

# Cultivating Embodied Awareness

How authentic movement practice deepens craniosacral work

My heart wakes up and starts to withdraw  
all of a sudden.

On the floor,  
pulled into my heart  
are up and down along the midline  
my face and pelvis.

My left half body contracts and  
pulls me into a small ball.

Tears well up.

I miss, I grieve, and I long for.

I am about to accept the tenderness  
of nursing my old wounds.

Then a flash of thought comes;  
This is all familiar.  
What else?

My right half body draws my attention -  
light and spacious.

My body starts unfolding and opening up  
I may take this spaciousness into my body.

I roll onto my back  
with my arms extended to the sky.  
I am receiving light into my palms.

Katsura  
Isobe

*My two practices, craniosacral therapy and authentic movement, developed together, referencing each other more and more as my journey deepened. I graduated from the College of Cranio-Sacral Therapy in 2016 and, a year later, I stepped into the discipline of authentic movement with Linda Hartley. Both practices slow me down to attend to each moment. In both practices, away from the mundane social context, I feel allowed to sense and feel everything unfolding in the moment within myself, another and our relational field. I drop into a liminal space where I encounter the mystery, the unknown and sometimes a magic of healing occurs. Healing - it is called embodiment when we work through our bodies.*

## A Journey Towards Embodied Awareness

Authentic movement is an embodied awareness practice, as is craniosacral therapy. The discipline of authentic movement has a distinct format, or rituals, that encourage practitioners to delve into the depth of their consciousness while maintaining the awareness of their bodies. The body is the vehicle of this journey. With awareness of the physical body and its sensations, more dimensions of bodily experiences unfold: feeling, emotion, image and even thought. Thoughts that come through the body are different from those of logical thinking. They are direct and intuitive-knowing.

Through my experience of practising and teaching authentic movement over the years, I started noticing how the embodied awareness grows in practitioners. It is not a linear development and there is no completion. We constantly go back and forth in these phases to encounter more details and gain more clarity. However, especially at the beginner's stage, there are phases in development, starting with awareness of the self; moving, sensing, feeling and imagining. From there, awareness towards others and their relationships with them continues to develop. Authentic movement practice also involves speaking of their experience, which creates a bridge between non-verbal experience and verbal expression.

Constantly checking if each action is aligned with bodily feelings, embodied awareness grows. It is a transformational practice whose effects ripple out

into professional and personal life. As mentioned earlier, my craniosacral and authentic movement practices have been developing hand in hand.

**I have noticed that, for authentic movement, my CST practice offers a great awareness of our bodies and our relational field. For CST, authentic movement showed me how to stay with myself and relate to another.**



As an empath, I used to get drawn and lost in my client's inner world. I was not even aware that I was merging with them. Today, my awareness of my own body, sensations and feelings brings a clearer seeing of what is expressed in the client's body. Moreover, I have found verbalising this perception of mine in a non-diagnostic and non-judgmental way often opens up something in the client's processing.

My experience in authentic movement practice has enhanced my CST practice, making it more creative and engaging in my unique way. I believe authentic movement has a lot to offer as one moves forward with one's CST practice.

## Authentic Movement In Practice

The following describes my experience of authentic movement practice in stages. I hope some moments resonate with your experience in CST practice, as with mine.

To begin with, as the fundamental structure, authentic movement is practised in the container



of the relationship between a mover and a witness. A mover moves with closed eyes, following their spontaneous inner impulse. A witness holds the space and attends to their experience of witnessing the mover. Now, this relationship would be a client and a therapist in a CST session. A witness/therapist is present for the mover/client.

1. Moving and being moved with the inner world

I am a mover, standing in the circle. I close my eyes and enter my body. I notice many sensations of busyness in my body. I soften my body and receive all of this. Scattered buzzing around the head, tightness in my chest, in breaths and out breaths, floaty feeling in the belly, slight shift of my weight through the soles of my feet, etc. I stay and witness my sensations until they start to settle and one comes to the foreground in my attention. Once my attention is caught, I follow. I let my body move with it. My body finds its way, which brings more sensations to my attention. I may choose to stay with the initial sensation I was drawn to or that may already be gone and my attention may shift to another one. Moment by moment, my attention and movement weave with each other. And there is a moment that comes when I have no clear thread. I pause. I am facing the unknown. And within the unknown, my senses heighten; what I hear, touch, smell outside my body and feel inside my body. Although I feel somewhat uncomfortable not knowing what comes next, I trust there is always something that emerges. A more profound feeling or emotion may surface or an image or memory may sweep the whole of me. I do not know yet what will unfold and until that happens I am with the unknown. I may end up simply changing my positions as my body physically becomes tired after a prolonged pause. So be it. It is, anyway, the beginning of the new thread.

