

The *Being* in the Body

There is a place inside your bodymind that exists outside of time. In this open field of energy it is possible to contact people and situations from the past, present or future and heal or recreate experience.

The usual sensations of anxiety and excitement spiral upward from stomach to throat with an uneasy swallow, as Laurel rushes out of her green vintage '68 van, guilty and afraid of being a few minutes late for her appointment. But she's used to this: this anxious feeling...and being late. She gathers into a basket items she brought as a "partial trade" for the sessions she's determined to continue, one way or another, until she's "healed", really healed, "from all the stuff I've buried from my childhood, from the humiliation and frustration in this marriage, from all my fears, my insecurities, my neediness, if people knew how much this external façade of strength is covering..." "But I'm a good person" comes the other side, "I have a really good heart. I want to feel good. I'm tired of always feeling stuck., I work hard... I even got myself through S.F.State! This dialogue inside her is like a radio station. Her old familiar songs: anger, rebellion, followed by adamant assertions of worthiness! Her feet strike the pavement hard in rapid drum steps, unable to carry her inside fast enough to get on the table once again. "How long will this take?" she wonders, "Will I *ever* really be done?"

Inside, Jiva prepares her space, lighting a candle, mixing aromas of lavender, neroli and jasmine-a high vibrational healing message of joy to the heart, sweetness and calm. She, too, has embraced, finally, the word, "Healing", but only after many years of aversion to it because of its implication that something was wrong with you, that you were sick, or that you *needed* to be to have the "ticket" to enter into a process of becoming who you are, *inherently*, as the armor and artifice melt away in a spring thaw of rebirth. Over the years, she understood the word "healing" to mean "wholing"; the integration of all the parts of oneself into a whole being, a whole life. Of course, "integrating" presumes the willingness to know and accept these parts, in order to have the freedom to choose your life, and to live your fullest, rather than be a victim of circumstance or self-limitation.

In her world, freedom and relatedness stood like pillars of light and dark, yang and yin, each with equal magnetism. For her, one without the other was meaningless, but together they support a doorway of energy she experienced as Love.

For now, Jiva is just glad to have reached the place of not having to "know" anything, quite the way she used to. The myriad techniques, enticing theories, and tens of thousands of dollars that weave a path through the seductive world of healing with its sometimes outlandish and specious claims of "transformation", led her, at last, to a clearing: the simple joy and humble fulfillment to just be present to someone, allowing whatever is ready to gently unfold supported by her hands and eyes and heart.

Complexity had distilled into its essence, and made of her a vessel for "anything *is* possible." Not the type to "believe in miracles" (as a downy-feathered newborn spiritually inspired convert), it was Jiva's experience of the flow of energy in the bodymind that teased her with the possibility that often, in a mysterious process that may

forever and happily elude definitive explanation, awareness, like a precious jewel of light, breaks through unconscious limitations to create a new moment, a new reality, and perhaps a new life. She's simply drawn the practical conclusion that to not hold *always* the possibility of change, "miracles", simply lessens your chances! "Why not be open and do what you can?" she has concluded, in exhilaration, always ready to throw out her sail to catch the wind that will carry her being across the great waters!

Jiva takes a few minutes to focus inwardly on the person coming for a session. She "asks" for guidance in her work, setting her own intention. Then she opens the drawer where she keeps sheets of many different colors, intuitively pulling out the colors that draw her eye at first glance, deriving private pleasure from the frequent phenomenon of the person entering the room wearing the color(s) of the sheets she's put on the massage table. Once in awhile, she chooses a color, like a deep red or hot pink, just for its energy, for someone who certainly wouldn't be wearing it.

A few seconds after the screen door slams against the old Victorian house, Laurel enters the room out of breath, but with a smile that lights her eyes, basket in one hand, swinging her long and loose wavy auburn hair behind her shoulder with the other, "Sorry, Jiva, sorry I'm late. Here's some things I thought you could use, some green tea, . . . , some other stuff I got last weekend at a music festival, and a hemp bag for salad greens, when you store them in the fridge." dropping it all at Jiva's feet, looking up with a wide expectant eyes awaiting response.

