CREATING CREATIVITY ©

Embodying the Creative Process

By Alan S. Questel

© Alan S. Questel 2000
For Jerzy Growtowski, George Morrison
and Moshe Feldenkrais.

The teachers who taught me how to learn and help me help others learn.
# Table of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 1</td>
<td>Creativity</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 2</td>
<td>New Criteria for Our Processes (Landmarks for our journey)</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 3</td>
<td>Knowing...Not Knowing...Knowing...</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 4</td>
<td>Attention...</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 5</td>
<td>If I Could Teach You One Thing...</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 6</td>
<td>Our Emotional Heritage, An Evolving Entity...?</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 7</td>
<td>Habits....the Making and Unmaking of Ourselves</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 8</td>
<td>Risk...Do We Take A Chance?</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 9</td>
<td>Connecting the Dots..........</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 10</td>
<td>Finding Center! Neutrality &amp; Biases</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 11</td>
<td>The Center of the Universe</td>
<td>115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 12</td>
<td>Touching the Fundamental</td>
<td>123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 13</td>
<td>The Pleasure of Challenge</td>
<td>137</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 14</td>
<td>Expression, Communication &amp; Listening</td>
<td>146</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 15</td>
<td>A Skeleton In Our Process</td>
<td>156</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td></td>
<td>166</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Introduction

Overview

This book offers you a unique doorway into the world of creating. It explores what it means to be creative, from many perspectives. It investigates the act of creation, the processes and inquiries involved in creating, and the results and consequences of creating. It also reveals what gets in the way of us creating effortlessly and easily, both as artists and in our everyday lives.

This book will be helpful for those who work professionally in the creative arts, such as painters, actors and writers; for those who enjoy creative pursuits as a hobby; and also for those who would simply like to enhance their creativity in their daily lives. It will also be transformative for people who consider themselves to be not creative, and who wish that they were. It provides an entry point for anyone who wants to deepen their understanding of what it means to be creative.

The fact that the content provided here is presented in the form of a written text might define it as an intellectual exercise or an abstraction of experience. However, my intention is for your experience of reading this book to be more than the mere consideration of ideas. More than simply the gaining of understanding, in the intellectual or cognitive sense. My hope is that what you read becomes "palpable, sensed and felt" within your self.

Therefore, the following chapters do not merely present ideas, concepts and arguments. They also present processes that invite the palpable sensing of our experience. As well as reading interesting and original ideas, you will also have the opportunity to do some very interesting and enjoyable movement explorations that will allow you to translate those ideas into direct embodied experiences. These movement explorations can be done at home by yourself, with a friend or in a group. They are all fairly short and easy to follow. They will lead you to a profound understanding of yourself and the patterns you unconsciously use when you strive to be creative.

The movement explorations will allow you to directly experience the ideas contained in this book in your own body. It is through the embodiment of our actions, thoughts and feelings that we can alter the way we create and be creative. Through this embodiment, we can change not only how we create in the sense of creating a work of art, but also the ways we create our lives, our relationships and ourselves.

Thus, in this book there is a union between the abstract and the concrete. This allows you, the reader, to experience a similar union within yourself, such that
your sense of yourself and the world you live in may begin to expand. Your sense of yourself may develop more fully into what you imagine yourself to be. You may even begin to discover a “you” that you cannot yet imagine.

It is important that we consider our interaction in this book to be like a conversation. A two-way dialogue between the ideas that are put forth on these pages, and your listening to them, your internal response to them, your assessment of their interest, meaning or value to you. Whilst you do not have the chance to respond directly back to me, as you would in a traditional conversation, nevertheless just this notion of two-way dialogue may shift how you pay attention to what is written here.

**Background to the book**

I started out my working life as an actor, but I didn’t conceive of this book on creativity until I undertook and completed my training in the Feldenkrais Method®. The Feldenkrais Method is an experiential learning system that fundamentally re-wires how we move, sense, think and feel. It will be explained in more detail below. In 1983 I had just completed my training as a Feldenkrais Practitioner and was teaching and participating in a weeklong workshop on personal-growth. During the week, I suddenly had this idea of wedding my two worlds, acting and Feldenkrais. I wrote out chapter titles that night (in August 1983), and every few years I would revisit this yellowed piece of paper, to find that the chapters still made sense to me.

As I began to write this book (many years later) I soon came to realize that what I was writing about was part of a world that was much bigger than just acting. It was about being creative. It became my aspiration to investigate the creative process, not just in theory but also through our actual experience.

I have always been attracted to experiences of all kinds, much more than to academic learning. It is these experiences that I have drawn upon to create this book. I’ve had the good fortune of having great teachers, a few careers and lots of interesting travel experiences that have all contributed to the evolution of my thinking. Whilst my acting training was foundational to this process, it was my training and experience in the Feldenkrais Method that gave me the means to more fully understand and express the ideas I had.

What initially drew me to the Feldenkrais Method was lower back pain. However, when I went to see a practitioner, I found the experience to be utterly fascinating. Not only did my back pain completely disappear, almost as if by magic, but I noticed in the ensuing days that my emotional state had altered, and my relationship to the outside world had changed. I became intrigued and decided to study the Method, thinking that I would pursue it part-time, to support my acting career. However, the training was so fascinating and transformative that I have
never really returned to my acting career, and to this day I practice as a Feldenkrais Practitioner and travel the world training other Practitioners in this extraordinary method.

**The Feldenkrais Method®**

The Feldenkrais Method was developed by Dr. Moshe Feldenkrais. Born in Russia, Feldenkrais immigrated to Israel at the age of thirteen. After receiving degrees in mechanical and electrical engineering, he earned his D.Sc. in Physics at the Sorbonne in Paris. He subsequently worked for a number of years in the French nuclear research program. Physically active, Feldenkrais played soccer and practiced the martial arts. He studied with Kano Jigoro, the originator of Judo, and in 1936 became one of the first Europeans to earn a black belt in that discipline. A chronic knee injury prompted him to apply his knowledge of physics, body mechanics, neurology, learning theory and psychology to the body and mind. His investigations resulted in the formulation of a unique synthesis of science and aesthetics, known as the Feldenkrais Method.

The Feldenkrais Method is a revolutionary approach for improving both physical and mental functioning through the exploration of body movement patterns and the use of attention. It is based on the brain's innate capacity for learning and the potential for lifelong development and growth. Movement is used as the medium towards understanding our habits and identifying, learning and acquiring alternatives, which promote ease and wellbeing. The applications of the Feldenkrais Method range from reducing pain, improving neurologically-based difficulties and learning disabilities, and increasing mobility, to enhancing performance of professional athletes, dancers, musicians, and actors.

The method is based on learning. Not the kind of learning that is based solely on information; rather it involves learning that can lead to a change in action, a change in thinking and feeling. The introduction of new variations through movement awakens curiosity and teaches adaptation for continually altering circumstances. Rather than attempting to learn the "right way" of doing something, or "correcting" or "fixing", we can explore choices, options, and different ways of using oneself. Thus, one can act more effectively and efficiently depending on the context and the intention in that moment. The Feldenkrais Method utilizes attention in a learning environment that is both safe, easy, and geared towards an appropriate degree of challenge. In this context, one can discover and shift habitual patterns that interfere with functioning. We become our own laboratory for developing understanding and awareness of our daily actions.

There are two main modalities of learning in the Feldenkrais Method: Awareness Through Movement® and Functional Integration®. Awareness Through Movement lessons are group sessions. (Awareness Though Movement sequences are the basis for the movement explorations you will experience in this book.) Participants are verbally led through a series of structured movement sequences.
that utilize attention, perception and imagination. Designed to evoke a more synergistic use of oneself, the lessons establish new patterns of movement. As the lessons progress, participants become more aware of their movement habits, affording new patterns of behavior. There are more than a thousand different lessons, with movements ranging from developmentally-based patterns to innovative configurations. The movements are usually done lying down or sitting, and in a manner that recognizes each participant's own pace and range of motion. Comfort, ease, and the quality of movement are the main criteria used, enabling the participant to develop their own inner authority.

The other modality, Functional Integration, is a one-to-one, hands-on interaction specifically designed to meet the needs of an individual. Practitioners guide students to a new and more varied use of themselves, primarily through the use of their hands. The quality of touch is non-invasive, informative, and interactive in nature. Students usually lie or sit and are comfortably dressed. As with Awareness Through Movement group lessons, these individualized sessions use movement as the means to promote changes in patterns of thinking, sensing, feeling and interacting with others.

The Feldenkrais Method aims to improve physical and mental functioning. It is applicable to anyone wanting to enhance the quality of his or her everyday life and activities. People from many different walks of life do Feldenkrais. They report results of increased vitality, enhancement of self-image, better breathing and posture, greater flexibility and range of motion, and reduction of pain. By bringing attention to the process of movement, students feel lighter and more graceful, and have greater ease and effectiveness in turning their intentions into actions.

For more information about the Feldenkrais Method check out my website www.uncommonsensing.com or the website of The Feldenkrais Guild of North America: www.feldenkrais.com.

**Application of the Feldenkrais Method to this book**

One of Dr. Moshe Feldenkrais’ many talents was his ability to make the abstract concrete. He was able to clearly and effectively take ideas and concepts and put them into the realm of experience. This was one of the many things I learned in my training with him, and it is the source for the movement explorations after each chapter in this book.

The movement explorations are all based on Awareness Through Movement sequences, and are designed to give you a direct embodied experience of the concepts covered in the chapter. I encourage you to take the time to go through these movement explorations fully, whether by yourself or with a friend or a group, for it is only by doing them that you will be able to get the true value from this book. You will find that they will not only bring about greater ease and freedom in your body, but will awaken your curiosity, enhance your relationship with yourself and
profoundly deepen your ability to be creative. Hopefully your personal experience and embodiment of the ideas contained here will develop, enhance and broaden your sense of yourself as a creative individual, as part of a creative community, within a creative world.

Hopefully your personal experience and embodiment of the ideas contained here will develop, enhance and broaden your sense of yourself as a creative individual, as part of a creative community, within a creative world.

The chapters in this book are successive approximations of a process that can help to unveil, inspire and evoke your own creativity. That is, each chapter builds on the ones before it; both in its content, its impact and in the possibilities it offers you for learning. As in most books, you may find that some chapters speak more directly to you than others. Nevertheless, I encourage you to keep reading through all of them. The final chapter provides the culmination of many of your experiences from the previous chapters. By going through the whole book in sequence and participating in the movement explorations in each chapter, the ending will bring you to a new beginning. A new beginning that you can make part of your everyday life and carry into every sphere of who you are and who you still would like yourself to be.

Ultimately, this book is about beginning. It is about starting. It is about taking action in a realm, any realm that extends us beyond our concept of the self.

So let’s begin.
CHAPTER 1

CREATIVITY

If I ran a school, I'd give the average grade to the ones who gave me all the right answers, for being good parrots. I'd give the top grades to those who made a lot of mistakes and told me about them, and then told me what they learned from them. — R. Buckminster Fuller

What is it we are referring to when we think of creativity? Usually in our attempt to define something as indefinable as this we fall into the trap of seeking ‘finiteness’. We want a good solid definition that tells us, once and for all, what we mean, what we are referring to and that confirms what we think we know. Let’s not do that here. Instead of trying to define “creativity”, let’s see if we can come up with some of the common characteristics of the “creative act”.

Our creativity does not happen outside of our actions. It is expressed through our actions. Our thoughts and feelings may contribute to and motivate our actions but it is only when we act, take action, act upon them... that we potentiate and manifest our creativity.

It is essential to acknowledge that there may be a long incubation period, both in thought and feeling, that leads us to an act of creation. Unfortunately, what I have experienced personally and seen in others is that this incubation period often replaces the actual act of creating. Feeling creative or having creative thoughts becomes confused with being creative. Many people have great ideas and inspirational feelings, but never enter into the process of doing, expressing or moving (in any direction). When there is no action taken after a long incubation period of thinking and feeling, we often feel distinctly uncreative.

I had an acting teacher in college, Joseph Anthony, a well-known Hollywood director. Joe was one of the most inspiring teachers I had met at that time in my life. One day Joe had me in front of the class and he spoke to me with such inspiration
and vitality that I thought I would burst with creativity. I began to recite my monologue only to discover that, while filled with inspiration, I had no idea of what I should do, no means to bring forth this inspiration into some form of expression, no ability to 'act', literally. But what I had done was to get up there and make the attempt. Without this attempt, as inept as it may have been, I could have felt inspired and creative and it would have only existed within myself. It is necessary to bring forth our internal thoughts and feelings into some form of action, something concrete that can be evaluated either by others or ourselves.

This leads us to another key factor, the ability to allow ourselves to be 'inept'. For many people this idea seems absurd. What does being inept have to do with being creative? Don't we want to be good and successful in our attempts to be creative? Of course we do! But what is really absurd is the belief that we must always be successful at being creative. In fact it is often through our multiple failures and our continued ineptness that we will evoke a moment of creativity. I love this quote from "The Dilbert Principle" by Scott Adams: "Creativity is making mistakes, art is knowing which ones to keep."

I am not suggesting that we should intentionally do things badly, thinking that this will make us more creative. We need to be able to allow ourselves to fail and continue to attempt again and not judge ourselves harshly in the process. We need to feel free to make mistakes and discover ourselves through our mistakes. We need to embrace our inability and lack, as one of the main sources of our creativity.

I've heard so many stories about great inventions that were actually mistakes. From the weak and useless glue that became "Post-it Notes" to the melted candy bar in the scientist's pocket that led to the microwave oven. These stories convey the idea that we need to remain open to possibilities that we may not have originally considered. Our failures at one endeavor may lead us to a creative breakthrough in another.

This is easier said than done, as we are almost always in a context of some import. That is, we are rarely in situations where it is acceptable to fail repeatedly, much less deliberately. In most of our life situations we generally try to be good or be the best or succeed and this is most often well intended. But this intention is one of the greatest constraints and inhibitors to our creativity because it doesn't allow us to feel safe enough to discover and learn through our failures, mistakes and ineptness. We are usually judged for our failures and this further confirms our belief that "we" are not one of those chosen few who are creative.

Of course we shouldn't completely disrupt our lives in order to foster our creativity. If I'm flying in an airplane, I don't want the pilot allowing himself to make mistakes in order to explore his creativity! So we need a very specific context where we can practice our ineptness, where we can be free from judgment, where we can fail miserably it won't affect our lives or the lives of others in any detrimental way. We must be able to not only have the freedom to make mistakes but also the time,
understanding and patience with ourselves to be able to explore and discover both the roots and the results of our actions.

What is implicit here is that we can learn from our mistakes. In fact we need to make learning explicit and use it as the foundation of our creative process. Learning must become central to being creative, as it can take the focus away from achieving an outcome and bring us back to something more immediate. Learning can orient us in new ways by reducing some of the demand we place on ourselves and giving us a container within which we can flourish.

Our learning becomes more tangible when we can elicit our curiosity. Our desire to explore and discover. Rather than focusing on answers, can we look for better questions? Our curiosity can keep evoking our beginner’s mind and become our guide into the unknown.

Probably the most demanding task throughout the process of creating is how we treat ourselves. A great paradox exists here because on the one hand we need to be engaged in a significant degree of challenge so that we demand a little more from ourselves, while on the other hand we need to be respectful and caring towards ourselves and honor where we are.

It is important that we are kind to ourselves, and accepting of ourselves. We need to begin where we really begin, instead of so desperately wanting to change ourselves. A Zen teacher I had, Kwon Roshi, once said, "We can view our desire to change as an act of aggression towards our self". We must not be aggressive towards our self. We must be willing to create a context to practice, for a few moments at a time, how to treat ourselves with kindness, acceptance, affection and even love.

This sounds great and we would all probably benefit greatly from being treated this way. What needs to be pointed out is being treated this way does not come from someone else. It does not come from the outside world. It must come from within us. My experience has shown me that being compassionate towards ourselves is one of the most difficult things for us to do. It is easy for us to consider being kind or accepting towards another but to direct this kind of attention towards ourselves is often uncomfortable. As we will see, the creative process is difficult, but we can create greater levels of comfort and safety in it through how we treat ourselves.

When we think of constructing a context of safety we must realize that this is an extraordinarily personal thing. What one person considers safe may be frightening to another, and what is frightening to another may not be challenging enough for someone else. This is why we must be careful as to how we go about defining, or even identifying common characteristics of, creativity. We also need to be extremely respectful of our subjective experience and of how we utilize the ideas
of others for our individual processes of creating (and I would include in this any ideas presented here).

Lastly we must recognize that although we talk about the “creative act”, it is actually a process, not an outcome. We may view the creative act as one moment but we must realize that it is part of an ongoing inquiry. This moment is not independent of what preceded it or what will follow. If we are capable of taking on this idea then we have truly entered into the realm of creativity.

To act, to be inept, to make mistakes, to learn, to be curious, to be kind towards ourselves, to assess ‘where am I now?’ to create a context of safety for learning, and to let ourselves be in our individual process, begins to build the necessary foundations for being creative. None of this guarantees that we will be creative. However, without these factors, creativity is further from our reach and more difficult than it needs to be when we do attain it. We will revisit all of these factors in greater depth and from different perspectives throughout our conversation.

At the end of this chapter there will be a process that may serve as a context in which you can explore these ideas, and palpably and concretely discover something about yourself and your own creativity.

**Do you know anyone who is creative?**

This is a question I like to ask when I teach. The answer is always "Yes, of course I know someone who is creative". Sometimes they know several people who are creative. It is my assumption that you too know someone who you think of as being creative. Have you ever considered what it is that makes them creative? Were they born that way? Or did they have some special training? Maybe they are creative in a particular domain or maybe everything they touch comes alive with a particular vitality.

What makes them different from you? Did you ever think of yourself as being creative? Was there any time in your life when you made something and you felt yourself to be creative? Often when I ask this question the answer is "No, well maybe once, but I was just a kid". When is it that most of us began to feel we were no longer creative? How is it that the creativity that is so evident in children does not always survive in us as adults?

Let me ask you another question. Do you think you have the potential to be creative? The response to this question is usually more positive, "Yeah, I guess I have the potential, but I don't know where it is". I love that answer, as if potential resided someplace and we could just go and find it.

**I have not yet met someone who I did not see as having the potential to be creative, think creatively or act creatively.**
If you think about the people who you see as creative, what makes them different from you? Isn't it true that your perception of their creativity is in comparison to yourself? That you have placed them in some higher regard because they seem to be able to do something that you cannot do?

Can you think of anyone who might view you as being a creative person? This may not be so easy to answer, but if you spend some time on it you can probably come up with someone. Of course the person you come up with may not be someone who you think of as being especially creative, so their opinion may not count according to your criteria of creativity.

Here is one of the ways we discount our creativity and ourselves. We think “there is always someone else better than I am and those who respect me don’t count”. How can we possibly believe in our own potential when we so frequently place ourselves in this double bind?

Have you ever asked someone whom you thought of as being creative if they feel they are creative? Many people will answer, "Yes" and just as many, maybe more, will say "Me creative? No, I’m not creative". So what is it that allows us to view someone as creative or to see ourselves this way?

Let’s examine some of the characteristics we observe in creative individuals. They seem to think of things that we would never think of. They see things from different perspectives. They act in ways we would not consider. They get ideas that seem totally new. They go beyond what is considered the norm. They take more risks. They are able to predict better. They notice things no one else seems to notice. They seem to listen differently. They ask different kinds of questions. They play more. They seem to enjoy what they do. They do things differently.

What is underlying all these observations about creativity? The simple answer is that the creative person understands choice. They know how to see choices. They know how to create choices. They know how to make choices. So in order to get a handle on creativity, we need to understand about choice. Let’s start with a fundamental question.

How many variables do we need to have a choice?

I get all kinds of answers to this question. The most common answer is 2. It is technically a correct answer, but does it really allow in us a feeling of freedom in our choice? Some people say the answer is 1 variable. This is also correct, because implicit in choosing something is not choosing it, so two choices are always present. However, most contexts where there are only two choices can feel very limiting. In fact having only two choices can sometimes produce a dilemma that leads to feelings of depression or inertia. For example, imagine a person who has the choice
of staying in a bad relationship or leaving that relationship and thereby being alone in the world. If you have ever been faced with this kind of choice you know it is not one that leads you to taking new action. The known commodity is almost always the chosen one. Let me share an instance of how I began to understand this.

I began to get an inkling into this question of choice many years ago, when I was studying at an acting conservatory. I was cast as Jakov, in The Seagull, by Anton Chekov. It was the smallest part I ever had. You may not be familiar with this role. Jakov is the servant, with only six spoken lines. Prior to this I always had good size parts, along with all the internal anxiety that accompanied them. In the beginning of the play, the characters Masha and Medvedenko are having a conversation, while somewhere else on-stage, Jakov is building a stage. They don’t know he is there until Jakov interrupts them. There were no directions from the script as to the nature of this interruption. When I heard my cue, I bounded into the scene, screaming from having just hit my thumb with a hammer. It was the most obvious intrusion I could think of, and it made sense as I was in the process of building something.

Now this moment was certainly not central to the scene and it was some time before I had the chance to enter again. A funny thing occurred during all that time when I had nothing to do. I came up with another idea. When I heard my cue, I ran about in a frenzy, pretending to be chased by bees. The scene went on and more time passed until my next opportunity to enter and lo and behold something else came to me. This time I stumbled into the scene, laughing and laughing, as if I just heard the funniest joke, and abruptly stopped, embarrassed that other people were around.

This time the other actors were shocked. They had not anticipated another variation in the interruption. My small moment began to take on new meaning as the director began rehearsing my entrance, again and again. And each time I did something new. I accidentally tossed something and went to retrieve it, I had a sneezing fit, I came out just to observe my handiwork as a builder. By this time the actors playing Masha and Medvedenko were becoming quite annoyed. What was this scene about anyway? The play was not the story of a servant making an entrance. They were central to the scene and they were being ignored.

But the director saw something. I was in the process of creating. In that moment I accessed something seemingly intangible and it would be many years before I would understand what I had done. So what did I do?

I discovered choices, created choices, acted on my choices.

Let’s come back to our question of how many variables are necessary to have a choice. Two variables work, but it is a very primitive kind of choice, in that it is easy to bind oneself with so few options. With two choices it is possible that no
action or movement occurs because the known entity can seem more reliable and it is often safer to stay put rather than risk something unknown.

But what happens if we add just one more variable? What can three variables afford us so that we might feel a little more space within ourselves, some possibility towards new action? I heard Mike Nichols, the director, speaking about actors he loved to work with. What he loved was that they brought in many, many ideas of what to do and how to be. If you think about it, it is much easier to eliminate choices rather than to having to invent them. If seeing choices, making choices, and inventing choices is in some way related to our capacity to be creative then three or five or ten variables opens innumerable possibilities.

Maybe those people who we think of as being so creative (and who themselves may not feel so creative) have the ability to see more choices than others do. Can we learn to do this too? Where should we begin?

My premise here, in fact the premise for this entire conversation, is that we need to have a palpable and “felt” understanding of what it means to make a choice. Just talking or reading about it doesn’t suffice. We need to investigate the processes and the action of developing choices. By actually experiencing how to generate choices we will achieve a deeper understanding of what it means and how we can access choice as ability, rather than just an idea.

**The palpable, the felt, the concrete...**

Jerzy Grotowski (director of the Polish Theatre Laboratory and a pioneer in avant-garde theatre in the 60’s and 70’s) was once asked the question "Jerzy, what is truth?" I was 20 years old at the time (and all knowing) and I rolled my eyes at the silliness of this question. Jerzy responded in a way that not only honored the person’s question, but also answered it in a most interesting way. He said, "As I see it there are two kinds of truth, one we get from reading books, and one we get from experience." I’m not suggesting that what is written here is necessarily the truth; we all have our own personal truths. My ideas can serve as something you can either move against or embrace. What is more important is that you have the chance to discover what is true for you. But not just what is true for you in your thinking, what is true for you in your felt and palpable sense of yourself. This is a reminder that although there will be value in reading this book, it will be your participation in the experiential explorations that will bring about its fullest intention.

What you are about to embark on is an embodied investigation, exploration and inquiry based on Feldenkrais® Awareness Through Movement® lesson. This movement exploration should take you somewhere between 30-45 minutes. (If it turns out to be significantly less than this, simply try it again at another time, going more slowly.) There are several criteria that will help to guide you throughout this
experience. I will go into more in-depth explanations of them later. For now, just follow as best as you can.

- Use a mat or blanket to lie on. Something that allows you to lie comfortably on the floor, without excessive padding.
- Always move slowly and easily.
- Let your own sense of comfort and pleasure be your guide.
- Do only what you can do easily, do not push or strain.
- As much as you can, observe and do what you are actually doing, not what you think you should be doing.
- Rest as often as you need to.
- Follow your attention gently. If you drift off, simply come back and start again.
- The repetition of movements is to provide you with the chance to make observations. Do the movements as an exploration, not as an exercise.
- The directions are in reference to yourself. For example, “up” always refers to above your head, not to the ceiling, and “down” is always in the direction of your feet.
- If you have any discomfort, make the movements smaller and slower. If discomfort still continues try simply imagining the movements rather than actually doing them.
- There is generally no wrong way to do these movements other than hurting yourself or others.
- There is also no right way to do these movements. This is not meant to confuse you, but to free you from the constraint of trying to do them “correctly”.
- If you get confused, slow yourself down and make whatever sense out of the instruction that you can right now. If you discover that you have been doing a movement differently than I described, congratulations, you just learned something!
- Make mistakes.
- Be inept.
- Be curious.
- Be kind to yourself.
- Stay in the process.
- Enjoy yourself!

Lastly, a note on imagining movements, as you will be asked to do this part way through this exploration. People imagine movements in different ways, for some it’s as if they are seeing themselves or someone else doing the movement. For others, when they imagine, it feels as if they are actually doing it. And some find they imagine as a kind of listening to themselves. You might find yourself imagining in one of these ways. But if you find that you have trouble imagining them, as many do, you can either pretend you are doing the movements (which is actually
imagining) or you can do them so small that no one would be able to perceive you moving.

*Lie on your back. Observe what you notice about yourself. Is your attention on your thoughts? Your feelings? Your sensations?*

*Bring your attention to how you are lying on the floor. Can you feel spaces between yourself and the floor? Where are they? Maybe there is a space behind your knees, your ankles, your neck, your shoulders, your lower back? Maybe in only some of these places, maybe in other places not mentioned.*

*How do the two sides of yourself compare to each other? Is one side longer or shorter? wider or narrower? Higher or lower? Thicker or thinner? Or do you have some other way of discerning a difference between one side and the other?*

*Bend your knees and place your feet so they are standing, with the soles resting on the floor. Notice if where you have placed your feet feels stable and easily supports your legs.*

*Lift the right side of your pelvis a little bit away from the floor and back again. Do this slowly 10-15 times. How do you do this? What do you feel when you make this movement? Where do you feel it? Pause for a moment.*

*Now lift the right side of your pelvis by pushing your right foot into the floor. Do this slowly 10-15 times. Is this different from what you initially did? Does this feel different? Is it harder or easier? Pause for a moment.*

*Now lift the right side of your pelvis by rolling the left side of your pelvis towards the floor to the left. Do this slowly 10-15 times. How does this differ from your previous movements? Pause for a moment.*

*Now imagine that there is a ribbon tied around your right knee and someone is gently pulling that ribbon downward and to the left, so that it starts to lift the right side of your pelvis. Do this slowly 10-15 times. Is this any different from the previous ways of lifting your pelvis?*

*Straighten out your legs and rest. Observe, as you rest, what does lying on your back feel like now? Are there any differences compared to when you first lay down?*

*Bend your knees again and put your feet standing. Explore the different ways of lifting the right side of your pelvis. Find the easiest way for you. If you like, you can combine the three different ways you already explored.. Then lift the right side of your pelvis the very first way you lifted it. Is it your preference?
Straighten out your legs, and rest. Observe how you lie on your back.

Bend your knees again and put your feet standing. Place your left arm, palm facing the ceiling, on the floor, diagonally up to the left (somewhere around 10:00-11:00, as if you were lying on large clock face). Slowly and gently begin to lengthen your left arm in the direction it is pointing in, and bring it back to where you started. Do this slowly 10-15 times.

Continue lengthening your left arm and at the same time begin to lift the right side of your pelvis (in whichever way is easiest for you). Think of connecting these two movements so they become one; as if lifting your pelvis lengthens your arm or lengthening your arm lifts your pelvis. Do this slowly 10-15 times.

Straighten out your legs, rest. And observe how you lie on your back now.

Come back to the same position. Lengthen your left arm as you lift the right side of your pelvis. Begin to roll your head to look at your left hand as you do these movements. Roll your head back to the middle as you lower your pelvis and shorten your arm. Do this slowly 10-15 times, again trying to connect these movements.

Straighten out your legs, and rest. Is the floor telling you something different than when you started?

Come back to the same position. Lengthen your left arm as you lift the right side of your pelvis while you roll your head to look at your left hand. As you look at your left hand begin to move your chin towards your left hand. You can also think of this as sliding the back of your head towards your right shoulder. Go slowly and find out how you can make all of these movements part of the same action.

Rest and sense any differences in how you contact the floor.

Come back to the same position and do the same movement. As you do this movement begin to lengthen your right arm, with the palm facing the ceiling, downward, in the direction it is lying. Can you make this part of the whole movement? Does including this arm bring more of your back into action?

Rest.

Bend your knees and put your feet standing. Slowly lift the right side of your pelvis and see what it is like now. How does it compare to when you first lifted it? Only two times, lift the left side of your pelvis and notice any differences between the right and left sides.
Keep your feet standing and imagine that you are lifting the left side of your pelvis in the three different ways you explored earlier.

Bring your right arm on the floor overhead, and imagine that you are lifting the left side of your pelvis as you imagine lengthening your right arm.

Continue imagining this movement and add in imagining the movement of your head turning to the right and the chin going towards your right hand.

And finally, add the imagined movement of your left arm reaching downwards.

Imagine the whole movement. Then, starting with an imperceptible amount of movement, begin to actually do the movement. Notice any differences between what you imagined and what you are doing. If it is different, go back and imagine it with this new information.

Rest.

Bend your knees and put your feet standing. Gently lift the left side of your pelvis and find out what it is like now. Lift the right side a few times and feel how they compare.

Keep your knees bent and bring both arms overhead, on the floor. Begin to lift the right side of your pelvis, lengthen your left arm upward and your right arm downward and look to the upward hand. As you bring your pelvis and arms and head back to the starting position, switch to the other side; i.e. lift the left side of your pelvis and lengthen the right arm upward and the left arm downward and look to the right hand. Begin to go from side to side observing any differences or similarities.

One last time, with your knees bent and feet standing, lift one side of your pelvis and think of the different ways of initiating the movement. Do you have a different sense of how you might choose to lift it? Has incorporating more of yourself into this action helped clarify how you do it?

Lengthen your legs and sense how you are lying on the floor now. Has it changed from the beginning? Do you notice different things? Slowly roll to your side and come to standing. Walk around and find out if anything is different in your movement, the way you sense yourself or in your walking.

If you are having a different experience of yourself, let it run it's own course. Try not to hold onto any sensations (even if you prefer them). Continue to observe any other differences you may feel throughout the rest of your day or evening.
Over the next few days, as you are carrying out various actions, notice if there are different ways you might engage in those actions. Practice developing more options of how you do things. Just as you did by lifting your pelvis in different ways, see if you can create new ways of doing what you already know how to do.
CHAPTER 2

New criteria for our processes
(Landmarks for our journey)

“The need to be right all the time is the biggest bar to new ideas.”
Edward de Bono

If we are to embark on a journey we need landmarks to be able to assess where we are. The journey into ourselves is usually guided, or misguided, by all kinds of voices and ideas to do with what is right or correct. We often try to live our lives in the right ways, avoiding the wrong ways, at all costs. But how do we define right and wrong, correct and incorrect? Are we using criteria that allow for our creativity to develop? Do our assessments have enough breadth so that we are able to see that what is right or correct for one context may be wrong or incorrect for another?

There is nothing wrong with right and wrong. We need these values in many situations in our lives. Our dilemma stems from the fact that these criteria are our default operating system when we enter new domains. For example, when I teach in Feldenkrais® Professional Training Programs I am often introducing new ways of thinking and doing. What I have observed is that when my students are asked to do something they have never done before, they want to be good at it - even though they have never done it before in their life! Instead of realizing they are embarking on a process to learn something new, they most often go into their default mode of “Am I doing it right?” We all do this, it is not wrong to do this and we probably, at least in the beginning, cannot not do it. Over time, with a supportive environment we can more and more quickly and consistently move out of “right and wrong” and into “what am I doing now?”

For the time being let’s more closely examine right and wrong and see if there are ways in which it can serve us better. We can examine the rightness or wrongness of how we perform our actions by breaking them down into four
essential criteria. They are our structure, the action itself, the environment, and the intention we bring to the action. The synthesis of these four variables can allow for a more complete understanding of what it is we mean when we say something is right or wrong, correct or incorrect.

By our structure I mean who we are. What our shape and size, our abilities and disabilities allow us to do. The color of our hair, the size of our feet, the strength of our arms all have influence over our actions. For example, your ability to reach for something on a shelf is determined by your height, how easily you can lift your arm, etc. If you have difficulty reaching for something because it is placed high up, standing on your tiptoes may be necessary. But if someone who is much taller than you stood on their tiptoes to reach for something on the same shelf it would seem silly, unnecessary and maybe even a little weird. The rightness or wrongness of how we perform an action is therefore informed by our structure and who we are.

Who we are also includes our knowledge and experiences. If we gave a western IQ test to a child who had spent their whole life in the jungle, they would most likely fail it, assuming they could read at all. But if they were left alone in the bush, that same child would probably have the ability find their way, feed themselves and create shelter for themselves. To a child in this kind of circumstance a high western IQ wouldn’t be of much value. It is this structure, who we are physically and the context of our experiences, that is the first determinant of the rightness of an action.

The action itself is the next important factor to consider in determining the rightness or wrongness of the way we perform that action. The action tells us how we will use our structure. The amount of force we use, as well as the direction and orientation, will vary from one action to another. Hammering a nail and combing your hair are very different actions, yet both require that you grasp an object in your hand. The tightness of your grasp, as well as the trajectory you move your arm through, is determined by the action. What is “right” for one action just won’t work for another. Try hammering a nail, holding the hammer as you would hold a comb, or try combing your hair, grasping the comb like a heavy hammer. You may in fact be able to do this, but you can also surely feel how out of balance or incorrect your use of yourself becomes. To experience this factor right now, stand up and slowly walk around and feel how your feet contact the ground as you walk. Most of us place the heel down first then the ball of the foot. Now jog on the spot for a few moments. As you jog, do you place your heel on the ground first, or does a different part of your foot contact the floor? Now try walking slowly with the kind of contact you felt while jogging. Then try jogging coming down on your heels first. Notice which kind of foot contact makes it easier to jog or walk. We must use ourselves differently depending on the actions we are engaged in.

The environment also determines how right an action is. We can train ourselves to walk elegantly for the stage, but if we tried to walk through a jungle this way it would be idiotic. We would exhaust and probably hurt ourselves. The way
we walk on ice is different than how we walk on sand, or in mud, or on concrete. The correct use of ourselves walking uphill is very different than walking downhill or along the side of a hill. We move differently in bright sunlight or extreme darkness.

The times and cultures we live in can also be viewed as our environment. In our culture burping out loud is considered rude, in others it is a compliment to the chef. What we think of today as the correct physique for women differs radically from what was thought to be correct in Ruebens time, as can be witnessed in his paintings. Most of the time we use our innate intelligence to make the necessary accommodations to both our physical and cultural environment. If we didn’t, we would frequently injure ourselves, both physically and psychologically. It is usually quite obvious when someone is an environment they are not accustomed to, as this is visible in their inability to negotiate that environment. Whether we make these adjustments or not, the environment plays a large role in dictating the “correct” way of acting.

Lastly we come to our intention. This is often what motivates us to act in the first place. Our intention brings us into relationship and action with our environment. It is the reason for what we do. Imagine what the quality of your walking would be if you were taking a relaxing stroll through the woods on a beautiful day. How different would your walking be if you were hunting something? What would it be like if something were hunting you? Could you imagine lolling through the woods in an easy, carefree manner while you were being chased or hunted? Someone who did that would quickly be labeled as being a little cuckoo, or at least not having much concern for their own life. If you have ever had the intention of gaining or losing weight you probably restricted your diet in some way. You may have noticed how this affected when you ate, what you ate, how you cooked, when and where you shopped, etc. A shift in our intention can produce a significant shift in how we act. The “correctness” of our actions is therefore informed by our intentions.

All of our actions take place relative to these four variables and must all be considered when we examine how right or correct something is. We all have predetermined ideas about things such as good posture or the right way to ski or the correct use of make-up, even how to be creative. When we stop looking for new possibilities and we complacently accept these ideas as all there is, we are usually living by someone else’s standards. Whenever we believe that there is a right way to do something we have constrained ourselves and imposed a limitation upon ourselves. Our understanding of our structure, the action itself, the environment and our intention can help us begin to shift our idea of what is right, wrong, correct and incorrect. By looking at our actions through these various lenses we may also discover that we can invent new ways of doing things that go beyond the accepted norms.
We have broadened our criteria for what it means to be correct or incorrect but can we also find some new criteria for our actions that go beyond simply determining their correctness or incorrectness? If we are to create an environment where we can make mistakes, be inept, learn, be curious, be kind towards ourselves and create a context of safety what is it that we can pay attention to beyond right and wrong so that we may grow or evolve?

