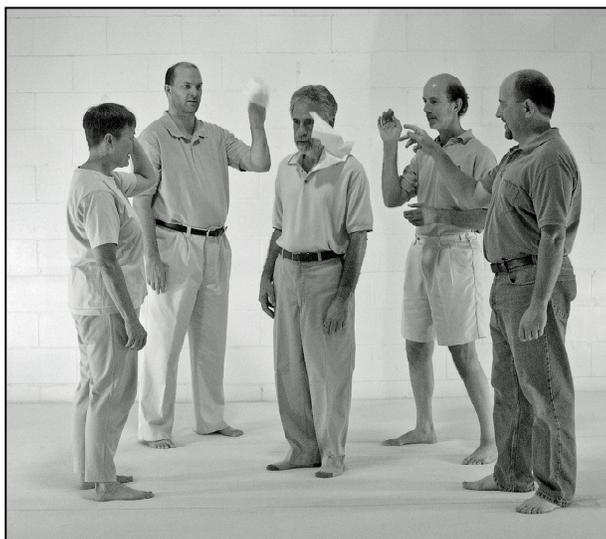


EMBODIED PEACEMAKING:

**Body Awareness, Self-Regulation
and Conflict Resolution**



**An E-Book by
Paul Linden, Ph.D.**

www.being-in-movement.com

EMBODIED PEACEMAKING

Body Awareness, Self-Regulation and
Conflict Resolution

Paul Linden, Ph.D.

First Edition

2007

CCMS Publications

www.being-in-movement.com

Columbus, Ohio

EMBODIED PEACEMAKING:
Body Awareness, Self-Regulation, and Conflict Resolution
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Published by CCMS Publications
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First edition 2007

Publisher's Cataloging-in-Publication
(Provided by Quality Books, Inc.)

Linden, Paul.

Embodied peacemaking [electronic resource] : body awareness, self-regulation and conflict resolution : an e-book / by Paul Linden. -- 1st ed.

p. cm.

System requirements: Adobe Acrobat Reader.

Mode of access: World Wide Web.

Includes index.

ISBN-13: 978-0-9716261-7-1 (e-book)

ISBN-10: 0-9716261-7-0 (e-book)

1. Conflict management. 2. Interpersonal conflict.
3. Mind and body. I. Title.

HM1126.L54 2007

303.6'9
QBI07-600195

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Steve Kotev, Ted Braude, and Bill Leicht read the manuscript in various stages of completion, and I would like to thank them for their helpful suggestions.

Peggy Berger helped take the photos. Peggy Berger, Lynette Carpenter, Patrick Carson, Sandi Forti, Jack Kangas, Josh Linden, Steve Meyer, Amy Piel-Glass, Phil Pierce, and Angela Worley served as models in the photos. I would like to thank them all for their generous help.

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WORKSHOPS & QUESTIONS

If you would like information about having me conduct a conflict resolution and peacemaking workshop, or if you would like more extensive training in how to teach embodied peacemaking, please contact:

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Information on professional certification in BIM and on a variety of BIM workshops is available at my website.

For questions concerning this book or the embodied peacemaking process, please feel free to contact me. Also, if you have interesting stories about your use of the embodied peacemaking process, I'd like to hear them.

READING THIS ON SCREEN

A reader of the book asked how one could conveniently flip through the book to find cross references when the book is being read on screen instead of as a printed copy. The simple solution is to open a second window and use the find function to go directly to the cross reference location in the second window. That leaves the primary window unchanged so you can keep on reading.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Conflict has many sources and root causes, and work with any of the sources or causes can be an avenue for reducing or resolving conflict. However, there is one element in conflict that is always present and usually ignored: the body.

It is very common to believe that conflict and peace are fundamentally mental, emotional, spiritual, political, and cultural in nature. However, in addition to seeing conflict and peace from these perspectives, it is important to understand the crucial role the body plays.

Conflict evokes in us physiological fight-or-flight arousal, and that physiological state constrains us to think and behave in ways which perpetuate and escalate conflict. However peaceful a person may wish to be, their capacity to think, talk and act peacefully will be undermined if their body is not in a state of peace.

All too often, conflict resolution and peacemaking processes focus on how to think and talk. Though this level of intervention is crucial, for greatest efficiency and effectiveness, verbal conflict resolution and peacemaking processes must rest on explicit techniques for placing and holding the body in a state of inner and outer peacefulness. Those techniques are what you will learn in this book.

DEFINITIONS

It would be interesting to define just what is meant by “conflict,” “peace,” “conflict resolution,” and “peacemaking.” That, however, would be complex, and it will be enough just to indicate the general direction of such definitions.

A conflict is a struggle or clash between individuals or groups over such things as ideas, behaviors, or resources.

Peace is not the absence of conflicts. Given the complexity of the world, that is an impossibility. All conflicts eventually end, one way or the other, but new conflicts arise. Peace is the condition in which conflicts are dealt with and resolved in respectful, life-affirming ways. Peace can be achieved only when people have tools for resolving conflicts in productive ways.

I would suggest that resolving a conflict in the most productive way possible would, ideally, lead to a situation in which all parties would feel personally respected and satisfied with the outcome. In this book, I am concerned with building a somatic foundation for methods which would resolve conflicts in this manner.

“Conflict resolution” applies to the resolving of specific conflicts, whereas “peacemaking” has the sense of a general style of interaction.

I use the word “embodied” in a way which may be unfamiliar to many readers. Rather than using it in the sense of “exemplifying,” I am using the word to mean

“taking into or performing in the body.” The word is often used in this sense in the field of somatic education¹. In using the word this way, I mean to be pointing at the idea/experience that conflict resolution must be based on a particular way of living in the body.

This particular way of living in the body would be experienced as an inner feeling of calm, compassionate alertness; and from the outside it would be a demeanor of calm, respectful, compassionate strength.

The opposite of this is fight-or-flight arousal and aggression.

AROUSAL & CALMING

Conflict, as it is usually experienced, includes some degree of fear and anger. When people are afraid or angry, they often lash out and try to hurt the people with whom they are in conflict. Sometimes they freeze in shock. This internal arousal interferes with people’s ability to think in flexible, constructive ways. It narrows their choices to opposition and conflict.

Your emergency arousal also reduces your opponent’s ability to function effectively. Your non-verbal body language shows that you are feeling/thinking “threat, danger, enemy, fight, run!” and that non-verbal message will elicit the same fight-or-flight arousal in your opponent. His or her thinking will therefore also be narrowed to conflict and opposition.

The non-verbal fight-or-flight signals from your opponent reinforce your own arousal, which in turn reinforces his. In other words, you and your opponent create a vicious circle.

Your arousal also interferes with your ability to treat your opponent in empathetic, humane ways—which is important in peacemaking. Treating others humanely is a crucial element in resolving conflicts peacefully and building a lasting peace. People have a deep need to be treated with kindness and respect, and satisfying that need is important in de-escalating conflicts and establishing cooperation.

And your opponent’s arousal interferes with his ability to treat you with kindness. Again, a vicious circle.

• • • • •

What is required is a simple, practical way of overcoming the body’s arousal and placing the body into a state of peace. That would make it possible to create a benign circle, an interaction in which you and your opponent elicit from each other escalating responses of respect and kindness. That is what you will learn from this book.

¹Somatic education methods focus simultaneously on body structure and on the lived experience of being in the body. See *Discovering the Body’s Wisdom: A comprehensive guide to more than fifty mind-body practices that can relieve pain, reduce stress, and foster health, spiritual growth, and inner peace*. Mirka Knaster. New York: Bantam Books, 1996.

Conflict resolution and peacemaking must start with controlling the emotions of fear and anger and go on from there to cultivating feelings of cooperativeness and harmony.

The difficulty is that emotions are very difficult to control or cultivate when you think of them as mental events. However, when emotions are looked at as body processes, that makes them more concrete and simpler to identify and manage. Working with the body is effective precisely because the body is tangible and observable.

In this book, you will work with movement experiments, which are learning situations structured to represent conflict in scaled down, safe forms. In these movement experiments, you will have the time and opportunity to study conflict and practice peaceful responses to it.

The process will involve noticing and feeling moment-by-moment what is happening in your body as you respond to the challenges in the movement experiments. *You will learn to improve postural alignment, stability, and mobility as a pathway toward calm alertness, power, and love. Then you will practice using this state of mindbody integrity as a foundation for responding peacefully to the challenges in the movement experiments.*

It is important to remember that peacemaking is not an intellectual insight or commitment. It is an embodied process of responding to challenges in a physically peaceful manner. It takes practice to overcome old response patterns and cultivate a new, better habit.

Of course, the real use of the process is in responding to the challenges and confrontations that daily life brings. Through this book you will learn practical skills, and you will benefit immeasurably by applying embodied peacemaking in your life.

THE DISTRESS RESPONSE

Before we begin the practical study of how to create the state of embodied peace, it will be helpful to gain a deeper conceptual understanding of the body states of arousal and calmness. The key to understanding this is the body's *distress response*, which is the opposite of the body state of peace.

The body responds to any form of distress by contracting. When people feel threatened or challenged in any way, they typically contract their breathing, posture, movement, and attention, and this can take six related forms. It may take the form of tensing and bracing as a preparation for strength and effort. It may take the similar form of tensing and hardening in anger. It may show up as stiffening and constricting in fear. It may take the form of collapsing and becoming limp in defeat. It may manifest in numbing of specific areas of the body or in an overall state of dissociation² (spacing out). Or elements of these can combine.

² For an in-depth consideration of collapse, numbness, and dissociation, see my e-book *Winning is Healing: Body Awareness and Empowerment for Abuse Survivors* (downloadable for my website).

Contracting the body reduces ease and effectiveness. Acting in a state of contraction is like driving a car with the parking brakes on. Doing any kind of movement when the breath and muscles are made small (whether tensely or limply) will make the movement effortful, inefficient and awkward. But beyond this, the contraction response reduces the ability to think flexibly; it reduces the ability to function calmly; and it reduces emotional sensitivity and empathy.

The distress response plays a part in conflict. Fear, anger, effort, and dissociation all make it difficult or impossible to function effectively, and they thereby actually escalate conflict.

• • • • •

A key to improving functioning in life's daily conflicts is overcoming the distress contraction. Since the distress response is a physical response of contraction, it is possible to replace it with a physical response of expansion. The exercises in this book will all focus on creating and practicing a body state of expansiveness.

In this book you will learn a simple, systematic way of putting the body into a state of relaxed alertness as an antidote to fight-or-flight arousal. This is an integrated state of awareness, power and kindness. In this state, you don't feel afraid of, angry at, or alienated from an attacker – or from yourself. In this state, you have the ability to speak words of peace from a peaceful place, a place which is strong and dignified, which evokes respect and encourages friendship. This process of cultivating and using this body state is called *centering*.

CENTERING

Centering is the antidote to the distress response. It is possible to prevent or overcome contraction by deliberately placing the body in a state of freedom, balance, and expansiveness. Contrary to our customary ways of being, action is much more efficient and effective when the body is relaxed, free and expansive. Every activity, whether it is primarily physical, intellectual, emotional, or spiritual will be done with greater ease and efficacy when the body is open.

The centered state is a state of wholeness and integrity. It can be described in different ways. Speaking in structural language, the state of integrity is one in which the musculoskeletal system is balanced and free of strain. Speaking functionally, this state allows stable, mobile and balanced movement. Speaking in psychological terms, this state involves reaching out into the world with a symmetrical, expansive awareness and intentionality³ while simultaneously staying anchored in internal body awareness. Speaking in spiritual terms, this state is an integration of the body states of power and love. Speaking in ethical terms, this state creates an awareness of and

³ What I mean by “intentionality” will become clearer as you go through the various exercises in the book and gain a direct experience of centering.

concern for the effects of one's actions on the wellbeing of others. Whatever terms we choose to use, they refer to one and the same mindbody⁴ state.

For some reason, it is easy and automatic for human beings to drop into the distress response, but centering needs to be learned and practiced, and it needs to be engaged in voluntarily and deliberately. The key to centering lies in developing and applying body awareness.

BODY AWARENESS

What is body awareness? The simple answer is that it is the ongoing process of feeling and noticing your body as you perform actions. That's a simple answer, but there is a lot hidden in it.

To begin with, most of us do not feel our bodies very clearly or fully, but since we don't have anything to compare that to, we don't notice how little we notice. And of course, we aren't directly aware of the negative effects of not noticing our bodies.

Being aware of your body means:

- noticing, feeling, sensing, savoring—
- the rhythms, tones, qualities, shapes—
- of your breathing, your muscles, your posture, your movements—
- how you deploy your attention inside and outside of your body—
- how intentions shape muscle actions and movements—
- how all that is a response to what is happening to and around you—
- how it affects your abilities to respond to what is happening to and around you.

The purpose of body awareness training is to wake up the human capacity for choice. Once you are aware of what you are doing as you do it, you will have the opportunity to choose among the various options of what to do and how to do it. Rather than being a slave to primitive arousal reflexes, or to your past experiences of conflict, you will have the ability to choose peacefulness.

BODY-BASED THINKING

The key to body awareness is learning to use body-based language for describing feelings and actions. In teaching a person to manage the feelings that are part of conflict, I have her learn to notice and specify what she is feeling by giving detailed and complete statements of precisely *where* in her body there is something going on and precisely *what* she is doing at that location. Body-based thinking means pinning down thoughts, feelings, and intentions by defining them in terms of observable,

⁴ "Mindbody" is a term used in somatic education disciplines to refer to the whole person without any implication that "mind" is separate from "body."

physical response patterns and tangible physical sensations. This is a process of pinning down emotions through operational definitions.⁵

Normally, people are so used to feeling themselves as “mental” and “emotional” beings that they don't notice the physical substrate for mental and emotional events. However, emotional and mental responses can be defined in physical terms. Thus, for example, rather than thinking of anger as something in the mind, you could look at anger as a complex physical action, which might include clenching your fists, tightening your jaw, breathing more rapidly etc. The mental aspect of anger, then, would be what is *felt* or *experienced* when these physical actions are done in the body.

Becoming aware of the *body events* which bubble along within you, usually out of your conscious awareness, is important in the process of self-observation and change for a number of reasons.

First, taking a body perspective transforms a strong feeling from an overwhelming, incomprehensible experience to a series of simple physical events. Instead of feeling terror, for example, you may be tightening your throat, stopping your breathing, hunching your shoulders and so on. That alone takes some of the power out of the feeling.

Second, body-based language facilitates the development of a stable observer-self. By stepping back from the whirlwind of emergency arousal and studying the body as the locus of emotions, a person attains some distance from and perspective on the emotions he is experiencing. That mental stability is the foundation for being able to know your self and make informed decisions about what to feel, think, and do.

Third, examining your body will help you become aware of and understand what you are feeling. Very often our awareness is restricted to just one part of what we are feeling, but the whole of what we are experiencing is happening in our bodies. By scanning your body, you can bring into your awareness the body events of emotions you aren't noticing, and you can start to feel those emotions and understand their influence on your actions and your life.

Fourth, by allowing people to compare the meanings they attach to the same emotion label word, body-based language allows people to achieve more precise communication. Just as the memories you attach to the word “cat” are different from the memories the word calls up in me, so the words we use to name feelings really have somewhat different meanings for each speaker. Thus, for example, someone who uses the label “anger” to denote an emotion which includes holding the breath is operating from a very different emotional state than the person who experiences anger as increasing the rate of breathing. By examining the physical content of each other's words, people can gain more of a sense of what the other person means.

Fifth, body-based thinking anchors people in the lived experience of the present moment. Rather than allowing them or encouraging them to go off into memo-

⁵ *Operational definitions* define ideas not by using other ideas and words but instead by specifying tangible, concrete, measurable events.

ries of the past or verbal/cognitive statements about their lives, physical thinking helps them keep up a running pattern of self-monitoring, focusing on the current details of breathing, muscle tone, posture and movement. This helps people to feel their feelings by getting them to notice just exactly what they are doing as they do it.

Sixth, once you understand feelings as series of physical *actions*, you begin to realize they don't *just happen to you*. They are physical actions that you are doing, even if you aren't normally aware of your role in doing them. And once you realize that you do your emotions, you can do the opposite actions. You can replace one set of actions with another. Looking at fear, for example, instead of tensing muscles, you can relax them. Instead of reducing breathing, you can increase it. Instead of shrinking, you can open up. When you do the opposite of fear, you will feel the opposite of fear, and you will become the opposite of afraid. You will become relaxed, alert, and capable.

Physical thinking offers a clear and distinct avenue for creating internal change. The body is solid and graspable. Once you can experience mental, emotional, energetic, intentional and behavioral patterns as lived body configurations/actions, you will be able to identify the configurations of dysfunctional patterns and then deliberately construct more positive patterns as replacements. By altering physical configurations, you will also be altering mental, emotional and behavioral patterns.

MOVEMENT EXPERIMENTS

The key to centering lies in using movement experiments as vehicles for developing and applying body awareness. Movement experiments are concrete situations for observing behavior (and I include thoughts, feelings, intentions, movements and actions as behavior). Movement experiments are simple role playing situations in which you have a task to achieve and can observe yourself as you attempt the task.

A movement experiment presents a challenge for the student to deal with. These experiments are safe, controlled situations which function as solid metaphors for or limited representations of the real life events or problems the student is dealing with. Because the experiment is a safe, controlled situation, the student can afford to focus his attention on the process of his behavior rather than on the results.

Real life, of course, requires you to focus on results, results, results. So you often do not have the time or energy to experiment with the *process* whereby you attain results. In a movement experiment, you will have the opportunity to learn how to monitor your responses, how to evaluate them, and how to construct new and better responses.

IN A NUTSHELL

The process you will be learning can be stated simply and briefly. The essence of conflict arousal is physical contraction, and the essence of embodied peacemaking is the deliberate replacement of contraction with expansion.

Fear, anger, distrust, egotism, jealousy, greed, deceitfulness, and other negative feelings involve compression of the breath, muscles, posture, and attention. Compression creates physical weakness and instability. It creates narrow perception and narrow thinking.

Kindness, sensitivity, generosity, truthfulness, assertiveness and other positive feelings involve openness and freedom in the breath, muscles, posture, and attention. Openness creates sensitivity, power, and compassion. Body openness creates open perception and open thinking.

By doing the exercises in this book, you will learn how to detect compression and replace it with openness. That will lift you out of the fight-or-flight physiology and place you in a mindbody state conducive to peacemaking.

BODY & MORALITY

Peace must be based on peacefulness, which is a body state. As you will experience through the exercises in this book, the human body functions best in a loving, empowered state. Fear, anger, effort and dissociation (the distress patterns) are weakening to the body and the whole self. Actions that are built on these feelings will create, escalate, and perpetuate conflict. I would say that peacefulness is the essence of moral behavior.

Morality is not some abstraction imposed from without. Morality is built into the very structure of the body. Morality comes from an integrated body state of power and love. Embodied peacemaking is an expression of the fundamental moral structure of the body. (This will be dealt with further in Chapter 14.) The method of peacemaking described in this book is not based on philosophy and beliefs but simply on how the human body works.

ORIGINS OF THIS WORK

It may help you understand this approach better if you know a bit about what brought me to it. In its essence, this teaching approach derives from my thirty-nine years of practicing and teaching the non-violent, Japanese martial art of Aikido.

The teaching and learning context of Aikido is, of course, based on an attack/defense model. It is because there is an attack that the practitioner must do anything at all, and the measure of his or her response lies in how effectively it deals with the attack. It shouldn't be a surprise, therefore, that when I began to teach body and movement awareness outside the self-defense context, I operated with that same model. However, instead of using an attack/defense model, I broadened it to create a *challenge/response* model. The exercises I use in teaching the various applications of body awareness often use the challenge of a confrontation as a learning metaphor for studying how to handle any difficulty.

Aikido makes use of the strategy of harmony or yielding, that is, going along with the power of the attack movements rather than resisting or stopping the attack.

That means that the Aikidoist must be very perceptive. She or he must be able to sense and work with fine details of the attacker's movements. It was in learning to do this that I developed the ability to develop and understand sensitivity to the body in everyday activities.

However, harmony is more than a technical movement strategy. One of the crucial problems in self-defense is being afraid of or angry at the attacker. Fear or anger interfere with perception and coordination. The solution that I came to in my Aikido practice was that of cultivating a feeling of harmony with the attacker. It was in working with this that I began to understand kindness as a mindbody state and as a foundation for daily actions.

Though I talk about what I learned in Aikido, I was taught very little of it. I had to figure out for myself much of what I learned. I was not a talented athlete. Just the opposite. When I was shown something, it was hard for me to understand or reproduce it. The chunks were too large for me to digest. The upshot was that I was left to devise my own ways of teaching myself Aikido, and what I came up with was an experimental, analytic process for learning how to become aware and how to move. It was in this that I learned how to practice and teach by breaking down complex movements and ideas into small, easily learned chunks.

I started applying the exercises I had developed in my Aikido practice in my daily activities outside Aikido. And I began, almost accidentally, to teach non-Aikidoists these same exercises independent of the art of Aikido. Though I never intended to become a body practitioner, I eventually developed a system of body work which I call Being In Movement® mindbody training and which has been the focus of my professional work for the last twenty-five years.

Along the way, as I practiced Aikido, I also earned a black belt in Karate, took lessons in the Alexander Technique of somatic education and became certified as an instructor of the Feldenkrais Method® of somatic education⁶. These three other movement disciplines also influenced my practice and teaching.

BEING IN MOVEMENT®

BIM is a detailed examination of the interaction of intention, breathing, posture, movement, feelings, action, and ethics. Whether I am teaching movement efficiency for golfers, reduction of performance anxiety for violinists, injury prevention skills for computer users, trauma recovery for sexual abuse survivors, burnout prevention for psychotherapists, or conflict resolution and peacemaking, I focus on body awareness as a path to efficacy. The specific details are very different for each application, but the foundation is the same.

⁶ For more information about the art of Aikido, about BIM, and about the Feldenkrais Method, please go to my website, www.being-in-movement.com.

If you would like further information about BIM and its other applications, you can take a look at my website, www.being-in-movement.com. I also have published a number of other books which explain the body process I use. The first was *Comfort at Your Computer: Body Awareness Training for Pain-Free Computer Use*, which is a traditional paper book. The others are e-books, and among them are: *Winning is Healing: Body Awareness and Empowerment for Abuse Survivors*. *Feeling Aikido: Body Awareness Training as a Foundation for Aikido Practice*. And *Teaching Children Embodied Peacemaking*, a version of this book specially oriented towards teaching children.

USING THIS BOOK

This book will provide you with a simple roadmap for embodied peacemaking. You may wish to learn the skills for improving your own life, or you may wish to use the book as a foundation for teaching others how to improve their lives.

You can use the book as a series of lesson plans to develop conflict resolution and peacemaking skills for use in situations from marital discord or business disagreements to contract negotiation or daily communication. Embodied peacemaking can be applied to social conflict, to civil war, or to international conflict. The human body and the skills of self-awareness and self-regulation are the same across the board. The only pre-requisite is a willingness to learn and use the process. As more people know about the process, it will acquire a momentum that will make it easier to gain cooperation in its use.

I wrote this book⁷ because we need a powerful yet simple way of moving the world toward peace. I hope that people will use this book as a workbook to teach skills of body-based peacemaking in schools, businesses, houses of worship, mental health facilities, prisons, and so on.

Many of the exercises can be done by individuals studying the material alone, and many of the exercises require that people work with partners or groups. In working in a group, it might be helpful to choose one or more leaders, who will be responsible for reading and teaching the exercises. They can also time the exercises and suggest when people should switch roles or switch partners.

The material can be taught in whole chapter chunks or broken down into smaller chunks, depending on time constraints. In addition, the size of the group will have an effect on how rapidly you can go through the material.

The lessons build on each other and go over the same material in many different ways. They offer enough practice to convert the process from an idea to a physical habit.

However, if you are pressed for time, the second chapter can stand on its own as a brief but sufficient experience of embodied peacemaking.

⁷ I also have available on my website a much shorter, free book titled *Reach Out: Body Awareness Training For Peacemaking—Five Easy Lessons*.

I should say something about a designation for some of the exercises in the book. I call some of the experiments *practices*. Most of the experiments are body/movement awareness exercises that you do once to gain some particular information or experience. *Practice* refers to an awareness exercise that is particularly central to the process of developing body awareness and which you can practice on an ongoing basis.

TEACHING HINTS

I have been teaching Aikido and body awareness training for over thirty years. Over that time, I have struggled to find the simplest, most effective ways of teaching.

Part and parcel of teaching people to feel their own bodies is teaching them to think for themselves. People experience in body awareness training that they must look within themselves for the answers to questions and then subject those tentative conclusions to concrete tests by way of movement experiments. Beyond just teaching the details of what I know works well in the body, I want to teach how to self-observe, so that when people have a question, they can depend on their own exploratory awareness to find a path to the answer. The exercises in this book are designed to help people develop confidence in their own capacities to explore and learn.

The lessons are designed to work as units. However, some people learn faster and some slower. If you wish to go more slowly, you can go through just one or two exercises at a time. It is important to go slowly enough not to feel overloaded by new material.

Repetition is crucial in developing new habits and new skills. Though each lesson's exercises are *described* only once, it will be very helpful to build in reviews of earlier material as introductions to the next lessons teaching new material. You could repeat a lesson or an exercise a number of times before moving on to new content.

Even though the exercises appear only once, key concepts show up over and over again in different contexts. Approaching the concepts from different perspectives will deepen their meaning for you.

Many people, when they are learning something new, practice until they fatigue and their performance degrades. Then they stop to rest. In that case, their last experience is of an impaired performance. You might consider stopping when the people you're working with are doing well and having fun. Then their last experience will be of effective and pleasurable performance.

On a more practical level, the room you teach in should be large enough that the participants can move around freely.

English doesn't have a gender-neutral third person singular pronoun. So in writing and teaching, I mix "he" and "she" and sometimes use "they" as a singular pronoun. I think that's important.

The lessons are designed for groups, but they can easily be modified for teaching single individuals. Instead of having group conversations, you would ask questions of just the one person you are teaching. And instead of doing demonstrations

with one participant while others watch, the demonstration of a process and the teaching of it to the single person become the same.

An important teaching hint: instead of telling participants what not to do, help people understand what to do. Help them understand in detail what their goal is in each movement or exercise. Then they will know what to attempt. Simply telling them when they are wrong leaves undefined what they need do to be right.

By the same token, it is very important to break down complex actions into a series of small, concrete, precisely defined steps. Very often, watching a new, complex skill being demonstrated does not give an individual a road map of what steps to take to achieve the skill. They are overwhelmed by the big picture and can't figure out what specific actions to take. The lessons in this book are designed with specificity as a support for the learning.

And last, I find that it is very helpful in teaching to use keywords. These are words that summarize or label key concepts or practices. By attaching simple words or brief phrases to complex ideas and experiences, and by using those key words frequently, you can help people form rapidly acting habits of thought and behavior. I will suggest some keywords in the exercises, and of course you can make up your own as well.

SAFETY

In this book, you will study conflict. To study the body's responses to conflict, a situation of conflict is needed. You will role play mock conflicts. Without that, there would be nothing to study and nothing to practice. On the one hand, for the conflict to arouse actual physical responses to work with, it must—to some extent—be concretely physical and real. However, to make the study safe and useful, the conflict must be minimal, almost metaphorical.

A simple and safe conflict exercise, for example, is to have people throw tissues at each other. Clearly this is a symbolic and non-injurious attack. However, even though it is mostly symbolic, the gestures and movements of the attack feel real and give students an opportunity to examine their reactions to violence.

It is important to keep in mind that since many people have experienced various forms of violence, even minimal attacks may be overwhelming or inappropriate for some individuals. For that reason, a clear safety contract is needed. It is important that each exercise should be calibrated to the needs of each student.

The *safety contract* is that the person practicing the exercise is the one in charge. If he or she wishes to stop an exercise, they have the right to do so. If they wish to slow it down, then they should. No explanations needed. They can simply tell their partner what they need, and the partner should do it.

Calibrating an exercise means reducing or increasing its intensity to match the needs and abilities of a particular student or group of students. For example, in an exercise in responding calmly to a verbal attack, you can adjust the intensity of the attack upward by raising your voice and getting closer to the person being spoken to.

Or you can adjust the intensity downward by lowering your voice and moving farther away.

However, it may not always be possible for the leader to know the people well enough to calibrate the exercises. It is important to explain to participants that they have the right to adjust the exercises to their readiness. It is important that they be enlisted as partners in the process of calibration. And it is important that reducing the intensity of an exercise be framed as positive self-caring rather than as a failure.

Beyond the innately disturbing nature of conflict, the exercises will bring you into contact with your own body and your own responses. I would like to suggest a caution. On the one hand, coming home to your body is very empowering and healing. On the other hand, if you have experienced trauma such as child abuse or rape, or trauma such as a car crash or the recent loss of a loved one, you may find that increasing your awareness of your body leads you to greater awareness of unhealed pain and anger—which could be overwhelming. If you think this caution may apply to you, then perhaps it would be wise to find a psychotherapist or somatic educator to help you work with your body and your inner pain.

CHAPTER 2

RELAXATION

How can we get a practical handle on what conflict is and what its physical effects are? What we need to begin the investigation is a small piece of conflict. It will function as a movement experiment, a small-scale laboratory version of a big, real-life event. If it is safe and small-scale, it will not cause unbearable stress, and it will be safe enough to study. But it must be real enough to arouse a response in you, or it will be not be worth studying. The following exercise will supply just such a realistic but minimal conflict.

THROWING TISSUES 2.1

This experiment will help you discover how you respond to conflict. For this exercise, you will need a partner. Ask your partner to stand about six or eight feet away (about two meters) from you and throw a tissue at you.

Well, as conflict goes, being attacked with a tissue is really pretty minimal. For most people this attack is tolerable. Most people find that this mostly symbolic gesture does arouse some fear, but since the “attack” is minimal, so is the fear. When you have a minimal attack, you can afford to take your time to study it and learn about your responses to it.

Calibration is important. The exercise must be matched to the student. I once worked with a person who had recently been in the military special forces. As you can imagine, having tissues thrown at him didn’t bother him at all. I had to increase the stimulus intensity *a lot* until we found an attack that was interesting for him to examine.

In working with people who don’t feel much, it is often necessary to increase the stimulus intensity so that they get a response large enough for them to notice. I might ball up the tissue so it flies faster, or I might wet it so it hits with a soggy and palpable thud. Or I might throw a pillow instead of a tissue. I wouldn’t throw a stone, but I might surprise someone by picking up a stone and pretending that I was going to throw it.

On the other hand, I often have people tell me that even throwing a tissue at them feels too intrusive and violent. In that case, standing back farther, so that the tissue doesn’t reach them, makes the “attack” even more minimal. Or it may be necessary to do just the movement of throwing the tissue without a tissue at all. Perhaps turning around and throwing the tissue in the wrong direction will help. Or just talking about throwing a tissue, but not moving to do so at all.

The point is to adjust the intensity of the “violence” in this exercise so that it is tolerable and safe for you to examine. For most people that means revising the attack downward in intensity.

You get the point, I’m sure. The “attack” must be intense enough to arouse some response but so minimal that you will feel safe in examining it.

Once you have chosen your preferred attack, have your partner attack you and notice what happens in response to the attack. What do you feel? What do you do? What do you want to do?

If you are working in a group, you can ask people to watch as you are attacked. They can give you feedback about what they observed you doing. You may be surprised by their feedback. Very often, observers will notice clear, obvious postural and movement responses that the person him/herself is totally unaware of. Many of the exercises in this book will lend themselves to this process of group feedback.

I think it is helpful to get feedback from a *group* rather than from a single individual. If a number of people report seeing the same response, that gives some assurance that they are seeing correctly. If just one person says he sees something that you didn’t observe, the question arises as to which one of you is observing correctly.

There are a number of common reactions to the attack with the tissue. People being hit often experience surprise or fear. They may feel invaded and invalidated. Frequently they tense themselves to resist the strike and the feelings it produces. Some people giggle uncontrollably or treat the attack as a game. Many people get angry and wish to hit back. People may freeze in panic, and some people go into a state of shock or dissociation.

Most people talk about *feelings* and *mental states*. They are surprised, angry, afraid, spaced out and so on. They want to escape, or they want to fight back. However, a very different way of paying attention to yourself is possible.

Notice the details of your muscle tone, breathing, body alignment. Notice the rhythms and qualities of your movements. Where in your body do you feel significant changes? What are you feeling and doing in those locations? Rather than speaking in mental terms—about feelings, thoughts and emotions—it can be very productive to speak in body-based language. By paying attention to the physical details of your responses, you will begin to see more deeply into the ways you handle conflict. And learning to notice what you do is the first step in changing and improving what you do.

Notice what you do in your throat, belly and pelvis. What happens in your chest and back? Notice what you do in your face and head. Notice what you do with your arms/hands and legs/feet. What happens to your breathing? Is there anything else to pay attention to?



Most people realize that they tighten up when they are attacked. They may clench their shoulders or harden their chests. They most likely tense or stop their breathing. They may lean back or lean forward, but it is a tense movement. Sometimes the tension is fear, and people shrink away from the attack. Sometimes the tension is anger, and people lean forward and wish to hit back. Do you do any of these things? Do you also do something else?

Many people find that they get limp as a response to being hit. Their breathing and muscles sag. This collapse is part of feeling defeated. Many people find that they experience both rigidity and limpness simultaneously in different areas of the body.

Another slack response is to look away and space out and simply wait for the hitting to be over. This is a form of dissociation. People may feel their awareness shrink down to a point, slide away into the distance, or float up and away. They are coping with the attack by reducing their attention to and their awareness of the attack.



Some people find the role of the attacker far more difficult than the role of the victim, but we will focus on the responses to the role of the person being attacked. However, one idea might make the attacker role easier for you. It will help to remember that your attack is a gift to your partner. By being concerned and benevolent enough to attack your partner, you are allowing them the opportunity to develop self-awareness skills. Without your gracious cooperation, they would not be able to learn these skills, and when they faced real challenges in their lives they would be completely unprepared.

Once you have gone through the exercise, reverse roles so that your partner has the opportunity to study her/his responses to being attacked. (Though this role

change will not be specified again throughout the book, *please do this role reversal in every exercise you do with a partner or a group.*)

Before we analyze this exercise you have just done, let's discuss a couple of things. First, in many of the exercises, I will talk about what "most people feel." That is a way of focusing the discussion on the responses and experiences which I have seen in my teaching to be most common. That doesn't mean that different responses or experiences are wrong. You may feel something different, and that is fine. If we were doing the exercises together, I could address the specific experiences you have, but in writing a book, I have to talk about what most people will usually feel. If you find yourself experiencing significantly different results in some exercise, that can be the starting point for heightened awareness of your particular movements and ways of being in your body.

Whatever you did in the exercise, it was important. It would be easy to dismiss the various physical responses to the attack as being nothing but ordinary tension that anyone would experience. However, the forms that you choose for your body and your movements—whether consciously or subconsciously—are expressions of your sense of what you are and what the world is. By experimenting with simple movement situations, you can discover the nature of the beliefs and strategies that underlie your actions. You can evaluate the efficacy of your choices, discover why you have become committed to them, and try out new movements and new ways of approaching the world. This learning is what will lead to personal change.

What message is contained in the movements you did in the *Throwing Tissues* exercise? When people pay attention to the motivation underlying their particular response, whether they tighten up or get limp, they generally sense that their response is a way of getting ready for the attack.

People experience that tensing is a way of bracing to withstand the attack. In what sense is bracing a way of being *ready*? Imagine walking in a park. It's a quiet day. You're listening to the birds in the woods and watching the clouds in the sky. You are walking past a flag pole and you can hear the fluttering of the flag in the breeze. All of a sudden, the flag pole falls. Right toward you. You are about to be crushed.

By how far does the flag pole have to miss you for it to not hit you? A mile? A yard? A foot? An inch? Well, it won't hit you if it misses you by an inch. A yard (a meter) might be better in case it bounces when it hits the ground.

Do you freeze in panic as you see the flagpole falling? But if you freeze, you're not ready to move. If you stop breathing or tighten up, your muscles and joints will be locked, which is not a good starting point for the simple action of stepping out of the way of the falling flag pole. Bracing is getting ready for *getting hit*.

If you are breathing with ease and comfort, and maintaining fluid flexibility in your muscles and posture, you are ready for dodging the falling flagpole. Being re-

laxed is getting ready for *avoiding being hit*. If you are relaxed as the flagpole falls, you can easily step away from its path.

It is obvious, on the other hand, that limpness is an acknowledgment of defeat. As people focus their attention on feeling the limp response, they very quickly sense that limpness is about giving up, knowing that there is nothing they can do so there is no reason to try doing anything.

Powerlessness is the hidden message in tension or limpness. Both ways in which people respond to the tissue attack contain a hidden belief that they cannot prevent getting hit. So they tighten up or get limp—and hope to survive the impact. However, relaxation is actually the best preparation for effective action to deal with problems or threats.

The common denominator in responses of tensing or getting limp is the process of getting smaller. Fear and anger narrow us physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually. Limpness also narrows us. However, softening the body is the antidote to contraction. By *softening the body*, I mean a form of softness that is energized and expansive—the opposite of both tension and collapse. The meaning and implications of this will become clearer as you go through the book.

SOFT TONGUE: PRACTICE 2.2

The simplest relaxation technique I know is just to let your tongue relax and hang softly in your mouth. What does that do?

Most people find that as soon as they relax their tongue, immediately their throat, shoulders and breathing soften as well.

This trick is rapid, effective and totally unobtrusive. You can practice it anywhere, any time, and use it in any situation to help decrease your emergency, fight/flight/freeze arousal.

SOFT BELLY: PRACTICE 2.3

Get up for a moment and walk around. What does your belly feel like? Do you suck in your gut? Many people hold their bellies tense and sucked in. If you do, how does that affect your breathing?

How do you feel about your belly? Many people are ashamed of their bellies and try to hide them or make them look smaller.

In order to increase your awareness of how you hold the core of your body, consciously tighten your belly, anal sphincter and genitals and then walk around. Really grip those muscles hard. How does that affect your movement? Notice how stiff and strained this makes your legs, hips and lower back and your movement as a whole. Notice how restricted it makes your breathing.

