

Non-Directed Body Movement

OR 'Standing Around'
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1. Start standing, with eyes closed. You won't necessarily remain standing. Lying down seems to work well also. Sitting is problematic - it is usually a position that controls body movements, restricting the unwinding of the tissues. Notice whatever comes to your attention first. This may be a physical sensation, an emotion, or a stream of thoughts.

2. If it is a physical sensation then continue to attend to the felt sense of it, noticing if it moves, intensifies, disappears, or if the sensation changes.

3. If it is an emotion, notice what it is, then remove the name - de-label it. You can easily de-label emotions by turning your attention to the physical sensations that are a part of every emotional state. Once you've found the felt sense, track it as in #2.

(A note about emotions: they come and go as you unwind your past. Some people are afraid of unwinding because they do not want to be overwhelmed by uncontrollable emotions. It has been my experience that you never get overwhelmed if you de-label the emotion and attend to the felt sense. The whole pattern can then truly unwind. This is very different than the practice of "getting it all out" by allowing an emotion to become overwhelming and dramatic - this seems to only practice the emotion, not unwind it.)

4. If it is a stream of thoughts, notice what sort of thoughts they are. Don't stop the thinking; rather develop an attention to the thinking. This is easier to do if you attend not so much to the content but a larger category: for instance, if you find yourself dwelling on how your spouse ticked you off last night by not coming home in time to get to the movie and you didn't know where s/he was... instead of attending to the details of the event, notice that your thoughts may be caught in a past event having to do timing, or a broken promise, or uncertainty. Then see if it is possible to detect any physical sensation or posture that arises with the stream of thoughts. If you can detect any, then attend to the felt sense as in #2.

Sometimes people cannot detect anything physical at all. This seems to happen when there has been a physical abuse trauma and the defense was to disappear into a cerebral state and separate completely from what is happening. If this is the case, just keep paying attention to the stream of thoughts. Sooner or later that defense pattern, the distracting thought pattern, has been looked at so often it will begin to falter. You will probably notice the falter by an odd emotion such as frustration, fear, or a sudden vacancy accompanied by not knowing what to do next. This is progress. Again, attend to the emotion, de-label it and see if it's possible to detect any physical

sensation.

5. Once you are able to attend and track the felt sense you will begin the process of learning to follow instead of lead. When your tissues begin to unwind they do it physically - your body will begin to move of its own accord, with no direction or decision-making on your part. Usually the movements begin slowly as if "they had a mind of their own" (which they do). If you are uncertain whether a movement is a true unwinding or whether you actually decided to do it, put yourself back in your original position and see if the movement happens again, paying attention to your thoughts to notice any orders you may be giving. If the movement happens again then it's a true non-directed movement. Allow this to happen, continuing to keep your attention on it. Sometimes movements change into something else. Sometimes they repeat themselves endlessly. Sometimes they stop completely. Sometimes they cause an intense contraction that can be painful and keep getting more intense. If this happens don't worry, don't try to stop it, or stretch it, or otherwise fix the situation. You've discovered an "unfinished action" - your body was trying to seize up completely at one time (or many times, as at the office), but you've stopped it before it could finish the movement. So it's still trying to finish the seizing-up. Let it finish. The contraction will dissipate of its own accord once it's finished the interrupted action.

We've learned many techniques to interrupt painful contractions because we believe that pain is automatically a bad thing, and that interrupting pain is a good thing to do. So we tend to interrupt and try to 'fix' painful situations. Watch for these interrupting habits. Pain isn't necessarily a bad thing; it's focused feelings. The word 'pain', however, adds judgment to the feelings, making them more difficult to access directly. Learning to fully experience feelings without escalating them with abstractions (labels) about them leads us to deeper levels of unwinding.

6. A Word about Intention:

We rarely make a move without a goal in mind. Being goal-oriented is part of our culture, education and sense of well-being. There are many situations where directedness is very helpful and necessary. But if we wish to repair damage of any kind, or to become as optimally adaptable as our species can be, then we need to learn to follow the movements of our tissues instead of leading them. To unwind and repair we have to have no intention whatsoever. We must approach our system with attention, but with no intention to accomplish anything. No desire to make something feel better, discover something more about ourselves, unwind a particular incident, get rid of a nagging pain. There is only what is happening exactly NOW.

