

JOURNEYS
Theme Packet for October 2015
The Unitarian Fellowship of Peterborough

What does it mean to be people of
Embodiment?



In a place of learning like the dojo, students practice what is being taught
and over time begin to embody the subject matter.

It lives in their body, it is who they are.

~ *Richard Strozzi Heckler, in **Holding the Center: Sanctuary in a Time of Confusion***

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WONDERINGS *about* EMBODIMENT

This month's theme asks us to consider what it means to have a body — to be a creature comprised of flesh and blood, with aches and pains, scars and wounds, pleasures and sensations. To be aware of our bodies is to be awake to being alive in ways that go beyond what our minds alone can tell us.

Being in our bodies, while generally inescapable, is not always easy. Our relationships with our bodies are complex; while the most intimate relationship possible, we can also be estranged from our physical being. Our bodies are always there for us, though not always in the way we would like. We abuse them and care for them, feed them and starve them, love them and hate them. They are malleable and impermanent, a source of both wisdom and pain, and provide the means for touching

and being touched. While being in a body is the only way to be human and alive, not all of us love the bodies we are in. No wonder embodiment can be difficult!

Here is what Clarissa Pinkola Estes writes about bodies in *Women Who Run with the Wolves*:

"The body uses its skin and deeper fascia and flesh to record all that goes on around it. Like the Rosetta stone, for those who know to read it, the body is a living record of life given, life taken, life hoped for, life healed. It is valued for its articulate ability to register immediate reaction, to feel profoundly, to sense ahead.

"The body is a multilingual being. It speaks through its color and its temperature, the flush of recognition, the glow of love, the ash of pain, the heart of arousal, the coldness of non-conviction. It speaks through its constant tiny dance, sometimes swaying, sometimes a-jitter, sometimes trembling. It speaks through the leaping of the

heart, the falling of the spirit, the pit at the center, and rising hope.

"The body remembers, the bones remember, the joints remember, even the little finger remembers. Memory is lodged in pictures and feelings in the cells themselves. Like a sponge filled with water, anywhere the flesh is pressed, wrung, even touched lightly, a memory may flow out in a stream.

"To confine the beauty and value of the body to anything less than this magnificence is to force the body to live without its rightful spirit, its rightful form, its right to exultation."

Embracing whatever the struggles we have with our bodies, this month we explore what it means to be people of embodiment. And, we'll ask questions about what we most want to embody. May we grow in appreciation for the great gift that our bodies are, and allow ourselves, in ways great and small, to exult in their magnificence!

~ Rev. Julie



em · bod · i · ment

ə m ' b ä d i m ə n t / *noun*

1. a tangible or visible form of an idea, quality, spirit, or feeling.

"she seemed to be a living embodiment of vitality"

2. the representation or expression of something in a tangible or visible form.

"it was in Germany alone that his hope seemed capable of embodiment"

3. the act of embodying: the state of being embodied

STORIES *about* EMBODIMENT

From *Writing Past Dark* ~ Bonnie Friedman

A young painter comes to Michelangelo and says, "I've seen your religious paintings. Teach me to depict the human soul." "Fine," says Michelangelo. "Learn to paint a human knuckle. Observe the knuckle closely. See all its bones and webs of skin, and the exact way it puckers. Study its minute shifts of color. You may paint a soul by painting a knuckle."



A Rabbi Hillel story...¹

Once, when Hillel had concluded a class with his disciples, he left the House of Study with them. The disciples asked him, "Master where are you going?"

He replied, "To fulfill a religious obligation." "What is this religious obligation?" the disciples wanted to know.

He replied, "I am going to the bathhouse in order to have a bath." The disciples were astonished, and they asked, "Is that really a religious obligation?"

He answered, "Yes! If somebody who is appointed to scrape and clean the statues of the king that stand in the theaters and circuses is paid for the work and even associates with the nobility, how much more should I, who am created in the image and likeness of God...take care of my body?"



