

Tuesday May, 26

BODY WISDOM & OTHER PATHS OF INNER GUIDANCE

WEBINAR SESSION 3

In last week's session, Richard talked about the different holding environments, with the first being in the womb, the second being the first years after birth in which we are inculcated with the values, beliefs and patterns of behavior modeled by our parents, and the third holding environment is the constant unconscious recreation of the emotional and psychological reality and internal feelings states formed in the first and second container. He reviewed the model of the Mandala of Being and how this model can help us free ourselves from stories, judgements and limiting beliefs. When we lose connection to Now, the present moment, we lose connection with our basic ground, our Aware Self. And the Mandala shows us there are only 4 places that our minds can take us—stories about ourselves, stories about others, into past memories that justify our emotional reactions, or into future imaginings that generate either hopeful or fearful emotions. Learning to question these beliefs, stories and judgements and beginning to understand how your mind pulls you out of the Now is an essential piece of the work.

As Jung stated: "Until you make the unconscious conscious, it will direct your life and you will call it fate."

In other words, until you begin to shine the light of awareness to these underlying patterns, learned beliefs, stories and judgements you will continue to be a victim of your circumstances and these patterns will direct your life.

One of the major challenges of emotional or physical trauma that happens in the first and second holding environments is that it occurs before much or any of the conceptual mind develops. For example, a study showed that pregnant women who were directly exposed to the attacks on the World Trade Center in September of 2001 and went on to develop symptoms of PTSD, gave birth to children who also showed signs of PTSD. Any trauma, illness, abuse, dysfunctional parenting, harsh environments, etc., that a child may have suffered has a cellular memory or an energetic imprint and can impact all aspects of development. There is no apparent rational component to many of the patterns of dysfunction. But as a bodyworker friend of mine once said, the issues are in the tissues.

In the physical body there is an innate wisdom, deep intelligence and impetus toward health and healing. Typically, when we think about wisdom and intelligence it is of the mind, it is mental. However, in the Tibetan tantric tradition, they say that true wisdom is found in the body. What does this mean, really?

The first and obvious difference is that it's not mental. Our conceptual minds are incredible mechanisms and capable of processing vast amounts of information, we can think logically and rationally and come up with all kinds of brilliant ideas and solutions to technical problems. And as we well know now, our thinking minds can also get caught in confusion, stories, beliefs, neurosis and even psychosis, but the body is very different from this. The body does not lie. In the body is direct knowing, direct experience, and the language of the body is sensation, or somatic intuition, or a felt sense.

Learning to understand the wisdom of the body requires a deep relationship with all sensation. The 5 senses are usually taken for granted (until you lose one) but they are actually the vehicles through which we experience.

As William Blake wrote: “If the doors of perception were cleansed, we would see the world as it is, infinite.”

The doors of perception are the 5 senses.

And he goes on to say, “For we have closed ourselves off until we see only through the narrow chinks of our cavern.”

The ways in which we close ourselves off are all the ways in which we learn to shut down, protect ourselves, numb ourselves, close our hearts. And what we’re shutting down is our openness, or perceptiveness, or vital energy and essences. The price we pay is an inability to feel, but not just the pain or the difficult experiences, it runs the whole gamut. You can’t just say, oh I’m going to block out this pain, or traumatic experience. The price is the shutting down of our vitality, our capacity to feel joy, love, peace.... deep aliveness.

In all of our meditations we have emphasized the necessity to connect to the basic ground, the basic field of our awareness. Seek refuge in Being. In the Tibetan tradition they talk about the “Hollow Body”.

The hollow body is an actual experience that you may or may not have had, but we need to discover for ourselves. When we turn our awareness inward and we allow ourselves to relax deeply, we feel all the places of tension, contraction, holding. And if we allow ourselves to acknowledge that and then invite ourselves to relax all of these sensations, you may find yourself in this vast spaciousness, and this space is teeming with energy and is alive and awake. You may experience a deep peacefulness, or sense of ultimate relaxation. And there may be a sensation of not even feeling the boundaries of the body.... there is no separation between the inner and the outer. And if you begin to feel this interior vastness,

deep peace, ultimate relaxation, this is the hollow body open, empty, alive, awake and free. And this is the truth of your nature.

When we can experience the ultimate truth of who we are we discover that our ultimate nature is this vast, open, free Being, connected with everyone and everything, it shatters the conceptual mind which lives in perpetual separation, and there is this greater awareness that knows this to be the truth of this existence.

This vast open space can embrace all experience and it does not collapse into pain and suffering and constriction, and it is always here, ever present, always supporting us. It is us, our awareness that is disconnected.

The 2nd piece of body wisdom is what exactly does this fundamental, infinitely intelligent and awake and aware fabric of our Being, that is our basic nature, what does that know? And how is that related to our everyday life and to the world around us?

What happens when we begin to connect deeply with the basic ground, Source, our basic nature, we have a completely different experience of what we see, how we see, what we feel, taste, hear. The ordinary 5 senses become extraordinary. And it's an experience that is felt and known.

Back to Blake: and the doors of perception....

When we meet another person for example, and we are seeing "through the narrow chinks of our cavern", we are locked in our defensiveness, protection, ego-centric view. From this viewpoint our perceptions are pretty limited, usually superficial and typically judgmental. But if we are able to rest in the vastness of our Being and see from this place, it is an entirely different experience. We may be seeing with our heart, and seeing with infinite love and compassion this fellow Being before us, we may look with incredible wonder at this Soul and see their uniqueness, their beauty, the particular gifts that they may be bringing in this

lifetime, we may see their pain and their suffering and the difficult challenges they have faced, a fellow Being, journeying through this lifetime.

From this place, we can perceive the beauty and the wonder of this planet and the sacredness of all life. We know ourselves as connected to everyone and everything. What the body knows is truly how things are. We've seen how the mind can get caught and when our awareness is hijacked by the mind, we are disconnected from the body and disconnected from our deepest wisdom. And we've emphasized again and again that when we are grounded in the Now, in the present, our lives can flow very differently. We develop a capacity to keep our hearts open and our minds clear in the face of whatever arises.

Somatic meditation is the way in which we connect to the wisdom of the body. We've been emphasizing the cultivation of the Aware Self process, building those inner muscles that allow us to journey deeply in the body, stay present in the face of fear, or difficult memories, or overwhelming physical reactivity. Transforming deep psychological or emotional wounds demands that we bring our awareness and our compassion to our thoughts, beliefs, and all the places of holding, resistance, pain and contraction that is held in the body.

Taking ownership for our woundedness does not mean that we are responsible for the injury or trauma we may have suffered. The damage is done, and we cannot change the past. What we have is the present and the possibility of a different future. Taking full responsibility for our psychological or emotional woundedness gives us power. If our victimization becomes our identity, then we are powerless to change our circumstances. Fully embracing and working with the impact of the trauma within us allows us the possibility of deep healing, growth and our ultimate liberation.