By the way, as you try this exercise, notice whether your clothes are comfortably loose. If they are tight, there will be a constant pressure on your body. Your muscles will actually tense up and fight the pressure, whether you notice it or not, and it will be hard to relax your belly. As a general rule, in relaxation and in everything else that will be discussed in this book, it will help to wear clothes that are as comfortable as possible.

Now, stand and alternate tightening your belly and relaxing it. When you relax it, let it plop out. Next try releasing your belly—without doing a preliminary tightening. Whatever is your normal way of holding your belly, just let it plop down. Along with softening your belly, for greater relaxation, consciously allow your genital and anal muscles to relax. Was there tension to release even when you had not consciously tensed your belly? What does it feel like to let your belly relax fully?

Most people experience a noticeable release even when they had not first tightened their bellies consciously, and they realize from this that they had been unconsciously holding themselves tight and that they probably do so most of the time.

Try walking around again with your belly soft. How does that feel? Most people experience greater ease, fluidity, and solidity in their walk. And that is how walking should be—not tense and constricted. (Occasionally, people who are very stiff will experience discomfort when they relax their abdominal muscles. That is generally because they didn't relax the rest of their body when they relaxed their belly. If you are feeling such discomfort, as you relax and free up the rest of your body, you will feel more and more comfortable.)

Once you can relax your belly, go back to working with the *Throwing Tissues* exercise (2.1). Have your same partner throw tissues at you while you maintain your tongue and belly in their natural, relaxed state.

What do you feel? What do you do in your body?

Most people will find that they have no physical response to having the tissues thrown at them this time. Or at least it will be a greatly lessened response. They will not be disturbed by the attack. They will be able to stay relaxed and alert.

The ability to stay relaxed and alert when something or someone is giving you trouble is the foundation for being able to handle the trouble. (Just to be perfectly clear, I am not recommending that when some dangerous object is actually thrown at your face you stand calmly with no response. You must block or dodge! The tissue throwing exercise is solely for the purpose of teaching people to decrease fight-flight-freeze arousal.)

Almost always when I teach adults about relaxing the belly and letting it plop out, I must spend time combating the notion that sucking in the gut looks better. (Young children usually don't have this concern.) People very quickly feel for them-

selves that they breathe and move more easily when they let their bellies out, but often they feel fat and sloppy. They feel embarrassed to go out in public looking relaxed and balanced. For many people it takes a good deal of practice to feel comfortable with being comfortable.

Many people identify beauty and power with tension and constriction. Our culture places trimness before us as the ideal of beauty, but if you look under the skin of that idea, *trimness* turns out to be another name for *tension*.

Think about it for a moment. When do we normally and naturally suck in our gut? When something startles us! Tensing and sucking in the belly is part of the fear/startle response. Isn't it strange that we are all encouraged to live in a permanent fear/startle pattern?

Holding tension in any area of your body makes your entire body uncomfortable, but the muscles in the belly, anus and genitals are especially important. They are the core of the body and the center of movement and balance. Holding tension in these body areas makes it impossible to relax and move freely, strongly and comfortably.

Sucking in your gut creates tension and weakness throughout the body. If you bring that commitment to tension with you to the task of discovering how to respond to conflict peacefully, you will be taking two steps back and one step forward. In order to become peaceful, you need to be willing to feel how your body operates and do what will make you truly relaxed and comfortable.

When I teach about relaxation, a question that always comes up is about the difference between relaxation and limpness. Relaxation is not just limpness, though many people think of it that way. I would prefer to define *relaxation* as *appropriate work*, that is, using only the amount of work appropriate to the task at hand. If you use one hundred pounds of effort to pick up a fifty pound weight, that is tense and unrelaxed. If you use only fifty pounds of effort, then you are as relaxed as you can possibly be while still getting the job done. If you are lying in the sun with your eyes closed, listening to the birds, resting and dreaming—and expending twenty pounds of effort in your muscles—that certainly is not relaxed. It is more work than the task needs.

There is an important point to be made about the *Soft Belly* exercise: it produces a relaxation that is active and strong, not passive and limp. The *Your Spot* exercise (5.5) will demonstrate what this means. Until then, keep this idea on the back burner.

The next place to go in practicing the skill of relaxation is breathing. Breathing is an interesting activity. It is something which is normally involuntary and automatic but which can be easily controlled consciously. By breathing during fight-or-flight situations in a manner that is involved in rest, you can actually keep your mind and body relaxed and alert and ready to deal with the problems confronting you. In addition to the direct benefit of relaxation, one purpose for relaxing your belly was to prepare you for relaxing your breathing.

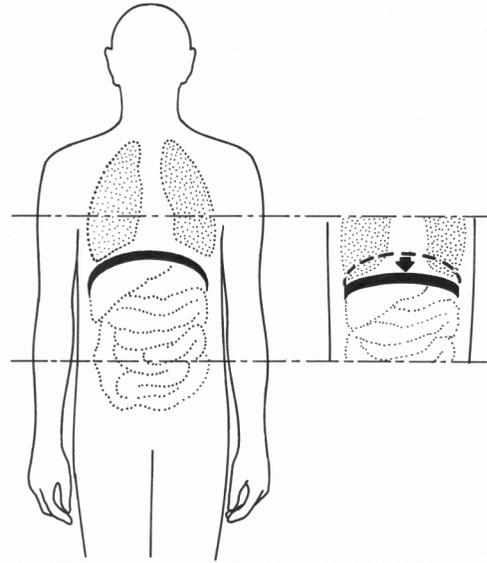
Before you learn the following breathing and relaxation exercise, you need to understand how breathing actually works. The key fact is that the lungs don't do the movements of breathing. The lungs are passive sacks that allow contact between the blood and the air so that oxygen can be taken in and carbon dioxide released.

The diaphragm muscle is the prime mover in the action of breathing. It is a dome-shaped muscle that stretches across the chest, and it functions like a piston. When it pulls down, air is sucked into the lungs, and when it relaxes and goes back up, air is expelled. Below the diaphragm is the stomach, liver and intestines, and that all has to go somewhere when the diaphragm pushes down. Flesh, being mostly water, is incompressible, so it can't be squeezed smaller. It can't move up because the diaphragm is there. It also can't move down because below are the pelvis and the web of muscles that comprises the floor of the pelvis.

When the diaphragm pushes down, everything below is displaced outward, primarily to the front where the abdominal muscles can allow movement (but to some extent to the sides and back since the rib cage allows some movement there as well). Have you ever watched a baby breathe? When babies inhale, what happens to their tummies? They expand. This is how infants breathe, and it is the anatomically natural way to breathe, but it is not how most adults breathe.

Stand tall. Throw back your shoulders. Suck in your gut! Have you ever heard this? We are taught to breathe wrong! Americans have enshrined the fear-startle response as their ideal of beauty and strength.

I wonder whether this tension-filled way of breathing is related to the prevalence of conflict in our world. The fear-startle response is the body's response to emergencies, but people who get stuck in the fear-startle response will treat much that comes their way as a threat and respond to it in the spirit of conflict. Learning to relax your breathing is important in preventing and breaking out of fight-or-flight arousal.



Action of the diaphragm

BELLY BREATHING: PRACTICE 2.4

Stand up. Now, put your hand on your belly and notice whether you suck in your belly or let it expand when you inhale. Then touch your low back, and touch your chest. Do they expand when you inhale?

Let your belly relax, and keep it relaxed as you inhale. Let the air fall gently down into your tummy as you breathe in, and let your tummy expand. (Of course the *air* stays in your lungs, but this image will help you feel the *movement* all the way down through your body.) Your belly should be the focal point of your breathing, but it is important to let your chest and back also swell gently as you inhale.

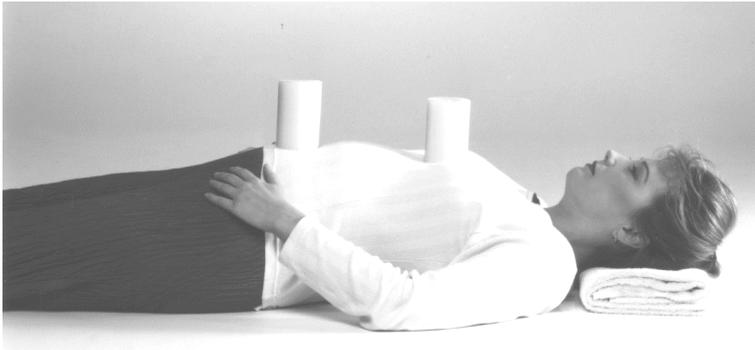
Compressing your belly as you inhale rigidifies your chest and back and creates a lot of tension in your body. However, if you have gotten used to sucking in your gut as you inhale, breathing in a more relaxed, comfortable manner will feel strange. It may be so unfamiliar that you will feel uncomfortable breathing comfortably.

If expanding and inhaling is difficult, at first you may have to deliberately push your belly out as you inhale just to get the rhythm. Later you can give up this extra effort.

Some people find it very hard to figure out how to either expand or push out their bellies. A way to help with this is to lie down on your back, with pillows under your head and knees, put a fist sized stone (or something similar) on your belly just below your belly button, and concentrate on raising the stone by inhaling.

Ideally you should relax your belly and breathe from there all the time. However, breathing in through your nose and out through your mouth is just for this exercise. In daily life, you should breathe normally, in and out through your nose.

Try walking around as you breathe from your belly. How does that movement feel? Most people feel that their movement is more relaxed, grounded and graceful.

*Chest breathing**Belly breathing*

Applying newly acquired knowledge is important. When you apply new information and experience success in applying it, that engraves it in your brain. We remember what works, and we will apply in the future what we've experienced success with in the past. So let's use this new way of breathing in a conflict situation.

THROWING TISSUES TOO 2.5

Let's go back to the tissue attack. It will be the same exercise but there will be one difference: as your partner throws the tissues at you, use what you have just learned about softening your tummy and focusing your breathing in the core of your body. Relax your belly, and regardless of what your partner may do with the tissues, keep your tummy soft and your breathing soft and steady.

What do you notice? How do you feel? What difference does softening your tummy make?

Most people notice that they receive the attack very differently when they keep their breathing soft. The attack no longer seems so threatening. They don't react with constriction, fear or anger. Most people experience that when they stay soft, they don't dislike the attacker but can maintain a spirit of calmness. The attack becomes just an event to deal with.

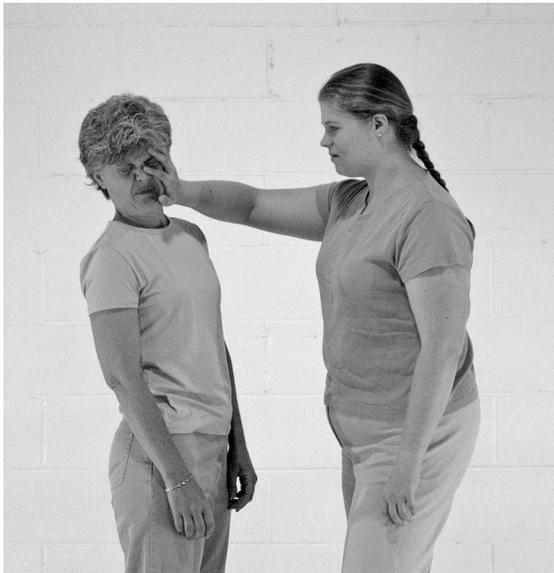
In other words, softening the belly takes a lot of the emotion out of being attacked. It reduces the attack to an event to be dealt with. And it gives the defender the calmness and presence of mind that will allow her/her to find constructive and peaceful ways of responding to the conflict.

One way to begin breaking free from the mental constriction involved in conflict is to focus on core muscles and loosen them. Once you can remember to remember to loosen your belly and breathe from there, you have begun the process of embodied peacemaking.

SLUGS IN YOUR FACE 2.6

This exercise is logically the same as the *Throwing Tissues* exercise. Something unpleasant will happen, and you will experiment with regulating your response to it. However, this exercise will be even more interesting than the tissue throwing.

You will need a partner for this experiment in using breathing as a means of reducing emotional stress. You and your partner should stand facing each other. In



order to create some conflict to overcome, we will use a simple image and movement. Your partner was out in their garden last night, picking slugs off lettuce plants, and they saved all the slugs.

Have your partner rub a handful of slugs in your face. What do you do when your partner does that? What happens to your breathing? Does your posture change? Do you stay relaxed and alert? Do you tense up and pull away? Or something else? What do you do in your face?

(Some people truly don't find having slugs rubbed in their faces at all stressful. If you are in that category, you might consider consulting with your partner and figuring out something that would be stressful enough to be productive as an exercise for you. Remember that the exercise has to be safe and that your partner has to be comfortable enough with their role in the exercise to do it.)

The imaginary slugs coupled with the real physical intrusion of the touch almost always makes people very squeamish and uncomfortable. Most people who do this exercise pull away, grimace, tense up, and restrict their breathing.

Now, have your partner rub the slugs into your face again. Consciously and deliberately relax your belly. Relax your tongue and throat, and release your pelvic floor muscles (the muscles around your genitals and anus) as well. Choose to keep your breathing soft, steady and continuous. How does that affect the way you respond?

Most people experience that relaxing the belly and breathing from the belly vastly reduces the emotional discomfort of the exercise. It is even more calming than only relaxing the belly. Many people even find that an intrusion which was very uncomfortable at first becomes quite trivial when they maintain their focus and relaxation.

Just for comparison, try tensing your breathing, throat and pelvic musculature as preparation for having the slugs rubbed in your face. Most people experience that tension not only brings back the discomfort but greatly increases it. Most of the pain/discomfort that you experienced in having the slugs rubbed in your face you created yourself through your dislike of the intrusion. Of course there is a certain real physical sensation because you are indeed being touched, but most of the discomfort was added on top of that bare minimum.

The real problem in conflict resolution and peacemaking is overcoming the emotions involved in conflict and violence long enough for rational discourse to evolve. The thrust of this book is that verbal, conceptual processes—without a body focus—are inefficient ways of making emotional changes.

Emotions are physical events in the body. Do you think you could be emotionally angry or terrified and at the same time physically soft, gentle and relaxed? Not likely. Could you be emotionally depressed and physically energetic, alert and comfortable? Emotions are physical events, and *feelings* are what those physical events feel like to the person doing them. The point is that if emotions are physical events, you can control emotions physically. You can replace the physical events of fear and anger with the physical events of relaxation.

CHAPTER 3

POSTURE

Relaxation is not the solution to distress arousal. Imagine that Attila the Hun comes up and tells you to hand over your sandwich. Relaxation would not be enough to help you deal with the problem. Power is also necessary. Peacemaking must be grounded on an integrated state of softness *and* strength.

We will begin the study of empowerment with a consideration of posture. How you align your body is the foundation for how you think, move and act. What this means will become clearer as we go on.

Good posture is required for power, but it is also required for optimal relaxation. In this chapter, we will deal with postural stability and strength as a foundation for the softness and openness that we have practiced so far. The next chapter will focus on expansiveness and the generation of power.

There is an important relationship between body alignment and Soft Belly Breathing. If you are out of balance physically, your breathing will be impeded, which will be uncomfortable and stressful. The pelvis is the core of the body and the central element in posture, so let's start with an examination of how the pelvis functions.

PELVIC ROTATION 3.1

There is a simple exercise which will help you feel how your pelvis and spinal column operate together to provide postural support. Find a firm chair with a flat, level seat pan (the part of the chair you sit on). Some chairs have bucket-shaped or very soft seats or seats that slant back. However, in order to do this exercise, you will need to be sitting in a chair that offers neutral support. If your chair is too soft and cushy or forces you to lean way back, it won't work. If you don't have a chair with a flat, level seat pan, you can use an ordinary chair with a minimal tilt or bucket—such as a library chair or a cafeteria chair. Simply fill in the rear edge of the seat pan with a folded towel to create a flat, level surface to sit on.

Sit without leaning against the back support, and try slumping down and sitting up straight. By *slumping*, I mean a movement in which you let your body collapse downward. Your shoulders go down but not very much forward. Some people, when they are asked to slump, will bend forward from the waist and drop their head down toward their knees, but that is not what this exercise requires.

Notice that when you slump, your pelvis rotates backward, the stack of vertebrae has no foundation on which to rest, and your back curves and slumps down. (The pelvis can be thought of as a bowl which contains the guts, and “backward” is

the direction in which the bowl would rotate to spill out the guts behind the body.) Notice that when you roll your pelvis forward, your body moves up out of the slump to an erect sitting posture. And if you continue rolling your pelvis forward past the point of erect posture, your back arches into a swayback position.



*Pelvis rolled back,
chest collapsed,
slumped posture.*

*Pelvis balanced,
chest open,
centered posture.*

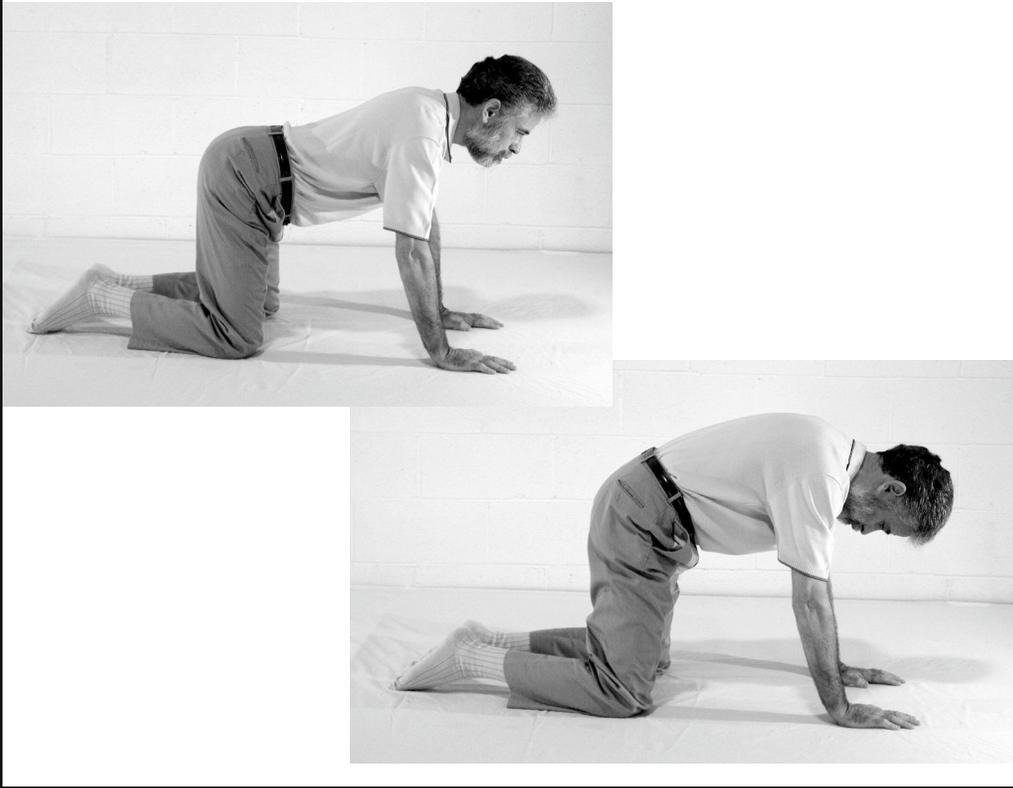
*Pelvis rolled forward,
back & chest tense,
swaybacked posture.*

Contrary to what most people believe, straightening up from a slump is accomplished by rolling the pelvis forward not by throwing the shoulders back or by straightening the back. If you aren't sure about this, slump, and, without moving your pelvis at all, try to sit up by moving your shoulders or your back. It can't be done.

Try rolling your pelvis forward to sit up out of the slump, and simultaneously puff out your chest and throw your shoulders back. Notice that those movements of your shoulders, chest or back are extra movements, which use muscles unnecessarily and waste energy.

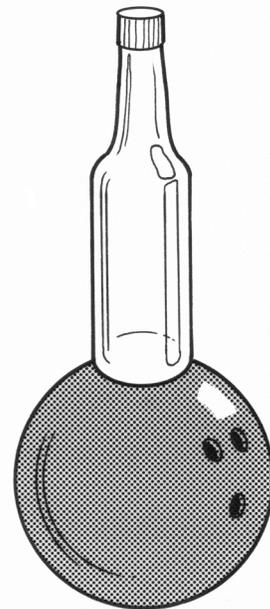
Some people find it difficult to do the movement of pelvic rotation while sitting, but practicing it in another position can be easier. Get down onto all fours, standing on your hands and knees, with your arms and legs pretty much straight (but not locked) underneath you. Now, gently arch your back, letting it sag down into a swayback position—like a horse that has had too many heavy riders. And then hump your back up—like an angry cat. Move slowly and gently back and forth from the arched to the humped position, feeling how your pelvis rolls and your spi-

nal column follows the rolling. Once you have felt the movement clearly, try it again in the sitting position.



How you balance your spinal column on your pelvis is very much like balancing a bottle upright on a bowling ball. Your spinal column is like a bottle, and your pelvis is like a bowling ball. If the bottle is placed just exactly right on the bowling ball, it will balance and stay upright. However, once it is balanced, if the bowling ball rolls underneath it, the bottle will fall off the ball. Your spinal column, of course cannot fall off your pelvis. However, if your pelvis rotates forward, your back will be dragged forward into a swaybacked position; and if your pelvis rotates backward, your back will be dragged backward into a slumped position.

The function of the pelvis is important in good posture, but it is also important to pay attention to the other end of the spinal column, i.e., the head. The head is supported from below by the pelvis and the



spinal column, but it also has movement of its own. Balancing the head correctly atop the spinal column is important for developing the open body use that is the antidote to the constriction or collapse of the distress response.

RAISING YOUR OCCIPUT 3.2

Stand up in a comfortable position, and now raise your head.

What did you do? Most speakers of American English interpret this to be a command to raise their chin. But when you raise your chin, your occiput (the lower rear part of your skull) moves downward. In other words, most likely you did not raise your head, you rotated it and constricted the back of your neck.

This is important because we have all been taught that to stand up right we must stand tall. And we subconsciously link this to raising our head, which after all, should mean moving it upwards, toward the sky. Many people, when they are asked to stand tall, pull down on the occiput and thereby shorten themselves.

Feel the back of your head with your hands. Feel the muscles that go from your shoulders along the back of your neck and up to your skull. Feel how those muscles attach to the lower rear part of your skull. That is the occipital area.

Gently rotate your head up and down, as though you were nodding “yes”. Don’t drop your head forwards down toward your chest or back and down behind you. Keeping it roughly where it is, rotate your head so your chin moves up as the back of your head moves down. Notice the sensations this produces. Feel how the muscles in the back of your neck shorten and tighten to rotate your chin up.



Now move your chin down and the back of your head up. You will not feel the muscles in the front of your neck working to bring your face/chin down. There is a simple reason for this. Your head sits on top of your spinal column, but not the way the golden ball sits squarely on top of a flagpole. Your spinal column is not right under the middle of your head. The point of contact/support is closer to the

rear of your skull, and therefore more of your head's weight is carried forward of the contact point. Because of this, gravity pulls your chin down, and that movement doesn't take much muscular effort. In fact, you may feel the muscles on the back of your neck lowering your face down. (If you want to clearly feel the muscles in the front of your neck acting, put your hand under your chin and push up, and then force your chin down against the upward pressure.)

Where is the point at which your head is rotated neither forward nor backward but balanced in the middle?

Try letting your occiput float gently upward just a very slight bit. If you do the right movement, you will feel your whole spinal column all the way down to your tail bone relax and lengthen slightly upward. That sensation of freedom is a sign of the correct balance of the head on the spinal column, and it allows your whole spinal column to function in a freer more balanced way.

SITTING AND BREATHING 3.3

Sit and do Soft Belly Breathing in your normal sitting posture. Notice what that feels like. What parts of your body move when you breathe? What is the rhythm and quality of the movements of breathing?

Then try breathing while sitting up *STRAIGHT*, in what our culture generally calls good posture (the third picture in the group shown in 3.1). What does that feel like? How free are your breathing movements?

Next try breathing while slumping down (the first picture). What effects does this posture have on your breathing?

Lastly, find the balanced, neutral manner of sitting (the second picture). It will be neither too tense nor too loose. How does that feel?

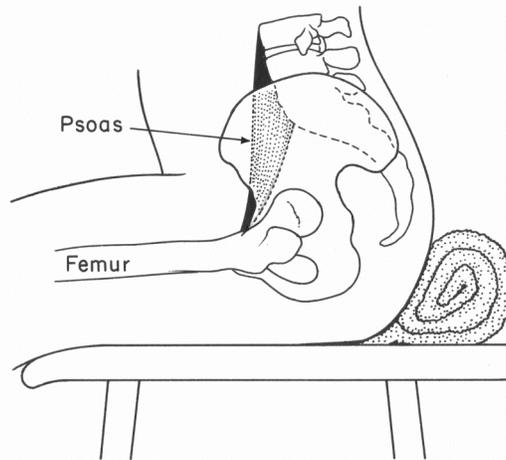
Generally speaking, what people call "sitting up straight" tenses the belly, back, and chest, and thereby interferes with free and easy breathing. Slumping causes the body to hang on itself, and it "squashes" the breathing. Most people find that the neutral and balanced way of sitting is freer, lighter, better balanced, more mobile and more stable.

Our culture promotes the idea that good posture is tense and pulled in. How many times have you heard "Belly in! Shoulders back! Back straight!" That tense posture is part of our culture's idea of "strength," but in fact it is a good description of the fear/startle response. It is an tension-filled posture and predisposes people to aggression and even violence. However, our culture's other mode, what is understood as "relaxed," is a limp slump. That is a weak way of sitting, a victim mode of being, and weakness too is an opposite to the state of peace.

There are two very different sets of muscles which will rotate your pelvis forward. Using one set produces strain and imbalance in your body, and using the other produces balance, power and ease. To understand this, consider that there are basically two ways to tip a bowl forward—lifting the rear edge or lowering the front edge. Which edge of the pelvic bowl moves determines whether pelvic rotation will be an easy movement or a strain.

Most people sit up “straight” by arching their backs. This is done by using the muscles along the surface of the back to pull up on the rear edge of the pelvis. However, it creates tension and discomfort, and this is why everyone will sit up “straight” for a minute when exhorted to and then give it up as uncomfortable.

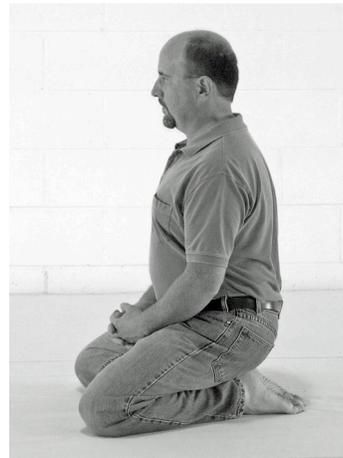
The most effective and comfortable way of rotating your pelvis forward involves using two muscles deep in the core of the body rather than muscles along the surface of the back. Those muscles are the psoas (pronounced *so-as*) and the iliacus (*ih-lye-ah-kus*). These deep, internal muscles, which lie right alongside each other, drop the front edge of the pelvis and create a very strong and comfortable physical organization of the pelvis and spinal column.



INGUINAL SITTING: PRACTICE 3.4

How can you find this new way of moving your pelvis? Sit toward the front edge of a firm flat chair, with your back not touching the backrest. Keep your knees and feet spread comfortably apart, your feet flat on the ground and your lower legs perpendicular to the ground, not tucked underneath you or stretched way out in front. (Or if you are comfortable kneeling on the floor with your buttocks on your heels, you can sit that way.)

Just for contrast, start by moving the wrong way, lifting from the back of your pelvis. Roll your pelvis forward by arching your back and lifting your back pockets up toward your shoulders. Notice that the movement takes place in your back



around your waist. Notice also how tense this makes your lower back. Most people will pull their shoulder blades down as well as their back pockets up, and this will spread the tension up through the whole back.

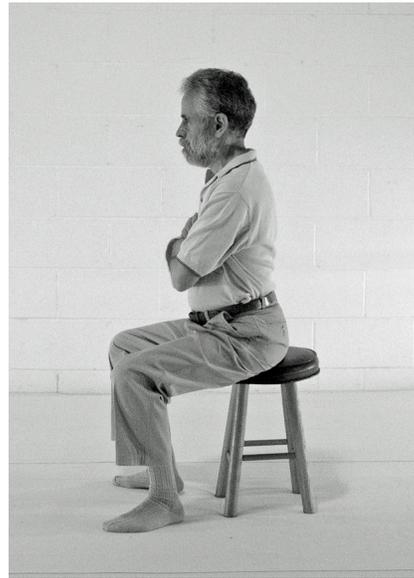
Now, let's find the better way. Slump down. Notice that when you sit slumped, your pubic symphysis (the bone just above your genitals in the front of your pelvis) points upwards. Roll your pelvis forward by moving your pubic symphysis forward and down so that it points toward the floor. It is important to keep your knees and feet apart as you try to find the proper way of rotating your pelvis. Most people find that rolling the pubic symphysis toward the floor brings them effortlessly up into a balanced sitting posture.

When the pelvis is balanced the body leans just a bit forward—almost putting the body into the stable configuration of a pyramid. Roll your pelvis to sit up and then lean a bit backward. What does that do? Most likely, it will not be comfortable.

Most people will feel that moving off the line of balance—whether forward or backward—creates tension in their backs and breathing. When you were a kid, did you ever try to balance your spoon on the lip of your cereal bowl at breakfast? Balancing on your pelvis is just like that. If you find exactly the right weight placement, the balance will be easy, and if you move off that placement at all, you won't be balanced.

You will know you are doing the movement right when you move easily into an erect sitting posture. Your back and shoulders will not be actively engaged in muscular work but will move in a soft and relaxed way, simply as a result of the pelvic rotation.

By the way, my first clue when I was discovering this new way of sitting was a feeling of spacious dignity in the inguinal (groin) area, so I call this Inguinal Sitting.



This new way of sitting places the bones of the pelvis and spinal column in the architecturally optimal alignment. The weight of the body is on a vertical line through the head and torso. It goes squarely through the sitbones into the chair. (Your *sitbones* are the ischial tuberosities, the two pointy bones in your bottom that press into whatever you sit on. If you aren't sure where your sitbones are, sit for a while on a flat concrete surface, and you will certainly begin to notice the hard bones pressing into the hard concrete.)

I try not to use the word *straight* about the body. I prefer the word *vertical*. Sitting or standing *straight* has connotations of being tense, held in, in a military posture. Letting yourself be vertical is a comfortable and relaxed way of being in your body. Being vertical has an upward opening and lengthening feeling to it, like a flower growing toward the sun, with its roots joining the earth. The vertical orientation allows your body's weight to fall squarely onto the support surface below your body, and that weight "reflects" off the support surface to lengthen your body gently upward.

Vertical does not mean *straight* like a ruler. In a simple sitting or standing position, the body is vertical when all the body's normal curves average out so that the skeleton directs the body's weight straight into the ground. There is a bit of forward lean in proper vertical sitting (as shown in the photograph of the balanced pelvis in exercise 3.1). Sitting with just a bit of forward lean moves the body's weight forward along the thigh away from the rear edge of the body and delivers the body's weight into the ground in a more stable and balanced way.

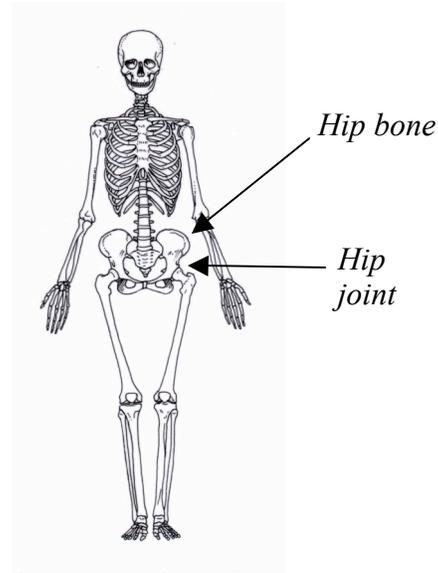
Sitting offers a good basic position for studying posture. Since we spend a lot of our time sitting, that position also offers a way of incorporating peacemaking practice into our lives. Every time we sit—at our computers, at the breakfast table, and so on—we can be putting in a bit of practice of the postural stability and centering that is part of embodied peacemaking.

The vertical, centered body state will improve performance in any task. Since that is so, the various daily-life applications of the centered body state offer wonderful vehicles for practicing that state and thereby improving one's skills in embodied peacemaking.

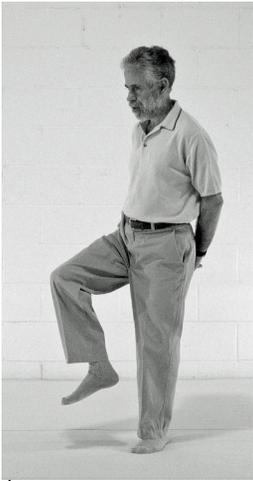
Standing is the other basic position in which to practice awareness and stability. However, to understand postural support in the standing position, it will be helpful to start by examining two other postural processes.

PRESSING HIP JOINTS: PRACTICE 3.5

Stand up and point to your hip with one finger. If instead I asked you to point to your hip *joint*, would that make a difference? In American English, “hip” refers to the hip bone (see below), and we don’t even have a common term for the hip joint. Most people don’t actually know where their hip joints are, but correct use of the hip joints is the major source of balance and power in movements.



The hip socket is at about the same



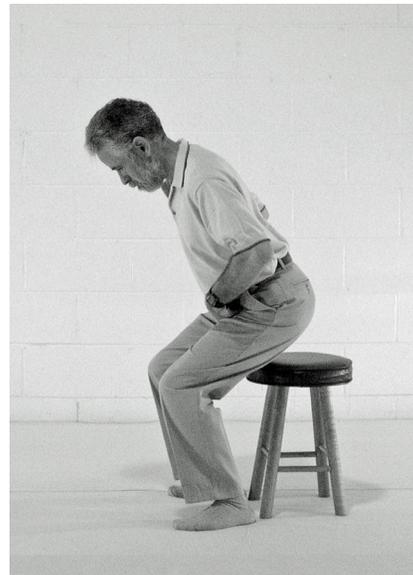
height in your leg as your pubic symphysis, the bone in the front of your body just above your genitals. Stand on

one leg, and raise the other in front of you. Where the fold is in your leg (the inguinal crease), that is where your hip joint is.

It is important to have an accurate awareness map of your body. If you have a mistaken image of where your hip joints are, you will plan your movements on the basis of that mistaken image and create weak and imbalanced movements.

Stand in front of a chair with a flat, level seat pan, and get ready to sit down. Position your feet approximately six to ten inches (fifteen to twenty-five centimeters) apart. Press your index fingers into each hip joint, and push toward the rear. As your tailbone gets pushed to the rear, let your knees bend. Your torso inclines forward as your pelvis goes back, and this counterweighting preserves your balance. Make sure that as your torso inclines forward, you keep your head in line with your back. In other words, don’t bend your head forward or tilt it back.

Notice the line from your occiput to your tailbone. As you press your tailbone



back/down, move your occiput slightly and gently forward/up along the inclined line described by your torso.

Keeping your whole spinal column from your head to your tailbone relaxed and lengthened, lower your bottom down to the chair.

The key postural awareness that this exercise develops is the process of lengthening the line which is the body core. We will go farther with this awareness in the next exercise.

WALL PUSHING 3.6

For this exercise, you'll need a room with enough clear space by the wall to stand facing and touching it.

Stand with both feet pointing straight at the wall. Stretch your arms out— but make sure there is a bit of a relaxed bend in them—and put your hands on the wall at about shoulder height. Position your feet far enough away from the wall that your body inclines forward at almost a forty-five degree angle.

Push on the wall. What part of your body generates the power for the push?

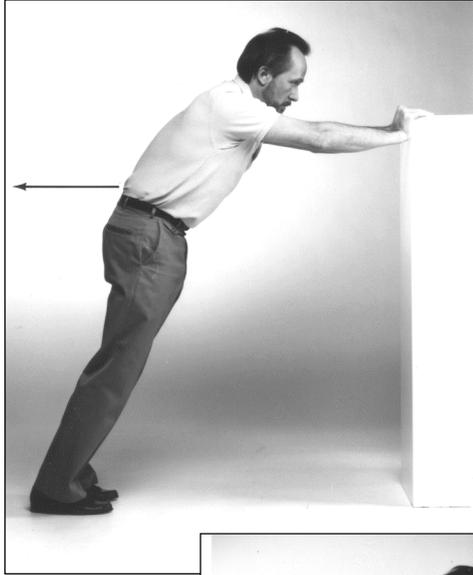
Try pushing in your normal manner. Next try pushing in the tucked/slumped position and in the swaybacked/arched position.

And then push on the wall in the balanced middle position. Make sure to push with your body in a fairly straight alignment—that is, in a straight, but inclined, line from your feet to your head.

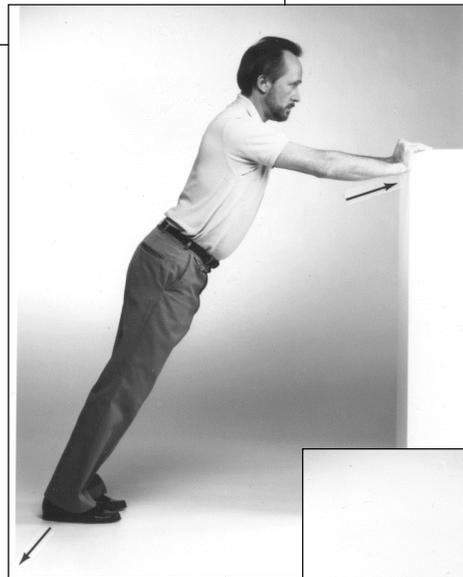
What happens to your breathing in each of the positions? Most people experience that when they are tucked or arched, their breathing is interfered with, but when they are in the well-aligned position, their breathing is freed up.

What happens to the push on the wall in each of the positions? Most people experience that in the well-aligned position, the push is more efficient and stronger. The feet/legs thrust into the floor, and the resultant pressure is transmitted cleanly up the spinal column, through the arms, and into the wall.

