

From Simon Says to Self-Sovereignty Empowering People Through Interoception



Pre-Livestream Preparation

The following notes are intended to support your understanding of the keynote “Empowering People through Interoception”. Hopefully, you have already watched the keynote as a preparation for the livestream intensive. If you haven’t watched it yet you can view this hour-long lecture by going to: <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=979592705721850>



Proprioception: Sense of Position in Space

is the *subconscious* awareness of the relative position of body parts in relation to other body parts. Proprioception allows you to walk in complete darkness without losing your balance. If you didn’t have this subliminal body consciousness you wouldn’t be able to drive a car because you would not be able to look at the road and steer and use the foot pedals at the same time. Nor would you be able to walk without watching exactly where you put your feet. Proprioception is mostly orchestrated through receptors in your muscles, tendons and fascia and relayed to the nervous system. These proprioceptors transmit information about muscle length and rate of change as well as muscle tension.

Kinesthesia: Sense of Body Movement

is the *conscious felt awareness* of the position, shape, movement and orientation of the body by means of sensory organs (proprioceptors) in the muscles, tendons, joints, fascia, skin and through the vestibular apparatus in the inner ears. Some differentiate the kinesthetic sense from the proprioceptive sense by excluding the sense of balance from kinesthesia. You can teach yourself to improve your kinesthesia– you can improve the accuracy, intricacy, speed and quality of movement, through consistent practice over time.

Interoception: Awareness of Internal Process

is the awareness of our *internal process* and how we feel. Because of interoception we know when we're hungry, frightened, or when we need to go to the bathroom. Interoception alerts us to whether touch feels safe or intrusive. Interoception is contemporarily defined as the sense of the internal state of the body.

Interoception is experienced through *visceral signaling*:

- ~ Respiratory System (breathing)
 - ~ Cardiovascular System (heartbeat)
 - ~ Gastrointestinal system (enteric nervous system, “gut feelings”¹)
 - ~ Thermoregulatory (heat, cold sweat, flushing)
 - ~ Endocrine System (adrenaline, cortisol, relaxation)
 - ~ Nociception (pain)
 - ~ Skin (touch)
-

The Koshas

In the West, when we talk about the body, we are usually only referring to the visible physical body. In the Eastern view of the body both the visible and the invisible body are included in a geographical mapping that acknowledges embodiment as a multifaceted dimension of self. In the yogic paradigm, the body consists of different sheaths or *koshas*, which range from the gross experience of physical structure, such as our muscles and bones, to subtler dimensions of embodiment such as our feelings or emotions. Although different Yoga traditions may vary in the naming and numbering of koshas, a basic scheme would include:

- ~ Physical Body (*Annamaya Kosha*)
- ~ Energetic Body (*Pranamaya Kosha*)
- ~ Body of Feeling and Emotion (*Manamaya Kosha*)
- ~ Body of Thought (*Vijyanamaya Kosha*)
- ~ Body of Liberation (*Anandamaya Kosha*)

¹ Dr Michael Gershon author of *The Second Brain* and professor of pathology and cell biology at Columbia University spent 15 years presenting research until his fellow neuroscientists capitulated and agreed that the neuromass in the belly is an independent brain. This is sometimes referred to as the abdominal brain, or the enteric nervous system.

Each of these levels of embodiment is inextricably linked. If you suffer from feelings of anxiety this may trigger higher cortisol levels that can in turn affect motor control, which could subsequently lead to problems with chronic back pain. If you have chronic pain in your back, this might cause you to feel frustrated and depressed. It is through the process of interoception that we are able to perceive messaging from the body in the form of sensation. Interoception is the gateway into experiencing the subtler dimensions of our embodiment.

Self-Inquiry

When we are hooked up to our felt experience of kinesthesia and interoception we are better able to determine:

- ~ Choice of practice, treatment, strategy
 - ~ Choice of context
 - ~ Depth of movement or exploration
 - ~ Intensity of challenge
 - ~ Duration of stay
 - ~ Optimal Threshold
-

