

# Before Knowing, Being

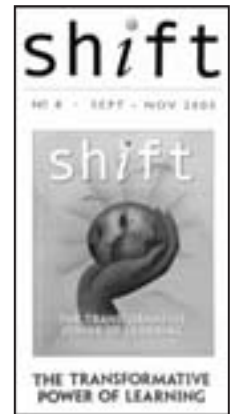
By Carrie Gray

For years I have been searching for an education that is meaningful—an education that doesn't press me into predetermined categories or ask me just to satisfy outer requirements, but one that I resonate with on the inside. My interest is in knowledge that addresses me as a whole person, and can offer insight into questions such as: Who is this "I" and how is it connected to that which is known? What is real knowing? What is the relationship between knowing and being? Between ideas and life itself?

To approach these questions, I have looked to a practice that includes the body as an ally in the quest for understanding—a holistic system of bodywork, exercises, and harmonizing principles called Breema. I have long felt that the body we are given is far from irrelevant to our human experience on this planet. I don't think it is something to overcome or to learn to dominate. The body is our earth; it is our most intimate connection with the planet. It has a gift to offer: it is alive and has an aspect to its nature that is always in the present.



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Breema uses the support of the body to cultivate a new relationship to what it means to be present. When I receptively connect with the body's weight and breath, and let all ideas go, I experience myself not as I think I am, but directly. Starting with exercises practiced on my own body as well as partner bodywork, my body learns to relate to life as a whole entity, with body, mind, and feelings working together. With a balanced relationship between these three centers, I am in a new way of being. This knowledge of my own existence, which I receive directly by "taste," is the starting place for a new form of education. Taste is like the difference between thinking "apple" and actually biting into an apple. In the moment that I bite, regardless of my past ideas and images, I know "apple" directly, undeniably. This "taste" is something that the mind cannot produce; it exceeds my ideas. It shifts the site of knowing from a field of outer information or past experience to a receptive relationship with this moment. A connection to the body is the ground for experiencing my own existence via taste. When taste is present the mind can receive conscious energy, and knowing and being become unified in the form of realization. Knowing and being become direct expressions of one another.

Using the principles of Breema, I bring the posture of presence into any aspect of life. The other day while washing the dishes, I remembered the principle "Single

Moment/Single Activity.” I washed the dishes without any mental stories—it was simply body washing dishes and fully being with that activity. My aim shifted from a focus on the result to being with the process itself. I became included in that process and was energized by it. Time became more spacious and I was simultaneously active and receptive. I was no longer rushing around but was simply with each moment.

This kind of direct experience helps me to see the limits of what the mind can give me, and helps me to see what I don’t know. Instead of looking to the preconceptions of the mind, I connect with the body, with the taste of I am, and I stay receptive to not-knowing. In this state knowing and not-knowing are simultaneous and they support each other. I am available to receive the reality beyond my concepts. Knowledge has become integrated into experiencing my own existence in life.

Recently, during an emotionally charged debate at school, I reminded myself that if education isn’t ground-

ed first in a receptive inner posture, in the wish to include self-understanding, then knowledge gets stuck in ideas located in the realm of abstraction and theory. Of course, the ways in which we humans use ideas are important, as is the development of discerning thought. But if I equate conceptual information with understanding itself, then I’ve lost something: I’ve lost myself.

With this support of the recognition of my body’s own weight and breath, I am more open to diverse points of view, to receiving beyond my pre-formed ideas. When I speak, I can simultaneously express and receive my own words. Because I am receiving myself as I speak, I am not as concerned with what others think. Yet I am connected with others as an aspect of being connected with the life in my own body. The experience itself becomes a form of teacher to me as I learn what it means to include myself.

The moment that I connect with a taste of being present, I experience that everything is present within me, inter-

connected and mutually supportive. I recognize that existence is not personal, it is not mine, but it’s something that I can experience directly and participate with. The practice of becoming present with the body gives me tangible support for actualizing my desire for self-understanding. The body allows me to know by taste that I exist; it supports me to be conscious of my own consciousness. With this foundation, I can experience myself in each moment as a student of life, a student of connecting knowing with being.

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