The Kerulos Center

Changing the World for Animals

Being Animal

By Janet Kaylo In Being Animal, Homepage News

Integrating principles of trans-species psychology with innovative and traditional approaches to healing non-human animals

This summer I interviewed Gloria Hester, a Somatic Coach and Educator for humans and other vertebrate species. She is the founder of *Yogic Wisdom for Horse and Human*™, an educational program that includes somatic healing retreats and workshops with horse and human participants. Gloria is a certified therapeutic yoga teacher, and Certified Hanna Somatic Educator for humans and equines, and runs a private practice as a Somatic Coach and Educator for humans, horses, canines, and other animals.

As a Body Ecologist certified by Donna Gates, Gloria infuses retreats, workshops and trainings with lectures on the subject of nutrition, food-

based healing, and how food affects the nervous system. She reflects the new edge of integrating principles of trans-species psychology with innovative and traditional approaches to healing non-human animals. Critically, she engages *psyche* (mind) and *soma* (body), which in contrast to conventional behavioral training, gives animals voice and respect in support of their well-being and self-determination.

JK: Gloria, how would you define Somatics as a practice that can be shared across species?

GH: Somatics is a science and an art. It involves principles from neuroscience and biomechanics. It offers an integrated understanding of how vertebrate animals function. Somatics is both very simple and complex in its application and understanding. It is a practice that requires not only a knowledge base, but also the cultivation of various key senses: awareness, quietness, receptivity, inquisitiveness, and patience with no expectations of the 'other'. Its purpose is to help disable and "re-tune" unhealthful, culturally conditioned sensory and motor aspects of the nervous system. As a personal practice, it also helps to reorient sensory motor impulses that underlie the tendency to objectify, dominate, and silence other nonhuman and human animals.

JK: What is the purpose of somatic education?

GH: When people have an opportunity to experience somatic work, they learn how to create a more embodied life with themselves and the animals with whom they live. Somatic work is both reflexive—facilitating an individual's own unique process of 'remembering' things that are innate—and therapeutic—facilitating the healing of the animal with whom the practitioner is working.

JK: How do you approach somatic work with a nonhuman animal compared to human somatic work?

GH: With horses, I like to meet the horse first, and talk with their guardians about why they have asked me to come in, what they have noticed and what has come to their attention that prompted them to bring their horse to me. Usually they don't know what has happened to the horse. Somehow, the horse's attitude, mood or body has changed. It could have been that the horse had a fall, or maybe not. In any case they notice a 'difference' in how the horse is moving or behaving. Other people are much more interested in somatic work not as a way to "fix" something, rather they

wish to employ it as a way to be with their horse. All of these factors influence how we approach the session. But when I meet the horse, I am not meeting him or her with the guardian's agenda. I am meeting the horse, one on one. Again respecting his or her agency.

When working with a horse, for example, I begin by observing the individual in his or her space so that I can get a sense of what is happening to the horse relative to his/her environment at that moment. For example, I first want to see whether or not the horse feels safe. A sense of safety is critical for the horse and for his/her guardian or somatic practitioner. Often, horses move very quickly and startle easily, which can be dangerous in a confined space. A feeling of safety is foundational. Movement is different for each species, and somatic work addresses the movement capability of each individual, while working with patterns shared across species.

The back and forth of the relationship with a human is different than with another animal, as we tend to use verbal language among humans much more to cue and create certain movement processes. Intention is important when working with humans or nonhumans, and while vocal quality is also very important when working with nonhuman animals, the words I use with humans play a different role. The nonverbal elements of a somatic session with an animal are more emphasized than they are typically with humans. Our species are often thinking about the meaning of the words themselves.

But no matter the species, the primary therapeutic goal of somatic education is to help an individual reset their nervous system back to a place where they're not in a "fight or flight" reactive mode, but in a place of "rest and digest." This is a more grounded space that encourages easy, fluid movement. You can see this as the individual appears relaxed and secure: walking with ease, resting with ease, and communicating gracefully.

JK: There is a wonderful quality of sharing the space which is visible in pictures of you being with horses. How do you create the opening and trust for this sharing to happen?

