



Activity

Body-Informed Communication

People: Ideally your whole group

Time: Approximately 45 minutes to discuss and try this Activity

Resources: This Activity, a place to meet, and someone to hold time

How Can This Help Us?

This way of speaking allows us to bring our Body Intelligence into our interactions. This helps to bring more of ourselves - and our ongoing, sometimes ambiguous inner process - into our own awareness, as well as into our relationships and group cultures. This increases meaningful engagement and inspires creativity.

The other benefit is that speaking in this way creates psychological safety in our groups. Our sensate responses to other people can be our body's way of remembering our own relational histories (see "Implicit Memory" resource); if we react from those sensations, without first noticing, naming, and getting curious about them (see "Staying With" resource), we can unconsciously project our relational histories or associations onto others - and miss out on what they're actually trying to say.

By noticing these responses, by Staying With them, and by speaking about them in a Body-Informed way (as per this Activity), we are encouraged to give them our attention without building them into stories about ourselves and the people we're engaging with. This allows us to practice compassion for ourselves and each other, to cultivate personal and group creativity, and at the same time to increase psychological safety in our group cultures.

Although this practice may seem lengthy at first, it speeds up with practice, and can be easily woven into regular interactions.

Lineage: My description of this practice is influenced by the Discipline of Authentic Movement, Compassionate Communication, and Focusing.

The Practice

1. Notice what you're feeling in your body
 - You might have no idea what it is that you're feeling at first. All you need to do is simply notice that you're feeling something, whether it's big and intense, or small and subtle.
 - You might like to Stay With it for a while before speaking (particularly if it feels charged).

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- Either way, in order to practice Body-Informed Communication, the first step is to notice that we are experiencing something in our bodies (see “Inner Tracking” resource).

2. Describe the sensations, and their location

- Eg. “I’m feeling a clenching in my stomach,” or “My heart feels warm and soft.”
- If you need help identifying and naming sensations, see “Naming Sensations” resource.

3. Describe the stimulus

- Describe what it is that evoked that sensation in you. This might be something someone said or did, or an event or experience.
- It is important that, when you describe the stimulus, you describe it as objectively as possible, rather than evaluating or interpreting it.
 - For example, say “I felt clenching in my stomach when you said you didn’t want to develop the project” rather than “I felt clenching in my stomach when you shut down all the work we’ve been doing.”
 - Or, “I felt warm and soft in my heart when you sat beside me and stroked my back” rather than “I felt warm and soft in my heart when you showed me your support.”
- By describing the stimulus objectively, rather than interpreting it, you create psychological safety for others.
- And, you “Mind the Gap,” building a creative void, or Gap between your assumptions and reality, into which new possibilities can flow.

4. Stay With your sensations

- You may choose to Stay With your sensations at any point in this Activity, to support them to unfold and offer more information; however, it can be particularly helpful to return to them after you’ve spoken, to notice if they have changed or shifted.

5. Check for feelings, needs, and insights

- While you are Staying With your sensations, you might wish to ask them (with your inner attention) if they have an emotion, or if there’s something they need.
- If you do have a need, notice if it’s something you might ask for from an individual, or the group.
- Stay receptive with your inner attention, in case an image or association arises. Your Body Intelligence might bring you some unexpected insight or information.

6. Share feelings, needs, requests, and insights

- Everything you’ve noticed within you has the potential to influence your relationships, and to inform your group and its projects. It is important to bring the feelings, needs, values, and

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insights that have emerged within you from noticing your sensations into the group's collective awareness.

- Once again, when speaking, it's important that you not interpret other people's actions, but rather that you speak descriptively and objectively.

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