

MKPNORCAL Heartbeat

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The Northern California Heartbeat is a place for men to tell their stories, share their works, their experiences, and keep the community up-to-date.

An EMBODIED WARRIOR



What We Don't Know....
Finding Inclination, Intuition and Inspiration

(photo by Jan Watson)

As [The Mankind Project](#) (MKP) shifts its work from experiential initiations created by men sharing sacred space to online courses, and training in written protocols and procedures, we grow further from embodied learning in the “oral traditions,” and in greater need of somatic practices that can preserve the depth and wisdom of experiential learning. Applied Aikido is unique among many somatic disciplines (Feldenkrais, yoga, bodywork and dance) in that its principles teach conscious embodiment ***under pressure***. Men’s consciousness work addresses pressures from shadowed beliefs of unworthiness, and triggered charges in relationships of adversity. The realms of shadow are the stuff we don’t know that lie beneath the surface of conscious awareness.

In Robert L. Moore’s 1995 Address on Masculine Spirituality, he states that the first component is a connection with a man’s power, and the second is channeling that

power constructively. He relies on Mircea Eliade's idea that "when human beings cannot find the Center, they fall into chaos." He develops the concept of Center as an ascent from chaos through creative epiphany to community and cosmos, a journey of actualizing the four archetypes of the soul, rooted in Jung's thinking and cast as foundations of MKP New Warrior Pedagogy: King, Lover, Magician and Warrior, energies we must learn to balance in our "journey to the Center." (Moore, p. 163)

Could finding center in conscious embodiment empower the journey to the spiritual center we seek in community, which actualizes the four archetypes of the human soul and lead us from chaos to cosmos? Moore's language speaks to the human psyche (mind) and its quest for social harmony and sustainability in a world we have all but destroyed. Though I haven't found evidence of somatic thinking in his writings, he does address the need for grounded and centered thinking in transformational work, and these are fundamental somatic ideas indeed. This seems like a great opportunity for applying Aikido for somatic attunement to our embodiment of center in support of our journey to center in our growing spiritual community. I believe that I'm more likely to find center in community when we each can find centered presence in our bodies. The [Mission of Somatics](#) is to restore care for one another and our environment by being more in touch with ourselves.

I learned about accessing the wisdom of not-knowing from practicing Aikido, and now I'm exploring the application of its principles to conscious embodiment in men's work. MKP has pioneered restoring emotional intelligence in men, whose culture and upbringing discouraged our emotional awareness and self-expression. Men still enter men's work thinking that feelings are "fine," maybe "a bit warm/cold." Once we learn mad-glad-sad-afraid-ashamed, we may wonder about entering a woman's world. I learned to talk about feelings, which often begins by addressing how I've been feeling lately, and perhaps for some time. Without conscious embodiment, I may report what I recall about feelings, which is in my mind, where my attention is on my memory of the past.

Elder presence has a lot to do with the present moment, and this observation speaks as much to accessing heart-felt emotions as it does about entering the illusive realms of not-knowing; imagination, intuition and wonder. My feelings are fleeting... emotion is "e" (energy) in motion. Somatics teaches that without conscious awareness, my emotions can lodge in my tissues as tensions and connective tissue rigidity. As a child, I grew up with a mild congenital cerebral palsy that contracted my left extremities, made me a target for bullies and disqualified me for physical education activities. My emotional intelligence was locked in my head as thoughts, and I was blocked from embodied awareness. Studying conscious embodiment with somatic practices opened my self-awareness beneath my neck, and Aikido trained lowering my attention under the

pressure of being attacked into my torso (heart) and my belly (hara). Without this *dropped* attention, I was likely to get riled *up* under pressure.

LANGUAGE of the HEART

By putting my attention in my heart before speaking my feelings I can distinguish what's presently alive there from how my mind thinks about what I've been feeling all week, perhaps much longer. So before discussing the wisdom of not-knowing, let's consider what conscious embodiment brings to distinguishing the past from present. As I learned to identify and express what I was feeling, I became aware of familiar feelings, those that accumulated over time, and then I looked for opportunities to express them. Sometimes I would express them to the people with whom they were associated, and often I would bring them to my I-Group in some form of "work." As I discovered their "fleeting" nature, I learned that feelings change on their own (emotion = "e" energy in motion.) How am I to know if they still abide in my heart unless I can access my heart-space with an open mind. If "I know what I feel," I may be in my head. Perhaps an unanticipated greeting changed what was in my heart on the way to group.

LANGUAGE of the HARA

Belly wisdom is even more elusive. It compliments memory of the past in my head with the gift of centered presence. But this *hara* has no conceptual language, and its wisdom lies beneath the sensate language of feelings and emotions. It's called a still-point, is dimly lit, and easily obscured by heart-felt passions. I get there by feeling my weight, connecting with Earth's magnetic attraction to my center of gravity; by playing with balance: right/left, front/back, and going within through a kinesthetic listening. A thumb over my navel helps to feel this illusive center beneath the palm of my hand. I let go of wanting to know... get comfortable with the silence; feel my potential for length and expansion; and begin to wonder or imagine.

