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Listening to Your Body

“Listening to your body” is a commonly heard phrase.

What does it really mean?

How would it change your life if you did listen?

To listen to your body is a culturally revolutionary act. Many spiritual traditions teach people to value the spiritual being as distinct from the physical being. Philosophical systems value the mind over body wisdom. (Did you notice how you responded to reading “body wisdom”? This would be an indicator of how much you have integrated these messages!) Once you become sensitized to this bias, you will find it in many places and systems. Our language is so full of it, it is hard to write this article!

For this article, I am wanting to limit this focus to listening to specific physical sensations; the pain/pleasure stimulations.

Many of us, when asked how we are feeling physically, will report on our experience of what parts of our body are painful. Here, again, is the cultural bias towards finding our bodies “a painful burden” rather than noticing what feels good about them. Are you aware that the neurological pathways for pleasurable stimulus are more numerous, thicker, and faster than those pathways for pain? Our biological disposition would be to notice what is feeling good.

The role of pain is to protect our bodies. This neurological system is critical to our well-being. Yet, in our disregard for the messages from our body, we overlook and sometimes deliberately overpower the messages of pain.

How revolutionary would it be if you stopped doing something as soon as you become aware of any discomfort? Imagine getting up from your computer as soon as your wrists or shoulders become sore, regardless of your report being unfinished. Imagine that you stop chopping firewood as soon as your back begins to ache regardless of whether you have finished the week's supply.

Now, luckily for us achiever types, the body will heal quickly if we listen to it soon enough, give it a rest, or occasionally change activities to one that uses the body differently. The reports get done and the firewood brought in. The pattern of activity will be different as will the resulting comfort in your body. If you want help learning about this edge of your body awareness, try *Trager*.

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