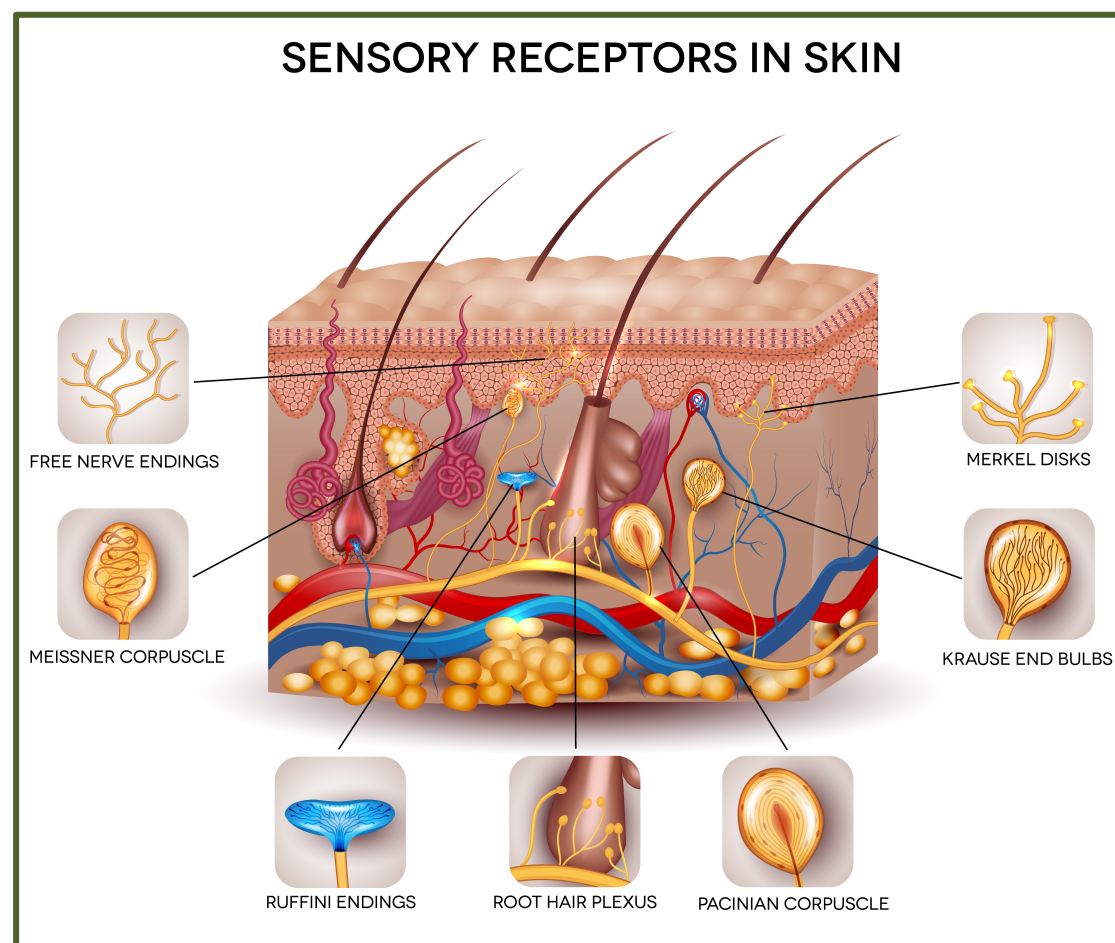
The Skin



Your skin is truly remarkable. An area of skin about the size of your thumb contains some three million cells, one hundred sweat glands, fifty nerve endings, and three feet of blood vessels. Your whole skin has approximately six hundred and forty thousand sensory receptors (which is more than the number of people that attended Donald Trump's inauguration). By the time you are seventy you will have worn out and replaced approximately 850 skins, each one a little different than the last. Your skin is flooding the conscious mind with constantly changing information— right now you may be feeling a scratchy sweater against your neck, the pressure of the seat under

your pelvis, and even the vibration of someone tapping his foot on the floor next to you.

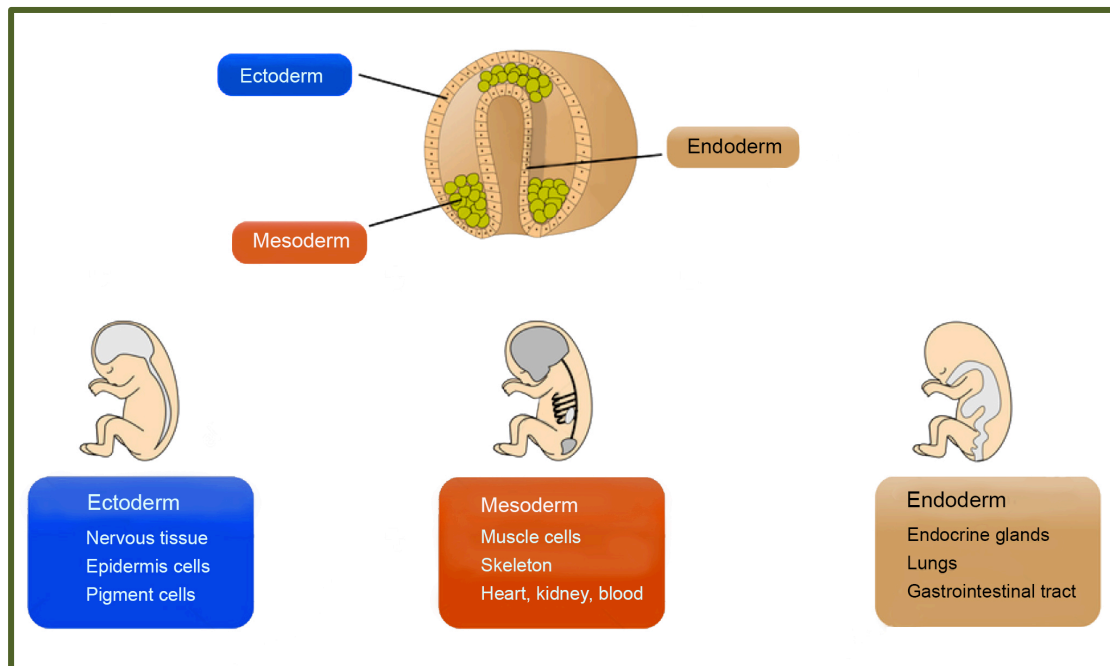
By far the most numerous sensors in your skin are those that signal danger or pain, known as **nocioceptors**. You have many different tactile nerve endings from **free nerve endings** which detect light touch or pressure, temperature and pain and **hair end organs** wrapped around the follicle of every single hair on the body which allow you to feel the tiniest breeze or movement of air on the skin. **Meissner's corpuscles** are acutely sensitive and most abundant on the lips and fingers, right under the surface of the skin. These are sensitive to light pressure, and helpful in determining texture. **Merkel's Discs** transmit long-continuing signals so they can pinpoint an object that is stationary on the skin, such as a fly that has landed on your arm. In the deepest layers of the skin the **Ruffini's corpuscles** are particularly abundant in joint capsules, signaling shifts of pressure caused by changing articulation. **Pacinian corpuscles** are like microphones in the deepest layers of the skin and tissues—these detect vibration. And wild, crazy looking bulbous capsules called **Krause's End Bulbs** contain sensory nerve endings, which may be mechanoreceptors, but which are also thought to be thermoreceptors sensitive to cold and activated by temperatures less than 20 degrees Celsius. They occur more superficially in the skin than heat receptors.





The Connection Between the Skin and the Nervous System

There is a close association between the skin and the nervous system. All tissues and organs of the body develop from **three primitive layers of cells**, that make up the early embryo. The inner layer of cells is called the **endoderm** and the endocrine glands, lungs and gastrointestinal tract arise from this layer. The middle layer or **mesoderm** produces muscles cells, the skeleton and the heart, kidneys and blood. The outermost layer or **ectoderm** produces both the brain and nervous tissue, pigment cells and . . . the skin. Thus the brain and skin arise from the source.



Another way of thinking about this is to consider the skin as the outermost surface of the brain, or the brain as the innermost surface of the skin.

