



2022 Spiritual Wisdom of the Body Series

First Talk

THE AWAKENED BODY

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Karen Johnson

TALK

Welcome everyone from all over the world. Miracle-ness that is what this body is. We don't really know entirely what its potential is even in the biological standpoint. I mean if you look at us as a species, you have been around for about six million years. The dinosaurs were here for hundred and sixty-five million years. We only have been here in our current form for two hundred thousand years. It gives you a little bit of perspective. There might be a lot more developing to do even physically because I really see form and function as going together. We stood up. We are upright. We grew a big brain. We got opposing digits and we are going okay we are good. That's it. That is the end for that now let's just get spiritual and move on. I think that in fact the fact that we can face our partners, the fact that we have a different relationship to gravity, all of these things are things that we are still working out.

Our social networks, all of these things, are really influx and, I think, partly we are still learning about what it means to be a human being in a body and how to express ourselves through it. There are so many perspectives about the body and what its role is in spirituality. Spirituality is something that evolves as our bodies evolve. As we gathered and became more capable, we started drawing pictures of things on cave walls. We can see how society has always embrace some form of spirituality. It has been always a part of us. We can't really divorce the body from spirituality but the way that we approach it varies depending on the spiritual traditions. As they have evolved, they evolved a different understanding of the body, how to approach the body, what the body is for. I still think there is a lot of discovery to be done there and it is an amazing process of discovery.

But for a moment, I would like to just take a pause here to pay attention to your body at this moment. Notice what you are experiencing in it, at it. Do you feel it? You might touch your limbs. Of course, I feel my body. I can feel the nerve endings. If you are touching it through your clothes, you might not be feeling your nerve endings at this moment. You might be able to say yes, I can feel my body. But if you try to sense from the inside, what do you feel? What do you notice? Some people cannot feel their bodies at all. They feel numb or thick. You might feel energy. You might feel openness. You might feel tension. Many of you have different kinds of physiological difficulties. There might be a physical problem or an injury or a backache. That is another way we have still not learnt how to be in this body upright. We are still fighting gravity.

Just sense into your body in general and then I would like you to focus on your feet in particular. Feel the pressure of the ground, your feet on the ground. Take time to notice what do you feel? Do you feel a foot? Do you just feel an area in the foot? Do you feel your whole foot alive and vibrant? Or does it just

feel like kind of a boot, not so alive but you know it is there? Or do you just feel the pressure? Just sensing our body is an experiment.

How often do we take the time to go through it to see how we are experiencing it? What it is from the inside? Those numb places, those places that have no sensation. The places that feel empty. The places that feel full. All of that is really sensing our consciousness. There is consciousness there that is asleep. It is not just your body that is asleep. If you can't feel it, there is some kind of sensitivity that is not there. If you reach down and touch your lower leg or your foot, yes, there will be sensation on a physical level but if you attempt to sense inside and take your attention to your feet and lower leg, or some other place in your body, those sensations are ways you are reaching into that place not just for the tension that you notice but your very consciousness is being felt. What condition is it in in your body? It is the same with the belly. Feeling in your body. Does it feel like it is just an empty place, an emptiness? Not much there. If you can find your big toe and really sense it deeply, fully, you are doing pretty good.

There is just a little bit of an entrance into giving some kind of a focus. I would like you to see if you can stay focused on your feet while listening. Just notice if that attention in your feet changes. You will probably forget, and I want you to go back to it. See what happens.

As I was saying before, various traditions have various approaches to the body. Ways the body is seen and what the body is for. Typically, there is an approach that matches a certain state that you want to get into. If you are a practitioner of Buddhism, you feel that the body is useful because it is the highest form of consciousness to be in. It is the best way to get enlightened. But its use is to be enlightened. This is very simple. I am not going through a lot of the nuances. There are many, many things we can say about Buddhism and the body but one of them is that it is the place to be to move on to the next level or to be reincarnated to have another opportunity.

The Christians have their view. It used to be much more dark around the body meaning that it is sinful, that it is a bad place to be, that it is driven by instinctual animalistic things, and we should not attend to it because of that. We need to cleanse it because of that. Just don't go there. Lately, there has been a bit of a turn seeing it more as this is where God's work is done. It is starting to have a different bend to it which I am happy to see. There still is the question of whether you are choosing the sinful way or choosing the way of the good coming through. Again, there are many nuances. It is just to get a taste of some of the ways we look at bodies and spirituality.

The Sufis have a saying that I kind of like which has to do with the body being a solidified soul and the soul being a liquified body. Really seeing it as two sides of the same thing. Soul meaning our individual consciousness. And a Roshi, a Zen Roshi, with whom I have conversations with occasionally once told me, as we were talking about posturing meditation, in the Zen perspective one of the things they say in his school is the posture is the state. This is an indication of some knowledge that many spiritual paths have of the way the body is informed by particular spiritual states. If there is a particular state, you want to prepare the body to be in it or you want to set the body in a condition that would be open to that particular state happening.



