

Somatic Leadership

by Fred Mitouer, Founder, Transformational Bodywork and Member, Mobius Transformational Leadership Faculty

Many years ago while hiking, I was scratched by a stinging nettle. Another hiker passing by noticed my dilemma, took out his knife, cut the stalk of the nettle and scraped out some of the pulp, then deftly applied it to my wound. Immediately the pain vanished and left me not only relieved but also with this insight: A precious gift awaits each of us in

the very center of our emotional wounds. If, for example, our wounds are anger based, then forgiveness lies in the core of our anger; if our pain is fear based, then faith can be found in the heart of that fear. By running from the emotional or psychic pain of our wounds, we miss an incredible opportunity to deepen our life experience. Ironically the running

both intensifies the emotional pain and also depletes the body's energetic resources.

In contrast, by choosing to directly explore the nature of our wounds, we can discover deep insights about our personal realities and about life in general. More significantly, the rewards for taking this journey go far beyond expanded awareness. Our

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At the birth of this millennium, *Yoga Journal* featured my writing about my hands on work of changing lives by transforming bodies in the article that follows this essay. Since then, much has changed in our socio-economic world, especially in technology and in our scientific understanding of the relational dynamic between consciousness, molecular biology and psychological states of awareness.

Today we are witnessing a much wider appreciation of what it means to be somatically intelligent, as we have earlier discovered with *emotional intelligence* and *social intelligence*. And this is good news for all of us who have lost faith in the human adventure.

Although “Somatic Intelligence” is not exactly a buzz word yet — like *transformation* has become, as of late—it will. And with it, a whole new appreciation of what the body has always offered up for our enlightenment—personally and collectively. Simply stated, it is *presence*. To be present is to be right here, right now—not somewhere else or in some memory or fantasy but to be seated in this breath, and this breath, too.

It sounds so simple, doesn't it?

But ask anyone who has sat in meditation for an hour, or a day or a week, how easy it is for them to get distracted by thought forms of past and future that arrive all too quickly. It is because of this top centered consciousness that we have to work so hard to get present. And it explains why everything is so *psychosomatic*—to make the body based experience a very mental confabulation.

But what if...

What if the truer of the consciousness networks was actually the world of *somato-psychic* phenomenon—more of the “bottom-up” way of knowing, not unlike the way a plant grows from the “bottom up” to meet the light—wherein our symptomatic thought forms that we identify with can be seen arising from our body's configuration patterns from genetic propensities to the cellular memories of our physical life experiences.

Imagine that.

For almost four decades now, as a bodyworker I've been mining the somato-psychic consciousness of the human journey through many thousands of people; and I find it heartening to witness the rising placement of body-based insight that is now evolving within the cultural zeitgeist. And I dare say, it gives me hope that we, as a species, might awaken, hopefully soon enough, to not self-destruct. But for this to take place we need to grow our collective body wisdom through our personal cultivation — each individual in his or her own way.

For this to happen we need somatic leadership that can inspire the kind of mutuality and collaboration that leads to enhanced ways of socializing in all areas of human endeavor — especially in the business culture where most of us, out of necessity, are stake holders in our own experience.

Surely an emotionally healthy workplace where personal satisfaction and even fulfillment are present is a most worthy goal. But what inhibits this from manifesting—even when we “know better” intellectually, are the archaic somatic patterns that habituate us from earlier times in our lives but still hold sway. Indeed, many of our habits are just coping patterns while others, which may have once been creative, are no longer appropriate to the circumstances presenting themselves in the present moment.

It is humbling to realize that change and transformation doesn't happen simply because we intellectually “know better”. Understanding this is of small consolation when we watch missed opportunities pass us by as we observe the “stuckness” in ourselves, and our colleagues and, thus, in our situations. We watch an emotional outburst or a streak of shyness in us, (or in a colleague), sabotage an otherwise promising moment; we act impetuously or over promise what we can deliver because we misread our actual resources such that our eventual actions don't match what we had envisioned. The resulting chasm between the “possible” and “what happens” can be narrowed and traversed if we knew more about how to read our body's *Book of Knowledge* with greater literacy.

senses become more acute because our life force is not being consumed by wound maintenance; and our feeling life becomes a rich and spontaneous realm where we can re-create and learn how to co-create with this mystery we call our life.

But first things first. What is a wound?