**A New Realm of Criteria**

In the first chapter you experienced a movement exploration that was based on your movements and the use of your attention. But what was it you were attending to? It may have been your thoughts or feelings (in the emotional sense), sensations or the movements themselves. The place that I primarily directed your attention was to your sensations. It is quite intentional, as sensations are immediate and concrete. They are what are occurring in us at this very moment. While thoughts and feelings may also be occurring, sensations are open to less interpretation or analysis. Our sensations can become our guideline as to where we are in our process. They are a rich source of knowledge about ourselves if we take the time to listen to them and educate ourselves about ourselves, through ourselves.

The utilization of our sensory life is not a task that we can just decide to do. It takes practice and a very particular kind of practice at that. Included in this practice are all of the common denominators we mentioned earlier. To act, to be inept, to make mistakes, to learn, to be curious, to be kind towards ourselves, to create a context of safety and to let ourselves be in our individual process. We need to take the time to develop within ourselves the necessary references, distinctions and criteria that will help inform us as to where we are in some consistent way. It is literally like learning a new language.

It is most important that we are patient with ourselves when we cannot clearly recognize what we sense. It is a good starting place to be able to say, "What I sense at this moment is that I cannot sense anything, or I'm confused about what I sense or when I think about sensing my back I only sense my neck." All of these are not only perfectly acceptable they are accurate assessments of ourselves.

How have we been taught to sense ourselves? When is it that you become aware of a particular sensation in yourself? Most people I know, including myself, have only brought our attention to our sensations when we are in discomfort. When we are uncomfortable we begin to listen to ourselves! If I sit in an awkward position my back may start to ache or my foot may fall asleep. If I'm walking or standing too long I may begin to notice my feet or my knee may start to feel tight. So what do we do at these moments? We adjust ourselves and then usually forget about ourselves until some new discomfort arises, then we again adjust ourselves and so on and so on.
Isn't it a completely bizarre criterion that the main times we sense ourselves is through our discomfort and pain?

Let's look at it from another point of view. When do you sense yourself through pleasure? How many times a day? During what events? If we list them I think we'll find that there are not a lot of times in our lives when we actually give ourselves permission to feel pleasure. The content of this list may vary for different people, but nonetheless much of it may serve as a common denominator.

Let's list some. I can experience pleasure in my sensations through sex, sports, exercise, eating, sleeping, listening to or playing music, dancing, conversation, a hot bath, a stroll on the beach, yoga, the arts and... ??? ... what else? This is not a very long list and certainly many of these activities are not pleasurable for many people. There may be some that we left out, but probably not many. Even if you found pleasure in all of these, how many hours or minutes of each day would it account for? Other than sleeping and eating, which we need to do for our survival, the rest doesn't add up to a lot of time when we seek to experience ourselves with pleasure as our main criteria.

There was a time in your life when you did use pleasure and comfort as the standard for almost all of your actions. It was when you were a child. As children we experience the world through our sensations. If we are uncomfortable we cry or struggle. When we are hungry, in a wet diaper, feel constrained by our stroller or don't like the sensation of wearing a hat, we do not tolerate it. When a child is held or touched in some unpleasant way they let you know about it at that very moment. Rarely will you hear a child say, "you know when we went to the zoo earlier today, you were holding my hand too tight." Or if you have ever watched a child drawing, they are constantly moving around the page. Literally moving themselves around it. Their experience of drawing is intrinsically connected to their internal sensations of pleasure and comfort. Have you ever heard a child get up from drawing a picture and say, "Mommy, my hip is stiff". Not very likely.

It is not that children do not struggle. They do. If you have ever watched a baby learn to roll over you know that they work hard at it, huff and puff and struggle. But once their intention is achieved and learned they will not tolerate discomfort in the act. If there is discomfort present they will stop doing it. Children like to play and have fun and they are serious about it. So serious that if you take away the pleasure they stop whatever they are doing. We all have been taught to ignore our sensations of comfort from an early age. Whether it was "stand still" or "don't get your dress dirty" or "stop that", whatever "that" was, our growing up was comprised of learning how not to attend to ourselves.

Now this may seem sad and yet at the same time it is necessary. If we only acted out of pleasure our civilization would look quite different, maybe not so civilized. When someone retains the internal values of a child when they are an adult, they appear to be simpleminded or immature. This loss of innocence is
important so that we may find it again as adults. So we can be conscious of it, because as children we are not able to make this as a distinction. We don't need to be childish but we can regain our childlike qualities of pleasure and comfort in our sensate life and discover what it is like to play again.

Imagine what our lives would be like if pleasure or comfort were one of the main standards through which we determined our actions. I am not suggesting that we eliminate struggle or challenge from our lives, in fact later we will investigate the necessity of difficulty and the means to stay with it. What I am suggesting is we learn to tolerate greater states of pleasure and to explore when this can be an appropriate criteria for our lives.

I began this section suggesting that sensations should become our new criteria for our process. We have been discussing pleasure but we must be clear that pleasure is merely one way, among many, of perceiving our sensations. Our sensations are felt in myriad ways, are ever changing and can be recognized in many ways.

Right now as you are reading this what can you sense of yourself? Maybe the book in your hand or your back or bottom against the chair, maybe your feet on the floor or the crossing of your legs. When we are asked to notice ourselves we all have the ability to do so. But do we really? I mean how much of ourselves do we really include when we listen to ourselves?

Notice in whatever position you are in right now, what is the sensation in your chest? In the back of your neck? In your shins? As I ask you these questions your attention goes to these places and either you sense what your chest, neck or shins are like or you may realize that you do not have a clear sense of these areas and in fact you may have no sensation to speak of. In another position or activity it is likely that you would have a very clear sensation of your chest or neck or shins. Then why is it that you don’t sense them now?

This is one of the big questions about ourselves. Our perception of ourselves is usually partial, segmented; yet our whole self is always involved in everything we do. Think of it, your chest, neck, shins, even your little pinky toe is always involved in everything you do. Sometimes these parts are passively involved, sometimes actively, but they are always part of us and that being so, they are always part of what we do. Maybe there is some correlation between how we sense ourselves, how much of ourselves we can sense and how our intentions are realized. This may have some impact on how we go about creating our lives and being creative. Can the recognition and inclusion of more of ourselves guide us to a more creative life?
The Process of Creating

The creative act is a process not an outcome or a thing. To understand this we need to delve more deeply into what we mean by a “process” and specifically the creative process. Usually when we think of a process is consists of a systematic series of actions directed to some end. Its derivation comes from the French word proces - journey, a going - and from the Latin word procedere - go forward, proceed. I like these roots as they speak more to the unknown aspect of the process itself. A journey, while we may have an intended destination, has an adventurous quality to it and to go forward doesn’t necessarily lead us to where we thought we were going.

Most of the processes we engage in have a known outcome. In actual fact, we like this. Knowing where we are going makes us feel safe, secure and in control of our immediate task. This is representative of our desire to know our fate and where our lives are headed.

The trap we often fall into when we are engaged in a process is that we habitually fix our attention on the outcome, the goal, even if this is only an image of what we would like to happen. We direct more and more energy onto this one thing and more often than not we don’t arrive there. We are like a horse wearing blinders, lacking the ability to take in our surroundings, other paths and the whole of our environment. When this happens we often miss out on some great opportunities and we don’t even know that we are missing them because we are so focused on where we think we should be or where we want to be.

I first discovered this when I was an actor. Whenever I would get a new role in a play I would immediately begin to get a very clear image of how I would portray this character. I would spend weeks putting all my attention and effort into achieving this image. But this image was elusive, out of my reach, as if I was trying to dunk a basketball into a hoop that was not within reaching distance.

The interesting thing about this was I never arrived at the image I initially created. The image was important as it gave me some direction to move towards, but I always arrived at an unexpected place. A place I never could have predicted. This place was up at the same level as, and sometimes higher than, the original image I had held, but it was my process of exploring that character that guided me throughout, not my image. Over time and several acting teachers, I began to discover something of my own process, my own way of developing a character. This process eventually became more important and useful to me than trying to achieve a predetermined image.

Our way of thinking of process tends to be linear. A leads to B leads to C and so on. A real process is not so predictable. A can lead to Q and Q can lead to 45 and 45 can lead us to snow or to r or to the weather and back to A again. To really represent this I would have to jump from page to page, even to other objects in the
room surrounding you. When we think in a linear fashion we make our process more finite. We need to be able to practice a kind of lateral thinking, acting and sensing that allows us to discover that which we don't notice on first glance. We must add more dimension to our perceptions and rehearse how to shuttle around this landscape.

Dr. Moshe Feldenkrais, who later became a teacher of mine, as I mentioned in the Introduction, once yelled at my whole class: "You all want to be over there, but when you get there, it's not what you thought it would be and you want to be somewhere else again!" This is such a recurrent pattern in human thinking. Instead of appreciating where we are, we search for the next thing or place or activity, hoping that this time we will be happy and get what we want. I have a friend whose mother-in-law is always asking what time they plan on returning from their weekend in the country. It's a reasonable question except that she always asks it on the way up to the country!

How many times throughout our day are we already in the next place? I do it all the time. Looking ahead can often be helpful in our planning and in making adjustments to our allocation of time. However, in the creative process (and we could even include some of our everyday life in this) we have to be able to assess "where we are now".

This question is actually preceded by another question, which is, "Where am I beginning?". It is a question that can be asked only once, and from there the question becomes "Where am I now?" The first question is significant as it sets the context of our experience. It is not always necessary but more often than not is very useful. It is a kind of a 'wake-up' to the moment of entering our process. It sets the criteria, through which we can make the necessary distinctions that tell us how far we have come.

So where are we now? And an even bigger question is: How do we determine this? Of course the comic's answer to "Where are we now?" is "We are in this room or we are in California, where do you think we are?" This answer, while intended as a joke, is an important part of making assessments within this process. But it falls short of what we need because once the question is answered like this we are finished with the question unless we move to another room or another State.

The answer lies within us. This is the "how" of determining where we are now. It exists, continually, in our sensory perceptions. This is an endless source of information and experience. Our sensory life is rich and ever changing. It includes our seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, touching and feeling/sensing. Our thoughts and emotional feelings also continue within us throughout, but they are, more often than not, attached to a situation or context and hence are colored in ways that render them less appreciable or acceptable to us.
What is so valuable about sensory information is that it exists right now. How you sense your back and your bottom and how your hands hold this book as you read it are all experiences that occur in this very moment. This sensory enquiry is one of the keys for bringing our attention, bringing ourselves, into the moment of the process we are engaged in. It demands that we listen to something other than the outcome of our process. It offers us the chance to pause and assess "Where am I now?"

I've seen many plays and movies where there a climax or catharsis occurs and then the next scenes are usually dull and lack the vitality that was so evident during the high point. The same thing can occur when a writer or painter finishes a piece and then feels uninspired or nothing comes forth for them to produce next.

This phenomenon is common to much of our everyday life as well. When we experience a peak, a valley usually follows it. How can we connect these peaks and valleys and not give up the texture of life that they afford us? If we come back to the question "Where am I now?" we might find an answer hidden within.

In any process we can define a beginning, a middle and an end. We usually pay more attention to the beginning and the end. The middle is often a gray area that is defined by what has come before or after. It is interesting, in light of what we looked at earlier, that this middle is closer to "now". Is it possible to understand the stages of beginning, middle and end differently from how we usually experience them? These three temporal distinctions are the result of our perceptions. If we were to perceptually make a shift, what would this middle, or the beginning or end for that matter, look like?

Is it possible to create a new relationship between these parts and find ourselves, instead of being at the beginning or the end of our processes, continually in the middle, in the now?

Let's do another experiment in movement and see if we can broaden our understanding and deepen our experience of this.

Follow the same guidelines as you previously used. There is more repetition of the same movements in this lesson so pay attention to when you need to rest.

*Begin in sitting. It can be in a chair or on the floor, whichever is more comfortable for you.*

*Slowly come from sitting to standing. What do you notice in yourself as you do this action?*

*Keeping going from sitting to standing and pay attention to the beginning (A) of this action. The smallest sense of beginning that you can perceive.*
Rest

Again go from sitting to standing and this time pay attention to the end (C) of this action. How clearly can you discern the end?

Rest

Again go from sitting to standing and sense the middle (B) of this action. The middle of this action has a broad range.

As you continue can you sense the middle of the middle? Each time find for yourself a more accurate sense of where the middle is.

Rest

Do the whole action paying attention to the beginning (A), the middle of the middle (B) and the end (C). As you continue doing it, internally mark each of these distinctions.

Rest

Now we are going to shift to a new beginning. Start your action in the middle of the middle (B), go to the end (C) and add on a new action (D). (Make sure the middle (B), from where you are starting is a comfortable position for you. Adjust this position so it is comfortable.) This new action can be any kind of movement you would like, a step forward, reaching your arms, turning, etc.

Repeat this new sequence and get familiar with it. The original middle (B) is now the beginning, the original end (C) is now the middle and you have created a new ending (D). Each time you do this see if you can get clearer about exactly where the beginning, the middle and the ending are.

Rest

Now we are going to shift again. Start your action with the end (C) of the very first sequence, go to the move you added on (D) and then create another new action (E). Now your beginning was the end of the original action (C), your middle is the first new movement you created (D) and the end is the second new movement you created (E). Get familiar with this new beginning, middle and end. Really investigate the beginning of the beginning, the middle of the middle and the end.

Rest
Again, start from the place that was the middle of the last sequence (D),
go to the end of that sequence (E) and add on another new movement (F).
Practice this new sequence sensing the distinctions of this new beginning,
middle and end.

Rest

And one more time, start from the place that was the middle of the last
sequence (E), go to the end of that sequence (F) and add on another new
movement (G). Practice this new sequence sensing the distinctions of this new
beginning, middle and end.

Rest

Come back to the very first movement you did (A, B, C), going from sitting
to standing. Do it a few times. What is it like now? Does the end still feel like the
end or are you drawn into further action as a result of this experiment? Do you
experience more of a sense of continuity or connection? Does the process
itself engage your attention more fully? Is the middle, the “now” more
interesting and palpable?

Start from the original beginning and continue the movement, each time
adding another piece. As you go through it are you drawn to adding more
movements? Explore this more on your own.

Is it possible to take an experience like this and throughout your day ask
yourself “Where am I now? Am I in the beginning, the middle, or the end of what I
am doing? If I’m in the middle, is it the end of something else or the beginning of
another action?” I encourage you to practice this kind of questioning. Not all day
long, but intermittently throughout your day. Perhaps you’ll find as a result of this
exploration that your attention is now more on what you are actually doing rather
than on the past or the future, and you may discover things that you might
previously have overlooked.
Many, many years ago in the old days in Russia, a Rabbi was walking to synagogue early on a Saturday morning. A Cossack riding on his horse came upon the Rabbi and demanded to know where the Rabbi was going. The Rabbi shrugged his shoulders and with a smile said, “I don’t know”. The Cossack was outraged by his response. He knew the Rabbi was headed for the synagogue and he became so incensed he dragged the Rabbi off to jail as punishment for lying to him. As the Cossack was turning the key in the lock of the jail door the Rabbi smiled and pointed his finger at him and said, “You see, I told you I didn’t know where I was going!”

An old parable by Anonymous

To know or not to know... Now this is a question! Earlier we briefly looked at our need to know what will happen in the future and how we spend much of our time planning and predicting our lives. Again we must acknowledge the importance of such knowledge in many areas of our lives. But when does this need to know become a hindrance to our creativity? Or better yet, when can not knowing enhance our creativity? In a truly creative process not knowing is essential. Let’s spend some time exploring ‘not knowing’.

What do we mean by ‘not knowing’? For many people it is simply a lack of information. A blank to be filled in and then checked off, “Good, now we know”. For others not knowing is a state of confusion and anxiety, something to be avoided at all costs. Some people experience not knowing as a terrain to be discovered and embraced. While others use it as a strategy to avoid making decisions or acting in the world.

There is something enticing about the unknown. It can lead to discoveries, new domains and new experiences. It brings us to the cutting edge of ourselves and holds all the possibilities for the self that we can only imagine. It offers us the hope of a future that will be better than our past or present.
But also implicit in not knowing is a certain amount of risk. It is a dark place that can be dangerous, where we can be injured or get lost. It lacks the safety of the past or present. What is known is an easier commodity to choose.

The feelings that accompany the unknown are unpredictable. The excitement of discovery or the terror of being lost are both extreme states. There also exists the murky, vague place in-between, the middle of nowhere. A place where we have little or no sense of where we are or what we are feeling or where we are going. I think the majority of us are not thrilled with the feelings that accompany that place.

As much as we like knowing what is going to happen or how things are going to be, when our world becomes too predictable we give up a good deal of our vitality and excitement. We enter into the mundane and we lose the element of surprise. The known is safe. It is home, recognizable and familiar. The unknown is a journey where we can get lost and possibly never find our way back.

The truth is, whether we want to admit it or not, we live in the unknown. No one really knows what will happen in the next 5 minutes, months or years.

I have a friend who often goes running. Whenever he runs in new places, he loves to get lost. When he first told me this it seemed bizarre to me. I had always spent more time and energy remaining oriented, so I wouldn’t get lost. The thought of intentionally creating a context where I didn’t know where I was put me into an uncomfortable state of anxiety.

Here is a great part of our dilemma in being creative and dealing with the unknown. To create something known is not so creative. It is replicating or redoing something from our past or someone else’s ideas. To create something new, to have a new experience of ourselves, demands that we step outside of our known boundaries into not knowing. And if we are to do this we must learn to tolerate the accompanying feelings. So how do we do this? What is it that might sustain us in the more difficult moments in the creative process?

Initially I’m going to lay out some aspects of working in the unknown that may be helpful for people who are embarking on a creative process. Later I’ll go into a more specific context where you may practice (and possibly even revel in) these ideas.

The first approximation of this is to acknowledge that difficult feelings may arise as part of our endeavors. We must accept the fact that our process will not be all peaches and cream. If this is not recognized, then when we do enter this realm of not knowing and its accompanying feelings arise, we will often bolt or retreat.

But as I said, acknowledgement of our feelings is only the first approximation. Let me share a story with you. Many years ago, when I started my
practice as a Feldenkrais Practitioner I felt that I didn't know or understand very much about what I was doing. The fact that the people I was working with kept improving, continued to return to me and sent me referrals didn't bolster my confidence. After a period of time I began to feel like I was faking it, that I had no idea what I was doing. I was a charlatan and it was time to quit. There was no point in my continuing and thank god I had other abilities to fall back on as a source of livelihood (even though I didn't like doing them). I entered into a deep depression around my work, but just as I was about to give it all up... I saw something. Something I had never seen before. It was a seed of understanding that rippled into all arenas of my work, with all of the people I worked with. I was able to generate new ideas and ways of interacting. I had found my footing and was once again happy to be doing what I was doing.

This lasted about two months and then I began to feel a little static again. What I was doing was becoming repetitive and again I began to question my ability to continue in my work. Again, I became depressed. Again it was time to quit. And again as I spiraled downward into finally coming to terms with quitting, eureka... I saw something new. Another seed, that again carried me forward and gave meaning to what I was doing.

This swing in my internal experience happened a few more times. Up and down, being excited about my practice and then wanting to quit. And wouldn't you know it, a few months later my enthusiasm for my work began to dry up again and lo and behold I saw my pattern. It was such a relief to recognize it. It was obvious. I would start to get depressed about my work, spiral downward towards giving up and then I would see something new that would carry me forward again. So now that I knew this I could just wait it out until my 'ah-ha' came.

Well I waited and nothing came. And I waited, because I knew this had happened before and something would come. And I waited and started to get worried because this had now been going on for quite a while. And finally I began to face the fact that this was it. There were no more surprises, no more discoveries, this time I was really going to have to quit. It was at this moment, and only at this moment, when I hit bottom that something, once again, came to me and my work became alive again.

But now I knew something and it was something important. The feelings I had (and have) were part and parcel of the experience of being creative. As much as I would like to avoid them or not have them, they will be there. They are often forgotten or colored by the feelings of breakthrough or discovery; they actually pale in the light of the excitement of generating something new. Knowing this means I still have to feel them, I have to get lost, to live in my shadow. But as I said earlier this acknowledgement is only the first approximation. To sustain ourselves in not knowing we need more, something concrete that we can anchor ourselves to so we can weather out the storms.
The second approximation is only a little more concrete than acknowledging what our experience is or may be. It is practice. Like the old joke about the man on the street in New York who is stopped by another man and asked, "How do you get to Carnegie Hall?" And the first man answers "Practice, practice, practice." We must continue to place ourselves in the environment or context where we experience 'not knowing' and hence potentially experience our creativity. This means that there needs to be something consistent in our endeavor. That we not only wait for moments of inspiration. That we continue to move forward in our process even when our feelings are screaming at us to quit. If the people who we think of as creative only practiced when they felt like it, they probably wouldn't be so creative.

The primary characteristic of this time when we are practicing is that we are not dependent on any particular outcome. It is a time of finding our way, allowing things to evolve and discovering what comes next. It is not about achieving, accomplishing or finishing something. It has the quality of 'being' more than 'doing', although it is explored within the context of doing something. The parable at the beginning of the chapter about the Rabbi states this so well. It is not that we are without direction, it is that the final outcome is unknown and that we are available for unknown outcomes to materialize.

Now we must realize that I'm not talking about stopping everything else and just practicing. It may be enough to set aside a short period of time everyday, or every other day or once a week. What is important is the consistency we bring to it. We need to make this time a part of our everyday life, rather than an added burden on it. We must be realistic as to what our practice can be and our ability to implement it.

This provides a new set of predicaments for us. First, what form will my practice take? Well of course it depends on the domain you are drawn to. To write you have to write, to design you have to design, to sing you have to sing. This may seem obvious, but I have known people who are always waiting until a certain point before they actually do something. It is like saying I'm not going to get on the mountain until I can ski. Well it's not going to happen that way. You have to get on the mountain and start going down and fall and get up and fall and get up until you are skiing. Whether you take a class or work on your own, it is only through the doing that we have the chance to develop our creativity.

**How do I begin?**

So we have the predicament of finding a context to practice in which we can develop our comfort in the unknown. But how do we actually generate the enthusiasm to create that context? How do we actually get ourselves to begin? This is probably one of the major, if not the major, deterrents to our being creative. The moment of beginning often exists within a small window of opportunity that is affected by all the feelings, mostly negative, that I spoke of earlier. The moment of
beginning is not the moment of deciding to do something but the moment of actually doing it. I am now going to meditate, I am now going running, I am now going to clean the house. These moments all need to be self-generated. We need to be personally responsible for these actions. This doesn't mean that we can't have a teacher or coach or partner who helps guide us towards these moments, but it is our own personal responsibility to take the actual action.

So how do we take advantage of this small window of opportunity? For myself I have found that sitting down to meditate or go swimming or writing requires that I do not think about it or inquire as to how I feel about it. I simply act. Sometimes my thoughts and feelings support my action and sometimes I act in spite of my thoughts or feelings. Once I am in the action, my thoughts and feelings may fully represent themselves either for or against what I am doing, but it is now within the context of whatever it is I am practicing. I am engaged in a process that has within it the potential for something new to happen.

I spoke earlier of tolerating the accompanying feelings that occur in the state of not knowing. The preceding paragraphs may lead you to think that I am suggesting that rather than tolerate, we simply ignore how we feel and just act. This is not the case. I am proposing that we shift our focus from how we feel or think to creating movement, the concrete action that can bring us to the necessary context. And the movement I am referring to is not the completion of whatever dream you may have. It is simply the most basic action of taking the first step from wherever you are - literally! This shift in attention from completing a project to taking the first step is something we will explore more deeply later on, as it is the seed for many new kinds of experiences.

Let's look at a third approximation. Doing something is different than inquiring as to whether or not I am ready to or feel like doing something. Many times throughout our day we take action towards something. In going to work I get into my car, to go to the bathroom I get out of bed, to get something to eat I open the refrigerator. Whatever the motivation for these acts, they all share something in common. I 'move' in order to complete these actions. It is the 'movement' towards the event that is essential, not the thoughts leading up to it or the feelings about the event (although these may be influential). It is the actual 'movement' that takes me there that places me in the context.

This may seem simplistic at first glance. But consider the place movement has in our lives. Consider how immediate, how concrete and how intrinsic it is. What do we do without movement? Well, I can feel my feelings. But do we really do this without movement? When we experience a change in feeling there are correlating changes in our chemical make-up and tonus of our musculature, our heart may beat at a different rate, we may feel heavy or weighted, or lighter and freer, all qualities that relate to our ability to move. Well, maybe I can think without movement. Is this true? We don't sense the activity of synapses firing in our brains, but it is a form of movement. Ours eyes move when we think, even when we sitting
very still. And again our thoughts can affect our pulse and tonus. And often our thoughts affect how we feel, which loops us back into the changes mentioned earlier.

Stillness is an idea, somewhat akin to posture, but not something we do very well. The planet we reside on is moving at quite a good pace, although we don’t sense it. When someone stands on stilts they have to continually keep moving, although it may be tiny steps, or they fall down. Our structure, standing on two small points with a fairly high center of gravity, makes us the perfect creature for a mobile state but not very good for keeping still. So biologically, movement is built into us, and the environment we exist in is moving. We even know that the atoms we are made up of are in constant motion; in fact, on a cellular level we are constantly remaking ourselves.

Let’s examine this even deeper and look at some of the basic activities that are always occurring within us. Thinking, feeling, sensing and moving. These are all ongoing components of our self. We may believe that some of these are sometimes not present, but in fact, they often lie just below our awareness. They are always there, waiting to be accessed.

Thinking (or what we generally refer to as thinking) is predominantly made up of the conversations that go on inside our heads. While it sometimes occurs through imagery, it is most often done in language and has or refers to a conceptual framework.

Feeling refers to our emotions and moods. It is an experience that is often not in language and can be hard to describe. Feelings can be inaccessible or overwhelming. We often believe our feelings to be the source of our actions.

Sensing is how we take in (and sometimes don’t take in) information. We do it through our senses - smell, sight, sound, taste and touch. We often have a predisposition towards one sense or another, and some of our senses may be more or less developed than the others.

Movement is a part of ourselves that is always going on, but not often considered. It is part of everything we do. It is always connected to action. In Alain Bertoz’s book “The Brain’s Sense of Movement” he suggests we add our “sense of movement” to our other five senses.

Since all of these aspects of the self are always going on, we can assume that there is a relationship between them. This means that if there is a change in one component, it has the potential to affect the rest of the system. So if we change what we think, this may affect how we feel.

However, to change how we think is no easy process, primarily because we do not know how we think. We just think. And if we did change it, how or when would we know it? Did it really change or do I just think it really changed? Is it
possible to think in more than one way? Or does thinking in two ways create a third way? What are the criteria for knowing that our thinking has changed?

How about changing how or what we feel? This is also not so easy. First we need to be able to recognize what we are feeling. Often we feel something but we cannot identify it. Sometimes we feel too much and become overwhelmed by it. But even after we have identified our feelings, how do we change them? Obviously feelings can change, but by what means can we change them deliberately?

To change how we sense is probably the most elusive, simply because it rarely occurs to us. We only think of it when we notice the lack of it. When we observe the lack of a type of sensation, once again, there are not a lot of means to bring about a change. It actually is possible to see what you feel, or smell what you hear, but this a pretty esoteric course of study.

If I asked you, at this moment, to change how you think or what you are feeling or how you sense, what happens? Maybe you first try to figure out what you actually are thinking, feeling or sensing, or you may get stuck in the question. You may even have the means to affect a change. It is important to note that these things do change and that we can change them. But for the most part it is a process that usually occurs over a great deal of time and personal investigation.

Let's look at the fourth component, movement. I have saved it for last because it has some different qualities than the others. Movement encompasses more than simply propelling yourself through space. It is what we do continually to remain upright in the field of gravity. The position or posture you are in is part of your movement. It is through movement that you can change what you are doing. How easy is it to change how you move?

Let's try a little experiment. Sit at the edge of your chair and just notice how you are sitting. Very slowly shift your weight to the left and back to the middle a few times. Now do it to the right and back to the middle a few times. Does it feel like you do it the same way to either side? Let's explore one side. Slowly shift your weight to the left and back again, but this time lead the movement with your head, do it several times. Now shift your weight to the left again, this time thinking that the left side of your pelvis is getting heavier, do this several times. Shift your weight to the left once more, this time by lifting the right side of your pelvis away from the chair, do this several times. Come back to the middle and shift your weight to the left and back to the middle again. How does it feel now? Do you notice any differences? Shift your weight to the right now and see how it compares with shifting to the left. As you sit now, how does it compare to when you started this exploration?

The differences that people can discern from a process like this vary. But nearly everyone can sense how shifting your weight, leading from different places, feels different. Yet you were always shifting your weight to one side. In a
matter of moments you changed how you moved and you could observe it. Our movement is easily accessible and concrete in our experience.

These qualities make movement unique compared to thinking, feeling and sensing. There is another important feature in movement. It is observable to others. As intuitive as any of us may be, we can never be absolutely sure of what someone is thinking, feeling or sensing. Not without checking it out. If you saw someone’s brow all furrowed, might you wonder if they were trying to make a difficult decision or could they be trying to remember a telephone number? If you saw someone crying would you assume they were sad, or could they be tears of joy? If you saw someone with their head cocked to the side, could you be certain that they were trying to hear some distant sound or were they feeling a twinge in their neck? The interpretations are endless. What we do know in these examples is that their brow is furrowed, that they are crying, that their head is cocked to one side, and it is these events, these movements, that are observed first. You know for sure if someone is sitting or standing, walking quickly or slowly, if they are stiff or relaxed.

Of the four components we have just examined, all are essential to and always part of our lives. And because of how inter-related they are, a variation in one may affect the others. But the road of movement is more easily traveled and for our purposes, it will be the path of choice. As we use movement to reveal the creative process, we need to remember to attend to the other aspects of ourselves.

Let’s come back to our original dilemma of staying in the unknown. I have stated a few approximations towards tolerating this that may be new or may be familiar to some of you. I have suggested that a practice of some form can be the vehicle for exploring our creativity. But part of the trouble we can get into is that the practice we tend to choose is often already too important to us. We want so much to be good at whatever it is we want to be creative at, that we get in our own way. We want to be a poet, so we practice our creativity by writing poetry, but this can have attendant expectation and pressure built into it. It is better to find a context for practice that lacks the import of our desires, hopes and dreams.

What scenario allows us to fully enter a process where we can more freely inquire and learn without the pressure of it being important? The movement lessons you previously explored are of this quality. Let’s do another. One that may lead us into our own personal process and more clearly brings us to someplace unexpected.

Remember to follow the same guidelines we laid out earlier. It may be a good idea to go back to page 13 and review them for a moment before you begin.

*Sit with your right leg in front of you and your left leg bent back to the left. The sole of your right foot will be near your left knee or lower thigh. Have your right lower leg be parallel with the wall in front of you so you can come*
back to this position as a reference. Lean back on your right hand. (If sitting like this is not comfortable you can sit cross legged or even sit in a chair - remember to have your orientation to the wall in front of you as a reference)

Place your left hand somewhere around eye level, fingers and hand relaxed and your elbow hanging downward. Keeping your hand in front of your face, turn your whole self comfortably to the right and back to center a few times. The next time you turn yourself to the right, look beyond your hand and mark whatever spot you can see on the wall in front of you.

Rest on your back.

Come back to sitting in the same fashion and remind yourself to start in the same orientation as when you initially sat this way. Bring your left hand in front of your face and turn yourself to face the spot on the wall you marked earlier. Close your eyes and, keeping them closed, move only your eyes further to the right and back to where you just started. Your head stays still, only your eyes move. Slowly and gently move your eyes back and forth like this.

Turn your whole self back to the starting position, close your eyes and keeping them closed, turn yourself comfortably to look to the right. Go as far as you can comfortably and stay there and open your eyes. What spot are you looking at now? Whatever that spot is, mark it, and come back to neutral.

Rest on your back.

Come back the same position in sitting, turn yourself to the last spot you marked. Stay there, close your eyes and now turn your head and eyes further to the right and back again. This time your head can move too. Do this many times, slowly, with your eyes closed.

Turn your whole self back to the starting position, close your eyes and keeping them closed, turn yourself comfortably to look to the right. Go as far as you can comfortably and stay there and open your eyes. What spot are you looking at now? Whatever that spot is, mark it, and come back to neutral.

Are things starting to change? Have these movements of your head and eyes allowed you to turn a little further without efforting?

Rest on your back.

Come back the same position in sitting, turn yourself to the last spot you marked. Stay there, close your eyes and now turn your head to the left and your eyes to the right and then bring everything back to where you started. Many times, slowly, with your eyes closed. It may feel very unusual to move your eyes and head opposite each other, so go slowly enough that you can do it.
Turn your whole self back to the starting position, close your eyes and keeping them closed, turn yourself comfortably to look to the right. Go as far as you can comfortably and stay there and open your eyes. What spot are you looking at now? Whatever that spot is, mark it, and come back to neutral.

Rest on your back.

Come back the same position in sitting, turn yourself to the last spot you marked. Stay there, and slowly turn your shoulders and chest to the right while turning your head and eyes to the left and then bring everything back to neutral. Many times, slowly enough that you can easily turn these parts in opposite directions.

Turn your whole self back to the starting position, close your eyes and keeping them closed, turn yourself comfortably to look to the right. Go as far as you can comfortably and stay there and open your eyes. What spot are you looking at now? Whatever that spot is, mark it and come back to neutral.

Rest on your back.

Come back the same position in sitting, this time place your left hand on top of your head and gently bring your left elbow towards the ceiling and then down towards the floor to your left. Back and forth easily and gently. Notice what happens in your ribs as you do this. Can you sense how you expand on one side and contract on the other and how this reverses as you bring the elbow in the other direction?

Rest in sitting.

Come back the same position in sitting, with your left hand on top of your head and bring your right ear towards your right shoulder and then bring your left ear towards your left shoulder, back and forth. Again observe the movement in your ribs. Bring your attention to your left buttock, when does it move closer to the floor and when does it move further away from the floor?

Come back to neutral, bring your left hand in front of your face as in the earlier variations and with your eyes closed turn yourself as far as you can comfortably to the right, open your eyes and notice where you are looking now and mark this spot.

Rest on your back.

Come to side sitting again and place both of your hands on the floor to the right of your right leg. Slowly begin to fold yourself, dropping your head and bringing your left buttock closer to the ground, then reverse this and lift your
head while lifting your left buttock. Slowly going back and forth, smaller and
taller, while observing your chest and back.

Come back to sitting, leaning on your right hand, your left hand in front
of your eyes. Close your eyes and turn to the right, stay there, open your eyes
and mark the spot you are looking at and then return to neutral.

Rest on your back.

Come to side sitting again and place both hands in front of you on the
floor. Slowly bend forward as if you were going to kiss your right knee. Just go
in this direction, you do not have to kiss your knee. Stay there and begin to move
your head towards your right ankle and back to your knee, with the image of
gentle kisses along the length of your lower leg.

Come back to sitting, leaning on your right hand, your left hand in front
of your eyes. Close your eyes and turn to the right, stay there, open your eyes
and mark the spot you are looking at and then return to neutral.

Turn to the original spot you marked at the beginning of the lesson and
then turn to where you can easily look to now. Has there been a change?
Perhaps you can turn yourself further to the right now, or perhaps you can turn
to the same place but with greater ease? Or perhaps you notice another kind of
change.

Rest on your back.

This time, come to sit with your left leg in front, your right leg back to the
right and lean on your left hand. Bring your right hand in front of your face and
slowly turn to the left. Go only as far as you can comfortably and easily. Mark
whatever spot you are looking at.

With your eyes closed, imagine going through the variations you explored
on the other side. So you are thinking of these movements, not actually doing
them. How fully can you imagine all of yourself in these movements? If it is
difficult to imagine, do one or two movements or do the movements so small
that it would be imperceptible to anyone watching you. Rest in between the
imagined variations. When you are done imagining go ahead and actually turn
yourself comfortably to the left and see where you look now. Notice any changes
in your range of movement, the quality of the movement, your posture, your
mood or your state of mind, or any other changes you may sense within yourself.

Did you find, like the Rabbi in the parable that you were surprised at where
you ended up? Throughout your day watch for small moments that might lead you
in an alternative direction from where you were intentionally heading. See if simply having your attention open to the idea of this leads you to places you couldn’t have predicted going to.
CHAPTER 4

Attention....

“The moment one gives close attention to any thing, even a blade of grass it becomes a mysterious, awesome, indescribably magnificent world in itself.”

Henry Miller

If sensing movement is to be one of the main references for our study into the creative realm, it may be worthwhile to understand something about how we actually do this. Our primary tool is our attention. But it is a funny kind of tool. We can’t hold it in our hand, although we talk about holding someone’s attention. We can’t see it as an entity, although we recognize it in someone’s face and movements or when they don’t have it. We can’t hear it, although when we walk into a room where people have it, it has a quality of sound or a quality of quiet.

So maybe attention isn’t a thing. We name it with qualities: focused, dispersed, concentrated, observant, caring, inquiring, long, short, internal, external, something that shifts, something that we can develop. Maybe it is an experience. Or could it be a way of experiencing something? Paying attention, stretching one's attention, observing, listening, considering, regarding, being preoccupied, etc., etc.

I’ve used the word “attention” many times in what preceded and we know what we are referring to when we speak of it, but its definition is elusive and mercurial. As we did with the word creativity, maybe rather than define it we can explore some common denominators or components of it.

