

Writings on the Great Unwinding

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Introduction

In 1966, Marvin Solit, D.O. began a transition from his practice of Osteopathy and Rolfing to Awareness and Non-Directed Movement. As a student and disciple of Ida Rolf, he had implemented her discoveries about deep tissue change, gravity, and structural integration over a period of years, treating patients whose symptoms and illnesses varied widely. In addition to practicing her work, he presented and promoted it as a speaker, writer and consultant.

It was during this time that he made a personal discovery. Following a suggestion from Dennis O'Connell, (associated with early Dianetics) whom Ida Rolf had suggested he meet back in the '50s), he simply stood still, paid attention to his feelings, and noticed that certain movements, unbidden, began to originate within the small and large muscles of his body. He noticed them, not trying to change them. The realization was dawning that he was onto something.

He had already recognized, during the course of his practice, that healing took place within the individual; that the practitioner was primarily a facilitator. There must be a way, he felt sure, for people to do their own healing, without being dependent on specialists.

With the deceptively simple notion of non-directed standing and noticing, Marvin, as he was known to those who came to his office in Brookline, MA, began New England's first Center for Holistic Healing. He effected the transition quickly. He gave his medical equipment to other doctors, turned his 5 room office into a Center, offered Standing Awareness workshops, stopped charging fees or requiring appointments, continued his own process of standing around - as a participant, dropping the role of doctor - and waited to see what would happen.

Why not charge fees? Why not require appointments? It all had to do with structure and control. If, as he had begun to discover within himself, injury, trauma and controls structured the tissues, locking them into a rigid state, and if healing lay in letting go of controls, thus unwinding the tissues, then to impose time and money protocols was to add to the layers that would later need to unwind. Furthermore, it soon became apparent that when two or more people were there at the same time, something important seemed to happen between and among them.

People who were attracted came from a variety of backgrounds, and for different reasons. Several had studied and taught general semantics, (A.J. Korzybski, Science and Sanity, 1933), which was excellent preparation for getting “behind and underneath words”. A few were drawn by their questioning of mainstream thinking. Some came with back injuries to heal; others with depression, eczema, spiritual emptiness, and some came because they were friends of early participants.

Without fees, how were Marvin and his family to survive? And if he no longer played the role of ‘doctor’, for what service should people pay? A conundrum indeed; one that continues to challenge traditional categories! Yet with roles cast aside, intrapersonal and interpersonal relationships unwind to deeper levels.

Thus began a 38 year relationship among a small group who remained involved, attracted by what Marvin had to offer. Many have sampled ‘the work’ over the years, some have come and gone, others have come and stayed, and now, several are recording our experiences and findings, both individually and as a group.

Though participants live private lives, we are nevertheless a community. For at least the last 25 years, we have enjoyed potluck suppers once a week, to which anyone who is interested is invited. We have a Victorian house in Cambridge, which houses the Center and the Solits, as well as a tenant or two. Please come in.

Table of Contents

Section 1: Non-Directed Movement (NDM)

1. Getting Started:
 - Sleep -You Already Speak Prose
2. The Immune Response
3. The Repair Mechanism
4. Trauma and the Pendulum
5. You CAN get There from Here
6. The Role of Feelings
 - a. Why Stay with Feelings

b. Things We Do to Avoid Feelings

7. Attention Without Intention
8. Escalation
 - a. The Thought Process that Escalates
9. Allergies
10. The Rise of Bodywork

11. Tensegrity
12. Taking on the Nervous System
13. Tracking Habits
14. The Power of Delay

15. Diminished Magnetic Fields
16. Philosophy Meets Life

1. Non-Directed Movement – Getting Started

Sleep - You already speak prose!

Guess what? You already know how to do this work.

You've been doing non-directed body movements all your life and have probably been completely unaware of it. Sleep, something we all do at least a few hours a night, is your personal center for Non-Directed Body Movement, of moving without controlling whether or how it happens.

Sleep researchers are finding that during non-REM sleep bodies do many non-directed, unintentional movements. So this is not entirely new territory. What's new is how we're going to think about it. We're going to turn something on its ear for you: we're going to ask you to pause when you awaken, before stretching, yawning, trying to get rid of cricks in the neck and stiffness in the limbs - all the things you label 'sleeping badly'. We're going to suggest that these feelings you have upon awakening are actually continuations of your body's attempt to restore you during sleep. This can be considered, in fact, sleeping well. We have learned, experientially, that whenever it has the chance, your body is bent on repairing old and new damage. It strives to bring old injuries or traumas ('emotional', 'physical'; recent or old) to a healed completion and move on. We contend that all these traumas, regardless of origin or how you label them, are stored in your tissues. During sleep, your body has been non-controlled for long enough that it can move into whatever uncompleted stresses are lodged in the tissues. These stresses usually try to complete themselves by going deeper into the positions in which we awaken: the very positions that we actively and almost automatically yank ourselves out of during waking hours. All you have to do now to allow this repair to happen is to not jump out of bed immediately, or wonder (fear) what you have to do today, or throw alarm clocks across the room, or yawn, or stretch, or follow whatever other impulse you habitually act on when you awaken.

What you do instead is allow whatever got started during sleep to continue towards completion without your conscious effort.

That's the basic principle, and at some level, you already know it. What follows is an elaboration of the process.

2. The Immune Response

We are all familiar with the immune function of our bodies. Medical practitioners, whether traditional, alternative or complementary, are concerned in large measure with the immune system. It is our military. It is called upon to fight invaders, whether bacteria, viruses, cuts, bruises or wounds, as well as the myriad invaders which attack from within. Our immune system is trained to seek out and attack anything it does not recognize as 'ourselves'.

The focus on recognizing self as distinct from other; the 'me' from 'not-me' or from that which I judge to be threatening me, and the readiness to attack perceived onslaughts are among the properties of the immune system. Its mandate is to recognize, prepare, attack and defend.

The immune response is at its best when it is saving lives at critical stages. When it responds automatically, however, attacking with more energy and resources than necessary, problems are generated by the response itself. The inflammation, or swelling (or aggression, fear, anger, etc.) stimulated by the intensity of the immune response is often more damaging to the body than the stimulus itself. This readiness to pounce on a perceived enemy, this security system that protects us so magnificently, also makes mistakes, sometimes pouncing on our own cells - friendly fire, if you will. The abundance of autoimmune diseases is testament to the vigor, ferocity and destructiveness with which our immune system defends. Be prepared. Ask no questions. Take no prisoners. Seek and destroy.

The very success of the immune system has led to its extension into ordinary life. As an attack and defend mechanism, its pattern of conflict has become a model for resolving disagreements. When they escalate, again the immune system is emulated as we go to war against the 'not me' as a way of solving problems. This has probably been the case since the early development of our immune system.

In the political arena, we attack our opponent. In the international arena, when we have been attacked, or believe we have been attacked, we mobilize for counter-attack, often satisfied with nothing less than total capitulation from our enemy. We teach our children to fight back when hit. Gangs, clubs, fraternities and a wide array of groups set criteria for 'who's in and who's out'. Even among cultures relatively untouched by civilization, the word for 'stranger' and 'enemy' is the same. The immune system is very old.

Inside and outside the body, the immune system becomes a model for authoritarian

control. To be prepared to attack requires control, of both inner and outer resources. Control must be established and maintained. Many divisions of responsibility must be deployed to implement control. Any institutions you care to examine: religions, government, marriage, corporations, involve control, replicating the functioning of the immune system.

Such an attitude of control extends quite naturally into daily life. We seek to control the way we act, interact, how we are judged, even how we look and feel. Consider for a moment the profusion of regimens we accept as necessary to our well-being: exercise and diet programs, nutrition supplements and pain suppressants; flu shots and vitamins; vaccinations and surgeries - all so much a part of our society that we seldom question their necessity, their deeper impact, or their source. Yet they can be seen as a projection of the impulse to control. The culturally mandated, unexamined assumptions underlying them deserve a deeper look.

Consciousness, which we humans have evolved, has been the source of creating the perception: 'I', 'me' as a separate entity. The individuating 'I' has given us a type of perspective and a type of consciousness which has tended to separate us. Indeed, the word 'I' has reinforced the perception of separateness through the ages. As we grasp how we have become separated, we may be able to reconnect.

