

You always remember the First Time. And my first time experiencing the sensational connection between mind and body happened the weekend I turned 30. It was an aikido workshop led by the late, great co-founder of the Human Potential Movement, George Leonard. "Make your arm strong!" he said. I stretched my right arm out, and powered it up, squeezing as hard as I could until it was straight and strong. George pushed slightly, and down it came, like a child, poking at a balloon. Whoa! What just happened? George suggested a visualization. "Now release any tension and imagine you're sending a beam of light through your arm, past your fingers, beyond the wall, down the street..." Strength through relaxation. I was a woman of steel. It was a mind-blowing, life-changing experience. If I can do this, I remember thinking, what else is possible?

Link Mind and Body.

I want to tell you three real-life stories to make one big point about the mind-body connection. It's real. It's not waiting to be proven some day—it *has* been proven, with scientific rigor, time and time again. Your mind and body are communicating with each other right now, inside you, hormonally, chemically, energetically, whether you're aware of it or not.

Becoming aware is a process of self-discovery. All sexes and ages are welcome. When you sense the connections between your thoughts and emotions, and how your body might be expressing them—back pain, indigestion, fatigue—it's a stunning aha! moment.

You won't blame yourself for every illness or accident, but you'll become open to discovering if there are lessons to be learned, especially about the effects of stress on your health, healing and well-being.

True story one: Sandy's husband died some months ago. They'd been together for nearly 25 years, a warm and compatible second marriage for both. Sandy depended on Bill, and Bill depended on Sandy, in a way that made them excited to be with each other, each trying to make the other happier.

Shortly after Bill died, Sandy stumbled and broke her foot. It was agony added to misery and Sandy didn't understand why it happened.

"I know that Bill is watching over me...so why did I have to fall?"

In time, she answered her own question.

"I was moving too fast. I couldn't bear to be in the house without him, so I sold it right away and moved to a smaller place, and I've been making a lot of fast, reckless decisions ever since."

Sandy decided her broken foot was a sign to slow down, move more cautiously. It's not taking away her deep grief, Sandy says, but her mood is better, and she's making smarter decisions.

Story two: Lew is 87, his wife, Bonnie, is 86, and they've been living happily, independently, outside Chicago, in a house they never want to leave. On a recent Sunday night, Bonnie was taken to the hospital because she had difficulty breathing. It's not a new problem but it's a scary one. Lew spent the day with her in intensive care and came home to an empty house. He had some supper, put himself to bed, and woke up after a few hours, unable to move his legs. This had never happened before. Lew called a neighbor, who called 911, and after two days of hospital tests, his doctors could find nothing physical to explain his sudden paralysis.

"I didn't want to go on without her," Lew figured out the next day, after his legs returned to normal. "That's why my legs wouldn't work."

Lew is home now, and so is Bonnie, both grateful to be together again.

"The body is an amazing thing," Lew says. "It knows more than I do."

Story three: A married couple—tired of cold winters and in love with Northern California—went to look for a home in Marin County. They were all super expensive, so the couple decided they'd sell another piece of real estate they owned before buying something new in California.

But then the tireless realtor took them to see the house of their dreams.

"This is it!" they cheered, lost in real estate rapture. "We'll never find a better place!"

They bid on the house without waiting for the other property to sell, which involved a risky bridge loan among other negatives. But what the heck, they high-fived: no guts, no glory.

The night before signing the offer, the wife suddenly felt the worst pain of her life gripping across her chest, lurching down her right arm. She hadn't fallen, lifted weights or done a crooked handstand in yoga.

"Is this a heart attack?" she wondered. "No! It feels deeply muscular, like someone is twisting my arm."

Her partner jumped to the exact right conclusion.

"We're not buying the house! Look what your body is telling us. If you can't move your right arm, you can't sign the offer. Forget it. We'll wait until the time is right."

The next day the wife saw a wise body worker, fluent in neuromuscular stress, and by noon, her arm was 95 percent better.

And she used it to hug her most understanding partner.

ENERGY EXPRESS-O! All Is One

“Body is not stiff, mind is stiff.”

—K. Pattabhi Jois



GOING DEEPER

Decide for yourself that you want to experience that mind-body connection. There are many paths, but reading about it won't take you there. You need curiosity, an open mind, a teacher and a training that helps you plug into the electrifying flow of energy that develops when your body and mind work in harmony.

Yoga is famous for it. So is training in martial arts, including Qigong, tai chi, aikido, taekwondo, karate. The Alexander Technique can take you there, and so can Feldenkrais, somatics training, and Pilates.

What about fishing? Yes! Hiking in a forest? Absolutely! Posting your 20th tweet of the day? Not so much.

Once you have that felt sense of a body-mind connection, you'll want to keep coming back to it, time and again. It never gets tiresome or boring. Instead, it becomes a way of seeing the interconnectedness of *all* things, inner and outer, humans and rocks, the sea and the stars.

Start where you are. Even if you've never felt the connection before, it is there, waiting for you.