A wound is an energetic constriction of life force. Wounds can be temporary or long term. When healing energy makes contact with

a wound, a cleansing and rebuilding experience naturally occurs. This happens on biological, psychological, emotional, and spiritual levels which mutually reinforce one another. When healing energy cannot make contact with the wound, for whatever reason, the wound is isolated from cleansing and no rebuilding can take place. The unhealed wound must then be managed.

Managing unhealed wounds becomes, over time, a lifestyle char-

acterized by coping behaviors and unconscious reactions. This state of woundedness is crippling to the spirit, depleting to the physical body, and sadly is the source of humanity's spiritual malaise and social decay. But there is another kind of wound, or perception of our wound, that need not be crippling and that, ironically, is the source of great healing. The "fertile wound" occupies the painful territory between the emotional and psychic dimensions of >>

The body language is rich with sensation and meaning that is accessible to any human being willing to invest the time and energy to learn the language. Sensations are the letters of the somatic alphabet and meaning is derived by the consciousness that reads the "words" made up by these letters. Hence a real and important story is told at an energetic level that bears much insight, promise and empowerment to those with somatic literacy.

Obviously, the various traditions within the hands on healing arts and martial arts have the most to contribute to this end but there are *tuning in modalities* that can also be quite effective such as breathing awareness, bio-feedback and mindfulness meditation. The primary reward that comes from these engagements is the cultivation of the inner witness—and from this we are able to respond, rather than react, to all kinds of external stimuli. This ability to respond makes us *responsible* and we are perceived this way thus creating the psychic environment for natural leadership to emerge within a social dynamic.

To summarize:

- 1) Human perception and behavior takes place on a great many subconscious levels that we often overlook. As a result, our ignorance about how to perceive and act in the present moment—appropriately in the "here and now"—accounts for the many and expensive missed opportunities that abound in our collective lives.
- 2) Core to somatic literacy is the capacity to recognize the energetic semantics of body sensation.
- 3) When an individual or a group becomes somatically literate, presence increases thereby developing leadership qualities in individuals and greater cooperation and cohesion in groups.

In the stories in the *Yoga Journal* article, there are examples of how emotional memory is accessed through the skillful means of Transformational Bodywork. Each of those individuals moved through his

or her unconscious material to become leaders in their respective lives and also more effective and compassionate participants in their families and communities. And they did it rather quickly and dramatically. And the results were permanent because the body reprogrammed itself in holistic ways from the bottom up—or, more accurately from the inside out on a cellular level—in a word, "somato-psychically."

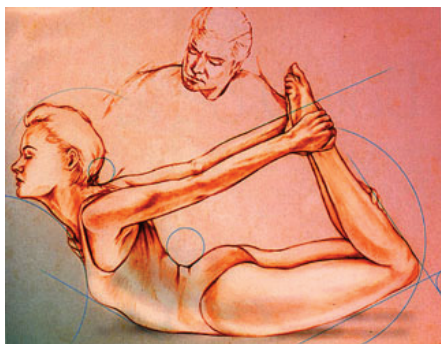
I believe that we humans don't need more information from without but rather real wisdom from within in order to fashion the better world we yearn for but mostly pay lip service to instead.

I believe that by cultivating somatic intelligence we can invoke the best promise for this "better world." And, though it will take some real work from us to achieve, my own experience has given me a measured optimism.

Today, we see healing and therapeutic human touch everywhere from corporate settings to airports—at the same time we have watched insurance companies follow the discretionary spending of millions of people who have sought alternative health care because of their disillusionment with the American medical arena.

The macro-trends for this increased body-based awareness are encouraging; but the challenge I see is that the human ego structure cannot be fully trusted unless it is challenged in new ways by our higher bodymind consciousness. I speak here of the need to understand our shadow impulses that also live within the cellular matrix of our human bodies. Unless we tackle our wounded natures at their core, we run the risk of turning all of our body based questing into yet another self-indulgent fantasy of congratulatory vanity.

If we are honest about our personal and collective shadow worlds—and address the propensities for manipulation and aggrandizement that reside therein—then there is real hope that we might actually learn to tame the dragon within and humbly embrace humanity's great challenge: to heal into oneness so that we can live in alignment with the laws of nature and thrive.



our mortality, most notably our felt sense of separateness in this world and, concurrently, our hunger for the experience of unity to assuage this feeling of separateness.

