

Entering Authentic Movement Practice by Enlivening Bartenieff Fundamental Movement Patterns

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Connor, MA, BC-DMT, LPC has recently lived and been worked in New Zealand. She has a particular interest, and is very experienced,

in Authentic Movement (AM) practice. This has led her to recently explore the potential of incorporating the Bartenieff Fundamentals into AM sessions. Read Connor's full bio on p. 2.

Abstract

The practices of The Bartenieff Fundamental Developmental Movement Patterns and Authentic Movement were integrated into a recent experiential workshop facilitated by the author. A witness offered tactile and movement cues to a mover to highlight their partner's unique developmental movement patterns and preferences. After this exchange and with new awareness of their own movement patterns, the mover enters into Authentic Movement. The aim of integrating these two practices was to find out whether their combination could have an impact on personal and clinical practice. Could working with Authentic Movement in this way assist movers in following their internal cues as they concurrently re-educate their body connectivity?

Key words:

Authentic Movement, Bartenieff Fundamentals, Developmental sequence, dance movement therapy, witness, mover.

Dance/Movement therapists are inspired by many practices, some of which they integrate into their work. Two practices that originated from pioneers in the field that they use are the Bartenieff Fundamentals™ and Authentic Movement. Irmgard Bartenieff, who was a protégé of Rudolf Laban, fled to the USA from Germany in 1936. She brought with her an

extensive knowledge of dance and the work of Laban at that time, which subsequently, with her help, became known as Laban Movement Analysis. As she began working as a physical (physiotherapist) therapist she created six developmental exercises inspired by the knowledge that she had of Effort and Shape. She integrated her dance knowledge within her work and became an important teacher in New York City, establishing 'The Laban Institute of Movement Studies' in 1978 (Bartenieff, 1981). Peggy Hackney, one of Bartenieff's students, and her protégé, deepened our understanding of the practice with her book (Hackney, 1998).

The practice of Authentic Movement is inspired by Mary Whitehouse's *Moving In-depth*; "The core of the movement experience is the sensation of moving and being moved" (Whitehouse, in Pallaro 1999, p.41). Janet Adler coined the term Authentic Movement and developed the witness role further while Joan Chodorow and Zoe Austrich both contributed to the early evolution and teaching of the movement form. There were many others who also contributed to the deepening of the practice and its applications (Pallaro 1999, 2007; Adler 2002).

Authentic Movement is a simple, yet profound process, between a mover and a witness. The mover closes their eyes and follows their own inner impulses. Listening deeply to their inner stirrings the mover brings un/preconscious material through the body into consciousness. The witness sits with their eyes open and tracks their own experience in relation to the mover and notices their projections, interpretations and judgements. They are aware of the present moment - of the room and the space - and of the movers - allowing them to be able to drop into a preconscious or unconscious realm prior to developing their own inner witness. The witness holds the consciousness or is the container in the beginning of the process. The mover develops their inner witness at the same time as the witness develops their inner mover.

This relationship is fundamental to each practice. The dyad is the basic structure in Authentic Movement. Tina Stomsted and Neala Haze say "Authentic Movement recapitulates our first

primary relationship in which being seen is inherent: the dyad of mover (child/client) and witness (mother/therapist)” (in Pallaro, 2007) exists within *a transitional space for collaborative exchange* (Phillips, 1988 in Stromsted & Haze, in Pallaro ed 2007). Peggy Hackney states “Each Fundamental Pattern of Total Body Connectivity represents a primary level of development and experience, and each is relational. Each organizes a way of relating to self and the world.” (Hackney p. 13) The realms of experience in Authentic Movement, include the individual body, the collective body and the conscious body (Adler p. xvi)



There are six fundamental developmental patterns. These include Breath, Core-Distal Connectivity, Head Tail Connectivity, Upper-Lower Connectivity, Body- Half Connectivity and Cross-Lateral Connectivity. The developmental patterns become the ground for the next pattern to be integrated. Revisiting these patterns means:

As we claim our full development of our bodily connections through movement patterns, and recognize the role they play in forming who we are as feelingful, spirited, thoughtful human beings, we will increase our options for a lively interplay with our world, we will feel more alive. (Hackney p.17).

The Bartenieff Fundamental Developmental Movement Patterns and Authentic Movement are integrated in this workshop. The Bartenieff Fundamentals and Authentic Movement are two very different skills that the dance/movement therapist can integrate into their practice. By combining the two together this workshop explored the idea that a new way of working can be found. Can our internal cues for movement be followed at the same time as we re-educate our body connectivity? “Everyone who goes into dance should have the primitive patterns of genetic development mastered” (Bartenieff, cited in Hackney, 1996, p.19). If these patterns could

be enlivened for our clients in this way, could they be accessed as a resource to assist them during their therapeutic journeys? Access to the Bartenieff Fundamental Developmental Movement Patterns could allow the mover easier access to their breath, shaping, and 3 dimensional movements. Some of the qualities of both practices also encourage deep relaxation responses and support the mover to become more sensitive to their own internal experience.