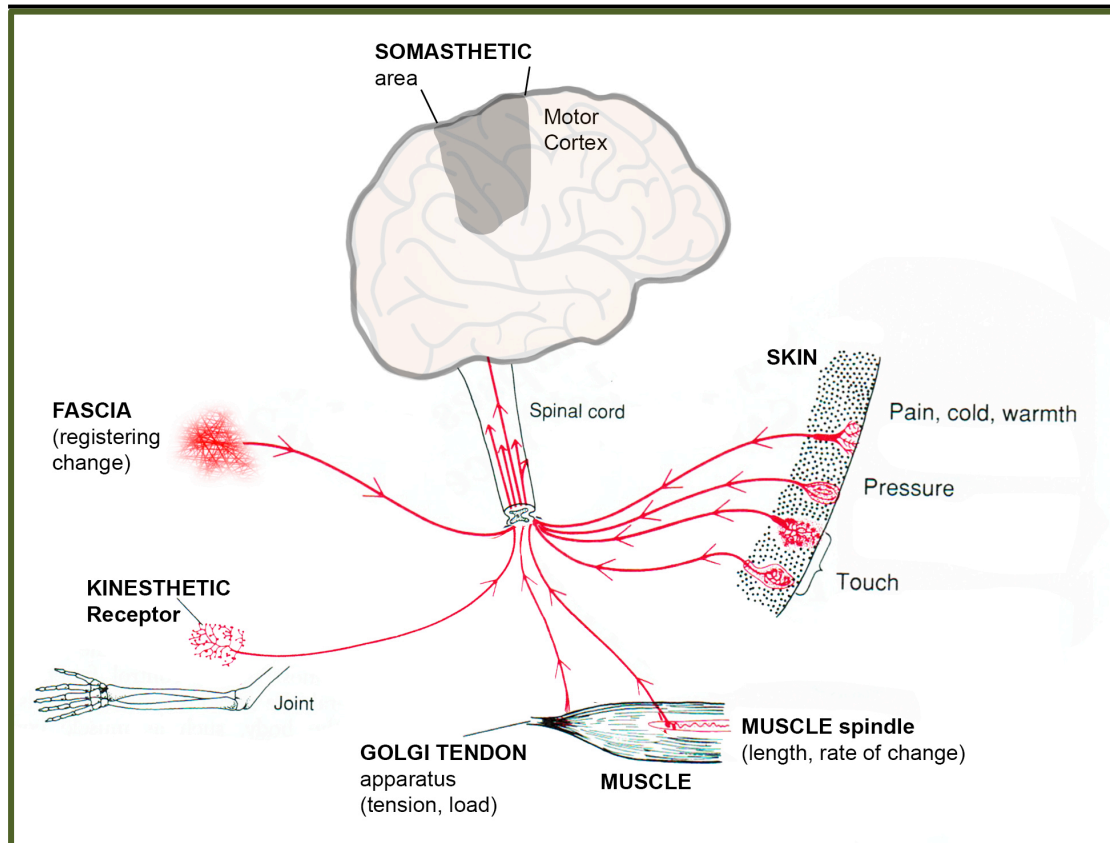
Deane Juhan, in his groundbreaking book *Job's Body*² describes a remarkable process called **neural mapping** whereby

“specific nerve endings on the skin transmit their signals . . . to specific cell bodies in the sensory cortex (in the brain). . . the organization of this parallel circuitry is actually initiated at the periphery. . . it is the periphery which helps to organize the connections in the central nervous system, not an organized central nervous system which reaches out to innervate the periphery. . . . this suggests that the use of touch and sensation to modify our experience in response to the environment exerts an active influence upon the organization of reflexes and body image deep within the central nervous system.”

² *Job's Body: A Handbook for Bodywork*, by Deane Juhan, Station Hill Press, New York, 1987

This has significant ramifications for those of us who use touch to facilitate movement repatterning to increase kinesthetic/interoceptive awareness. It also speaks to the importance of how we contact the world around us and how that contact literally shapes our neural intelligence.

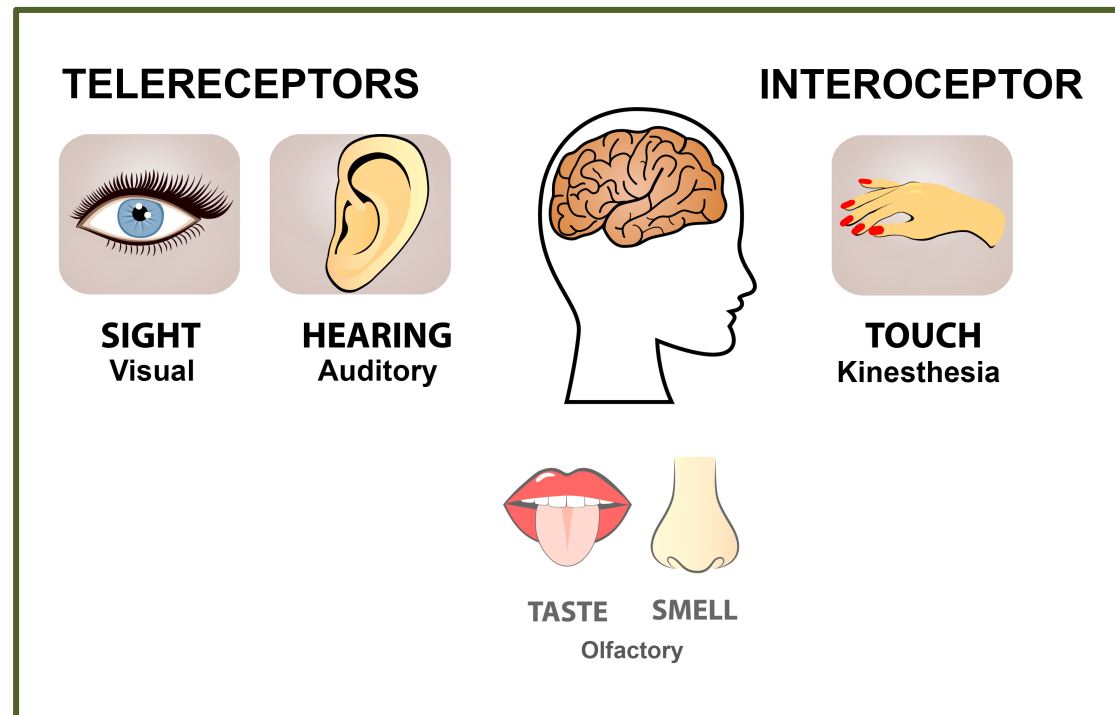
Muscles, tendons and fascia



There are spindles in the belly of the muscle and Golgi tendon organs embedded deep within the musculoskeletal system: these register stretch, load, and resistance. The signals for these two receptors are almost entirely for the purpose of muscle control. But what we now know is that fascia is also highly innervated with sensory nerve endings. Fascia is a continuous biological fabric in the body that both connects and separates structures. Clinical research has determined that fascia contains ***six times more sensory nerve endings than muscle***. This has exciting implications for core muscles such as the psoas muscle as a sensory organ. Fascia has four types of sensory nerve endings, which are responsive to mechanical stimulation in the form of tension

and pressure.³ Research has shown that often a muscular or motor problem is primarily a sensory problem and that training sensory awareness gives the brain the stimulus it needs to improve movement.⁴

Teaching and Learning Movement



Telereceptors (Greek “tele”, at a distance): These receptors tell us what is happening outside the body.