Firstly, attention has something to do with your self. When you pay attention or you don’t pay attention, it is something that you are doing. It can’t be done without a self; it only exists within the context of something that is alive. It is not limited to humans; we see animals with it. One can wonder, does an amoeba somehow use attention in the act of acquiring sustenance?
Attention always exists in relation to the self. This implies that there is an object or place where I can put my attention, whether it is outside of myself or inside of myself. Attention to something inside myself requires a differentiation between my attention and my self. Attention to something outside myself requires a differentiation between my self and something outside of me that is perceived as separate.

Attention moves; it can be fixed or it can shuttle between things. The places it moves around can exist outside of us; the road, the mirrors, the radio, the gas and the brake when I’m driving, or within us; my hunger, the ache in my neck, my desire to make love with my partner and so on.

Time is a factor in it. I can have a long attention span or a short one. I can vary how long I give my attention to something. It is somehow through or over time that I can develop my attention.

It is quantitative. I can give more or less attention to something.

It has a rate. I can move my attention quickly between things, meander or stay in one place.

It can shift sharply or in a graded fashion.

It has something to do with familiarity, what I know or can recognize. It is hard to pay attention to what you don’t know. In fact one of the challenges we face in exploring creativity is how can we discover what it is that we don’t know, so we may give it our attention. In this way our attention is representative of our knowledge or understanding of ourselves and the world we live in.

The process through which we are investigating and inquiring is through our attention. Where and how we place our attention is a key to our ability to engage and sustain it. Of the qualities of attention listed above some afford us the chance to expand our choices and to know ourselves more fully. In fact, it is not the quality of attention itself but the shifting between these qualities that allows for our growth. This shifting between qualities brings us, once again, into the realm of movement.

For example, the movement of our attention between foreground and background allows for a shift in our perspective. If we are always foreground in our attention, we can’t see the forest for the trees and if we are always background in our attention, we tend to miss the details that can become our anchors or landmarks. An object in our awareness can easily shift from foreground to background, and visa versa, according to our perspective. As you are reading these words right now we could say that these are in the foreground of your attention, but at the same time you might be listening to the sensations of the position you are sitting in and this could be perceived as the background of reading. But if a particular sensation, or complex of sensations or even the lack of sensations catches
your interest, your sitting position may shift to the foreground of your attention. You may find that reading has slipped to the background, so much so that you may have to re-read what you just read.

What we call foreground or background is relative. Returning to the above example, we may think of reading as foreground, but if we start to attend to the movements of our eyes while reading, reading may again shift to the background, but this time in a more focused, rather than dispersed way.

This leads us to other qualities of attention that we can move between: focused attention and dispersed attention. We can also think of these as detailed or generalized attention. This is different than foreground and background attention, in which we are shifting between making one thing or another more central in our attention. In focused attention we are bringing our attention to something more specific, let’s say the movements of our eyes, and in dispersed attention we are bringing our attention to something more dispersed, let’s say the general sensation of sitting. Focused or detailed attention tends to be more on one thing and dispersed or generalized attention tends to observe the whole picture.

Another place we may shuttle between is our internal and external attention. This is quite literal, shifting between my internal thoughts, feelings and sensations to my external experience: where I am, who is around me, the sounds, smells colors, temperature, etc. of my environment.

In all of these arenas, internal-external, focused-dispersed, foreground-background, how I attend to myself is generally done through my thoughts, sensations or feelings. Here again we create more distinctions around which our attention can land. For example, I can have in the foreground of my attention some detailed thoughts of my external world, and in the background may be a generalized feeling of my internal world. These variables can shift around, creating great variety and a wide range of potential experiences in any particular moment.

Individually we generally have a bias towards being more foreground or more background, more focused or dispersed, more internal or external, more in our sensations or thoughts or feelings. Our biases also exist in the combinations of variables we mostly utilize to make sense out of the world, a foreground of detailed, external attention or a background of dispersed, internal attention, etc. It is often this use of our attention that limits our creative potential and limits our capacity to invent choices. If we are to become more creative and increase our capacities as individuals, we each need to develop a wider range and a more fluid ability to shuttle throughout our attentional fields.

An integral aspect of the use of our attention has to do with time. This includes how long I pay attention, and at what speed I shift attention. This begins to beg the question, how much volition do I have over my attention?
Years ago I was fortunate enough to take the time for an extended trip through parts of Asia. Prior to my travels I was in Perth, Australia visiting a friend. While at his house I found a book on meditation. I had always been interested in meditation and had probably learned how to do it a dozen times. Every time I learned it I thought 'Wow! This is great!' and I would have this big experience... and never do it again. I liked the idea of it, but was unable to sustain the practice.

One of my very personal interests at that time was how could I sustain my attention for longer periods of time. Now, all of sudden, this book on meditation was presented to me. I was about to go off on a journey of several months with nothing else to do but travel (which is actually quite a bit of work, but of a different nature than I was used to). Given that being too busy with my work was no longer an excuse, I thought that maybe meditation could be the vehicle for sustaining my attention for longer periods of time. My meditation practice consisted of sitting for 20 minutes a day, counting my breaths, one through ten, and then back to one again. Simple, easy, no problem.

Well! Was I in for a surprise. I would find myself all of a sudden at 38, and I’d start again at one. Then I’d get up to 2 and drift off and spend the whole time never getting past 3 or 4. A few times I found I was up over one hundred. So this simple practice became my own personal nightmare. Was my attention so deficient that I couldn’t stay with 20 minutes of counting my breaths 1-10?

It turns out that deficient was the wrong term. What was true about my attention was that it was unpracticed, undisciplined and I lacked any volition over it, or over myself. Over time I found it quite simple to count my breaths, 1-10. I learned to bring my attention to something I had previously had no understanding of.

And then I found there were other ways of counting my breath. I had been counting each inhalation and each exhalation as one, the next inhalation and exhalation as two, and so on. I became informed of another practice where I would start with an inhalation and exhale on one, inhale on two, exhale on three and so on until ten. So now the exhalations were always on the odd number and I was back to square one. Not only would I find myself exhaling on the even numbers, but once again I would be up in the twenties or thirties before I realized I had drifted off.

Eventually I was able to master this new way of attending to my breath. Then, after about a year and a half of meditating, I was participating in a 5 day meditation retreat and I made a terribly embarrassing discovery. I wasn’t counting my breaths. I was counting the numbers. I actually had no idea what my breathing was doing. I mean I knew that I was inhaling or exhaling and linking the numbers up with these moments, but as for how I breathed or what occurred for me through sensation when I breathed, this was a complete blank. I was overwhelmed by my ignorance, and having spent years as a teacher of awareness I felt like a charlatan. Fortunately my attitude towards myself in this discovery was compassionate and
kind. I could forgive myself and embrace this moment as a great chance to learn something. But just so you don’t think I have all the answers, it is now many years later and I am still deep in my investigation.

Counting my breaths was really a tool to observe when my attention would drift off and also a tool to bring me back. Kind of like a metronome keeping a beat in the background. I also had the challenge of observing my thoughts, feelings and sensations during these times of practice. I discovered not only that I was having thoughts, feelings and sensations, but that they could so easily capture my attention and pull me into rollercoaster fantasies and obsessions and again I would find myself with my attention someplace other than I had intended.

I could probably write a whole book just on my process and experiences of meditating (there are many others already out there if you are interested) but I’d like to come back to how having some understanding of this can foster our ability to become more creative individuals. Our attention is the means through which we can make distinctions about ourselves and the world we exist in. Attention gives us the opportunity to make comparisons so that we may note when we have learned something or have shifted or made a change in our internal or external environment. The more effectively and more efficiently we can use this tool the better our chances are for sustaining ourselves in the creative process, tolerating not knowing and having a forum for creating more choices.

The dilemma we face is when, where and how can I practice these aspects of my process? The movement explorations in each chapter are a perfect opportunity to practice this. Let’s do another, to practice the use of our attention.

This exploration is in two parts. After you have finished the first part and have come to standing and walked around take a 15-minute break and then come back and do the rest. It may be a good idea to review the guidelines set out in Chapter 1 before you begin.

Please lie on your back. Take some time to observe your attention. What is the first thing you notice? What do you notice next? What after that? Include your thoughts, feelings, sensations and your environment.

Bring your attention to your sensations. What stands out to you? Do you notice where you are uncomfortable or where you are comfortable? Are your sensations different from what you felt in any of the earlier movement explorations? Take some time to compare the two sides of yourself. How are they similar, how are they different?

Now shift your attention to your external environment. The sounds, smells, colors, light, temperature, etc.
Stay with your attention on your environment and begin to also sense how you are lying on the floor. Let both of these events be alive to you. How do you do this? Do you notice mostly details or are you sensing more of the whole picture? Are you focused on something in the environment and dispersing your attention throughout yourself? Do you shuttle slowly or rapidly between the two? Does one start as foreground and as you pay attention to the other does that then become the foreground? Take your time and discover how your attention moves through you.

Roll onto your right side, bend your legs in the knees and the hips and have one leg on top of the other. Place your arms where they are comfortable, in front of you or with one under your head, whatever is easy for you. Sense yourself and your immediate world now. Do different things come into your attention from this shift in position?

On your side, slowly lift your whole left leg into the air and put it down. Only lift it as high as you can go comfortably. Notice the weight of it and how high you can easily lift it.

Keeping your knees touching, lift your left foot away from your right foot. You will be bringing the left foot towards the ceiling, while pivoting on your knee, and the knees remain touching. Do this gently, many times. What is your sense of where this movement begins? Is it in your foot? Your knee? Your hip?

Rest on your side.

Now lift your left foot away from the right but as you lift the foot lead the movement with your little toe, as if someone was lifting your foot by the little toe. As you lower the foot, change it so you are leading with your big toe, so your big toe is the first part of your left foot to touch your right foot. Keep lifting and lowering the foot like this, switching your orientation of what leads. You'll find that your heel is lower as you raise your foot and then your heel will be higher as you lower the foot.

Rest on your side.

This time lift your left foot leading with your heel as the foot lifts and then leading with your heel as the foot lowers. Do not force the movement, it is enough to have the intention of the heel leading in each direction. Your heel leads the movement as you lift the foot towards the ceiling and then you change the angle of the foot so the heel leads as the foot lowers towards the right foot. Notice how leading with the heel like this changes your sense of yourself compared to when you were leading with your toes.

Rest on your side.
Now experiment with lifting the left foot away from the right, this time attempting to lift the whole surface of the left foot at the same time and then lowering the entire surface of the left foot onto the right foot at the same time. How does moving like this change how you organize yourself?

Rest on your back and again observe your attention and how it moves through you now.

Lie on your right side and this time keep your feet touching and lift your left knee away from your right knee. Now the left knee is going towards the ceiling and you are pivoting on your foot. Do this many times. Where do you begin or initiate this movement? The knee? The foot? The hip? How do you make this easier? Can you include more of yourself to do this? Try rolling your pelvis back a little as you lift the knee and see if your knee lifts more easily.

Rest on your side.

Once again, lift your left knee into the air, pivoting on your foot, and put it down. Now lift your left foot into the air, pivoting on your knee, and put it down. Alternate between the two, the knee lifting and coming down and then the foot lifting and coming down. Does your pelvis move in any way as you do this?

Rest on your side.

Lift your knee again, pivoting on the foot, and this time, as you begin to lower the knee, begin to lift the foot. So by the time your knee has come down, your foot will be lifted. Then as your foot lowers, begin to lift the knee. At some point your whole leg will be in the air making a kind of seesaw movement.

Lift your whole left leg as you did in the beginning. What is it like now? Lighter? Does it lift higher, or to the same place with greater ease?

Rest on your back and again observe your attention and how it moves through you. Can you let your attention shuttle throughout yourself, your sensations, thoughts and feeling, and also into your environment? What is the quality of your shifting of attention now?

Come onto your right side, one leg on top of the other, bent at the knees and the hips and have both arms straight out in front of you, palm to palm. Keeping your elbows straight, begin to gently and easily bring your left arm towards the ceiling and then towards the floor behind you and back again. Only go as far as you can go comfortably.

Rest on your side.
Again bring your left arm towards the floor behind you but this time follow your arm with your eyes so you can see it the whole time. Let your head turn as you do this. Notice as you let your eyes and head participate that your arm goes further back with greater ease. The next time you bring your arm back leave it there and just roll your head, looking at your left hand and then looking at your right hand, back and forth.

Bring your left arm in front of you again, then bring it to the ceiling and behind you and this time do not roll your head. Does it still reach back with the ease and range you had when you were turning your head?

Rest on your back and again observe your attention and how it moves through you.

Once again come onto your right side. Bring your left arm behind you - you can let your eyes and head participate - and as you bring your left arm back in front of you, lift your left leg. So as your arms come together your leg is lifting, and as your legs come together, your arm is lifting. Feel how and where this moves the middle of you, your ribs, back and chest. Bring your arm back in front of you and rest briefly. Now lift your left leg. Has this changed since the last time you lifted it? Has the exploration of your arm and head somehow influenced the movement of your leg?

Rest on your back.

Come onto your right side. Slowly lift your left leg and at the same time lift your left arm, then lower them both back to the floor. Each time you lift them go a little further with each. Eventually you will feel that your legs will be wide apart and your left leg will start to pull your right leg away from the floor so that both of your legs will be lifted with your knees wide apart and your feet off of the floor. Your right arm will also start to lift into the air. Keep going a little further each time until you are lying on your left side.

Rest on your left side.

On your left side, begin to bring your right leg and right arm towards the ceiling and towards behind you. As your right leg reaches its limit the left leg will be pulled from the floor, and at some point the left arm will be pulled into the air too. Continue until you roll onto your right side. Begin to do this as one movement, rolling from side to side, with your knees wide and your arms long. How can you make it easier, softer, more pleasurable?

Rest on your back and notice how your attention moves through you.

Come onto your right side. Lift your left leg and feel what it is like now. Is it lighter? Easier to lift? Does it lift higher with less effort?
Rest on your back. How do you feel compared to when you first lay down? What captures your attention now? How does your attention move through you? What is it like to shift your attention between yourself and your environment?

Slowly come to standing and feel the influence of these movements. Notice the different sensations and the shifting of your attention as you walk.

TAKE A 15-MINUTE BREAK AND THEN COME BACK AND CONTINUE.

Please come onto your right side with your arms palm to palm, straight out in front of you. Slowly lift your left arm a little and bring it back. As you do this bring your attention to where your right arm meets your torso, your right shoulder joint, in front. Feel how the space increases between your right arm and your torso as your left arm lifts and how this space closes as your left arm comes back towards the right arm. Begin to lift and bring back your left arm by opening and closing the space between your right arm and your torso. You may feel your right arm pressing into the floor as you lift or push open your left arm.

Rest on your back. Does this feel any different having attended to your right shoulder joint?

Come onto your right side. Gently lift your left leg just a little bit. As you do this bring your attention to the place where your right leg joins your torso, your hip joint, in front. Feel how as your left leg lifts, the space between your right leg and your torso opens up. See if you can start the movement of lifting your left leg by opening the hip joint of your right leg. It may feel like you are pushing your right thigh into the floor, to lift your left leg. As you bring your legs back together, think of closing the right hip joint, as if you are pulling the left leg down by bringing your torso towards your right leg. Slowly open and close your legs initiating the movement from your right hip joint.

Rest on your back. Does this feel any different having attended to your right hip joint?

Lying on your right side again, begin to open your right shoulder joint and your right hip joint so as to lift your left arm and left leg. You will probably feel both your right arm and right leg pushing into the floor to propel the left arm and leg up. So now instead of pulling the left arm and leg away from the right you are pushing them open from the right side. Only go about half way and then come back again. Notice how different this feels from the way you moved earlier.

Rest on your back.
Come to your right side and in the same way open your right shoulder and hip joints so as to lift your left arm and leg. As you go further across to the left side, feel at some point you can shift your attention to your left shoulder and hip joints and think of closing them, until that pulls your right arm and leg all the way over to the left and you will be lying on your left side. Now open your left shoulder and hip joint so as to move the right arm and leg over to the right and feel at some point, as the right arm and leg go further to the right, you can shift your attention away from the opening joints on the left side and bring your attention to the closing of the right shoulder and hip joints. Do this slowly enough that you can stay aware of yourself and how your attention moves you.

Rest on your back.

Come to your left side and move in the same way as you have just explored. As you roll onto one side and bring your arms and legs back together can you feel a sense of your self snapping shut, like a box with a spring closure on its lid? Then you open that box to send yourself across to the other side and at the point where your attention shifts to the joints against the floor you think of snapping, or whipping closed. You will feel an increase in your momentum as you add power to the effects of gravity by pushing against the floor to open and by snapping shut.

Stop on your right side. Go back to the original way of letting your left arm and leg simply float up to the ceiling and behind you to roll you to the left, without opening your right joints or pushing off the floor with your right limbs. Use this original way of moving to roll back to the right. Feel different? Explore the two ways of moving yourself and your attention, and feel how in doing so you can have such a different experience of yourself. There is no judgment attached to the two different ways of moving; you may prefer one way to the other, but neither one is better than the other.

Rest on your back and observe how you feel now. Take some time to observe your attention. What is the first thing you notice, what next, what after that? Include your thoughts, feelings, sensations and your environment.

Bring your attention to your sensations. What stands out to you? Do you notice where you are uncomfortable or where you are comfortable? Are your sensations now different from those you felt earlier? Is your attention drawn to different parts of yourself or do notice yourself in a different way than when you began this process? Take some time to compare the two sides of yourself. How are they similar, how are they different?

Now shift your attention to your external environment. The sounds, smells, colors, light, temperature, etc.
Then slowly come to standing, and walk around. What can you sense in your walking that may be different from how you usually sense yourself?

Throughout your day, pause every once in a while and notice what you are attending to and see what else can you begin to observe. Is it in relation or connected to what you first observed? Is one aspect more internal, one aspect more external? How slowly or quickly do you shift your attention. When you come back to what you were first attending to, is it any different now?
CHAPTER 5

If I could teach you one thing......

"Great dancers are not great because of their technique; they are great because of their passion."

Martha Graham

I've often pondered, what is it that underlies our ability to be creative? What is the driving force? What gives us the impetus to enter into the unknown? Along these lines, I've asked myself: if I could teach only one thing, what would it be?

This question has always been easy for me to answer. If I could teach only one thing, it would be enthusiasm, the ability for someone to generate their own enthusiasm. But enthusiasm isn't a thing or a concrete skill or information. It is an attitude, an internal directive, more of a feeling than anything else. It waxes and wanes and sometimes it bursts like a bubble and is gone, but where does it go? Or for that matter where does it come from?

I know that some of these questions are unanswerable. What can we understand about this phenomenon of enthusiasm? It has other names: passion, interest, ardor, zeal, eagerness, devotion. Its derivation includes divine inspiration, prophetic or poetic frenzy, being inspired, being god-possessed, the sense of being full of zeal for a cause, etc. Quite a history to live up to.

The quote from Martha Graham at the beginning of this chapter captures this quality that can lead us towards greatness. We all know or have known someone who displayed an incredible passion or enthusiasm about something. Perhaps we were jealous of this or put off by it, but it generally seems to touch us in one way or another.

If we have enthusiasm, then our practice or the practicing of whatever we are doing simply takes care of itself. But how does one find enthusiasm and how does one sustain it? Alas, that is the mystery, or the quest. Maybe you remember the story from Chapter 1 about my getting up in front of my acting class having been
inspired by my teacher, Joseph Anthony. I had a ton of enthusiasm at that moment, but it wasn't enough to sustain me. Firstly, it was the result of someone else's enthusiasm and secondly, I had no idea as to how to use my attention around it.

Like creativity, enthusiasm or passion or whatever name your prefer to give it, is elusive. But is it? Maybe there is a way or ways that we can evoke and maintain it, or discover and re-discover it.

Let's examine it from another perspective. What is it that interferes with our ability to generate enthusiasm? What is it that stops us from being passionate? Are there circumstances we create (albeit unknowingly) that constrict or constrain or disrupt our creative process?

Have you ever thought of yourself in any of the following ways: being "the best", "really good", "an expert", "smart", "clever", "fast", "quick", "good at it", "the first to start", "the first to finish", "original", "unique", "special", "extraordinary", etc., etc? Even if you don't think that way about yourself all the time, perhaps there is some area in your life in which you feel that way. We can use these labels to motivate ourselves to act, to generate enthusiasm, or to enable ourselves to achieve something. When we feel stuck or when we are unable to find the impetus to continue, we may use these kinds of thoughts to keep ourselves going. We all do this to varying degrees. Are these ideas useful or destructive to the creative process? Do they encourage or impede what we do? What we think of as the means to bettering ourselves is also the shadow that can stop us from being truly creative.

All of the thoughts set out in the previous paragraph have a positive aspect to them. They need to be included in our journeys and explorations. But it is when they become the major impetus and focus of our actions that our processes get disrupted, go off kilter and become misguided.

Being the best implies that one is on the top of the mountain, as if it is a place that only one person can occupy at a time. I've always thought there was a tremendous danger in trying to be the best because once you have succeeded, someone else will pick up the challenge and try to best you. Think of the Olympics, of any particular event. Someone jumps a certain distance or skis at a particular speed and they become the best at that event. They hold the world record. But what happens as the result? In the next Olympics someone else surpasses them, and there is a new "best", a new world record holder. This is an endless process and while it is a testament to our human capacity to grow and go beyond what we thought was possible, it is a potentially limiting, extreme and narrow way of developing ourselves. If we used this model in the arts there would be "the one and only bronze sculptor" and "the world's greatest singer" and "the only great movie that everyone has to see". And what of the rest?

Thinking of ourselves as "special" is another way in which we get in our own way. One summer, having just visited some friends I met trekking in Nepal, I was
driving along a meandering scenic road. I had the radio on and the song I was listening to crooned something about being “special-ohhh so special...”. I was singing along when it suddenly struck me that this whole notion of "being special" had caused me a great deal of trouble. Most of the time I didn’t feel special and when I did it was due to someone else’s opinion of me; other times I felt special, but no one else seemed to agree. I realized that we all would like to be special, and wherever it comes from it has some value and place in our lives. However, as with "being the best", “being special” can easily become our main criteria for assessing ourselves or the main motivator for our actions. When this happens we create the circumstance for a great deal of potential misery.

As I considered this, I thought, "Well, what could be in place of ‘special’? If I’m not special then I must be ordinary." At first this did not sit too well with me. The self-image I had developed did not include this word. Ordinary was for someone else and it was a word that was filled with my judgments. But the more I considered it, the more appealing it became. I found that the idea of just being "ordinary" (even the quotation marks seem out of place with this word) started to allow me to feel a little more normal. I could more easily be myself and I didn't have to work so hard when I was in the presence of other people. I did find that I had to be careful not to think that I was so very ordinary that it in fact made me special!

I began to discover that there were times when I still did feel special, but at those times I actually felt special rather than just wanting to feel special. Sometimes I felt this from within and sometimes it came from outside of myself. Most importantly, I had discovered one of the ways I got in my own way in many areas of my life, especially around creativity.

The values or ideals we have been discussing in the above paragraphs such as being the best and being special all have something particular in common. They are all comparisons that we make between ourselves and someone else, or someone else’s abilities or achievements. We could examine each one and recognize how we use these descriptions to inhibit ourselves not only within our process, but also from even beginning our process. Again we can remind ourselves that it is useful to be stirred or egged on by another’s success, but this use of our attention orients us towards something outside of ourselves. In our creative process we need to look inside of ourselves for the source of our passion and enthusiasm.

It is easy to get stuck in this externally focused way of approaching our creativity and this tends to squelch our enthusiasm for what we are doing. At the same time it can also raise our anxiety and diminish the trust we have in our own abilities. We can get discouraged when we look out and see so many people who are already successful at what we want to do. We often wonder how we could ever get from where we are to where we can imagine ourselves to be?

What about being better, rather than being the best? Here is an aspect of our intention that can be more process-oriented rather than goal-oriented. I can always
be better than I am now, but only one person is the best at something. Rather than using others as our major criteria for our success we need to develop an internal criteria that can help us maintain our attention in our processes and serve as the means for assessing ourselves.

Alternatively, we can always consider simply being "good enough". This is often less anxiety provoking and allows us to feel that we are working more within the range of what is possible. But these thoughts last for only a moment and then what?

What is it that makes someone an "expert" or "original" or "unique"? When we make this assessment we are usually viewing the final product. Did this person just arrive at this level of competency or did they do something that was maybe not so original or unique in the process but allowed them to develop and stay in their process? What could it be? Earlier we spoke of enthusiasm or passion and as we examined it we realized it is somewhat elusive. Were they simply thinking about being "better" or being "good enough"?

No, I think there is something else that goes on for such people. It is not so mysterious, nor is it only possible for a select few.

It is simply being interested.

Instead of trying to live up to some external ideal, we can recognize that those who are "great" got there by being interested in what they were doing. Think about it, if your attention is somewhere off in possibilities for the future, what can you be doing right now? And when you return from the future you find that nothing in the present has changed or developed very much. At this point we either return to our dreams of how great we will one day become or we stay here and become discouraged with how little we have accomplished. Either way we are in fantasy or judgment and not engaging in the necessary process.

Could it be so simple that instead of trying to be "the best" or the "expert" all we need to do is maintain our interest in what we are doing? The answer is a resounding "yes". Our interest is what guides us, directs us, and is the developer of our endeavors. We move to whatever is next as the result of our interest. What interests us is what we attach our attention to and it is our attention that allows us to continue and stay in our process. In fact it is almost impossible to sustain our attention without interest. As long as we are interested in what we are doing there is some level of enthusiasm present. At its most extreme we are passionately interested, and as it swings the other way our interest is more detached, but throughout it is what connects us to what we are doing.

Our interest, to some degree, speaks to the quality of attention we bring to something. It is important to recognize within us a broad range of attention. This can allow us to stay with something in a variety of states so we don't have to feel
enthused or passionate throughout. We can begin to view our interest, and hence our enthusiasm and passion, on a continuum. If we find we have lost interest then at least we know what we need to do. Connect to something, anything that can enliven it again.

But alas, how do we connect to something when we have lost interest in it? We can force ourselves to be interested, but that usually doesn't work and the effort required is draining. We can throw away what we are doing, declare it useless and start all over again. We can simply quit and decide, for example, that the piano isn't for me, I should do photography instead. But this may be an all too familiar pattern demonstrating how fickle we can be.

Did you ever watch a child play with something and lose interest in it and then spontaneously start playing with that object again at some later time? What happens is that their attention is usually taken over by something else. A child's attention span usually isn't that long, so it isn't this aspect of their use of attention that we want to model. We can recognize a similar pattern in adults too, although our attention span is generally longer. However, as adults we can quite deliberately choose what we do with our attention. We can use the shifting of our attention as a strategy to help us sustain our interest in our creative endeavors. Rather than be distracted or look for some distraction, we can quite intentionally shift our attention to something else for a short period of time. We can interrupt our process and like the child regaining their interest in a previously abandoned toy, we may provide the opportunity to find our way back to our initial intention and interest.

So what do we shift our attention to? I once read this funny little poem from “The People’s Almanac”, by David Wallechinsky & Irving Wallace (© 1975 – 1981) that has some relevance here

Whenever you're called upon to make up your mind,
And you're hampered by not having any,
The simplest way to solve the dilemma you'll find,
Is simply by flipping a penny.
No, not so that chance shall decide the affair,
As you're passively standing there moping.
But as soon as the penny is up in the air,
You'll suddenly know what you are hoping for.

How does this apply to shifting our attention? I find that very often, at the time when my interest wanes, I am distracted by something else that I want to do or need to do. Many times it is not even my lack of interest but the degree to which I am drawn to something else that causes me to be distracted. Now it is easy to trick ourselves and always shift because there is another task at hand. But often if we put something else to rest, our attention and interest returns to our original activity.
If we understand something about the nature of our distractions it may be easier to find our way back when they take us off course. We can distinguish between shifting our attention and interest to something completely outside of what we are doing and shifting our attention and interest to another aspect of what we are doing. For example, as I was writing this paragraph I remembered that I forgot to check something off a list I was keeping (nothing to do with this book). I stopped writing, found my list, checked off what I wanted to and started to peruse the rest of my list. After a few minutes I remembered about my writing (the computer was on and right in front of me the entire time) and here I am again!

Making this observation about myself is very informative as to how I skip out of my creative process. Sometimes as I sit here, with apparently nothing to write, I will go back and read from the beginning of the chapter. This shift is away from what I was doing, writing, but still connected to the project of writing.

Sometimes we can form an "internal bridge of interest" between the initial activity and what someone else might call a distraction. This way of connecting things is very individual and personal. To illustrate this, let's look at a variety of ways that I build these internal bridges of interest in my own creative process.

I once read a very interesting book called "Overcoming Overeating", by Jane Hirschman and Carol Munter, and one idea in it that I found novel was, when I feel hungry, what is it I would like to eat? In the past when I had felt hungry I would eat whatever was around, or whatever smell was caught by my nose, or whatever someone made or brought me. I had never sat and thought for a few moments, "what would I like to eat right now?" I find that now, when I get hungry, I ponder this in a similar way to how I ponder what words need to be written next. As I go and eat I still feel connected to my writing, or whatever project I am working on. It is as if the act of eating is a continuation of my intention to create something.

Another bridge I have noticed within myself is the act of calling someone who I've been thinking of calling. Not a call that takes care of some business, but a personal call that is both interactive and conversational in its nature. I have found that I am often unconsciously making some connection between my task at hand and the person I am calling. I come back to my initial activity refreshed or shifted in some way that allows me, or even propels me to move forward.

I also sometimes just let my attention wander for a while. Sitting where I am and looking around, I let myself daydream and simply noticing what is around me. If I find something else that calls me to work on it, I notice that and then move on. I don't allow myself to start any other activities. This short interlude is often enough to settle my interest back into what I was doing.

My most frequent interruption is noticing how comfortable I am and making any necessary adjustments so I can get even more comfortable. It usually takes me a few seconds and I may do it very often. I find there is a direct correlation between
my state of comfort and ease and how I can maintain my interest. An indirect, but funny, example of this was when I was sharing a house with three other people during my Feldenkrais training in the early 1980’s. My bedroom was adjacent to the bathroom. Every morning, a lot earlier than I liked to get up, my friend Gus would do his thing in the bathroom and make quite a racket. After a few days of this I spoke to him about his loud morning rituals and asked him to tone it down. In response he asked me what I did when I heard him making noise. I wasn’t that interested in analyzing my process but I answered him anyway. I told him the obvious, which was, I would try to go back to sleep. He said to me, "That won’t work. Next time you get woken up just notice how you are lying in the bed and see if you can get more comfortable." This was not what I wanted to hear. I told him, "Look, just see if you can keep it down in the morning." The next morning, right on schedule, Gus woke me with his usual sounds. I immediately got annoyed and then I remembered his suggestion. The next thing I knew my alarm was going off, and it was time to get up. I had immediately fallen asleep as I attended to my own comfort. And I was never woken up by his morning noises again (and I know he was just as loud as ever). The point of this is not to put ourselves to sleep, but to use an internal bridge to bring ourselves back to whatever activity we have been distracted from, whether it is sleep or creating a collage.

As I said before, these "bridges" are very personal. Mine may seem relevant to you or maybe you already understand something about your own bridges. Whatever you discover, it is important that these interruptions have a time constraint. My interruption is usually about 10 minutes (maximum 20 minutes) and no more than one each hour. You may find something else works better for you. All we are seeking is a way to get ourselves interested again.

Our interest is the means, the connection and the vehicle that can elicit our passion and enthusiasm. It has a life of its own that ebbs and flows. It only takes a single moment to find it again and it is usually closer than we think. In order to fill our creative potential, we do not have to be great or the best, we only have to follow our interest.

Each movement exploration you have done so far as well as the ones that follow give you the chance to observe your attention and how you stay interested. Through sensing yourself in movement you are actually practicing “being interested” without the need to achieve something. Let’s do another movement exploration now to explore this.

Before you begin, how much of the initial guidelines for how to do these experiments do you remember? Go back to Chapter 1 and see if you left anything out.

**Lie on your back. Take some time to observe yourself. Pay particular attention to how you make these observations. Are you finding what is wrong with you? Are you finding what is uncomfortable? Are you changing and**
adjusting things the moment you sense them? We can’t stop these kinds of thoughts, but every time you assess yourself in this way see if you can notice yourself more neutrally, without judgment. An example, “My legs are too close together.” Could become “My legs are closer than I imagined they would be.” or “My legs are nearer to each other and farther from the walls or the people around me.” Take some time to re-describe your observations of yourself.

Come to sitting with the soles of your feet touching. Sit comfortably, don’t have your legs pulled in too close to you. With your left hand get hold of the right foot, with your palm on the sole of the foot and all of your fingers (including the thumb) along the outside edge of your foot.

Gently begin to lift your right leg into the air and back down again. Observe how it lifts. How light or heavy is it? What is the comfortable range it can lift to? How much is the rest of yourself involved?

Put your foot down, lie on your back and rest. Has anything changed from doing these few movements?

Come to sitting again and get hold of your right foot with your left hand in the same way you did before. Lift your right foot to a comfortable height. Someplace where you could stay for a bit. Keeping your foot at this lifted place, slowly start to move your foot to the left and then to the right. Continue going back and forth. Is it easier to move it to the left or the right? Without any strain, how far can you go in each direction? What prevents you from going farther?

Rest in sitting.

Get hold of the same foot in the same way and again, begin moving it to the left and right. As you move the foot leftward, look to the left and as you move the foot rightward, look to the right. Do you go any farther? Could you begin to swivel on your bottom as you go to the right to go farther right? How about bringing your right foot to the left of your left leg as you go to the left. Play with this and see if you can find ways to easily go farther left and right.

Lie on your back and rest. Are there any differences you observe?

Come to sitting again and get hold of your right foot with your left hand as before and lift your leg into the air as you did in the beginning. Any easier?

Switch your hands and feet. Hold the left foot with the right hand, palm to the sole of the foot and all of your fingers together along the outside edge of your foot. Gently lift this leg into the air and find out how it lifts. How is it different from the other foot? Is is lighter, heavier? Does it have a different range? Is there a different involvement of the rest of yourself? Gently lift your foot and put it down many times, getting more familiar with it.
Rest on your back.

Sit and hold the left foot with the right hand as you just had it. Lift the foot to a comfortable height and explore moving it left and right. Does it start out easier than the other side did? Begin to bring more of yourself into the action, looking with your eyes and turning your head. Swiveling on your bottom. How can the rest of yourself help this leg go left and right?

Pause in sitting.

Lift the left foot with your right hand and see what it is like now.

Lie on your back and rest. Has anything changed? What do you notice now?

Come to sitting and bring your left hand to hold your right foot as you did in the beginning. Begin to lift your foot into the air bringing it towards you and then higher and then away from you and back down, so you begin to move it in a circular fashion, towards yourself and away from yourself. Switch directions and listen to how it feels.

Pause in sitting.

Begin to circle your foot again and this time find out at what point could you bring your head most easily towards your foot. So your foot is going in a circle and your head comes towards the foot at some point. Let your back round. Use all of yourself. Change the direction of your circle.

Rest on your back.

Come to sitting and this time get hold of your left foot with your right hand. Lift your foot and bring it towards you and then up and then away from you and then down, so it starts to circle. Do this several times and then change directions.

Pause in sitting.

Circle your foot again and find out when you can easily bring your head towards your foot and your foot towards your head, while continuing to circle the foot. Change the direction of your circle.

Lie on your back and observe any differences.

While lying on your back, bend your knees and put your feet standing on the floor. Lift your right leg into the air and with your left hand get hold of the
foot in the same way you did in sitting. Palm to the sole and all of your fingers along the outside edge of your foot. Slowly begin to lift your foot. Is it different lying on your back? Easier? It’s the same leg, same foot, same hand, what is it about lying on your back that makes it different?

Rest with your feet standing.

Get hold of the right foot with your left hand and lift it to a comfortable height and start to move your foot left and right. How far does it go easily, without strain? Begin to involve more of yourself. Let your head roll, your eyes look to each side. Let the movement of the leg begin to roll you from side to side. Can you bring your knee to the floor as you go to the right? Can you bring your foot and hand to the floor as you go to the left?

Rest with your legs long.

Bend your knees again and get hold of your left foot with your right hand. Lift the leg a few times and find out what it is like. Slowly and gently explore moving it to the right and the left. Bring more and more of yourself into it until it can roll you from side to side.

Rest with your legs long.

Come to sitting and hold your right foot with your left hand. Lift it and see how it lifts now. Easier? Change over your hand and foot, right hand to left foot, and lift this leg. Easier?

Take your left hand and hold your LEFT foot - THIS IS SOMETHING WE HAVEN’T DONE BEFORE. Hold it so your hand reaches over the front of the ankle, with your fingers wrapped around the outside edge of the foot, all of your fingers together. Get hold of your right foot with your right hand in the same fashion. Slowly begin lifting one leg into the air and putting it down and then lifting the other leg. Keep alternating lifting one leg and then the other and notice how your weight shifts. Is there a way in which you can get closer to the floor, towards one side, each time you lift a leg? Play with it.

Rest on your back.

On your back get hold of your feet as you just had them, left hand to left foot and right hand to right foot. Have your arms in-between your legs, your knees outside your elbows. Slowly begin lifting one leg and then the other, alternating. As you lift the left leg start to reach it over to the right and as you lift the right leg start to reach it over to the left. Back and forth, letting your whole self roll.

Rest on your back.
On your back, get hold of both feet in the same way. Begin to lengthen a leg bringing it over to the other side and as you do this push through the foot of the leg that is reaching across yourself. Keep your head down towards the floor and find out where this movement can take you. Some of you may be surprised that you end up sitting!

