stand tall' or " get ready to sing as if you were in stage."*
  - b. New paradigm action. (leaning in different ways and then coming to center of support while looking around and being free to bounce a ball) Guide them thru leaning and coming roughly to balance. Ask them to go back and forth between 'good posture/alignment' and the upright that comes from the leaning to balance process and see if they can tell if they feel the same or different. Don't debrief yet.  
You can also use the being ready to bounce a ball process as a comparison to 'good posture'. Come to a gentle stillness being ready to bounce the ball. Go back and forth between this upright springy availability with the 'good posture' feeling. Note for yourself. *What is the same? What is different?*
4. Debrief. Discovering what happened for the students. Getting information from them.
  - a. *Were you able to do the two different activities? If so to what degree?*
  - b. *Did you notice any differences between the two activities?* Refer back to the going back and forth they did to see if they could feel any difference.
  - c. *If so describe some of the differences?* If not do (d) below.

- d. Do CLARIFYING activity depending on what you heard from the students. This often involves adding a function in each option. (position and do a sound- spring and do a sound)
- 5. Significance. This is a crucial step for self-knowledge and agency. It is often skipped. It takes the exercise from being a trick or technique to us to being a principle that you can apply to many situations.
  - a. *What does your experience show you about how different ideas of being upright effects your ease or strain in singing?*
  - b. *What does this tell you about your amazing human design, about how your system works?*

SUMMARIZE SIGNIFICANCE of the activity. This can be a clear statement of the principle demonstrated by the activity, You might use the same word as you said to introduce the activity. Use students' responses to show the significance. *"Can you see how this shows us how that we are built to be free to sing. You just need to be alert and ready, like be ready to bounce a ball. Putting yourself into a fixed position doesn't necessarily help. But you can't be sure of this yet. You'll have to try this out for yourself. Don't believe me. The point is for you to understand more about what you need to be available to sing easily."* This leads to the next step.

- 6. The TAKE AWAY...ask what they can do to experiment with what we just did to see if this is true for them. (THIS STEP SUPPORTS AUTONOMY – AGENCY.)

## Inquiry Tools • Investigating Root of “Problem” (Adapted LearningMethods™)

When the issue is in the student, a student has a symptom then we need another tool. It is a different situation than when we have a topic to teach. The student has the information about what they are up to when the problem occurs in them, even if they don't know it yet. We may think we know what is going on in them. You, the teacher, can have a hunch. “She's holding her breath.” “She's tightening her tongue.” But you are only seeing what has happened in the student. YOU DON'T have the information about what the student was intending or attending to that lead to that symptom. If these statements are unclear to you, please review the coordinating system chapter of this text.

It is helpful in working with a student's symptom for the teacher to have worked out many issues in themselves and have a generally accurate idea of how the world, system and skill works. The charts in the Coordinating System section are useful to use to see if you have most of those common misconceptions cleared up in you. To be able to work with the Language of Wholeness being clear of these perspectives is essential. It makes the approach much more intuitive and natural.

Here are some introductory steps to inquiry work to investigate why the symptom the student has makes sense.

1. What is the problem? Name it clearly.
2. Why does it make sense the problem is occurring? Anyone up to the same things would have this problem?
  - Tools for this stage:
  - a. Find a specific moment when this problem is occurring?
  - b. Find a time when it is and isn't occurring and look at details of why in one situation it occurs and another it doesn't? What is difference.

- c. Watch for hindsight and speculation...stay in actual experience of the moment.
- d. Find the order of events just before problem happens.
- e. Listen for redflags like:
  - a. Unfinished sentences – sentences ending in emotions. Afraid of what?
  - b. Maybe/probably family – Do or don't you know? If you don't how would you find out?
  - c. Should/need/wish –what is reality what is wish?
  - d. Listen for assessment language – good, bad...good for whom and by what criteria.

If you want to develop skills to do this kind of inquiry in your teaching it can be very useful to take a few group LearningMethods™ classes.

## Expressive Nature, Dynamic Life, Making Art • Perils and Power

**Innately Expressive Beings:** We are communicating beings. Our survival depends on our ability to express our needs and understand the needs of others. Expressing needs, wants, ideas, our experiences is foundational to life. Making art is an extension of this need to communicate, to tell stories, to understand and be understood.

**Performers predicament:** Some of the most common statements I hear from singers/conductors are: “I need to be more expressive.” “My expression interferes with my tone/my gesture.” The predicament seems to be:

- a. When there is free and natural expression the structure/instrument is contorted.
- b. When there is an attempt to keep the structure from contorting, like working on posture, free and natural expression is constrained.

**Emotion and Culture.** In order to be safe and appropriate in a social system our system holds back our free flow of emotional expression. We have executive function to inhibit our emotional reaction to keep ourselves and others safe. We don't throw the baby out the window. We don't hit another person. We don't dissolve in tears on the bus. We don't laugh at another person when they fall.

**The Invisible Confusion.** The result of this important aspect of social life is that we confuse the feeling of holding back the full expression of an emotion with feeling the emotion.

Say the following phrases with the emotion that goes with them:

1. Please, NOOO don't let this be true. This can't be true. NO No no.
2. WATCH OUT! STOP! RATTLE SNAKE!
3. Oh Wow, This amaaazing! I love this. I want some more, yum, delicious.

Each phrase may feel totally different to you: shock and grief, fear and warning, pleasure. Is there an underlying common sensation? Say them again.

Notice that there is a slight bound, grip to each one. If you didn't notice it. Say them again. It is like a holding in, or holding back. This is our socially appropriate inhibitor in action. This grip of holding back feels like authentically communicating the emotion. We confuse the grip, the bound sensation, with the feeling of the emotion.

This grip to feel is the aspect of 'natural' expression that interferes with our structure, our instrument. **It isn't emotion that interferes with voice or gesture, it is the holding back of the emotion that interferes.**

**Expressive Affinities.** Our comfort range with emotional expression is determined by our cultural background, family background, life experiences and our nature. We all have a comfort range and affinities.

**Artistic Expression.** The beauty of artistic expression is that it is a social situation in which it is safe to let expression flow freely. In fact, free flow of expression is an essential requirement of art. The story you are telling is often rooted in culture and experience that isn't yours. The job of an artist demands a larger expressive range, usually beyond your affinities. Just as you have a vocal comfort range, a tessitura, you have an emotional, expressive comfort range or tessitura of emotion. Just as you can develop your range vocally you can expand your expressive range.

**Postural Manipulation.** One strategy people use to support free expression is to work directly on freeing the body and having good posture. When you understand how your system is always in the coordination of your attention and intention you have the information to understand why manipulating your body, whether it is by trying to 'relax' or trying to 'have good posture', doesn't generally work.

- You can't hold back emotion and be relaxed.
- You can't be free to express when your sternum is held.

**Understanding Dynamics of Expression to Free Yourself from the Performers Predicament.**  
**Alphabet of Expression • Expanding my expressive palate so I have more choice • Detecting my limits so I can choose to expand range if I am ready.**

*Tell a story. It was a dark and stormy night. We all sat around the campfire and the Captain said "Tell us one of those good old fashion stories." And Jack began.*

Words are louder, softer, lingered upon, brisk, dwindled, boomed. Depending on how you say one word it can convey many meanings. The body is hunched, poised, sharp, languid, big, shrunk. Depending on what is happening in your face, body and movement, one word can convey many meanings.

**Non-verbal Communication.** You have something to say and your system changes tone, shape, energy, direction, phrasing of your words and body. You are expressing. If you are listening to someone you pick up those cues, interpret them and communication occurs. Most of what is happening in communication is happening in the other-than-conscious part of our system. The meaning your system makes of someone else's expression comes primarily from the tone of voice, the visual cues of body and face and only a tiny part of your understanding comes from the meaning of the words themselves.

**Elements of Expression.** These changes in shape, direction, energy are the elements or ingredients of expression. You can define them. They are what allows computer engineered voices to sound expressive and

animated objects to look alive and express feelings. If an object turns to each side in short darting actions while moving slowly forward, we pick-up a cautious, sneaky creature. Combination of dynamic and spatial elements communicate emotion.

**Dynamics.** Moving through the activities of everyday life demands a wide range of dynamic responses. When you shovel snow, you are in a different dynamic organization than when you are hanging a fragile ornament. You use your energy differently. Dynamic change is a natural part of life. The movements for the tasks of life are the same ingredients we use for emotional expression. Dynamics in the music are the cues to communicate the emotional story of your song. Dynamic cues in music, whether added by composer or editor, are serving the telling of the story.

The challenge for an artist is to have authentic feeling and expression without interfering with the instrument. Artistic expression doesn't need to contain or control. The flow can be open and free and powerful.

Exploring the elements of dynamic movement is a powerful tool for:

- Allowing the flow of feeling and expression in order to have an unimpeded instrument
- Expand your comfort zone or your tessitura of expression
- Gain another way to gather information about the piece you are exploring by changing dynamics as you explore it.

We all have dynamic qualities that are more comfortable to do than others. We call this our dynamic affinity. You may be quick, direct and strong while someone else tends to be indirect and sustained and light. Characters also have affinities. To be a facile artist it is essential to have access to a wide range of dynamic choices. Similar to expanding your vocal range, you can also exercise your dynamic range. Below is a process for expanding your range in the elements of expression as a tool for expanding your comfort zone, a pathfinder for developing freedom in expression and deepening interpretative possibilities. It helps you have more expressive options available to you as you traverse and engage in the telling of the myriad stories of art.

**Laban Movement Analysis** describes a wide range of dynamic qualities. It breaks dynamics down into single elements and then combinations of elements. Real movement is always a combination of elements. As you explore different dynamic elements, you'll notice that different dynamics evoke different emotions, different emotions evoke different movements. It feels different to punch than it does to tap; it feels different to float than to wring.

Consider:

1. Exploring through movement and/or sounding the single dynamic elements and their combinations.
2. Can you tell which elements are easier than others? Identify your affinities this way.
3. Make a mixed playlist of a wide range of dynamic music and dance to it.
4. Singing a piece changing the dynamics in your body and notice how the change effects the sound, your feeling or anything else.

**Dynamics in Laban Movement Analysis** are described as follows:

- **Time** continuum: quick and sustained

Quick is time cut in small pieces; sustained is continuous relationship to time.

Example would be cutting a carrot versus smoothing a blanket

- **Force** continuum (Weight is Laban word): strong and light

Strength is using your forces for effecting action; light is using less force to effect a less demanding action.

Example would be shoveling versus catching a bubble.

- **Space or direction** continuum: direct and indirect

Direct is going from point a to b; indirect is meandering from point a to b.

Examples are shooting an arrow, kid in candy shop being sidetracked along the way.

- **Flow** Continuum: bound and free

Flow is more about perceiving interference with emotional freedom than it is an element to exercise.

Flow is about muscle tone. Bound is held stiff; free is out of control.

Examples are a robot compared to someone drunk.

These 3 core continuums, (Time, force and space), combine in movements like:

Dab—quick, direct, light

Flick—quick, direct, strong

Wring—sustained, indirect, strong

Glide—sustained, direct, light

Float—sustained, indirect, light

Press—sustained, direct, strong

Punch—quick, direct, strong

Slash—quick, indirect, strong

Body Mind Centering™ work explores dynamic expression through what they call the ‘mind’ of our tissues.

Imagine moving from your:

- Bones—the scarecrow in the wizard of oz—freedom
- Muscles—rich, strong movement, tiger—rhythm, power
- Organs—belly dance—emotion
- Lymph—clear, direct movement like karate-boundaries
- Fat—hula dance—sensuality

There are many more possible tissues to root yourself in for dynamic qualities, character and expanding your potential.

Shaping yourself is also another doorway to explore your freedom of expression. Make a big shape with your body, then a small, crunched shape, then a middle range. Notice how shaping makes you feel. Sing a piece as you change shape. Notice how the shaping changes how you understand the piece.

For more significance on this subject check Amy Cuddy’s TED Talk: Your Body Language May Shape Who You Are

## 5. Sound Music Education

The Language of Wholeness Applied to Music



# The Learning Moment • Feedback

## Understanding feedback in music education and why it matters?

Babette Lightner and Megan Brenneman

### The Crucial Moment

There probably isn't a more crucial moment in learning than the moment after an attempt at a skill. This is the moment when feedback on the results of the action is received. Sometimes the feedback, (information about the results) comes from others and sometimes from what the performer perceives. How that information about the results is understood and handled makes the difference is what happens next.

Is a person inspired to keep with it, to keep learning or is a person deflated and wishing to quit?

Is a person able to understand what happened and make hypothesis of what to try next? or

Does a person look to another for direction: "What should I do now?"

What happens in this moment sets-up the strategy for learning. The chosen strategy shows how the teacher or student understand what learning is and how it works.

How external feedback is given and understood is completely different depending on how teaching/learning is understood.

Here's a dictionary definition of feedback:

*information about reactions to a product, a person's performance of a task, etc. which is used as a basis for improvement.*

In music education feedback is the common currency of teaching. A student makes music and the teacher responds. The teacher is affected by what they saw-heard-felt and feeds back the information so the student can take the next steps in the learning process.

This is a moment of truth. How this learning situation is understood and set-up can be the difference between learning as inspiring and learning as fearful. In my experience working with hundreds of people who have anxiety about performing or tension in their playing the root of the fear and tension had its genesis in past 'feedback'/learning environments.

Talking about feedback is talking about learning.

Talking about feedback is talking about relationship.

### How does learning and skill acquisition happen? What is your job as an educator?

Learning is on-going and primarily an-other-than-conscious activity. It is neuro-biological activity. At every moment of life, the human system is taking in stimulus, interpreting it and responding. New neural networks are created, old ones are refined; muscles and other tissues lengthen, shorten, strengthen, weaken, stay the same; bones gain mass or lose it; hormonal responses charge us up or calm us down. The system is adapting to the demands we place on it. Adapting is the physical change that we call learning. It happens across all systems. Repeat an activity, refine it over time so that more often than not what you intend is what you get and voila--you have acquired a skill.

No one can do it for you. You have to engage in something to learn. Your system does the learning you simply have to intend, do, perceive the result (self-feedback) and intend again. This is a cycle of activity that is the act of learning. You don't 'do' the learning; learning happens when you set-up the conditions for the coordination necessary for the task to occur consistently.

You 'do'. The system learns.

As you learn a skill you are also learning about which situations are safe and which are dangerous. Your feeling system is learning too.

You can learn a skill and be brilliant at it and mostly feel terrified to engage in it.

You can learn a skill and it can give you the greatest joy and deepest satisfaction.

You can have any variation of this as well.

How you perceive the moment of 'feedback' is the heart of the learning moment. It is the moment of "now what is my next move?"

If 'feedback' threatens me, I will learn differently than if I perceive it as a challenge, as a way to move forward, as a stimulus to curiosity.

Feedback comes from you, your own perceptions of your action. This is self-feedback. Feedback comes from others. You do, someone reacts verbally and non-verbally. When you react to someone's action, your reaction gives them feedback.

Feedback is a fact of the learning relationship.

**How do we honor this role of giving feedback so that it supports a person to engage in the activity so the system can freely learn and gain mastery of the skill?**

The Teacher – What's my job?

A teacher is generally someone who has more experience in the subject at hand than the student. We go to a teacher for guidance to help us learn to do what they already know how to do.

As a teacher how do you understand what you do? Teaching is a relationship. How you enter the relationship, how you understand it determines all that comes next.

One way to think about this is that a teacher's job is to see the beauty in the student.

A student or a group of students is before me and I remember that I am here to support them to experience their own beauty, their possibilities. I am here to help them discover themselves through the skill we are exploring together. As they master the skill, they learn how they are made to learn. As they master the skill, they learn what it takes to learn: tenacity, resilience, clarity. Seeing the beauty in my student is what ignites holding them to a high standard. A standard based on a mutual desire to "discover what you are capable of when you put your will to the task at hand".

"I can't learn for you. Learning happens inside you, in your tissues, your brain, your fingers. I can only help you set-up the conditions in which learning happens in you." Learning is an embodied activity.

If a teacher sees their role as a means to scaffold learning possibilities for the student than how they respond to a student when they make the music will be different than when a teacher understands their role as a teacher as telling students how to do the skill or thinks they have to inspire students or have to get students engaged or feel good about themselves. You can't inspire, get them engaged or make them authentically feel good, you can only set-up the conditions to make those responses that are in them be more or less likely to happen. Generally, when teachers see their role to make these responses happen in students, the teachers are exhausted at the end of the day, have voice or headache issues. (This topic demands another article).

## A common teaching scaffolding

Let's say there's a piece of Baroque music a student is learning. A first step is finding ways to make curriculum relevant to the student. How do you show how old forms and new forms are universal and connect to the student's lives in some way? To the degree relevancy is established is the degree the next steps unfold.

Since this article is about the feedback moment we will jump to that moment in the education situation.

Here we are in the moment when the student finishes playing the piece. The most common sequence I observe in music teachers is a quick jumping in with a reaction to the playing, anything from: "Great. Now..." to "Well good try, but let's go back to page 2....". There are a few token questions but the relationship is of the student playing and the teacher assessing and giving instructions for what to do next. The student leaves with a list of instructions.

Students are often clear about the assignment but have no clear idea of how the assignment will help them learn the skill other than the "instructions are to help me play better by the teacher's criteria and get a better grade". Over time the student can gain skill. Common complaints of teachers are that students don't practice enough, are lazy, aren't engaged. If we stop and take a closer look it makes complete sense that a student doesn't want to practice and isn't engaged. Most of the work in the lessons is coming from the teacher. The assessment and the next step is from the teacher because the teacher is the holder of the intention and the criteria for the music.