- ~ Visual Sense: Monkey see, monkey do.
- ~ Auditory Sense: Simon Says

³ Robert Schleip, “Adventures in the Jungle of Neuro-Myofascial Net,” *Rolf Lines*, May 1996.

Robert Schleip, Thomas W. Findley, Leon Chairtow, and Peter A Huijiing, eds., *Fascia: The Tensional Network of the Human Body*, 1st edition, Churchill Livingston London, 2012.

Robert Schleip *Fascia as a Sensory Organ: Clinical Applications*, Research Gate, June 2017
Robert Schleip notes that “fascia has four types of sensory nerve endings, which are responsive to mechanical stimulation: Golgi organs, Rufini receptors, Pacini corpuscles, and Interstitial receptors. These sensory nerve endings can be called fascial mechanoreceptors, meaning that they respond to mechanical tension and pressure.

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/319182467_FASCIA_AS_A_SENSORY_ORGAN_Clinical_Applications

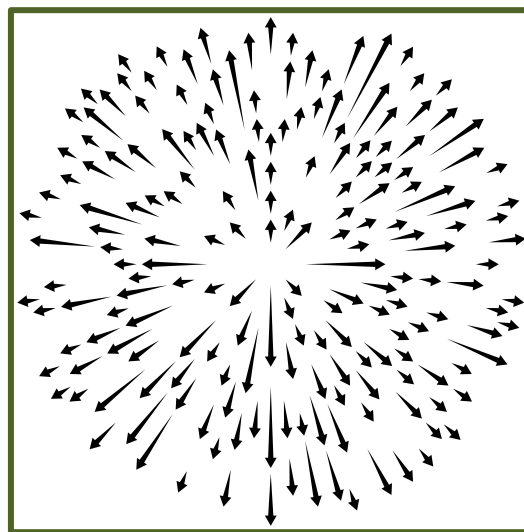
⁴ Ana R. C. Donati, et al., “Long-Term Training with a Brain Machine Interface-Based Gait Protocol Induces Partial Neurological Recovery in Paraplegic Patients,” *Scientific Reports* 6 (2016): 30383

Interoceptors: These receptors tell us what is happening inside the body.

Research shows that kinesthetic guidance can be translated into behavior 30 times faster than visual guidance can, and many thousands of times faster than audio guidance.”⁵⁶ Although, audiovisual learning has its place, there are some real disadvantages to overreliance on these modes of learning. First, as someone looks and listens to what is outside the self they tend to move their sensory perception outwards. The image seen, whether it is a photo, video, or real person, is an image of another structure, and often a structure that may function very differently to our own. This can create “the tyranny of the ideal image” and this image can dominate perception so that a person may try to make the body “look” right even if it “feels” wrong. This tendency is so strong and so pervasive that the attempt to make shapes with the body based on an external reference may eclipse warning signals from the body. Being preoccupied with attaining a body shape may also override the perception of sensory information arising in the present moment. Our thoughts and beliefs about the body are rarely as accurate as the “breaking news” that is arising in the present tense. Being connected to this present tense information affords us the ability to act more skillfully in response to what we feel.

A New Model : Sense–Feel–Act– Deduct–Adapt–Evolve

Sensing

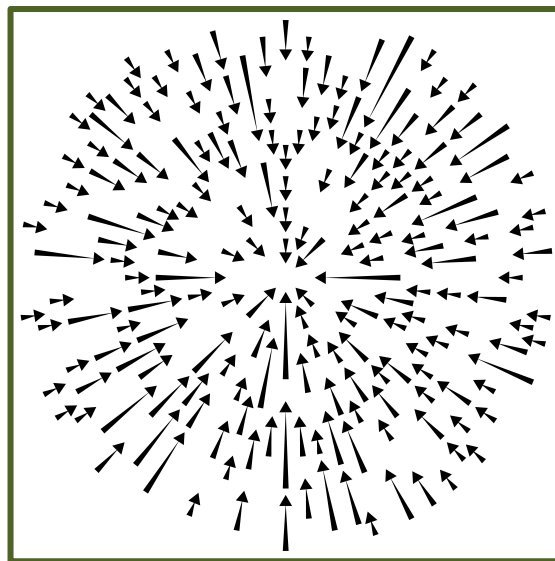


⁵ Birdwhistell R, *Kinesics and Context: Essays on Body Motion Communication*, Penguin Press, New York, NY, 1971

⁶ Kinesthetic Dystonia: what bodywork can offer a new physical education by T. W. Myers (Thomas W. Myers) *Journal of Bodywork and Movement Therapies* (1998) 2(2) 101-114, Harcourt Brace & Co Ltd 1998.

There is a distinction between sensing and feeling. Sensing could be considered as an outward orientation of perception that has to do with drawing attention to the periphery of the body and our relationship to our environment. Usually when we are sensing the Sympathetic Nervous System is more dominant: determining whether we freeze, fight, take flight, or fake-it, and also helping us to reorient our movement choices in response to what is happening around us. Sensing often takes people to the surface of the skin in a centrifugal orientation of perception.

Feeling



Feeling is an inward orientation of perception, which has to do with drawing attention toward the interior of the body. Increasing our capacity to feel allows us to develop a relationship to the content of our experience. Feeling is facilitated through relaxation, which requires the support of both the parasympathetic nervous system and the enteric nervous system (the “brain” in the belly)⁷.

Dr. Richard Miller defines feelings as: sensations that involve perception through kinesthesia such as warm, cool, comfortable and uncomfortable.

Emotions are defined as psychophysiological states that moves us to action. They are expressions related to our perceptions and beliefs about objects or people. Examples are anger, sadness etc. . .

⁷ This interview with Philip Shepherd, featured in the The Sun magazine is a great introduction to the enteric nervous system <https://philipshepherd.com/the-sun/>

Feelings are usually precursors to emotions. When your interoceptive sense becomes refined, you may begin to notice the sensations that are the lead up to emotions. This can help you to recognize the landscape of your emotional terrain, to manage how you navigate through it, and to become less reactive in the face of emotions (your own and others). Becoming conversant and comfortable with a broad spectrum of sensations, feelings and emotions increases your “emotional fitness” and leads to greater resilience.

