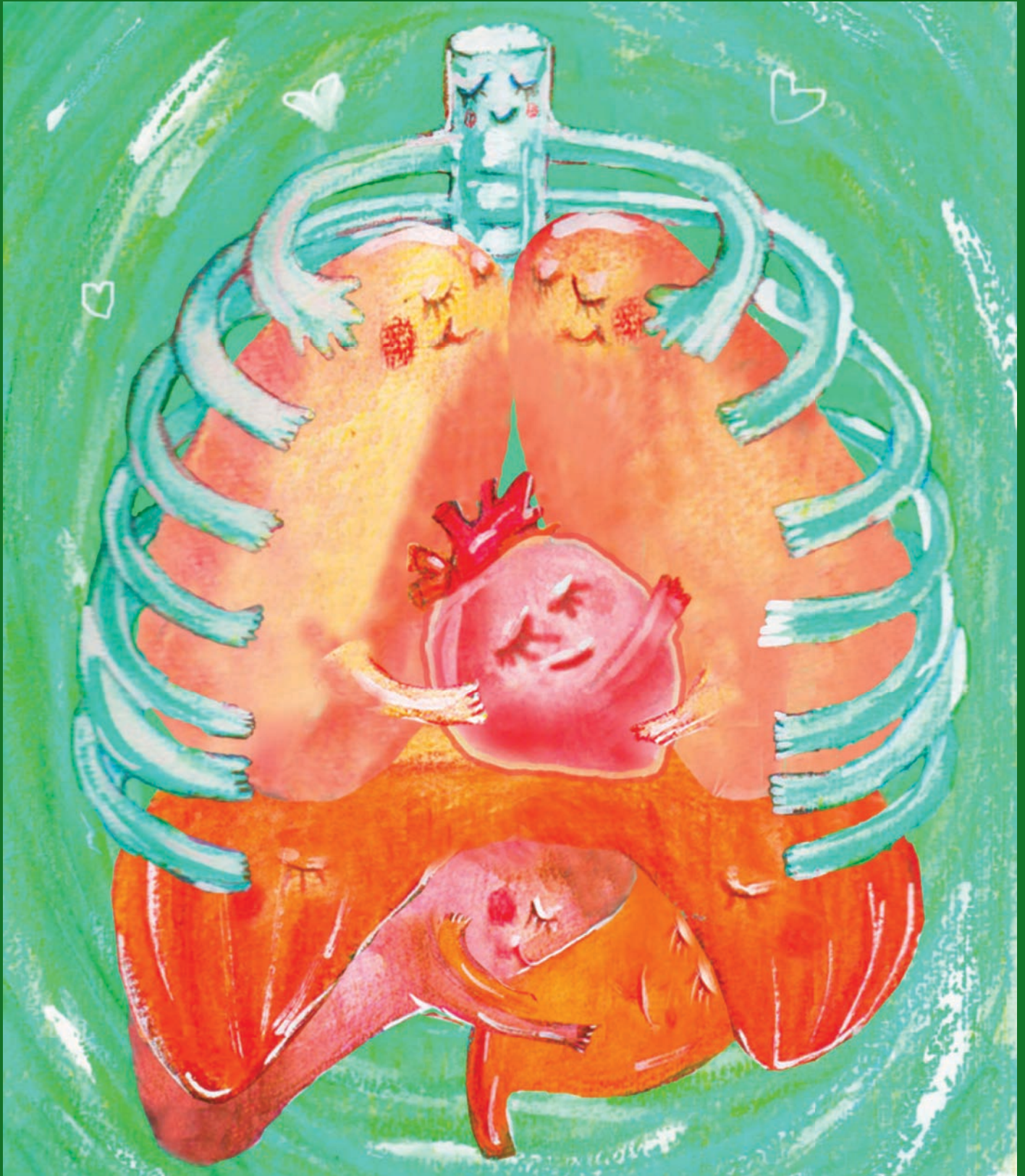


Currents

Journal of the **Body-Mind Centering®** Association



Currents

Journal of the Body-Mind Centering® Association

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Call for Submissions!

Currents 2022 Theme

INCITE' / IN'SIGHT

These two words may move in opposite directions and with different stress on their syllables, but can, in fact, be used together. INCITE has motoric implications, an outward-directed focus intended to be activating and stimulating. To incite is a provocation to action. The word "cite" in Latin ('citare') means "to summon" or "to call," thus, the "in" of "incite" invites "to call in" or "to call out". INSIGHT, on the other hand, has perceptive implications, "to see" inwardly more clearly, to reflect. With the "calling out" of INCITE and the "seeing into" of INSIGHT, both words can serve separately as broad-stroke inspirations or else lead to each other, and together, be integrating.

Currents, the annual journal of BMCA, is a professional periodical that publishes writing on the nature of the body-mind experience and its interrelationships across disciplines. Supporting both scholarly and creative texts, *Currents* is unique in its attention to the development of somatic writers and their writing. We welcome fresh research, rich description, and embodied documentation of new modes of healing and expression.

We invite submissions from both beginning and advanced writers.

Dates for March 2022 publication are as follows:

Feature length abstracts to be considered: June 1-August 15, 2021.

Final Drafts: November 1, 2021.

Short pieces, poems, visuals, and ads: October 1, 2021.

Full submission guidelines and formatting can be found at:

<https://bmcassociation.org/publications/currents>

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Deadline to reserve space in the 2022 issue:

October 1, 2021

Submit all materials to:

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Lettre Du Présidente¹

Rien ne sera plus jamais comme avant.

Comment commencer à s'adresser à vous sans parler de la pandémie, qui change et à déjà changé nos vies de façon irrémédiable. Que l'on ait été touché individuellement ou collectivement, les écueils de la société néolibérale dans laquelle nous vivons n'ont jamais été aussi visibles. Allons-nous continuer à faire comme si rien n'avait changé ? Comme si "comme avant" existait encore ? Aujourd'hui, une partie des populations qui était en difficulté est dans la précarité et les précaires sont en danger, pendant qu'une poignée de privilégiés s'enrichit sur le dos du plus grand nombre, dans l'archétype patriarcal blanc dominant-dominé, héritage d'une décolonisation inéquitable.

Il est temps de penser à une solution plus collective et juste, dans laquelle nous ne laisserons personne de côté. Il n'y a pas de solution magique, nous devons tou.te.s nous retrousser les manches. Il nous faudra être courageu.x.ses, il nous faudra faire avec cette nouvelle donne, il nous faudra rebondir et nous relier.

Libérons-nous des injonctions à la compassion, à l'empathie et à la résilience, pour pousser la réflexion et analyser notre inconscient individuel et collectif. Il n'y aura pas de recette toute prête, nous nous devons les uns aux autres de faire ce travail. Chercher plus loin que des concepts prémâchés.

Respirons, respirons pour les autres, aimons chaque seconde passée ensemble, ici et là-bas, restons éveillés, n'ayons pas peur de nous indigner.

Notre communauté somatique sait s'adapter, nous savons apprendre de nos expériences, c'est dans notre ADN, il est dans notre construction de patiemment analyser et comprendre ce qui nous anime dans ce nouveau monde. Se comprendre est un des grands défis de la Body-Mind Centering Association. Se comprendre à travers nos cultures, nos langues, nos histoires. Notre internationalité devient un magnifique outil pour une lutte intersectionnelle. En tant qu'organisation multiculturelle et incluant plusieurs continents nous devons nous comprendre à travers nos existences et nos communications. Un mot ne correspond pas à un autre mot, chaque mot porte une signification que nous décidons ou non d'intégrer, d'accepter, d'entendre, de comprendre. Comme notre système immunitaire laisse entrer ou pas l'autre, comme notre microbiote avec lequel nous décidons de vivre ou non en symbiose, comme notre voie vagale sociale que nous utilisons ou pas pour être en relation avec notre environnement.

La BMCA est au travail avec d'autres associations comme ISMETA, BMC France, Glia en Allemagne pour accueillir et embrasser le dialogue autour de l'égalité des droits, la diversité et la justice sociale, l'accès pour tou.te.s à l'éducation somatique et l'horizontalité de nos organisations et en partenariat avec, à une plus petite échelle, des projet tels que la série collective « Somatic Writing » (voir le site Web de BMCA) et « Archiving in Community ».

Continuons de nous révolter avec enthousiasme et générosité en prenant le temps qu'il faudra.

La BMCA prend le train de la transition et du changement. Avec 10 membres du conseil d'administration, vivant dans 6 pays différents, venant de 8 différentes cultures et autant de langues et d'histoires de tellement d'ancêtres. Nous travaillons dur à nous comprendre, essayant de nous libérer de nos schémas confortables.

1 L'écriture inclusive: et si on s'y mettait tou.te.s ? Améliorer l'égalité entre les femmes et les hommes en changeant notre façon d'écrire... L'idée fait son chemin avec l'apparition d'une nouvelle orthographe censée rendre notre langue moins sexiste. <https://start.lesechos.fr/societe/egalite-diversite> Inclusive or egalitarian writing is happening in Romance languages where the object is modified by gender. This project takes extra effort and consciousness, just as the spectrum of non-binary language-ing is transforming pronouns of self-identity. [ktm - editor]

A travers qui nous sommes, ce que nous apprenons et notre expérience professionnelle, notre pratique somatique du Body-Mind Centering, ce savoir, cette sensibilité, ce corps BMC, nous continuerons à chercher ce que veut dire être cohérent.e.s. Nous analyserons d'où nous venons pour comprendre notre présent et où et comment trouver le bonheur dans ce présent.

Merci...

Merci à toutes les précédentes présidentes qui ont porté l'association jusqu'ici, me permettant d'être la présidente que je suis. Merci Wendy Hambidge qui a commencé le processus d'une présidence horizontale moins pyramidale. Merci Marila Velloso de m'avoir appris ce qu'est d'être présidente d'une telle association, avec douceur et dans la sororité. Marila qui continue d'accompagner le conseil d'administration comme ancienne présidente et conseillère. Merci aux membres du conseil d'administration pour leur implication et leurs différences. Ensemble, nous continuerons à nourrir et à prendre soin de nos paradoxes et de nos divergences. Merci aux comités et aux bénévoles qui donnent avec cœur leur temps, leur énergie et leurs compétences. Continuons à travailler avec honnêteté et transparence. Merci aux professionnels du BMC. Vous êtes la raison de notre travail. Vous ne cessez de réinventer comment transmettre, comment prendre soin des autres, comment être éducateur, praticien et enseignant Body-Mind Centering. A l'image de Spinning the web, beau partage des découvertes de la communauté et de vos recherches. Merci aux étudiants qui doivent également faire face à des conditions très spéciales pour apprendre et expérimenter le BMC dans ce nouveau monde, BMCA est là aussi pour vous.

Ensemble, essayons de comprendre ce dont la communauté a besoin. Dites-nous quelles sont vos difficultés et vos limites dans cette crise en tant que professionnels comme étudiants. Rejoignez-nous pour saisir la chance de faire partie du grand mouvement dans lequel nous sommes.

Merci Bonnie Bainbridge Cohen, aucun des professionnels que nous sommes ne serait là sans toi et le travail de toute une vie. Merci Kate Tarlow Morgan (rédactrice en chef) et la commission journal qui continue de nourrir cette précieuse culture BMC. Je veux dire ici un merci spécial à tous les amis et collègues qui me soutiennent dans la perte et le deuil de mon père décédé cette année du COVID 19.

Enfin merci à mon père qui m'a appris à être courageuse, curieuse et intrépide. Aujourd'hui encore, j'apprends tellement de lui, c'est dans mes cellules, c'est tout autour de moi, tous les jours. Je sais que ses connaissances cheminent, infusent en moi et seront révélées tout au long de ma vie.

Continuons à apprécier les petites choses et la grande abstraction,
Je vous embrasse fort et vous envoie plein d'amour,
Bien à vous tou.te.s,

Sophie Centenero, Présidente
Ecrit en écriture incluse

President's Letter—In English with inclusive language²

Nothing will ever be the same.

How to start talking to you without addressing the Pandemic that has irreparably changed, and continues to change, our lives? Whether we have been touched personally or globally, the pitfalls of the neoliberal society in which we live have never been more visible. Are we going to continue to pretend nothing has changed, as if a “before” still exists? Today, there are populations who have come into great difficulty, and other populations already precarious are now in great danger. All the while, the privileged few continue to enrich themselves at our expense. The legacy of the failure of decolonization keeps us in the archetype of inequality, white dominant and dominated.

It is time to think about a more collective, fair solution in which we leave no one behind. There is no such thing as a magic solution, therefore we need to put ourselves at work. We will have to be brave; we will have to deal with this “new deal,” and we need to re-bound and bond.

Let us free ourselves from the injunctions of compassion, empathy, and resilience to extend our thinking and analyze our individual and collective unconscious. We need to go deeper. There won't be a ready-made recipe; instead, look beyond pre-chewed concepts. Breathe, for ourselves and for each other; love every second spent together; spend your time here and there; stay awake and do not be afraid to get indignant or outraged.

Our somatic community knows how to adapt and we know how to learn from our experiences. It is in our human DNA, our construction, to patiently understand what is “brightening” us up in this new world. And, since understanding each other is one of the main challenges for BMCA—through culture, through language, and through history—our internationality becomes the wonderful tool to be intersectional on our planet. As a multi-cultural, multi-continent organization, we must understand that we both exist and communicate IN translation. A word never equals a word. Instead, “meaning” goes far beyond even what we choose to hear, or embody. We continue to translate between one another, just as the immune system lets in or keeps out; the microbiome synchronizes or not; and the Vagus Nerve flows with the environment or not.

BMCA is taking the “train” of transition and change. With 10 board members from 5 different countries, 8 different cultures and as many languages, and histories from many ancestors—we are working hard at understanding each other. BMCA continues to be at work connecting with other associations (ISMETA, BMC France, GLIA, Germany) and partnering with smaller cadres such as the Somatic Writing Collective Series (see BMCA website) and Archiving in Community. We must continue to revolt with enthusiasm and generosity, aligning together in support of equal rights, diversity, and social justice. And to maintain horizontality within and between our organizations towards access to somatic education for all.

Through who we are, through what we learn—our professional experience, our somatic practice through our Body-Mind Centering knowledge, feeling, bodies—we will continue to search for what *coherence* means, we will analyze where we are coming from to understand the present and be pleased *in* this present.

I am grateful...

2 Sophie Centenero is writing in the new “inclusive” grammar that is catching on in the romance language countries. Inclusive or egalitarian writing offers female and male modifiers of the object. This project takes extra effort and consciousness, just as the spectrum of non-binary language-ing is transforming pronouns of self-identity. [ktn - editor]

I am grateful to all the past presidents of BMCA who carried the association to the point where I am now permitted to be the president that I am. Thank you, Wendy Hambidge, who started the process of more horizontal presidency. Thank you, Marila Velloso, now ex-officio advisor, who taught me what it is to be president of such an organization in sisterhood and softness. Thank you, Board of Directors, for their involvement and their differences. Together we will continue to nourish and care for our paradoxes and discrepancies. The committees and volunteers who are giving their time, energy, and competencies with heart. BMC professionals. You are the reason for our work and who keep reinventing how to transmit, how to care for others, how to be a Body-Mind Centering educator, practitioner, and teacher, in the image of Spinning the Web, a beautiful sharing of the community discoveries and research. Students who now face new conditions to learn and experience BMC in this new world, BMCA is there for you too.

Together, let's try to get what the community needs. Tell us what your difficulties and limitations are in this crisis as professionals and as students. Join us to take the chance to be part of the great movement we are in. Let's continue to work with honesty and transparency.

Thank you, Bonnie Bainbridge Cohen, none of us would be here if it wasn't for you and your life work. Thank you, Kate Tarlow Morgan, *Currents* Editor and the Journal Committee, who continue to nourish this precious BMC culture. Special thanks to all the friends and colleagues who support me in my loss and grieving of my father.

Finally, thank you to my Dad, who taught me how to be brave, curious, and fearless. Even now, I am learning so much from him—it is in my cells, around me, every day. I know his knowledge will thrive, infuse in me, and be revealed throughout all my life.

Let's continue to enjoy the small things and the great abstraction.

Love and hugs to you all,

Sophie

Editor's Letter

With understandable delay in printing this year, I am confident, nevertheless, in the force of the essays, poems and images of Currents 2021. So too, my reaction to our BMCA President's letter was one of a deep relief that she had put into words exactly how I felt. Nothing will ever be the same. With this, I found myself turning to my memories to find courage and intuited that it was time for a recipe. When I was young, our family would gather for Jewish Thanksgiving, comprised of Cheese Straws, Chopped Chicken Liver, a little Matzo Ball Soup, and ... shhhh, Turkey (not kosher, folks)—at the home of my beloved Great Uncle Bill and Great Aunt Gertie. Gertrude's story begins in Brownsville, Brooklyn, as one of three daughters. Her mother ran a dry goods store, while her father "studied" Torah. She was a gentile kind person, with a bold smile and high cheekbones that gave her the look of a Buddha and a Cheshire Cat. She was a serious weaver at a Leclerc Floor Loom that took up half the room; one whole wall housed 100 spools of multi-colored thread. Our home was decorated with her woven window shades, rugs, and floors-runners. In 1994, at age 92, Gertie had just recently gone blind, but at that Thanksgiving, she made her apple pie. This is what she said when I asked her for the recipe ~

The thing is, you have to make a good pie crust often, and you get to sort of know what to do. It's just like anything else, you mustn't regard it as a chore, but as something that you are making! Now, I don't sift the flour; I don't do any of those things you are supposed to do, because—I use my hands.

I take 2 cups of flour and I add some salt. I just put in a little. When I say a "little," it means a teaspoon (of salt). Sugar too, I throw it in like that. Then, I use Crisco, instead of butter, because I think it's easier to use, not because it's healthy or not healthy. I use ¼ cup of Crisco; I dig it out and throw it in.

You mix the sugar with the flour with your hands, you see. And then you throw in the Crisco, and you mix it around. You try not to handle it too much. The flour coats the Crisco, so the bits are about the size of dimes and then you pour in a little milk, enough to absorb it all.

Now—this takes knowing. You can't say that you're going to be a first-class pie-maker right off. It takes knowing, looking at it, and getting to know the materials. You can only do it if you keep on doing it, and not regard it as a chore, but rather, as something that you've gotten to know. So if you want to be a good pie-maker, you have to make them often.

Now, you always keep your roller in the refrigerator until you are ready to roll the dough. After you roll it, you let it rest. Let it rest in the way that you roll it. You see, it takes knowledge in the fingers, like weaving, like anything ... your fingers know how to do it.

When you lay in your apples, you have to be sure that the apple is the right apple. You just don't take any apple—a Rome apple is good because it isn't too juicy. You lay each apple slice around the outside, and then another one close to it, because six [whole] apples is a lot. If you just throw them in without placing them next to one another—after they are cooked, you will have nothing. You need six apples for a good plump pie.

The sugar comes in after. You take a cup of sugar, and you just pour it all around. Then, you take some butter, you know, a dab, two dabs, all around. Then you put the crust on top; you lay it on gently and then you have to pinch it. You pinch it, pinch it, wet it on the outside, with enough water going all around, and then you pinch it: like this ... Then you put it in the oven at 425 degrees 10 minutes, then lower to 350 for 35 minutes.

People can laugh and say, "Oh, you don't need brains to make an apple pie." Well, you don't really. But if you want to make a nice apple pie, it takes knowledge in your fingers. You see, the person that makes the pie doesn't know she has all the knowledge, but she has it!!

To repeat, from Sophie: "Rien ne sera plus jamais comme avant." Nothing will ever be the same. Some of the recipes do need to change. But other recipes will remain—in our hearts, our hands, and in great faith of hope.

Gertie's Apple Pie

2 cups Flour
1 teaspoon Salt
¼ cup Crisco
A little Milk
6 Rome Apples
2 dabs of Butter
1 cup Sugar

THE IMMUNE SYSTEM: A PLAY WITH 18 CHARACTERS

My story of learning about the Immune System began with a two-day workshop led by Dirk Dimock in 1998/99 in Northampton, Massachusetts. Dirk spent many years engaged in a deep healing process before his passing. A dozen of us spent a weekend examining the beautiful symphony of biochemical layers and systems known to participate in an immune reaction. To be honest, the complexity was beyond my comprehension at the time, but as I continued to study, the immune system gained clarity and unfolded like a Shakespearean play with systematic transparency. I offer my version of an IMMUNE SYSTEM PLAY for reading and acting out. Fair warning, there are many actors in this play.¹

~ Toni Smith

The immune system presents as a linear chemical process that engages almost 3 dozen players. The players are made up of glands, specialized cells, organs, and entire systems. Immune reactions are stimulated by the presence of antigens, bacteria, viruses, allergens or infections in the body. The process of an immune response is a map or a series of events: a procedure that has a specific order when the body is presented with a foreign or unknown microbe, tissue or chemical. Immunity is always available for activation in the healing of a healthy system. An immune system response presents in cases that range from a bee sting to a deadly bacterial infection. Side effects are familiar and often innocuous or passing in nature: congestion, swelling, fever, fatigue, aches, digestion issues and more. If an immune response is not successful, or excessive, symptoms can elevate, become severe, and disable the body. The Covid-19 virus has the potential to result in an overactive immune response, creating a storm of cytokenes (protein by-products of immune cells) that overwhelms the lungs.



Welcome to my theater for a story. As the characters in the story unfold their story, you will find:

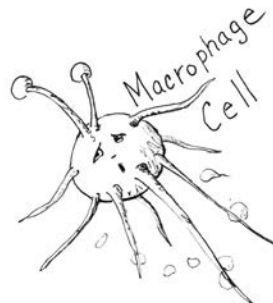
PRESENTING: A Play in One Act: The Immune System, a play with 18 characters.

*Once upon a time there was a **healthy cell**. The healthy cell was happily living, working, and dancing around the body. The cell lived in a village with many other healthy cells in a safe container called **SKIN**.*

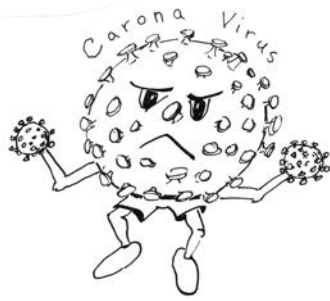
*The healthy cells were surrounded by **MHC: Major Histocompatibility Complex**. MHC identified the healthy cells as good members of the body. All the healthy cells lived in harmony, playing, raving, and celebrating in community – everyone did their job with excellence and precision.*

*Nearby, the **Thymus Gland** was busy making immune cells: **T Cells, Killer T Cells, and Suppressor Cells**. Those healthy immune cells flowed into the blood and floated around the body, not active, but poised if a need should arise.*

*Not far away the **bone marrow** was busy producing white blood cells.*



¹ Editor's note: As Toni's play unfolds, you will encounter a number of deftly sketched illustrations by John Kraft, inspired by Ms. "Carona's" journey. Your job, dear reader, is to figure out the order of these "figures" as they appear, here and there, and between the lines. Then, you may copy these pages, cut out the drawings, and arrange this biological process according to the Story of Immunity. And then, curtain call, you bow to applause.



One fine day, a powerful virus named “Carona” tried to invade the skin that surrounds the body, but was repelled over and over until finally “Carona” found a tiny orifice that presented an open door for easy entry into the body. “Carona” floated around the body until it found a healthy cell with a permeable membrane. “Carona” binded to a receptor on the cell membrane and injected its genetic code into the cell. “Carona’s” DNA hijacked the cell’s machinery and forced the cell to replicate “Carona’s” own genetic code over and over and over. The “Carona” genetic code folded into tons of new viruses until the cell was filled to capacity. In a fatal burst the **cell exploded**, releasing thousands of new “Carona” vi-r-ons everywhere into healthy tissue.

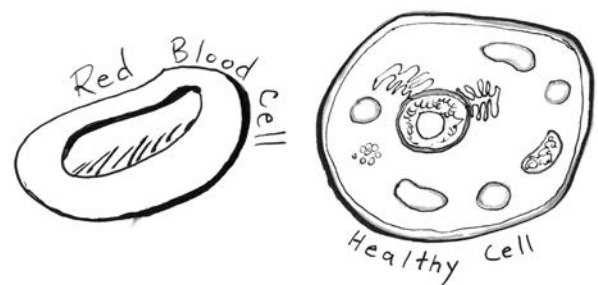
Passing **T Cells** recognized the growing fertile colony of “Carona” virons and the T cells marked the location of the infestation, sounding an alarm for HELP.



First to the scene of the “Carona” cell gathering was a colony of **Mast Cells**. The Mast Cells **ACTIVATED** and spewed **heparin** and **histamine** all around the “Carona” virons, creating pus and inflammation. The swelling fluids surrounded the newly birthed “Carona” virons, isolating them and sequestering them separately from the rest of the body.



The Mast Cells called for back-up from the **White Blood Cells, Killer T Cells, and Suppressor Cells**. When all the immune cells arrived on the scene they created a ruckus, attaching the “Carona” virons: Spewing out **Cytokines** into a **Cytokine Storm**.