"Hi Laurel, have a seat for a minute." says Jiva, neutralizing her experience of Laurel's intensity and agitation, with an inward reflection on what mirrors we are for each other. She has learned to be careful not to allow the somewhat aggressive energy blowing through the air "at her", like fall out from an explosion, to control her; to neither make her become defensive nor, in compensation, to be too kind, diffusing the built up energy inside this human pressure cooker.

Jiva smiles, looking at Laurel, waiting; each warming to each other in their own way.

"You know what, I wrote you all that stuff last week just to get my feelings out so I wouldn't feel so *STUCK*, and now I just want to get on with it! I mean I just want to *MOVE ON* with my life, forGET the past, and just *GET RID* of the pain. I am so tired of dealing with this stuff!" And then, as her expression and voice softened a little and the tension left her forehead, "I just want to feel good," she sighed.

The mixture of passion and pain, vulnerability and courage, never failed to touch Jiva's heart. It had been a journey of trust for both of them. Laurel remembers her first session as if it was longer ago than it was. She'd heard about Jiva from friends but didn't know if she'd trust her enough to tell the things she needed to tell. Jiva had met her first question "Are you like a therapist that's gonna think I'm really screwed up if I tell you certain things?" in her characteristically disarming way, saying, "I can see that you are strong. To do this work you have to be willing to be vulnerable which is not always so easy. It can be scary, and there may even be things that you've never been able to tell anybody. But here's a good place, a safe place, to begin. And no, I won't think you're

“screwed up”! she added with a warm smile, conveying a mutual humaneness that made her feel less scared of what might come out.

Each sense today is a turning point in this journey. While no specific destination was set for the exploration begun several months ago, memories from her past have opened up like darkened rooms in an old disintegrating house. Revisiting those shadowy places has unveiled the wounds to be healed underneath but not without first acknowledging the armament inevitably developed for protection. It’s time to reframe that house on its foundation of the present and discover who lives in it now.

“I do want to heal myself, Jiva”

“Well, why not just get right on the table then,” Jiva responds, moving energetically from her chair, heading toward the door.

Before Jiva can exit the room, Laurel’s sage green tank top has landed on the chair, her short denim skirt drops to the floor on top of her sandals, as a sigh of relief accompanies Laurel’s landing, face up, on the massage table. Shifting restlessly, she covers herself with a sheet the color of her favorite sage green, and her tank top.

Jiva returns, without having left, to the foot of the table to begin, as always, with a few deep breaths, and her instructions, “in through the nose and out through the mouth”. “So, as we breath, let’s each ask for guidance and affirm that the work we continue now is not only for our benefit, but for the good of all,” Jiva offers, as close to prayer as she dares, to help shift them both into another dimension of being.

With her first full breath, Laurel begins to relax, in a familiar process that signals the beginning of her inward journey as each continuing breath allows her to go deeper inside herself.

“How good it is to ‘stop’ ”, she reflects, feeling the support of the table under her back and legs. “How far away from myself I get without even knowing it...” anticipating the range of sensations ahead that would always bring her back into a body she is unaware of ever leaving.

“I get so lost! Children, husband, work, the garden, trying to pay bills, my mother...I have no time for me. I don’t even know who that is – me. There is no “me”, anymore.” She continues to breath.

A wave of sadness begins to rise up in Laurel’s chest as Jiva’s hands reach deeply under her shoulders on either side of her spine, all the way down to her waist.

With the whole of her upper body now fully supported by Jiva’s forearms, her shoulders drop voluntarily into a “letting go”.

“I carry a lot” she feels to herself, melting comfortably in her identity as one who “takes care of everything, makes it happen, is good.”

Jiva’s fingers feel the contours along the spine, slide slowly pulling the skin toward the neck and press upward, opening up the chest and heart space from underneath. The natural arch of the body, head falling back, is reminiscent of a swan dive, as they plunge together, into the unknown deep pool of embodied human experience.

In a momentary pause in the movement, Jiva gazes out the large window to the east, taking in the glossy dark green leaves surrounding the milky white magnolia blossoms, the purity and the Motherly energy of the tree, feeling grateful that Nature, once just “background”, to the foreground of her daily life as a child, could now captivate and be “all that is” in that instant.

