



live particle

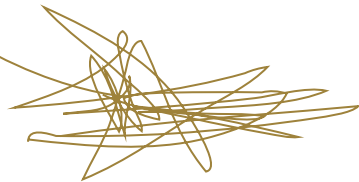


Embodied Practice for Physical and Mental Wellbeing,
and Creative Living

Classes, Courses, Art Interventions, Private
Consultations, Crafted Objects and Online Resources

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Welcome

In this booklet we share the what, how and why of embodied practice and the research that evidences its transformative power.

Embodied practice is a process of paying attention to the fact that you are embodied and in continuous relationship with the world around you. It develops your multi-sensory capacity and in particular grows your kinaesthetic, auditory, and spatial knowing. The neural pathways of these sensory channels are directly linked to the pathways for homeostasis – your wellbeing.

Where you are in space, how you move, the feedback you get through touch and sound, registry of inner sensation and picking up on cues from the outside world are central to your survival. Embodied practice taps the intelligence alive in your cells and cultivates a quality of

attention that can profoundly shift your state and ignite your creativity.

Your cells, body-systems and environmental ecosystems can provide tangible models for healthy and creative living. Paying attention to these models can help you feel more connected and support you to care for yourself, others and your environments more actively.

Embodied practice has a key role to play in repatterning values, beliefs and behaviours. Growing an embodied practice is the personalised action you can take for developing healthy, connected and creative communities.

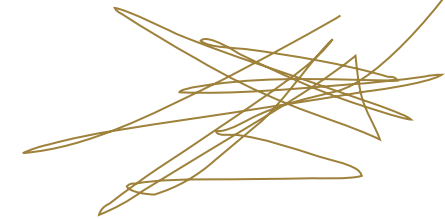


“The experience of oneself in the world as a cognisant being does not solely emerge from neural activity within the brain. Instead, it involves a complex interplay of brain, body and environment, and the seamless integration of interoceptive, proprioceptive (including vestibular), kinaesthetic, tactile, and spatial information.”

~ Schmalzl et al., 2014

Embodied practice is beneficial for:

- Reducing stress, worry and anxiety
- Inspiring creativity and play
- Modulating the nervous system and re-patterning behaviours
- Managing and processing trauma
- Sustaining physical activity and improving coordination and agility
- Increasing general mental and physical health
- Cultivating self-confidence and personal agency
- Relieving geriatric disease symptoms
- Improving sleep






Embodied practice explained

Embodied practice is a multi-sensory tool, a form of physical mindfulness that foregrounds breath, imagination, movement, voice and your senses.

Your senses and perceptions form a kaleidoscopic experience of your living reality. Your trillions of cells dynamically communicate with your environments all the time. Your environments shape you as much as you shape them. An embodied practice focuses on this reciprocal relationship fostering curiosity and wonder. Paying attention to this exchange is about consciously expanding the breadth of your experience.

This process involves listening more closely to your sensing and feeling intelligences. It is about noticing how the quality of your attention can change your experience, have impact on others and provide more choice in your response to things. This is a *practice* because it requires regular and repeated action and is integrated into your daily life.



We learn first through the perception of movement. Not only is movement a perception, but as the first perception of learning it plays an important role in establishing a baseline for our concept or process of perceiving. This original process of perception then becomes incorporated into the development of the other perceptions.

~ Bainbridge Cohen, 2012

The process begins by growing embodied awareness strategies such as:

- Paying attention to your immediate context
- Noticing breath and sensations
- Recognising and responding to sensory information and playfully exploring what you notice
- Activating movement and vocal potentials
- Experientially exploring and following the natural flow of movement and vocal patterns
- Listening to your embodied intelligence or what some call your felt-sense (e.g. gut feelings, spine tingles etc.)
- Choosing to pay attention to particular sensory pathways in the things you do.
- Mapping your living systems such as your respiratory, circulatory, nervous, systems to sense and feel your multi-dimensionality

The power of embodied practice becomes personally relevant and transformative when you:

- Apply embodied strategies in the things you do
- Translate embodied approaches in professional settings
- Actively and regularly engage the therapeutic benefits of embodied practice
- Experience first-hand the physical, mental and emotional freedom of paying attention to your embodiment
- Apply human biological structures and systems to solving problems and developing innovations

The field of embodiment incorporates a wide range of disciplines and many strategies are shared across different embodied modalities and emerge from different cultures. Some of them you may have already encountered such as martial arts practices, body-oriented therapeutic practices, yoga traditions, theatre and dance training techniques, and psychotherapy interventions.