Rest on your back.

Come to sitting, hold the left foot with the left hand and the right foot with the right hand. Slowly lift one leg and as you do this let your weight shift until you can come onto your side. If you are lifting your left leg, let your weight shift to the right until you can bring your right knee or right elbow to the floor and then come back up to sitting. Do it to both sides. One side may be easier than the other. Explore the differences.

Rest on your back.

On your back get hold of both feet as you just had them and lift a leg and reach it across to the other side and see if you can find your way to sitting. Roll from side to side. If you need to you can use some momentum to help you.

Come to sitting. Sit still holding your legs and decide which side you want to roll down towards. Roll down to that side and continue onto your back and then onto the other side and back up to sitting. Continue to circle like this. Change directions and discover rolling like this to the other side.

Rest on your back. Observe how you are lying on the floor now. How do you make your observations now? Do you have a different quality or tone to your observations? What is different in your sensations both generally and specifically?

One last time come to sitting with the soles of your feet together and, as in the beginning, hold your right foot with your left hand and lift your foot and leg into the air. Is it lighter? Easier? Do the same thing with the left foot, lifting it with your right hand. Is it any better?

Come to standing and feel how your legs support you now. Walk around and notice what is the level of your vitality now. What is your internal attitude towards the world at this moment?

Enjoy yourself!
In the next few hours take a few moments to reflect on the qualities of your attention in whatever you are doing. Are you excited, interested, bored with what you are doing? How long have you been doing it? How long do you still have to do it? Think back to what your attention felt like in this last movement exploration. Was it different? Can you identify or name some of the differences? Could you bring some of the qualities you used in the movement exploration to what you are doing now?

Begin to observe the qualities of your attention and how you use it in the movement explorations as you progress through the book. Notice if each process in this book is giving you the chance to understand something about how you can stay interested in whatever you are doing.
Chapter 6

Our Emotional Heritage, an evolving entity....?

You're more likely to act yourself into feeling than feel yourself into action.”
Anonymous

Our self image, our identity and who we are is both largely made up of and strongly influenced by our emotional life. In our culture we spend a great deal of time and money trying to get in touch with, understand, gain control over and express our emotions. They function both as a source of definition and inspiration. They guide our decisions and both inhibit and encourage our actions. We believe them to be part of what it means to be human but much research indicates that we are not the only members of the animal kingdom who experience them.

When we know and understand what we are feeling we often feel more complete and whole. Much of the time we are either confused about what we are feeling, feeling too much or not feeling anything and wondering what’s wrong with us. Overall we understand very little about emotions although research and various schools of thought continue to develop insights, theories and understandings. We have spent a lot of the last century (and will well into this one) researching, evoking and catharting our emotions. What we have discovered is that they are not separate from the self, that they are interconnected through our neurology and our relationship to our environment.

Our emotions play a big role in the process of actualizing the unimaginable. They determine our best and worst moments ranging from divine inspiration to the lowest despair. They allow us to move forward or can stop us dead in our tracks. They confuse us, excite us, deter us, inhibit us, encourage us and generally take us on some of the wildest roller coaster rides imaginable. Our feelings are an essential part of who we are, but unfortunately we often let them rule us.

We often wait to feel a certain way and then we will do something... Or we believe that when we feel differently, then we will do it.... Or we try to regain a
particular feeling so we can do it... In other words we spend a great deal of our time wishing for different feelings in order to be able to act.

What is it that determines what we feel? How is it that we can feel one way and then another so quickly? Is there another way we can interact with our emotions? Let's see if we can make some sense out of it.

Years ago I got it into my head that I wanted to travel for a year. I had no money and I approached my aunt and uncle for a loan. They skeptically said they would think about it. In the meantime I had been earning a living doing interior contracting, painting, plastering, wallpapering, etc. One morning as I went to my car to go to work, I discovered that my car had been stolen! I was thrilled! I took it as a sign that I wasn't supposed to be doing this kind of work; I was supposed to be traveling. It was the best thing that could have happened to me. I remember going off for a walk, beaming with a smile. Unfortunately, a few blocks over, I found my car. I had forgotten where I had parked it. Somewhat disappointed, I went off to work.

About two weeks later my whole life had changed around. I no longer planned to go traveling. I had decided to rekindle an old relationship and now wanted to stay home. I left early that day to go to work and discovered that my car had been stolen! Sound familiar? I went into total despair. I needed the car to work, what was I going to do? This meant big trouble for me, as I had no money to buy another car. Depressed, I began to wander aimlessly trying to figure out what to do now that my whole life had just caved in. And wouldn't you know it, as I moped around I found my car, just a few blocks over. Again I had forgotten where I had last parked it (part of the challenge of parking in New York). Hooray, I was ecstatic! All of my plans were resurrected. I would survive and survive well.

Isn't it funny that discovering that my car had been stolen could evoke such different feelings? Have you ever considered how much the contexts we exist in determine what we feel? We actually fill in the emotional content of a situation depending on how we read the context.

Imagine someone wandering into a room, their hands pressed deep in their pockets, a solemn look on their face and breathing deeply. What could have happened to them? Someone must have died or maybe they got fired; could their car have been stolen? Would it surprise you to discover that they had just won the lottery and were shocked by the opportunities that now presented themselves? Of course you can imagine that; it may not be the way you would react to that kind of news, but someone else might.

Earlier I spoke of our emotional life as something that is always occurring within us. The level of emotion can vary and even if we have a hard time identifying and getting in touch with our emotions, they are still part and parcel of who we are.
If a change in context can produce such different emotions then how are we to determine what we are really feeling?

Did you ever see an infant crying and then someone jangles a set of keys in front of their face and the tears disappear? Where did those feelings go? I always have been struck by the fluidity and ease of emotions in a child and the difficulty with which adults experience emotions.

When we, as adults, have a strong emotional response we often try to keep it buried away so as to avoid experiencing it. Other times we work so hard trying to understand our feelings, as if by understanding them they will last longer. This isn't what the crying child is doing. The child is simply having his or her experience. Both in trying to keep our feelings at bay and when we work hard at understanding them we literally hold on to our emotions. Keeping our emotions away and keeping them here requires a lot of work and energy. It is a relentless process that requires constant vigilance.

Pick an object in the room you are in right now and imagine that you don't like it and have to keep it far from you. You will discover that there has to be some constant attention devoted to where that object is. Even if you leave the room, you have to know where it is so you don't run into it by accident. Even if you travel to another continent, feeling the distance increase between you and that object, you are still maintaining a connection to it.

It is similar if you too strongly embrace the object. You then need to always carry it with you. Imagine that, as a result of always having it with you, you can only pick up one bag of groceries when you go shopping, or are not able to fit into a crowded elevator... and of course you would probably need a bigger bed.

In both of the above cases you are limiting what is possible for you. We end up feeling what it is like to "hold on to a feeling" or to "keep the feeling away". This is different than simply feeling the feeling. One implies movement the other is static. One is the actual experience the other is our idea about that experience. One can evolve, in the other we try to maintain something.

What is it that tells you that you are having an emotion? I mean, how do you know what you are feeling? Even if you can't say its anger or hurt or love, what tells you that that emotion is present? Think of an emotion building or dwindling in you, what is it that signifies this? Right now, grit your teeth and clench your fists and make your lips tight. Besides the tension you feel, does it remind you of or even evoke an emotional response? Let that go and smile reaching the corners of your mouth towards your ears. Different isn't it?

Now here you have sustained the same context but shifted something within yourself. The change you experienced in your musculature evokes different feelings. These changes in our musculature are recognizable to us through the shifts in our
sensations. It is through our sensations that we determine what it is we are feeling. We know or recognize our feelings through our sensations. It is the actual state of contraction or de-contraction of our musculature that is interpreted by us as emotion. When we see changes in the musculature of others we think we know what they are feeling as a result of what we see.

Unfortunately, the times when we try to understand out emotional processes is often when we are in the depths of our feelings. This is a dilemma. It is similar to the one we face when we are trying to allow ourselves to make mistakes, as discussed in Chapter 3. We need a context in which to practice that isn’t so important, one that has relatively few consequences. But how can we practice our emotions? And which ones should we practice? Should I practice being angry or loving today? And should I do this alone, being angry or loving towards myself or should I pick someone to do this with? Let’s see, who is closest to me? Maybe my partner or spouse or best friend... Pity to those who are around when we try to practice some of these things. This is not an easy task.

When we recognize what we are feeling and even when we don’t, this is a relative act. That is, our recognition of our feelings is always in comparison to other feelings we have had. If we had never felt sad, then how would we know we were happy? It is our comparisons of the differences in our emotional states that helps us figure this all out. While we would always like to feel happy, if we were happy all of the time, it would soon become mundane and eventually we wouldn’t even know we were happy. So this means that we need the full range of our emotional life so that we can really feel happy and even happier still.

When I first worked with Jerzy Grotowski (the director of the Polish Theatre Laboratory I spoke about in Chapter 1) the interview process was secretive and a little unsettling for me. One of the last statements he made before asking me if I wanted to participate in his work was, "The purpose of our work is to bring joy to each other." Had he not said this I probably would have declined. I was twenty years old and still a little frightened of the unknown (by the way I’m still a little frightened of the unknown, but only a little; in my 20’s I used bravado, now I have experience). What he said was true; working with him and The Polish Theatre laboratory was a tremendously joyful experience. Two months later, having had this wonderful experience, I thought well that was it, I was lucky to have it. And then at 11:30pm one night I get a phone call and the voice said, "This is Jerzy Grotowski, would you like to meet and talk?" Wow! Would I!

I went to Jerzy’s hotel and we talked until 7:00am. One of the questions he asked me was what would I like to do next? The initial work we had done was so far beyond anything I could have imagined that I was a little stumped by his question. Finally an answer came to me and this is what I said. I held my hands out in front of me and raised one higher than the other. I explained that I felt nothing but joy in my work with him and, referring to the hand that was raised high, I feel like I reached some limit to the joy I can feel. In order to feel more joy, I would need to feel more
of my pain and now referring to the hand that was lowered I slowly started to raise it towards the other hand. As I raised the hand that I referred to as my pain, I felt like the other hand, my joy, had the capacity to lift higher. My pain and my joy felt relative to each other and I needed to feel both fully to feel either one or the other to a greater degree. I must say here that I was not referring to physical pain, although anyone who has been in emotional pain knows it is a physical experience.

When we are engaged in a creative act there is no time to practice the range of our feelings. It is difficult to divide our attention when we are so close or so far from our feelings. Also, the range of feelings we experience in our creative process is so broad that we would be spending all of our time exploring our feelings and have no time left to create. And let’s not forget the unpredictability of our emotions. They can arise so quickly, and change so fast and come from out of nowhere. To be at their mercy can be scary. There needs to be some intermediary place where we can learn about this so when we come to "creating" we have an increased understanding of what we are feeling.

If, as discussed above, we recognize our emotions through our sensations, then maybe it is possible to practice our sensations and in so doing, learn more about our emotions. Perhaps the exploration of our sensations can provide us with this safe context in which to explore and practice our feelings, outside of our creative endeavors.

Such an exploration may not only lead to greater creativity but to deeper personal development. The human journey is an embodied process of discovering, knowing and learning about ourselves. As creatures capable of deep feeling, can we develop and evolve ourselves until we have a new understanding of what it means to be human? As in the Olympics, where the human capacity to run, jump or ski continues to develop, is it possible to raise our consciousness so as to develop our emotional capacities beyond what was previously possible? We cannot do this in one day or in a weekend workshop or even by reading a book like this. But perhaps the day, the weekend or the book can begin to give us the means to embark on this journey, which, if it is really of any value to us, will continue throughout the rest of our lives.

Let’s do another sensory movement exploration now to take these ideas from the abstract into the concrete. The interrelationship between our emotions, intentions and actions is where our creativity lies. By developing a deeper understanding of our emotions our actions can become more representative of our intentions and we can more freely express our creativity. As you do the following movements, listen closely to your sensations, and you will be able to examine how your emotions are affected by your contexts, your intentions and your actions.
Lie on your right side. Slowly roll onto your back. Then roll back onto your right side. Do this several times. What do you notice? Include your sensations, thoughts and feelings.

Rest on your back.

Roll onto your right side and onto your back again, several times. Does it remind you of anything? Is there something familiar about this action? When and where have you felt this action in your life?

Imagine that you are rolling onto your back as if you were in your bed. Does that feel different from how you initially sensed yourself in rolling?

Rest on your back. Does the image of rolling over in bed continue for you as you lie on your back?

Roll on to your right side again and explore rolling onto your back as if you were in bed. The next time you do it imagine that you are rolling over to turn off your alarm clock which just woke you up. Do this several times. How does that change the quality of your rolling and what you sense about your rolling over?

Rest on your back.

Roll on to your right side again and roll back, again thinking of turning off your alarm clock. Did you already decide what time your clock was set for? Imagine that your clock was set 2 or 3 hours earlier than you would usually get up and continue rolling over to turn off your alarm. How does this time difference influence how you roll and what you feel?

Rest on your back.

Roll on to your right side again and think, did you invent some reason to have your alarm set earlier than usual? Roll back again, this time imagining that you are getting up early to do something you do not want to go to. What is the quality of your rolling like now? Heavier, lighter, slower, faster?

Rest on your back.

Roll on to your right side again and this time roll imagining that your clock is set for 2 or 3 hours earlier than usual, but this time it is so you can go on a vacation that you have been looking forward to for a long time. What does rolling feel like now? Do you move through a different trajectory? Do your eyes feel different?

Rest on your back.
Roll on to your right side again and this time roll over to turn off your alarm at a normal hour. What is it like now? Now imagine that you are turning off your alarm but your partner is in bed with you. How does this influence the way in which you roll over?

Rest on your back.

Roll on to your right side again, roll over to turn off your alarm, your partner is in bed with you and this time you do not want to wake them. What differences does this make in how you move?

Rest on your back.

Roll on to your right side again, roll over to turn off your alarm, your partner is in bed with you, you don’t want to wake them and you had a big fight the night before. How does this affect your rolling over?

Rest on your back.

Roll on to your right side again, roll over to turn off your alarm, your partner is in bed with you, you don’t want to wake them and you had a big fight the night before. Have you already decided whose fault the fight was? In any case make it so the fight was your fault and you don’t want to wake your partner. What are you feeling now?

Rest on your back.

Roll on to your right side again, roll over to turn off your alarm, your partner is in bed with you, you don’t want to wake them and you had a big fight the night before and this time the fight was their fault! Does this shift your feelings yet again?

Rest on your back.

Roll on to your right side again and roll over to turn off your alarm alone in your bed. Different? Now roll to turn off your alarm but it is very cold in your room. What is this like?

Rest on your back.

Roll on to your right side again and roll over to turn off your alarm and this time it is very, very hot and humid in your room. Notice the differences in your rolling.

Rest on your back.
Roll on to your right side again and roll over to turn off your alarm with a normal temperature in your room. How is it now?

Rest on your back.

Roll on to your right side again and simply roll onto your back as you did in the beginning. What is it like now? Are there specific or generalized differences? Are there added dimensions to your rolling? Do you notice things you didn’t notice before? Have some qualities become clarified or others shifted into the background?

Roll onto your back and a few times roll onto your left side and back again. How does this compare to rolling from the right?

Come to standing and observe how you feel. Do you feel differences from one side to the other? Try turning to each side and compare them. Notice your emotional tone right now. Is it biased in a particular direction or more neutral?

See if you can carry some of this process into your everyday life. Observe yourself, either when you are feeling a lot or feeling relatively little, and examine the context you are in and if it is having any influence on what you are feeling.
Chapter 7

Habits...the making and unmaking of ourselves

“If you create an act, you create a habit.”
Andre Maurois

We are all creatures of habit. There is nothing essentially new in this. Most people know this about themselves. When I ask people "What are your habits?", they answer in a variety of ways. In New York City people talk about drinking too much coffee, smoking, rushing and window-shopping. In San Francisco people talk about taking walks on the beach, meditating, turning the tap off to save water and drinking good decaf. Of course these are stereotypes and all of these activities are habits that are not bound to a particular place. But I have observed the difference from coast to coast in the positive or negative interpretation of what a habit is.

If we go on to list our habits we can find that we will come up with quite a long list that includes both positive and negative habits. In relation to the creative process we most often view our habits as things that interfere with our creativity. If we were only free from these damn habits we could really be spontaneous. But could we?

Take a moment and consider your habits. Include the positive ones and negative ones; your habits in thinking, acting and feeling; the frequent and infrequent ones.

And now consider this question, what do you do that is not a habit? Really think about it. It is not so easy to answer this question. In fact we find that most of the things we do are habitual. Now before we go off judging this we need to recognize that not only are we creatures of habit, we need habits. Without our habits we would live in a state of internal and external anarchy and life as we know it would completely disintegrate. Without habits you would open a door to go into a room and not remember how to use the door to get out.
So what do you do that is not a habit? You may come up with one or two, maybe even five things, but you can see that you can think of many more things that are habits than aren’t. Maybe one of your answers is getting down on the floor and exploring movements, attention and sensation as a result of reading this book, not part of most people’s repertoire of habits. In fact it may be a totally new experience to you to do something like this. But if we look more closely at how be bring ourselves to do something new, we find that there is an existing hierarchy of habits that enables us to do the new act.

For example, you may not realize it, but the way you use your attention in the movement explorations has some relationship to how you use your attention in your life. Seeing the glass as half empty or half full is representative of the habit of how we perceive our world. In fact, this hierarchy of habits is what allows us to develop new ones. We crawl before we walk and walk before we run and all of these habits influence us when we learn to ski and so on.

Most of us think of habits as something repetitive, something we can do without thinking about it, something that has been practiced to a degree that it becomes unconscious and doesn’t require a great deal of attention to enact. For example, how you get down and up from the floor is not new, you may do it infrequently, but it is certainly something you can do without having to think about it.

Often we can find ourselves doing something habitual and not knowing when we began to do it. And almost everyone has had the experience of trying to "break a habit" that they have had for a long time.

How many times must you do something before it becomes a habit? Once, twice, a hundred times? There is obviously no one single answer. If we recognize the hierarchy of our existing habits as part of learning a new one, then maybe the answer is once. If the habit needs to be enacted without having to think about it at all then maybe the answer is a hundred times. The number of times we need to repeat something varies from person to person, from activity to activity.

Some of our habits are so deeply ingrained they are part of our identity and inseparable from our sense of self. It would be unimaginable to change them. Other things that we would like to become habits seem unattainable. Most of the time we have associated some level of judgment towards ourselves, our habits, and our ability or inability to do something different around them.

A large part of what makes something a habit is the sequence in which it is done. When you shower or bath do you shampoo first and then use conditioner and then soap your body, or do you wash your body first and then use the shampoo and conditioner, or do you have another order? When you use the soap do you start with your feet? Your neck? Your chest? If you floss your teeth, where do you start?
Do you do the upper right quadrant first or the lower left? How long does that take to do? Next time you shower or bath or floss; change the sequence in which you do things. Start flossing from the other direction or when you shower soap up first or shampoo first and change the order in which you wash your body. To disrupt a habitual pattern that is done so regularly can feel quite bizarre as well as being very informative.

The frequency of our habits may also be instructive. The daily ones like showering or flossing are more obvious. Can you think of any habits you have that you do very infrequently? What about holiday rituals, decorating a Christmas tree or celebrating the Passover Seder or New Years Eve or Thanksgiving? It is so interesting how we are capable of doing something only once a year and so quickly attaching ourselves to a particular way of doing it.

Many of our habits come from our parents and family, and they got them from their parents and so on. I heard a wonderful story of a woman; whenever she made a roast she would always cut it in half and cook it in two pans. Some years into her marriage her husband asked her one day, "Why do you always cook the roast in two pans"? She told him, "That was how my mother always cooked it". Here was something she did because it was how her mother did it. But the question stayed with her and after some time she posed it to her mother. Her mother told her, "Oh, when you were growing up and we had very little money we didn't have a pan big enough to hold the roast so I would cut it in half and cook it in two pans." We can easily find the humor in this story and many of us have a similar story about ourselves or stories that are yet to be discovered.

Our habits speak very much to our ability to make choices, our ability to be creative. If we do something and have no awareness of how we came to do it, what it is we are doing, or the reason we do it in this way, then we are acting in a way that keeps us as we are and limits our potential for expanding more towards who we would like ourselves to be. We must take care not to dissect everything we do and totally disrupt our life as we know it. But to begin to live with the question of "what are my habits" can wake us up to our capacity for learning, growth and creativity.

In a situation where we feel stuck, seeing our dilemma as a habit can often unstuck us. Once we have this perspective we can begin to play with some of the variables that make it a habit. We can change the frequency or the sequence, investigate the history of the habit, modulate the intensity of it, or vary it slightly so that it a little less recognizable. When we do this we may expect some kind of epiphany (and this may occur), but what is more likely to happen is that we end up feeling a little less coordinated and somewhat confused.

Feeling less coordinated has interesting implications. At these moments we actually lose our coordinates, our points of orientation that make something familiar and recognizable. It is like going back to someplace from your childhood and finding that the landmarks have changed. We can have some idea of where we are and at
the same time feel a little lost. To disrupt our habits to the degree that we can allow something new to happen, whether it is a behavior or a feeling or simply seeing a different perspective, is a necessary part of the creative process. One that invites us into the land of "not knowing", a fertile territory where discoveries can occur.

Habit can be the nemesis of the creative artist. Think of the actor who has to repeat the same lines every night, the dancer who does the same movements with the same partner, the potter who makes mostly vases because that it is what sells best. For many this repetition deadens the spontaneity and vitality of what they are creating. They begin to feel that they are doing it by rote. Something is missing and it is often evident in their art.

But isn't the same true for most of us in our work and daily life? Don't we long for the moments where we feel fresh and alive? And paradoxically, if we lose hold of our habits to the point where life begins to feel chaotic, don't we wish for more constancy? Maybe it is possible, both for the artist and for ourselves generally, to see the habitual nature of our existence as a chance to refine what we do. To develop the nuances of our actions. To see more details in relation to the whole. To see more of the bigger picture, which can only occur through repetition. The embodied investigations we have been doing at the end of each chapter in this book have repetition built into them so that discovery becomes possible. Being creative has moments of inspiration and it is also methodical.

It is important to realize that our habits have been learned. They may have been learned unconsciously, like the woman with the roast, but the fact that they exist within the domain of learning means there is the ability to do 'what'? Unlearn them? I don't think so. How do we unlearn something? And would unlearning it really be useful to us? What is more likely is that we can learn a new habit or evolve the existing one. In either case the original habit remains as a part of our repertoire and probably needs to be. If the woman with the roast completely lost the habit of cooking with two pans, and one day found herself with a big roast and no big pan, she would be at a loss as to how to cook it. Our habits, even those that seem the most arbitrary, can always serve us in specific contexts.

Imagine yourself as someone who types with two or three fingers (like I am as I write this). It works, and you (and I) have always gotten by with it. You decide to take a class to learn to type with all ten fingers as you know it is much more efficient and you will be able to type faster. Two weeks into the course you rush home and have to type a letter very quickly. What do you do? Do you struggle, trying to use all ten fingers, even though you haven't refined this ability or do you type with the two or three fingers that are familiar and known to you? Obviously if you were in a hurry the more known way feels and is more efficient. But two months after you have finished the course and you have become proficient with all ten fingers, going back to typing with two or three fingers would feel incredibly inadequate. At some point the new habit takes the foreground, but the old one remains dormant just in case, one day, you might need it again. In the same way,
while we value electricity, we don't want to give up candles. We know that when there is a power outage or no bulbs left in the cupboard, candles can allow us to see in the dark.

So we need our habits and we also need to perturb them. As a resource and as a constraint, our habits are one more means towards understanding ourselves and becoming more creative individuals. Again it is important to remind ourselves that we need to be kind towards ourselves and not judge our habits harshly. They helped get us to where we are today and will continue to be a part of our growth and development. Let's see what we can understand through an experience of our habits.

Remember to go slowly so you can more fully sense any differences.

*Please lie on your back. Sense how you are lying on the floor. What comes into your attention first, second and third? Notice, do you scan through yourself in a particular way that is familiar? Do you always first sense what is uncomfortable or what is comfortable? Do you regularly start with your head, your feet, your breathing or someplace else? Are there habitual ways in which you sense yourself?*

*Interlace your fingers. Notice which thumb is on top and which little finger is on the bottom. Change all of your fingers over one notch, so the other thumb is on top and the other little finger is on the bottom. Does this feel different? Where does it feel different, in your fingers, your wrists, arms, shoulders or does it just feel generally strange and unfamiliar? Slowly change back to the habitual way of interlacing your fingers and then back to the non-habitual way. Do this many times, sensing if you can discern where or how it is different.*

*Rest with your arms at your sides.*

*Can you find another way of interlacing your fingers, different from the two ways you have just explored? Play around with this idea.*

*Regardless of what you discovered, place your palms on the front of your torso, with your fingers pointing towards each other. Slowly lift the heels of your hand, letting your fingers remain dangling and still touching your torso. Now move your hands together until your fingers interlace in this inverted fashion. Again observe which thumb is on the outside and which little finger is on the outside. Keeping the interlacing inverted, slowly switch over your fingers one notch until the other thumb and little finger are on the outside. Slowly go back and forth between the habitual and non-habitual way of interlacing your inverted fingers and notice how and where you feel the differences.*

*Rest.*
You now have four ways of interlacing your fingers. Can you think of another?

Bring your hands towards the ceiling, arms almost straight. Turn both palms so they are facing to the right. Bring the palm of your left hand to the back of your right hand and interlace the fingers in this orientation. Keeping the palm to the back of the other hand, slowly move all of the fingers over one notch and then back again, many times, exploring the different sensations.

Now you have six ways in which you can interlace you fingers, and maybe you’ve already thought of two more. Bring your hands towards the ceiling again and this time turn your palms so they face to the left. Bring the palm of the right hand to the back of the left hand and interlace your fingers. Slowly move all of the fingers over one notch, going back and forth sensing the differences.

Rest.

Interlace your fingers as you did in the very beginning. Do it habitually and non-habitually. What is it like now?

Leave that and with your legs long, cross your ankles. Notice which ankle is crossed over which. Change it over so the other ankle is on top. Are there any differences you can sense between the two ways of crossing your ankles? For many of us this movement has less differences between habitual and non-habitual because we may frequently do this action while sitting in a chair and as a result both ways may feel familiar. Keep changing over the crossing of your ankles.

Rest.

Cross your ankles habitually. If you are not sure which way is your habitual way simply cross them quickly and see which way you choose. Leave your ankles like this and interlace your fingers (as in the first variation) non-habitually. Slowly change over your ankles and fingers at the same time. So when your ankles are non-habitually crossed your fingers will be habitually interlaced and vice versa. Keep change them both over at the same time, back and forth, sensing the differences.

Rest with your feet standing.

Lengthen your legs and cross your arms over your chest. Notice which arm is on top and which is below. Change over your arms so the other is on top. What is different about this way of crossing your arms? Slowly go back and forth, first one arm on top and then the other.
Leave your arms interlaced habitually and notice how they are crossed. Are both hands by your shoulders, or is one hand by a shoulder and the other by your armpit, or are both hands by the armpits? Whichever way you are crossing your arms pick a different way and then, in this new way of interlacing your arms, change over which arm is on top. Go back and forth between habitually and non-habitually crossing your arms in this non-habitual way of crossing them.

Rest.

Cross your arms again, this time crossing them in the third possible way and go back and forth, one arm on top and then the other. Slowly, many times, observing the differences.

Go back to the first way you crossed your arms and cross them habitually and non-habitually. Notice how you change them over. Do you move both arms at the same time, or only move the left arm, or only move the right arm? Change the way in which you change over your arms. Try all the different possibilities. Continue and add the crossing of your ankles. So your arms and ankles are both changing over at the same time and you are changing over your arms in different ways.

Rest.

Cross your arms in a non-habitual way (one of the three ways mentioned earlier) and change over the crossing of your arms and begin to also change over "how" you change over the arms. Remember that you can laugh and breath and not get too serious about this!

Rest on your back. Are you resting habitually or non-habitually?

Let's come back to the interlacing of your fingers. You already have six ways; are there any others? Bring your hands to the ceiling. Turn both palms so they face out, the left palm to the left and the right facing to the right. Slowly bring your arms towards each other until they cross at the wrist and then interlace your fingers. Which thumb is on top? Which little finger is on the bottom? Is it always the same thumb or has it been changing throughout? Keeping your wrists crossed as they are, change over all of the fingers one notch to the non-habitual interlacing. Continue to explore this back and forth noting what you feel.

Notice how your wrists are crossed. Which arm is closer to you? Unlace your fingers and change over your wrists so that the other one is closer to you. With your wrists crossed like this, non-habitually, interlace your fingers and play with the habitual and non-habitual interlacing of your fingers.
Rest on your back.

Slowly roll to your side and come to sitting with your legs crossed, Indian or tailor fashion. Notice which leg is in front and change it over so the other leg is in front. Go back and forth investigating yourself in these movements.

Notice how you change over your legs. Do you move both at the same time or just the left or just the right? Change the way in which you change over the legs. Try all three ways and sense yourself.

Continue changing over your legs and add the interlacing of your fingers (again the initial variation). Change your fingers and legs at the same time, many times.

Rest in sitting.

Cross your legs non-habitually. Cross your arms habitually. Slowly change over your arms and legs at the same time. Go slow enough so that you can coordinate these actions as one.

Keep changing over your arms and legs and also change "how" you change over your arms and legs. Slow down if you need to and remember if you can’t do it, you can still have a good life! Take it easy.

Rest in sitting.

For the next variation it is important that you only do what you can do comfortably. Make sure you do not strain and if you feel any cramping stop immediately and simply do less or imagine it.

If you are wearing socks take them off. Sit with the soles of your feet together and using your hands to help you, slowly interlace your toes habitually. I know you are probably laughing at the idea of “habitually interlacing your toes” as if this is something you regularly do, but you will find that you do have a predisposition to one way over the other. Remember to go slowly and gently. If only two toes can interlace then that’s enough. Notice which big toe is on the top and which big toe is on the bottom. Is it similar to the interlacing of your fingers?

Uncross your toes and cross then again non-habitually, changing over whichever big toe was on top or little toe on the bottom. Is it easier to do non-habitually?

Uncross them again and notice from which toes did you start the interlacing? From the little toes or the big ones? If you started from the top
down, do it from the bottom up. If you started from the bottom up, start from
the top down.

Rest on your back.

Slowly interlace your fingers as you did at the very beginning, habitually
and non-habitually. How does it feel now? Are there fewer differences than you
initially noted? Or are the differences clearer to you?

Slowly roll your side and come to standing. Did you roll to the habitual or
non-habitual side? Do you know if you have one?

Begin to walk around. As you walk, begin to interlace your fingers
habitually and non-habitually. When do you change over, when the right foot is
forward, when the left foot is forward or on each step forward? Now do it
differently – change the timing of when you swap the interlacing of your fingers.

Continue to walk and begin to interlace your fingers habitually in front of
you and then non-habitually behind you. Again on which foot does this
changeover occur? Continue and change it so your fingers are non-habitually
interlaced when they are in front of your and habitually interlaced when your
hands are behind you.

Leave it and just walk and sense yourself now. What is it like? Different,
familiar, clearer?

Gently observe your habits throughout the rest of your day.

Pick a regular habit you have, and explore doing it differently for a week or
so. For example, try wearing your watch on the other wrist or brushing your teeth
from a different starting point or with the other hand. Notice how much attention
you have to bring to doing your habit in this new way. Observe if this makes you
more aware of other things you do habitually.
Chapter 8

*Risk... Do We Take A Chance?*

“Only those who will risk going too far can possibly find out how far one can go.”

T.S. Elliot

Without some level of risk we cannot be creative. Risk demands that we enter into the unknown, that we try something different, that we find out what might happen. We associate certain feelings with risk, generally fear or excitement. Most of the time risk is something we avoid. It is too dangerous; we could get hurt or lose everything. When we think of risk our minds often go to extremes; bungee jumping, putting all of our savings into lotto tickets, going to the airport and getting on a plane, to anywhere, anyplace, far, far away.

Think of the last time that you took a risk. If the outcome was positive then maybe you are looking for another chance to try it again. If the outcome was negative, even reading this chapter may bring up bad feelings. When we risk and succeed our internal self-image gets expanded, sometimes even overblown. When we fail at risk we can feel shame and may want to hide and become invisible.

We usually only appreciate risk when we triumph. But in actuality we most often don’t have a very clear idea of what happened. When we risk and it works we feel lucky, at least up until the time we risk again and flounder. If we are fortunate, we can appreciate our failings at risk and learn from it rather than inhibit our behavior.

We have all been hurt in love and know how hard it is to come back out and enter into a new relationship (or even rekindle the old one). Some never find their way back to that level of risk, it is just too painful. The degree of pain we feel when our "risks" don’t work out is one of our best teachers. Later we will discuss some of the means to tolerate this burden.

When we risk we usually plan or predict some outcome. Our emotional response to achieving or failing to achieve the outcome depends on how much we
feel we have risked. If I invest money in new company and I’m hoping for a return that will double my money and it quadruples, I feel great. If I move to be near the person I love and upon moving, find out she is marrying someone else, I feel miserable. How great or how miserable I feel is relative to how much I risked. If all of my money is invested in the new company, Wow! If I was playing it safe and only put in a small amount that I wouldn’t even miss if I lost it, then I a may be disappointed that I didn’t get a bigger return. If I sold my house and moved across the country to be with the person I loved I would feel much worse than if I had merely sublet my place for a month (although subletting for just a month would be a good indication that this relationship didn’t have much of a future).

Often we take risks and we don’t think they are risks. We are certain of the outcome. It is a sure thing. I can recall many years ago, I had two friends from Seattle visiting me in New York City. I was taking them on a grand tour, showing them everything. We started at the Battery and went up to Wall Street, to Chinatown, to Little Italy, to SoHo, to the Village and found ourselves in Times Square. At the time, Times Square (42nd Street) was a place filled with hustlers.

There was a man playing a street game called Three Card Monty. He has three cards, one red and two black. He shows you which card is in which hand and starts tossing them onto a makeshift cardboard table. He usually goes slowly enough so it is easy to follow where the red card is. There is also another man or woman who works with him, although you’re not supposed to know it. This partner bets money on which card is the red one and (most of the time) wins, hoping to lure the onlookers into betting too. It is a loser’s game. You cannot win unless the person playing the cards wants you to. The cards are palmed and the hand really is faster than the eye.

So this guy who is playing is really good. He is entertaining, talking a good rap as he flips the cards and he has a nice size crowd gathered around him. I’m really enjoying showing my friends this side of New York. Until, that is, one of my friends takes out $50 and puts it down as a bet. I remember stepping forward, trying to stop him, but I was too late. Somehow when I stepped forward I crossed some invisible line and entered the game. I could clearly see that my friend was picking the wrong card, and he did. I also could clearly see which was the right card. So with the idea of recouping his money and making some more, I threw down $100. What do you think happened? I picked the wrong card! I couldn’t believe it! I KNEW where the red card was. How could I have been wrong?

I felt like someone had taken the world and turned it about 90 degrees. Everything I looked at was distorted. Everything was familiar and yet totally unrecognizable. When I stepped off of the curb I didn’t trust where the ground was. It was as if I could no longer trust any of my judgments. It lasted about three hours and finally some sense of normality returned.
The immediate result of my foray into an expensive game of risk was that I
lost my trust in myself. This is the risk of taking a risk. It is the last thing we want to
happen. Any taste of it from a past experience is enough to elicit our fear and inhibit
our actions. When we risk, it isn't the money or the relationship we are risking,
although this is what we tell ourselves. It is our trust in ourselves that we ultimately
risk. When we recognize this, our risks take on a different quality. When we know
what is at stake from the beginning, risk becomes more possible.

For many of us there are certain arenas where we feel comfortable or more
comfortable taking a risk. It usually tends to be an arena where we have a fair
amount of knowledge. Somehow when we know enough about something it is
worth the risk.

Risk is closely associated with "not knowing". When we 'don't know', we are
usually waiting for something known to present itself so we can finally take a risk.
Unfortunately this contradicts the whole premise of taking a risk. Risk means going
into the unknown. But of course there are different levels of risk. Risking $50 is
different than risking everything you own. Depending on the degree of risk it may
or may not be possible to return to where we began.

********
Falling...........
Risking.........
Falling.........
********

I've always been curious about falling. Dreams about falling, how falling
relates to our creative capacity, how people survive tremendous falls and actually
learning how to fall have continually been interests of mine. I was once listening to
a Thomas Moore tape, "On Creativity", in which he related the Myth of Icarus.

Maybe you're familiar with the Myth of Icarus. Icarus's father was Dadelus.
Dadelus made things for the gods; the labyrinth was one of his creations. Dadelus
fell out of favor with King Minos and was imprisoned, along with his son Icarus, in a
high tower. Using his incredible ingenuity to escape from this tower prison, Dadelus
constructed wings made of wax and feathers so he and Icarus could fly to their
freedom. As the time for their flight approached, Dadelus explained to his son that
he mustn't fly too high, as the sun may melt the wax wings and he would no longer
be able to fly. He also mustn't fly too low so as to not get caught in the air currents
and get pulled into the sea.

As we all know, Icarus became so delighted with his ability to fly that he flew
higher and higher and higher. As Dadelus predicted, the heat of the sun melted the
wax wings and Icarus fell to his death. The myth of Icarus has always been
interpreted as: moderation is the path to follow, don’t try to achieve too much, stay within your limits, (listen to your father?).