Opening up feeling function is supported best when:

- ~ We are in an environment that we perceive as **safe and secure**.
- ~ We begin the process in a **deliberately simplified space** (e.g. standing, sitting, lying down, walking slowly). Reducing extraneous stimulation and activity can help us to feel how we are in the moment.
- ~ We take the time to **register a perceptual baseline** (how are we now?)
- ~ We also **acknowledge the neutral substratum** that has a consistent patterning relative to the ever-changing arising and dissolving of experience. This is called *pratyahara*, or the restoration of the senses to perceive the ground upon which experience arises.
- ~ We **slow down**.
- ~ We **“tag” language to sensation** by naming our experience. By naming our experience we are better equipped to identify a sensory experience and its meaning the next time it arises.

Deducting– Adapting–Evolving

By creating a **sensory memory bank** we begin to make correlations between specific practices and activities with specific sensory experiences. These correlations are then stored as a resource for future experience. A sensory memory bank is a valuable resource, but it can never be absolutely definitive because our body is in a constant state of change. For instance, after a knee injury it may be painful to kneel and the sharp and uncomfortable sensations on the inside of my knee tell me so. Yet, after months, and possibly years of tissue regeneration as well as remedial movements and strengthening, I may be able to kneel again without knee pain. The memory of the sensations that preceded the knee injury and subsequent pain are valuable resources, but it can be self-limiting to assume that in the future certain movements can never be practiced based on the sensations we felt in the past. Tentative and judicious exploration can often prove otherwise.

Having a strong internal referencing process means that we can begin to make deductions about our experience and adapt. One of the key adaptive processes is our response to discomfort and pain. Because pain is the most fundamental way that the body protects itself from danger, nociception is crucial to our survival. Pain is the body’s way of saying “try a different pathway” or “make a course correction”. This can translate to the body asking us to:

- try a smaller increment of the movement or practice

- change the vector of the movement
- practice with less force or load
- decrease the duration
- rest
- assess our preparation for the task at hand

Sometimes discomfort is the body's way of communicating a lack of preparation for the task at hand. Consider how slowly and carefully a professional dancer warms, conditions and prepares the body with gradually larger and more challenging movements before shifting to dynamic locomotion. The discomfort that someone feels in his or her lower back in a posture such as Upward Facing Dog (*Urdhva Mukha Svanasana*), may have as much to do with a lack of proper preparation as any inherent structural limitations. In a well sequenced class, we avoid these encounters with the body by thorough conditioning, rather than causing discomfort early in a practice session when the body is cold and stiff, and then spending the rest of the session undoing the damage.

Intensified sensation is not necessarily a bad thing. The body adapts in response to positive stress. Moderate and even strenuous exercise builds robust bones and strong muscles. When attempting to distinguish between “good pain and bad pain” consider whether an intensified sensation is leading to more options and more freedom, now, immediately after, and into the future. Intensified sensation, such as swimming 10 more lengths than you swam the day before may create new demands on the body that may build greater strength, endurance, stamina and muscle coordination. Bad pain, on the other hand, is almost always specific and localized and creates a flinching response which is the body's way of defending itself against the movement or activity. Bad pain almost always leads to decreased options in the future.

When determining sound and unsound practices ask yourself:

- What is the immediate effect of the practice?
- What is the effect several hours later? (A practice that feels good while we are doing it but creates pain and discomfort or causes a feeling of energy depletion by the afternoon cannot be considered sound.)
- What is the effect over the course of days, weeks, months and years?
- How is this practice shaping me as a whole human being?

When we consistently make poor choices and override interoceptive signaling, especially in the form of nociception (pain sensation) we may be held sway by an *unconscious higher allegiance*. In Yoga practitioners this unconscious higher allegiance may take the form of a rigid adherence to a method, tradition or teacher. Higher allegiances can also take the form of belief systems such as “mind over matter”, “no pain, no gain”, or “age is just a number”, commonly manifesting as inability to adapt to the changing context of an aging body or a new health condition or injury. Unconscious higher allegiances can be formed through the concepts of “ideal alignment” and set visual templates stored in the brain, which tyrannize

awareness and override felt experience. Investigating and uncovering these higher allegiances can be the key to restoring a healthy and harmonious relationship to self.

Evolve

We return full circle. Having acquired years if not decades of information stored in our sensory memory bank, in the present moment allow this information to drop into the substratum of awareness. If something is relevant to the moment, it will undoubtedly percolate up into awareness to serve the moment. But it is also possible that what is happening now is an entirely new experience, requiring an entirely new solution or strategy. Cultivating an intelligent state of “not-knowing” sustains the beginner’s mind: open to new possibilities, new options and new ways of being.



Session One: A New Pedagogy for Teaching Yoga

- This session began with a PowerPoint lecture, *Falling Short of Knowing: A New Pedagogy for Teaching Yoga*. The pdf of this PowerPoint presentation can be downloaded by going to this link:

Before you print go to “page setup” and change to a horizontal format. The document will register best if printed in colour.

Prayer for Teacher & Student

Om saha navavatu

(Om saha na wa wa too)

Saha nau bhunaktu

(Saha na boo nak too)

Saha viryam karavavahai

(Saha viryam kara wawa hay)

Tejasvi navadhitam astu

(Te ja swena wahe tamas tu)

Ma vidvishavahai

(Ma wid we sha wa hay)

Om shantih, shantih, shantih

(Om shaantee, shaantee, shaanetee)

May we be protected while we are together.

May all obstacles be removed which stand in the way
of our understanding the truth that all is One
and that there is no division or separation between us.

May we grasp this understanding with full comprehension
and without doubt so that all misunderstanding is dissolved within us.

May we not cherish hatred, anger or displeasure.
May our hearts be full of love.
May perfect friendship reign between us.

May the space around us be free of fear.
May the East and the West, North and South, be free of fear.
May the earth be free of fear.
May the past and the future be free of fear.
May we have no foes. May we all be friends.
May our hearts be full of love.
May the human race unite in one fearless friendship.

Om. Peace. Peace. Peace.

(This prayer is ancient: the translation is contemporary and is by Dr. Richard Miller)

Session Two: Rules versus Principles

Chant for this session:

AYUR MANTRA

A mantra for health and nourishment
From the Tattiriya Aranyaka IV.2

Om āyur¹ dhehi prāṇaṃ² dhehi

(May my life be nourished. May the upward flow of energy be nourished.)

