



Embodiment, Talk # 1
Transfiguration Retreat, 2008

Sandra Glickman

Sandra: A lot of what we're doing here is working to understand our embodiment altogether. So I want say a word about embodiment on the earth plane. Embodiment on the earth plane has to do with the play of opposites. Right? Always. Embodiment as we know it is always a play of opposites. And at times those opposites can come into a little bit more balance so that we can feel a relief from being pulled back and forth between the opposite poles of experience and when we feel that relief we can kind of settle down and feel peaceful and expand outward and then we can recognize other more subtle aspects of our whole being.

In other words we can get in touch with our conscious nature when we're not having to put attention on the play of opposites as they work through our bodyminds. So the mind has it's template of opposites to deal with always, always, always, and if you don't understand the mechanics of how the mind works between this and that, and if you don't observe that in yourself, you may come to the mistaken conclusion that something that's constellated itself really strongly over here is the whole truth. You follow me on that?.... Okay?

So, examining the mind and examining the patterns of the mind as it recapitulates itself in the thoughts and the judgments in the assessments and then later in the emotions - because all of the thoughts judgments and assessments create the emotions and the emotions then are more related to the body processes. And then the emotions and the physiology work together to form the whole being. So the mind is really crucial.

So what am I doing here, I'm trying to convince you of the need for investigating these subtle levels of mind or even maybe not so subtle levels of mind, but to be aware of the mind and how it creates. How the trajectory downwards creates the emotions, relationships, and body. Physiology. So I wanted to ask you how many of you have done a meditative practice of some kind? And are you aware of what you've gained from that? And have you made another direction, or are you still incorporating that meditative practice sometimes in your lives? Just be curious about that, how many are still incorporating that practice?

Okay, good. So are you kind of feeling into what I'm saying here about the value of this kind of sitting with yourself, holding yourself and noticing how your own mind plays? You kind of get a sense for that? Are there any questions so far?

Why do they do this waking stuff? And in our practice a very compelling reason is that we want to release bound up energy and attention, because if it's bound up in an unconscious way and we can't see where our holding patterns are, then we can't make the space to see more of our total nature. So we need to know where the holding patterns are, so freeing energy and attention is one of the main reasons for doing this waking practice at all.

The very act - you know this from the physics you've been reading, modern physics and discoveries - that the very act of observation alone begins to release the pattern and change it. If we try to look at molecules, if we try to look at atoms and protons and neutrons and all of those many parts of existence, we have learned that just focusing on them and looking at them changes their behaviors. It makes their behavior unknown and non-specific. Just by looking at them. So the same is true with our patterns.

The beauty of this kind of investigation and observation is that to see the pattern at all begins the change of the pattern and the release into freedom. So this is the power of sitting in the silence of your own space and feeling and just simply observing. And then to expand our knowledge of the experience of the masculine and feminine, the true masculine, actually supports and enables the emergence of the true feminine, because the true masculine is a powerful holding space. The feminine is too but the true masculine is able to tolerate everything because of the capacity to merely observe it and allow it to appear.

When that happens then more of your embodiment can come into play in the forefront. And I imagine you can identify with this. Actually if you cultivate this kind of awareness, there's a really profound enjoyment in it. That you become more sensitized to the subtleties of your life and the appearance of every other piece of phenomenon, and life become an incredible enjoyment because you're more sensitized and this kind of observation sensitizes you.

It refines your nervous system and makes it possible to pick up very subtle emanations and then these become a wonderful play of light and energy and awareness and this informs you about the nature of your existence so it deepens you and opens you. Like anything, though, it maybe needs to be given a little time and maybe a little practice to become more proficient at observing. And to hold yourself through inevitable reactions and anxieties and all of the things that keep you from persisting. Once you hold yourself through that, then you get the

rewards of the practice and it's simply more consciousness, more awareness, more participation, more enjoyment, so I wanted to entice you that way.

So that's all I'm going to say about that. I hope you might be inspired to try some of these things out yourself. Are there any questions or comments so far?

Participant: I never had any light or any colors or anything nice like that in all my years of all the meditations I did.

Sandra: You never had any? And lately?

Participant: I haven't been doing meditation. It didn't feel necessary.