As I listened to the myth being recounted I thought, "Moderation wasn’t what was needed. Icarus didn’t know how to fall.” It wasn’t that the risk was too great. Icarus was not prepared to take a risk of this magnitude.

Now I know that all acts involve some level of risk. A person can slip in their kitchen and their whole life can change dramatically. No matter how well you prepare for an ascent of Mt. Everest, you cannot be equipped for everything. But we can develop a deeper understanding of what it means to be ready for such a voyage into the unknown, and we can develop tools to better prepare ourselves.

By understanding something about falling we can educate ourselves about risk. What is falling? Losing our balance, being out of control, giving in to gravity, a change in orientation. These are some of the answers I often hear. But our everyday movement also has these components in it. We can move and lose our balance and not fall. Our movement can be out of control and we still may not fall. Gravity is ever present whether we give into it or not. I can change my orientation and not fall.

So far in this book we have used embodied experiences and movement to explore different concepts and ideas about creativity. What is it that makes falling different from movement?

I have only come up with one answer. Falling is irreversible. As I am moving, and I pass some threshold that is related to gravity, control, balance and orientation, I fall. This means that the place I started from is no longer attainable from where I am now. I’m not speaking about getting up and starting over. I’m talking about an action that has gone so far that the only way I could get back to my beginning is to fall, and then get up to start over. This is what happens when we take a risk.

This is about our ability to recover. To recover our stability or our sense of self or our investment. Whenever we risk we either find ourselves achieving new heights or landing in some unknown territory or hitting the ground hard. The part we all fear and want to avoid and is the last, hitting the ground hard, bottoming out, failing, falling.

But there is something in our ability or inability to recover that is a statement about our habits, our self-image, our state of health and the limitations they represent. It is possible to experience falling and risk in a way that is more expansive, more inclusive and as an ever-widening range.

When we think of reversibility we generally think of moving backward through the exact same trajectory we initially came through. I would like to enlarge our definition of reversibility to include not only the ‘reverse direction’ but also ‘a
change in direction’. The image of a martial artist can help us envision this. When someone attempts to throw a martial artist, the martial artist first attempts to change the trajectory of force so it is put back onto their opponent or moved past them. They avoid being thrown. If the martial artist is unsuccessful and is thrown, the martial artist changes "falling" into rolling, or sliding, or spinning around and up again. The difference here is that, at the moment of losing control, volition is found in another direction. Once one has volition over one’s movement they are no longer falling.

This is the metaphor we need to utilize in our creativity. It is not that we won’t end up in some unexpected places, but when we do, can we be present with where we are so we may gain command of where we may go to next. This is an ability that requires tremendous mobility.

When we consider an increase in mobility, we must also recognize that this results in a decrease in stability. If we were to increase our stability, we would have to give up some of our mobility. These qualities of our movement our intrinsically connected and both have positive and negative attributes depending on the context.

When we think of being more mobile, we think of freedom, flexibility, speed, lightness and greater range. But mobility can increase to the point where it becomes disruptive and chaotic. A mobile attention is great but too much attentional mobility is akin to a short attention span or even an attention deficit. Too much mobility means we can too easily be knocked over or off our center (center still needs to be explained and understood - later, I promise). When we have too much mobility we tend to vacillate and never land long enough for something of substance to develop. We give up a sense of being grounded and connected to ourselves, others and the earth. At its extreme it is equivalent to anarchy.

On the other hand mobility affords us the chance for more choices. We are less stuck. There is the sense of movement, of going somewhere. When we are mobile we can more easily take advantage of new opportunities that present themselves.

Stability brings us a sense of safety and security; it is familiar and solid. But too much stability is stagnating. It can inhibit our growth and development. Discoveries are discouraged or even obstructed. A repressive environment is the result of too much stability.

Without stability we have very little reference to make comparisons with. Stability is representative of the development of a culture and body of knowledge. It is like the deep roots of an old tree.

Certain actions require more mobility. Others demand more stability. When we are more stable we have a lower center of gravity and a wider base of support. The more stable we are the harder it is for us to get knocked over, but when we are
knocked over it is more difficult to get up. The more mobile we are, the greater our potential energy, and a very small stimulus can get us moving. When we are more mobile and get knocked over it is easier to get up and get moving again.

So which is it? Mobility? Stability? Both have advantages and disadvantages. Let’s examine some other choices. What about a mobile stability? That is, the ability to remain mobile while maintaining a base of support. Movement that is within our control yet not too fixed or static. Or what about a stable mobility? A sense of solidity that has flexibility built into it.

All in all we are talking about our capacity to grow and develop into new arenas and domains. The ability to allow our self image to continue to expand, while having a history to refer and come back to and a sense of self that has enough constancy so that we still can recognize ourselves, regardless of how much we have changed.

The idea of reversibility is an essential part of our mobile stability / stable mobility. Our capacity to change direction, without a great deal of unnecessary reorganization, is a big part of creativity. But we must also risk, stretch ourselves a little bit further than is comfortable. We need to give up our stability enough so as to find ourselves in a new place, with new choices.

Many of us associate risk with throwing ourselves blindly into the unknown, praying that we will survive. Other people’s idea of risk is to take a little step, look around and weigh all of their options and then take another little step, look around, etc. But what if our capacity to take a risk was greater than we imagined? Then we wouldn’t have to hurl ourselves into the void of the unknown, nor would we have to tentatively plod along.

Risks can lead us into mistakes and, as discussed in earlier chapters, mistakes are an essential part of our learning. We need mistakes as our teacher. But what if our capacity for risk grew as a result of a greater understanding of how we move into risk and hence an understanding of how we can move out of risk. If we took 20 people and had them lean over the edge of their chairs until they fell over, they would not all fall at the same time. Some would fall sooner; some may not even fall. There may be something in their individual structure or size that might influence this, but I think it would have more to do with the constraints of their habits. If one of those who fell early came to understand more about how they bring themselves to lean over, they would find they could increase their capacity and range for moving without falling.

Taking a risk can be an extension of where we are; it doesn't have to be a giving up of where we are. We can utilize our history and understanding of ourselves to enlarge who we are. In my experience, whenever I have discovered that I could do more, go beyond or shift my capacities, I felt like I was taking a risk because it felt new. The sense of discovery, the feeling that I am capable of more
than I imagined, is one of the results of taking a risk. Finding this out is the actualization of what was previously unimaginable. This may even serve as our definition of creativity, "Actualizing what was previously unimaginable".

As we broaden our self image, we amplify our creative capacity. Remember the person who you think of as being creative, who may not consider themselves to be creative? As we expand the choices available to us, we become more creative, more who we would like ourselves to be and we grow closer to our potential.

The distinctions we made earlier about falling and moving are analogous to risk and the known. If we can gain volition over our falling then we can turn it into forward movement. Then risk can become less frightening and unknown to us. Through the practice and the development of this we can more easily enter into the arena of risk and thereby expand our capacity for creativity.

Let's feel and sense what this could be like.

Before you begin, review the guidelines for participating before you do this exploration.

**Sit with your right leg in front of you and your left leg bent back to the left. The sole of your right foot will be near your left knee or lower thigh. Lean on your right hand. Notice where you have placed your right hand to bear your weight. Explore putting it in different places, a little farther back, a little farther forward, farther out to the side, closer to your buttock.**

**Place your right hand farther out to the right and feel at what point can you no longer lift it? When does your weight go into your hand in a way that you get stuck there and have to use effort to come back? Slide the hand a little closer to you so you are not stuck and slowly move your ribs further to the right and back again. Notice when you move your right ribs to the right they expand and when you do this the ribs on your left contract. Gently do this many times, letting your attention shift from your ribs on the right to your ribs on the left.**

**Rest on your back.**

**Sit with your right leg in front of you and your left leg bent back to the left. The sole of your right foot will be near your left knee or lower thigh. Bring your right hand to where you last placed it. Again move your ribs to the right and this time, as you return to where you started, move your ribs to the left. Go back and forth feeling as you expand the ribs on the left the ones on the right contract and as you expand your ribs on the right, the ones on the left contract.**

**Pause. Move your right hand a little further to the right and see, now, at what point does your weight get committed. Is it a different spot?**
Rest on your back.

Sit with your right leg in front of you and your left leg bent back to the left. The sole of your right foot will be near your left knee or lower thigh. Bring your right hand to the right, to the point where you feel your weight is committed to it. Bring your left arm over the top of your head and place your palm on your right temple. Move your ribs left and right and feel how is it different from when your hand wasn't there? Continue to bring your attention to both sides of your ribs as you go from side to side.

This time sit with your left leg in front of you and your right leg bent back to the right. The sole of your left foot will be near your right knee or lower thigh. Lean on your left hand. Notice where you have placed your left hand to bear your weight. Explore putting it in different places, a little farther forward, a little farther out to the side, closer to your buttock.

Place your left hand farther out to the left and feel at what point can you no longer lift it. Is it different to this side? When does your weight go into your hand in a way that you get stuck there and have to use effort to come back? Slide your left hand a little closer to you so you are not stuck and slowly move your ribs further to the left and back again. Notice when you move your left ribs to the left they expand and when you do this the ribs on your right contract. Gently do this many times, letting your attention shift from your ribs on the right to your ribs on the left.

Rest on your back.

Sit with your left leg in front of you and your right leg bent back to the right. The sole of your left foot will be near your right knee or lower thigh. Bring your left hand to where you last placed it. Again move your ribs to the left and this time, as you return to where you started, move your ribs to the right. Go back and forth, feeling as you expand the ribs on the left the ones on the right contract and as you expand your ribs on the right, the ones on the left contract.

Pause. Move your left hand a little further to the left and see; now, at what point does your weight get committed. Is it a different spot?

Rest on your back.

Sit with your left leg in front of you and your right leg bent back to the right. The sole of your left foot will be near your right knee or lower thigh. Bring your left hand to the left, to the point where you feel your weight is committed to it. Bring your right arm over the top of your head and place your palm on your left temple. Move your ribs left and right and feel how is it
different from when your hand wasn't there? Continue to bring your attention to both sides of your ribs as you go from side to side.

Rest on your back.

This time, sit with your right leg in front of you and your left leg bent back to the left. Explore the placement of your right hand. Can you reach different places than before? Does your weight get committed at the same point or has it changed?

Lie on your right side, knees bent, one leg on top of the other. Reach your left hand over your head and get hold of your right temple. Many times, using your hand to help you, slowly lift your head and bring it back down. Feel what happens in your ribs, how they contract on the left side and how the ribs on the right side push into the floor. Next time you lift your head, intentionally press your side into the floor. Does your head get lighter when you do that?

Rest on your side.

Keeping your knees touching, slowly lift your left foot away from your right foot so you are pivoting on your knee. Feel how this changes how you contact the floor. Pause. Now lift your whole left leg, keeping the knee bent, and put it down. Where do you sense this? In your leg? In your pelvis? In your torso? Wherever you feel this, press into that place as you lift your leg. Does it change something in the quality of how your leg lifts?

Rest on your side.

Reach your left hand over the top of your head and get hold of your right temple. Slowly lift you hand and at the same time lift your left leg. See if you can lift them both and bring them back down at the same time. Feel where you bend on your left side and where you press into the floor on your right side. Continue by pressing this place into the floor.

Rest on your back.

This time, lie on your left side, knees bent, one leg on top of the other. Reach your right hand over your head and get hold of your left temple. Many times, using your hand to help you, slowly lift your head and bring it back down. Feel what happens in your ribs, how they contract on the right side and how the ribs on the left side push into the floor. Press your ribs into the floor as you lift your head.

Rest on your side.
Keeping your knees touching, slowly lift your right foot away from your left foot so you are pivoting on your knee. Feel how this changes how you contact the floor. Pause. Now lift your whole right leg, keeping the knee bent, and put it down. Where do you sense this? In your leg? In your pelvis? In your torso? And press into this place as you lift your leg.

Rest on your side.

Reach your right hand over the top of your head and get hold of your left temple. Slowly lift your head and at the same time lift your right leg. See if you can lift them both and bring them back down at the same time. Feel where you bend on your right side and where you press into the floor on your left side. Press into the floor and notice if it changes how you lift your head and leg.

Rest on your back.

Sit with your right leg in front of you and your left leg bent back to the left. Lean on your right hand and feel where you are able to place it now. Slowly lift your right hand away from the floor and put it down an inch further from where you had it placed. Continue to come off the hand and move it out an inch each time. Feel how your ribs on the right side can expand as you reach the hand further out. Each time slide a little further to the right. As you go further out to the right, think of letting your armpit come closer to the floor each time. Feel how your whole side extends outward towards the floor and as you come back how your whole side curves the other way.

Rest on your back.

Sit with your left leg in front of you and your right leg bent back to the right. Lean on your left hand and feel where you are able to place it now. Slowly lift your left hand away from the floor and put it down an inch further from where you had it placed. Continue to come off the hand and move it out an inch each time. Feel how your ribs on the left side can expand as you reach the hand further out. Each time slide a little further to the left. As you go further out to the left, think of letting your armpit come closer to the floor each time. Feel how your whole side extends outward towards the floor and as you come back how your whole side curves the other way. As you go further to the left feel how your left ribs extend leftward and lead the movement and as you come back feel how your right ribs extend rightward to lead the movement.

Rest on your back.

Sit with your legs crossed in front of you, placing your right leg in front of the left. Lean on your right hand, out to the right. Start to slide yourself further out to the right, bringing your right armpit towards the floor as you go
rightward, and reversing the movement of your torso as you come back towards sitting. Let your legs be free from the floor as you go farther right.

Switch over the crossing of your legs so the left leg is in front. Again slide yourself out to the right and back. Is it different with your legs crossed this way? Is it easier, harder?

Rest on your back.

Sit with your legs crossed in front of you, placing your left leg in front of the right. Lean on your left hand, out to the left. Start to slide yourself further out to the left bringing your left armpit towards the floor as you go leftward and reversing the movement of your torso as you come back towards sitting. Let your legs be free from the floor as you go farther left.

Switch over the crossing of your legs so the right leg is in front. Again slide yourself out to the left and back. Is it different with your legs crossed this way? Easier, harder?

Rest on your back.

Please exercise your own discretion as to how much of the next movement you do. It is not important that you succeed or accomplish the movement. It is enough to attempt it at whatever level you feel you are capable of participating.

Please stand on both knees. Reach your right hand towards the floor as if to slide all the way out to the right. You may find that in reaching your right hand you instinctively bend yourself in such a way that your right ribs move away from the floor. Instead, see if it’s possible to do the opposite, to let your whole right side get long and extend as you reach your right hand to the floor, making sure your hand continues to slide as you go to the right. On the return let yourself bend so that your right ribs lift from the floor and your whole torso curves to the left to bring you to your knees again. When you do this your head will be vertical as you go down to the right and then your head will be to the right as you come back up. Gently explore this several times.

Try the same thing to the left side. Is it easier? Harder?

Rest on your back.

Sit with your right leg in front, your left leg back to the left. Lean on your right hand, to the right and feel where you place it now. Begin to explore the placement of your hand and feel if there is less weight committed to it, if you are able to place it farther out to the right. Slide yourself farther out to the right and see if you can go even farther than before and slide back to sitting more
easily. Feel how you can use your torso to help you reverse the movement and make the movement more volitional and less like falling.

Change your legs over and explore sliding out to the left side and back. Have you improved in your ability to extend the range of your movement while maintaining your control over it?

Come to standing and begin to walk around. Is there anything different in your walking? Does the ground feel closer to you, or do you feel closer to the floor? Do you have a different sense of where your center of gravity is? Does the floor feel more accessible? Without doing it, imagine what it would be like to slide - from standing - one of your hands towards and along the floor until your whole side rested on the floor. Is it more of an imaginable possibility than you previously could have conceived? Do you feel a different relationship between moving and falling?

As you go through your week notice if there are moments where you have a sense of taking a risk. How do you approach it? Do you leap or retreat? Explore it from the point of view of being more reversible. How does thinking of risk in this way affect your decision to take the risk or not take it?
Chapter 9

Connecting the Dots...........

“Discovery consists in seeing what everyone else has seen and thinking what no one else has thought.”

Albert Szent-Gyorgyi

By now you have probably noticed the dots in the upper right hand corner at the start of each chapter you have been reading. Take a moment and flip through from the beginning to remind yourself and to see their development.

What are they? Do you recognize anything in them? If you look at the very first page with just two dots, what do you think it is? Two dots? Two eyes? Two points to be connected? What have your thoughts been as you have noticed them while you were reading? Spilled ink?

The dots are a representation of the chance for something to come together or become recognizable. They speak to the moment when things coalesce, when the gestalt occurs. The instance when something that was previously unimaginable is suddenly perceived. Sometimes it is like a bolt of lightening, sometimes as slow as mold growing into a pattern of colors. Often it is a juncture; a moment along the way that defines the journey or something that can determine what comes next.

As you have looked at the dots, at any time have you thought “Oh, that’s a blah-blah-blah”? Maybe you did, maybe you didn't. Maybe you saw something, but with the addition of more dots, you changed your mind.

When I teach workshops and do this on a flip chart, slowly adding a few dots at a time, I’m always surprised at the point when people actually recognize what I am drawing. It is almost always much later than I would imagine. Once in a while someone will guess it very early on and I am convinced it is more than a good guess. Their good guess has something to do with their intuition, their ability to have vision and their capacity for seeing whole patterns out of the parts.
The dots continue throughout the book and maybe you've already gone on to the end to see what they formed into. Whether you have or have not looked ahead, slowly turn the pages and find out at what point the object being brought forth becomes recognizable. Show it to your friends and find out when they discover it. Make this an inquiry into another person's way of thinking, not a test to see who gets it first.

So by now you know it's a top hat. How come we didn't know that from the initial two dots? Discovering what became apparent or what was exposed by the addition of more dots is part of the study of our creative process. The addition of pertinent or significant details of definition helps us to create something or recognize the creation of something. It is not necessary for there to be more and more and more until recognition is inevitable. What is important is the timing and placement of our actions that bring forth a new outcome.

It is also true that in the case of sculpture, it would be the taking away that would bring forth the creation. I've heard it said that when Michaelangelo was asked how he carved The Pieta, he replied, "I just chip away everything that is not Pieta!"

By understanding something of how we recognize an entity, either an object or an event, we can understand something about how we create and how we can sustain our creativity. A person's ability to form the dots into a picture of a top hat is the result of their history; if they had not seen a top hat at some point in their life they would never have been able to recognize one. It is also the result of the placement of the dots and the order in which they are placed. For example, if I had placed the majority of the dots along the bottom edge only, it would be quite some time before most people could see a top hat. The viewer might form another image, perhaps a very interesting one, but not the one I intended to portray.

This choice of placement is a double-edged sword. The shift in placement may produce something unexpected, something unintended and something quite wonderful. But have we lost or given up what we initially wanted to create? Which road do we take? We must remain open to both and allow for an ebb and flow between the two.

It would have also been possible for me to spread the dots around until my intent was realized. One might think that an even distribution would be the best way to evoke the intended image, certainly the most methodical. However, a random distribution might produce a representation that illustrates more of the essence of the intended idea. What comes to mind is a sketch of three lines done by Picasso of a woman's derriere. In those three lines one can see not only the physical entity, but also the rest of the woman and her history, and one can create stories about her and others in her life. Quite a big feat for three lines.
As I discussed earlier, the process of reading the ideas in this book is linear and not entirely representative of the creative process. In the same way, the representation of the dots into a top hat is also limiting and does not fully express the dynamic nature of how something coalesces.

For it to be more accurate, our model needs to be three-dimensional. Our object needs to exist in space, in relation to other objects, in relation to its environment. In this sense the environment plays a big role in how something is perceived. We can also call this the context, as we had explored earlier.

Imagine this, your hand is in front of you, the palm facing up. There is an invisible object resting in your palm. You may know what it is, but no one else knows. With a magic pen, you mark a spot on the invisible object and color in that single spot. As you color in other spots your object eventually becomes recognizable to others as well. What are becoming defined are the boundaries of the object.

Let's make the object a coffee mug. A standard coffee mug, nothing fancy, any color you want. While the boundaries are what we recognize as the mug, it is also defined by the space surrounding it. If there was no opening at the top, it would look like a mug, but it wouldn't be one. Part of what defines it as a mug is its functionality, how it is used in the world. This kind of recognition develops through a relationship between form and function.

Understanding this relationship can help us become more creative. We tend to either stay in a mindset that keeps things functional but lacks creativity or the other extreme creating something that is totally lacking in functionality. If we can expand our thinking to include the idea of "What if?", we can evolve our potential to be creative. If we think of the evolution of the coffee mug we can see that the "What if" has been present throughout. What if I wanted to make it more stable, what if I made it taller, what if I painted the inside so something emerged as I was drinking, what if I made a cover that I could still drink out of, what if I made it much, much bigger?

What may be gained in function may be lost in aesthetics and what may be gained in aesthetics sometimes loses functionality. What follows is a photo of Angelo Mangiarotti's work in glass. It is a wonderful example of how the form can change and the functionality is retained. Certainly these glasses are "creative". I could not have imagined them, much less made them, but Mangiarotti did. And remarkably they fit your hand however you take hold of them and drinking out of them is easy from the entire lip of the glass.
We create out of what exists within us and around us. If we can see a different function for an existing entity or if we can see the aesthetics in something mundane we are on the path to creativity. In the movie, The Gods Must Be Crazy, a coke bottle becomes much more than a coke bottle, not only in its use, as a whistle, a hammer, a rolling pin and a musical instrument, but in what it can represent to a person and his community.

When I think of this, I would dare to ponder, "What is art?" What I mean is, if something, an object, a story, a photo, evokes in me or in those around me a different relationship with the world, might that be art? If I perceive things differently after being exposed to such a thing, even if I hate it and am offended by it (as one can be by much of what is called art), is it art? The fact that it has an effect on me, that it produces a response in me is part of what happens in the creative act. Of course there is a wide range of possible responses to any piece of art and the responses are always subjective but what is most significant is that there is a response.

A reaction of indifference is probably the best determinant of something that lacks creativity. Indifference is like not seeing something, not noticing something, not being affected by something, not caring about something. If we consider what moves us to see something as unique or creative we can see that it has to do with what happens to us in the presence of that thing. If nothing happens, well, it hasn't captured our attention.

What captures our attention is the new set of boundaries that define the creation. Something is tweaked or expanded or evolved and suddenly we find ourselves in a new place, in the presence of something new. This experience is part of something much larger than creating an object like a mug or painting or dance. It is the experience of the self, a sense of self that is beyond what we could have imagined for ourselves. It is the experience of having the possibility of more choice available to us.

The dots we have been connecting and observing are a simplistic yet concrete way of investigating how we view, perceive or define our world. How we name the environment we live in, including ourselves as part of that environment, is also how we create limits on what we see as possible and how we also limit our creative capacity. The following may help illustrate this point.
One of my teachers, Moshe Feldenkrais, related this wonderful story. He was traveling on a train in Israel and there was a Bedouin man with a very intelligent face sitting across from him. At one point the Bedouin man began to read a book, but to Moshe’s surprise and confusion the man was holding the book upside-down. Puzzled and perturbed Moshe could finally no longer contain himself and he exclaimed to the man, "What is the matter with you, reading a book like that?" The man was shocked by the interruption and said, "What are you talking about? What is wrong with how I am reading?" Moshe said, "Your book is upside down, how can you read like that?" The man said "What does it matter how the book is facing?" And he proceeded to read aloud with the book upside down, with it facing to the left, facing to the right and with it right side up. Moshe was amazed that the man could read with the book in so many orientations. He discovered that the Bedouin man had grown up in a small village. As a child at school there had often only been one book and the teacher would read aloud from it. While the teacher read the children would sit in different places around the teacher and view the book from many different angles. Of course, soon they were able to read while sitting to the right of the teacher or to the left or in front or behind. In the end Moshe felt that he was the idiot, not the Bedouin man, because he could only read from one perspective.

Here is a more extreme example of this. Some years ago, if I was sleeping over at someone’s house and they had said to me that the sheets I was to sleep on had been slept on before by another friend of theirs on a previous night, I would have been appalled. Those are dirty sheets; either wash them or give me another set. But oddly enough, after some months of low budget traveling in Bali, India, Nepal and Thailand, clean sheets were often so rare that ones that had only been slept on for two weeks by others seemed clean. Now let me be clear here, I much prefer clean sheets, but in the event that they are not available, I can tolerate used ones. What shifted for me was my perspective, how I hold a particular experience.

If we are to develop our creative abilities, part of what we can practice is observing the way in which we define things. Not the semantic definition (although playing with this is also interesting) but how is it that we observe something and internally give it a name and/or function. Children are great at this. They take objects and use them in ways other than what they were intended; they put thing together and develop new relationships that we would never consider. Now much of the time what a child does is considered cute or childlike, yet we can evoke this way of seeing in ourselves as adults. At first we often become embarrassed that what we do will be perceived as childish, but if we continue to allow ourselves to practice these kinds of games our creativity blossoms.

Let’s do an experiment.

_Sit on the edge of your chair and raise your right arm and put it down. Do this several times. Feel what it is like and where you feel yourself involved or doing any work._
Now this next time, I'm going to say it differently. First consider how this new way of saying it impacts on you internally, then observe any differences it makes in your movement.

Please allow your right arm to come to lifting. Does it have a different quality? Does your arm move to a different place or at a different rate?

Let's take a moment and look at this phenomenon. For many of us, not everyone, the difference in how this direction is worded evokes a different experience. How is that? When we hear the initial direction of "raise your right arm" we do a movement that internally means to us, "raise your right arm". For just about everyone, each time we do it we bring our arms to the same place, at the same rate, with the same quality, and internally we know that we are "raising our right arm". When we are asked to "allow your right arm to come to lifting" we consider what this means and become more attentive to the process of our arms lifting, rather than the outcome. In the first direction there is a predetermined, although unconscious, expectation of what it means to "raise your right arm". In the second form of the direction we find out what it means to produce this action. Some of the differences I have seen in people doing this, and you may have felt yourself, are the arm lifting at a completely different rate, and ending up in a different place. I've seen people lift their arm only an inch, some floating their arm upward, others spiraling upward, some lifting their arm with softer hands, a few with their eyes following the hand as they lift, as well as many other variations.

Let's continue and see if we can connect more of the dots.............

Sit on the edge of your chair and slowly lift your arms and put them down. Do this several times. Feel what it is like, which parts of yourself are involved in the movement, and where you feel yourself doing any work.

Now sit on the edge of your chair with your hands resting on your thighs with the palms up. Doing a small movement, slowly round your back and come back to where you started. Continue this and observe if there are parts of your back that round more than others. Don't try to change anything, simply observe yourself. Sit back and rest.

Again come to the edge of your chair and this time move your back a small amount in the other direction; that is, gently arch your back and return to where you started while observing the shape your back makes and which parts of yourself you feel are involved. Rest again.

This time, while sitting on the edge of your chair, combine the two movements, so you are slowly and gently rounding then arching your back, all the while listening to what you can sense and feel throughout yourself. Rest.
Come to the edge of your chair and slowly lift your arms. Is it any different from the earlier actions you did? Do you sense more of yourself involved? Do your arms connect more through to the rest of yourself?

Sit at the edge of your chair and slowly look up and down. Feel where does this action begin in you. In your eyes? In your neck? Someplace else? Where do your eyes naturally go to? What spot above you or below you do you see? Begin to connect this movement to the rounding and arching of your back. Does this start to change your experience? Do your eyes see a different place above or below you now?

Lean back in your chair and rest.

Sit on the edge again and look up and down with your whole self i.e. letting your back round and arch as you do it. Slowly and as much as can without interrupting the movement, begin to move your eyes opposite your head. This means that as your head lifts up to the sky, your eyes look down towards the floor and as your head drops down towards your chest, your eyes look towards the sky. Go slowly and reduce the size of the movement so that you can eventually accomplish this unusual differentiation.

Now let your eyes move WITH your head and the rest of yourself. Is it easier? Rest.

Slowly lift your arms again and find out what it is like now. Rest.

Sit and place your fingertips in the crease between the top of your thighs and your torso. Slowly move your torso forward and backward over this point. Sense if you can feel your whole self pivoting around this point. Feel when you are closing this space, maybe even pinching your fingers a bit, and when you are creating more space for your fingers. Rest

Sit and begin to round and arch your back again and discover what it is like now. Easier? More connected? Raise your arms and sense the quality of this action now. Rest.

Sit and again bring your fingers to the crease between the top of your thighs and your torso. Begin to move your torso forward and back over this point. As you continue to do this, without changing anything, observe where your feet are on the floor. Gently begin to move your feet to different places, feeling how it affects the movement of your torso. You can place your feet further out in front of your or further back from where they are, closer to each other or further apart from each other, one foot further out and one foot further in, one foot more forward and one foot more back. With each variation do a few movements and sense throughout your whole self as you do it. Rest.
One last time come to the edge of your chair and raise your arms. Have they gotten lighter? Has the movement become smoother? Do they lift higher without any extra effort? Does the lifting of your arms connect more to your back, head, pelvis or feet? Slowly come up to standing and walk around and observe if there are now more dots that make up "you" than you previously felt.

Pick an easy action you do often. See if you can find more of the details that are both part of that action and that also influence it. For example, stand and turn to look behind you - is it only your eyes and head that turn? Can you include your ribs? Your chest? Your pelvis? What would happen if you pushed through one foot? If in your work you do a repetitive action, see if you can figure out how to include more of yourself in it or initiate it from a different place.
Chapter 10

Finding Center! Neutrality & Biases

“Stay centered by accepting whatever you are doing. This is the ultimate.”
Chuang-tzu

One of the most common expressions I hear in the arts, in sports as well as in the jargon of our cultural psychology is "find your center". This is one of those phrases that, depending on whether or not we have found it, can make us feel invincible or completely inadequate. There is obviously some attraction to "finding our center" or "being centered" (which is how we like to describe ourselves once we have found it). It represents to us, or to the people who think we need it, a place that is better than where we are. A place that is more, more, more........What? More yourself? Different from yourself? Simply yourself? What are we talking about here? I'm speaking of this "center" as if it is a place, but is it? If it is a place then why can't we just go there? Would it be possible to find this place and go somewhere else or are we to be stuck in this place once we've found it? And we speak of finding our center as if it is an "it", a thing, that once we've found we can keep, and put in our pocket so it is always nearby. The more we attempt to understand this phrase the more confusing it becomes.

It is significant in terms of our understanding to realize that finding our center and being centered refers to two related but completely different things. "Finding our center" refers to a process and it assumes (for many) some final destination, kind of like finding your keys! "Being centered" is a place we have already arrived at - my key's and I are now one! Both the process and the destination have value. A process with no sense of arrival is too tiring to sustain. However, being centered is more than simply having arrived at a place.

Many years ago I had a friend who did a course called "Lifespring". I didn't know much about it, but it seemed like a mild form of EST (if anyone remembers that as well?). After doing a weekend of immersing himself in this work, he knowingly nodded to me and said "Alan, we never arrive.....!" Wow, it was quite an
important realization for him, as it would be for most of us, if we could maintain it as a perspective. Unfortunately I responded to him by saying, "So, you've arrived at the understanding that we never arrive...!" To say the least, I burst his bubble and put him into a funk. I wasn't trying to be mean, I was serious. It seems to be part of our nature, at least in our culture, to want to have something and be done with it.

What exactly are we referring to when we speak of being centered? A more accurate question is what does it mean to you? How do you know when you are centered? Is it something specific you can describe? Is it something vague yet recognizable? Is it completely vague, something you've never truly felt in yourself? These are tough questions.

Maybe you are able to see it in someone else. What does it look like? Does it look the same in everybody? And if it doesn't, well, then what's the difference?

There is the assumption that the person who directs us to take on this task, including yourself (and including myself), has some idea of what it means; I'll know it when I get there. Too often we believe them, or ourselves, and this sets us on a path to find, that which is indescribable, invisible, mercurial, elusive and temporary. Yet we want it! We strive for it! We effort and contort ourselves to fit some picture of it!

I find in my conversations with people that when they really get down to it, often what they are describing when they feel centered, is being in control, that things go their way. But then does that mean if things don't go our way, we lose our center? If this were true, our being centered in the world would consist of a tremendous amount of competition and struggle.

What else do we associate with being centered? Not getting upset when something goes wrong, that's an important one. This would allow us a certain equanimity while retaining the ability to act intelligently (whatever that is). There are many moments when we have some sense that we can be thrown off balance and we have this idea that being centered from the beginning will help.

And then there is feeling ready. Ready for whatever we are endeavoring to do. Going on stage, going on an important job interview, meeting your ex. Often we attempt to get centered prior to an event. We prepare ourselves for what's to come. This works fine for taking a test, assuming you know the content the test is based on. But in our everyday lives there are too many variables that we cannot predict or prepare for.

Years ago, when I was an actor, I worked very hard at being centered before I would go on stage. I would have to have a certain kind of meal, and have a certain kind of bowel movement (pardon me but it's true) and of course, never have a fight with my girlfriend. So I would have my meal and my movement but then I would almost always have a fight with my girlfriend, of course at my instigation and always
about something quite insignificant. I would be off my center and never satisfied with my performance and try to blame it on my girlfriend. I can clearly remember the day - I was performing Fabian in Shakespeare's "Twelfth Night" - when my girlfriend and I had a serious fight. I was terribly distraught and nowhere near ready to go on stage when I heard my cue. Out onto the stage I went, and although I wanted to let the audience know that I wasn't yet centered and would they please give me a few more minutes, I went ahead with the play. To my great surprise and astonishment I found that I was more alive and more in character than I had ever been. Not just in this play but later on in others as well. Obviously I had to reinvestigate my concept of what it meant to find my center and be centered. The obvious conclusion I came to was to have a serious fight with whomever I was involved with at the time. However, while this may have made me more centered it would have wreaked havoc with my personal life! There had to be something else.

Some people actually associate being centered with having a lot of money (I know I did). If we have plenty of money, we'll be happy and even if something goes wrong we can buy our way out of it. From a distance, people with money can seem more centered. However, more and more I find that they are just dressed a little better and that they have all of the same problems as the rest of us.

Maybe having little or no money is closer to being centered. This is another reasonable perspective and if you spend time in some third world places, the lack of the importance of money (not the lack of money itself) seems to have its benefits.

My references here to money may seem misplaced to some of you, but as a therapist I was working with once said to me, "money is to our time, what sex was to Freud's time." I think he is right and it needs to be part of the whole picture of ourselves that we are investigating. It is certainly one of the biggest dilemmas someone faces when they attempt to make a living as an artist.

Fifteen years ago if someone had granted me one wish, I would have asked for a million dollars, five years later I upped it to ten million (a million no longer seemed worth a million). Five years after that I decided that if I had one wish it would be to breath well at all moments -"you smashed up the car...ahhh". He died......ahhh". I'm fired....ahhh". I died.....ahhh".

It is interesting that people have so many different ideas of what it means to find their center or be centered. Control, equanimity, readiness, financial stability and instability. This is such a broad range. Is there a way of understanding this phenomenon that is true for everyone?

When I first started teaching at Princeton University I was a bit daunted. I had never taught before and was teaching a 3-hour class in Theatre Games and Improvisation. For the first time in my teaching life, I decided to use a lesson plan. 2 hours and 45 minutes into the class I was just about through the lesson plan. That gave me quite a scare. For the next week I made a lesson plan that was good for at
least 6 hours. Maybe an hour into the class I saw someone do something that reminded me of a theatre game that I had forgotten. On the spot I decided to do this instead and the rest of the class evolved in a totally unexpected and, I'm happy to say, successful way.

After that I gave up the idea of lesson plans and began to work off themes. The problem with this was that I never knew how things would work out. This raised my anxiety to a pretty high level. On the train out to Princeton from New York, about an hour and half ride, I would try to fall asleep so as to miss my stop and thereby avoid the dilemma of teaching. However, I never missed my stop, and the one time the train was delayed for several hours, I was actually very upset that I missed the class.

I taught at Princeton for two years and my experience on the train never changed. I dreaded going there and was almost always high on my way home. You would think that after two years of doing this twice a week I would have recognized something in my process that was of some value. What prevented me from seeing this was the intensity of my feelings. What was I feeling? I was feeling vague. That is, I felt lost, unclear, and unable to settle on any one feeling, good or bad. I floated in an amorphous cloud of confused feeling. It was years later that I finally recognized what had been going on with me at that time. I was working so hard to be centered that I was ignoring what was actually going on inside me. Whatever I felt was not what I thought of as being centered. I was looking for a place of constancy that would allow me to teach wonderfully and feel good at the same time.

Today when I go to teach, when I sit down to write, or before I give a talk, I still experience the same things internally. It is still uncomfortable and I still describe it as feeling vague, but I've learned to recognize this in myself as a large component of being centered. The question now becomes, what is that helped me learn to recognize this and how can this be of value to you?

Many of my stories tell of the emotional tone I experienced in my search for my center. However, my experience of understanding 'being centered' actually came from another place. It came from my physical experience of being centered, from moving from my center and from a center. The distinction between moving from "my" center and from "a" center is important to us. Understanding this will help us access the center we all so desire.

We all move from "a center". It is a place that speaks more of our habits in our movement than anything else. Our habits of movement are not bad. Our habits evolved from choices that we made throughout our lives. These choices were good, considering the information we had at the time that we made them. They could have come from imitating a parent or relative. They could have been a compensation we made as the result of an injury or trauma, either physical or emotional. And to most of us they are unknown to ourselves until someone imitates
us, usually in an exaggerated way, or until we see ourselves on videotape for the first time.

