

### Mastery and Practice

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What is a somatic practice for mastery? I suppose we could come up with something complex, new and multifaceted, but I am drawn toward the simple and direct to explore mastery.

I propose using Centering as your practice for mastery for the next 3 months\*, every day. Practicing every day, and a curiosity for deepening and learning from the practice, is needed to explore mastery. I suggest a minimum of 20 minutes each day.



Centering...you know the basics.

- Drop your attention into your sensations and aliveness. Feel what is.
- Purposefully bring your attention and self to Center (feel its dimensional quality, 2 inches below your navel). What changes as you do this?
- Center in Length. Dropping into gravity and your lower body, lengthening up the spine. Dignity, vision and action.
- Center in Width. Balance left to right. Widen from your centerline. Fill out and beyond your edges. Connection, community, interdependence.
- Center in Depth. Filling in, feeling the space behind you, inside of you, in front of you. Not pulling back, nor pushing forward. History, present, future.
- Center in Purpose. Speak your commitment to yourself. Or Center into your calling or longing.

For an exploration of mastery...

- ⇒ Can you feel yourself more subtly in sensation, and anew each day? In 3 months, can you increase your capacity to feel, by at least 25%? Tissues, bones, circulatory system, organs?
- ⇒ Can you increase your emotional range and what you can be present within yourself and others, over these 3 months? What emotions do you move toward - love, happiness, calm? Can you deepen and become more astute within these? What emotions do you automatically avoid - fear, anger, sadness, pain? Can you learn to be with and move toward one of these with more skill and presence?
- ⇒ Over these months can you open to aliveness, both inside and outside of you, substantially more? Can you listen to aliveness and its direction or harmony?

In 2007, I had the opportunity to go on sabbatical for eight months. I left my work and home behind and went with my family to live in South America for that time. I was committed to letting go of an organization I had been building for 10 years and to "unplug." I had worked since 13, and this was my first opportunity as an adult to just be and not need to produce an income. I needed a time to listen to the big changes in my life, to reflect and rest, and discover what was next. I left an outgoing message on my cell, an auto-reply on my email and did just that. The structure I gave myself for that time was this - enjoy and be with my family, do whatever you are called to, do NOT engaged in any project, no matter how compelling it seems, and every day sit in meditation and write. That is what I did.

### Mastery and Practice – Continued

Sitting daily, sometimes for 20 minutes, sometimes for an hour, was stunning in what it revealed. I saw my repeated habits and patterns (places of anxiety, needing to prove or earn worth and belonging, places of distrust) and felt where they lived inside of my soma. As those of you who practice know, in feeling and being present with these, there is space, and then a revealing of so much more...life, resilience, a peace with the unknown etc. Then, I'd write. Whatever came, whatever was needed, whatever insight. Then, I'd move into my day...often open and unstructured, except for feeding the family.

There were organic revelations as I went - each seemed oddly fueled by the daily practice. Five months into the journey, walking down a cold weathered beach, the weight of my last organization slipped from my shoulders like a wet wool coat. I saw I had to let go of much more than the organization, I had to face both the success and failures that I had created. How deeply what I did mattered to me and others, and that in letting go it all might end. Opening to failure, opening to dying, to responsibility and its limits.

About a month before we were to return, I sat in meditation. I could describe in detail the somatic experience and visual imagery of these 7 minutes, and suffice to say, a fear that I had earned in childhood, that I mostly dealt with by being counter phobic, showed itself and dissolved. I knew that was the gift, the mastery of daily, repeated, practice. Of all of the open space. I knew that would change what came next.

#### Four aspects of practice

1. Purpose: For the sake of what are you practicing? Does this practice serve that calling or change?
2. Embodied: Assure that the practice is an embodied practice, engaging sensation, emotion and attention.
3. Repetition: You practice overtime, using the structure of the practice to learn and develop.
4. Opening: While practices build our competence and this is useful, hold the practice as more than "increasing skill and function." Use the practice to open, listen and invite more life/aliveness in and through you. Use it to notice more life outside of you.

Enjoy your exploration of mastery. I'll be practicing with you these next 3 months.

\*You can use another core somatic practice as well - say two step, extension, rowing. I suggest choosing one and deepening into that one practice for 3 months. Changing and switching it up won't allow the same exploration.