Listening Deeply
Connecting to Your Body
When you listen, really listen, to what your body is saying, it speaks in a language of love & compassion that nourishes the whole of you.

- Carleen Hicks

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Come Up For Air

When was the last time you took a deep breath? Think back. Was it this morning when you rose? Climbing the stairs at work? How about taking one right now?

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Come Up For Air

Deep Rhythmic Breathing

Imagine a spot just below your navel. Breathe into that spot and gently fill your abdomen with air. Inhale through your nose; let the air fill you up, watch your abdomen slowly rise. Then slowly release the air through your mouth, let it out, like a slow moving tide. Place you hand on your abdomen to feel it fill and then deflate as the air slowly comes in and slowly goes out. If it helps, bring to mind the rhythmic sound of waves lapping on shore & slowly breath in time to the rhythm. With every long, slow breath out, feel the tension you are holding in your body relax. Better?

Say out loud one word that describes how deep breathing makes you feel.
Stand Tall

How is your posture? Have you been curled around your keyboard? Are you taking up your rightful space in the world? How would it feel to do that?
Stand Tall

Take Your Rightful Place

Bring your head over your shoulders, and your shoulders over your hips, and (if you are standing) your hips over your knees, and your knees over your ankles. This is called the human line of dignity. Your feet are firmly on the ground, connected to the earth. When you center along your human line of dignity, you get in touch with how you are feeling morally and spiritually, your vision for yourself and your purpose. Along your length, what you’re doing is straightening and settling. Straightening doesn’t mean getting tight, or rigid, but feeling, sensing, or imagining the space between each vertebra in your spine. Bringing attention to the crown of your head, feel it open to the space above, to the sky. At the same time, settling. Taking up this space, with your dignity, your purpose.

Say out loud one word that describes how taking your rightful place in the world makes you feel.
Boundaries

Where are your edges? How are you relating to others in your work and life? How are you relating to your commitments?

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Boundaries

Find Your Edges

Feel your balance in your feet (or, if you are sitting, in your hips), balanced left and right. At the knees. At your hips. The rib cage. Your shoulders. This is a horizontal plane, side to side, but it also goes in a big 360 degree circle around you; your sociability. This is the place you relate to others. This is how you make boundaries. How far out do your boundaries extend? Where do you make your boundaries closer to yourself? Who do you want to let come in and be very intimate? Who do you want to have stay at arm’s length of you? Feel towards the other living things in this room, this building, this space. Sense the relationship you are holding to others in this place.

Say out loud one word that describes how you are relating to others right now.
Going Deep

Are you leaning into your future? Pausing in your past? What are you open to?

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Going Deep

Find Yourself in Time

Starting with a more vulnerable aspect of your depth, bring attention to your back body, sense the space between your shoulder blades. This part of depth is where you acknowledge those that have helped you come to this moment in life - your teachers, your parents. Settle back and down into yourself, checking in to sense your orientation in your depth; are you leaning back towards the past or forward into the future?

See if you can center between the two.

Coming to your front body, with the strong sense of your backing, your heritage, bring your attention to your heart center. Let your chest open, giving room to your heart, to breath, your sense of compassion. See if you can open a little more, sensing into what you long for, in your work and life. In front of you is your future, what does it hold? A long-withheld project, a book, a relationship you want to have? Is it long held anger? Long held love? For your evolution, what now wants to come to be and that, through listening to your body, you can begin to feel is possible.

Say out loud one word that describes where you are in time right now.

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Place your hand on your belly

Now, put your thumb on your belly button and let the palm of your hand rest just below that. Feel your hand, feel the shape and warmth of your hand, this is your center of gravity. This is the physical organizing principle of the body. Life giving and sustaining. Give yourself one more deep, slow, nourishing breath, feeling your hand rise on the inhale and slowly contract on your exhale.

Open your eyes if they were closed. Smile if it feels right.
Whatever relationship you hold with your body, I hope you find it in yourself to listen to what it has to say - supporting you in the life you want to live, and the work you were born to do.

- Carleen Hicks

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About This Practice

Adapted from Richard Strozzi-Heckler

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