



“When the body dances, the silence between the movements opens up. In this vastness, every movement becomes a quiet connection between the past and the present.”

Brigitte Züger

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THE BODY REMEMBERS—EVEN WHEN YOU DON'T REALIZE IT

Why past experiences may still influence your life today, and how you can change that.

Do you know that feeling of suddenly feeling tense in a completely harmless situation, without knowing why? Your heart races, you withdraw, or you simply freeze. Your mind says, “Everything is fine.” Your body tells you, “I’m not so sure.”

Your body is a silent archive, and your memory is far more than what you can consciously recall. Scientists distinguish between explicit memory—that is, things we can recall and recount—and implicit bodily memory: a deep, unconscious archive of sensory impressions, emotions, and physical reactions that builds up over the course of a lifetime and is stored in the body.

From an early age, it stores not only movement patterns like riding a bike or swimming. It also stores whether closeness felt safe or threatening, whether loud voices signaled danger, or whether it was okay to express needs.

If you learned as a child to freeze when faced with loud noises, you may still freeze as an adult. Not because there is a reason for it now, but because the body remembers the past based on a perception that we experience.

These reactions are originally meaningful protection and survival strategies, so that we intuitively know what is good or not good for us. But the body cannot distinguish well between the past and the present. What was threatening back then still triggers the same alarm today, even if there is no threat.

Understanding alone is not enough, because many people working on themselves have a frustrating experience: they have understood their history, they know the patterns, and yet a real change in experience and behavior is not possible. This is because bodily memory is not accessed through insight. It requires new physical experiences, because new thoughts alone are not enough.

Neuroscientist Stephen Porges describes in his Polyvagal Theory how the nervous system constantly and unconsciously scans the environment for safety or danger, often long before we realize it.

The brain can reshape itself—throughout our entire lives—and that is the miracle: it is the neuroplasticity of our brain, its ability to learn through new experiences and relaxed states. This allows us to activate new patterns of experience and behavior, regardless of our age. Old, painful imprints and their physical reactions can be slowly reshaped through repeated, healing experiences.

This is where Dance Movement Therapy comes into play.

At this point, where understanding falls short, dance therapy offers something unique. It doesn't talk about the body. It talks with it.

We know that every experience is reflected in our bodies and through our movements. Perhaps you have a pattern of taking up space or making

yourself small. Or you habitually push forward, or hold yourself back. Perhaps you notice low or high muscle tone, a feeling of heaviness or lightness. In dance therapy, these qualities become visible and tangible to you.

From there, new patterns of posture or movement are explored together, which you try out and experience in your body. You sense whether they feel different from what is familiar, whether they calm you, whether they feel right. This is a search, just as a plant seeks a path to the light and, once it has found it, knows deep down: this is right. And can now use its strength to flourish.

In our training, our students learn to look closely: What comes from the body's memory—and what arises from intention, stimulated by dance therapy interventions? Our students learn extensively to recognize this difference so that they can offer precise interventions to anchor new patterns of experience and behavior and maintain the momentum for change.

Takeaway:

You don't have to forget your story for it to stop controlling you. But you can offer your body new experiences—slowly, mindfully, repeatedly. This creates what no explanation alone can achieve: a new sense of yourself.

Warm regards from ZOE SCHOOL and welcome to Spring!
Brigitte Züger, Director

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