

Reclaiming a Relationship with Our Bodies

The body is the home of experience. It is where we feel, think, sense, and intuit our lives. There are many scholars and practitioners studying this connection to the human body and how it affects the way in which we live our lives. The field of somatic psychology and embodied spirituality is vast, but there are few who speak directly to the social and planetary implications of disconnecting from the body. We begin with the body because as Andrea Olsen, dancer and environmentalist writes, “Body is our first environment. It is the medium through which we know the earth”. We cannot have a sense of place in the world if we do not have a sense of being in our bodies.

With the depth, complexity, and suffering of the human experience, we find ways to disconnect from our bodies and there is no shortage of ways to escape our existence. Ultimately, we have no choice but to face the relationship we have with our bodies. The late Celtic philosopher John O’Donohue said, “Your only home in the world is the clay hut that we call the human body.” We must learn skills, and cultivate the discipline needed, to stay present to the vast and complex terrain of our bodies.

The body is important when it comes to the praxis of education and creating culture, and unfortunately, we leave the body out of the conversation. The body is part of us, and when we ignore it, we live in separation from ourselves, from each other, and the planet. Education that is transformative must include head, heart, soul and body. Vitality-centered education depends on our connection to the body—both individually and within the collective body of community, including the planet. Recovering our connection to the body might help us remember that we are of the Earth. Might we look at other human beings differently, when the earth of our bodies offers common ground to relate from? We no longer then are simply, “doing the right thing” by taking care of the earth, and each other. Like Mother Teresa said, “If we have no peace, it is because we have forgotten that we belong to each other.” Our bodies offer common ground to stand on.

We are invited to choose each day whether or not we wish to show up for our lives. When we do our very presence becomes an act of service to the world. We can choose to numb out, avoid, or run from our embodied experience or we can learn ways to stay present to the resilient, yet unpredictable human experience. From this embodied ground, a vital and wholehearted life grows.