Sandra: Well, people are built differently, so you may not- I don't actually see light I'm a feeling, sensing person. And that's how I know, but I don't see light, I kind of like feel the lightness or the darkness, or the play. How many people are like that? I'm a feeler, I don't see it and I know other people are more visual. Who here is visual? Good, good. Visual AND feeling. Okay.

What other modes are there? Some people might be- auditory, okay. How many are auditory? Yes some people have a lot of access. And then the other one is kinesthetic, like you may be. Like a lot of your awareness may be down here so that you are a mover. You move in response to your awareness. And that might be a dancer, or you know, an athlete or somebody like that. Any kind of person might be that kind of a responder so it's not necessary to have- when light- that's a kind of funny thing- you can say that light is present and you can talk about the clear light of mind but honestly it's not light in that sense, its light in the sense of (*quick inhale-exhale*) like that. Lightness of more space, lightness of spirit, but somehow the words never do it justice. Okay so let's try some actual exercises.

Now I would like to just invite you - don't move at all. We're going to begin awareness and investigation and noticing. But don't change just because we say that, don't put yourself in a composed posture and get yourself all ready for it.

Okay? Starting right where you are now, just start noticing how you are. Notice how your body is positioned, notice your breath, notice if your attention is more inward or outward, just start tracking yourself this very moment, not having any idealized way of having to be. Meditation, awareness, tracking oneself happens under all circumstances. It potentially can happen under all circumstances, whether you're seated in a meditative posture or not. So just notice

how you are. And also let yourself just relax a little bit more, maybe sink into your chair a little bit more connect with your body a little bit more.

Yes, I see some people's deepening their breath. I notice that. But don't try to make your breath deepen. Just let yourself be as you are. Connect with yourself and let yourself follow a natural physiological process of settling down, sometimes when I'm really agitated and I feel like I don't know what to do, I just sit down and I do nothing. I don't make my body make a decision, I don't make myself breathe, I don't start doing alternate nostril breathing to balance everything out. All of those practiced are not necessary particularly. The important and transformative element is that you sit down and be with yourself observe as you are. And the observation begins a process of change.

And sometimes I'll just sit there and my mind will be going, going, going, and I just let myself think, think, think, think, think, and then sometimes I just let myself feel my brain buzzing away and then sometimes I notice that without any decision or effort, my eyes just sort of slam shut. "Clunk." And then I notice "Ahh, that has a certain pleasure in it." So just let yourself be as you are. No agenda, no corralling your mind, no goal, and if you just observe, usually the mental processes will calm down a bit, the breathing will calm down a bit and you'll settle down a bit.

But if you don't, don't worry about that; just continue to be with yourself, your attention may move inward, but paradoxically it may start picking up sounds from outside. Or sensations of the room full of people. See where your attention naturally gravitates.

(Long pause)

When you can just be with yourself this way and be with your mind, without an agenda, you really are touching in to the naturalness of your mind. Naturally your mind will tend to follow the play of opposites and naturally it will tend to focus outward, inward, close, broad. Different kinds of focus will occur, and if you just allow this, this is ultimately kind of relaxing. It's kind of like letting your children play. Just wander about, do what comes to them, not having them accomplishing a lot of things. So this is getting in touch with natural mind.

(Group silence – about 5 minutes)

So now, without losing your tracking, I would like for you to bring your awareness to the room and back to our conversation here. Maybe how was that for you? To let go of a goal? To stay present to whatever was going on? How was that?

Participant: Peaceful.

Sandra: Peaceful.

Participant: Very peaceful.

Sandra: Good.

Participant: Relaxing

Sandra: Relaxing.

Participant: It's interesting to watch because I felt myself... going back and forth.

Sandra: The focus of attention. The attention changed: out there, in here. Good to notice. Good, very good. Marilyn?

Participant: Immediately I found the body's boundaries in the mind were defused. My molecules seemed to have gone traveling.

Sandra: Yeah, interesting, isn't it? See, it's probably the mind that keeps the boundaries of the body. And our minds tend to be set in a certain track until we give it a new experience and let it find another way. So now you have another awareness that you can add in to your repertoire of experience. What else?

Participant: Just a second question, when you say "mind" what do you mean?