This is something that I find really intriguing and important in terms of what it means to be embodied spiritually. Again, what does that mean in the body. There are so many ways we use that term. What does it mean to really embody the vastness and the transcendence of the Absolute or Pure Awareness where everything appears as transparent? What does it mean to actually embody that? For some, it means being aware of that transparency and to be able to attend to what you need to attend to while you are walking around aware of that. That is one way of looking at it. There are other ways that we might see embodiment that I will be talking about. It is not just to include the body in your awareness but what is the body actually feel like when you are awareness. When you are pure awareness. What happens to be sensations? What is the state of that in the body? There are questions here. What is the body? What is its function? What is its role in the spiritual journey? And it is just one thing we get to and recognize and then we have spiritual experiences in it?

I feel slightly differently that in fact the body is in union with our consciousness. As I was saying at the very beginning, giving you that little opportunity for a journey down into your feet. How are you feeling your body right now? With these tension patterns, senses open, perhaps forms of presence or senses of feeling joy and delight, all these kinds of different ways or just in your mind having ideas. It changes depending on how you are feeling and where you are and what you actually experiencing inside. Take it to a body language. When you feel joy, your body uplifted. You feel a lightness. If you really sense into your body and feel into the joy, you can feel the fact of it coming through if you have a certain kind of sensitivity. If you are seeing somebody who is happy, they lit up in a certain way. Or anger, heavy. You can be imploded with it or exploding with it, but it had biggest to it. It got something else in it. Or if you are feeling strong, it comes true in a very particular way. If you are feeling tender and gentle.

The body language is much more than just the posture we get into. The very consciousness of what you are is speaking right now. Your attitude shows in your eyes, in your sunken chest or in your levity. I remember in the 60s body languages were being discussed a lot. There was a lot of discussion about it in education watching how children were acting with one another and sitting in a classroom and whether they were unhappy or happy and how to read that. My mother was an educator, and she would discuss that. It was a very interesting thing in those days, but we can see as time has gone on that the body language is being propelled by something within us. It is expressing something that is going on in our consciousness.

Our consciousness is not just something in our head, not just something in our mind. It is not just the fact of awareness or the function of consciousness. Consciousness is our living beingness. It is the stuff of consciousness. It cannot be divorced from the body in this way. The body is the vessel for life and for consciousness to express itself. Consciousness is the living beingness in the body. The state of consciousness changes from day to day, from minute to minute. Our emotional state is a state of consciousness. We are sad or happy, it shows through our bodies how we hold ourselves. So too, when we are in a state of expansion. The way we can experience our body feeling that, coming through and functioning as that expanse through the body.

So, in our work how we came into our body, how do we use this body in a way that honors its potential? How do we find the way to enter it to see what this body is? How do we open to its wisdom? Its language

is in the felt sense of where we are. It is the chronicle of our condition and our conditioning. In fact, mostly our body at its very beginning - there might be many of you who have been very involved in bodywork for a long time, practice different kinds of awakening techniques and you have seen a process. At the start we don't know how to feel it. We don't know how to get in there. We don't know how to attend to it. It takes practice to awaken it. We get involved in bodywork, ways to sensitize our bodies.

I give you the tiniest taste of one of the practices we have in our teaching of the Diamond Approach and that is sensing, looking and listening. You are remembering to sense your foot right now as you are listening. It is difficult. The sensing, looking and listening practice involves the arms and the legs. We do this particular practice in our workshops and our online groups and so on. If you have the opportunity - some of you have - to take anyone of the courses, you got that full practice of what it means to learn how to find out how this can be more of a vehicle for spirituality by sensitizing it. We utilize breath techniques and other things to energize the body. But the point is to allow it to speak to go into those tension patterns because the tension patterns are our ego patterns. They are etched into our flesh. They are telling the story of our history. We need to turn toward it not away from it. To turn into it. Allow ourself to be the body.

I recall long away when I first started getting involved in spirituality, one of my teachers said to me you are not your body. I think that was meant to say you don't have to worry about how you look or what you think you are as a person, there is much more to you. It was a way to turn me toward spirit and the spiritual and not get locked into this physicality. But we are here as a body and each of us unique. Your skin color, your hair color, your eyes, the way you are shaped, your size, everything about you is unique. This body is an expression of the uniqueness of you that is inward. There is a lot of different ways that we feel about our body. We have cultural pressures, familial pressures. We have all kinds of medical issues and all different kinds of pressures on us.

But to really find out what is this body and what is role in spirituality, we have to learn how to enter and move through those patterns because that is part of unlocking the potential of the body. Allowing the transformation of our body to take place by opening it up to new conditions, new sensitivity. We start with our biological sensations meaning being able to touch and have that be a biological process of just our biological sensitivity which we need. It is not a matter of trying to transcend that. But as we sense inwardly and learn how to open up those patterns and understand them meaning there is content in there.

