The lack of information about the human body in our years of education is startling since it is our home for our entire lifetime. It seems we either think that the body is too simple and too "physical" to warrant attention, or that it is so complex that it is reserved for medical students. In fact, it is both. It is very simple, and everyone can understand body principles and learn the names of bones, muscles, and organs. It is also the most complex living form. The study of the human body involves both mystery and fact: there is much that is known and equally as much that is left unknown. This paradox suggests that we need to value both the information and the questions about what it means to be human.

One of the most thoroughly neglected areas of body education is the awareness of what is happening inside: the dialogue between inner and outer experience in relation to the whole person. We spend much of our time involved in outer perception through the specialized sense organs of sight, sound, taste, smell, and touch. We are generally less involved in developing our capacities for inner sensing which is the ability of the nervous system to monitor inner states of the body. How and why do we progressively close down our capacity for body listening? As children we are necessarily involved in our relationship to the outer environment for survival. An early aspect of body awareness is about control. One is supposed to gain control over the body as soon as possible to avoid doing

Running

My strongest movement memory as a child is running through the fields in Illinois. When I think of all my years of dance training, I knew that this sensation of running, without boundaries, in the flatlands of the midwest is basic to my love of movement.

One of my favorite aspects about living in Utah, was going out at the end of the day into the sunset, and facing the long, downwards hill to my apartment. With a slight shift of weight, I would fall and be running, exhilarated, through space and time.

At a dance workshop, a choreographer asked us to run. She was attempting to clarify performance intention. "Are you running away from, or towards," she asked. I am just running, I thought. The question puzzled me.
Because I travel a lot, flights became a new form of running. Flight reservations often involved considerable mental confusion, as their name suggests. Sometimes I would be completely calm, but often I would get in a state of panic. I would flip from mild depression, unmotivated to go anywhere or do anything, to creating gigantic plans and making twenty decisions, many of which would be changed. My friends called it my "flight pattern." It helped to name the state of confusion; it seemed to make it more tangible, more humorous.

One summer I was making flight plans for California. I felt the familiar flutter. I was writing about emotions and began thinking about the connections. A friend said, "Depression is repressed feeling." As I thought about this, I saw that panic, for me, was a response to numbness. The flutter created stimulation, even though it was confusing. Feeling bad was better than not feeling. "When you are trying to travel, let yourself feel what you’re leaving, and where you are going. Recognize the emotion under depression or panic: the pain, fear, and joy around coming and going. Look for what isn’t being expressed." And I thought about the connection of running to flying and dancing: they suspend time; they remove me from the real world of emotions, responsibilities, and interactions; and they are experienced through the body. They can be used to go towards or to go away from awareness.

anything embarrassing or terrible in a social context. After control comes manipulation through training techniques: ballet, gymnastics, sports or work tasks. The goal is to manipulate our body in certain patterns for coordination, efficiency, aesthetic pleasure or competition. Throughout is our layered relationship to sexuality, usually the repression or redirection of sexual energy in conjunction with religious and cultural convention. There is confusion around all of the digestive functions, from eating to stomach growls to elimination, and a generalized "hush" about what is going on in the organs and the emotional centers of the body. Throughout our lives, but especially during adolescence, conformity to outer images of what the body is supposed to be, defined by social, cultural and religious norms, makes a division between our inner impulses and our outward manifestations. Less and less attention is given to what is coming from inside. We often need instruction on developing a healthy dialogue with our physical being. As young adults, much of the time is spent trying to "do" something to ourselves, to look better, get stronger, be thinner, work harder. And as mature adults and senior citizens, we are encouraged to deny or mask the aging process, to glorify youth rather than appreciate the beauty inherent at every age.

Consider the amount of time spent feeling good about our bodies. How often do we communicate with ourselves? Do we enjoy our physical capacities and efficiency? Our many years of schooling bring a separation of mind and body (sit still and learn). Cultural stereotypes and advertising emphasize the body as youthful sexual object. Physical training techniques and medical practices can lead to a view of the body as a machine, needing to be repaired by someone else when necessary. There is often a sense that one is either the master or the victim of one’s own body. When communication breaks down, we are left polarized within ourselves. It becomes important to understand that the body has its own way of functioning, its own way of telling us what’s going on inside, its own logic. Much of our task is to learn to listen.
Constructive Rest
15 minutes

Lie on your back on the floor in a warm, private place.
- Close your eyes.
- Bend your knees and let them drop together to release your thigh muscles.
- Let your feet rest on the floor, slightly wider than your knees (or prop pillows under your knees for support) and release your legs.
- Rest your arms comfortably on the floor or across your chest.
- Relax into gravity; allow yourself to be supported by the floor.
- Feel your breath, and the responsiveness of the whole body.
- Allow the organs to rest inside the skeleton (the lungs and heart, the digestive and reproductive organs); feel the contents released within the container.
- Allow the brain to rest in the skull.
- Allow the eyes to float in their sockets.
- Allow the shoulders to melt towards the earth.
- Allow the weight of the legs to drain into the hip sockets and feet.
- Allow the surface of the back to move against the floor as you breathe; feel the ribs articulating at every breath.
- Allow your jaw to gently fall open; feel the air move in and out through your lips and nose.

As you release your body weight into gravity, the discs are less compressed and the spine begins to elongate. You may need to lift your head or pelvis and lengthen the spine on the floor to accommodate this change. Constructive rest is an efficient position for body realignment. It releases tension and allows the skeleton and the organs to rest, supported by the ground. Constructive rest is useful at any time of day, but especially if done for five minutes before you sleep. The relaxation of the body parts returns the body to neutral alignment so that you don’t sleep with the tensions of the day. Constructive rest is discussed by Mabel Todd in her book 
The Thinking Body, A Study of the Balancing Forces of Dynamic Man.
Transition from floor to standing

Three minutes

Lying in constructive rest:
○ Roll to one side of your body, allowing the head to stay relaxed on the floor. Feel the effects of gravity as you lie on your side.
○ Spread the palms of your hands on the floor and push into the floor to come to seated. Feel the change of gravitational pull as you sit in vertical.
○ Again, place both palms on the floor in front of you. Press into the hands and simultaneously rotate your pelvis off the floor so there is no weight placed on the knees. You are now in a relaxed push-up position with the pelvis in the air, knees bent, weight supported on hands and feet.
○ Relax your neck and walk your hands back to your feet, bending your knees as you need, so there is continuous flow.
○ Slowly roll up your spine, letting the weight drop down into your feet. Allow your head to hang forward until you reach the end of the roll up.
○ Feel the parts of your body balanced in relation to gravity.

This transition reduces stress on the knees and lower back. Repeat it a few times so the sequence is comfortable. Breathe naturally as you move.

Bodystory

Two hours

Give yourself time to collect as many memories as you can.

○ Write a personal bodystory. Include:
  • the story of your birth (pre-birth if possible; the health and activities of your mother affect life in the womb)
  • your earliest movement memory (earliest kinesthetic sensation you can remember. Examples: being rocked, learning to swim, bouncing on your parent’s knee, falling from a tree, riding a bicycle)
  • training techniques (sports, dance, gymnastics, musical instruments)
  • environment where you lived (mountains, plains, forests, oceans all affect how you move, how you perceive)
  • comments you heard about yourself which shaped your body image (“Oh, what a cute chubby child! Stand Up Straight! He’s going to be tall like his dad. Children are to be seen and not heard.”)
  • attitudes towards sensuality, sexuality; gender images
  • injuries, illnesses, operations
  • nutrition, relationship to body weight, strength, flexibility
  • anything else that interests you.