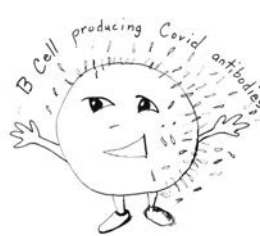
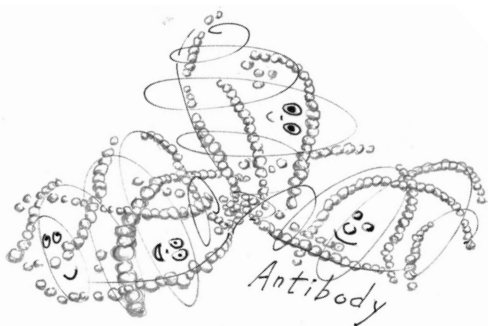


A bold, confident **B cell** witnessed the battle and shim-mied up to “Carona” virons and imprinted the Carona virus and spewed out a multitude of **Antibodies**. The antibodies were sent everywhere throughout the body. From that day on the immune system would recognize “Carona” and destroy it immediately so it could not invade healthy cells ever again.



The body was **not happy** during the war. The present-ing symptoms were fever, chills, fogginess, fatigue, swelling, coughing, and respiratory and nasal congestion. As the bat-tle waned and the immune actors calmed down, the body’s **unpleasant symptoms gradually subsided**.

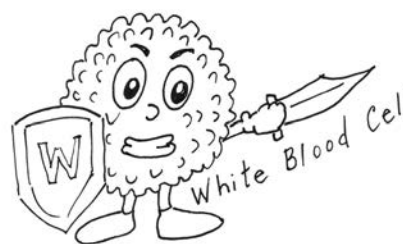
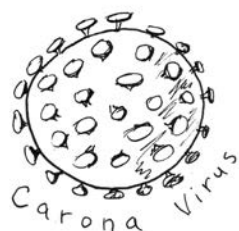
When all was said and done, “Carona” was machinated by **macrophage cells** into worthless, useless **peptides** and sent into the **lymphatic vessels** where the **lymph nodes**, full of



white blood cells identified them as waste. The lymphatic system sent the peptides into the digestive system as unworthy molecules. The remains of “Carona” exited the body as urine and diarrhea. Meanwhile, the antibodies that the **B cell** created will swim around the recovered healthy body carry-

ing the memory of “Carona’s” DNA. If the antibody spots “Carona” in the body, it will swiftly, efficiently call the immune cells to the site and do away with the “**Carona**” **Virus** without symptoms.

There is a happy ending to this play. Immunity wins out in the end. 🐼



HOW CAN BODY-MIND CENTERING ASSIST HEALING FROM A CORONAVIRUS?

BMC has tools for embodying the lungs and supporting biochemical processes that cannot be seen or touched.

HOW?

- Palpation of the lungs.
- Initiate movement from all aspects of the respiratory system.
- Visualize immune cellular activity, bringing attention and awareness to various cells, systems, and organs that promote a healthy immune response.
- Support internal aspects of the body with Basic Neurocellular Patterns: yield, push, reach, pull.

EXAMPLES TO EXPLORE:

- 1) Palpation of the lungs can include but are not limited to self-touch or partner-touch engaging compression, jiggling, counter rotation, elongation, approximation on the upper torso, using the rib cage as a container.
- 2) Initiating movement from lungs can be explored in three planes: vertical, horizontal, sagittal or three dimensional movement. Movement can be initiated or isolated to a single lobe of the lung. Rolling

the torso, inverting the torso, playing with gross as well as micro movement using space, time, force, and flow.

- 3) Somatization begins in a quiet restful state. Visualize the activity of an immune response. Use the Immune System play above as a scenario, and/or draw imagery from the drawings of the immune cells, glands, and systems. The mind can identify an immune player or sequence of immune activity and motor it vividly into the body.
- 4) Engage the Basic Neurocellular Patterns inside the cellular mechanisms of the body. Inhabit aspects of the immune system. This can be done in a contemplative state or full-out gross motor spatial expression. For example, explore a macrophage cell attacking a viron with reaching, pulling, and pushing. Or, visualize a T cell yielding into a viron to identify it as a foreign presence in the body.

COVID-19 and Body-Mind Centering

Compiled by Pat Ethridge

Much is being written about the COVID-19 pandemic. Much of this is not very helpful for those grappling with the disease's direct presence in their lives. After the September 11, 2001 attacks in the U.S., the Body-Mind Centering community wrote about its experiences, reactions, healing treatments, and coping mechanisms, mostly in BMC terms. Many found this supportive. We have solicited some input from the community about the current situation with this helping intention in mind. The contributions below were collected in October 2020. Please also see Wendy Master-son's essay on her COVID-19 experience in this issue.

ROXLYN MORET in New York City, USA

I got COVID on April 6th at the height of the pandemic in New York City. It started with a prickly, strange metallic sensation in my nasal passages, and for over a month I had a sticky, clear overflow of mucus. My sense of taste and smell were altered. I had gastric distress. In the beginning I couldn't keep food down. I lost 10 pounds in 2 weeks. My body ached and I had a fever. I felt paralyzed by the fatigue that settled in my body. COVID was so unfamiliar to me that I didn't trust myself to make decisions about how to focus and direct my energy. I was only able to float in this very disorienting, frightening, physically and emotionally painful place.

Hundreds of people were dying every day in New York City. There was an ambulance going by my window every 10 minutes, 24 hours a day. With each siren I was aware that a person's life was being upended, as well as the lives of those who loved this person. My family was getting slammed with the virus in New Orleans.

The veil was being lifted with this pandemic. The cracks in our country's foundations that I have known since I was a child in the segregated South were visible for all to see. It was apparent who had access to health care and a safe, adequate place to shelter in. As I floated under the tone, I realized that not only was I struggling with my own personal physical crisis, I was in the middle of this deep spiritual, social crisis that is a part of my history, my ancestry. COVID is a teacher. It knows how to cooperate and travels easily through the air from one host to the next. I am still sitting with this teaching.

I am 68 and I have asthma. In the second week I took a downturn, when my mucus membranes, bronchi, lungs, and alveoli were affected. I couldn't stop coughing and the tension and stress in my lungs were increasing. The doctor put me on steroids. In the third week I felt that the virus was no longer in my body, but my respiratory system felt damaged. I got an X-ray of my lungs. I was diagnosed with Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease and that is what it felt like. I was so diminished. Bonnie was doing a lot of work with the

bronchi and lungs at the time. I called Bonnie. I didn't heal alone. Being in relationship can be so supportive of the healing process for the individual and the collective.

I continue this practice of being present with my breath as it moves through my 6 nasal conchae, the 3 parts of the pharynx, the trachea, the bronchi, the bronchioles, the alveoli, and the lungs. The steadiness of a gentle breath has brought awareness to the layers, levels, textures, contours, membranes, fluids, and spaces that make up all of the parts of my respiratory structure. My body knows what to do. My alveoli are healing, my lungs are so much spongier, and my fluids are much more in balance with my membranes. It may be helping my underlying asthma. I have been in the care of an ophthalmologist since last year for high eye pressure. This February he agreed to give me one more shot at bringing the pressure down with my somatic practice before he would strongly suggest I take drops. I saw him today and my eye pressure had significantly lowered. I believe that being with my nasal conchae and pharynx has been very important.

The COVID challenge has shifted so many things for me personally and as a part of the collective. Being under the tone has become a place of deep rest, restoration, knowing, and transformation. It is the support that I have longed for to move forward.

MARIAH MALONEY in Brockport, New York, USA

Last March before I got COVID-19, I felt healthy and vibrant. Then, one day, after a long, beautiful walk, I began to feel a gelatinous mass forming in and around the lymph nodes on the right side of my abdomen. During the first two weeks, I felt the virus infect my blood cells, blood vessels, lungs, heart, and brain; later I experienced inflammation in my kidneys, skin, blood vessels, and colon. For sixty days, I lived with the virus and the resulting widespread inflammation. Eventually, on day sixty, I was able to clear the virus from my body.

In the beginning, shortly after my lymph nodes became swollen and sluggish, I experienced a band of pressure that radiated up over my sternum and heart and made it extremely difficult to breathe. Walking meditation paired with embryonic breathing and lung breathing helped me endure this phase of the disease. Through the practice of embryonic breathing, I understood I was able to receive oxygen even as my lungs became more constricted. I began to trust that I had space in my body cavity and I was receiving an oxygen supply, I was OK.

At this point, after five days of dealing with the disease, I felt I had experienced the worst part of the illness and I would be feeling better soon. That was not what happened.

The next phase of the illness was the most intense. I experienced symptoms including an elevated resting heart rate of 120 bpm, an irregular heartbeat, nausea, and extreme fatigue. I felt my life force leaving my body. I was unable to stand or walk and experienced shooting pressure move down my left arm and in between my shoulder blades. I sensed fluid around my heart and could feel my heart pushing out of my chest cavity as it strained to pump my blood. I was really scared and sort of gave up. And then, I found my body knew what to do. My body was already exploring cellular touch—I started to calm down. I brought a pillow up to the front of my chest and another few to my lower and upper back and rested vertically in between the pillows. The soft pillows gently provided support for my inflamed heart and lungs. I felt the soft touch of the pillows help my heart rest easier in the pericardial cavity and I felt my lungs embrace around my heart. I fell asleep.

Over the next few days, I moved in slow motion, crawling up stairs, resting until my heart rate came down. Throughout my experience with the virus, I went to the ER twice, I had three tele-doc appointments and did not receive a COVID-19 test. Two weeks later, I had a test and a CT scan. The test came back negative and the scan revealed mild enlargement of the right atrium and slight pulmonary edema. The doctor felt I was recovering from COVID-19.

After I received the CT scan, I tried to walk up the block and experienced extreme pressure in my left temporal lobe. A few hours later, I received a call from Bonnie. We had been in touch around the California workshop that was canceled due to COVID-19 and had been in correspondence about my experience with the virus. She was checking to see how the CT scan came out. In our call, Bonnie guided me, to allow my hands to encourage the interstitial fluids (encouraging the fluid that was clean) to gently move toward and through the lymph duct into the subclavian vein. As Bonnie guided me, I felt my entire lymphatic system drain the excess interstitial fluids. I felt the drainage begin at the subclavian vein and very quickly move down through the groin. I felt a state of relief and a major shift in my body. This was the beginning of my body turning the corner toward recovery. I am deeply thankful to Bonnie and feel my practice with her in the

Body-Mind Centering community prepared me to survive this illness and to thrive post-COVID-19.

I am deeply thankful to be alive and well. I have deep gratitude for my healing practices, my family, friends, mentors, and community that have been with me on my journey, offering healing guidance, energy, love, and support. My practices in Body-Mind Centering, Alexander Technique, meditation, qigong, improvisation, walking, and dancing brought me through this ordeal and continue to keep me healthy, post-COVID-19. In closing, I offer an autobiographical dance, *Sunflowers in August*. <https://vimeo.com/manage/473650764/general>

TONI SMITH in Troy, New York, USA

Overhearing a webinar my son, an Emergency Room doctor, was listening to: “The disadvantage of resorting to a ventilator in cases of COVID-19 is that the patient cannot be rotated to all sides, including belly, in the bed.” Indicating that movement and relationship to gravity promote recuperative activity in lung cells. Having heard this, I have been playing with BMC palpations of the lungs on myself and notice enormous revitalization of lung sensation, respiration expansion, and more. I am not surprised at the ENORMITY of the response in my own “healthy” body.

True Story: One time I was visiting two of my clients in the pediatric ward (identical twins, 3 years old, with problematic asthma). The nurse walked in, tested their oxygen levels with a finger clip, and stated, “that’s not good.” She went to a drawer and pulled out a pink rubber plunger with no handle. She started pounding on the girls’ chests, backs, and shoulders with quite a bit of force. The nurse then took their oxygen levels again, said, “that’s better” and walked out of the hospital room. HMMM. Tissues responding to stimulation—something we know via BMC. Movement, touch, gravitational pull, HMMMM.

NAVANITA HARRIS in Stellshagen, Germany

Happy we recover the practice to strengthen the instrument that knows:

Containment and Space

Beginning: location of the container, of the rib cage protecting and giving space to the breath breathing us.

Then: location of the back of lungs brought attention to the field of support of being backed up, rather than outer attending to overloaded information.

Moving dancing touching locating spacious inside of lungs breathing and the dimensionality of the rib cage ...

Intention softening holding and noticing being held ...

Moved to space around body contained by walls.

The shift inside outside and choice and being with both.

Then: noticing space outside window with resources of membranes boundaries containment of space.

Moving attention exploration between the spaces that are all the same.

How the membrane shifts the orientation and attending to location ...

Completing with watching breath breathing belly breath and chest.

Held by movement of space connecting us all ...

Arriving Sensation Location of Embodied spaciousness

Informed of health—

Existing in its effortlessness I am whole.

Luxury is the body knowing

... Immune system is awakened with presence ...

The body knows what to do to take care.

KATY DYMOKE in Manchester, United Kingdom

Tips for Personal Practice—Touch Deprivation

Dear all, this is an offering, to take or leave, inspire or pass on, to remain embodied and at ease—some are finding this very challenging, another ‘me too’ ...

A little tip in these days where we may well be feeling touch deprived? If we can’t get a hug from someone physically, we may get it virtually through web-chat; however, I still feel a latent sense of missing hands on, or the empathic presence of other at the point of body on body, or hand on body contact. If touch is a ‘natural human need’ then how long can we do without?

Some ideas that may be helpful:

- The pull of gravity sustains physical contact with the earth, so if the body can rest into gravity, using the surface of the floor, chair or gymnastic ball, or even better on the grass, then the sensory feedback to the body can serve as a substitute for the meeting of my body through the hands of a practitioner. Sensing the contact of my body on the ‘earth’ using the energy field of gravity, I can let go my own self-holding, feel the fullness of my breath as I breathe, and focus, simply on this state of being, this connection, this ‘bond’ to myself through sensing, breathing, and noticing a calm sense of presence flow in and out and around. At times I may pause to rock myself, giving my body an active jiggling, shaking down tension into the pull of gravity, so gravity does the work, supports me to ‘let go’ of what I don’t need and to feel the resources that I do—my breath, my fluid body, my animate being, this source of knowing that I may not pay much attention to or give credence to?

- Thoughts will still intrude, but I can let that happen, some may come from deeper places, some uninvited thoughts may pull me away back into a ‘disturbed’ mental state ... but returning to the connection I have still there, with gravity, is like the lifeboat, brings me back to ‘terra firma’—to ease again.

- Active touch—if I go into movement, like rolling, turning my body against a surface, even standing against a wall, or using a gymnastic/Pilates ball, compressing into the tissues of my body, leaning into the surface and feeling my weight flow through ... the compression releases tissue fluids back into the spaces, the tissue spaces where they may be pooling, waiting for a chance to drain or replenish.

- If you have a partner with whom you feel ‘safe’ to move with (because you have self-isolated together, *etc.*), you can do this back to back, or belly on back or side to side.

- Tapping a soft ball, rolling a soft ball—with a ball in one hand, tap it all over your body, particularly your torso, but the peripheral spots are also important. Roll it between your hands, under each foot, up and down or in circles over the whole body, over the surface of all limb segments, joints, and feel the transition between tissues from the bony to the muscle, from the surface of the skin to deep tissue.

- Taking several minutes and longer where it feels good, your body tone will start to change, like your breath has reached all the cells of your body, like light has come on in dark places, or like a lightness has replaced heavy density...

We can do more ... but this is plenty, from here gentle stretches or more full-on body movement can feel really good, to music or to your own breath rhythm or together in combo.

This body wisdom sustains my sense of being with, rather than afraid of, my body’s state of wellness ... of being well.

KATE TARLOW MORGAN in Marlboro, Vermont, USA [edited for context]

We ought to open this discussion on how to communicate in the new world of “physical” distancing. But I am also hearing a deeper request, a philosophical one: that is, what does it mean to be researchers of bodies in space/relationships and memories of the space of time that we have occupied? Time-and-Space-without-Substance is now the new normal. And this is where language might be called on to fill the membrane. In fact, language is the ocean into which we may dive for right now. Even if we Zoom: we might ask, do we have to speak? This might just be the container—hard-copy, online and ZOOM—that we need to begin a new movement.

ELIZABETH DELABARRE in New York City, USA

Hello, all, this may be the first time I have had real space since my son was born over 12 years ago. It is ironic that at a time when some people are so anxious and nervous, I am settling into the absence of rushing, the absence of rescheduling clients to accommodate chaperoning a school trip or a rescheduled little league game, the absence of NOISE! I haven't heard a horn or siren in at least 2 days—unheard of in Midtown Manhattan. I am also settling into the awareness of those who are suffering greatly due to our current situation, which takes me into more internal spaciousness as I allow the feelings to be here ... I hope the people on this list are getting through this with what they need.

Like so many of you, here I am with an unfamiliar amount of time on my hands—literally. Since touch is what I do, I have felt bereft at my inability to offer my services during this time. And I don't just get to touch others for a living, but am blessed to be touched by people such as those on this list, who trusted me, graced my table, and allowed me to be of service. While creating this list, it was so lovely to go through my files and be reminded of you all! I work with people of all ages and backgrounds, but what we all have in common right now is this strange landscape we are moving through, together yet apart—and some with more ease and resource than others, which brings me to the purpose of my email.

If we haven't met in a while, you may not know that I graduated from the Somatic Experiencing® Practitioner program. Somatic Experiencing is a body-oriented approach developed by Dr. Peter Levine, which is used to treat trauma-related issues. The goal of SE is to be present in the “here and now,” explore choices and options, and create stability in clients' relationships and lives. By accessing the nervous system and being with the arising and shifting sensations in the body, the client experiences relaxation, resource, and emotional self-regulation. Recently, a few of my clients triggered by Corona fears asked for SE video sessions with me. The sessions were a win-win! Anxious clients got palpable relief, and I got the meaningful work I crave always, and especially during a crisis when women's bodies release oxytocin, the “tend and befriend” hormone. I was so grateful to be able to offer support, and it was more satisfying than the blog I was thinking of starting! ... If you know of anyone who needs the support and has limited finances, have them contact me to work out an arrangement. Feel free to share this with people you think might be interested or post on Facebook, since you know I won't be!

Also, most of you have heard me speak of Kadampa Meditation Center, which has been a huge support for me the past 8 years. Kadam Morten has been livestreaming his dharma talks and meditations, and what a help they are! ... I highly recommend being in his “presence.” www.meditationin-newyork.org

Sending blessings out to all of you! May you be well, may you be happy, may you be free from suffering.

PHOEBE NEVILLE in Reggio Emilia, Italy

Living with Covid-19 in Italy has been a bit of a Zen experience. After a few stumbles at the beginning, Italy went into lockdown—no stores open except for food, and one could leave the house only for necessary business. A declaration form, showing name, age, ID number, and purpose, was updated weekly!

But I determined to be as mobile as possible, despite my husband and me being in the AT RISK category (Philip being 87, and I Bonnie's age). We live in the Historic Center of a small city, where I have known the people at the newsstand, the butcher, fish store, grocer for twenty years, so visited them daily. No masks for love or money, but we happened to have some from our China trip the year before. And as for risk, I resolved that IF the worst happened, we would die at home rather than bother the already overworked medical staff ... The riskiest thing was getting to the health food store, a bit outside of the center, but the minibus to the Hospital was always running (free) and from there it was a short walk on a quiet, tree-lined street, with only traffic to the hospital, so I was practically invisible.

Philip took it magnificently, admiring the sun on the courtyard wall, and composing some extraordinary music. I opened up my massage table to give him bodywork to compensate for his reduced activity. I suffered from not having my physical therapy sessions for the pinched nerve which affects my median nerves, but discovered that napping face down on the table reduced the pressure, and doing Pete Egoscue's exercises helped, too. As for maintenance, I've always cut Philip's hair, and I didn't need one, so no problem there. I baked cookies as a THANK YOU for all the stores which remained open, and the bus driver ... And then my beloved Dance meditation teacher in the U.S. started giving ZOOM classes (she's a Sufi master, in a tradition which teaches via movement)—to reconnect with her was amazing—time and space dissolved!—and what a joy to see her smile after over twenty years ... Emails and phone calls kept me connected with family and friends in the U.S.. There was one difficult moment, when Philip developed an ear infection, since his annual ear cleaning couldn't happen, but by then the hospital was dealing well with non-COVID medical stuff, so we were able to deal with it.

So it was a bit surreal—I'd come back from shopping, the sun would be shining—and an ambulance would arrive nearby. And getting our check from Trump felt a bit weird—I immediately donated to the Community fund here! Since things have opened up, we've been supporting our local restaurants by weekly attendance!

The story isn't over yet— we're both cautious— but grateful to be in Italy! Hoping this finds YOU well, and coping!

PAT ETHRIDGE in Maryland/New York, USA

Pandemics have been an ongoing presence in human history. Some historians have pointed out that the effects of past epidemics seem to be quickly forgotten, although the economic and political impacts can cause significant changes in society. The vast plagues of ancient and medieval times, and even of a few hundred years ago, seem too far back in time to seem relevant. Some last relatively briefly—a few years, like typhoid, cholera, or bubonic plague; others, like tuberculosis and AIDS, are ongoing. There was a ‘Russian Flu’ in 1889; the ‘Spanish Flu’ in 1918; and the polio epidemic in the first half of the 20th century. I am old enough to remember people avoiding swimming pools in the summer and the sugar cube with vaccine I was given to prevent polio. And many of us know survivors who are now dealing with post-polio syndrome. New diseases like Ebola, SARS, MERS, Nipah, and others are constantly evolving and require coordinated effort to address.

My own grandfathers survived the Spanish Flu. My maternal grandfather was 17 and reported seeing “many multi-colored giraffes running across the ceiling” during his fever. He lost his sense of smell, which returned partially when he was 70. My paternal grandfather was in his early 20s and serving in WWI in France. He was so badly off that the doctors closed the curtains around his bed, expecting that he would not survive the night. But a little French nurse sat by his bedside and held his hand, which he believed pulled him through. His lungs and heart were affected; he was sent home and spent a year recovering in a veterans’ hospital. Although formerly robust, he was not able to do heavy work after that and always seemed a little frail to me. Lingering damage like this is often overlooked in the history and reporting of these diseases.

There are many unknown aspects of COVID-19 that are still being investigated. At first it was thought to be only a respiratory illness, with some gastrointestinal symptoms in some patients, but now it is seen to be a whole-body experience with many long-term, negative consequences. Treatments and therapies are still being devised. The SARS-CoV-2 virus is complicated; it may mutate unpredictably for better or worse and may not respond well to a vaccine.

I have been living for over six months in Maryland, the longest period of time I have spent outside of New York City since I moved there in 1978. I was visiting family when my job switched to remote work, and I opted to stay, preferring a house with a yard to being cooped up in a tiny, one-room NYC apartment. Within a couple of weeks, my next-door neighbor, someone I had known for 35 years, died of COVID-19. My siblings and I are all in the high-risk category, and the jostlings around boundaries and ‘membranes’ in meeting and spending any time together required significant time for adjustment. The younger generation dances around issues of separation and enmeshment, suffused with anxiety

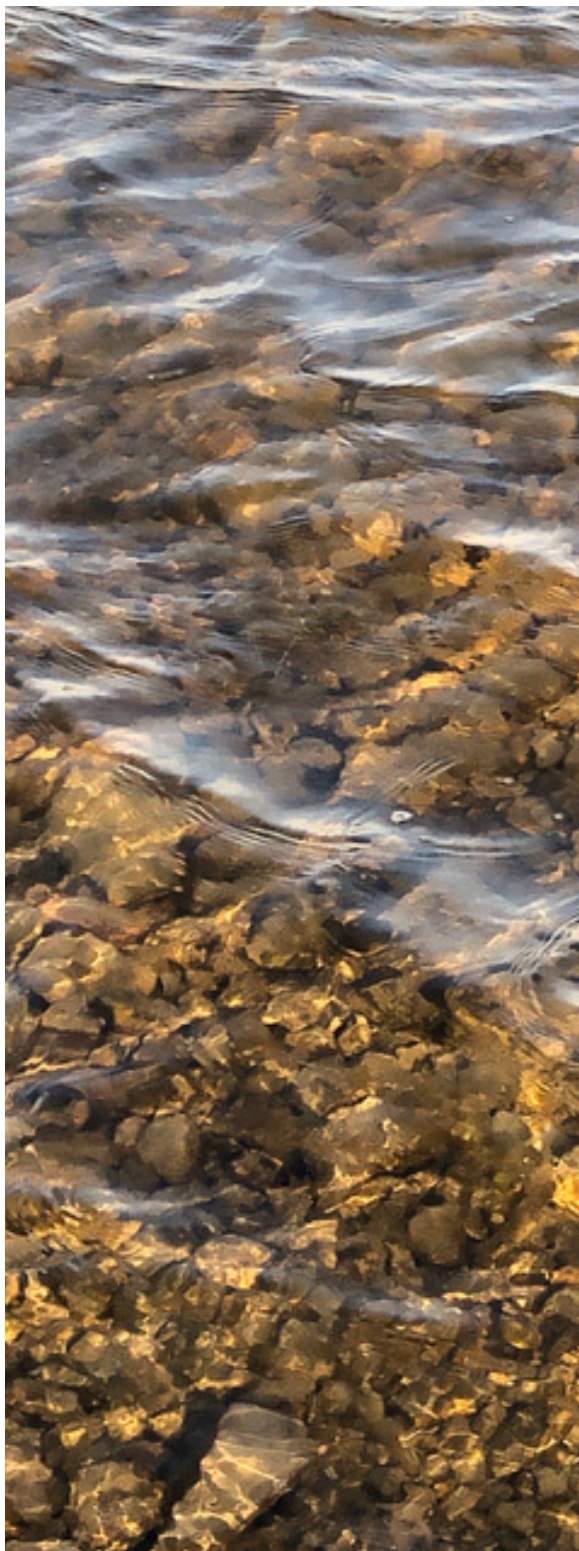
and fear for the future. Zoom encounters have become primary with them and almost everyone else. The tension that arises when required to deal with someone who does not respect space and coverings feels existential.