Those tensions as they open up have feelings locked in that we are still living with, carrying around with us that we have suppressed and pushed down, ignored, pushed away. As we open them up, we are releasing energy and we are releasing potential. As we understand the patterns, look into our history, our wounds, our pain, we start to recognize as we get more sensitive that there are emotions we are feeling as sensations. There are not from some abstract thing. We are feeling them in our bodies. There are anger fields, hot and explosive. There is tenderness. There are wounds that come up with tenderness that is sensitive. Actually, sometimes we feel the wound as a gash. That is not happening in the physically of us alone. It is our physicality; the area and it is consciousness that is wounded and is

holding that wound in and opening up, understanding it, feeling the pain, attuning to it, being right there with it along with the practices of presence which I will talk about in a minute.

Just doing emotional work is not enough to find out the full potential. It is part of it. It is an opening. Frequently after a cathartic moment when we cried or screamed or got into the wounding and all the suffering in it, connected our history to it and understood something and had an insight, sometimes it can leave a feeling of just being relaxed. Hameed says: How do you feel? Oh, I feel good. That is a good relief. It was hard to get into, but I am really glad to be on the other side. That is where our work really begins. What is that relaxation? You feel the relaxation after kind of a moment, it is an opening. It is not just the lack of pain or suffering. There is a relaxation that happens in our consciousness. By feeling into that relaxation sometimes that can open up to something that feels like an opening.

Sometimes it feels like a lack. Sometimes it feels like oh, I feel like I am over the historical part of it, but it feels like I am really missing something that I need right now. A quality of kindness, perhaps, or love. Something that you really wanted. Something you felt you did not get or something that is needed right now. It is an invitation. Sometimes though the relaxation just feels like such a relief because your body has let go of something that is in there. If we really stay with that relaxation, that can help open up to all kinds of potential revealing itself through our consciousness, opening to a deeper level of consciousness and a quality that we need to be in life. A quality of consciousness that feels like some sensation that does not feel like an emotion. It is not the same kind of emotional charge or tension around it, or it does not have any kind of category that you felt before.

You don't have an idea about it. You just know that you feel perhaps love. It is kind. There is a softness that feels like love, a presence of softness, fulness, a fluid full flowing sensation that does not feel physical but yet it is so palpable. It is a presencing into the now how it is happening through the body, through the body consciousness where we can start to see that the body in fact is in union with our consciousness all the time. When we wake up the body, we are waking up our consciousness, our individual consciousness, our sensitivity, our true aliveness. That which is animating the body is the consciousness filling us out and we can feel the qualities of consciousness coming through.

So, there is consciousness that is just an alive sensitive medium that is animating the body. Sometimes we feel it beyond the body. When you are feeling yourself as that great expanse, your consciousness is expanding beyond your body. You are feeling the nature of Reality like who is feeling it? Your consciousness is feeling it. You can touch it. You know it. You know it by feeling it, by touching it, by that sensitive medium touching it at every point and you can be that expanse coming through the body and functioning as that expanse, filling out every cell with that expanse of love or presence, or spaciousness. Whatever you are in touch with can inform the body in a full way where you are coming with beingness, with oneness. That can be expressed in various ways. The presence for us is the consciousness that is conscious of itself, knows itself through being. It is an immediacy meaning there is no distance between the quality and the knowing and the being. When we are full and we feel a quality of being, we feel filled out with that knowing, filled out with the presence of love or clarity or joy. These are qualities that we need in our human life.



It is important to feel the freedom of the expanse of nonduality and to see that all beings are the same nature, the same True Nature and that nature flows itself and gives life to all beings. When we see that, we must treat everyone equally. We see that they are what we are. We also have this uniqueness of our bodies in this world and if you value your tradition, it is like the Diamond Approach. There is value of being in this world that fulfilling the potential of this human form and finding its true function as an instrument for spirit. Then the body has equal value with spirit, equal value and not only that it is because it is spirit. It is living consciousness. I am using spirit and living consciousness sometimes simultaneously, sometimes a little differently. The living consciousness is what we call the human soul, the medium of experience. That which senses, experiences, carries your history is the one that can be ignorant, does not know itself. Learning to know itself can open up, can unfold, can become what it is, can unleashed the potential.

Spirit and the spiritual experience is the purity of our nature. Our consciousness can become that purity. The purity of our nature cannot be touched by the world. Our living consciousness within our body is the nexus of spirit and the world. Our living consciousness as body is the bridge, is the continuum that holds both, is both. The biology and the spirit are one. Embodiment can be the fulness of that presence and presence as a fulness is palpable. It is not only spacious. You can experience the spaciousness embodied as well. But I am actually calling attention to presence because that has been used a lot when we talk about spirituality these days. When we talk about it in our work, it is the spiritual mass. It is the meta mass. It is a palpable sense of spirit that is touchable. It feels nearly physical. But that presence is something very necessary to be in the world. We need to feel the presence. We can feel grounded as presence. We can feel the solidity of our heart flowing as presence, the spaciousness in our mind as the presence of spaciousness.

