

Embodiment principles

These principles are what we are applying in embodied work. They came from observing our own work and that of other teachers. Paul Linden invented the centring principle and called it an 'algorithm', and we have extended the idea. They can be thought of as keys to understanding embodied work or as templates for practice.

While embodiment should never be practiced 'by numbers' (without appreciation for individual differences, intuition, circumstances, etc.), these principles aid clarity and can be used generatively. Note also that while these are presented in a simple and discreet linear fashion, application is often more dynamic than this. It can take a couple of years to really get them and the associated tenets.

So meet people where they are, and bring your unique gifts.

1. The fundamental principle

Awareness and choice

Awareness principles

2. Familiarity

try and notice

3. Deviation

differ and see

4. Contrast

extend and compare

5. Simulator

create and reveal

6. Body listening

reveal and dialogue

7. Body reading

see and ask

Choice principles

8. Growth

identify and balance

9. Centring

notice and manage

10. Emotions

identify and shift

11. Shadow

identify and re-own

12. Process

follow and allow

Principles in detail

These apply to one's own practice and also to facilitation. They are divided into awareness and choice principles – and awareness often naturally brings choice, so don't hold this distinction too firmly.

1. *The fundamental principle (aka meta-embodied algorithm/freedom principle)*

Distinctions - awareness - learning - choice

- Learn embodied distinctions: cognitive 'learning about'.
- Create awareness of current patterns of posture, movement and attention through mindful self observation, contrast or external assessment.
- Learn other possible options to create greater range of possible choices and less habitual unconscious patterns: skill acquisition for range.
- Choose actions and responses to match circumstances, values and goals: increased responsiveness.

This fundamental 'awareness and choice' frame is at the very core of CEC embodied work and what we are facilitating with clients. It underpins all other principles.

Awareness principles

2. *Familiarity*

try - notice - clarify - reflect

- Try a range of motions or postures (eg 4 elements).
- Notice which are familiar, which are uncomfortable and which are longed for.
- Clarify what patterns might be present.
- Reflect on how this shows up in life.

We use this principle with all kinds of models and it can be done with both individuals and groups. Be careful to distinguish between what is familiar and what is longed for.

3. *Deviation*

try - deviate - notice - self-assess

- Do any physical form (eg a yoga posture or dance).
- Notice deviation from the form (you may need help with this).
- Illuminate purely physical influences, such as injuries.
- See the pattern.
- Use models to make conclusions.

You can use the two-step, Embodied Yoga principles, bokken practice, or any form with a client to reveal patterns. Here, 'mistakes' are not mistakes but interesting ways we reveal ourselves. For example, if a yoga student finds it hard to do warrior pose perhaps they have an issue with fierceness or taking up space. In yoga this is some-times called 'exposure', as patterns are exposed.

4. Contrast

decide - embody - exaggerate - contrast - notice

- Decide on an area to work with, for example a challenge in life or from consistent feedback.
- Take the key issue and identify how it is embodied (if possible, it's best to do this first through self-observation; outside observation is also often necessary if the pattern has become habituated).
- Exaggerate and contrast this pattern with its opposite, noting transitions, the middle ground and specific body markers of the pattern to make it obvious.
- Notice the pattern via these body markers as it occurs habitually in life.

This is useful for coaching around many things – for example, working with being pushy vs being a pushover; or earth vs air. This principle brings clarity to what is involved and also usually helps with range, since it shows what is possible.

When we reach an extreme, a pattern can often 'swing back' into the other pole, so it could be considered a choice principle too.

5. Simulator

identify - create - observe - insight - apply - review

- Identify an area to be examined.
- Create an embodied metaphor for circumstances, e.g. being pulled in two directions, having someone look over your shoulder.
- Observe embodied reactions and possibilities.
- Gain insight into external circumstance (e.g. current patterns or new possibilities).
- Apply insight back to external situation.
- Review and adjust.

A useful one for bringing insight into a coaching challenge. The body has a way of feeling the symbolism of situations and reacting in a constant way to regular life revealing both habitual patterns and creating a place to study new possibilities. For example, if we view tango or simple leader-follower exercises as studies of relationship, or aikido as a model for conflict, we are working within this frame.

6. Body listening

identify - welcome - expand - ask - design - review

a) Identify a theme / question ...

b) ... or start with a sensation already calling for attention within body (e.g. pain with no obvious external cause).

- For (a), ask the body for a sensation which relates to this question/theme and identify one.
- For (a) and (b), notice, accept and welcome the sensation.
- Ask the sensation if any other parts of the body are involved and follow these until it settles.
- Ask the sensation to grow (NB you may have to set bearable limits).
- Ask the sensations what message they have. What is their job? What would they like? What would they like to say?
- Design actions and practices based upon this, if needed.
- Review and adjust.

This principle is from Paul Linden (and is similar to other practices including Focusing). It is a way of accessing intuition and dialoguing with the unconscious.

NB Self-care and rest afterwards are particularly important with this practice.

7. Body reading

premission - why - note - observe - identify - eliminate bias - feel - observation - state - ask - compare

- Establish permission to body read.
- State why an assessment is being made: for the sake of what?
- Note immediate empathic emotional impact, both in own mirroring and in reactivity.
- Consciously 'try on' what you see with micro or macro movements in your own body for emotional tone and insight into the meaning.
- Make concrete observations (assertions – like operational language), using as many of the CEC tools as possible, e.g. posture and movement style.
- Apply models of embodiment that you know to draw assessment.
- Eliminate bias as much as possible: note cultural norms, obvious physical causes, like injuries, own observer bias due to state (e.g. in a bad mood, seeing negative things) and possible shadow.
- State what is both observed and what an assessment might be based on, stressing it is just an educated guess and not 'the truth'.
- Ask if this trait plays out in a general way in life/ if others assess them in this light.
- Compare the somatic tendency observed with their daily-life behaviour.