As I continue to pick up, follow and lose a thread in all unexpected ways, I descend into the depths of consciousness. While I am utterly awake and fully present, I feel I am dreaming. In the flux of sensations and feelings, I am having an extremely intimate dialogue with myself. I often encounter complicated feelings and less conscious material,

as well as life-affirming moments, in this liminal space. My processing will continue to the later parts of this practice.

2. Cultivating the inner witness by tracking our experiences

Of course, there are times when I struggle to engage in the practice. I may be going around in my head what I saw and heard before the practice. I may be worried or feeling uninspired. Indeed, it is not easy to drop into the space. In these cases, rather than beating myself up to engage, I have learned simply to be myself. I witness myself being bothered and having difficulty dropping into the practice.

It may sound like a paradox that I am in my body, sensing and feeling and, simultaneously, I see myself from outside. This part of me, seeing the moving self from outside, is called the inner witness. My inner witness tracks my experience in each aspect of movement, feeling, emotion, imagination and thought. It is not that every element is present all the time but having such a map of experience helps me to notice less conscious parts. Here is an example.

An image of a rock comes to me. [imagination]  
I am kneeling. My whole body is held and stiff. [movement]  
As I feel into this, I notice I hold anger in my body. [emotion]

In this case, my emotion is a less conscious part, which may not have been noticed if I had not learned to pay attention to various aspects of experience beyond the first impression. The practice cultivates awareness. Awareness turns the unconscious into the conscious. Consciousness transforms our beings.

3. Transitioning from liminal to ordinary space

As a mover, I hear the bell three times, which marks the end of the moving circle. I slowly open my eyes and walk back to the circle where I started. Time feels stretched out. I take my time to

find my notebook and pencils and sit comfortably against the wall of the room. I feel full and empty at the same time. I want to draw or write something on the blank page in front of me to reflect on my moving experience. Some moments appear and disappear in my mind. That continues for a while until I notice a hook that I feel attached to a particular moment. I start by choosing the colour of a pencil and then draw a line or write a word. I re-enter the moment I experienced and bring something back to the page, another line, or another word. As I continue, I start remembering the moment more vividly and something becomes clearer - what may matter to me the most in that particular experience.

During this time after the moving circle, a transition occurs from my deep inner world to the physical space in the studio. In the drawing and/or writing, it feels so potent to see the alchemy of my intangible experience gaining some form. This is an act of creating a bridge between liminal and ordinary spaces.

4. Clear speaking

I come back to the circle, sitting. In the speaking and listening circle, each mover takes turns speaking from their experiences and then listening to what the witnesses offer. 'Speaking from the experience' is an embodied speaking that takes the mover right back to the moment that they are sharing. It differs from 'speaking about the experience', which has an objective perspective. We focus on our subjective experiences with each practitioner's body.

It is my turn to speak. Having become clearer about my moving experiences during the transition period, I am more ready to share them with others. I re-enter my body, remembering moment by moment to describe my movements, sensations, feelings, images and/or thoughts. I take my time to choose the words that are true to my experience. And I want to communicate. I hope the listeners are with me, bodily imagining the moment I am speaking of.

I finish speaking. A witness speaks of their experience of that moment, with which I may or may

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**Location: London, NW8 9EB, Limited spaces available to maintain an intimate, supportive environment for all participants.**

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- Working in the Fascial Field - Sept 12-16
- CST & the Elements - May 29-June 2, 2026 (approximate dates depending on flight release)

#### ETIENNE PEIRSMAN IN LONDON

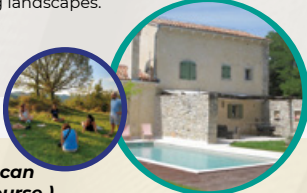
- Talking to the Heart (Oct 2-5)
- Advanced Brain Masterclass (April 11-14 & April 16-19, 2026- can be booked individually or as an 8 day immersion course )



Etienne Peirsman, a pioneer in craniosacral therapy with over three decades of teaching experience, brings his poetic and transformative teaching style back to London this October for **Talking to the Heart** — a four-day course open to all. This deeply experiential training explores the body's intuitive language and guides you to reclaim your 'original voice' — the innate wisdom of the heart.

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**£150 reserves your place on any of the four day courses with payment plans available. Visit: [craniosacralcollaborative.com/etienne](http://craniosacralcollaborative.com/etienne)**



A portion of the proceeds from Craniosacral Collaborative Courses will support the Cranio in the Community project and the volunteers who bring CST to marginalised communities.

Sign up to our newsletter to learn about our other upcoming events including our Castellino courses with Lin Vermeiren (Early imprints, Womb Surround Workshops), retreats, and Scarwork & CST courses [craniosacralcollaborative.com](http://craniosacralcollaborative.com)



not resonate, or may help me recall and clarify more details of my experience. Often, my perception of the experiences is reshaped by hearing the words of the witnesses. With the witnesses non-judgmental and compassionate attitudes, I feel my experiences are affirmed and my attitude towards them also softens. Here is another alchemy, where my perception of my experience shifts.