Om, apāṇaṃ³ dhehi vyāhaṃ⁴ dhehi

(May the downward flow and the circulating flow of energy be nourished.)

Om cakṣur⁵ dhehi śrotraṃ⁶ dhehi

(May my sight and hearing be nourished)

Om manō⁷ dhehi vācāṃ⁸ dhehi

(May my mind be nourished and my speech nourishing)

Om ātmānaṃ⁹ dhehi pratiṣṭhāṃ¹⁰ dhehi

(May my soul be nourished. May I rest in that nourishment.)

Om māṃ¹¹ dhehi mayi¹² dhehi

(May I be nourished and through that nourishment bring pleasure to others.)

Rules & Principles⁸

Philip Shepherd

⁸ Extracted from *New Self, New World: Recovering our Senses in the Twenty-First Century* by Philip Shepherd, North Atlantic Books, 2010



- A rule is concerned with upholding order (as in ‘law and order’); a principle is concerned with a **deepening of harmony**.
- A rule seeks first and foremost to limit behavior in a given circumstance in order to ensure a specific result. In prescribing limits, a rule has the effect of a funnel: it gathers all the varieties of human drive and hope and insight (imagine a throng of pedestrians on a busy sidewalk) and channels them to a common point (e.g. a waiting at a red light). A rule is enforced in the name of a perceived good, and so relies on a scheme of good and bad. Those who follow the rule are upholding the good and may even feel some entitlement for doing so.
- A principle **points to the heart of a dynamic: the relationship that brings its parts into harmony**. Understanding that essential relationship provides a starting gate for exploration, learning and play: as theater director Eugenio Barba points out, a knowledge of principles **enables us to learn to learn**. The Latin word from which *principle* derives literally means “beginning.” A principle does not aim at a specific result. In fact, its effect is precisely the opposite of a funnel: it starts from a common point of understanding. . . and that understanding acts as a springboard into limitless forms of integration.
- A rule can be written in a flash. As soon as an authority wants a certain result, it can issue a rule to enforce it. **But a rule can never be as complex as the human behavior it is trying to govern**, so it will tend to precipitate unforeseen results, which in turn require more rules, which in turn precipitate unforeseen results, and so on. Rules tend to grow in complexity.

- A principle is uncovered only after someone has so thoroughly immersed himself in the dynamics of some form of exchange (human, mechanical or otherwise) and so thoroughly integrated all his perspectives that he gains insight into the heart that harmonizes it. **The articulation of a principle often happens in stages, and it moves towards simplicity.** The simpler a principle is, the more helpful it is likely to be.
 - A rule can be broken, and when that happens, it threatens the order of the perceived good and the entitlement of those who uphold it.
 - A principle can be used or discarded. There is no such thing as ‘breaking a principle’, for it constitutes a point of departure, not a barrier.
 - We might also note that a rule reinforces an existing story, whereas a principle initiates a new one.
 - Finally, as we have said, **rules thwart transformation; principles promote it.**
 - Of course, we all appreciate that rules are necessary in certain circumstances. Can you imagine the chaos that would engulf a busy intersection if we eliminated the signs, the speed limits, the traffic lights and the sidewalks—without even a traffic cop to help things along? In fact, that’s exactly what has been done in some cities in Denmark, Holland and Germany in an urban planning movement begun by visionary traffic engineer, Hans Monderman and dubbed ‘naked streets’. The results are puzzling: traffic accidents are fewer, trip times for drivers are lower, and businesses lining the road thrive. When Christiansfeld, Denmark, took an intersection with a troubled history of traffic jams and accidents involving pedestrians and decided to go naked, the number of fatal accidents dropped from three per year to zero. But why? Well, once you take away the little green and red dot of light that orders people to go or stop, drivers and pedestrians have to notice what’s happening around them, and make eye contact, and cooperate and come into relationship with *each other* rather than merely with a *set of rules*; suddenly no one using the street is granted entitlement. Because the intersection is stripped of the dissociated governance of law, drivers are no longer upheld in their *own* dissociation, and they discover and take on responsibility. Taking away rules, then actually necessitates an evolution of consciousness away from the presuppositions of entitlement and into relationship of ‘what is’. In effect, **rules take you out of relationship with the present; principles bring you into relationship with it.**
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In this session we explored the principle that “whenever the relationship of yield is sustained breathing “happens” and whenever the relationship of yield is lost, breathing becomes restricted.

These inquiries may be useful in opening up to the experience of yielding.

Inquiry: Wakame (Seaweed)⁹

This exercise was learned from Shintaido master Haruroshi Ito, and helps the body's intelligence to release itself into its natural, fluid sensitivity.

The exercise is called Wakame, a Japanese word for “seaweed.” The soft, yielding and gentle qualities of seaweed are precisely the ones that awaken our capacity for relationship. You begin the exercise by standing in a relaxed manner, imagining and feeling your body to be a seaweed plant: your feet reach down into the seabed and are rooted there; the rest of your body floats upwards towards the unseen surface, buoyed by the sea around you. Not only that, your body also reacts as a seaweed plant would, yielding to the merest current.

Once that image is clearly felt within the body, imagine a current of water coming from behind you: without resistance you bend forward and flow with it, and then gradually float back up, buoyed by the water. Then play in the same manner with currents from the front and either side. Pay attention to any tightness the movement reveal and see if you can release it to fluidity.

The next stage requires the help of a friend. As you float up like seaweed, rooted in the ground with your eyes closed, your friend will gently push on some part of your body, as a current of water might. Like seaweed, you offer no anticipation and no resistance, but simply yield to it, then return to the upright floating position.

Your friend can adjust the speed and weight of each push, and your response should be precisely commensurate with it. To yield to fluidity in that way is also to reveal any consolidations still held in the body; once those consolidations are brought to light, you have already brought awareness to them, which by itself will begin to change them.

When Shintaido masters practice this exercise, they are so sensitized to the movement of their partners that, though their eyes are closed, they yield to a push even before it has touched them. Similarly, when we are sensitized to the movement of the present, we yield to it and dance without need of either push or shove.

