

Move Authentically? Does My Body Even Do That?

A Personal Perspective, by Mary Goyer

You may think an Authentic Movements class doesn't sound like your thing. You're not even quite sure what it is. For me, it was certainly a novel experience, one I embraced after an initial hesitation. This is a story of how I, a very grounded (and some would say straight-laced) woman, decided to give the whole bliss-power-body-Goddessy stuff a try...

Not For Me

Several years back, my sister, Lumenaria, involved herself in a dance class that one of her friends turned her onto, one of their "definitely them" endeavors. It sounded kind of intriguing. I definitely liked the *idea* of women learning about tantric principles, goddesses, and meditation, etc. But it still never struck me as something I wanted for myself. She had started the class with the intention of getting back in touch with her passion for dancing. So, although I generally enjoyed - and could relate to - her weekly "ah-ha!" stories, I still made an automatic assumption that it was not my cup of tea. I wasn't a dancer, I didn't know the jargon, and that was that. In spite of many invitations, both from outside and from within, joining the group remained the farthest thing from my mind.

Listening to the Impulse

The invitation to give it a try began to gnaw at me as time went by. I felt it pulling in a subtle but persistent kind of way, like a tap on the shoulder every time I sat really still. One day it hit me that if I chose to try the dance, I'd find a level of resolution around some of the body and self love issues I'd been attending to for years. I knew, somehow, it'd help move my process into a new dimension. So, of course, I ignored the impulse for several more months. In fact, I

never did join the class Lumenaria attended. But by the time she decided to launch and teach her own modified version of the same concept, without any further doubts, I knew I was in. It was almost like I didn't have a choice.

Oh, The Fear

By the time the class began, I'd had the luxury of experiencing the work privately so I felt ready. I navigated the fear about dancing in front of others with relative ease. I was, however, still managing one tiny identity-based fear. I had in my head that people who did this sort of thing were too "out there" or different and (it sounds ridiculous to articulate) that I might become something I was uncomfortable with just by association. Soon I might not recognize myself! When I caught myself with these thoughts, I laughed because they didn't even ring true; I knew it was always up to me to choose who I was and what I wanted to express. And yet the fear kept popping in, right up until I experienced my first official class.

Elation

After one try of the Authentic Movements class, I was more than relieved, I was elated. It felt great. I couldn't pinpoint entirely why, but I didn't care. Each week brought up interesting

Elation (con't.)

nuances in my ideas of my body, what I knew of myself, what I felt about being a woman, and what I thought about being alive. Each week brought about experiences of freedom that I didn't even know I was looking for. The classes had a certain structure to them that included personal and group time. They generally began with some instruction on tantric principles, breathing techniques, following body impulses, etc. From there we'd quickly shift into movement, something like personalized meditative yoga, except it felt unlike any yoga class I've ever experienced (more intentional, more connected to a personal process, and with a different type of focus on the body). Some activities did feel strange and new, but, phew! My identity never needed a code red! It was more like playing dress up in an exotic costume closet, with the option to take home anything I loved. And experiencing all this in the group format was a treasure. The bonding that took place was almost instant but still allowed ample room for deeply personal experiences that weren't always shared in the form of out-loud self disclosure. It was supportive without requirement. My expectations, in all ways, were exceeded every week.

Body Changes

There's a feeling of being in an altered state of consciousness during Authentic Movements classes, so it can be as hard to remember a change as it is to recall a dream by the time you've had your first cup of coffee in the morning. For me, there definitely was, though, an unprecedented level of body awareness and

sensitivity that remained once all of my shifts began to occur. I began to *feel* things I never before could. A level of self acceptance came through, and I found my automatic criticisms about bodies (mine and others) quieting into appreciation. I began to see more through eyes of beauty and perfection rather than comparisons of good and bad. I noticed these types of changes in my thinking and sensed them on a body level, too. The absence of judgment that I began to experience the pleasure felt nothing short of transcendent.

Courage

If I could offer this class to every woman in my life I would because the dance asks for no particular ideology, vocabulary, or starting point. Every woman just begins wherever she is and takes from it whatever feels right to her. Don't we all want to feel more at home in our bodies and more in touch with our sources of power? Yes, please. The hardest part, in my opinion, is simply deciding to sign up and GO because it's a hugely symbolic decision which forces us to put aside our mental chatter. Even now after a few years have passed I acknowledge I do feel awkward in my body at times. And I do still feel like a beginner when trying to connect to something new. In fact, sometimes it's intense and I have to tap into the reservoir of courage to make a refreshed commitment. But the whole process all feels softer now so I know I've learned something important. I'm more comfortable letting myself be wherever I am on any given day. And that is what I rest in now. It feels good to rest in that.