

Transformation through MovementSM

By Andrea Isaacs

As we explore the connection between body, mind, and spirit, we find that our emotional and thinking states influence us physically, and vice versa. Just observe your body language-when you're feeling uplifted, your body feels light and your energy is more "up." When you're depressed, you feel heavy and your energy is "down." When you're feeling vulnerable, your shoulders cave forward, your arms tend to cross your body for protection, and so on.

There are many traditions that have drawn on this connection as an alternative or supplementary path towards being at One-with one's self, with God, with a higher state of awareness. Our body is being used as a bridge between our everyday conditional existence and a higher realm associated with spirituality. Traditions such as yoga, t'ai chi, chi gong and aikido are revered as extremely effective in this field.

The Enneagram so aptly describes the nine structures underlying the different personality types, but knowing about our inner psychological motivation does not automatically help us to resolve a concrete problem nor make us more spiritual. We all know what we "should" or "could" do in order to grow, but our goal can seem so distant that we give up in discouragement. But what if it were surprisingly easy to "turn a corner" in a difficult situation?

In a recent phone conversation with a fellow Four friend, I found an opportunity to test the effectiveness of EnneaMotionSM, or Transformation Through MovementSM. She was recovering from a recent break-up and was experiencing many "classic" Four symptoms: fear of being alone (though she had set up her life so that she lived alone and worked alone at home!), of not having time for creative projects, not being able to get motivated, fear of not having a self, of not being able to see herself, of not being seen, of not existing. When we spoke, she had been stewing in this condition for days without finding her way out, so she asked for some help.

I asked her to describe in detail what happened to her when those dark feelings arose. She said she felt agitated and would pace and wring her hands, mumbling to herself.

That's all we needed to begin an EnneaMotion exercise. We began by analyzing pacing, wringing and mumbling in terms of the nature of movement itself: space (direct or indirect), time (fast or slow), and force (firm or light). Then I asked her to pace, wring and mumble, focusing on the pure movement aspects which applied to those motions: moving indirectly, with force and agitation. She was to keep repeating what she was doing, gradually exaggerating each gesture more and more.

Our habits become habits because we repeat them so often that we barely recognize we're doing them. It can take a lot for us to simply notice that we are in fact engaging in one of our habits. Repetition and exaggeration are great tools to help us notice. Emotionally, it works—we may not know we're pissed off, but when we blow up inappropriately at the wrong person (exaggeration), we finally realize we've been mad all day. It's true physically as well. We may not know the effect of wringing (physically wringing our hands and an internal wringing of our emotions), but if we start to really exaggerate, we begin to notice what that state really is and how it feels.

Back to my Four friend. After experiencing the exaggerated state of wringing, etc., I told her to just notice how she felt. A more objective understanding of this state (with internal emotional wringing) began to evolve.

The next phase was to gradually begin doing the opposite motions. For example, instead of wringing her hands (slow, forceful, binding, clasping motion), she was to splay and open her fingers, rotate the palms up or outward, relax the wrists, and reach her arms outward into space. One part of the body after another was told to do something opposite (in terms of space, time and force) than before; again, repeating and repeating so the body could learn this movement pattern, so it too could become a habit.

The result was that this inwardly-focused Four, afraid of not being seen, afraid of not being able to see herself, became more outwardly focused, with the ability to see objectively that she does indeed have a self, and does in fact exist. Having accessed this more peaceful state by doing a physical exercise, it becomes possible to choose to inhabit this state at will by moving in a conscious way. It may not be easy at first, but, like all habits and with repetition, it can become easier.

Having moved out of the despair, she is capable again of being in balance—able to take in the joys and the sorrows of her life, of others, of the world, and not be emotionally distracted by them. This kind of harmony creates a deep inner peace, one of the gifts of the Four.

This workshop will have specific exercises for the types in the heart center (Two, Three and Four). We will explore kinesthetically what the body language and movement patterns of these types are. By experiencing the range of these patterns, we will be more able to access the higher qualities at will. To know light, one must also experience darkness.

The workshop will also include yoga, chi gong (an ancient Chinese movement meditation combining repetitive motion and the breath) and meditation exercises to help balance the body, mind and spirit.

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