It was a short step for consciousness to become an instrument of the immune system, leading to protective, aggressive behavior! Language became its handmaiden. When we take an authoritarian stance toward our body, telling it what to do, we tend to breed conflict and resistance inwardly. We may not be aware of the limitations that language imposes, but somehow we know that it doesn't cover everything. When we go on a diet, we implicitly say: 'The food I eat is responsible for my weight or discomfort'. There are a myriad of factors, however, that relate to food consumption, and at some level, we know this. When we decide to attack our fat cells - an immune/control response, we also employ fear of what could happen if we do not. 'If I don't eat 'right', or exercise, (control) I could get a heart attack - note the term - or stroke (fear). At the very least, my muscles will atrophy. In these examples, the term 'therefore', the linguistic equation of logic, is implied or directly stated.

The decision to have surgery, medication - even vitamins - utilizes a similar process. It's not about the validity of the decision; it's about the logic that YOU, or the practitioner you have chosen, select from the totality of factors to decide what your body needs. You are telling it, not asking it. The attitude of telling, as opposed to asking, is an extension of immune system behavior. Asking, as we shall soon consider, may be an extension of the repair mechanism. In later sections we will consider ramifications of this alternative to the immune response: listening to the repair mechanism.

As you read, observe your reactions, including any objections, skepticism, questions. Notice accompanying feelings, and whether you can identify sensations in your body that correspond to your reactions.

3. The Repair Mechanism

The immune system is not our only resource for health, nor is it even the primary resource. Unbeknownst to many, we also have a repair function. Bacteria, for instance, have only the repair function available to them. Some bacteria have been shown to survive even in the radioactive waters of nuclear power plants! They have existed since long before immune systems evolved. We still have the very same, very ancient repair mechanism available to us. It is our contention that the repair system is the preferred mode of taking care of damage under most circumstances. The immune system is called for when repair is not fast enough, when the life has to be saved right now.

The overuse of the immune system has caused it to be excessively relied upon, often overriding the slow, steady, constantly active repair mechanism. The balance between these two functions has become skewed. The immune system has been analyzed, manipulated and pushed to produce results and goals that it was never designed for, while the repair system has been insufficiently called upon to do what it does so well.

The repair system takes us in an altogether different direction: the direction of awareness, with the opportunity to observe what's presented, and to feel and sense it more deeply. This approach tends to lead towards interaction rather than control; compassion rather than conflict.

The repair function has become somewhat atrophied as the immune function has dominated. Like a hovering parent, the immune system has not allowed the repair system to exercise its independence. We can allow it to resume its ability through the use of the process which the DNA/RNA does routinely: Consciousness, which has become the instrument of the immune system, has as well the capacity to become the instrument of the repair mechanism. The increased complexity of consciousness, culminating in the human, affords a heightened ability to self-reflect. When we use it to notice the feelings in our tissues, without any intention of forcing them to make them 'better' or directing them in any way, we enter into the repair mode. Repair may involve returning a structure to its original shape and function, or it may be a process that incorporates the injury or invading organism into its existence, thereby creating an altered organism.

An example of the altered relationship with an invader is the Dutch Elm tree and the fungus known as Dutch Elm disease which swept the country killing many of these venerable old trees. Some trees, however, did not die from the fungus. Upon investigation it was discovered that the fungus and the tree had incorporated each other, becoming both different and united. Instead of fighting until one or the other died, they now needed each other to stay alive. The organism that forms symbiotic relationships has a new source of energy, and becomes different.

Similarly, as our injuries, our damage, our traumas, undergo repair, they have the potential to make us different than we were - a difference that is perhaps more functional,

more adaptive and more resilient than the rigid adherence to recreating 'normal', which is what an overly controlling attack method strives to do. Tribal systems, before they broke down when they stopped taking in the 'other', and turned them into the enemy, (their words for 'stranger' and 'enemy' became the same), exemplified at a social level such symbiotic relationships.

Repair is a self-reflective function, but not necessarily a function of awareness. At the DNA level, repair is the process of recognizing damage, unwinding the strands, reading them, recognizing errors, directing the reversal of damage, excision repair, or occasionally patching repair - whichever is most expedient. At the larger level of wound repair, the same sort of recognition, then patching, takes place. Damage initiates repair, which happens at the level of DNA. The repair mechanism then 'unwinds' the affected portion of DNA, and 'snips' and replaces the damaged part with fresh DNA. Under more serious damage, the repair mechanism resorts to 'patching' with fresh DNA. A kind of attentive reading of the DNA is involved. When, instead of reading, we interrupt this transmission of information by preventing the response to the injury from being completed, we essentially lock in, or suppress, the injury. The repair mechanism's work of unwinding the layers of injury is made more complex by the suppression of the immune response, which adds new layers for the repair mechanism to unwind.

Boundaries in a repair mode are more subtle than in the immune mode: taking in what's 'not me' instead of kicking it out requires the blurring of typical identifications and interpretations, and the suspending of the idea of immediately 'doing' something about it. Pausing gives us the ability to take something into ourselves which puts us squarely into the world of relationship.

Let yourself become aware of any pain, ache, discomfort or, irritation going on in you. Observe your reaction, your interpretation and any impulse. Do you feel it's a 'bad' thing? Do you want to make it go away? That's the immune type of response. We encourage you to entertain the possibility that repair may be underway, and just notice what you feel. That's the first step in the repair response. The simple act of noticing engages the repair mode instead of the immune system.

4. Trauma and the Pendulum

We define trauma here as incidents which don't go to completion. These can be single injurious events like a car accident, continuous bombardments from parents that require emotional defenses, or even training of muscles for a specialized sport that lock the system into one pattern. Traumas are anything that keeps us locked in a physical, emotional, behavioral or mental habit. These habits are like motors; they drive our lives.

The pendulum is the natural swing between a traumatic injury and the restorative process as the pendulum goes back to its original position. Gravity is one of the properties that the repair system uses to restore the pendulum swing. When a tree is traumatized by powerful winds it just keeps moving until it equilibrates and finds vertical again. But with

people, for many different reasons, the equilibrating movement is stopped and the pendulum becomes fixed. There are reasons these incidents cannot go to completion, among them, too much pain, panic and fear, too many interventions, social requirements to return to 'normal', pressures, feeling overwhelmed, or a separation of parties where the people involved have dispersed and split away. (This is a big one - when there's a fight and someone splits, the event is stuck at the split level. This is why death experiences can be so powerful - they create a seemingly irreparable split that holds the pendulum fixed in place).

What feelings represent are the accumulation of these incomplete events and the body's attempt to complete them. So feelings are the point of entry into the stuck pendulum.

Athletes, for instance, have a need to get back into the game despite injury; they cannot afford to stay with the pain but have to freeze it, work around it, or ignore it in the service of completing the game. So they stop the equilibration of the pendulum. In a culture in which the modus operandi is to get you over pain as quickly as possible, the notion that you might get out of the game and allow yourself to feel pain for awhile is considered ridiculous, or at least hard to understand.

When you don't have time for the pain, the drug store and health food store are full of quick fixes. Anti-histamines are a good example. When the people around you are depending on you to function normally there is much at stake if you do not - your livelihood, your status, the wellbeing of your dependents, your identity, your security in all senses of the word. Using anti-histamines helps you to function, but the cost is a stuck pendulum!

Histamines, which are associated with allergic reactions and inflammatory responses, hold the trauma in place and keep the pendulum from moving on. A non-traumatized pendulum equilibrates that movement. Allowing feelings to surface tends to unlock the stuck pendulum. The wonder is that the pendulum has the ability, not merely to swing freely, or stop swinging, or swing in small arcs, but that it can swing at all! Experiencing life without traumas is not the idea. The ability to really repair from the traumas, without forever being driven by them as unconscious motors, is the idea.

The reason that pain increases in intensity is that the accumulation of injury from previous events has never equilibrated, so each new event re-stimulates earlier injuries. Each event is an opportunity to feel the stuck pendulum, and let it get unstuck. If we choose to feel the discomfort of injuries as they begin to repair, instead of choosing the 'quick fix', we move into an unfamiliar arena. Defenses may come up, in the form of 'Why suffer when you can take a pill and feel better?', or 'Why does it have to be an old injury - why can't it be just a plain old headache?' New or old, the importance is how you respond: do you attack it or let it affect you? We are besieged with messages to choose the quick fix, but the option to repair has always been there. The choice we make when we allow these injuries to surface is to not escalate; but to realize that surfacing is the first step on the road to de-escalation.