### CRITERIA<sup>1</sup>

Teachers often don't even know they have criteria. In traditional pedagogy many teachers confuse criteria with truth. Criteria stays hidden as a universal standard and so the criteria isn't explained. There's just a determination of good, bad or ok.

Change criteria and you change your perception of the results.

Criteria reflects the goal and the goal reflects the criteria. When students never understand that the choices being made are made based on criteria and the criteria stays hidden, they don't get the information to be engaged, to have curiosity in the practice room. Repetition without curiosity or interest can be mind-numbing. Repetition with the main goal being to get it right teaches a person to fear getting it wrong.

How might we teach when we see the role of the teacher as setting-up conditions for learning, learning that happens in the student? How might we teach when we understand that learning demands clear criteria for the skill, clear targets?

Leon Thurman describes the three key aspects of learning, taken from research on what human's need to thrive. These aspects are empathetic relationship, success and autonomy.

In other words, a student learns best when they feel safe, are able to succeed at a task and can go away and do the task on their own.

When the teacher who sees their role in facilitating high level skill-acquisition as helping the student feel safe, have success and leave with something to do, the interaction with a student might go something like this:

**Specific Intention • Explicit Goal<sup>2</sup>:** Before the student plays the piece, we need to know what they want from the playing.

What goal or intention do you have for the music?

This is a moment when quite a lot of teaching can happen. Is the goal clear or murky?

If a student says "I want to play the piece well."

We ask “What do you mean by well specifically?” (It is impossible to play well – generally. We need criteria for what is playing well. All assessments have criteria. One person’s well is another person’s boring. There is no generalized ‘well’ or ‘good’.) The teacher can help the student refine a goal for playing ‘well’. A student can intend to play: ‘with expressive phrasing’ or ‘mostly in tune’ or ‘to see how I know the piece at this moment so I can find out where I might want to work next.’

**Doing • Play:** Now the student plays.

**Listening with you heart:** An exercise I do with teachers is to ‘listen with your heart not just your ears’. Teacher are in partners and they practice playing for each other. One is teacher, one is student. The ‘student’ plays and the ‘teacher’ takes in the music being made.

You, the listener, suspend for a moment all the detailed evaluation. Listen in order to experience what you are hearing. Listen with you heart. How does it make you feel or not?

Let a student play and do them the honor of listening to the music where it is in them now and not for what needs to be fixed. Listen for the beauty of their artistry as it is in this moment of their lives, no matter how messy. The magic of all the funny hiccups and interpretations and not knowing.

It is a powerful exercise for teachers with long experience because they find it almost impossible to do. When they are in the ‘student’ role, making the music, they have such a different experience when the person in the teacher role actually listens to them, to their current level of artistry. Try it. While the students play, listen from your heart.

**Assessing:** The music has been made and now what?

If we remember that learning happens in the student, we know the most crucial assessment is what the student picks up, hears, notices. They are the learning person after all.

Even if you were ‘just listening’ you can’t have helped picking up details. The details arrive even when you hold the bigger picture.

The student can’t help but hear and feel what happened. Assessing is constantly occurring.

**First ask the student:**<sup>3</sup> “How did that go for you?” If they say something general like ‘good’ or ‘bad’ or ‘ok’, we help them get specific. ‘Good, bad, ok how?’ If they can’t answer then we go back to the intention or original goal for the playing, this can also be the first question: “So you said you wanted to play in-tune. How often did you play in-tune? What percentage do you guess?” If they say a clear percentage and you agree from what you heard then you can either go to a next step or if the percentage is low, you can ask them to play again with the same goal and see if it just takes a little time to get in-tune. At this point you have a shared intention. Together you are setting-up an exploration to figure out what would help the student improve tonality. Here is where all your past knowledge comes in. But instead of just telling the student “Ok let’s go to page 3 and work on those measures” ask them first and see if they have a strategy for getting more consistently in tune: “Since you are noticing you are in-tune all the way through except on page 3, if you were on your own in the practice room what you do now to help get that section in line with you want for the music?”

The point of the lesson time is to help them be able to learn on their own in the practice room. I like to say the “learning room.” “Go and learn from your playing. Go learn how to play the music.” A practice room tends to imply “Well, you learned what you need to know in the lesson, now go practice it.”

They haven’t learned a thing in the lesson. They may have had a *performance change* but skill acquisition takes repetition. Succeeding in doing something once or twice is NOT learning. It is not skill acquisition. It is a *performance change*. Learning, gaining skill happens effectively when the student has an intention for the music, does it and then they themselves assess what happened and decide how to proceed to continue to gain mastery. Intend. Do. Assess. Intend again. Over and over and over again. That’s learning.

Notice no one has had to praise or criticize.

The music gives that information.

Is the playing closer to a target or further away from it? We can talk about accuracy, closer, further from what we want. Good and bad are the natural feelings of getting closer or further from the desired outcome. The teacher's role isn't to say "good' or 'bad' it is to help the student determine if what they are doing is what they want to be doing.

Of course, teachers do have responses and express them in excitement or irritation. When we do burst forth with an opinion about what we hear and feel it is helpful to say "Ok I loved that version. I felt the story. That is my criteria. It feels good to me. *But the important thing is how did it feel to you based in the criteria you set for yourself?*" In this way I am allowing myself to have natural responses, but I am being clear that my response says something about me and my criteria and how what I heard fits my criteria. My response is my opinion not truth. (For more on this see the Response System articles.)

Praise, just like negative response, teaches students to look outside of themselves for assessment. It teaches the seeds of performance anxiety. If a student plays and asks you "How did it go?" Then it is important to shift approaches so the student has the tools to discover for themselves how they played. They become the holders of excellence as they learn how to have standards for excellence inside themselves, not somewhere out in the world.

**Feedback:** The purpose of teacher sourced information is to guide the student to be able to frame intentions and personally own the criteria to evaluate their music making so they can frame new intentions.

**Significance:** Once there has been a shift or performance change there is an opportunity to bring out the significance of what the student has done. In the example we have presented about how it is impossible to play 'well' as general goal you can have the student compare:

- A) Trying to 'play well'
- B) Playing a specific intention to 'play mostly in-tune.'

In the above comparison students usually will experience a much clearer and more satisfying result to with B) the specific intention. Once they have compared a few times and see a consistency with the different intentions we have the significance opportunity. This is rooting the performance change to the bigger principle they can apply to all music making.

"Can you see how this works? When you have clear intention and clear criteria it gives your system something to organize around and then it can do it. If you have a vague 'to play well' intention there's nothing for your system to organize around other than "Oh no, I might play badly.' This shows you how beautifully your system is designed to learn. You get that tight, stressed feeling when you try to play the generalized 'well' and you feel easier when you play with the specific intention to 'play in-tune'.

**Making Sense of Experience<sup>4</sup>:** You the teacher has to understand the significance of common music making principles. One way to discover these is when you notice a change, a success or failure, you ask why does this make sense? How does the system work that when I do A) and it is different than when I do B)? Like our example above: "How does the system work that when I try to play *well* it is more stressful than playing to *see how in-tune I can play?*" There are endless contrast moment possibilities. Here's another: Why is there more breath when a person knows what *they want to express* in the phrase compared to trying to *make sure* they have enough breath to finish that long phrase?

Each success shows you something about how the human system works that if understood is an underlying principle for making music. This is the way you as an educator can make discoveries about how things work. When you have the curiosity to look deeper than 'the playing is good or bad' and begin to for what *allows* playing to be good and bad, than

questions and comparisons will bubble-up in you. Each lesson is an opportunity to learn and teach principle through the specific development of skill and musicianship.

**Information Updates<sup>5</sup>:** There are always times in a lesson in which what the students says shows the teacher they need some more information to frame a more appropriate intention to the meet criteria of the genre. This is when you say things like “here is the standard convention for playing Baroque music. Let’s explore the difference between what you just played which was more a Romantic interpretation and doing this (explanation) Baroque quality”. You have lots of information to share and update them on. Information update moments come organically out of moments of student’s playing and verbal responses.

Once students understand that lessons are about them having intentions and criteria so they learn on their own work, the bulk of the time in the lesson can be on understanding and deepening the MUSIC! As one teacher working this way has said: “Once they got this ownership of their musicianship you couldn’t keep them out of the practice room.”

**The Experiment or take-away<sup>5</sup>:** One of the most important questions you can ask yourself as a teacher is what is the student leaving with? What are they going to do when they leave the lesson to keep learning? We literally ask them: “What have you understood from this lesson? What experiment can you make in the practice room to explore what we looked at today? Framing the take-away as an experiment is useful. Learning is experimenting. It is having a question, curiosity. The take-away could be “I am going to compare playing the whole piece slowly to see if that helps me play more in-tune, rather than playing to tempo right away.” Students can compare different strategies. This way the student learns to learn. It is a totally different mind than going to the practice room to attempt to repeat over and over again the performance change they made in the lesson, limited to trying to get it right. What question does the student leave the lesson with?

The question leads to the first question when they arrive in your class next. “How did your experiment go this week?”

In Summary:

**Establish Relevance if possible**

**Specific Intention • Explicit Goal**

**Doing • Play**

**Listening with you heart**

**Assessing rooted in understanding criteria and how assessments and the response system works**

First ask the student questions

Conversation –

Next Steps – do again or refresh goal or comparisons

**Process repeats until we have a clear performance change – contrast moment**

**Significance**

**Making Sense of Experience**

**Information Updates**

**The Experiment or take-away**

**NOTES:**

1. **Understanding how assessment work is crucial for this aspect of feedback see: Good For Whom by Elizabeth Garren and The Response System articles: What I Wish I’d Learned in Middle School by Babette Lightner**

2. Establishing specific criteria is one of the skill sets we teach in The Language of Wholeness work.
3. The steps of feedback that involve asking students questions, seeing the significance of experience are rooted in the method of question taught in LearningMethods™. You can discover useful questions on you own, if you have the questions. Since the question arise out of a generally new way of understanding learning and how things work the LearningMethods™ can speed up the learning curve on this aspect of teaching.
4. 5. 6. See note 3.

## Learning Process and Setting-up Feedback in a Group setting.

This feedback • learning process works almost the same way in a group setting. Like a recipe you adapt the process of the work with the ingredients at hand.

The goal of teaching is to help a student:

- Learn how to learn
- Choose intentions based on specific criteria
- Have the information to make choices

These goals are all in the service of the student having the means to be the skilled, capable, expressive artist they can be. The upshot of this is the gift of what it can be to be a musician. They have chance to be imbued with curiosity and to develop perseverance, expressive availability, empathy, and the ability to stand-up inside their own beauty. They have access to their own compass in the context of the world.

Below is a simplification of a possible process one can ask students to do when listening and responding to another musician.

- 1) Listen with your heart. What did you feel, think as you listened?
- 2) What worked for you (name this to yourself) – “I felt a consistent pulse.”, “I understood the words.”
- 3) What didn't work for you (name this to yourself)- “I sensed nervousness and so felt nervous.” “I was tense because it felt out of tune to me.”

They may need a little reminder of why they are doing this. You can remind them: “You are practicing realizing that what you heard and experienced tells you about you and what matters to you. You have access to information about you.”

- 4) Ask permission to give your opinion if you aren't directly answering the player's question.
- 5) Can you frame your idea into a question for the player so you can see if what you were guessing is accurate or not. Instead of saying "You seemed nervous." You can ask "How were you feeling when you played?"

Another reminder moment: We often speak with conclusions or assumptions about what the player was doing. We say "You were nervous" "You played in tune" "You were gripped." You actually don't know this or have this information. If you guess right it can seem like guessing isn't a problem. But have you ever had people tell you what you feel and what you were doing and it wasn't at all accurate? That's when guessing is a problem. If you are guessing you have no idea which time will be fine and which time won't. It's just best to practice questioning to get accurate information than guessing you know what the other person was feeling, thinking or doing. People often close down when someone tells them what they did and what they should do.

If you develop your ability to be clear of what you want in the music and what you want to find out about your playing then when you are done you can have real questions for your listeners. They don't have to guess and critique you. You use the listeners as feedback for your questions. Here are some ways to help you develop your clarity of playing or practice purpose.

1) Ask yourself: Why am I playing music? (This may require a mini lofty goal lecture)

2) Ask Yourself: What matters to me in this music? (Mini-lecture) *If you tend to say "nothing" then find something or make it up or change the piece. It is much more fun and engaging if you can connect with what you are doing. To be interested and engaged can only come from you. It isn't the teachers job to get you interested. Find something to react to, to make meaning of in the piece. Compare playing with no interest to palying with interest or listen to the difference between the music someone makes who 'doesn't care' and someone who has something to say.,*

3) What are you saying or what is your target for this opportunity you have for learning about the piece through this chance to play? *(Depending how student answers this there is often an opportunity for the educator to clarify useful from useless targets – general targets like "play well" as distinct from specific targets "to have my words understood.")*

4) You get to experiment in front of the group and the group can help you makes choices because they can tell you what they felt and heard. *(Feedback from them is for you so you can make choices and develop as an artist it is not ABOUT you and your worth.)*

### Learning Process:

1. Player says (either to themselves, to instructor or to the group - depending on the experiment they are doing) why they are playing and what is their target, goal.
2. Player plays.
3. Player says how it went for them with specific questions (instructor can prompt):
4. Important first questions for the player to ask themselves:
  - a. Did I do the experiment/think about my target? If yes then we carry on with questions if no then play again
  - b. How did it go? How close did I get to the target?
  - c. Considering that result what would I do next?
5. Only now ask others: Do you have any questions for the listeners? If yes go ahead and ask. (opportunity to guide having specific result-oriented questions about their experience of what they heard and observed.)
6. Listeners answer player-initiated questions.
7. If desire for open ended responses the player always gets to say if they want to hear response or not. (Do you have enough to go explore or do you want to hear more?)
8. Listeners practice asking permission to give response or suggestions or ideas.

Real World Examples of the Conscious Feedback Process in a High School Setting. We begin with High School Educator Megan Brenneman's description of the results of this approach in her classes. Her course's Learning Cycle and assignment guidelines follow:

Megan: I feel that this exploratory approach to feedback allows students to engage more deeply in the entire creative process. For the singer-artist, they are being asked to make meaning of the music, to express their artistic thoughts and opinions, and to connect those ideas with their music-making at whatever skill level they find themselves. Through

curiosity and inquiry, they can become aware of their whole self - not just the kind of sound they are producing musically, but how they are feeling physically and emotionally through it all, and reflecting back on what they have previously analyzed about the character, message, and music. This process honors the whole self, and acknowledges that the student has the capability of self-assessing, problem-solving, and making decisions about how to move closer to their goals. They are empowered to take charge of their own learning and development as an artist and human being. Using this kind of approach - in community - in the company of peers - helps to develop a supportive and non-threatening atmosphere. For the listener-artist, this approach can help to build the skill of being able to listen and observe closely, and to use a line of inquiry that genuinely seeks to empower others and lead a person toward self-discovery. It also takes the pressure off of a peer or teacher to "have all the answers". All the information is literally inside of the person who is sharing. Every individual is unique. Every individual will engage in the process to a different extent. Some students may have difficulty making connections and engaging in higher level and layered thinking. They may need to be given specific experiments or comparisons to do, in order to help them make decisions. If we can still give them the opportunity to make choices for themselves (even if it has to be through more close-ended questioning - "Which one do you like better - this one, or that one?"), this can still provide the agency that we are hoping to build within each student.

As you look at these assignments note:

- How the description of the assignment states the purpose and tools to achieve that purpose up front. Here is the teacher's point of view made transparent.
- How students are asked to be clear about their purpose and guided in finding not only a piece of music but what they are communicating. While this is a vocal classroom the process is no different than for instrumental situation. The language might be tweaked a bit to evoke more imagery than character. But these steps are basically interchangeable for finding what it is the music is expressing. Expression is the purpose of technique!
- How the making of the music gives the opportunity to clarify student's artistic criteria and sense of self.
- How the process is laid out in clear steps. Different musical and technical aspects can be brought out through the intend, play, result, feedback – process. When a student doesn't get what they want it is often the opportunity to explore or explain something about music – a technique can be refined to help achieve the goal or an explanation of the problem area for example they made need to know how syncopation works or how a certain genre approaches phrasing. The opportunities are endless and tied to the student's goal.
- All the aspect from any good curricular design: goals, process and results, next steps.
- What interests you?
- What might you apply?

**Solo Learning Cycle #1 (7-week cycle)**

During this course, you are going to learn and share two solos with your teacher and peers. The following process will help you develop an understanding of the creative process, and discover how to become your most artistically expressive self through the singing of a folk song.