Unlike the unhealed wound, in which we identify with our pain, become bonded to it, and feel victimized by it even as we numb ourselves to it, the fertile wound opens us to feeling our pain in a way that opens our hearts, tempers us, and reveals to us what exactly needs to heal. This revelation is simultaneously humbling to our notions of self and empowering to the evolution of soul. What catalyzes this revelation is usually a shift in perception, somewhat analogous to seeing the glass half full rather than half empty.

Yoga and massage are transformational practices that can serve as catalysts for shifting perception because they can bring the experience of unity to the physio-emotional sense of separateness. With these practices we have the capacity to bring core vulnerabilities to the surface where they can be successfully channelled into personal strengths. In a quarter century of practicing bodywork, I have found that skilled loving touch can facilitate this shift in perception and help people transform their pain into a deeper understanding of their possibilities for happiness. Most of us who have been on a personal healing journey have realized that when

the body is left out of the therapeutic equation, deep cellular angst remains in our energy field, ready to present itself in yet another configuration.

Physical touch that is aimed at neuromuscular holding patterns can interrupt this cycle of angst and create a shift in a person's life on all levels. By probing muscular armature to find the "resistance wall," a practitioner and subject can uncover an aspect of personal history that became frozen behind that wall. Through breathing into the resistance, an energetic charge can build from inside the subject's musculature. Simultaneously, the practitioner can soften and erode the hardened muscle wall until the held back energy breaks through and reveals a whole series of emotions, thought forms, and dynamic impressions. Underneath all of these is usually a yearning for freedom and a hunger for unity.

Softening Your Body Armor

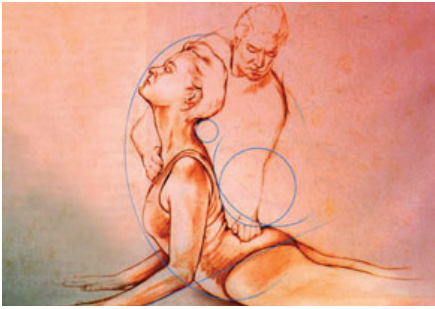
Many years ago along with my yoga teacher, Tracey Coddington, I developed a form of yoga massage called Transformational Bodywork, which is more an "approach" to healing the body/mind split than a "technique." Essentially it involves massaging



a person's musculature while he is engaged in a yoga asana. However, unlike most yoga orientations, which focus upon performance of a particular asana, yoga massage is aimed at helping an individual work his muscular threshold into a multi-dimensional release, an experience that is rich with emotion, physical change, and psychological insight. By riding the breath while I manipulate the muscle origins, bellies, and tendons, the person begins to play with his therapeutic "edge." The client and I work this edge into a breakthrough consciousness. This shift in awareness evokes personal transformation and invites fresh physical, psychic, and emotional possibilities.

When I do yoga massage, I contact the muscular tension of my client's body by facilitating his achievement of a particular asana. Each person's muscular tension has a unique electromagnetic charge that is his personal signature. To sensitive hands, this charge can be read as an intimate expression of a person's energy moving outward against the organic envelope of his muscular walls, much like the air pressure within a balloon moves against the inner walls of that balloon. When the inner pressure grows to a point of alarm, the individual's muscle walls harden to adequately contain the energy or repress it. Over time these muscular walls become an armature that holds onto dangerous feelings.

My job is to neutralize the danger and accentuate the opportunity for change. I feel for many things that are clues to this person's state of being. Certainly the quality of respiration is one factor, but there are numerous physiological cues that together form the individual's unique holding pat-



tern. I observe where there is an easy flow of energy and breath and where it tends to be blocked. In a phrase, "I go with the flow," and feel where the blockage to flow is most available for manual contact. This meeting ground of my client's blockage and my physical intervention is where the real work of therapeutic transformation happens. The blockage is the psycho-physical manifestation of an unhealed psychological wound. Sometimes the wound is archaic and unconscious and sometimes it is known and relatively recent, but it is always the cause of the feeling of separateness.

Case Study #1: Susie Arms Aching to Hold

Little Susie's arms are full of tension because her desire to reach out for Daddy's hug is held in check by her memory of Daddy hitting her and Mommy when he was out of control last night. Susie, a senior leader in operations at a global chemical company, still has difficulty reaching out and experiences anxiety when she is embraced tenderly by someone she loves. In my work with her, this story pours out of her pectoralis major muscles as they are stretched and manipulated.