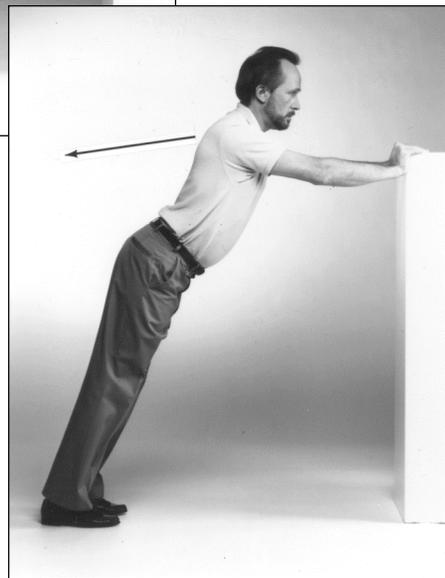
In the tucked position, the pelvis is pushed rearwards by the pressure on the wall. And in the arched position, the shoulders are pushed to the rear. In both these cases, pressure on the wall rebounds to move the body itself. Consider trying to move a piano this way. Clearly, an unintegrated posture weakens the body.



With the pelvis rotated backward, the force pushes the pelvis to the rear.



With good alignment, the force from the legs is applied to the wall.



With the pelvis rotated forward, the force pushes the shoulders to the rear.

The last two exercises have focused on developing a sense of the lengthened postural line through the core of the body. Now we'll apply that to standing.

STANDING POSTURE: PRACTICE 3.7

Stand and feel your posture. If you wish to see your posture from the side, you could have someone videotape you, or you could simply stand in front of a video camera and watch yourself on a TV. A low tech option is to go to a clothing store and stand in front of the three-panel mirror used for trying on clothes.

Feel your heels on the floor. Imagine/feel a line of movement starting at your heels, lifting upward along the backs of your legs, and lifting upward along your back up to a point above your head. Make sure that in imaging the line you don't lift your shoulders or try to pull yourself up. The process will be gentle and subtle when you do it right.

As your body gently follows the line, you will attain a lighter, more architecturally balanced standing posture. The next exercise will help you understand this new posture in movement and action.

In addition to sitting and standing, the other activity we spend a lot of time doing is walking, so let's examine that. There is a way of walking that allows you to transfer the feeling of strength and ease you achieved in static standing into movement. Making walking a study of ease and stability allows you to use your everyday walking as a practice of peacemaking.

FEET WALKING: PRACTICE 3.8

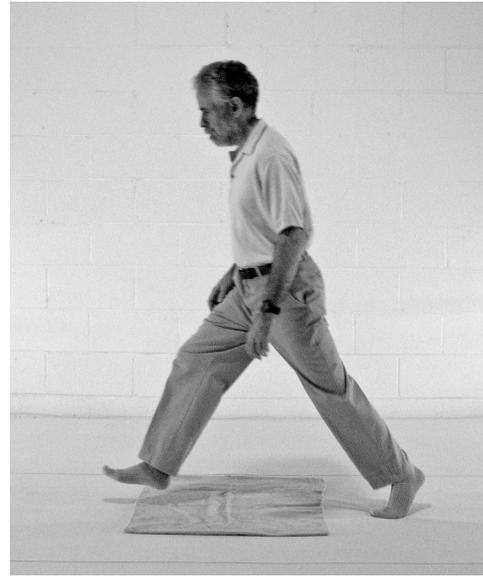
What is your image of walking? Try walking and noticing how you walk. How do your legs and feet make your body move forward across the floor? Do this barefoot so you can feel your feet without the interference and restriction of shoes.

How do you carry your body's weight? Do you lean forward, hang behind yourself, or balance yourself in the middle of your stride?

Focus on your right foot as you walk. How does your foot touch the floor? Do you bang your heel into the ground or land softly? How does the weight move from your heel to your toes? How and when during your stride does your right foot exert force on the floor to move you forward?

Many people feel that they swing their leg forward, and the weight of the leg drags their body forward. Some people feel that they put their foot on the floor out in front of them and then pull themselves forward with it. Some people feel that when their foot is behind them, they shove themselves forward with it. Which is the most efficient way of walking?

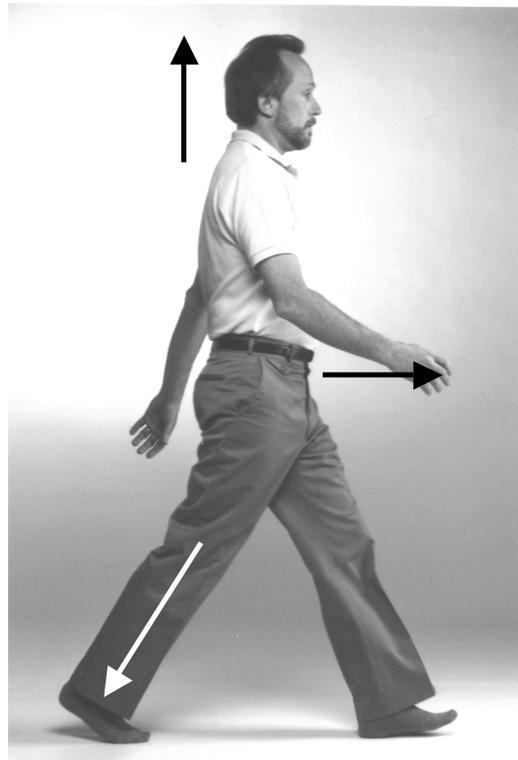
Place a towel on the floor. Walk around, and try leaping over the towel. In order to get forward distance, you will have to use a long, low jump. How do you do that? Jump with your right foot forward, and notice the moment just before your left foot leaves the floor. Where is your weight, and what does your right foot do? To jump well, your weight must be moving forward. If you lean back, you won't get any distance in your jump. At the moment before you jump, your left leg is out behind you, your toes are bent, and the ball of your left foot is touching the floor. At that moment, you are applying



a distinct rearward shove to the floor with the ball of your foot. Your right foot is up in the air in front of you, coming down toward the ground. The rearward shove is what moves you forward.

Leaping over a towel is a somewhat exaggerated movement, but you can use the same rearward push in a smaller way in ordinary walking. You will find that this is the most efficient manner of walking.

Try walking and focusing on the rearward thrust. Keep your weight balanced between your legs—even when one is up in the air. Push to the rear with each foot when it is behind you. This action is an efficient, coordinated way of using the pelvis and legs to put power into the ground and create forward movement.



Remember your basic physics. Every action creates an equal and opposite reaction. When you move forward, there must be a force exerted backward. However, in order to push straight backward, you would need a leg sticking out straight behind, and it could push only on walls and trees and so on. In reality, when your leg is behind

you, it is on a slant, so its thrust is on a slant. You push off from the ball of your rear foot, pushing in a backward/down direction.

Try walking while paying attention to this process. With each step, press down and back with the ball of your back foot. Feel how the back/down energy of the foot reflects off the floor into a forward/up movement of the body. Your body is propelled forward, and there is also a force thrusting upwards along your spinal column.

People generally experience that when they walk with this awareness of the down/back thrust of the feet, they have a ground to stand on and a foundation for themselves. The forward energy makes them walk forward more quickly, lightly and gracefully. The upward energy opens their posture upward. Their walk becomes more erect, clearer and more energetic.

When people conceive of walking as falling down onto their forward foot rather than rising off their back foot, they sag and fall down as they walk. When they pull themselves forward with the front foot, they compress and shrink. Feeling the back/down thrust leads to a way of moving that is mechanically more efficient and powerful, and it is also much more psychologically confident and alert. It is this *alert confidence* which is important in peacemaking. With this mindbody state as a foundation, it is much easier to feel peaceful in the midst of a conflict.

WALKING THE GAUNTLET 3.9

For this exercise, you'll need a group of at least seven people. Have them divide into two groups and form two lines about three or four feet (one meter or a bit more) apart. The two lines should face each other, leaving a path between them.

Your job is to walk the length of the path between the lines, keeping your belly soft, your breathing full, and your posture relaxed and open. Keep your walk energized and alert, smooth and balanced.

The job of the groups is to distract you. They can throw tissues at you, yell at you, pretend to poke you, or anything else that is obnoxious and irritating—but safe. There should be no actual physical contact! The people should be sure not to touch your face, or trip you, or do anything which could lead to any injury.

How does walking the gauntlet feel? Can you keep from feeling threatened and fearful or angry? Can you keep your tongue and belly soft and your breathing free? Can you keep your posture alert and strong?

Give each person a chance to try this exercise.

In this chapter, we have examined the role of an alert, balanced posture in creating a mindset conducive to peacemaking. In the next chapter, we'll take the examination of posture into a consideration of expansiveness and empowerment.

CHAPTER 4

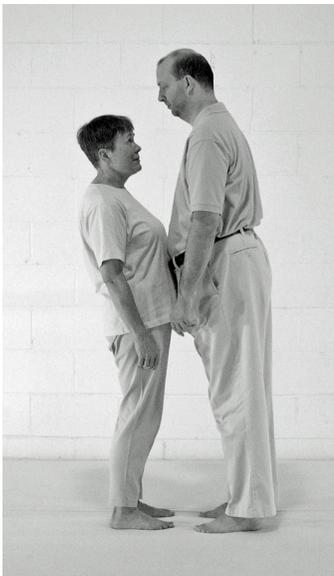
POWER

Conflict includes both content and process. We have disputes about specific content such as which TV program to watch or how to allocate scarce water resources. The process is the manner in which we conduct our negotiations about content. Do we listen to the other person attentively and respectfully? Do we present our own position in a clear, non-hostile way?

How can we protect our boundaries, argue for our positions, argue against the other person's position, and do so in a peaceful manner rather than descending into antagonism and aggression? That question is, I think, clear and obvious. However, there is an equivalent, and perhaps more fundamental, question that is not so obvious. How can we conduct a dispute without withdrawing from ourselves and the other person, that is, without alienating ourselves from ourselves and the other person?

ALIENATION 4.1

Stand up in your ordinary stance. And have a partner stand about four or five feet (about one and half meters) in front of you. What is that like? What do you do with the space between the two of you? How do you relate to your partner's body presence? How do you inhabit your own body?



Now ask your partner to walk right up to you, touching his stomach to yours. You can add an imagery component if you wish: imagine that your partner has been working hard all day in the sun and he's hot, sweaty and smells bad.

What do you do? How do you feel?

Most people will withdraw, whether in a large movement or just in an internal shrinking away. Hidden in that withdrawal is a process of alienation.

If you stop to think about it, you will probably notice a subtle reduction in your sense of contact with your partner. That is really a reduction of the sense of his humanness, an alienation from him.

And the shrinking away movement you do is a withdrawal of attention from areas of your body and

the space you inhabit. This loss of contact with your own body is a reduction in your own lived sense of your own humanness, an alienation from your own self.

By examining relaxation and posture, we made a good start in learning how to stay in contact with ourselves and the other person. The next step is the development of power. I define “power” in two related ways. Power is the ability to control your environment in ethical ways to achieve your goals. Or, power is the ability to move your body in graceful, efficient, effective ways. The second definition is an internal definition, and the first is an external definition

Power is an important step in the development of peacefulness, and this is rather surprising to most people. *Power allows you to stay calm, stable and safe, which is a prerequisite for avoiding aggression and for developing the sense that you can afford to treat your enemy as a respected human being.*

Relaxation and postural integrity are foundations for the development of power. As we shall see in Chapter 5, power is a prerequisite for the development of love, and love is a foundation for the wise, humane use of power.

It will be helpful in understanding power to examine its opposite: powerlessness. I think it is fair to say that powerlessness is a root cause for much of the conflict and violence in the world. When people feel powerless, they often lash out at the perceived sources of their powerlessness.

POWERLESSNESS 4.2

Imagine you are working for a hostile boss. She creates conditions which make it impossible for you to succeed. Perhaps she assigns you work but doesn't give you adequate support personnel to achieve her goals. And then she blames you for not succeeding. Not only that, but her boss is a friend of hers, and will hear no wrong about her, so you can't even go up the command ladder to find support. You can't win for losing!

What do you feel? Many people will feel a helplessness and a frustration that is the beginning of rage and the desire to lash out and hurt the person who is victimizing them.

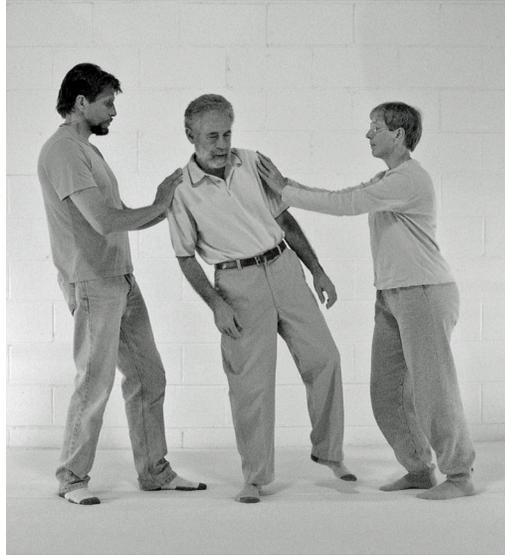
What do you feel in your body, in your breathing, in your movements? What are the somatic underpinnings of the feelings of helplessness, frustration, and rage?

POWERLESSNESS TOO 4.3

Working in a group of three, the two people working with you will act the role of “attackers.” To attack, one person should place her hand on your shoulder and then—without impact or great force—push you. It does not mean hitting or striking your body! Then the other person can do the same. Have the attackers keep up a steady barrage of pushes.

Don’t resist the shoves, but instead let yourself be pushed around. As you are pushed, let yourself feel what it is like to be out of control of what happens to you. Let yourself feel helpless and powerless.

What do you notice? Some people will become passive and fearful. Some people will respond with feelings of anger and aggression.



Powerlessness is a state of smallness in the body, whether tensed or collapsed. Speaking in body terms, how would we define power? The opposite of the contraction or collapse of powerlessness is expansiveness, softness, and equanimity. Power is an antidote for the feelings of powerlessness, fear, and anger. How can we generate power? The next three exercises will focus on that.

CHEST PUSH 4.4

Are you a pushover? What is your immediate response when I ask that question? Do you get limp and feel “Yes”. Or do you get rigid and feel “NO!”

Let’s try an experiment in resisting and not resisting. Your partner’s job will be to push on your chest, and your job will be to maintain your sitting posture and not be pushed over backward. Women can have their partners push on their shoulders.

Sit toward the front of a flat, neutral chair, without leaning back against the backrest. First, sit up *straight*, like a model of “social correctness.” Suck in your gut and throw back your shoulders. Have your partner push on you with a steady pressure but not with extreme force. In this sitting posture, can you resist the pressure? Unless you are massive and strong, probably not.

Now, slump down, and then come up to a good sitting posture by rolling your pelvis forward in the proper way, as described in exercise 3.4. (By the way, the psoas and iliacus muscles have very little sensation. You won’t feel them when

you use them. You will just feel balanced and strong.) Relax your belly and breathe. Soften and open your genitals and anus. Keep your legs about shoulder width apart.

Have your partner push again. If you are sitting correctly, you will feel the pressure of the push get deflected from a line going back through your chest into a line moving diagonally down and back. The pressure will actually press you into the chair and stabilize your posture, and you will feel that you are not working very hard to achieve the stability. Of course, there are limits to how much pressure you can absorb. Your partner should be reasonable and not push too hard. In the photo below, I am leaning my whole weight onto my partner, but most people should start off with less pressure.

Just for another comparison, sit properly and change just one thing. Bring your legs together. What happens? Most people get tipped back immediately. Why? Sitting with the legs together rotates the pelvis a bit backward and creates tension and weakness in the breathing and lower back. Moving your legs apart arches the lower back a bit and makes it easier to position the pelvis properly for strength.

For another comparison, sit properly, and then squeeze your anus or your throat. Again, most people become weak and get tipped back easily. These are examples of how constricting creates weakness and opening produces strength and stability.



Many women have a feeling that spreading their legs is a sexual invitation or makes them sexually available. Our culture commands women to sit with their legs together. That is the lady-like way to sit, and many women feel that sitting with open knees is a man's way of sitting. Unfortunately, rather than making a woman less vul-

nerable, sitting with the legs pressed together makes her more vulnerable. Sitting with your legs together is weak and uncomfortable and makes you a pushover. Literally.

For women, wearing short skirts may make it uncomfortable to open the knees, and wearing tight skirts may make it impossible to do so, but you can wear pants or full, long skirts and open your knees comfortably apart. And while I'm on the topic of clothes, women are often expected to wear pointy-toed shoes or, even worse, high heels. Such shoes constrict your feet and make comfort and power impossible. Men's shoes and formal suits are just as constricting. Pay attention to what you wear, and see if your clothes are interfering with the development of a peaceful body.

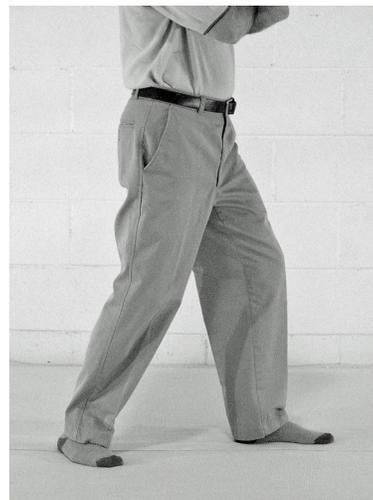
If you haven't been able to accomplish this strong way of sitting just from the exercise described above, don't despair. Some people have such strong and unconscious habits of body constriction that they need more practice, and perhaps individualized instruction, to overcome their habitual patterns.

What is it like to sit stably and be able to resist the pressure? Most people feel it is effortlessly strong, powerful yet without *resistance against*. That was why I characterized the exercise as being about resisting and not resisting. It is about resistance in the sense of applying power and not being pushed back. It is about not resisting in the sense that the physical power and mental focus are not about antagonism or fighting against. A cliff does not resist the power of the waves. It simply sits, secure in its own strong identity, and the waves crash against it and fall back. When people sit properly, they experience a similar feeling in this *Chest Push* exercise. They don't *fight against* but simply sit with a sense of powerful presence. This way of handling a pressure or a threat is non-oppositional and non-violent, and it is a firm foundation for peacemaking.

STANDING FIRM 4.5

Stand up in a T-stance. Place both your heels on the same forward line, your left foot forward about shoulder's width in front of your right foot. Point your left foot forward, and point your right foot about forty-five degrees to the right.

Thrust your body weight forward with your right leg, bending your left knee as you do. Your right leg should straighten out and plant itself on the floor. In order to maintain balance, your left knee should not project beyond your toes. The heels and toes of both feet should stay relaxed and in contact with the floor.

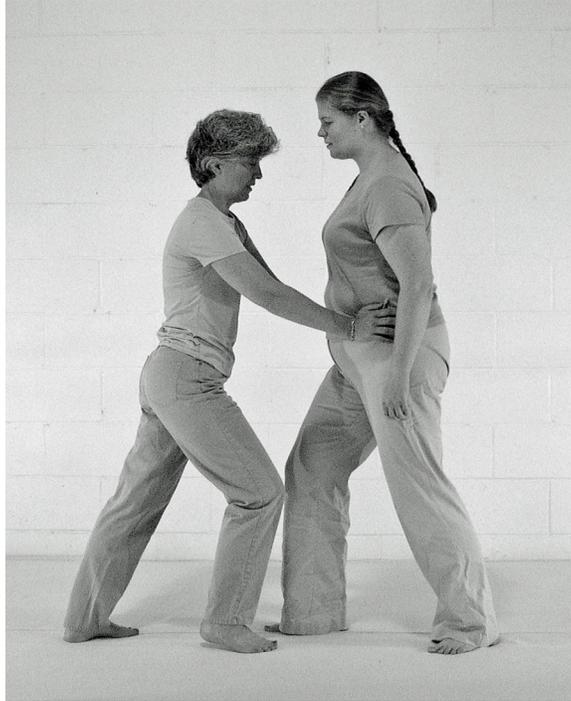


This is a stance in which you are balanced and braced to apply a forward thrust or resist a thrust toward your rear applied against you.

Ask your partner to stand in front of you, place her hands on your hip bones, and try to push you back. Your job is to stand firm, not be pushed back, yet relax and not use oppositional effort.

For a more difficult version, invite your partner to push on your shoulders. Resisting that requires integrating the spinal column with the pelvis and legs.

Just as an experiment, adopt an oppositional state. Let your body get harsh. Think unfriendly thoughts about the jerk who is pushing on you. What happens to your stability? Most people find themselves being pushed back quite easily.



Powerlessness is constriction of breath, tensing of muscles, shrinking of posture. Powerlessness involves patterns of body sensation, posture and movement which are small and uneven. They are constricted or collapsed, and they are lopsided or twisted.

Power has to do with such qualities of body organization as solidity, weight, rootedness, resoluteness and tenacity. Power is soft, symmetrical, and expansive. The body organization which gives rise to physical power is also the source of emotional and personal power and the capacity for powerful action in one's life. Power is the ability to control the environment in order to maintain one's safety and secure one's needs and desires. The ability to exert control over elements of your environment is an essential aspect of life. Survival would not be possible without power.

Many people believe that power is by its essence bad. It is often said that "Power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely." The brutality and abusiveness that often pass for power are really just fear and weakness manifesting as hurtfulness. True power is not bad. True power is loving and nurturing, as we shall see in Chapter 5. I reserve the use of the word "power" for ethical, life-affirming uses of force, and I use the word "brutality" for much of what passes for power in our world.

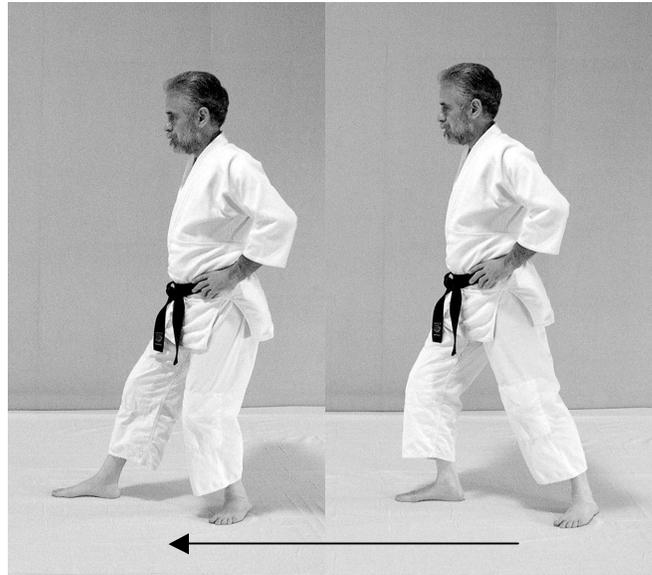
PUSHING: PRACTICE 4.6

In this exercise, you will use the same body position as in the last exercise, but you will do it as a movement rather than as a static posture. This is taken from a common Aikido practice called the *Rowing Exercise*.

Stand up in a T-stance. Place both your heels on the same forward line, your right foot forward about shoulder's width in front of your left foot. Point your right foot forward, and point your left foot about forty-five degrees to the left.

In order to push forward, you must first move your weight back—just as you would pull back on an arrow as preparation for shooting it forward.

From that cocked stance, thrust your body weight forward with your left leg. To do that, straighten out your left



leg and push backward against the floor. Let your right knee bend as you do.

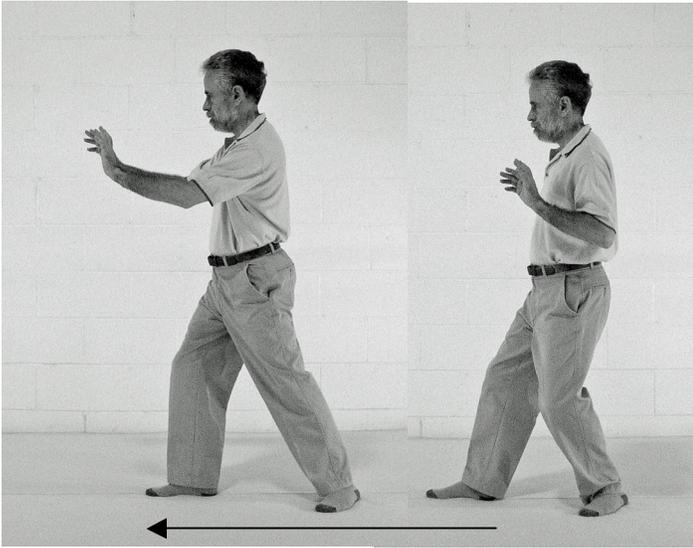
It is important to sense power in the legs and feel how the feet are rooted to the ground. Don't move forward aimlessly or loosely or let the toes or heels detach themselves from the ground.

In order to maintain balance, your right knee should not project beyond your toes. The heels and toes of both feet should stay relaxed and in contact with the floor.

Make sure that your whole torso rides forward on your pelvis/legs. Don't keep your shoulders in one spot in space and rock your bottom back and forth.

Now let's add the arms to the movement. As you push backwards/down with your left leg, you will thrust your body forward. As your body moves forward, thrust both hands/arms forward at about chest height. A key element in this exercise is to learn how to generate power in your legs and transfer it up your torso and into your arms. It is important that the movements first start with the legs/hip joints and then communicate themselves through your torso to your arms.

Since the power is transmitted to the arms via the spinal column, it is necessary that the torso remain upright and move as a unit. If the pelvis moves an inch, then the shoulders move an inch. If the shoulders move, it is because the pelvis moved them. Be careful to keep your torso vertically over your pelvis/legs and avoid



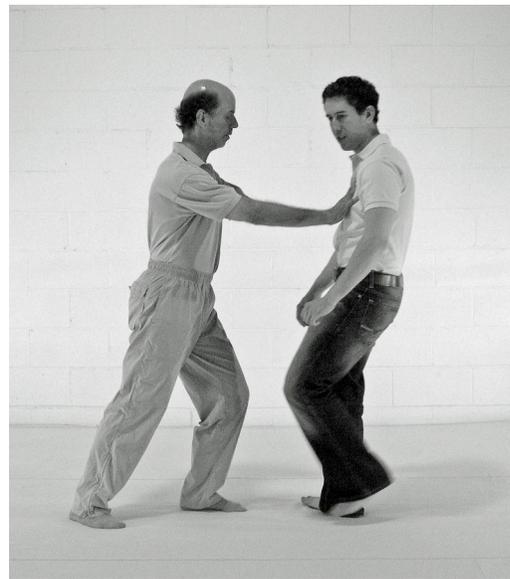
leaning your shoulders either forward or backward. Leaning would introduce a bend in your lower back, which would create a weak spot in the legs to hips to spinal column to arms transmission of the power.

Once you have this movement down, use it to push a partner away from you. Stand

facing your partner, and deliver the shove to his chest or shoulders. There are a couple of safety considerations. First, contact your partner gently—not with sudden, forceful impact—and then use the movement to shove him away from you. Second, your partner should be prepared to rapidly back away in the direction of the shove—rather than stumble backwards and fall.

This part of the exercise gives you the opportunity to examine your attitude toward power and control. Does pushing on your partner disturb you? Do you feel bad when you apply your power to another person? Would you feel bad about taking a strong position in a negotiation? Would you feel bad about telling someone that something they're doing makes you uncomfortable?

Do the push again while saying “NO” in a loud, clear voice. (We will work with the voice in Chapter 8.) Do you tense or constrict yourself? Do you collapse? Or can you use soft belly breathing and good body alignment to generate non-oppositional but forceful and commanding power?



The next chapter will examine love as a necessary element in the generation and use of power. That may sound strange now, but I think you will see the logic of it as you go through the exercises.

CHAPTER 5

LOVE

In the previous chapters, we focused on relaxation, posture and power as elements in the process of undoing the distress response. This chapter will focus on the process of love or kindness as way of freeing the body.

Is the inner state of harmony and good will a physiological or a psycho-spiritual phenomenon? Well, it's both, of course. I prefer to think of the words "mind" and "body" as being two different languaging systems. One points at and refers to the *experience* of being a living human being. And the other points at and refers to the physical *object* which a human being is. But just as we can say "the table" or "la table" or "der Tisch" in English, French, and German and yet refer to the same one table, so we can speak about body, mind or spirit and yet be referring to only one thing. In this book we are focusing on physical work as a means of creating psycho-spiritual and behavioral change.

Much of the world's conflict resolution efforts are focused on negotiations about the external elements of conflict, but internal body responses of fear, anger and distrust undermine the agreements about external situations. Obviously, work on external conditions is necessary and important, but in this book we are focusing on the inner work.

I have noticed that people generally find it much easier to make their habitual mistakes than to act in new, better, unfamiliar ways. Whether I am teaching about upright posture or an effective golf swing, I have found it useful to start by having people study their mistakes. Understanding in detail what about a mistake does not work well provides clues about what the correct performance must be. This being so, let's start the investigation of love by examining hatred.

HATRED 5.1

Imagine someone who is a constant source of irritation and obstruction—perhaps a boss who constantly belittles you, or a co-worker who always shirks his own work but tries to take credit for work you have done. You have tried everything you can think of to resolve the situation, but the jerk just makes fun of you for trying. Let yourself feel irritation and resentment. Even hatred.

What happens in your body? What do you do in your breathing? In your chest and your posture as a whole?

Negative feelings such as hatred and anger produce constriction, hardness and imbalance in your breathing, chest, face, and the rest of your body. Acting

from the physical state of hatred makes movement cramped and graceless. It makes action weak. (By “movement,” I am referring to moving the body through space. By “action,” I am referring to purposive movements, that is, goal-oriented behavior.)

In other words, hatred will weaken you. Making peace demands a lot of inner strength. Weakness is no basis for peace, and for that reason hatred must be avoided.

EYEBROW POWER 5.2

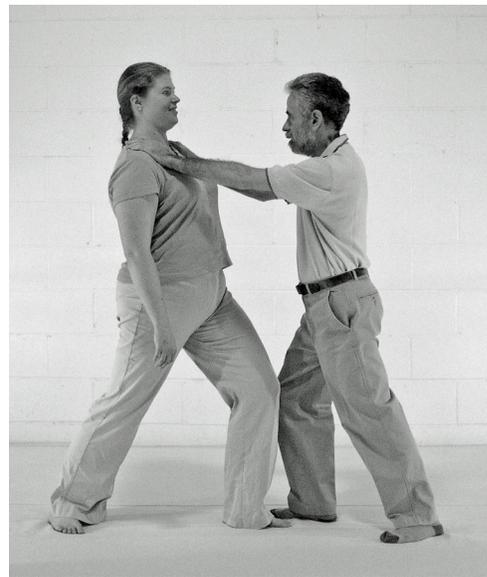
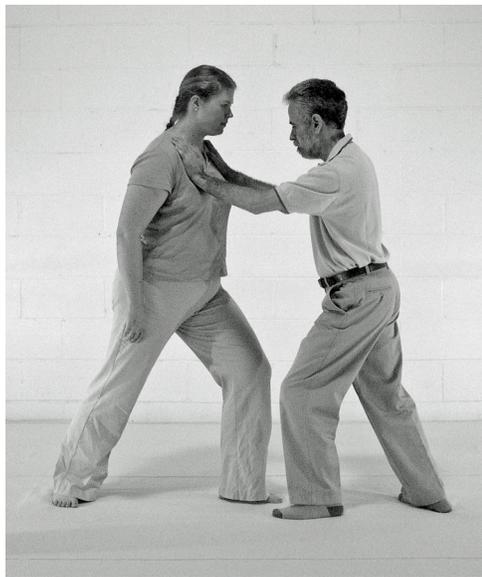
Let’s return to the *Standing Firm* exercise (4.5). Stand in a T-stance and resist when your partner pushes on your chest. It should be a safe and gradual push, not a sudden impact. Relax your belly and your breathing, lean forward a bit into the push, and resist it. Most likely, you will be hard to move.

Now make one small change. Raise your eyebrows while you resist your partner. Almost certainly you will now be easily pushed back. Why?

When would a person ordinarily raise her eyebrows? When she’s startled or afraid. And what other body actions would she perform when her eyebrows went up? Most likely she would pull back. It’s the fear/startle response.

So when you raised your eyebrows, your body figured you must have been startled or afraid, and it fired off the rest of the reflex package. When your body goes into the fear/startle response pattern, your posture gets weak. Clearly, fear is physical as well as mental, and fear weakens you.

Pay attention to the details of how you do fear in your body. How does that emotion compare somatically to anger?



Feelings take place in your body. By observing and changing your body, you can understand and change what you feel. The feeling of love is an important part of letting go of fear and anger and finding your power. However, many people have done many different things under the rubric of *love*. What exactly do I mean by “love?”

HANDING OVER 5.3

This exercise must be done with a group of people. It will involve observing how different people perform the “same” task in very different ways.

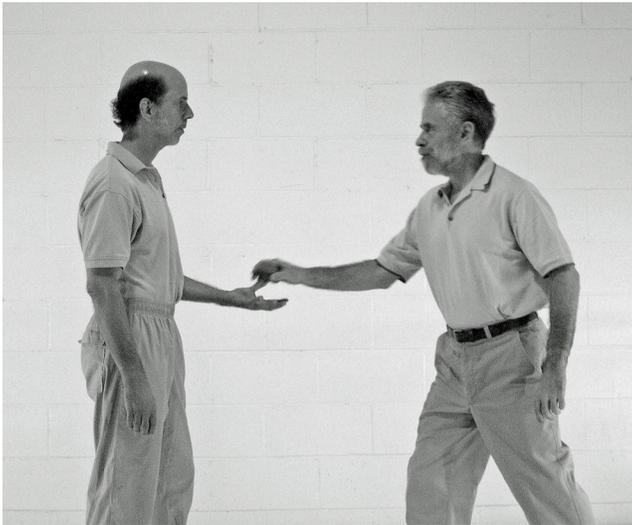
The task will be very simple. Have one person stand about fifteen feet (about five meters) away from the group. Have each person in the group walk over, one at a time, and hand the person a penny or a pebble or something of the sort in a loving way.

As you do this exercise and create the loving feeling in yourself, what do you feel in your body and your movement?

What do you see when other people do the handing over? Are there consistent physical manifestations of love? Are there commonalities? Are there differences?

You may see some people doing what they call a loving movement in ways that look distinctly unloving. If someone becomes hard and tight when they feel and express love, what does that say about their experience and understanding of what love is? Would you really want to call a hard, tight mindbody state “love?” Many people think they are doing/feeling one thing when they are really doing/feeling something else.

What does it mean if a person becomes limp and breathless as they manifest



love? How many different concepts are there of love, and how do they manifest physically?

Watching what people *do* is a very concrete way of pinning down what they *feel* and what they *mean*. It is also a powerful way of detecting misunderstandings between people that would ordinarily be swept and hidden under the rug of similar language.

Does this look loving?

Rather than using conceptual/philosophical discourse to define what I mean by “love,” I guide people to create in their bodies the physical actions that for me make up the action of *love*. That is an operational definition of *love*. Once people have experienced the physical actuality that I have in mind when I use the word, they know just what I’m referring to. Words without body sensations are slippery and vague.

SMILING HEART: PRACTICE 5.4

Everyone has something or someone—perhaps a friend, a lover, a child, a flower, a work of art—something that when they think of it makes their heart smile.

Stand with your eyes closed, and spend a few moments thinking about whatever it is that makes your heart smile. What happens in your body? How is your chest affected? What happens to your breathing? What sensations do you feel flowing through you?

Most people experience a softening and warmth in their chest, a freeing up in their entire body, and a sense of expansiveness.⁸

During a conflict, you can try to remember that a loving feeling is something *you do*. It is a choice, an action on your part. It isn’t a response to your attacker, who, after all, may be very unlovable. But if you can feel and act loving toward your attacker, that is the beginning of breaking through the wall of threat and establishing a peaceful body and a peaceful resolution of the conflict.

These sensations of being “warm hearted” or “tender hearted” are the bodily manifestations of love or compassion. If you stop to think about it, you will notice that very often we use physical language to describe emotional qualities. We talk about someone being *stiff-necked* or *warm-hearted* or *having guts*. There is a wisdom to this. Our emotional feelings are rooted in our physical life. By cultivating the physical state this Smiling Heart imaging practice produces, you are actually developing the capability of doing love instead of hate when you are confronted by conflict.

A particular issue that often arises as people begin learning to use softness has to do with strength, power, and boundaries. Doesn’t softening your core make you weak? Isn’t strength hard? Doesn’t love make you wimpy. Don’t you need to be tough to keep people from intruding? This next exercise will address that issue.

⁸ I learned this exercise from Stephen Levine, who works with meditations on the heart. For more information on this, you could take a look at his book *Who Dies? Conscious Living and Conscious Dying*, Anchor Books, Garden City, 1982.

YOUR SPOT 5.5

Pick a spot on the floor, and stand on that spot. Ask your partner to push you off. Your job is to stay on your spot and not get pushed off it.

Before the exercise gets too crazy, let's put some limits on what this means. Have your partner push you with the palms of both hands, on your chest or shoulders. The push should be a gradual shove not a sudden blow. The push should be somewhat strong but not unreasonably hard, in other words, neither limp nor brutal.

What do you do to maintain your position and your balance? What do you do with your breathing and posture? Most people brace themselves for the impact. They stiffen up and try to resist the push. Get as tough and hard as you can and brace yourself to withstand the shove. Does that work? Most people find that it doesn't.

Now, try it again, but this time relax. Remember, that doesn't mean getting limp and spaced out. Let your belly soften. Breathe calmly in through your nose and out through your mouth. Use the *Smiling Heart* exercise to open your body. Be soft and focused when you are shoved. What does that do?

Most people find that when they create a body state of softness and heartfulness, they feel more solid, and they can resist. They find it much easier to stay on their spot by getting soft and loving. (Of course, there are limits on how much strength you can successfully resist. Be reasonable.)

Often people feel that anger is a source of strength. Try getting angry and using that energy to resist the shove. What happens?

Most people find that anger, which is a form of bracing, actually weakens them. If you wish to be strong enough to stand your ground, you will have to give up your anger and embrace the body state of love. Real strength is loving – soft, considerate, and gentle. Kindness is the key to both peace and strength.

In our culture, rigidity is taken to be the source of strength and readiness to deal with threats. Rigidity is, however, created by tensing muscles against one another, and the sensation of muscular conflict is what people interpret as strength. It is like a car that feels its own strength when it is driving with its parking brake on.

The feeling of rigidity is a sign that energy is being wasted internally rather than being applied externally to good effect. When people are tight and hard, they feel strong to themselves. But their minds and bodies are constricted and shut, their movements are restricted, and they are less able to take other appropriate action to create safety for themselves. Therefore the sensation of strength that people experience when they are rigid is actually a signal of weakness.