Waiting for Our Souls to Catch Up

~ based on a story told in the movie *Beyond the Clouds*

An archaeologist once hired some Inca tribesmen to lead him to a site deep in the mountains. After they had been moving for some time the tribesmen stopped and insisted they would go no further. The archaeologist grew impatient and angry. But no matter how much he cajoled, the tribesmen would not go any further. Then, all of a sudden the tribesmen picked up the gear and set off once more. When the bewildered archaeologist asked why they had stopped and refused to move for so long, the tribesmen answered, "We had been moving too fast and had to wait for our souls to catch up."

Questions for Reflection *on the theme of* EMBODIMENT

- How do you experience your body on a daily basis? Are you frequently mindful of yourself as a body? And, when have you been most aware of your body? What moments have brought that awareness to mind?
- How does the way you think about your body affect the way you care for it? Do you treat it like a temple? Are you attentive to its needs, its changes, its challenges?
- In your understanding, is there a difference between your physical body and what you relate to as your mind, or spirit, or soul? How does that understanding impact how you relate to your body?
- What would you most like to be the embodiment of? What do you need to do to live into that?
- What do you make of being in a body that is limited, differently-abled, or in pain? Do you feel anger or betrayal? Is it ever reasonable or possible to be grateful?

¹ *Spiritual Literacy: Reading the Sacred in Everyday Life*, Frederic and Mary Ann Brussat, editors (Touchstone: New York, 1996), p. 374

Inspirations on the theme of EMBODIMENT

There is no place so awake and alive as the edge of becoming. But more than that, birthing the kind of woman who can authentically say, 'My soul is my own,' and then embody it in her life, her spirituality, and her community is worth the risk and hardship. ~ Sue Monk Kidd

The first step on a spiritual path today is a return to a sense of one's own body. ~ Martha Heyneman

Our body is precious. It is a vehicle for awakening. Treat it with care. ~ Buddha

If we bless our bodies, they will bless us. ~ Gloria Steinem

Don't turn your head. Keep looking at the bandages place. That's where the light enters you. And don't believe for a moment that you're healing yourself. ~ Rumi

For at some point, each of us will be asked to embody what we feel and know. ~ Chang-rae Lee

I am the now of the then. My body is the embodiment of all my ancestors who came before me. They live on in me. ~ Jarod Kintz

For real human beings, the only realism is an embodied realism. ~ George Lakoff

The Church says: *The body is a sin.*
Science says: *The body is a machine.*
Advertising says: *The body is a business.*
The body says: *I am a fiesta.* ~ Eduardo Galeano

To love is to see myself in you and to wish to celebrate myself with you. What I love is the embodiment of my values in another person. Love is an act of self-assertion, self-expression and a celebration of being alive. ~ Nathaniel Branden

Favor comes because for a brief moment in the great space of human change and progress some general human purpose finds in him a satisfactory embodiment. ~ Franklin D. Roosevelt

Anatomy is destiny. ~ Freud

I think I'm a living embodiment of, 'Don't try to push me around or squash me,' whether it's how I talk to a record label or in my relationships. ~ Bonnie Raitt

Mother Teresa was the very embodiment of saintliness: white-clad, sad-eyed, ascetic and often photographed with the wretched of the earth. ~ Steven Pinker

Your body is the ground metaphor of your life, the expression of your existence. It is your Bible, your encyclopedia, your life story. ~ Gabrielle Roth

We sing before we talk, we dance before we walk. ~ P. Grendrad

Movement is what we are, not something we do. ~ Emilie Conrad

A man should be well danced as well as well-read. ~ Unknown

Of what is the body made? It is made of emptiness and rhythm. At the heart of the world there is no solidity, there is only dance..." ~ George Leonard

My particular bodily form, my particular body feeling, is testimony to my particular character, my particular way of behaving, both psychologically and physically. ~ Stanley Keleman

All the terrible things we do to ourselves and others from alcoholism to character assignation to abuse to murder come from one cause: the inability to stay present with an uncomfortable feeling in the body and seek short-term relief. ~ inspired by Pema Chodron