Most of her life, Susie has felt cut-off at the arms, separated from heartfelt intimacies because of her childhood history of domestic violence. When she first came to me for

help, Susie mentioned her feeling of separateness as her primary reason for receiving bodywork. She had been in psychotherapy for years and knew her shoulders held the "cellular memory" of her unhealed wound. Deep in her muscles was a story of distrusting men, of wanting to strike back and see justice prevail, and of desiring to cave in to her chest to find solace. The instinct to collapse into her "heart cave" was checked, however, by Susie's pride which would not permit it. Therefore, her upper back muscles worked to retract her shoulders into a forced posture of unnatural confidence.

This profile of an unhealed wound is, at a deeper level, a story of alienation and soul yearning. As a bodyworker my job is to talk to this person's held wound and help it to transform from being unhealed to being fertile. The first thing I do is create a safe feeling of unity by massaging my client's area of tension with quiet, nurturing touch. This nondirective and simple touch engenders a feeling of ease and integration which contrasts with the muscular sense of separation.

The feeling of unity is essential to healing a wound because it reminds us that there is a natural state of physical ease and psycho-emotional comfort that can be remembered or achieved and that by going through this process a state of ease and flow will be the reward. This juxtaposition of this feeling of expansion and support with the sense of contraction, separateness and loneliness catalyzes a profound awakening. A light goes on in the person's head and reveals what needs to happen in our session, and the incentive to experience unity in a sustainable way is born.

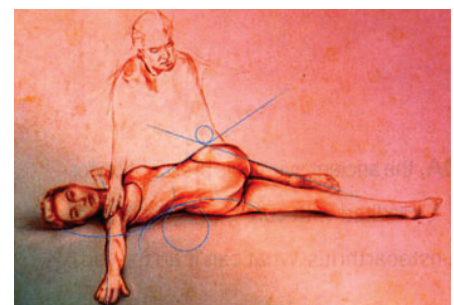
If the individual has no cellular memory of his or her sense of

unity because of severe trauma in early life, for example, this physical experience of flow becomes a new foundation upon which to build a healthy, fresh identity. If they are reminded of what they once knew, but forgot, then we have more potential to work with.

Initiating this flow state involves a specific series of bodywork techniques that unblock the jaw, diaphragm, and pelvis by employing energetic repatterning protocols akin to acupuncture, massage, craniosacral work, and polarity. Once this flow state is established, a healing journey begins and ultimately becomes an odyssey of the soul.

On this journey, I remind my clients, we don't want to get lost in mental obsessions about our destinations or the rate at which we traverse our real or imagined paths. Nor do we want to identify with the significance of each rest stop on these journeys. What really matters is that we are taking this journey.

It is understood that the major factor in this transformational journey is the expanded consciousness that grows within the person's direct experience. Complementary to this basic understanding is the principle that transformation involves learning about the factors that have contributed to the circumstances that are present. Through this awareness, it is possible to develop more positive



approaches to life challenges, create more and better choices about what goals are more worthy of our attention, and cultivate support to realize these goals in their fullest expression—a healed life being foremost. Greater connection will, in turn, allow Susie to be a greater leader and heighten her leadership presence and magnetism.

Case Study #2: Jim Running from Intimacy

Jim volunteered to be the model for a demonstration on the pelvic and leg segment of the body. After demonstrating the movement sequences on Jim, I noticed that his body had stiffened and he was breathing rapidly. I moved him into a version of Paschimotasana (Seated Forward Bend) on the massage table. I kneeled in back of him and reached forward to push and extend the quadriceps and pull and lengthen the hamstrings. Within a short time Jim's mouth puckered up and his hands became rigid with his thumbs stiff but tucked into his palm. These physical symptoms are referred to as "tetany" in transformational bodywork, and they indicate that a major release of energy is underway. Unresolved intensity in the body/mind can be

experienced can be experienced as sensations of inner heaviness, heat, electric itch, and others.

Jim began to get very anxious. I asked him if he was with us in the room. He replied, "Not really, I'm somewhere else. I'm scared. I feel small. I'm really pissed but I'm much more scared." I reminded Jim that he was safe and that he was experiencing some unconscious cellular memory of a frightening time. I explained that something that was being held in his leg was leaving him and that when it left he would feel much better than he has for a long time.