**Step #1 – Diagnostic Assessment with Mrs. Brenneman (Early February) - Done!!!**

- Meet Mrs. Brenneman to do a vocal range check

**Step #2 – Meeting the Music (Feb 13-25)**

- In class and using the resources found in Google Classroom, listen to possible song selections; make a song choice ([Folk Song Sheet Music](#); [Folk Song Rehearsal Tracks](#); [YouTube Playlist \(arrangement possibilities\)](#))
- Complete the assignment found in Google Classroom **“Meeting the Music: Understanding Your Folk Song” (due Tuesday, February 25th)**
- Listen to the rehearsal track and sing along with the example to begin learning the melody and to ensure the song rests comfortably within your vocal range/tessitura
- Decide with Mrs. Brenneman if you would like to change the song style slightly to suit your musical taste
- Download the rehearsal tracks of your song onto a your computer and/or a portable mp3 device
- Download and print the sheet music of your song and keep it in a safe and accessible place

**Step #3 – Singing Labs with Mrs. Brenneman and with peers/Singing Lab video (March 2-13)**

- Listen to your peers and give feedback - keep your goals in mind
- Record your Singing Lab with Mrs. Brenneman - Discovering what makes it easier or harder to express this piece of music
- Complete the assignment **“Solo #1 Singing Lab Video Reflection”**, found in Google Classroom **(due Thursday, March 12)**

**Step #4 - Final days of rehearsal at home and at school (March 16-27)**

- Continue to rehearse on your own and for others at home and at school, taking into consideration the feedback you gained during your singing lab video and from other sources

**Step #5 – Sharing with the Class (evaluated and video-recorded) (March 30-April 3)**

- Share your solo with the class, to be evaluated by Mrs. Brenneman

**Step #6 – Reflection on Solo Sharing**

- Watch the video of your solo sharing
- Complete the form **“Learning Cycle Solo#1 Final Reflection”** found in Google Classroom **(due Tuesday, April 7)**

**Big Ideas:**

B1 - Use the critical analysis process when responding to, analyzing, reflecting on, and interpreting music

**Essential Learnings:**

- Use analysis and interpretation skills to inform artistic decisions about a piece of music to be performed as a solo

**Learning Goals:**

- Goal #1: I will demonstrate my understanding of the text (lyrics) of my chosen solo
- Goal #2: I will make connections between the message/meaning of my chosen solo and the musical aspects that will help to communicate that message/meaning clearly to the audience

**In order to really understand the song you have chosen and to effectively communicate the message to your audience, you need to analyze the meaning of the text (lyrics) in addition to memorizing the words. Simply memorizing the words will not be enough to successfully convey the mood and emotion of the song. Please complete the following questions, using your own background knowledge, research about the song, and/or your own imagination and interpretation skills. The more detailed and clear your ideas are, the more compelling your singing will be! When you sing, you take on a new character. Essentially, you are becoming an actor, using your musical and physical expressive skills to convey a message. Remember that if you use outside sources (e.g. Internet, books, etc.) to complete the following questions, you need to make a note of where you found your information.**

1. What is the title of your Folk Song?
2. Who is singing this song?
  - Describe the character/person that you think is singing this song (i.e. age, social status, personal history)
3. To whom is this person singing?
  - Describe the character(s) or person/people to whom you think the singer is “speaking” through this song
4. Why is this person singing this song?
  - What do you think is the main message of the singer (i.e. problem, crisis, hopes, dreams, recent events)?
5. Describe at least 2 artistic decisions you can make about how to perform this piece that would help to communicate the mood and message of this song.
  - For example, which words of the text are most/least important and how will you add emphasis to help enhance meaning? How can you use dynamics to help highlight your character’s mood / message? What sort of facial expression might you use in the various parts of the piece to visually convey your character’s mood and message?

### Success Criteria

Categories/Criteria	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4
<b>Knowledge and Understanding</b> Information and Ideas	Includes less than half of the required information	Includes most of the required information	Includes the required information and ideas are complete	Includes extremely detailed information and insightful ideas
<b>Thinking</b> Analyzing and Explaining	Supports few ideas with examples that lack relevance	Supports some ideas with relevant examples or rationales	Supports ideas adequately with relevant examples or rationales	Supports ideas effectively with relevant examples or rationales
<b>Communication</b> Language and Style	Meaning and intent are frequently unclear	Meaning and intent are sometimes unclear	Meaning and intent are clear	Meaning and intent are clear and engaging
<b>Comments and Level</b>				

## Solo Learning Cycle: Guidelines for Singing Labs

You will have 30-40 minutes of Singing Lab time with your peer group each day over the next 5 days. On at least one of those days, you will work in Room C251 with Mrs. Brenneman. Here are some guidelines for effective approaches and helpful feedback that will encourage deep reflecting, responding, and analysing (RRA) in both singers-artists and listener-artists alike.

### Everyone:

- Before starting each session, consider the “lofty goal or purpose” by asking questions like: What is the purpose of singing? Why do you sing?
- Review and have handy the [solo sharing success criteria](#) that we have discussed

### The singer-artist who is sharing during singing lab:

- Share with your group your lofty goal: What is your character’s purpose for singing this song? Why do you want to sing this song?
- Decide on your “target” or “experiment” for today’s lab. What do you want from this Singing Lab today? (e.g. I want to get closer to accurate pitches in this particular part of the song). Share that with your group.
- Share (sing) your song or part of your song
- Reflect and analyse for yourself how close you think you came to your target on a scale of 1 to 5 (1 being “not yet”, 5 being a “bullseye”)
- Decide whether you would like feedback/discussion from/with your peers or not
- If you decide you would like feedback/discussion with your peers, first allow them to ask you some questions (see below) to help you reflect
- Ask your group a specific question about how close they thought you came to your target

### The listener-artist that is listening during singing lab:

- Engage as an active listener (no distractions - e.g. doodling, work from other classes, or cell phones, unless recording with permission or using as an accompaniment device)
- Only provide feedback if it is requested from the person sharing (this goes for “positive” or “constructive” feedback)

- If they would like feedback, start by asking questions. For example, How did that go for you? After they answer, you could encourage more depth of reflecting/responding/analysing (RRA) by asking questions like, "Why did you feel that way about your singing? What did you like? What would you like to be different? What would your next step be? Where did you feel you were getting close to your target and why do you think that is? What do you want to work with now that you have sung?" When we ask questions like this, it helps to develop a learner's capability to self-assess.
- If they would like more specific feedback about your experience of what they shared, avoid starting with "**you** did..." or "**you** were...". Instead, you could:
  - Say how the piece moved you, as the listener
  - Say what the message felt like to you, as the listener
  - State basic facts, such as, "I could/couldn't understand the lyrics, I heard/didn't hear changes in the dynamics, I could hear that you were in tune/not in tune in this particular section, etc."
- When we feel like we see a problem or something the person is doing that could be improved or changed, instead of assuming you know what the source of the problem is, ask them a question to find out what was going on, because **they** are the only person who knows what **they** are up to. For example, if **you** feel like they were nervous or tense, and you think that was getting in the way of the singing, don't tell them that because that's just **your guess**. Instead, ask an open-ended question (not a yes/no question) like "How were you feeling when you sang...?" This will give both the singer and the listener more accurate information to help the singer come closer to their target.

## The Whole You • Laying the Foundation for Voice Skill

(This is a chapter written for an updated edition of the Vocal Pedagogy Text, *BodyMind and Voice* primarily written and edited by Leon Thurman.)

All of us teachers plan and carry out our teaching practices as an expression of both our *explicit knowledge* and our *implicit knowledge* about how we human beings learn. Our explicitly learned knowledge about human learning is available to our conscious awareness. Examples: What we learned in our teacher education courses, teacher workshop experiences, and self-evaluations of our teaching experiences.

Our implicit knowledge is almost always learned outside our conscious awareness. Examples: "taking in" all of our experiences with the people, places, things, and events that we have encountered, including our parents/caregivers, and observing all of the school teachers we've had. We *started* learning that knowledge before we were born, and it has spiraled up throughout our lifetimes.

For decades, now, the quality of our U.S. education culture—including music education—has been assailed by many critics as less than adequate. As a result, numerous upon numerous educational philosophies, policies,

standards, organization formats, “what works” teaching practices, discipline methods, and the like, have been and continue to be invented and promoted. So far: No consensus!

The underlying premise of *Bodymind and Voice*, as suggested in Book I, is an integration of: (1) how whole human beings learn best and thrive, and (2) what teachers do when they are helping other human beings to optimally learn and flourish—*Human Compatible Learning and Teaching*.

Integrating music and voice education with the way we humans function for optimal learning seems to be common sense. Yet, how close do we teacher-people come to knowing how we’re actually made and how we function? And..., how close do we come to infusing our teaching practices with that knowledge?

Human Compatible Teaching seems to be based on three principles:

Teaching practices are generated out of our best up-to-date knowledge about “how we human beings work:” Our whole human bodyminds.

Teachers design their teaching practices so that they match how whole human beings function, and they come as close as they can to making that match transparent in the way they teach.

Teachers continually update their understandings about how human beings “work,” as new information, research, and understandings arise—an ongoing learning process.

Imagine being at a friend’s house and someone asks you to open a wine bottle. You find a bottle opener you’ve never seen before. Then, you try putting the silver flip-tip on the edge of the bottle’s mouth and into the cork. It isn’t long before you are in a wrestling match with the bottle and the opener, right?

Then your friend arrives, takes the bottle and the opener, and gently sets them up the way they’re supposed to be. The cork, then, just floats out of the bottle. Given a few more minutes on your own, that cork might have been pushed into the bottle, or the bottle-mouth might have been chipped and you may have cut your hand.

What happened? There was nothing wrong with the opener or the cork, or you, in fact. You just didn’t know *how the opener worked to do what it was designed to do*. How many of us know more about our bottle openers, our cars, and the tools we use, than we do about the nature of our human system?

*Could it be that the closer our teaching practices match human functioning, the more effective and useful they will be? Conversely, if we teach or operate against the way we actually work, might we be more likely to experience unnecessary effort, other symptoms of physical inefficiency, and even a greater possibility for injury—physically and emotionally?*

The history of voice education is fraught with conflicting ideas. This makes sense, since during nearly all of that history, knowledge of vocal anatomy and function was unknown or presumed by voice educators.

Even today, nearly all vocal pedagogy books address what the vocal *muscles* do during vocalization. But by themselves, muscles are just big and little “slabs of meat” that can’t do anything. “Something” has to “tell” muscles what to do, when, with what intensity, and when to stop. That “something” is the parts of our nervous systems that coordinate the actions of our muscles—in and outside our conscious awareness.

Remember that those parts of our nervous systems are *extensively* interfaced with nearly all other areas of our entire nervous and biochemical systems, including those that process what we call *cognitions, actions, emotions-feelings*, and our lifelong accumulated *memories*. *Bodymind and Voice* is rooted in that breadth and depth of research into the *neuropsychobiological sciences* (neuro-psycho-biological).

**Principle:** *Teaching and learning a skill is easier and faster when we engage our students (or ourselves) with a working knowledge about how our bodyminds actually operate.*

The amount of knowledge we can acquire about our extraordinary human system is not fixed and unchanging. That knowledge is always growing and changing. But the more we remain open to learning with a fascinated curiosity and explore, observe, discover, and even question the principles that underlie human learning, the more we will acquire knowledge that will support optimal teaching and the satisfactions that it brings.

You can harness the fact that working against yourself shows up as struggle in your own work by noticing when you are struggling and instead of trying to fix the struggle you ask: “Why does this make sense? Could I be working against my system? What might I need to know to get the result I want with less effort?”

**Principle:** *Open curiosity and interest are key components of human compatible learning and teaching.*

*So..., we propose an understanding of voice education that is grounded in the science of a whole, integrated, human-system design.*

## Upright Standing:

Is It *Posture, Alignment, or a Pre-Sprung Elastic Suspension System?*

The word **posture** is rooted in the Latin words *ponere, posita = to place; positura = position*; i.e., position of one entity in relation to another, as in a wooden post placed perpendicular to the ground for a fence.

In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, formal speech-making, called *elocution*, was commonly taught in schools and colleges [Latin: *e-* out; *loqui* = speak], and it incorporated a relatively rigid “holding” of the body in an upright, “post-like” position. As a result, various Western cultures evolved an implicit belief that there is something called *good posture* that we can and should consciously control and adjust. When we have that good posture, then we can sing, speak, and move better because we have it.

Many people have grown up with *instructions* about *how* to stand upright. The intent of those instructions is to help learners have *better or best posture* (especially when singing).

### **Exploration 1: Stand up and do this sample of posture instructions.**

Stand up straight. [Sit up straight.]

Don't slump.

Your body's ears/shoulders/pelvis/ankles should be stacked up in a straight line.

Squeeze your buttocks to line up your pelvis and abdomen.

Hold your head up high.

Stand tall with an elegant, royal posture.

Think of puppet strings attached to the back of your head, pulling you up.  
Rotate your shoulders back and down and keep them back and down.  
Elevate your sternum.  
Ground your feet eight to ten inches apart, one in front of the other.  
Get centered.  
Keep your neck free.  
Think wide in your body.  
Relax.

Ask yourself how these instructions actually feel. Do you feel more or less mobile with one or another? Which ones feel easy, which feel stiffer than where you were?

Compare the feelings of above instructions with simply standing up as if you were holding a ball and getting ready to bounce it. Are you mobile, available, breathing?

There are two deeply held premises that underlie postural instructions:

There is a good or best way to stand upright.  
We can *make* posture happen by directly putting ourselves into a position.

A postural perspective also implies that:

If there is an ideal way to be upright, but you personally aren't experiencing that ideal way of being upright, then you are somehow not okay. Implied is the idea that you need to change or improve something to have good posture.

You should learn to stand up (or sit) *correctly*, and once you do, you can maintain that all the time. You will have gained *good posture, good alignment, or good use of your body*.

In a stacked/aligned model, the head sits on the cervical spine (neck), putting downward and forward pressure on it. The head and neck together put downward pressure on the rest of the spine while the torso puts a downward and forward "pull" on the spine, and so on down through the body. There is a sense that gravity is problematic. Often, there is a sense that we have to hold ourselves up. [See Footnote 2 for more info on how these downward pressures can "teach" us to be habitually scrunched in our spines.]

Personally speaking, I lived the above point of view for many, many years; first as a kid whose parents talked about good posture, then as a dancer when good alignment was the rage, and later as a practitioner of Tai Chi, Hatha Yoga and Alexander Technique. Yet in the end, no matter how easily I moved or how good my posture was, when I checked on myself, or saw a candid picture of myself, my body was not in good posture or alignment. I always needed to be better than I was. It was like I had short dances of success followed by moments of shame. From talking with others, I know that I was not alone in that self-perception. I grew up with what I call ***The Postural Paradigm***.

Your Integrated Human Structure and Function:

The Coordination of a *Pre-Sprung Elastic Suspension System*<sup>1</sup>

Can you clearly describe the way your system is organized to allow you to be upright on your two feet?

Hundreds of people have been asked this question, individually and in groups. The overwhelming response is a blank stare followed by a bit of fuddling to see if someone can figure out the answer.

### Physical forces that influence our uprightiness.

All celestial bodies in the universe possess degrees of an attracting force called *gravity*—more mass, more gravity. That gravitational force attracts entities with lesser mass toward the center of entities with greater mass and gravitational force. So, everything that exists on Earth’s surface, is on Earth’s surface because Earth’s gravitational force continually attracts those “everything’s” toward the center of the Earth.

That includes us, right? Of necessity, all creatures that exist on Earth—including human beings—have adapted to being in Earth’s gravitational field. We may say that Earth’s gravitational force has us pinned onto the Earth’s surface in what we call a *downward* direction. Make sense, so far?

But wait a minute! There’s another force that Earth produces, and the direction of that force is outward from Earth’s center in the direction that we call *upward*! Really?

As our planet Earth moves in its orbit around its star—the Sun—it is continually *spinning*. All spinning objects create an outward, away-from-it force—a centrifugal force [Latin: *centrum* = center; *fugere* = flee]. If you placed a small single strand of cooked spaghetti on the surface of a toy called a *top*, and then made the top spin fast, what would happen to the strand of spaghetti?

So..., Earth’s opposing gravitational and centrifugal forces—both of them—influence the adaptation of human beings who live and move on our planet. Does *that* make sense?

Have gravitational and centrifugal forces affected how our bodies are “put together?” Have they affected how we navigate on the Earth?

### Gravitational force influences how we are made and how we function.

In a gravitational/centrifugal universe, Earth is “sending us up” from underneath us, just as gravity is “sending us down” to meet Earth’s surface. Since most of us have been inundated with images and ideas of how gravity pulls us down, let’s put a little more emphasis on the equally true, but less detectable fact that there is an upward force from the earth *up through and out of us*. The huge difference in size makes that upward force undetectable. But nonetheless, Earth’s centrifugal force raises us up from underneath us.

Our elastic structures interact with Earth’s opposite-direction forces and enact an upright physiological suspension of our bodies. When we are babies, our motor systems gradually increase:

- muscle mass,
- neural connections, and
- myelination of axons for more rapid and “flowable” function.

When we were children, we moved our faces and limbs to express emotions. We learned to retain eye contact with others by countering the instability of our heads. We learned to sit up, roll over, crawl, push, pull, stand, walk, and run—all adaptations to the gravitational and centrifugal forces that are acting on our bodies.

As we human beings grow up, our “elastic neuromuscular suits” are lively and constantly responsive in our

movements. They accommodate our bodies' instabilities within gravitational and centrifugal forces in such a way that our bodies are *pre-sprung* into internal neuromuscular suspension systems—our *Pre-Sprung Elastic Suspension Systems*.

### Tensegrity structure as a model for your system.

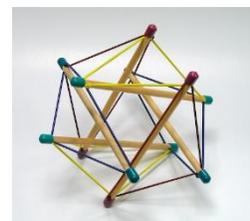
The idea of a “floating compression” was first used in the work of the Latvian-Soviet sculptor Kārlis Johansons (1921), and later by the U.S. sculptor Kenneth Snelson (1948). Rigid pieces were attached to elastic pieces in such a way that the stretched elastic pieces erected the rigid structures into a whole “floating” structure.

