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Knowing where you are – Proprioception

At an early age, we development our ability to sense where parts of our body are in relation to each other and how they move in relation to our environment. This ability is called proprioception and is linked to body maps in the brain.

When proprioception works well, we don't have to think about how to scratch a mosquito bite or how to clear the edges of a doorway.

Here is an easy test: close your eyes, then touch your finger to the end of your nose. Does your accuracy change if you start with your face turned to one side or you extend your arm out further between each touch or you use a different finger or your non-dominant hand?

Proprioception changes with injury or brain damage. Chronic pain can distort our sense of ourselves as the brain suppresses the awareness of the painful area so that we can continue to function. This can make us more vulnerable to re-injury because an area is not clearly in our awareness.

To improve proprioception, focused awareness is critical. Gentle touch to your skin helps define your 'edges'. You may want to focus on any areas that have reduced sensation, lightly tapping and stimulating the area. Avoid creating any pain during this exploration as the automatic body-brain pain avoidance mechanisms will result in further disengagement.

Walking in the woods gives opportunities exercise your proprioception as you step over irregular roots and rocks. When you notice a root several steps ahead, allow the length of your stride to change so that you can easily step over the root. Do this with your head level, not watching your feet, so that your body figures this out using your peripheral vision.

Before I began training in *Trager*® Somatic Body Therapy, I could not catch anything. During the training, students practice on each other. Suddenly, I could catch keys that were tossed to me! My sense of my body in space had become more accurate so that I could place my open hands into the trajectory of the keys.

Trager Somatic Body Therapy helps clients develop their proprioception. Your 'edges' are defined by my deliberately welcoming touch. This quality of touch invites your brain to accurately map your body. The *Trager* movement connects one part of the body to the whole, so that you can feel easy coordination throughout your physical structure.

With a clearer sense of where you are and a new sense of how to be better coordinated, your proprioception can support you moving in the world.

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