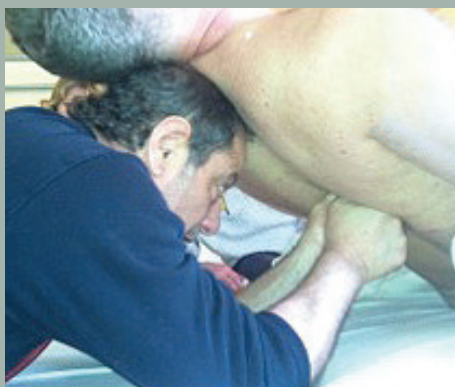
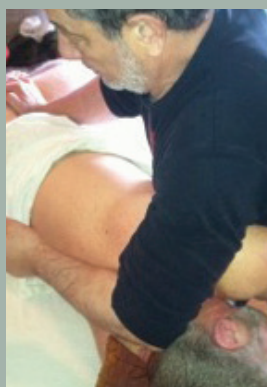
Suddenly, Jim's legs stiffened as if to run away but couldn't and he began to shake all over, squirming as if to get away from something. It took all of my strength to restrain him. "Oh my God! Oh no!" Jim shouted, "It smells so bad! What is that smell?"

During the next half-hour, Jim recalled the forgotten scene of a childhood incident. At about age eight, Jim's mother and he were in a taxi on their way to visit an uncle. On the way they stopped at a hospital presumably to visit a friend of Jim's mother. Once inside the hospital Jim was taken away to have his appendix removed. He was totally

shocked. He tried to run away. His legs were energized to flee, like in a dream where he couldn't move his body but tried nonetheless to get away. His legs held this frozen history of terror, outrage, and betrayal. The memory complex of these negative emotions was muted by what turned out to be ether.

Jim was anesthetized with ether. After coming out of the operation he was met by a smiling mother and ice cream. Like so many of us, little Jim went on from the experience to live out the remainder of his childhood, while his legs "froze" the impulse to run away; froze it, that is until, this massage table thaw.

The unfolding of this story was exhilarating, but somehow the energetics didn't feel quite complete. After a while Jim relaxed and opened his eyes and with sincerity said, "Boy, this really explains a lot. I'm thirty-two years old, I've been in at least half a dozen long term relationships and about two dozen short ones. Every time I feel close to a real commitment, I freeze up and run away. I've been running away from women all my life because I feel, down deep, they just can't be trusted. Oh wow, all these years I've been carrying this wound, this feeling that every woman is going to set



Transformation involves learning about the factors that have contributed to the circumstances that are present; and that, through this awareness, it is possible to develop more positive approaches to life challenges, create more and better choices about what goals are more worthy of our attention, and cultivate support to realize these goals in their fullest expression.

— Fred Mitouer

me up, betray and abandon me, and pretend with me."

Jim healed something deep inside from his work during this session. His body's wisdom sensed that he could handle the presentation of this charged cellular memory and it went into release mode. Riding atop the energetic wave of release was a package of specific psychological content: betrayal, rage, and fear.

In my work I seek out, with my hands, an energetic field of charge and then invite the mystery to express itself. My intent is to understand and effectively transform the client's energetic field. After expression there is a relaxation cycle that is ripe for awareness and reflection. Much healing occurs during this time of heightened awareness and physical discharge.

You're Not Alone

Over the many years of practicing bodywork, I have been amazed at how much fragmentation, abuse, and pain exists in the lives of ordinary people. The unhealed wounds that people carry get passed on through negative relationships which become a stage to act out further abuses ad infinitum. So to stop this cycle of reactivity, we must return to our original wounds, do the work of ripening them into fertile wounds, and then do the necessary healing work.

Anxiety and depression, two of the most pervasive therapeutic presentations usually arise out of life conditions where a person feels unbonded, lonely, and scared. Most adults who suffer from anxiety and depression, for example, are in some way reacting to issues of intimacy—the fear of it and the desire for it that began in their early life. As in-

quiring adults they usually come to see that their preoccupations with safety in relationships is equated with how well they feel protected against intimacy. Because intimacy is both feared and desired, the experience of vulnerability becomes suspect. In yoga massage sessions, the experience of vulnerability is transformed from a liability into an asset. At the physical boundary of muscle tissue is often an issue that is an amalgam of sensation, story, yearning, and choice. Because the stretching of boundary is occurring within the context of another human being's loving and skilled intent, the person feels safe with in his or her vulnerability. As a result, a metaphysical alchemy takes place that allows real feeling to become a force for change. And it is the befriending of feeling in general that is the pivotal therapeutic reward.