The U.S. scientist-architect Buckminster Fuller (1895-1983) invented the term *tensegrity* to label the concept, and he used it in creating his unique architectural invention, the geodesic dome. Stretch forces are equally distributed between several or many rigid structures so that a whole entity is erected and internally suspended (see picture). The *tension* in the stretched elastic structures gives *integrity* (stability) to the whole structure—***tensegrity***.

Over 35 years ago, Donald Ingber, MD/PhD, at Harvard University began to investigate how the tensegrity principle is present in the “architecture of life,” from living cells to whole human bodies. In his forthcoming book *The Anatomy of Wholeness* and in his Anatomy of Wholeness courses David Gorman<sup>1</sup> illuminates in detail how the tensegrity principle exists in our human anatomy and physical functioning.

Our bodies are “put together” like a tensegrity structure. Simplistically speaking, our bodies include *rigid structures* (bones) and *elastic structures* (muscles, tendons, ligaments, fascia). Our bones extend in multiple directions, but primarily, our bones are like the rigid spacers in the pictured tensegrity model: (1) bones make room (volume) for our organs (e.g., our torso), and (2) provide points to which muscles-tendons-ligaments-fascia are attached. Our elastic structures are stretched between their connections to our rigid structures creating a pre-sprung systemic *tension* that gives *integrity* (stability) to the whole of our bodies, and giving us neuromuscular leverage capabilities.

We are living creatures and much more complex than a simple tensegrity structure. But as an image for how we “work,” the tensegrity/suspension model is more akin to our efficient functioning than an alignment/stacked-up model that is inherently quite static, and one in which forces accumulate downward.



much

The more we allow ourselves to be free from unnecessary constraint in all directions, the more our whole systems are *available* to balance our bodies' instabilities and to flexibly move us as we carry out our intentions (what we need to do or want to do). That's how we can be both stable and mobile *at the same time*. Injuries to our tissues also are *much* less likely when the stretch forces are distributed in a relatively equal or balanced way.

### Center of support.

In an elastic suspension model, forces aren't focused, so no accumulation of forces is occurring at any point. Gravitational and centrifugal forces are the vital ingredients for the stable-mobile up-thrust of our pre-sprung elastic suspension systems. Uprightness happens by simply wanting to be up in the world and allowing ourselves to be in our *center of our support*.

### Exploration 2:

Come to standing.  
Look around the room.  
Can you tell if you are standing more on any part of your feet?

On purpose, lean a bit forward;  
Lean a bit backward;  
Shift yourself to one foot;  
Then the other foot.

Now, stand evenly on both your feet.  
Can you stand with an *even distribution of contact* with the ground or floor?

Another way to say this same thing is: **come into the center of your support**. Earth's ground (or a floor supported by the Earth) is *our* supporting surface. When you made evenly distributed contact with the Earth on both your feet, you were standing in the center of your support. In the Exploration:

Was the activation of your muscles the same as when you were leaning?  
What was different?  
Why was there a difference?

Experiencing and understanding what you feel like when you are *in* your Center of Support and *off* your Center of Support is a key information for making healthy choices.

Some basic criteria you can use to assess your functioning is to ask:

Do I feel more or less *mobile*?  
Do I feel more or less *stable*?  
Can I move in any direction with *flexible* ease?  
Do I feel more or less *human*?  
Can I just start bouncing a ball or...?

For the suspension system to work, the *whole* system needs to be available to respond. **Stability, mobility, flexibility, and volume** are all present at the same time. A shift of your head has an effect down to your toes. If you lock up one part, then the system will do what it can to give you your intention but it will be a comparatively limited response, less than what is possible.

You can interfere with our elastic suspension systems in three primary ways:

By adding rigidity, i.e., "holding" key musculature in our bodies;  
By collapsing, "relaxing" or "turning off" key musculature;  
By having a faulty idea of how we work, like: "I have to *keep* or *hold* myself upright," or "I have to fight gravity."

When you are standing, the "parts" of your body will appear to be vertically "lined up." But being "lined up" isn't something you need to consciously control. **Being "lined up" happens naturally (automatically) when you are alert in the center of our support, and...when your system is available to take action**, like: catch a ball, bounce a basketball, throw a frisbee, push a piano, paint a wall, wave to a friend, or...sing. The torso retains its natural length, width, and depth without any holding. Your limbs are free to move at their joints. Essentially, it is your *natural core capability to act*.

Your *whole* integrated functioning.

Your Pre-Sprung Elastic Suspension System does not function in parts—this muscle and bone, then that one. Your “parts” function as a *whole integrated system*. Playing an instrument and singing are *whole* acts, functions, or tasks; in principle, they are like bouncing a ball. If you stand and look out at your audience and you aren’t feeling like you can bounce a ball easily then you aren’t in an optimal center of support to make music.

In **Exploration 2** above, your pre-sprung elastic suspension system was *automatically* activated when you leaned forward, backward, and placed your weight on one foot or the other.

The key is *automatically*. You didn’t have to say “hold my calf, back-of-thigh, back, and back-of-neck muscles.” You had a reflex-like *whole* reaction to protect you from falling and possibly being injured, and your neuromuscular systems automatically coordinated the response outside your conscious awareness.

Your neuromuscular tension was exactly what was necessary to keep you from falling. It was *necessary* neuromuscular tension.

Did you notice how the response of muscular activation happened throughout your body from toe to crown? Functionally, your muscles don’t work like individual pieces. They work like one whole, naturally responsive, neuromuscular “web.” Anatomists, surgeons, and massage therapists might need to know details about specific muscles, but in real-world bodily action, specific muscles do not act by themselves or even in pairs, as is often thought. Gorman describes our neuromuscular system as “an elastic muscular suit.”<sup>1</sup>

When you were consciously leaning, the sensation of muscle tension was a signal telling you that you were off balance (useful information). In just a few hundred milliseconds, you felt and accurately interpreted the meaning of that signal and your whole body reacted (one second is made up of 1,000 milliseconds).

Your elastic suspension system has these characteristics:

You are fundamentally unstable.

Your musculature is designed to match your instabilities and to support both your stability and mobility in complete freedom.

Your system responds automatically to your needs and our intentions.

Your systems signal you when you are: *on your center of support* (ease) – or *off your center of support* (effort, strain).

Your musculature functions like a personal elastic suit, always matching your instabilities and allowing you to flexibly do what you want to do—your intentions.

*The more you allow yourself to be free in all directions, the more your whole system is available to match your instabilities and keep you stable, mobile, and flexible at the same time. Elastic forces are distributed in a balanced way across your system so that injuries to your tissues are much less likely.*

**Sensations as Information – A question of interpretation**

Interpreting our sensations/feelings/experiences is when many of us get into trouble exploring the suspension system. We often ignore sensory signals or misinterpret them. For people who have habituated a “lean” into their upright stature, the sensation of neuromuscular tensions is interpreted as the sensation of standing-up and being ready. When they come to more balance, they can feel like they are falling over. In this way, a

misinterpreted sensation can lead to a cascade of misconceptions about oneself and the world in which we live. A major job of a teacher, in this work, is to help students more accurately interpret their sensations. One of our core values is learning to accurately interpret the ongoing flood of sensory signals we are receiving as we move, sing, and talk. The more accurate our interpretations of our sensations (our system's signals), the more likely we are to move or function optimally.

While the *intent* of the posture/alignment concept is good, it also includes the prescription to *consciously control* our posture or alignment, to *position* ourselves. In the suspension system model, you learn and understand balance differently. You can clarify where your joints are and use other self-assessments to allow yourself to function optimally. **Skilled self-awareness is the heart of teaching and learning from WHOLENESS.**

A major job of a teacher, in this work, is to help students more accurately interpret their sensations.

## Your Coordinating System

**Exploration 3:** Come to standing in a room with space for movement.

*Walk around the room in a rush!* Race across the room, fast.

Then stop.

Next, *walk around the room while you just think about something* that happened to you that you enjoyed and found interesting.

Then stop.

Now, walk around the room and *just look at things around the room.*

Then stop.

You did the same thing each time—you walked in the room.

Describe any differences that you noticed between each walk?

Before each walk, did you consciously decide to change what you were doing *with your body*?

People have reported some common differences between these three walks:

Rushing generally feels tenser, quicker, with a body-forward sensation compared to the other two.

The thinking-about-something-else walk tends to have an inward focus. The head is generally tilted down and there is sometimes a heavier feeling compared to the other two.

The looking-around-the-room walk is generally reported to feel easiest, physically, with a sense of calm while noticing details in the room.

What we have here is the same basic act of walking. But the walking was utterly changed depending on what you were intending to do—what you were thinking or paying attention to.

Think about this for a moment.

The functioning of your structure was changed simply by changing what you were intending to do. You wanted to cross the room as fast as you could. You were thinking about something else while walking. You wanted to look at what's around you while walking. Those are different intentions layered on to the basic action of walking. Your system was in a different coordination in each one.

We experience these phenomena all the time. They are such common facts of life that their significance is almost always missed. What explains this experience?

When we rush, it is not just our neuromuscular systems that are in a different coordination, we also have a different biochemistry coursing through our systems than when we are thinking of something else or just looking at a room. A pleasant memory, a fantasy, a worried memory, or thinking about a future event will also have different biochemical and neuromuscular responses.

*When you change your thinking/intent-purpose-attention, you change all of you.* You are a *whole system* all of the time. This insight about the coordination of your system in any given moment is so simple and so profound—and so ignored.

*Every split second of your life, you are within the necessary coordinations for whatever you are up to with your thinking/attention. Your coordination may not be efficient from a bio-mechanical point of view, or healthy from a mental health point of view, or useful from a skill acquisition point of view. But, except in the case of disease, your system is working in a whole, integrated way, at all times.*

*When you change your thinking/intent-purpose-attention, you change all of you.*

Voice Education:

Helping Other *Whole* Bodyminds Coordinate their Voices for Singing

When we teach whole human beings, we see people engaged in a whole activity—singing. When we perceive an interference with the potential vocal sound that a person can make—say, a head forward—we are noticing a *symptom of interference with singing*. Our curiosity guides us toward a perfect explanation for this interference.

In traditional pedagogy a singer is often told by her teacher what she did wrong. “Did you notice you are pulling your head forward?”. She is then helped by being shown how to tuck her chin in, and pull her head back to counteract the forward pull. She is told she must keep her head there when she sings. The instructions are given with the best intention. The teacher knows that the head forward position interferes with optimal singing, and chooses to make a correction.

Here is the challenge of this parts based pedagogy: Following instructions, the singer consciously pulls her head back during that particular part of the voice lesson. But as soon as the same singer spontaneously *gets into* expressing the song, her head comes forward again. While pulling her head back into a more optimal position seems to work in the moment, the “fix” doesn’t last. Typically, this experience leads the teacher and singer to identify “a problem she has in her singing”.

But why doesn’t holding her head back work for her?

From the wholeness, Elastic Coordinating System perspective, we would choose to find out what the singer’s intention is, or, what she is *up to* when she *gets into* singing and her head pulls forward.

In other words, we ask ourselves: *What is the singer engaged in that explains this symptom? Because we know that we are always the perfect coordination of whatever we are up to.*

We know she didn't pull her head back consciously; it happened but she didn't DO it. In fact, the singer didn't even notice her head coming forward!

If she didn't DO it, then what is causing this movement to HAPPEN? To get answers, we go to the source – the singer herself.

We ask her questions like: “What is important to you in singing this song? When you put your attention on expressing the song, what kinds of things come to your mind?”

With this kind of sleuthing, the teacher and student can work together to find out how to allow the system to function more efficiently while singing expressively. <sup>6</sup>

### The Language of Wholeness<sup>7</sup> versus the language of body “parts.”

When we teach vocal skills from *wholeness*, we see people in action, engaged in a whole activity. We may hear an interference with the potential sound they *could* make. We wonder what explains that interference and *how can we help the student become consciously aware of that, too?*

That's our core question. *Helping the student resolve that interference is our goal, and how we go about it is what we call a teaching method or teaching practice.* The word *educate* is from the Latin word *educere* [*e* (variant of *ex*) = out; *ducere* = to lead or bring.] In *Human Compatible Learning*, it means that teachers arrange situations that enable students to *bring out their own learning.*

Some singing teachers and choral conductors recognize a kind of wholeness when singing or speaking happens, but very often, their teaching instructions are given in the language of body parts and a separation of body systems. Their words reflect the concept of bodies that are separate from minds,<sup>3</sup> rather than the concept of whole, integrated, elastic coordinating system design.

Structurally the PARTS language sounds like this:

*You need to have good posture—good body alignment. Stand up straight. Plant your feet firmly on the floor, shoulder-width apart, one in front of the other. Hold your head up high like you have a lot of pride. Remember the puppet string that pulls your head up? Do that. Now, circle your shoulders around three times and then keep them in the back and down position. Hold your chest up with that pride. When you sing your high notes, don't let your chin go up. Keep it in. Now, remember to squeeze your buttocks muscles to help with good posture and good breath support.”*

Structurally the Language of Wholeness sounds like this:

*Lean a little in different directions. Then come to relative even distribution of contact with your feet over the earth. Look around at the room you are in. Remember, you're in a gravitational universe, the earth is coming up underneath you just as you are coming down to meet the earth., the earth rises up under you and your feet come up under your lower legs, your lower legs come up under your thighs and this carries on in an upward direction right on through and out of you. As you stand there imagine your bones are extending away from each other, opening you up and out in space. You don't have to hold yourself together or hold yourself upright. You simply have to want to be upright looking out at the world and your system, will do exactly the perfect degree of resisting the spreading of bones and exactly enough allowing movement to let you remain standing in an open, easy, suspended way.*

Functionally or Coordinating System aspect the PARTS language sounds like this:

*“When you start singing that phrase, you tighten your jaw. Next time try keeping your jaw loose...put your hand on your jaw to check it.” Or the teacher might say “When you feel your jaw tighten, tighten it even more so you can bring that pattern into your awareness, then let it go.”*

Functionally the Language of Wholeness sounds like this:

*What are you about? Why are you saying those words? What has the person singing this song lived through to be saying this now? We would ask questions when we see interferences.*

The Language of Wholeness, a pedagogy for human design.

The physical principles that govern a coordinating suspension system model are different from the physical principles that govern an alignment/postural structure. In *many* ways, they are contradictory. If someone has been imposing principles from the postural model onto the suspension system, then confusion and frustration is likely. The physical principles of one are not congruent with the other.

The more a person begins to explore being up and over the planet in a free and open relationship, while getting clarity of the balanced forces of the suspension system model, the more their whole structure begins to change. The more they begin to ask themselves questions, rather than try to get something right, the more they are likely to gain an easy self-reliance.

To help students out of a habit, there may be occasional times in which we identify joints and their relationships, but doing so as generally as possible, like the “cylinder of the torso” related to “the legs” or “the arms.” But instead of using positioning words like *put, keep, hold, straight, bent*, we can engage them with exploration and comparison and contrast experiences with words like *allow, invite, let*, and qualifiers like *roughly, relative, as close as you can get*, or other phrases that don’t evoke a one and only “correct,” or “should” kind of idea. [For information about goal-setting and feedback language, see Book I, Chapter 9, in *Bodymind and Voice*.]

The language of Wholeness we use tools to help students develop their own criteria for assessment rather than try to get a particular “correct” or “should” end that comes from an external authority (us). We support students to gain autonomy. Our job as teachers isn’t to tell human beings how to *be* - “stand tall” or “have good posture” or “relax.” Our job is to *invite* learners to stand, walk, move, or sing, so they can allow their amazing coordinating systems to take care of the rest. As soon as we even think about a part of our bodies, we are speaking the language of separated systems.

Our systems are pre-wired to give us easy, open uprightness and mobility, unless, of course, there is some kind of disabling to bodyminds or genetic dysfunctions. [Even in these cases, however, this way of seeing the human elastic suspension system can be more helpful than imposing or forcing a coordination.]

Well-being over-rides structure, coordination and mastery.

Understanding our human structure and our physical coordination is important for all educators. And, mastering music is important for music educators/musicians. Fundamental to all this is remembering that we don’t live in isolation from other human beings and the planet.

We are always in relationship to someone and/or something. “Here I am in the world.” This interaction is primary to anything we know about ourselves and music. We may know lots about balance and ease and have the music clear and with efficient skills, but if in the moment of singing we are worried about what other people think about us, or are worried that we might not get the high note in the next phrase, then we will coordinate ourselves around perceived threats to our well-being. Then, almost inevitably, our balance will be off, our coordinations will be tense, and our potential for expressive singing will decline. Our priority in this way of learning and teaching is to set our learning environments for well-being, for a healthy relationship to the world around ourselves and our students.

Well-being as the primary ‘technique’ is the heart of the Human Compatible teaching. Learning to scaffold your own well-being is the fundamental skill of all. ‘Posture’ (structure), singing (function) all depend on our well-being in relationship to the world.

## FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup> Author and teacher David Gorman worked with human beings to help them move more efficiently and fluidly. Those experiences peaked a deep curiosity in him about how it is that human beings accomplish purposeful behavior. So, he studied the minute details of whole human anatomy and physiology (function). Over time, he evolved insights about the human system as a functional whole and developed a unique paradigm (a model) of our incredible, lively, expressive, moving system—Our Pre-Sprung Elastic Suspension System.

He “fleshed-out” his insights in his Anatomy of Wholeness work. He is author of *The Body Moveable* (Gorman, 2016). People who study the multitude of books on anatomy and physiology are exposed to the minute details of those areas of knowledge without ever presenting how the vast “details” work together to create our intentional, moving human system.