Presence can be just pure presence or can arise as the various qualities that we need in our life. The ability to stay with something, feel grounded and steadfast, our shared experience of love, caring, tenderness. The heart qualities coming in so many delightful, beautiful ways. The ability to think and have clarity and feel the precision, the precision of mind as a presence not just the gray matter working well but the meta matter infusing it with clarity. The body is the vehicle through which we can access and transform the body through accessing these wounds that live in the body become clarified. The body becomes more open, more sensitive. Our soul, our consciousness becomes clarified also, more sensitive and more able to express through this form all the qualities of our nature from the expanse to the most delicate inklings of the heart. To be able to touch with, filled out presence, pure contact with another. To touch bodily but also to be filled out even beyond the body with contactfulness and touch each other with beingness, fulness of what it is to feel our potential embodied and awake.

When we wake our body up, we are waking up our consciousness. When we really find out what this amazing vessel is. It takes time to move pass all the admonitions we have about our bodies. All the ways we feel it ought to be or the ways it has been treated and some have been treated quite harshly. There is trauma there. Those are difficult things to get around and deal with. It is difficult to move into those places because with trauma it makes you want to leave and disembodify. I would rather be transcendent thank you very much. Embodiment sounds good but not if I have to really open up those places because in our bodies the hurt is still there, the wound is still there. The force is still there. That is something that

in fact, one of our teachers is going to be doing an entire workshop on. I can't possibly give it its due to anything of these things that I am brought up in this short period of time.

It is such a beautiful exploration. It is just giving you a sense of what the possibilities are that this body is an amazing phenomenon, and we don't know its potential. We don't know it biologically and we don't know it spiritually, but we do know there are in union growing, transforming us as we speak as you are feeling your foot. It is an entrance into the potential that your body holds. We just need to open up the stories that is still in there, the stories we tell ourselves, the stories that have been told about us. They are embedded and keeping us structured in a certain way that does not allow us to open up and to be transformed by something within. When we know we are being, the impact of the world is lessened. The more we are feeling the purity of our nature filling us out, the more our functioning has a sensitivity, has intelligence, innate intelligence, the more we can actually respond instead of react, the more we can really be a full and complete human being with all that we are. Body, heart, mind. We can be the entire universe expressing itself right here right now. That is the complete human being. Does it mean you get to a state where you are complete? A complete human being has all of the potential possible continuing to transform, grow, learn, discover new ways of expression, new ways of creating.

In fact, the HU symbol that you see behind me is a symbol of the Diamond Approach and that is the symbol we call the HU symbol which is HU written four times in Arabic writing. It is actually one of the sacred names of True Nature, God, Higher Power. But written four times in this configuration means the complete human being. My take on that is the four times have to do with our four centers of body/belly, heart/love, mind/clarity and life. All of this is about coming into life head on, meeting it fully, filled out and ready to go to learn more but also to enjoy, to express and fulfil our potential in all these ways and to continue to develop and grow.

I think it is time. There is so much more that I could say about all of this. Taking questions might bring more out of me but I do also want to say that we will be spending the year honoring this precious vehicle and having opportunities with teachers that have done research in the body and spiritually for many, many years. There is going to be filling out and having the chance to explore, to inquire and get guidance about how to approach the body in a way that opens it up, helps to sensitize it and what we do when we get in touch with some of those really, really difficult places. They are not just emotional. They are embedded in the flesh. How do we read them? How do we come to terms with ourselves and our bodies and how we feel about our body? What is this living presence and what does it mean that this living presence is the body? Also, not to forget, there is going to be one on love and the body of love which will help to actually soften what is often a harsh approach to our bodies and also seeing that our body is love. That is one of the ways consciousness shows up is as love.

QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS

I am ready for some questions that might help me hone this a bit more for you.

STUDENT: I have a question about consciousness. When you were talking about what we can see in our bodies when it gets angry, I mean the feeling of that coming through. Is that consciousness coming

through when that anger or that pain or whatever is coming up, is that also consciousness? Because that is the feeling that consciousness can only be good. Can only be the good things.

KAREN: That is spirit. Our spiritual nature is always blissful, is always good and when we experience our spiritual nature in terms of the qualities of presence, there is always a good feeling. Consciousness can experience the continuum of all experience and that goes for the imploded and the closed reactive and the angry or the spirit. All of it is what consciousness experiences.

STUDENT: Okay. That's helpful. I just want to remark on something that I noticed during your teaching is – I have been in Diamond Heart for quite a while – how helpful it was to focus on my feet. Stay there. I noticed. It was really helpful more this time for some reason. Also, I really felt during the teaching how much – I don't know what this is – just how much I was feeling the transmission of love and compassion. Everything was really touching my body like it was really – and I could feel how much I needed that for myself.

KAREN: What are you experiencing right now?

STUDENT: -

KAREN: It seems you feel teary.

STUDENT: Very much. There are tears. There is some sadness, some grieving but just feeling how much what I was sensing from you I really need for myself.

KAREN: What is happening right there in your body consciousness? What is the sensation right here?