Really feeling one's wound within the company of a compassionate witness reminds us, as Buddha taught, that pain is inevitable. In realizing through our vulnerability, our humble connection to everyone and everything else, we are brought face to face with the hurtful, but sweet secret: None of us escapes unscathed. Too bad, but there it is. Or maybe not too bad, for it confirms to us that we're not alone. We don't need pain and suffering to be reminded that we exist, but neither do we need to fear it. Without fear dominating us we can have all of our feelings; we can take life as it is with all its paradoxes, contradictions, and tensions.

No longer at the mercy of our emotional systems, we can fully invite our feelings with all their richness and diversity into our daily lives. That's a lot different

Rubbing up against thousands of embodied lives from my box seat perspective, I have been fortunate to watch this dance of light upon darkness. Under my hands and before my eyes, I have witnessed many men and women who have met themselves at their edges and have moved their rocks with courage and dignity.

— Fred Mitouer

from trying to stay in control. It's true acceptance, and our bodies love it; limberness in the muscles and joints develops, and we feel relaxed and alert with energy to spare. But the moment we begin to fake it again by holding our pain at a distance while pretending we're relaxed, our bodies respond by showing symptoms of illness.

Case Study #3: Tom Choosing Life over Death

Tom came to see me for low back problems, a calcified neck, and a mental attitude which included suicidal predispositions. His anger would explode when he forgot to take his lithium, a mood-elevating drug. He could not access any of his depressive feelings that ordinarily governed his life when the drug was operative. Tom had been in all kinds of talk therapy but had never really explored healing bodywork, done breathing exercises, or hung out in feeling states in silence for extended periods of time; nor had he ever been manipulated into yoga postures.

Tom had served in Laos and Cambodia as a counter-insurgency paratrooper before the Vietnam War heated up and was full of the horror stories of war. A big man

with a 6-foot, 2-inch frame, Tom had a desire to heal, but so much habit to overcome and a body that moved like a rusted Sherman Tank. When Tom first came to see me, he was driving his fifth wife crazy, and it was November, the month of his birth and the fading light of the sun. His emotions had begun to dip dangerously low.

Through Tom's lithium-induced haze, I would rub and probe his body with my elbows and knees until it showed signs of life, always staying within his tolerance level. Sometimes I was gentle and just "vibed" him and coaxed his body to present itself organically, moment to moment. Tom began to trust his experience after a few sessions, but he couldn't access his anger although that was his reason for working with me. I told him that I couldn't do transformational work with him if his feelings were numb and that he needed to check with his psychiatrist before dropping his prescription medicine.

Tom wrote in his journal: "I took to this stuff like a Cape Buffalo that wants to be tamed but I had eons of genetics and beliefs saying 'the cyclical suffering is safer.' I am intuitive more than analytical. I knew this work was positively changing me. Knowing the shrinks say you must take lithium for the rest of your life to avoid a life ending depression, I dropped it in the hope of being able to learn to be with the sensations

in my body and the feelings it had stored."

By our fourth session, Tom had quit his lithium announcing that he had not felt so limber since he was ten years of age. He also wanted to talk about his sexuality. Over the next three sessions, I worked on his low back, legs, groin, and belly. A great deal of early life history became unveiled, especially his shame and fear of being vulnerable with women. Tom, I learned, was slapped across the face as a small boy very hard and often by his mother. In progressive sessions, his face grew sadder and sadder. I thought about how silly his lithium

grin looked compared to the real life sad face that had begun showing itself. I worked with Tom in variations of Marichyasana on a yoga mat to lengthen his spine evenly and draw his concentration inward. As the layers of armature began to peel away, both of us got to meet, unexpectedly, an overwhelmed little boy. Like a deer caught in the headlights, little Tommy was stuck in frozen flight. Working with Tom's breath and massaging his belly elicited deep moans and feelings of profound magnitude. Tom shut down to these powerful forces, but he did not want to stop our work. In one session he stopped the breathing exercises just as he was accessing some powerful memory. I felt certain that his mother beat him quite severely the last time he had experienced this much intensity.