GH: Firstly, it is about my intention in the space which is to pay attention to them as if seeing through their eyes, rather than mine. Second, I bring in a sense of embodiment—that is, I make sure that I am able to feel my own center, particularly

my gut, in relation to the verticality of my body. Am I standing in a grounded way in relation to my center and the rest of my spine and head? Is my gut relaxed? I check to see how my feet are resting on the ground. I imagine a long thread pulling up through my body out through the top of my head—like dancers do. I check to see if there are any areas that feel stuck between those two places—my feet and my head. What I mean by "stuck" is where there isn't a continuous responsiveness throughout the core and verticality of my body. I also sense a softening of the tension in my skin. From that place of centeredness and stability, I then attune to the environment. This includes everything I become aware of—not just the horse. And this is important because horses want to know that you are aware of everything around them. That way, there are two of you looking after their well-being—you and them. If they can feel that, then they feel safer.

One horse I worked with at a rescue center had his legs tied together in a forest before being rescued, likely to keep him from running away. This horse tried to kill the farrier at the rescue when he tried to look at his hooves—which is understandable given what the horse had experienced in relation to his feet and legs. If an animal is traumatized, how are we going to work with them? Horses are so quick, and this horse always had to 'hop' when his legs were tied together previously, so his movements were abrupt and unusual and in that way also unpredictable even to those who were familiar with helping rescued horses. He had been through a lot, and this had to be considered when he was handled or approached even in ordinary, daily care-taking processes. When you work with other species you want the time together to end on a good note because you can't call them up and change the last moments you had with them and where things went together. They remember how things ended, and that impacts how they will look upon the next time someone approaches them in a similar way. Knowing something about a horse's previous experiences and recognizing unusual patterns and defenses that grew out of those experiences, can be important in establishing a trusting rapport from the very start.

In another instance at the rescue center, I was introducing four women to somatic work with the horses there. There was a big arena, and we could stand upstairs and watch a horse moving in the arena. It gave us a wonderful vantage point. I was introducing the women to somatic concepts, explaining what a session might be like. The horse we were watching in the arena was running around and having a good time. Every once in a while he would stop and look at us. He did this repeatedly. By the time we were ready to work with him, he was listening and had already entered the conversation. Everyone there could tell he was part of our conversation. It was as if there weren't any secrets anymore, between us and him. Everyone there was open to the exchange they could see happening, and the Arabian clearly thought the conversation more interesting than ripping around the arena.

By the time we got to work, he had already gotten a lot of it, and he shifted significantly in 30 minutes—he was a different horse after that. Before the session, when he saw something he didn't know, he would run backwards. After the session,

he walked towards people he didn't know, and greeted them—people there were crying, because they knew him from before, and suddenly he was able to move towards things with curiosity. To create that exchange in relationship always plays a part when I am working with a group of people and individual horses: the group affects the session and the session affects the group. A woman there who was videoing was scared of horses, and after one day of watching somatic movement sessions, she was no longer afraid of them.

So this is another example of how I create that space through intention, working nonverbally, and conveying through touch, where I'd like to bring their awareness as I introduce a movement and encourage them to come into and out of the movement slowly. I am always waiting for their feedback, giving them time to take in and digest what is happening as we go along.

JK: Can you describe how somatic work resets the nervous system?

GH: Somatic work resets the resting tonus of the muscle—that is, how the muscle would be if it is not already in an 'alert' and readied state of contraction. When contracted muscles relax and return to their natural length, there is a feeling of comfort, peacefulness, and confidence. This occurs when the muscle's resting tonus feeds back information to the brain that says "everything is fine," that there is no need to tense or contract in fear or defensiveness. The environment is safe. Here, the body is the director. The body tells the mind what to do and feel. In essence, when any individual, regardless of species, has such somatic education they begin to live in their current reality, and are no longer a victim or trapped in stressful events or experiences of the past.

JK: What makes somatic education different than other more commonly known modalities that people might seek out for themselves or other animals such as chiropractic, massage, or other physical therapies?

GH: Ideally, somatic educators facilitate reawakening of an individual's nervous system. This is in contrast to other approaches that manipulate the body such as techniques performed in chiropody, osteopathy, and massage. A somatic approach

invites more active involvement of the individual by reeducating the nervous system from a first-person rather than third person perspective. Yoga is also different than somatic work, in that the yoga teacher imposes their ideas onto the mover—directs the individual about form and how to achieve the form. Similarly, chiropractic work literally puts your bones where the practitioner thinks they need to be. In somatic work, the transformation is in the hands of the individual, the somatic practitioner aims to help the individual find his/her way back to his/her unique form and expression. Somatic education puts the locus of activation within the nervous system with the aim to literally enervate and communicate to muscle without requiring any particular "form" outcome.