STUDENT: This is where it gets hard. It is hard to feel.

KAREN: Like you are touching it with inner fingers.

STUDENT: It feels like there is a layer of something protecting this like it is not letting in everything. It is just feels like I can feel this, and I also feel the resistance to it.

KAREN: That is exactly where you are. You want to spend some time right now as we go on to another question. I want you to stay with that resistance and, also, it seems like you are feeling kind of tender.

STUDENT: Yes, definitely both.

KAREN: There is a gentle kind of feeling there along with the resistance.

STUDENT: Yes.

KAREN: That gentle feeling is kindness. That is the presence of kindness. It is a gentle kind of touch. It is just what you need right now, and it is right there. You have it.

STUDENT: Thank you.

KAREN: Just hang on with that, resistance and the gentleness and see what is evolving there.

STUDENT: ... more dense. An issue is at my age, there is the idea that when the body that experiences different dense guise, is there a separate one? Does this suppler body live on? We have this sense of almost like a ghost like, a spirit like. I am very preoccupied with the body or the nature of the body before I am in this life and after this life. Can you comment on that?

KAREN: That is a very interesting question that many people want to know. Am I going to survive this? Life is terminal. The sheath, it comes like a sheath that dies. The consciousness or the living beingness seems to stay on for a while and it depends on how developed, how open, how much you know the truth and the nature of that how long that remains. Time and space don't exist on the other side. Who knows? It could feel more a million years or feel like a second. I don't really know because I have not died yet as far as I know. I have probably been reincarnated or something. I have some memories of those things, but it has not been a full exploration. We just know how we experience our students and friends as they

pass. We can still feel their presence for a while. Presence is something that is not reliant on biological processes. It is the nature of being and being precedes and underlies and is much more fundamental and basic. To answer your question, it is possible, but it is best to live this life as fully and richly as possible and to develop your embodiment. That embodiment and knowledge of what you are within the body that remains in consciousness. Consciousness can and it is my theory, and this is not part of the teaching because it is not verifiable to me yet other than certain experiences, I have had with other people who have passed but it is my sense that living consciousness when it knows itself for what it is, it is aliveness. When your body is dead, it is just lying there, and life has left it, but life does not die. There is a transformation that is possible. How are you doing? How is that with you?

STUDENT: I am feeling in this life. My heart is actually opening up. In my throat there is a kind of a feeling like ah. I have been thinking about this a lot in this past year and have experienced - so the opening up from the belly into the heart and into the head where it is more like one. Now, as I am facing this where am I going? I ask the question where do I come from. Now in this life, the I in the now is the accumulation I guess from conception as far as I know or whatever. Then I am very, very curious about this. Like you, I don't really know but I am fascinated.

KAREN: I have a question for you. If you don't worry about where you came from and where you are going, where are you right now as this opening?

STUDENT: Right now, I am feeling from my feet to my belly to my heart and I am feeling like connecting with you, your presence right on the screen and I am feeling shivery.

KAREN: Feel the shiver. This is the now. This is eternal now. You don't need to go anywhere else. What I mean by the eternal now is that it becomes timeless if you are right here right now. It feels good, does it not?

STUDENT: It feels like I am my breath. There is a real sense right from my feet, both feet on the floor and it is really up to here the most. It is not quite as powerful the higher up it goes but down below to the heart to the throat. The last part of it is maybe a trickle.

KAREN: There is the death state, the fluid state and the gaseous state but there is a substance to it. It is not just breath. There is a substance to it that you are feeling. It is the fulness of being here. When you say I am my breath, this is the I am.

STUDENT: I feel the presence of love. An elderly neighbor, eighty-seven, older than me said God is love and that reached me in a way that it never reached me before. I hear that statement right now.

KAREN: Right now.

STUDENT: In this round, it is present, yes. God is love.

KAREN: Yes. I will leave you with you and your beloved.

STUDENT: Thank you so much.

STUDENT: My heart is just really opening a lot. That is kind of my question. It seems like the heart feels to me like the doorway that is opening the body.

KAREN: It is a very important one. What do you feel right now as you open that door?

STUDENT: A lot of tingling and mild shaking.

KAREN: What kind of feeling?

STUDENT: The feeling is excitement, joy you know. How deeply touched - I don't know how to describe it quite.

KAREN: Feel the shaking and the joy, what the texture of that joy is like. What do you feel as you touch yourself from the inside, in your chest? Excitement?

STUDENT: Yes. There is a definite presence in the body fully. The body is filled and there is a strength that just came in actually.

KAREN: How do you know it is strength? How does it feel like?

STUDENT: I am sitting up. The body, the back just sat up. There is a moving forward. Less fear, more here.

KAREN: Courage.

STUDENT: Yes, courage.

KAREN: It is really informing your body. You have a courageous stance. You are not just sitting there feeling courageous. It actually is filling you out and it makes you even happier I can feel. You are glowing. The shiver and excitement are alive. I feel your aliveness with it. Beautiful.

STUDENT: Thank you so much. I really felt you. I am feeling you.