<sup>2</sup> **Can our counterbalanced suspension system be compromised?** Yes, and in a variety of ways. Our bodyminds have *considerable perceptual, conceptual, action, integrative, analytical, and memory capabilities*.<sup>4,5</sup> Over our lifetimes, we learned the great bulk of our automatic action patterns by:

- (1) reacting to our interactions with other people, places, things, and events,
- (2) mimicking the behavior patterns of other people (models), or
- (3) purposely exploring the physical and social environments that we experience  
(interactions of the three often happen).

All such interactions effected changes in our bodyminds’ neural-chemical networks, thus sensitizing neuropsychobiological action patterns. The vast adaptive capabilities of our cerebral cortices (and their subcortical and biochemical interfacings) are almost entirely *purposeful—not rational*.

While we’re talking with someone, we do not rationally think, “I’m now going to pick up my glass of water and, when I finish what I’m saying, I’ll take a sip.” While we’re talking, we just pick up the glass and when we stop talking we take a sip—all such purposeful actions are part of massive neural networks that were developed early in life, elaborated over our lifetimes, and were transferred to subcortical motor areas for actions that activate almost entirely outside our conscious awareness. They automatically carry out our ordinary, daily *purposes/intentions*.

Examples:

Rolling over, sitting up, standing

Crawling/Walking/Running

Speaking our original language(s)

Prosody in speech (pitch contours, vocal volume, voice quality, timing/pacing)

Opening and closing doors

Rolling, tossing, and catching an object like a ball

Drinking liquids from a container

Using utensils to eat food

Operating transport vehicles (tricycles, bicycles, go-carts, automobiles)

As we live our lives, however, there is no guarantee that we will always activate these learned, purposeful actions with our innate optimal elastic suspension system. Various life circumstances can “program” our bodyminds to habitually activate our bodies in ways that are *not* in the best interest of our optimal well-being.

For example, longer-lasting conditions of illness, fatigue, and/or threats to our well-being can alter our innate elastic suspension system away from its optimum function. They can induce in our bodies what we may sense as “downward collapsing,” commonly called a “slump.” When slumped, our erector spinae muscles (and others) release and our pectoral girdles tilt forward and down, bringing our heads, upper spines, and rib cages with it. Our eyes commonly orient toward the horizon, so when we are slumped, the rear areas of our neck vertebrae become “scrunched” into each other creating pressure on our cervical spinal nerves. Many other micro-changes can occur as well.

So, longer-term illness, fatigue, and/or mild threat can slowly induce a learned “posture program” in tiny increments of change that are not noticed in conscious awareness. *Eventually, the nervous system will automatically choose that program over the innate one.* The internal organs in our torsos will be under a “squeezed” pressure, and as a result of underuse, our “anti-gravity” extensor muscles that contribute to optimal upright standing will eventually lose tonus. Ligaments and skeletal joints will undergo physical “re-formation” to the slump configuration. That program for upright standing, then, will become “recognized” by our sensory networks as “standard and familiar.”

Threats to our well-being induce emotional reactions that are connected to our self-protective reactions. Overt reactions to a history of threats may extend from bullying others to withdrawal from others. Two internal emotional reactions to threats are called *anxiety* and *depression*. All of these reactions are interdependent with our bodily functions, including our innate elastic suspension system.

<sup>3</sup> *Epistemology, aesthetics, and ethics* are the domains of *philosophy* about the nature of human beings and their interactions with each other. The philosophers Plato and Aristotle indelibly implanted the identity of “body” as distinct from “mind” into Western philosophy. The *duality* of body and mind also was subsumed into Western religions. And, this assumption was consistent with the direct experiences of people—it “made sense.”

Mind was assumed to be a non-physical, disembodied entity that existed within each person. Mind produced thinking and reason, and directed the body to move according to the mind's thoughts. The philosopher who cemented **mind-body duality** in Western culture was René Descartes (1596-1650). His proof of his own existence was summarized in his well-known phrase, *cogito, ergo sum* (I think, therefore I am). He maintained that the domain of the external world, *res extensa*, could only be perceived by the body's senses, but the

senses could be deceiving. The domain of pure conception or reason, *res cogitans*, was not a bodily structure. He believed that mind existed without matter and was more important than matter.

[NOTE: Neuroscientific research has established that multiple trillions of electrochemical actions and tissue growths happen every day throughout our brains over all of our lives, *but...none of those events can be sensed in conscious awareness*. In other words, brains do not have sensory nerves embedded within them that report their own interactions back to themselves in conscious awareness. Thus, we cannot sense what our brains are doing when we are: observing the world through our senses or processing emotions, reasoning, or thinking. That's why it "makes sense" that our "minds" are separate nonphysical entities that inhabit our bodies. (After the anesthetized tissues that cover our brains are breached during neurosurgery, no anesthesia is needed for the brain.)]

This mind-body duality assumption, though, is still evident throughout Western cultures, including education. For instance, the concept of "brain-based education" substitutes a body-separated concept of "brain" in place of the concept of "mind." Humorously, we may think of classrooms with brains hovering over desks, not whole human beings sitting at them.

In reality, brains are useless without "bodies," and "bodies" are useless without brains. But, wait! Isn't the brain part of the body? In fact, brains are dependent on neurobiochemical "messages" that are supplied from the rest of the body, and the rest of the body is dependent on neurobiochemical "messages" from the brain. None of those neurobiochemical processes are detected by our sensory systems. We know better, now. We are WHOLE creatures!

<sup>4</sup> **Core Capability-Ability Clusters:** *Perceptual, Emotive, Conceptual, Action, Restorative, Immunity, and Memory.*

<sup>5</sup> **Extended Capability-Ability Clusters:** *Integrative, Analytic, Evaluative, Expressive, Interactive, Self-Regulative, Imitative, Exploratory, Skill, Protective.*

<sup>6</sup> With this kind of sleuthing, it becomes clear the singer is wanting to connect with the audience, and evoke a response from the people who are listening to her. Having the audience feel what she is feeling is VERY important to her. Knowing that our whole system will coordinate around our intentions helps us begin to make sense of the singer's head forward situation: Perhaps she narrows her attention to the listeners and reaches out to them – literally! Consequently, her head would move forward toward them when her attention turns to being in relationship with her audience. If she is trying to *make sure the audience feels* what she is expressing, it would make perfect sense that her head comes forward because she is in coordination of wanting the audience to feel something. With this insight, teacher and student can marvel at the brilliance of their whole system response to singing expressively, rather than see the head forward coordination as a "problem with her singing or posture". *She didn't have a forward head problem*. She may have had a "trying-to-make-the-audience-feel-connected-with-her" problem.

They could start by reminding themselves that by the very act of being on stage and telling her human story, the singer is setting up the conditions for the result she wants to happen: performers are automatically in "connection" with the audience gathered. Nothing more need be done to ensure the connection is present. Without a need to be sure, perhaps the symptom (coordination) of reaching forward in the head and neck will disappear.

This example is common among teachers and performers. Many people are trained to make connection, show compassion, show they are interested, by narrowing their attention over into another person, into an audience. Narrowing our attention into anything else—another person, the book you are reading, the computer screen—generally manifests in that familiar head forward orientation. It isn't a problem with the position or weight of the head, or older age, or the myriad of reasons we give for structural inefficiencies.

Next, they might explore the effect of singing to “tell the story”, keeping in mind that all the people who are listening will have their own response to her singing. We cannot ensure the interpretation of our audience. What if our energy went into telling our story, rather than trying to affect the experience of our listeners? Again, teacher and student have opportunity to notice the effect of different intentions or attentions when the singer is performing, and make choices toward efficiency.

When teachers perceive their students as a collection of body parts, and they see a body part that is functioning “incorrectly,” then they most likely first point the problem out to the student (who hasn't felt or detected it yet) and second, will ask their students to adjust that body part, e.g., head, jaw, shoulder, chest, diaphragm, hip, legs/feet. The fact that students are asked to change a body part shows that the teacher is coming from a separated-system perspective where the “body” is different from the “mind” (the many-centuries-old mind-body duality assumption. See Footnote 3). Always with kind and good intentions for the student, but without the understanding of how the system actually coordinates action.

Yet..., often, teaching that way doesn't result in a *long-term* change.

Hidden within this “parts” point of view are several beliefs:

We can directly change what our body parts do without any understanding of what other body parts are doing at the same time; the cause of my vocal problem is just a tight jaw.

We are designed to tell our isolated body parts what to do directly, and putting attention into those body parts is a good thing.

If we regularly do something “wrong” that is outside our conscious awareness, then it is a “bad habit” that needs changing. We change it by repeating a new position.

It also has an effect on the student's belief about herself. If a teacher tells me about what I'm doing “wrong” vocally, and I was unaware of it, then maybe I'm not very good at detecting these inadequacies on my own, and I may always have to depend on a teacher to tell me what I'm doing wrong and how to “fix it.” When such experiences are repeated, students may lose trust in their self-systems and, thus, become dependent on outside “authorities” to “correct their unreliable body parts.

But when you are teaching, what do you do when you observe a vocal inefficiency and your students don't? Isn't that what you are being paid to do? How could we see this situation from a whole elastic coordinating system perspective?

First, we invite students get to compare different strategies. We ask them to do ‘make sure to connect’ and compare that with “knowing you already are connected and just sing the story”. Their own sensations become their reliable guide for making choices. We don't teach them a list of corrections. We help them learn a more accurate understanding of their innate coordinating systems and more accurate interpretations of their

sensations and more effective strategies to achieve their goals and make art. The teaching technique is to find out what explains the symptom *and* help the person find that information out *for themselves*.

In order to teach this way, it is necessary to have a basic understanding of:

Human structural design as a *pre-sprung elastic suspension system*.

The innate coordinating system.

<sup>7</sup>The Language of Wholeness is a pedagogical approach being developed by Babette Lightner and others to articulate new approaches based on new paradigms.

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# Body-Mind Integration PAVA 2017 How-to Vocology Workshop

Babette Lightner, Jennifer Moir

PAVA Presentation 2017. This is a handout for a presentation given by Jennifer Moir and Babette Lightner for the Pan American Vocology Association in 2017. It gives a flavor of ways to introduce this material.

**Today we are looking at taking advantage of our wholeness or inherent integrated system for music/voice education.**

We will explore lingering misconceptions from the body-mind-split perspective and propose alternative points of view and strategies from an integrated-system perspective.

## Postulates of Sound Music Education

1) When you scaffold an approach to music making that is aligned with how the human system works, and how the universe works, everything is easier, more skillful and enjoyable.

2) When humans are supported to thrive and have their own agency, curiosity serves as a foundational, sustainable approach to learning, and bedrock for confidence.

*However beautiful the strategy you might want to occasionally look at the result. - unknown*

*If you don't like the result, you might want to look at the point of view that underlies the strategy. - Lightner*

## Comparing Perspectives: Point of View (P) → Strategy(S) → Result(R)

**Your point of view** is your belief. It is the meaning your system has made of your experiences up to this moment in your life.

**Your Strategy** is what you DO. It is revealed in the words you use to instruct others or yourself.

**Result** is what happens. It is what you see and hear.

**Application:** As an educator you are helping carve your students' belief/ point of view, for better or worse. Your actions, words, responses come from your current point of view. In Sound Music Education, making your point of view explicit to yourself and your student is an essential element for healthy interaction.

## **How-to Sound Music Education:**

### **1. Gravity**

#### **Body-Mind-Split Point of View: A Dis-integrated System (DIS)**

P: Gravity is a downward force.

S: You need to lift yourself up, struggle against gravity.

R: Weighted, stiff movement, pain and unnecessary effort, a sense of fighting our body.

#### **Body, Mind Integrated Point of View, An Integrated System or IS**

P: Gravity is multi-directional, our system is designed with gravity.

S: We are sprung in a gravitational universe and learn basic principles of balance and motion to cooperate with this

design.

R: A sense of ease, light, powerful liveliness. Not fighting with ourselves and world.

## **2. Structure**

### **DIS Perspective**

P: Postural, alignment or “good position” idea of our structural design.

S: A set of external instructions on how to achieve this good position from the teacher. Implied in this is the idea that a person should keep the position; learn the posture and hold it.

R: Overall lack of availability of the system. Limitations in movement and freedom to express. Students often report the frustration in “never getting it right”. There is a shift of power and authority about the student’s experience to the teacher.

### **IS Perspective**

P: Adaptive, Coordinating Pre-sprung Elastic Suspension System (Gorman)

S: Ask the student questions to have them self-assess their structural organization. Use comparative experiences to learn to more accurately interpret sensations and determine efficiency from one’s own system. Am I in even distribution of contact or not? Can I move easily in any direction? (Sound Music Education has developed a pedagogy and self-assessment method for this perspective)

R: Availability of the entire system increases. Evidence of freedom to move and efficient function. The student is the authority of their experience (of singing).

## **3. Coordination of Action - 2 parts: Scaffolding Learning and Problem Solving**

### **DIS Perspective for scaffolding learning**

P: We are designed to manipulate parts.

S: Instructions to “do” something different with the body are given.

R: Partial coordination unfolds. It is often challenging to incorporate the fundamental purpose of singing/conducting/talking like: telling the story or being expressive. This approach often leaves people feeling inadequate, “If I could just do this better I could be successful.” Students question themselves, not the method.

### **IS Perspective for scaffolding learning**

P: “We are always in the perfect coordination of what we are up to with our attention and intention.” - David Gorman

S: Set-up clear intentions that activate the coordination we want. “Point to the light.” “What are you saying in this piece? Why is that a long phrase or why is this moment building to a crescendo? How does the dynamic information serve the telling of the story? With that clarity, sing again and tell us the story. Let’s see what happens!”

R: Skilled, empowered, artists

### **DIS Perspective, Problem Solving**

P: A problem in the instrument/body is addressed by doing something different in the body. ‘Don’t lean forward’, ‘Take a good breath’. This language is rooted in seeing the body and mind as separate. Teachers attribute the problem in the body or voice to an action taken by the student. Teachers may say, “You leaned forward.”

S: We attempt to fix the problem (the lean), by consciously adjusting/manipulating the body. “Don’t lean”.

R: Problems reoccur when the student is not consciously giving themselves the instruction. Students are unable to be their fully expressive selves. Possibly create symptoms like tension, not feeling free or enjoying making music.

### **IS Perspective for problem solving**

P: “We are always in the perfect coordination of what we are up to with our attention and intention.” – David Gorman

S: Teacher asks the student what their attention/intention was at the moment of the problem, affirming that it is the

student who has this information, and is the authority of their experience. Teachers set up explorations to explain how the system coordinates action. We clear up common misconceptions that tend to coordinate effort and interferences in body and voice. (We have developed a pedagogical approach based on this IS perspective.)

R: Skilled, empowered, artists

**The following examples are a category of common misconceptions that interfere with music making. When these misconceptions are cleared up many of the technical problems you thought were happening in you or the student, fall away. Many educational approaches teach these misconceptions inadvertently. With clarity, we can increase the likelihood of more joy, beauty and well-being in the making of music and the teaching of human beings.**

#### **4. Outcomes**

##### **DIS Perspective**

P: You can ensure an outcome.

S: Language: *"Make sure you inhale before you start"* *"Try to get a good breath"*

R: Tension, feeling inadequate, unwilling to take risks, perfectionism

##### **IS Perspective**

P: Aligning our understanding with how the universe works: You can't *ensure* an outcome but you can set up the conditions for a more or less likely chance for the outcome to occur.

S: Language: *"Give it another go."* Or *"Are you clear what and why you are saying this?"* *"Why would the phrase be long and have that high pitch? How does that serve the telling of the story?"*

R: Skilled, empowered, expressive, curious learners who are willing to take risks. Embracing the theory that you have to miss a target to ever hit it!

*"Brains learn by taking target practice"* Leon Thurman

#### **5. Response System**

##### **DIS Perspective**

P: Response system isn't in this perspective.

S: Misattribution of our response to people and objects around us. *"You have a good voice."*

Telling ourselves and others what to feel and think. Teachers may try to change feeling directly: *"Relax your jaw."* *"Be present."*

R: Disconnect from or invalidate feeling, people looking outside themselves for valuation. Lack of autonomy for the student. A shifting of power of authority to the teacher.

##### **IS Perspective**

P: Humans have a response system. We are inherently responsive creatures. Responses are our inner-compass. They tell us how we see the world.

S: We attribute our feelings to the meaning and interpretation our system has made. Teachers support students to more accurately utilize this inner-compass. Teachers support students to develop their own criteria for choice.

R: Empowered, emotionally skilled artists. Autonomy for students.

More on this complex subject and performance anxiety see:

[http://www.lightnermethod.com/uploads/8/5/6/1/85610178/patterns\\_of\\_joy%E2%80%A2your\\_inner\\_compass.pdf](http://www.lightnermethod.com/uploads/8/5/6/1/85610178/patterns_of_joy%E2%80%A2your_inner_compass.pdf)

#### **Setting the stage for Wholeness:**

There are 3 aspects to this sequence:

M - A gestural movement, W- words and F-focus for your attention.

1. M. Lightly stamp right foot while doing gesture of putting down a staff and say first phrase.  
Repeat movement with left saying second phrase.

