



An overview of all embodied techniques

There are a lot of embodied techniques and practices out there and it can be helpful to have some ways of making sense of them, both for your own development and in designing practices with clients. A simple categorisation relating to sensations has just three options – you just hang-out with them (mindfulness), you make them less by managing them somehow, or you express them and make them more. There are also techniques which use a release model – explicitly trying to ‘let something out’.

Category	Making it...	Examples	Benefits	Pitfalls
Awareness (primary)	The same	Mindfulness, Vipassana, Feldenkrais	Non-invasive and gentle Necessary for others	You can be really aware how screwed up you are and still be screwed up!
Management (form) alter and optimise	Less	Centring, Alexander Technique, metta meditation, most yoga, partner dance & martial arts, Leadership Embodiment, some body therapy	Fixes problems Effective and practical	Can get in the way of natural wisdom and process Can be overly head led or see the body as wrong/bad and in need of correction
Process (freedom) dialogue or express	More	Contact improv, improv comedy, 5 Rhythms, some high-level martial arts, Focusing, embodied nature connection, some body therapy such as Hakomi	Allows natural unfolding	Sometimes the body lies! Can be indulgent and ineffective
Release allow out	More to less	Trauma release exercises (TRE), cathartic anger methods, some dance	Often effective, at least in short term	Can use unscientific models Can deepen not release patterns Overwhelm and addiction risks

NB Many techniques are in different categories depending on how they are done and the level a practitioner is at. Process tends to be more ‘advanced’, but not always. Note your preferences and which are personality and politically influenced. Yang types may be more prone to correction and yin may be more prone to process or awareness. Engaging in only one side could limit development. Note too that embodied work by definition always starts with awareness; this is primary and enables the other two options.

Other distinctions

Intention

Changing the purpose of a practice changes it fundamentally. The same thing done for two different reasons is not the same thing.

Solo, relational or task focus (I, we, it)

Embodied practices done in relationship are fundamentally different from solo ones. One can meditate and do yoga one's whole life and miss much learning from relational practices such as aikido or tango, and vice versa. Relational practices may be collaborative or competitive; both can be good for different reasons. Having an objective, functional, measurable goal in mind changes the practice.

On, with or through the body

Body as object (physical), relationship (somatic) or gateway (spiritual): a Strozzi Institute distinction.

Modern or pre-modern

Embodied practices from modern times (mostly Western) have a different flavour from pre-modern ones (mostly Eastern).

Yang-Yin / Four Elements

Challenging or nourishing/supportive is one way of looking at your practices. As ever, a balance is usually healthy. You could also categorise practices dependant on what element they developed – or use any other model.