In our experience, NOT taking the aspirin, NOT taking the anti-histamine, NOT taking the antacid typically lead to intensified symptoms for awhile, followed by deepened experience of earlier feelings, and often, unexpected emotions, images of earlier injuries, and a greater sense of connection to ourselves.

5. You CAN Get There From Here

This is a fast-moving society. It depends on production, information, advertising, medicine, transportation and governance - even vacations! And everything must increase in order to survive. There is simply no way to slow down without having an impact on our global economy. Any attempt to slow down any part of its functioning, since each part contributes to a structural whole, affects the rest.

And what is the impact of this degree of intensity in our individual lives? We must adhere to rigid schedules. We must meet increasing costs for our health and insurance providers. We must accommodate all our relationships, including our children who demand ever more of what they see/want/need. We must deal with our intensifying hierarchies in employment.

It is in this context that we come to offer the alternative of slowing down; of reducing the intensity of our individual lives, with full understanding that, if such change were to occur, it must ripple into the broader sphere. From this perspective, it appears seditious. And what possible advantage can there be? We are offered such a wealth of possibilities. We are inundated with the seven second message. The underlying premise seems to be, "If you receive a myriad of stimuli per second, you do a lot more living." But here's the rub. You do a lot more reacting, but not a lot more living. You have traded living for being pummeled by stimuli. Once you move towards retrieving your life, there's no turning back. Your choices become fewer. You begin to notice how you feel, rather than merely reacting to these omnipresent stimuli. Once you recognize the game, you can no longer be an unaware player.

Feeling is your road back to yourself. And noticing how you feel sweeps clean the road ahead of you, as well as the road you have been on to get here. It is also your available response to inundation. As you notice that you are being offered short-term benefits with long-term consequences on every side: pharmaceutical remedies, credit cards, idealized silhouettes, you can no longer avoid noticing the connections between the short and the long term. As you become clearer about the costs, you may become less willing to pay them. You may find yourself noticing the headache, and what it connects to, rather than run for the aspirin. You may consider a moment before you allow that extra credit card into your life, or into your college student's life. Everything enters your awareness in a slightly altered way. As you notice more, including the appetites that are created in you by all that is offered, you may experience your response in a more finely tuned way.

6. Things People Do to Avoid Feelings

Remembering that feelings are our route to unwinding, we have generated a list of some things people do to keep from feeling. You may find it perplexing – many of these things need to be done, or are enjoyable – are we supposed to never do them? Not at all. These things, and actually almost anything, CAN become activities we do to interrupt feelings. “Can” is the news story here.

To find out whether you’re using an activity to prevent or change feelings there are several clues to look for (and probably many more if you observe closely). One of the clues is that the activity has an obsessive quality – you feel driven to do it, or it becomes a ‘default’ program that you automatically do without thinking about it. Habits are difficult to see sometimes, but almost always belong on this list. Careful observation of the impulses leading to action is necessary before you can tell if you’re *using* a behavior to change feelings or whether the activity is the *result* of a feeling. We use defensive actions to suppress an awareness of something else. Defenses become less effective the more you notice them, and the more you experience them in their entirety. So noticing defenses, rather than trying to do anything about them, is the key. The ‘I’ that notices the pattern is not the same as the pattern itself. Put another way, “I” am not my defense, nor am “I” my habit or even my feelings! “I” am the self who notices what’s going on.

- * Cell phone
- * Daydream
- Work
- Fight
- Take baths
- Cross legs, arms
- Coffee
- Movies
- jog
- Smoke
- Solitaire
- TV
- Go to therapists
- Sugar
- Hot or cold drinks
- Express/act out emotions
- Repress
- Sex
- Exercise
- Judgments
- Blame
- Stand tall, stomach in, chin up
- Sleep
- Be in other people’s

business

- Political criticism
- Spectator sports
- Pills
- Crack knuckles, joints
- Sit in the sun
- Travel
- Spend money
- Act
- Describe feelings
- Makeup
- Seek to be needed, liked, approved
- Anchor elbows
- Make money, save it or give it
- Keep busy
- Meditate
- 'If only...'
- create problems to solve
- bounce leg, tap foot
- go to the bathroom
- leave a room
- make lists
- get warm to go to bed
- Drugs
- Alcohol
- Jokes
- Talk constantly
- Smile
- Raise the level of abstraction
- Control breathing

6a. Why Stay with Feelings?

- Feelings: - connect us to the world.
 - keep us in the moment
 - provide healing energy
 - ARE the solution
 - provide general instead of specific solutions
 - revive atrophied systems

Once you become aware of, and really 'feel' your feelings, those around you tend to notice increased clarity of your non-verbal as well as your verbal communication. Conversely, not feeling your feelings tends to make you more isolated, more closed, more disconnected from your tissues. You tend to send out murky messages, generating unease

and ambivalence in those around you.

7. Attention Without Intention

In the sleep state, feelings happen, movement happens, without the component of awareness. In the waking state, however, awareness of sensation lights the road we follow, the thread we pull to unravel us through the labyrinth of the past. But, unlike all roads, these do not lead to Rome. We don't know where they lead. As one astute observer of Beethoven remarked, "He goes here and then goes there and you think he's going to resolve the confusion and when he gets to a pause he'll know where he's going. But he gets there and you realize that he still doesn't know where he's going."

This is repair work in progress. It's almost a prerequisite that you not know where you're going. It is also very un-American. We're trained from the day we're born to have goals, to learn that there are right answers, to have plans and direct ourselves into accomplishments. So putting ourselves in a position of not knowing what's going on and not knowing what will happen next or where we'll get to can be very disconcerting. It can also feel disturbing.

All techniques, whether medical, spiritual, natural, or anything else, depend on having a goal to reach. Progress is assessed by how much closer to the goal you've managed to get. When we give our tissues full reign to unwind without the guiding arm of intention we have taken an entirely different path. We only know where the road starts, not where it will end, or even if it ever will end. The freedom this orientation brings to our systems is absolutely necessary to the repair process.

One of the reasons for this is that we very often have no clue as to what the source of distress is. Physicians or therapists we go to for relief will have their own set of theories to guide them to a diagnosis. But their information comes from a set of learned assumptions about how bodies/feelings work, which may or may not be germane to this immediate situation. Many people go from one therapeutic modality to another, searching for the technique that can illuminate their problem and provide the cure. What's wrong with this? The information needed is not available. Nobody knows. It's not in a book. So what do you do?

We have found that the information that is unique to a given individual surfaces and bubbles up through the unwinding of the tissues. We cannot stress enough that there is no separation between the 'physical' and the 'psychological'. For instance, a feeling of fear at a given moment can be found to correlate with a feeling in the body, perhaps a shoulder, or neck, or the sinuses, shortness of breath, or wherever the pendulum may be stuck. These parts are poised to finish the motion towards closure that they began. Regardless of how expertly a general diagnosis may apply, a particular unwinding is unpredictable.

8. Escalation

Escalation is an inherent tendency of the immune system's attack mode. The trust we have placed in antibiotics is a case in point. Damage, unless it is the wholesale outright slaughter of an entire species, almost always results in a stronger organism. The reign of destruction we had hoped to accomplish with antibiotics has now swerved around to bite us as the damaged bacteria learn to repair from or live with the toxicity of these drugs. This is a fine example of the adaptation of which we are all capable. When, however, the pharmacological response is to find a stronger antibiotic, this continues the escalation process..

Escalation is practically synonymous with warring behavior, and has been our tendency for a long time – perhaps since the advent of earliest civilizations. Having the stronger deity, the more powerful weaponry, the most fearsome heroes, has never been enough. Someone always made a bigger gun, a more powerful god, a nearly indestructible hero. The escalation story rolls on.

Our athletes must jump farther, run faster, lift more weight. And the remarkable thing is that they do. Whenever the limits of the human body seem to be reached, someone manages to push them even farther.

In the short term, it seems essential to find that next escalation. “Billy, why did you hit Johnny?” “Because Johnny hit me first”. (Read Bosnia, Palestine, Rwanda, Iran, Iraq, neighborhood gangs, divorce complaints or your child's ear infection in place of Johnny). The immune answers are familiar. “Get out there and hit Johnny back!” “We've got to stop the spread of” “The villains must be stopped or else....” “If this infection isn't stopped, it may become lethal!”