Sandra: I guess what I'm referring to altogether is sentience. Sentience, whatever we're aware of ... whatever we're recording, whatever we're taking note of. There's something taking note of everything.

Participant: It's also what we're thinking about in language, in English words.

Sandra: Yes, thank you, and the patterns of the mind are developed around language... cognizance... So, it includes cognizance. How many of you were aware of your mind chattering away?

Participant: Mine went on a daydream kind of thing.

Sandra: A daydream.

Participant: It told a little story.

Sandra: Well somebody said that our minds are probably 98% of the time engaged in a conversation. Did you notice – I always notice that it's a little conversation that I'm having with somebody. And if I really investigate it, it's usually the person I want to impress, or justify myself to, you know? Or explain myself to. But I'm not sure who that is, it's just the generic "other" out there that I feel somehow I have to be accountable to, so I'm explaining what I'm doing.

Participant: Well it's also, you feel some deficiency in yourself and so you feel the need to justify it.

Sandra: Two parts of yourself; one part of yourself speaking to the other. Yes!

Participant: And sometimes you switch off. Right? Or at least I do, I'll be putting some part of myself down, and the other part will go "you can't tell me what to do" and then both.

Sandra: Yes. So it's good to notice that the mind is always at work. It's kind of like work, I mean it's a job of the mind to speak away and to warn you and to kind of keep the patterns going because the patterns actually create the structure of your embodiment. So the mind has to keep the patterns going, or it thinks it does, just like the heart has to keep the body going and so it's the job of the mind to chatter away.

Participant: You just said that the mind creates the structure of our embodiment.

Sandra: That's one of the reasons I want to encourage you to observe more carefully. To observe your mind because it is those things that we took in very young before our personalities were completely formed and before we knew how to behave in relationship to other people, we took in admonitions from our environment, our parents, our siblings, other people, our teachers, and our culture in general, we took in ways of being. And they became cognized.

People actually said "be a good boy," "be a good girl," and we took all that in and those words were lodged in our mental processes and out of those words and processes patterns developed and they became, because they were repeated again and again, and we gave them attention again and again they became very fixated. And as they were fixated they drew our energy in to match

our idea of what was in the mind and then we developed an egoic form of being in the world which is actually our appearance here, our embodiment here.

It's not permanent but it feels like it is, right? Because it's so old and it's so unexamined and it's so compelling. Because there's one part of us that always wants to be a good girl, no matter what. No matter how much work we do and how much observation, there's a depth in us that's committed to a perspective that we learned early on, or maybe that we brought in here as a soul. So at a very deep level, we're committed to a certain perspective or pattern of mind that we are maybe even unconsciously giving attention to.

That's another thing that I want to bring out. That attention can be unconscious like a huge part of our attention is tending unconsciously to keep those patterns in place.

Participant: Those are the ones that are really running the show.

Sandra: Yes. Those are the ones that we call binding. They're binding our attention and energy up. And they're unconscious and most of our existence is probably unconscious, but the more that you investigate and examine and allow - like we're doing here this week - interpersonally and in mutuality and in your down work, but also in your waking work. The more that you investigate, the more the energy is observed where it's bound is observed and then it begins to unwind and let go. So what else did you maybe notice during that period of? Yes, Victor.

Victor: I became very aware of the sounds in the room. Even as you're speaking and you're speaking words I'm just hearing the sound.

Sandra: So you're registering them as vibration?

Victor: Yes.

Sandra: Now we do that, don't we? We really do that. A lot of times even as little children, whatever words our parents were saying were not as impactful as the vibration of the words; of the tone of voice. Is it inclusive and affirmative, is it cutting-off and shaming or isolating? The tone, the way we take it in, creates the pattern. Not even just the words. So, that was good.

What we just did was what you call bare awareness. Just letting yourself be and being gently aware and not being invested in the outcome. So all of you were

able to do that very easily, right? Bare awareness. It doesn't really require much effort at all it just requires tracking yourself, being present to yourself.

Ok, now I wanted to talk about a little bit more focused kind of meditation but a really important quality to bring to your investigation is something I like to call *relaxed awareness* or *relaxed alertness*. Paradox, right? Relaxed, alert. And it's kind of the quality that you see in the animal self, in the animal world. Animals like your cat, or your dog – dogs especially - they relax laying on the floor, nothing disturbing them, you can walk by and make noise and the dog is just so relaxed, but the minute a footstep is perceived at the end of the pathway coming toward your house (*clap, barking*). So that animal self of that dog was being incredibly relaxed, but aware and alert; knowing that something different was entering the environment that had to be attended to.

