

Embodiment as Spiritual Practice

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To explore spirituality as embodied experience

Activities

- I. Sensory awareness activity
 - a. Body resources: spine, speed, hands, arms, feet, space, quality of force and energy, breath, heartbeat, pulsing, 3 Levels of Awareness (sensory, associative, felt)
 - b. Doodle drawing, writing
- II. How is embodiment spiritual?
 - a. Assumption of wholeness
 - b. Language and embodiment
 - c. Felt sense
 - d. Witnessing and dual awareness in embodiment practices
- III. Group Voice activity
- IV. Popcorn feedback

Resources

Terms

Felt sense
Seamless Plenum
Intermodal arts process
Boundary loss
Communitas
Pre-linguistic
Liminal
Embodied cognition
To witness
To prophesy
Gnostic Acts of John
St. Ambrose of Milan
St. Augustine
Rene Descartes

Scriptural References

I Samuel 19:20 (King Saul), II Sam 6: 14-16 (King David), Acts 2 (Pentecost), Acts 9 (Saul/Paul on road to Damascus)

Youtube

McIntosh County Shouters. "Jubilee." Smithsonian Folkways Recordings:
<https://youtu.be/BtYh-L173KU?si=pkiYPFtZl6TpBXXl>

Smith, Shelly. "Focusing' Demonstration." <https://youtu.be/Blzplt2zFuY?si=shooHUrG0LI9J6zs>

Quotations of Interest (see Sources below)

"Body is an inclusive term for the whole being. Other words for body: soma, soul, spirit, psyche, physical body, emotional body, intuitive body, mental body, thinking body, energy body, person, self" (Andrea Olsen).

“Embodiment can be simply defined as living life informed through the sense experience of the body” (Ann Safi Biasetti, quoted in Rabin).

“Somatic psychology asserts that the felt experience of the body and the thoughts of the mind are completely interwoven and interdependent. Furthermore, one’s awareness of their felt experiences derives from three sense mechanisms, exteroception (sensing the environment), proprioception (sensing the physical position of the body), and interoception (sensing essentially everything and anything you can feel inside your body)” (Rabin, Karden. “Defining Embodiment.” Trauma Research Foundation. September 27, 2022. <http://traumaresearchfoundation.org/defining-embodiment/>)

“Embodiment is the radical hypothesis that the brain is not the sole resource we have available to us to solve problems. Our bodies, and the meaning-filled perception of the world they allow, do much of the work required to achieve our goals, and this simple fact changes utterly what our theories of ‘cognition’ will look like. . . . [E]mbodiment actually qualitatively changes what it will be” (Wilson and Golonka).

“The world is not imperfect or slowly evolving along a path to perfection. No, it is perfect at every moment, every sin already carries grace in it.” Hermann Hesse, *Wer lieben kann, ist glücklich. Über die Liebe*. <https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/123340-the-world-is-not-imperfect-or-slowly-evolving-along-a>

“A felt sense doesn’t come to you in the form of thoughts or words or other separate units, but as a single (though often puzzling and very complex) bodily feeling. Since a felt sense doesn’t communicate itself in words, it isn’t easy to describe in words. It is an unfamiliar, deep-down level of awareness that psychotherapists (along with almost everybody else) have usually not found” (Gendlin 36). “[W]hen you let the felt sense form, then you can work with more than you can understand. . . . We can’t do anything about our felt senses by ‘thinking at them.’ It is necessary to approach them by an entirely different route – that special through-the-body route that I call focusing. By approaching them that way, *we can let them change*. There is no other way to make them change. This is why much of what has passed for emotional guidance and psychotherapy in our past has been so futile” (39).

Sources

Conrow Coelho, Mary. *The Depth of Our Belonging: Mysticism, Physics, and Healing*. Belize: Producciones de la Hamaca, 2021.

Gendlin, Eugene. *Focusing*. New York: Everest House, 1978.

Halprin, Daria. *The Expressive Body in Life, Art and Therapy*. London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2003.

McNeill, William H. *Keeping Together In Time*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University P., 1995.

Mounk, Yascha. *The Identity Trap*. New York: Penguin P., 2023.

Olsen, Andrea. *Body and Earth*. Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University P., 2002.

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Shusterman, Richard. *Thinking Through the Body: Essays in Somaesthetics*. New York: Cambridge University P., 2012.

Sklar, Deidre. “Five Premises for a Culturally Sensitive Approach to Dance.” *Moving History / Dancing Cultures*. Ann Dils and Ann Cooper Albright, eds. Middletown, Connecticut: Wesleyan University P., 2001.

Sorrell, Walter. *The Dance Through the Ages*. New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1967.

Wilson, Andrew D. and Sabrina Golonka. *Psychsciencenotes*. “Notes from Two Scientific Psychologists.” Nov. 6, 2011.