



## Presencing Issue 28: Just Enough Part II

**When we engage with our clients' somatic awareness... less is truly more:** Somatic awareness comes from attending to our experiences through our internal senses. When we ask clients what they are feeling inside most cannot tell us. Why is this so... because our minds are preoccupied with other concerns. We react to our symptoms rather than interacting with them. The reaction comes from fear and overlays the body's natural signals with fearful messages. Even though our bodies have repaired themselves countless times, we reject that data and focus on the "what ifs:" "What if it is cancer; what if it becomes infected; what if I am now permanently disabled or disfigured; what if I cannot work any longer; what if my insurance runs out, what if they find that I'm at fault?" Interacting with the symptoms directly is an alternative to fear and produces less suffering. When we teach our clients to "barely attend" to the messages coming from their bodies the first thing that happens is that they become less fearful. Next they enter a parasympathetic state of awareness, which allows more blood flow and relaxation of tissues. Next they enter a state of presencing which allows them to join with their bodily healing processes, letting the body digest the fearful stimuli so that the healing is also a forgetting of trauma.

**"How little can you do:"** The term "bare attention" occurs in Buddhist meditation training. It is an internal application of "just enough." It means not reacting excessively to anything that occurs. But "bare attention" also implies a basic trust in a life of balance and peace. If we practice presence when we work with our clients we are giving them the same messages: We trust them to live their lives fully and in accord with their own destiny. If they are complaining about their lives or what has happened to their bodies, we meet them with compassion and teach them to trust in life. And most importantly, we help them digest the fears that are causing their suffering. We apply the "just enough" approach so that they become directly involved in their own healing. By doing so we are teaching trust in life as well as full participation in whatever is occurring. At the same time we are opening them into direct dialogue with their own "internal Healer, which emerges directly out of self-presencing.

**Symptoms as "somatic doorways":** Normally the conscious mind tries to avoid areas of discomfort. The tightness that forms around the injury site causes its own symptoms, i.e. limited motion, stiffness, achiness. This is a natural protection against further injury and when we try to move against guarding we receive further discomfort. It takes a

certain amount of time for the body to repair itself. But in the pushiness of our modern lifestyles we neither want the discomfort, nor have the time for the rest required for the normal healing mechanisms to occur. So we mask the pain and sometimes put an artificial restraint around the wounded area. Long after the body has repaired the injury we still experience pain and lack of movement. The somatic doorway is to go directly into the discomforts and limitations without causing further discomfort. There are a variety of ways the practitioner can create this kind of intervention. The most important element is the conscious interaction with the symptoms by the client. In other words, we create a “safe haven” for the client’s explorations. We can alter the symptoms mechanically but this often creates more pain for the client, can reinjure the area, and also supports the client’s weakening of somatic awareness.

**Gamma Sensory:** Deane Juhan talks about how the gamma sensory motor system, based in the autonomic nervous system, splints and limits an injury site. This limiting and lack of feeling is also receiving impulses from the conscious mind: “Don’t hurt, don’t feel.” When a trauma happens we limit sensory access to that part of the body. So the way we can create direct access by the client’s conscious mind into the area is to create pain-free positioning and encourage the client’s curiosity to interact – proprioceptively, or neuromuscularly, within the guarded region. We use our own palpation skills and verbal accompaniment to encourage the clients to interact “just enough” so that their somatic awareness is increased. When this happens, the small safe interaction by the client produces change. The practitioner can then follow any kind of softening and warming into a pain-free movement of the area. So the client plays a major role by steadily increasing somatic awareness of the area until there is restoration of movement and greatly reduced anxiety of further pain. The settings in the gamma sensory motor system that were created to protect access and movement are reset during this process and both client and practitioner can feel the changes.

**Profound:** There is a “just enough” engagement between our touch-presence and the client’s inner engagement. The client comes in cautiously with feeling awareness to test the effects of the interaction. When those interactions are met by more and more freedom of movement and less and less pain, the client responds with more trust of the process. So what starts out as bare attention becomes a greater acceptance of the somatic process. These changes can be felt by both practitioner and client. The practitioner started the process by giving the client “just enough” stimulus to start the interaction. By working in this way the practitioner is able to come in “under the protective radar” of the conscious mind which has avoided and even feared direct sensory access to the region. We are working with the client’s sensitivity and gently building trust for the process. The releases that happen are guided by the body and do not result in re-injury. A small example: Release of sacral tuberosity ligament tightness works best with bare tactile stimulation by the practitioner and bare engagement by the client. Whole Anatomy Trains structural patterns and connective tissue can be approached in this way: “Barely breathe into or barely touch my fingers from the inside of your tissue. I can now feel you coming in. Now touch my fingers as ! lightly as possible from inside. That’s it. Notice what you are feeling inside as I remove my hands.” In this way the practitioner is guiding the client into an awareness of her own healing response.

Kokoro - Heart Centered Awareness