But the biggest effect seems to be on the sense of time. This has been like another version of “sitting in the synapse”—waiting for something to happen, to change, or to end. It is a peculiar quality of suspension, where six months seems like no time at all, even though it is half a year, and yet an endless succession of somber days. Planning is short-term, encroached upon by “what-ifs”—especially, perhaps, by the ultimate long-term plan, what if someone dies. Or I do. Is it OK to be done? “Getting things in order” is a legitimate response to all the chaos. As is seeking to assist those in serious trouble, of whom there are many.

Planting and maintaining a garden has been restorative, as well as feeding and watering the birds and tracking them in their little lives. Preserving a structure for each day—of chores, a work schedule, an exercise protocol, a meal and sleep program, a meditation/spiritual practice, careful titration of news intake, and planned Zoom communications with others—sustains personal ground. Mentally and physically, holding to a state of readiness for whatever comes seems like the best approach. As the British famously said, keep calm and carry on.

And I know that whatever happens, whatever imagined regrets and unfulfilled wishes I might have, this life has been good enough. Even blessed. The ultimate consolation is gratitude.

Thank you to Contributors who shared their insights in *Covid & Body-Mind Centering*—Roxlyn Moret, Mariah Maloney, Toni Smith, Navanita Harris, Katy Dymoke, Kate Tarlow Morgan, Elizabeth Delabarre, Pheobe Neville, Pat Ethridge. 🐾



Fluid

the dew drops the ocean
the essence the water

the timeless present of bones

the silent smile of organs
the inaudibility of movement

the conscious self of fluid space

Swim/Absence

I swam naked in a swamp
that was very, very deep
The waters were calm, and black, and dense

I took part of a summer solstice celebration

There was a bonfire burning
The wind was scented of birch trees

I could feel my heart pounding
at the rhythm of the misty, hot air, in the sauna

Elixir drops caressed my skin

Although you were not there

Although you were also there

In a way

In a way that was only mine

And it was also,

Yours

Maria Eugenia Spinelli

BRAIN LAB



Dr Deglin PhD
Dr Kinsbourne PhD

ENTRANCE



On the table is an index card.
We'll deactivate your right, then left
cerebral cortex and ask you if the state on it is
true...



Sure

true...

Major: All monkeys climb trees
Premise
Minor: Porcupines are monkeys
premise
Conclusion: Porcupines climb
trees



Normal

Is it true?

No, it sounds logical
but it's incorrect.
Porcupines don't
climb trees

Thank you.



R-Inactive

Actually, it is true.

How do you know?

Well it says so
on the index card.

Fascinating



L-Inactive

And now...?

Are you nuts? Do
you take me for a fool
of course porcupines don't
climb trees. What kind of
dumb crap is this!!
I'm outta here!

Thank you for participating!

Notes from a Pattern Spotter:

A Neuro-Phenomenological Perspective on Dyslexia and Cognition

By Sebastian Bechinger¹

“By studying neurological syndromes that have been largely ignored as curiosities or mere anomalies we can acquire novel insights into the functions of the normal brain.” (2003)

~V.S. Ramachandran,
Cognitive Neuroscientist

“I see patterns. I see the rightness of patterns and I see when patterns are disturbed. Now if I was going to give myself a name, I would say that I’m a patterner and a shape-changer. Those are my strengths. Many people who are looking at science are not looking at patterns, they’re looking at the details. In this culture, we’re taught a lot of isolated facts, ‘In 1492, Columbus sailed the ocean blue,’ but not how to see the underlying patterns, the relationship of everything to everything. In the nervous system, the extra-pyramidal system recognizes patterns, while the pyramidal system controls more the specifics of movement. I suspect I initiate or articulate more through the extra-pyramidal system. Both systems are necessary—they balance each other, within the individual and within society.” (2008:113)

~Bonnie Bainbridge Cohen,
Movement Therapist and Explorer

As an artist, I have always been interested in *deconstruction*. By that I mean, I tend to seek concreteness for a sense of foundation. I pick things apart to find fundamentals, seeking the basics and the experienceable—and to work from there. I try to know the basics of what I am working with and then I join the dots of its ecology. This drive to deconstruct has led me to two studies: the *Six Viewpoints*—a phenomenological study of theatre and dance developed by Mary Overlie, based on the elemental components of the action of the stage; and Body-Mind Centering, which also engages what Overlie calls “particle-ized consciousness” but applies it to the internal world of the body, instead of the outer world of the stage.²

When I was 11 years old I was diagnosed with dyslexia. My mother, a trained occupational therapist, suspected something was different about me as a learner and decided I should get tested. I remember going into the Special Edu-

cational Needs classroom at school where there were posters of famous dyslexic people: comedian and actor Eddie Izzard; mathematician and theoretical physicist Albert Einstein; world-famous architects Richard Rogers and Norman Foster; John Lennon of the Beatles; and entrepreneur Richard Branson. On the poster of Richard Branson there is a quote, where he insists his success was *because* of his dyslexia, not in spite of it. Six years later, at 17, I was reassessed more specifically. I turned out to be in the 99.7th percentile for IQ, but in the bottom 10% for executive functioning. I consider myself lucky—only a minority of “dyslexics” gets assessed and receives support.

So the questions I have for myself are:

- 1) What is the connection between dyslexia and embodied practices?
- 2) Why do I feel strongly that I want to bring these two enquiries together?
- 3) What does any of this have to do with Body-Mind Centering (BMC)?

Neurodiversity

The term “neurodiversity” originates from autism advocate and sociologist Judy Singer and was developed by Harvey Blume and Thomas G. West. The basic theory is that there is an advantage if there is a variety of “wiring” within the human population. The problem arises not in the brain differences amongst individuals, but when society expects homogeneity. Differences get labelled as problems or pathologies as society fails to recognize the strengths neurodiverse individuals bring, seeing only deficits in comparison to the general population.

Some people point out that the idea of neurodiversity can be traced back to Socrates, but maybe that’s another story. Whatever the case, the concept of neurodiversity in relation to dyslexia is older than Judy Singer’s 1998 Article. Many educators, such as Thomas Armstrong and Harold Gardner, have been writing about learning differences since the 1970s and in 1994 Ronald Davis published *The Gift of Dyslexia*.

¹ At the author’s request, British word spellings are retained in this essay.

² Interestingly, Mary Overlie considered Body-Mind Centering to be part of the extended curriculum of the Viewpoints. I intend to write more about their interconnections in another essay.

The earliest known writing about dyslexia appeared in the 1890s with Dr. Pringle Morgan, an ophthalmologist who worked with a boy who couldn't read despite being seen by his teachers as "the brightest lad in the school." Gradually literature began discussing "word-blindness" and its possible causes, with an increasing focus on a deficit-oriented perspective of dyslexia. A dominant etiology emerged around phonological processing deficits, but this did nothing to explain the extraordinary intelligence which Dr Morgan observed and which accompany many observations of dyslexic individuals. The phonological theory is still popular today and while there is a variant of dyslexia which revolves around phonological processing³, it doesn't explain other dyslexic challenges adequately. Around the 1970s arguments began appearing to support the idea that if such a high proportion of the population is dyslexic, it might be unlikely that it really is a disorder. Slowly, a strength-based view of dyslexia began to re-emerge.

2019, Summer, ImpulsTanz

"If you judge a fish by its ability to climb trees, it winds up believing it's stupid."

*~Albert Einstein,
dyslexic mathematician*

I am in Mary Overlie's Viewpoints class. We are walking and stopping.

She says, "Take in the unnecessary details: the clothing of other people, the textures of the walls, marks left by the gaffer tape, the way the light falls. Notice all the things you are trained to filter out."

Later she said, "Allow yourself to think about something completely unconnected to this workshop."

In that moment, I was given permission to simply see, without directing my seeing. Early in my life, I learned to adapt my perceptual process to a world that was asking me to continually narrow my perceptual process. "Focus, Sebastian - just concentrate!" This class with Mary was a step to unlearning what I had adjusted to, and to free my sensory processes.

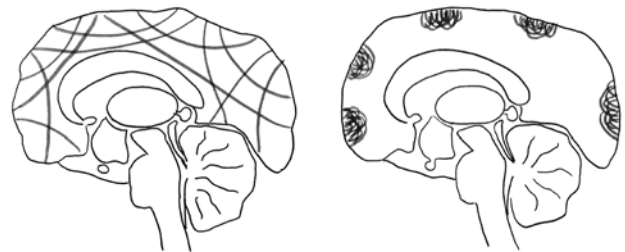
Minicolumns and Brain Circuitry

There is a common belief that dyslexia is only an issue when children are learning to read. It exists in the classroom, frustrates teachers and parents, but eventually, you catch up and you're cured. Whilst it is true that many individuals with dyslexia catch up on their reading level, it does not mean that

their cognitive style and their brain wiring fundamentally changes. Scientific consensus is that there is a genetic component to dyslexia and that dyslexia runs in families.

The research of Dr Miguel Casanova sheds some light on this. After dissecting brains across a huge variety of the population, with or without diagnostic labels, Casanova began to see a pattern in the dyslexic and autistic brains he was studying. Casanova's research was focused on minicolumns: stacks of neurons in the cerebral cortex which fire together, arguably "the functional unit of the cortex." He discovered significant variation in the spacing of these minicolumns, which in turn influences the connections between the minicolumns themselves. Scaled up, the organization of these columns ends up dramatically influencing overall brain circuitry and corresponding cognitive function.

"The brains of individuals with autism are biased towards short connections at the expense of long connections—just the opposite of dyslexia. Not surprisingly, when we looked we found a high proportion of individuals with autism ... where the minicolumns are closely packed. Cognitively, individuals with autism focus on particular details: they see the trees but lose the forest. ...

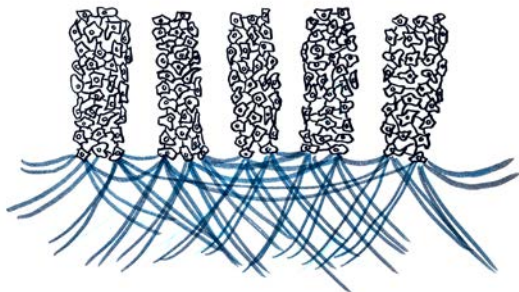


In contrast, joining distant areas of the brain together is what individuals with dyslexia do best. As a result [they] excel at drawing ideas from anything and anywhere, and at connecting different concepts together. Where they miss the boat is in processing fine details." - Casanova cited in Eide and Eide, 2012: 41

In autistic individuals the minicolumns are tightly packed together, like apartment blocks in a dense city, and in dyslexic individuals they are widely spaced, like ranches in the Australian outback. Imagine for a moment you live in a big apartment block and have lots of neighbors whom you know well. When you want to talk to your neighbors you are likely to just slip on your slippers, take almost nothing with you except maybe your keys, and go and say hello. You can easily spend a whole day having a rich set of interactions without ever actually leaving the building.

3 Known as phonological dyslexia.

In the Australian Outback⁴ your next neighbor lives a 7-hour drive away. You pack your car with food, water, and camping supplies in case you break down. You drive off and are gone for days. Once you visit one neighbor, then the difference between being gone for two days or three doesn't seem that much, and maybe you drop by a few more people.



When Casanova studied the connections between minicolumns he also looked at the kinds of connections made by their axons to other minicolumns. Wider spacing between minicolumns generally leads to a predominance of long-range connections whilst trading off short-range connections and vice versa. Cognitively, short-range minicolumnar connections have a bias towards processing similar information, whereas long-range connections emphasize associating distantly-connected information.

With predominantly long-range connections, you end up with extremely complex connections *between* brain areas; with short-range connections, you end up with complex connections *within* brain areas. If you stop and think about this for a moment, within each functional area of the brain—language, movement, perception, imagination, inhibition, planning, emotion, *etc.*—depending on how these minicolumns are structured, a person is more likely to develop:

- a. highly specific cognition within certain areas, or
- b. an interactive ecology of cognition, or
- c. a balance of both.

A person with an autistic cognitive style, that is a high capacity for short-range axonic connections, looking at a green object might see the subtle variations of the color green, becoming preoccupied by the differences between this green and that green. They will have a bias to not see that they are looking at a leaf, or even to connect what they see with a word or a pattern or to act on their perceptions. However, a person with a dyslexic cognitive style, that is, long-range axonic connections, has the reverse problem: we see the leaf, we connect it to the image of a tree, to memories, to emotions, to movement, to language, but in a way that is so complicat-

ed that it can become overwhelming. That is, we don't stay with the different shades of "green," nor can we stay neatly in any cognitive boxes for very long.

You may notice that the typical dyslexic and autistic processing styles, as implied by the minicolumn theory, have similarities with left (autistic) and right (dyslexic) hemispheric processing. In *The Dyslexic Advantage*, authors Brock and Fernadette Eide point out that the dyslexic brain has a distinctly right brain "flavor." The right hemisphere of the brain tends to connect distantly associated information more than the left hemisphere, but a theory of dyslexia based on hemispheric bilateralization is problematic, otherwise all dyslexics would be left-handed.⁵ That said, however, according to Eide and Eide the dyslexic brain struggles with procedural learning, which is characterized by a "left-ward shift." When we learn something new, we all use both hemispheres to maximize attention on the new information. Dyslexic learners seem to retain this trait with the advantage of more mindfulness and intentionality at the expense of automaticity.

When I read about this I realized why I never lasted long working most day jobs—whether working a coffee machine or doing a desk job, most entry-level jobs rely on executing a given procedure, rather than inventing new ones.

Essentially, the dyslexic brain excels at top-down cognition and synthesis. It's about getting "gist," the "essence" of the thing (whatever the thing is). It's about spotting connections that other people just don't spot.

It's a noisy brain. There is a lot going on inside the dyslexic brain. It doesn't settle easily, but in this noise there are patterns that can form which are outside the orders and strictures of conventional thinking and acting.

According to Eide and Eide, there are "dyslexic-rich professions." The arts, education, and body-based therapies are included here and are basically the feed-in professions for BMC. I would wager that if all certified BMC professionals were to be assessed for adult dyslexia, then a disproportionate number of us would show up as dyslexic. Dyslexia is about pattern forming: seeing forests, but not necessarily trees. Arts and Body-Mind Centering both gave me environments in which these traits were encouraged. I felt at home amongst pattern spotters.

Interestingly for me to notice is that the career paths that dyslexics favour are also those which not only embrace *distant* connections, but also allow *time* for those connections to develop. I find, amongst artists, there is an understanding that to develop your voice you need time to mature—some things, important things, just need time to cook. I was relieved to discover, whilst researching for this article, that it is in fact very common for dyslexic adults to be "late-bloomers."

⁴ Will anybody who knows Australia well forgive this stereotype—it serves its illustrative purpose well.

⁵ The author of this article IS left-handed and proud of it.

Eide and Eide suggest that due to the complexity of connections, it simply takes longer for the ecology of relationships to clarify, their gist or essence to be revealed. Partly because of this, dyslexics are more likely than average to become “multiple specialists,” developing expertise in a few subjects before being able to link these divergent fields of knowledge together. One eminent example is the dyslexic scientist James Lovelock, who developed Gaia Theory after completing two doctorates combining physiology, environmental sciences, climatology, and physics.

While researching this topic, I noticed that most authors assume that you can only embody these processes indirectly—that is, through cognitive outcomes and biases—rather than the neural structures themselves. BMC gives us a way to actually go inside the brain and directly embody our minicolumns and our association pathways, whether we are dyslexic or not.

Visualize your cortex--the surface of the brain. Visualize the grey matter--the dense unmyelinated neurons near the surface--in relation to the white matter, the long, myelinated axons connecting parts of the cortex together⁶. What differences, large or small, do you experience when you focus just on the grey matter, or just on the white matter, or on both simultaneously?

Now focus on the white matter--whether you are dyslexic or not, there are some pathways which are long range--connecting distant parts of the brain together, and there are pathways which are short range, which stay within a single brain area. What differences, large or small, do you experience when you focus just on long-range connections, or just on short-range connections, or on both simultaneously?

Can you visualize your minicolumns, stacks of neurons which “wire together and fire together?” Do you have a sense of their spacing? If you visualize them widely spaced, what do you notice? If you visualize them tightly packed, what do you notice?

Do you have a preference in your axons? If you know you are dyslexic, do you experience a sense of relief when you allow the long-range pathways to be in the foreground? Do you get lost in the endlessness of them? When you embody your short-range pathways, do you experience a healthy sense of challenge--like in a Feldenkrais class where you differentiate between two very similar ways of rotating a joint—or do you experience an unnatural myopia or hyper-focusing which is draining?

Adult Dyslexia

“It puzzled me at first that biology was taught entirely indoors, in a laboratory-style classroom—but I secured a desk close to the window, and when during lectures my attention drifted out beyond the glass, I felt less guilty than I did in other courses. This being biology, I felt more justified gazing at the underbelly of a beetle climbing on the other side of the pane, or a couple of barn swallows swerving and dipping behind the teacher’s reflection.”—David Abram, dyslexic ecologist and philosopher. (2010: 66)

Mostly, dyslexia research is focused on children and on problems with reading and writing--encoding and decoding written text. However, estimates are that 10-20% of the overall population is dyslexic⁷, meaning that not only 1 in 5 children are dyslexic but also 1 in 5 adults. As adults, dyslexia typically affects us differently. On top of that there are atypical kinds of dyslexia⁸ where reading and writing are not the central problems, though executive functioning skills such as sequencing, non-verbal reasoning, and working memory are clearly affected.

When I was diagnosed with a variant of dyslexia that primarily affects executive functioning, the educational psychologist said, “This might sound familiar. You have a lot to say, a lot of interest in the subject. But when it comes to getting words on the paper, it doesn’t come out. You can’t get from A to B.” Or as a less sympathetic and less informed teacher in high school put it: “Sebastian is highly intelligent, but highly lazy.” Seth Perler, an educator specializing in supporting children with executive functioning challenges, calls this the Myth of Laziness (2017). He argues it’s one of the most damaging things for a child’s self-esteem and implores parents and teachers to understand the difference between “can’t” and “won’t,” even when it seems like a child is just being resistant.

Adult dyslexia is not so much about reading and writing for many people (though for some it remains a big challenge). As we have seen, the dyslexic processing style comes with significant strengths and trade-offs which underlie, but aren’t really about, difficulties with reading and writing. Dyslexia was “discovered” around a time when it was first becoming an expectation that everyone reads and writes. Before that people were not “dyslexic,” but had a dyslexic brain structure which allowed them to express their talents according to their non-literary occupational possibilities.

I feel dealing with adult dyslexia has a lot to do with unlearning compensation strategies learnt earlier on. I feel and observe that, although many adult dyslexics have mastered reading and writing adequately, they still engage in a kind

6 There are also connections which go from the cortex to other parts of the nervous system, but let’s stay mostly with the cortex for now.

7 I haven’t seen primary data relating to this, but it seems that most articles I read cite this number. The official figure from the British National Health Service is 10% but I see 20% cited far more frequently, including from the BBC.

8 Eide calls this “stealth dyslexia.”

of forced concentration. For younger people, in classroom environments where you have to sit still, be quiet, and live mainly in a world of written words, letters, and symbols, we tend to daydream, paying more attention to the concrete details of the classroom--the space, the ecology of people, stories, hearts, bodies, sensations--than the content of the class. Dyslexic individuals are punished for this behavior and so called "inattention," which is really an overabundance of attention rather than a deficit of it⁹.

One way to avoid this punishment is forced concentration. Forced concentration, as has been noted by various people, from Fritz Perls to Ronald D. Davis, is very different from spontaneous concentration, which arises from genuine interest in something in the environment and results in vivid figure/ground formation. Fritz Perls notes that children exhibit perfect examples of spontaneous concentration.

Forced concentration also is a big drain on cognitive resources. In my observations of adult dyslexics I have noticed that many, particularly those who were given messages early on that they should "try harder" to conform to an idea of "normal," straightjacket themselves doing so and that their talents do not get to shine through. They are strangers to their own gifts, and this is tragic to see.

Because of this, I believe¹⁰ it is essential that dyslexics, as adults, are aware of their divergences and the gifts and challenges they come with.

Interventions...?

"One of the stranger treatments for dyslexia, from the 1950s, sprang from the observation that children who later developed dyslexia had often begun to walk before they could crawl. The treatment was to make the dyslexics crawl around on the floor until the dyslexia went away. Of course it didn't work, but crawling therapy was added to many treatment programmes for dyslexia, and is still practised in some today." (1997: 107)

~Ronald D. Davis, author of *The Gift of Dyslexia*

"One 10 year old boy I worked with couldn't write or spell. He was diagnosed as having cortical problems. After three months of low brain repatterning exercises, without any additional language skill instruction, he was able to write and spell." (2008: 55)

~Bonnie Bainbridge Cohen, originator of Body-Mind Centering

The quote above from Ronald D. Davis is clearly critical of 'crawling therapy' and as a Body-Mind Centering professional, I strongly believe that examining one's developmental integration can be a good thing. Yet I find it difficult to dismiss his rebuke of crawling therapy. When I picked this passage apart, I realized that the problem is of over-simplification and of pathologizing—if we're proud of our dyslexia, we don't want our dyslexia to "go away."

Intuitively, I gravitated towards BMC because it held a key to coming to terms with my dyslexia. Understanding my perceptual-motor integrity, my peculiarities, and my sensitivity was a big part of it. On a physical level, I simply knew I needed to explore and come to terms with my developmental process. Yet the topic of intervention is clearly very sensitive. If dyslexia is a pattern with extraordinary cognitive strengths, then to talk about 'curing' or 'treating' it is absurd. Yet, I also don't believe it's correct to simply ignore developmental patterning and hope that individuals with dyslexia just find their way as well-adjusted people with a healthy sense of resilience and self-esteem.

In *The Dyslexic Advantage* Eide and Eide comment, "Typically [approximately half of the dyslexic population] shows signs of mild cerebellar dysfunction on exam, such as low muscle tone; poor motor coordination; and difficulties with sequencing, timing, and pacing, and time awareness."¹¹ (2012: 28-29) I personally believe that, in this area, developmental integration can be a valuable support for individuals with dyslexia. Yet, I think this has to be approached in a greater context of how an individual is seen and the nature of the support they receive. Essentially, it's not about treatments and cures, it's about supporting and celebrating.

As dyslexics we need, particularly during childhood, all the opportunities we can get to feel we have genuinely accomplished something and to experience a sense of meaningful achievement. When everything is based on reading and writing skills, this sense of accomplishment can be sorely missing for the school-aged dyslexic. I see it is key to find opportunities to get to know and develop one's talents, particularly talents that involve creativity, connected to or separate from the arts.

I believe, in part, that I chose to go to art college because I intuited it was an environment where my differ-

9 There is a rich discussion about the overlaps between AD(H)D and Dyslexia, where some propose that AD(H)D is a sub-variant of dyslexia, where others feel it is a separate condition. In any case, the topic of mis-labelling and "co-morbidity" is a complex topic. AD(H)D has its own discussions in terms of Neurodiversity and advantages.

10 Research appears to confirm this--adults with dyslexia who are aware of their dyslexia tend to be more emotionally resilient, choose careers which fit them better, are more able to focus on their strength, are less prone to depression, and have higher self-esteem. (Sabin 2020)

11 Many of these traits are reminiscent of dyspraxia, which many dyslexic individuals are also diagnosed with.

ences could be celebrated¹². In “freshers week” the Learning Support coordinator, Graham Greene, spoke about dyslexic writers, dyspraxic dancers, and visually impaired visual artists who came through his doors. He explained that the dyspraxic dancer he referred to was an exceptional improviser and movement creator, though learning rote steps was harder for her and that the dyslexic writer had an unusual, highly experimental and impactful way of handling text. At high school, I avoided intervention because I was proud and wanted to show that I could do without it. I was ashamed to need help. I experienced a wide range of interventions, some of which were more harmful than helpful, so I learned to be suspicious of so-called “support.” At the end of the penultimate year of high school I had the grades D, E, A, D. I was in danger of blowing my opportunities to go to art college.

Just a few weeks into my final year, one of my tutors came up to me and said, “I’ve booked you a session with the learning support tutor. I know you don’t want to go, so here’s how it’s going to work. You’ve got to go to the first session—we’re forcing this one on you. After that you’re free to decide and to never go again.”

I begrudgingly accepted this arrangement. I decided I would jump through their hoops to meet with a man named Geoff, who invited me to sit down and asked me about myself. For fifty minutes he pulled out of me all the things I was passionate about—my art, my band; how I was trying to self-record a solo album on an eight-track tape deck; and how I love experimental theatre. Then, minutes before the end of the session, he said, “OK—now tell me which homework you’re behind in?” I told him I was behind in everything, but most interested in photography. “Great,” Geoff said. “I’ll tell all your other tutors they’re going to get nothing from you this week. Then we’ll check in and I’ll ask you how that photography one went.”

I was stunned, sold by this new plan.

During that week, I did not do that photography assignment. I did not know how to begin. When I arrived in Geoff’s office he asked me about the homework. I felt ashamed that I had let him down. With genuine interest he asked me what happened.

Over the following sessions he helped me understand my difficulty with task-initiation and develop strategies that *I had a sense of ownership over*. By the end of the year, with his help, I achieved the grades A, A, A, D. Most importantly, Geoff helped me gain confidence in myself as

a Learner, and to understand that my survival skills at school would actually be life skills in the future.