W. **"Here I am, as I am."**

F. Feel your presence on the ground in the moment with each movement and the words.

2. M. Open horizontal circle with 1st right then left arm saying 1st phrase with right and 2nd with left.

W. **"In the world, as it is"**

F. See/ feel/hear the world around you.

3. M. Hands together in prayer like position.

W. **"Supported by the planet."**

F. Sense the same pressure between your hands as you do the pressure between you and the earth under your feet.

4. M. Prayer hands move up over your head.

W. **"Floating in the multiverse".**

F. See yourself from the perspective of the moon, standing on the earth, under the earth.

5. M. Prayer hands to level of forehead.

W. **"Awake"**

F. Sense an alert glow between your eyes.

6. M. Prayer hands to heart level.

W. **"to my state of being."**

F. Feel your current state of being, sensations of your being.

7. MWF - **woosh** exhale any movement feels good.

The video of the following is here: <http://www.lightnermethod.com/well-being.html>

## 6. Wholeness in Motion™

### The Language of Wholeness applied to Movement



Wholeness in Motion™ began as an attempt to see if it was possible to teach movement based on new science about skill acquisition, efficient coordination and the Elastic Suspension System model of human structure. Wholeness in Motion is the Language of Wholeness applied to movement.

Instead of instructing you how to move Wholeness in Motion™ facilitates you:

To develop your own experiential criteria to sense what works for your body and what doesn't.

The most common paradigm for human structure is that humans are a postural or alignment system. The Elastic Suspension System paradigm for human structure as articulated by David Gorman takes into consideration a much more detailed understanding of anatomy and how it works to allow us to have our stature. It is as different a model from the postural model as a suspension bridge is from a columnar bridge. It demands a new pedagogy. Through Wholeness in Motion™ you experience this new approach. You experience:

An exploratory approach to stature and movement in which you learn principles for understanding your body, your balance, your volume, space, mobility, strength, dynamic range and miraculous design.

I have over 40 years of movement training (dance/yoga-you name it, I did it) almost all of which used focusing on body parts as a primary means of training. I see why that approach made sense; a teacher sees a harmful habit or pattern in the person and wants to help.

The latest discoveries about human functioning raise new questions:

How can a person change an inefficient physical pattern without adjusting or directing body parts?

How can a person do a particular core strength exercise and not hurt her back if we don't say "tone your abs"?

Is it possible to teach from a different set of principles?

Would there be an advantage to teaching in accordance with the way our system works?

These were the real questions I had when I began this research. The answer is mostly a resounding YES.

The principles of teaching that were revealed through the questions underlying Wholeness in Motion™ evolved into The Language of Wholeness, a pedagogical approach you can incorporate into the movement forms you currently love to do, like the yoga teacher who come back after a class ecstatic about how this fundamental change in her perspective and the consequent change in her language transformed her yoga experience for herself and her students.

Words can't adequately convey the distinction. I invite you to come and experience how this material contributes to the rich wealth of movement work that is out there.

The forms and content of Wholeness in Motion™ (WIM) are designed to be a comprehensive way to experience the innate capability of your system to BE well-being, to be perceptive, responsive, clear, strong, expressive and rooted in love and joy, to move with ease and intelligence, to be free to be yourself.

## The Wholeness in Motion Tracker

The core themes of WIM are like a braid weaving three threads through the movement. These three themes, principles or threads are:

- Well-being Perspectives (AKA Patterns of Joy)
- Sensory Landmarks to recognize and choose healthy movement (Opportunities to experience Body Mapping and Anatomy of Wholeness™)
- Expressive and spatial Availability, expressive, emotional and spatial vocabulary and range.

Here are some examples of the threads you experience in WIM:

4. Well-being perspectives
  - Remembering your elemental nature, that you are made of the universe
  - You have an inner compass you can rely on

- You have many avenues for information and insight one of which is your senses and body based information
5. Sensory Landmarks.
    - Identifying the different sensation of being in the center of support or off the center of support
    - Feeling smooth versus choppy movement as an indicator of efficiency
    - Detecting the difference between having integrity through the torso or feeling disconnected
  6. Expressive Availability.
    - Exploring pushing, floating, directed or quick movement with various intentions and contexts
    - Feeling the difference between gripped dynamic expression and open, free dynamic expression
    - Dancing the planes of movement

As a way for you to deepen your relationship to the material I offer the following framework for you to use to articulate these threads within the various movements/forms. WIM starts with an emphasis on experiencing the themes and forms. The writing framework below provides a means for you to make a cognitive relationship to the work. This blend of experience and embodied cognition is key to living the work in the world.

Below is a list of the individual movement explorations in WIM. For each form/shape or sequence write:

1. Heart: What is the Heart of the movement for you?
2. Well-Be: Which Well-being perspective is embedded in it?
3. Structure: Is there a Sensory landmark here? A human design principle to explore in this movement? An opportunity for mapping or Anatomy revelation?
4. Express: What expressive availability is possible here?

Each form has an emphasis. For example the expressive work comes more into play when we are standing so you may not have a response for that thread in some of the floor work. I have asked a few specific other questions to help you clarify the key ingredients of the movement. It also gives us information about areas you might want to bring up in class or in an individual session. The point of this is as a tool for you in an on-going way, like after each class. This is not a quiz! No right or wrong just what is true for you in this moment of your experience and understanding. It can be place for you to track/articulate how a particular class struck you.

I suggest as you engage in the reading and writing of this you notice if you start to grip or narrow. What if you only wrote from a place of open connection, easy heart. I say this not as a right or wrong but as an invitation to experiment in how information flows and from where answers bubble up...allowing the response or answer to arrive rather than hunting for it.

Please let me know how this is or isn't of use for you. Joy, Babette

### **Web or Elemental Self**

Heart

Well-Be

Structure

Expression

## **Cellular Dance**

Heart

Well-Be

Structure

Expression

## **Starfish sequencing**

Heart

Well-Be

Structure

Expression

## **Fish/dolphin-Tubular flows**

Heart

Well-Be

Structure

Expression

## **Sea Anemone**

Heart

Well-Be

Structure

Expression

## **What are the 4 fundamental movements?**

### **Transitions to standing – mid-range crawl movements**

Heart

Well-Be

Structure

Expression

### **Prostration to standing –maximum contact with the planet to minimum contact and back again**

Heart

Well-Be

Structure

Expression

**Dancing interlude: we explore in various ways many expressive, mind, movement themes.**

What are the 3 planes of movement?

What are 3 key dynamic continuums?

What are BMC body based dynamic elements like blood, bone etc?

**Locating: here I am as I am...**

Heart

Well-Be

Structure

Expression

**For the standing sequences below jot down any notes about the threads and particularly what you can learn, demonstrate or exercise in each.**

**Elephant**

**Drawing the ears**

**Establishing trunk**

**Soaring trunk**

**Drink water**

**Up to Lion**

**Lion interlude on one foot**

**Kick set**

**Spring to land**

**Repeat elephant to lion then**

**Become the air**

**Spring to Artemis**

**Arrow/point one way –center—the other**

**Center**

**Flying bird**

**Land on mountain**

**Dragons tail up to mountain**

**Tilt one side then the other**

**Fly again**

**Become the ocean/river**

**Spread the seas one side, center, the other**

**Up on one leg soaring**

**Tilt over**

**Step back**

**Diagonal**

**Rotate**

**Tectonic plates arm switch**

**Windmill curve to flying bird**

**Become a tornado/lava flow**

**Land in the meadow**

**Deer**

**Spread the seeds**

**Center**

**Meta-patterns •Patterns of Joy™**

**Open to horizontal plane dance (architype will be in parenthesis- Nataraja)**

**Fluid (Shakti)**

**Line/trajectory (Kali/loving warrior)**

**Pause to recognize roots of health (Sage)**

**Spiral (Mary/mother/Bodhisatva)**

**Sphere (Gaia/Celtic monolith)**

**Wave (Vishnu)**

**Suspension (Infinity)**

**Float – dissipation (Universe)**

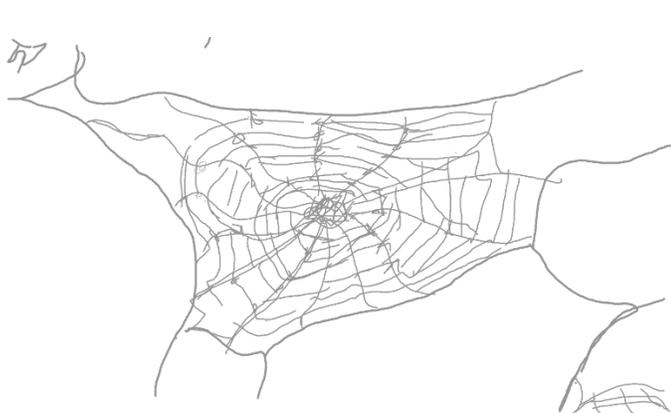
**Here I am as I am .... In the world as it is .... Supported by the planet..... floating in the universe....AWAKE...to my state of being....ffuuuuwwuw...**

# Entering the Earth to Sky Sequence



In this traverse from maximum to minimum contact with the planet landmarks and self-assessments for healthy movement are introduced.

This is a developmental/evolutionary excursion designed to remind you of your fundamental being, your innate miracle of being.



Elemental Being

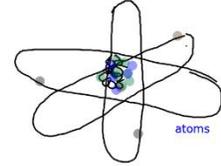
WEB



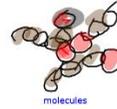
I am Air



I am Earth



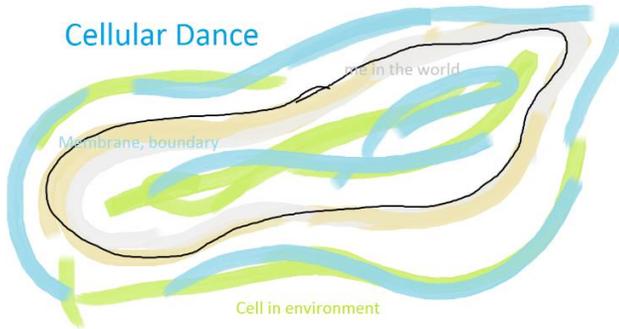
I am Water



me before my story

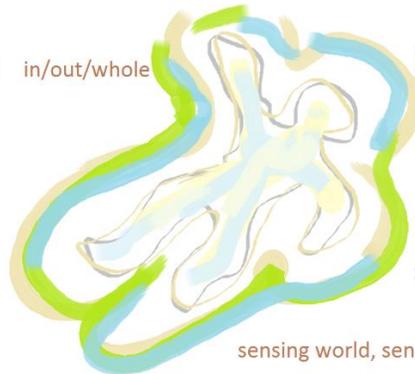


Cellular Dance



in/out/whole

Cellular Dance



sensing world, sensing me

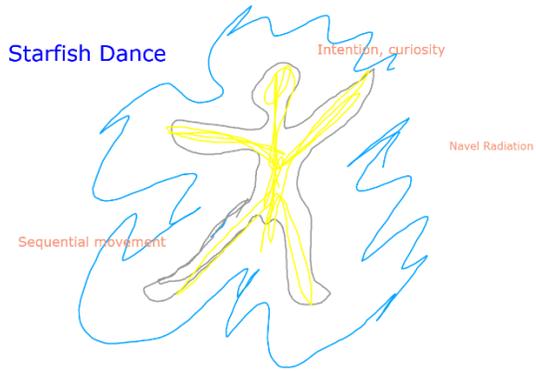
in/out/whole

Cellular Dance

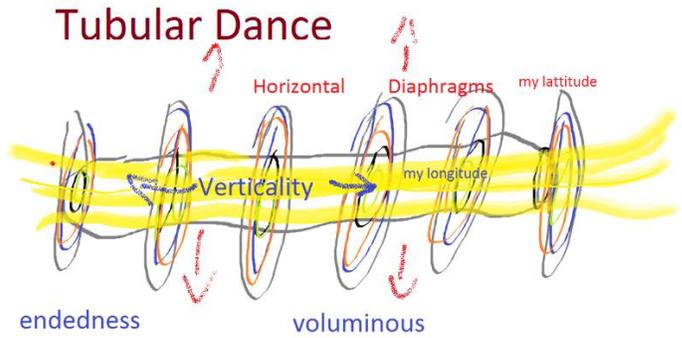
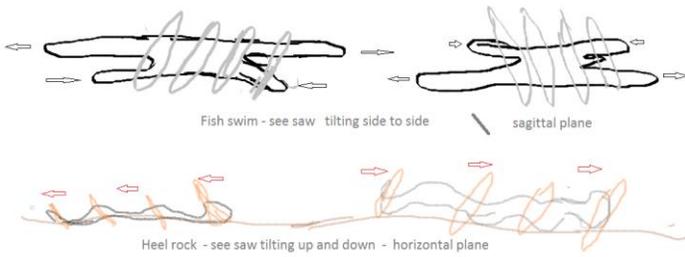


Whole muscular web  
Oneness

sensing world, sensing me

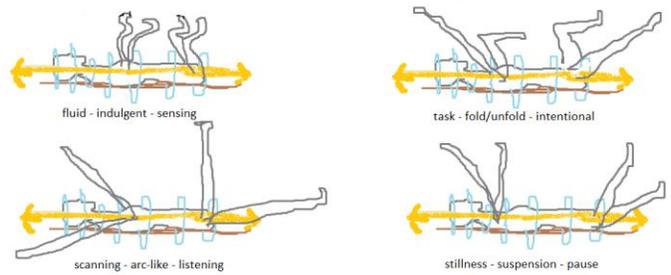
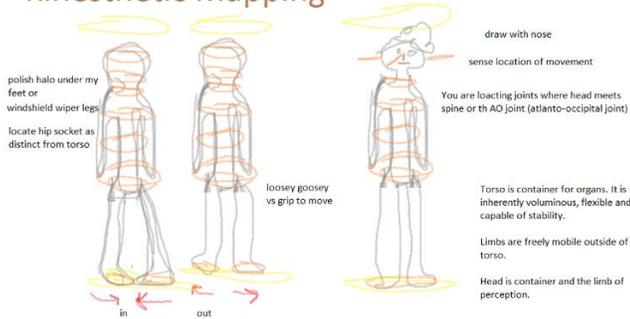


### Tubular Dance and Mapping

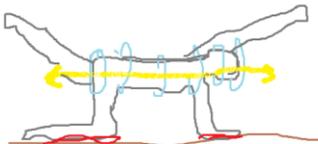


Sea Anemone - stability of torso and volume of torso in four foundational patterns of movement.  
 Landmarks/assessments: As I move my limbs: Are diaphragms parallel or compressing front or back? Is volume changing? Is contact with earth changing? Can I sing?

### Kinesthetic Mapping

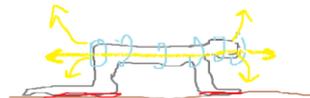


Changing points of Contact in excursion from maximum contact with planet to minimum contact. Rising and lowering. Touch ground with 4, 3 or 2 points of contact. For example right lower leg and right palm or 2 palms and left lower leg and forearm.



Changing points of contact and exploring:

1. Even distribution of contact or being on and off support.
2. The 4 foundational patterns of movement and effect on volume/stability.
3. Starfish/sea anemone and even distribution of contact



Explore mobility of torso through double-headed dragon initiation compared to central initiation.

Explore the excursion of rising up and coming back to the ground.

Some ways to explore:

Move up and down in each plane, sideways, front/back, horizontal. 

Move in the spirit of gratitude, the ancient practice of prostration. 

Play with images of being wind, liquid, butterfly.



As you explore you can also invite different principles of movement into your awareness.

Am I moving in starfish or following the butterfly in which spine twists and turns, the movement is sequential? 

Am I moving in sea anemone or as if I have a task in which my torso retains stability as I fold, bend, walk?

## Approaching The Animal Form

The drawings of the forms show the choreography, the shapes that you move through. In every shape you can explore the fundamental landmarks and sensations to discover how the shape informs you, feels good to you.

I call this the Goldilocks approach. In any shape move a little forward, a little back and then to what feels "just right" to you. In another shape mush your torso together in front, in back and then arrive at approximately unmushed. You are deciding what you want in the shape or form.

Invite lively intention, imagination to ignite the movements, particularly once you have a feel for them.

A key to visual cues scattered in the drawings to remind you of ways to approach learning the movement.



Goldilock's 3 Beds • to remember to explore comparisons. Your system learns by comparison and experimenting.



A Compass • to remind you this work is about developing and listening to your compass. What feels right and good to you in this moment?



A Target • to remind you learning happens through "Target Practice". You intend, do, and assess. No mistakes, just closer or further from the target. Learning is going off target! Play to learn. Make you own discoveries.



A Butterfly • to remind you to find intentions to bring the movement to life and efficiency: follow the butterfly, pick up a basket, touch stars, kick a ball.

# Elephant

You can approach elephant in several ways:  
The excursion of elephant is an opportunity to explore balance, volume and all the fundamental assessments of healthy functioning while moving through the full range of motion of the arm-structure.

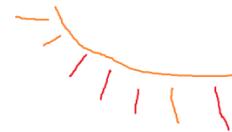
In Indian dance starting with Ganapati (Elephant God) is an invitation to removing obstacles and clearing the way. Invite a clear path into your being.



Elephant  
• Pause to start



Elephant  
• Draw the ears



Start the ears inward, up and around - big ears.

Elephant  
• Become the trunk



Elephant  
• Flap the ears



Draw trunk up thru center line and in full extension above your head

Flap ears in front & back as if showing off sparkles on outside of arm

Elephant  
• Drink the water

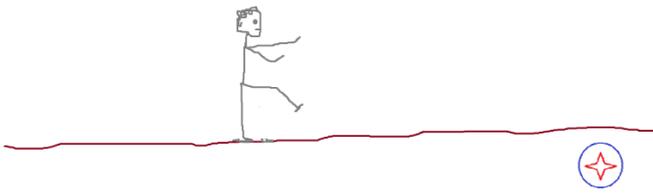


Explore balance and bend and organization of torso.



