YOU ARE
HERE
TO FEEL

The sensations of the body are integral to our perception of the world and our sense of self. Often experienced below the level of consciousness our bodily awareness continuously inform the way we live our lives, our ethical and philosophic choices and our deepest understanding of who we are. Actively sensing our bodies encourages a shift from the efforts of doing to a yielding of being – a being that supports us to yield into the mystery that surrounds us. It is our hope that these investigations are an invitation that may point to the joy, wisdom and depth of awareness inherent in the simple acts of feeling, breathing, moving, touching and sensing.

This poster is a project by Zoe Kreye continuing a lineage of Unlearning Practices (with Catherine Grau) and made in collaboration with Annie Canto and Ateret Buchman. This compilation of embodiment exercises collects the knowledge of those dedicating their lives to somatics as well as those of us striving for a deeper connection with our bodies in our everyday. The printing was generously supported by Emily Carr University of Art + Design, Vancouver Canada. You are welcome to download and share freely from zoekreye.ca

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BEGINNING

An important note as you begin: These exercises can be uncomfortable, intolerable or anxiety producing. These explorations are offered as an invitation only. You are your best guide to your body and its experiences of embodiment.

Before starting exercises involving a partner, you and your partner should thoroughly review the activities, discuss what is off-limits, and explicitly consent to participating, with the agreement that either individual can stop at any point during the exercise.

GRATITUDE AND ACKNOWLEDGMENT

We want to acknowledge that our work is being done on the unceded, traditional and ancestral territories of the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Sḵwx̱wú7mesh Úxwumixw (Squamish), and səl̓ilw̓ətaʔɬ (Tsleil-Waututh) peoples. We are in gratitude for the nurturance of this place. In doing this work we encourage you to research and acknowledge the histories of the land you stand on, and hope that a deepening relationship with body and land will benefit all in our shared struggles.

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DAILY PRACTICES

Hide inside and listen to the place where you live.
Find a beach and dig a 'you' shaped hole.
In a public place, become an egg and wait.
Imitate the movement of the natural beings around you.
Draw the sounds you hear in your surroundings.

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PLEASURE

MOUTHING

Working in partners, take turns with eyes closed. Together, organize and choose some juicy, scented fresh fruit that you both enjoy. Begin by bringing fruit close to their nose and mouth without touching. Let them sense it and move towards it. Tempt them with touching the fruit to their lips and encourage them to move towards it with the palate and their tongue to taste the fruit. Do not tease them but encourage them to move towards the fruit instigated by the mouth. When we aliven the mouthing reflex at any later stage in life (with fresh juicy fruit) we activate full body movement which enables us to be moved rather than moving through muscle effort. This desire to move is essential in our development and survival as it is our earliest drive. Often we focus on the effort of ambition and lose a connection to the effortlessness that desire brings. Mouthing is the oldest of our reflexes and begins in utero. There is a direct correlation with the formation of the palate membrane and the pelvic floor, essential in the formation of our inner strength and core. The oral stage is also one of our first psychological stages; therefore, the mouthing creates our first secure attachment with the mother -- a deep sense of safety, security and trust.

*Depending on early attachment or traumas, cellular memory can arise and bring emotions which can be disturbing yet liberating and integrating.

MAKING TIME TO FALL ASLEEP *prophecy sun

When you feel overwhelmed, stop and re-charge. Listen – take a feel of your body and surroundings. Safely – sit or lay down wherever you are, put fabric over head and engulf the eyes - try a scarf or hat. Make a pillow with your arms. Rest your head. Focus on your belly moving up and down, loosen your tongue and imagine you are floating elsewhere.

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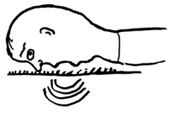
SOUNDING

LAND SOUND

Go outside, preferably to a park or forest, where there's peace and quiet and grass or dirt. Lay face down on the ground. Touch your nose to the ground and smell it. Put your mouth very close to the ground, preferably right on it. Sing a constant tone, starting low and going up and down slowly until you hone in on a tone that vibrates well with the ground. It could take quite some time.