Dyslexic individuals are often extremely skilled in detecting authenticity, or lack thereof, which is something



that cannot be faked. I experienced in Geoff a mix of real understanding for my struggles, real admiration for my strengths and, perhaps most importantly, a sense of humor about the gap between.

To Conclude

A lot of us need someone to celebrate and champion our passions, our unique thinking styles, our ways of approaching things, as well as to understand our weak points and how to challenge us in a way that will help us. But more than that, as adults, we need to do that for ourselves—we need to internalize our Geoffs. Ultimately, the more I explore the topic of neurodiversity, it seems increasingly odd that there is even an idea of “neurotypical,” as if there is an idealized “normal” brain in a jar somewhere that we can compare our own to¹³.

12 When I applied to Dartington College of Arts, they proudly made a point of saying how much they encourage dyslexic students to study there and named various successful dyslexic graduates.

13 I’m borrowing this metaphor from Thomas Armstrong (2014).

The 10-20% of dyslexics among us are spread across all backgrounds, social classes, skin colors, and geography. Those who have access to the most understanding and respect are always more advantaged in turning this complex set of strengths and challenges to their advantage. There are many ways human beings process information—this is a place where, perhaps, we can learn to be more humane. 🐼

Glossary of Neurodiversity

Attention Deficit (Hyperactivity) Disorder aka ADD/ADHD—Challenges overlap with dyslexia when it comes to “latent inhibition”—the ability to automatically distinguish and filter “irrelevant” information from the environment. Suggested advantages are mainly around creativity, problem solving, and connecting information.

Autism Spectrum Disorder and Aspergers Syndrome—Controversial in the discussion around neurodiversity, with advocates being divided about the advantages of autism, especially where individuals need high levels of care. Suggested advantages are around the ability to systematize.

Dyscalculia—Related to dyslexia, but difficulties specifically affect maths and numerical reasoning.

Dyspraxia and Developmental Coordination Disorder—also strongly connected to dyslexia. Challenges involve movement and coordination and have many overlaps with the procedural learning difficulties of dyslexia. Dyspraxics tend to have high levels of spatial visualization, reasoning, and creativity; it is suggested their challenge is to do with locating themselves within their maps.

Irlen’s Syndrome (aka Visual Stress Syndrome)—in response to high-contrast visual stimulus, a kind of visual “noise” can be created, which can include text jumping around the page. While there may not be a clear advantage, this commonly co-occurs with dyslexia or is sometimes mistaken for it, so is worth mentioning.

Sensory Integration Disorder—classically, unusual sensory processes, such as being hyper- or hypo-sensitive to certain sensory modalities. Very common in both autism and dyspraxia. Many people are interesting artists as they have unusual aesthetic processes.

Synaesthesia—a “cross-wiring” of sensory processing, such as perceiving numbers as having a color, or shapes as having a flavor, *etc.* It is suggested (see Ramachandran 2012), that synaesthesia creates a tendency towards metaphor and “cross-modal abstraction,” which was part of the development of language in early humans. Synaesthesia is approximately seven times more common in artists and poets than in the general population. This author believes classic synaesthesia to be a specialized form of dyslexia, or that dyslexia is a generalized version of synaesthesia.

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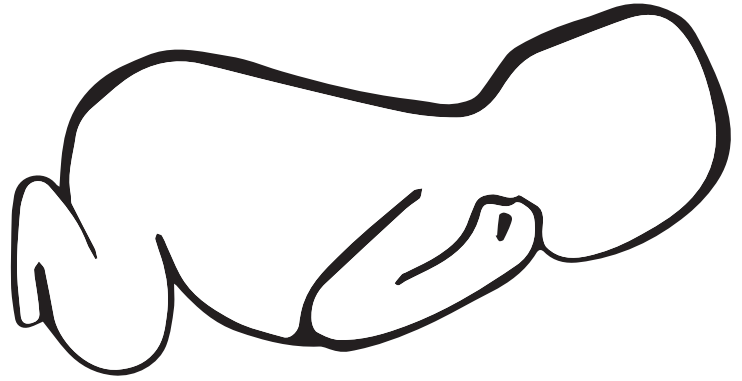
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Becoming Aware of Process

By Sandy Jamrog and Barbara Chutroo



This essay is the second in a series of unpublished archival writings about babies, co-authored in the 1980's. Barbara Chutroo has carefully kept the collection intact since the passing of Sandy Jamrog.

~ Editor

What is process? The *Currents'* theme this year beautifully evokes the concept from the idea of a course or a sequence—from the idea of a journey to a procession—conjuring images of movement from one stage to the next. “Process,” the *Currents'* team writes, “operates on all levels--the cellular, the planetary--telling the travelers they are going somewhere.” Infant development is the essence of process.

But so much of process goes unnoticed. Try to watch a plant grow, the skin heal, a seed swell into life. Even a watched pot of water, they say, never boils. But sometimes, we can lie on the earth and watch the clouds unfold across the sky, feel the so-slow incremental weight of moisture play with the forces of the wind and become one with the vast transformation of the sky above us. In such moments we can feel the process we are witnessing deep within our bodies.

In teaching about infant development, Sandy Jamrog always emphasized process – the tiny internal steps, often overlooked, that accumulate in order for new patterns to appear. She wanted parents to recognize the invisible process of the child's growth. How all of the infant's seemingly random and repetitive activities, unacknowledged and undervalued, in fact enable each milestone's attainment. She saw the developmental milestones not as goals but as landmarks in the incremental organization that unfolds within a child as they discover their body. She hoped that this understanding would enable parents to respect and allow, not rush, the child's growth so that all those invisible steps would have opportunity to take form.

For example, it is easy to think that “walking” is a goal. Of course, babies strive to walk and it is an achievement we expect all babies to attain. But if we must identify a goal with an understanding of process, we might say that the goal is not walking, per se, but the infant's discovery of balance, the strengthening of all the muscles and neurological organization that enable us to stand upright, and the building of a

foundation for all the complex movements that will follow. Also, the child's awareness of and pride in each achievement is a part of the child's emotional process as they come to understand the experiences of attention, problem solving, and learning. Knowing this, a caretaker would refrain from lifting and standing a child starting to walk each time they drop to their haunches or bounce to the ground, because it is the child's repeated rediscovery of their upright stability, by transitioning again and again from squatting to standing, that informs and strengthens the neuromuscular organization which underlies the walking posture and reinforces the child's sense of capability. Learning to walk is a step in the inner organizational development of the many increasingly skillful applications of the body.

Babies' hidden processes often go unnoticed because they are so fundamental to us and we cannot imagine them never having been there; we are so far away from the time of their formulation. These include learning to eat, learning to feel our bodies, learning the most common movement patterns we so take for granted in our adult lives such as turning, standing, lifting our heads.

A baby is fully immersed in the discovery and experience of these processes. For the baby, it is the discovery of the multiple capabilities of her living, pulsing body. Children are blessed with a full and aware immersion in the emergence of their body's myriad life-supporting organizations of nerve and muscle. A baby's attention to this inner organization is, itself, a part of this process. Although we lose memory of this attention over time, I would argue that the degree to which a baby is attentively involved in her own transformative experience is what strengthens the neurological imprint these activities create, so as to build a strong neurological system that will later support her adult capability and resilience.

We all share the experience of process but cannot give it to one another. Process bubbles up from the depths of our own bodies, inherent in life itself, and is nurtured by the life around us. 🐾

The Body under Late-Stage Capitalism

Karin Spitfire, 2020

The heart has abdicated feeling.
I have enough to do, all this beating, all this pumping.
Builds a wall to harden the pericardium.
Feels the shearing less.
Knows it is ultimately useless and easily scaled,
the breakthrough scorching.

In the heart's determined absence,
the digestive track takes up the slack, but can't stomach it.
Bile, bubbling lava, ire, rise along the esophageal
membranes.
What does make it down is hardly digestible,
only present due to the sheer volume of forced feeding.
The small intestine is especially overworked,
separating the pure from the *unpure*, the true from the
untrue,
the useful from the corrupted, too big a job,
so nearly all passes on to the large intestine,
which just wants more water.

The lungs, the lungs are crying,
damp or charred,
ash floating, hacking up bits of themselves,
too many fires burning, too many on the edge of the
last exhale.
Seeking solace on hard granite,
weep into the mother's embrace
even as she suffers.

The nervous system is trigger-happy.
The hand tremors unrelenting.
Good time not to have a gun.

The interstitial swamps,
lowdown fluids between/among
everything,
are in the best shape, not frozen, not making off
with the last energy in the treasury.
Steady, slow, tidal,
still taking cues from the moon
but in need of water.

The feet run.
The hands want to strangle.
The spine contorts under jeopardy.
The endocrine system would just like
the right drugs to fuck its brains out.

The mouth and vocal cords,
more inarticulate than not,
garble, gurgle, sputter, spewing
silent.

The central canal, the core,
aligning with the earth's magma
roaring, roiling
unconcerned with blue, waits
for vents, fissures, some pore, some open vein
to come erupting out
with precision and deadly aim.

But the cells
in their unwavering, egalitarian democracy,
in their trillions, all still work together,
each with its small input, need, job,
praying
in this way to keep the whole alive.

The mind, once tethered by the heart, is disembodied,
wracked in this climate of isolation.
shouting for water.

UNDERCURRENTS + Revisiting “Energy in a Circle.”

By Guest Editor, Eva Maes

In Latin, the past participle of ‘to edit’ is ‘edere,’ which means “to bring forth.” As word Ambassador to our international somatic community, Currents Journal introduces an annually rotating Guest Editor section inspired, facilitated and crafted by BMC teachers and practitioners around the world. Eva Maes, from Antwerp, Belgium, is our first illustrious guide in this endeavor. We greet her and we thank her.

From Currents Journal Committee

I noticed *Currents* for the first time in early 2004: *Currents* Journal was floating around at the sidelines of the gym at Chiemsee’s Fraueninsel, facing the Alps. At this European Body-Mind Centering training, next to the wondrous transmission through explorations, dance, hands-on work, and sharing circles—all bringing breadth and depth to the words contained in our notebooks—*Currents* offered a window into a larger circle of ideas, images, persons, in short—*Currents* offered a glimpse into the vast embedding of BMC’s study and research. This curiosity to encounter this larger circle supported my move to continue the Practitioner modules at Smith College, Northampton, Massachusetts. *Currents’* pages had whispered to me I would find a wider but equally nutritious space while leaving the warmth and comfort of the initial circle.

Throughout these two summers in Massachusetts, and at other ‘seasons’—while engaging for the BMCA conference in Ghent; while assisting, teaching, and further studying; while meeting others—more voice and heart emerged next to the names and words previously met on paper. Always in good company, I further perceived circles’ abilities to sustain, to dissolve, to solidify or to soften their membranes, to recompose themselves.

Body-Mind Centering: learning in/with/through/in spite of/by grace of circles.

For this issue of *Currents*, rooted in the theme of *Process*, I want to offer two different contributions:

Undercurrents as circulatory letter has grown, one paragraph, one voice at a time, throughout Summer and Fall 2020. We thank all contributors. We hope their words and images find resonance within you, as well as our implicit desire to include each of you, while we propelled this letter through different BMC circles across our planet.

In *Revisiting 2008 Currents Contribution by Pat Ethridge: The Evolution of Flow—The Developmental Progression of Energy in a Circle*, we return through drawings to a core Body-Mind Centering *technique* of learning, processing, and progressing through and within the circle—as all the different voices on the next pages speak so much for themselves, glow together ...

Special thanks to Nisha Kewalramani for her clear guidance around the Undercurrents letter; to Pat Ethridge for her archive of circles; and to Kate Tarlow Morgan with Currents Journal Committee, Martha Eddy, Pat Ethridge, and Jane Kornbluh, for opening up their creative orbit to include this guest editor section.

Undercurrents

‘Process is based on relationship.’ I just noticed this quote by Bonnie passing by on Facebook. There are a couple of things I observe: my overall love for quotes. One phrase, a couple of words are enough for my imagination to be set into motion; and there is always enough space above, beneath, and under the sentence to breathe into. By breathing into this quote, I am seeing my own tendency to—still—think of process as an internal, intimate space, often also an isolated space. I would love to move through this letter, this Fall together.

Eva Maes (Antwerp, Belgium)

As I dive deep into the depths of my being, I feel the churning of the Angels and the Demons in my cells. Through my transitional fluid, my karma alchemizes with my destiny.

The phone rings. She hears my voice and knows where I am, in my process. She shares a story she has shared with me before, “Did I ever tell you about the man who descended into hell and he was so kind that even the devil had to eventually kick him out?”

“Damn!” I think to myself, “I guess I am in hell again.”

I put down the phone and Thank the Gods that the space connects us. How can I not be kind with such a Love?

I have choice.

Nisha Kewalramani (New York, USA)

In this moment, I'm very interested not in the words by themselves, especially those who are circulating a lot for a while, and sometimes, as everything is process and so in permanent motion, becomes lots of different things, but I'm mostly attracted and moved by the relationship the words create between me and the environment, inside, outside, in between. Saying, reading, listening, feeling process, brings breathing, sense of touch, attention, love, and listening. It is not a concept but an action. I feel everything is all the time in process as life!

Sara Jaleco (Montpellier, France)

Today, as I was reflecting upon all the meanings of love that BMC embodiment process aroused in my life, I found these plants in my mother's backyard. I have been witnessing from my peripheral vision their lighter green sprouts growing from the inside for one month. All of a sudden, without warning, they just reached upwards, opening their leaves, and both of them looked brand new – *novinhas em folha*, as we say in Brazilian Portuguese, literally: "new as leaves." Moved by the Chilean biologist Humberto Maturana Romesín's notions about the biology of love, I am amazed by the collective process of life and its capacity to create change. Each living being that creates itself as a brand-new becoming process instills its love in us. Today I feel *novinho em folha* in love with all somas in process.

Diego Pizarro (Brasília, Brazil)



In August I read in *The New Yorker* about a book called *THE WELL-GARDENED MIND* which explores the regenerative power of gardening. I sent it to a psychoanalyst friend who was struggling and had found solace in gardening. The writer, Sue Stewart-Smith, is a psychiatrist and psychotherapist whose ideas were shaped by years of reading and conversing about psychoanalytic thinkers with her husband, Tom Stewart-Smith, a well-known landscape designer. In the article he says, "a garden is fundamentally a process—there is change, and sometimes it is dying and sometimes it is hibernating." I am not a gardener myself. I live in a New York City apartment. Our garden is a window sill in the living room crammed with plants that my husband Jacques waters every other day. I spend most of the time in the bedroom. I'm a choreographer without dancers or a dance so instead I roll around, write, and contemplate the nature of dance as creative process—forms emerging and dissolving like a sand mandala. And I look at the beautiful images in Phillip Ball's book *PATTERNS IN NATURE*, which Jacques gave me for my birthday and I read, "fluid flow can become not just a patterned phenomenon but a patterning agent itself: the shapes and forms of the water leave permanent traces. Streams, rivers, and oceans pick up sand, silt, and stones and shift them in the current, and the resulting processes of erosion and deposition rearrange the landscape into patterns that are as pleasing as they are surprising."

Tal Halevi (New York, USA)

This year I lived for the first time in over twenty years with my family of origin since I left home at 17. Mum, Dad, brother, and me in my hometown in Adelaide, Australia. This year I lived with my partner and felt timeless, expansion, comfort, connection, at home with her in California. This year I lived in the country of my ancestors, imagining myself into the fast-flowing waterfalls that populate this place in the ancient Blue Mountains, Australia. It rained heavily the day I arrived. Washing myself, letting go all imprints, coming clean. Alone. Reaching across earth in grief and joy and celebration of these serious complex relationships of the heart.

How far back in time can I go? Can I undo everything under the protection of the trees, the wildflowers, of my long dead Grandmothers in the quiet listening spaces of the plateau?

I first met the word "process" in Amherst. Just like yielding. And many other words. We can say my English was quite poor or at least limited to an everyday and pop-blues-rock vocabulary. The first year of the training at Amherst was like entering a new world, a new language. I've got the words through movement, experience, and mind – just like babies adding vocal forms to phenomena. In some cases it was quite disappointing to find the meanings two months later at home in a dictionary out of original context. The experience was not really covered. How can you describe a feeling like love? It's not even a feeling. A full experience, a lived moment, a state. Yielding was a complex experience with a really short name tag that didn't tell anything about the mystery, dissolving and reforming, sinking into the unknown with a hope to reach the point of return.

Process was pretty different: it was something I haven't got an access to. It was something very hidden, secretful that appeared expected-unexpected, usually suddenly upon my student colleagues. Who's got the initiation started to weep, shake, shiver and moved to the side of with an assistant embracing and the large group regardfully pretending to pass. No explanation, no interpretation but being enlightened after. I was a bit jealous and felt definitely excluded. I knew this situation from gut. At home we never spoke about personal difficulties, just held the space for each other to get through. Survive and go on. Support meant allowing to hide, trusting that it's enough.

The dictionary then was again very profound: *flow*. In my language process is etymologically close to flow. Same as the words *river* and *continue*. Folyik, folyó, folytatódik, folyamát. Where is the identification with *process*? This question I pass and invite another word to meditate on: context.

Ferenc Kálmán (Budapest, Hungary)



"When you look behind you, you see the future in your footprints"

Songlines: The Power and Promise
Margo Neale and Lynne Kelly

Suze Smith (Katoomba, Blue Mountains, Australia)

Laid over the floor, tired, exhausted, feeling no inner space. Laid over the earth trying to focus into cerebrospinal fluid flow. Letting my external breathing get calmed, epigastrium space wakes up itself, wakes up something new. Waves, pulse, it seems CFS emerges from there.

A voice manifest in a persistent/constant repetition (*I want to be seen*). Meanwhile, my middle spine giving birth to waves movements. A strong vibration into my left temporal lobe reveals. CSF hitting against temporal bone (*Is here where words grow?*). My temporal lobe tissues vibrating, squirming, experiencing spastic movements (*I wanna be seen as I am*). Deep, long, and dense wave baths suddenly all my spine, cranium, coccyx, feet. Wave beyond me. I feel fear about this clarity, this deepness and density of the fluid movement. (*Voice 1 - Go away from here. Voice 2 - Deep with no fear into this sensing*). My back body opens suddenly, a flow ascending through posterior body, surrounding my cranium and descending through anterior body. (*What is this? Where am I?* A recovery of memory emerges: amniotic fluid memory overturning into yolk sac fluid. A circular flow, a constant flow surrounding me (*I want to be seen as I am all of me*). Floor has disappeared, my back has disappeared, bones have disappeared, organs sucked up by fluids, pushed down by fluids. My skin membrane blurred, fused with space. Space becomes a fluid environment. Like a breakdown into my nervous system control, medulla begins to fold and unfold, guided by this surrounding and circular flow that embraces me. Medulla bending into a delicious, spontaneous movement, medulla as a snake floating into an unknown space. It is not fluid, it is not space. Sparkling arms without bones. Marrow without bones (*I want to be seen as I am all of me*).

How to come back into that blank space of my own origin?

How to express a pre- and non-verbal experience?



Mónica Ezquerro (Ponferrada, Spain)

Right before sunset on a relaxed Sunday afternoon on the Southern California coast, I happened upon this parade, this festival, this procession. The totem pole had been erected. The circles drawn, stones placed to mark the boundary, already disappearing into sand, and all along the long lines of the beach, of the waves, of the horizon, men—young, middle, and old—were moving with purpose and focus, while one rested in the sand, his shirt over his eyes, perpendicular to the action, in perfect repose. Yin and yang in perpetual motion and harmony, coming and going, doing and undoing, resting and moving. Where to start? Where to stop?



Eberly Barnes (Del Mar, USA)

Process

an image is appearing in my head - different layers of
sand, stone, soil - space in between them to let the
fluid pass and sink towards a deeper ground - a deep
frequently flowing stream - light and dense at the
same time - very silent and powerful
Where is that stream coming from?
Where is it going to?

It feels like a deep connection -
it is not my personal one

maybe a collective awareness?

It is wise
it's infinite

Process - a movement of unfolding, (re-) connection,
a creation of something that was not there before or
that I did not have access to - new options

Sometimes it is hard work - you wanna gain some-
thing, you are hardly trying to focus on a special

outcome - emotions of desperation that it wouldn't
happen -

than you let go and out of a sudden you wake up and
realize the shift has happened - in the depth -

silently - a different flavor has taken place in your life

Space of resonance, an echo, holding hands, love ... are
building the frame to sink into the stream and give
orientation

being embedded into something - trust, continuity -
touch and being touched

it is keeping us alive

Thanks to my dear friend Eva for generously offering
and inviting all of us into this space to unfold

Mouna El-Hosri (Berlin, Germany)

Quand le processus nous emmène vers un état "d'être" alors
je relâche le processus de faire. Être profondément en relation
est un processus de toute une vie que j'aime perdre et retrou-
ver au fil de mon quotidien. Toute ma gratitude à la vie de
pouvoir goûter encore et encore ce processus avec les autres.
L'amour so tient le processus et le processus soutient l'action.

El proceso me lleva a un lugar desconocido. Un punto de
encuentro conmigo misma, con el ser amado, con la tierra
querida. El proceso me hace vacilar y caer de mis certidum-
bres, de mis hábitos. El proceso de ser unida a la comunidad
me lleva a sobrepasar mis miedos y a integrar que somos más
fuertes unidos que desunidos.

Tamara Milla Vigo (Paris, France - Lima, Perú)

Space to unfold ...

2006, our last BMC practitioner course in Northampton.

It was almost the end of our training, we happened to raise
a little friend in Elaine's planter pot in our shared bathroom
of the yellow dorm of Smith College. She vigorously ate
leaves and we witnessed her process day by day ... and one
day, she ate up all the leaves and made a cocoon.

We were so busy for everyday training from morning to
evening and prepared our final projects before graduation.
My project was the Heart, a journey of the heart cell from the
top of the head to the place of destination. I visited Smith li-
brary and watched the video of the development of the heart
again and again like meditation. Then I found an illustration
which showed a map of a stem cell divided into future orga-
nization. For the stem cell, it has to be "in the right place, in
the right timing in a space" in order to be a heart and rela-
tionship with other cells determines and informs you where
to go and what will be.

That cocoon was there. And after a week, she suddenly dis-
appeared around the day of the final presentation. Someone
said that a beautiful butterfly was flying around the planter
and left our bathroom. It was the day of transformation and
metamorphosis for all of us.

"Green caterpillar makes cocoon and dissolves (melts) itself
before becoming a butterfly"

How can we remember ourselves, even after dissolving
ourselves? It is like BMC training for me ... diving into un-
known sea of fluid of life, trusting myself and yielding into
the nature of my body. 2020 was the year we all have been
in cocoon and felt life is limited, isolated from the world. If
we are in transition, how can we trust ourselves, feel the pres-
ence of others, and dive into a fluid space of life? When we
come out of the cocoon, how do we expect ourselves and the
world would be?

Eva, I will back to this circle to you with gratitude.

Minako Yoshida (Tokyo, Japan)

**Thank you to Contributors who shared their insights in
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Pizarro, Tal Halevi, Ferenc Kálmán, Suze Smith, Mónica
Ezquerro, Eberly Barnes, Mouna El-Hosri, Tamara Milla
Vigo, Minako Yoshida. 🐛**

The Evolution of Flow:

The Developmental Progression of Energy in a Circle

Revisiting 2008 *Currents* Contribution by Pat Ethridge

Eva: Can you remember, Pat, why you decided to contribute these beautiful images, as well as the accompanying sentences to *Currents* in 2008? I have just started 'Transmitting the Body'¹, a project in which I look through concrete practices in order to discover a surrounding field. For Body-Mind Centering I chose to focus through the lens of 'Questions and Answers,' as a recurrent and core part of the BMC curriculum. Yet, it also remains a mysterious layer ... what happens in the circles? Your drawings resonate with this personal interest, but—of course—also strongly with the theme of 'process.'

Pat: I have always been interested in energy. The first summer I was studying with Bonnie, somebody asked her what was different about her way of seeing from other people who were doing bodywork. She answered that what was different for her was that most people would look at people moving in a room and they would see people doing their movements, but what she saw was the space between them and what was going on in between. That caught my attention, and I realized she was talking about not just space but energy, and that drew me even more into Body-Mind Centering. She also said that it was in the movement and in the falling off balance that people would learn how to grow or change. Just looking at a structure: that is static in a way, even if it is moving. It is when you fall off balance and have to figure out how to recover that that you have to learn to change and grow. I thought these were two interesting principles. At any rate, I was observing the changes in group circles, especially in BMC with the "community meetings" that sometimes became quite rancorous or quite profound. I saw the group energy change direction, reach across, dive, expand, contract, rise like yeast ... all sorts of changes. Most of these types of changes were consis-

tent with each group, with some variations, so I concluded that these were characteristic of group dynamics. When I came to explore how to depict this, I found myself looking at topology. I didn't exactly follow those dictates, but I found it helpful. Since mathematics, in some views, underlies the structure of the universe, I thought it an interesting intersection with my perceptions. I drew the images of the people from my memory of the circles -- that is, the behavior of the people in them.

Eva: The circles can also be a challenging place. With an expanding and diverse community: in which places do you locate this 'developmental progression of energy in a circle'? Where is our collectively shared place of feeling 'yeast' rising in the center?