Tom's "tension space" had ripened into a potential creative breakthrough but his beaten little boy could only see an imminent destructive breakdown. Tom could not go on further until he had integrated what he had learned. He was accessing his power in our work, but as a boy that had gotten him into trouble with his mother. He was also accessing his vulnerability, and that made him feel he might lose control and be taken advantage of by his wife. He did not want to put on more armature because he knew

*It feels as though I make my way
through massive rock
like a vein of ore
alone, encased.*

*I am so deep inside it
I can't see the path or any distance:
everything is close
and everything closing in on me
has turned to stone.*

*Since I still don't know enough about pain,
this terrible darkness makes me small.
If it's you, though--
press down hard on me, break in
that I may know the weight of your hand,
and you, the fullness of my cry.*

Book of Hours 3,1

--Rainer Maria Rilke

that would not provide him with any more security. He also did not want to take off any more armature because that would make him too vulnerable to the old feelings of suicide and depression.

Tom could not move forward or backward. Nor did he want to go up above his experience through transcendent meditation or with drugs. Tom was experiencing his "dynamic tension" for the first time while being supported, and he stood at the precipice of a new life feeling both terrified and in awe of the fact that he could actually choose the kind of life he wanted.

Tom's fearful personality wanted to remain in a reactive state though his soul yearned for his newfound flow state experience. I told him that sometimes flow state experience is not necessarily pleasant, but at least it's real. It is the only place where real healing and loving can happen; and this is what Tom wanted most.

For many of us the childhood bonding patterns with our parents and our observations of how our parents treated each other have so distorted our perceptions of relationship that we go into automatic pilot in intimate relationships. My work with Tom was about supporting him unconditionally in exploring a new vision of his life where he could show up and be vulnerable and feel loved. Old childhood memories of shaming from his mother surfaced right alongside war memories of jungle parachute drops through clouds of bullets. Tom finally went with the deeper breathing with less and less resistance, and his body loosened up as a result.

By relaxing his armature, Tom gained energy to use for his fam-



Fred Mitouer, Ph.D., is internationally known for his groundbreaking somatic therapy: Transformational Bodywork and as the founder of Dragons' Breath Theatre—a forum for cultural experiments in consciousness and irreverent play. He and his wife Cheryl created Pacific School of Massage and has been a featured presenter at The International Somatics Congresses; The State of The World Forum; and The International Conference on Conflict

Resolution. His writings have appeared in *Perspective*, *Massage Magazine*, *Common Ground* and *Yoga Journal*. He is a co-author of the book, *Healing the Heart of the World*, Elite Press, 2005

For nearly forty years, his work has transformed the consciousness of countless individuals in diverse arenas spanning the creative arts through the shamanic depths to the corporate world. The New York Times has called him, "The Hollywood A list's favorite guru...a master." He and Cheryl live on California's Mendocino Coast where he sculpts in metal and stone and rides his dragons. He can be found at:

<http://www.bodyworkmassage.com>

ily life; and Little Tommy was given a second chance to have a happy childhood. Tom now exercises occasionally, does his yoga, and is learning to pace himself more moderately. In his journal, Tom summarizes his transformational journey with this: "I have had a couple of long bouts with depression in the last several months. There is a more 'let it be, this too shall pass' quality to all my mood swings. They don't have me; I observe them. The flip side to the constant threat of self-destruction was always the apparent fight for survival when I was not depressed. Now I live with the certainty that the major threats to my life are inner and that living with my own natural rhythms makes the world a safer place to be in. Living more in the present, I respond to my three-year old son's antics with joy in my heart. My wife is relaxed, knowing I am here for the long haul;

we are planning and working together for our family. As I write this, gratitude is swirling through me, for in a sense I am being born anew each time I disengage from past reactivity, forgive myself, and go on with my day."

As a bodyworker I have found the body's deep capacity for healing and regeneration to be an amazing mystery. Countless people speak of healing experiences in spiritual terms because a real turning point occurs in which traditional language fails to contain or describe what transpired. I am convinced that what we call our wounds and our suffering are in most cases passports to a more conscious and whole hearted way of living. May we all come to appreciate that, with a little help, our wounds can turn into blessings. ■

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