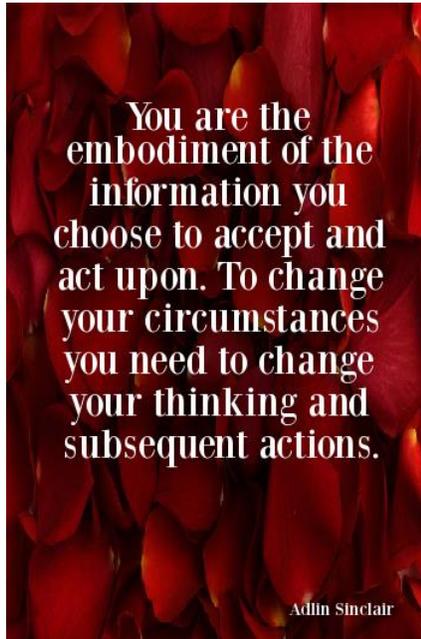
The body never lies; the body says what words cannot. ~ Martha Graham

Knowledge is only a rumour until it is in the muscle. ~ New Guinea Proverb

Often the hands will solve a mystery that the intellect has struggled with. ~ CG Jung

Your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit. ~ Corinthians 6:19-20

My body knows it belongs, it's my mind that makes my life so homeless. ~ John O'Donohue



QuotePixel.com

Practicing EMBODIMENT

Option 1: Mapping the Body

Take a blank sheet of paper, and in the middle draw a figure to represent your body. This may be a stick figure or may even look more like a gingerbread person. Artistic quality doesn't matter! Once the figure is drawn, meditate on different parts of your body. Consider the story of a hand, your ear lobe, your shin. Revisit the scars that indicate injuries or surgeries. Give thought to the changes that have come with age, the tender places that carry wounds from the past, the centres of joy and pleasure. Make notes, or draw if you like...but mostly think through the 'story of you' told not from a narrative your brain might compose, but from the perspective of your body.

Come to Journeys next month prepared to share an insight you gained through this time of reflection.

Option 2: Gratitude Down to Your Toes

A quote from Thich Nhat Hanh: "There are so many things that can provide us with peace. Next time you take a shower or a bath, I suggest you hold your big toes in mindfulness. We pay attention to everything except our toes. When we hold our toes in mindfulness and smile at them, we will find that our bodies have been very kind to us. We know that any cell in our toes can turn cancerous, but our toes have been behaving very well, avoiding that kind of problem. Yet, we have not been nice to them at all. These kinds of practices can bring us happiness."



Spend some time this month being nice to your toes and see what develops!

Option 3: Body Language

Social psychologist Amy Cuddy shows how "power posing" — standing in a posture of confidence, even when we don't feel confident — can affect testosterone and cortisol levels in the brain, and might even have an impact on our chances for success.

http://www.ted.com/talks/amy_cuddy_your_body_language_shapes_who_you_are

Watch this presentation, think about your own body language, and consider if there's something you might like to change. Practice some new postures this month!

Option 4: Jump in a Haystack

Every day, I see or hear something
that more or less kills me with delight,
that leaves me like a needle
in the haystack of light.
It was what I was born for –
to look, to listen,
to lose myself inside this soft world –
to instruct myself over and over in joy
and acclamation. ~ Mary Oliver

When reading this excerpt from a Mary Oliver's poem "Mindful," her expressed 'embodiment' is so strong that I want to run into a field and throw myself in a haystack that I might feel the same joy and delight.

Is there something that what you might do with/in your body that would create the feelings you want to have? (Or vice versa?)

Write a poem or a reflection that expresses what you would like to feel in your body, and how you might best embody that feeling. Then go and do it!

Option 5: Check out some other 'practices' here:

<http://www.katedaiglecounseling.com/2014/03/26/five-steps-becoming-embodied-home-body/>



More MOVIES

Ex Machina (2015 - R)

A coder at the world's largest internet company is lured into participating in a strange and fascinating experiment in which he must interact with the world's first true artificial intelligence, housed in the body of a beautiful robot girl.

Face/Off (1997 - R)

To foil an extortion plot, an FBI agent undergoes a face-transplant surgery and assumes the identity of a ruthless terrorist. But the plan backfires when the same criminal impersonates the cop with the same method.

Freaky Friday (2003 - PG)

An overworked mother and her daughter do not get along. When they switch bodies, each is forced to adapt to the other's life for one freaky Friday.