Returning to the body underneath her hands, fed by the brief journey outside to an expanded space, its inspiration now fueling her as she continues her work, she looks down on Laurel’s proud transparent face.

They move and breathe deeply together through a familiar sequence, slowly turning and stretching the neck, lifting and releasing the occipital ridge at the base of the skull, “unzipping the wings” underneath the shoulder blades. Laurel reveling in a continuum of pain/pleasure succumbs as layers of tension fall from her shoulders, neck and torso, while Jiva imagines the primal broth of the past dripping onto the floor in a greenish-yellow pool.

No longer aware of exactly what is taking place outside her, Laurel begins to flow. “I am fluid. I am ease. I AM.” her awareness speaks to her from deep inside. The layers of defense carried in her body structure dissolve in the flow of energy that is streaming like electrical currents through her body.

She remembers her feelings earlier this morning, her anger at her mother, and hurt, but they seem distant now, enveloped by a feeling wave of expansion. She is floating in a vast universe of energy where surprisingly, it’s easy to feel love and forgiveness, an acceptance that we are all doing the best we can, that we are who we are. And “I AM.” The “I AM” is real...no longer a feeling, or thought: she *is* her being.

Jiva’s strong fingers, thumb joints, fists, and intention, all become one dance now, as Laurel’s heart raises up under her hand; each body arriving to the present moment to pause, receiving each other’s energy before moving on.

Jiva takes a deep breath and exhales, experiencing a silent and exhilarating “Here we go...” inside herself as her whole body participates in the movement of energy to its completion, from Laurel’s sacrum at the base of her spine, (*an energetic “freeway interchange” that relays all her experience of personal support, groundedness, anger, sexuality, primal sense of belonging*) up through her torso, clearing out the “secret emotional stash” hidden under the shoulder blades (*areas of converter points for the heart and the gall bladder*) with a turn of her fist, to come quickly to her upper chest, contacting the area above her heart, with sustained pressure across her chest, pressing down onto the shoulder joint, continuing along her upper arm, and bearing down upon her forearm, squeezing all the primordial juice of longing, belonging, reaching out and pushing away straight out through her wrist, hand and out her finger tips!

Simultaneously, Laurel, at first, holds her breath in involuntary resistance, followed by a long full exhalation transporting her into a blissful peace. Sensations register throughout her upper body. She feels vulnerable and comfortable at the same time. Energy is streaming out her arms. Her body, with arms and legs open, lies still.

Stillness is in the room, spreading its presence around the walls and ceiling, to be breathed in like waves of grace.

At the level of brain waves, alpha and theta waves are increasing through the awareness of her senses and deeper emotional experience to bring harmonious balance to the beta waves of everyday mental activity, predominant when they began. It is the imbalance of beta waves, emphasized in our stressful living patterns that are common to anxiety states.

Laurel lies on the massage table, eyes closed, seeing pictures and colors materialize and disappear, until the felt sensation in her abdomen brings her straight into her body. Is this pain or pleasure? A soft voice is encouraging her to breath, and she quickly finds a rhythm, a connection with the pressure around her navel. As she breathes in, the pressure lifts up, and then as she exhales, she feels soft fingers pressing in deeper and deeper with each breath. Pain. Pleasure. Relief. The initial pain that had instantaneously moved her from her head to her gut only moments ago dissipates into a feeling of well being and calm. “Breath is magic”, she has heard Jiva say often.

Jiva’s eyes, which were often quite penetrating and open, grew soft and kind as she worked. At these moments she, too, was held in the magic of the connection between two bodies, two consciousnesses, now one with the Intention from inside and outside meeting at the edge, the interface of “I” and the “You”. There is no one, both are gone, not really “gone” but no longer separate entities, dissolved into the liquid energy of a healing river that, she perceived, flowed through the room and into which she and another dove for “the work”, which wasn’t really *work*, nor was it play. At these moments, Silence echoes through time.