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There is another issue that people often express as they work with exercises on love, and it is the flip side of the idea that strength is hard. Many people say they feel

exposed and vulnerable when they soften. However, as you have just experienced, feelings of being soft are part of the process of learning to use strength effectively.

Not only that, but physical softness is crucial in developing flexible thinking and flexible behavior. From a place of inflexibility, people become mentally narrow and oppositional. It is the tension and constriction that people adopt to handle the conflicts they face that actually make them vulnerable.

People are able to respond to conflict much more easily and effectively from the open place of softness than from what they initially felt was a less vulnerable place. In other words, it is through cultivating the feeling of “vulnerability” that people can learn to act effectively and reduce their actual vulnerability. It is being willing to become soft and available in the face of a conflict that truly enables people to handle the threat.

This openness can be accomplished through the bodily integration of power and love. It is important to note that this integration of power and love must be learned. It is not instinctive. When you feel the urge to get tough and hard, that is the most necessary moment to embrace gentleness. That is the moment to replace anger with love.

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By the way, I am not saying that people should suppress their anger or that anger and other “negative” emotions are bad. They are natural, legitimate responses of the organism to invasion, and it can be productive to feel and study your hurtful feelings when you have time to do so. In a situation of conflict, however, you cannot afford to be angry or afraid. You will think and act most effectively when you are relaxed and focused.

Power and love, contrary to the model that our culture uses, really are inseparable. In fact, they are the same. Love without power is limp and ineffective, and power without love is rigid and harsh. In either case, love or power is diminished to the point where it becomes just a shadow and not true power or love at all. Power is the foundation for the ability to love, and love is the foundation for wise use of power. This is not mere philosophy but is simply a shorthand method of stating that the body and the self must be soft and receptive as well as integrated and strong in order to function well.

Feeling soft is very foreign to many people. As a general rule, we equate “habitual” with “correct.” Whatever we normally do *feels* like the right thing to do—even when it isn’t. In order to learn a new and better way of doing something, we often have to do what we intellectually know is right, even when it feels wrong, and keep practicing it until it starts feeling right.

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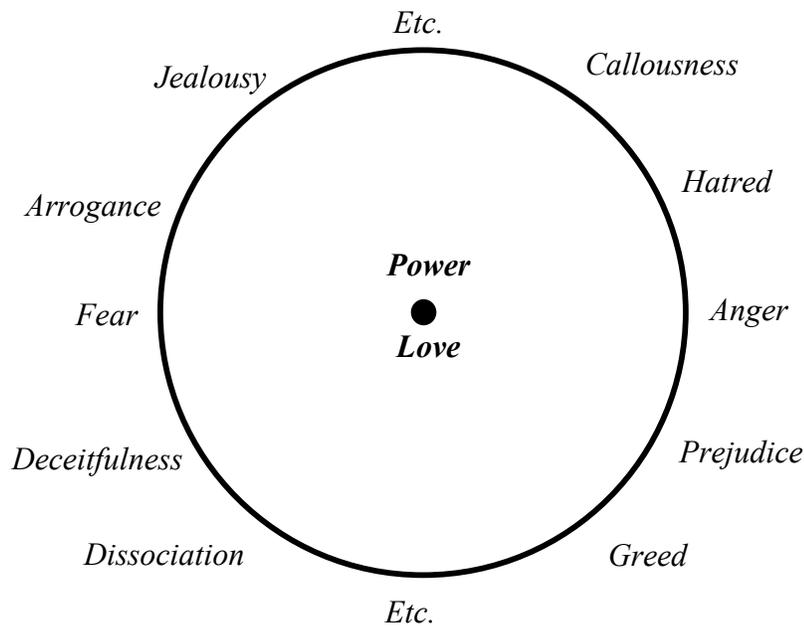
One thing that is confusing to some people is the impersonal nature of the love that we are cultivating here. This kind of love is really much more like a flashlight

than a radio. This kind of love is something that shines out of you, not something that is a response to a signal sent to you. Ordinarily we think that love is a response to someone or something that is lovable, and that is true of one kind of love, what we might call *personal* love. But I am talking about a state of being loving, something you maintain in yourself independent of what is around you. This is more an *impersonal* love. Personal love is a reaction to the person you're loving. Impersonal love is self-generated and independent of who or what is in front of you.

Think about getting up on the wrong side of the bed. You're angry and grouchy. Whatever crosses your path, you snarl at. That is an emotion that comes from inside you, independent of what you run across. Unfortunately, the idea of being grouchy is very familiar, but the idea of getting up on the right side of the bed and feeling love toward whatever you see—that is not something we ordinarily think of.

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There is a simple model of the nature of centering (see the Introduction for a definition of *centering*). The following image is not, of course, all inclusive, but it does suggest a way of thinking about the range of uncentered responses and their relation to centered being and doing. Power and love are unified and lie in the center of the circle, and all the myriad negative responses are points along the periphery of the circle. The integrated state of power and love is the opposite of and the antidote to all the negative, destructive emotions. The negative emotions are part of the distress response in the body, and power/love frees the body. The structure of the body is such that we function better physically when we are centered. Morality is built into the human body.



SOFT FACE 5.6

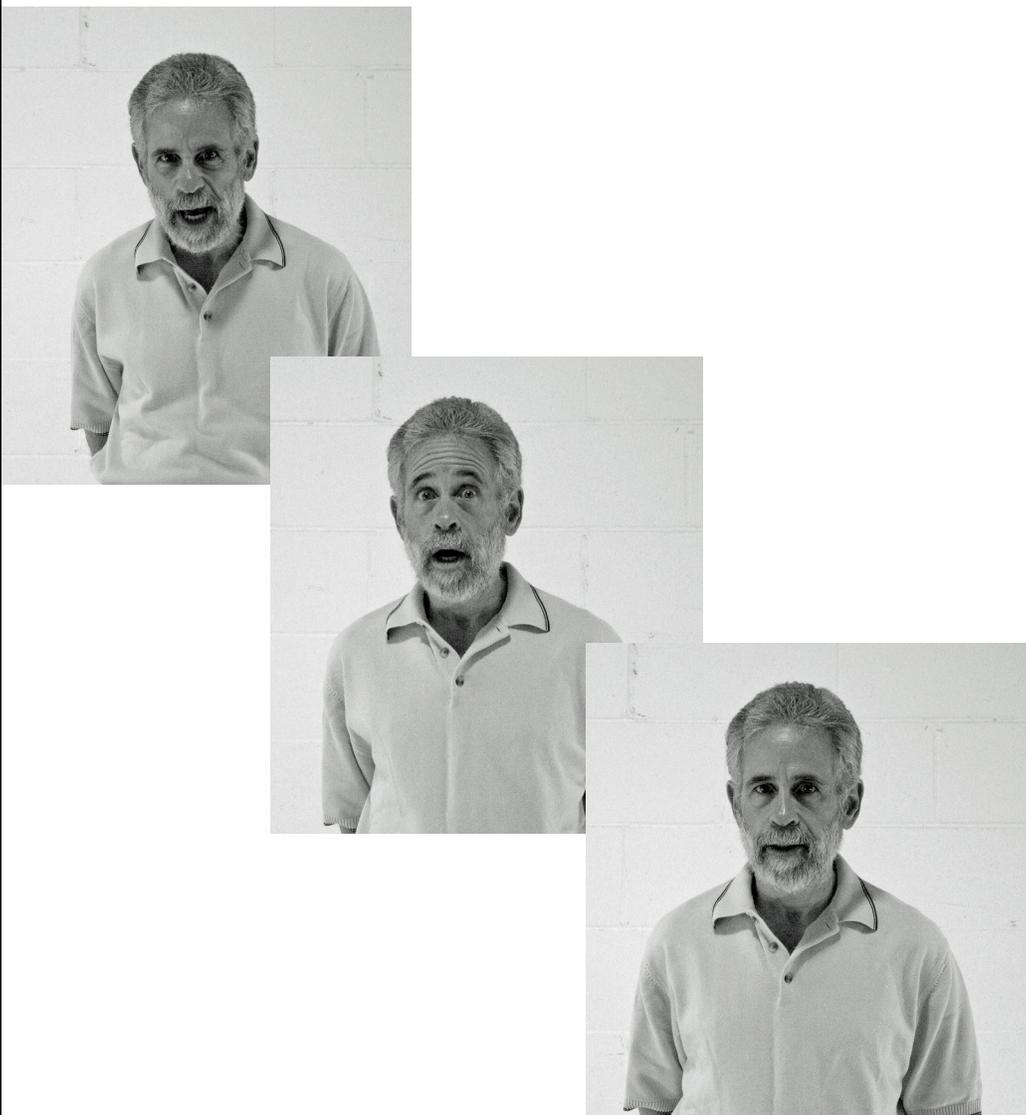
Make a really angry face. Glare with your eyes, and scowl with your face.

Make a really scared face. Open your eyes wide, and make a silent scream with your mouth.

Feel your tongue, throat, lips and jaw. Notice how your forehead, eyelids, and cheeks feel. Notice how tight and twisted your face feels. Probably the rest of your body gets tight too.

Now, let your face relax. Let your jaw relax. Soften your tongue and throat. Let your cheeks, eyelids and forehead rest. Let your mouth hang gently open a bit. How does that make you feel? Probably quieter and more relaxed.

If you let your face get soft, you will feel calm rather than upset in the face of conflict.



SOFT EYES: PRACTICE 5.7

You can also learn how to keep your eyes relaxed. Sit comfortably and shut your eyes. Without moving your head, move your eyes to look up, down, right and left. What do you feel in your eyes? Are you exerting *effort* to look in the different directions? Try letting the movements of your eyes be soft and fluid. Move your eyes slowly and gently. It will help if you don't move too far in any direction. Moving your eyes all the way to the edge of their range of motion takes more effort than staying in the middle of the range of motion.

Start moving your eyes in gentle, soft, smooth, curvy lines. Make sure to let your forehead, cheeks, mouth and tongue relax as you move your eyes. Try some circles and figure eights. Feel how your eye muscles work to move your eyes. Is there some particular spot in the movement that is tense or hesitant? Let the places where you feel any strain soften and release.

Normally we concentrate our awareness in the center of our visual field. *Soft eyes* is the skill of balancing central and peripheral vision so that we can overcome our normal tunnel vision and pay attention to more of the environment than we usually do. Soft eyes is useful more for picking up large movements than fine details, but it is also a way to look at threatening things in a relaxed manner.

Pick a target to focus your eyes on, some spot that is not too close—perhaps a spot on a wall ten or fifteen feet (three or four meters) away—and keep looking gently at that spot. Make sure to keep blinking at a normal rate. Without moving your eyes, pay attention to what is already in the left side of your peripheral visual field. Now notice the right side. Now the top, and now the bottom. Blink occasionally. Now pay attention to the whole of your visual field, gently, without gripping the world with your eyes. Most people experience this as a soft, embracing and relaxing way to use their eyes.

It would be instructive to examine what you do with your eyes when you look at something violent or horrifying in daily life. TV news or the daily newspaper certainly would give you the opportunity for this. Can you look at something negative and keep your face and eyes soft?

Imagine being in a conflict and keeping your eyes and face soft as you face the person you're having problems with. Not looking like an enemy, and not seeing with enemy-eyes, would help de-escalate the conflict.

All the lessons in this book share a common structure. You learn something that helps you bring your body into a state of peace, and then we create a conflict within which you can practice maintaining that peace. So here comes another conflict.

NOSES 5.8

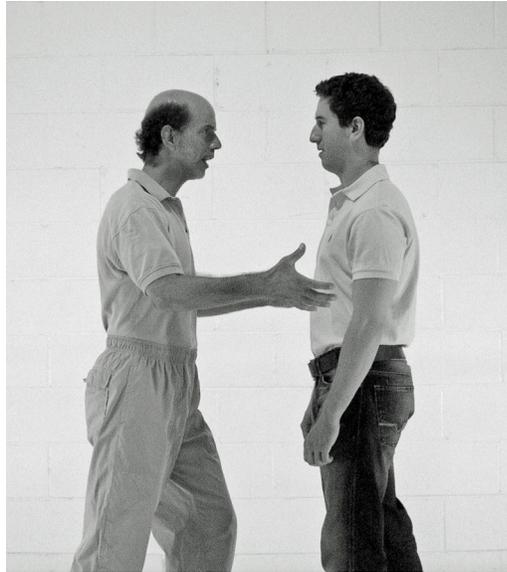
In this exercise, rather than hurling tissues, your partner will yell insults at you. Being on the receiving end of a loud yell can be very stressful, and that will give you the opportunity to use the *Soft Belly Breathing*, *Smiling Heart*, *Soft Face*, and *Soft Eyes* techniques to preserve your equanimity.

Remember to calibrate the attack. You have the right and the obligation to decide for yourself what level of attack would be difficult enough for you to derive benefit from the practice but not so difficult that you would not be able to succeed.

When I work with children, I usually lean in close and yell, “YOU HAVE TOO MANY NOSES!!!” Most kids will giggle at the stupidity of the “attack,” but at the same time they will respond with some fear to the loud voice on the part of an adult. By using this silly “attack,” I get to attack while at the same instant showing that this is really not an attack at all.

You could have your partner loudly yell things like “slimeball” or “jerk.” Or you could have her yell a bit more quietly and choose less irritating things. At this stage in the lessons, you should probably stay away from truly hurtful things to yell.

What did you do when your partner yelled at you? Could you remember to soften your body and open your heart? Was that easy, or did it take effort?



TOWEL CHOPPING 5.9

This exercise will be a further step in the use of the hip joints as a source of power.

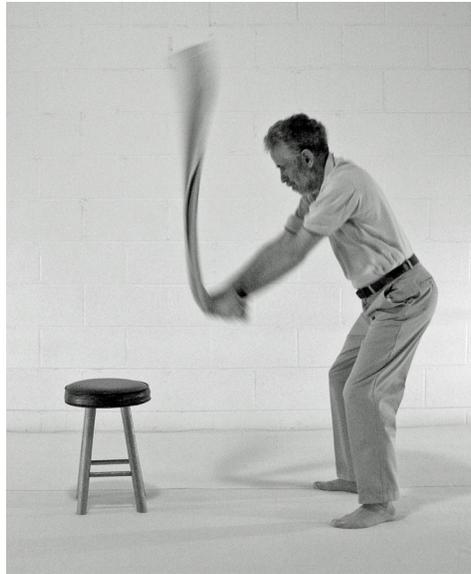
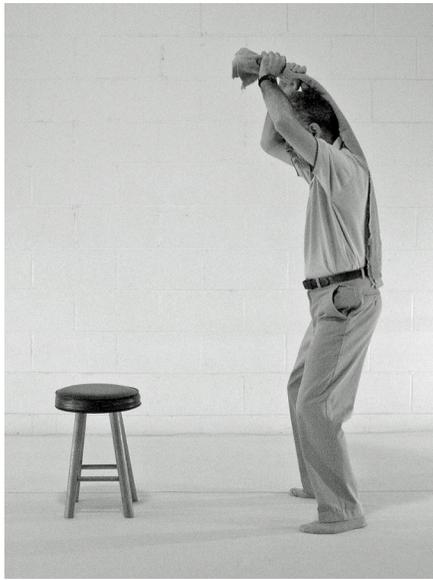
Stand in front of and facing a table, couch, or chair, with your feet side by side and about shoulder width apart. Press your fingertips into your hip joints and with a rapid movement thrust your tailbone back while bending your knees and inclining your torso just a bit forward. Do this a few times. This is similar to the *Pressing Hip Joints* exercise (3.5).

Next hold a bath towel in both hands. Raise your hands above your head, and let the bath towel lie along your back. Swing your hands in a large arc forward, bringing the towel up over your head and down onto the chair in front of you. The movement is similar to chopping down with an axe.

Now put the two parts of the exercise together. See if you can generate the power of the chopping movement not from the arms but from the movement of the hip joints. If you do this correctly, you will experience that you get a far stronger chopping action with far less work.

And last, let's try an experiment. Do the towel chopping movement again, but this time in a state of anger. How does that feel? What does it do to the movement and to the amount of effort you expend and the amount of power you generate?

Do the towel chopping movement again in a state of love. What happens? Most people experience that the movement is both easier and stronger.



PUSHING WITH KINDNESS 5.10

This exercise will be essentially the same exercise as the *Pushing* exercise (4.6), with one addition.

Stand in a T-stance and thrust your body forward. As your body moves forward, thrust both hands/arms forward at about chest height, and use this thrusting movement to push a partner away from you. Stand facing him, and deliver the shove to his chest or shoulders.

There are a couple of safety considerations. First, contact your partner gently not with sudden, forceful impact—and then use the movement to shove him away from you. Second, your partner should be prepared to very rapidly back away in the direction of the shove—rather than stumble backwards and fall.

The added step in this exercise is to simultaneously do the act of pushing and the Smiling Heart exercise. Beyond just calmness and non-oppositional power (which we worked with in exercise 4.5), what is it like to exert power against another person from an attitude of love and kindness? Is that a contradiction in terms?

I would like to say again that love and power, far from being opposites, are inseparable. Love doesn't make you weak, and power doesn't make you brutal. The replacement for the distress response is the integrated state of love and power.

In our culture, we are given the dichotomous categories of winning or losing. Those categories go along with two others, brutal and wimpy. Winning has connotations of brutality, and losing is wimpy. Love goes along with losing and wimpiness. However, we have no word for strong and effective as well as loving and kind. What we have no word for we cannot easily think about or make a part of our lives. I would like to suggest that the somatic experience of an integrated state of power and love is an important element in non-violence and conflict resolution. And that somatic experience can be embedded in new, enhanced meanings for the words "power" and "love." With these newly refurbished words, we can think, talk and act in new ways. This will be examined in more depth in Chapter 13.

CHAPTER 6

FOCUS

In this chapter, we will begin moving from the more obvious level of breathing and body mechanics to a subtler level of practice. This will involve intentionality as a foundation for effective, peaceful action. Intentionality is the process whereby a willed decision to perform an action creates the muscular responses for executing the action.

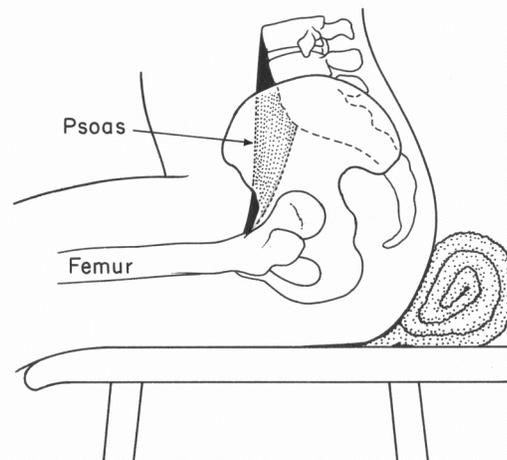
We will start with a breathing exercise that is very valuable as a practice for clarifying intentionality. However, before we work with it, it will be helpful to learn how to maintain a stable, comfortable posture during the breathing exercise.

TOWEL SITTING: PRACTICE 6.1

There is a simple way of supporting the pelvis and back that will make sitting much easier and more comfortable, in the following breathing exercise as well as in daily life activities. You will need a bath towel for this. If it is really large and thick, it won't work. And likewise, if it is thin and skimpy, it won't work. Take an ordinary bath towel and fold it in half widthwise. Then fold it in half lengthwise. Then roll it up, not too tight and hard, but also not too loose.

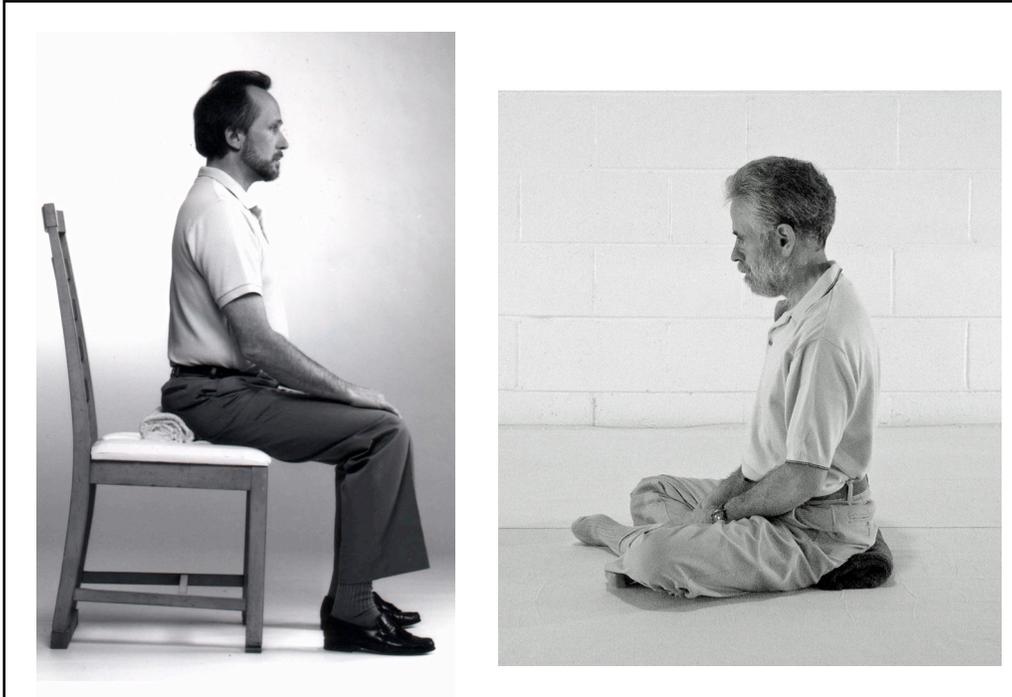
You can sit either on a chair or cross-legged on the floor. If you are sitting cross-legged on the floor, the most comfortable position will be to have both your ankles on the floor one in front of the other, rather than one on top of the other or one ankle crossed over the other. If you have one ankle atop the other, one hip will be higher and your posture will not be balanced.

Sit with your pelvis rolled forward into alignment. Now lean forward and get your weight off your sitbones. Raise your sitbones off the chair or floor a few inches (about seven centimeters), put the towel roll underneath your tailbone, and then sit back down onto the towel roll. It is important that



the towel be positioned under your tailbone not under your sitbones. Your sitbones must still rest on the surface you are sitting on.

Then come back to your vertical sitting posture. If you have the towel positioned right, you will feel your tailbone resting on it, and you will feel the towel supporting your whole spinal column and torso. Most people feel lighter, taller and freer when they sit with a towel roll for support. They feel that the effort they usually expend on holding their bodies up simply isn't needed.



This towel roll is so comfortable because it stabilizes the pelvis and supports the spinal column. Normally when you sit, the two sitbones are all that contact the surface you're sitting on, and that is an unstable arrangement. The pelvis is essentially a two-legged stool, and it tends to roll back. It takes muscular effort to hold the pelvis in position, and people usually use their back muscles to hold the pelvis in place. However, those are the wrong muscles, and they tire quickly. In trying to reduce the strain, people slump until their bodies hang stably on their ligaments. A better way to create stability is to use the psoas and iliacus muscles to hold the pelvis in position. Better still is using those muscles to position the pelvis properly and then filling in the gap between the tailbone and the chair surface with a towel wedge (as shown above). This in effect provides a third leg for the stool and reduces the work even the right muscles need to do. (For more information on efficient sitting, you could take a look at my book, *Comfort at Your Computer*.)

You need to be able to find the stable, vertical posture through your own body actions, but once you know how to create a balanced sitting posture on your own, you can use a towel roll to support yourself in this posture. This stable and relaxed posture is a foundation for calmness under pressure and effective responses to conflict. And an excellent way to practice this calm stability is through an extension of the *Belly Breathing* exercise.

BASIC BREATHING: PRACTICE 6.2

Sit on a chair with your feet flat on the floor, or sit cross-legged on the floor. Use a towel roll for pelvic support. (Kneeling, sitting on your heels, is also a good sitting position. It puts the heels under your tailbone and creates the same upright sitting posture as the towel roll. Some people may prefer this kneeling posture for the breathing exercise.)

With your eyes gently closed, breathe in through your nose and out through your mouth. As you breathe in, let your belly expand gently. Focus your awareness on the feeling of drawing your breath/awareness down into your body core. Don't rigidify your chest and upper back when you inhale, but let them expand in a gentle, spontaneous way as well. You should feel that the inhalation starts in your belly and expands through your body into your back and chest as well. As you exhale, it will be almost like a sigh. The air will fall out of your mouth. Make sure to let your lips and jaw relax open. Don't purse your lips and blow.

Don't force your breath. Breathe in your natural rhythm without trying to hold the breath or control its timing.

If you feel that your breathing gets softer and calmer during the exercise, then you are moving in the right direction. If you feel uncomfortable, perhaps that you aren't getting enough air, then you are holding tension somewhere in your body. Since you are learning about this on your own from this book, without an experienced teacher to go to for help, then you will have to figure out the tension pattern on your own. The best way to proceed is just to relax and let yourself be uncomfortable. Don't push the exercise, but do it for a few minutes at a time until you happen to notice where the tension is that is interfering. If it remains uncomfortable, don't feel that you have to keep on working with the exercise.

You may wish to do this breathing exercise for only a few minutes at a time until you get used to it. As you continue working with it, you may wish to do it for twenty minutes or more, once or twice a day. If you do this exercise for a few minutes every day, you will build up clear habits of keeping your body relaxed and powerful, and that will be very helpful in handling and resolving conflict. As you continue to play with this exercise, you will find that a few full breaths done in the midst of some stressful situation will calm you down and help you react to conflict in new and more perceptive ways.

Breathing in through your nose and out through your mouth is useful for two reasons. It makes the absolutely ordinary process of breathing into something new, which helps you stay focused on it. Also, it is a bridge between an inner and an outer focus. Normally you breathe out through your mouth when you are talking or expending physical effort. Both those tasks are directed outward into the world. This breathing exercise focuses on what you are doing inside your body, but its purpose is to cultivate an inward relaxation which will allow effective functioning out in the world. By focusing inward on the task of breathing outward, you are bridging your inner state and your outer capacity to act.

Ideally you should relax your belly and breathe from there all the time. However, breathing in through your nose and out through your mouth is just for this exercise. In daily life, you should breathe normally, in and out through your nose.

Breathing and opening your body in this way is very relaxing. Breathing is supposed to be a gentle, internal massage, and it is very comfortable when it is. This internal physical softness creates a psychological state of relaxed alertness. Negative feelings such as fear, anger, anxiety, confusion and so on always involve some form of twisting, and constriction or collapse, in muscles, breathing, posture and movement. Breathing in an open way is the opposite of this constriction and serves to counteract emotional stress.

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Underlying the physical process of distress contraction is the *intentional* process of contraction, and learning to sense the micromovements involved in the distress response is a powerful aid in constructing an open and peaceful body state on the level of intentionality.

WANTING A PENCIL 6.3

Put a pencil on the floor, and then stand about ten feet (about three meters) away. Stand up comfortably. Look at the pencil. Oh, I forgot to tell you, this is a magic pencil. With this pencil, anything you write will come true. You could have a swimming pool filled with chocolate ice cream. You could have twenty hot sports cars. You could establish world peace! You get the idea. Wouldn't you love to go over and get that pencil?

When I work with children, I usually use the image of a big, hot, delicious pizza sitting on a table. That is more motivating to them than a magic pencil. If you'd rather, you can use the image of pizza yourself. Or anything else that strikes your fancy.

Build up within yourself a feeling that it is a wonderful pencil and you would really like to have it. Actually *intend* to go over and get the pencil. You have seen little kids visibly *wanting* to go get a toy. It must be that kind of authentic wanting. You must feel it in your body.

It is important to be clear about what wanting the pencil means. “Wanting” is not the same as “going.” Don’t actually walk over and get the pencil. Focus instead on the *feeling* of wanting to go over.

It is also important not to become stiff and rigid. When I say not to actually go get the pencil, I don’t mean that you have to make your body absolutely motionless. Don’t freeze up and physically prevent your body from moving in order to focus on wanting to move. Just let your body experience the wanting and react to it naturally and spontaneously—without actually walking over to the pencil.

Another difficulty in this experiment is that “wanting” does not mean merely *thinking about* getting the pencil. There is, for example, a difference between thinking about loving someone and actually feeling love for them. *Thinking about* is more of a disconnected intellectual picture, but *feeling* is an action you do with your “heart” and your body. Relax, be natural, and create an authentic feeling in your mindbody of desire and intention to walk over and get the pencil. Most people can create this feeling when they focus on it, though many need some personal instruction to figure out how to do it.

What happens when you stand and focus on wanting the pencil? Take some time to let the feeling build. Once you establish this feeling, you will probably feel yourself “involuntarily” tipping toward the pencil. For most people, this movement will be a small drift toward the pencil, perhaps a quarter of an inch (about half a centimeter) or so, though some people will actually move quite a bit. Most people will feel as though the pencil were a magnet gently drawing them towards it. (Some people will have other responses, and they generally have to do with whether they feel they are able to move toward what they want.)

This is the process that I call *intentional projection*.

What does it mean that you leaned toward the pencil or the pizza? It means that wanting with your mind immediately engages your muscles for movement. So watching how your muscles work is a way of looking inside your mind.

When you have an image of a movement and intend to execute the movement, your brain sends nerve impulses to the muscles which will do the movement. The muscles can act with a range of force, from a barely perceptible tensing to an all-out clenching. However, even below the range of what is barely perceptible to most people, there is still physical activity, the faintest stirrings of the muscles. You could call these faint, normally imperceptible tensings “micromovements.”

The pencil-wanting experiment is a way to help you begin to notice the micromovements which are the small beginnings of the action of going to get the pencil. The experiment is an attempt to help you make the imperceptible perceptible. With training, you can sensitize yourself to events that are an ordinary part of human existence but which almost no one notices. Have you ever been driving down the street, come to a traffic light just turning yellow, and felt your foot wavering between the gas and brake pedals? That’s an example of intentionality in daily life. You were sending your muscles two different messages. You were torn between stepping on

the gas or the brakes, and your muscles could not execute a clear movement until you decided what to do.

This experiment makes it quite clear that there is an intimate connection between your mind and body. All you have to do is wish to begin moving in some direction and your body will begin to do that movement. That is not awfully startling when you think about it. The body is, after all, the way we go about doing what the mind wants. But feeling this, experiencing it, gives us a lived experience of the fact that there is no separation between the mind and the body, even though the nature of our language forces us to talk about them as separate, different things. Of course, though there is no separation, we often wish to discuss specifically the mental or the physical element of human experience, so having language which distinguishes mind and body is useful. However, even though it is often useful to speak about the mind and the body as though they were two separate things, it is important always to remember their oneness.

The importance of this process of intentional projection is that paying attention to it offers a subtle method of discerning the faint beginnings of contraction and a powerful method of replacing the constriction of conflict with the expansiveness of peacefulness.

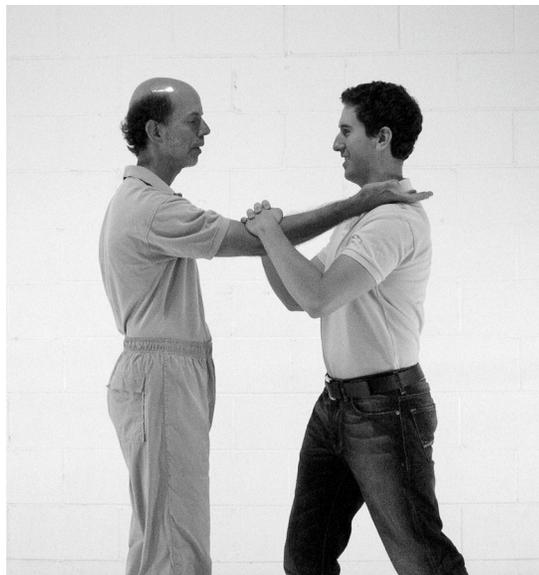
This next practice is a basic Aikido exercise. Aikido is a soft martial art, one which emphasizes physical relaxation and mental focus rather than hard muscular strength. Relaxation and focus are the foundation for a different kind of strength.

UNBENDABLE ARM 6.4

Stand in front of your partner and put your right arm over his or her left shoulder. (You can reverse the directions if you are left handed.) Keep your elbow somewhat bent and pointed down at the floor. If you point your elbow horizontally toward the right, there is a risk you could injure your elbow.

Have your partner put both hands on top of your elbow and push down to bend it. He can build up to a firm pressure, but it has to be gradual so there is no risk of injury. Your task is to keep your arm strong so it doesn't bend.

After you try this, stop to reflect on what you did. Did you get stiff and resist as hard as you could? Most people do. How did



that work? Was it comfortable? Did you succeed in keeping your arm from bending?

Try the same task, but this time don't do it from an oppositional state of mind. Put your hand back on your partner's shoulder. This time unclench your hand, gently open your fingers, and point all of your fingers at an imaginary flower growing on a hillside in front of you. Without straining, reach all your fingertips toward the flower, moving them a little closer in order to touch it. Let your breathing and your whole body stay open and soft. Keep your focus on r-e-e-aching outward toward the flower.

Now have your partner push down on your elbow to bend it. Be sure not to resist. But don't go limp either. Just continue your steady concentration on reaching gently outward toward the flower. Don't space out and lose awareness of your partner. Be aware of him or her, but don't get involved in a struggle.

Most people experience that when they concentrate on reaching toward the flower and don't fight the pressure, their arms have a relaxed strength that will easily resist and not bend.

We will shortly do some exercises which will focus on using this kind of soft outward focus to energize and strengthen the whole body.

The *Unbendable Arm* exercise further indicates how the will and the muscles interact. By deliberately increasing the will to reach outward toward the flower, your muscles acted more effectively to resist your partner's pressure. However, by focusing your will on opposition to the pressure, you weakened your muscles. Why? The act of aiming at a goal is built on an explicit picture of the outcome you desire. However, the decision to oppose some event carries *implicitly* within it a picture of being overwhelmed by that which you are opposing, and that picture also sends messages to your muscles. By adopting the negative goal of opposing your partner's pressure, you are automatically moving your will toward the act of bending your arm. In other words, you are energizing both the muscles that would bend the arm and the muscles that would straighten the arm, and that internal conflict weakens your action.

REACHING FOR THE FLOWER 6.5

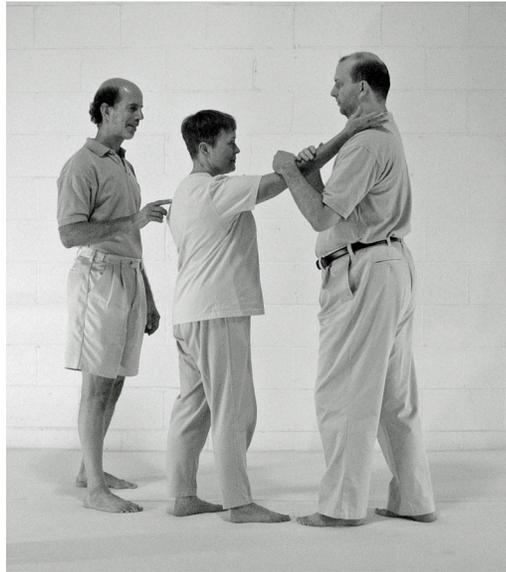
For this exercise you will need a third person. The exercise will use the *Unbendable Arm* reaching out, and it will add a distraction to make things more entertaining. Imagine a flower floating at shoulder height in front of you about ten feet (three meters) away. Raise your arm, and reach out toward the flower to touch it. Your job is to maintain your focus on the intentional projection toward the flower.

Your partner's job, as before, will be to try to bend your arm. The third person will provide some distractions. What kind of distractions? Well, one distraction would be to simply stand in front of you and block your line of sight toward the flower. Does that make your focus waver? Your partner could stand in front of the imaginary flower and dance, or sing, or tell bad jokes. Does that make the distraction worse?

To focus your concentration, remember to soften your belly and breathe in through your nose and out through your mouth. And at the same time that you focus inward on your body, focus outward on trying to touch the flower.

A more distracting distraction would be for your partner to tap you on various parts of your body or even tickle you.

What does it take to enable you to maintain focus? It is important not to ignore the distraction in the name of keeping focused. If you were involved in an actual conflict, you could not afford to ignore the conflict in order to maintain your focus.



In the next chapter, we will take the processes of focusing on breath and reaching into constructing a sense of somatic spaciousness.

CHAPTER 7

SPACIOUSNESS

The process of embodied peacemaking is about becoming aware of how we contract when we are threatened and how to open the body instead. One element in opening the body is softening. Another element is empowerment.

A third element is expansion. This chapter will focus on how to become spacious and expansive inside your body and how to reach out gently and alertly into the world around you. We will focus specifically on creating internal space as a foundation for effective action in external space.

SKIN BREATHING: PRACTICE 7.1

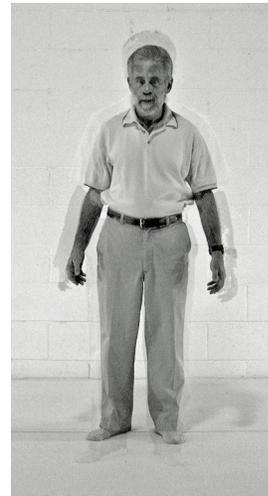
I'm going to suggest something impossible. Well, it will have a distinct and real result anyway.

Stand up, and breathe comfortably, inhaling and expanding your belly, exhaling and letting the air fall gently out.

Your skin, of course, is porous. So it ought to be possible to inhale into your belly and exhale outward through all of your skin. You would breathe out a cloud of air all around your body. What does that feel like?

Most people experience a sense of heightened awareness of the space all around them.

Try walking around and maintaining that way of breathing outward, of creating that cloud of awareness around you. Is it harder when you're moving around?



The next three exercises will offer a further way of feeling body spaciousness. These exercises are all related to the *Wanting a Pencil* exercise (6.3) and the *Unbendable Arm* exercise (6.4). In the first exercise, you wanted a pencil and felt how that intention to get it actually organized your body for *moving* to go get it. In these exercises, you will be focusing your intention on projecting outward, and your body will organize itself for the action of expansion.