Let’s examine this concept of our center and our habits from another perspective. Here is an interesting question. *What part of you needs to be in a room, for “you” to be in the room?*

Think about this for a while. Maybe get up and experiment with it. Stand in one room and place yourself at the entrance to a second room and explore when you feel that you are more in one room or the other. If you put your hand into the other room, which you room are you in? What about your head in one room and the rest of you in the other room? Try it with one foot or both feet (you'll have to lie down or bring a chair near the door to accomplish this one). For the moment let's agree not to include our astral selves, as this book isn't big enough to cover this aspect of our beings.

What about investigating this from the perspective of being at the edge of a cliff. If you sit on the cliff, you probably feel like you are on the cliff, even though your feet are dangling over the edge. If you lie down and let your head hang over the edge, you still are on the cliff. Letting your hands hang down still keeps you on the cliff. What about having your legs hooked over the cliff and your torso hanging over the edge so you are upside down? If all of these parts hanging over the edge are not making the difference, then what is the constant that is keeping you on the cliff? Would you still consider yourself to be on the cliff if your head and hands were on the cliff but the rest of you was hanging down?

Think about where your pelvis is. When it is on the cliff, either in sitting or standing, you are on the cliff. Imagine your pelvis hanging off the cliff (don't try this at home!). It gets pretty clear, pretty fast that in this very concrete example, it is the location of your pelvis that determines where you are. This helps us to answer the question posed above, that is what part of you needs to be in a room for “you” to be in that room? The answer is again, your pelvis. If our pelvis is the part of us that determines where we are, then moving from this place is about as centered as we can get.

Personally I find this a pretty convincing argument but I am only attached to it until the time when someone provides me with an experience of something different. Try it on for yourself, not as the truth, but as a new way of perceiving yourself in the world.

For the rest of the day today, explore where your sense of yourself resides. Is there any correlation between your sense of yourself in a particular context or situation and your sense of place in your body? Don't try to impose this idea on yourself. You, as is true for many people, may not have any sense of your pelvis, where it is in space or how or if you move from it.
To continue with our distinctions about "the center".... An actor once came to me for private Feldenkrais Lessons. He said wanted to move from his center, and as he said this he indicated his belly. We looked at how he was moving and it became clear that when he walked his chin jutted forward and actually led all of his actions. When he turned, his chin led the way; when he reached for something, his chin slightly jutted forward; when he spoke he began the action with his chin. His chin had become a center for his movement; it was "his" center. What he wanted and eventually developed was moving from "the" center, his pelvic region.

It is important to recognize, as I said earlier, that moving from a center has value. We learned it out of a particular need, even if it was unconscious. And to give it up entirely would eliminate a potential choice that might be the best choice for some event in our future.

So what is the value of moving from the center, from our pelvic region? For example, why is it so important in the martial arts? How can this help us in our quest to be more centered, not just in movement but in all aspects of our life?

When I refer to moving from the center, this means to move from the place in myself that is most central to all of my actions. In the world of movement and anatomy we describe parts of our self in relation to each other. When we are closer to the center we call it "proximal", as we move a way from the center we call it "distal". These terms are used relative to the parts they are referring to. This means that the knee is proximal to the ankle and the ankle is proximal to the toes or the toes are distal to the ankle, the ankle is distal to the knee, etc, etc. The funny thing about the definition of proximal is that it never states what is most proximal. You would think that someplace has to be most proximal, most central. For that sake of a more concrete understanding of this I propose we make the pelvis the most proximal part of ourselves. We can make a strong argument for this from our example of our pelvis being on the cliff. Or we can look at it from the point of view of where our center of gravity lies, just below the navel. From this point of view the most proximal we can be is the pelvic region. From there everything else is distal. The most distal would be our fingertips and toes.

If the pelvic region is most proximal, then moving from there is moving from our center. This is also the part of yourself with the largest muscles. Proportionally, we expend less energy when we move from here than if we move from someplace else.

Often we become very attached to the notion that our head is the center of our movement, and there is sound reasoning why we feel this way. All of our teleceptors are in our head. Our eyes, ears, nose and vestibular system are the things that place us in the world. They provide us with orientation and guide our actions. But as a center to move from this means that the smaller muscles of our neck have to pull along the rest of us.
What is necessary is to develop a better relationship between the pelvis - the engine - and the head - the periscope. When these parts act in concert we come closer to being centered in the world. It means we can always maintain a sense of orientation while initiating action from the most powerful and efficient place in ourselves.

And we need to keep reminding ourselves that moving from "a center" is also important as some contexts place different demands on us. Fundamentally we are learning to make the distinction between the center and a center so that as the need arises we can make a choice.

As I said earlier, movement initiated from our pelvic region is more efficient in that larger muscles require less energy to do an action than the muscles of our more distal parts would require for the same action. For example, lifting a ten-pound weight with one finger is impossible for most people. Lifting the same weight with your hand and forearm is much more possible. When you lift that same ten pounds using your whole back and pelvis, your arm and hand works less and you have the chance to gain more control of your task.

Where we initiate movement from is only part of understanding how to find our center or be centered. We need to be able to put this into a context that serves the variety and immediacy of our individual needs. We need to be centered in relation to our world. If we take the meaning of being centered literally, then we are equidistant to everything around us.

Another way of describing this is being neutral. Neutral is a midpoint, a place of balance, a resting place that has readiness. It is a place from which we can move equally in all directions. This is another way of describing 'being centered', isn't it? It is easy to define in words but difficult to know in reality. Why is it difficult to know? Because neutral, this place in the middle, is defined by its boundaries.

If we walk into a room (at least when our pelvis walks into the room) we know when we are in the middle of the room, which is equidistant to all parts of the room, by observing where the walls are. If the room is an odd shape we adjust ourselves accordingly. But in our lives the walls, the boundaries of our potential experiences, are not so clear. A more accurate metaphor would be to walk into a room with a blindfold on, and attempt to find the center. Depending on the size and shape of the room and our ability to navigate blindly it might take some time to discern the center, that is if we ever accurately find it at all. This is how we try to make sense out of the world around us. And in the world it is even more complicated because the boundaries are always changing.

I am not suggesting that we look to place ourselves in the middle of whatever place we are in. I am suggesting something quite different; that wherever we are we develop the capacity to move in all or at least many directions. That instead of the
world determining our center, we are centered because of how we are able to act in relation to the world.

To develop our capacity to do this we need to understand something about our individual biases, our habits. Maybe you know something of this about yourself already. Our biases are what show up in us frequently in our actions. They are often old learnings that were useful or made us successful but don’t always serve us in different contexts. The actor who moved with his chin jutted forward is a good example. Your habit may be rounding your shoulders or walking more on your toes. There is nothing wrong with these biases other than that they sometimes dictate how we act in the world in ways we don’t intend. Someone who walks on his or her toes may have a greater propensity to move forward, almost falling forward. Rounding your shoulders may give you a greater capacity to move backwards or fold in on yourself.

People are also much more complex than I am making it sound here. We have many different reasons to do many different things and they are often cross-motivated. Our understanding of this is a personal investigation for each individual. There are no generalizations here. One person rounds their shoulders because they are very tall, another because their breasts are too big or too small, another because they were yelled at or hit throughout their childhood.

Imagine each of these people going on to become lawyers. In addition to their intelligence and unique abilities, their personal ways of moving may actually influence their success in practicing law. The lawyer who stands more on his toes will be responded to very differently than the one who slouches. One may be seen as more always rushing, the other as a bit too casual. And if we compare both of these ways of moving to someone who stands erect and looks you straight in the eye, well, you can imagine how he might be perceived. And none of this has anything to do with each individual’s actual ability to practice law, but we all know that we respond to a person’s physical way of presenting themselves.

These ways of moving also have deep emotional influences not only in how we perceive ourselves internally, but also how others perceive us or feel when they are around us. Most of us have had the experience of being in the presence of someone who we felt intimidated by, or conversely, moments when we felt superior to someone else. These experiences are not independent from the way we move. I have worked with many people who sit very hunched over. When they are gently guided to a more erect way of sitting, in addition to the surprise that they could sit like that, they will sometimes say, "This feels arrogant. I couldn’t sit like this, what would people think?" This poses quite a dilemma between how we would like ourselves to be and what we are used to.

How we relate to others is influenced by our biases. Growing up, I was always small, often the first in line in school. I tried to make myself taller, completely unconsciously, by walking on my toes and lifting my head higher. It gave
a nice bounce to my walk and I felt better about myself. This way of moving also led me to have a greater readiness to jump at things. I was quick to act, often impulsive in how I did things and became quite aggressive. By the time I was a teenager I could really irritate people. I was told at one point when I was in college, that the dean saw me coming and said, "Here comes Questel, that pushy little guy!"

I graduated from that school a year early and later found out that my aggressive nature was used as an example of how others needed to be to get by in the acting world. Go figure! I can still be aggressive when the need arises, but I’ve learned to grade my aggression, all the way down to being passively alert and now find that I can be thoughtfully aggressive.

Understanding our biases does not mean giving them up. It means being able to utilize them intelligently. To be centered is to have a choice in how we can act. Finding our center is the process that allows us to discover our biases and understanding where and how we place ourselves in relation to others and the world.

Again to deepen our understanding of this we need to have an experience of it. Let’s do some movement.

Make sure you are staying within a comfortable range of movement and you are letting a sense of pleasure guide you in all your movements.

Walk around the room and simply listen to your sensations. Imagine where your center of gravity is. Don’t worry if you can’t find it, it will serve as a reference for the end of the lesson.

Lie on your back and observe yourself. Imagine beginning to roll to one side. Just imagine it or do it so small that someone watching wouldn’t be able to observe anything. Where do you begin this action? What part/s of you initially get engaged? Where do you think your center of gravity is now?

Lying on your back with your legs long, imagine that there is a small clock under your sacrum (this is the triangular shaped bone at the base of your spine, at the back of your pelvis). Imagine that 12:00 is at the top of the sacrum and 6:00 is towards your tailbone or coccyx. Place 3:00 to the left and 9:00 to the right.

Slowly and gently begin to move from 12:00 to 6:00, moving through the center of your clock. Notice the line of pressure that you make against the floor as you move. Is it a straight line or curved?

Now move from 3:00 to 9:00, through the center of your clock, gently moving from right to left. Again, notice the line of pressure that you make against the floor as you move. Notice the shape of the line.
Now begin to circle your clock, moving along the circumference. Keep the movement very small, as a clock under you sacrum wouldn’t be very big. Notice where is the circle not a circle, where is it less round? Don’t adjust it or change anything, simply observe yourself.

Change the direction of your circle so you are going counterclockwise.

Rest.

Keeping your legs long, put your right ankle on your left thigh, so your right knee is out to the side. (If this is uncomfortable, place a pillow or support under your right knee). Begin to explore the movement on your clock of 12:00 to 6:00, moving through the center of your clock. Notice how having your legs crossed like this changes the movement. Does it pull you more to one side and change the angle of the line of pressure you are making on the floor? Or do you find yourself working in a different way to keep the line as you felt it before? Let the weight of your leg deform the movement. Do this several times. Now do some more movements, but this time keep the line as you felt it earlier. Sense where you work or get engaged to maintain this line.

Rest with your knees bent and your feet standing.

With your legs long, place the right ankle on the left thigh again. Begin to move from 3:00 to 9:00. Again notice how does the crossing of your legs influence the movement? If the line you are rolling on has shifted due to this, let it remain shifted. Do several movements like this. Now, if the do the movement without letting the line be deformed. Keep it as much between 3 & 9 as you can and listen to what parts of you need to get involved to maintain this.

Rest with your knees bent and your feet standing.

Come to the same position and begin to circle your sacral clock, moving clockwise. How does the crossed leg affect the shape of your circle? Let it have it’s own shape. Do several circles like this. Now see if you can maintain the integrity of the circle. What parts of you come into action to do this? Explore the same things in a counterclockwise direction.

Rest with your knees bent and your feet standing.

Change your legs over so the left ankle is resting on your right thigh, with the right knee out to the side (again, use a pillow for support under your knee if this is uncomfortable).
Explore the same movements, resting when you need to:

- From 12:00 to 6:00, letting the line of pressure change trajectories and not letting it change.
- From 3:00 to 9:00, letting the line of pressure change trajectories and not letting it change.
- Making circles clockwise and then counterclockwise, allowing the shape of your circle to change and then not letting it change.

Rest with your knees bent and your feet standing.

With your legs long move from 12:00 to 6:00 and see what it is like now. Do the same from 3:00 to 9:00 and observe any differences. Circle your clock in both directions and listen to any changes.

Rest.

Roll to your side and come onto your hands and knees (if your knees are sensitive, place some padding under them). Begin to round and arch your back. Simply listen to how you move and where you sense movement. Go gently.

Rest in sitting.

Come back to your hands and knees and round and arch your back. As you do this, bring your attention to your sit bones (ischium). Imagine that you are pointing your sit bones towards the floor and then to the ceiling. It might help to imagine that you have eyes on your sit bones and they are looking up and then looking down, while continuing to round and arch your back. Does this change the way your back rounds and arches? Repeat this movement many times.

Rest in sitting.

Come to your hands and knees again, round and arch your back and bring your attention to the top of your pubic bone. It is at the lower part of your belly by the top of the pubic hair. Imagine that you are bringing the top of the pubic bone towards the floor and away from the floor while rounding and arching your back. Sense how this influences the movement of your back. Explore this movement.

Rest in sitting.

Come to the same position, round and arch your back, and this time think of the crease in the front of your hip joints. This is where your thigh meets up with your torso. While rounding and arching your back, open and close the
space. You can imagine two big eyes there, opening and closing. Does this change how you round and arch your back?

Rest in sitting.

Again come to your hands and knees and round and arch your back while playing with the different references we just explored. Your sit bone eyes looking up to the ceiling and down to the floor, the top of your pubic bone going towards the floor and away from the floor, and the front of your hip joints opening and closing. You can combine them in whatever way you can make sense out of it. Play with this for while.

Rest on your back.

With your legs long, move from 12:00 to 6:00 and see what it is like now. Do the same from 3:00 to 9:00 and observe any differences. Circle your clock in both directions and listen to any changes.

Rest.

With your legs long place your fingertips at the top of your pubic bone. Move from 12:00 to 6:00 and listen with your hands to the movement. Pause. Intentionally push downward (towards your feet) on your pubic bone and hold it there. While maintaining that downward pressure, move yourself from 12:00 to 6:00. When moving to 12:00 you will feel the increased resistance from the pressure of your fingers. Where do you feel yourself working as the result of this? When moving to 6:00 your fingers will be helping you do the movement. Do several movements like this.

Rest with your knees bent and your feet standing.

Lengthen your legs, place your fingertips at the top of your pubic bone and this time pull up (headwards) on your pubic bone and hold it there. While continuing to hold it, move from 12:00 to 6:00 and observe where you have to work against the resistance of your fingers. Do this for several movements.

Rest with your knees bent and your feet standing.

With your legs long move from 12:00 to 6:00 and see what it is like now. Do the same from 3:00 to 9:00 and observe any differences. Circle your clock in both directions and listen to any changes. Has your sense of these movements changed? Has the quality improved? Is it easier? Clearer?

Lie on your back with your legs long and imagine rolling to one side. Where do you initiate the movement now? Where is your center of gravity now?
Roll to your side and come to standing. How do you feel? Walk around a bit. Do you feel closer to the ground? Do you feel taller? Do you feel closer to the ground and taller at the same time? Where is your center of gravity now? Is there a different sense of moving from the center of yourself? More like a Ninja? Do you move more from the part of you that needs to be in a room for you to be in the room?

Notice throughout your day how this changes. Don’t try to keep it. Let it have it’s own rhythm.

See if you can observe yourself in walking and inquire into ‘where your center is’. Don’t try to change it. Play with it. Can you move the sense of this center in one direction or another, that is, initiate the movement higher up or lower down, more to the left or more to the right? Then see if you can move more from ‘the center’, from your pelvis. Next time you are ‘feeling centered’ notice how you are moving and what sensations are associated with it.
Chapter II

The Center of the Universe

“Every time we start thinking we’re the center of the universe, the universe turns around and says with a slightly distracted air, “I’m sorry. What’d you say your name was again?””

Margaret Maron

Now that we’ve figured out where our center is (ha, ha), I thought we could move on to a bigger question.

Where is the center of the universe?

Now what could this question have to do with our investigations around creativity? And how could we possibly answer it, if the astro-bio-neuro-physicists are still pondering it?

I was once actually at the center of the universe. It was in southwestern Australia. I had just arrived at a working ranch where I was going to ride horses and herd sheep and cattle a la "City Slickers". The owner of the ranch came up to me and pointed to a large hill. He said, "See that hill? There is something very important up there. If you leave now you’ll have time to see it and be back in time for dinner."

So of course I set out to climb the hill. At the very top was a pile of stones with a brass plaque on top of the stones. On the plaque was engraved "The Center of the Universe". Around us was a 360 view. Magnificent and panoramic, it did feel like the center of the universe.

What I found interesting about this was even though I was in an incredible place of nature, what defined it as the center of the universe was that I was there to observe it as such. Now we all know, at least according to the latest science, that there is no one center of the universe. But maybe you have had the experience of being someplace magical and felt, at that moment, that you were at the center of the
universe. It could have been while rafting in the Grand Canyon or at a sumptuous meal surrounded by your whole family or gazing into the eyes of your lover.

What is constant in all of these events was that you were there to describe it. That means there is something to our idea of the center of the universe that implies that our presence is necessary. When I ask actors, “Where is the center of the universe?” They almost always reply by pointing a finger at themselves. Now you may say, well actors are more self-centered, so of course they would say this. But I have found that when we really get down to it, we are each the center of our own worlds.

You may find yourself balking at this idea, and certainly there are many exceptions. A child can certainly be the center of a parent’s world. The person you are in love with may be the center of your world. Your job may be the center of your universe. And we may make something temporarily the centre of our universe. For example, when I am training my dog, he is the center of everything. When a therapist is working with a client, she may make the client the center, for that period of time.

Certainly if something outside of ourselves is always the center of our world, there is something in this that is disturbing. Many of the difficulties in our lives stem from either making something else too much the center of the universe or making ourselves too much the center of the universe. Before we consider finding any kind of balance, we first need to investigate and understand something of how we do this.

It is interesting that to even say that my child or my lover or my job is the total center of my universe, implies that there is a sense of self that is distinct from this. Otherwise how would I know when someone/thing else is the center?

Our culture enforces in us the value of 'the self' being significant and important. In other cultures 'the self' is diminished, instead the group is of greater importance. In some cultures the self is valued, but must not be overly valued that is, don’t get too big for your boots. In some micro cultures the all-consuming self is valued, the diva or star for example. In others, like some spiritual practices, a lack of self is paramount.

To some it may seem narcissistic to consider ourselves as the center of the universe. But before we judge it, let’s consider the value of this perspective. It can also be seen as a measure of self worth. The degree to which I can see myself as important may influence my ability to accomplish things. One’s own self esteem can be a source of empowerment in relation to others. There is a healthy development of ego that acknowledges "me" as having purpose, meaning and substance.

When there is too much "me" we do become narcissistic. Others see us as stingy, not only in the things we don’t give, but stingy in our capacity to be sympathetic or empathetic. We are less able to relate to others. It is like that old
joke about the person who is talking about him or herself. "That's enough about me, so what do you think about me?"

On the other end of the spectrum is the person who is so giving, so caring of others that no sense of self seems to exist. Yet when we see this capacity in the course of service there is nothing higher. I witnessed this, or I believe I witnessed this, with some of the sisters at Mother Teresa's in Calcutta. It was a kind of selflessness that was easy, down to earth, almost matter of fact. This making others the center of the universe is one of the highest spiritual achievements. In a more recognizable domain, when a teacher makes the student's learning the object of greatest importance, rather than what the teacher knows being important, everyone benefits.

Unfortunately many of us practice this, not from a place of service, but from a sense of lack, of feeling worthless, of thinking everyone is better than us. Everything becomes a source of comparison where we end up as the failures. Everyone is always better than we are. When we see this in others it is often so self-effacing that we are uncomfortable being around them, thus perpetuating their sense of worthlessness.

Again we are faced with the paradox of what to value. Where to place ourselves in relation to others? And how do we gain the perspective to begin our inquiry? This little story speaks well to our predicament.

There's this Rabbi who wanders in to the synagogue, and - whooosh!!! - he's struck with this vision. He throws himself down in front of the Torah, and starts screaming, "Oh God, I'm nothing, I'm nothing God, I'm really nothing in your eyes, I'm nothing, nothing, nothing", and he lies there praying. After some time the Assistant Rabbi wanders in to the synagogue, and he too gets struck with the same vision. Wham!!! And he throws himself down in front of the Torah, and he starts ranting, "Oh dear God, I'm nothing, I'm nothing God in your eyes, I'm nothing, nothing, nothing", and he lies there praying. And then the janitor of the synagogue wanders in he gets struck with the same vision. Kapow!!! And he throws himself down in front of the Torah, and starts shouting, 'Oh God, Oh dear God, I'm nothing, I'm truly nothing in your eyes, I'm nothing, nothing, nothing", and he lies there praying. And the head Rabbi, while pointing at the janitor, turns to the Assistant Rabbi and says "Humph. Look who thinks he's nothing."

Our capacity to value ourselves and our capacity to value others are essential to the development of our talents and our ability to recognize talent in others. Where and how we place ourselves in relation to another can empower or destroy our sense of being creative.

Another way of looking at this is whether I view the world as if everything is on my periphery or I view it from the perspective of always being on the periphery
of everything. Am I the most important thing or is everything else more important than me. It has echoes of feeling special or being ordinary.

Some of you may say, I already am the center while others clearly feel on the periphery of the rest of the world. The question arises, "Well, which should it be? Should I be the center or should someone else be?" I am not proposing that one way of perceiving oneself in relation to the world is better than another. In fact I believe both are essential to our sense of wellbeing and to living a full and healthy life. While some may view the optimal sense of self as being a balance between the two, I would prefer to see it as a choice between two options. A choice that, at times, may be quite out of balance.

The ability to shift and return to our habitual way of interacting in the world is another way we can grow, develop and evolve ourselves. The uncomfortable feelings we encounter in the creative process can be better understood through clarifying our relationship between ourselves and our worlds. Our sense of status, of place, of hierarchy speaks volumes to our capacity to allow ourselves to feel creative. For some it is necessary to feel themselves to be the absolute center of the universe, for others it is through the elimination of self that they become most creative.

In the parts of our lives where we interact with the world and where we want to be creative we are faced with different kinds of predicaments. So often our sense of being creative is something that we allow to be determined by someone else. Not that someone else's opinion isn't of value, but in this case our motivation to create is so that we can be complimented and hence be made the center of the someone else's universe.

If I am to be really honest with you and myself, my main motivation to become an actor was to get attention. To be seen and recognized as someone who had some value in the world. While this may be a common motivator for actors, it didn't allow me to include others in this picture. I would do all I could to draw attention to myself, even when the scene wasn't about me. I was less interested in the playwright's story and more interested in the applause or laughter I might evoke. I was less concerned with the audience having a good time and more concerned about whether or not they liked me. If someone else on stage was really great, instead of feeling part of the entire gestalt of the play, I became resentful and jealous.

These kinds of responses are not limited to the actor's experiences. There are many places in our lives where these kinds of feelings arise. As a practitioner of the Feldenkrais Method I achieved a high level of success. I went on to become an Assistant Trainer in professional training programs and eventually became a Trainer in the method. Throughout my development I was continually faced with a similar dilemma to that which I encountered as an actor.
The confidence I felt as a practitioner suddenly evaporated when I became an Assistant Trainer. As a result, I resorted to all of the compulsive behaviors I had depended on in the past. Was I a good Assistant Trainer? Did the students like me? Being funny and clever was more important to me than conveying the material. Eventually I settled into my new role, found my confidence again and was able to evolve professionally. When I became a Trainer, again my compulsions began to rear their ugly little heads. Not nearly to the same degree as when I became an Assistant Trainer, but I could feel them. What eventually evolved was a secure enough sense of myself and my abilities in this role, so that I could make the students and their learning the most important thing. Their learning became paramount. It was nice if they also liked me but what was more important was that they were learning. And sometimes this clearly meant that they would not like me.

In the arts that require partners, for example in theatre, dance and music, where and how the artist places himself or herself in relation to others is observable and felt by an audience. Here, when one performer places themselves as the "star", it often backfires. They are seen as arrogant, upstaging, pompous, and their colleagues, who they are performing with, often resent it.

Now this can become very confusing. If a person were a star, wouldn't it make sense for them to take that role on fully, get all the attention they can and let the others fend for themselves? Well, yes and no. What I have witnessed in many great performers is, rather than push themselves to the foreground, they support and value those around them.

In improvisation there is a rule, always say "yes, and" never say "no, but". The idea behind this is to move the improv forward in a way that builds something rather than short circuiting any ideas. For example, if someone says "Boy, look at the size of that cow!" their partner in improv might say, "Yeah and did you ever see so many spots on one cow?" If the second player said, "That's not a cow, can't you tell a horse when you see one?" it stops the scene and the audience doesn't know who to believe. The actors become adversaries rather than partners.

When I have heard stories of people working with "stars" (not all, but enough) they speak of how this person directed so much attention to them that they felt like they were the star. Think about it, the person who is already well known, already has the attention, and makes themselves look better by sharing it with everyone else.

What we need to recognize is that in these cases of the more evolved “stars” there is a self that is already well established. Once this is so, to give up that self is no great threat. To let go of being the center of the universe becomes more and more accessible when it is a known place that we can return to and leave and return to again.
When is it better to be the center as opposed to being on the periphery? I have no idea. That’s your job, your course of study. What we can benefit from is having an understanding of where we habitually place ourselves and creating more choices so that, as different contexts present themselves, we can act more in line with our intentions.

Through our explorations you may also find that you are beginning to observe others through this lens. It is important to remember to remain as kind and as appreciative of others, as we would be towards ourselves. To accuse someone of being the center of the universe doesn’t necessarily help him or her behave any differently. In such an instance an outside observer might easily say that you are choosing to remain on this other person’s periphery. It takes two to create such dynamics.

Trying to get someone else to change is most often a fruitless endeavor. To change our own behavior is our challenge. I’ve always liked this quote from Mark Twain. “When I was fourteen, my father was so ignorant I could hardly stand to have him around. When I got to be twenty-one, I was astonished at how much he had learned in seven years.”

I think it is worth commenting on, that while it may seem that we have strayed a bit from our course on creativity, it is in the everyday dealings we have, interpersonally and intra-personally, that our creativity is inhibited. So much of our sense of self, creative or uncreative, is derived from how others see us and by how we feel seen by others. Waking up to ourselves in this way is yet another avenue towards more fully understanding what we have to express and contribute creatively to the worlds we live in.

Perhaps the best we can hope for in uncovering these aspects of ourselves is that we become more capable of ‘meeting’ ourselves and others. Both meeting and being met. Finding a mutual ground for experiencing and expressing ourselves.

We will undertake our concrete exploration of these ideas differently here to how we have done so in other chapter. Instead of exploring an idea in a solitary way, we now need the benefit of a group. I would recommend 6 people as a minimum, and as many as 15 if the situation presents itself. Make sure everyone in the group understands that you are exploring these ideas and it will probably be beneficial if everyone has read at least this chapter, if not this entire book. If someone is uncomfortable in the process, give him or her the choice to withdraw. One person has to be the leader and read the instructions and create a time frame. This person is less likely to participate and derive any first hand learning so you might want to do it a couple of times so everyone gets to experience the process.
The presenter of the group will read aloud the following, allowing for a good amount of time for each direction to settle in, more time than you might imagine:

Everyone please sit in a large circle, (including whoever is presenting to the group.)

Consider this question: “Where is the center of the universe?”

Consider the idea that you can be at the center and everyone else is on your periphery or everyone else can be the center and you are on their periphery (There may be some discussion. Encourage it, but do not comment on it).

Each person pick someone to look at. Make sure the person you are looking at is not looking at you and the person you are looking at is not the presenter of the group.

Continue looking at this person and imagine yourself as the center of the universe.

Think, with yourself as the center, that the person you are looking at is on your periphery.

Notice how this feels to be the center.

What sensations do you experience?

What is your breathing like?

How to you give your weight to the ground?

Stay here for a while, observing your thoughts and feelings as well as your sensations.

Does being the center of the universe evoke anything in you? Is it familiar? Unfamiliar? Comfortable or uncomfortable?

Do you feel fairly neutral or perturbed in any way?

Leave that. Look down and away from the person you were looking at. Don’t speak yet, just take a pause.

Again look at the same person you were previously looking at. This time, as you observe them, make them the center of the universe.
How does this feel?

Notice your sensations, your breath, how your give your weight to the ground. Are these any different than when you were the center?

Leave that. Look down and away from the person you were looking at.

As a group, take a few moments and discuss your experiences.

Repeat the previous experiment while looking at a different person. (Presenter - inquire into the same questions you went through earlier.)

Does doing this with a new person change your experience in any way? How?

Pick a third person to do this with. Make yourself the center of the universe. As you do this, consider your morning, how it began, what you did, from waking up until you left your house.

Speaking at a normal level of volume, begin to describe your morning to the person in the circle you are looking at. It is not important that they hear you simply that you engage in the act of speaking to them. Feel free to pause at any time and resume your conversation when you are ready.

(Presenter - let the conversation go on for a while.)

Pause your conversation and keep looking at this person, with yourself as the center, and observe how you feel.

Take a rest.

Come back to looking at this person and this time make them the center of the universe. Begin describing your morning to them. Observe how you feel as you tell them about your morning, now that they are the center of the universe.

Pause your conversation and keep looking at this person with them as the center and observe how you feel.

Leave that and take some time to discuss your experiences.

Pick a person, it can be a new person or someone you were gazing at earlier. Make yourself the center of the universe and spend a few moments sensing your experience of this. While maintaining yourself as the center in relation to this other person, everybody slowly stand up and begin to walk
around. How does being in movement influence your sense of this experience? Walk a bit.

Everyone come back to sitting in the circle and pause.

Look at the same person and this time make them the center of the universe. Everybody slowly come to standing and begin to walk around. What is it like to walk while making someone else the center of the universe?

Slowly come back to sitting in a circle. Take a pause.

Spend some time discussing your experiences. Do your best not to interpret people’s responses. If you have a response that is different than everyone else’s, allow it as a possibility.

As you move into your day or night, notice the influence of the center of the universe, in yourself and in those around you. Is it an observable distinction? Something of interest or value? See if you can discover anything about how you place or perceive yourself in relation to the people you interact with throughout your day.
CHAPTER 12

TOUCHING THE FUNDAMENTAL

“We are so visually stimulated that we don’t even realize how important touch is.”

Tina Kahn

In the previous chapter we began to explore how our relationship and interactions with our world can influence our creativity. Usually when we think of being creative it is a solitary act. Something we generate within ourselves, even when it is done in concert with another. However, so much of who we are is determined by our interactions with others. This being so, it is worthwhile to explore how we can utilize these interactions to evoke new creative states within ourselves.

How do we begin? There are so many levels through which we engage with the world. As we looked at earlier, to change, shift or interrupt our habits is one way we can shift ourselves into new ways of acting, thinking and feeling. We need to consider that whatever avenue we choose to explore, it must be fundamental to who we are. To shower in a different order or floss from a different direction is only the first approximation of how we can bring about changes in our processes. Our next approximation is to explore what is more essential to our nature, some aspect of ourselves that we almost take for granted.

When working with actors I pose a lot of questions that we have already delved into. For example, the idea of choice is one that is central to the job of an actor. Another important aspect of what an actor does is communicate, and as art imitates life, communication is an important aspect for all of us. So how do we communicate? These are the answers I usually get: we talk and sing and listen, in person, on the telephone, on CDs; we write letters, texts and e-mails; we create art, paintings, sculptures and photographs; we read books and magazines and advertisements; we use body language; we use different media - television, film, plays, dance and music.

I have consistently found that an essential aspect of how we communicate is left out. Let me share a moment when it became clear to me. Some years back I was
teaching in the acting department of the University of Utah, in Salt Lake City. There is a regional theatre there and I went to see a production of Joan of Arc. It was a very large and stagy production, with huge sets, elaborate lighting and costumes. Everything was a little too large and the actors seemed small in relation to everything else. And then there was this moment; very brief but very significant, when one actor touched another actor in an unusual way. The contact seemed as if it was from a different time, certainly not the 20th century. Until that moment, I had not realized that all of the other contact between the actors was bound by the culture and habits we presently live in. But in that instant I suddenly saw something distinctive. From that moment I became fascinated with how we use touch as form of communication. As a Feldenkrais practitioner it was always clear to me that touch was a way to communicate (I am referring to the hands-on modality of Functional Integration), but somehow the idea of touch as a source of communication in everyday life had eluded me.

Touch is the form of communication that I rarely hear mentioned and yet it was our primary experience of the world when we were infants and children. At some point in our lives, the ways in which we touch became more formed and eventually fixed within our individual culture and micro-cultures. For some of us, the worlds we inhabit invite long, warm hugs, others frequently kiss cheeks, some enjoy a good slap on the back and others go no closer than a handshake. For someone to go from a handshake to a long warm hug is probably too big a leap, nor am I suggesting that this is necessary. Quite the contrary, a change of this sort is still within the realm of our habits.

I am suggesting something different. I am suggesting that we alter the quality of how we touch. This inquiry happens along with another person, but it is something that we do from within ourselves. Here we can influence ourselves at a fundamental level. A place from which innumerable moments throughout our day can effect, over time, a deeper change. Why over time? When we do something so frequently, without paying much attention to it, it is challenging to alter it. For example, I could have chosen breathing as a fundamental aspect of ourselves, and it certainly is. Many practices, from meditation to yoga to singing, use breath as the means to bring about change and learn about ourselves. However, I find touch to be a little more accessible as a means for our exploration.

We need to make an important distinction about touch from the start. There is a difference in the ways children touch and the ways adults touch. The obvious difference is how much freer children are. They have no problem reaching out to your face and playing with your nose, or resting their head on your chest, or jumping into your lap. If we imagine an adult doing this with another adult it presumes a great deal of intimacy, which with adults, is usually sexual as well. One of the great losses we experience as we become adults is less and less frequently are we touched in a way that it is intimate but not sexual. I say it is a great loss because I believe that human beings thrive through touch. We know that when children are deprived of touch they suffer greatly in all aspects of who they are, emotionally,
developmentally, psychologically and physically. Isn’t this true for us as adults as well? While not all of us may long for it, I am sure we could all benefit from it.

It is rare that adults touch intimately without it being sexual, becoming sexual, perceived as being sexual or misconstrued as being sexual. Now I am not suggesting we stop being sexual, but if we could find ways to have an intimate experience of touch, I would bet that our sexual meetings would improve greatly.

We touch so many times throughout our day. Objects, people, animals, and yet how often do we inquire into the quality of our touch? It is similar to how we habitually attend to our movement, through discomfort rather than pleasure. How is it that we know how to hold a cup and how we do that differently from holding a hammer? What kind of grip do you hold a hammer with and would you hold a child’s hand with the same grip?

As a culture we have either little or no training in the quality of our touch unless we are in a particular domain that utilizes touch. And even then how we touch is based on our history of how we were touched by others. I probably risk some strange reactions and the next story may seem bizarre to some, but it best illustrates my point. I had been staying in a beautiful, quiet and relatively uninhabited area in the Santa Cruz Mountains. The place I was staying in had no internal toilet but there was a lovely outhouse surrounded by old redwood trees. Having done my business I proceeded to wipe myself with toilet paper. Now I know this an experience that is familiar to all of us. (And yet I don’t recall reading about it or hearing it discussed on talk shows. This is part of our cultural inhibition, which may not always serve us.) As I was wiping myself I suddenly became aware of how much force I was using to clean myself. I certainly don’t think it was excessive and yet I realized that it was probably more than I needed. I easily adapted how I was doing, to what I was doing.

Afterwards I began to wonder, where did I learn to wipe myself in this way? Well I had to go back quite a ways and since I didn’t remember explicitly being taught, I began to realize how I had learned it, was through how others touched me. Did the people who cleaned me as an infant touch themselves in this way, or did they just dislike having to change my diaper and their feeling was expressed through their touch?

When I tell this story to people they often come back to me later to tell me of their own discoveries. While I would not list this as one of our movement explorations (no pun intended) you may find it useful as source for exploring the quality of how you touch. If you ever put any kind of cream on your face you can investigate the same idea. How do you apply the cream? Is it with your fingertips, only some of your fingertips, your palm? How do you work it in? Do you make circles, or rub up and down, or across, or randomly? How much force do you use? Could it be just as effective with less force or does increasing the amount of force improve what you are doing?
We have taken a necessary detour from our journey into the creative process, so let's find our way back. Earlier I spoke of how thinking, feeling, sensing and movement are all aspects of ourselves that are continually taking place. How a shift in any one of these areas potentiates a shift in the others. My experience has been, both personally and hearing from others, that changes in the quality of our touch impacts greatly on our lives. In fact by exploring a seemingly unrelated domain, we open ourselves to new experiences that can bridge to our primary course of study, the creative process. Another way of looking at it would be that we are increasing our capacity to be sensitive, to listen better with our hands and bodies.

It is interesting that from a neurological point of view our hands are a big part of who we are. There is a famous (although somewhat dated) representation of our sensory and motor cortex called the “homunculus”, developed by Wilder Penfield, M.D. It doesn't actually exist in our brain, but as a representation it shows how much attention is given to certain parts of ourselves. (As happens with much scientific research, the fixity of the homunculus has now come into question, but it is still instructive when we look at how the brain functions.).