In the workshop the movers worked in dyads with a witness who offered both the tactile and movement cues to their mover partner to highlight particular developmental fundamental patterns. Following this, the mover entered into Authentic Movement within the circle. The dyad then changed their roles and using another movement pattern drawn from the developmental sequence, repeated the activity. The discussion that followed highlighted ideas of how the initial ‘enlivening’ could impact on personal and clinical practice. By integrating these two skills it is posited that perhaps a new way of perceiving the work of a DMT could emerge including the integration of both. That is, following our internal cues, together with the provision of ‘re-education into body connection’ (Bartenieff, in Hackney, 1998).



The fundamental patterns are layered developmentally as is the practice of Authentic Movement. The form of the latter begins with a mover and witness, and later can include triads and larger groups or collective experiences. As each mover and witness becomes familiar with tracking their own experience they can incorporate witnessing multiple movers as well as being witnessed by multiple witnesses. As we explore this evolving practice experientially we move towards conscious embodiment which ultimately allows us to be more present in our daily lives. We learn to pay attention to our body on its own terms without superimposing a structure or an aesthetic view point.

Some teachers offer particular warm-ups before entering into the practice of Authentic Movement. As Linda Murrow* says “People are just coming off the streets” (personal conversation), so we can see that these fundamental developmental movement patterns are a somatic method for awakening the body. Indeed a few of the participants in my workshop were new to both practices so I suggested that they work with a partner with more experience. Within the time frame of my workshop there was no time available to teach the basics of each practice.



The participants gathered in dyads and the first to witness highlighted the first pattern, that of the breath, by placing their hands, after firstly seeking permission, on six different areas on the torso. This included all areas of the lungs. Music supported this process. Hackney suggests that breath confirms our connection to everything in life and connects us to the fluids in our body. And with each breath, a dialogue with our environment is created. This is also the first experience we have of our inner space.

In my own practice with the breath I remember discovering the movement of an ocean wave. I became that wave. Another example of breath exploration is that of a mover who uncovered some imagery around creation and the level of manifestation. That is that the level of energy becomes matter from the impulse to create. She explored these through some elements of sound, finding deep stillness as well as new life when moving in a kinespheric bubble.

A mover stated:

As a mover, after experiencing the BF (Barteniff Fundamental) developmental level of breath, I was quite aware of my middle body and its volume. My

movement was very body driven (vs. image driven or emotion driven) and at some point in the movement process I knew clearly that ‘What my body needed is what I need.’

Another mover shared:

As a mover I worked with the breath pattern. I found the combination of the BF developmental patterns with Authentic Movement created a synergistic effect in terms of depth. The pattern is a fantastic entry point into Authentic Movement and accelerates the process.

In the second round of the dyads the mover and witness exchanged roles. The witness then highlighted the core-distal pattern. This pattern facilitates core support as well as establishing the kinesphere. It demonstrates the relationship of the six limbs (head, tail, arms and legs) to the core. It creates a rhythm of gathering and scattering, or in and out, movements.



One of the movers entering through the core-distal pathway discovered an embodied level of being in relationship with her limbs and experienced her weight on the floor. Imagery did not materialize as it often does for her in the practice, as she was focused on feeling the weight of her body on the ground.

A witness states:

As a witness, after tracing my partner with the X roll patterns, I observed in her movement what I thought was a big emphasis on the spine. She said her images were about opening in the core. (i.e., my witnessing imagery was more dorsal and her moving imagery was more ventral).

Another witness shared:

As a witness I led my mover through the core distal pattern. Initially I could see

that my mover was uncertain of the instruction. They seemed lost and as if they were seeking information. Eventually my mover just seemed to go with it and a beautiful exchange occurred between her and another mover. She started initially with external information for her movement but eventually drew on internal information. It seemed that my mover went from distal to core during the process.

In the group setting during the second round of Authentic Movement the core –distal pattern had been highlighted. An increase in interactions between the movers was observed as limbs opened out in exploration of the space around the body. This had not been present during the first round of movement.



During the discussion participants expressed that a shift had occurred during the second round of moving which could either be attributed to a greater ease and familiarity with the practice or perhaps the pattern highlighted. One participant responded with:

I want to encourage you to continue down this path as I think you are onto something really valuable. I can see this being a fantastic professional development opportunity once completed. A full day's immersion to discover where we can go to uncover our inner wisdom. A full day or even weekend could allow for deeper and deeper processes and who knows what we may find. I would be the first to put my hand up when you are ready.

Authentic Movement itself is a developmental practice and when offered over a weekend or retreat setting, movers generally deepen into the practice. Perhaps by adding one or more Bartenieff Fundamental developmental patterns movers can embody or enter into the practice more quickly and with greater ease. These are questions to be explored further in future workshops.



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*Linda Murrow is a Melbourne based DM therapist, a BC-DMT, who trained in the US. Authentic Movement is one of her areas of expertise.