Such are the premises, of the immune system. The behavior follows inevitability. There are other premises, however; which, with equal inevitability, lead to different behaviors. For instance, Billy might be shown how to ask himself questions, such as “What happened before he hit me? And before that? And how did I feel about it? What was my part in what happened? What am I afraid might happen to me if I don't fight back?” This begins to allow for a *more participatory*, as opposed to a *cause-effect*, view of events.

Participation allows for the repair mode to kick in as an alternative to the immune response. With little recognition, the repair mechanism functions within the organism with lightning rapidity, all day long and all the time. It heals our cuts, our bruises, our muscles. Self-reflection and self-recognition are the coin of the realm of the repair mode.

These two very different outlooks co-exist in our biology. The immune system and the repair system were designed for different jobs. The post modern world has chosen to use variations on the immune system to the exclusion of the repair theme. We are not proposing to exclude the immune system, only to restore repair to a fully functioning and valued existence. The effect this may have on our behaviors, at the personal, medical and

political levels could be evolutionary.

8a. Thoughts that Escalate the Process

Here is a recent experience of someone who has become familiar with the role thought/language can play in escalating symptoms.

I experience “Tension in my head”, and the thoughts I have are: “My blood pressure is high”; “Feels like I’m losing control”; “When is this going to end?”; “Should I be doing something I’m not doing?”; “Have I missed something?”; “This is scary – it feels like I’m never going to come out of it”; “I can’t live my life like this”..

Such thoughts seemed to intensify and escalate my feelings of panic and hopelessness. The next thought, however, seemed to reverse the escalation, putting me in a calmer state: “Well, it IS less intense than 1 or 2 weeks ago”. A certain inner optimism was engaged, but I didn’t feel much trust in myself so when someone I respected said: “Those feelings don’t go away. It’s unrealistic to think that just experiencing them erases them. What IS realistic is to begin to recognize them as they return, with decreasing intensity”. My thoughts were affecting me like a roller coaster – up and down, a visceral response to thoughts, to language!

I immediately interpreted these words as “There IS no hope”. That seemed to reinforce my feelings of hopelessness. “O my God; what did he just say?” My heart starts pounding again. “Seems like there’s no hope; seems like I have to live with this for the rest of my life”; “O my God; what have I done by exposing myself to all these therapeutic techniques? It’s too late; I can’t undo it now; I’m finished.” (More panic). “I’ll never be rescued”; “I may as well resign myself”; “I may as well die”. Then, “Maybe that will be peaceful”. “Maybe I’ll just turn off my brain” (so I don’t have these thoughts).

My thoughts, my interpretations, (*often considered a mental or psychological activity*, ed.) reinforced my feelings (*which are labeled ‘emotions’*, ed.). These reinforced all my physical sensations). Words like ‘never’, ‘hope’ and ‘rescue’, while they express deep feelings, also structure my reactions. I’ve come to realize that ‘hope’ and ‘never’ have the same effect: the need to control! I now begin to see the validity of noticing my patterns without resisting them, and also of noticing how the process I automatically engage in escalates my reactions.

Once I began to recognize how my thoughts were crucial to the entire experience, I decided to just notice them. I noticed that the words I used: ‘panic’, ‘hope’, ‘never’, ‘hopeless’ for example, were very abstract terms. I tried to make them more specific: ‘pressure at the top of my head’, ‘choking feeling’; ‘pressure around my sinuses’. Indeed, as I allowed my ‘felt sense’ to replace my abstractions, I began to feel the relationship among the pressure, the choking and the sinuses. Images came up, which I could both see and feel – also with panic. This was at a different level, however, from the panic evoked

by the thoughts. I was a participant/observer in one, both experiencing and watching the process.

There have been changes, slowly – two steps forward, one step back. But there is no doubt that, in a new sense, I feel ‘in control’ as opposed to ‘controlling’. The waves of feeling that still wash over me do not touch the essential part of me; I feel it all just as much, but I ‘get’ that it is coming up IN me; it is NOT me.

9. Allergies

In a discussion of the immune and repair systems, the study of allergies is an excellent example of the functioning of the immune system. “A properly functioning immune system is a well-trained and disciplined biologic warfare unit for the body. The immune system is really quite amazing. It is able to identify and destroy many foreign invaders.” The allergic reaction is the immune system gone slightly askew: the allergens (pollen, dust etc.) that get identified for an attack response do not really need to be defended against. It’s an inflammatory response to invading elements which results in the immune system eventually exploding its own histamine-filled mast cells instead of the invaders, causing the familiar and sometimes lethal allergy symptoms.

Solutions put the sufferer very strongly into a control mode. The allergens are eliminated or avoided if possible. The price you pay for these solutions is often very high: home remodeling, money, food shopping, etc. These are energetically expensive solutions and tend to cut you off from much of your environment. Disconnection is the result. These solutions tend to escalate the allergic reactions as well as their solutions of control.

Allergy shots make somewhat more sense in that they are designed to cause a minor inflammation reaction at the local level (just this allergen) and slowly help the body desensitize itself to that invading protein. This is similar to the non-directed approach except that the non-direct method is to not target specific allergens and responses, but to put the person in a milieu that includes their total environment (culture, home, people, past, things, job, etc.) so that everything that might be involved in the allergic response can be inflamed together and allow resolution to happen in a global manner. The inflammatory propensity may not just be in the immune system – it may be throughout the person’s entire life. The allergic reaction is an opportunity to unwind much that is hidden, especially in the realm of what we experience or label as anger. This is also an opportunity to de-escalate control (defenses) and restore lost connections with the outer and inner worlds.

As you reduce the atrophy in your repair system (and this absolutely must come first), dealing with allergies in the repair mode is possible. Instead of avoiding the allergens, food allergens, for example, you expose yourself to very small doses with a willingness to experience the reactions with minimal suppression. Over a period of time the amount you eat can be increased. It has been our experience that unwinding (or becoming

sensitive to) the total allergic response will include undoing patterns out of past history that include non-allergy induced traumas.

Beyond the personal, we are now being exposed to more and more pollutants in our environment. The popular modality of 'eating well' and avoiding chemicals in our food seems to be offset by the recently discovered number of chemicals in even a 'healthy' body. Overcoming them by choosing chemical-free foods seems to be losing the battle. Fight/flight reactions, the province of the immune system, is once again coming a cropper. It seems clear that survival will depend on adaptation to chemical pollutants since there seems to be no way to halt their escalation.

How is political behavior relevant? How often do you see attack, defend, then escalation as the preferred strategy in our political actions and reactions? We tend to respond in an inflammatory way to political issues. These are allergic reactions on a political scale. Is there a repair solution? Allergic reactions, whether in the arena of the body, or the body politic, seem to be so commonplace today that we hardly recognize them as such. It may be time to take a fresh look.

10. The Relationship of Feelings to the Body.

We use the word 'feelings' here, not to represent 'emotions', but to represent 'physical sensations', or 'felt sense.' 'Thoughts' and 'emotions' are the road taken in psychiatry/psychology, and they are often helpful in obtaining relief, a feeling of release, and in adjusting to life's requirements. The felt sense, however, the physical sensations that can come to awareness, provides access to the damaged tissues themselves. They're not *about* the damage, they're not the emotions surrounding it; they are the damage itself. When they surface, you have contacted the reality of the damage. By feeling the damage (trauma) as a physical sensation, rather than seeking to describe it, analyze it or overcome it, you are turning over the repair to the tissues themselves. When the tissues are thus empowered, they will actually repair and return themselves to as much normal functioning as is possible. They will do this as a global solution, using all information from the whole of the system, rather than a localized solution. When we choose to feel the damage ('feel'; not 'think' is the operative word here), we contribute towards opening a closed system. A system that is closed limits our connections with the outer world; we go into isolation and contraction. The conscious choice to isolate is not necessarily a bad thing. When it's a habitual response to damage, however, and you're on the course of closing down, you decrease the likelihood of coming back out of it. The adaptive function of isolating is lost when it becomes obsessive, an agent of control.

What about control? Is it not a good thing? After all, we assume we must often control how much we sleep, eat, our impulses, our temper, our job relationships, our weight, our health, our money, our children – what's wrong with control?