REACHING FOR PIZZA SLICES 7.2

Imagine that there are two delicious slices of pizza floating in the air, out in front of you and a bit to the side, one to your right and one to your left. Reach out

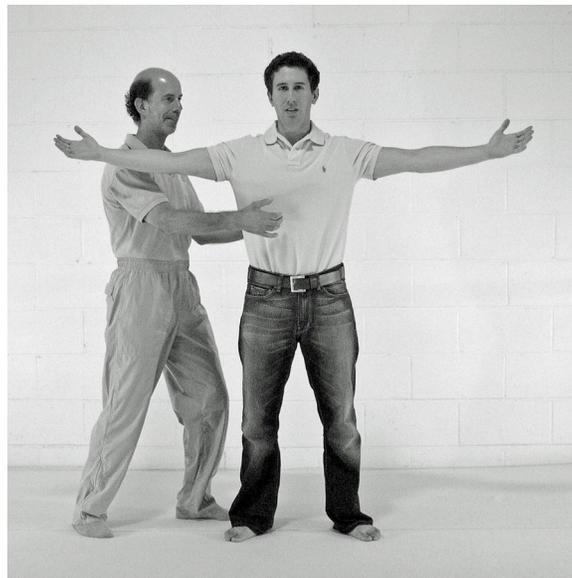
with your arms toward both slices at the same time. Can you focus on what is going on within your body as well as on your relationship with the two objects outside of yourself?

This is obviously much the same exercise as the *Flower* exercise (6.5) in the last chapter. However, the difficulty lies in maintaining two focus targets at once.



Now, let's provide a challenge. Again, we will ask your partner to try to distract you. The usual things will do. Tickling or tapping you is good. Or if you want a real challenge, try to maintain a calm body and an outward flow of intention while your partner flicks your nose with his finger!

What do you do when your partner tries to distract you? What happens to your breathing? Does your posture change? Do you stay relaxed and alert? Do you tense up and pull away? Or something else? What do you do in your face, and in your body as a whole? Does your concentration on reaching outward for the two pizza slices waver? Or can you keep your breathing and your body stable and clear, maintain



your concentration, and not get sucked into conflictual thinking?

The real physical intrusion almost always makes people very uncomfortable. Most people pull away, grimace, tense up, and restrict their breathing, all of which interferes with the reaching out.

As your partner touches you, consciously and deliberately relax your belly. Relax your tongue and throat, and let your pelvic floor muscles (the muscles around your genitals and anus) relax as well. In addition, breathe in through your nose and out through your mouth, focusing your breathing into your belly. Choose to keep your breathing soft, steady and continuous. Open your heart. Feel your legs and feet contacting the floor. How does all that affect the way you respond and how you reach for the pizza?

Most people find that an intrusion which was very uncomfortable at first becomes quite trivial when they maintain their focus and relaxation. Most of the discomfort that you experienced you created yourself through your dislike of the intrusion. Of course there is a certain real physical discomfort because you are, indeed, being touched, but most of the discomfort was something you added on top of that bare minimum. Most people find that when they can open their bodies, they can much more easily maintain their focus on the two slices of pizza.

Just for comparison, try tensing your breathing, throat and pelvic musculature as preparation for having your nose flicked. Most people experience that not only brings back the discomfort but greatly increases it. It also destroys the focus on the pizza.

SIX DIRECTIONS REACHING: PRACTICE 7.3

Stand up with your feet about shoulder width apart and your hands down by your side. Notice that you are standing on the soles of your feet. Where is the center of the earth? Way down below you. With the soles of your feet, reach down into the earth. Don't just visualize or think about reaching down, but actually sense in your body and through your feet a reaching toward the middle of the earth. Stay with that sensation/action for a moment.

Let go of reaching down. Now, with the top of your head and shoulders reach upward to feel the sky. This should be a very gentle action, an intention or micro-movement without any strain.

Try reaching forward with the whole front surface of your body. And then reach back behind you with the whole back surface of your body.

Reach out to the right with the right side of your body. And then reach out to the left with the left side of your body.

You could reach toward the horizon, or you could find something closer to focus on, as close as you need for it to be a clear sensing process for you. You are probably doing this exercise indoors, so you could reach below the floor and above the ceiling, and out to the walls. You could reach out into the air six or eight inches

(about fifteen centimeters), if that is easier for you to sense. Or you could imagine six slices of pizza to reach toward.

Now, do all the directions together. Reach down and up, left and right, and forward and back.

How does that feel? Most people experience this as spacious and energizing. You don't have to shrink. You can take up space.

You can practice the *Six Directions Reaching* exercise as you walk around during your daily activities. That will help you practice being more present and more alive. In particular, you can add the *Six Directions Reaching* to the *Feet Walking* (3.8) process to create a vigorous, energetic way of moving through your world.

You can also use the *Six Directions Reaching* to help you maintain your inner spaciousness when you feel threatened. That will help you respond with more clarity and strength.



The *Six Directions Reaching* exercise can obviously be used during daily life activities and during conflicts. This next exercise is better done as a solitary, sitting practice to strengthen your contact with the six directions and inner spaciousness.

SIX DIRECTIONS BREATHING: PRACTICE 7.4

You will use the same sitting posture and the same breathing process as in the *Basic Breathing* (6.2) exercise, but you here you will add to that a way of “aiming” your breath as you exhale. In the *Six Directions Breathing* exercise, you exhale in different directions through your body, which generates micromovements and changes your overall way of holding your body. By practicing intending to open your body radiantly outward in a number of directions, you will develop the habit of keeping your body opened and balanced.

Sit quietly in the upright posture, using a towel roll for support. You can sit on a chair away from the backrest or sit on the floor with your legs folded. Shut your eyes. Inhale gently through your nose, and let your belly expand gently as you do. The movement of inhaling should be focused in the core of your body just below your navel, though of course your chest and back will expand gently as well. Then exhale through your mouth, relaxing your mouth and throat.

As you exhale, imagine that you are gently blowing the air down through your body, out your bottom, to a spot six or eight inches (about fifteen centimeters) below you. Exhale down for half a dozen or so breaths.

Don't just think about this or picture it in your mind, but actually *feel* it in your body, *do* it in your body. Be careful not to tip your head up and roll your eyes up toward the ceiling as you imagine the path the air takes through your body. When people look upward, they are usually engaging in an abstract visual process of imagination rather than an embodied sensation process of imagination.

Then change the direction. Imagine/feel that you are exhaling up through your body, out the top of your head, to a spot six or eight inches above you. Breathe gently. Don't purse your lips and blow, but just open your mouth, relax your throat, and let the air come out.

After you have done about half a dozen breaths, then breathe out through your right side toward a spot about six inches to your right. Next breathe out through your left side. Then breathe to your rear out through your back, and next breathe forward out through the pit of your belly and the front of your body.

For the last, exhale in all six directions at once, down and up, left and right, forward and back.

Exhaling a number of times in one direction gives you enough time to really feel how to aim your breath in that direction. However, once you have practiced this whole sequence and felt how it works, there is a more balanced way of doing the exercise. If you feel ready for it, instead of exhaling in one direction for half a dozen breaths or so, exhale once in each direction and go through all the breaths in a seven breath cycle. Always start with the down direction because that is a way of stabilizing the body. Then exhale up. After that it isn't important in what order you do the horizontal pairs, but exhale into the right and left directions and the backward and forward directions. Then for the seventh breath, exhale in all six directions. And then start the cycle over. You can do this exercise for a minute or ten minutes, or for whatever is comfortable and enjoyable for you.

Once you practice this exercise and gain skill with the breathing, you will find it productive to aim your breath farther away. Experiment with how far you can focus your breath and notice what happens as you aim your breath farther and farther out. Make sure not to introduce effort or strain as you aim farther out.

You could also experiment with exhaling in lines between the six cardinal directions. Or you could experiment with exhaling the feeling of love. If you let the exercise talk to you, it will show you a lot of possibilities.

This exercise is a way of practicing maintaining an open, even, symmetrical awareness of your whole body and the space around you. Most people, when they first start working with this exercise, experience that there are areas of their body or directions of their breath that are not clear for them. Any dim spot in the feeling of your body's field of attention is an area of reduced body awareness and reduced vigor. Finding gaps in your field of awareness and breathing life back into them is a

way of remembering to live fully in your body. More than that, it is a way of contacting the feeling of living fully in the world. This exercise offers a way of practicing relaxing, balancing and empowering your whole body all at once. It would be well worth putting a few minutes into doing this exercise every day.

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There is an exercise that I often use to help people practice staying calm and loving under extreme pressure. However, I must warn you that this exercise involves experiencing intense but non-injurious pain. This is logically the same as all the challenges you've practiced with so far, but it is more intense. As you experience the pain, pay attention to your body, notice the elements of constriction and asymmetry, and then use all your tools of breathing, postural balance and intentional projection to create the open state we have been working on. And remember to look at your "enemy" with a warm heart.

Remember, if you don't feel it is appropriate for you to do this exercise, don't do it. Use your skills in relaxed stability and simply tell your partner you don't wish to do it. Also, remember that your partner may not be emotionally ready to deal with causing you pain. In that case, he should use his skills to set good boundaries, and you should find a another partner to do this exercise with.

Before we jump into the exercise, there is an issue to deal with. Many people find themselves unable to hurt anyone. The word "hurt" is ambiguous. We often don't distinguish between two senses of the word, that is, "cause pain" or "cause injury". I'm not asking you to injure your partner. That would not be appropriate or productive. I am asking you to cause her pain so that she can learn how to get strong enough to deal with it. This is a respectful, cooperative learning situation. You are providing your partner with the gift of a challenge to study and practice with.

PAIN CONTROL 7.5

By pressing into a nerve point, your partner can generate intense, non-injurious pain that stops as soon as s/he releases the pressure. (It is non-injurious, but occasionally someone will develop a bruise from the pressure.) This is a considerably greater challenge than merely having "slugs" rubbed in your face.

Have your partner pinch the web of muscle between your thumb and first finger. Make sure your partner has short fingernails or he will punch little holes in your skin. Have him pinch by digging the tips of his thumb and first finger hard into that soft area. If he is doing it right, it will be very painful. (Some people have very high pain thresholds and will feel no pain from this. There are more painful nerve points, but how to use them is hard to describe so you will have to make do with this.)



What do you do when you feel the pain? Most people jump right out of their skins. Notice your breathing, your facial expressions, and your posture. Most people inhale suddenly, tense their shoulders and try to pull away from the pain.

Now, simultaneously open your body by reaching out in all six directions and open your heart. When you are in the state of loving power, have your partner pinch you again. Stay focused on keeping your breathing calm and expansive and your heart open. Keep your eyes open and continue to pay attention to what your partner is doing, but respond to it from the state of soft breath and open heart. What happens this time? Most people find that the pain is vastly decreased. It becomes a simple event that they can handle. Most people find that they don't feel distressed by or antagonistic toward their partner. Many people even feel very loving toward the person causing the pain.

Just for a comparison, have your partner pinch your hand again, and this time hate her and hate the pain she is causing you. What happens? Most people find that when they approach the challenge in a state of hatred, the pain is far more intense and they are far less able to handle it well. In addition, many people find themselves feeling an urge to hurt their attacker.

It is significant that at first many people's awareness is totally dominated by the *experience* of pain, and they don't have any awareness at all of their physical responses. As the pinch is repeated and students have time to examine their responses, they become able to give a detailed list of their responses. Generally these include fear responses such as inhaling suddenly, raising and tensing the shoulders, tensing the neck, and leaning away from their partner. It also frequently includes facial changes such as raising the eyebrows and widening the eyes. There can also be anger

responses such as tightening the fists or glaring at the partner. Frequently, people will numb their bodies or dissociate.

When people breathe, relax, and anchor themselves, they can begin to notice what they do and feel. When people utilize their new skills in relaxation, postural alignment, and generation of power and love, they experience that the pain is really not that bad and that they can handle it. They experience that being able to handle pain is really a very concrete process of placing the *body* in the right state. *They also realize that much of the pain they experience in their lives is a result of their oppositional way of receiving life's challenges and not inherently part of the challenge itself.*

SEAMLESS BREATHING: PRACTICE 7.6

Here is another method of freeing your breath.

Pay attention to the rhythm and feel of your breathing. In particular, notice what happens at the moment you shift directions of breathing, from breathing out to in or in to out. Most people hold or stiffen their breath slightly. However, that is not necessary.

It will be easiest to learn how to free your breath by first deliberately tightening it. At the moment that your breath shifts direction, for just a second or two, hold your breath and constrict your throat, chest and belly. That will serve to amplify the slight gripping you probably had been doing before.

Now let go of the gripping completely. Let the back of your throat soften and widen, and breathe so gently that your breath no longer halts. Instead of breathing in a reciprocating line, like a piston going up and down, you will feel that you are breathing more circularly, without any distinct change of direction. Your breathing will feel seamless, and your body will feel lighter and freer.

When I breathe this way, I experience a sensation that my body is filled with sweet spaciousness. The feeling reminds me of the soft sweetness of confectioner's sugar.

You could combine Seamless Breathing with Six Directions Breathing. That would mean taking care to exhale and inhale seamlessly in the six directions.

COLD SHOWERS 7.7

Here is another opportunity to constrict your breath.

Taking ice cold showers is a marvelous centering practice. It really feels worse than having your hand pinched. It lasts longer. You can do it every day. And you don't need a partner for it.

Can you keep your muscles relaxed and your breathing soft and free while you are under a stream of frigid water? Can you reach out into the space around you? If you can, you will find the icy water much more tolerable.

I had a client to whom I recommended this practice. She looked at me and remarked, "You treat yourself like a lab rat, don't you?" When I asked her what she meant, she replied that I observe myself and train myself with the curiosity and detached perspective of a scientist training a rat. I had never thought of it that way. It certainly beats being overwhelmed by a stream of cold water.

What is it really that you are learning here? Something that is rarely taught in our world, and something that is very important: *how to develop and strengthen a sense of the self as distinct from what happens to the self*. Our awareness is so easily and so often dragged outward, away from ourselves. We focus on outward events and goals. We focus on what the world around us makes us do or feel. And we lose our sense of ourselves as having some choice about what we will feel and how we will respond.

The very structure of the English language encourages us to lose our sense of the self as a chooser. "You make me feel so angry" or sad, or happy, etc, etc. But in such a linguistic construction, the power is put on the other to cause us to be or feel something. What would happen if the ordinary linguistic form were "I make myself so angry about you"? Would that remind us that we, to a great extent, create our own feelings and have a choice about we will think and feel?

The exercises in this book are essentially about the process of self-remembering. About learning the skill of noticing the self and being able to choose how you will live. About being able to devote some attention to yourself even while attending to the world. Especially while attending to the world, since remembering the self will allow you to think and act with greater efficiency and effectiveness.

Though this last exercise is about reaching outward even while being hit with icy water, fundamentally the exercise is about the person who is doing the reaching.

CHAPTER 8

VOICE

Being able to speak out clearly is part of what it takes to resolve conflicts. This is true both in the sense of the physical process of using your voice and in the sense of being able to communicate effectively. As usual, how well you do the underlying physical process is a key factor in the effectiveness of the "higher" function.

SPEAKING: PRACTICE 8.1

Stand up. Stand in your customary, habitual posture, and count aloud from one to ten. Pay attention to what you do and feel as you speak. Where in your body do you feel that your voice comes from? How does your voice sound? What is your breathing like?

Many people identify the origin of their voices as being in the throat or chest area. It is certainly true that those areas are involved, but there is more.

Let's try some body awareness work. Spread your feet about shoulder-width apart. Put your fingers into the inguinal creases and press towards your rear a bit, letting your knees bend and your tailbone move rearward a bit, as in the *Pressing Hip Joints* exercise (3.5).

Let your tongue and throat relax. Let your belly and pelvic floor muscles hang free. Feel the weight of your body pressing your feet onto and into the floor. Breathe in and out freely.

Now, count aloud again. How does your voice feel this time? Many people experience that their voices sound richer and deeper, that the voice comes from deep in their guts.

Speaking is like a telephone connection in the sense that there are two speakers with a line between them. Using your voice takes place at one end of the line. Communicating, however, does not involve just one end of a line of communication, but two ends. You speak from *you* to *him*. Not only is it important to focus on the end that is within you, but it is also crucial to focus on the end that is in the person you are talking to.

SPEAKING OUT: PRACTICE 8.2

Stand up, look around you, and get ready to speak. Try talking about something that is important to you.

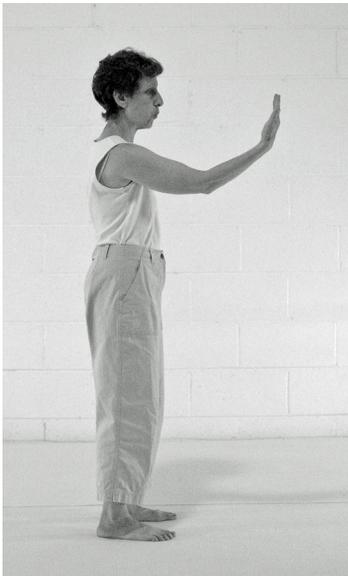
How does that feel? What do you do with your breathing and your throat? Where do you aim your voice? Where do you send it to?

Many people have a hard time thrusting their words out into the world. They pull their words in, they pull their breath in, and they hide their voice. How can the voice be aimed out into the world rather than aiming it into the dark space within?

How would you "aim" your voice? If it doesn't come naturally to you, one trick is to aim your breath. Let's try a little

game. Lie down on your back, with a pillow under your head and one under your knees. Put a tissue across your face, inhale gently and fully, and then blow the tissue straight up into the air as far as you can.

Many people can't easily *aim* the air out and up, and they cannot move the tissue much. Pick a particular spot above you, perhaps a yard (a meter) or so up in the air. Aim your breath at that spot. When you get the hang of it, you will see the tissue going up far above you into the air. That is the process of aiming your breath up and out.



There is another simple way to aim your words outward. Hold your hand in front of your face and close to it, with your palm facing your face. Now blow at your palm.

Next, hold your arm out at arm's length in front of you, with your wrist bent so that your palm faces your face, and blow at your palm again. Most people have no trouble aiming their blowing close in or farther out.

Hold your hand out at arm's length and try speaking while aiming your breath and your words at your palm.

When you speak, do you aim your breath out into the world? Or do you withhold your breath and your words even as you speak? Go back to saying something that feels important to you. Try speaking while aiming your breath, your words, and your message outward.

SPEAKING FARTHER 8.3

Ask a partner to stand about three feet (about one meter) away and listen while you speak the numbers from one to ten. What does your voice sound like to her? How well does it carry? Is it clear? Does it sound either harsh or weak?

When you speak to your partner, where exactly do you aim your voice? Do you aim it at all? Do you find yourself speaking toward a spot in space which is different from where she actually is standing? In doing this exercise, some people find that they speak toward a spot which is much closer than where their partners actually are standing.

Go back to the posture and breathing patterns we worked with in the last two exercises. Project your breath and your voice to your partner as you count again. Have your partner reflect back to you what differences she hears.

Have your partner stand about twenty feet (about six meters) away and listen while you recite the alphabet. How does your voice feel and sound to you? How does it sound to your partner? Does the increased distance make a difference? Are you aiming your voice all the way to your partner?

Try alternating aiming your voice at your partner and aiming only about a foot in front of your face. How does each alternative feel and sound to you? How does it sound to your partner? Which is more effective as a foundation for communication?

SPEAKING LOUDER 8.4

Ask your partner to stand about twenty feet (about six meters) away and listen while you say the numbers from one to ten.

Instead of just speaking at a normal conversational volume, can you speak the numbers at your partner loudly? How does this sound and feel to you? What does your voice sound like to your partner? How well does it carry? Is it clear? Does it sound either harsh or weak?

Many people notice that they produce a louder sound by tensing and constricting their throats and their whole bodies. Can you generate a louder tone by opening your body and stabilizing your posture?

Many people find it emotionally uncomfortable to raise their voices and speak out loudly. However, a loud voice is like a hammer. There's nothing intrinsically wrong or impolite about a hammer. It can be used to build a house or to hurt someone. In just the same way, a loud voice can be used in a friendly and respectful manner, or it can be used destructively and disrespectfully—just as a quiet voice can be.

Count again, doing both power and love in your body. Have your partner reflect back to you what differences she hears.

I have developed many exercises about assertiveness and expansiveness. One that is particularly illuminating has to do with the way the whole body responds to your manner of speaking.

MOUTH MARBLES 8.5

Stand in a strong T-stance. (This is the same stance you used in 4.5.) Both your ankles are on a straight line forward, with your back foot turned out a bit less than ninety degrees. Have your partner push on your shoulders towards your rear. Your job is to resist. Of course, the push should be applied gradually and should not be forceful enough to be dangerous. Instead of bending forward and resisting with your shoulders and back, try to maintain an upright posture and do the resisting with your legs.

Have your partner stop pushing. Stand comfortably, and count aloud from one to ten with a loud, clear voice. Then count again in the same clear manner while your partner pushes on you. Notice what you feel and how you respond to the push.

Then, as your partner continues to push on you, shift to counting aloud in a mumbled, indistinct manner, as though your mouth were filled with marbles. What happens to your posture and your ability to resist?

Almost always people experience that when they mumble, they are unable to resist strongly. The mind and body form an integrated whole, and when one part goes slack and limp, the whole does. If you don't speak clearly and confidently, your body weakens and so does your communication.

Your voice is such a core part of your person. When your voice is used limply, that limpness spreads into other parts of your body as well. This last experiment is a good argument in favor of speaking clearly and resonantly. But don't worry if you can't do that *yet*.

Often in conflict situations, you have to say things that are anxiety-provoking. This next exercise will focus on a way of staying centered while speaking about things that make you feel anxious.

ICK AND AHH 8.6

Stand up, feel your breathing. Count out loud from one to ten, and notice what parts of your body are involved in breathing and vocalizing. More than noticing just what parts move, notice how they feel as they move.

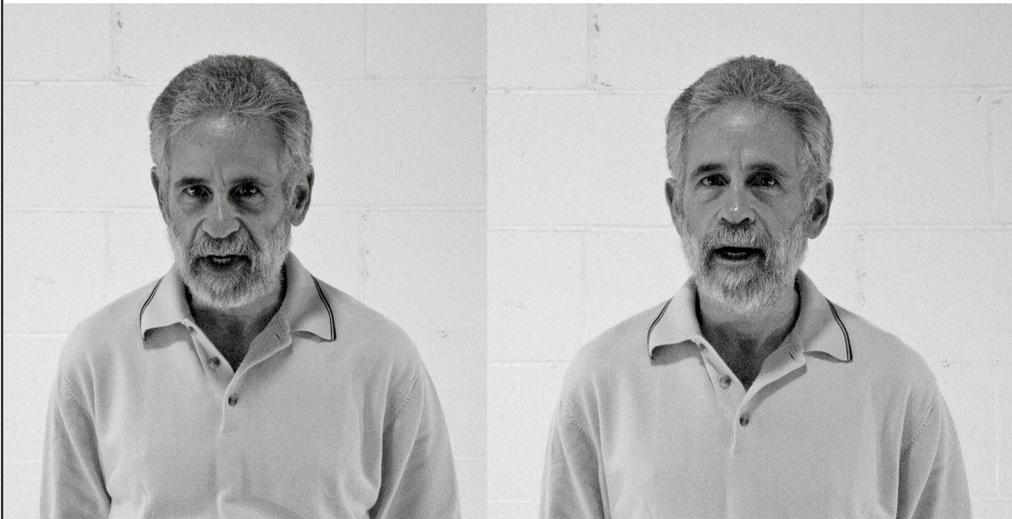
Now, try saying "Rat guts, ick!" And for contrast say "Ice cream, ahh!" (If you don't like ice cream, think of something else that you like, and say that instead. If by some chance you like rat guts, then choose something else you don't like.)

Say "ick" and "ahh." Feel how your throat and mouth tense when you say "ick" and how they get softer and smoother when you say "ahh."

The expressions "ick" and "ahh" are very interesting. They simultaneously create and reflect the body processes of repulsion and enjoyment. The sound "ick" has sharp edges and creates constriction in the throat and breathing. The sound "ahh" has round edges and creates softness and openness in the body.

How do you talk when you talk about the conflict and what your needs are for resolving it? Is it more like ick or more like ahh?

Find a word or phrase that summarizes some aspect of a conflict you've experienced. Maybe the word "unfriendly" or the word "disagreement." Try saying that word followed by ick or ahh. "Disagreement, ick!" And now say, "Disagreement, ahhh!" Can you let your body stay in the open ahhh state even as you speak about the issues in the conflict?



Ick

Ahhh

The voice offers a convenient and effective handle on the processes underlying conflict and peacemaking. You always have your voice with you. It expresses what you feel. And working with your voice is effective in learning how to stay centered during conflicts.

Speaking is intimately related to thinking. Though this next exercise is not directly about speaking, I believe this is a good place to put it. *Consciousness* is a physical process in the body. I'll never forget the moment about thirty-five years ago when, doing an experiment on directing attention, my consciousness slipped out of

my head and fell down into my belly. I don't mean that I was aware *of* my belly. Instead, my I-ness was located *in* my belly. It stayed that way for about three days. Gradually, over the years, my I-ness has broadened to live in more and more of my whole body. An important part of the work in this book is learning how to go beyond *thinking about* peace to developing a body sense of peacefulness. This exercise will focus on what it means to get out of your head, or more properly speaking, to not lose your body when you think intellectual thoughts or assert some position.

IN YOUR HEAD 8.7

Sit or stand in a comfortable, balanced posture. Now, imagine a red number 3 and add it to a yellow number 4 to get an orange number 7.

What did you do in your body? Did your breathing or posture shift? What area of space in or around your body did you pay attention to?

Many people look off into the distance in order to concentrate on this visual/intellectual task, and they lose focus on the physical here and now. It can be very difficult to do the task without losing your body.

Try it again, but this time take a moment to prepare yourself. Let your belly release. Focus your breathing down; that is, draw the air down through your nose or mouth into your body core, and exhale downward through your legs into the ground. Once you have achieved this downward focus, let go of the breathing technique, and simply stay in that downward bodyness. And in that state, try the addition task again.

If you are successful, you will understand what it means to let the self down into the body while performing intellectual work, rather than staying up in your head to function cognitively.

Now, have a debate with a partner. You can maintain opposite stances on topics such as whether virtue is learned or innate or whether the United Nations should control all under-sea mineral rights. As you state your positions, can you stay anchored in your body?

Thinking and speaking in a disembodied state creates a sense of distance from yourself and the people around you. This sense of distance and alienation is a root cause of inhumane treatment of people (and animals and the planet itself). We will discuss this further in Chapter 12 on various concepts that are part of the structure of conflict and conflict resolution.

Communication is difficult at best. I was teaching a workshop in Berlin. During a break, one participant apologized to me for disturbing me with the flash from his camera while I was demonstrating a technique of hands-on body work. I told him

I was surprised and puzzled since I didn't recall being disturbed at all. He told me that I had said "You did this last time too!"

After thinking hard about it, I realized I had indeed said those words, and just at the moment his flash went off. However, I had been addressing the whole group, reminding them that during the previous training six months before, they had practiced the same body work technique. Because of the accidental juxtaposition of the remark and the camera flash, the student felt I had been criticizing him for taking a photo. But luckily, he had the courage to speak to me about the incident, and we cleared up the misunderstanding.

I took two things away from this somewhat comical event. First, it is so easy for misunderstandings to arise. And second, it is imperative to speak your truth and clear the air.

CHAPTER 9

FOLLOWING YOUR BODY

You show up for a negotiation session, and the person you've got to talk with looks just like your high school history teacher, who was antagonistic and sarcastic. Even before you've started talking with this person, you are on edge. It's a common experience that strong feelings from the past color our responses in present situations—even when we know the old feelings are logically irrelevant. These past feelings interfere with our ability to see what is actually in front of us and manage conflict in respectful and productive ways. Centering will help you deal with such feelings.

It is equally common that feelings that belong to past situations can control present behavior without our having any conscious awareness of the exact past source of those of feelings or even that the feelings are coming from the past at all. You could feel your instant dislike of the other negotiator without realizing that it came from his resemblance to your old history teacher. You might wake up the next day with a sudden insight about the source of the dislike you felt, or it might remain a mystery to you.

Centering will usually help you manage inexplicable feelings, but sometimes the feelings are so strong and insistent that centering can be very difficult. In such cases, it can be very helpful to uncover the source of the feelings. Doing that provides a sense of the logic underlying your apparently illogical feelings, which can be a great relief. It can also help reduce the intensity of the inappropriate feelings and their effects on the present situation. In many cases, knowing the source of the past feelings will reveal what course of action you need to take to complete an unfinished situation, and that will allow the feelings to resolve themselves. *Following your body* is a method of finding the hidden, past roots of inexplicable feelings.

Following your body is also a method of pinning down just what you are feeling in the present. Sometimes we aren't clear about what exactly we are feeling. Sometimes we are torn between various courses of action and aren't clear about which we'd really prefer. Needless to say, if we aren't clear about what we're feeling or wanting, that will interfere with our attempts to resolve conflicts productively. In such cases, by helping you gain more clarity in your feelings and desires, following your body will enhance your ability to manage conflict.

Following your body is a way of using your physical responses as stepping stones to take you from what you know about your feelings to what you need to know about them. Following your body starts with expressing your feelings in body-

based language (see the discussion in Chapter 1). It is important to be able to state what you are feeling in terms of actions done at specific locations in your body.

Following your body involves posing questions to your body about your feelings—and then waiting for your body to answer. It means using your intellect to ask a question—but not using your intellect to find the answer. It means letting the question be answered by an aspect of yourself that is other than the part that you normally identify as *you*.

Following your body means refraining from deliberating, mulling over, trying to think out the answer to the question. Asking questions of your body is much like asking questions of another person. You must put the question into clear verbal form, but once you have done that, there is nothing more you can do except wait. You have to be patient and calm and simply wait for the other person to respond. And they may or may not respond. No application of effort on your part can speak the answer, because the answer has to come from the other person. When you receive an answer from your body, it will feel as if a part of you is speaking that is different from the part that you ordinarily identify as *I*. Actually, of course, it is you, just as your kidneys are you, but a part of you which is normally outside conscious awareness.

I often wonder about the spelling of the word "I". It is such a simple little word for such a big, complex thing. Surely there should be many more letters, or at least a much more complicated letter if there is to be only one. Such a simple letter, just a line. Almost a pun on the numeral 1, as though we were trying to reassure ourselves that the self is simple and unitary. In fact, the self is anything but.

The self is a complex, layered thing, and the process of following the body is really a process in which the conscious, cognitive element or layer of the self poses a question to the body or sensate layer of the self and then sits back and awaits an answer.

The work we have done so far has been about containing conflictual feelings and replacing them with a centered mindbody state. However, there is another face to the process of awareness and empowerment. This other element is about going into the conflictual feelings, amplifying them, and letting them flow freely in order to study them. Following your body is, in effect, a form of somatic free association. You focus on one sensation in your body, or a group of sensations, and let that naturally give rise to the next sensation, and then let that sensation naturally lead to the next, and so on. That train of sensations will help you become aware of what you are feeling and what its roots are.

In following your body, rather than replacing problematic sensations with center, you focus on and amplify the problematic feelings to gain a clearer awareness and understanding of them. Amplifying sensations is done by focusing your attention on the sensations and requesting your body to allow the sensations to grow stronger.

The following two experiments will let you feel what it is like for your body to express itself independently of your conscious intellect. This offers a process for puzzling out what course of action really resonates for you.

TELLING THE TRUTH 9.1

You will need a partner to help with this experiment. (However, if you wish to try this experiment by yourself, it will probably work anyway.) It would be best if you stopped reading at this point and asked your partner to read and carry out the instructions for this experiment. If you don't know what is going to happen, you won't be biased.

Have your partner say aloud a series of simple, true assertions. Pay attention to what goes on in your body as you listen to each statement. There should be some time between each so you can feel how your body responds.

Fish live in the water.

Cows eat grass.

The sky is blue.

Cars have wheels.

Libraries have books.

San Francisco is in California.

New York is the capital of the United States.

What happened in your body when you heard that last statement? Most people feel a "quiver" or "twisting" of some kind, which is the body's dislike of false statements. Your body is designed to feel most comfortable with truth, and it indicates when it touches a lie. Of course, it isn't quite that simple. If you believe a statement is true, you may respond with greater comfort to that statement even if it is false. Or a deeper part of you may respond with discomfort even though you think you believe it's true.

Essentially, we're dealing with a formal procedure for training our intuition. Intuition is the subconscious aspect of the self gathering and processing information about the environment. Being more educated about and sensitive to your intuition will help bring to conscious awareness faint stirrings that can help you make useful decisions during conflict situations.

How might the awareness of "faint stirrings" be used? You could, for example, make a mental list of some alternatives you have to choose between in some situation and "taste" each alternative to scope out which feels most right to you. The fact that one alternative feels best may or may not indicate that it *is* best, but knowing what you really prefer gives some added information to the process of choosing.

ASKING QUESTIONS 9.2

Well, would you rather go to the party at Fred and Mary's house, go out to the park with Jack, catch up on your reading, or take a nap? How would you figure that out? You could fire up your computer, get up a spreadsheet on the screen, and

start entering pros and cons for each choice. At the end you could look down the columns and try to figure out which choice has the most pros. A very abstract intellectual exercise!

Or you could "chew" each choice clearly in your body and "taste" which one is most fulfilling.

You probably wouldn't decide how much salt to put in a soup by pondering the problem abstractly. You would taste the soup, paying careful attention to the taste of the soup in your mouth and the feelings the soup inspires, and you would let a feeling well up in you of what would taste best. In the same way, you can go to a place within yourself where the feeling of each choice of how to spend your time would be clear, and you could let the deeper "computer" within you process the feelings and tell you which choice would be most satisfying. When I say "deeper computer within" I mean to suggest that this is a feeling process in your body deeper than the conscious self.

Let's try that process. Imagine taking a bite from a ripe, red apple plucked right from the tree (raised organically, with no pesticides on it). And imagine taking a bite from a dirty, squirming rat. Which snack would you prefer? Notice the physical shift in your body. Your body speaks his/her mind immediately and clearly. (This is related to the *Wanting a Pencil* (6.3) experiment you did earlier.)

Try asking yourself some questions and noting the physical responses. Would you rather go to an exciting party or a quiet poetry reading? Would you rather drink tomato juice or orange juice? Would you rather see your father or see a friend? Does your body react to these questions? Do the reactions suggest the answers to them?

Often in the course of following the body, a person will begin to experience images of past events. You might, for example, start with a question about whether or not to go to a party, and an image might eventually arise of being spanked for misbehaving at a party when you were five years old. That image would explain your dislike of parties, but how do you know whether the image is true or not? Frequently there is objective confirmation of such images, but most often there is not.

I like to make a distinction between accuracy and authenticity. An accurate statement is one which has objective supporting evidence. An authentic statement is one which has deep emotional power to it and which makes sense of important life patterns.

A statement may be true, but if it has no corroborating evidence, we can't tell if it's accurate or not. However, we can tell whether the image is authentic. If there is powerful feeling to it and it makes sense of much in your life, we can say the image is an authentic focus for empowerment work. We can even say that such an image can't be baseless and we *believe* that what it depicts actually did happen. What we cannot logically and legitimately say is that we *know* for sure that it did happen. For the specific, limited purposes of training the intuition, it really doesn't matter whether

the images are accurate or not. All that matters is that they offer a view into hidden corners of the self.

FOLLOWING SENSATIONS: PRACTICE 9.3

This exercise is a little different from the others in the book. You cannot practice following sensations. You can only actually do it. You must start with an actual feeling that you really do find puzzling.

Let's assume that you have something to follow. It may be that you were in a discussion with your boss, and she made an innocent remark about a bicycle, and you felt a sensation of dread. Perhaps you have to deal with a disagreement about the amount of a payment due, and that inspires a surprising rage in you. Those responses would offer starting points for following your body.

Step One—Identification: Begin by stating the feeling to yourself in specific body terms. For example: "When my boss said that thing about the bicycle, I felt dread. When I felt that dread, I noticed that my stomach clenched, my head turned to the right, and my weight rocked back on my heels."

Step Two—Amplification: Request of your body that the physical sensation actions become amplified. For example: "Body, please increase the actions of clenching the stomach, turning the head, and rocking the weight back." Note that this is a request of the non-conscious body self. It is *not* a matter of simply doing the amplification voluntarily. And like all requests, it may or may not be granted. Either way is fine and just the right thing.

Step Three—Following: Request of your body that some physical sensation or body action which is connected to the prior body sensation reveal itself to you. It may reveal itself as a new sensation, or a thought or image, or as an awareness of some area of your body.

Repeat the three-step process on this new sensation or feeling, and keep going around this loop. At some point in the sequence of following one sensation to the next, a significant image is likely to emerge. That image will probably explain the strength of the initial puzzling feeling. By knowing what you were reacting to in the present conflict, you can more easily set the past feelings aside and function more effectively to resolve the conflict.

If the participants in a conflict were amenable, it would be very helpful to go through this process of studying and feeling emotions. It would enhance each individual's self-understanding, and it would enhance the general communication process. However, it's not terribly likely that you would have the time or safety to engage in this process of introspective self-study during an actual conflict. In an ideal world,

in which this process were well-known and respected, perhaps it would be an accepted part of ordinary dispute resolution methods. In our world, however, it would probably be best to engage in following your body during private time. By studying yourself outside of the conflict situation, you will be better equipped to handle the conflict. Or if it is too late to do well on today's conflict, at least you will be better equipped to handle tomorrow's conflict.

CHAPTER 10

SENSITIVITY

Interpersonal sensitivity is an important element in peacemaking. Being consciously aware of and sensitive to the needs and feelings of the person you are interacting with is crucial in being able to resolve conflicts in a productive and peaceful manner. This is the case both in terms of gathering extra information about the person and in terms of helping the person feel seen and respected.

In this chapter, we will take the personally focused state of softness, strength, kindness and spaciousness and extend it into practice of noticing other people. In the context of this book, "noticing other people" means learning to perceive better other people's breathing, muscle tone, facial and body expressions, posture and movement.

Let's begin with some exercises on sensing another person's movements.

MIRROR POLISHING 10.1

Work with a partner, and have her take the role of leader first. After a minute or two, you can change roles.

Stand in front of each other with your arms out at about shoulder height. Place your palms against your partner's palms, with the hands vertical and the fingers pointing upward.

The leader's job is to move her hands around, and your job is to follow, keeping your hands lightly touching your partner's hands. The leader should keep her feet in the same spot, not move across the floor. However, the rest of her body can move, up and down, to the side, twisting, and so on. The leader should not move in rapid, jerky ways. She should not use mere speed to make it hard for you to stick with her.