## 5. Embodying the therapeutic presence

Authentic movement is a relational practice that encompasses relationships within the self and between the self and others. What we cultivate in this practice is a non-judgmental and compassionate presence towards ourselves and others, which Linda Hartley refers to as therapeutic presence. As craniosacral therapists, we value this presence highly. Cultivating the therapeutic presence is an embodiment practice that transforms the personal and professional self and consequently clients and others around us.

Returning to my body, paying full attention to my experience moment by moment in both my professional and personal life, I find this most

pleasurable for my soul. And my soul is nourished with other persons in compassionate and non-judgmental communities.

It is a conscious choice for us, as craniosacral therapists, to attend to the bodies and belong to this community, despite many other societal values. Likewise, cultivating embodied awareness is a path we choose to walk. Shall we walk together? I invite you to experience authentic movement practice. 🌱

**Katsura Isobe** is a somatic therapist-teacher-artist. She is a registered craniosacral therapist and registered master somatic therapist with over 30 years of professional experience in dance. In collaboration with CSTA, Katsura will be holding a day-long authentic movement course in London on 12th October. [www.katsuraisobe.net](http://www.katsuraisobe.net)

### Further reading

Intimacy in Emptiness. An Evolution of Embodied Consciousness. Adler, J. Morrissey, B., & Sager, P. (eds) (2022) Rochester, Vermont: Inner Traditions.

Embodied Spirit, Conscious Earth. From Embryology to Embodied

Relational Spiritual Practice. Hartley, L. (2024) Axminster, England:

Triarchy Press.

# Fascial Unwinding

with Thomas Attlee, Lizette Villaverde, and team

“The soul of man seems to dwell in the fascia of the body”  
- Andrew Taylor Still

Fascial Unwinding is an exceptionally profound and valuable process and an extremely useful resource in any Cranio-Sacral Therapist’s repertoire, particularly in resolving deep trauma.

**Free Online Talk:** Tuesday 20th Jan 2026 6pm-8pm (UK time)

**Online Course:** Five Tuesday evenings 6pm-8pm (UK time)  
from Tues 3rd Feb to Tues 3rd Mar 2026  
Cost: £300

## Live In-person weekend courses:

**Part 1: Arms and Legs** Mar 28th/29th 2026  
**Part 2: Neck, Trunk, Viscera** May 16th/17th 2026

**Venue:** British College of Osteopathic Medicine, London NW3

**Time:** 9.30-5.30 each day

**Cost:** £320 each weekend (£280 if booked before 22nd Feb 2026)



The online course and the in-person course are **separate courses** which **can be taken independently** of each other.

Thomas Attlee, principal of the College of Cranio-Sacral Therapy, is one of the most experienced Cranio-Sacral Therapists in the world and a leading exponent of Fascial Unwinding. He has developed a unique approach to this powerful and transformative process.

Within Cranio-Sacral Integration, we see profound transformation through Fascial Unwinding, whether for:

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“I used to think that Fascial Unwinding was a superficial waste of time. Wow! What a difference!! One of my sessions was one of the most profound Cranio-Sacral sessions I have ever received”

“There was so much useful learning in the day. It has really transformed my understanding of Fascial Unwinding”

“Although I have practised Cranio-Sacral Therapy for many years, I had never encountered Fascial Unwinding before. This is a revelation!”

“I thought I was doing OK with Fascial Unwinding. Little did I realise how limited my skills were - until now! A completely new understanding!”

**For further information, videos, and booking,  
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## HeartFelt Learning

Postgraduate CPD courses for Craniosacral Therapists

### 2025 COURSES

**Working with the Ancestors (online : £60 per module)**

Module 3 Saturday 13th September 2 - 6pm (Deepening the Process - personal)

Module 4 Saturday 11th October 2-6pm (Deepening the Process – collective)

**The Menopause - supporting women and families**

Saturday 27th September : In person day : Sussex : £125

### 2026 COURSES

**Understanding Cats and Dogs** - 3 days in person : March (date TBC) : Wales : £1500

**‘What the Heart is Like’** - introduction to Biodynamic Cardiovascular Therapy (BCVT)- 2 days in person : May (date TBC) : Bristol

**Menopause** : Awakening to the Health Parts 2&3 (Menopause & Post Menopause) - 2 days in person : June 20 - 21st Solstice weekend : Sussex

**Working with the Ancestors** - 4 modules @ 4 hours : online : £60 per module : Spring/Summer dates TBC

**Tending the Tree of Life** on the Big Wood Estate - with Ian Wright : 3 days in person : September 25th - 27th : Sussex

**Advanced BCVT skills** - 1 day in person : October (date TBC) : Bristol

**Working with Migraines Part 2** - 1 day in person : November 7th : Sussex

Please go to our website to find out further information and booking  
We look forward to welcoming you.  
[www.heartfeltlearning.co.uk](http://www.heartfeltlearning.co.uk)