This is essentially two methods combined – one more cognitive and one more empathic. The underlying principles are to resonate with someone, and to apply a model, while eliminating as much of our own bias as possible.

Choice principles

8. Growth

aim - identify - design practices - support - review

- Name a trait that, when excessive, is causing problems that you'd like to move away from; or a value/ virtue you'd like to embody more.
- Identify the embodied pattern of this trait (outside observer or role-models may be useful), then identify the positive, if you've started with an excess/negative. Use the contrast principle, if needed, to help find the pattern. For example, if starting with something excessive/negative, go deeply into it, then out, and keep going out into the opposite embodied pattern to find a balancing virtue.
- Design a practice to grow the desired embodiment.
- Create support structures and engage with communities of support, feedback and immersion.
- Review and adjust.

There are various coaching tools based on this principle. For example, someone says 'I have an issue with arrogance. I would like to be less habitual and have more range.' You help them find how 'arrogance' lives in the body, e.g. as chin up, chest out and abruptness of movement patterns; and then to find an alternative softer flow, which they practice e.g. in Tai Chi. Often we are building a range with this principle.

9. Centring

challenge - notice - learn - repeat - centre - increase - repeat

- Introduce a manageable challenging stimulus with permission. Start with a very gentle stimulus and calibrate upwards making it more intense and realistic until a noticeable but not overwhelming distress response is reached.
- Notice the distress response. Make/ask for specific body-based descriptions rather than evaluations. Repeat stimuli if not able to identify response.
- Apply an appropriate centring technique using culturally sensitive language, and add metaphors, role-models and images, if that's helpful.
- Repeat stimuli and employ the centring technique, targeting specifics of the individual distress response.
- Notice objective reduction in distress response, subjective feelings of distress and effect on the relationship (eg less hostile). NB a coach should let a client discover this for themselves, rather than tell them.
- Increase the stimulus strength with permission. As long as someone is not overwhelmed, you can keep increasing the strength of stimuli and centring.
- Repeat centring.

This principle is from Paul Linden. Like all the other principles, there are many ways of applying it, for example using many stimuli such as tissues, grabs and insults; and many centring techniques such as ABC, EROS or smiling heart. It contains sub principles, such as capable consent, calibration and individual adaptation. A well-designed yoga or martial arts class can be an expression of this principle.

10. Emotions

notice - name - cause - presence - shift

- Name and, if appropriate, express emotion.
- Identify the message – underlying needs and story that have caused the emotions.
- Ask if another story would serve better.
- Stay present with sensations of emotion (this often helps it move).
- Shift and centre body to change / moderate emotion, as appropriate.

This is just one simple way to work with emotions, influenced by both CBT and NVC.

11. Shadow

identify - try - tolerate - play - re-own - mark - process

- Find someone or an aspect of someone which you find annoying.
- Identify the specific embodied elements of what you find annoying.
- Try it on and learn to tolerate it. Go in and out, as necessary.
- See the world from this perspective; increasing empathy.
- Play with it until you find the positive side.
- Speak from this embodiment as part of yourself.
- Find the body markers that will allow you to access this again.
- Verbally or creatively process this experience.
- Self-care and rest after are particularly important with shadow practice.

This principle is making the unconscious conscious. We did this in various ways in module 2. This is one of the deeper aspects of the work we do and should be approached with care. NB: For a 'light' version, think of triggers, note tension, relax.

12. Process

frame - follow - allow - set aside - follow - meaning

- Pose yourself a question you'd like insight into as a frame. This part is optional; just 'letting the body do its thing' is also usually helpful.
- Follow sensation in the body.
- Allow movement to occur. This could be very brief or over days. Music can facilitate this (for example, as in 5 Rhythms) but be aware this adds an element.
- Watch out for forms and set aside judgment and censorship; for example, you can just say 'later' to yourself when this happens or focus on sensation again instead
- Keep following sensation and movement; preferably until it comes to a natural rest point as per the cycles.
- Afterwards, you can make sense of the experience through discussion and creativity (e.g. drawing). Self-care and rest are recommended.

The idea here is that by 'getting out of our own way' we allow the body to follow its natural healthy process. There are other slightly more led varieties – for example, where we are looking to complete a stuck movement from the past (e.g. Somatic Experiencing). The seasons model is key to this principle.

Tenets of embodiment

CEC distilled! These underpin the principles – see if you can match them up.

T0	Layers	Situation, relationship, culture, disposition and environment are all embodied. We are layers of adapted response to history.
T1	Comfort	The body reveals what's familiar. What we have practised feels easy.
T2	Joy	Delight reveals what's needed or longed for.
T3	Holographic	The body reveals our way of being in all things.
T4	Deviation	Inability to follow a form reveals habitual patterns. Habits assert themselves and are exposed by form.
T5	Guidance	The body can guide our life. When listened, to the body gives wisdom.
T6	Practice	We become what we practice. We can learn to embody new ways of being.
T7	Contrast	The body reveals and learns by exaggeration, contrast and differentiation.
T8	Social	We learn in relationship, and naming is powerful. By being witnessed and naming something, we deepen insight and declare new futures.
T9	Integration	We can transfer embodied learning into daily life by creating micro indicators and postures, and by designing a practice routine.
	<i>Supplemental tenets</i>	
T10	Process	The body is a process and it benefits us to listen and follow.
T11	Self-regulation	The fight-flight-freeze and craving responses can be managed.
T12	Trigger	Shadow is revealed by triggering and infatuation.