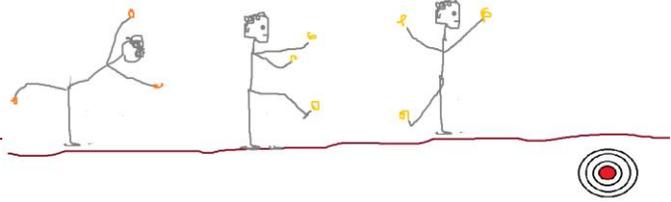
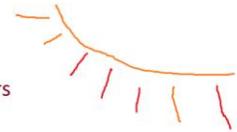
### Lion

- Up to lion



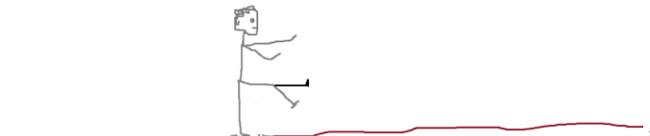
### Lion

- optional interlude: touch the stars



### Lion

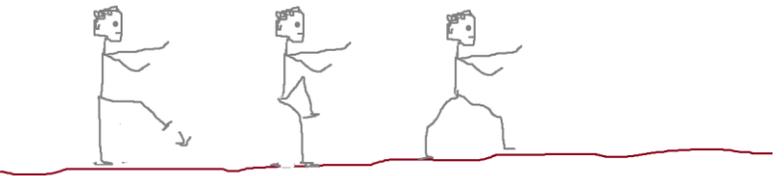
- Little kick



Little quick kick with just lower leg

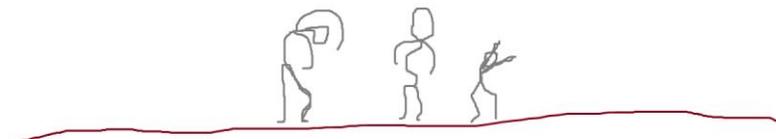
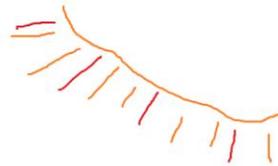
### Lion

- step, jump spring to land



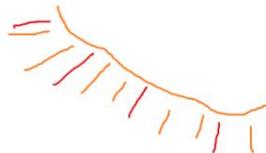
Once landed explore activities like shoveling, lifting, bending in & out of support

## Become the Wind

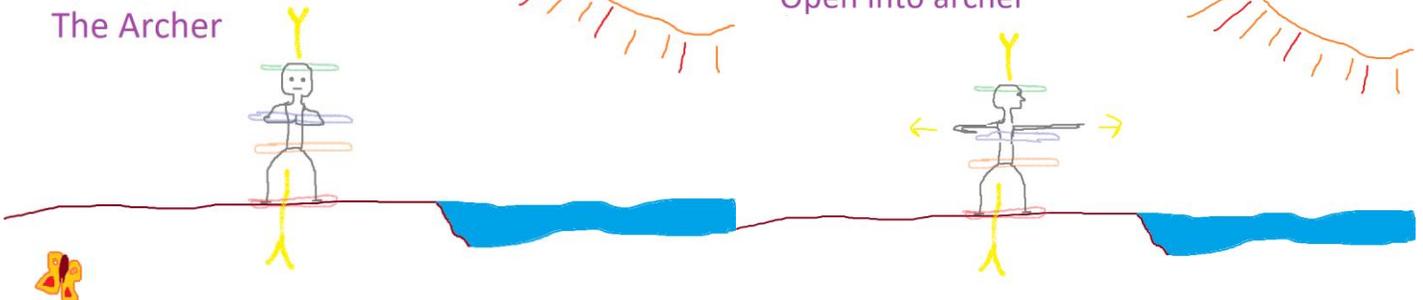


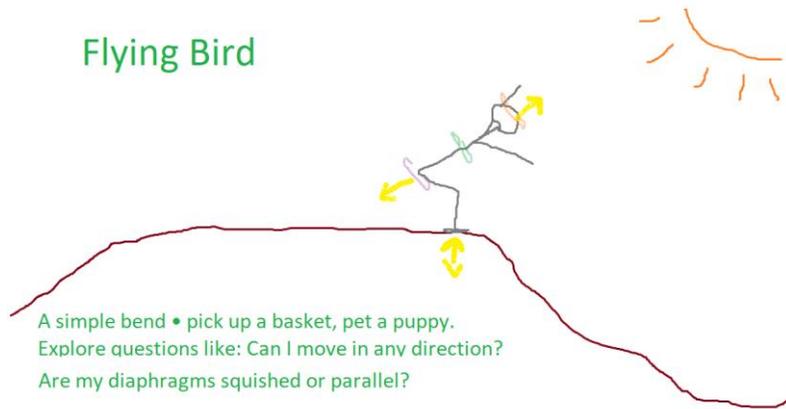
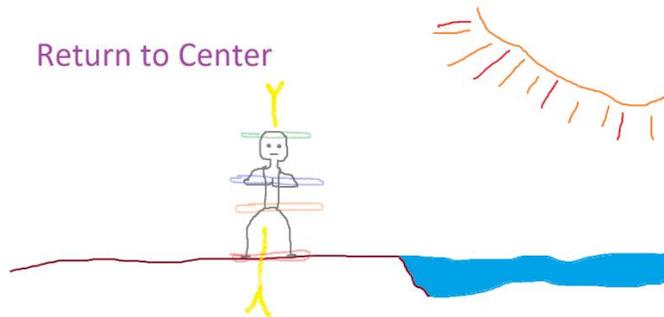
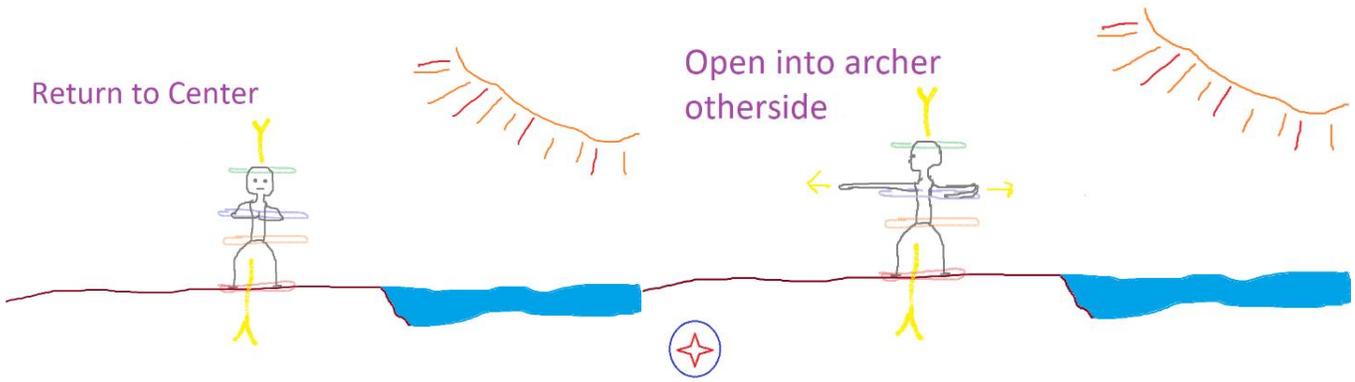
Three times during the animal form there is an interlude to move in free form with an image of a force of nature. This is an opportunity to let your body lead and unravel any strain and to play with dynamics and energy.

### Spring into Artemis, The Archer



### Open into archer





## Flying Bird

Fly again



Counter balance • whole system folding • not down but open to fly

## Become the Ocean



Second interlude: dance and move like a stormy sea, gentle river  
Unravel any strain, follow your sensations

## Part the Seas

One palm down and one palm up to spread the seas. Fingers face center.



Look down to lower hand. Because movement is at A/O joint, head diaphragms tilt while others are parallel to earth all the way to top of spine.

Allow arm-structure to be in full range, upper arm is next to ear. What is happening with diaphragms? Central Channel? Center of Support?

## Part the Seas

other side



This is from a Korean Healing practice. This movement is considered good for digestion.

## Soaring Bird

Come up thru center like you are soaring straight up, one leg up and bent.



Imagine geyser flowing through you from center of Earth to center of Universe. No need to balance, let system balance you. You open to world, to soaring.

## Soaring Bird

Tip over - fly horizontally



## Soaring Bird

Step back • soar center



## Soaring Bird

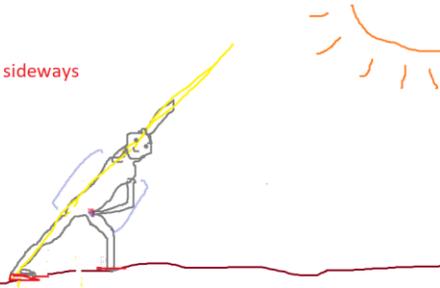
Tilt over • soar diagonally



Long line from back foot to finger tip of extended arm on same side. Other hand is at crease of hip on bent leg side. Even distribution of contact with the Earth. This is not a lunge forward.

## Soaring Bird

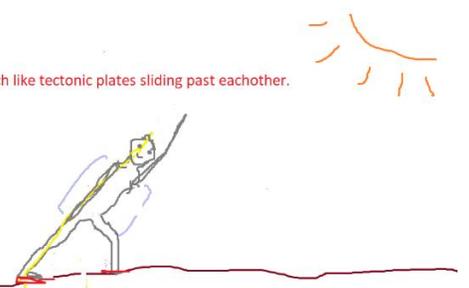
Rotate to face front • soar sideways



Still even distribution of contact. The front leg is stable. The back foot rotates along with whole body as it rotates at hipsocket to face forward. Back foot points diagonally forward. The distance from hipsocket to armpit is equal on both sides, diaphragms are parallel but tilted.

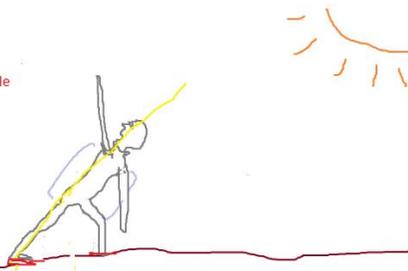
## Soaring Bird

Wings switch sides • arms switch like tectonic plates sliding past each other.



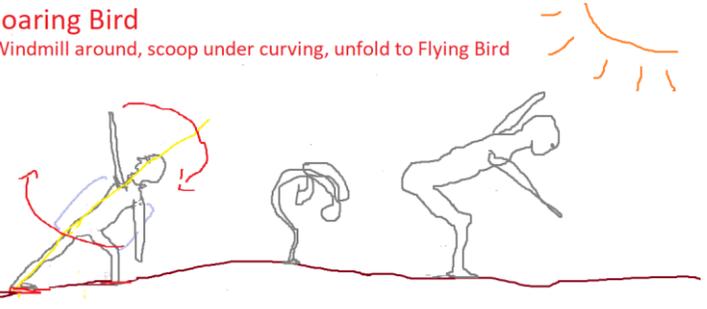
## Soaring Bird

Windmill arms like spinning a circle



## Soaring Bird

Windmill around, scoop under curving, unfold to Flying Bird



## Tornado Wind Interlude



Move how you feel good. Play with power strong and light. Play with shapes big and little.

## Land in Meadow Become Deer

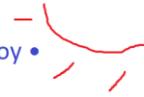


## Sprinkle an offering Return to Center



Earth coming up to meet you as you meet the earth.

Pause between The Animal Form and Patterns of Joy • Perspectives of Health



Entering the meadow of the dance possibility or simply pause or "Here I am, as I am" sequence.

Perspectives of Health • Patterns of Joy™

Movement metaphors to remind you of healthy perspectives. These are physical reminders of cognitive information.

When you are caught in a suffering perspective it is challenging to remember the knowledge you have that would support your return to health. These physicalizations of cognitive ideas are a tool to bring into awareness what you already know but don't have access to in the moment of confusion.



The sequence has several layers.

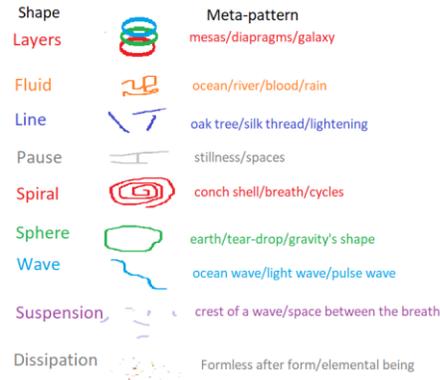
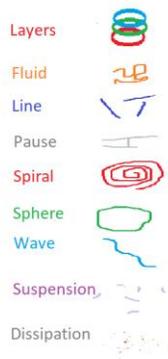


The Shapes

The Perspective of Health or Pattern of Joy that corresponds to each shape.

-  I am stardust • I am part of a greater whole
-  My inner-compass
-  My compass • your compass
-  Pause
-  Embrace • release
-  Being with what is
-  Changing flow
-  Access to mystery, inspiration
-  I am stardust, stardust having had this form

One way to start is with the shapes.  
Do them as simple hand gestures or as whole body shape dances.

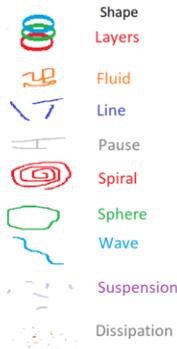


Explore shapes as Meta-patterns or patterns and shapes in you and the world, micro and macro patterns.

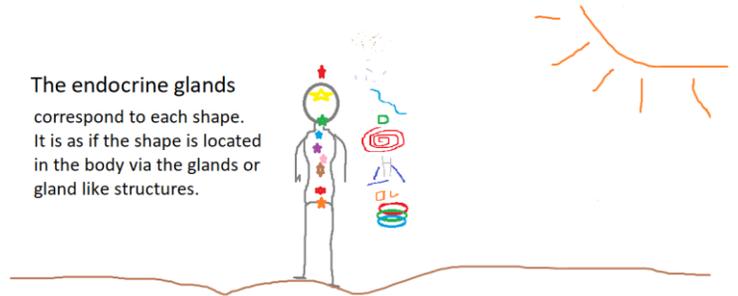
There are Archetypes - Characters that add dimension to the Perspectives



These are the Natya-Assanas or dance shapes that are rooted in South Indian classical dance. They can be done as a series on their own or woven into the Perspectives sequence. When you embody a character or archetype you feel the shape in new ways.



The endocrine glands correspond to each shape. It is as if the shape is located in the body via the glands or gland like structures.



Elemental self • I am stardust • I am part of a greater whole • I am the universe-the universe is me • essence of being • pure potency (root of feeling safe)



Layers • parallel planes



Nataraja • Dancing Creation

coccyx • root glands tail •



galaxy • mesas • diaphragms

My Compass • I am in touch with my truth • my inner knowing (root of being in touch with self)



Fluid • inner-outer motion



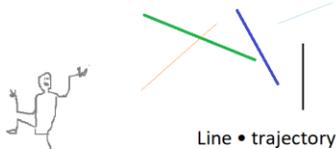
Shakti • Essential Energy Life force • coming to being

ovaries • gonads



Rivers • oceans • blood

Rooted in my truth even in context of your truth • Clarity • Remove obstacles • Clear clutter • Everyone has their own compass, made and for each person • Get my 'should' off you and your 'should' off me • I know what is true for me • I am here-you are there (root of relational health)



Line • trajectory

Kali • Warrior • clear the crap

Adrenal Glands



Pause • Stillness • The Space Between • Rest (roots of being unfold to roots of inter-being)



The Sage, pilgrim Here I am, as I am



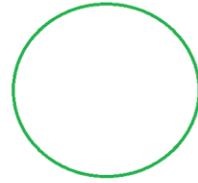
Pancrease



emptiness • spaces • silence

Being with what is • **Isness** • **Inclusive Awareness** • **Perspective** •  
 (root of gratitude)

**Spirals** • Embrace-Release • **Cycles** • **Inhale suffering-exhale joy** •  
**Breath in joy-breath out suffering** • **What nourishes me? What is  
 toxix to me?** • **Take in-Let go**  
 (root of compassion)



Spheres • Shape of Gravity

Thymus Gland



Earth•tear-drop  
 •galaxy•cell



Bodhisattva•Mary•  
 Mother Goddesses of all time



Spiral  
 The Heart

Water cycle  
 Breath Cycle  
 Circulation



Gaia • Celtic Stones

**• Nexus** • **Access to Wisdom** • **Mystery** • **Stillness** • **Suspension** • **noitziqniL**  
 Possibilities (root of wisdom)

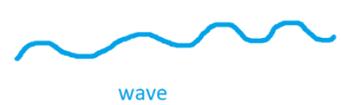
**Change** • **Waves** • **Currents** • **Crests and troughs of life** •  
 Riding the flow of life • **Allowing** (root of resilience)



Top of the wave  
 Eye of the storm  
 Between the breath

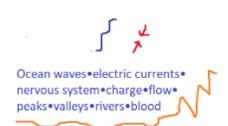


Pituitary Gland  
 Vishnu•Peace



wave

Thyroid Glands



Ocean waves•electric currents•  
 nervous system•charge•flow•  
 peaks•valleys•rivers•blood

Dissipation after form • **Atomic self** • **Vibration** • **Spaces** • **I am**  
**Stardust** • **return to elemental self** • **NoSelf** (root of liberation)



Amphora•vessel



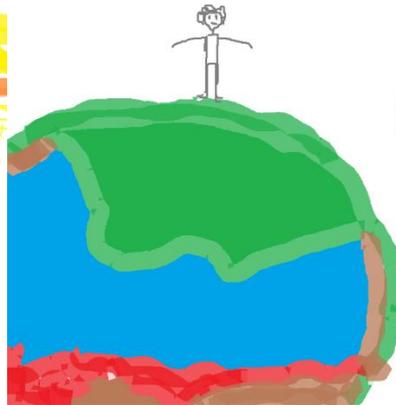
Pineal Gland



Formless after form  
 Emptiness  
 Space between electrons

Here I am

As I am



In the world

As it is



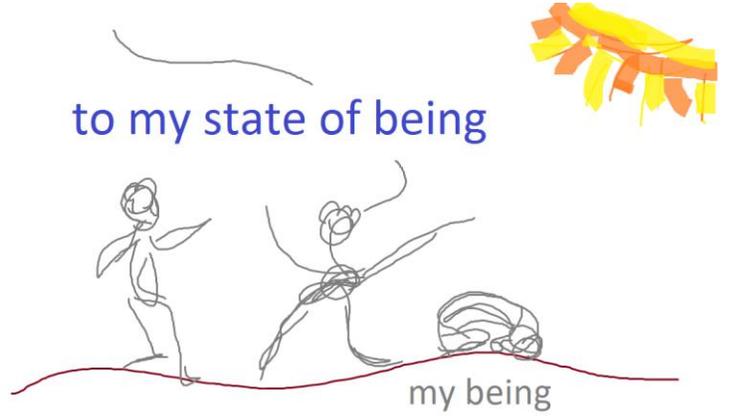
Supported by the planet



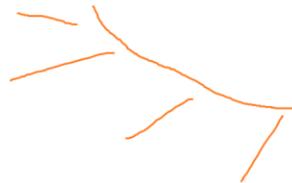
Floating in the multiverse



to my state of being



Thank You!