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COVERT PRACTICES

BREATHE

With your eyes closed observe your breath. How does it feel in your body? Is it shallow or deep or fast or slow? Just pay attention. There is no need to change it. Begin to focus on your diaphragm. Feel it draw down as you inhale, extending your belly, and balloon up as you exhale, exerting pressure on your lungs. Make these breaths deep and long, filling your lungs to their fullest. // 60 secs. Now, experiment with allowing the movement of your diaphragm and lungs to transfer into other parts of your body. See if you can let the wave of your inhalation and exhalation flow through your tissues- referring from one part to another to another. These movements can be subtle and still very effective. // 120 secs. (You can do this in any setting and nobody will notice.)

LYDIA DAVIS' GETTING TO KNOW YOUR BODY

If your eyeballs move, this means that you're thinking, or about to start thinking. If you don't want to be thinking at this particular moment, try to keep your eyeballs still.

HOW TO GET LOST

Go for a walk without a purpose. Whenever you're faced with the choice of turning left or right focus on your feet and follow the one that feels warmer by turning to its direction. May your feet lead you to a beautiful place.

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COLLABORATIVE/COLLECTIVE

SOCIAL OBJECTS

Select an object used in your day. It could be something that is dear, or maybe overlooked. Is this object usually used by one person but could it be used by two? With one or more people, transform the use of the object to be collaborative. Give yourself time in the interaction to tell stories, debate, and realize the social or anti-social potential.

MOVING TOGETHER IN CONVERSATION

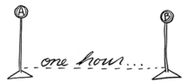
In a pair sit side by side, either facing the same direction or shoulder to shoulder facing opposite directions. Together choose a conversation topic and goal, then follow the prompts below. To come to an agreement: allow your torsos to sway in the same direction slowly and steadily as your conversation unfolds. For a meandering discussion: begin by swaying in opposite directions forward and back, then follow any and every impulse to change direction or to sync your movements with one another. In support of asserting an opinion: stay rigid in opposition, leaning away from one another for several seconds and making eye contact as your bodies meet side by side.

TOUCH ME; DON'T TOUCH ME

Sit across from a person. Each wear a glove on your dominant hand. Explore each other's bodies varying the rhythm of your touch from quick movements with light touches to extremely slow movements with hard pressure. Do not always complete your movements and touch the air around them by tracing their body's silhouette.

ONE HOUR

Requirements: A large group of people, a big room (between 15-20 meters long), a timer. Everybody starts against the wall and should cross the room within 1h without any clue of time. No communication between each other except eye contact.



DURATIONAL DISCO

With a group of people, of any size, learn the Electric Slide. As a group, feel yourselves move in and out of sync. Experience the collective motion. Grapevine left. Tap the left toe. Grapevine right. Tap the right toe. Two steps back led by the left foot. Rock forward tap the back left toe. Rock backward tap the right front toe. Step forward on the right, swing the left foot forward while turning 180°. Repeat. Choose a longer song for example, Love Come Down Full Version by Evelyn "Champagne" King and dance for the entire seven minutes. Overcome social pressures of the day to day by focusing on the group dance.

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TRANSFORMATION

LIMINAL SPACE MEDITATION *Aja Rose Bond. Amici Mortem

Dressed in clothes you don't mind getting dirty, come to a place where dead leaves and other plant matter have been allowed to accumulate on the ground over many seasons without being removed. Carefully burrow yourself down into this leaf litter that is in the process of slowly decomposing. Cover yourself with some of the more recently fallen leaves. This is a liminal space where dead parts of plant bodies are being transformed into soil, returning to the earth to be broken down by the billions of creatures that make up the soil food web. Let yourself imagine, with all your senses, what it is like to decompose. Breath deeply and know that you are alive, for now.

FEELINGS, NOTHING MORE THAN FEELINGS

Write down a list of verbs relating to feelings or connected to emotions. Don't prejudge. Organize the list alphabetically or follow the chronology of your own experiences. Make a long list; take your time. Now go for a walk with your list. Choose one of your verbs and reflect on its meaning in your life either in the past, present or future. Next, embody the verb by transforming its energy into your walk. Feel how it permeates your feet, legs, your hips, your shoulders... Move to another verb and repeat.