Embodied practice is not an alternative discipline but acts as a complementary approach. It focuses on the quality and subject of your attention and brings a multi-sensory attentiveness to living.

What we do and how we do it

In a Live Particle encounter you will move, vocalise, and use imagination, touch and resistance to develop an embodied practice. Our work is grounded in embodiment, somatics, improvisation, education and creative practice.

As artist/educators, we craft inquiry-based, experiential, educative and therapeutic encounters and accompany these with our original live and recorded soundscapes. Holding space for exploration, we drop in ideas, theory and processes and offer physical tools to inspire and encourage personalised moving and vocalising. Responding to what is live in the room at any one time, we take a trauma-informed approach to ensure a sensitive and safe learning environment.

Delivered in-person and online, our classes, courses, art interventions, private consultations, crafted objects and online resources provide opportunities for you to know yourself from

various vantage points; inside-out, outside-in and in-between. You learn to recognise, live and respond dynamically to the ever-shifting nature of things and develop an attentiveness to the stirrings that you sense and feel from your inner and outer experience.

Our approach has both structured and freestyle elements. Any sequencing is spacious enough for you to find your own way of practicing. The improvisations are supported such that you are not left wondering what to do. Within this play of structured and freestyle practice there are specific skills and processes to cultivate that support you to tap the many dimensions of your embodied life.

Our work has been engaged by individuals, schools, universities, prisons, the neuro diverse, aged communities and small businesses.





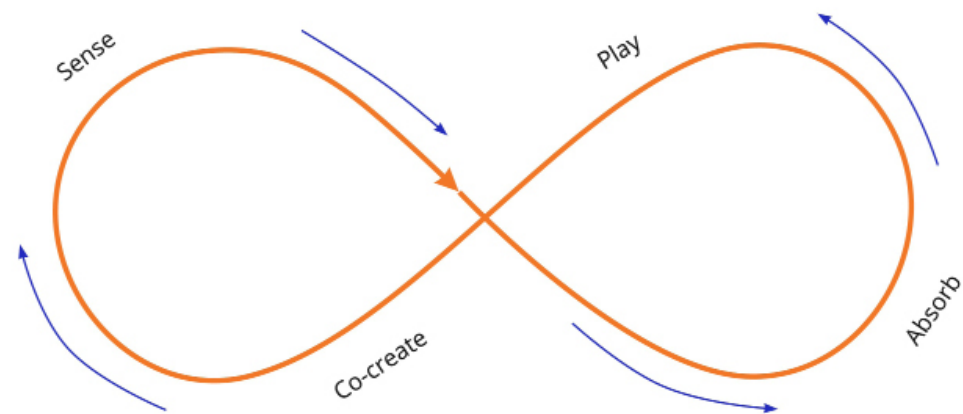
“We’re awake now, and the question is how do we stay awake to the living world? How do we make the act of asking nature’s advice a normal part of everyday inventing?”

~ Janine Benyus

LP Attunement Cycle

A key process in exploring and cultivating an embodied experience is our Live Particle Attunement Cycle. Repetition of this cycle supports you to develop a practice and become more able to refine your dexterity, respond sensitively moment-to-moment, generate more

choice and craft nuanced embodied expressions. The process has four key stages as shown in this diagram; Sense, Absorb, Play, Co-create. It begins with Sense and is presented as a Mobius Loop to show that the process is continuous.



SENSE

Settle and be with your breath. Sense your contact with the earth and become aware of the space, sounds and things around you. Notice the information you are receiving through your senses.

ABSORB

Spend time in this embodied experiencing. Notice any sensations and images that arise. Allow yourself to become interested and absorbed in what emerges.

PLAY

Amplify, reduce, adjust or contrast the qualities of your embodied experience. Play with things like speed, rhythm, size, proximity, levels, and textures.

CO-CREATE

Explore the relationship between the things you have discovered. Generate patterns, include the space and things around you. Use gesture, sound, movement, touch and resistance. Follow your interest.

Why care about growing an embodied practice?

Because you are embodied.

Because you are more than your frontal lobes.

Because sensing, feeling, moving, sounding, touching, imagining and creating is being human.

Because knowing is multi-sensory and multi-dimensional.

Because embodied practice taps the extraordinary intelligence alive in your cells.

Because by choosing to craft your multi-sensory capacity and innate creativity, you are engaging more of you and enlivening the world around you.

Because your embodied intelligence is a pathway to deep connection, care and belonging.

Because when you engage your embodied intelligence, you dramatically increase your ability to manage stress and anxiety, process trauma and support healing.