JK: You have been practicing and teaching Somatic work across species for several years, and sometimes you are able to work with humans along with the animals they care for. How do those things differ?

GH: The set of principles with which I work are the same across species but are applied differently according to the body and form of the species. There are also different ways in which a practitioner approaches a client, including the use of touch. For example I would never go in and "pet" a human client. However, some sort of somatic gesture might be appropriate to communicate. I might reach out to touch or stroke a nonhuman animal's head, and I am not likely to do that with a human. Human relationship to touch is often more loaded than with other species even if there has been no abuse, though, of course with any animal, touch has to be very sensitive and include what the animal will be responsive to in a positive way, as well as include awareness of ways that touch has been used negatively. Whereas nonhuman animals might feel love and respect when you stroke their head, a human is more likely to interpret that as a condescending gesture. Domestic animals are also accustomed to being stroked as a way of showing love and caring. And they let you know if that is what they are expecting or looking for from you. Humans are less likely to accept touch specifically as a calming or kind gesture, unless you are already into a somatic session and touch has been accepted from you to them through a more formal agreement. A somatic session with a human can include quite a lot of verbal cueing, while with another animal, cueing is generally done through quality of touch. The quality of touch with a nonhuman animal, in a somatic session, is used only as an invitation, and not as a demand. And the same applies in the use of touch with humans.

But once touch is understood as an invitation and not a command, typically, when I start working with the animal, he or she picks up very quickly what the work is about. The way I use my own body in a session is very specific to the given species for this very reason. For example, I might use my whole arm space across the body of a horse, still gently and with sensitivity to their responses, whereas with a human or a canine reaching across them doesn't work so well, because the differential in body size makes it inappropriate. I establish relationship through sharing the space with them in individual ways that relate to their embodiment.

JK: What would you say is the thread that runs through all of us—human and non-human animals—that makes Somatic work particularly useful across species? Is there something more than as trans-species psychology says, that all of us—horses, humans, cats, dogs, turtles and so on—share basically the same brain and mind and associated capacities?

GH: The thread running through all of us is *personal agency:* the personal will, and right, to live, to express, to be. Our common thread is never ending. This is a key principle in somatic education and one that is often ignored or overlooked.

A lot of people maintain that they "love" animals, but these feelings are often quite predatory and selfish. In other words, this "love" is possessive and directed to the desires of the human not the animals; the feelings and actions toward the animal are motivated by the human and not the animal.

For example, let's say when you were a child your mother thought you needed to wear a hat, and the hat band was really tight on your head and was uncomfortable and painful. But, because your mother insisted and you wanted to please her or felt you had to do what she said, you had to go through a day continuously experiencing this tightness on your head. Your parents wanted you to wear it, and there you were with a tight, uncomfortable hat that you had to endure because of your parents' desires, not your own. Such actions are done out of concern with good intentions but they often fail to take into consideration what is going on in the mind and body of the child. Without listening to the somatic responses of the person we love, we can cause damage.

In our human culture, as we mature, we are allowed to have more say, exercise agency, in greater ways. Yet so much of our society and social rules continue to constrict and limit agency. This situation happens very often for animals who as "pets" or as workers for humans, are confined and restricted. A family "pet" is regularly confined to small spaces, or wears a collar that is not comfortable for her or him. Maybe they'd rather be without that collar while they sleep. The same thing happens with a horse's halter. For example, a horse's halter is often kept on, not for the horse, but to satisfy human convenience. More often than not, people overlook what the horse may be experiencing.

There is so much we do unthinkingly out of habit that is culturally conditioned, with non-human animals whom we "love," without really giving much thought to its impact on their personal agency and physical experience.

Another thing I would add, is that we do share with other vertebrate animals the same prime muscles that move in response to some stimulus such as a cringe reflex or a startle response. We tend to get hung up on outside form and forget that we share a lot of movement patterns across species. Many of us (human and nonhuman) are walking around holding previous constrictions or past events that inform our current reality. The stimulus in our current reality is colored by the past,

and these memories are held in the nervous system, and mirrored in the musculature.

JK: What is the similarity between Hanna Human Somatics and Hanna Equine Somatics?

