

Initiation of Movement

Hmmm, very powerful tool.... How do you initiate movement? When you do something, something common, ordinary, what muscles, parts of your body, do you move first? Walking, eating, brushing your teeth -- what moves first? Rosie asks such simple but difficult questions -- why, when you lift your leg, do you tilt your hips the opposite way?

Very confusing -- very Zen. All of a sudden walking is very complex, brushing my teeth is wonderfully confusing. Trees aren't trees anymore -- things are confused and jumbled together. What connects to what? What leads what? Why?

Ah, but I know that turbulence and confusion provide wondrous opportunities for change. And this time, at least, the turbulence and confusion isn't brought on by trauma.

And it is very Zen. Cheri Huber sums it up very nicely in three principles: (1) pay attention to *everything*, (2) don't believe anything, and (3) don't take things personally.

Of course, being Zen, these three phrases are quite the shorthand. The shorthand I use is similar: clear seeing and calm abiding.

These are similar? Yes, at least to me. Pay attention to everything -- quoting Suzuki-roshi, "see things as they *is*." Pay attention -- be present in the moment, and observe all around you. Observe things as they *is*, not as you wish them to be, or not be, or as someone else may wish them. Don't believe anything -- don't take things on faith, or on someone's word. Work with what *is*, without judgment. Don't take things personally -- act without judgment, without attachment. What is happening? What are you going to do about it?

So what the hell has this got to do with rolfing and movement?

Ah, it's all connected -- you need to generalize. I need to generalize.

So far, rolfing is changing the way I breathe, the way I walk, the way I sit, and a few other things. Is changing -- the changes are ongoing. Ongoing to where? Hey, it's the path without answers, the path without end again. Once I realized that, I felt better -- I've been confused like this before -- I've been on this path for a while. Seize the opportunity to make change!

One of the things that drew me to rolfing is my shoulders and upper back. That, and the continued recommendations of people I respect and trust. Dea, I finally listened! Often my upper back and shoulders get tight. I say that tension hides there, especially in my left shoulder - not only in the superficial layers, but the intermediate structures such as the rhomboids. I'll go in for bodywork, and enjoy the sensation of an elbow working up my back, especially that left side between the spine and the shoulder blade, working out knots, working out tension.

Where do those knots come from, dummy? Who puts them there? Got a mirror?

Many moons ago, when I was in the software business, I remember telling my girlfriend about finding a bug in a piece of code I'd written -- it was a nasty, subtle thing, and took me days to find, and I went on and on about it. She was an artist, a potter. She listened quite patiently, then asked me, "If those bugs are so hard to find, why do you put them in there?" What a wonderful question! Her question changed the way I did things. Patti, I hope wherever you are, you are happy, healthy, and loved.

Yet 25 years later, I haven't learned to generalize -- who puts that tension in your upper back, silly person? Why do you do that? I realize bodywork is very enjoyable, but still, wouldn't it be nicer to walk around without all that tension most of the time, rather than just for a few hours or a few days after a massage?

Back to initiation of movement -- Rosie started me on my hips, but lately I've been paying attention to my shoulders and how I move them. I know they creep up closer to my ears when I'm at work. So, as Rosie says, a hundred times a day, recognize that, and let there be more room between my shoulders and my ears. Let there be more room between my shoulder blades.

Why the hell do I lift my shoulders, both of them, when I brush my teeth? Sorry, hard to be nonjudgmental here -- once I noticed it, it's weird. Same thing with eating -- lifting both shoulders. Why? Now, this isn't "wrong," and it isn't "right," it's just the habit I have. Can we play with changing that habit?

It seems as if most things I do, I lift my shoulders. Eating, brushing my teeth, driving, it goes on and on.

Except for one thing. And that's another story, another story about generalization, and how I've learned a little, but have a lot more to learn. Back in the late 70's, when I was on the East Coast, I was studying Aikido, flute, and teaching juggling. Sensei tells me during Aikido -- shoulders down, heavy underside, relax the belly, move from the center. The next night my flute teacher tells me -- shoulders down, relax your belly, breathe from your center. The following night as I'm teaching the juggling class, I tell someone -- shoulders down, relax your belly, move from your center. The lightbulb lights up over my head -- dimly, but it lights up. Where have I heard this before? Generalize, silly person!

I know how much my posture shifts when I'm juggling -- Dea has seen it. I've used that in yoga -- pick up the juggling persona momentarily as an aid for *tadasana*.

Now I'm playing with it more, even though it's confusing. I'm not going to eat with this fork, I'm going to juggle it -- shoulders down, relax the belly. Pick up the toothbrush and pick up the juggling persona -- don't think, let my body do what it knows how to do. Then fool myself and brush my teeth. At the office, feel what it's like to let my shoulders and shoulder blades drape on my ribs -- as Rosie says, sitting "down" not sitting "up."

What a trip! I think it's working -- I'm still confused. I know I stand differently. My hips and lower back are doing better. My walk is shifting. I'm more observant, that's for sure.

Shoulders, though, and upper back -- I enjoy bodywork. I enjoy an elbow smoothing out the knots, rippling through them, especially on the left side. I enjoy the attention, the touch, relaxing and being cared for. Yet part of me knows that isn't the long-term answer, as nice as it is. It's a force-against-force solution, and it's short term -- two weeks, three weeks, a crisis, and my shoulders are tight again. I know from my psychological/spiritual explorations that confrontation isn't the long-term solution. The long term solution is to go to the root of the problem, embrace, and forgive. Thank you, Dea, for helping me understand that.

Ah, what a wonderful path, the path with no answer and no end! What wonders and insights (and foibles) will the next rolfing session bring? Who knows!

I'm so lucky to have such teachers, people with such skill, soul, and patience.

At the end of each yoga practice, whether in a class or on my own, I thank my teachers. Thank you Zora, thank you Bill, thank you Dea, thank you Barbara, and David, and John, and Sidney, and Phil, and Kimberly. And thank you, Rosie.

--artie

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