KAREN: Beautiful. Glad to be here literally. Thank you. It is a lovely example of the presence coming in and really informing the body.

STUDENT: ... your full-on language about the body. I have a little bit of an angle of a question in that. I have been supporting my sister who has been in and out of the hospital and just recently had open heart surgery and has been in and out for months with a variety of things. My question related to how much my body is feeling being with her and the deep levels of pain that her body is in. This most recent experience of open-heart surgery and really a lot of pain, physical. My body is absorbing, being with, in relationship to being with her. I guess, I don't know, any advice in terms of another practice of being with my body and sensing. Literally my heart has been in pain in this past week.

KAREN: As our body gets more sensitive and our consciousness gets more open, we have more empathy for where people are and that is a blessing and a curse in a sense that we can really respond more directly and more precisely to what is going on and at the same time, if you take that on and hold on to it. The structures that are left in us, the consciousness that is still asleep can take that in as its own in a way. It also means you need to spend some time alone. You need to find ways to get back to your own condition so that you know where you are and where you are situated. Sometimes, it means you just tolerate it as best you can. It depends. As you feel yourself right now, what do you experience?

STUDENT: I am hearing your words so there is more happening in my head. I am feeling my posture is a little bit leaning forward to want to understand. My heart feels very – there is a shifting being with you. Through your talk and prior to my speaking, there was great pain, ache. That is lifting.

KAREN: Is there any content for you in that pain and ache meaning emotion or –

STUDENT: The content feels like it is so literal to be with how much pain she is in.

KAREN: Let yourself feel that for a moment. How you feel about her pain? What is difficult about it?

STUDENT: I can feel echo of the old pattern of wanting to take it away from her.

KAREN: Fell that. Feel that you want to take it away from her. Why you want to take it away from her?

STUDENT: I don't want to take it away. I just want to not feel so much and to support that in some way.

KAREN: I am going to go back and validate you would like her to not hurt. You would like to be able to take it away.

STUDENT: Yes, but just saying that, being witnessed in that place, feels like a weight is lifting.

KAREN: How do you feel toward her?

STUDENT: Oh, a tremendous amount of love.

KAREN: What does that feel like now? Listen to your chest.

STUDENT: I feel an expanding quality through my chest and a depth in breath.

KAREN: Deeper, broader and what is the texture?

STUDENT: Strength, a solidity like cloth that is like corduroy that has a more solid quality to it.

KAREN: It has a texture of corduroy so there is some softness, but it has heft to it.

STUDENT: Right.

KAREN: Sturdiness and soft. That is a very strong love. Steadfast. You care for her very much.

STUDENT: Yes, I do.

KAREN: Do you let her know that?

STUDENT: I do it through my actions and less through saying I love you but not with as much language and presence as I could honestly.

KAREN: Perhaps a loving touch would be soothing like letting that fill your arms to convey, to let the body speak it. It is a suggestion that might give you an opportunity to let this come forward in a different way.

STUDENT: Thank you. That is very good.

KAREN: Blessings on your sister.

STUDENT: My question is often times I will experience pain or injuries or some type of bodily problem that attracts your attention. I may attract it for some period of time. I had a Tai Chi teacher who defined the body as being the unconscious mind. Often, when you have some body part that is ailing, like somebody will come up and pat you on the shoulder right where it hurts where you have been putting your attention almost like your attention is a magnet. I was just curious if you can comment on that. If you thought that different parts of the body have their own languaging. Obviously, the heart stuff does.

KAREN: That is an interesting question. I feel the relationship of our body to our unconscious is important, but I don't feel that is all the body is, that it is the ignorance. It carries it but also it is a very precious vehicle for the heart, for embodiment of our spirit, for being to think and process mentally. It is very difficult to be in touch with our nature and be in touch with that openness when we are in a place of illness or pain. That is more difficult. In terms of it being a magnet, I think our ... is very sensitive. Sometimes we are holding ourselves in a protective way and that might call attention to somebody doing that. I have not done a big study on that, but I know the feeling. I broke my back many years ago and several people came up and patted me on the back. How are you doing. I went: Oh, my god. I know the feeling. I don't know that there is anything inherent in an injury that pulls more injury to it. I would have to think about that, but I think the question of the illness and so on brings in the physicality of the body in such a way that there is a biological functioning. There is the sensitive nervous system. It is still working on a sensation level. It needs to. We need that for the body in this world. When there is an injury, if we are not really settled in our consciousness in a way that it is in touch with its openness and its nature and presence in a steady way, the attention of an illness or an injury will take us away from that. That is where I find the difficulty really be. That is not the body's problem, it is our consciousness that is not settled in its deeper nature and gets pulled into the more animal nature of can I ... and caring for itself. But you can be in both. You can be in touch with your nature and in touch with presence and still have injury or incapacities and so on.

STUDENT: The other question I had that I sort of referred to is as if there was sort of a mapping of meaning to different parts of the body. If you have a pain in your shoulder if that has somewhat of a universal meaning other than an individual meaning.