Pat: There are other dynamics that could have been depicted. I tried to keep it somewhat contained. We were a group of 110 people (1989). Because the circle was so big, it could hold what certain issues present, and yet for some of the people in the group it was very raw and brutal. Yet, if some persons would have tried to bring in their issues in a smaller group, it would not have worked at all. And some people have told me that they felt that their issues were too small to bring forward. Only in smaller groups could they bring them forward. There were all these dynamics going on.

Eva: And also, when moving online, where do you feel the circle(s) resides, appears? Where do we come together, in a circle, in a Zoom meeting?

Pat: It's a challenge. In a circle you can hold hands, you can feel the energy go around.

1

For this 2020-2022 research project at COPRoREAL group Royal Conservatory Antwerp, we consider specific practices (among others: Question and Answers in BMC, blind learning by Lisa Nelson) as soluble containers that allow us to look at communication processes underneath dance. I gratefully find resources and inspiration in Ben Spatz's articulations on the differences and interweaving between *practice* and *technique* in his work *What a Body can do: Technique as Knowledge, Practice as Research* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2015). I am interested to see how these articulations can further ground the enormously rich theme of transmission and legacy in the movement arts.

The Circle starts



The center point converges as everyone takes hands

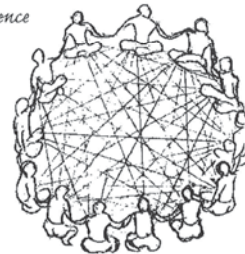


The Circle rotates clockwise

Each Person Speaks - expresses unique energy - becomes a center point - a focus of attention.



After all speak, all are now connected by articulated presence

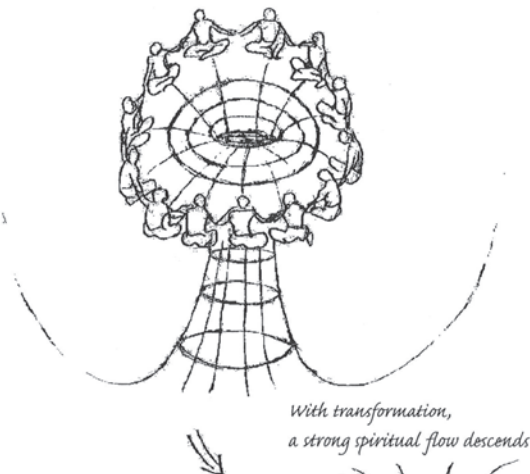


After activities, the Circle reforms-

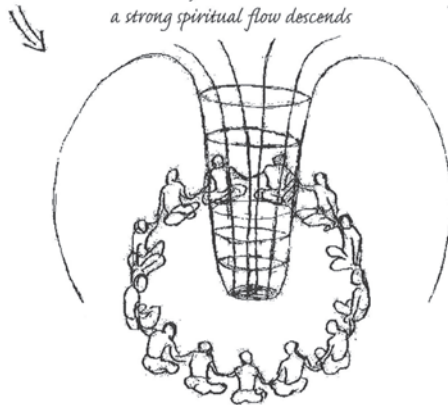


The stimulation of learning a 'yeast' rising in the center

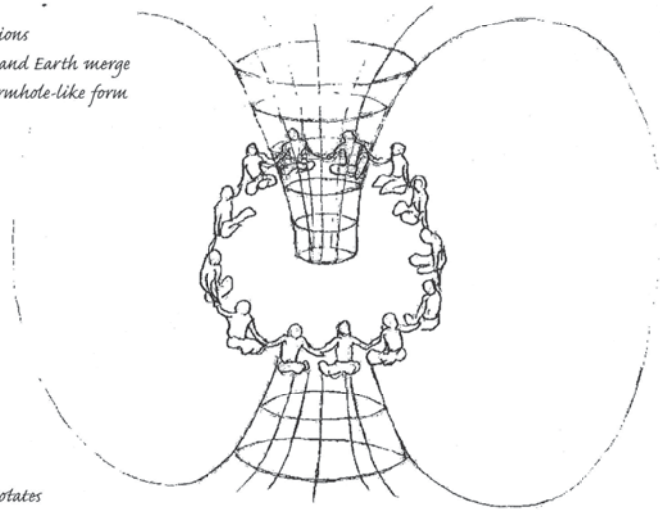
*With emotional exploration, new depth appears—
yet all are secure in the Circle*



*With transformation,
a strong spiritual flow descends*



*Integrations
Heaven and Earth merge
in a wormhole-like form*



*In closing,
the Circle rotates
counter-clockwise*



*The Circle is
connectedness, convergence and continuity*

Closing Circle

I want to close my contributions with a quote from Ben Spatz, nonbinary researcher and theorist of embodied practice and Senior Lecturer in Drama, Theatre and Performance at the University of Huddersfield~

At the risk of oversimplifying: There is no avoiding the need for us all to become indigenous. (...). The question is how a lost indigeneity—a lost sense of justice as inextricable from the earth—can be found and what that would mean. Today, everybody can hear the screaming of the earth. Indigeneity is the question of who listens (...). What we need is a new, or perhaps a very old, or perhaps just a different understanding of the human as a way of living that does not destroy itself.²

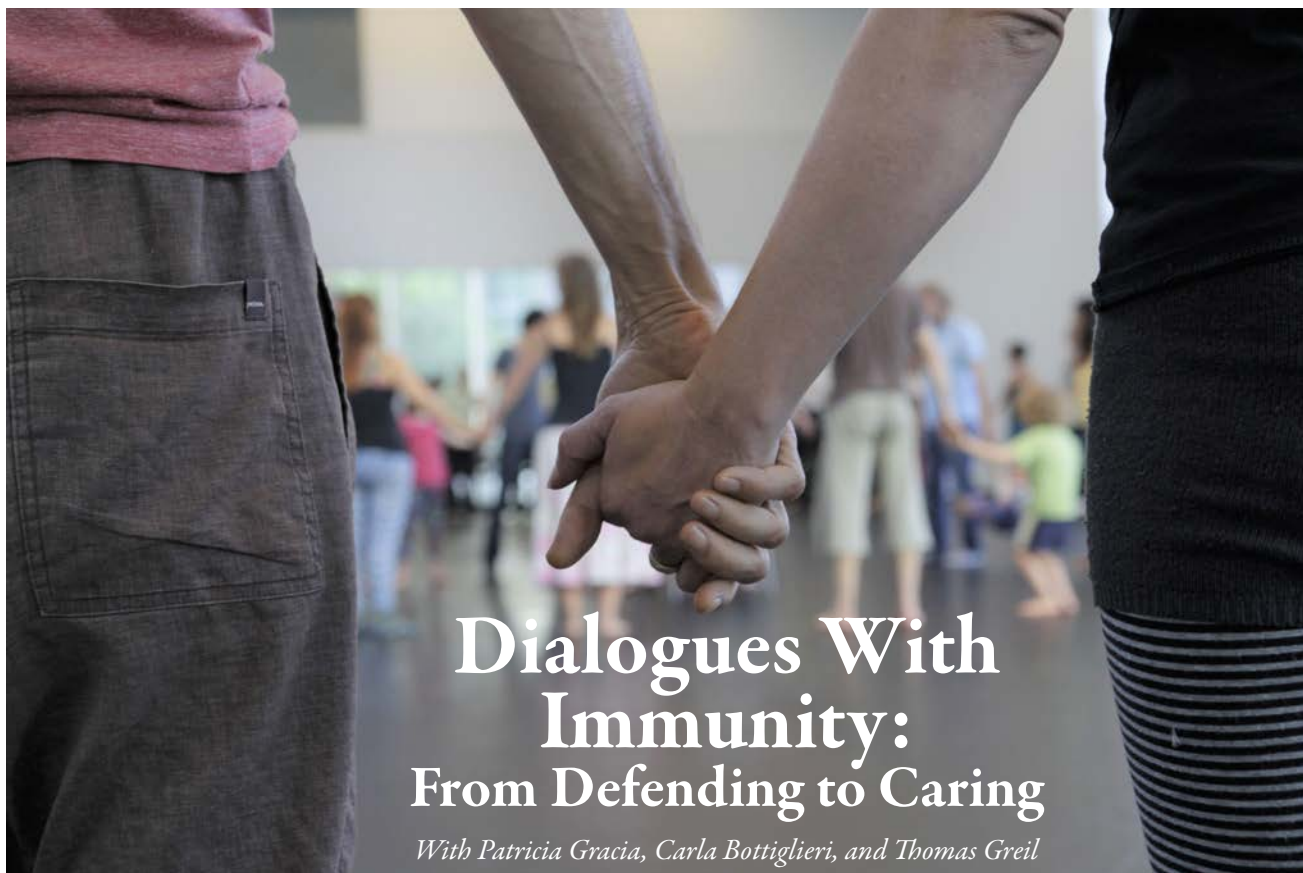
and circle it towards a quote from Tiokasin Ghosthorse, member of the Cheyenne River Lakota Nation of South Dakota and founder of First Voices Indigenous Radio ~

...The Earth does not lie, and if the earth does not lie, then in our language, which comes from the Earth, we too need to develop that integrity with the Earth. We are always adapting to the Earth. We don't change the Earth to suit our needs, we are always adapting to the Earth. We listen to the Earth. We go to nature to see and hear how mother Earth listens to us—if that makes sense. We go to see and hear how mother Earth listens to us, and therefore we know the communication involvement as a human species to understand that integrity I am talking about.³

Can we, as 2021 finds its course, interconnect our circles again at a deep physical level and truly *share* the richness of our learning in/with/through/in spite of/by grace circles, while collectively listen to the Earth? Thus, listening to Earth and listening to our inner voices as deep anchors for these expanding circles. 🌱

2 Ben Spatz is author of three books: *What a Body Can Do* (Routledge 2015), *Blue Sky Body* (Routledge 2020, see quote, p xv) and *Making a Laboratory* (Punctum Books 2020). They are also editor of the videographic *Journal of Embodied Research*, co-convenor of the international Embodied Research Working Group, and Senior Lecturer in Drama, Theatre and Performance at University of Huddersfield. More information: www.urbanresearchtheater.com

3 Tiokasin Ghosthorse is an international speaker on Peace, Indigenous and Mother Earth perspective. A survivor of the "Reign of Terror" from 1972 to 1976 on the Pine Ridge, Cheyenne River. With his long history of Indigenous activism and advocacy, Ghosthorse is guest faculty member at Yale University's School of Divinity, Ecology, and Forestry focusing on the cosmology, diversity, and perspectives on the relational/egalitarian vs. rational/hierarchal thinking processes of Western society. <https://firstvoicesindigenousradio.org/>



Dialogues With Immunity: From Defending to Caring

With Patricia Gracia, Carla Bottiglieri, and Thomas Greil

Dialogues with Immunity is a space for collective thinking, learning, and unlearning, supported by the soil of somatic practice, in the times of the Covid-19. An invitation to reach, connect, and sustain community-making with collective enquiring. The conversations were emerging in the spring 2020, in the midst of the Covid-19 lockdown, where our most preferred modes of inquiry and learning in BMC—touching, moving, and sharing in proximity with others—had been restricted.

The information delivered by the mainstream media stresses a narrative based on fear: defending and attacking as a way to overcome the so-called pandemic. We were asking ourselves if there are other ways of relating to this particular situation. How can we learn and experience ourselves in relationship to others, articulating other narratives?

We started a series of online conversations around the Immune System from a somatic multilayered perspective: using the restrictions of the lockdown to open up to a collective thinking, sharing our views, and naming and connecting to the work of people who explore outside the box.

Patricia The field of immunology has been growing and evolving greatly with the technological improvements of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st. Immunology, a field in itself emancipated from microbiology, has been challenged in its dominant narratives from intersecting fields like philosophy, sociology, anthropology, and art. My first question is, What do we talk about when we talk about the immune system? How can we even start to define immunity?

Thomas What comes to my mind is, “why do we call it a system?” The so-called immune system is not a congruent separate system, it is a mental construct which assembles many metabolic functions, which are spread throughout the body. There are certain cells, immune cells, certain organs, lymph, etc., but in fact, it concerns the whole organism—basically what is underneath the nervous system. The living organism

needs to find a way to adapt to what is going on around itself. Rather than thinking of the immune system as defending the body from something invading us, which is the current narrative, we could imagine how we collaborate with what is out there ... the frontiers between in and out are maybe not so sharp. So, to use the word *system* is maybe not so appropriate; it is more about specific functions, which keep the body in balance with the ecosystem, inside and outside.

Patricia To be defensive is understood as an overreaction to the environment based on fear. In BMC, we practice listening with an open heart, regulating our tone, so we can be in adaptive dialogue with the environment. But to be defensive is different from defending oneself, we can also understand defending as protecting at a physiological level, we have to maintain our homeostasis. How do we come to good terms with the process

and act of defending? Can we understand defending as simply protecting ourselves from harm or danger? How do we defend and when? Is defending conscious or unconscious? What body systems do I defend with? How do we defend without creating unnecessary tension? Can we defend without overreacting or oversizing the aspect to which we might want to defend from? If defending is one of the immune functions, how can we re-elaborate or re-think about it?

Thomas I think it is not about throwing out the idea of defense completely, more how we look at it and how we can expand the ideas about immune functions. Also, to differentiate between what belongs to the nervous system and what belongs to immune functions, because a lot of rhetoric or narrative around immune functions is related to fear. Fear and defense are very much related, but these are more functions of the nervous system. Fear comes from a previous experience. We want to protect ourselves to prevent something happening in the future. But immune functions don't work like that. The cells don't think, "oh my god, I have to be careful." There is not this retraction, which comes with fear, on the cellular level. There is a meeting. The cells are processing information. When the virus is coming along, the virus needs to be processed, but the immune response is not about pushing away. This is a function of the nervous system. It is helpful to deal with our fears. Fear is something we recreate rather than what is the reality of cellular and immune functioning.

Carla My first, groping inquiries in this vast subject of immunity started more than ten years ago, when I was doing a field research in the frame of a PhD – never finished since – around the introduction of somatic practices as complementary resources for improving the quality of life of people affected by chronic viral illnesses such as HIV/AIDS. The project aimed at bringing together several associations of patients and experimenting with practices of body awareness and somatic learning in order to promote empowerment and self-care while dealing with such invasive treatments as the antiretroviral therapies. Interestingly enough, beside the effects of better management of the illness, the most striking and recurring issue evoked by the participants was the need to recover a sense of community. I learned a lot from my companions of research, to whom I was proposing both individual and collective sessions based on BMC and other movement awareness practices: these collective laboratories were shelters that allowed, even temporarily, the experience of touch, physical contact, resonance, attunement, response, for people who often were deprived of that. This experience was completely contradicting the whole representation of "health" as an individual, successful performance, coming from the ability to defend oneself from potential challenges and enemies—with its reverse, vulnerability, carrying along an implicit stigmatization or guilt. It was, rather, the potential of responsiveness and response/ability that came in the foreground, more adequate than fear and defense.

Patricia I love that you bring already the importance of community in regard to immunity. I think about bonding as

the other side of defending, accepting, and rejecting, complementary aspects needed for what Donna Haraway calls "making kin:" maintaining enduring relatedness, that carries consequences, between humans and nonhumans. Don't we need both "defending" and "bonding" for the development of healthy responsible communities? The ability for community-making is one of the aspects of the immune functions that inspires me most. Immune functions show cells' ability for migrating, exchanging information (through fluid and membrane to membrane), learning and remembering, coordinating cycles of proliferation and death, discriminating "harmful" from "helpful" and "bonding" with a diversity of other nonhuman organisms in evolving relatedness. We work with cellular consciousness and learning in BMC and it seems to me that this ability for self-organization, for diverse community-making, this cellular awareness and intelligence beneath the nervous system is present as its best in what we call the immune functions. The level of communication and cooperation that it takes to unfold the process we call immunity is amazing! Why don't we talk about that instead?!

Thomas A common perception about immune functions is that it is about getting sick or not. It goes along with the idea of defense. Even the word "immune" is evoking that. When we say, I am immune, what does it actually mean? It means not to be affected by something or somebody. To close oneself off, to shield oneself, to be protected against something. An attack, an invasion, a threat ... It is always about this limit. But, immune functions include much more. There is a very complex organization of resonance, of being in dialogue with the environment. One aspect of that is the microbiome. Microorganisms living on us. Not so much in us, but inside our digestive system, the lungs, and on our skin. Trillions. Estimates go from a ratio of 1:1 to 1:10. 1-10 times more than human cells. And, this inner ecosystem is extending beyond us, the tools we use, the table at which we eat, the people we meet. There is an invisible connection, a constant exchange happening. It is funny to think about the fact that isolation and confinement should be the solution for the pandemic. Maybe it is exactly the opposite. We are cutting ourselves off from a great potential in thinking that the body is like a castle, the thicker the walls the better the defense.

Patricia The idea of "self" and "other" is constantly promoted through this understanding of immune system. If we look at the level of microbiota we are forced to reconstruct the notion of self and other: we cannot function without the multiplicity we are. At the same time, this self-and-other supports a pattern of polarization and confrontation, seeing the other always as the problem; we are struggling with a global pandemic not because public health is privatized and precarious. Our actions upon the earth, the ecosystems and all living forms, have nothing to do with it either! Is the virus that is attacking us, we are helpless victims ... Process ??

Carla The fiction of the biological body as something possessing anatomic borders, harmonious balance characterized by communication between its parts, division of labor for the benefit of the whole, and a system of hierarchical dominance and control, is the projection of social notions (mostly Western ideas) of human individuality into biology. It has been sufficiently recognized that epidemics themselves reflect the destruction of ecosystems. The conception of the individual as an independent agent and basic unit of society comes together with the madness of our civilization, the complete un-responsibility towards the intricacy of our interwoven lives on earth. The environment is not such a separate and abstract natural “thing,” but it is the symbiotic assemblage of interdependent lives, organized according to the singularity of places and ecosystems. The theory of symbiosis challenges the definition of the individual organism, and it invites to deconstruct the idea of separated agency and autonomy. Measures of isolation and separation are finally consistent with the causes of pandemics: a “cure” that is a retaliation, for our conception of a separated life.

Thomas This is very congruent with what is needed for the version of capitalism we are living right now, that every person becomes its own agent for producing its own profit. There are no longer communities, there is the singular person which needs to manage its own workforce. We are asked to adapt much faster than still in the 70’s, the speed of life, the vision or the fiction of the body which comes with it ... the icon of the immune system has become the goddess of our times, of capitalism or our health system.

The way we use the word immune in the sense of defense is not surprising, if you look at the origin of the word immune. For centuries it was used only politically, in the sense of: A member of the parliament cannot be prosecuted unless his/her immunity is lifted. When microbes were identified as pathogens at the end of the 19th century, when Pasteur and Koch were some of the main scientists, the word immune was transferred to humans who need to be defended from those pathogens. The idea that pathogens cause diseases was born. This is still the main idea about health. Instead of thinking, what are the imbalances in the body which might accumulate and lead to a disease? This would be more like the eastern view of the body. If an imbalance exists for many years, you might end up with a problem with an organ or your joints. You look at, rather, how you can bring balance and well-being than how to take away a problem. It is a very different approach.

Patricia As I think of health as a way to being in balance, what comes to my mind is the amount of adaptation we undertake in our modern lives. The mobility we have gained in the past century has become hypermobility ... a phenomenon that enables our participation in capitalism and that also comes with physiological, psychological, and emotional costs for individuals and societies and for extenuation and contamination of many ecosystems. We are asking ourselves to constantly adapt to new environments,

often without giving ourselves the opportunity to bond in significant ways with hosting communities. Hypermobility is a sign of identity in our western societies. How do we participate responsibly in this mobility, by less productive and more reproductive means?

Carla And since the relationship with environments becomes so neutral and “aseptic,” it doesn’t allow us to cultivate attention and bonding with the places we live in. Embodiment, if we are to keep this term for our somatic practices, cannot be taken apart from embeddedness in a world of many entangled forms of life.

Thomas How to listen and be in communication instead of moving away from contact. Maybe, instead of making yourself immune, it is about becoming less immune. We are defensive at times, we maintain strong boundaries not to be affected. Looking for the cause outside of us: the virus, the economy, blaming others. “I am immune, I make myself immune of everything.” An example for that is the rhetoric of “having a strong immune system,” as if the more defensive we get, the healthier we are. For caring for ourselves and others we need to be less immune, we need to allow an exchange, a resonance. How care is seen right now, not allowing people to visit old people, all this isolation. Even the fact of putting people in nursing homes where they are isolated.

Carla How do we practice resonance? How do we respond to, and take care of, other lives? I wonder if the etymology of *munus* could be traced back to “care.” Care as the root of community, and taking care as a function that circulates among its different members, which is not bound to specific individuals. When there is a severe illness you understand how much it overwhelms and disrupts the limits of the individual experience and is always a crying out for a community to hold together what cannot be borne by a singular life. The same is true for the function of taking care, which cannot be offloaded on the shoulders of an individual alone, be it a family member or a professional caregiver.

Thomas The sad thing is that we gave up the responsibility for our own health and well-being to institutions. The collapse of the health system is also because we gave the function of care to doctors, nurses, and caretakers in the nursing homes. This creates separation and monocultures. When you grow wheat on a field in monoculture, it is much more susceptible to being infected by a virus or a parasite. It’s a similar thing, if you put people in a nursing home and the virus enters, it spreads very fast.

Carla That’s also a consequence both of the capitalistic division of labor, with all the segmentation of specialties and professions, and the objectification of the body in the medical field. Care work is made invisible and downgraded, and yet we have a considerable tradition of feminist activism and theoretical work that has been fighting for the recognition of the reproductive labor.

Patricia The importance of recognizing the value of repro-

ductive labor and social practices: care and bonding as the means for entangling ourselves with others in sustainable ways of living and dying ... I feel the vast soil of feminist ideas permeating this conversation with examples of how feminist philosophies have challenged and help rethink scientific theories about immune functions ... from caring to defending! I am wondering what do we learn from all of this? How is the ability to learn and create memory related to immune functions? How do we acquire new skills in a constantly changing environment?

Thomas I got very curious about these questions. Right after the two months of lockdown in Italy, after very limited possibilities to go out, not even for running or a little walk, I was asking myself what people had learnt from this time of confinement. I had the impression that people wanted to go back to normal as if nothing had happened, just go back to how it was before. I was thinking, "They learned nothing!" We just go back to the same system, the same way of living. But then, on another level, people went through a profound experience, something which affected them deeply. Maybe it is not so much conscious, they want to have their lives back, but maybe on a deeper level something has changed.

Patricia I'm struck by this question of "going back to normality," the life we want back. What is it we want back? In a way I feel that in going back, we avoid the learning, we are almost not taking the experience in, is it a way of denying? It is funny that we speak of going back to normality, instead of moving into a new reality? What are we learning and how do we take it in? How can we fully acknowledge the experience so we can be more resourceful and adaptive to the world we co-create and live in? I was thinking about Donna Haraway's way of thinking about the Terrestrial and her question: How do we go back to a living that is deeply terrestrial? She mentions the importance of rescuing the memory of who we truly really are: we are animals that long for belonging.

These days during the quarantine we have witnessed nature going back to healing and recuperating the moment we step back a little from predating the environment. One thing I fear is that this memory will be lost. The life we go back to does not hold this memory of our intimate relationship with the environment, with others around us. So in one way, there is a celebration for a glimpse into more terrestrial possibilities for living and at the same time, we cannot hold this memory strongly enough to make the changes we need to do. As we go back into predator mode in terms of consumerism and interaction with the environment, how do we stay in contact with these memories so we go back to a terrestrial way of being that is caring for others?

Carla For me, and perhaps for many others that have not been directly concerned by the fatal effects of the virus, the main, unsettling learning relates to the so-called "social distancing," and there would be a lot to unpack from the meaning of that. We evoked distancing as being the paradoxical retaliation for the violation of another kind of "distance," which is basically the respect toward other human and non-human lives. I read

a poignant text of a poet and architect, Robert Kocik, who writes: "As we keep our distance from each other, we see that the outbreak was always a crying out for respect of space and respect for interwoven life-cycle tempos ... for all kingdoms." We always think that distance happens in a void that must be filled – but, actually, to hold distance is to acknowledge space as teeming with multiple entities and events, visible and invisible. I find that this is overlooked, to perceive what this "distance" is and how to become more aware – perceptually, affectively—of the all in-betweenness among us.

Thomas It is interesting that you bring the notion of space. I find there is an interesting relationship between space and learning. It is necessary for learning to open a new space. If children are asked to repeat something, to obey or to follow some instructions without opening that space, there is no creativity. First of all, we need to open that space in ourselves, which allows us to listen to what is happening inside of us, connecting to something deeper, maybe something we might not perceive right away. People say, they want to go back to normal. Does this crisis give us the chance to connect on a deeper level? To ourselves and to the living world around us and to bring maybe more respect for ourselves and others? Social distance is also a question of respect and acknowledgment of the living matrix underneath all that.

Patricia As you were talking about space, I was sensing into the fluid matrix in which cellular communication takes place, we say is the place in which Humoral Immunity takes place ... And there is innate immunity happening cell to cell, in touching proximity ... I was thinking that we are more in tune with the cell-to-cell type of relationship and that we make kin with those we can directly touch and be in relationship with. Maybe we are not so aware that we are always in relationship with all the other beings through the fullness of space, the same way our cells are in touch through the fluid matrix. Holding communication through fluid. How do we feel and acknowledge that we are all in contact through this space, dense of events? If we lose this sense of being in contact we start losing our sense of responsibility ,, so we are holding detached memories of ourselves in the world, instead of memories of belonging systemically ... we cannot feel part of if we think of ourselves as detached individuals ... we cannot understand that whatever happens in one side of the world is touching us and is happening to all of us. As deforestation is happening in so many parts of the world, ancient ways of social organization and sustainable living are going extinct. Important memory cells, in our environmental tissue, holding ancient memories for terrestrial ways of living and dying are going extinct, we continue to kill them. Holding a metaphor of the physiological micro, this is a severe form of autoimmune response.

