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Authentic Movement

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“Movement never lies . . . it is a barometer telling the state of the soul’s weather to all who can read it.” (Martha Graham)

Authentic movement is about the relationship between one or more people moving - with eyes closed - and one or more persons witnessing the movement. It is about seeing and being seen. There are no directions given. A potential freedom is offered, similar to free association in a psychoanalytic process. The attention is focused on one's bodily experience - following its impulses, letting happen whatever arises from within. This includes - to varying degrees - feelings, images, thoughts, fantasies, memories, sounds, language. An attitude of inner openness, concentration and patience is called forth and develops over time.

As movers, our eyes are closed to help us turn inward and to diminish the input of the sense-organ that most powerfully guides our interactions with the world. In tuning into ourselves we may also become more aware of what is around us. Our other senses - hearing, smelling, sensing and proprioception - are often heightened. Authentic movement is a uniquely individual and at the same time a deeply shared experience. As movers we are also witnesses to ourselves. Authentic movement is not about letting go of all consciousness, but about a deepened awareness of ourselves with ourselves within this group of people, in the present moment. If a mover begins to feel overwhelmed by strong feelings or impulses, he or she can open their eyes and sit on the side of the movement space.

As the witness or witnesses we are allowed to see, not only with our eyes, but with our whole being. We are allowed to look directly and for long periods of time at people's bodies, faces, movements and gestures, to experience their interactions with each other and to let ourselves be affected bodily and emotionally; open to our own associations. This too is a unique experience and creates a level of intimacy that we are not used to. There can be much visible movement and feeling, barely perceptible movement, stillness, sound, touch, togetherness and solitude. What shows itself is often astounding: similar movement-patterns arise here and there in the room, simultaneously, sequentially or returning again later. A choreography might unfold, where people move together : a hand reaches out at exactly the right time and height to meet another; two people walk close by each other, never touching; several people get involved in playing, etc.

Often a common theme evolves, which may or may not become conscious to the witness but reveals itself in the dialogue at the end of the session.

After the movement time, which lasts anywhere from 20 to 90 minutes, we spend about 15 minutes, each writing about our own experience. Then we gather back in the circle, talking - or not - for the last half hour. This can be a time of deep discoveries of our connectedness, our similarities and differences, of amazing stories unfolding. Whatever happened tells each of us something meaningful about our present way of being.

Authentic movement can be an important aspect of a training for psychotherapists. It helps us to develop a deeper awareness of our own and others' embodiment and to strengthen the sense of comfort and connectedness with ourselves and others. It allows us to explore a dimension of which we are mostly unconscious but which holds rich and meaningful information, even though its translation into language is limited. All this contributes to the capacity for expanding our openness and attunement to the intimacy of a therapeutic relationship.

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