

Heaven in this moment

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As my fiftieth birthday approached, I was more than ready for a tune-up of mind and body. I wished for greater ease and flow in my approach to life, as well as for a more harmonious relationship with my physical body. The month

before my birthday, when I flew cross-country to Oakland, California, for a week-long Intensive in Breema Bodywork, my intention was to add to my skill set as a massage therapist. I was going there for my clients' benefit.

Surprisingly, the teacher began by asking me to register my own body's weight and breath as I stood on my partner's heels—to focus on myself and not upon my recipient. Trained as a caregiver, I was both baffled and relieved – here was something for *my* body and mind to benefit from.

As I placed my attention within myself, the atmosphere of coming to the present moment united myself and my partner. This person, stretched out before me on the oriental carpets of the Breema Center classroom, did not need diagnosing or fixing, but rather was someone with whom I could exchange an experience that embodied mutual support and invited conscious energy.

As I looked around the classroom at many others ranging in age from their twenties through their seventies, I saw that I had expected my classmates to be massage therapists and personal trainers. During later conversations, I found out that I had partnered with a carpenter, a technical writer, an artist, a physician, even a San Francisco tour guide. Here was a group of people who were there for their own self-understanding, with an interest not only in the health of the physical body, but also in practical support for living daily life in harmony with oneself and one's environment. As a newcomer, I felt as if I were stepping into a current of flowing water, and year after year as I continue the study of Breema, the teaching continues to have a fresh, dynamic quality.

Each bodywork sequence had its own tempo and rhythms. Some were quiet and nurturing; others were playful, swinging legs in the air, walking a foot down a recipient's thigh, brushing off toes. The movements were innovative and fun, connecting myself and my partner like puzzle pieces with a comfortable fit. I observed how my body felt—relaxed and energized, with my mind engaged in the activity of the body—both as a receiver and giver. The “Breema touch” we were practicing was described as natural, without tension or effort. Instead of attempting to “memorize” each sequence as it was demonstrated to us, we were encouraged to trust that our bodies as well as minds would register what we needed to absorb. In addition to the physical benefits of the bodywork in relaxing muscular tension and stimulating the flow of vitality, these sequences also seemed to be the means to another end: that of uniting body and mind in a “taste” of the present moment. I felt calm, alive, and open-hearted.

In addition to learning partner sequences, we began each morning, afternoon, and evening workshop with Self-Breema—energetic exercises where you are both giver and receiver simultaneously. The same tapping, brushing, leaning, holding movements that we had practiced in twosomes are also possible to do by oneself. Repeating these Self-Breema exercises at home supports the student in creating a healthy flow of vital force within the body, as in yoga or Tai Chi.

Self-Breema exercises are also said to deepen one's inner attention, the awareness of the present moment with mind engaged in the activity of body. At the Intensive, hearing the names of the exer-



cises sometimes brought laughter, sometimes nods of agreement. “Jump to the Light and Then You Find Yourself,” “Your Bonds Are Imaginary,” and “Heaven Is in This Moment” were a few favorites.

Underlying Breema bodywork and Self-Breema exercises are Nine Principles of Harmony: ***Body Comfortable, No Force, No Judgment, Mutual Support, Single Moment/Single Activity, No Extra, Firmness and Gentleness, No Hurry/No Pause, Full Participation.*** Described by the instructors as “nine windows all looking out into the same garden,” during each workshop we considered a particular principle. The instructor would share aloud how he might relate to the principle of say, ***Body Comfortable***, while positioning himself in alignment with the recipient, or to suggest bringing in ***Firmness and Gentleness*** as he rocked his partner's head from side to side. In this way, Breema bodywork and Self-Breema were understood to be the vehicle by which we practiced new ways of participating in life—with mind, body, and feelings united.

As I reflect back three years later, I did in fact fulfill my fiftieth birthday wish for more flow and ease in my life. That trip to the Breema Center opened a path into a rich and practical teaching related to consciousness, physical health and personal development, which has become the foundation for the way I look at life and participate in it. For those of you who might like to experience Breema for yourself, Jon Schreiber, Director of the Breema Center, will be teaching from June 15-17 at Rowe Conference Center in Rowe, Massachusetts, along with three other distinguished Breema instructors. For more information, and for Breema bodywork and classes on the Cape, please feel free to contact me at 508-564-6133. **CHA**