



*The Missing Link BodyTalk Series*

## Bonus 1: Connecting to the Body to Reduce Stress

(please use with the accompanying meditation)

While the BodyTalk session focussed on recalibrating the nervous system to be less sensitive and to not be as easily triggered by stress this bonus is to assist you to consciously choose to respond differently to stress so as to re-wire your stress response. Most people I meet with chronic exhaustion have become so depleted because a) they are holding tension in the body and this holding shows up in personality attributes and responses to life, b) their autonomic nervous systems are out of balance, and c) they are not connected to their bodies and their needs.

### Why Reconnecting to the body is so Beneficial

When we start connecting to our bodies we can honour our needs and tune in to what is in our best interests in each moment. Instead of following the rules and beliefs as set up by the computer in our head brain we start to tune into the heart brain and gut brain to follow our intuition and felt-sense of our needs. This enables us to provide for ourselves what we need for healing and balance rather than overriding our needs to feel safe and good enough.

The secret to change is to begin to have more of a relationship with the body and, in time, to recognise the patterns that indicate holding. Then we can choose to introduce and embody a new way of feeling and being.

We essentially learn a new default response to perceived threats. We re-wire the brain and this impacts the autonomic nervous system stress response.

We also learn to break the cumulative stress response so the body can move more easily and more often into rest and digest which is where we can heal.

### EXERCISES (Recognising your default holding posture):

1) Listen to the accompanying body scan exercise to help you to become more aware of your body and where you are holding tension. It is not uncommon for me to guide clients through this body scan and they realise they have a great deal of holding in the stomach or the shoulders (or elsewhere) and they also realise that is actually a very familiar tension that they just tune out and live with.

The more regularly you do this exercise the more connected you will become to your body. Also, you will find you can start to access relaxation more often now that you know the difference between holding and relaxation in your body.



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2) Think of a situation that created/creates overwhelm and anxiety for you. Really tune into that as if you are back there (please do not choose something too traumatic!) and then feel where you are holding tension in your body. Common areas are:

- The shoulders (carrying too many burdens and hunched up to protect the heart)
- The thoracic spine behind the heart (to provide armouring around the heart)
- The diaphragm (holding emotions in the diaphragm instead of releasing them upwards through expression or downwards through the bowels or bladder. There is also often a tendency to be afraid to breath in life and all that life offers)
- The gut (fear of fully digesting life and not trusting that life provides nourishment. NOTE: control often manifests as constipation and overwhelm as diarrhea)
- The Pelvis pulling upwards (the root chakra is shut down and there is an upward pull of self-reliance rather than a softening to be supported and grounded by life/Mother Earth)
- The knees pull upwards and are tight (all joints represent flexibility and the knees can represent willpower so a pulling is usually around over-exercising willpower and control)

There may be different areas for you.

Take some time to take note of where you hold tension. See if this is a common response for you as you think about other times when you feel overwhelm and stressed.

The benefit of these two exercises is that you now know when you are in fight and flight as your body communicates this very clearly. By having this knowledge you can now empower yourself by choosing to respond differently and the more often you do this the more you rewire your body and brain to respond differently and in a more healthy way.

#### TOOLS: 4 Methods for Responding to Stress When You Feel it in Your Body

There are a number of methods that you can use to practice bringing softness and relaxation into the body whenever you notice the tension:

- 1) The breath: the breath represents life and whenever we breath in we are accepting life force. When we fear life we breath superficially and we do not fully accept life force and vitality. Focus on breathing in deeply as if right down into the base of the spine. Feel the belly expand like a balloon and then deflate as you breathe out and release all the tension. Also notice the air filling the ribcage so it expands upwards, forwards and backwards. Don't force this if it feels too difficult – rather then imagine your air filling those spaces.

Keep your jaw slack and your mouth slightly open and accept life deeply through your nose and then release through mouth. A slack jaw results in parallel relaxation in the pelvis so that you can feel grounded and held. Really let go with that outbreath. A few deep breaths can be a powerful re-set.



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Your body cannot be in fight/flight and breathe deeply at the same time. Breathing slowly and deeply is related to relaxation so use the breath to tell your body that you are safe and relaxed even when your brain is sending messages that you must be worried, stressed or overwhelmed.

Also, deep breathing is a short-circuit to initiate the Parasympathetic Nervous System (PNS is responsible for rest and digest) in another way. When we inhale deeply it cause the bronchioles of the lungs to inflate and expand. The PNS is responsible for bringing us back into balance so when the bronchioles are expanded through deep inhalation the PNS is activated to constrict them back to normal size and, in that way, the rest and digest response kicks into action with deeper breaths creating a feedback loop.

- 2) Yawning: Consciously yawning activates the PNS. Give it a try now!
- 3) Beault's Technique. This is the technique I demonstrated in the video. This is a powerful way to activate the PNS through the nerve supply in the eyes. A simpler (but not quite as effective) version of this is to rub your eyes as when you are fatigued.
- 4) Feeling positive emotions: Our PNS is triggered when we feel positive emotions. While we are stressed it can be difficult to conjure up positive emotions but try to think of a situation in which you felt positive emotions or in which you believe you would feel positive emotions, or think of a pet, person or something else that brings joy or pleasure to mind.

You can also try exercising gratitude for what you have in life. Gratitude not only stimulates the PNS but also attracts more abundance to be grateful for! When feeling the emotions try to embody them and notice where they are in your body and what they feel like. This embodying is further re-wiring your capacity to not only relax but also to feel these positive emotions more often.

Take care,

Kerry