Inquiry Dyads: Gertie Ball Dynamics

Sitting or standing with a fully inflated MR Ball between you, explore the dynamics of :

- Yield
- Collapse
- push
- yield/push/yield/push

⁹ Sourced from *New Self, New World*, by Philip Shepherd, North Atlantic Books, 2010

- push & push
- pull & pull



Inquiry: Testing Yielding in Tadasana A (Dyads)

Pressing down on your partner's pelvis, feel whether the response under your hands is one of:

- rigidity with the legs feeling like solid columns
- collapse with the legs "giving way" and failing to push against the earth
- yielding: a buoyant sensation of "bent legs inside straight legs"

❁ Origami Head Wonton

This can be added to any relaxation practice to give an added sense of containment and comfort. For this practice you need a bath towel that is slightly wider than the standard: 710 cm X 1340 cm is perfect. If your towel is too wide this fold will not work well. Ideally, the towel will be extra fluffy and very soft. If the fabric is thin or stiff your head support will be far less supportive.

1. Lie towel on the ground in front of you.
2. Fold the towel in half with the folded edge towards you.
3. Bring hands onto the bottom corners and fold in half again. You will now have two slices of towel, each two layers thick.
4. Keep your hands where they are and bring the corners of one slice down into the middle of the bottom edge to make a triangle within a rectangular shape. Leave a 4-finger width gap between the two triangles.
5. Slide your hands along the bottom edge to the outer bottom corners.
6. Fold back these corners to the top middle edge of the towel. You will have a triangle on top of another triangle.
7. Holding onto all the layers, carefully flip the whole thing over: you will have a triangle shape with a depression running through the center.
8. Place your head into this depression so that the base of the towel lies in line with your shoulders.
10. Lift your hands to take hold of the outer edges and tuck them under your shoulders either side of your neck so that you feel a containment around the head and support under the neck.

The first time you practice this head support it can be especially lovely to have a friend firmly tuck in the two tips of the won ton and to press the sides of the support against your head. Once you have an experience of the compressive support of the towel you'll be better able to replicate it on your own.



Photo sequence with thanks to Sam Loe

Session Three: From Giving Answers to Posing Questions: The Language of Guided Inquiry

“Beginners want to learn as many techniques as possible. Knowing they do not know, they seek volume in an attempt to fill their void. They tend not to stand still, not to listen. Consequently, they do not stay “plugged in” long enough to let information stream into their being for interpretation. After four or five minutes of one technique, when they have it technically correct, they leave, or ask for a demonstration of a new technique, as if to say, “give me a new toy” There is no attempt to access deeper levels. Why” Perhaps because they fear their own shadow. The client’s pain reminds us of our own, and in sitting still we begin to face ourselves.

The more you understand, the less you need to do until—like many masters of this work (*referring to craniosacral work*) such as Rollin Becker, Viola Frymann, and John Upledger—you hardly need to touch at all. And when you do, every touch is a fresh technique, the world has never seen it before, yet it is perfect, coming as it does from the client. It is so simple that it takes years to understand; you have to learn a thousand techniques in order to understand a single one.

Then you only need one. “

~ Hugh Milne¹⁰

Guidelines for setting the stage for inquiries:

Opening up feeling function is supported best when:

- ~ We are in an environment that we perceive as **safe and secure**.
- ~ We begin the process in a **deliberately simplified space** (eg standing, sitting, lying down, walking slowly). Reducing extraneous stimulation and activity can help us to feel how we are in the moment.
- ~ We take the time to **register a perceptual baseline** (how are we now?)
- ~ We also **acknowledge the neutral substratum** that has a consistent patterning relative to the ever-changing arising and dissolving of experience. This is called *pratyahara*, or the restoration of the senses to perceive the ground upon which experience arises.
- ~ We **slow down**.
- ~ We **“tag” language to sensation** by naming our experience. By naming our experience we are better equipped to identify a sensory experience and its’ meaning the next time it arises.

¹⁰ *The Heart of Listening: A Visionary Approach to Craniosacral Work* by Hugh Milne, North Atlantic Books, California, 1995

Session Four: Using Templates for Kinesthetic Learning: Offering Students Stages of Inquiry, Progressive Points of Entry, and Layered Instructions

“Concentrated attention on the primordial navel center brings understanding of all bodily systems.”

Yoga Sutra III:29

In this class Donna used the human developmental movement pattern of Navel Radiation to explore how it is possible to offer students stages of inquiry. These are some possibilities:

- Feeling the breath emanate and return to the navel center.
- Observing for “miscalibrations” off-center: forward, back, above, left or right of center.
- Feeling the connection from the center to the head and tail.
- Feeling the connection from the navel to both arms.
- Feeling the connection from the navel to both legs.
- Feeling the connection from the navel to all six limbs.
- Feeling the cross-lateral connection for the center to the right arm and left leg.
- Feeling the cross-lateral connection from the center to the left arm and right leg.
- Being present for new or clearer pathways through the body

Session Five: Planning Classes: Considering the Class Plan as an Artistic Process

This session began with a PowerPoint lecture. Set your printer page set-up for a horizontal format before printing. The document will register best when printed in colour.

In the experiential portion of this class we explored:

Theme: The Tonic Labyrinthian Reflex: Balance, Stimulate, Sedate

Physical Focus: Restorative Postures

Poetry: Rainer Maria Rilke, Book of Hours II:16

Music: Silence or very quiet, calming music

Special Equipment: none

The Book of Hours, *Wenn stewart mir vom Fenster fällt (II.16)**

Rilke



How surely gravity's law,
strong as an ocean current,
takes hold of even the smallest thing
and pulls it toward the heart of the world.

Each thing—
each stone, blossom, child—
is held in place.
Only we, in our arrogance,
push out beyond what we each belong to
for some empty freedom.

If we surrendered
to earth's intelligence
we could rise up rooted, like trees.

Instead we entangle ourselves
in knots of our own making
and struggle, lonely and confused.

So, like children, we begin again
to learn from the things,
because they are in God's heart:
they have never left him.

This is what the things can teach us:
to fall,
patiently to trust our heaviness.
Even a bird has to do that
before he can fly.

Introduction to Theme:

The action of yielding and pushing is supported by the Tonic Labyrinthine Reflex which is one of the first reflexes to develop and underlies our connection with the earth.

“. . . it draws us towards the Earth by increasing the postural tone (a sense of aliveness and weightedness) of the muscles on the underside of the body. For example, if we are lying on our bellies, flexor tone is facilitated or increased; if we are lying on our backs, extensor tone is facilitated; and if we are lying on our sides, the tone on the underside is facilitated”¹¹.

Most students are simply told the “effects” of Restorative Postures. As a preparation for several restorative postures with different orientations to the ground, we explored the effect of lying prone, lying supine and then lying on our sides, asking the question: “Does this relationship to the ground sedate, balance or stimulate?”

