

## Sensory Intelligence

If you have participated in a class or workshop recently you know that I often start by asking you to look around the room, listen to the sounds of the moment, note your mood and how warm or cold you feel. I am essentially asking you to come to your senses, awaken you to your sensory information. When I first developed this exercise I wasn't exactly sure why. It felt important and over time the content and purpose evolved. I summarize the exercise as follows:

*In our culture information coming to us from NPR or the BBC or a research article or some external expert is given great validity. It is as if the only source of valid and true information is external to us. But we just explored your system's amazing and on-going ability to give you information through your senses. As artists this is your most essential source of information. It allows you make choices. It gives you the information of what does and doesn't serve your purpose; what does and doesn't give you joy or power or anything you want.*

*This is not to say external information is less valid. This is invite you to have access to as many sources of information as possible to navigate your life. This is about revalidating our inner-compass as the foundation of well-being.*

Below is a quote from one of these external, research sources, Dr. Bud Craig, (note: better heartbeat perception is a method of measuring someone's *interoceptive awareness* or body awareness:

"Better heartbeat perceivers function better not only on an emotional level but also cognitively. They make better decisions based on subtle environmental cues, they perform better in tasks of selective and divided attention, and they respond more quickly to intuitive choices. They also have a more accurate subjective sense of time...they expend less energy than poor heartbeat perceivers." -- Dr. Bud Craig. How Do You Feel? An Interoceptive Moment with Your Neurobiological Self, p 6-7.

I am thrilled to have the essential conclusion I arrived at from doing the Coming to Your Senses exploration confirmed in research. Recently in my on-going study about the human system I came upon the work of neuroanatomist Dr. Bud Craig. His book is How Do You Feel? An Interoceptive Moment with Your Neurobiological Self. Yes, it is dense. He has put forward a whole new paradigm for understanding how we feel, literally. What he has discovered couldn't have been mapped before because we didn't have the instruments to see the tiny, tiny tissues he has mapped. His work is vast and more complex than I express here. I've had the sense that it won't be long before we see books about developing our "Sensory Intelligence".

In the dance world we have known that there is no mind separate from body. Movement, sensation and body is our mind. We are whole and embodied. To dancers Descartes thesis "I think, therefore I am," has long been seen as inaccurate at best and the root of a sick, disembodied western society at worst. In his introduction Craig writes: "*'I feel, therefore I am,' or more aptly, as I will explain, 'I feel that I am.'*"

An understanding of embodiment isn't revolutionary anymore. Craig makes a thrilling contribution to the field. My work, the Lightner Method, is about developing practical strategies to apply new information about our system to daily and artistic life. The goal of developing our "Sensory Intelligence" of the Coming to Our Senses exercise is now both experientially and externally validated. Happy Spring!

Here is a link to the Coming to Your Sense script.

Here is link to a talk by Craig.

I also highly recommend Dr. Ginger Campbell's Brain Science Podcast. I first heard Craig in episode 121.

Take a moment and very simply and look at this room. Do you see anything you haven't noticed before.....now, gently listen to symphony of sound in this quiet room....How awake are you? How tired? .....Notice the sense of the earth coming up under you to support you, the feeling of the chair, the ground.....What is your state of being? Alert, bored, annoyed, interested....If you give your state of being a name like happy where do you feel the happiness? Indicate with your hands where you feel the sensation of your state of being.

Do you know what anxious feels like? Where do you feel it. Notice we have a word – anxious. This is a concept. The feeling of anxious, the experience of anxious is in your being. It is a sensation.

When we started seeing the room, listening to sounds, we were perceiving the world around us. The head is the limb for perception. It is like a periscope giving you lots of information about the world around you.

There are lots and lots of other senses. These are dispersed throughout your body. They tell you about how you, your internal balance, your hunger or temperature, your balance and also your feelings and responses to how you interpret the world around you at every moment.

You perceive the world, interpret it and then get sensations of your response to the world. These sensations are your feelings. This ability to perceive, interpret and respond is an ancient and foundational ability. It is in every cell in your body and every living cell everywhere. It is are fundamental information source.

As you receive the information of your sensations explore finding descriptive words for these sensations beyond easy and tense. How about: bubbly, light, dark, rigid, fluid, tingly, grinding....develop your sensory vocabulary.

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