Jiva’s days are spent in a kind of love, a love that suits her, for its dispassionate nature. There is a way in which one enters, at these moments, a state of love, and yet with neutrality and calm, a “holding of space”, she often expressed, about the time and space for people to access their own truth. This was a timeless space of comfort; a place that was home for her no matter what was taking place under her hands on the table inside another human being, which was not always calm at all. And yet, the more dramatic or emotional the response, the more centered and clear she became. It is a dance of energy, familiar, even if mysterious, like a magnificent dark storm, after which the sun bursts through in brilliant rays of self-awareness.

Presently, a sigh and prolonged breath signals a resolution of tension that had drawn her in as she’d engaged with the core of the being that lay now at rest under her hands. The core, the “dantian” as the Chinese say, just under the navel, the “hara”, the center, one, among several, pivotal places of deep knowing she liked to go, eventually.

The discovery of a “second brain”, the “bellybrain”, reveals a vast complex network of informational connections within the digestive organ system that makes what we call our “brain” pale by comparison. The ratio of information flow from the bellybrain to the brain is 9:1, and it works almost completely independently, even when communication from the “master brain” is cut off. (The Second Brain, Michael Gershon, M.D. 1998.)

“I am so tender there,” Laurel’s whisper fades back, as she slips into another

plane of consciousness like a movie screen. A blur of her father's face zooms in closer, pores of his ruddy skin, the smell of sweat and alcohol, she fades away, amidst the echoes of her parent's yelling. Again, she feels the pain in her belly, "What is that?"

Her young girl body tensing in resistance, as her present one does the same, in reaction to Jiva's pressure around her navel, and above into her solar plexus.

"Keep breathing..."

The feeling of pain as she breathed became warm, almost pleasant as she tried to remember what had just happened. How the hard and painful spot in her stomach had sent her into another place, like a dream.

"Maybe you can tell *me*. What is that?" Jiva keeps a steady pressure and restrains herself from offering answers, even when she "knew" them, respecting the body's way of bringing information that is useful for each person, in the right time, and with its own sweet subtle nuances.

"It was kind of dark and..." Her words are eclipsed as the sensation of a whirlpool spirals down into a dark place where she can't see anything anymore.

Silence. The air in the room is dense, stillness vibrates. Jiva knows that something is working its way out, or through. She listens with her hands, neither retreating nor moving forward, maintaining contact with the tissue and sensing the rhythmic pulsing under the skin.

An iridescent glow surrounds Laurel's face, her eyelids flutter, and her breath is barely audible. Tears slide from the corner of her eyes.

"What is happening for you?" Jiva asks softly, only after the rhythm of time signals to her the moment.

"It was so painful at first, like a sharp burning knife. Images came up... ugly, scary. And then, as I was breathing the pain was less."

"How does this area feel now?" Jiva asks, gently circling, in rhythmic pressure, clockwise around the navel.

"It's much better; it's still tender, but not sharp."

Jiva radiates these spots with a crimson light, as she talks about the navel, the umbilical cord, the connection to birth, mother, and the energies we hold *about* "mother" and by extension "the feminine", all that we hold in ourselves about feminine energy, our beliefs about what "Woman" is, which everyone, man or woman, takes in, originally, from the first woman we know, our mother.

"Whether it is positive or negative doesn't matter, it is still a layer over *our own*, whatever is authentic for us, which could be quite different from what you took in from your mother," Jiva explains.

"I wonder where my mother was... Laurel speaks softly and sadly. Why she didn't do anything... I struggle with her. I guess it isn't just now, I've always had a problem with her... or *she's always had a problem with me!*"

"How would you describe it?" Jiva's words flowed now in a soft rhythm, like a quiet stream of water, forward to an inevitable destination, always this familiar human path, always the unique droplets of water splashing in a myriad of individual patterns. Familiar in essence, yet unknown in particular, always cleansing and purifying, like water.

Laurel's face glistening beneath her smiled in resignation. "Well, I'm probably just like her!" came a voice much stronger and more agitated than before.

“I mean, I love her, but I’m afraid of being like her... weak... afraid. She’s always telling me what to do, how to do it, her way! But underneath, she’s...” Laurel pauses as if she is receiving something or processing. “It’s as if she’s got this big bravado to cover her weakness! She wasn’t *there*... or didn’t want to be. She was too scared.”

