

Feel The Body

A Didactic Introduction to Body Works, Leading to Consciousness and Sensitization

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It took me many years to understand some orientations towards the body. Had these orientations been given to me in a didactic way, I would understand them more easily, and this would facilitate the contact with my body and my feelings. This work arose from the concrete need for a better comprehension of the meaning of a certain order, as for example: breathing deeply, doing grounding, letting the energy move in the body (charging or discharging the energy), putting the feet on the ground, relaxing and moving harmoniously, feeling the breathing and the flux of energy towards your body.

To people who do not have consciousness of their own body because they have never worked on it, it is difficult to know what deep breathing is, not knowing even how they should breathe. They must study each step until reaching total breathing. Without feeling each step of breathing, without knowing the purpose of breathing, the advantages and disadvantages of one or the other type of breathing, “deep breathing” becomes a distant and vague concept, even a difficult thing to experience. The same occurs with the term “grounding”. Why should I stay with the feet and legs in this specific position, even if I have never done so?

I have seen body therapists lose good opportunities to do excellent work by leaving out the experience part and beginning with the concepts. Leaving the experience part out of the work makes it difficult to absorb the learning. That is what happens when we simply talk about energy flow, harmony, interior peace or in strengthening the sensibility. It is necessary to explain each step until we can reach to the whole, and even explain the reason of each procedure. The explanation is necessary to comprehension but this is only a step, a facilitating device which is needed before the experience. Instead of talking about moving energy, we should help people to feel intensely this flow in the body, thus avoiding a vague concept. Even if the results of the work are not very durable, those who enter it have the opportunity to be sensitized, to feel their own

bodies in a different way, to experience the agreeable feeling of harmony or even contact the difficulties and perceive that there is something to be done.

This work has no pretension to be a therapy. Generally it is done in group and with people outside the therapeutic circle. It aims to open the consciousness, which can lead to a therapy. Frequently, the energy blocked in the body appears as mood alteration, lack of concentration, changing emotions and feeling in unconscious ways. This work contacts the person with his energy—perhaps the first contact with something inherent to all of us. This first contact facilitates and encourages people to be alert to the inner self, making it easy to understand and accept body therapy.

The Process, Step by Step

Take off your shoes and make a circle, hand in hand. Leave problems outside and pay complete attention to this moment. Feel the feet on the ground, as if they had roots into the ground. Feel like a tree with deep roots, firm into the ground, against any wind, and so having a long life. The grounding gives you a strong base, providing safety without sacrificing mobility.

During this exercise of grounding, it is important to be alert, feeling the points of charge and discharge of energy in the feet: the heel, the big toe and the base of the little toe, forming a triangle. These three points must be firm on the ground. The knees must be flexed in order to permit the flow of energy. Straight knees mean blocked energy. When the legs are stretched out, we block the knees, the pelvis and the shoulders. People living in big cities have the habit of locking knees, pelvis and shoulders in a constant attitude of fear and defense. People in a peaceful environment, close to nature, have a more relaxed posture: flexed knees, unblocked pelvis and the entire foot on the ground (when walking, they touch the ground first with the heel). This way, they can walk miles without tiring. Now we understand the basic position of grounding and we can intensify the energy flow, letting the energy in the mind flow down to the feet. We move the energy doing the basic grounding exercises of Core Energetics.

The next step is to work on balance. Every corporal work begins with a good base in grounding. So, staying in the basic position, feeling the three points of the feet on the ground, move the body forward and backwards and next from side to side, maintaining the feet on the ground.

Stop the movement on one side and pay attention to feeling the weight of the body. Move to the other side, concentrate on lifting one foot a little bit from the ground, making circles with it. Afterwards come back to the initial position and repeat the same movement slowly, harmoniously and with consciousness.

The Torso

It is very important that the pelvis be free, first because it is the center of the body, where there is a great flow of energy, and secondly, because from the pelvic movement stems all movement of the body, and thirdly, because it involves sexuality. Dancing is a good exercise to set the pelvis free. Put the hands on the hips and move the pelvis from side to side. The hands help to concentrate on the exercise. Then make movements slowly to and fro.

