

This is Your Vessel

by Todd Fiorentino

Your body is your vessel. It can take you to great heights or to the pits of despair. After watching the Olympics, I really began to see this truth. Imagine all of the muscle coordination and strength that was needed to participate in those events. Or, on a more basic level, just think of the coordination needed to simply cook a meal or get dressed in the morning.

There are literally hundreds of muscles in your body. In each of these muscles, there are sensors continually relaying information to your brain, which controls your nervous system. These sensors tell the brain whether it is too cold or hot, if you're fatigued, sore or whatever. It's a closed system, though if inefficiency sets up, it could become open as you start to "leak" energy.

Part of the system is automatic. Organs function without direction from us. Part of the system is voluntary. And a few functions, like blinking and breathing, are a little of both. I recently participated in a Kundilini yoga class where we focused on breathing and did the famed "breath of fire." Although I could not master it, it made me realize what a shallow breather I am. In fact, I almost pant.

Breathing deeply from the abdomen is not only relaxing—it cleanses the whole body, oxygenating your blood and getting rid of impurities by activating the lymphatic system. Deep, slow breathing can help you to slow down and get centered. While we were doing the fire breath, the instructor spoke of a retreat she had been to where they learned to get beyond the pain they were feeling.

On the retreat, the group held poses for extended periods seeking to pass through the pain and emerge from it. Another strategy might be to go deeper into your mind and merge with the non-physical realm of dreams, imagination and thought, changing your focus. Aside from these techniques, it is also possible to reinterpret things that we experience.

Here is an example: Many people look at a rainy day and say, "It's awful outside." Or, to take a contrary example, people look at a river and say, "that's beautiful." In actuality, neither statement is inherently true. We have been trained to interpret things in a given manner. We have been socialized to think a certain way, and in some cases, to not think at all. It's so important to see things for what they are and resist simple classification.

By allowing ourselves to pass through; merging with the non-physical; and, reinterpreting experience, we can reach our true potential. We are capable of so much, especially if we take care of our body. Awakening to this and listening to your body is the hard part. It tells you everything it needs.

Your body remembers. Your body remembers traumas; it remembers dysfunctional patterns and old habits; it remembers mistreatment. Sometimes the goal of a massage therapy session may be to simply put you in touch with the pain you are experiencing—the first step in eliminating it. Positional release is an interesting technique that identifies these patterns and uses them to release long held tensions.

Muscle memory and cellular intelligence are fascinating areas to study -- not just for therapists -- for anyone looking to gain a better understanding of one's self. Our ability to regenerate alone is so wonderful and magical and mysterious. Science may be able to

tell you what happens during regeneration (cell growth, etc.), yet it cannot really tell you why living things regenerate.

Just like nature we regenerate, heal, grow and ultimately die. Just like nature, we need light, food, water and love. Plants, animals and humans all respond positively to loving touch. Soak up nature's energy. Soak up the rain and the sun. Soak up the good things in life and avoid the bad. Your body will thank you for it; it will thank you one hundred fold.