



*An experienced movement practitioner sheds some light on how to connect to your body through personal imagery, and how that connection can foster positive change in all aspects of life.*

**S**elf image – an authentic sense of self - is enhanced most deeply and truthfully through images that occur to one's self, not through forced imagery. Telling someone what to do most often isn't viable, especially if it's put forth, as "You should do as I do," or "This has worked for me." People resist being told what to do, and this becomes evident in their bodies; and resistance creates tension in the body.

I have discovered as a teacher of movement and spinal support that I cannot tell you anything that you do not already know or sense on some level in your own body. It is my job to guide you to the utilization of your own imagination in order to create changes that better support the spine and changes that better support your life on many levels: confidence, ease, empowerment.

Using images is essential to a mind-body process. My job as a mind-body practitioner is to invite and encourage and enable your imaginative process, and to guide you through exercises in which you realize that your thought process is a bodily thing.

Sparking someone's own imaginative process is different than feeding images. Who hasn't read a book that was made into a movie and been disappointed? What we imagine while we read is not just different than what the moviemaker decides to show, but more detailed and fluid than any outside source can produce.

I have learned that no amount of anatomical information I can relate creates profound change. It is a potency of image

that occurs in the spirit of relationship that develops through dialogue in the course of a lesson. Each person brings a rich wealth of experience that gets tapped into during the dialogue, encouraging what it is that the person is feeling while they are doing. This is their sense of self, the combination of thought and bodily movement.

At one time I thought I had a feeble imagination. I thought I should be able to close my eyes when I thought of some person or place and be able to create a projection - like on a movie screen - in my mind's eye. I could at best see brief little snapshots. I believed that my mind and my imagination were solely in my head. Now, knowing that my mind flows through my entire body, I sense what I wish to remember with a bodily feeling rather than a visual seeing-it-in-my-head. We spend a lot of time in our heads. If we truly desire to get out of our heads – to free ourselves from latching onto feelings of worry and dread - it is essential to have a sense of your mind, not as a brain in a skull, but as a flow through your entire bodily system and most prominently through your spine. To get out of our heads, we must give ourselves somewhere else to reside.

We project a sense of self more based on what we see in a mirror than what we feel in ourselves more deeply. As a dancer I spent an extraordinary amount of time in studios with mirrors, studying my self from the frontside, not knowing (because I had no sense of it) I possessed an enormous amount of power in my backside, which I could not see. We see (both literally and figuratively) ourselves as frontal flesh rather than sensing ourselves as central beings radiating from our spines. We are assaulted everyday with full frontal imagery designed to tell us what to wear, what to watch, what to do, and what we should aspire to

look like. This sort of bombardment stifles the exploration of individuality, as the imagery is based on what companies decide will produce the best sales. Our thought of self then, becomes based on what someone else thinks we should look, feel, act.

I have witnessed many times someone's entire composure change when they have a true sense of themselves as a spine. Frontal tension eases – the eyes change from the glossiness of forced-concentration to a glimmer of understanding, as they simultaneously take in optically and emotionally express outwardly. They release the false urge to have to lift the ribs up towards the head or project them out in front of them. Most often it happens when someone is lying on the backside, so that they can let go of the conditioned obsession with the frontside, and release into the back body. Depth is physically and emotionally achieved in the space between front and back.

There are other residual benefits of getting more connected to your core. If your spine is well supported your posture allows you to come across as more confident and self-assured. A more elongated stance allows your clothes to drape marvelously from your body. Mentally and physically being in your backbone gives you more fluid access to the flow of your nervous system, which flows through and winds off of the spine. When the spine feels suspended rather than clamped in place, you can allow yourself to go with the flow rather than feeling like you have to get a grip.

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