# Source and Resources and Acknowledgements

The material in this text represents a life time of curiosity about how the human system works and how we are part of the natural world. I am working to create a more formal bibliography of my primary influences and sources. In the meantime, I acknowledge and honor my sources below. Please look-up anything these people have written or attend a workshop they teach.

David Gorman's work is the pillar on which the Language of Wholeness stands. Access to his material can be found at his website [www.learningmethods.com](http://www.learningmethods.com). You can order his anatomy book The Body Moveable as well as read brilliant articles and sign-up for his Anatomy of Wholeness on-line courses.

Leon Thurman's work with the VoiceCare Network and his book BodyMind and Voice laid the foundation for the understanding of well-being as primary to learning and artistry through his articulation of *human compatible learning*. Like Gorman, Leon is thinker and pedagogue ahead of his time. He applied and studied neuroscience to life and education thirty years before the subject was on every airport book kiosk.

Movement, Nature, Human Function and poetry are the core threads that weave together to form the Language of Wholeness. The sources, resources and acknowledgements in each area are vast. As I acknowledge my teachers, I am also sighting my sources for the work. Below I start with somatic/movement work. I follow this with Nature, Human Function and poetry.

My roots in somatic work and modern dance form the foundation for my belief that experiencing a concept is necessary for true understanding. Embodied knowledge is experiential knowledge. Most of the Deep Play assignments reflect my Modern Dance roots. My first dance class rooted in Laban Movement Analysis was as a seventh grader taking a Saturday class at American University with Anne Hutchinson. Laban and Bartenieff Fundamentals are the scaffolding of my movement training. Thanks to Diane Schmidt and Maralee Hardenberg for their contributions to my continued dance with Laban and Bartenieff. I feel blessed to have had one deeply impactful workshop with Irmgard Bartenieff herself in the late 1970's. My debt to her his unpayable.

The other embodied approaches that are embedded in this work are Bonnie Bainbridge Cohen's BodyMind Centering work and F.M. Alexander's Alexander Technique. The list of teachers here is long. Alexander: Sherry Oliver, Barbara Conable, Alice Pryor, Bruce Fertman, David Gorman, Elizabeth Garren, Elizabeth Huebner, Giora Pincus, Jessica Wolf, D. Carrington, Marjorie Barstow and many more. BMC: Bonnie Cohen, Diane Elliot, Suzanne River, Margie Fargnoli. Randee Pauve keeps me rooted in the dance.

It is hard to even begin the gratitude for my numerous movement teachers. Their influence is in every step I take and in the Wholeness in Motion sequences. Here is a sampling:

Bharata Natayum, Classical South Indian Dance: Bala Krishnan, K. Neela, Raneer Ramaswamy

Modern Dance: Trude Link, Mark Taylor, Stuart Pimsler, Martha Myers, Beth Channock, Sara and Jerry Pearson, Lenore Lattimore, Daniel Nagrin, Don Redlick, David Dorfman

Ballet: Marcus Schulkind, Carolyn Coles, Jacques D'Ambrose

African Dance: Chuck Davis, Arthur Hall

Middle Eastern Dance: Cassandra Shore

Jacobs Kapers Morris Dance Team

Karagam South Indian Folk Dance: Om Parier Swami

Improvisation: Martha Myers, Martha Moore, Mabou Mines Company

And my colleagues with Spanuptzes Theatre an Improvisation Movement Theatre Company in Cambridge Mass in the early 1980's.

Tai Chi Chuan: Sat Hon, Phillip Zarrilli, Lenzie Williams, Ben Lo, Bill Zeman.

Hatha Yoga: William Protengier, Teresa Pritchett, Scott Anderson, Regina Wray

South Indian Martial Arts: Kaluripayattu: Phillip Zarrilli, Selumbu:P. Veran

My movement passion was met with my passion for the natural world. Nature herself is my first teacher in the flow of living life. My lessons came from such moments as walking the beach in Bayside Maine, paddling Rush Creek again and again, back packing the Rockies, sailing Penobscot Bay, growing our food. Living with my wife Suzanne Baker, has been a deep education in listening and learning from plants and the world around me. She is a plant whisperer. Experiencing how she sees, hears and relates to the plant kingdom has broadened my heart and mind more than I can say. Studies with my neighbor and renown herbalist Mathew Wood has also given me a window into other avenues for learning and knowing. These experiences are supported by books, articles and experiences in Deep Ecology and Herbalism. Here are a few greats: Stephen Buhner, Susun Weed, Rosemary Gladstar, Robin Rose Bennet, James Green, Arne Naess, Rachel Carson, Aldo Leopold, John Seed, Kay Grindland, John Muir, Edward Abbey, Dave Forman, Terry Tempest Williams, Wynona LaDuke, Bill Devall, George Sessions, Johanne Macy, William Bryant Logan, Starhawk, Julia Butterfly Hill, Tyler Volk, Brian Swimme, George Lakoff, Mark Johnson, Diane Ackerman, Charlene Spretnak. My colleague and friend Christine Wolf shares this dance of nature and somatic work with me. The books she has given me and led me to are many of those listed in these pages

In the area of Human Functioning I see three blurry divisions: spirit and mind, anatomy, social, education and neuroscience.

Here are some influential spirit and mind authors/teachers: Dalai Lama, Krishnamurti, Toni Packer, Jon Kabat Zinn, Thich Nhat Hanh, Joseph Campbell, Thomas Moore, Byron Katie, Carl Jung, Eckart Tolle, James Hillman, Robert Holden, Starhawk.

Anatomy and body: David Gorman, Bonnie Cohen, Linda Hartley, Morris Berman, Deane Juhan, Arnold Mindell, Ashley Montague, Lenore Friedman, Mathew Sanford, Stanley Keleman, Hugh Milne, Kristen Linklater, F.M. Alexander, Michael Gelb, Gretchen Reynolds, Barbara Brennen, Robert Fritz, Joan Jacobs Burmberg, Lulu Sweigard, Will Johnson, Leon Thurman.

Sciences (distinctions are blurred): Norman Doidge, Antonio Damasio, Charles Duhigg, Timothy Wilson, Marco Iacoboni, Leonard Mlodinow, Richard Davidson, Barbara Fredrickson, David Eagleman, Michael Gazzanga, Elizabeth Blackburn, Elissa Epel, Susan Cain, Sharon Begley, Candace Pert, William Dement, Amit Sood, Rollo May, A.D. Craig, Richard Panek, Neil Shubin, Marshall Rosenberg, Lori Bailey Cunningham, Becky Bailey, Alfie Kohn, Mary Pipher, John Holt, Nancy Jo Sales, Polly Berrien Berends, J. Bronowski, Kenneth Clark, Lisa Feldman Barrett, Eugene Gendlin, Peter Levine, Stephen Porges, Andy Clark, Michael Anderson, Ed Taub, Gregory Hickok, John Ratey, Penelope A. Lewis, Luiz Pessoa, Michael Merzenich, Seth Grant, Temple Grandin, Jaak Panksepp.

Check out Dr. Ginger Campbell's Brain Science Podcast for interviews with the scientists doing the research.

Poetry: Whatever touches you. Please read, listen and write it. This list is just too long or I am out of steam.

Oddly this attempt to acknowledge sources feels futile. The random encounters, the innocent statement of a friend, a news story, a beautiful design, a work of art, an injury, a gift, so much combines to give us our perspective and vision. I bow in gratitude to all these random and carved moments that have shaped me and this work.

I bow at the feet of those who have been willing to work together with me, to study, to take classes, to give feedback, contribute material and make aspects of the work their one. My colleague, Jennifer Moir, has her own powerful voice in this work. I am forever indebted to her support in every way. Alison Jane Taylor is also firmly teaching from this perspective but from her own unique perspective. It is exciting to see. Thank you for your trust. Thank you to the current group of Wholeness in Twelve members and the 2019 Pilot Apprentice group. There is no work if there is no one to explore it. I am bowing.

# Living the Language of Wholeness Retreat Overview and Schedule

The Living the Language of Wholeness residential workshop is built around Wholeness in Motion™ Sequences. Each of the four working days will be organized around two of the Meta-patterns (Perspectives of Health Sequence). The concepts of the day's Meta-patterns will be the lens through which we look at the four territories of the work: 1. Well-being/response system 2. Structure/Suspension System, 3. Action/Coordinating System, 4. Learning/Adapting System.

## Flexible Schedule

**First Evening** - We gather and share a meal. We take time to meet and share our purpose in coming together for this work. Why are you here? What do you want to experience, learn, allow this week? How do you want to feel when you leave? How do you want to meet the week? What 'extra' activities do you want to do: fermentation, lotions, wild food walk, tinctures, sculpture garden visit, kayak, pottery tour, birding, making idlis?

I will present the context and framework for the week. The premise and purpose of Language of Wholeness through going over this text and how to use it.

We will set-up job sharing (elf teams) for those staying in my home and other nuts and bolts.

You will want to have a tool to track your experience with words and images, music – perhaps a 11x17" blank notebook. A recording device. It is up to you.

The daily schedule (days one, two, four and five) will gently follow this pattern:

Day three is a pause day – extras, field trips, co-creative collaborative learning time.

## Morning to do your own thing and any assignments

9:30 Locate – threshold and meta-patterns of the day.

10:00 Deep Play – Heart of the day through Have a Walk.

11:30 or as sensible – Break

11:45 Deep Play – Have a Dance - expanding the work.

12:15 Paradigm – Presenting the overview and details of one of the four fundamental paradigms of the work each day: Suspension System, Coordinating System, Adaptive System and Response System

1:00 Lunch

2:30 Wholeness in Motion- The developmental movement, experiential anatomy – Embodiment work.

3:15 Lessons – Pedagogy – Individual lessons that others observe: Three 30 Minute lessons and/or participation in LearningMethods™ class

4:45 Gather to tie-up the day – Meta-patterns

5:15 Break for the evening

Evening option to watch Anatomy of Wholeness video class by David Gorman.

The idea for evenings off is to give you space to process, reflect and integrate the days experience.

Below is an outline of how the themes of each day are the lens for the aspects of looking at the four aspects our wholeness. This outline may be more meaningful at the end of the week than at the beginning.

Day One



Meta-pattern: (Layers/horizontal) (fluid)

I am Nature and Nature is Wise • My Compass

I know this is my roots: I am stardust – I am an individual, no-self/self, boundaryless/boundary

I am rooted to my lofty goal – my bigger purpose beyond ego.

I dance this in the play of Web/Elemental being • Cellular self

I study this in my Structure and understand new paradigms:

Gravity as multi-directions

Pre-sprung Suspension System model

Sensation as the language of my compass

Web of tissue and balance and support

Root organ/gland: coccyx and ovaries/gonads

Nervous System-skin – tactile and dispersed senses

I develop my Sensory Knowledge or Agency with assessments like: Do I feel Fluid or stiff? Do I sense flow or being stuck/blocked? Do I feel connected or isolated? Do I feel rooted to purpose?

I root my teaching, my pedagogy in my understanding of the essential power of safety, (safe space/safe speech/safe contact/safe heart). I explore:

- locating tools
- sensation as information
- honoring each persons' reality as true for them.
- identifying root purpose or lofty goal.

Deep Play: Locating: Locating  
Have a Dance  
Here I am practice  
Greetings  
Predictable movement, guided breathing, meditations, sounding and other tools for bringing pause/plan part of system on board (Autonomic Nervous system)  
Meeting my Compass (artistic inspiration)  
*Have a Walk* with photo journal - Being Called into the World

Afternoon Lessons - Pedagogy: Individual lessons that others observe: Three 30 Minute lessons and/or participation in LearningMethods™ class

Day Two 

Shapes of the day: (Trajectory/line) (Pause)

I am in relationship to the world, to you. I am rooted/you are rooted. There is space and stillness and silence between. Threshold - the pause between past and future.

I know this in my roots. I take action and I pause. I listen, receive, give, act, acknowledge and meet.

I dance this in the play of starfish, tubular length, mouthing, limbs develop to afford perceptive and action potential, tree frog – limb support the ‘core’

I study this in my Structure and understand new paradigms:

Response System – well-being/learning

Locomoting, bending, mapping

Inclusive Awareness

Root organ/gland: adrenal, pancreas, lymph

I develop my Sensory Knowledge or Agency with assessments like: Do I feel: 1. clarity or grip? 2. power as flow or power as bound?

I root my teaching, my pedagogy, in my understanding of the essential power of relationship – each person has their own compass. One of my jobs is to support the student to develop their own compass. Scaffolding discovery versus imposing my knowledge. How do we give feedback in ways that support our students to develop their own compass?

Deep Play: Have a Dance - Space near-far, partner sculptural play  
Listening – talking  
Tie down the sun  
Have a Walk – Learning from the World

Afternoon Lessons – Pedagogy: Individual lessons that others observe: Three 30 Minute lessons and/or participation in LearningMethods™ class

## Day Three – Pause and integrate, co-create, collaborate, PLAY

### Day Four



Shapes of the day: (Spiral) (Sphere)

I am a learning Coordinating Being. I discover, in every moment, as I live and play and explore myself in the world around me.

I know this in my roots. I take action and I pause. I listen, receive, give, act, acknowledge and meet.

I dance this in the play of: sea anemone to lizard to treefrog to rising and falling – intentional ignition – interest and manipulation of the world.

I study this in my Structure and understand new paradigms:

- I am coordinating being – intention and attention organize me
- Breathing
- Arm-structure
- Torso/limbs: butterfly, stable, hinge options
- Root organ/gland: heart, thymus, circulatory system

Perspective: embrace • release, nourishing • toxic, Isness, Inclusive Awareness

Eagle perspective – micro • macro, atom • cosmos

I develop my Sensory Knowledge or Agency with assessments like: Do I feel elastic or brittle? Can I sense integrity and divided-disconnection? Can I sense how my attention affects me, organizes my shape? Can I sense the effect of changes in intention on the ease or difficulty of action?

I root my teaching, my pedagogy, in my understanding of the essential power of how attention and intention affect my students. I harness that knowledge to set-up learning and efficiency and success.

Deep Play: Ensemble games

Empty Chair game – rushing or amoeba

Intention • Attention games like periphery following

Challenge or fear perspective

Efforting • allowing

Frustration • accepting unpleasant reality

Have a Dance: Time play-sustained • quick, continuous • choppy, chaos • predictable,

Have A Walk – The world in context

Afternoon Lessons - Pedagogy - Individual lessons that others observe: Three 30 Minute lessons and/or participation in LearningMethods™ class

## Day Five



Shapes of the day: (Wave)

(Suspension)

(dissipation)

I am a resilient • I am LOVE

I know this in my roots as I allow change to happen. I go with the troughs and crests of life. I embrace and I release. I know what is nourishing and what is toxic. I practice Eagle and mouse perspective – micro to macro, atom to cosmos. I invite stillness, silence to allow wisdom to arise – accessing mystery, (the-other-than-conscious processes to bubble up).

I dance this in the play of the excursion from Earth to Sky, from formless to formless, Movement poetry, Movement prayer, Movement and voice Haiku

I study this in my Structure and understand new paradigms:

- Adaptive System, learning and skill acquisition
- I come back to the whole
- Root organ/gland: thyroid, mamillary, pineal – throat, eyes, ears, smell,

I develop my Sensory Knowledge or Agency with assessments like: Do I feel available or restricted, mobile or fixed, stable or movable (can I tell the difference?)

I root my teaching, my pedagogy in my understanding of the essential power of setting the conditions for optimal learning and that learning happens by *Target Practice* and not by attempting to be perfect or always right. In understanding the power of not-knowing, scaffolding feedback, LearningMethods tools.

Deep Play:

Ensemble games

Ball play with target practice

Have a Dance - Negative space play with pattern recall

Movement – Stillness

Swing

Choreograph, compose, paint project

Group piece

Palate of dynamic range

Have a Walk – I am the world

Afternoon Gathering – Haiku – Closure