Carla I was thinking—resonating with what you are telling—about these living archives and other ways of living in the world that many indigenous communities still hold ... I think especially of the Yanomami in the Amazonian Brazil. How can we really learn from them, especially in regard to

memory? This is exactly the incredible relationship that they cultivate with the “past.” I feel that we mistake, well, let’s say our modernity, as imprecise as this term is, the meaning of past, because we are stubbornly convinced that life is about creating novelty, and we are its agents. What if, instead, life creates by unraveling the past? I’m reading a book written by a leader of the Yanomami, the shaman Davi Kopenawa, together with a French anthropologist, Bruce Albert, who lived with them for about thirty years. The title in English is *The Falling Sky: Words of a Yanomami Shaman*.

I’m struck by what I perceive as continuous, never-ending dialogue that the Yanomami entertain with all the living and non-living elements composing their environment. Ancestry here is a keyword, the memory of ancestors is kept alive. They become spirits, called *Xhapiiri*, which include not only humans but also animals, plants. Ancestry is transversal, cross-specific, and strongly implicated in the places they inhabit. All kingdoms are interrelated. The whole life of communities evolves and revolves around these knowledges that are transmitted from generation to generation. It is beyond immune or commune, it is exactly the space for letting circulate this whispering information, this precious whisper of life as information that runs through generations in different forms.

Thomas How far have we moved away from connecting to a deeper matrix? How far have we gone with our technologically-based life? One thing striking me these days is how we in the western medical and scientific paradigm are categorizing or cutting the body in systems. It is useful to some degree. For example, to differentiate what memories are related to the nervous system and what are related to immune functions. When you hear that some people after confinement don’t want to go out anymore, even if they could. After two months at home they are afraid to go out. For me this clearly is a memory created in the nervous system, the fear to go out. On the level of immune functions there is no fear. The immune cells are not afraid of the virus. They process the virus. Even if the virus is quite strong, coming from a far territory which we are not familiar with, our immune cells can still process the virus. We cannot process the virus because we are afraid of it, not out of a survival response, but because there is a memory somewhere deep in our cellular organization, there is a memory which can match the virus. Where does this memory come from? It is not something which is acquired in this lifetime. It’s a collective memory of diversity and cohabitation on this planet. Maybe it goes all the way back to bacteria before there was anything we call an animal or a plant. This way of recognition and symbiosis, connecting with and processing other life forms. And that is not to be confused with fear or anger which is created through a memory in our nervous system created in our lifetime from before birth to the moment we die. We don’t want to replay that constantly. We learn and unlearn. It is another kind of memory. It is based on experiences we had in the past, which makes us react in a certain way.

Patricia I feel this response of fear is linked to experiencing ourselves as detached from others. I resonate with this idea Carla brought: that all kingdoms are interrelated ... we should urgently recover this memory so we don’t act upon previous experiences of detachment. I feel we are not experiencing each other as a resource for overcoming the struggle. How can we struggle together offering mutual support? How can we open ourselves to the multi-levels of existence and co-dependency?

Thomas It comes back to the question, what do we consider as learning, how do we view learning? There are different educational models for that, models based more on creativity, like Montessori or Waldorf, giving space to another way of living and expressing. The vision of BMC is that the nervous system is only one aspect of learning. In the words of Bonnie Bainbridge Cohen:

“Traditionally, in our culture, learning is considered to be a function of the nervous system. A recording system and therefore the last system to ‘know.’ It records and stores patterns of movement and behavior and, once stored, it can retrieve them. Through habit, memory and projection ... For new experience to be obtained, release of the nervous system control is necessary so ... new cellular experience can come into being. By cellular experience, I mean initiation and awareness directed locally by the cells. This dialogue between present cellular and past nervous system experience is, for me, learning.”

If the idea is to learn something new, then we need to let go of the holding of the nervous system. That is what we are seeing a lot of right now—the grasping on to something, which is a survival response, holding on to something we don’t want to let go. It is not material things, but beliefs and a certain way of thinking. How can we open another space for learning? How can we be open to new information coming from the cells? Which is not just the one cell talking but the cellular organization of the living body supporting our learning in this moment. Instead of reproducing what we have learned already, last week, or a month ago ... we have the chance of doing something different ... we don’t want to reproduce what we learned all the time, we need different possibilities and to find them we need to let go of the holding of the nervous system.

Carla Learning is linked to the ability of forming new habits, but habits are not only what we call actions, thought or behavior. Here I think of some beautiful pages of *Difference and Repetition* (1968), by the French philosopher Gilles Deleuze, where he contends that in essence habit is contraction and as such it doesn’t concern only our sensorimotor dimension, but also the processes that organically compose us: the “primary sensibility that we are.” There is this incredible passage: “We are made of contracted water, earth, light and air—not merely prior to the recognition or representation of these, but prior to their being sensed ...” Deleuze calls it “contemplation” at this pre-cognitive and pre-perceptual level, and he continues: “A soul must be attributed to the heart, to the muscles, nerves and cells, but a contemplative soul whose en-

tire function is to contract a habit.” (DR, p. 95)

Thomas Beautiful. What resonates for me is not to interfere with that living contemplation. Our nervous system always keeps an antenna to the outside to track what is happening out there. You see this function of adaptation to a basically hostile environment in all species. Even cells, who don't have a nervous system, need to project themselves to the outside to check how safe they are, if there is food or somebody I want to connect with, to exchange, to mate. Our nervous system has evolved to a very dominant system, to the point that it is interfering with immune functions. It is disturbing the living matrix, it is disturbing the cellular functioning underneath.

As our Brazilian friend Sueli Rolnik says, “it is important to say life matters, but even more to connect with life, to connect with the living organism.” Our society has accelerated, especially in the last 40 years, so much around fear and protection. We are living in a time of narcissism and individualism that really cuts the connection with life. This way of living pushes us to relate through production instead of responding to the felt sense of what is present. We are more occupied with what threatens life than with the biological forces keeping us alive.

The system is constantly telling us that we need others to stay safe: we need doctors, we need nurses ... we cannot perceive ourselves as capable of resolving situations. For a simple cold we turn to professionals, for essential care. We have lost our capacity for self-care.

Because our nervous system gets over-stimulated all the time, there is less and less space for connecting with the living, and to connect with this kind of memory the Yanomami are cultivating, this spreading like a rhizome, like mycelium, which allows plants to communicate with each other ...

Carla (...) and mycelium is already an co-evolutionary endosymbiotic phenomenon.

Patricia ... feeding into this aspect of not knowing. How different is it to be rooted into a perceptual not-knowing than one that is detached from perceiving others? In BMC we practice finding comfort when sitting in the unknown. We ask ourselves: How can we feel rooted, embedded in the not knowing, so we can meet the wisdom that emerges without the interference of the nervous system? In a way that is related to previous ways of knowing and to our western system, new ways of learning. “Not knowing” as a practice is not valued in western education: we don't want to hang much in there because there is a belief that this doesn't bring any skills that we consider useful for coping with the environment. Suddenly this crisis comes and we meet the need to hang in the unknown without many skills for it. These ways of inquiring have not been promoted in our learning models. I feel this crisis is calling us to be humble and to learn to sit in the unknown ... and through somatic practice, we can help others in this process.

Carla It is so important that you remind us of that. I would say that this state of intimacy with the unknown as an ani-

mal. To keep in mind the tridimensional architecture of our senses, the most peripheral, the most proximal, so that we can maintain the richness of “the space holds information” ... I remember our previous conversation about the value of improvising, to be with the unknown is to cultivate the ability to respond. But maybe more to unveil, unfold, unravel, unload the invisible forms that are filling the space. The space is “impregnated with” ...

Patricia Improvisation is a practice of receiving and responding ... especially group improvisation is so much about responsiveness. We, collectively, learn to read, download, and share the information that the space holds ... For me, BMC is a form of group improvisation, is about the development of collective inquiry and discovery. How to be oneself, how to be together? This type of practice feels ritualistic, it relates to ancient forms of group ritual in which dance, movement, voice are resources for accessing and being in dialogue with the information that the space breathes.

Carla Most of the western misconception of space is something empty that can be colonized and appropriated ... This was also nourished by the imagination of western imperialism ... coming from complete ignorance. The crucial issue to shift and question, urgently ... is that empty space needs to be made productive, exploitable. We really need to destroy this assumption, that space is empty and should be made productive, exploitable.

Thomas This is also related to the idea of ownership. To take something which is common. The indigenous people did not own the land, they were living with the land. When the colonists arrived, they wanted to own the land. They were saying, oh nobody is owning this land, so we can take it. This kind of appropriation, which is very much how we see our own body in a mechanistic way. How the medical field has developed in the last 200 years. The appropriation of the body and the idea that we can fix it. We can own it, know it, fix it. It is also a history of failures. Especially when it comes to immune functions, how science and politics are dealing with the situation right now, is very poor. They are not really matching the research. The measures taken against the virus are more based on statistics and not so much about biology or immunology. Science is much farther ... Immune function is not just about defending, distance or washing your hands. It is collaboration and balance ... about dialogue with the environment.

Carla It is very interesting that the notion of ownership and property in other cultures is not that they are owning the land, but they are owned by the land. Property exists, but it is the other way around. Property is more like a quality. They are not connected in other cultures; property exists, but as a quality ... As soon as we invented this individual subject, owner, agent, we disrupted something that had another meaning.

Patricia I feel we are experiencing a difficulty to find safe places to meet and think together outside, or in parallel, to the dominant narratives, and all the biased information

to which we are continuously being exposed to ... I'm concerned also about the quality of the thinking. How can we open spaces, channels for new embodied perspectives and ideas? I feel that there was a crisis of critical thinking before the pandemic came and that somehow now is being more accentuated. How much this more than a metaphor about the immune system is shaping us: if we think detached, we feel detached. How the way we think about individuality is shaping our ability for co-thinking? How can we evolve into practices that embrace critical thinking that is more ecological, embedded, and embodied? Thinking about embodied thinking.

Carla And thinking within uncertainty: how to do without what we usually enact so easily in terms of anticipation? How to get rid of anticipation, planning, and foreseeing, and what does it mean to live within uncertainty, but trying to—in spite of these conditions we are in, and in spite of the experience of distance, difficulty to come together? How can we still open as much as possible our perception, in order to recover a sense of implication, embeddedness, being resonating boards, and trying really to fully feel and be affected, and even accepting being destabilized in order to perceive this *here and now*? And maybe getting rid also of the idea of the future as something to anticipate, but trying to move with the wisdom of unraveling the past, even the close past, to understand better where we are.

Thomas Continuing with this question about learning and memory, I find the relationship between the micro and macro very interesting. What does learning mean for a cell? We have the tendency to project cognition onto cellular organisms. We take it for granted that cells think, act, recognize, and respond. That they are agents, protagonists of the immune system. We even go so far as to make a virus responsible for the crisis, as if the virus would cause it and not the reaction of the scientists and politicians. We call it the corona crisis. It is interesting to deconstruct these narratives. Maybe we can arrive at a description which is more close to what is happening at the cellular level. Cells can have memory by changing the types and numbers of certain receptors on their membrane, and the genes of cells change over time. The human DNA contains parts of viral and bacterial DNA. This reflects our evolutionary history. In that sense cells are learning from infinite encounters over millions of years and from the symbiotic relationships with microorganisms in and on us.

How the very little microscopical cellular learning is reflected in how we learn to be together, to think and research together. Even more how our world is organized, how we or people are organized. How a deeper look at how life is organized on a cellular level can change how we could be organized differently. The idea of symbiosis and cohabitation speaks a lot to how in the last 40 years, 400 years, things have moved away from a community-organized life to an individualized world, where everybody is fighting for oneself.

Patricia The ability to be fully present and affected, to be able to perceive the here and now so we can go from embodied practice into critical thinking, about the pandemic, and the many challenges we face on earth „, connecting micro and macro, requires detaching from individualism to find the mirroring and symbiosis between one's-own-body-and-everyone-else's-bodies ... finding the support in the reconnection of our cell communities to support larger communities in the macro to reconnect. Restore health in both directions.

Thomas This morning we had a very interesting conversation with a farmer. He is not a traditional farmer. His family had some land, and 20 years ago he started to cultivate the land. Learning by doing, he became an activist for farming in a more traditional way. We were talking about animals. He doesn't think about the pigs or sheep as animals he needs to take care of, but that they also take care of the land. He found ancient texts which talk about a vision of farming which includes all living beings into farming. Animals are not only there to produce as much meat or milk as possible, to optimize the product. Pigs, for example, can eat the bad chestnuts and clean the land. There is constant circularity of care. This way animals are part of the community.

Carla And it is the circularity of care that we evoked in our first conversation, isn't it? We could imagine to take some dust away from the word *munus*, and its rooting in juridical language, and to put it back within life processes and translating rather as care or taking care, maybe as a gesture that needs less agency and intentionality of subjects, and it's more like the wandering, circular process that is shared by a collective, a consortium of beings.

Thomas It also challenges the idea of agency. You cannot reduce an animal by saying that it is adapting to the environment to guarantee its own survival. We have internalized or embodied this kind of language. This is a common view which goes together with the idea of individuality. It is part of our western psychology. The idea that there is an individual that has to adapt to an environment. We find the same thinking with the virus, how each person is coping with the situation, individually. Ignoring many other factors contributing to the challenges. Instead of seeing the whole constellation, instead of seeing the animals as part of a mutual giving and taking, interweaving embeddedness. That changes completely the idea of animal rights.

Carla I wonder to what extent the notion itself of "rights" can be somehow misleading, and how important it would be to reflect on the notion of "obligation" instead. This is what Simone Weil pointed out in her last book *The Need for Roots: Prelude Towards a Declaration of Duties Towards Mankind*, in 1943: only the notion of "universal obligation" towards every human being can guarantee the respect for fundamental rights and needs—and the most basic of all was, for her, the need for roots. I believe that there is much to reflect on in this direction: first of all, the extension of the obligation to all beings, human and non-human, and the profound

contradiction between common and individual. Law, writes Weil, is always private and proprietary, while the very root of the community is alteration, contamination, mutual munus. That goes back to the question of respect, as we were evoking with the farmer the violence that is perpetrated on animals, with industrial breeding and exploitation. To replace munus with mutual care would be an incredible step.

Patricia Stepping into the obligations we have towards other beings is a very beautiful idea ... I'm wondering, is there an obligation towards ourselves? Self-care? Is there an opportunity to self-care in this pandemic ... to review or to renew the state of these obligations to ourselves? Crazy fast living ... since we don't self-care for ourselves, how can we care for others?

Carla But maybe self-care is not in opposition with mutual care, if we take it as the basic attention to the situation in which we all are, as a modality of listening that doesn't separate our supposed selfhood from life of others, and the question is, again, what do we mean by "self?" ... If we mean by self a reflexive particle that emphasizes an attitude of deep resonance within us and what surrounds us.

Thomas I think there is a bit of an edge in the idea of self-care, because sometimes self-care can mean to some people not to be affected by something outside or by stress, which in itself is not a bad thing. But when it blocks off information it can easily become egoism or narcissism. In self-care, maybe it is good not to think too much about myself as the one who needs care, but see care as a circulatory function.

Carla ... and self as a resonating board. A fundamental space of relation, encounter. I think it is because we are used to represent action as opposed to "passion," or something separate from being affected, and so we reduce it to something outwardly directed to modify the environment. But with the consistencies and the thicket of affects, action becomes something else, and even self-care brings along implication and engagement in what we do. I don't know if it makes sense to bring it here, but lately I think often of a seminal book of the Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben, *The Use of Bodies* (2014), which is the last chapter of a long research throughout the western genealogy of power, subject, action ... By the way, it should be a reference for somatics in general! He digs in the etymology of the verb "to use," for instance, to find out that it is a medial verb, neither passive nor active: to use "of" something involves always to be affected by it, to be modified. The use reveals a fundamental relation and alteration ...

Thomas It relates a lot to immunity, very interesting. What the word *immune* already evokes. That's why it is really inappropriate to use the word immune for what we are talking about. It always distinguishes me to be defended from something else, not to be affected by something. We want to be affected, we want to be in exchange. Same for self-care, if you shut down being affected, you end up in isolation. We have seen that in history so many times, taking care of one's own needs, going for what you want, your own country, your na-

tion, religion, *etc.*, going to war, fighting for your "rights." To be open to that your actions affect others and their actions affect you, that is very important in the micro and macro level, to be in exchange, it is not about being protected. Micro-organisms, bacteria or immune cells are not there to protect us but to allow a fluid exchange ...

Carla ... and to make us, it is like identity would be just the history of our encounters, the ones that had transformed and modified us. Identity as tracing the history of relationships that created what we call "us" of "me," or "you" ...

Patricia I was thinking about the delicate balance between encounters that nourish and encounters that diminish us, how do we contemplate permeability and balance ... too much immunity can be as harmful as too little! How do we arrive at a dialogue to preserve homeostasis: we introduce the same pathogen that we need to protect from, we need to know the other to stay alive. Niels Jerne's Network Theory, main theories, we already have the antigen for the pathogen resonance at the core of self-care ... we need to be in resonance with the environment to perform self-care ... that is at least my idea of self-care, a state of permeability to adjust in dialogue with the environment, a state of resonance so we can be ready to respond when needed.

Carla And Niels Jerne, that you were just mentioning, also brought the new idea that in this network theory of the immune system there is nothing like a pre-given identity of the organism: identity is a process. There is the question of exposure to antigens, of recognition and memory, but also fundamentally the idea that identity is always the result of a systemic adjustment within the network, a processual learning.

Thomas Listening to the both of you, I think about how monoculture is completely against that. In Europe more than half of the people who were dying from Covid were old people in nursing homes. Also in the sense of growing vegetables together, or keeping all the pigs in one place, and the chickens in another place, having huge fields of wheat or corn. When there is an infestation, if there is a parasite or a bacteria, in a chicken farm or a crop field it is devastation, because there is no communication possible. At the root of capitalism and industrialization, historically, there was the monoculture of cotton fields in England, which changed the whole rural farming community into a workers' community. Some rich people bought the farm land, creating these monocultures of cotton, then the farmers lost their work and were employed to work in the fields and in the factories. This whole idea of separating, individualization is at the root of our thinking and capitalism. We are without defense against that, which is funny, because we are actually much stronger to survive by relying on symbiosis and exchange.

Carla And medical modern immunization is a very poor mimicry of symbiosis. The inoculation of little, controlled doses of difference, allows indeed the process of integration within the same, but reintroduces the multiple in the shape of the other, of alterity, and by that replays the idea of di-

chotomy and separation between self and other, and so it doesn't match what has been lost, the ethics of multiplicities that compose an ecosystem, an heterogeneous group of humans and non-humans that belong to a specific, particular environment.

Thomas The farmer this morning was saying that people who live with animals have a much stronger immunity, sorry to use the word immunity, how more resilient they are to more challenging viruses. Just living with a dog increases the diversity of your microbiome dramatically.

Patricia Having a dog or having brothers and sisters! As I'm listening to you I see the pigs, the cows, the viruses, all these forms of life, categorized in different boxes, living separated in different cages ... we negate life, we advocate life processes into cages: animals, encaged way of preservation, in a way, is a killing of freedom, our way of preserving life is by encaging and separating environments. We deny life the possibility of life being in contact with itself: in order to promote life, we explode life against its own potentials.

Carla Because we reduce life to the individual body, and this is really problematic, because it deprives life of its bonding to multiplicities. At the core of capitalistic extraction of surplus and profit, there is the differential treatment of individual bodies.

Thomas What Lynn Margulis has identified as Neo-Darwinism, taking Darwin further to apply to everything, as the basic paradigm for surviving in this society, linking it with the *homo economicus*, the individual who has to fight for the survival in the market, a step our society has taken in the last 40 years. There is a striking analogy. I was thinking about how memory is held in the brain, not by neurons, but in the spaces between neurons, in the relationship between them. How a specific pattern is stimulated to evoke a memory, a thought or an emotion. The space holds the information.

Carla There is a book by Alfred Tauber that is an incredible summary of contemporary new theories about immunology: *Immunity: The Evolution of an Idea* (2017), funny enough, is dedicated in memory of Lynn Margulis. So here is the link we were hoping for, since our first conversation! What would be immunology in the light of endosymbiosis ... The book presents new paradigms that allow us to think in terms of ecological immunology. Tauber draws the history of immunology, pointing to the troubles of notions such as self, individual, organism, and along with them, the problem of the concept of agency for describing the processes within immune functions that are connected to cognition—which here is rather a metaphor.

Patricia ... This idea of symbiosis, the thinking of organism not as one but as a consortia of living organisms, inspires me to think about cognition as something that needs to include symbiosis, we need to think together in symbiosis as a holobiont, how can we merge with other species ... how can we

cross-pollinate with other ways of making sense of the world?

Thomas And it takes practice to listen, be affected, and respond ...

Patricia I was inspired to think about Carla's talking about how we transform each other: How do we transform each other, through experience, how do we become in relationship? ... I was listening to Humberto Maturana, giving a master class, and he was talking exactly about this ... The theme of his presentation was "love" as education ... loving as a way of acknowledging diversity and embracing others and transforming in contact with, in relation with ... the powerful notion that through contact that is loving and accepting we transform ourselves and we learn to be in the world ... very inspiring, the simplicity with which he was transmitting the powerful ...

Carla You make me think of this other wise man, Munir Fashes, our Palestinian friend. When I first met him, thirteen years ago, it was in a conference in Berlin about "non-aligned academics." The presenters were actually quite academic, by the way ... but Munir was radically different. When he spoke, I was completely moved by what he said, and then we became friends and we wrote to each other for some years. I was reminded of a concept he proposed instead of education. It is an arabic term, *muthanna*, that he stressed not to have adequate English translation for. It means basically nurturing each other, a relationship that could be translated with a sentence like, "you are, and therefore I am," or "I am because you are," learning through friendship. Muthanna ...

Patricia It seems like we might have a title for this conversation, in a way it summarizes the whole thread ...

Carla Or the suggestion for changing the immune system in the muthanna system ... And Munir would erase the term *education* and talk about *learning* as a biological function ...

Patricia So we have the seed for our next conversation! 🌱

POEMS BY GALABINA IVANOVA FOR CURRENTS 2021

I Winter. Journey.

white-ness

brown, limewashed
white
shadows, stains from older
times
twining around me arms
snowheavy branches

know
(so many ways)
unknown

white
ways
whisper invisibly

to me, to me

echo of my soul
drowned in so much

wide-ness

II Almost

Something healthy takes place
on the playground of identity.
When WE become(s) impossible
while life gains importance.
A life without YOU within life
makes YOU obsolete.
YOU AM WE.
The last drop of hope drunk by reality.
Intestines full, fed,
fed up
with souvenirs.
With things of much weight once,
now trembling with the notion of almost gone.
Almost done.

Vast emptiness of no-thing(s) to lose
Frees within me all WE
That you needed to be.
A life with no importance at all.

III Nothing really

Fragile fertile words of
weakness
floating towards my being's
softness.

Dizziness
moving through fingers, lips -
Tiptoeing truths on whispering wings of banalities.

Love
is like finding a sea shell
on one of these rainy days.
You would understand if you listened to what I said:
"I will not fall in love with you."

You don't fall in love.
You are it.
I have.

IV Space

As I close my eyes
I find only open space –
so endless is your love
that it breaks open every
dark corner in my cells to save me and bring me home.
You are the destroyer of darkness,
the saviour of streams floating
down and up and around all things
to find
only you.

So much have you become the love
we were embracing on that dance floor of
the One
that everything soaked in you
turns into pure divine joyful
nothing-ness ...

Contact Instead Of Control

Somatic work with musicians, inspired by Body-Mind Centering

by Galabina Ivanova



About 7 years ago, after a long orchestral performance, I was lying in the bathtub with back pain, browsing through a Yoga magazine. In it, a well-known Yoga teacher described her experiences with Body-Mind Centering and Yoga. The next day I told a friend about it, enthusiastic about how enriching it would be if musicians had access to this kind of teaching. As a professional dancer he knew BMC and exclaimed, “Yes, everyone should do that every day!” By that evening he had forwarded me the link to the one-year advanced training at the *Tanzfabrik Berlin*.

As a musician I have always strived for a creative approach to my physical and psychological obstacles. A purely mechanical practice was never enough for me. First, because after taking a break for more than 10 years (age 24-34), I needed something that would help me achieve the desired results more effectively. Second, because my mind and self-perception did not follow at the same speed. I struggled with my trembling right arm: at almost every audition I lost control of the bow. I knew it was not due to normal stage fright but did not understand the cause or the pattern. No meditation, no coach, no exercise seemed to help. So I started searching through my own combination of Yoga, meditation, analysis, and subtle body awareness. Since then, beginning with my training in 2014, Body-Mind Centering gave me a framework and a research tool. And, in 2020 I began training to become a Somatic Movement Educator.