SENSATION EXPLORATION

In a quiet location, sit or lie down, finding a comfortable position that allows you to gather your attention to the sensations of your body. Take some time to become aware of what you are noticing and then to find words to describe to yourself these sensations. Words could be written down, said aloud or just held in your mind. See if you can begin to identify increasingly subtle sensations and begin to notice changes in sensation as you describe what you are feeling. Some words you can use to begin: pressure – even, uneven, supportive feeling, crushing; discomfort/pain – aching, throbbing, sore, stabbing pain, nausea, numb, bruised, itching; motion – flowing, expanding, stuck, stillness, sinking, floating, etc.

FOCUS

For when you are feeling ungrounded and flooded emotionally. Stand up, pick one focal point in close proximity (like the line of a window pane), keep your vision glued to that point and walk briskly on the spot. Get your arms and legs pumping to help move the flooding emotions through your entire body while maintaining your visual focus. You usually feel the benefits within a minute or so.

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REFRESHMENT

REFRESHMENT

Bring your attention to the tissues of your face. Notice if there's any extra holding or tension. Practice letting it go (if only as a thought). Play with the image that your skull is floating free and away at the top of your spine. like a buoy: tethered, with a sense of both weight, and buoyancy. Now practice turning your head to any one direction, then back to centre, then again, letting the skull and jaw float, free and away. Now the next time you turn your head, walk in that direction and notice that by turning your head, you change your awareness, you perceive something different than you were perceiving before. Turn your head, and change direction and awareness as many times as you like. Know that at any time that you can practice refreshing your whole self by just turning your head. pressures of the day to day by focusing on the group dance.

NOTICING EXERCISE

The soles of our feet are always facing the ground. Have you ever turned your foot up in the shower and felt the water fall on your sole? Maybe our soles don't have to carry all of our weight continuously, maybe they would like to feel the ticklish lightness of rain on their surface. Maybe you could try it tonight, if you want to. Or tomorrow morning, if you prefer. Think about your body and the function of each of its parts. The movements they often do, but also their direction, what they're facing. Now try to think of the exposure they don't get, and try to access it. Like catching a sun ray under your jaw, and feeling its warmth.

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IN RELATIONSHIP

STONE MEDITATION

Approach stones. Take 3 deep breaths: In through the nose, out through the mouth. Look at the stones. Notice their different colours, sizes and textures. Taking your time, when it is clear which stone you are drawn to touch, take it in both your hands. Feel its weight and dimension. Close your eyes and breathe with it. Place the stone on your body. Try placing it on different body until you find the place it wants to rest. Close your eyes and breathe with it, feel its weight, connect with the stone, imagine it is alive, feel its energy. When you are ready, thank the stone and return it with the others.

IMMERSING

Think about something you are immersed in within your everyday. Find a body of water you can fully immerse in. Leave your thoughts with the clothes you wore as you undress. Get into water and spend some time inside. Notice its texture, the sounds, the visual qualities (you can wear goggles), the temperatures, gravity. Allow your body to explore in different ways: float, dive, swim, plunge, make waves, sink. As you come out and dress again, return to the thoughts you left. What have you learned from water?

BELONGING

Best done with a partner to guide you through the steps and witness. Wherever you are begin, with a land acknowledgment. Invite the ground to be your partner in this movement score. Warm up your body, working with the ground. Repeat sinking and rising motions considering these intentions: Yield to the earth... Yield to gravity. Let yourself sink down and feel held. Where do you feel held? Let the ground rise up in you. Feel that energy to rise up stronger. Where do you feel strength? Yield to the universe... yield to vulnerability. Let go and know you are held. Let the land rise up in you. Feel your body rising as an extension of the land. Yield to your most intimate desires for belonging. Sink down... Feel oneness with your heart, your hands, your pelvis, your face... Rise up, resisting a narrative of separateness. Yield and rise up to the feeling of belonging. Personalize and adapt the score for your own struggles or celebrations of belonging. When you find an end, give thanks to the land and to your body.

*Note that this score can be emotional and best done with support. Let feelings of grief and pain work through your movements

SECOND LIGHT

Sit in an outdoor space. View the sunset through anything other than the sky (a reflection on glass, the shadows on the ground...). Let this second light cast its reign on your body. Use all of your senses to acknowledge how your surroundings change as time passes. Stay until your shadow no longer sits with you.