We need to distinguish between kinds of control. The word 'control', like many words in our language, does not have one single meaning. In fact, meaning does not reside in the words themselves but rather in what they mean to the individual using them and hearing them, which is a factor that complicates communication. With this in mind, let's consider 'control'. Controlling your children when they scream in a supermarket does not mean forcing or punishing. It really means teaching them social skills and not accepting antisocial behavior. Controlling your job relationships means making strategic choices among possible behaviors, each with consequences you may or may not want. Controlling your diet, on the other hand, DOES often mean forcing, which, because it selects food, and often exercise, as the primary aspects to deal with, tends to elicit inner resistance, resulting in the 'yo-yo' effect. The fact of the matter is, of course, that a child screaming in the market and the need for job strategies are also related to a great many factors, which, if considered and responded to earlier might have averted both problems.

In the case of early damage to our tissues, control merely adds layers to be unwound. We can begin to undo tissue damage by first noticing the feelings, which we often notice as patterns, either of movement, behavior, thoughts, emotions, etc. Control adds yet another pattern to the overlay of patterns that already exists. Instead of adding to the patterns, we undo them: The Great Undoing. It's much less energy-consuming to let go of an old pattern than to add a new one.

Conventional physical therapy is sometimes an example of control: a knee injury, for example, could elicit several diagnoses: the muscles on one side of the leg are short, tending to pull the bone in that direction, eventually creating knee pain. A program of exercises might be recommended to shorten the muscle group on the other side of the leg, resulting in shortness on both sides and pulling the bone back into a less stressed position. So now you have short muscles all around the leg, but they are balanced in their shortness, and they will not stay that way without constantly exercising to keep them that way. Another strategy might be to stretch the short muscle. This will have a finite duration, since the muscle will tend towards shortness again. This is a huge increase in energy output over a lifetime. Imagine a leg that could repair its knee pain by unwinding the shortened tissues, which will also create a balanced musculature (tensegrity) system and reorganize the relationship of bones at the knee. The energy output over a lifetime has not increased. Tissues tend to become more resilient the less they are controlled.

Examples that are labeled 'physical' are perhaps easier to understand than 'emotional' traumas, yet the build up of damage and the unwinding process are essentially the same. In an adult who has been subjected to forced sexual experiences as a child may have repressed the memories. The experience of apprehension and self-protection that ensued, however, may be embedded in tensed muscles, rapid heartbeat, deadened sexual response, and in the tissues enveloping the entire body: the connective tissue.

11. The Rise of Bodywork

Body workers have a key role to play in the shift from abstract thinking towards concrete experience. Most transformative therapies employ a top-down approach. Psychology and

related talk therapies use a verbal (abstract) approach to exploring inner states. Categories, classifications and definitions lead to, and result from, this modality. The idea is that the correct classification will bring enlightenment through understanding, and that understanding can bring about the desired change. It is also assumed that the verbal level can lead to transforming the emotional level, which is the objective.

Therapies, past and present, have found the realm of emotions to be the most fruitful playground. Sometimes, the term 'feelings' is used to refer to the dramatic eruption of these seductive energies, which are considered the route to release, although they may also escalate current relationships. As we see it, however, emotions are clues which, when attended to rather than expressed, lead to what's going on underneath, especially when they become obsessive, and commandeer our attention at inappropriate times. They can lead us to defensive postures lurking beneath the attention-grabbing drama. Expression of such feelings may actually prevent them from going deeper by affording a kind of release which can be interpreted as 'reaching a bottom'.

Body workers, however, work at the physical level. The tissues are their playing field, and the sensations of physical feelings are the medium through which transformation can happen. Without bringing the physical tissue into the therapy room, old patterns, no matter how well understood, cannot be unwound. Unless one brings physical sensation into the picture, old patterns or 'issues' can be restimulated, rerouted, acted out, expressed or repressed, but not unwound. Thoughts are mental abstractions from life. Emotions are an energy impulse to act. The blocks to movement that are created by traumatic events and interactions do not reside in either one. This is the realm of physical tissue, and body workers are the most adept at recognizing tissues that have been traumatized. Returning physical sensation, or felt sense, or feelings to a priority in our awareness, is something body workers can help us do.

Physical sensation, or what we are going to just call feelings, is the first leg of this new methodology. The other leg is equally important and much more difficult for us to get used to. This is the non-directed approach. 'Non-directed' means that, though we notice our impulses to control, change, fix or make ourselves feel better, we do not act on them, unless and until we feel a clear movement originating from within.

While awareness among therapists is increasing about the importance of attending to the feelings of physical sensation, these feelings are often used as information, pathways or techniques to create change in the body. They become manipulations to make 'better', or to 'fix' what has now been labeled a 'problem'.

In NDM there is no 'problem', there is only sensation; feelings of the condition of life in this exact moment. We are conditioned by our education and culture to always try to make things better; to insure that all pains, whether physical, financial, emotional or otherwise, go away. We are very quick to perceive uncomfortable feelings as undesirable and in need of fixing. The fixing methods are legion.

We propose a totally different premise. To more directly feel your own pain, suffering,

discomfort, fear, annoyance or any other distress without trying to make it go away is actually the most effective road to change. And notice that I said ‘change’ – not ‘feel great’, ‘to be the way it used to be’, or any of that ilk. The act of observation is very powerful – “the observer always affects the observed” has been a conundrum for social anthropologists and physicists alike. The act of observation by feeling is even more powerful – attending to feelings without the intent to change them allows the whole system to change itself. And it will.

Observation without intent does not provide the security of predictability; we don’t know what the change will be. Some of us have noticed, during unwinding sessions when an old pattern is about to come loose, that a feeling of panic or fear arises. This is the last defensive maneuver our systems use to keep the old pattern in place. We don’t like to lose what became a survival tool for us when we really needed it. Defense is an appropriate response for our immune system to make when we have actually been attacked. When defense becomes a pattern or habit, however, it becomes ‘defensiveness’, and is no longer useful. Still, the force of habit is a true force, one not easily dislodged. Nor do we like to lose that which is familiar, however uncomfortable. The unknown might be intriguing to the adventurous among us, but even the most ardent adventurers hesitate to lose something that was instrumental in keeping them alive or safe (and this can be emotional safety as well which can be even more compelling than physical safety). So change without a blueprint to guide those changes is not territory we are used to. Non-directed attention offers more freedom to our tissues. With even the smallest directedness, whether from desire or habit, our systems will return to that directed path. Freedom is another word for having no route chosen for you. But not to worry, the route will create itself.

Freedom is a banner we wave proudly in this country, but who among us is willing to extend that freedom to their own tissues? We prefer to stay in control, to be authorities over our bodies and to seek out experts armed with medical and therapeutic theories that hope to give us ultimate control one day: no illnesses, longevity without aging, test-tube babies, and cloned organs. This is a technical age with preconceived ideas of what a human body should be like, and forcing ourselves into molds rigidifies those conceptions. Recognizing our personal controls helps us to understand external controls.

12. Tensegrity

“Tensegrity, a contraction of ‘tension’ and ‘integrity’ is a word coined by R. Buckminster Fuller in his master work, ‘Synergetics’. Tension denotes pulling or stretching, while integrity implies wholeness. A tensegrity structure is maintained by a continuous tensional network which holds it together despite forces applied to any one part. In a standard post and beam (compression) building, forces are absorbed wherever stress is applied (locally), and because it is rigid, it will fail if there is too much stress on any one part. But through tensional connections, a tensegrity structure balances the forces around and within it. It is dynamic and can respond to change, just as life can.”

What does tensegrity have to do with the human body? Donald E. Ingber, MD, at Harvard University, has described how “the principles of tensegrity apply at essentially every detectable size scale in the body. At the macroscopic level, the 206 bones that constitute our skeleton are pulled up against the force of gravity and stabilized in a vertical form by the pull of tensile muscles, tendons and ligaments. At the other end of the scale, proteins and other key molecules in the body also stabilize themselves through the principles of tensegrity”. Dr. Ingber’s particular interest is in the structure of the cell, which is our focus as well.

It appears that, once the body’s tensegrity starts diminishing it tends to stay diminished. The resulting locked-in tissues become exaggerated over time, creating a self-generating feedback loop. There aren’t too many ways to restore reduced tensegrity – the methodologies of our culture work with biochemistry rather than the physics of structure.