KAREN: Well, there are different ways you have to learn for yourself, going into it and see. Am I holding something back? Am I wanting to punch somebody? Am I angry and I am acting out? I don't want to be angry. Or did something actually happen, an injury, something came and hit you there. It is going to hurt, and it might not have any psychological content. But arms, when we feel tense in them, that can be not reaching out. The pain in the heart will bring in all kinds of emotional content and difficulties. There can be a universal meaning to certain things when there is an eye blockage, and we are not seeing certain things, or we are seeing things askew. Our jaws often show a lot about what is going on in our bellies with anger and those kinds of things. There is some universality to it. I think the workshop on living presence and some of the other things they will be going into some of the ways of can learn to understand what your body is trying to say. It is unique to each person but there are some universal features like emotional pain often come here although we can have an emotion about a pain elsewhere, but this is where we feel our emotional hurt. The belly makes us feel grounded when we are full and present there. That is a universal phenomenon when that center is open and available. In the morning we usually have a feeling of spaciousness there when it is open. When the heart is open, there is a fulness and flow. When the belly is open there is density. The spiritual language is actually more universal than the uniqueness of the way you access that.

STUDENT: My question is related to movements in the body. For example, when I listen to your teaching, the body was doing strange movements like some impulse that said bah or (sounds). I don't know what to make of it. Sometimes in the mediation it also happens. There is no feeling regarding it. It is just movement. I don't know how to work with it.

The other question is is the body just transforming personal stuff or is it transforming everything? I don't know.

KAREN: That is an interesting question. Do you mean transforming?

STUDENT: I mean taking on like energies and balancing it out in my system or something. I don't know.

KAREN: Let's start with the first thing. When you feel these movements and abruptnesses, is there a pattern to them. Do you tend to shape or does it –

STUDENT: It is abrupt impulses like ha, or my head goes to the right or something like that. It is always the same.

KAREN: Is there any content in it? Does it make you feel frightened or is there fear?

STUDENT: No, there is no feeling. It is just an impulse. Sometimes I have a feeling maybe it is the body bringing me back to now because in mediation I somehow space out and then I come back again.

KAREN: Okay. Can you do the movement for me?

STUDENT: It is like (noise) or ha of ah. It is like waking up.

KAREN: Do it a little slower now.

STUDENT: Ha, ah. Actually, I get more air into my lungs.

KAREN: Do it again even slower.

STUDENT: -

KAREN: How are you feeling as it is happening?

STUDENT: It is an opening. It is actually quite – it brings more energy. It is nice. It is like I am breathing in.

KAREN: What kind of energy do you feel?

STUDENT: It is softening my chest. Yes.

KAREN: What happens as your chest softens?

STUDENT: There is a release happening.

KAREN: What are you releasing? What is getting released?

STUDENT: Too much tension in my back and my arms. Such hard structure.

KAREN: Okay. Just feel that structure for just a minute, whatever is left of it.

STUDENT: Yes.

KAREN: Who is that?

STUDENT: It is a fearful me. I don't move, don't let them see or something like that.

KAREN: Okay. Don't let them see. We are opening it up a little, the content is coming out a bit. How do you feel when you say don't let them see, don't move?

STUDENT: I feel ashamed. I feel really ashamed.

KAREN: What are you ashamed of? What am I going to see?

STUDENT: That I am weak. That I cannot do it.

KAREN: Yes. Feel the weakness.

STUDENT: (Crying)

KAREN: It's okay.

STUDENT: It makes me sad and lonely.

KAREN: Yes. Lonely. As if you will be abandoned or something? Sadness.

STUDENT: I feel that there is too much being asked of me.

KAREN: You are too little. By whom?

STUDENT: The grownups.

KAREN: They are asking too much of you as – how old are you?

STUDENT: I think four or five. I don't understand and I cannot do it.

KAREN: They want you to grow up too fast.

STUDENT: Yes.

KAREN: How do you feel toward that little girl.

STUDENT: I am sorry. I am really sorry, and I feel this thing since a few months only. I want it to heal like faster.

KAREN: You are doing to yourself what they did to you. You better do it and get over it.

STUDENT: Yes.

KAREN: Take all the time you need.

STUDENT: (Crying).

KAREN: It seems we have found out what the movements are.

STUDENT: Yes, thank you.

KAREN: Trying to shake off but they are not ready to be shaken off yet. Just slow it down but I am feeling like you are being a little gentler now.

STUDENT: Yes, it feels good.

KAREN: Yes. It feels ... gentle touch of the elixir, the healing elixir.

STUDENT: I feel grateful. Thank you.

KAREN: Good. Thank you for hanging in there and giving a very beautiful demonstration of how we can learn to listen.

STUDENT: Thank you so much for being here.