The desire to share my work with musicians arose when I helped a cellist prepare for his auditions in 2014. Initially he asked me simply to pretend to be the jury, but then I asked him a few questions and we ended up exploring his sound, his idea of music, and a blockage of his right shoulder. We then began to work frequently together, but I could seldom put my finger on why I was trying a particular approach or the reasons why it worked. My experience with coaching myself and my ability to observe and analyze at close range enabled me to help my friend refine his technique.

The focus in music education is usually on perfect mastery of the instrument. The body-mind response to the consequent stress of this demand can be stiffness, poor posture, pain, and stage fright. There are some music universities that provide Alexander Technique, Feldenkrais, and Yoga, but missing is the idea that movement awareness is fundamental to both artistic development and general sense of well-being. This omission is reinforced by the fact that body work is treated as a separate subject from instrumental lessons. In my view, instrumental and somatic training should form a unit from the very beginning. For dancers, actors, and singers, it seems self-evident that body and voice are the intrinsic instrument, and that mastery can only be achieved through a skilled use (*i.e.*, knowledge) of the body. With instrumentalists, the practice is more cerebral, reduced to rote, repetitive movements—perhaps because we hold an instrument that is

separate from us and only in rare moments seems to merge with us as part of our body. But it is the musician who plays, not the instrument! The instrument is simply an appropriate object that is brought into vibration by the inner and outer, mental and physical movements of the musician, and thus also shows in what individual way the body, instrument, and psyche form a unity. I work with musicians to explore when this unity is out of balance and how it can be brought back into balance.

Excerpts From a Coaching Session

An oboist wanted to play again after not having touched the oboe for years. During her studies, she began to experience fears that affected every aspect of her life and eventually made playing impossible. She constantly inhaled far too much air and then experienced a choking sensation as if being strangled. She also experienced her soft palate as unable to contain the air pressure needed to direct wind through the reed. Instead, air was diverted down her throat and up into the nasal canal, causing a hissing sound.

When I asked her if she could also remember relaxed moments during this phase of her life, independently from playing the oboe, she replied: “Only when eating. Mostly alone or with a very few special people.” Given that eating involves enjoyable movements of chewing and swallowing followed by ingesting, while playing the oboe is rather static in comparison and is “projecting” her inner world to the outside, I asked myself a few questions to explore during the coaching session.

- How are her muscles disposed—for enjoyment or for playing the oboe?
- Which way does she channel the air? Can it emerge completely and freely?
- Is the choking feeling more likely to occur when breathing in or out?
- Is the nervous system subjected to physiological stress because she over-compresses the breath in her chest and thus triggers the sympathetic nerves?

I proposed that we have lunch and that way, I can share in an activity she expressed as relaxing to do. I observe that she has a strong sense of control and is possibly even “postured” in manner. Her upper lip seems firm, held, which only relaxes a little on the second day. When in dialogue, she offers frequent exclamations such as, “True!” “You’re right.” “Exactly!” She is polite and supportive of my opinions, but reveals nothing about herself.

GI: Can you play just one or two notes?

She plays and immediately comments, judges, and belittles her performance.

GI: When did you adjust your muscles to play?

Client: Even before I took the oboe into my hands, about two steps in front of the case.

GI: Okay, go back a few steps, approach the oboe, and observe at what point your muscles tense up in anticipation of playing.

The awareness of the process already seems to make a difference.

GI: Now walk away from the oboe until you are completely comfortable.

She goes to the other end of the room and looks in the opposite direction.

GI: Take very slow steps towards the oboe and tell me what you feel?

Client: Tension, not being good enough, uncertainty, pressure.

I interrupt and let her move freely, tell her to just follow her impulses. The first thing she does is to sit down and give in to what is weighing her down.

Client: Yes, I’ll just let it all happen.

I let her remain lying down and give her an organ touch on her lungs. I’d like to give her the chance to feel that there may be other sensations in her chest and that she can access various feelings and thus doesn’t have to be overwhelmed by the pressure. Afterwards I let her do a little ‘lung dance’ to the sound of the sea, still unsure if all this is not too direct and too fast. But she is already moving in a lighter and livelier fashion.

I notice that she holds her shoulders very rigidly and explain the anatomy of her shoulder girdle through pictures and a bone tracing session. Then I let her visualize her breathing within her shoulder blades. For the first time I see her breathe with her chest moving freely. Amazed by this experience, she wants to play again and a natural, liberated sound comes out.

Client: This is the first time in years that my sound could flow without faltering.

On the second day we undertake some experiments with the breath. What is it like when she breathes into her chest, which is where she usually breathes under stress? How does she feel when she breathes into the lower abdomen, as her teacher wanted her to? Breathing in the lower abdomen seems too far down, so I get her to try and focus on breathing into the solar plexus: now she feels calm and in good contact with herself.

Posture and Fine Tuning

How to manage physical posture as well as inner attitude? This question determines all other aspects of music-making: sound, breath, technique, pain prevention, and stage fright are related to it. Often musicians are looking for the perfect technique and insist upon conforming to “a” one and only correct posture. Professionals begin their training as children, so their posture is copied, often even imposed on them by teachers and other role models. It is hardly

ever organically formed through playful engagement with one's own anatomy. In addition, there is a tension due to the aspiration to reach perfection. So already, at a young age, musicians complain about pain and suffer injuries.

When working with musicians it therefore is fundamental for them to have concrete experience that posture and alignment are never static, and what was good yesterday may no longer serve today. This is achieved more quickly without the instrument as it is important to connect with one's own body in relation to earth and space, before connecting with the instrument. As with tuning the instrument, the task of keeping one's body perception fresh is key to fine tuning before each concert and practice session.

WEIGHT: While holding their instrument musicians tend to keep more weight off the ground than necessary. Simply lying down, without having to do anything, and feeling the contact of the body with the ground works miracles in one's self-perception with the instrument. At the start I like to make a journey along the skeleton while lying down and gradually let the bones sink to the earth through all the soft tissue. The next step is for the client to pick up her instrument while lying down and perhaps even play a few notes. Playing at a horizontal position is an unfamiliar but relaxing feeling for most musicians. Then we might move on to soft movements initiated in the spine and visualizing the arms and legs hanging as if suspended from it. There are plenty of things to try out with the spine and thus become aware of one's center: palpating while lying down, wriggling to feel the vertebrae, curling up and uncurling.

SUPPORT: After increasing the feeling of weight a little more, the question often arises as to how weight is distributed in the body, *i.e.*, how will it 'fall' from top to bottom as freely as possible, regardless of our position and whether we are holding an instrument. The question "How do I hold myself?" then changes into "What gives me support?" And, connected with this: "How do I hold the instrument." The feeling of being supported is strongly linked to the feeling of connection. By exploring various inner connections, musicians become aware that supporting themselves too actively by muscle power and according to right-wrong concepts is more like cramping, and results into hypertonicity, stiff movements, smothered sound, unfree breath, and pain.

CONNECTION: One of my favorite exercises from Andrea Olsen¹ illustrates three sets of bones (calcaneus, sit bones, and occipital bone) that determine areas of feeling in our backs. I like to add the shoulder blades. Working with this exercise, musicians begin to feel the weight of the pelvis and the way in which it gives support. As a result the belly feels softer and the breath flows more freely.

String players feel 'closer to the string' and better in contact. Awareness of the back of the skull makes gripping the instrument easier and yet stable. This all results in a fuller, more three-dimensional feeling in the body, which can deepen and enrich the instrumental sound.

EXPLORING SUPPORT THROUGH CONNECTIONS: We often play "In how many ways can I stand up?" This is about observing and gaining fresh experiences of movement in the body. Here is an example: "Lying on your back, turn onto your side, one arm under your head, the other supported in front of your chest. Exert pressure with your upper hand and observe what happens. [The upper body rolls backwards, legs follow.] Repeat the movement, but brace your back against it. Can you initiate movement by putting pressure on the edge of the foot resting on the floor? This gives a jerk to the hand, which can then support you." Experimenting with various ways of making a movement lets in a breath of fresh air and enriches the range of movement by drawing attention to unfamiliar body parts and movements. This approach trains openness and flexibility, and practicing an instrument becomes constant research into ways of meeting various requirements. The exercises are only stepping stones, not general principles or an invariably valid technique.

EFFORTLESSNESS: String and wind players use too much muscle power in the way they hold their instruments and are rarely aware of their inner architecture. With them, I constantly explore how much effort is really needed, and it is very helpful to work with the skeletal system. Holding the instrument from the bones is almost effortless, the posture becomes relaxed and fine motor skills are set free. It is a significant discovery for musicians that more permeability in the inner structures will not lead to a collapse at all, and that they do not need force to hold themselves together. Instead, the support that comes from an awareness of the vessel frees up movement and breath, which can be used efficiently to meet challenges and foster creativity.

LUNGS: With high string players the instrument rests on the chest, and so I like working with the lungs. We explore the following questions: Does the instrument sink into the lungs so that it is compressed, does it simply float above them without making contact, or can it even be "received" while the lungs remain alive and serve as a supple support? Which combinations are possible? Awareness of the lungs and heart is directly reflected in posture and sound: relaxed tone, graceful posture, and a warm sound are the result. This has an effect on charisma, self-awareness, and presence.

HANDS: Connections also play an immense role in fine motor skills. Thus I discovered that the visualization of the extensor digitorum hoods, which connect the fin-

1 Olsen, Andrea: *The Place of Dance: A Somatic Guide to Dancing and Dance Making* p. 27. Middleton, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2014.

gers with the metacarpus, leads to a rich yet precise contact with the string without the musician gripping too tightly, which otherwise often happens in challenging or emotionally intense musical passages. The awareness of the unity between thumb, index, and middle finger and their connection to the inner edge of the shoulder blade, as well as the unity between ring and little finger and their connection to the outer edge of the shoulder blade, supports movements that are focused and yet swing freely. For example, in passages where overstretching of the little finger of the left hand is necessary, it is supportive to activate the outer lower edge of the shoulder blade.

THE BASIC NEUROCELLULAR PATTERNS: The BMC principles of movement are relevant not only for bigger movements but also for fine motor skills. In terms of grip and technical stability, yield before reach and push is essential. It makes a huge difference to be conscious of where pressure can be eased from the hand, the arm or the whole body prior to difficult position changes and runs. This can be done in various ways, but still has to do with accepting weight. For example, string players can allow the non-playing fingers of the left hand to relax towards the fingerboard, releasing the rest of the hand and allowing the playing fingers to move faster and more efficiently.

ENERGY AND FLOW: It is also of great value to explore the place where movements originate, how the impulses travel further and which part of the body defines the direction. During the stroking movement of a string player's right arm, the source of the motor may be in the shoulder blade and the direction of the movement is marked by the lines of the arm bones. A very different option is to let the impulse arise from the contact with the bow, *i.e.*, in the fingers. It is a cycle: the player produces a sound, the instrument reacts to it and, feeling its vibrations, she responds to them. It frees the movement to imagine that the bow moves by itself and the arm merely guides it a little. Fingers, wrist, arm, shoulder, and spine then follow as a natural reaction.

SPACE: You often hear teachers say: "You need to relax here!" But a fake or imposed relaxation only leads to further imbalances. What we can do is to actively foster openness, space, and a feeling of safety, which are an essential basis for relaxation. That is why I often work with space. Usually, mental stress during difficult technical passages is reflected in the body; it contracts and tightens. While practicing these passages musicians can find ways to allow themselves more inner and outer space. When body and mind feel at ease with the demands, relaxation follows. We can consider options for creating space in the joints, length in the bones and muscles, and flow in the movements already during warm-up, before the mind is exposed to technical challenges.

Inner images are very helpful in supporting inner space. Visualizing the weight being transmitted to the earth through the center of the joints is one of them. We first explore everyday movements with the large bones of the body before



transferring the sensation into the fine motor movements. In the same way, visualizing the length of the metacarpals relaxes the hand. (Most people are not aware of the actual length and estimate it to be much shorter). Another way to open up space is to focus on the middle or outside contours or imagined inner lines of the body and limbs. But there are also external spaces that we can expand: for example, between the palms of the hands and the instrument or between the individual fingers.

BODY SYSTEMS: Working with the various body systems is of great interest for musicians in terms of mastering technical difficulties, freeing the movements and shaping the sound and movements according to the artistic intention. For example, initiating playing movements in the bones mostly results in lightness and clear sound; the overall feeling is one of openness, compactness, and focus. To make the sound fuller, it is helpful to add the visualization of the blood-filled living bones and the flesh around them. If string players perceive the bow as an extension of their forearm bone, movement becomes fluent and quick string changes are achieved technically smoother through the visualization of the ulna and the radius articulating against each other.

CONCLUSION: In my work with musicians, we realize time and again that there is no technique that always carries. The work is therefore a mutual search for released movement, easier and at the same time more stable technique, and the desired sensations. The focus is open and process-oriented. Body-Mind Centering has often been a deep source of inspiration for me. The exploration of one's own anatomical structures and the understanding of posture and playing movements have a positive influence on musicians' sound, self-confidence, well-being, and stage presence.

It is always a matter of evaluating closeness and distance, adjusting the focus, finding space(s) and new options, and above all, addressing the questions: how do we best take care of ourselves, where do we feel safe, and how do we access that space and stay there? These are the main issues that guide my work with musicians. 🌱

Becoming Complete and Completed with Coronavirus

by Wendy Masterson

Since January 2020 and during my recovery of the past ten months, I have come to know the coronavirus well. At first, I did not know what was happening in my body. There was confusion between body-mind and cognitive understanding and the needs of both. In the end, time became my friend. Time as a transitional space for pausing, questioning, moving, embodying, and coming into relationship with the coronavirus. My body became my guide, with the support and trust of my immunity collective that had generational knowledge of this virus. Meeting as two, becoming one, then separating again into two identities. One virus. One me.

When the coronavirus struck me, it was quick, voracious—essentially a full-body pandemic. My immune system responded as quickly, and my cellular tone was amplified both within the virus and my immunity response. Cellular vibration for many months after the initial illness was highly amplified. My instinctual understanding was of having my connective tissue shriveling like the petals of a summer flower on a very hot, dry day.

Shortly after the New Year, I remember something entering through my nasal passages which lit my entire head on fire. Very hot ... blazing, as if I had been sunbaked. What had I done? During the previous weeks I had been working on releasing scar tissue at my low brain level and in the optic orbit. Had I gone too far? Why was my head radiating heat? Did I need to go to the hospital? I decided to give it time. I waited. I placed my feet and hands in cold water, which helped a bit. After an hour, I did not feel worse nor did I feel better. I stayed within my question, “What is this?”—keenly aware of the heat and that my brain called for protection through fat and fluid in order to cool down.

I felt as if I had army ants invading my body. Their tiny feet were scrambling everywhere. I recognize now that this was cellular division in real time. The virus cells were exploding and the immune cells were multiplying. Everything was migrating at a rapid rate—highly vibrational and building energy, creating a swarm of cellular energy. What a phenomenal sensation! In one sense, my earliest experience of a fertilized egg was repeating itself, re-member-ing itself, as the sensation spread throughout my body.

This illness, with no name, kept morphing. What I thought would be a 24-hour bug turned into days of wondering when the illness would subside. That was 10 months ago. I am still exploring and clearing the impact of the coronavirus on my body.

I became physically aware of the virus as it migrated throughout my nervous system. Quick, very sharp pain in the full lace fabric of nerve. I felt like my whole body had sciatica. From the nerves the virus moved into my fascia. All of my joints simulta-

neously became arthritic. Throughout this illness I have felt that the virus was moving through or invading my connective tissue. The image in my mind has been of an egg being slurped up by a predator. Egg whites dripping from the predator’s mouth. I could hear this sound in my tissue during the illness and can still recall this sensation easily today.

The next stage of the virus woke me up from a restless sleep on an early wintry morning, two days after the initial hit through my sinuses. I was struggling for breath. Prolonged dry coughing caused my diaphragm to seize, thus my entire thoracic cavity was not moving dynamically. I felt as if my chest was wrapped tightly in gauze. My lungs had no room to move and wanted oxygen, receiving very little, and sending my respiratory tract into a panic state. I grasped for every small moment of relief. Air was not coming in. My inner voice was resonating, “Uh-oh, this not good.” I tried to subdue the panic, but my body needed oxygen.

After a few minutes of struggling, I realized that I was using the vertebrate patterns, yield/push/reach/pull, while trying to literally catch my breath. I pushed for breath, I reached for breath, I tried to pull breath in. With the high cellular vibration reverberating throughout my body, even yielding created panic. In this moment, the vertebrate patterns caused more distress than relief.

I paused and tried omental breathing. Because my diaphragm and connective tissue were constricted, this avenue did not work. I tried cellular breathing. Again, the cells were highly amplified, so this route was not productive. I came back to myself and paused.

A familiar path emerged, one that I have explored many times before in my personal practice and with my students, pre-professional artists and dancers, and adult clients. I paused again and listened. My body led me to other pathways for breathing. Through the cacophony of vibrations and panic, the pre-vertebrate pattern of sponging arose. Specifically, sponging through my skin. I began to balance the tone of internal and external space, inviting the largest organ of my body to receive. My whole body became a cellular membrane. Relief came. Panic subsided. Oxygen was easing in and my breathing improved.

Asking through *invitation* was key—inviting the skin to receive oxygen, balancing internal and external environments. That morning and for several more days following, when I forgot and tried breathing with the support of the vertebrate patterns, my body responded with warning signals and impending panic. I remembered and consciously returned to breathing through invitation of sponging with skin and easeful breathing was restored.

The coronavirus presented many pathways for discovery. Some were new experiences, others involved physiological systems that I had explored somatically years ago. The illness, recovery, and integrated experiences were an interweaving of the past and the present.

The constriction of my lungs, diaphragm, ribcage, and connective tissue within my heart's helix caused my heartbeat to become irregular. I immediately called on my venous capillaries, my friendly little fingers, to balance the pump from my periphery to the core. My heart rhythms restored easily.

One of the other interesting moments occurred when I lost the feeling in both of my legs. This I traced to an epidural I had received almost two decades ago. I remember the sensation of the epidural and followed the familiar nerve and tissue pathway. This is one of the times during my encounter with the coronavirus that I used a clear "no" and activated vertebrate and muscle-mind intentions. My brain-body was literally not going to stand for this, and I brought my legs back into connection with my spine. The coronavirus led me to the place of initial contact of the epidural needle, drug, and my tissue. Over a period of three months I continued to play with that space. It took me time to go through the layers—in the end the point of epidural contact cleared, and my body responded with a spinal reflex: the same spinal reflex that occurred during the injection twenty years ago. I would not have gone there without the stimulus of the coronavirus.

The coronavirus has given me opportunities for taking pauses, for trusting my body as a guide, and for exploring my relationship with this virus, my immune system, and myself.

A phenomenal and unexpected experience has been emerging during my illness and recovery. In January when I asked, "Am I ok?" my immune system responded, "We know this. We've got this." This response told me that this was not a new virus. My body was actively engaging with a virus that my immune collective knew from generations ago. I think this is one of the reasons my immune response was so aggressive.

Later, during my recovery, another question formed. "Can I trace the connection of the virus to previous generations?" Once again, I paused and stayed with this question. Gradually I was taken back to pre-human form. The place of an egg being eaten by a predator. This is the sensation that I had felt many months before in the initial stage of the virus and my immune response. Was this imagination? Was this a collective memory?

Another remarkable gift from this virus is one of conscious identity. When the virus entered my healthy cells, a new relationship was created with my cell/self. Then when the cells of my immune system responded, they created their unique relationship with the virus. All interwoven. All with their own needs and programming. Generations of memory in action. With months of questioning, taking pauses, using embodied awareness and movement, I was able to recognize these relationships. I had developed a new consciousness with the virus. What started as two beings, then joined into one, later emerged as two separate identities.

I had been asking since the beginning, "Can I enter the virus cell? Is it safe? What happens if ...?" In the beginning the cellular vibration was too high and my immune system was protecting me from contact. Over time I felt that I was getting closer. Cellular tone was softening, and my immune system was quietening and coming back to itself.

Then one day, five months after becoming ill, I had a profound and illuminating moment while working with a client. We were exploring transitional space—the transitional space of memory, of sensory, and of action. I was once again in my question, "Can I come into contact with the virus?"

Through the space of the pause, the space of my questions, the space of not-knowing yet knowing: my body guided me to my blood. At that moment I discovered very clearly two independent identities. One, the virus cell. One, my cell. There was not a sense of competition nor desire to multiply. Simply one of being. Each to its own. Each now a part of me. Generations of memory, in that moment at peace. This experience was a beautiful gift. In that moment I understood time without time. Being complete and completed.

I continue to explore the coronavirus through many lenses. One has been facilitating organ, glandular, skeletal, fluid, and nervous systems with the underlying support of the pre-vertebrate patterns. Another avenue for integration has been by sharing my experiences and somatic explorations with my clients and through a series of webinars. For these webinars I invited Annie Brook and Toni Smith to collaborate and share their knowledge of the immune system and cell receptor sites. Recordings of these webinars are available through my website, themotionspace.com.

I also have been working with clients who are in recovery from the coronavirus. Many have not been able to breathe fully, they feel sluggish, or their lower digestive tracts are affected. When I use touch to facilitate these clients, I notice my cellular tone and theirs. I can easily identify the progress of their immune system and relationship to the virus. The vibration of the virus is very clear to me. This has helped to support my clients' well-being and recovery.

I also understand the global response to the coronavirus as a reflection of the human immune response. This helps me to balance my singular life with the collective global view. This has helped me to address my own anxiety and reassure my clients as well.

In closing, although this virus was a challenge, it was also a phenomenal gift. I do not fear this virus. Perhaps more importantly, I respect the virus. I have trust in my immune system and its generational knowledge, and I practice self-care. Self-care includes my personal life and explorations; my family, friends, and colleagues; and my community. My relationship towards the coronavirus continues to unfold—each of us becoming complete and completed—for this moment in time. 🌱

Announcing the Making of a BMCA Video!

By Mary Ann Rund



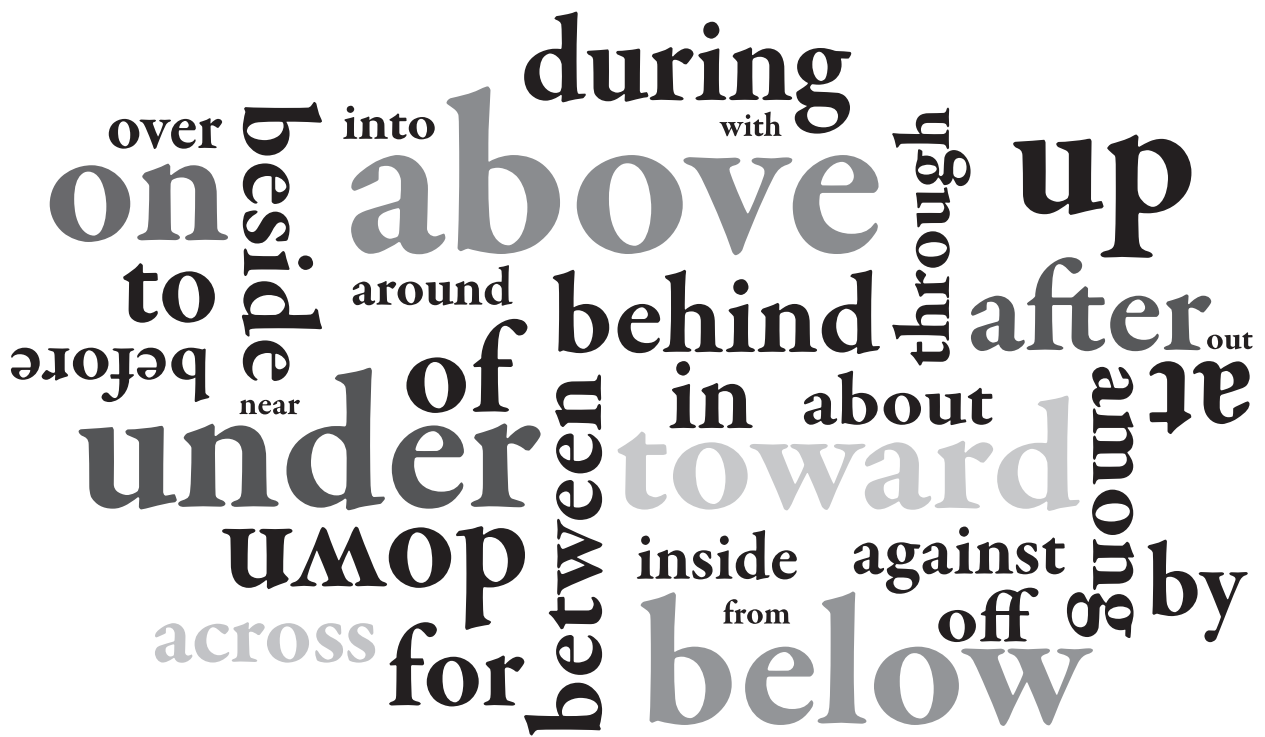
The BMCA Membership Committee, with Natasha Martina-Koechl at the helm, is pleased to present the first video produced by The Body-Mind Centering Association. After two and a half years of brainstorming, visualizing and gathering data, budgeting, script writing and editing, recording, animating, and translating, approving, more editing, and final processing, it is ready for viewing!

This video, offered in six languages—French, German, Spanish, Italian, Portuguese, and English—is a concise and informative introduction to BMC and BMCA. It explains how they are linked in the support and protection of this unique work, which is distinguished by rigorous training, specific certification, and strong ethical standards.