In Dr. Ingber’s terms, the structure of a diseased cell loses its tensegrity balance. The effect on the adjacent cells is that they are pulled down towards the horizontal as well. Conversely, however, if a cell were to become healthy, it would start exerting a corresponding pressure on the adjacent cells to resume their tensegrity structure. Tensegrity is the most generalized way of understanding a body. We’ve become masters of specialization – and not just masters, but extreme experts. The specialization of the nervous system has been ongoing continuously, and has accelerated incredibly in the last century. We identify with our brains. But to repair requires generalization: holism, not specialization. To evolve holistically, too, requires generalization. We need a model that recognizes the indivisible wholeness of the entire human system – and not just physical, but what we might call personality traits, emotions, consciousness, the “I” itself. They can all be seen as elements in the tensegrity of matter: structure.

Feelings, and especially tensions, are our pathway to the body’s constant efforts to restore tensegrity. They are our clue that tensegrity has been reduced. So any attempts we make to not feel; any deliberate actions we take to change what we feel, delay the process of restoration. Feelings are our route to repair. They put us on notice that damage has been done, restoration is required. When we head for the pain killers, the anti-depressants, the anti-inflammatories, the alcohol, the food, the favorite addiction, we have interfered with the process of restoration.

So how do feelings relate to structural tensegrity?

Structural systems are either opening or closing; they are never static. When a structure takes damage that doesn’t repair, it tends to shut down, creating an immobile area in one place and general deformation over the entirety. The tensegrity ‘loses its balance’, one might say. Closing down is physical; the sensations accompanying it are also physical, though the physical aspect may not be the first thing that rises to awareness.

Structures close because they need to defend and/or control against injury. Defense and protection are related and necessary; they just go too far. Defenses close a system down in an effort to keep it safe, to survive, in response to injurious experiences, which can include, not only personal injury or ongoing trauma, but also education and culture.

Closing down provides a feeling of control. So the response to the initial injury is to protect, i.e. shut down, and the repetition of the response beyond and long after the injury, keeps the system under control - shut down

As we begin to notice feelings, we support the opening of the system. The initial sensation may be, for example, a feeling of tightness somewhere in the body, an example of closed tensegrity. Because of the system-wide way in which a structure deforms, these sensations might be felt anywhere, from shoulder to digestive system, from headache to a feeling of despair. Awareness of them will eventually lead to unwinding the initial locked down area.

Restoration may be accompanied by feelings of fear as we approach an 'edge' between staying defended and opening up. There are many subtle ways we use to avoid such an edge, and thus, restoration. At our Holistic Center we have generated a list of the more common ways we have all used to avoid the feelings that arise during awareness work and in daily life. (See Section x). Some of these 'avoidance methods' have become part of our stressful postmodern society. Even the so-called alternative approaches have been co-opted. Yoga, for instance, which most likely began as following the body's lead, has become a technique. Body alignment must be just so, postures must look just like this; timing must be rigidly adhered to. Stretching, which the body uses to bring oxygen flow to an awakening structure, has been ritualized and tyrannically imposed, which actually fights the contracting forces of daily stress. What used to be a gentle participation in the cycle of sleep is now a survival tool, used to control the effects of stress rather than allow them to unwind to their tightly held information. Underpinning these approaches is the assumption that one can know, cognitively, what causes individual, uniquely experienced stress. .

It becomes obvious that tensegrity, which is a network of relationships, leads to entirely different perspectives than prevailing cause-effect theories. We have all grown up in the system of cause-effect thinking, so for any new premise to be considered, we must first ask the question: "Is there some other way?" The moment we do we become liberated from the educational box that has limited us, and are again free to roam the world of unrecognized potentials.

By replacing the cause-effect assumption with an assumption of connectedness, we begin to feel a participatory, rather than causal view of experience, one in which the entire system of that which we call a 'human' is included. Indeed, the environments in which we live are, of necessity, included as well. Such awareness is the methodology of participation, of tensegrity.

As this work evolved, we called it "non-directed movement" but have come to feel that this label is a bit misleading. Moving in a non-directed way is important, but at least as important is the awareness of what goes on as you move. And what often happens is that you try to stay away from feeling – by stretching, scratching, daydreaming, thinking, and a myriad of other attention-grabbing devices. Our list is in Section x. Make your own, it's interesting. We're very good at finding ways to detour our attention onto routes that

derail uncomfortable feelings; we often prefer substitutes. The trick is to not accept substitutes! The process of discovering your defenses against feeling is of great importance as you attend to inner impulses. These defenses are the portal to the real gold in the mine that we are excavating.

It's important to state again that defenses are not bad; they've been created for the sake of survival. We produce defense mechanisms in response to experiences that we determine at a very particular point in our lives to be a major threat. Defense mechanisms do not dismantle themselves, nor can they be talked away or willed away. This is because they are physically internalized. They sometimes manifest in obsessive thought or behavior. Defenses become inappropriate when they make us less adaptive to present day circumstances, or when they keep us from feeling alive, whole and participatory. The only way a defense relinquishes its hold on us is when it is experienced as a lived sensation in real time – in the here and now, where the need for its protection no longer exists. When it's lived in this manner the defense can be renegotiated by the whole human system – the felt awareness of the sensations that accompany defense, the habitual emotions and thoughts that erupt out of the defensive maneuver - all coalesce in the present to apprehend the fact that it is no longer needed. This leads to unwinding, to restoration.

How do we recognize a defense pattern? With difficulty! They're tricky. They don't like to be discovered, but at the same time they're as obvious as the proverbial nose on your face. They're the thing that's so familiar you don't notice it. Or you think that this is you. Or even think that this is a good thing, something to pursue. Anything that captures your attention and pulls you away from experiencing life fully in the present time is potentially a defense.

We've discovered some of the really common activities that people engage in when they first start to bring their attention to repair work (See table 1). But soon the trickster aspect of defenses becomes noticeable. Fear, for instance, which can be a truly adaptive emotion – we need it to recognize real danger - can easily be used to grab attention away from some frightening old trauma. We become preoccupied with fear and believe that this is an accurate read-out of current reality. We believe we have something to fear and this is why we're scared. This may also be true, but not necessarily. Real time life is mostly not frightening, at least in post modern America. To feel fear much of the time is a maladaptive way to be. The questioning mind eventually wonders if it is actually a defense instead of reality, and lets the fear take hold of attention without acting on, or believing in it. Then the fear is engaged in a manner that the whole system can participate in. We can realize the discordance between the fear and present day life, and make the perceptual adjustment. What happens next is that the fear disappears, leaving you with something else – often it is the trauma that the defense was protecting against, but many times it is merely another defense mechanism that comes up for review. Each stage of review is important though, and taken over time will bring awareness to the earliest, oldest and most entrenched tissues that pull the whole system into a closed state.

Being willing and able to feel defenses is a cultural and political decision. Our priorities have to change from the highly valued “pursuit of happiness” to include feeling unhappy, depressed, pain, suffering. Not masochistically, and not as an end in itself, but in the confidence that this is the royal road to integrated living. This goes against the grain of socially approved priorities so to engage in repair work is to be ever so slightly un-American.

13. Taking on the Nervous System

“Nothing in biology makes sense except in the light of evolution” Ted Dobzhansky.

For the last 3000 years or so, homo sapiens has been pushing the potentials of the Central Nervous System. This discovery process has been thrilling, informative, evolutionary, and now, extreme. We’ve created a computer technology, a CNS mimicry that is helping us define and understand our nervous systems even more thoroughly. We can look at our past, look at our present, project into predictions about the future and then theorize about, manipulate and control our environment, our cultures and ourselves. Developing the CNS has been the preferred direction of evolution and it is easy for us to see it as being an overly important priority in the scheme of things. But the fact is, the nervous system is only one of the many potentials a human system has to play with, and perhaps we’re about to play too long and too hard.

The nervous system can exert authoritarian power over all of the other functions and structures in a body. Everyone is aware that ‘mind over matter’ is possible. We can think ourselves into better performance. We can plot out exercise strategies that we force onto our tissues in the service of faster, longer, harder. The nervous system has entry into hormonal and enzymatic functions and its control can be exaggerated to make those systems function ‘better’. We seem to have blessed, elevated and sanctified the idea that ‘more is better’. The history of our political systems has been a relentless drive toward authoritarian power, and this should be no surprise given the route evolution has taken us.

Out of the nervous system has come our understanding of the body in medical terms. It has been defined according to symptoms and ailments, and we take for granted the premise that good health and freedom from symptoms is not just a good thing, but in this country a right and prerogative. Human performance and human health are constructs of nervous system advancement. The immune system has been placed in the vanguard of human health and every drop wrung out of it to produce and ensure forever a lifelong series of healthy, happy days. The premise is that newer technologies produced by nervous system control are going to get us where we want to go. Is there another premise?

