



SOMATIC TRAINING

ARTICLE 2

Mastering Our Reactive System

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“That means I must become mindful of what I define as hurt, which is the action of coiling. Do you understand? So I think one must be able to have such a degree of mastery that one survives the coiling or one has an ability to position oneself in a way that the auto-coiling doesn’t happen, and promote the opening more. You see the problem is opening appears to be very vulnerable and closing appears to be very safe.”

~ Dhyan Vimal

What is this action of coiling and how is it that it dominates our daily experience? At the moment of conception we have inherited a reactive system that is easily triggered and difficult to recover from. When we look to our reptilian and mammalian ancestors, we see that they move into and out of reaction with relative grace and ease. This is not so with the awkward human who, once triggered, flails around battling imaginary threats exhausting themselves in the process! How is it that we suffer from such foolishness?

While we may take pride being on the cutting edge of evolution, the experience cannot be described as glamorous. The pulse of life continually pushes us to grow and transform which results in us being confronted with an almost constant state of instability; physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually. In our frustration we have treated the symptoms of our instability as illness and aggressively attempted to fix or ignore them. In fact we suffer from ignorance not illness.

It is now estimated that 95% of all illness, physical, mental, emotional and spiritual, is caused by our inability to manage interior signals. Attempts to fix our bodies, either by drugs or other ways of healing our bodies are mostly aimed at overpowering vital information emerging from the depths of our bodily experience. In our reactions to this emerging information, we coil and in coiling the body experiences hurt and pain, and then reacts to that reaction. Over time we grow layers of neuromuscular tissue attempting to overcome the pain of our original hurt.

Let's take a different look at our reactive system and recognise it not as a curse but rather as an incredible gift. Whether we are triggered by a hormonal awakening of our growth drive or the perception of threat from the world, the body recoils in fight, flight and freezing behaviour. Instinctually we exaggerate our fear of the pain, and this exaggerated fear is reinforced by the culture and the world in which we live. Our institutions; medical, educational, physiological all support a negative judgement of how our reactive system has awakened in a state of alarm.

What is occurring is the experience of being overwhelmed by our power. We see this reflected in the dysfunctional behaviour of our immediate caregivers and society at large and assume that this is simply what is. Can it be ignorance? In reaction, we are attempting to defeat pain (and in doing so create layers and layers of more pain).

What if we were taught to move towards that pain? Not foolishly but with an intention of managing the force of our nature in much the same way we might move to tame a wild horse.

Now we have stepped into the arena of struggle with the raw power of our primal nature. We will fail at times, however if we do not allow these failures to define us as a failure, then we step back into the arena to reengage the force of our evolution. This is a whole body engagement that awakens and revitalises and reshapes even genetic and cellular structures of our organism.

At first the work is to become intimate with our coiling pattern, and to learn how to manage its appearance. Overtime the body's response-ability grows and we move towards the more graceful relationship with our reactive system enjoyed by our animal ancestors. **Our goal here is not to fix our reactive system as that is a biological impossibility. Our goal is to manage and use our reactive system to grow a life able to expand into profound experience and challenge, and use these opportunities in the service of transformation. In this way we move towards our automatic coiling behaviour and employ its activity to serve our being, rather than choosing to live in service to our reactive system and deny the beauty of our true nature.**