Postural Sequence:

- Supported Side-Lying with bolster, blanket roll and towel. (7 minutes each side)
- Supported Seated Forward Bend with one or two chairs (5-7 minutes each side)

¹¹ *Sensing, Feeling and Action: The Experiential Anatomy of Body-Mind Centering* by Bonnie Bainbridge Cohen, Contact Editions, Northampton, MA 1993

- Supported Rolling Brook with pleated blanket support under the thoracic spine, bolster under the knees and neck and head support (9-11 minutes)
- Variations on Viparita Karani:
 - Lower Legs supported on a chair with graded support under the pelvis (folded blanket/s, bolster)
 - Using two bolsters to accentuate the angle of the chest
- Savasana

Sample Peer Review

Date: _____

Teacher: _____

Reviewer: _____

Theme of Class: _____

Physical Focus: _____

Rating System: 5 (exceptional) 4 (very good) 3 (satisfactory) 2 (poor) 1 (ineffective)

- **Balance of the Class:** Did the combined elements of the class (Introduction to topic, demonstration, inquiry, practices and asana) come together to create a safe, effective and enjoyable class?

5 4 3 2 1

- **Theme and Staying on Task:** Was the theme of the class clearly represented within the structural thread of the class?

5 4 3 2 1

• **Sequencing:** Was the sequencing of inquiries, practices and asanas progressive, logical and safe? Any recommendations for changes that would have made the sequencing more effective?

5 4 3 2 1

• **Skill Building:** Did the teacher effectively build one or more skills needed to serve the intended focus of the class?

5 4 3 2 1

• **Content:** Was the content of the class pitched to the student’s level of understanding? Could it have been more or less challenging?

5 4 3 2 1

• **Clarity of Instruction:** Is the language used clear and easily comprehended?

5 4 3 2 1

• **Voice Quality:** Does the teacher use their voice at a volume that is easily registered by the students? Are there aspects to the use of the voice (cadence, expressiveness, tendency to speak in monotone, or problems with “rising inflexion” (raising the pitch at the end of sentences) that could be improved?

5 4 3 2 1

• **Pacing:** Was the pacing of the instruction such that it sustained the student's interest? Was there any aspect of the instruction that may have caused a lag in pacing (e.g. taking too much time with one individual, too breaks in the flow of the class)? Were any portions of the class rushed (e.g. caused by giving too many instructions too quickly, or trying to fit too much material into the time allowed)?

5 4 3 2 1

• **Pedagogic Model:** Is the teacher actively soliciting the involvement of the student in terms of engaging a process of inquiry?

5 4 3 2 1

• **Observation/Deduction:** Is the teacher observing the students and gauging the instruction that follows based on what he/she is seeing? Or did the instructor appear to be “on automatic” and not observing the efficacy of the instructions given?

5 4 3 2 1

Any Other Comments:

Other Resources:

- *Open Body: Creating Your Own Yoga* by Todd Walton, Avon Books, New York, 1998 (I use the word “yoga” to mean all those physical and verbal and emotional and meditative things I do in loving response to the needs of my body and spirit.)
- *Making Connections: Total Body Integration Through Bartenieff Fundamentals 1st Edition* by Peggy Hackney, Routledge, 2000 (An exceptional resource for inquiries that roughly follows the progression of human developmental movement patterns)
- *Hara: The Vital Center of Man* by Karlfried Graf Durckheim, Inner Traditions, 2004
- *Kinesthetic Dystonia: the contribution of bodywork to somatic education* by Thomas W. Myers, Journal of Bodywork and Movement Therapies, Volume 3, Issue 1,

P36-43, January 1999 [https://www.bodyworkmovementtherapies.com/article/S1360-8592\(99\)80041-2/fulltext](https://www.bodyworkmovementtherapies.com/article/S1360-8592(99)80041-2/fulltext)

- *The Breathing Book* by Donna Farhi, Henry Holt and Company, New York, 1996 (This text includes many rich inquiries for breath and movement exploration)
- *Yoga Mind Body & Spirit: A Return to Wholeness* by Donna Farhi, Henry Holt and Company, New York, 2000
- *Bringing Yoga to Life: The Everyday Practice of Enlightened Living* by Donna Farhi, HarperCollins, San Francisco, 2005
- *Teaching Yoga: Exploring the Teacher-Student Relationship* by Donna Farhi, Rodmell Press, 2006
- *Pathways to a Centered Body, Gentle Yoga Therapy for Core Stability, Healing Back Pain and Moving with Ease* by Donna Farhi and Leila Stuart, Embodied Wisdom Publishing, New Zealand, 2017
- *Basic Neurocellular Patterns: Exploring Developmental Movement* by Bonnie Bainbridge Cohen, Burchfield Rose Publishers, Berkeley, California, 2018 (This is Bonnie's latest book. An absolute treasure of distilled wisdom and a rich resource for somatic inquiry ideas.)
- *Dynamic Alignment Through Imagery* by Eric Franklin, Human Kinetics, United States, 1996 (Franklin's work is helpful for those wanting to expand the use of ideokinetic imagery in teaching.)
- *Draw Breath: The Art of Breathing, Mindfulness & Meditation* by Tom Granger, Summersdale Publishers Ltd, London, 2019
- *Connecting: Conscious Communication for Yoga Teachers & Therapists*, by Lucy Karnani & Jill Danks, www.yogacommunication.org, Australia, 2018

Some Suggested Music Resources

During Active Practice:

- *El Hadra* by The Mystik Dance
- *Luminous Emptiness* by Hang Massive
- *As it Is* by Hang Massive
- *Amber* by David Darling
- *Cello* by David Darling
- *At the Temple Gate* by Prabhu Osoniqs

Navel Radiation Somatic Inquiry

- *Dreamtime Return* by Steve Roach, Track: Magnificent Gallery (6:02 minutes)
- *Dreamtime Return* by Steve Roach, Track: The Other Side (13:11 minutes)

Cellular Respiration

- *Chanting Om – Meditation on the 7 Chakras & Savasana* by Music for Deep Meditation
- ~ Repetition of Muladhara Chakras X 4 (3:41 minutes)
- ~ Repetition of Swadhisthana Chakras X 2 (3:23 minutes)
- *As It Is In Heaven, Wie Im Himmel*, Soundtrack to the Movie (3:49)

Gentle Tracks for Quiet Practice

- *Living Room Songs* by Olafur Arnalds
- *Tiny Island* World 1999