In Aikido, it's letting go of a learned technique, trusting the safety in balance and connection to Earth's center some four-thousand miles beneath mine. I can harness its power, and access its wisdom when I align my heart/torso centered above my hara, and begin to appreciate its language when my head sits balanced over my heart. But I keep my attention in my belly and resist putting words to my thoughts. I wait for something to emerge from the emptiness. Beyond a familiar fear of the unknown, which I've grown accustomed to; still in wonder, something inevitable fills the vacuum. Often it first appears as an inclination, literally as in a leaning; a fitting reference for the center of gravity, a movement toward some direction in space, or a connection, perhaps a pull.

Applying this practice to men's work reminds me of the musician's connection with the muse; she doesn't come if he thinks he knows what he's playing. But he still picks up

his instrument and *appears* to know what he's doing....Only if my attention is not in thought, and my emotions have subsided, will this wondering evoke an impulse from connections unknown. I call that intuition or imagination, and it can evoke inspiration. Such an impulse can shake my whole body. I can see it in men's compassionate curiosity dialogues when speech slows down to reveal space between the words, as though the speaker is listening to another source. Sentences often begin with "I wonder...., or I imagine."

When I consider the qualities of awareness that I can find there, I have an opportunity to resolve splits between what my head thinks and what my heart feels. What kind of resolution might my gut provide when my head and heart diverge?

I like to consider a recent situation of being under pressure, perhaps from a triggered shadow, or a work/relationship encounter. The response to this pressure can be felt in the body as one of three common somatic responses to pressures (push-back, cave-in, rigidify.) These responses, embodied predispositions, can be transformed by centering and grounding practices that support connection by extending energy from our center.

An experienced staffer at NorCal's last initiation weekend described this work as an "advanced facilitation skill" after he attended a presentation including practicing responding to pressure from stances and with gestures that model extending energy from a grounded center (title photo.) These applications are somatic alternatives to psychologically reprogramming shadowed beliefs.

After attending an online open circle, one embodied warrior said:

"My new awareness was a sharpening of something that I have been feeling for most of my life; easily mistaken for fear or shame that I am not good enough. As I became aware of my body and how I was standing, I noticed my alignment, balance, and posture, as well as the feelings in my gut. When I worked with my alignment I experienced a release of the emotional feeling of shame. This was accompanied by a release of energy in my body and mind. ... not able to say if the flow was out of me, into me, or an exchange of energy with the other men. I am grateful, energized and curious."

This man's account addresses both his personal work and the impact of connecting with others from *hara*. He changed his posture (stance, shape, attitude) and became totally present with the other men. We experienced this as a group, each in our unique way, all knowing "your work is my work." I-Groups know the feeling of connecting at the heart level. We haven't practiced connecting from *hara* yet, and we can.....

I also invite men to simply name or title their group work rather than formulate a “work statement;” say just what or who it’s about before dropping into the heart space. Speak what’s alive there at this moment. Then settle attention in the still place and get content there without thoughts or feelings. Compassionate curiosity dialogues reflect this somatic process by exploring feelings and what’s imagined about a world of mystery beneath the reality of known thoughts and felt emotions.



Aikido principles empower conscious embodiment in communications to transform frustration and overreactions into responses that leave you satisfied, calm and respected. Can you identify the posture of your predisposed responses to pressure? Can you transform the tension patterns in your stance to a centered and grounded connection with others?

I believe you can.... Many blessings.

Yitzak / Jerry Green, Graceful Otter

Lead Elder Emeritus, MKP NorCal





RESOURCES:

Japanese Calligrapher Sengai made the mystery of the Circle/Square/Triangle visible to the world throughout history. They represent the grounding of consciousness in the human body and are the spiritual dimensions of embodied consciousness in Aikido (head/heart/hara.) The mysticism of these cornerstones of sacred geometry also associates the shapes with the energies of fire/water/spirit, written about in Jewish Mysticism as The Three Mothers, the energies that bring forth creation. These notions are expanded in Kabbalah of the [Mother Letters. in Tiferet: Journal of Spiritual Literature \(#11, 2009.\)](#)

Robert L. Moore, *The Archetype of Initiation*, Havlick, Jr. (2001)

Applying Aikido to men's work: <https://youtu.be/SgV5DZ2HkiA>

Liminal Aikido Moments: <https://www.Applied-Aikido.org/Articles>

Somatic Caucus mailing list: <https://lp.constantcontactpages.com/su/XaxfXpj>

The Mission of Somatics: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jqfm6NJp6DY>

TUNING IN to the Body, Jerry's 10 Lessons on Applied Aikido: <https://aikidolearning.com>

New Zealand's Gerald Lopez interviews Jerry: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UB0PdQA3UiY>

The Intuitive Body, by Wendy Palmer <https://www.leadershipembodiment.com/store/>

Aikido Off the Mat, by Kathy Park: <https://www.northatlanticbooks.com/shop/aikido-off-the-mat/>

Jerry's Somatic Earth/Water Music-Video, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7ofPwxhG4Ms>

Ram Dass Tells Terry Dobson Train Story: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VkJnZ-63wBE>

John de Strakosch, Healing Sword:

<https://www.amazon.com/Healing-Sword-John-Strakosch/dp/0911041117>

Embodied Leadership: Richard Strozzi-Heckler: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b2ZsqfXWDkY>

[Sh'ma: An Encoded Meditation Key to The Oneness](#)

[Jerry Green with Panelists Rabbis Jonathan Seidel & Lavey Derby](#)

[AQUARIAN MINYAN YESHIVA](#) Monday January 11, 2021

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