

The following is an excerpt from the introduction to ***Engaging The Movement Of Life: Exploring Health & Embodiment Through Osteopathy & Continuum*** by Bonnie Gintis, D.O.

Engaging The Movement Of Life: Exploring Health & Embodiment Through Osteopathy & Continuum is an invitation to discover new ways to experience health and embodiment. Through my experience studying and practicing Osteopathy and Continuum, in addition to exploring a variety of other physical and metaphysical approaches, I have synthesized and integrated a unique path of inquiry into the nature of embodiment and the vast scope of human experience. My approach is at once scientific, metaphysical, and poetic. I offer this book to you as a vehicle for exploration of the supposed boundaries of physical form and expectations of function.

What does it mean to have a body or be embodied? Supposing that any model of human life is the truth, traps us in an artificial construct, and prevents us from having an actual experience of living. Rather than definitively proclaim anything I think is true about embodiment, I propose possibilities and ask the reader to consider them. The root of the word consider is, “considerare,” from the Latin meaning, “to be with the stars.” It is in this spirit that I invite you to contemplate a shift in your paradigm of embodiment. Imagine how you might feel if you were lying on the beach at dusk and waiting for the stars to emerge from the night sky. A state of open attentiveness would be conducive to the receptivity necessary to see and experience something new. If you stare at any one place you think a star will appear you will most likely miss its emergence, along with all the other things happening in the rest of the unseen sky. It is with wide openness that I ask you to be attentive to your own body. Can you gaze openly, taking in the scope of the body as a whole, and wait patiently, without specific expectations, for something new to emerge and capture your attention? This style of inquiry asks for all assumptions to be put aside, to have the willingness to consider the unexpected.

The way we ask questions often limits the possible answers. When we inquire from a different paradigm, an unexpected answer may arise. Embarking on an exploration of the possibilities of what it means to be embodied, it’s fruitful to learn how to ask novel questions in new ways, and learn to alter the tempo of our listening so that we can hear the answer that has been here all along, waiting for us to become resonant with the rhythms of life, the Earth, the cosmos, and the silent Stillness from which everything emerges.

To be “engaged” requires a commitment to be wholly engrossed and participatory. The topic of this book is not an intellectual exercise, or something that can be passively observed from a distance. It is an invitation to a grand experiment in deepening consciousness and connectedness. It is an introduction to a philosophy that is about a way of life, rather than about how a technique is done. Thinking about your body does not create the experience of embodiment. The movement of life can be fully appreciated when you allow it to enfold you completely. I intend this book to be a support for those of you who are searching and struggling to find a new way of being, for those who want to learn to respond to the body in a new way.

The adult body is composed of about 70% water. Water is the ultimate resonator. It is a powerful solvent. It has the ability to carry and store energy and information in a wide variety of ways. Learning to identify with the fluid nature of the body opens doors to realms you would never find by exploring the mechanical model of the body we all learned as children and grandchildren of the Industrial Revolution.

Both Continuum and Osteopathy ask us to be in relationship, to be engaged with both the physical body and the nonmaterial vitality of life. The gross physical and the energetic nonmaterial are two ends of the spectrum of one unity. Vitality is a characteristic of the potent life force. It is not a substance; it is not material. We cannot image or measure this force. We can, however, detect and experience the effect of its presence, as it is manifest in physical movement and form. Human beings are the summation of life processes moving in relationship to the matter of which we're composed. On the physical plane, all life involves motion. Water, minerals, ions, vitamins, fats, carbohydrates, and other nutrients move through and around the cells and the spaces between them. Cells move, tissues move, organs move, and the space in and around these things move with them, all in concert with an unseen animating spark. There is a miracle that began at the moment the sperm met the egg, that became you. That miracle hasn't ended yet. The mystery that propelled the growth and development of an embryo continues after birth and throughout life as the forces of adaptation and healing. The movement of embodiment is the vehicle for the expression of this life force.

There is no spiritual path without a physical body in which to have it. And there is no physical existence without the presence of the mysterious nonmaterial life force, often referred to as spirit. The separation, either conscious or unconscious, of physical being from other aspects of life has led many people into a quandary. Many people have artificially split their physical and spiritual paths, believing that they don't belong together. And yet, our physical and nonmaterial existence is inseparable. One cannot exist without the other. The body informs the spirit in a silent language that is spoken from the dark watery depths, and the spirit brings breath, light, and fire to the body.

This book is about unification. I chronicle a path that encompasses all these views of body, mind, and spirit as an integral, intercommunicating whole. Spiritual practice, embodiment, self-care, and pleasure do not contradict each other. They can all occur simultaneously in one arena of practice. Continuum offers an opportunity to bring the consciousness and commitment of spiritual practice to an engaged embodied movement practice. Each individual can be the vehicle for devotion in a grand exploration of life in all of its expressions.

Although much of what I describe in this book was passed on to me from a variety of teachers and written sources, this book was born through experiencing what I know, not from thinking or theorizing about it. The experience of embodiment is just that, an experience. Engaged embodiment exists in a realm of sensing, feeling, and moving. Once it is translated into words it becomes frozen as symbols on paper, another step away from what it actually is. Anything that I describe in this book is only a description. A description only points to an experience. I have created a map to help guide the interested reader as they enter and explore the territory of their own experience of embodiment. The words are chosen and arranged in the way I find they best point towards the path to experiencing what they describe. Please explore your territory, rather than my map. Your path might be different than mine. Bon voyage!

An Invitation To Inquiry

The philosophy that I offer is in the domain of nature and I hope you find a way to integrate it with your worldview and have it enrich your life, whether you do so through Osteopathy, Continuum, or your own approach. I invite you to allow yourself to loosen the bounds of your culture, your education, your family, your personality, and the self-imposed bounds of your awareness and glimpse into an alternate view of embodiment in

which you might experience greater freedom and have access to fully express your essence. If we question deeply enough, we have a chance to expand the field and escape the density of being bound in our assumptions about form and function. The possibilities are limitless. I invite you to join my exploration and engage the movement of life.