Because growing a personalised embodied practice engages and neural pathways for homeostasis - your wellbeing and capacity to thrive.

Because consciously living your embodiment is a personalised political act towards immediate and future sustainability - yours, ours, the planet's.

“If I was made of silicon or fibre optics, I would need different things, respond to different things, notice different things, and be intelligent in a different kind of way. My mind was not parachuted in to save and supervise some otherwise helpless concoction of dumb meat. No, it’s just the other way round: my intelligent flesh has evolved, as part of its intelligence, strategies and capacities that I think of as my ‘mind’. I am smart precisely because I am a body. I don’t own it or inhabit it; from it, I arise.”

~ Claxton, 2015, p.3



Many people go through their lives paying very little attention to anything other than their thoughts. Yet there is so much more to you than your thoughts. Attuning to your natural infrastructure (how you are made, function and interact, and the inherent intelligence alive in your cells) can resource you to skilfully relate in your world.

For instance, if you want to understand balance, rather than just reading and thinking about it and experimenting with objects, you can stand on one foot and experience it. If you play with different ways to balance, you simultaneously engage multiple biological systems, senses, and perceptions - your muscles, bones, breath, eyes, ligaments, touch receptors, spatial awareness, and imagination. You can consciously explore what you discover and knowing emerges from your experience. This is embodied knowing. It bears unique, personalised and enduring understanding because when you experience something first-hand you pattern it across multiple systems. This multiplicity makes it more adaptable, robust, less likely to fade and ripe with varied approaches.

Growing an embodied practice crafts a particular quality of attention to your embodied reality. It can yield strategies for staying resilient and coping with difficulties. It supports you to embody variability and adaptability and provides

insight into the multiplicity of things, thus shifting and loosening any rigid mindsets. Attuning to this way of being in the world is an essential life-skill right now as we humans face unprecedented global uncertainty and require unparalleled need for creative solutions to complex problems.

More than that though, growing a personalised embodied practice builds your capacity to notice the beauty and wonder of things and your part in this. It creates time and space for listening to those intuitive inklings that ignite your creativity, inspire action in the world, and build lasting reciprocal relationships.

This way of living is important because the quality of the relationships you cultivate with yourself, others and your environments can foster a more caring mindset and can pave the way for a more just, empathic, respectful, and loving world.





Research shows...



It is widely accepted that the mind-body schism that pervades our cultural behaviours does not serve the healthy functioning and creativity of individuals and communities. Yet, still we are behaving and conceptualising ourselves as though intelligence predominantly resides within our brains; that the rest of our flesh is an unintelligible mass of “dumb meat” responding to cognitive inputs¹. In so doing, the wealth of intelligence alive in the rest of our cells (i.e. other than the brain) remains outside our consciousness and we miss actively coordinating with the spectrum of our embodied intelligence. Being embodied is an ongoing living process that is multi-dimensional, durational, everchanging, innately creative and immersive. This reality has direct implications for our physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual wellbeing.

Advancements in the fields of neurobiology², trauma therapy³, psychology⁴, mindfulness⁵, somatics⁶, gender⁷, sexuality⁸ and natural science⁹, are shaking up limited perceptions of embodiment. These advancements are thus paving the way for embodied modalities as effective in transforming personal and planetary wellbeing.

Evidence-based research over the past 60 years supports the positive impacts of embodied modalities by showing that practices that pay attention to moving¹⁰, sound and vocalising¹¹, sensing/feeling through touch¹², and imaginative and visceral sensitivities¹³ are highly effective in shifting mood, changing state, igniting creativity, and cultivating care and connection. Furthermore, research in education shows the positive impacts of embodied modalities on refreshing and energising focus, enhancing learning agility, cultivating agency and building self-confidence¹⁴.

It can be argued therefore that embodied modalities that have developed educative practices are key to managing our current personal and environmental predicaments and critical to repairing the mind-body schism. The physical, mental and emotional stressors of a pandemic, a climate emergency, global instability, social inequality, the sedentarism of contemporary living and the negative impacts of obsessive technology use have augmented an already spiralling mental health crisis that contemporary health professionals are struggling to support. This crisis is now concerningly evident amongst young people¹⁵.





We are in a state of high alert more of the time, often exhausted and our defences are up. As distinguished scientist Stephen Porges argues, “the physiological states that support defence are incompatible with those that support creativity...and promote health and feelings of love and trust”¹⁶. He says that “not respecting the body’s own responses and filtering visceral feelings, over time, may contribute to illness by dampening the bi-directional neural feedback between brain and body”¹⁷. A growing body of research is revealing that embodied practices can alleviate the symptoms of a range of clinical conditions¹⁸, and bring about measurable shifts in stress markers¹⁹.