The Fountainhead (1949)

Ayn Rand created Roark as the embodiment of the ideal man. In this film version, Roark, an uncompromising, visionary architect struggles to maintain his integrity and individualism despite pressures to conform to popular standards.

BOOKS

Becoming a Visible Man by Jamison Green

Written by a leading activist in the transgender movement, this is an artful and compelling inquiry into the politics of gender.

Embodiment: The Manual You Should Have Been Given When You Were Born by Dr. Dain Heer

This book is about functioning with your body from the perspective of being. It explores how to can experience greatness with your body and enjoy the body you currently have.

Our Bodies, Ourselves: a new edition for a new era by Boston Women's Health Book Collective

Synonymous with women's empowerment for the past 40 years, it offers a relatable voice to help make the very confusing reality of health and sexuality as a girl easier to navigate.

Of Woman Born: Motherhood as Experience and Institution by Adrienne Rich

As a woman, a poet, a feminist, and a mother, Rich draws on personal materials, history, research, and literature to create a document of universal importance.

Out of Time: The Pleasures and the Perils of Ageing by Lynne Segal

A brave book with a polemical argument on the paradoxes, struggles and advantages of aging.

Understanding Human Sexuality by Janet S. Hyde et al

In its fourth Canadian edition, this text focuses on three key strengths: solid grounding in research, fully integrated Canadian content, and commitment to currency.

When the Body Says No: The Cost of Hidden Stress by Gabor Maté

Maté shows that emotion and psychological stress play a powerful role in the onset of chronic illness, including breast cancer, prostate cancer, multiple sclerosis and many others, even Alzheimer's disease.

Children's Books about EMBODIMENT

Beautiful Girl: Celebrating the Wonders of Your Body by Christiane Northrup and Kristina Tracy

Big Body Play: Why Boisterous, Vigorous, and Very Physical Play Is Essential... by Frances M. Carlson

Boris's Body by Spike Gerrell

It's Perfectly Normal: Changing Bodies, Growing Up, Sex, and Sexual Health by Robie H. Harris

Me and My Amazing Body by Joan Sweeney

My Body Belongs To Me: A Book About Body Safety by Jill Starishevsky

The Treasure in Your Heart: Yoga and Stories for Peaceful Children by Sydney Solis

What I Like About Me: A Book Celebrating Differences by Allia Zobel Nolan

MUSIC

Body and Soul, Tony Bennett & Amy Winehouse

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_OFMkCeP6ok

Bodies, Celia Pavey

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CdYT5j4jR4c>

International Body Music Festival

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BJp7SIE6R2s>

Move Your Body, Beyoncé

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MYq0zAQ3IHY>

Shake Your Body, The Jacksons

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T2wYZFji0Cs>

Table Grace *on* EMBODIMENT

It is a blessing to be.

It is a blessing to be here.

It is a blessing to be here now.

It is a blessing to be here now together.

~*Traditional Unitarian Universalist*

(Other phrases, from silly to serious, may be added.)

Chalice Lighting *on* EMBODIMENT

Can we dance, like the flame in our chalice?

Can our hearts and hands make our values
come alive?

The challenge of embodying our faith
greet us each day.

As we light this flame, we take up the
challenge!

~ from UU Church West in Brookfield, WI



For Presence by John O'Donohue

Awaken to the mystery of being here and enter the quiet immensity of your own presence.

Have joy and peace in the temple of your senses.

Receive encouragement when new frontiers beckon.

Respond to the call of your gift and the courage to follow its path.

Let the flame of anger free you of all falsity.

May warmth of heart keep your presence aflame.

May anxiety never linger about you.

May your outer dignity mirror an inner dignity of soul.

Take time to celebrate the quiet miracles that seek no attention.

Be consoled in the secret symmetry of your soul.

May you experience each day as a sacred gift woven around the heart of wonder.

November's theme: What does it mean to be
people of **ANCESTRY**?

Email your ideas for themes, or suggestions for
resources to share in this packet to uurevjs@gmail.com

The Unitarian Fellowship of Peterborough
Sunday Services @ 10am @ 775 Weller St
www.peterboroughunitarian.ca
office@peterboroughunitarian.ca

705-741-0968