So there's that quality of letting your animal self relax but something in you is staying alert. And ready to notice what's going on. Now the reason I say this is sometimes we get really relaxed and we just want to fall asleep and so we go into a kind of dreamlike state, or kind of a stupor and fall asleep, and then we miss what's going on in our body-mind process. But maybe we need sleep so it's not horrible or bad, but there is a way in which you can notice that you're drifting into a state of lethargy, inattentiveness and stupor, and then notice that you did that and you're doing that. And the noticing and the alertness to that will bring you back to presence to yourself. So: relaxed alertness.

I like to tell the story – even in the Bible, these are cross-cultural ideas. We're told that the brides must always keep their lamps lit because they don't know when the bridegroom will come. This is a parable of Jesus. You don't know when the bridegroom will come and when the masculine, when the divine force, will come upon you if you're not awake then you're not going to know.

I also had this Buddhist teacher, her name was Kennett Roshi, and she used to say “stay awake, stay alert because at any moment you might be grabbed by the divine.” But I never forgot that because it is true that the most incredible openings can come upon you in an instant. They're not the result of work, they are the result of being present to yourself, or some kind of grace that drops out of the sky.

Have you ever had an experience like that? It's just like suddenly you're in a different place. Ok, so relaxed alertness is very important. And another very

important thing is try not to have heavy judgments about yourself but do try to notice that you're judging. That just means that you have a good mind because the mind's job it to make judgments, right? It really is. It's like critical to our survival in the social world to be able to make judgments. And when it's in the natural world we call it instincts but when it's in the social world we are making judgments, assessments, judgments and all that.

One of the things that I'm going to mention - because it's good to be aware of what's in our mind - we have these patterns that recur; we have places where we identify - states of identification, right? You've heard that word. It's like we get stuck on something and can't get it out of our minds. We've identified with it. We've landed in it in a very sticky way so that's one of the other things that may come into your awareness, places where you've identified and it's not necessary to make yourself misidentify, but if you notice that you identify and you remain with that, you know our principle: embrace that? Remain open to it, be it, allow it, all the time noticing that it's part of your awareness. You've identified with it; it's not all of who you are.

Certain tendencies may show up, certain affinities for this or that. And you may think "well doesn't everybody know that?" I was listening to this video of a Christian evangelical person and this person was talking about Jesus Christ and that and everyone should be invited and kind of compelled to come to Jesus Christ and in the end she ended up saying "well it's just right. I'm right. This is right. This is the right thing" and she was identified with that: being right. And she wasn't even aware that there was anything else, she was identified with that.

Anyway, it just struck me as "here's a person who is very identified and not able to observe that there's identification going on" and so there's the effort to impose that identification on everyone else. So beliefs about existence, those are beliefs. So as you observe, notice what kind of beliefs come into your awareness. Beliefs about self, I think you mentioned. "Oh, I'll never be good enough." Belief. So observe it as a belief as it comes into your mind, because all of these states of mind and attitudes and perspective bind up our energy and attention.

Participant: We have to have something in our minds, don't we? Like beliefs and things?

Sandra: Yeah, actually we do.

Participant: Otherwise we might, I don't want to say that's what makes us, US. I mean I'm struggling with this a little bit, I guess we all are, but we have to have some sort of belief in our minds, I guess, about something.

Sandra: Yes, because the mind will feel very nervous if it doesn't have a belief. But our beliefs can evolve and expand so that a belief can be, "Oh, I'm right and everyone should see it my way" or a belief could be, "Well, I have a way of being but there are other ways of being and we can get along" so therefore the belief becomes more expanded and it's still a belief and it's still guiding your mind but it's way more spacious, you know what I mean?

Participant: I don't know – it doesn't make sense to me.

Participant: Open-ended, like...

Sandra: Open-ended, yeah.