Of course, or we wouldn’t have asked.

The human body has many potentialities; many systems and functions that the process of evolution can explore, and push as far as they can go. The connective tissue matrix is the structure to which we’ve returned to find the properties of generalization and adaptability

that the evolutionary process usually seeks before engaging in a new direction of exploration.

14. Tracking Habits

Our habits are a valuable source of clues for us. Becoming aware of them in daily life provides another rich avenue for self-reflection. In one sense habits are short cuts. We find ways to get things done with the least amount of time, energy, money, involvement – whatever resource we each, individually, need to limit. Some of these are personal – cooking from a limited menu, maintaining a particular order/disorder, a way of writing, eating chocolate instead of finding a lover. Other habits have cultural origin – clothing fads or uniforms, ways of training children, typical ways of structuring time, for instance. Genetic propensities and traits can even be seen as long-term habits.

A habit generally starts for some good reason – a need to conserve time, money or some other resource, and at some point becomes the ‘way you always do it’. The habit develops into a stuckness in your life, something you never change and eventually become pretty unaware of. So bringing awareness back into the habits you currently hold becomes another way to find the patterns that have now come to run you - the motors that drive your life instead of choices you make en route.

The cultural habits that you fall into are fairly easy to track. It takes little time spent in awareness for them to fall away. You may feel very refreshed, or lighter somehow, and think that a lot has happened – this unwinding is easy and eventful! But the personal habits, which can often be the result of traumas, are really dug in and a lot of awareness and tracking may be necessary before enough unwinding has happened to be noticeable. Staying with these longer unwindings can become tedious, boring, repetitious and uncomfortable – this is the real work and also the most rewarding in the long run.

Once you unwind something, it cannot be wound up again. Often it can feel that you’re unwinding the same thing over and over, but careful attention to the movements your body makes will show you that something is always different. There may be many events through time that have layered themselves onto this same ‘stuckness’, and will unwind like echoes across a canyon wall – just as articulate but ever fainter and always saying the same thing. The important thing is to keep paying attention without trying to change anything. The changes arise in whatever order is most available right then.

Often, when an old pattern is very close to finally unwinding, a sudden awareness of losing something comes up. It can be accompanied by a fear or panic, like a pain in the chest or a notion that “life won’t be any good without this”. The thing that’s being lost though is the wound up stuck pattern, and awareness of the sense of loss is important here along with absolutely not acting on any impulse to pull your attention off whatever is unwinding. This is when the relief is about to occur. Faith that comes of experience helps in these situations. We have found that the loss of an old pattern, even one you thought you liked or were comfortable with, does not leave you with a scarcity, but rather with a

greater sense of richness about your life. You become more able during daily life to see the habits you've entrained yourself to as they lose their invisibility. Now you get to choose whether to take that short cut or try the longer route. Once you've regained the ability to choose it doesn't fade away.

15. The Power of Delay

To be, or not to be: that is the question:

Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer
The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,
Or to take arms against a sea of troubles,
And by opposing, end them?

In Shakespeare's famous soliloquy Hamlet (Act 3, Scene 1) is contemplating whether to live or die. From our perspective, he is contemplating whether to pause, to delay his reaction to 'outrageous events', which is to be - 'not to do', or to take his life - 'to do'; not to be.

From previous sections we can now infer that a quick reaction to a given stimulus is likely to be an immune-based reaction, linked to an original survival response; more than likely an escalatory response in the current situation. Since in daily life, our survival is not typically threatened, such a response no longer serves us well. Absent immediate threat, our survival is better served by delay than by instantaneous response. All around us, though, are messages urging us to act NOW. We live in a fast-moving culture where delay is neither valued nor appreciated. "He who hesitates is lost", "Life is short, so we must not delay", "Time is money", "You haven't got time for the pain" are a few of the messages which urge us to immediate response and action. They form the background of our lives. By becoming aware of the list in the section on 'What We Do to Change our Feelings' we can learn to delay our habitual responses. Once a habit pattern or a defense mechanism has been noticed, that mere act of noticing begins to diminish its power. It is not necessary to try to change it; simply to pay attention whenever it makes its appearance. Noticing itself introduces a delay. This is not to be confused with abridging spontaneity, however. One soon learns where spontaneity enriches, and where it is merely a response to a signal. If I were to yell, "Move; there's a car coming", you would not be concerned about losing your spontaneity. On the other hand, if I were to say, "Those people are lazy and taking our jobs", you could well benefit from paying attention to your reaction before responding.

Once we realize that delay is available to us, we begin to free ourselves from the programming that has become part of every life. This is indeed the place to look for freedom. Having absorbed society's imperatives via our personal histories, we become our own authoritarian captor. The speed of most cultures, ours being a prime example, demands that we do everything faster, and faster still. We encourage our babies to walk early, to talk early, to participate in as many learning activities as we can find. We rejoice in how quickly they learn to read, or solve mathematical problems, and are often

dismayed when they do not, or do them slowly. We offer them opportunities to use every available moment either to learn, to prepare for the future, and/or to compete. Eventually, they must yield to faster, younger competition, and become relegated to the vastly increasing realm of the tolerated, the ill, the dependent and the resented. Old age, no longer a period of continuing growth and contribution, becomes society's burden.

We do have the possibility for withdrawing from the inexorability of this path. The human species is the only one that has a childhood – a prolonged period of dependency. All other beings move quickly from birth or infancy to a juvenile state, in which they can more or less fend for themselves, which they learn to do by apprenticing to their elders. Ashley Montagu, the anthropologist who popularized neoteny in 'Growing Young', describes the process as preserving youth by retaining early traits and delaying maturity as long as possible. Neoteny refers to the slowing down of the rate of development, and the extension of the phases of development from birth to old age. Montagu describes it as "a process that played a fundamental role in the evolution of the human species and the development of every human being who had ever lived".

If we were to live in such a 'neotenus' way, what would we do differently? How do we develop the skills and the opportunities for delay? How do we support slowing down? In a competitive, individualistic economy, where competition rules, where do we find the means to support ourselves physically while we slow down? One real possibility is to be around people who also want to slow down. Connecting with people of similar orientation can lead to the development of support groups. One such group is our Foundation for New Directions (Holistic Living Center), in which small group businesses have developed, participation in child-rearing has been shared, opportunities have been created for sharing responsibilities, and health challenges have been met. The environment that supports 'unwinding' allows for an increase in awareness, which leads to intra- and interpersonal growth. They are a natural consequence of unwinding, which is an ongoing activity. As interpersonal issues are dealt with, the opportunities for economic growth stem from the evolution of the group.

Back in 1966, several people, until then unconnected, heard of Dr. Marvin Solit's work, and were drawn to explore it. They found the setting he had created to be a non-directed environment in which participants were encouraged simply to become aware of their feelings, with no other agenda, no financial expectations, no appointments and minimal direction. The one question they would be asked was, "What are you aware of feeling?" Many came and went over the years, but those who stayed around, many until this very day, were launched on a lifestyle that no one could have predicted. As it became apparent, for instance, that going out to work in an environment that was not 'person-friendly' was less appealing than finding ways to work together, we identified opportunities that could be income-producing for several people. As each one began the process of unwinding, we found ways of earning money that arose from interests that developed, for example, in geometry and woodworking. We even formed cleaning, security and futon making groups, which were less prestigious than most were used to, but the tradeoff was freedom, energy, community building and cooperative child care. Most important, we were not so pressured that we had to stop the process of unwinding.

Gradually these forays were replaced by others. The most significant activity, in terms of freedom and income, turned out to be real estate. As a result, the original interest in growth and healing, which evolved into a holistic environment, could be maintained without sacrificing individual predilections, including preferred lifestyles. Moreover, the quality of the practice of real estate itself became holistic, with ripple effects in the wider community. Reputations were made based on deep understanding of clients' needs, and a desire to work effectively with whole situations as opposed to the more traditional purchase and sale of property. We have been able, through these activities, to maintain FND/HLC comfortably, if not lavishly.

