

## Sensory Motor Amnesia and Paralysis Presencing Issue #44



**Presencing Paralysis:** I have been holding back on issuing a new Presencing newsletter because I have been seeking ways to put the following cases into words. I am currently working with 3 clients who are paralyzed from the waist down. All three are suffering from spinal cord injuries. One has been paralyzed for 1 year, another for 23years. The third suffered his injuries 34 years ago when he was 16 years old. One and 1/2 years ago I started working with the third man in Kyoto Japan. I agreed to see him because his wife had written to us stating that he was in extreme pain and that everything they had tried seemed to make things worse.

He was sitting in a wheelchair, his feet resting on the footplates with his ankles totally inverted. I had no idea where to start, so I let my curiosity be my guide. I decided that I could find out how much he could feel and where he could feel it. So I weighed each of his legs; he could feel the change of position in his hips as his legs were lifted. He could not feel the contact of my hands. I then compressed and lengthened his upper legs towards and away from his hip joints and he could feel that. Next I did the same thing starting with his lower legs, ankles, and straightened feet. He could feel the compressions and distractions in his hip joints. Next we moved down to the knee joints and ankle joints. It was a little difficult at first but he found that he could feel the compressions and distractions in each of those joints.

**Next we moved to the muscles;** when I touched different muscles in his legs, he could not feel the touch. I decided to try decompressing the muscles one-by-one. I started with the muscles of his upper legs since they were closest to his pelvis, where he had some feeling awareness. At the same time I decided to see if he could interact with what I was doing. So I asked him to focus his in-breath and out-breath right where I was placing my hands. It took a little while but he became able to feel a sense of proprioceptive interaction with my hands ; he pushed against my hands with his breath as I lengthened the muscles and contracted in exhalation as I decompressed or shortened the muscle tissue.

What is more surprising is that I could feel the effects as expansion and contraction in my hands, and I told him so. Following this procedure, we were able to create interaction all the way down his legs. And as a side effect, he was feeling the very pleasurable parasympathetic effects of decompression in many parts of his body; he was experiencing less and less pain.

What happened next was almost unbelievable. I put my hands on his right knee and asked him to touch my hands from inside of his knee. I then could feel him touch my hands! In other words he was able to use his conscious awareness to create a different form of interaction with me. Even though he was still unable to fully feel where I was touching him, he could touch me back. Also as we practiced that form of interaction the tonus of the tissue in his legs was softening and warming!

By that time we had reached the end of the session. I wanted to create a similar kind of interaction between him and his wife. So we started with his paralyzed legs and voila, he could interact with her hands and she could feel his breathing and touching. We then shifted to different parts of his upper body. The two of them could interact in those places as well, including tight painful body parts. These interactions resulted in more shifts towards warming and softening. Now they had some tools they could use to work together on their own! The next time I came to Japan, they came to see us 3 times, traveling all the way from Osaka to Tokyo. His wife also took a few classes so that she could have even more tools for their interactions. One of those times my students were astounded to be able to feel his ability to interact with their hands.

Over the last six months I have been fortunate enough to be able to work with the other two clients with lower body paralysis, one in Seattle and one on Orcas Island. All three clients have made great strides in their abilities to feel into their lower bodies as well as interact with the hands of practitioners. Thomas Hanna coined the phrase "sensory motor amnesia." He was convinced that if you could create a restoration of sensory awareness, that motor function would follow.

While I am not an expert on motor nerve function, I do believe that spinal nerve severance offers the supreme test of Hanna's notion. In these three cases we have more than amnesia operating. But here are some astounding facts that are showing up with each of these clients. All of them can interact proprioceptively with the practitioner's hands. All of them are starting to create movement with their lower extremities, including leg swings from the hips using their upper leg muscles, side to side leg swings using their hip rotators, adductors and abductors, knee flexion and extension against resistance and in one case ankle flexion and extension against resistance.

All of them have learned to presence the pain in their bodies, using the pain signals as a way to enter a state of presence. All of them have developed their own proprioceptive exercises for increasing somatic awareness in their bodies. All of them can interact with the practitioner's hands in their lower extremities, using their breath and touch! There is still a descriptive vagueness when each tries to describe their new feeling awareness. But the interesting thing is that as they are searching for words, they are creating parasympathetic reactions in their bodies. All three are motivated to continue the process of growing new synapses of movement and feeling; all three report a growing awareness of life force and joie de vivre; all three have supporters that are enabling them to practice presencing and somatic interactions.