Participant: How strongly do you hold onto a belief? Like you can look back at your life and there are certain points where you believe like maybe the Easter Bunny or Santa Claus or something like that, that you completely believed at the time so there's things in your life right now that you may simply be holding on to that tightly that ten years from now you'll see that they weren't necessarily true, or true in this perspective. How tightly do you hold on?

Participant: I guess I mean, I know the fundamentalist people have their beliefs and I don't believe that way so I guess I am having room for people to believe that, even though I might have an opinion about them in that way, which is another thing.

Sandra: See, especially children need beliefs, we all need learn beliefs when we were young because we needed them. I don't know... children seem to need to have strong sense of boundaries and what is right and what is wrong. That's a developmental need because if you don't have a sense of what is right and what is wrong and what you believe in, then as a child you can't handle the energy coming in on you. You'll be inundated, you'll be destabilized. But as you get older you can have more space and hold more room to have more various beliefs - even in your own self. So the mind does need beliefs, especially when you're young, but as you grow and change, you can open up and have more room. But I don't think we ever outgrow a belief system, actually, we just trade one for a more expanded one or a better one. One that's more serving of our experience now.

But the important thing is, even if we have an expanded belief system, notice that it's a belief system. Notice that the things that everyone accepts as normal - that that's a common belief for that group of people - but it may not be the belief that takes you to the next level of good functioning. It's just as important to notice that it's a belief. And I know even in this work, I found myself at times saying "well, everyone says that, but is that really true?" You know? I start to question or notice that it's a belief. And that it has a certain function, but it may not serve the next level of function. So it's important to just notice the beliefs.

Participants: I do notice sometimes, you have said, "I believe this" and then the little voice will go "I used to believe that, do I still believe that?" and sometimes it answers "No, actually, I believe something different and didn't realize it until now."

Sandra: OK, let's do another meditation. How about that? Another investigation? We've had a lot of reminders about what to look for and about the most productive attitude, relaxed alertness, and about easing up on your judgments in the sense of just noticing that they are judgments, and noticing that you have beliefs and noticing that you're identifying.

So just easing up on it and realize that the act of noticing in itself brings changes. See if you can see how that happens in the progress of sitting with yourself.

Begin where you are, allow yourself to move as you naturally will in your process. There is no moment that is not potentially a moment of meditation. Even this moment, if you think you're not quite arranged well enough to meditate. That is a moment of meditation if you notice it.

Again, you don't have to be committed to achieving anything; you don't have to be committed to relaxing or getting clear or opening yourself, just be committed to noticing this moment.

This moment may be a very subtle moment, or a very intense moment. It's all just right. Just be who you are in this moment and as you notice it, track the changes.

Notice what are the tendencies in your person? Do you tend to be hard on yourself? Do you tend to be impatient? Are you trying hard to be correct?

Are you tending to be into the past? Are to tending - this is one of mine - to look to the future and find your body kind of rising up to meet the future, and thinking what you have to be prepared for next? Listening to yourself, tracking yourself, and just noticing in relaxed alertness.

So let's continue with this for about ten minutes and then we'll talk.

(Group silence – about 10 minutes)

Okay, very gently bring yourself back to this moment. I'm sorry to press us forward but I wanted to share one thing with you, because I have some markers to know where the practice is. How was that? Did you find identifications? Beliefs? Sensations? You allowed yourself to have all of that without too many judgments? You noticed your judgments but you didn't try to force yourself to get out of them. Okay, anything else you'd like to comment on?

Participant: I think that it was helpful to just simply name or acknowledge my state that was arising.

Sandra: Great, great. Anyone else notice that? If you can stand back enough to name it: "oh, I'm judging" or "oh I have that belief" It can be greatly clarifying, actually.

Participant: I started to notice not only patterns, but then a meta-pattern. So I would first be thinking about today and thinking about- and then I noticed the meta-pattern's outward-ness, always looking outward.

Sandra: Great, excellent observation. That's really- that is the kind of subtle thing that you can begin to learn about yourself. You may have known it, but to actually see how it's operating in your system is to further help it unwind.

Participant: After I let go of my things in my head I should start feeling my body supported by the chair and after all the stuff, just letting it.

Sandra: Good, good.

Participant: I had the same thing and then my body wanted to move and I could feel every muscle and it was just a dance.

Sandra: Uh-huh... So you felt connected up and you can feel it all kind of flowing.