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UNMASKING

GROUNDING CREATIVITY

While engaged in a creative process you may experience a variety of feelings from bliss to anxiety. In times where you are swept away by your thoughts and emotions, try noticing the sensation attached to them. Put your left hand where you feel it in your body, and focus on the sensation. Then focus on your centre or what feels like 'self' in your body and feel your feet on the ground . Then use your right hand to sweep over your face, as if you're clearing the fog or even pulling a mask off your face with the intention of seeing clearly from your centre. Then exhale. I also sometimes touch my right hand, the one with which I create to feel it and make sure we are in tune.

FACES

Sit or stand comfortably in front of a mirror. Close your eyes and make a face. Open your eyes and look deeply at yourself. What feeling does this face express? Concentrate on that feeling. Lean in to it. When you feel it fully, take 3 deep breaths, then close your eyes and relax your face. Make another face and repeat the exercise at least 3 times.

*This can also be done with a partner instead of the mirror. Take turns going back and forth at least 3 times, taking the time to move through the faces that come up as they may be silly, sober, caring, unfamiliar.

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LOVE

COMMUNICATING WITH LOVES IN OTHER DIMENSIONS

Create an imaginary egg that you can comfortably fit within and line it with the softest thing you can imagine. Enter inside. Make a hole in the egg to find a string that is connected to your loved one in another dimension.
Draw the string through the hole and connect it to your forehead. Blink your eyes three times to let them know that it is time. Open your eyes and send words or an image to them. (Note: These things are best carried on a strong emotion, especially at the beginning. After some time less charged messages will be fine.) Unplug and close the egg. Wait for a response. It will most often be wrapped in a bright light in your minds eye or a strong feeling in your body.

SELF LOVE

For when you are yearning for the caring touch of someone else but are alone. Use your own hands to sweep gently over your face, as you were a kitten or a baby. This tender touch from your own hands can satisfy your yearning for care and nurturance.

MEDITATION

Here we focus on 3 contemplations taken from Shambhala Buddhism, inspired by Taoist principles of equipoise and balance. Sitting in a comfortable position move through the 3 stages shifting your focus with each.
1. FEELING (associated with sentient beings). Is much simpler than emotions. It's a feeling tone related to the bodily sensation which could ultimately be either pleasant, unpleasant or neutral. Unpleasant sensations tend to dominate, so it's helpful to start with the pleasant. Neutral may be areas of the body you never noticed or are quite subtle. Inquiry and listening is more important than knowing. With each, the more attention we you the more you can observe it changing and moving.
2. BEING, focus on attitude, versus feeling which has more content. Bring your fingers to lightly touch the centre of your sternum, the menumbreum. This focus is more related to ground, to earth. This brings an awareness to gravity, to our centre, our core. Feel the changing quality of just being, the steadiness of being, and how different this is from doing. Being is like the seasons or the weather - the earth is not fighting or choosing these elements.
3.TOUCHING is related to contact with " the Other". Place your hand lightly on the ground or something that is not you. This focus is more distal and brings a consciousness of a space that is associated with the principle of 'heaven'. You begin to focus on whatever is most present around you through your senses while bringing the awareness to the point of contact which is neither "me" or "the other".
In the end, Rest in a neutral position without any focus for a minute or two.

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RITUAL

MIDDLE WORLD

Working directly on the ground, move through these seven postures as a cycle. Learned from the Slavic tradition, this cycle is dedicated to growth. This is a good practice if you're growing a garden or beginning a new project, as it supports development, and wards off bad weather, illness and disturbances. It is best practiced when the Moon is in Virgo.

A GOODBYE CEREMONY TO SHARE TOGETHER *Mickey Morgan

Preparation: Light your candles, make your food, dig your hole.
Congregation: Converse, Share, Eulogize.
Reader: Reach your hands to the heavens, your bare feet to the ground.
Congregation:(Aloud) Shout praise until there is no more breath.
Reader: Put in your hole what is to be left.
Congregation: Bury handful by handful. Send off and gently kiss your hands.
To end: share, eat together.

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