“What’s happening right now in your body?” Jiva sensitized to how a person can move away from the center and into the mind, gently returns her with her question.

Continuing to press into the center, gently but firmly, Jiva breathed into her own “hara” and grounded her feet into the earth.

Laurel’s face had taken on pinkish and subtly tightening energy, communicating to Jiva that a process was taking place, soon emotional energy would surface... Another time to wait and see, no agenda, nothing to be done.

Keeping her hands in contact with the energy under the surface of the skin, Jiva, bends close to Laurel’s ear, and, barely audible, encourages, “just keep breathing, feel what this is, stay here, it’s O.K.” Another rich pause, full, in which “nothing” is happening. Jiva feels the swell of the ocean underneath, and waits, calm and ready for the wave to reach the body’s shore, when the shaking begins. Like a tidal wave it grows until the body heaves from the gut, convulsing inward several silent times until the tears flow as gentle as rain, washing away pain blocked by a dam built years ago by the one who’d “made the decision,” however unconsciously, to “take care of her,” to be strong, to not need anything, to give to others what she could never get...”

Tears become sobbing as Laurel’s body heaves from the center.

Jiva’s nostrils flair like a wild animal into a heightened sensing of the fine line between reliving a trauma, repetitively, deepening an already established emotional groove, and unblocking energy to create a new emotional pattern through reframing, re-perceiving an experience, to weave with delicate threads, a new pattern, an inner landscape tapestry, toward freedom.

In this moment there is the possibility to begin a new synaptic connection in the limbic brain, where emotional memories live without distinctions between past and present. A momentary awareness, a new perception, a reframing of how it is, right here can create a “miracle” connection between neurons than initiates a new emotional pattern, a new relationship between neurons, which replaces overtime the old and “automatic” response.

Listening with her whole body for the moment the silence is ready to open, like a seasoned conductor of soul symphonies, Jiva transitions to the next movement, “What’s happening now?”

“Um,” Laurel’s voice is vague, as she tries to find the place in herself that makes words for non-verbal experiences, some way to integrate the selves, past and present, which somehow live inside her, not as memories, but as energy, as beings. “I’m not sure...” she trails off, as feeling images swirl, into a blur of form and color without identity, like grasses underwater.

Inside her body, she feels a streaming of energy, fluid and electrical. Her legs want to run, move, kick. Her arms feel alive, tingling, light. Everything seems to be going soft around her, and still. She drifts in a timeless space. A new kind of information seems to be coming in. It feels like light visible in rays through a window, as she tries to track it,

remember what it is. Her life is a movie. Where is she? She can see herself on the screen, but she is behind the projector watching, or more like sensing, herself under her covers, her mother locked up in her room, her father coming home late and drunk, yelling at the dog barking, scenes, sounds, images arising out of the darkness, a feeling of nausea in her stomach, head throbbing no longer sensing her body, suddenly her eyes are on the curtain, the flowery pattern of the curtain that hung, faded and frayed at her bedroom window.

In her bed, under her “comforter” which offers none, staring at the lifeless curtain in her window, there is no protection, no safety. Somewhere deep in the cells of her numbed body lodged the information that she was not worthy.

As powerfully and deep as this message traveled into her depths, her resilience, on its way up, met this force with equal power. Here the conflict began, as without words for what she knew, she knew in the core of her being, not her brain that *she mattered*.

Jiva, flat palms connecting directly and deeply now holding the outside of Laurel’s thighs, moves slowly, with intention, over every centimeter of fascia from her knees to her hip joint. Laurel breaths more rapidly in response to the pressure over the painful points along her legs.

Fight, flight, or freeze is what we human animals do under pressure. The only difference between us and other animals is after the crisis, animals get up after the adrenaline rush is neutralized by a physiological process of whole body shaking, and go on about their daily life, without emotional impact. (Peter Levine, Waking the Tiger, Trauma Recover, 1997).

She hung in there determined to hold her own. Suddenly, her legs relax on the table, and simultaneously, a big sigh of relief. Her ear aches, briefly, as the sound of her mother’s penetrating, shaming voice fades away. Energy streams are pulsing in her legs now, euphoric as it travels to her feet and out her toes.