Participant: Yeah. After I watched and allowed all that.

Sandra: Oh good. Okay?

Participant: I'm not very visual and several little movies kind of enjoyed the whole experience. It's kind of a unique one.

Sandra: Great. Good.

Participant: So this tendency now as I'm speaking the judgments stuff a little bit, that just is the fun stuff, just watching, you know?

Sandra: That's good! Excellent! But see? Isn't that interesting? It adds complexity to you, to yourself. You see "oh, I've got all these parts in myself." A lot of things going on at the same time.

Great. Okay, I would like if you have five more minutes, I would like to now take you into more directly a body investigation. A meditative investigation of sensation. And generalize moods and states that announce themselves through the body. A little like Gayatri noticing her mood was to go outward. Her reference outward.

Okay, so just beginning where you are, start to scan your body and by that I mean you may want to start at the top and kind of like allow your attention to travel down your body and notice where the sensation seems to be located in your body? Where does your attention tend to gravitate? Is your head, heart, gut, out toward the front, in and up?

Just notice where your attention tends to gravitate and notice what is the mood that is currently so for you? Just see if you can notice - does it tend to be quietude or a little anxious or a little sad?

What is your current mood in your body and where is your attention gravitating in your body?

Now as you locate the state, consciously, knowingly, choose to BE this state. We tend to want to hold these states of being off, because they may be uncomfortable or we may even have a prejudice against a pleasurable state. But whatever the state that you're finding is, chose to consciously and knowingly identify with it. Embody it. If you identify with something and you know you're identifying with it, it's very different from not knowing that you're identifying with it.

So, just be this state, be curious about it, explore it, and give it its place. And here's another principle that I want you to know. You know this already, but it's helpful, it's always been helpful to me. When I was with my guru Adi Da, he used to say "feel into the state, like a hand feels into a glove." So for me that was very expressive, like the fingers reaching for the edges, filling out the glove, filling it up, extending into it. So feel into this state that you've located like a hand feels into a glove and follow this state of being that you are at this moment. Follow it until you feel it's edges or until you hit what you feel like is a boundary of it.

It actually has a form, you see. Like a word has a vibration, and it has a beginning, middle and an end? A state is the same thing. It has a form that has been generated by mind and carried out by the body. So feel into it until you find the edges of the form, until you find its boundaries.

Just take a minute or two to rest in this state, in this mood without trying to change it, just rest in it, receive it in a relaxed and alert manner and see what happens.

(Group silence – about 3 minutes)

Okay, now without changing your observing self - remembering that meditation is available every moment - just open your eyes and get oriented to the whole space here, and everyone else. We're at the end of our time, but I wondered if anyone would like to say anything about that?

Participant: Being specific, it was amazing. It's like I had two bodies and it was a shocker. And it was all on certain... It was going on in my mind, and in my body at the same time. It was really amazing.

Sandra: Cool, good. That's wonderful. So were you able to find that your mood actually had a form? And that it had an inside, and a medium place and a boundary? I've always found that to be amazing, that you can actually feel the boundary of a mood.

Participants: I need to practice that, I like that distinction that a word has a beginning and an end and so do our moods. I need to practice that, so I like that distinction.

Sandra: Good, good. Because everything is a vibration, right? And certain vibrations have forms, they appear in shapes. At a certain level the sensations all converge so that

the sounds have shapes sometimes. I don't know, it's something you discover about phenomenon. Good.

Participant: Is it the vibration or does the mood take the shape of the body? Or does the body?

Sandra: Maybe, is that what you found? Yeah, I often find that the mood is similar to my body, but often beyond my body, or it might just be in a part of my body; the form of it. What did the rest of you find? Anything like that?

Participant: It was at a part kind of an oblong-y shape.

Sandra: Yeah, kind of an organic shape.

Participant: Mine was more like a jagged edge cloud around a part of body.

Sandra: Good, good, well you know people who have sight can see these colors and things happening in you and they'll often talk about things like a cloud on the top half of your body. That sounds something very like what you might – a psychic might tell you. Yeah.

Sandra: I know you all need to be excused to go to the next meeting. So this is it. Tomorrow I plan to just carry on and have more of these, okay? So thank you for coming, it was really a pleasure.

(End Discussion)

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