The homunculus shows how much certain parts of the brain are dedicated to particular parts of ourselves. The hand occupies a huge amount of representation (the mouth does as well). The following illustrations of the homunculus (which means "little man") can help us understand this.

So what can this mean to us? Since the hand occupies such a large area of representation, how the hand is utilized, both in quality and action, has an impact on the rest of our self as well. For example a change in the general tonus (state of muscular contraction) of the hand may have an effect on our emotional life. It may
also allow our attention to move to other places within us. And it may also shift how we enact or participate in certain activities.

To become more sensitive to how we use and sense our hands can help us listen better. As we increase our sensitivity, we become more available to more choices. This way is a more indirect route than those we have explored earlier, but I assure you, an alteration in this aspect of yourself can ripple through your whole life.

When we think of becoming more sensitive, again we need to go a little deeper than just the word and its definition. We face a bit of a paradox when we try to increase our sensitivity. Culturally, when we want to increase something we work harder at it. But when we work harder we also tend to decrease our sensitivity. So how do we become more sensitive without an increase in our effort?

One phrase that always held some interest for me was, “Less is more”. When I say interest, it is more accurate to say I kind of liked the idea behind this statement. The truth is I didn’t really understand it, but I thought it was cool. The paradox we face can benefit from an interesting study done many years ago. The study investigated thresholds of perception. The result has been called the Weber-Fechner Law. Weber and Fechner looked at when we are able to notice differences and at what point do become unable to notice differences. They looked at thresholds in weight and pressure, light and sound and came up with different ratios in each. (Subsequent studies have shown different ratios, some return to Weber-Fechner’s, but in any case it is more the general concept that we are interested in.)

I’ll explain the idea and then explain it again to help clarify it. Let’s say in weight and pressure we can, ideally, be sensitive in the ratio of 1/40 of something. This means that if you were carrying 39 pounds and someone added a pound, you (potentially) could feel the difference. If you were carrying 41 pounds and someone added a pound, you would not be able to sense the added weight. Now this ratio is supposed to be the limit, so some people, depending on their level of sensitivity, might not notice any difference when one or even two pounds are added to the 39 pounds.

To relate this to our touch, if we squeeze a ball, the degree to which we can sense with that ball depends on how hard we squeeze it. If I squeeze it very hard I will sense something about the ball, probably how dense it is. But with that intensity of force it is unlikely that I will notice the texture of the ball or the initial resiliency or elasticity, or the seam on the ball. Certainly different aspects of the ball will show up with different degrees of force, but the greatest level of detail will appear with the lightest touch. Now this is a skill that develops over time. Initially when we decrease the habitual amount of force we use when touching an object, we often sense less because we are not used to this way of attending to something.
We can also relate these ideas to our movement explorations. Stand and put your arm straight out in front of you and move the arm left and right, as far as it can go. Notice what you can attend to as you do it. Ideally you have the capacity to feel 1/40 of that movement, which of course is a smaller part of the action. Now move your arm left and right again, but this time only move it a few inches to the left and right. What do you sense now? Different things? Try it again with the full range of your arm and listen to what you can feel throughout the rest of yourself. Now do it in the smaller range and see if the rest of yourself is easier to observe. At this point you may want to go back to any or all of the movement lessons (not all at one go) and see if doing them with this new way of moving (smaller) allows you to sense new things and make other discoveries.

There are also ratios for light and sound. If the ratio for light was 1/230 and there are 200 light bulbs on in a room and one goes out, it is probably perceivable. If there are 250 light bulbs on in a room and one goes out you wouldn’t be able to notice it. The same is true for a ratio for sound. So if the sound on your stereo was at a certain volume the degree to which you would be able to hear it if you turned it down a notch would be relative to the volume it was initially set at. If it was really loud it would have to be turned down more than if it was set a at low volume, in order for you to notice it.

So less is more! Who would have thought? With a decrease in effort, there is actually an increase in sensitivity. In a culture where more is always supposed to be better, now we find that less could be better. By increasing our sensitivity we increase the number of distinctions we can sense or observe and thereby multiply the choices available to us.

Another aspect of touch that is worthy of investigation has to do with our intentions. Usually when we touch someone or something we have an intention behind it. Conversely, when someone touches us, we usually perceive an intention behind it. As in our earlier investigations, we know that our intention can be a big influence on what our experience is. Often our intentions are habitual and so we are not even aware of them. When I hug someone I am happy to see, I communicate my intention, to let him or her know how happy I am, by how hard I hug them. This is just fine, but different people will react quite differently to the same degree of “hug”. We need to be able to grade how we communicate our intentions, relative to the person who is receiving it.

The context also influences what we do. If someone has hurt himself or herself and we absolutely have to move them, you may well imagine what qualities that situation may bring to your touch. We would certainly want to be as careful and as sensitive as possible, but it also likely that we would bring a great deal of fear, worry and trepidation to this act. On the other hand, if the same situation presented itself, rather than bringing fear and worry to it, what if we were able to bring compassion, interest, confidence and support to it, we would find it to be a very different interaction. I’ve been in situations like this and I can assure you, in
the latter a person responds very differently to being moved, regardless of their hurt.

Even when the hurt is emotional, the way in which we approach a person makes a difference that can really make a difference. When someone is crying and you are afraid to make contact with him or her, they can sense it. When you bring yourself to them in a way that is not coming from fear, they are usually more responsive to it.

We can consider that one aspect of enhancing our creativity is to create different responses to the situations and relationships we find ourselves in. To create new ways of interacting with others, in the long run, will be much more satisfying than painting a picture, writing a book or performing on a stage. Through this kind of learning we can enhance not only our own creativity, but also the creativity of those around us. Maybe the greatest contribution we can make, once we have contributed to ourselves is to move beyond ourselves and influence the growth of others.

As with all of our learning, if we are to make inquiries into the quality of our touch, we need to do it in an environment that is safe. Especially since some of our explorations will involve another person, there needs to be a clear understanding of the nature of the exploration, so they are not misconstrued to be something else. This means that you will be exploring touch in an intimate way. It is not sexual. Even if you are doing this exercise with your lover, make the agreement that it not be sexual. (There is plenty of time for that later on.)

There are two explorations for this chapter. Doing them either one after the other or at different times is just fine. I recommend that you take at least a short break (15-30 minutes) in between them if you are doing them one after the other.

The first exploration is designed to help you become aware of some of the ways in which you use your hands. You will each need three objects. (1) A cloth of some type: e.g. a tea towel or scarf. (2) A piece of one-inch foam, about one foot square. Soft foam is best and if you don't have a piece just lying around you can use a large sponge (not too thick) or a flip-flop sandal (it must be the really thin and bendable kind) or something that is fairly malleable. Thin and light-again foam is the best. (3) A hardcover book that is not very thick. A children’s storybook is best. A clipboard will work, as will a shoe with a hard sole.

Initially you will explore these objects by yourself. You can do this sitting or standing (eventually doing both and incorporating other variations of your position).

Begin by placing the cloth between your hands and observe how you hold the cloth. How much force do you exert between your hands to keep the cloth there? Could you reduce the amount of force and still keep hold of the cloth?
Play around with this even to the point where you drop it several times. Make sure the cloth is not hanging over the top of one of your hands, that it is only between your hands.

Pause and rest.

Again place the cloth between your hands. Notice what part of your hands do you use to hold the cloth? Is it your palms, fingertips, the heel of your hands? Try holding it in these different ways and find out what was your spontaneous choice. Play with the different ways of holding it and see if the different ways afford you different results.

Pause and rest.

Take the cloth and explore holding the cloth with the different parts of your hands while modifying the amount of force or pressure between your hands. Periodically diminish the force so you drop the cloth. Find out what is the minimum pressure needed between these different parts of your hands to maintain your hold on the cloth.

Pause and rest.

Place the cloth between your hands. While varying the pressure between your hands and shifting the cloth between the different parts of your hands, begin to move the cloth around. Where can you bring it to in space? Observe as you move the cloth to new places, (above your head, between your legs, behind you) do you change the pressure between your hands? How does moving it throughout your environment affect what your hands do?

Pick up the cloth and hold it only between the heels of your hands and move it around. Had you thought of this? Probably not. Usually we would only see someone holding piece of cloth like this if they had just painted their fingernails. Continue moving the cloth and yourself around but now hold it only between your fingertips. Was this one of the ways you chose to hold it. How is it different than holding it between the heels of your hands. Still pay attention to any changes in pressure between your hands as you move around.

As you move around, how much do you move. Do you stay only in standing? Can you move the cloth around as you go to sitting or lying. Keep changing your orientation.

Pause and rest.

Pick up the piece of foam so you are holding it along its edges at its longest, so there is the greatest distance possible between your hands. Only the
edge of the foam will be contacting your hands. (You are not holding it along its surface with the whole of your palm.)

As with the cloth, begin to explore how much pressure you need to exert between your hands to continue holding the foam. Play with diminishing the force so that it drops several times. Notice what happens when you increase the amount of force. How the foam starts to bend. If you use too much force it may pop out of your hands completely. Play with finding the pressure where you don’t drop it, nor do your deform the foam.

Pause and rest.

Again place the edge of the foam between your hands and notice, against what part of your hand does the edge of the foam rest? Is it your fingertips? The middle of your palm? The heel of your hand? Play with holding the foam only between your fingertips, then only between the heel of your hands and finally only between the middle of your palms. What differences does this make?

Pause and rest.

Take the foam and while holding it in these three different ways, begin to explore how much you can vary the pressure between your hands while not deforming the foam or dropping it. Of course while I say without deforming or dropping it, if we are really discovering what is possible it will most certainly drop or deform at times. Don’t be good at it, let yourself make mistakes and fail.

Pause and rest.

While playing with the different ways of holding the foam, with varying degrees of pressure, begin to move the foam throughout space. Move it wherever you possibly can and notice what accommodations do you need to make with the pressure between your hands. Also notice is it easier holding it from your palms, fingertips or heels of your hands? Which way of holding it allows you the greatest range of exploration through space? Take some minutes exploring each way of holding the foam, between your the heel of your hands, then your fingertips and finally the center of your palms

Pause and rest.

Now take the book and hold it along its edges, the long way, so there is the greatest distance between your hands. Find out how much pressure you need between your hands now. Does the difference in density and weight change what is required? Explore diminishing and increasing the pressure between your hands. Let the book fall at times, find out what is the least amount of force you can use and still be holding the book. (Of course by holding the book vertically, with one hand over the other it will take the least amount of force,
although most of the weight will be in one hand. What is the least amount of force with your hands parallel to the floor?)

Pause and rest.

Again take the book between your hands and observe what part of your hands do you hold it with. Fingertips, heel of hand, palm? Experiment with the different ways of holding it. Which way allows you to feel you most securely ‘have’ the book?

Pause and rest.

With the book between your hands explore holding it in different ways while varying the amount of pressure between your hands. Which way allows the least amount of force?

Pause and rest.

Continue playing with different ways of holding the book, with different amounts of pressure, and also start moving the book through space. Move it and yourself all over. Find out where in space is it difficult to maintain your grip. As with the foam, don’t do it perfectly, don’t stay safe. Find out where the edge of your ability is. The only way of discovering this is by losing your hold periodically.

Pause and rest.

Now we will continue our experiment in conjunction with your partner. Let yourself have as much fun as you can tolerate. If you get too serious drop the objects intentionally.

Take the cloth and hold between your hand and your partner’s hand. Observe the amount of force required. What is it like to only be able to control one side of the ‘holding’? With what part of your hand do you primarily hold it with?

Both of you, at the same time, play around with how you hold it. Shift between your palms, fingertips and heel of hand, spending some time exploring each way of holding it. Vary the pressure, without speaking about it, and find out how you follow the other person.

Pause and rest.

Begin to move the cloth through space, playing with the different grips and varying the pressure. Where can you and your partner move it to? Change the rate with which you move it. Does that affect how you hold it?
Pause and rest.

Now hold the foam, along its edges, between the two of you. Continue your exploration. Holding with different parts of your hands, varying the pressure. Note how different it is holding it between the heels of your hands, your fingertips and the center of your palms. Trying not to deform or drop the foam - which means making sure you deform or drop it sometimes, so as to know where the limits are.

Pause and rest.

Again, holding it with your partner, begin to move the foam through space. Where can you move it, where can’t you move it? Go faster and slower and find out how you stay connected to your partner. How does the rate affect your ‘hold’ on the foam? Can you discover, between you, how to move it to every place?

How is this different from holding the foam by yourself? What challenges does the foam present that wasn’t present with the cloth?

Pause and rest.

Now hold the book between you. Observe the initial differences between this and the cloth and the foam. Experiment with different degrees of pressure and with the different parts of your hands. Take the time to explore each way of holding it.

Pause and rest.

Begin to move the book through space. Which way of using your hand works best? Does it change as the orientation of the book changes? Is it easier or more difficult to stay connected to your partner than it was with the foam or cloth? Vary the rate you are moving the book.

Pause and rest.

Stand up and walk around the room. Is there anything in yourself you sense differently? Do your hands feel more awake to the world? As you move around, touch different objects, pick them up and see if your relationship with them has changed a little.

You have just spent some time inquiring into an aspect of ourselves we rarely look into: touch. Think of all of the objects you come in contact with during the day. How do you hold them? Is that determined by the shape and weight of the object, or by the habitual ways in which you use your hands? Consider when and with which
objects in your daily life might you experiment with these ideas. I encourage you to continue to investigate how you use your hands... but practice for a while before you try it with the good crystal!

In this second exploration you may make the (very common) assumption that the exercise is for the person who is actively doing it. The value of it is just as much or maybe even more for the person whom it is being done with. As I said earlier, when we change aspects of how we touch, we sometimes feel less. We don’t have the same landmarks to help us recognize our experience. So it is more than likely that the person who is being touched, the receiver, will be the one making distinctions. This means that it is important that both of you get to have a chance to participate in both roles to fully ‘get’ the lesson.

One person lies on their side, they may need a pillow under their head so they are comfortable. The other person sits behind them. All of the directions are for the person sitting behind, unless clearly stated otherwise in capital letters. The person sitting can read the questions that are for the person lying. I recommend that, other than the questions I ask you to pose out loud, you do this exercise in silence and hold your conversation until the end.

It is important that the person sitting continually check in with themselves as to how comfortable you are. Adjust your position as often as you need to so that you remain comfortable.

Begin by observing the person in front of you. What do you notice? Does anything stand out? Can you observe their breathing? Where do you see the movement of their breath? What can you notice about their shape? Are they leaning more forward or backward?

Take your hands and place them on their shoulder. How do you do this? What parts of your hand do feel are in contact with their shoulder? Fingertips, palm, heel of hand? Are you still comfortable?

Notice as you place your hands, do you have the desire to do something with them? Do you want to move them around and do something so as to let the person know you are there? Gently move your hands as you touch their shoulder, maybe like a gentle massage. Now do it more firmly. Now simply let your hands rest there. FOR THE PERSON LYING DOWN - WHAT DIFFERENCES DO YOU SENSE BETWEEN THE DIFFERENT WAYS OF BEING TOUCHED? MAYBE YOU HAVE A PREFERENCE FOR ONE. WHICH ONE ALLOWS YOU TO LISTEN TO YOURSELF MOST CLEARLY?

Pause and rest.

Repeat what you did above. Really take your time with each different way of touching. Imagine you are touching them in a way that they could more
easily listen to themselves through your touch. How does that affect your touch? Could you be more comfortable?

    Pause and rest.

    Now simply let your hands rest on their shoulder. Listen to them listening to themselves. Can your hands soften and conform more to their shape? How much pressure are you using? Could you diminish the pressure? WHAT IS IT LIKE TO BE LISTENED TO LIKE THIS?

    Pause and rest.

    Begin to explore touching different places, eventually exploring two or three other places, letting your hands conform to the person’s shape at each place. Go very slowly and take time at each place. Go slow enough so the person lying can listen and slowly enough so that you can sense your own hands, the parts of your hand that are touching, the pressure. You can listen to the movement of their breath. Are you still comfortable?

    Pause and rest.

    Bring your hands back to their shoulder. Slowly and very gently begin to move their shoulder forward and backward a very small amount. Move very slowly and listen for any changes in quality. I know it is a big temptation but do not try to see how far you can move them. Staying within this very small range move them only from your fingertips. Then only from the heels of your hands. Then from the palm of your hand. WHAT DIFFERENCES DO YOU SENSE BETWEEN THESE DIFFERENT WAYS OF BEING MOVED? WHAT IS YOUR PREFERENCE? WHICH ALLOWS YOU TO LISTEN TO YOURSELF MOST EASILY?

    Pause and rest.

    Do the same variations, touching them in the other places you explored earlier. Remember, only move them a small amount, don’t try to find their full range of motion, and stay comfortable.

    Pause and rest.

    Come back to their shoulder and this time pretend that moving them will be painful to them. How does this affect the qualities of your touch? CAN YOU SENSE ANY DIFFERENCE IN HOW YOU ARE BEING TOUCHED?

    Pause and rest.

    Again move their shoulder and this time pretend that the person lying in front of you is some very unusual and friendly creature you have discovered.
You are extremely curious and interested to see how this part moves and connects to the rest of them. How does this intention influence your touch? WHAT DO YOU SENSE FROM THIS KIND OF TOUCH?

Starting with their shoulder and slowly moving through the other places you have already touched, touch them as fully as you can with the intention of quietly listening to them so that they can listen to themselves.

When you are done move away from them and let them slowly some to standing. HOW DO YOU SENSE YOURSELF AS THE RESULT OF THIS EXPLORATION? DO THE TWO SIDES OF YOURSELF FEEL MORE DIFFERENT OR MORE THE SAME? ARE THERE SPECIFIC THINGS THAT STAND OUT OR IS THERE MORE OF A GENERALIZED DIFFERENCE IN HOW YOU FEEL YOURSELF?

Spend a few minutes discussing your experiences. Find out where you had very similar or very dissimilar experiences.

Switch roles and go through it again.

Over the next few days notice how do you handle objects, how tightly do you grip things, and how tightly do you need to grip them? What part or parts of your hands do you use? Do you mostly use your fingertips or your palms? Can you vary how you hold things? Notice the different qualities of touch you experience from others. When is it harder or softer than you would like? When do you more clearly feel ‘touched’ by someone? Ask others about the quality of your touch.
CHAPTER 13

THE PLEASURE OF CHALLENGE

“The ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of comfort and convenience, but where he stands at times of challenge and controversy.”

Martin Luther King, Jr

Challenge! For some this word evokes “OH NO!” for others it invites “LET'S GO GET 'EM!” and of course everyone else falls somewhere in between. Depending on the context, we can have very different responses to this idea. The timing in our life, how we feel about ourselves, and the importance of the outcome all contribute to how we feel when faced with a challenge.

Earlier, I said that in learning, there needs to be a certain degree of challenge so that we have the chance to go beyond ourselves. When that level is too high we enter into risk, when it is too low our attention begins to wane.

What happens when we are faced with a challenge? What feelings arise and what is our response to those feelings? How is it that some challenges seem fun and others seem scary? Do we really know what it is we do, when we are faced with these emotions?

Challenge is different from risk. In risk we are almost always faced with some degree of challenge. When we are challenged we are not always faced with a risk. In a risk something is at stake that we have the potential to lose. In a challenge the sense of potential loss is more of an internal event.

Our task here is to understand something about what we do when challenged. That is, what do we do when we face a challenge, how do we bring ourselves to it and how do we continue to proceed with our course of action in the face of it.
There are many components that make up our experience of challenge: physical, psychological, emotional, and attitudinal. All of these can manifest in thoughts, stories and states that move us through the challenge or pull us away.

Think of a time when you felt challenged. Can you recall how you felt and acted in a physical sense? Many of us will find that we have similar responses; holding our breath or shallow breathing; a general increase in the tone of our musculature, in preparation to act; a sense of focusing internally or through our eyes; or even a disbursement of our attention to consider the whole situation.

What did you feel emotionally in that moment? We can experience fear, excitement, happiness, curiosity, competitiveness, wanting to hide, wanting to be seen...

The thoughts we have can tell us things like “just do it!” “I’ll never be able to do it”, “I wish I could do it”, “I’m going to try to do it”, “Someone else could probably do it better”, “I’m going to do it the best I can”, “I’m going to do it better than anyone else” etc.

These moments can bring up memories of prior challenges, some in which we succeeded and some in which we failed. The memories stirred up can go beyond our feelings, thoughts and sensations and include the voices of our parents, an awareness of the lifelong consequences of that success or failure, and the implications for our potential futures.

I can recall when I was in my late teens and even into my 20’s that I was very shy around women. Not in the sense that I would avoid them - in fact I was quite social and had many female friends - but when I saw someone I was attracted to, I would get shy and inhibited to the point where I might simply take myself out of the situation. The thoughts that usually accompanied this withdrawal went like this: I would imagine finally getting up the courage to ask the girl out. I would begin to project forward in my mind from the first date and continue up to a monogamous relationship. I would envision vacations and dinners and magical moments. And then I would start to construct scenarios where things weren’t working out so well. And eventually I would get to the point where we would break up.

Now you have to realize that I was capable of doing all of this in about a minute and a half. And, of course, this would result in my never even approaching the woman of my immediate dreams.

This is what I did in this moment of challenge and it took me quite a long time to discover what was underlying these thoughts, feelings and action. One thing that became very clear was that I was taking myself out of the present moment and allowing my thoughts and feelings about the future to take over my experience.
We all do this to varying degrees at different times. Sometimes where we go to in our thoughts and feelings is useful and sometimes - as in my story - it doesn’t serve us. All of our responses are appropriate, although not in all contexts. We need to begin to discern which responses are appropriate for which contexts.

This chapter is called ‘The Pleasure of Challenge’, and for some it may seem like an oxymoron. I believe that this paradox can be the key to surmounting our dilemma. For a challenge to be pleasurable it has to arise in a milieu in which we are still able to take a “meta” response to it. By “meta” I mean that we can observe ourselves while we are still engaged in what we are doing. Seeing the bigger picture, while we are still involved in the smaller picture. This has been our practice in all of the movement lessons we have explored.

Pleasure is something that we seek (as is the avoidance of pain). It is not always present. But to have it as a guide and ally is one of the things that can help us continue to move forward.

When I was picked to work with Jerzy Growtowski I can clearly remember the impact of one particular thing he said to me in our interview. He said, “The purpose of our work is to find joy”. That stayed with me. It was important because he was asking me to agree to questions like, “If you are picked, you must be willing to go to the end!” When I heard that question (remember I was 20 years old) I thought does he mean death? No, probably not, but what was the end? It scared the hell out of me. And then I remembered, “The purpose of our work is to find joy”. It allowed me to say “YES.”

Pleasure, joy, well being, feeling good, being happy, being comfortable, enjoying ourselves, smiling, laughing and just having a good time is what underlies and motivates most of our actions. It is not a constant state. As my Aunt Flo, in her inimitable wisdom once said to me, “Happiness is a moment. If you put enough of those moments together you’ve had a pretty good life.”

This is what we are looking for; moments. And in looking for these moments we must understand the other moments, the ones we don’t like so much.

Being creative doesn’t mean we need to be or feel challenged. But at some point in our creative process we will encounter it. At that moment it won’t work to say, “Oh yeah I’m feeling challenged. Now feel pleasure. No, pleasure, damn it. I said feel pleasure!” Our first step is to identify what we mean when we say “I feel challenged”. A central challenge in the creative process is to stay with what is going on and not trying to get to someplace else.

The acceptance or acknowledgement of where we are, as much as we may resist it, is the only place from where can come to understand what we are doing and how we are doing it, and it is the only way we can come to do something better or moving forward. Clearly identifying what is occurring is all that we need to do.
Once we have named what we are doing, we shift how we interact with the present moment.

For example, I was attempting to unknot a friend’s delicate necklace. I’m usually good at this kind of thing so I already brought a certain level of expectation to it. Since I knew I was an expert at this, I just went for it. But it was more of a challenge than I had anticipated. I soon found myself holding my breath, scrunching my shoulders up around my neck, and thinking, “it’s too tangled, we’ll probably have to break it”. When my vision started to blur, I caught myself. It made me laugh. Here I was getting more and more frustrated, over what, a necklace I couldn’t unknot? At that moment I was faced with maintaining my frustration or accepting that I was stuck. Some may consider these two states to be the same, but in fact they aren’t.

Accepting that I was stuck was a realization that allowed me to shift in my approach and attitude, which allowed me to interact with my dilemma in a different way. I slowed down and pondered the knots more. I started from different places and turned it so as to get new perspectives. If I started to feel frustrated I would pause and wait until I could interact with the necklace in a more reasonable way.

This leads us to the source of our difficulty with challenge. When challenged, we tend to remain fixed on the same path, even though it is clearly not working. Instead of backing off a bit, it is the moment when we charge forward. It is often the place where we break the necklace.

Let’s look at some strategies that can help us when the level of challenge begins to move us further away from our experience of pleasure. Once we have become cognizant of what we are doing that is not working:

- We can pause and stop for a bit.
- We can name or identify our immediate experience without judging it.
- We can slow down what we are doing.
- We can look for another perspective, either by moving ourselves in space or by moving the object in space.
- We can shift our attention to a different, maybe even to a seemingly unrelated, place.
- We can begin again from a different place.
- We can shift our expectation both in time and outcome.
- We can shift how we initiate what we are doing.
- We can stay more observant of what we are doing physically with ourselves i.e. holding our breath, tensing our muscles, and ask if this is contributing to our task at hand.
- We can shift our position and orientation to the task at hand.
- We can inquire into how important we have made this task and how important it really is.
- We can give up, but not stop what we are doing.
These are some of the ways we can interrupt what we are doing.

Become aware of it and alter our relationship to it. The example of the necklace is fairly benign in that the success or failure of my unknotting it doesn’t have a great impact on my life (unless I’m the one who knotted it up to begin with, especially after I was told to be careful). Many things that challenge us may be more significant to our lives. They may make a difference in areas ranging from what job we can get, how much we can earn, all the way to our ability to survive in the woods. These kinds of things begin to blur the line between challenge and risk.

What remains constant throughout all of these moments is how we bring ourselves to the challenge. It may arise in varying degrees, but you can be pretty certain that the same phenomenon arises each time. What we do in these circumstances are the habits we bring to challenge, to learning and to our creative process.

In a way, we are back to the question of the means for creating more choices in what we do, which I discussed earlier in this book. We are simply investigating how we can introduce new ways of doing what we do.

We need challenge in our lives. It spurs us to grow. If we eliminated it we would not only never allow our potential to come to fruition, we would become dull and mundane. Our fear of failure (which is very close to our fear of success) is one of our greatest inhibitors in these moments. If we can allow ourselves to fail, not by quitting, but by giving up our notions of success, we can more fully participate in whatever we are facing.

In most of the previous movement explorations we primarily placed our attention on our sensations. We moved between the foreground and background of our attention and intention. We want now to add to this the naming or acknowledgment of what is occurring in the moment, rather than jumping ahead to where we want to be or where we think we should be. Let’s examine our experience in movement.
Read through the guidelines from Chapter 1 to remind yourself of things you may have forgotten.

*Lie on your back and scan through yourself. Observe what you feel, how you sense the floor. What thoughts or feelings do you have as you enter into this process?*

*Roll onto your stomach. Sense what this is like. Where do you feel the floor? Do you feel it pressing into you? Where are you lifted away from the floor? How is your head lying? Is it turned to the right, left or in the middle? Change how you have placed your head and sense what is it that made you choose the first way you did it. Does some level of challenge already present*
itself with these questions? If you are not sure of what you are doing or cannot distinguish differences, what gets evoked in you?

How is the rest of you lying? Where are your arms; alongside your torso, on either side of your head, or is one arm up and one arm down? How about your legs, are they both straight or is one drawn up to the side? Do your toes point in or out? Do these questions make you wonder about how you should be lying?

Turn your head so you are facing right; your left ear will be on the floor. Have both hands somewhere upward, on either side of your head. Bend your right leg so that the knee is closer to your right elbow, bent out to the side. The whole leg is resting on the floor, bent at the hip and the knee. In this position, lift your whole right leg away from the floor. The whole leg, not just the foot or the knee. If you can't do it, don't worry, we've now got a challenge! What is your response, internally, to not being able to do this? Simply listen and name what your experience is.

Throughout this process continue to ask questions that inquire into and name how you are responding to what your are doing.

Turn your head the other way, looking to the left with the right ear on the floor. Straighten your right leg and bend the left so your left knee is closer to your left elbow. Slowly lift this leg away from the floor. Is it easier, harder, or just as impossible?

Roll onto your back and rest.

Come onto your belly again. Turn your head to face right and draw your right leg up beside you as you had it earlier. Place your right hand on top of your left and place them both under your head. Slowly begin to lift your right hand and your head away from the floor and back again. Start with a small movement. Lift the entire arm, including the elbow. As you do this sense what happens in your back. Notice the trajectory your head and arm move through. Observe how and where the pressure changes between yourself and the floor.

Pause and rest on your front. When you rest like this you can put your head, arms and legs any way that feels comfortable for you.

Come back to the same position, right leg out to the side and change over your hands so the left is on top of the right. Begin to lift your left arm and head at the same time. How does this change the trajectory of your head?; how your back is engaged?; where and how you press into the floor?

Take your arms from under your head and place them somewhere alongside your head. Again, begin to lift your whole right leg. Is it any
different? Turn your head the other way and change over your legs. Lift the whole left leg and find out what it is like. If it is different, how do you respond to that? If it is the same or harder, what do you tell yourself?

Roll onto your back and pause.

Roll onto your belly with your right leg drawn up and out to the side. Place your left hand on top of the right and slowly turn your head so you are looking to the left, right ear resting on your hands. Gently begin to lift your left arm and head. Go slowly, as this places a much greater demand on your neck. Listen to changes in pressure against the floor and how you involve the rest of yourself.

Rest on your belly.

Come back to the same position, right leg drawn up, head facing to the left. Now put your right hand on top of the left hand and place both under your head. Slowly lift your right arm and head at the same time. Again observe differences in yourself.

Turn your head back to the right, place your hands alongside your head and again lift your right leg. What is it like now? Change over your head and legs and lift the left leg. How do you do this now?

Rest on your back.

Come onto your belly again. Turn your head to face left and draw your left leg up on the floor. Place your left hand on top of your right and place them both under your head. Slowly begin to lift your left hand and your head away from the floor and back again. Start with a small movement. Lift the entire arm, including the elbow. As you do this sense what happens in your back. Notice the trajectory your head and arm move through. Observe how and where the pressure changes between yourself and the floor.

Pause and rest on your front. When you rest like this you can put your head, arms and legs anyway that feels comfortable for you.

Come back to the same position, left leg out to the side, and change over your hands so the right is on top of the left. Begin to lift your right arm and head at the same time. How does this change the trajectory of your head?; how your back is engaged?; where and how you press into the floor?

Take your arms from under your head and place them somewhere alongside your head. Again, begin to lift your whole left leg. Is it any different? Turn your head the other way and change over your legs. Lift the whole right
leg and find out what it is like. If it is different, how do you respond to that? If it is the same or harder, what do you tell yourself?

Roll onto your back and pause.

Roll onto your belly with your left leg drawn up and out to the side. Place your right hand on top of the left and slowly turn your head so you are looking to the right, left ear resting on your hands. Gently begin to lift your right arm and head. Go slowly, as this places a much greater demand on your neck. Listen to changes in pressure against the floor and how you involve the rest of yourself.

Rest on your belly.

Come back to the same position, left leg drawn up, head facing to the right. Now put your left hand on top of the right hand and place both under your head. Slowly lift your left arm and head at the same time, again observing differences in yourself.

Turn your head back to the left, place your hands alongside your head and again lift your left leg. What is it like now? Change over your head and legs and lift the right leg. How do you do this now?

Rest on your back.

Roll to your front. Draw your right leg up, head to the right, right hand on top of the left and both hands under your head. Begin to press your right leg into the floor and release it many times. What part of your leg presses into the ground? Is it more the knee or the foot? Can you press the whole leg evenly into the floor? What happens in the rest of yourself when you press this leg? Does some other part or parts lift or diminish in their contact with the floor?

Stop pressing the leg and begin to lift the leg from the floor. What is this like now?

Rest on your front.

Change your legs over so the left is drawn up and the right is straight. Turn your head so you are looking to the left. Begin to press your left leg into the floor and release it. Do you do it differently on this side? Slowly develop your ability to press the whole leg into the floor. In the rest of yourself, what lifts in response to the pressing of the leg? Stop pressing and lift the left leg. Is it improving?

Rest on your back.
Come to your belly. Head turned to the right, right leg drawn up. Begin to press and release your straight left leg into the floor and feel what lifts in response. What happens in your right leg? Press your left leg while lifting the right leg. Can you begin to actually lift your leg a little now? Play with varying the trajectory of your right leg. Does that make any difference?

Change over your legs and turn your head to face the left. Press and release your straight right leg into the floor. What happens in the rest of yourself? Continue pressing the right leg and at the same time lift the leg. Can it come free of the floor now? Is there another path your left leg could take? Does that make a difference in how it lifts?

Rest on your back.

One more time come to your front, head facing right, right leg drawn up, and play around with lifting your right leg. Experiment with pressing other parts of yourself into the floor to help you lift the leg. Let yourself roll a little to the left as you do it.

Change over your head and legs and explore this on the other side, pressing parts of yourself and rolling a little to the right. What kind of conversation are you having with yourself now? Whether you can lift either of your legs now or not, observe what thoughts and feelings you have. Do they contribute or detract from what you are doing? Can you name them more easily? Are they familiar and recognizable as what you do in other circumstances?

Roll onto your back and sense yourself. What is different?

Come to standing and observe how you feel and move.

As you go through your week notice if there are different degrees of challenge you encounter. How do you respond to them? What are the thoughts, feelings and sensations that accompany these moments? Can you recognize any of the strategies you bring to a challenge? Begin to explore other strategies in your moments of challenge.
CHAPTER 14

EXPRESSION, COMMUNICATION & LISTENING

“To listen well is as powerful a means of communication and influence as to talk well”
John Marshall

Creativity has always been and is one of the major means we have to express ourselves. The act of creating something, whether it is a work of art, decorating a room or formatting a page, has as its basis an action and intent that is directly connected to one’s self.

All along we have been exploring the direct and indirect correlation between knowing ourselves and bringing this knowledge into our lives and into our creative processes. To express ourselves in any domain is, in some way, to show ourselves. That which we create is a representation of who we are, how we think and what sense we make of the world. Whether we intend it to be or not, it is an intimate event.

Expression, although not always intended to be shared, when it is shared with others, takes on the form of a communication. When received by another it can take on new meaning. Of course the question then becomes who gives it meaning? The creator, or the one observing or participating in the creation?

One of the pitfalls we often run into when we attempt to create something is that we do it for praise, approval and confirmation. There isn’t anything inherently wrong with these motivations but they do take us to a different perspective in our process. The other side of the coin is when we become secretive, silent and protective of what we create as if it is something precious that needs to be shielded.

How do we stay in a process that is personal and at the same time represents some form of communication? This is a fine edge to balance on. It is easy to continually seek other’s opinions throughout each moment of our process. It is just
as easy to stay hidden from others until the idea of sharing it with anyone becomes daunting.

Answering these kinds of questions is extremely individual and obviously what works for one person won’t work for another. Even within one individual’s creations how they interact with the world may vary.

What we can say is that whatever we create exists within a larger context than the moment we created it in. Just as it is true that we evolve and develop as human beings in relationship to the environment we live in, our creations develop in the context of our lives. Our lives, and thus the context in which we create, include other people (unless your closet is filled with things you have kept concealed from everyone all these years). To acknowledge this is the first step towards diffusing the power that the world holds over us. Our intent is not to ignore the world, change it or eliminate it, but to recognize how we function within this relationship.

A most curious occurrence I have observed over many years is how actors respond to praise after a performance. You can tell them how wonderful they were, how brilliantly they performed, and how much they moved you, and they will smile, loving every minute of the applause being showered on them. And often (not always, but really often) they will return to you some time later and say, “What did you really think?”

It is a bizarre dilemma to face. We want so much to gain the recognition of others and yet when we receive it we often don’t believe it. Maybe this has to do with the insincerity that is too often present in people’s compliments. Maybe it has to do with the feeling one has, that “I know I could do better”, that “this wasn’t my best (at this time)”. Whatever the basis of this dilemma is, we need to find ways of making it beneficial to our process.

Usually we have a circle of people we are willing to share ourselves with. The people who we trust, whose opinion we value, and who we feel safe enough to let ourselves be a bit exposed to. I know that when I write an article or important letter, there a few people I almost always run it by first. I want the feedback to find out if I’m making any sense, if others will understand what I am putting forth.

The degree of safety in these relationships is paramount. But this is just the first circle that surrounds us. It spirals outward until there are people we barely know or have never even met before telling us what they think. And this doesn’t just consist of compliments; it includes advice, what we should change and what would work better. Well who asked!?  

The fact is that when we put something out there, someone will see it. We need to be brave in the moment we become visible to the world. We need to be able
to sustain our internal sense of "self" in light of all that transpires around us. We need to let the world in without letting it diminish us.

Many years ago I returned from a trip to Australia and had developed what seemed like a small fungus on my leg. Cream kept it at bay, but it finally turned into a bad case of psoriasis (luckily I don't have it any more). At the time when it was bad I went to see a homeopath for treatment. If you have ever been to a homeopath you know that they ask a lot of questions. Not just about the symptoms you are presenting, but about all aspects of your life.