Rather than relying solely on a highly stretched health system, why not consciously tap the known healing benefits of embodied practices in appropriately supported educational settings? In carefully crafted programs that utilise evidence-based embodied practices people can explore the bi-directional neural feedback flows between their brain and the rest of their body, and themselves and their environments.

An embodied educational approach can be complementary to traditional mental health interventions. As Harvard professor of psychiatry Dr Bessel van der Kolk argues, “mainstream medicine is firmly committed to a better life through chemistry, and the fact that we can actually change our own physiology and inner equilibrium by means other than drugs is rarely considered”²⁰. When our inner equilibrium is in balance there is more space to pay attention to our impact on others and our environments and more capacity for empathic and creative living. This is a critical consideration right now because as bio-mechanist, Katy Bowman says:

“Movement matters. Not just movement, your movement – not only to your physiology, but to those in your family and community. Your movement matters, not only to those you see on a daily basis and yearly basis, but to humans elsewhere, that you’ve never met. Your movement matters to the forest and bees in your local area ...You have a role in the ecosystem, and it’s not a static position at the top of a food chain as you were taught. Your role is a dynamic one, critical to all the other living things on this planet”²¹.

For many, educative interventions that are therapeutic can be enough to set them free from damaging behavioural and thought patterns, and disorienting and anxiety provoking realities. This then leaves health professionals to support those in need of more specialised physical, mental and emotional care.

Here, at Live Particle we create the conditions for people to explore, learn about and experience their inner life, their multi-sensory nature, and their reciprocal relationships with our living world.

Endnotes

- 1 Claxton, 2015, p.3
- 2 Damasio, 2021; Eagleman, 2020; Koob, 2009; Willis, 2020
- 3 Levine, 2011; Porges, 2017; Schwartz, 2021; van der Kolk 2014
- 4 Stapleton, 2022
- 5 Kabat-Zinn, 2019; Schmalzl, Crane-Godreau & Payne, 2014
- 6 Bainbridge-Cohen, 2018; Ogden, 2021
- 7 Malatino, 2019; Plotegher, 2021
- 8 Komisaruk, Whipple, Nasserzadeh & Flores, 2009
- 9 Sheldrake, 2020; Benyus, 2002
- 10 Bowman, 2016; Walker, 2021
- 11 Campbell, 2011; Paul, 2004; Porges, 2017
- 12 Bainbridge Cohen, 2018; Linden, 2016
- 13 Brandt & Eagleman, 2017; Claxton, 2015
- 14 Willis, 2020; Robinson & Robinson, 2022
- 15 Grové, 2021
- 16 Porges, 2017, p. 42-43
- 17 Porges, 2017, p. 218
- 18 Klein, Baumgarden & Schneider, 2019
- 19 Bloch-Atefi, et. al. 2015
- 20 van der Kolk, 2014, p.38
- 21 Bowman, 2016, p.1





Who we are...

Angela Clarke PhD & Camilla Maling MA.

First and foremost, we are explorers. To us, the extraordinary multi-dimensionality of our embodied lives and our living world is endlessly fascinating.

Between us, we have studied and applied approaches influenced by mind-body philosophy and psychotherapy, neurobiology, biological sciences, experiential anatomy, neurodevelopmental therapy, movement ecology and creative arts therapy. We have also studied and draw upon a range of Eastern/Western embodied modalities including: Body-Mind Centering, Anusara Yoga, Alexander Technique, Contact Improvisation, Extended Vocal Technique, Performance Improvisation, (Syn)aesthetic Performance, Butoh, Hannah Somatics, Contemporary Dance, Feldenkrais, TRE, Skinner Release Technique, Tamalpa Institute, Qi Gong, Embodied Flow and Action Theatre. As practitioners we are magpies curating and applying these modalities as needed in the moment.

We are artists who have spent decades immersed in embodied explorations in studios, universities, communities and schools.

We are educators who have worked with people of all ages in creative practice, body awareness, various movement and vocal practices, psychosomatics, storytelling and improvisation.

As embodiment, education and creative practice specialists we have come together with a shared desire to translate the transformative power of embodied practice into mainstream contexts. This is the material of our professional work, art practice and ongoing living research. We believe in empowering people with the knowledge and tools to thrive.

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References are continued on our website:
www.liveparticle.com.au/lp-pdf-references

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*Delivering sustainable pathways for healthy, connected
and creative communities*