You should keep your feet stationary and keep your palms resting lightly on the leader's palms. If you follow your partner skillfully, you will look like someone polishing a mirror. Actually, the leader will be the one polishing the mirror. You will be the reflection faithfully reflecting whatever movements the leader makes as she rubs the glass.



Remember to create the mindbody state of softness, strength, kindness and spaciousness. That will make sensing your partner far easier.

And then after a time, switch roles so that the leader will have the opportunity to practice following.

If you are working in a group, have all the participants change partners so they can feel how different it can be practicing with someone else.

FOLLOWING A PARTNER 10.2

This is an extension of the *Mirror Polishing* exercise. You will work with a partner again, but this exercise involves moving along a straight line of fifteen feet or so (about five meters).

Stand at one end of the line with your partner, palm to palm as in the previous exercise. The leader should walk forward along the line to the other end, and then he should return to the starting point walking backwards. Your job is to move along with the leader and maintain a light but firm contact with her hands.

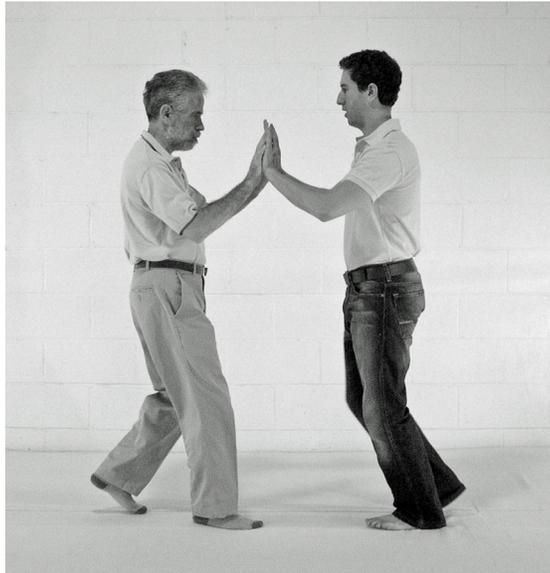
As he walks forward to the end of the runway, you should walk backward at exactly the same speed and rhythm. That way his push forward won't exert any pressure on you. Don't resist, and also don't speed away and lose contact.

As he walks backward to the other end of the runway, you

should walk forward at exactly the same speed. Don't lag or you will have to reach out and lean forward to maintain contact. If you can sense his movement and follow it, you will have the feeling of being in the eye of the storm. The relationship will be undisturbed by the movement, and there will be a quietness.

Remember that the state of softness and spaciousness will make it easier to do this exercise well. And after a time, switch roles.

Now let's make it harder. Still walking in a simple forward/backward straight line, the leader can stop and start and reverse directions as he wills. Do you lag in your awareness and your movement? Does her shift to forward movement surprise you so that for a moment you are resisting it and pushing on her? Do you lose contact as she suddenly begins moving backward?



Can you breathe, soften your core, arrange your posture for power and sensitivity, and merge into the dance of movement with your partner? Can you follow your partner—without losing your own center and autonomy, of course? There is a special feeling of soft yet firm awareness that allows you to bypass the conscious mind and just follow. The conscious mind, with its effort to perceive and understand, will always be one instant late. Can you find the more immediate connection, which proceeds from a more physical awareness than your conscious mind would create?

Now let's make it harder still. The leader can move in any direction, turning, advancing, stopping and retreating, circling around, and so on—but not so fast that the exercise becomes impossible. Can you follow and maintain contact? To do so, you must follow just a fraction of an instant in advance of your partner. You and your partner may for a moment or two not know who is leading and who is following. That is true empathy and connection.

Let's proceed from paying attention to other people's movements to paying attention to other people's feelings. The bridge is that feelings are movements and can be observed. This idea may strike some people as odd. However, when you look at someone and notice what they are feeling, what are you looking at? Their muscle tone, posture, breathing, movements, and facial expressions. In other words, we see the body and infer the feelings.

As we have already discussed, emotions are physical events in the body, events such as clenched fists, a fluttering in the belly, or a heaviness in the chest. By developing greater body awareness, you will be able to notice and identify as well as talk about emotions—both your own and other people's—with more clarity.

I define *emotions* as physical changes in the body. *Feelings* are what those physical changes feel like to the person doing them. Empathy is what happens when you observe (consciously or unconsciously) the physical changes in someone's body and "mirror" or "taste" them in your own body.

Empathy is usually thought of as good, and basically it is. However, it has a problematic aspect as well. If, in a conflict situation, you mirror other people's emotions without conscious awareness of that process, you can get stuck in their negative emotions. This can lead to a feedback loop in which negative emotions get amplified and take over an interaction (as was talked about in the Introduction).

Greater awareness of the emotion elements in a conflict situation will allow people to more easily resist that destructive feedback loop and keep themselves in the centered state.

WATCHING PEOPLE 10.3

This is best done in a group. Have everyone stand up and spread out in the room. Have them shut their eyes so that they will not be influenced by seeing the other people doing the exercise. Ask them to remember something that made them very angry. Have them feel the anger and show it in their bodies.

Then take a moment to discuss what people did and felt physically. Are there commonalities? Are there differences?

Ask for a volunteer who would be willing to stand up and demonstrate doing anger. (Rather than using the common phrase “being angry,” I use the phrase “doing anger” to emphasize that anger is an action.) Have the group members identify what they see in the volunteer's body and movements.

Have another person stand up and do anger. Do they do the same things? All of the same things? Any different things?

Does having the opportunity to observe emotion actions in other people help you identify the emotion actions you had been doing in yourself?

Repeat the process with other emotions, for example, fear, jealousy, confusion, shyness, and so on.

Have a volunteer stand up and do some emotion without telling what it is. What physical changes do group members notice in the person doing the emotion? Can they identify it?

Give other people the opportunity to portray an emotion. Remind the participants that noticing other people's feelings is more physically complex and difficult than hitting a home run. It's OK to make mistakes. It's like shooting a bull's eye with a bow and arrow. It's difficult, but the more you practice, the closer you get.

Does it matter what state the observer is in when they are watching people? Invite the group members to do a strong feeling, fear, for example, while they are watching one person do an unnamed emotion. Is it as easy to pay attention to what the other person is feeling while the observer is himself doing a strong emotion? Have the observers try various emotions while different volunteers portray various unnamed emotions.

And last, have the observers try centering while they are watching the volunteers do various emotions. Does that affect their ability to pick up the physical clues to the volunteers' feelings? Is it easy to stay centered while standing in front of someone's strong emotions?

In Chapter 13, we will role play some conflict situations and will make use of this process of noticing emotions during a conflict.

CLONING 10.4

This will be an exercise in sensitive perception.

This exercise needs to be done in a group. Have everyone stand up, and ask for two volunteers. They should stand side by side in front of the group. One volunteer should be designated as Number One, the other Number Two.

The task for the group members is to offer one postural suggestion at a time to Volunteer Number Two. Each suggestion should alter Number Two's posture to be similar to Number One's way of holding himself. The goals are to be able to identify Number One's personal manner of being, translate that into discrete body instructions, and finally turn out a clone of Number One.

What details can you perceive? How subtly can you tune into the volunteer's way of being his body? How specific and precise can you make your instructions?

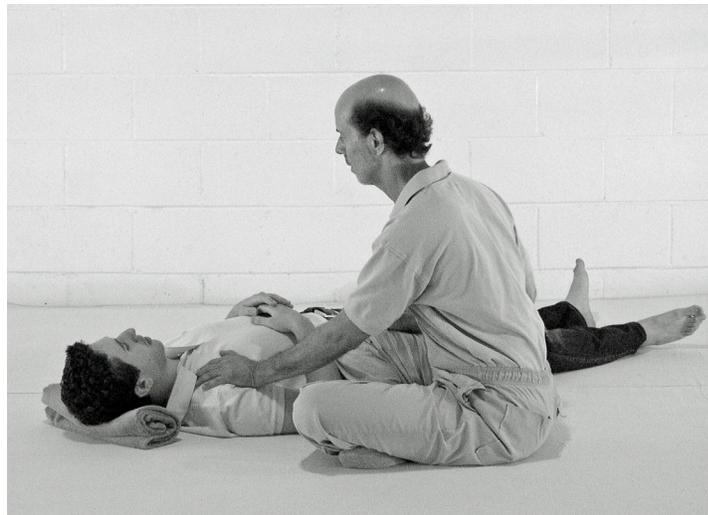
Once you get the hang of this, try it with different volunteers. Is it easier or harder with different people?

EMPATHIC TOUCH 10.5

You will need a partner for this exercise. Ask your partner to lie down on his back, while you sit beside him facing him.

Put your hands on his close shoulder. Be present and receptive in your touch. What exactly does that mean? Well, this is something that is difficult to convey in person in the workshops I conduct, where I can actually touch people and show them what I mean. Is it possible to learn it from a book? I hope so.

Imagine picking up a baby bird. I would pick it up with a delicate, gentle touch, but a touch with enough firmness to keep the bird from falling out of my grasp. Touch your partner that way. The process of



opening and grounding yourself will support your ability touch in this manner.

Or imagine someone reading Braille. They'd need a sensitive, alert, attentive touch to be able to discern the subtle shapes made by the raised dots. Touch your partner that way.

Touch your partner in a feather-light way, but that lightness must include a sense of contact in it. Put your whole hand flat against your partner's skin. Don't touch just with isolated parts of your hand.

Reach out through your hands and *feel* your partner. Feel his skin surface, and then feel into him, below his surface. How can you do that?

Imagine a portable metal detector scanning the ground for buried metal objects. It aims its awareness below the surface, into the ground. Sending your awareness out and into is similar to what you did when you sent your awareness outward in exercises such as *Unbendable Arm* (6.4) or *Six Directions Reaching* (7.3), and it is similar to what you did when you aimed your voice outwards (8.2).

Now, have your partner remember something that made him very angry. Invite him to feel the anger and do it in his body. As your partner lies in front of you doing that emotion, can you feel the physical anger-actions in his body?

Try this same process with different emotions.

For a harder version of this process, have your partner lie on his back and generate emotions, while you sit beside him with your eyes closed touching him. Can you identify his emotions solely through touch?

Clearly, you will not be sitting and touching your challenger during a conflict, but the sensitivity you develop in this exercise will help you notice what your opponent is feeling. That will allow you to understand your opponent better, and it will also will help you behave in such a way as to make your opponent feel respected. Both those capabilities will help you manage conflicts more effectively.

CHAPTER 11

YIELDING

"Yielding" is a technical term from Aikido, the non-violent martial art I practice and teach. It doesn't mean surrender or giving up. It means becoming physically pliable and mentally adaptable. It means not wasting power in opposition, but relaxing into the flow of the events surrounding you in order to better manage them.

Let's start with a simple movement riddle.

CROSSING THE LINE 11.1

Draw a line on the floor (this can be a piece of string or even an imaginary line), and stand on the opposite side of the line from your partner. Ask him to grasp one of your wrists and try to pull you across the line. Your job is to not be pulled across the line.

How do you attempt to do this?

If you are working in a group, try calling up volunteers, and see how they attempt this.

TRY THE RIDDLE BEFORE READING THE SOLUTION.



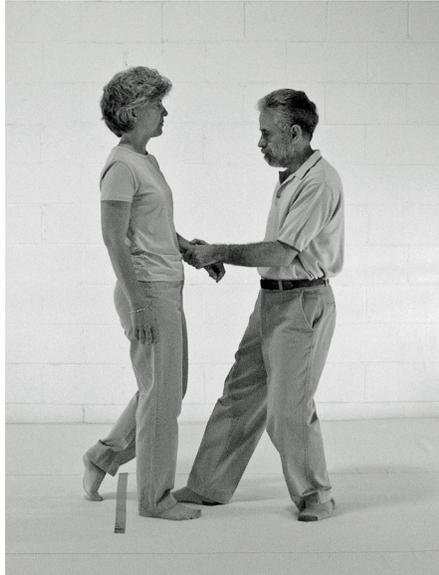
In many hundreds of trials of this riddle, I have experienced that people *always* try to resist my pull.

However, there is a much simpler, less strenuous way of not being pulled across, and that is to voluntarily walk across before being pulled. (See the photograph on page 98.) Notice that the instructions did not specify not to cross the line. The instructions were to not *be pulled* across the line. *However, people are used to oppositional thinking, and what they hear is that they are not supposed to cross the line.* Of course, resisting is one possibility, but it's hard work and frequently doesn't work.

The point of this riddle is that is easy to fall into the trap of oppositional thinking and that yielding and cooperative thinking work better.

The simplest example of the use of yielding is extricating yourself from an ocean current. Imagine you are caught in a swift-flowing current pulling you out to sea. The oppositional thing to do would be to swim in the direction you most want to go—directly against the current and directly toward the shore. However, you would wear yourself out in no time and drown. By turning and swimming *with* the current, but at an angle to it, you wouldn't wear yourself out, and you would sooner or later reach the edge of the current, at which point you could then turn toward the shore and swim in. That's *yielding* - going along with the flow as a means of taking control of the situation.

Yielding is important in conflict resolution. Coming from an oppositional state of mind doesn't help. *Opposing your opponent simply intensifies your opponent's opposition to you. Softening, relaxing, being in your power, being in your kindness, and yielding encourages flexible thinking and adaptability.* In other words, yielding allows people to hear each other.



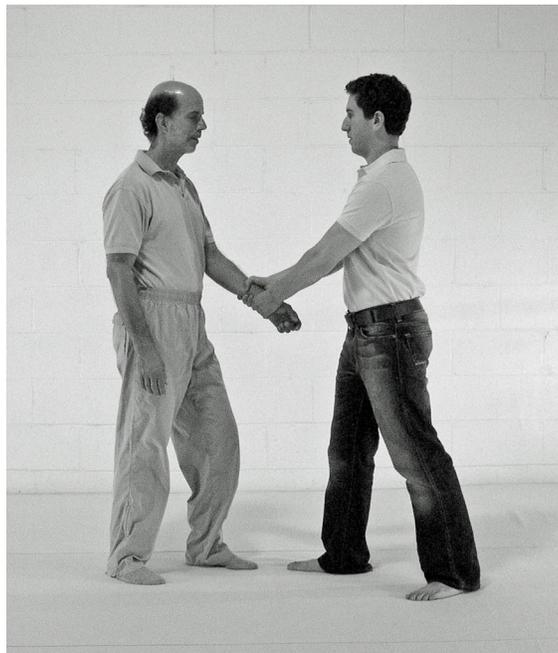
*Yielding and
solving the
riddle*

YIELDING TO A GRIP 11.2

This is a simple exercise to show what yielding is. Work with a partner. Have him stand opposite you, and invite him to grip your wrist with both his hands and squeeze hard.

What is your reaction to this pressure? Most people tense up and resist. Try tensing especially hard. What happens? Most people feel that the attacker automatically responds by stiffening and tensing even further.

What would yielding to the grip be? Soften your belly, open your heart, reach your attention out, and in that state of openness soften your arms completely. People find that when they relax and cease to be so confrontative and oppositional, the attacker usually relaxes his arm as well, as if by unthinking reflex.



The problem with conflict is that it comes at us and reflexively evokes the distress response. In this next exercise, you will have the opportunity to work on dismantling the oppositional response to something coming at you.

YIELDING TO A SHOVE 11.3

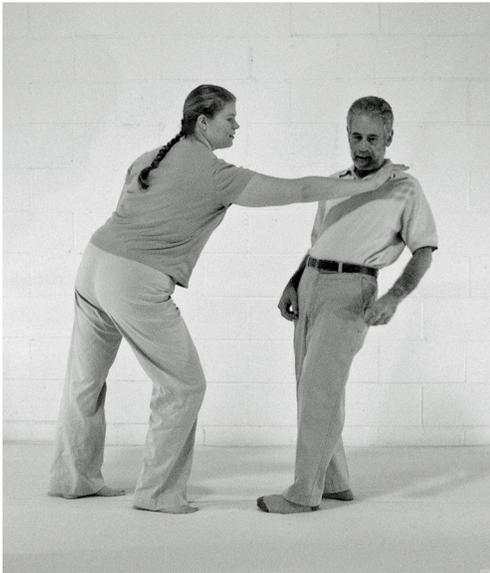
How can you respond peacefully to being shoved around? Let's work with a shove to find out.

For the exercise, the nature of the shove is very important. It must be realistic yet completely safe. Have your partner put her hand on your shoulder. Without taking her hand off, she should shove hard but gradually on your shoulder. This is *not*

a strike. There should be *no impact*. The shove should be strong but gradual.

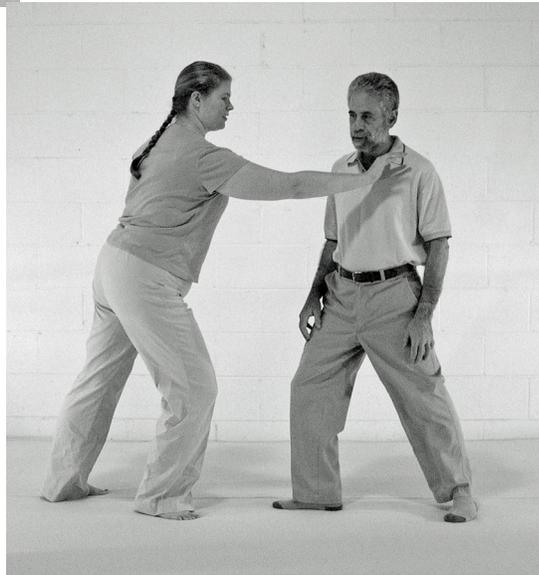
Try stiffening and resisting the shove. What happens? Perhaps you were pushed back, or perhaps not. In any case, resistance is effortful and uncomfortable.

Try yielding to the shove. Most people do that by letting their shoulder be pushed back and letting their torso twist. However, that posture is twisted and off balance. Though it is what is normally meant by "yielding," it is not what I mean by that term.



Try stepping back to yield to the force of the shove. So, if your left shoulder is being pushed, you should step back with your left foot. The movement will be very similar to the way a swinging door opens when you push on one edge. Note that this way of yielding does not oppose the power of the shove, nor does it allow that power to deform your posture.

What happens in this way of yielding? By swinging your body open, by matching the timing and direction of the shove, you take all the "shoviness" out of the shove. In



other words, resisting increases the power of the attack, and yielding reduces the power of the attack.

It is important that yielding and being centered go together. If they are divorced from each other, you don't have yielding but rather being defeated. This next exercise will take yielding a bit farther.

WOBBLE 11.4

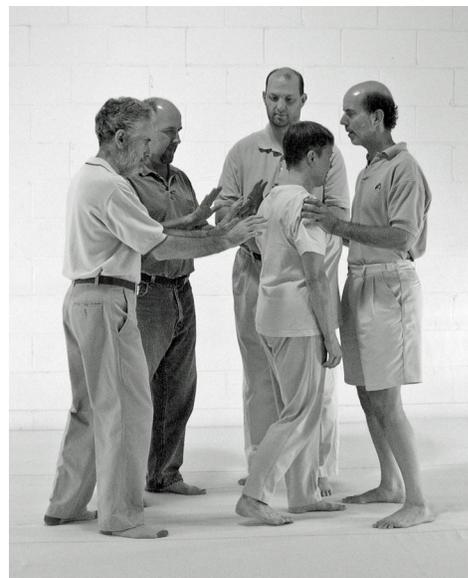
Stand in the middle of a circle of four people.

The people around the perimeter of the circle should stay about an arm's length from you. Their job is to deliver a series of shoves to your shoulders. Make sure that they shove not strike! In other words, the pushes should be gradual, with no sudden impact, and not very forceful.

How do you respond? Most people wobble around, tipping this way and that, losing balance as they are pushed in the various directions. Giving in to the force is a passive response, not *yielding*. So far, this is the same exercise as 4.3.

Instead, to maintain good balance, you must receive the force actively. You should actively walk in the direction of each shove, keeping the weight of your torso over your legs. And what would facilitate this? Of course it would be breathing, softening, opening the heart, and becoming spacious.

The problem is that being shoved around often makes people afraid or angry, and because it does, it offers the possibility of practicing taking conscious control of themselves.

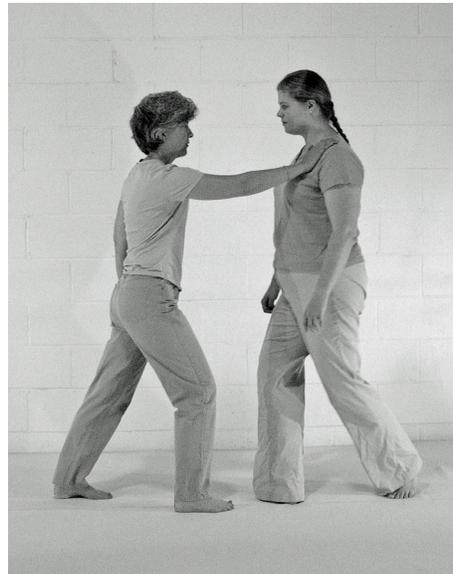
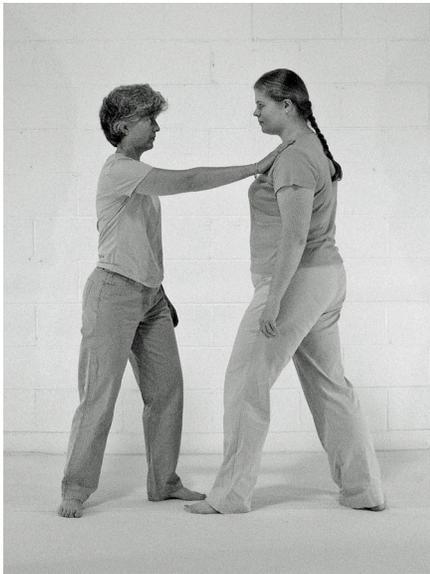


ADVANCE TO THE REAR 11.5

This exercise is an extension of 11.3, but will include the added difficulty of dealing with movement. For the exercise, you will need a room with clear space to move in. Stand in a T-stance, with your left foot forward, and the back foot behind and turned outward a bit. Have your partner stand in the same stance about four feet (one hundred and twenty centimeters) away. That is, you have your left foot forward, and she should stand in front of you with her left foot forward too.

Have your partner take one step forward with her right foot and push on your left shoulder with her right hand. The push should be firm and contactful but not hard and impactful. The push should be slow and continuous, not fast or abrupt.

Your job is to join the push. Match its direction, speed, trajectory and rhythm. Simply float along in front of it, like a leaf on a wave in the water. There is a particular movement which will help in this. As your partner pushes on your left shoulder, step backward with your left foot, in a circular movement which swings your shoulder off the direct line of the thrust. As you step back, let your right foot, which now becomes the front foot, swivel a bit to face straight ahead.



Go along with the power of the push just a moment before it actually impacts you. You could think of this moment as the instant when your partner touches your skin and the instant just before the pressure begins to push on your skin. If you do this, you will take all the power out of the thrust. It will not actually deliver any force to your body.

Note that going along with the thrust of the movement is not a passive action. You have to be very active, both in perception and movement, to match your partner's attack. In order to do this, you must move from center, with your body open and aligned well.

At this point, you have taken one step. You are standing in right foot forward T-stance, and your partner is standing in right T-stance too. She can now take another step forward and push on your right shoulder with her left hand, and you can take another step backwards and yield to her push again.

You and your partner can move down the length of the room in this stepping and yielding process.

A common problem is that people do this rearward movement in a state of defeated shrinking and withdrawal. It is also possible to do it in a state of resentment and hardening. Instead, you can open your body and do it with calm alertness and loving power. Instead of retreating, you can advance to the rear.

Yielding is a specific philosophical stance. It is a way of not opposing power and at the same time not giving in to it. It is a way of preserving your integrity while dealing with power. It is a calm acceptance that a problem is what it is, but it is an active relationship to the problem, without any hint of passivity. Peacefulness and passivity are not at all the same thing.

In addition to the idea of yielding, there are some other "philosophical" concepts that are important in conflict resolution, and the next chapter will examine these concepts.

CHAPTER 12

CONCEPTS

There is a subtle dimension of embodiment that plays a part in how we respond to and deal with conflict. This dimension has to do with the ideas by which we organize our responses to conflict. The concepts and words we use to organize our thinking about conflicts channel and constrain the options that we are capable of noticing for resolving conflicts. More concretely, this dimension has to do with the feelings/body actions that are our responses to the words we use to think about conflicts.

Trust, forgiveness and *gratitude* are three basic, positive values, but conflict undermines them all. It is hard to forgive someone who has hurt you, and it is hard to trust them. It is certainly difficult to feel gratitude in the midst of conflict. We experience difficulties, however, partly because we often mean the wrong things by “forgiveness” and “trust” and “gratitude.”

The meanings we attach to the words/ideas *win* and *lose* also determine, in some measure, how successful we can be at resolving conflicts peacefully. By the same token, the meanings that are part of such words as *criticism, righteousness, self-worth,* and *apology* exert some measure of control over our thinking, our bodies, and our behavior in the conflict situation.

TRUST

Distrust doesn't seem like a productive start for peacemaking. On the other hand, why trust a person who is in conflict with you? Is that a reasonable thing to do? Even more fundamentally, what is trust? As usual, we will attempt to elucidate these questions through movement experiments. And since distrust is so easy and widespread, let's start with that. We can study the act of not trusting to derive clues about the nature of trust.

As a general rule, I find that it is very instructive to amplify problematic actions as a first step in finding better ways of acting. Amplifying a problematic behavior makes it clear just what the behavior actually is and makes its drawbacks quite apparent. In addition, the right direction is usually just the opposite of the unsatisfactory direction, so gaining clarity about an unsatisfactory action will furnish clues about what the satisfactory action may be.

DISTRUST 12.1

For this exercise, you will need a partner. Walk up to your partner, and shake his hand. Oh, and one other thing: this person has betrayed and hurt a close friend of yours, so you are suspicious and distrustful of him.

What is it like to shake his hand? What feelings do you notice in yourself? Where in your body do you do those feeling actions, and exactly what are those body actions?

Most people will feel some degree of constriction and restriction in their muscles. Beyond that, many people will notice a sense of withdrawal and barrier-ing. This can be a general process of distancing from your partner, or a specific process of withdrawing from his touch. It can even be a process of distancing or withdrawing from your own hand—a sense of abandoning your arm and pulling your awareness out of it.

Before we move on to working with trust, let's examine further this process of withdrawal. The sense of alienation from the distrusted other is often present in conflicts, and it is, I think, a root of the dehumanization and violence that often are part of conflict.

POURING JUICE 12.2

Imagine that you are stuck in a sword and sorcery fantasy novel. You have been captured by the Evil Sorcerer. He wants to know where you have hidden the Ring of Power. Naturally, you are not about to tell him, and, of course, he is going to torture you to get the information. The Evil Sorcerer is stubbing out a burning cigar on the palm of your hand to convince you to tell the secret. You are chained to the stone table in the dungeon, so you can't fight back. What can you do to withstand the pain? You can redeploy your attention.

Suck all the awareness "juice" out of your hand and up into your shoulder. You can inhale and use the inhalation to pull the awareness up out of your hand, just as you would draw juice up through a straw. Keep the hand juiceless so that it won't feel the pain of the sorcerer's cigar. How does this make your hand feel? Most people feel their hands becoming distant, lifeless and unfeeling.

Next, change to a different image. It is a warm, pleasant day. You are lying outside on the grass in the sunshine. And a little caterpillar begins to walk across your hand. A fuzzy, cute caterpillar. Send all your awareness down into your hand to feel with exquisite clarity and delicacy and enjoyment the shape and texture and movements of the caterpillar. How does this affect your hand?

To make this exercise more real, you could practice it with a partner, having him touch your hand, while you imagine that he is stubbing out the cigar on your palm. Then you could imagine that his touch is the sensation of the caterpillar

crawling across your hand. What does changing the image do to the way you feel your hand and your partner's touch on your hand? Notice the sensation of putting your awareness into your hand or of withdrawing it from your hand.

Try inserting and withdrawing your awareness into and out of other areas of your body.

Try shaking hands with your partner while withdrawing your attention from your hand.

Then try distancing yourself from your whole body. How do you feel about partner as a human being when you have distanced yourself from yourself? And how do you feel about yourself? Most people feel a sense of lifelessness and alienation. When you withdraw your awareness, you actually alienate yourself from yourself as well as the other.

Reverse roles, and have your partner shake your hand while withdrawing from his body and yours. What does that feel like to you? Many people find this way of being related to very disturbing. Some people will even become resentful or angry at being touched this way.

This process of dissociation and alienation is profoundly dehumanizing. In a certain sense, it could be said to be the essence of violence. It is the empathic connection with other people which renders them fully human in our eyes. *We become fully human to our own selves by sensing and noticing our own feelings, and just as important, we become fully human to our own selves by sensing other people as conscious beings and by being sensed by them as conscious beings.* If we can't feel ourselves or the other person, instead of a relation of one being to another, we have a relationship of one object to another. Being taken as an object is profoundly dissatisfying, and can give rise to resistance, anger and violence. And taking another human being as an object will allow one to perpetrate violence on them.

Clearly, distrust has a negative effect on your body. Distrust is no way to live. However, on the other hand, you cannot afford to trust someone who may betray that trust. What to do? Part of the answer lies in what meaning we assign to the concept of *trust*.

TRUST 12.3

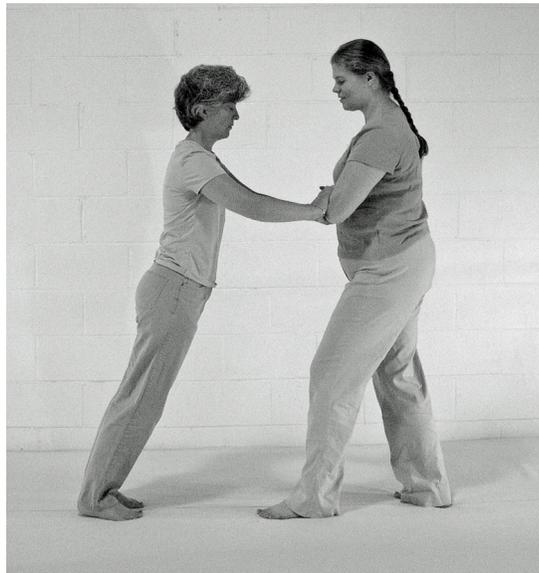
What is trust? What does it mean to trust someone or something? A movement riddle will help make this clearer.

TRY THE RIDDLE BEFORE READING THE SOLUTION.**FIRST PART**

You will need a partner for this. Stand up, and have your partner stand in front of you with her arms crossed in front of her chest. Keep your feet together and don't move them. With both of your hands, grasp whichever arm she has in front.

Then have your partner back up a bit so that you are leaning forward with all your weight on her arm. You are depending on her to carry your weight and not let you fall. Notice that if your partner steps back suddenly or lets her arms down, you will fall. You are trusting her not to do such things. How does this feel? Is it easy to let yourself depend on her? Do you feel nervous or scared having to depend on another person?

Try this before going on to read the second part.

**SECOND PART**

Stand up, grasp your partner again. Have him back up so that you are leaning forward with all your weight on him. This time your task is to find a posture in which you are indeed depending on your partner but in such a way that you will not lose balance or fall if it turns out that he is undependable.

Take a moment to try to find a solution. Give yourself some thinking time before reading the solution in the next paragraph.

There is a very simple solution. Just put one foot forward, holding it just barely off the ground, ready to take your weight if your partner doesn't support you. (See the photograph on page 108.)

What does this experiment indicate about trust? I would suggest there are two kinds of trust. A child's form of trust gives over all their weight to the parent, and of course children cannot support themselves. Supporting the child is the parent's job. An adult's form of trust gives over their weight to another person but always maintains the ability to carry their own weight if and when that becomes necessary. Not giving over your weight is distrust, and that's no way to live. Not maintaining the ability for self-support is to live as a child or a victim, and that too is no way to live.

Too often, people identify trust solely as what I call the childlike trust. And since it is clearly inappropriate to trust an opponent in this sense, their only option is distrust. Realizing that there is another way in which to trust can open a pathway toward conflict resolution and peacemaking.

BLIND WALK 12.4

For this exercise, you will need a large space free of furniture—a gymnasium, or a lawn perhaps. Have your partner grasp you by one arm, gently but firmly, and lead you around. Close your eyes, and keep them closed as your partner leads you. She can stop and start, and change directions. Your job is to go along with her—easily and gracefully.

What do you do? How does it feel to not be in control and be unable to see where you are going? Do you shrink away from the movement, trying to maintain some control by hesitating and bracing yourself? Do you limply surrender to the movement, being tugged this way and that, losing balance as the movement changes direction?

Can you trust your partner? In this instance, trust means to yield to the movement, that is, neither withhold yourself nor give up too much of yourself. Posturally, that means maintaining your vertical body alignment and actively moving in the directions your partner pulls or pushes you. This is very similar to the *Wobble* exercise (11.4), but here there is the added element of trust to study.



This exercise, and the concept of trust generally, speak to an important issue: How can we open ourselves without losing ourselves? And how can we protect our boundaries and argue for our positions without losing connection with the other?

Being either too open or too closed will result in our alienating ourselves from both ourselves and from the other.

Actually it isn't a choice between being too open or too closed. That is too simple a way of speaking about it and suggests that center lies midway between open and closed. I think it is more useful to think of center as being on a different level altogether. It isn't the amount of openness or closedness that is significant, but the way in which you are open or closed. If you are wide open and at the same time, well-bounded, that is being centered. Trust is a key issue in this, though in reality, every exercise in the book is about this integration of openness and boundedness.



Adult's form of trust

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Some people might feel that there is a problem hidden in the approach to peacemaking delineated in this book. We have just done an exercise in which a certain style of trust was said to be unsatisfactory. Many of the exercises identify various feelings and evaluate them as inappropriate or not useful. However, some people might hold the belief that it is incorrect to label any emotion as wrong. They might see that as being negative or judgmental. I would suggest that emotions, like any other behaviors, can be more or less healthful and constructive.

A more personal reaction might be to feel demeaned or threatened by any suggestion that what you feel might not be OK. If you believe that your emotions are *who you are*, any suggestion that some emotions are inappropriate or should be managed will be experienced as invalidating and attacking. If feelings are who you are, then calming your feelings will feel like eliminating parts of yourself. However, think about slum clearance. If slums are defined as being part of the historical truth of a city, and part of the city's essential character, then knocking down the slums in

order to replace them with something better will be resisted. Knocking down inappropriate emotions can be experienced as an attempt to strengthen and heal the Self—rather than as an attempt to destroy it.

Imagine walking through the grass and being hit with a wave of fear upon seeing a snake right by your foot. But on second glance, you realize it is just a piece of green garden hose. I wouldn't say that the initial emotion was wrong in the sense that it wasn't natural or appropriate to your perception. However, I would say that it was wrong in the sense that it was inaccurate. There never was a snake there. I would also say that the fear was wrong in a second sense too—it was not adaptive. The fear was neither comfortable nor helpful. You could either run or freeze better from a place of calmness.

I think different people are wired to have different degrees of emotionality. Some people are very sensitive to emotion triggers and take quite a while for their emotional waves to subside. For them, there may be a stronger sense that emotional surges are their core selves.

In a certain sense, for all of us, our habits of emotion action *are* who we are, but that still doesn't mean it is wrong to learn and grow and change who we are. Sticking with familiar unhelpful emotions is like refusing to improve bad posture because how you stand is part of who you are.

It reminds me of a moment many years ago when I was taking a walk by a small lake one spring day and watching the pollen blowing from the trees onto the wind-tossed surface of the water. All of a sudden, my perception shifted, and I said to myself, "The winding is blowing the pollening onto the watering." In that instant, it was so apparent that it was all *process* that using thing-nouns seemed totally inadequate. Our language creates in us the habit of seeing *objects*. The use of the word "is" tricks us into seeing stability and permanency. "He is emotionally over sensitive." The *is-ness* of *is* suggests that a characteristic of a person is somehow part of his solid, stable essence. Imagine if we were used to saying, "He often does emotional over-sensitiveness." That would carry a feeling of activity and a sense that different actions could be chosen and performed.

The point is to gain enough perspective on emotions to be willing and able to evaluate and change them. The trick is to break the chains of old, destructive emotions and live appropriately in the present.

FORGIVENESS

Forgiveness is difficult. Many people hold onto anger or resentment and don't want to forgive the people who hurt them. However, not forgiving an opponent perpetuates conflict. The question arises: Why forgive a person who has wronged us? Even more fundamentally, what is forgiveness? As usual, let's attempt to elucidate it through a movement experiment. We can study the act of not forgiving to derive clues about the nature of forgiveness.

UNFORGIVENESS 12.5

Imagine the boss from hell. He is demanding and uncaring. He demands that you put in absurd amounts of time and work, and rather than rewarding you for being helpful, he insults you and puts you down.

Let yourself feel anger and resentment, a sense of righteous indignation about being treated so badly. What do you notice in your body? Most people will feel tension and hardness. As we have seen, that's uncomfortable and makes it hard to move and act freely and effectively.

Imagine your boss does something so manipulative and unethical that you decide to quit. Good riddance to your boss! A few months after you land a dream job working on interesting projects with really nice people, you hear that your boss got himself fired. What do you feel?

Imagine that you respond with a feeling that your ex-boss got what he deserved. What happens to your breathing and your posture? Most people would feel tension and compression.

That is what an unforgiving person creates in their body: hardness and constriction. Unforgiveness is part of the body's distress response. It's uncomfortable and ineffective.

I once had as a client a woman we can call Eleanor. When she'd been a little girl, she had been molested by a neighbor.. She had reached a stuck place, both in her body work with me and in her psychotherapy. I suggested she forgive her abuser, and she thought that was just plain dumb. She wanted to beat her perpetrator to a pulp, not forgive him. We practiced some Aikido stick work as a vehicle for experimenting with the process of forgiving. I had Eleanor execute a downward cut with a wooden



staff (a one inch thick, four foot long stick) against a staff that I was holding. I had her do the cut first while being in an angry/hard place and then while thinking about love and forgiveness. She could feel the increase of strength when she was doing love.