Karen: I sort of went over briefly that we are going to be looking at the divide between spirituality and the body. We are going to do a workshop on the body of love and how we need to hold our body's wisdom and that it is love basically. We are going to do some work with trauma with a trauma specialist who is a teacher in the School. And living presence and embodied inquiry which I have been kind of doing with you some in the Q&C and really learning how to move into the body in a way that helps open that up. The living presence is going to help you to learn that somewhat also, some inquiry and learning how that can express itself through the body.

STUDENT: I have a question about - actually I am an osteopath. I work with people all day, but I am on my own spiritual journey. This is sort of I am asking for a friend but I really kind of am. This is not for me. This is for people I work with. It is about disembodiment. When I am often working with people, they are unwinding. They all come to me with pain or illness. They feel the pain but if I get to a certain point with them, they are completely disembodied.

KAREN: What do you mean by that? How do you know that?

STUDENT: I am thinking of a particular client that came to me recently. I know she has a trauma history. Other than just - I could get her into her sore neck but if I asked do you have sensations in your body, for instance, there are none. I can't feel my feet, or I can't feel my legs. The idea of disembodiment -

KAREN: I think you have the sense that she is dissociated somewhat.

STUDENT: Right. Maybe dissociated is the right word for it but when I work with people, more particularly in an inquiry sense, there is no connection to the body. It stays in the head.

KAREN: Many people do. Like if you touch the person on their body, would they feel it?

STUDENT: Should they feel my touch officially?

KAREN: ... inside. Most people unfortunately are in that condition where there is not a lot of awakening of their consciousness. That means they need to be interested in that for one thing and number two they need to be willing to put some attention and energy in the practicing of what that would be.

STUDENT: Right.

KAREN: That is one thing. With people who have trauma, that is slightly different. It is not just that they are numb to their sensations, or they are not really awake to the sensitization of what is possible in experience, but they are also in a defensive position of really moving out. I am out of here. That is something that I think really need certain expertise and so on.

Good luck with that one.

STUDENT: Yes, good luck with that one. Thank you for that. It has been an interesting journey not just for myself but working with people in the observation of this, as you say, dissociation from the body particularly in trauma and how to work with that.

KAREN: That is not something I can easily say in a few minutes.

STUDENT: I knew it was a hard question.

KAREN: It is a long one and it takes a great deal of expertise and knowledge to move people through that and back into their bodies. It takes a lot of skill. I would not be doing it justice by giving you a quick answer to it.

STUDENT: I would like to be able to conceptualize and articulate what presence is. I am curious. If you would say more about how you define presence.

KAREN: Presence is actually a very difficult thing to define without actually experiencing it. Like I said, it is spiritual mass. It is a mass you can actually feel in the body that feels palpable. It is pure consciousness conscious of itself. You can feel it in a way that is almost physical, but it isn't. When you actually sense it - when I first started feeling presence, I felt like Oh. Actually, Hameed was with me when I felt it at first. He poured something into my hand. He felt some presence and he poured it into my hand, and it felt like a weighty substance that lit everything up for me inside and filled out every atom, every cell with pure presence. You can't call it anything than that. It was just right there. It is a hereness that is unguillible and it flowed up my arm. It was not blood flowing. It was substance, spiritual mass flowing through my flesh up into my arm, filling my chest, filling beyond my chest into my other arm and down my body lighting everything up. My belly got hot and that was a different kind of presence. It was warm, filmed and I felt strong. I began to realize that there were qualities of presence not just pure presence which can be qualityless. Strength happened and then processing that over the next couple of years. It took hold of me and just started to unravel me from the inside out. Then I started to feel the kindness and the love as presences, delicate presence full and rich presence. It comes in all kinds of qualities and then my head lit up with brightness, clarity. All presences of different kinds.

STUDENT: Was it your presence?

KAREN: It became my presence. It is still there, dude. I am here. It has gotten more and more and different in different ways. It can be dense. It can be empty. My body is a body of presence. There is no difference for me, none. It can be filled out and I feel it as filled out, pure presence or it can feel like just empty. Nobody there, no sensation but it is not the sensation of newness but the sensation of nothing is there. Or the heart can show up as love and sweetness and nectars and I just feel it flowing in this direction. It can be anything. It is a complete transformer. The body is a transformer, and the body expresses and shows each of those things in very different ways as I just demonstrated. I was not thinking that about it. The movements are different, qualities are different. No, you can't quite conceptualize something like that. You have to feel it fully. At least now you have the idea that something beyond sensation, emotions or ideas is possible to experience. This is beyond all of them and informs all of them.

STUDENT: When you said it is consciousness being conscious of itself.

KAREN: Right, immediate meaning it is a substance that is just pure consciousness like a ball of consciousness or an expanse of consciousness. It is presence so it is substance, spiritual substance.

STUDENT: Thank you.

KAREN: I hope it takes hold. If it does, you will have no control over the outcome which will be good news.

STUDENT: I hope it takes hold too.

Everyone, I just wanted to get a glimpse of all of you who remain to say goodbye and hello. I wish you all a fine journey and appreciation for the amazing window of opportunity that this body is. I hope it aids you in your discovery of what lies beyond the physical as we go into the physical to find life within, its nature.