This relationship has grown from the seeds propagated by Bonnie Bainbridge Cohen years ago. Her love and sharing of this work has cultivated many deep and prospering roots for educators, teachers, and students from various professional backgrounds. This video honors Bonnie, her work, and those who have had roles in its development and dissemination.

As BMC programs and professionals have spread across the globe, BMCA has become an increasingly important link for the members of its community as well as to the general public. This video is another vehicle for connectivity, offering information in a different format, one that can be easily shared with students, clients, and colleagues. The many arms of the organization, diverse activities of the members, and various vehicles for communication are all represented. Also enumerated are the many benefits available to members, of which the prime benefit certainly is being part of such a distinctive professional circle.

If you have not already done so, please take the opportunity to view the video on the BMCA homepage where you will find links for the various translations. We hope you enjoy the video and see it as a great resource in spreading the word about BMCA. Please feel free to share the link on your Facebook page. The website will also feature links for the various translations. 🌍



The enclosure of a preposition

By Kristin Prevallet

My early memories of prepositions: a grade school teacher drawing a picture of a squirrel and a log on the chalkboard, and saying:

a preposition is anything that a squirrel can do to a log. A squirrel can go in the log, out of the log, above the log, through the log, and be among the log.

As she pointed to the various spots on the log where the squirrel might be, my mind was moving all over the place, as if I was the squirrel having this experience. I was inside the log, then I was outside; I was walking through the log, and when I was among it, I was nowhere. I found myself lost in time, like in a dream.

Many years later, I find myself studying hypnosis and am excited to learn that this trick of switching prepositions elicits a trance state. When a person is “in” a problem, they can’t see it clearly. Make the shape of a wave in space, and ask: where is the problem in relation to this wave? Are you under it? What would it feel like to be floating over it? Moving through it? Being among it? Which preposition feels better in your body? It’s interesting to begin noticing relations to other people and objects in this way: are you among them? Are you with them? Are you against them? Are you inside of them? Are you feeling outside? How would it feel to be among them?

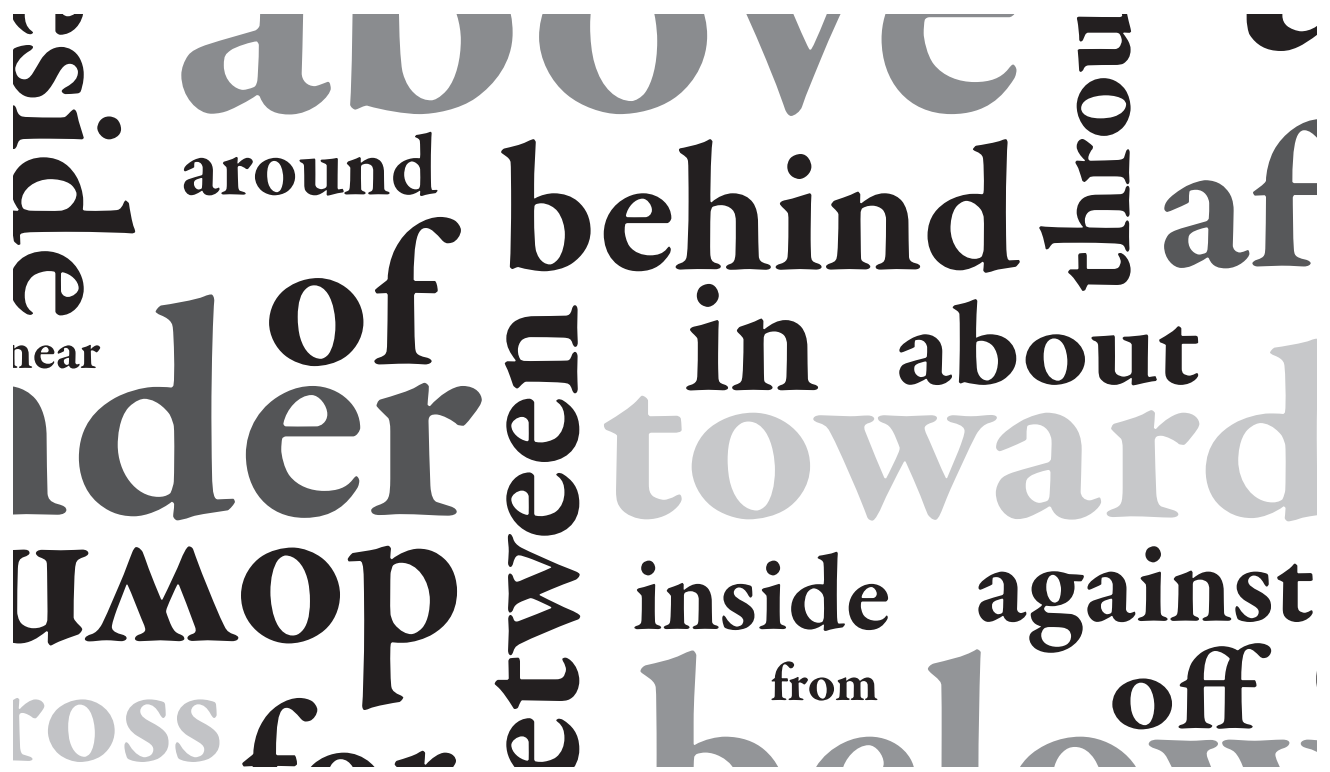
A preposition is a flick of grammar, an inflection of speech. In a sentence, it locates a subject in place and time. But what

does it mean to be a subject located in place and time?

To the ancient philosophers, there were only three grammatical categories: nouns, verbs, articles. But as more and more philosophers came onto the antiquity scene, classifications of every single little word became the study of this thing called Grammar. Ugh. No wonder we hate it. Taking something as fluid and open and evolving as language (as nature) and dissecting it into small parts, and then labeling/naming those parts as if some words (nouns) are more important than others. Because really, all words exist in relation to each other, and language is an extension of consciousness in its widest, most inter-related manifestations of no-separation. And like any system, grammar was invented in order to explain the invisible tethers that ground the body in time and space, even as the soul roams freely.

In 1874 a Greek scholar and Homer aficionado named William S. Tyler circled every single preposition that Homer used and identified exactly HOW he used it:

“Prefixes to verbs and as prepositions governing substantives. Of the 251 instances in all in which words of this class called prepositions occur in the third book of the Iliad, 10 per cent occur separate from either substantives or verbs, and 9 per cent more come after their substantives, thus making 19 per cent that are not strictly prepositions; while 81 per cent occur in the normal state of prepositions, 47 per cent before substantives and 34 per cent in composition with verbs.” (William S. Tyler, “On The Prepositions in the Homeric Poems”)



After all that work, he came to the conclusion that prepositions 1) are not essential or found in the nature of things; 2) are inflections, or accents of verbs; 3) are not universal (most languages do not have them, or if they do, have only a few); 4) are purely cognitive, meaning that they evolved in English from merely locating a subject in space (like the squirrel) to locating a subject in time (a much more abstract understanding); and from there, evolved to denote “all varied relations of human action and thought ... they illustrate our intuitive conceptions of the material universe.”

Intuitive conceptions of the material universe. Whoa!

It’s interesting to me that English—which like dogwood, cleavers, and kudzu vines, is an invasive species, a cognitive colonizer that absorbs other languages and somehow through its syntax justifies the slaughter and oppression of those languages—is the language with the most prepositions.

For anyone trying to study English as a foreign language, prepositions are often the most difficult thing to master because they are both abstract and essential at the same time. Just google the Wikipedia page for Prepositions and you’ll see a list of over 500 words.

Looking at this list, it is obvious that a colonizer’s language needs to have plenty of ways to locate and define, classify and de-mark, subjects in space and time. After all, it is language that those in power must use to classify, shape, and design the lives of the people “beneath” them. Just the presentation of a hierarchy (upper class, lower class; awareness of who is “above” you, or “beneath” you) means that some people get be more “located” in time and space than others. There are,

after all, many more physical structures, institutions, dwelling places, for people who are “above” it all. And race is a preposition as well: which white bodies keep others “out?” Which Black and Brown bodies are constantly reminded that they are “outside?”

If (as Chomsky and Layoff assert) grammar is embodied, then prepositions are embodied as some kind of measurable evidence that your body is located in space and time and that other people’s bodies are outside of yours. This understanding means that you must put everyone else “in” their place—and of course, this is unconscious. This is what “embodied” means, after all. So, what might it mean to disembody prepositions? What might it mean to disembody the metaphoric containers that have convinced you that when you close your eyes you are going “inward,” as opposed to the “outward,” which is what happens when you open your eyes and are confronted with the “real” world?

I invite you into the subtle work of really thinking about language and all the ways that as human bodies we are contained by it. And to break the containers, wild your language, and walk through the illusion of the container (nowhere more present than in the sentence, “I can’t wait until we get back to normal”), which has, quite literally, now shattered itself.

If you’re feeling anxious, frayed at the seams, overwhelmed, unable to focus, terrified of the future, perpetually in a state of discomfort, there is nothing wrong with you. It’s just that the enclosure you thought protected (prepositions) turns out to be just an illusion. 🐼

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Moving into Inclusive Consciousness

A Conversation with Roxlyn Moret and Kate Tarlow Morgan



Kate: Roxlyn, you and I met one another in 1986 at the first, large School for Body-Mind Centering (BMC) training. Since then, we have been in many rooms together, crossed paths of interest, and watched our children grow. After living through this volatile year of social, emotional, political upheaval as well as surviving COVID-19 yourself—why don't we begin with the BMC circle that we share.

Roxlyn: Last year's devastating events brought conversations on inclusion, cooperation, equity, truth, diversity, and anti-racism to the forefront all over the world and in our somatic communities. Our BMCA Scholarship Committee started to look at how we talk about giving and receiving. Everyone that sits in our circle has merit. Primarily, scholarships are offered because of financial need. Perhaps we can consider giving when someone has a skill set to offer? Or because someone brings a unique voice and perspective that expands our consciousness? As a somatic organization, what is our capacity, our responsibility to widen our circle to include those voices that are not usually represented in the room? Who can we listen to? How can we listen? How fully do we recognize how differently our tissues can hold the lived communal experience in this country, depending on the color of our skin, gender, physical abilities, and culture?

Kate: Tell me about where you grew up and some of the pathways that led you to your present insights.

Roxlyn: I was born and raised in a segregated South. I grew up sitting with my mother in the back of the bus. I was eight years old when we moved away from that culture to San Luis Obispo, California. As I got older, my parents expected me to get a job and get married. But, I had no intentions of being a secretary and being married at that time, so I left home when I was 18 and went to junior college. It has been a long journey for me to trust my experience and my capacity to

listen to my tone and truth, and to listen to others. I have two sons who have been raised in a bi-racial and bi-cultural household. I realize now that my experience had guided me to make good decisions for my sons. My sons know how my stories have lived in my tissues, and they have grown up in both White and Black communities. I am so humbled by their emotional resilience and their capacity to experience the nuance and complexity of these times and their very proactive involvement with social justice.

Kate: Where are you now?

Roxlyn: Where I am right now is, I have been wanting to talk about race for a really long time. Race has been something that I have thought about every day of my life. When Obama was elected a lot of people were saying, "We are living in a post-racial society." That was not my experience, and now, the veil has been lifted ... everybody is talking about race now. I want to ask of our somatic organization: what do we see? Who is sitting in the circle? And what are they doing outside of the circle?

I am going into history now: 60 years ago Martin Luther King was in a group of White allies. He said, "It's sexy to integrate a lunch counter, if somebody has the money for a hamburger; it's sexy to go for voting rights because it doesn't cost anything." And, he also said, "We are going to lose allies soon, when the *real* work comes—changing our institutions, medical care access for all, housing, and fair salaries." And so, Kate—you remember Vietnam—everybody was on the streets!! I was raising money for Biafra, and then with the Vietnam War, we thought there was going to be *change*. We did get out of Vietnam, but here we are again! People say, "Oh my god, that was terrible what happened to George Floyd, or what happened to Breonna Taylor. We are so sorry about how people of color are dying of COVID-19 at alarming rates ..." but, what has really changed?

I live in the affluent White Upper Westside of New York City. When COVID hit, the city moved 200 homeless Black men into a hotel in my neighborhood. The city was attempting to reduce the spread of COVID by dealing with the over-crowding in homeless shelters. The racist slurs and backlash were swift. Someone put a noose up in front of the hotel. It was a long, hard-fought battle. I am happy to say the men are still there with full-time security guards in front. I ask, security for them? Or us?

I am in this unknowing place right now, and here's my question: **I don't think we are really going to come to any kind of remedy until we can drop down into each other's tone.** How do we talk to each other when we seem to hold such different perspectives? How to resonate with one another's tone?

Kate: Yes!! About tone—I want to ask, “What is “Blackness? What is Whiteness?” Can our BMC-world of somatics figure this out? Sometimes I feel that the definitions we have come up with end up being reductive, or even unconsciously token-izing. Do we ask, what are we in our bones? But no, even with bones the same color, we are born of different experiences, different histories. Can we resuscitate the original meaning of “intersectionality”—coined by Kimberly Crenshaw (1990)—where she writes, “**Intersectionality is an imperative to perceive when inequality exists.**” Intersectionality reveals complexity; it makes people think, rather than “label.”

Roxlyn: We say, “We want more people of color in the BMC Circle,” but do people of color trust that they can be in the Circle and be supported or listened to? I work with 2 young Black women from North Carolina. They loved the work but would be hesitant to sit in a somatic circle that doesn’t have anyone that looks like them. This is not the first time that I have encountered this. They don’t want to be in a situation doing deep work where people might not understand their process from their experience. They have experienced intentional and unintentional racism all of their lives.

Kate: Yeah, that happens in my little world too.

Roxlyn: I’m sure that it does. When I work in the city, I work with many people who are Jewish. There is a different tone to some of the people who grew up in White Christian communities. I probably recognize that tone because that is a tone that has played out in the Black community.

Kate: ... when I think about my childhood in NYC. We were having Passover with people who had run from the South, and from the burning crosses on their lawn. My father, as a journalist, marched with Martin Luther King. At our Passovers, there were 25-30 people, of Black and White folk, talking about Civil Rights, fighting the good fight. One time, Claude Brown [*Manchild in the Promised Land*] stood up at the table to make a speech about “freedom.” I remember his passion—a force—like you say, infused tonally. I remember, at 8 years old, feeling that I was seeing something big, feeling change, feeling history. Multiple histories layered upon a ritual, where year after year Jewish children are told an ancient story of being released from slavery. The message I got, back then, was that there was always more to be done, **and** to keep telling the story of the *Mitzrayim* (‘the narrow place”).

Roxlyn: I see what you are saying, Kate. The past is still with us. People could have dinner together but, how woven are their lives after Passover? I read *The Bond Woman’s Narrative*—written by a Black slave refugee. It took so much research to authenticate it. I was so deeply moved by her novel. I felt the truth that she wrote and wondered how she got there, faced with so many obstacles. The human capacity for resilience is inspiring. What do I learn from her? When I was a little girl ... I read Toni Morrison’s *The Bluest Eye*. I used to truly believe that when you were White, you had no prob-



lems. I wondered, what did all the Black people do that they have to sit in the back of the bus? They shape our conversations and the truth that we come to.

Kate: Black Lives Matter.

Roxlyn: Black Lives Matter has been about history, my history, my ancestry, bringing me to this moment in time, and as a somatic person. As a somatic organization, as a somatic practitioner, this is what I am interested in: where do I go next? I would like this to be our dialogue in the circle. This past year I sat in a space of chaos and not knowing. I wasn’t alone. I am encouraged by the voices and interest in our community to reach out and change some of the deep patterns of oppression that hold us all back. Sometimes those who are oppressed feel the devastation first, but everyone suffers. As we reflect on these times, our deep inability to cooperate as a collective caused a pandemic that cost so much to so many. We can do better. I am so grateful to my BMC practice and community. I know now that healing isn’t a solo experience—mine is going to take a community. Body-Mind Centering: support precedes motion¹ ...

Kate: Yes. I will hope that the support we find in Body-Mind Centering will precede a new movement. 🌱

1 This phrase is one of BMC’s basic principles.

Our 2021 Contributors

Carla Bottiglieri came to Somatics moved by the need to question the social and political constructions of agency and subjectivation, and in search of alternative aesthetic and clinical paradigms of care. Parallel to her dance training, she graduated in Classic Literature and Philosophy (University of Salerno), and holds a MA in Dance (University of Paris 8). She is a BMC Certified Practitioner, Teacher and IDME, as well as a Rolwing® Certified Practitioner.

Barbara Chutroo has master's degrees in dance/movement therapy and social work. She has worked with substance abuse and mental illness and currently teaches psychology at NYC College of Technology. She places the experience and organization of the body foremost in her world view. BMC informs her understanding of child development but she has also studied Buddhist meditation, Focusing, contact improvisation, Afro-Caribbean dance, 5Rhythms, Continuum Movement, and yoga. Dancing gives her joy.

Patricia Gracia is a dance/movement artist fascinated with pedagogy as a vehicle to facilitate the confluence of creative, social, and healing practices. She studied Contemporary Dance at the London Contemporary Dance School and Dance Movement Therapy at the Universidad Autónoma de Barcelona. She is a Body-Mind Centering Certified Practitioner, Teacher, and IDME and Administrative Director of the SME and IDME programs in Spain (Zaragoza), through Movimiento Atlas ([www.movimientoatlas.com / info@movimientoatlas.com](http://www.movimientoatlas.com/info@movimientoatlas.com)).

Thomas Greil, BMC teacher and IDME, works with the experiences and events which form us throughout life and explores how we meet challenges. He created the project "Making Connections" to support special needs families and offer workshops for parents and professionals. Besides many years of BMC experience, he trained as a JKA practitioner. Together with Carla Bottiglieri, he founded *minima somatica*, a nucleus of research investigating forms of circulation and sharing of body knowledges (www.minimasomatica.org).

Galabina Ivanova: Born and raised in Sofia, Bulgaria, spent many years in Germany and on tour with her viola, now based in Basel, Switzerland. Cultural scientist and musician by profession. In constant (re)search of expression, meaning and context: with music, poetry, body, tango, photography, psychology.

After obtaining a Master in History, **Eva Maes** (B) studied dance at Cunningham Dance Studio (NY) and Royal Conservatoire Antwerp. In 2003 she met the work of Lisa Nelson and started her studies at the School for Body-Mind Centering (USA), where she graduated in 2006 as Practitioner; in 2019 as BMC certified Teacher (IT). Fluctuating between educational, artistic, and research environments, she conducts the project 'Transmitting the body' at Royal Conservatoire Antwerp, Belgium. www.evamaes.wordpress.com evamaes@hotmail.com

Wendy Masterson, BMC Practitioner, RSME/T, RSDE, IDME, MFA, has an extensive career as an educator and artist. In 2016, she opened The Motion Space in Montana, where she combines her background as a Body-Mind Centering Practitioner; Infant Developmental Movement Educator; GYROTONIC® Pre-Trainer/Trainer and GYROKINESIS® Trainer; Somatic Dance Educator; and Reiki Master. She holds sessions for clients of all ages in-person and online. wendy.themotionspace@gmail.com

Roxlyn Moret, CMA, BMC Practitioner, Teacher, and Yoga Teacher, ERYT-500, RSME ISMETA. I have been exploring the healing and creative aspects of movement for 50 years. I am currently interested in how somatics can help to heal the ruptures in our communities. I have a private practice. I teach Embodied Breath Yoga classes and workshops on Zoom, in the U.S. and in Europe. I have taught in BMC Certified Programs. roxlynmoret@gmail.com.

Kristin Prevallet is a poet and the facilitator of Trance Poetics, an online course and community for medicines of language and imagination: www.trancepoetics.com

Toni Smith, MFA, BMCP, IDME, is a choreographer and a founding member of the NYS DanceForce. She was a member of the dance faculty at Skidmore College over three decades and served as the Artistic Director of the National Museum of Dance. Toni has a private practice in upstate New York and teaches BMC workshops, movement, and yoga for all ages and abilities. www.tonismithdance.com
Illustrator of Smith Article: John Kraft, MSpEd.

Maria Eugenia Spinelli. Independent art critic and curator until 2011. Engaged in movement from conception. Movement educator since 2011. Trained at Somaatikum (BMC SME Program), Pivarootsi Mõis, Estonia, 2019. Lives and works in Argentina. me@spinelli.com.ar

Karin Spitfire is an artist, who chooses whatever means necessary: performance (*Incest: It's all Relative* 1983-86), poetry (*Standing with Trees* 2005), artist books (*Press On: Rumination on the Fifth Chakra*), letterpress broadsides, and collaborative community "happenings" (*Sardine Extravaganza*, 2010) for expression. Nature, radical intersectional feminism, and Body-Mind Centering inform all her work.

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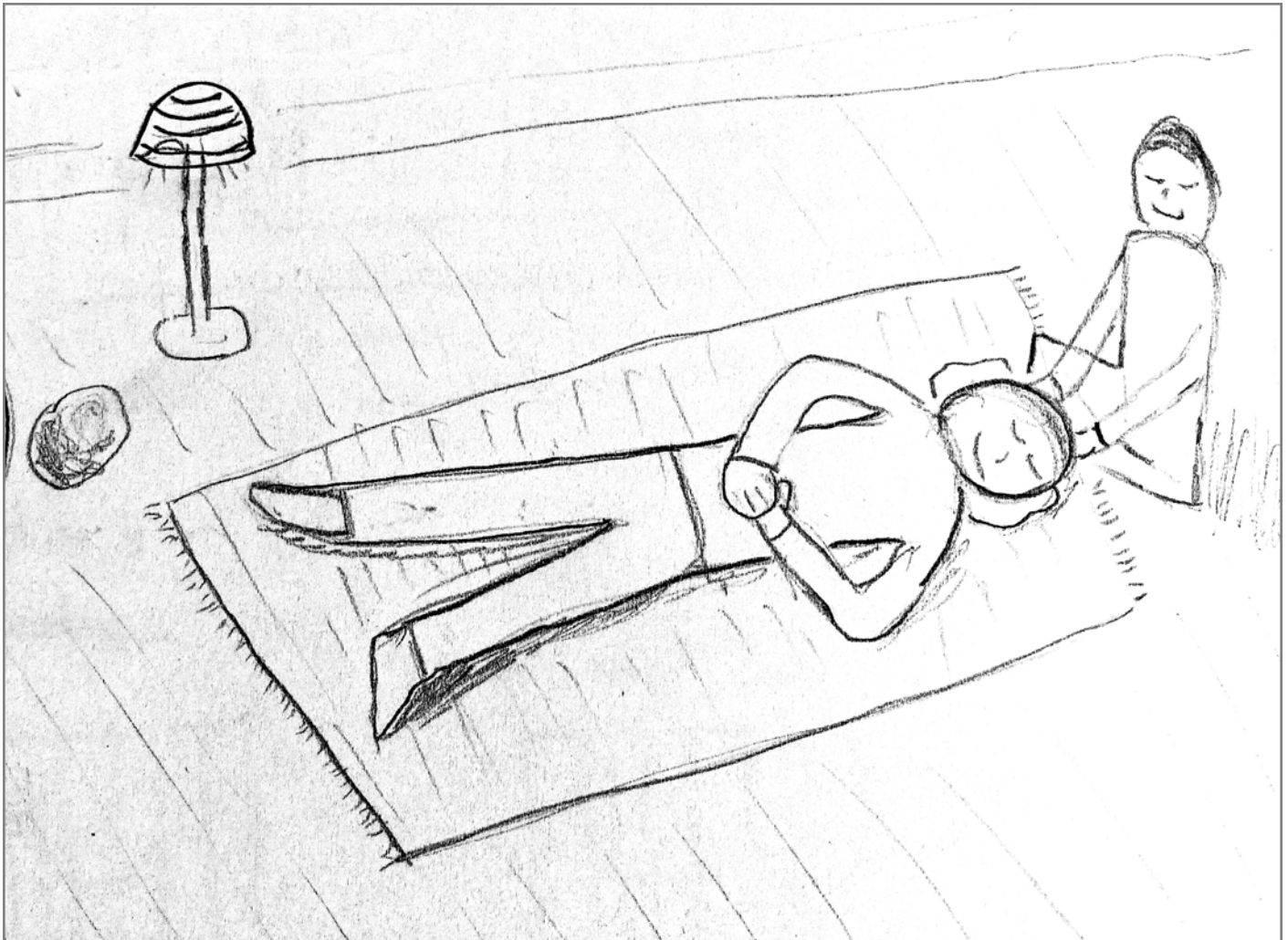


Illustration by Sebastian Bechinger

Navanita Harris' Description of Front Cover Image painted by Bholi, a participant in her training.

I just offered a practice to my training of containment and space: Briefly. I felt I needed this before arriving on membrane of cells. Beginning location of the container of the rib cage protecting and giving space to the breath breathing us. Then location of the back of lungs brought attention to the field of support of being backed up, rather than outer attending the overloaded information. Moving dancing touching location spacious inside of lungs breathing and the dimensionality of the rib cage...Intention softening holding and noticing being held ... Moved to space around body contained by walls. Noticing the shift inside outside and choice and being with both (was more here, guiding here). Then noticing space outside window with resources of membranes boundaries containment of space. Moving attention exploration between the spaces that are all the same. How the membrane shifts the orientation and attending to location. Completing with watching breath breathing belly breath and chest. Held by movement of space connecting us all. It felt good to offer the containment as a resource where sensation awareness strengthens the location of the whole body. Luxury is the body knows how to protect and the immune system is awakened with presence. The body knows what to do to take care.