Next, I had her hold the pole while I did the cut in both states. She could feel that when I cut with love and forgiveness, I

moved with more relaxation and ease and therefore hit harder. In fact, I broke the pole she was holding. She saw that and announced that if forgiving her perpetrator would let her hit him that hard, then she was willing to learn to love the son of a bitch.

In Chapter 5, we worked with love, and we found that the soft, free body state created by love works better than the tense, stiff body state created by hatred. However, the question is, what is forgiveness?

The word *forgive* is composed of two elements, *for* and *give*. *The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary* states: “The primary notion of the prefix is that of ‘forward’ ‘forth’ ... with sense ‘away’ ‘off’.” Thus forgiving an injury or an insult is tied to the idea of *giving away*, or *casting away*. My sense is that it has to do with casting off, or casting out, the internalized effects still being held in the body, that is, the resentment and the anxious expectation of further injury.

This is very different from the connotations that often accompany the word, that when you forgive, you should be nice to the person you have forgiven. There is ordinarily a sense that you should befriend the attacker and excuse the attack.

I would suggest that another way to look at forgiveness is that it is a process of letting go of resentment, hardness, and constriction in yourself. It really has very little to do with the person with whom you are in conflict. If you stay chained to resentment and bitterness and oppositional feelings, your enemy is controlling your body. What you want is to learn to let go of those somatic actions and achieve freedom in your body and your movement.

In one sense, love and forgiveness are really much more about you than about the other person (as was discussed in Chapter 5). Ordinarily we think that love is a response to someone or something that is lovable, and that is true of one kind of love, what we might call *personal* love. But I am talking about a state of being loving, something you maintain in yourself independent of what is around you. This is more an *impersonal* love. It is an emotion that comes from inside you, independent of what or who you run across.

Forgiveness means being able to contemplate your enemy and her hurtful actions without hardening and weakening your body, and the best way to do that is to stay in the state of power and love.

In a sense, I am suggesting that it is only by changing what the word means that an attitude of *forgiveness* is appropriate in some cases. Of course, in some cases, it is appropriate to befriend someone who has wronged us, but even then, centering will help.

FORGIVING 12.6

Let’s go back to imagining the boss from hell. Or the ex-spouse or roommate. Talk about what they did to you, and watch for the physical changes in your body that are part of the anger/resentment/indignation spectrum.

Can you stay anchored in the body state of love while talking about what she or he did to you? Use power as an anchor for your love. Power is like a fresh battery in a flashlight. It lets the light shine brightly and steadily.

See whether you can aim your love at the person who treated you so badly and at the specific hurtful actions she performed. *Nothing she did is a good reason for you to choose to weaken your own body.*

In 2005, I was part of the teaching staff at an Aikido seminar⁹ in Cyprus. We had Iraqis and Americans, Israelis and Palestinians, and Greek and Turkish Cypriots all practicing together, and the focus was on peacemaking. One of the sessions I taught was on ethnic trauma. I started with a question. “You have showed up at a peace negotiation. You sit down at the table, and sitting opposite you is the man who killed your mother. What does your body do?”

Most likely you immediately drop into the distress response, but that will derail the peacemaking efforts. You are convinced that peace is necessary. What do you do? Anchoring your body in the state of power and love is a beginning. And forgiving your enemy is a further step.

That certainly does not mean condoning the murder. It does not mean absolving the murderer of responsibility. It means being able to look at the former enemy calmly. It means being able to aim your love at him. That is forgiveness. It’s hard and takes a good deal of somatic self-regulation and practice, but it is worth it.

Let’s extend this idea of forgiveness a bit farther.

UNDERSTANDING 12.7

Think of someone in your life who has insulted or hurt you. (If you can’t think of someone, or can’t face working with someone you can think of, make up a story and an enemy to focus on.)

Look at your enemy and try to see the world through her eyes. That doesn’t mean that her vision of the world is right, just that it makes some kind of sense through her eyes. Try to see her hurtfulness as reasonable, in some sense of “reasonable.” How does that reframing affect you?

Many people will find that their bodies will become softer and freer, which, of course, is what this is all about. Softness and freedom are two more elements in the process of forgiveness.

Of course, there are injuries and acts of violence that are so beyond the pale that no sane person can find any reason in them. But even so, even there, you could think: “You must have been in so much pain to have needed to treat people the way

⁹ The seminar was put on by Aiki Extensions, a professional organization of Aikido instructors who teach people how to apply Aikido principles in various areas of daily life. The website is www.aiki-extensions.org.

you did.” Many people will find that their bodies will become freer with this way of thinking. Realizing that the assault came from the attacker’s own pain, can you stay centered and not constrict and coalesce around your own feelings of pain, fear, anger or vulnerability?

For a moment contemplate feeling truly good about yourself—strong, whole, and loving. Your enemy may not deserve it, but if you felt good about yourself, wouldn’t you wave a magic wand and heal your enemy, if you could? Part of forgiveness means not holding hurtfulness in your heart. After all, your contractive mindbody state of hurtfulness hurts you more than it hurts your enemy.

GRATITUDE

What is gratitude? Let’s start with a body awareness exercise.

THANKFULNESS 12.8

Think of someone in your life who has been particularly helpful to you, perhaps gone out of their way to take account of your needs or feelings and smooth what would otherwise have been a difficult situation.

What do you feel? What do you feel in your body? What emotion actions are you doing? Most likely you feel warmth and opening.

Notice how close this exercise and the feeling it creates are to the *Smiling Heart* exercise (5.4) and the feeling that creates.

The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary defines gratitude as “A warm feeling of goodwill towards a benefactor,” and this certainly does express what people usually feel in this last exercise. (Interestingly, the definition includes the element of *warmth*, which is not a merely abstract description, but is rooted in the somatic experience of the feeling, as so many of our emotion descriptions are.)

However, this definition clearly does not apply in a conflict. The person with whom you have having a dispute is not a benefactor, and you probably won’t have a warm feeling of goodwill towards him.

On the other hand, I can use an example from Aikido to further our study of the concept of *gratitude*. It is often said in Aikido that the attack is a gift. In one technical sense, this is an easy concept. Aikido is a defensive art that goes along with the power of the attack and uses that power to control the attack and the attacker. The defense techniques utilize the speed and momentum of the attack to move the attacker farther than he meant to go until he loses balance and falls. The attack is a gift of power given to us by the attacker.

In my own practice, I have extended this concept of the gift a bit farther. Aikido takes the ethical stance that we should protect ourselves without injuring another human being—if at all possible. The *Smiling Heart* exercise (5.4) lets me sub-

stitute love for anger or fear when I am facing an attack, and that allows me to control the natural urge to hurt my opponent.

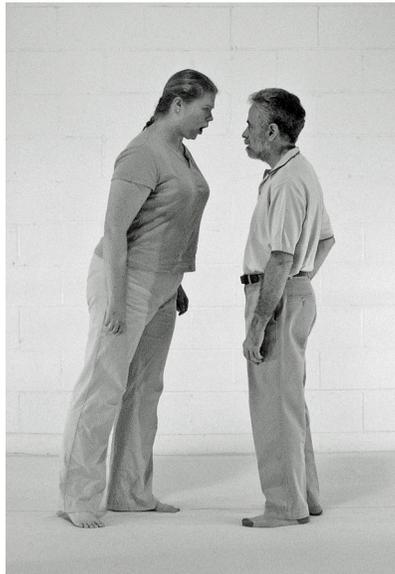
Generating the feeling of *gratitude* is a variation on the same theme. I approach *gratitude* as a somatic state, as something I do in myself and as an attitude that I project out into the world. Facing an attack with a sense of impersonal gratitude allows me to move more effectively and maintain an attitude of protectiveness toward the attacker. Paradoxically, gratitude allows me to execute more effective defense techniques and also prevents me from being too effective. In other words, I would define *gratitude* as “A warm feeling of goodwill projected outwards.” Note that, as usual, *this is about the mindbody state we choose to live in, and is not about the opponent.*

GRATITUDE 12.9

Invite your partner to get in your face and yell insults at you. Low stress insults would be silly or trivial things. Medium stress insults might be common epithets. High stress insults would be things like racial slurs.

What do you feel in your body?

Now, have your partner yell at you again while you generate a feeling of thankfulness and aim it at your partner. Do you feel different?



Exercises on *Smiling Heart, Trust, Forgiveness, Gratitude*: they are all much the same. They are all logical extensions of the *Wanting a Pencil* (6.3) exercise. What you want automatically manifests in your body.

What is the point of devoting time and energy to so many similar elements? That’s easy to answer. We are furnished with a set of cultural concepts that militate against a peaceful attitude, and it is helpful to consider each of the concepts in the

process of reforming our ways of thinking. In addition, the attitudes are generally so unconscious that it takes a good deal of somatic work to bring them into awareness. Beyond that, the basic attitude of peacefulness is so foreign to most of us, and so hard to maintain, that we need to approach it from many directions and have multiple opportunities to practice it.

It is undoubtedly something of a change from the ordinary meaning of the word to speak of aiming impersonal gratitude at an attacker, but there is a point to changing the concept this way: it allows us to overcome negative thoughts and actions and work toward resolving conflicts in a peaceful manner.

WINNING AND LOSING

In the *Shorter Oxford English Dictionary*, a primary meaning of “win” is: “to conquer, subdue, defeat, vanquish.” And a primary meaning of “lose” is: “to be brought to destruction, ruin or misery; to be killed.”

Conflicts certainly can be won or lost. That is part of what makes them conflicts. However, the way we conceptualize winning and losing is important in determining the outcomes and long term results of conflicts.

WINNING & LOSING 12.10

Think of a conflict that is significant—significant in the sense that losing means destruction, ruin, misery or being killed. You get the idea. Imagine the moment after the fight.

Imagine you have won. What are your feelings? What do you feel in your body?

Imagine you have lost. What are your feelings? What do you feel in your body?

Using emotion-language as shorthand, we can say that many people would experience relief or elation as they think of winning. Some people may feel other things such as anger or sadness. Many people would feel fear or dejection as they think of losing. Some people may feel anger or a desire for getting back at the winner. What body events do you notice with such feelings? Do you experience actions such as expansion/rising or collapsing/falling?

Try thinking again of winning. Then think of losing. What are the spatial configurations of your feelings? That is, where in your body do the feelings take place, and what relation do they have to the space around you?

Generally, the feelings of elation or dejection are disconnected from the space around you. Feelings of winning or losing promote isolation. (See the *Alienation* (4.5) exercise.)

Let’s try an experiment. Can you keep your body centered and radiating outward (as in the *Six Directions Reaching* 7.3 exercise) as you think about winning and losing? What do you notice now? Is there the same emotional/physical charge

on the concepts? Is there the same sense of isolation? Most likely, you can now think of winning and losing more neutrally.

Remember that for you to win, your opponent must be brought to destruction, ruin or misery. Aim toward your opponent a sense of wishing him that harm. What do you notice occurring in your body as you direct that sensing outward toward your opponent?

Next, try focusing on the fact that your opponent wishes you to lose. What do you feel in your body when you think that s/he is willing to bring you to destruction, ruin or misery?

Most people notice the usual distress responses in their breathing and posture when they take time to tune in to the hurtfulness involved in a win/lose relationship. Whether you are on the receiving or giving end of hurtfulness, your body will almost certainly experience distress—unless you deliberately alter that through centering practices.

Continuing with this practice sequence, try doing three things simultaneously. Create the body state of radiant, spacious power and love; focus that feeling outward toward your opponent; and also think of winning. What does that feel like in your body? Is the sense of winning made different? If so, in what ways?

When I do this practice, I experience a sense of compassion for my attacker. Just as much as I don't myself want to lose, I don't want to win against my attacker, and I don't want him to suffer the pain of losing. I am motivated to find a way in which we can both win.

Instead of being a matter of diminishing an opponent, winning now becomes a process of finding a constructive, productive solution to the conflict.

This conception of a winning that is constructive for both sides in a conflict is something that I first encountered in the martial art of Aikido. Aikido aims at a form of self-defense in which the attacker is controlled and subdued and at the same time protected from harm. As I developed BIM, I explored and extended this idea.



The definitions cited above refer to serious, life-threatening conflicts, but *winning* and *losing* are very often applied in the context of games. People do get wrapped up in the game and treat it as serious, but winning or losing a game is, in reality, pretty trivial. After all, it's just a game. You can feel puffed up or deflated depending on whether you win or lose, but there's nothing intrinsically important about the outcome of a game—as compared with the real significance of such things as contract negotiations or physical combat.

Winning or losing, in both serious and game contexts, have to do with becoming more or becoming less. The feeling of aggrandizement or diminishment can assume great seriousness to some people. This is the realm of ego and self-image, and it often plays a part in conflicts. Let's examine this.

CRITICISM

You can criticize a novel, or a person, or a plan of action, or a person's behavior. *Criticism* has to do with pointing out shortcomings or faults, but this can span a range from blame and name calling to dispassionate analysis and evaluation.

BEING CRITICIZED 12.11

Imagine a business plan of yours being criticized by someone who is disrespectful and strident and who makes the criticism a personal attack. Or instead of a business plan, it could be a political opinion or your taste in clothes. Perhaps you can remember such an event that actually happened to you.

What do you feel happening in your body? This is undoubtedly quite clear: in the face of a personal attack, most likely you go into the somatic distress pattern. Using emotion-language, we could say that you probably feel defensive, anxious, or irritated.

Imagine someone who, in a respectful and calm but logical and incisive way, is ripping apart a favorite opinion or plan of yours. Or, instead of just imagining this, you can work with a partner who can role play it. This isn't a personal attack. It is simply a rational discussion of something you have thought and expressed.

What feelings does this call up in you? What are the body concomitants? Some people will feel quite neutral. Many people will feel defensive and physically constricted. When people react with constriction, that is a sign that they are taking the rational criticism as a personal attack.

Just what is the attack-ness in the attack? What is the essence of the wound inflicted by criticism? To be more precise, what feelings/body actions are done by the person who feels wounded by a criticism?

Remember the *Following Your Sensations* exercise (9.3)? Let's use that in investigating these questions. Sit in the balanced, upright position, and shut your

eyes. Let yourself feel hurt by a criticism. Request of your body that the feeling of being hurt be clear and close. What do you notice in your body? Repeat the process, and request that this new sensation become larger and clearer. Keep doing that until the nature of the criticism wound becomes clear.

Or, it may be helpful to request of the body that the body part that knows and understands what the hurtfulness is become present to you. What body segment comes to the forefront of your attention? Stay focused on that body location until the feeling it contains becomes clear to you.

If I were actually with you doing this work, I would not make suggestions about or offer interpretations of your body sensations. I would allow you to come to your own understandings. However, in a book I must offer some ideas about what people generally experience and what that may mean. There is, of course the purely personal aspect made up of your own particular memories, experiences and feelings. However, there is also a general aspect which comprises the commonalities shared by many people's experiences of criticism.

Many people experience a physical shrinking which they eventually experience as being a sense of diminishment arising out of the criticism. In other words, they experience that being criticized amounts to being shamed. They feel that in the eyes of the other they are devalued. Since we are tribal, social beings, our sense of our own worth depends at least partly on how we are viewed by other members of the tribe. Being devalued by the other results in a lessening of our own feelings of worth. Some people collapse around this, and some people fight back. In other words, we are back in the territory of the distress response!

Try imagining both the personal attack mode of criticism and the rational discourse mode, and with each, track your physical responses and replace the distress responses with centering. This is, of course, fundamentally the same kind of challenge/response exercise that we have practiced in many ways before.

The centered body pattern is the best platform for responding in a clear, calm, effective, and peaceful manner to being criticized.

Being criticized often, or even usually, feels like losing face. However, that just isn't logical! If the criticism is indeed a personal attack, then you aren't actually diminished just because the other person is acting like a jerk. Instead, it would be more appropriate to remain centered and deal with the personal attack in a kind and effective way.

And if the criticism is rational discourse, then it is truly a gift which will allow you to improve yourself. Feeling shamed by having your flaws pointed out guarantees that your flaws will endure. Instead, it would be more appropriate to remain centered and work on fixing the flaws.

Whether you are faced with an actual personal attack or are simply reacting emotionally to a rational discussion, the distress response is not the best platform for clear and effective peacemaking behavior.

CRITICIZING 12.12

The flip side of being criticized is criticizing another person or criticizing something that someone said, thought, built or produced. Imagine, or remember, criticizing someone. What feeling does that have for you? Do you do either mode of criticism? Both? Something altogether different?

Many people experience anxiety when they have to criticize someone, and some people deal with that anxiety by becoming harsh in their criticism. Others sugar coat their critiques or avoid difficult criticisms altogether.

If you are working with a group, it could be interesting to observe a number of people criticizing someone. This is like the *Handing Over* (5.3) exercise. Though the label *criticism* is the same, you may see very different body actions.

Try delivering a penetrating criticism of someone or of something a person did or created. What do you do in your body? Can you deliver a criticism while staying calm, alert, loving and grounded? What is that like?

Ask the person you're criticizing what it feels like to her when you deliver a criticism from a narrow, tight body state or from an open, free body state.

What does *criticism* become when it is done from a state of center? Rather than reeking of disrespect and meanness, criticism becomes limited to its rational discourse function. It actually functions as a gift in the sense that it is a packet of energy freely given and devoted to helping a person improve herself. If a criticism is done from center, there is really nothing you should get upset about. The criticism is either wrong or right. If it is wrong, it will give you insight into possible ways that other people can interpret what you are doing. And if it's right, you have the wonderful opportunity to improve yourself and what you are doing. So, whether it's wrong or right, centered criticism is a gift.

However, just because a speaker is doing criticism in a centered, clean manner does not mean that it will be received in an equally centered manner. So it is up to the hearer to stay loving and powerful so he can allow himself to listen to the critique without becoming defensive.

Of course, if the speaker actually is uncentered and blaming, then it is especially important for the hearer to stay centered. If the critique happens to be correct, and the hearer can hear the part that is right and discard the blame, he will have found constructive value in what was meant to be personally devaluing. And if the criticism is incorrect, then by being centered, the hearer can make a conscious decision not to take it in.

RIGHTEOUSNESS

Conflicts often include a sense of righteousness on the part of some of the participants. A righteous action is one which is moral or just, and righteousness is the sense of being right or just in one's actions or beliefs. However, righteousness often is a negative, arrogant feeling of false superiority. The sense of righteousness can apply to specific actions or to a whole worldview, and it can apply to one person or a whole group.

RIGHTEOUSNESS 12.13

Imagine you are on the side of the good, the pure, the moral. Perhaps you are fighting some political action by short-sighted special interest groups. Perhaps you are suing a neighbor whose dog has repeatedly torn up your flower beds. Perhaps you have discovered a co-worker stealing donations to a hunger relief project.

Righteousness often includes some comparison with an individual or group that is not righteous. Let yourself feel the sense of your own goodness, especially in relation to the badness of your opponents.

What are your feelings? People will often feel righteous indignation, a feeling of being justified in anger at someone else's misdeeds.

What do you feel in your body? Many people will feel sensations of postural stiffness and twisting, with a focus on the shoulders and neck. People become tense and top heavy. Clearly this is uncentered and unhealthful.

For comparison, try contemplating your opponent's misdeeds from a body state of love and power. That makes the sense of being in the right rather different, doesn't it? How would you describe that?

To sum it up, righteousness is often immoral. The sense of your own rightness can become an uncentered, inhumane foundation on which conflict rather than peace is built. The uncentered sense of being *right* is very close to what we had already explored in looking at *criticism*.

Opponents often create and perpetuate conflict through interlocking and antagonistic feelings of each person being in the right. Giving up those feelings allows people to explore and communicate about the actual content of the conflict. Sticking with feelings of righteousness means the conflict can be resolved only with difficulty, if at all.

SELF-WORTH

Uncentered criticism and uncentered receiving of criticism are very similar. Both the desire to diminish another person and the readiness to take in that diminishment come from lack of self-worth. The question arises, just what is self-worth? More to the point, can *self-worth* be defined in a concrete, operational, body-based manner rather than in the abstract psychological way we usually think of it?

SELF-ESTEEM 12.14

You were at work and were surprised to receive a notice that you'd been laid off. No warning. No good wishes. Just dumped! Say aloud to yourself, "I'm no good. I wasn't worth keeping. And everybody I interview with to find another job will see that I'm worthless. I'll never get another job." As you say this, feel it and believe it.

What happens in your body? Most people experience dull heaviness and a postural collapse.

Shake yourself and let go of this state of postural dullness. Come back to a somatic state of energy and liveliness.

Let's try going in the opposite direction and start with the body instead of with words. Let your posture collapse. Let your muscles get slack and dull. What emotional state does this create? Most people feel something in the area of depression or worthlessness. In other words, thoughts of worthlessness lead to postural collapse, and postural collapse leads to thoughts of worthlessness.

Try centering and at the same time say the same sentences about losing your job and being worthless. Breathe, stabilize your posture, radiate love and keep yourself centered as you say the words. What do they induce your body to do? Most people feel that saying the words has no effect on their body state. People remain anchored in a somatic state of self-esteem. The words are empty of meaning.

Whatever else it may be on the psychological level, self-esteem is fundamentally a postural state, and the somatic state of self-esteem is essentially also the state of compassionate regard for the other. This somatic state is the foundation for the ability to take an approach to conflict resolution based on mutual winning. It is likewise the foundation for the ability to offer and receive criticism in a positive and secure manner. If your face is secure, then issues of losing face are not important, and you can deal productively with the substantive issues in the conflict rather than getting sidetracked on ego issues.

APOLOGIZING

What is an apology? What happens when we offer an apology? The *Webster's New International Dictionary* defines "apology" as "an acknowledgment intended as an atonement for some improper or injurious remark or act; an admission to another of a wrong or discourtesy done him, accompanied by an expression of regret."

OFFERING AN APOLOGY 12.15

You just squashed your spouse's pet poodle with your car, by accident of course. You lost sight of the dog and didn't realize he was sniffing the rear wheel of the car.

Working with a partner, offer an apology. What do you say by way of apology? What do you do in your body?

What does your partner feel in their body?

We can divide an *apology* into a number of elements, some of them being: a statement of the facts of what you did, a statement that your behavior was incorrect, and a statement of regret. I would suggest that a statement of possible reparative actions should be part of an apology as well.

Imagine someone saying, "Yes, I ran over your poodle because I wasn't looking for the dog. I should have been looking for him, and I was wrong not to have been. I'm sorry for what I've done. I know nothing can bring him back, but at least I'd like to have the picture I took of him last week enlarged and mounted in a nice frame for you." What's missing?

Notice that the apology is defined in terms of statements and actions done in relation to the wronged person. You could say all the right things but be in a body state, for example, of cold anger (to use emotion-language shorthand in naming the state). I don't think that would count as a true apology.

It would be helpful in considering the nature of *apology* to include the body state as being the actuality behind the statements of regret, remorse, or a desire to make amends.

APOLOGY TWO 12.16

You found that the report you were asked to prepare involved a lot more research than you had allotted time for. As a result, your boss had to postpone an important meeting. Offer an apology. Try including each of the elements of the apology definition: state the facts, your wrongness, your regret, and a plan for reparative actions. What do you feel in your body as you state each of the elements of the apology? Follow the body sensations, and see what they connect to. What do you notice?

Some people will notice that offering an apology puts them into the distress response.

This distress reaction is complex, and there is no one-size-fits-all explanations for the origins of the distress. However, many people will find that offering an apology evokes feelings of losing, or losing face, or shame, or feelings in that general area. In other words, by admitting their mistake, they are somehow diminished. This

is clearly related to the discussion and reframing of the concepts of losing, criticism, and self-worth.

APOLOGY THREE 12.17

Think of something you've done that was inaccurate, or inconsiderate, or unethical, or not allowed, and so on. Feel that apologizing is diminishing and painful to you. And offer an apology to your partner anyway. What do you feel in your body? What does your partner feel in their body when you offer this kind of apology?

Now center yourself, and offer the same apology. What is different about offering the apology from a centered state? And what differences does your partner feel?

Many people will experience that being centered while apologizing allows them to stay present and in their wholeness instead of going into the diminishment of the distress response. Offering an apology in a centered manner, by anchoring you in your self-worth, allows you to admit mistakes without feeling diminished. In other words, it becomes possible to take owning up to your mistakes as a positive process, as something which will let you do better in the future. That would certainly promote peaceful, constructive resolution of conflicts.

An added benefit is that you can be more present to and empathetic with the person to whom you're offering the apology—which creates the kind of benign circle discussed in Chapter 1. Most people will feel better about receiving a centered apology. It will feel more sincere and will affect them more.

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This chapter has investigated a number of concepts, elucidating and improving their meanings and functions through an examination of their somatic aspects. As humans, we use and are controlled by language. The words we are furnished are what we think with, and the range of our thoughts is to a great extent bounded by the range of our words. Not only are our thoughts directed by the available words, but so are our bodies. The feelings which are part of the words' meanings show up in our bodies.

Trust, forgiveness, gratitude, winning and losing, criticism, self-worth, and apologizing: all these concepts play parts in how we think, feel, and act in resolving conflicts. And a vital part of training our bodies to adopt more peace-affirming response patterns is using words in ways which will promote the centered response patterns we are after.

CHAPTER 13

CONFLICTS

Which situation would provide the better opportunity for learning how to get along with people—a situation of friendly cooperation or a situation of antagonism and discord? People usually guess the former, but I think it is the latter situation which provides the greatest learning opportunities. It is our enemies whom we have to learn how to get along with, and without some enemies to practice with, how could we learn?

This chapter provides the opportunity for people to practice calmness and awareness in the midst of conflict. The conflicts will be a bit different from the stress situations we have practiced with so far: the conflicts here will be situations in which both partners are trying to win against the other. After all, it isn't enough to be peaceful in a conflict. You have to press your side of the case against the objections of the other person, even as he is pressing his side.

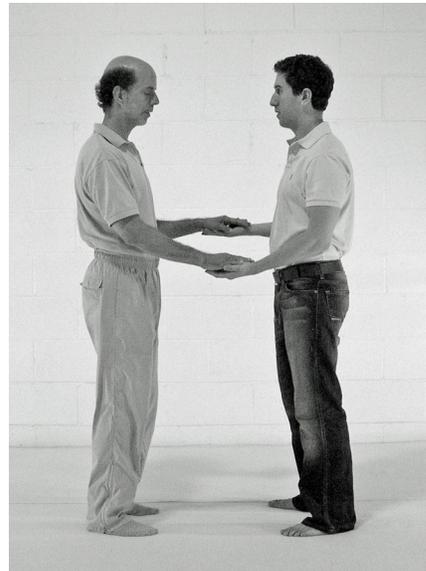
Here are two games which people can use to study conflict. The structure of these exercises is simple. A challenge is provided, participants observe their ordinary responses, learn better responses, and then practice these better responses.

HAND FLIP 13.1

This first is a common game, but we'll use it as a centering practice. Stand facing your partner. Both of you should put your hands out horizontally in front of you. Place your hands palm to palm, with your partner holding his hands palm up and you holding your hands palm down.

Your partner's task is to flip one or both hands up over your hand(s) and slap down on your hand(s). Your job is to withdraw your hand(s) fast enough that it not be slapped.

Notice what you feel during this game. Ask your partner what he feels. Does either of you feel competitive or excited? Some people may feel anxious. Do any of those feelings help? Generally not.



Try the game again. Can you both stay calm and kind even when you're engaged in a slapping conflict?

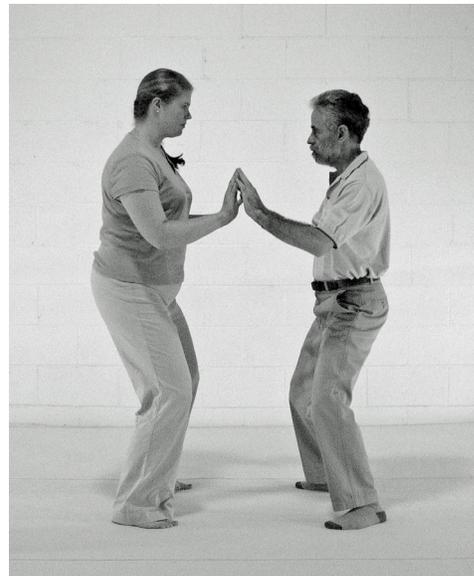
A harder version of this is for each of you to hold one palm up and one palm down. In this case, each person is simultaneously a defender and an attacker. It takes a lot of concentration to do that.

SAMURAI PATTY CAKE 13.2

This next game is one that I imagine the Japanese samurai warriors might have played. It's another slapping/centering game.

Stand in front of your partner a bit closer than arms' length apart. You should both bend your knees and assume a squatting stance. In Karate, this stance is called the Horse Riding Stance because the legs are spread apart as though one were riding a horse.

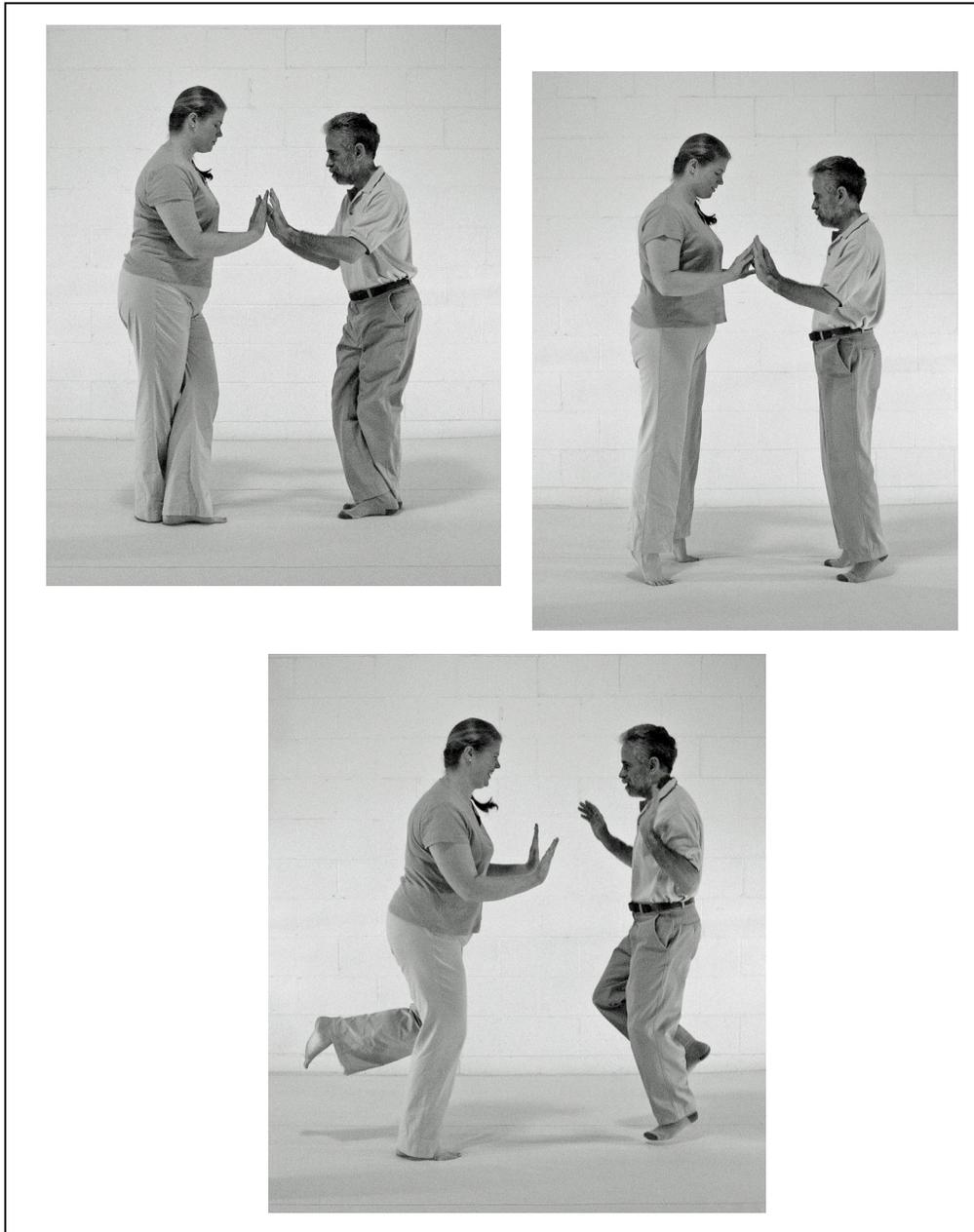
The game is derived from the children's game Patty Cake, in which two people clap their hands together. In this case, the game is to slap the hands together in such a way as to break the opponent's balance. The simple way to do that is to slap *hard* and just knock the opponent back. A more subtle way is to *fade away* at the moment of the



opponent's slap, thereby letting his momentum pitch him forward off balance. As usual, centering will be the best way to succeed in this game, whether force or yielding is being used.

For safety, it is important to confine the slaps to just the hands—no slaps to any part of the body other than the palms.

There are many possibilities for increasing the difficulty level of this game. Instead of standing in the horse stance, you can both stand with your ankles crossed. Or you can each stand with your feet close together, standing on your tip-toes. Or you could do the exercise while standing on one foot.

**U-TURN 13.3**

Have your partner stand in front of you about ten feet away (about three meters) and then walk toward you and over you, like a steam roller over a frog. It is important that your partner not withdraw or move aside at the moment of impact but simply walk straight over you.

Just before the impact, move to your right enough to dodge the attack. It will be like getting off the train tracks to avoid getting hit by an oncoming train.

What do you do just before the moment of possible impact? Most people brace to get ready to be hit, or they flinch away from the impact. Instead, try relaxing and grounding. Breathe calmly and openly. Accepting the attack will prepare you for defending against it. Anything you cannot accept and tolerate will be very difficult to protect against.

Once you can move aside calmly and lovingly, then add a U-turn to the movement. That is, turn to your right (clockwise), put your left arm around your partner's shoulders, and smoothly blending into his movement, walk along with him.

Hugging your attacker and going along with him is a way of accepting the attack peacefully and rendering it powerless over you. It's a really strange way to respond to an intrusion, but it works well!



CHICKEN 13.4

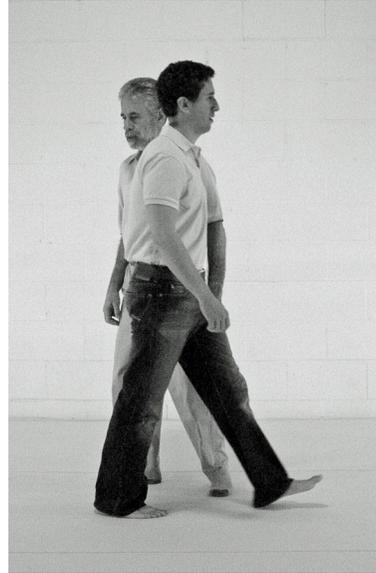
Have your partner stand in front of you about twenty feet away (about six meters) and then walk toward you. At the same time, walk toward your partner. Both you and your partner will be walking straight at each other. Stay on the same line, and walk straight at each other.

And just at the last moment before the impact, one or both of you should veer off the line so that there is no crash.

If you both go to the same side, you will crash. If one person stays on the line as the other person veers off, that will work. It will also work if you both veer off to opposite sides.

How do you know which side to go toward? Well, that's the point of the game. There is a rapid non-verbal negotiation about who will move and in which direction. Don't make it too obvious—say, by cocking your head to the side very early in the movement—since that will make the game uninteresting.

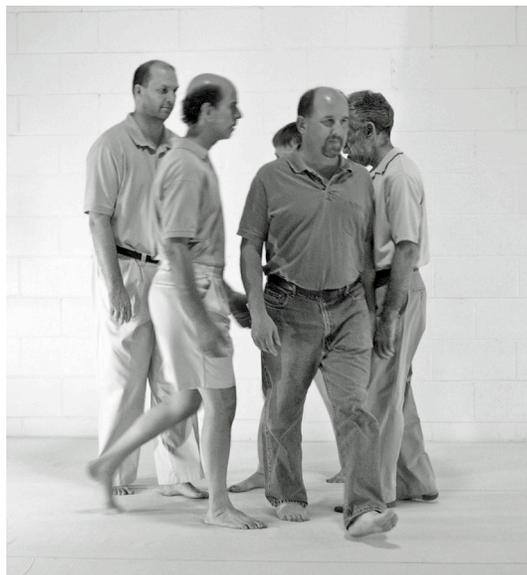
Note that this exercise has a lot to do with the exercises in Chapter 10 on developing sensitivity to other people. And, yet again, let me remind you that centering will help.

**PENGUIN WALKING 13.5**

You will need a group of four or five people for this exercise, and it will need to be done in a large space empty of furniture.

Start by having your partners stand on one side of the space while you stand on the other side. You can signal the start of the game by nodding to the group. Their job is to walk into you, and your job is to dodge them all as they come at you.

For safety, everyone should keep their hands by their sides. Maintain a steady half-speed



walk. No speeding up and crashing into people.

Centering will help you perceive and move. In particular, *Soft Eyes* (5.7) will help you see the whole picture and stay aware of the ebbs and flows of the group's movements.

An important element in being able to handle this group "attack" is staying wide in your awareness rather than narrowing your focus to just the person immediately confronting you.

In this next exercise, we will begin moving toward practicing directly with conflict instead of with conflict games.

JUDGMENTALISM 13.6

Invite your partner to stand in front of you. Your job is to be judgmental, even prejudiced.

You can tell her that she's ugly or stupid. You can make fun of her clothes.

Or it could be vicious name calling, for example, "kike," "nigger," or "queer."

What happens in your body? The chances are you will experience some distress. The body rejects prejudice and judgmentalism. That alienated thinking is harmful to the thinker's own body.

Ask your partner what happens in her body when she is subjected to offensive language. And can she center herself and refrain from acting on—that is, taking into her body—the negative attitudes being aimed at her?

By the way, making judgments and being judgmental are rather different. Offering well-reasoned, calm and respectful judgments is not harmful. Judging and analyzing situations are necessary parts of every day life. You couldn't survive a day without judging which situations were potentially harmful and dealing with them. I make this point because every once in a while I have a student who in the name of centering and nonviolence aims at giving up making all judgments instead of just the prejudiced judgments I'm calling *judgmentalism*.

MIRRORING EMOTIONS 13.7

In this exercise, you will have the opportunity to practice with a somewhat more realistic conflict.