Now let us work with breathing, the most important involuntary movement of the body. Just after birth we have perfect breathing. Observing a baby breathing we can see it fills up the belly and then the chest, and the pelvis goes slowly backwards. This kind of breathing remains until the child meets negativity and repression from the family and from society. Depending on the intensity of repression, the child begins to breathe only the minimum necessary to survive with the breath going a little below the throat. We divide this movement, for better understanding, into three stages: low, medium and high breathing, which happens in the belly, chest and throat/shoulders. The three movements produce the complete breath. Complete breath produces better sleeping, more vital energy, interior harmony, better sexuality and even easier birth labor as well as better balance, strength, physical resilience, less stress, less physical pains, etc.

As the majority of people forget to breathe, we are going to use an easy and efficient method to learn it again. Put the right hand on the lower belly (below the navel) and exhale, pushing out all the air and then filling it up with fresh air. Let the movement give you pleasure. Repeat the movement many times, slowly. Inhale and then exhale with the sound of “a” as in a car. Do the same thing using the basic sounds of the other vowels, and so on. Keep breathing, stretching out the arms in order to open the chest and the diaphragm. From now on, every movement must be synchronized with the breathing. Now inhale and move the arm forward and let it fall while quickly exhaling the air. Repeat the

movement putting the arm backwards. Then do the same exercise with the other arm.

For the neck, let the head fall over the chest while exhaling, and put it up and let it fall backwards while inhaling, leaving the jaw free. Move the head from side to side just touching the shoulders. Let it fall forward and move it circularly, inhaling and exhaling as the head goes forward. Afterwards, we review all movements, from the feet to the head and then let us go to the next stage: First, standing with the eyes closed we listen to music, allowing the harmony to involve us completely. Second, letting the music enter us, we begin to move the body in harmony with the music, integrating the movements done until now before adding other ones. In the third phase we expand the movements, with open or closed eyes, around the room. After this dance, we sit silently in a circle and each person talks about his experience and feelings.

Self Massage

We have seen consciousness and sensitization developed through movement, breathing and music. Now, for attaining the same goal we will use touch and self-massage. "Touch strengthens the immune system, reduces repression, increases self-esteem, produces better sleeping, reduces eating disorders, arthritic pains, headaches, hypertension, anxiety, makes better sex and many other things," according to Pamela Chubbuck. Depending on the culture, touch assumes a different kind of importance. In our culture (Brazil), touch comes with many taboos. Some people avoid touching since childhood, so we have some uneasiness in touching other people. But this is the road to the cure, or an opening to the cure. Touching or self-massage never substitutes for therapy, but is complimentary to therapy. Feeling the body, we open new ways to reach our problems. In general, we are not used to touch and we touch each other without consciousness of what we are doing. Therefore, we could be surprised by our experience. Energy, liberated superficially and in short bursts, produces consciousness and stimulates investigation about our selves in therapeutic processes, like Core Energetics.

Previously, we began from the feet toward the head. Now proceeding inversely, let us go from the head toward the base. Begin by grounding, then touch the head with the fingers, squeezing it strongly. Try to determine sore spots beginning by the brow, using the fingers with a movement of opening, from the center out. Circle the eyes and press the eyelids. Go to the jaw, massaging with the fingertips and stronger

movements. Make faces and let out sounds. With both hands, treat the neck. In the back of the neck there are three points from which the energy passes from the mind to the body. Massage these points with open hands, strongly. Go to the arms with open hands. Give special attention to the articulations: these are special points of toxin accumulation. Strongly rub the palms (strong sources of pleasure) and fingers. Touch the top of the spine and proceed down, massaging it slowly. Then massage the dorsal muscles from the top down and from the spine out, on both sides. With the hands closed, sock the lumbar region down to the buttocks. On the chest with both hands, make movements opening the chest, downward and opening the diaphragm. Massage the belly clockwise to activate the internal organs. Now with closed hands, go down punching the outer part of the thighs until reaching the heels and return on the inner part. Massage the calves of the legs, then the heels, feet and toes. Squeeze the soles of the feet, activating nerve endings; these nerve endings connect with all the organs and functions of the body. Like the hands, the feet are a great source of pleasure.

After this step, we can talk about the experience of discovering our own body and of touching it. Following this, we make groups of 5 or 6 people. One of them lies down on his stomach and for 5 minutes the others massage him intuitively, using the resources learned in selfmassage. All members work simultaneously, one at the head and the others on the arms, trunk and legs. After 5 minutes the person turns himself belly up and receives 5 more minutes massage. Then another person receives the same treatment and so on, until all of them have been massaged. We finish the session with group sharing and meditation. The work gives good results and people make contact with their own bodies, increasing their perception and sensitivity.