Calm enters into the room, a palpable enfolding peace. The rosy golden glow on the wall reflects the late afternoon sun streaming through the window blinds in striated patterns of light. In this resting place, an oasis of time and space, in the “not knowing” what is still to come, Jiva rests in deep quiet, alert.

She moves, after a pause, on to the calves, ankles and feet. It is not a time for words. The being rests peacefully on the table and while from the outside one cannot know all that is taking place inside, there is, beyond, a shared wisdom.

The currents of life, lived, flow with the breath, drawn out through the feet, like ocean waves pulled by the moon to carrying the residue of pain, hurt, struggle, tension out to sea. “It doesn’t matter anymore” awareness speaks within the being. “It’s over. It is all past, it isn’t happening anymore. The struggle is over.”

Awareness makes a visitation as a kind and nurturing wise woman in stately robe, speaking her truth, with love, inside your being.

“Has it occurred to you that the struggle is over, the battle already won?” Jiva asked softly, with a twinkle in her voice.

“Yes, just now.” were simple words, for the bodily awareness of a new sense of who she is in her life, and what she has to give to her children.

In a quiet calm voice as if channeled from deep inside, as clear water springs from the depths of the earth, Laurel begins:

“I made up my mind a long time ago, that I would be for others what I needed so bad, myself. I’ve gotten very good at it. I can do it, and that’s a good thing, really. But... releasing tears down her cheeks... it hasn’t brought me any closer to what I need, what I want... maybe even further away, because I am so strong, in a way. It’s hard to ask for anything, to even know what to ask... to receive. It’s so foreign, so uncomfortable. I really don’t know how. I want to love *and be loved*, but I only know how to do one of those. When I love, I feel strong.”

“What do you think would happen if you allowed yourself to receive... to be loved?” Jiva responds placing one hand over Laurel’s heart, the other, a hand’s width or so lower, over her solar plexus.

Laurel tries to imagine what that might feel like, as she feels the warmth of Jiva’s palm over her heart, a melting sensation. Jiva’s hand rests just at the surface, waiting to see how far, or if, she will be let in. Her other hand, over the solar plexus senses more aliveness. “Just breathe into here a little... and let yourself feel love for yourself, and for that little girl inside.”

Jiva catches her own reflection in the mirror across from the massage table, before returning her eyes to Laurel’s face, now beautiful and proud.

“Thank you,” Laurel says quietly,

“Thank *you*.” Jiva offers with an inward smile, adding, “It is my privilege to share your journey.”

The revolutionary research of Masaru Emoto, a Japanese scientist, describes the impact of words like “thank you” on the molecules of water, which form into unique and exquisitely beautiful crystalline mandala structures in response to feelings of gratitude or love. By contrast, the water entirely loses its geometrically organized snowflake patterns and dissolves into unrelated, disoriented pieces when exposed to hateful or disharmonious expressions. Our bodies are 75% water. The implications of this work, however, go beyond our personal health to our planetary environment and peace. (The Hidden Messages in Water, 2004).

She leaves the room quietly. Laurel slowly, reluctantly rises from the table, and looks into the mirror by its side, moving her face even closer until her eyes meet the eyes in the mirror. She looks curiously, then deeply at this being in the mirror, allowing her eyes to sink softly, lovingly, into the soul reflection

A shy joy rises from inside her in surprise. In the feeling of her loving eyes looking back at her, she could say “I love you” to herself.

“I *am* love.” her silent reflection communicates radiant love back to her.

“I AM.” Laurel’s eyes confirm the truth of her whole being.

Inside Laurel is a feeling of peace that is new, along with excitement and fear... that it wouldn’t last.

Laurel brushes tears away and smiles at Jiva as they meet in the doorway. “Don’t forget your stuff.” Laurel says, trying to re-inhabit a self which is now too small, reaching out to touch Jiva’s shoulder.

Opening her arms to offer a hug, they embrace in the doorway between two worlds: Inner and outer, past and present, body and being, visible and invisible, “I” and “you”.

Laurel goes out, and Jiva comes in, like breathing.