There is a reason that beginning swimmers practice their strokes on dry land before getting in the water. Dry land is less complex environment. There is not as much new input to pay attention to, so learning is easier. And it's a safer environment. The risk of drowning is eliminated while beginning swimmers are learning how to not drown. In much the same way, the exercises in this book offer a simpler, less overwhelming environment than actual fights.

This exercise offers a bridge between dry land practice and swimming through real conflict.

This first role play involves talking to an angry person. Have your partner yell, loudly and angrily, about how she never gets to pick the TV program to watch. Or something of the sort. You have to say something in reply.

Before you reply, make a mental list of the emotion actions the attacker is doing, and observe whether you are mirroring any of those actions in your own body. Strong emotions are contagious. Part of the human capacity for empathy and communication is an unconscious mirroring in our bodies of what the people we are with are doing in their bodies.

Now, let your body mirror the emotions your partner is doing. Reply to the angry attack in an equally loud and angry voice. Coming from this angry state, what do you choose to say? What does that feel like, both to the attacker and to you? What effects does it have on the attacker? What effects does it have on the course of the conflict?

Before we move on to role playing the centered response, let's examine its logical structure. First, of course, the reply must come from a soft, open, empowered body state. Beyond that, the reply must be non-oppositional in a logical sense. Opposition is "No, but...." Centering is "Yes, and...."

An oppositional statement would be of the form "No, what you are saying is wrong." A respectful, non-oppositional, yielding statement would have a form something like "Yes, I hear what you are saying, and I can see why you would say that, and why you're feeling so strongly about it." Next, you could say, "And I'd like you to consider this other perspective as well." That could be followed by "What could we do to achieve practical changes acceptable to both of us?" and by specific suggestions for this.

This process has three steps. The first step is accepting your opponent's position. However, *accepting* doesn't mean agreeing with your opponent or giving up your position. It means truly seeing your opponent and his position and acknowledging it. The second step is to present your position. And the third step is to propose a negotiated solution. Of course, it may take a number of iterations of this process to get to a mutually acceptable solution.

Acknowledging the communication from your opponent, that is, hearing and respecting both him and what he is feeling and saying, is a foundation for productive communication and conflict resolution. And the embodied state of peace is a foundation for acknowledging your opponent, rather than getting caught in the spirit of conflict.

Naturally, the process will work much better if both parties to the conflict are trained in and committed to using the process of embodied peacemaking, but it will still be helpful if only one side is using the process. If both parties are trained in and committed to embodied peacemaking, it could be very helpful if they would periodi-

cally remind each other to remember to center themselves. It would be helpful to have an agreement that either side could call for a breathing and centering break if it seems that fight-or-flight arousal is creeping into the conflict.

REFLECTING WORDS: PRACTICE 13.10

One common technique that is often employed in verbal conflict resolution processes is reflecting back an opponent's message. That means restating her arguments in your own words and in such a way that your opponent agrees that you have understood and expressed her position adequately.

Have a partner strongly state a position on some topic. Your task is to reflect his statements back to him. Does centering help you hear and speak clearly?

It will make this exercise more entertaining if your opponent reacts to your reflection statements in an obnoxious and picky way. Can you breathe and stay calm, strong and loving?

This process of calm reflection will be especially difficult when you are called upon to restate a list of bad things your opponent believes you to have done. If your partner can come up with some real complaints about you, that would be a wonderful practice gift, wouldn't it? Can your partner stay centered while stating your misdeeds? Can you stay centered while listening, and then while reflecting back his accusations?

ROLE PLAYS 13.11

Have your partner yell angrily at you. Create the body sense of calm, kind alertness, and reply to your opponent from this state of being. What do you choose to say now? Do you choose something different to say when you feel calm? What does that feel like, both to your opponent and to you? What affects does it have on the your opponent? What results does it have on the communication process?

For another role play, you could mediate between two angry people. Have your two partners find some cherished belief to argue over. What do you say to intervene and try to create some productive resolution of the problem? And even more fundamentally, *how do you say it?*

One way you can help is to call for a centering break. Try asking the parties to the conflict to relax and breathe. Of course, you have to be careful about this or both people could focus their anger on you. If that happens, you will need to employ all your centering skills.

An even more lifelike role play is possible. If it seems safe and not too personal, you could try working with some real conflict you've experienced. Working with one or more people as needed, you can have your partner(s) act out the role(s) of your opponent(s). You can give them loose scripts to follow.

Can you remember what you did with your breathing and posture during the conflict—in other words, what you felt like in your body? Replay the conflict, and this time try to stay anchored in your bodyself. Do you communicate differently? Do you communicate different ideas? Do you approach the conflict with a different outlook? What are the results?

There are some elements of the conflict situation that are important to keep in mind. The first is the distinction between what could be termed *hard* and *soft* forms of power. The hard approach to control is based on direct force to overpower and dominate. The soft approach to control is based on the use of yielding and acceptance to influence and achieve cooperation. It is often thought that hard power is by its very nature harsh and unethical and that soft control is the only ethical way of living.

I would like to suggest that what makes control of either sort ethical is that it springs from an inner mindbody state of integrated power and love. *I would define violence as behavior which comes out of an inner state of fear and/or anger and a consequent desire to diminish or injure.* It is possible to wield hard power with a sense of respect, compassion, and a desire to help and heal. For example, imagine being in a burning house with a friend who has panicked. You might knock him unconscious so that you can drag him out to safety. On the other hand, soft power could be a devious, underhanded form of manipulation. I would therefore suggest that the essence of ethical behavior lies in your intention and body state—you have to intend to do good and intend to be physically centered.

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It is important to realize that what you have control over is your own process, not the outcome. There are no guarantees of success in the outcome. Embodied peacemaking will produce a good likelihood of resolving a conflict productively, but “good likelihood” does not automatically translate into “desired result.” It's a sure bet that violence won't produce the life or the world we want. Peacefulness offers a good shot at that, but there is no way to guarantee results, particularly in the short term. A failure to achieve a particular outcome right away is not a failure of peacefulness as a way of acting and living.

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When you are engaged in a conflict with someone, it is helpful to respond in such a way as to lure your opponent into opening their body. This is particularly important with an opponent who is not himself actively engaged in practicing embodied

peacemaking. It may not always be possible to calm your opponent, but when it is, it certainly is helpful in creating peace.

The first step in helping your attacker feel calmer and more open is simply keeping your own body open. That way you won't look like an enemy. That way your voice will be calm and gentle, and you won't sound like an enemy.

The second step in helping your antagonist feel calmer is choosing words and ideas that will not alienate your attacker but that will make her feel respected and heard. Keeping your body open will maximize your ability to conceptualize the conflict in non-oppositional, non-aggressive ways. You will be able to think about the conflict not as a conflict but as an early stage in the development of cooperation and harmony.

It will be helpful to respond from a "yes, and" approach rather than from a "no, but" position. "Yes, I receive and understand what you're saying, and I would also like to add an extra point for your consideration." Instead of, "No, I don't think much of your point, but my point is much better." "Yes, and" is conceptually open, in much the same way you have learned to open and soften your body. It will encourage physical softening and conceptual opening in your attacker. This kind of verbal/conceptual openness is the beginning of the more common verbally-based approach to conflict resolution.

The point of all the body awareness work has been to get you to a place where you could be peaceful in the midst of a conflict. If you aren't peaceful, then it will be difficult or impossible to create peace. If you are peaceful in yourself, not only will you look and act like a friend rather than an enemy, which will defuse the antagonism, but you will also be more able to think on your feet and come up with a response that would resolve the issues under dispute in constructive and life-affirming ways.

SELF-DEFENSE

Another issue in conflict resolution is self-defense. This book focuses on improving primarily one part of the conflict resolution spectrum, the body responses. In the consideration of the various relevant concepts and in the role plays, we moved somewhat into the cognitive and verbal part of the spectrum. However, a third part of the spectrum, we'll leave untouched, and that third part is self-defense expertise. Unfortunately as it is, some conflicts really do have to be settled by physical combat. That's life!

If Attila the Hun comes riding over the hill all set to pillage your village, the first, civilized step is to say, "Excuse me, Mr. Hun, but I'd really rather you not pillage my village." Of course, we know what he'd likely say. So the next step would be to make a clear statement of the negative consequences for him of his trying. And of course, we know what he would be likely to do. So the necessary last step would be physical self-defense.

Without the capability of bottom-line, practical self-protection skills, other conflict resolution skills rest on a foundation of sand. This makes little practical dif-

ference in our daily verbal conflicts. They rarely degenerate into physical combat. Even so, having the skills to physically protect yourself makes a difference in the confidence with which you can use the mindbody skills that are part of embodied peacemaking.

You might consider studying a martial art. Some martial arts, however, have become purely sportive, with little or no self-defense usefulness. Some martial arts teachers embrace anger and harshness as a means of generating energy for fighting, and this would be the opposite of embodied peacemaking. Depending on the art and the teacher, in addition to self-defense, martial arts can also be excellent vehicles for deepening and extending your mindbody awareness, so martial arts can contribute to embodied peacemaking in this way too.

Or you might consider taking a self-defense course. Martial arts are *arts* and take years of practice to master. Self-defense courses, on the other choose material that is quick and easy to learn and which is broadly effective. You won't get the depth of skill development, but self-defense demands relatively little time investment. The same caution applies here about anger as a power source.

FURTHER PRACTICE

In addition to using Embodied Peacemaking for conflict resolution, you can use the skills of balancing and opening intention, posture and movement to improve your functioning in physical tasks from playing the violin or using a computer to mowing the lawn or playing baseball. Beyond improving physical performance, the mindbody state of calm alertness will enable you to better handle emotionally charged situations such as job interviews, public speaking or going to the dentist. And conversely, when you incorporate your new body awareness skills and methods into your daily life activities, those activities become opportunities to practice and improve the fundamental mindbody skills for conflict resolution and peacemaking.



CHAPTER 14

MORAL EDUCATION

Underlying the practical body awareness exercises in this book is a theory and method of moral education. Moral education involves teaching people moral thinking, feeling and acting. And for this teaching to have practical importance, it cannot be simply a matter of abstract information or concepts. It must be a practical process which achieves actual changes in the way people behave.

There are a number of questions which are fundamental for a practical and effective theory of moral education. First, are there general ideals or standards which define right actions and which are universal, logically compelling, and empirically testable? Second, given such general standards of right behavior, what procedures can people use to arrive at specific decisions about how to behave in specific situations? And third, what training methods can be used to help people internalize the ideals and achieve concrete changes in the way they act and live?

Body and movement awareness training offers a concrete approach which answers these questions. From this perspective, morality is not a matter of abstract philosophy. It is a process of discerning and choosing actions which promote expansiveness in the body. Looked at in this way, morality is more a matter of physical health than abstract ideals. Certain ways of behaving are built into us, and behaving in accord with our physiology is the same as behaving morally.

This book details the application of body awareness training in the area of conflict resolution, but in essence, the book is really laying out a program of moral education. In Chapter 1, there was a brief section on body and morality. This chapter will examine that connection in more detail and focus on the broader issue of the nature of morality. Since we have already done the body awareness exercises which form the experiential foundation required for the development of a practical approach to morality, this chapter will be more conceptual and theoretical.

BODY ALIENATION

Such seemingly different problems as interpersonal and international conflict; ethnic, religious, or gender prejudice; drug abuse, family violence and child abuse, and environmental degradation are all very similar in one crucial way. From my perspective on body and movement awareness education, all these problems are branches on the tree of body alienation. Whatever else may be involved in these problems, body alienation is a necessary condition for their existence, and body awareness training is a crucial component in their solution.

Body alienation, or body numbness, is the condition of not feeling oneself. Numb people don't have a clear, detailed perception of their own bodies. They don't

feel accurately their position or movement in space, and they don't fully notice the physical sensations and emotions that stream through them. In this state of body alienation, people cannot feel or notice the effects of their actions. They cannot feel or identify accurately what gives them pain or pleasure, and they move toward things that are harmful to them and avoid things that are beneficial.

Body alienation is also the condition of not feeling other people or the planet itself. When people cannot even feel themselves, they have very little feeling for others or for how their actions affect others. They are not fully aware that other people really feel things, and they are inclined to unthinkingly use other people and hurt them. In the same way, numb people will have so little empathy for other non-human life and the earth itself that they may unthinkingly and unfeelingly destroy species of plants and animals and despoil the soil, water and air.

Two questions arise: What causes body alienation? And, how can body alienation be overcome?

ANESTHESIA

Body numbness is a hidden dimension of the distress response. People generally respond to being challenged or threatened by taking what appear to be the appropriate actions of fight or flight. It is startling to people to find that hidden within these actions is a very different process. As people contemplate their experiences in the body awareness exercises, they realize that real and effective fight or flight is accomplished on the basis of a personal mindbody condition of strength and perceptivity. The psychological/physical distress response of rigidity or collapse, however, is not a process of effective action but is instead really a process of anesthesia. On a foundation of constriction or collapse, effective action is difficult at best. What is created, however, is a condition of unfeelingness. It might seem paradoxical to suggest that the painful state of constriction/collapse is a form of anesthesia. However, as people focus their awareness into that body state, they come to realize that it distances them from themselves and their environment—in other words, it is indeed a form of anesthesia.

It is very important to consider why it is so common for people to adopt a strategy of anesthesia rather than a strategy of effective mobilization as a basis for reacting to threats. Continuing to plumb the depths of their experience, people usually realize that the self will opt for numbness rather than effective action in the face of a threat when it perceives that it is really unable to take effective action to handle the threat. Even while it is apparently fighting or escaping, the self that feels itself to be impotent will also be shutting itself down so it won't have to feel what it believes it cannot handle. This includes not feeling both the external environment and internal sensations and feelings.

By keeping this new insight in mind as they try out various ways of responding to challenges, people feel how acting on the basis of impotence and numbness establishes a feedback loop of disempowerment. When they respond to a threat in a weak and collapsed or constricted manner, they experience that their responses are indeed

ineffective, and that reinforces the self-concept of impotence, which leads to still weaker responses.

People also experience that rigid responses sometimes do work in achieving some manner of external control but that even this is problematic. The kind of control that rigid numbness effects is harsh, insensitive, alienated and destructive. It creates pain and suffering, both for the people who act out this strategy of self-protection and for the people that they dominate. When people struggling to use rigidity to assume control of a threat find themselves losing control, they will generally use even greater rigidity to try to reestablish control, thus creating another vicious circle. As the self gets more and more caught in the cycle of rigidity and pain, it eventually comes to perceive itself as impotent to achieve its real goal of safety and comfort. So in the end, even rigidity, which is at first experienced as strength, is a form of weakness and leads to ever increasing weakness and need for anesthesia.

TRAUMA & INVALIDATION

How do people come to learn that they are powerless and that they need to adopt a strategy of numbness? My experience in seeing people work with this question is that the primary source of this learning is the traumas and invalidation that many children experience in growing up.

I define "trauma" rather broadly, as any situation, event or action which overwhelms a person's coping and/or survival skills. Child abuse is a clear and harsh form of trauma, and many children in America have been abused. I have seen estimates that one in four girls and one in six boys have been sexually abused, and that doesn't include the numbers of children who have been abused in physical but non-sexual ways. Nor does it include children who are victims of neglect, emotional abuse, poverty, or prejudice. Nor does it include children who have experienced natural disasters, serious accidents, serious illness, civil unrest, or war.

Invalidation also hurts children. Anything which teaches children to ignore and deny the messages they experience in their bodies diminishes their sense of self. For example, it is invalidating to tell a child who has been frightened by a shadow, "Stop crying. It's just a shadow. You shouldn't be afraid." A different message could be, "I can see that you are really scared. Would you like me to hold your hand, and we'll both go investigate the monster?" The first message leads to a feeling of being wrong, unsupported, invalidated and unsafe. It also forces the child to suppress his feelings in order to be acceptable to the adult. The second message leads to feelings of being respected, to willingness to stay in touch with internal sensations, and to skills for investigating and handling threats.

Children start off powerless and incapable, dependent on the adults around them for their safety and for the fulfillment of every need, and a primary task of their growth is to gradually gain power and take over the job of fulfilling their own needs. A major task of the caregiving adult is to respect and nurture the child's development of power. This means recognizing and validating the child's feelings and needs, nur-

turing his or her sense of self-worth, and leading her or him to the ability to deal with the world from a secure and effective inner base of power and compassion.

The experience of being ignored or hurt interrupts this process of growth and empowerment and leads children to take in the message that they are worthless and powerless. Since the child is powerless to change the external situation he or she faces, the child adopts a strategy of altering the internal perceptions of his or her feelings and situations.

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A person who has not fully developed his or her power to deal with life-threatening dangers cannot feel secure in a perilous world. A person who has not contacted their power cannot have a secure self-territory from which to venture out into the social world. His underlying response to threat will be fear, and the fear will prompt him to perceive a lot of the world as threatening. It will also give rise to anger and the desire to hurt and destroy what seems threatening. Without a sense of security of the self, based on the realistic ability to defend the self from harm, full and compassionate contact with other people will be impossible.

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Anesthesia is a primary strategy for coping with ongoing fear and pain. Body numbness can embrace many forms of reduced awareness. There can be lack of physical feeling for various areas of the body. There can be a lack of contact with the physical sensations of emotions. There can even be amnesia for traumatic experiences or for whole periods of a child's life.

Even when the child grows up to be an adult, this learning incorporated at an early age continues to be a fundamental part of the personality construct. The adult continues to act from the knowledge of his or her own weakness and lack of effective boundary defense. Many people try to brace themselves to handle the external events and inner pain, and many people give up and collapse in resignation, and both of these options create a state of anesthesia. And just as the sense of powerlessness persists, so the strategy of internal anesthesia persists into adulthood as a fundamental mechanism for coping with life's threats.

The process of anesthesia is supported and strengthened by our culture. For example, two common ways in which this impacts individuals is in terms of what is perceived as good posture and as strength. Our culture teaches us that good posture is achieved by raising the chin, throwing the shoulders back, bracing the back and sucking in the gut. This makes the body rigid, top-heavy, unbalanced, immobile and tense. It makes people feel rigid and alienated, and it leads to rigid and alienated behavior. Our culture also teaches us that strength is bulky, contracted, and high in the chest, which also leads to rigidity and alienation.

It is interesting to note that the body form our culture prescribes is practically a prescription for the movement pattern involved in the fear/startle reflex. Body and

movement patterns express emotions and also create them. Feeling a certain way will result in corresponding body patterns, and adopting those body patterns will create the feelings. The cultural prescriptions for posture and strength both express a widespread underlying fear pattern and serve to create and perpetuate the fear, rigidity and weakness. And underlying our cultural concepts of both strength and good posture is the process of sensory reduction and anesthesia.

ALIENATION & EVIL

The process of prescribing and choosing anesthesia is both a result and a cause of interpersonal discord, drug abuse, family violence, child abuse, ethnic intolerance, international conflict, and environmental degradation.

On the basis of having been hurt and disempowered, people grow up weak and fearful, either collapsed/retreating or rigid/aggressive or both. They adopt the coping strategy of numbness to avoid feeling what happens to them. They become numb to their own feelings, and are not fully aware of what they do to themselves. And what they cannot feel in themselves they cannot notice or comprehend in other people. They have shut out their own pain, and they cannot feel anyone else's pain. They lack empathy and compassion. They lack awareness of the fact that other people truly feel, and they are not fully aware of what they do to the people around them. They are not fully aware of the life in plants and animals, and the earth itself, and they are not aware of what they are doing to the planet they are part of.

The ability to do evil is based on not feeling oneself and others¹⁰. In the state of numbness and lack of awareness, people can take care of their own needs in a short-sighted, self-centered way. They won't notice the effects they are having on the people around them or the long-term effects they will be creating in their own lives. By being absorbed in themselves, people can unfeelingly hurt others and themselves. When they become parents, they respond to the powerless children under their care on the basis of their own needs rather than on the basis of their children's needs. At best, they simply do not notice, validate or fulfill the needs of the children. At worst, needing to feel powerful, they repeat on their children the abuse they themselves experienced as children. This finally allows them to feel powerful, in the way they perceived their abusers as being powerful, which is their only understanding of power. In the same way, numb people form groups to disempower or abuse other groups. And numb people use the planet carelessly and unfeelingly to satisfy their own needs, in the long run possibly destroying the planet and themselves.

It is important to remember, however, that numbness is not in itself evil, and numb people are not evil. People who choose numbness do so from a place of pain and powerlessness. Presumably, given their situation and their resources, it is the

¹⁰ It may be that in some instances of evil, the person committing the act resonates with and enjoys the pain and suffering of the victim. That would be a different process, one which I suspect would be rarer.

best choice they have available. All they are trying to do is survive. The problem with numbness, though, is that in the long run it has disastrous side-effects. Like a powerful narcotic, numbness is appropriate for dealing with the pain of an acute emergency but continued use will eventually destroy the person using it.

EMPOWERMENT

Looking at the broad context for life, any organism has two basic needs for sustaining its life. The organism must be able to exert power in its environment, and it must be able to connect to its environment. It must be able to exert power to defend itself and its young from predators and other dangers, and it must be able to exert power to secure food. It must be able to connect to its environment both in the sense of receiving sufficient perceptual input to function and in the sense of connecting with others of its species for reproduction and possibly other purposes such as grooming or nurturance.

Translating this into more human terms, two fundamental requirements for a person to be a fully functioning human being are that he or she be able to protect him/herself and be able to love.

The solution to body alienation is to replace numbness with awareness, power, and love. Through the body awareness exercises in this and my other books, people can be brought to notice their numbness, understand and evaluate it, and change it. Through the experience of power and love, people will be able to find the courage to confront the powerlessness and numbness they have experienced, a process which can be scary and painful. Through the experience of power and love, people will understand the necessity of choosing to be vulnerable to their fear and pain, and they will understand the effectiveness of that choice in securing their safety.

Blocking the awareness of fear and pain reduces the capacity to perceive and understand the source of the pain and how to resolve the problem causing the pain. It's like driving with your eyes shut. The less information you have, the poorer will be your ability to manage problematic situations. Conversely, the more open you are to input from the world, the better you will be able to manage the situations which cause pain and fear.

However, in order to risk being fully open (vulnerable) to people, a person must know that he or she has the power to handle anything undesirable that may occur once he lets his shield down. Once a person is secure in her power, she can afford to take the risk of reaching out to others in a loving, empathetic way.

There is another somewhat paradoxical way in which power is the basis for love. Power enables people to go beyond power to the experience of ultimate weakness. Human beings are all ultimately weak in the face of the universe and death itself. It takes a good deal of power to look squarely into the face of mortality and accept your fundamental weakness in a calm way. Power gives people the courage to achieve a humble acceptance of their fear and weakness. In that humility and softening of the heart, people can let go of the barriers that keep them fearfully separate

and defensive, and they can then feel empathy with and compassion for the beings around them.

MORAL ACTION

The key to the process of empowerment is the development of a moment-by-moment habit of self-study. Remembering to observe, interpret and control their physical responses gives people a powerful tool for choosing harmonious ways of interaction.

It is in this process of self-examination and cultivation of harmony that moral education takes place.

Rather than attempting to give a list of ethical dos and don'ts, this approach to harmony focuses on finding a powerful, loving and centered state of being and from that state making decisions as to how to act. It challenges the individual to constantly aim at understanding and creating harmony in everyday moments of life.

In this approach to moral thinking, the body is the touchstone for decision making and action. In practicing body/movement awareness exercises, people come to experience that thoughts, feelings, intentions and actions which lead to smallness and twisting in the body are those which upon reflection would be identified as weak, hurtful, immoral and unethical. And thoughts, feelings, intentions and actions which lead to expansiveness, symmetry and freedom in the body are those which are respectful, compassionate, nurturing and confident. If people who are faced with decisions about how to behave turn their attention to the sensations in their bodies, they will have a way of judging whether they are moving in life-affirming or life-destroying directions.

Actually, it is more complicated than this. Actions which lead to smallness and twisting in the body are generally harmful and/or unethical, and actions which lead to an expansiveness and symmetry are most likely and comparatively more healthful and ethical. Smallness and twisting do indicate that there is some difficulty that must be resolved, but there are two kinds of difficulties which may arise. The simple difficulty is that the thought or action is one which is indeed hurtful and unethical. The more complicated difficulty has to do with fearful and painful associations. If in our past experience we have learned to associate pain and punishment with something that otherwise would be life-affirming, then our bodies will become small and twisted when we contemplate doing that which actually is good. Smallness and twisting, therefore, are indicators of a necessity for learning and growth. Either we are faced with some traumatic experience to be worked out and overcome or we are experiencing an urge to do something wrong and destructive. In any case, experiencing smallness and twisting in the body indicates that some study of the self is needed before we can make an ethical and healthful choice.

Likewise, expansiveness and symmetry do not indicate perfection. Thoughts, feelings, intentions and actions which lead to an expansiveness, symmetry and freedom in the body are those which are moving in the direction of respect, strength, compassion and nurturance. Opening and freeing of the body do not indicate that

some choice or behavior is absolutely true, but they do indicate that we are moving along the right path. There is always more opening and freeing of the body to achieve, so there will always be a deeper or more complete understanding of what is truly life-affirming to achieve. But if we base our decisions about feelings and actions on a search for the more open and free body state, we will be led in the direction of an ethical and constructive life.

A HUMANE WORLD

There are many areas in which people, on the basis of disempowerment and numbness, choose destructive ways of acting. If the powerlessness and numbness which are the underlying causes of those choices are not rooted out, no amount of teaching new ways of acting will succeed. But if people are brought into contact with their power, love, awareness and freedom, they will be able to start learning life-affirming ways of behaving. Living from their power and love, people will feel a sense of their connectedness with all the people, animals and plants alive, and with the planet itself. They will feel spiritually part of a community of the planet.

It is wondrous to contemplate that morality is built into our physiology. When we act in destructive ways, our bodies rebel. And when we affirm our communion with life and the planet, our bodies function well.

In the beginning of this chapter, three questions were raised concerning the possibility of a practical, effective theory of moral education. The practice of body awareness answers all three questions. The nature of the body itself constitutes a ideal which defines right actions in a universal, logically compelling, and testable way. Body awareness exercises constitute procedures by which people can make specific moral decisions, and they also constitute a training method through which people can learn to live by the general ideal.

Of course, beyond just finding our power and love, there are many specific practical changes that need to be achieved in making the world more humane, but the willingness to begin the process must be founded on awareness of the experience of being alive in a living body on a living planet. The courage to face and accomplish the monumental restructuring of our civilization that is needed for our civilization and the planet itself to survive can come only from living in our awareness, power and love. Though the specific topic of this book is conflict resolution, the book is really grounded in a much deeper process of moral development.

CHAPTER 15

SUMMARY

We have covered a lot of material in this book. On the one hand, there is a lot to remember. On the other hand, there is a fundamental simplicity underlying all the exercises. This brief summary will, I hope, help you put the whole process of embodied peacemaking into perspective.

Many of the exercises in the book are one shot movement experiences: doing them once gives you some information, and after that you wouldn't need to do the exercises again. Some exercises are worth practicing on an ongoing basis. After each paragraph summarizing the key ideas in a chapter, the exercises to practice on an ongoing basis are listed.

The exercises in this book are essentially about the process of self-remembering. About learning the skill of noticing the self and being able to choose how you will live. About being able to devote some attention to yourself even while attending to the world. Especially while attending to the world, since remembering the self will allow you to think and act with greater efficiency and effectiveness.

This tourist in New York got off the subway at Broadway and fifty-ninth street. He was going to a concert at Carnegie Hall, and he knew he was somewhere close but didn't know how to find it. He went up to a cab driver and asked, "Excuse me, how do I get to Carnegie Hall?" And the cab driver replied, "Practice, practice, practice."

That's it in a nutshell—practice, practice, practice. That's how you develop and internalize the response of peacefulness.

CHAPTER 1 – INTRODUCTION

Conflict evokes in us physiological fight-or-flight distress arousal, a state in which breathing, posture, movement, and attention are contracted. That physiological state constrains us to think and behave in ways which perpetuate and escalate conflict. Training in body awareness and centering is the antidote to the distress response. The key to body awareness is learning to use body-based language for describing feelings and actions. The essence of conflict arousal is physical contraction, and the essence of embodied peacemaking is the deliberate replacement of contraction with expansion.

CHAPTER 2 – RELAXATION

Softening the body is the antidote to contraction. By *softening the body*, I mean a form of softness that is energized and expansive—the opposite of both tension and collapse. Soften your tongue and your belly. Breathe from your belly, letting your chest and back as well as your belly expand when you inhale.

Soft Tongue 2.2

Soft Belly 2.3

Belly Breathing 2.4

CHAPTER 3 – POSTURE

How you align your body is the foundation for how you perceive, think, move and act. Good posture is required for optimal relaxation, and it is also required for power. Rotating the pelvis into the right position under the spinal column is the key to efficient support in sitting and standing. Inguinal sitting provides the postural foundation for effective sitting. Raising your occiput a slight bit gently lengthens your spinal column upward. Freeing your hip joints lengthens your spinal column from below. Walking with an awareness of the action of the back foot grounds the body, lengthens it upward, and makes forward movement clearer.

Pelvic Rotation 3.1

Raising Your Occiput 3.2

Inguinal Sitting 3.4

Pressing Hip Joints 3.5

Standing Posture 3.7

Feet Walking 3.8

CHAPTER 4 – POWER

Power is the ability to respectfully control the environment in order to maintain your safety and secure your needs and desires. The shrinking movement which is part of the distress response stems from powerlessness; it reduces your lived sense of your own humanness and alienates you from your opponent. Resisting a push and pushing are two applications of power, and both come from the legs and hip joints. The body organization which gives rise to physical power is also the source of emotional and personal power and the capacity for powerful action in one's life. I reserve the use of the word “power” for ethical, life-affirming uses of force.

Pushing (Rowing Exercise) 4.6

CHAPTER 5 – LOVE

Negative feelings such as hatred and anger produce constriction, hardness and imbalance in your breathing, chest, face, and the rest of your body. Acting from the physical state of hatred makes movement cramped and graceless and makes action

weak. Feelings take place in your body. By observing and changing your body, you can understand and change what you feel. The feeling of love is an important part of letting go of fear and anger. Rather than using conceptual/philosophical discourse to define “love,” the *Smiling Heart* exercise is used to create the physical actions that make up the action of *love*. That is an operational definition of *love*. The sensations of being “warm hearted” or “tender hearted” are the bodily manifestations of love or compassion. Love is a part of strength.

Smiling Heart 5.4

Soft Eyes 5.7

CHAPTER 6 – FOCUS

A subtler level of practice involves intentionality as a foundation for effective, peaceful action. Intentionality is the process whereby a willed decision to perform an action creates the muscular responses for executing the action. The importance of this process of intentional projection is that paying attention to it offers a subtle method of discerning the faint beginnings of contraction and a powerful method of replacing the constriction of conflict with the expansiveness of peacefulness.

Towel Sitting stabilizes the pelvis and supports the spinal column, which helps make breathing exercises more comfortable and therefore more effective.

Towel Sitting 6.1

Basic Breathing 6.2

CHAPTER 7 – SPACIOUSNESS

The process of embodied peacemaking is about becoming aware of how we contract when we are threatened and how to open the body instead. On one level, the opposite of contracting is softening. On another level, empowerment is the opposite of contraction. Another opposite of contraction is expansion, the process of becoming spacious inside your body and reaching out gently and alertly into the world around you. As people work with this, they experience that being able to handle challenges is really a very concrete process of placing the *body* in the right state. They also realize that much of the pain they experience in their lives is a result of their oppositional way of receiving life's challenges and not inherently part of the challenge itself.

Skin Breathing 7.1

Six Directions Reaching 7.3

Six Directions Breathing 7.4

Seamless Breathing 7.6

CHAPTER 8 – VOICE

Being able to speak out clearly is part of what it takes to resolve conflicts. This is true both in the sense of the physical process of using your voice and in the sense

of being able to communicate effectively. As usual, how well you do the underlying physical process is a key factor in the effectiveness of the “higher” function. It is important to use physical centering as the foundation for effective voice production. It is also important to aim your voice outward. Your speaking will be more effective if you don’t lose awareness of your body when you think intellectual thoughts or assert some position.

Speaking 8.1

Speaking Out 8.2

CHAPTER 9 – FOLLOWING YOUR BODY

Centering is about containing conflictual feelings and replacing them with a mindbody state of power and love. Following your body is about going into conflictual feelings, amplifying them, and letting them flow freely in order to study them. Following your body is a method of finding the hidden, past roots of inexplicable feelings, and it is also a method of pinning down just what you are feeling in the present. Following your body involves posing questions to your body about your feelings—and then waiting for your body to answer. You start by expressing your feelings in body-based language. Then you focus on one sensation in your body, or a group of sensations, let that naturally give rise to the next sensation, and then let that sensation naturally lead to the next, and so on. That train of sensations will help you become aware of what you are feeling and what its roots are.

Following Sensations 9.3

CHAPTER 10 – SENSITIVITY

Interpersonal sensitivity is an important element in peacemaking. Being consciously aware of and sensitive to the needs and feelings of the person you are interacting with is crucial in being able to resolve conflicts in a productive and peaceful manner. This is the case both in terms of gathering extra information about the other person and in terms of helping the person feel seen and respected. The focused state of softness, strength, kindness and spaciousness is the foundation for noticing other people. In the context of this book, “noticing other people” means learning to perceive better other people’s breathing, muscle tone, facial and body expressions, posture and movement. Emotions are physical events in the body. Empathy is what happens when you observe (consciously or unconsciously) the physical changes in someone’s body and “mirror” or “taste” them in your own body. Empathy is good, but it also has a problematic aspect as well. If, in a conflict situation, you mirror other people’s emotions without conscious awareness of that process, you can get stuck in their negative emotions.

CHAPTER 11 – YIELDING

“Yielding” is a technical term from Aikido. Yielding doesn’t mean surrender or giving up. It means becoming physically pliable and mentally adaptable. It means not wasting power in opposition, but relaxing into the flow of the events surrounding you in order to better manage them. Yielding is important in conflict resolution. Coming from an oppositional state of mind doesn’t help. Opposing your opponent simply intensifies your opponent’s opposition to you. Softening, relaxing, being in your power, being in your kindness, and *yielding* encourages flexible thinking and adaptability. In other words, yielding allows people to hear each other. Yielding is a way of not opposing power and at the same time not giving in to it. It is a way of preserving your integrity while dealing with power. It is a calm acceptance that a problem is what it is, but it is an active relationship to the problem, without any hint of passivity. Peacefulness and passivity are not at all the same thing.

CHAPTER 12 – CONCEPTS

How we respond to and deal with conflict is determined partly by the ideas which we use to organize our thinking about conflict. More specifically, this dimension has to do with the words we use and the feelings/body actions that are associated with those words. The ways we respond to the words/ideas *trust, forgiveness, gratitude, conflict, win, lose, criticism, righteousness, and apology* determine, in some measure, how successful we can be at resolving conflicts peacefully. If, when we use these and other such words, we respond by shrinking, that will derail our efforts to be peaceful. We can mean constructive things by these words and use them constructively only when we are living in our spaciousness.

CHAPTER 13 – CONFLICTS

A situation of antagonism and discord provides learning opportunities. It is our enemies whom we have to learn how to get along with, and without some enemies to practice with, how could we learn?

A peaceful response to a verbal attack must come from a soft, open, empowered body state. Responding peacefully has three steps. The first step is accepting your opponent’s position. However, *accepting* means truly seeing your opponent and his position and acknowledging it. The second step is to present your position. And the third step is to achieve a negotiated solution. Naturally, the process will work much better if both parties to the conflict are trained in and committed to using the process of embodied peacemaking, but it will still be helpful if only one side is using the process.

Reflecting Words 13.7

CHAPTER 14 – MORAL EDUCATION

Body alienation is the condition of not feeling other people or the planet itself. Numb people are not fully aware that other people really feel things, and they are inclined to unthinkingly use other people and hurt them. In the same way, numb people will have so little empathy for other non-human life and the earth itself that they may unthinkingly and unfeelingly destroy species of plants and animals and despoil the soil, water and air.

When we act in destructive ways, our bodies rebel. And when we affirm our communion with life and the planet, our bodies function well. Living from their power and love, people will feel spiritually part of a community of the planet. Morality is built into our physiology.

CHAPTER 15 – SUMMARY

In a nutshell—practice, practice, practice. That’s how you develop and internalize the response of peacefulness.

CHAPTER 16

HEALING THE WORLD

The specific topic of this book is the application of body awareness to conflict resolution and peacemaking. The broader topic of this book is how to heal the world.

We really could get together and solve most of the world's problems fairly easily—if we could get together at all. The problems are certainly real. Hunger, poverty, disease, societal breakdown, war, environmental destruction. But underlying the problems themselves are the emotions of fear and anger. These emotions make us unable to think clearly and cooperate effectively.

Wouldn't it be nice if the understanding of the physical basis of fear and anger were widespread, and when people in a conflict were starting to feel fear and anger, they would all know to take a body awareness break?

Fear and anger are internal body processes and as such can be replaced by the body state of integrated power and love. Creating the body state of power and love is a way of replacing destructive feelings with life-affirming feelings. This is a state of embodied integrity.

A person acting from the state of integrity will feel and take account of the existence of the world around him or her and act in ways that are peaceful, ethical and constructive. Greater sensitivity to, empathy with, and compassion for oneself includes being sensitive to the condition and needs and feelings of the people around you, the animals and plants around you, and the soil, water and air as well. It means feeling yourself as part of the web of life rather than separate from it.

All of the work in this book proceeds from the perspective that the human body is designed to live and function in love and power. Our bodies are built for life, for creation. The negative feelings which are so often part of conflict sap energy better spent in creativity. Violence is worship of death and destruction. This work is about the physiological underpinnings of peace. It is about reclaiming the body for life.

If you are working on healing your own fear and anger, you are really working on saving the whole world. If you are helping others become more peaceful, you are really working on saving not just the people you work with but the entire world. It's worth doing.

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- *Winning is Healing: Body Awareness and Empowerment for Abuse Survivors.*
- *Winning is Healing—Basics: An Introduction to Body Awareness and Empowerment for Abuse Survivors.*
- *Feeling Aikido: Body Awareness Training as a Foundation for Aikido.*
- *Teaching Children Embodied Peacemaking: Body Awareness, Self-Regulation and Conflict Resolution*
- *Reach Out: Body Awareness Training for Peacemaking—Five Easy Lessons*

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