Well, at the time I was thinking of leaving my private practice and going into business with my brother. He had a new invention and it sure seemed like a good idea. I was telling the homeopath about it and he asked me an interesting question. He said "What is the best that can happen and what is the worst that can happen?" I pretty quickly replied that the best that could happen was that in a couple of years we would sell the company and we would be rich. "And the worst?" he inquired. I started to say that we would end up not talking to each other and I caught myself and said no, that's not the worst. The worst would be that one of us would kill the other. He said "Yes, that's the worst."

Well, needless to say, I didn't go into business with my brother. He is doing very well with it, by the way. But through this conversation I gained a tremendous insight into how I could view and review the events in my life and gain a better perspective on them.

Think about it. If someone hates something you have created, what is the worst that can happen? It may feel like the criticism is killing you, but it won't. You may not like it, but you're still alive and you can move onto something else. Maybe not immediately, but over time things tend to even out.

Of course the challenging balance is, as I said earlier, whether we can remain available and open to the world, not so open that it defeats us, and not so closed that we don't let anything in.

If we consider creative expression from the point of view of a "communication", we may shed a little more light on the subject. However, what do we mean by or understand about communication? Certainly the lack of communication is one of the major causes of breakdowns in every kind of relationship.

The Random House Dictionary defines "communicate "as follows. 1. To impart knowledge of; make known. 2. To give to another; impart; transmit. 3. To administer the Eucharist to. 4. To share in or partake (archaic). 5. To give or interchange thoughts, feelings, information or the like by writing, speaking, etc. 6. To express thoughts feelings or information easily or effectively. 7. To be joined or connected. 8. To partake of the Eucharist. 9. To take part or participate (obsolete).
I find this definition fascinating. Almost in its entirety the description of communicate seems to be a one way road. One of giving, imparting, etc., or one of receiving. Of course this makes sense in a linear way of thinking. But it lacks a certain dimension that is essential to an effective communication.

A communication is a dynamic event. One that is very hard to break down without it seeming like a process in which we take turns. Let’s look at speaking as an example. If one is speaking it implies that there is a listener and that they are listening. I speak, you listen. You speak, I listen. Our conversation would consist of taking turns until we have satisfied our intention to communicate something.

Well, easier said than done. More often than not when we speak our intention and attention is fixed on getting our point across. Not a terrible thing, but it presents a situation where what we have to say becomes more important than whether or not it is being heard. Rather than make this wrong, can we discover a way to interrupt this so as to have more real and fulfilling communications?

A satisfying communication, in speaking, is a continuous loop of speaking, listening, speaking, listening and so on. It may seem as if this is a process of alternating, when in fact speaking and listening need to occur simultaneously. When I am giving a talk, as I am speaking I am listening for a response. I am attentive to the reaction I am getting, attentive to how people are listening. If I see people checking their watches, starting to doze off, or chatting with each other, I have to shift something in my conversation to regain their attention. The words I am attempting to get across are of substance only when they are heard by those listening. This is not an easy thing to track with one person let alone a group of people.

And when listening we are often already internally answering or responding. Again, this is not reprehensible, but at the moment when we start to do this we have stopped listening. When I am listening, I need to observe my internal conversations and be able to put them on hold until the person I am listening to has finished speaking. The question becomes “how do I interrupt my interruptions?”

When someone says, “I really felt heard by you”, what do they mean? When someone says, “you’re not listening”, how do they know that? When I say, “I don’t know what you are talking about”, what is happening? It is felt; it is an experience we have. When I am speaking to someone I can sense a different tone in their presence if they are really listening compared to when I have only part of their attention. The same is true when I am really listening to someone while they are talking.

All of this takes place within the domain of our thoughts, feelings and sensations. To be able to track our internal dialogues and our internal feelings and
sensations while we are listening offers the means to shift our attention more fully to the person we are listening to.

Identifying where I am at in moments of speaking and/or listening is what is necessary to bring myself more fully to the communication. If I am distracted by something else, I may not be able to do anything about this, but I can let someone know. In the same way if I perceive someone as being distracted, I can ask him or her if this is the case. Of course they may deny it, but at that moment I have the choice to say I’d rather talk about this at another time.

It may seem like we have gone off on a tangent or lost track of the discussion we began this chapter with. But have we? In the earlier chapter on touch I explored the fundamental significance of touch to how we interact with the world. The same is true here. The way in which we communicate is a huge part of what allows us to express ourselves and take in what the world presents to us. As with touch, a shift in how we communicate resonates through our whole life. It is the means to having more choices. As discussed throughout this book, the more choices we have available to us, the greater our potential to be more creative.

Overall I would say the place where most of us can improve is in our capacity for listening. Not just from the perspective of having better ears, but from embodying the experience of listening. Up till now we inquired into this in listening to ourselves. We also need to be able to do it in relation to others. We can begin to observe the different sensations that occur within us when we feel that we are deeply listening or being listened to. And we need to compare these sensations to the ones that we have when we don’t feel heard or when we are not giving our attention to someone.

We have all been in conversations where someone is speaking to us and we are chomping at the bit to respond, or when we are speaking and we can feel another’s urgency. We also know the experience of thinking about something other than the conversation at hand or seeing someone’s eyes glaze over as we talk to them. We can feel ourselves surging forward or sinking back. Holding our breath, taking deeper breaths or breathing more shallowly. We begin to fidget or we feel constrained.

We also know the feeling of dropping into ourselves. Of settling in and breathing more easily. Of being more interested and patient. Of feeling heard, of being understood. How can we invite this more and more into our lives?

Rather than look for the change to appear in our speaking or listening itself, we can examine our sensations in these moments and produce shifts through our movement to elicit different sensations. For example, if I am speaking with someone and they appear distracted, I may find myself talking faster. I might feel myself moving closer towards them. I may start speaking louder. All of these strategies may or may not get their attention. If it works, fine. If not, then other choices
present themselves. Of course I must first be able to identify what I am doing. Once I have done this I can alter my actions and find out if there is a response. I say find out because we don’t know what the outcome of an action will be until we do it.

When I was in college I remember conversations where we stayed up all night talking. They were great, intense and full of meaning. I discovered something interesting way back then, and while it wasn’t always true, for the most part it was. I found that while in a conversation with someone, if I changed my physical orientation to them, the conversation shifted. Specifically, if I placed myself lower than them - for example, if we were both sitting on chairs and I moved and sat on the floor - I found our talk became more intimate. I can’t say if the intimacy was enhanced in them or in me, but it definitely changed. In the same way, if I was in an argument with someone, if I increased the distance between us, the tone of the argument seemed to diminish in intensity.

I was doing this spontaneously and became aware of it over time. What it did was wake me up to the moment I was in. Rather than respond as I always did, habitually and even compulsively, I began to have a choice. I began to have volition, to some degree, in my interactions with others. Overall it affected a big change in how I listened, and how I felt I was being heard.

Today, more often than not, it is my breathing that informs me in these moments. I can sense when my breath is shallower, when I am breathing less in my belly. When I sense this I usually become aware of how ungrounded I feel, less connected to the earth or to the surface I might be sitting on.

To produce any shift in these aspects of ourselves comes slowly. We need to, again, remind ourselves to be patient and accepting of ourselves especially in the moments when we are unsuccessful or get lost.

Let’s see if we can enhance our awareness of our breathing as a means to utilizing our breath as a barometer of our experience. This is not about learning the “right” way to breathe. Our intention is to discover something about our breath and how this can serve us in our expression, our communication and our listening.

Go slowly and move easily throughout making sure you are not straining or efforting.

**Please lie on your back and observe how you contact the ground. What stands out to you today? If you are more comfortable with your feet standing, place them standing.**

**Begin to observe your breathing, doing your best not to change it or interfere with it.**
How do you breath? Is it more through your mouth or your nose or both? Where does it move you? Is it more in your chest or your belly? Does it move your ribs forwards, out to the sides, or in your back towards the floor?

Begin to inhale, filling up your chest with air. Gently let it expand as you take in air. Don’t force it or go to the limit, simply let it inflate as you breath in. Notice as you fill your chest, does your back lift from the floor? Can you let your back remain in contact with the floor while you breathe in, without efforting?

The next time you fill your chest with air, hold your breath and see if, while continuing to hold your breath, you can move the air down into your belly and then back into your chest and back into your belly. Gently moving it back and forth until you need to take in a breath. Go slowly as this is an unusual movement for most of us. Let the air, on the held breath, move back and forth as many times as is comfortable.

Pause and rest. Let your breathing resume to normal.

Again, fill up your chest with air on the inhalation, hold your breath and then move it from your chest to your belly to your chest. Back and forth, letting this ability slowly develop. After a minute or two of doing this see if you can begin to move the air more quickly between your chest and your belly. How fast can you do it without disrupting it? Go quickly without hurrying.

Rest again.

The next time you inhale, fill up your chest with air and then on the exhalation begin to push out your belly. On each inhalation you’ll expand your chest and on each exhalation you’ll expand your belly. Let the breath be of a normal and easy size and duration. Don’t go to your limit. See if you can find yourself breathing in a more normal fashion as you do this.

Rest.

Come back to the same kind of breathing, inhaling and filling up your chest and exhaling filling up your belly. As you do this, on the exhalation also begin to push down towards the floor of your pelvis, as if your were pushing down into the top of your legs. It is a similar feeling to when you push when you are going to the bathroom. Let this sensation develop along with the expansion of your belly on the exhalation. Then again expand your chest on the inhalation. We’ll call this seesaw breathing.

Rest and observe how you sense yourself on the floor. What is your breathing like now?

Slowly roll onto your right side. Begin the seesaw breathing and sense if
your can feel any difference in it in this position. Can you feel the influence of gravity moving your chest and belly any differently? Continue to simply inhale while filling up your chest with air and exhaling while expanding your belly and pushing down towards your pelvic floor. Do this for a while.

Slowly roll onto your left side and continue the see-saw breathing. Is it any different on this side compared to the other? Breath like this for a while, easily observing your sensations.

Roll onto your back and rest. Listen to how you feel now.

Slowly roll onto your belly with your legs long. Notice which way you choose to put your head; to the left, the right or in the middle. Without changing anything, observe your breathing in this position. Begin to do the seesaw breathing. How is it different from the previous positions? Does having the floor as a feedback device inform you in a different way? Can you find a way of doing this seesaw breathing easily in this position? Practice for a while.

Rest on your belly. You can change the position of your head and legs if you would like.

With your legs long slowly turn your head so you are looking to the right, your left cheek will be on the floor. Begin the seesaw breathing and this time have the idea that as you inhale you will expand the right side of your chest and as you exhale you will expand the left side of your belly. Both sides may still be participating but you have the intention to move your breath in this diagonal fashion. Breath like this for a while.

Pause and rest on belly with your head and legs however you would like.

With your legs long, turn your head to the left so your right cheek is on the floor. Begin the seesaw breathing, this time filling up the left side of your chest on the inhalation and pushing out the right side of your belly on the exhalation. Is it easier or harder or the same on this diagonal as it was on the other? Stay with this for a while.

Pause again on your belly with your legs and head arranged however you feel comfortable.

With your legs long, place your head wherever you would like it to be, probably as you had it when you first came onto your belly. Observe what your breathing is like now. Begin to do the see-saw breathing, letting your whole chest expand as you inhale and your whole belly expand as you exhale and still pushing down towards the pelvic floor as you expand your belly. Is it clearer than when you first did it on your belly?
Roll onto your back and rest. Sense how you feel, how you breathe.

Gently begin to do the seesaw breathing and discover what it is like now. Is it easier? Clearer?

Slowly bring yourself up so you are supported on your forearms and elbows. Your legs are long and your eyes are towards the horizon. Begin the seesaw breathing. How is it altered in this position? Does the position make one aspect of the breathing easier than the others? Do you feel different parts of yourself becoming engaged? Stay with this for a minute.

Bring yourself up to sitting with the soles of your feet comfortably touching each other, while leaning back on your hands. Do the seesaw breathing and find out what it is like in this position. Has anything changed?

Rest on your back.

One last time, begin the seesaw breathing and sense how you do it now. Is it more fluid? More accessible? On the next inhalation hold your breath and while continuing to hold your breath, begin to move the air from your chest, down into your belly, back up to your chest and so on. How does this compare to the beginning? Can you move the air more quickly between your chest and belly? Is this easier than before?

Lying on your back, simply observe how you feel now compared to when you first lay down. Do you contact the floor differently? Does your breathing have a different quality compared to when you started?


Walk around and listen to how you feel. Can you gently find the seesaw breathing while walking?

Leave it, and let yourself breath naturally.

This is a lesson you my want to return to periodically. Breathing, since we do it all of the time, is not the easiest thing to influence. Let your awareness of how you breath develop over time.

Throughout your day, periodically check into how you are breathing. Initially, observe your breath in your regular moments to begin to get familiar with it. Over time, observe it when you are in a conversation. Do you breathe differently
with different people? Is your breathing easier with some people, more challenged when you are around others? How can you influence your experiences in a conversation either by altering your breathing or changing the proximity to the person you are conversing with?
CHAPTER 15

A SKELETON IN OUR PROCESS

“We tend to think of the skeleton as an inert erector set that holds us up and doesn't do much else. That's not true.” Karl L. Insogna

Throughout all of the previous chapters there have been two underlying meta concepts that I have waited until now to make explicit. Why wait until now? Because my idea was to create the circumstances for you to have more experience in these realms before giving words to them. Even after reading this chapter, whether you recognize these ideas or not, I recommend that you go through the embodied movement explorations in the previous chapters again, in light of what you read here.

Lingering in the unknown

While we have spent some of our time together talking about not knowing, each embodied exploration you participated in was another opportunity to investigate this. How? Each movement lesson is designed so that you don’t know where you will end up. Each one is a chance to linger in ‘not knowing’. They provide a great opportunity for learning, because the consequences of not knowing in this context are less significant than in our real or everyday lives.

The movement explorations you have done provided the finite time constraint of about 30-45 minutes, during which time you could inhabit, tolerate and experience yourself without having to know anything. Without having to know where you were going. Without having to do anything correctly, well or right. It is likely that many of you didn’t exactly linger in a blissful state, enjoying the absence of these things. It is more likely that you discovered some of the aspects of yourself that look for or crave knowing, that need to know where you are going and be correct.
What, hopefully, has been afforded you here, is the chance to spend a little bit of time ‘practicing yourself’ in this state. Getting to know features of who you are and how you respond in situations that we usually stay away from.

However, all of this has been developed in the context of movement and sensation, rather than simply dealing with words, ideas and our psychology.

I believe our culture has lost a great deal of understanding about being in a process and patiently, tolerantly and curiously waiting or watching as the outcome evolves. ‘Process’ is a big topic right now, but it is still viewed in relation to the outcome that is to be achieved. We are happy to ‘go through the process’, as long as we come out the other end exactly where we want. What is missing is the willingness to give up some of the constraints of time, to give up some of the control and to really discover what is not yet known.

The funny thing about this is on some level we all know it is impossible to know exactly where we will end up. We have no idea what will happen in the next minute, five minutes or the next 5 years.

We now live in a society where we can control the hours when we work and play. Where we can artificially construct environments from beaches to snow. Where we can move to a foreign land thousands of miles away, in a few hours. I don’t think this needs to be judged or changed. But what needs to be added to it is a development of our inner world. We can discover that the sense of infinity we envision when we think of outer space is equally infinite and great when we consider our inner space. We need to move back and forth from our inner world to our outer world until there is a greater balance and accessibility between the two.

It is not enough to know this; this is something we need to practice outside of the context of our everyday lives. We need to deliberately create time for internal investigations and rekindle the parts of ourselves that have been ignored for too long.

I, and many others, have found that the time I have spent rolling around on the floor, exploring my sensations and discovering different qualities in myself has allowed for the development of a different appreciation of myself, of others and the world I live in. It has not always been easy and comfortable, but it has always held my interest.

This book has provided a kind of ‘waking up’ to ourselves. The chapters and movement explorations have built on each other and can be utilized in many different ways.
Finding our skeleton

The second meta concept that has been occurring throughout this book has been the unveiling of our skeleton.

Moshe Feldenkrais gave a lecture in my training stating that the next stage in human evolution would be the development of a ‘skeletal consciousness’. I remember when he initially said this I was laughing a lot because, for some reason, the whole idea seemed funny to me. It was not something I took very seriously. Some years later when I had the opportunity to hear his lecture again on videotape I was astounded by what he was saying.

I think my initial response was due to the lack of understanding I had both in my cognitive appreciation and in my experience of myself. To develop a skeletal consciousness takes time. To orient to ourselves in this way does not seem to come spontaneously to us. Maybe over time, as our species develops it will become innate, but until then we need some guidance.

We need to have some understanding of what our skeleton is. What are its functions, how can we come to perceive it more clearly and what can this understanding afford us in our lives?

For most of us a skeleton represents death; something to be frightened of; something to be kept in the closet until Halloween night. The phrase ‘having a skeleton in the closet’ speaks deeply to how hidden we think we need to keep it. It is funny to me simply because our skeleton IS something that is hidden from us. Usually it is only observed after death or in severe starvation. It is also utilized in art and religion, but in these contexts it is not represented as part of our everyday lives. I love it when someone with a child visits one of my Feldenkrais Training Programs, where we have a life-sized skeleton. The child will go up to it and start playing with it with a wonderful sense of curiosity. And not always, but sometimes, the parent will pull them away from it, as if it is something dangerous, something that can contaminate them.

When I was camel trekking in the Tar desert in western India, I was at a very remote village that consisted of mud huts with no electricity or running water. At the time I was about the 12th western man to ever to visit this village. I’m talking about remote! The toilets were the vast expanse of desert to either side of the village. The men’s toilet was the desert to one side of the village and the women’s toilet was the desert to the other side of the village. Two of the women I had been traveling with had gone out to the ‘lady’s room’ and came back carrying some large bones they had found. The people of the village freaked out. They ran towards them, screaming, waving their arms, indicating that they wanted them to drop the bones and not bring them into the village. Both women were compelled to participate in a serious session of washing their hands. Later, I found out that to the
people of this village, bringing bones into the village was bringing death into it. Quite a serious infraction of their beliefs.

We haven’t progressed much further than this today in what is considered to be the developed world. Our beliefs are more influenced by the religion of science, but deep down the sight of a skeleton or bones still elicits some kind of primal fear in us.

Let’s look at some of the main functions of our skeleton. Its main purpose is to bear weight and transmit force. Imagine trying to stand without a skeleton, or pushing a door open without your bones. We rarely consider its value to us unless we injure it or lose some part of it. And from the point of view of our evolution, its formation is in a large part due to the fact that we exist within the field of gravity. Just like fish at the bottom of the sea who evolved without eyes because there is no light there, outside of the field of gravity our skeleton doesn’t hold the same value. This has been shown to us through the space travel our astronauts have done. When they are outside of gravity they experience a significant degree of bone loss that is difficult to regain.

Our skeleton is not completely formed when we are born nor even as we continue to grow. Our skeleton is something that develops in relation to its use. The more compression it experiences, the denser and stronger it gets. A bone in a limb that is never used is thinner, straighter and weaker. For example, our hip joints are initially more cartilage than bone. The shape of the hip joint develops in relation to its use. In India and China people squat, whereas this is less frequent in the western world. Therefore, if you looked at the skeleton of someone who grew up in India or China and compared it to one that belonged to someone who lived in America or Europe, you would find that you could tell which skeleton was from which country by what the hip joints were able to do. The actual shape of our skeleton is determined by its use.

When we speak of our skeleton we need to include it in the larger context of where it exists and functions. The living skeleton is part of a complex system of muscles, nervous system, circulatory system, digestive system, etc., etc. That is, it exists and functions as part of a whole. It is not independent, although it is under utilized.

For our purposes I don’t want to go into too much detail about all of these relationships. However, we do need to consider our skeleton in relation to our muscles and our nervous system. A simple way of looking at it, as I stated earlier, is that the skeleton’s main functions are to bear weight and transmit forces. But it cannot move by itself. It is the muscles that move our skeleton. And it is our nervous system that activates our musculature into action. Of course, the self (wherever that is) is what is generating the activity in our nervous system and this is within the context of an environment (the world).
So when we consider the effects of being more skeletal or developing a skeletal consciousness, we do so in the context of this larger picture of ourselves.

Almost all of the embodied movement experiences you have been exploring in previous chapters have within them the underlying principle of developing a better skeletal use of yourself. I don’t imagine that this is overtly apparent, largely because it is not so easy to sense our skeleton. The changes we feel during these explorations are sensed more through our musculature. Any differences you may have felt from the various explorations you have done in this book were known to you through your ability to compare the before and after states in yourself. When making these comparisons, while they were mostly felt in relation to your muscles, they were always made within the context of the whole of yourself.

Another way of explaining how you have become more skeletal by working through this book is by the feelings of increased fluidity, lightness and mobility you may have felt as a result of the movement lessons. When you utilize your skeleton more fully, your muscles necessarily do less work. In effect, when you feel free and light, what you are feeling is a decrease in the amount of muscular activity you are doing compared to what you habitually do.

This discovery also holds fascinating potential for us neurologically. When our musculature does the job of the skeleton by working more than it needs to, this is a neurological event as well. When the muscles are working harder our brains are working harder. Neural impulses need to be continually sent out to maintain our posture, our actions and the tone of the musculature. When we become more skeletal, this neural activity can diminish.

Maybe you have heard the theory that we only use 10-12% of our brain and that someone like Einstein used 12-15% of his brain and this is what made him a genius. Dr. Feldenkrais had an interesting view on this perspective of our neural functioning. His idea was that what limits us, is not that we only use 10-12% of our brain, but that we use the same 10-12% over and over again. Someone like Einstein also only used 10-12% at any one time, but he had a greater range over which that 10-12% could be distributed. Feldenkrais’ idea was also that the other 88-90% was used for inhibition. This large part of our brain is committed to creating a certain degree of invariance, maintaining the world in a constant and recognizable way, so that we can make sense out of our experience. An example of this is hallucinogenic drugs. One of the things they do is switch off the inhibitors in our nervous system. When this happens there is a flood of information, on all levels, and people have experiences that are beyond what they normally have. However, if you read the literature of people who have experimented with these kinds of drugs (people like Aldous Huxley and Ken Kesey) what they say is that they can’t function (go to work, drive a car) while in this altered state.

So what does all of this mean to us? Well, if our musculature is working less when we utilize our skeleton more fully, we come closer to that neutral state we
discussed in earlier chapters. From where we are, we are freer to move more easily, in more directions. There is more choice available to us, as well as the chance to be more spontaneous. Our intentions are more likely to be carried out in our actions. Our nervous system is relieved of some of its habitual activity and we have the possibility of utilizing greater areas of our brain.

Now this is theory, and while it may be of interest, what is of greater value is how we experience it. Consider for a moment the quality of how you feel when you are on a wonderful vacation. Not the kind where you are trying to see 8 countries in 7 days. The kind where you have no commitments to anything except figuring out when and where to eat, going for a swim or hike, maybe doing a little shopping (a place where it is amazingly affordable), reading a book in a hammock, easily reacquainting yourself with your partner, whatever it is that makes it a vacation for you. For most of us this experience is very different from our everyday lives, the hassles of work, traffic, bills, etc. But a significant part of what allows us to experience these worlds as different is the quality of sensation we feel within ourselves. When we have fewer stresses, when we are simply enjoying ourselves more, our musculature takes on a different tone. Unknowingly, we become more skeletal. Unfortunately, just as unknowingly, our musculature goes back to its habitual state of effort when we return to our everyday life.

Does it have to always be like this? Well, yes. But it isn’t such bad news. If our muscle tonus was the same all the time, a vacation wouldn’t be a vacation. In terms of our sensing experience there would be nothing to distinguish it from work. But what if more of the qualities we experience on vacation were felt throughout our everyday life? Then, when we went on vacation, we could have an even richer experience of ourselves. We would be expanding the range and depth of how we recognize ourselves, and in doing so, improve the overall quality of our lives.

Another example of what being skeletal can feel like is through using a cane. If you have ever had the misfortune of having to use a cane, you know that, internally, you have a sense of the right place to put it on the ground so you can bear weight through it. This is a fascinating event. This stick becomes part of us, to the degree that we can utilize it as an additional limb that can support us and bear our weight. If we consider transferring this innate knowledge to the use of our legs we can discover something interesting.

Stand up and walk around and observe your sensations in walking. Now as you walk think of each leg as a cane. Think of where you would place it to best support you. Forget about the length of your stride or where you need to get to, simply listen for the feeling of support. Let the leg coming forward land someplace safe, rather than reaching. Slowly walk with this in mind and see if your walking takes on different qualities. Do you find that your muscles are working less hard? Do you feel a sense of lightness or ease in your walking?
This sense of having a skeleton, of taking weight through us can be a significant sustaining factor in our creativity. We know that in the creative process things can get dicey. The uncomfortable feelings, the confusion, the lack of motivation or inspiration are all difficult to tolerate. The idea that there is actually a part of ourselves that can bear the weight of the world, that can prevent us from being crushed by our feelings, that can be a sustaining support in difficult times can be a relief to our process.

In the most difficult times of my life, when I was emotionally devastated, I discovered that while I was completely miserable, I wasn’t crushed. I didn’t crumple and fold in on myself. What I felt most strongly was that I was internally supported. I had a skeleton. I certainly felt compressed, but I was able to continue to move forward in my life. My musculature was deeply affected by my misery but there was something else that could now ‘hold me up’.

There are other ways in which we get through difficult or even horrible times. One of the main ways is through the stories that we tell ourselves. The people who suffered the horrors of being in concentration camps during World War II are a good example of this. The people who endured these atrocities were not thinking of their skeletons. Whatever they could find that gave them faith or the belief that they could survive, was what carried them through.

God forbid any of us should ever suffer such an event, but the severity of this kind of experience either calls up our deepest resources or we die. In our everyday lives we are not usually faced with this degree of suffering. We still utilize stories but because it isn’t life or death, our stories change. Sometimes we believe them and sometimes we use them against ourselves. In our creative process we are not usually faced with the prospect of death. It may feel that way, it is not so in reality.

At those times, we need to be able to call on something more immediate, more concrete, something we can count on in spite of our emotional state. It is our skeleton that we can utilize in these moments. It is an unknown (until now) source of support, literally, that can continue to develop throughout our lives. However, as I stated above, the written word and concept is not enough. This idea only develops through our experience. Further, it takes time to develop a skeletal sense of ourselves. Each time we practice one of the embodied explorations in this book or a Feldenkrais lesson (classes or in private) we can deepen this understanding and this way of being in ourselves. Over time, our appreciation of who we are, how we relate to our worlds and our capacity to be creative can expand far beyond our expectations. We can realize our creative potential and much more.

Let’s do one final movement exploration to clarify this in ourselves and maybe one more time, review the guidelines set forth in Chapter 1.
For this process, please take off your socks so you are in your bare feet.

Walk around the room and observe yourself. What do you notice in general? In specific? As you walk, consider the question, "What is walking?" If you had to describe it to someone who had never walked or never even seen someone walking, what would you say? Where does walking happen from? We all do it, but do we really know what we are doing?

Lie on your back and scan how you are lying on the floor. Gently place the back of your left ankle, the Achilles tendon, in-between the first and second toes of your right foot. Don't force it. Gently increase the pressure of your left foot, back into your right foot and release it. Do this many times and observe where in the rest of yourself do you work or effort? Is it only in your feet that you sense activity? Maybe you feel some work in your thigh or your abdomen or the back of your left knee.

Unlace your feet and rest. Notice any changes in your sense of yourself.

This time gently place the Achilles tendon of your right foot in-between the first and second toes of your left foot. Gently increase the pressure of right foot back into your left foot and again observe where in yourself there is work going on. Is it different on this side? Are some parts more or less involved than when your feet where the other way? Again notice your thigh, abdomen and the back of your right knee.

Unlace your feet and rest. Notice any differences or anything new in your attention.

Place the left Achilles tendon in-between the first and second toes of the right foot and again gently press back into the right foot. Pay particular attention to your belly. Does it tighten at all when you press? What happens in your lower back? Does it press into the floor or lift from the floor or do nothing that you can sense? Intentionally tighten your abdomen when you press one foot into the other. Is it familiar?

Keep your feet together and pause for a moment. Gently increase the pressure again but this time push your belly forward and arch your lower back from the floor. Play with this until it becomes more familiar. Notice if there is any difference in how your thigh or the back of your knees is involved or in how this connects up through the rest of you.

Rest and observe yourself.

Interlace your heel and foot the other way and do the same thing on this side. First tighten your belly while increasing the pressure of one foot into the other and then push your belly forward and arch your lower back. Observe
what it is like on this side. How far through you can you sense the movement when you push your belly forward?

Rest.

Lie on your left side and place your right Achilles tendon in-between the first and second toes of the left foot. Again gently increase the pressure of the right foot into the left. Do you tighten your belly? Intentionally tighten it a few times. Now push your belly forward and arch your lower back as you increase the pressure between your feet. What happens?

Rest like this for a moment. In this new position, lying on your side, you no longer have the constraint of the floor behind you. So when you push the right foot back into the left foot, both feet can now move backwards in space. In fact as you push your belly forward and arch your lower back, the whole front of you can get longer. Your legs can slide back and your head can slide back too. Your whole body can respond to this action. Try this and feel what it is like.

Roll onto your right side and place your left Achilles tendon in-between the first and second toes of the right foot. Again gently increase the pressure of the left foot into the right. Do you tighten your belly? Intentionally tighten it a few times. Now push your belly forward and arch your lower back as you increase the pressure between your feet. Let you whole self respond. Your feet can slide back and so can your head.

Come onto your back and rest. Observe the kind of contact you make with the floor now.

Place your right Achilles tendon in-between the first and second toes of the left foot. Increase the pressure as you expand your belly and arch your back. What is it like now? Can you feel more of yourself getting longer in the front? Is the back of your neck lengthening? Continue and think of lengthening the leg that is on top, as you increase the pressure of one foot into the other. See if you can get a sense of length throughout your whole self as you do this.

Switch your feet over and continue.

Rest.

Bend your knees and put your feet standing. Very minimally, start to lift your pelvis from the floor. Pay particular attention to the shape your back makes as you do this. Can you sense (for most of you) that your pelvis tucks a little bit as you initiate this movement? Bring your feet as close to your bottom as you can. You can use your hands to help. Keeping you feet as close as you can to your buttocks start with the same tiny movement of lifting your pelvis. Does this change the angle of how your pelvis lifts? Continue to lift your pelvis, slowly
increasing the size of the movement. As you do this imagine that your knees are reaching down to the floor in front of your feet. So with your feet close to your bottom, lift your pelvis, while thinking of your knees touching the floor in front of your feet. Feel how your pelvis lifts now.

Rest and observe any differences you may sense in yourself.

Place the right Achilles tendon in-between the first and second toes of the left foot. Press the right foot into the left as you push your belly forward, arch your back, lengthen the whole front of yourself and elongate your right leg. What's it like now? Feel the kind of power you generate through yourself now. Go back to doing it by tightening your belly. Can you feel that you shorten your whole self this way? Do the same movement a few more times, this time pushing your belly forward.

Change your feet over and feel what you do on this side, pushing your belly forward, arching your back, lengthening the whole front of yourself and elongating your left leg. Then do it a few times while tightening your belly. Resume doing it with your belly pushing forward.

Rest on your back and sense yourself. How is it different from when you began?

Consider the question we asked in the beginning: "What is walking?" How would you describe it now? Slowly roll to your side and come to standing. Walk a bit and feel what it is like.

Then stand in a place and put one foot flat on the floor in front of the other but with no weight in it. Slowly shift your weight into the forward leg and back again. How do you do it? Do you work the thigh on the forward leg? Do it by pushing through the back leg and making the whole front of yourself longer. Start to walk like this, pushing through the back leg and getting longer in your front with each step. Take short strides. It is a bit like ice-skating.

Then simply walk around without thinking about it and sense yourself. Do you have a lower center of gravity?

Take some moments each day while walking to notice ‘how’ you are walking. Does it feel like a very muscular action? Could you instead focus more on your skeleton supporting you and helping you transfer your weight? Think that each leg is like a stick or a cane that you are coming onto and notice if you feel more stable and more mobile. Play with finding your skeleton more and more in all your actions.
CONCLUSION

“The plain fact is that there are no conclusions”
James Jeans

This book is designed not just to be an interesting read, but to actually help you to find new ways of accessing and exploring your creativity in the world and in your life. There are probably an infinite number of ways you could utilize this book to do that. However, what will be most valuable is for you to find your own way of bringing this material into your life. I will make some suggestions, but in the end you will be the one to decide how to make the best use of it.

In Chapter 15, ‘A Skeleton in Our Process’ we examined a fundamental idea that could help sustain you in your creative endeavors, utilizing your skeleton as a source of support. I recommend your going through all of the different processes, now from a skeletal frame of reference. Doing this will inform you in new ways and provide you with fresh perspectives of sensing and understanding yourself and ideas presented here.

Another thing that will help greatly is if you can challenge yourself a little in how you implement the ideas and experiences presented here. In Chapter 13, ‘The Pleasure of Challenge’, you explored some aspects of challenge. As you work through this book, it is important to bring a comfortable level of challenge to your process. Enough so you stay interested, but not so much that you give it all up.

The most important thing you can do is to create the time to do the different movement explorations. It is also important for you to make that time regular. Set aside a specified amount of time and regular intervals for when you will do them. It can be once a day, or 3 times a week… whatever works best for you. What will be hardest, but will also provide you with the greatest success, will be to follow the schedule you set up…no matter what. Writers know about this. They (most often) have set times to sit down and write, and they sit there at their computer even if they don’t write very much. Remember, being creative isn’t only about feeling inspired and finishing something. It is about being in the process, which is what this book is ultimately about.

Which order should you do the movement explorations in? My suggestion is to pick one of the themes from this book that most captures your interest, and start with the movement exploration in that chapter. Then choose the chapter that grabs you next. We’ve seen how important the ‘process’ is in the creative process. Staying in that process is paramount. There are many ways to stay in the process. Sheer willpower, making yourself do something or getting someone to monitor you are fairly common ways. The method I think is most effective is to pick something that captures your interest, something that you are curious about. That is the best place
to start. Perhaps you’ll decide to pick a topic that interests you and explore that for a week or more. Perhaps you’ll start with a concept that is relatively unknown or less clear to you and endeavor to gain greater clarity. Or perhaps you’ll choose the one you relate to most easily and find even more distinctions in your understanding. It doesn’t really matter; if you’re curious, you will be more available for learning, for making distinctions, for staying in the unknown.

My next suggestion is that you should create a realistic time frame for evaluating your efforts. Most people expect they will begin to observe a difference in their creativity in a week or two... and you might find that happens for you. However, developing our creativity through such profound processes as understanding our emotions, taking risks, or finding our center is much more likely to unfold over time. So how much time do I think it might take? I can imagine the answer you would like to hear, but I am going to tell you what I really think... Start with a year and a half. Wait! Don’t stop reading, hear me out. Think about it for a moment. How long does it take to create a new habit, one that overrides an existing one? Someone once asked me how long did it take me to get my hands to touch and sense as they do. I told them that I am still learning... and I still am. These things take time.

People who are known for their creativity will tell you the same thing, that their ability developed over time. They may have been born with some innate talent, but their capacity for being effortlessly and consistently creative took time to emerge. By setting yourself a longer timeframe, you are taking the pressure off yourself and allowing your learning to unfold more organically. If you set a short timeframe, like a month, and you find yourself completely changed in that time, wonderful, but if you don’t, you may feel unsuccessful or daunted or depressed. However, if you give yourself a year and a half, then after a month you might think, ‘thank goodness, I still have 17 months to go!’ Plenty of time to explore and let things develop in a more organic way.

The ideas in this book are fundamental, not only to the creative process, but to many aspects of our lives. They are all ideas I have been exploring in my own life for over 30 years. The great thing about these concepts is that they can stay alive and be rich in your experience for the rest of your life. In actuality, they are not ideas or concepts at all, they are processes. Each one illuminates another essential aspect of our creative potential as well as our human potential.

It is important to allow these concepts, ideas and explorations to filter into your daily life. After each movement process in the book, I have given you suggestions for how you can bring some of the things you experienced in that movement process into your life. Now the question is, how can you make each idea and process even more personal so that it becomes more than forty five minutes of moving and extends into more and more of your daily life?
You may find that some of these concepts and experiences begin to pop up in your life, even when you’re not doing the movement explorations. You might even find yourself shuttling between some of the different ideas throughout your day, making use of them as they arise. Coming face to face with challenge, lingering in the unknown, using your attention differently, catching yourself in your habits, taking risks, making new connections, feeling centered or out of center, listening to yourself and others differently. Consider, are you at the end of this book, or the middle of your process or the beginning of something new...Allow yourself to play with these ideas in all areas of your life.

The hidden treasure in the ideas and experiences presented in this book is not in the daily practice or schedule you set up. The treasure exists in the small moments when you find yourself acting in a new way as the result of your daily practice. It is found in the times when you encounter a novel sense of yourself. When generating choices becomes the norm for you. The work you put in by doing a regular practice creates the foundation for these breakthroughs and illuminations to occur. As Samuel Goldwyn said, “The harder I work, the luckier I get.” I wish you the best of luck!
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The people to whom I owe great gratitude are more than I can begin to name here. They include all of my teachers and all of my students (who were really my teachers). I was fortunate enough to be continually egged on to finish this book and pursue making it available to the public, so thanks to all of you! I owe a great deal of thanks to Tahnee Woolf, who took on the task to edit my manuscript, to Konrad Wiesendanger for creating the emerging dot pictures, to Marty Weiner for the ideas relating to the center of the universe and to all of my colleagues and friends who read and advised me on what I wrote and to you, the reader, for making these ideas your own.