Two powerful tools that have been fundamental to 'the work', as we have come to call it, are Non-Directed Body Movement and General Semantics, the work of Alfred J. Korzybski. (See Section X). Both tools are based on the delay of habitual responses. Conflict, anxieties, ambivalence and all the trials to which human beings are subject have been an important part of the evolution both of the group and the individuals. However, the embracing of a non-escalatory approach together does not preclude the understanding that these issues tend to arise again and again until resolved. The principle of the delayed reaction has allowed deep feelings and interpersonal issues to be experienced with awareness and inner-direction, but there are always more that come up. If we are recapitulating human experience, we cannot necessarily expect an end to the process. Still, over time, the lifestyle of attention and delayed response has resulted in transmutation of relationships with self and others.

In the beginning, people came to FND to see Dr. Solit on an individual basis. As they began to feel the effects on their personal lives, however, and as appointments were not required, they – we - often found ourselves spending time together. This soon became more the norm than being alone, and instead of relating merely to Marvin, we began to relate also to one another. NDBM was now happening interpersonally as well as intra-personally. Participants discovered a physical sense of one another's 'stuck' areas, emotional connections among those present, and to ongoing unwinding.

Unwinding assumes a history of winding up, whether a tension in the shoulder from resisting an anticipated blow, a battle fought long ago, a fixed smile etched by a rejection, or something as simple as a cut or a bruise. Similarly, we can assume a history among groups as well. The hatreds among ethnic and tribal peoples that go back for centuries, fanned by revenge (escalation), have a present day quality to them. They do not feel like the past. Neither do the fixed smiles or the tense shoulder. The past, therefore, is very much present, both within us and among us. It doesn't work to say "You're not being rejected NOW" or "Your grandfather was tortured 2 generations ago", because the initial injury has not been unwound, or repaired. We have discovered that the wounds we still have among us, from however far back, are still there to be first felt, and only then, healed. The energy 'locked up' in the wounds may be released not only through individual unwinding, but may require a restoration of energy by someone else, either with whom an early conflict had actually occurred, or with someone who stirs that connection.

We have experienced the gamut of emotions over the years, from panic to rage to envy to bitterness. We have experienced illnesses of many kinds. We have experienced poverty, loneliness, recurrent symptoms, despair and aging. We have not been exempt from life just because we accepted the notion that unwinding was the royal road to psychic, emotional, physical and spiritual health. The difference is in the personal journey that we are willing to take, without knowing the road, and without demanding the security of a goal. As Alan Watts wrote, there is ‘wisdom in insecurity.’ Adaptation becomes a value, as opposed to controlling and directing the outcome.

However, we have found that there is a tendency to heal. Injury and repair are ‘the name of the game’, as it were. This realization, together with the further discovery that we are significant to one another’s healing, has reinforced the choice to continue the process. No panacea; no escape from the hand you’re dealt. Just a different way of playing the cards, and a fascinating adventure, to boot.

16. Diminishing Magnetic Field

To Unwind or Not to Unwind

. “Our Magnetic Shield is Growing Weaker” is the title of an article in ‘New Scientist’ December 13, 2003. The article describes the work of Robert Coe, Professor of Earth Sciences, at the University of California, Santa Cruz. “By studying magnetic particles in lava and clay, Dr. Coe has seen a steady weakening of the magnetic field over the past 2000 years, and noticed that ground and satellite measurements suggest the decline is accelerating. Coe clocks the decline at 5.5% percent per century up to the end of the 19th century, and 8% for the 20th century”...

In 1976 Kyoichi Nakagawa, MD wrote a paper entitled Magnetic Field Deficiency Syndrome and Magnetic Treatment, (Japan medical Journal, No. 2745, 12-4-76). He found that the magnetic field of the earth had been diminishing, and that there are many clinical studies which have demonstrated that among human illness syndromes, there are some which are relieved when magnetic fields are applied to a part of the human body. There appears to be a relationship between the magnetic field and the human body. People suffering from sciatica, low back, joint pains, headaches and other symptoms seem to find relief when magnets (in mattresses, shoes, jewelry, etc.) are applied to compensate for the loss of the natural magnetic field. Dr. Valerie Hunt, in her book “Infinite Mind” (p.31), describes experiments she conducted with human subjects in a room specially constructed to vary the intensity of the magnetic field. When “the magnetism was decreased, gross incoordination occurred, and the entire neurological integrating mechanism was thrown off. Subjects could not balance their bodies; they had difficulty touching finger to nose or other simple coordinated movements. They lost kinesthetic awareness.”

Given our immune/repair discussion earlier, we see that supplying compensatory energy

is in the 'immune' type category of response: another way of changing what we're feeling. (See: Ways We Use To Change Our Feelings). Looking at the 'winding up' offered by compensatory mechanisms, we speculate that the alternative of 'unwinding' affords us the opportunity of 'going with the diminishing force' rather than against it. If indeed, the planet is in an unwinding phase, then human unwinding is consistent with planetary unwinding. In a similar way to allowing personal unwinding without opposing the process, we choose to support (appreciate) the diminishing magnetic field rather than oppose it. In so doing, we continue adaptation to the new environment. This requires a fresh look at Darwinian evolution. The survival of the fittest means the ability to adapt and to fit into the new conditions of the environment. Times of diminishing magnetic fields have historically been times of large evolutionary changes.

17. Philosophy Meets Life

As you become more conversant in this new dialogue with your body and more practiced at not controlling every action and event, life slowly begins to change. You become more you, as it were. If there is an 'essence of you' it is this that becomes your more prevalent experience of yourself as you live. We unwind into more of what we are, and this will be different for all of us, so it is impossible to predict what will evolve out of each person as they unwind.

Some of us have noticed that this type of work leads to a feeling of being in a different relationship to the prevailing culture, and to our own individual lives. A sense of greater connectedness within our own structures comes alive as well as connectedness to the external environment, whatever that is for each of us. In a way, non-directed non-intentional awareness becomes a way of life. Not totally of course – we all have to 'pay the rent' and find a way of inhabiting this culture – intentionality is always part of the ballgame. But what becomes very evident is something the Taoists write about with ease – the feeling of being on a path that leads from this place to the next to the next...and our major task is to be aware of when it is time to act and when it is time to not act. Both are equally important and the awareness of the call to action and the call to retreat is a first step to staying on that Tao or path. One does have to act of course, when action is called for, and for westerners it's often easier to act than to retreat. But once you've re-established a working relationship with your repair system, the times to retreat become as obviously important and valuable as the times to act. Like warp and woof in the hands of a master weaver, a well-lived life becomes a tapestry of starts and stops that eventually reveals a pattern of great beauty and depth.

Because new energy means change, the status quo of a culture is committed to keeping the real energy of the world out of itself. Even the people who see themselves as liberal and understanding of world views, if they still have an authoritarian relationship to their own bodies, have not fundamentally shifted to a different premise. They remain in conflict, and nothing too new will come of their efforts. A new status quo may develop, but without a different relationship to the process of change, this new status quo will again have to be defended – and conflict will continue.

First we have to recognize that we have a relationship with our bodies. Then we can explore what it is and watch ourselves trying to manipulate it for the better. Those manipulations are the important work. This is a passive rather than aggressive mode we have to put ourselves in if we're going to watch. The act of having a relationship with our bodies and putting awareness into it changes everything - without trying to change it. The act of giving attention is the only act required.

We have to learn to allow pain and other symptoms. We have to allow ourselves to give up our identifications.

We have to redefine being sick and being well. This is a cultural dilemma. We want to feel good and look good. Life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness makes it 'our right' to be well and be happy. Reinstating pain and suffering into this culture as valuable commodities makes for a very fundamental shift. We hold onto the myth of feeling good.

The body wants to change and to do that it needs to get new energy. "Where's the missing energy?" our systems cry out, and we feel that as a real and natural drive. We mistake its source and so we overeat. Food is abundant and cheap. It has an anesthetic quality that becomes a replacement for the missing energy. The real energy that our systems are crying out for is in the symbiotic action embedded in the repair function.

9/11 was a big blast of energy into the center of our culture. We could have taken a repair route but instead did an immune action – attack aggressively, globally and reactively. "Terrorists" are the perfect unstamp-outable invaders. Just as the 150,000 bacteria that invaded their amoeba hosts and killed off a good number until an equilibrium was reached, the amoeba took in their invaders, together they discovered a new relationship and became different. We can learn from this.(Margulis 1981, Symbiosis in Cell Evolution p.213).

"The Great Unwinding" is a work in progress. Stay tuned for updates. 02/05/05

See WWW.holisticliving.info for more writings on NDM, including an introductory manual.