7. A Second Word about Intention: The Pause.

Once we manage to begin standing around without a goal in mind the next place many of us get sidetracked is the nearly automatic response of trying to "make something feel better". The big fix. It's quite a habit in our culture, and has been for a long time. Once we've discovered a symptom that's uncomfortable we search for some way to make it "go back the way it was before". Notice yourself doing this. You may not be able to catch yourself at it right away. Well-learned habits are hard to even notice. Once you've noticed any attempt to fix things, give yourself a pause before you act on your

inclination. The pause is very important. Don't just stop your intended attempt to fix things, but also attend to what you are feeling - physically. The "fix-it action" is a way to distract yourself from the damage that was done earlier. It's a defense to keep you out of unsafe territory. Either that, or it's the technique you've learned to get yourself through life with this damage intact. When we have had an injury, whether physical, emotional or both, our systems go to great lengths to keep us safe. We will unconsciously put together an endless variety of physical, emotional or mental distractions to keep us from paying attention to old damage. This is not a bad thing - our systems are trying to keep us alive at all costs and these distracting elements are a good way to do it. Our systems just haven't caught up with what's now happening - that we are no longer in danger. So, give yourself a pause before taking action. Notice what you feel, (not how you feel), and return to following the movements and feelings in your tissues instead of leading them.

8. Another Reason to Pause:

Allowing yourself to pause before taking action breaks into an existing habit pattern. In so doing, more information is allowed to surface. Perhaps it isn't verbally accessible knowledge, at least not yet, but it will be understandable to the rest of your non-verbal system. Information about the damage you've incurred that's been suppressed, ignored, or bulldozed over with medications or fix-it techniques, will begin to make an appearance. This is very interesting stuff, and it's all your very own individual history that no one in the world could tell you about.

9. A Word about Resistance:

Resistance is something we do in the service of Intention. If we have a goal then we fight off challenges to that goal. We can get into subtle resistance patterns with this unwinding work. Since the unwinding occurs at the tissue level we often try to keep our attention on our felt sense when, for example, it may be our thoughts that are really active. Many of us have trained in meditation techniques where you control thinking by letting the thoughts go and returning your attention to breathing. In Non-Directed Body Movement, that would be a resistance technique - taking your attention off what's happening and placing it elsewhere. If you notice that all you can do is go cerebral, then go cerebral - just notice it, notice it with complete attention. Another common resistance is to stretch in response to a contracting pattern. The stretch may be a resistance to contraction. Just pause, notice the desire to stretch, and return your attention to what is contracting. Attend to the state of your system exactly as it is right now. When you can do that it will then take you to the next best place it can go.

10. The Next Best Place:

Repair work is not a linear process of getting a bit better each day. For one thing, "better" has no meaning in this work. What we are doing is unfettering our systems from a lifetime of habits - motor habits, thought habits, behavior habits. Some were intentionally learned, some are responses to danger or injury. What you will be when freer of all that is unknown. It may be "better" or it may be something else entirely. The body persists in repairing itself; we just have to allow it.

When we back off from leading our systems and learn to follow, then our

bodies will unwind whatever is most available. We have no idea what that might be, but in retrospect I understand that the process takes the path of least resistance, often leaving you in a new place (physically or emotionally) for awhile before unwinding further. There seems to be no optimal, perfect place to get to. Or if there is, it seems to be a state of complete adaptability – being able to change as the situation necessitates. (The idea of a heaven, nirvana, security or other point of perfection seems more like wishful thinking than reality).

11. Intra- and Interpersonal Unwinding:

Life patterns accumulate in the context of interpersonal relationships; they tend to surface more naturally, therefore, with one or more people present.

Unwinding alone is also recommended. Sometimes no one else is around, so alone it has to be. As you become more attentive to your whole system, not just the verbally conscious part, and learn to follow as often as you lead, then your whole life starts to become an unwinding process. In this way the unwinding work is always group work and always individual.

The pioneers of Non-Directed Body Movement are a group in Cambridge, MA, called Foundations for New Directions, established in 1966, and led by Dr. Marvin Solit.

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