GH: The similarities between Hanna Human and Equine Somatics are in the principles and the common patterns that we share across species in the nervous system. As vertebrates, we share patterns of tensions and contractions in the neuro-muscular system. But there are differences that relate to body form and activities. For example, horses have patterns of contraction that evolve from carrying saddles, wearing a bit, and being led by the head which humans may not have. While our patterns of habituation across species are different, we share contraction of tension patterns. In a similar fashion, the compensation patterns—that is, ways that we alter our inherent movement ability to compensate for pain or disabilities—might be different. A horse may shake his head and stretch his mouth in response to the bit and bridle and being directed through the head.

On other hand, humans might keep their shoulders drawn up towards their ears, or move the head forward away from the spine, or tuck their pelvis under and push from their thighs to move in space. Human compensation patterns are different due to the difference in daily demand and the species' anatomy, but we all share similar prime mover muscle responses to the environment. With horses, canines and humans, the principles are applied through working with the sensory motor system in a way that the individual is receptive to, working with the individual nervous system.

JK: What are you doing instead when you meet with the horse?

GH: I come to the horse on the horse's own terms. For instance, I worked with a horse with a hip injury. However, some states in the U.S. do not allow you to put your hands on a horse unless you are a veterinarian or chiropractor. So in those cases, I teach the guardian how to work with the horse and to work with his or her horse somatically. In other instances, I can work as a "trainer," because legally, as a "trainer" you may touch a horse, but of course, I am not at all working as a trainer would. Unfortunately, you don't have to have a license to spur a horse, but you have to have a license to "help" a horse. This reflects a big problem for horses. They are still regarded as objects and tools for human use. In all cases, I teach the horse and the horse's person somatic principles

so that when I leave, both the horse and the person have a new understanding about how their mutual brains and bodies connect as a first-person based experience.

JK: How do you get first-person feedback from a horse?

GH: A first-person response is the feeling one has when making a movement, or watching the end result after a movement is made. I ask through somatic observation and relationship, how I can find a way to make a particular movement feel even better. Then I watch the horse to see changes in breath, head-hanging, sighing, licking and chewing—all of which lets me know that the horse has an experience of a pattern that is efficient and integrated. These responses in a horse are relaxation responses. For a horse, I don't have an agenda for the horse to hold his/her head a certain way (or a person for that matter). Rather, I want them to find all the potential that feels good to them, creating choices in their own experience. That's the individual's first-person based experience, their experience of the movement or the quality of touch or the awakening that might occur. It is not me imposing something on them.

When working in first-person based experience, the relationship includes establishing a rapport that feels good to the human or non-human animal, so they don't have to guard with me, or feel a threat that would come from imposing my will on them in any way, in terms of movement or quality of touch. There is no expectation for something particular to happen in a certain way, and that creates space for the horse or human to explore and to trust, and to learn that there's a sort of symbiotic relationship between them and how I am being with them in the space. Something happens during that work, ideally—with horses they know why I'm there, and owners say they see their horses respond to me as if they understand why I'm working with them. To do this, it is vital to create a kind of space together that allows the other animal to be receptive to the exchange. When an animal is allowed to make their own decisions in a relationship they begin to trust that your will is not going to be imposed upon them, and they relax their defenses and come into relationship with you in the work that you are doing for their benefit.

JK: What relaxation responses would you see in a human?

GH: Typically, a softening of the face, of the musculature, the complexion will look different. The person's eyes will become clearer and brighter, the jaw more relaxed and they will be more effortlessly upright and vertical.

JK: Can you describe some of the specific movement work you do in Hanna Somatics with horses?

GH: Two of the principles that we utilize in Hanna Somatics, is *Kinetic Mirroring* and *Pandiculation*. Kinetic mirroring is a method where you bring the origin of the muscle and the insertion closer together. This entails a person placing their hands on the horse's body on different ends of a muscle group, very gently bringing them

closer together, and then releasing the area slowly. If the brain is keeping the muscle very contracted, kinetic mirroring that area for the horse allows the horse's brain to stop sending all those motor units to the muscles that have been keeping the muscle short or tight.

All vertebrate animals pandiculate, and if there has been injury or a lot of stress, pandiculation lessens or ceases altogether. Pandiculation is like the stretching we do when we awaken, or yawn—where opposing muscle groups elongate into eccentric contractions. When we see an animal do "upward dog" or "downward dog," those are examples of pandiculations.

When an animal feels safe and healthy that's the way they naturally reset the resting tonicity of the muscles. You see cats do it, when they stretch their front legs onto a wall, or put their hips in the air while lengthening the spine and front legs.

So, part of my job is to help the animal remember their natural pandiculation pattern, which I do by inviting the animal to make a movement, and then allowing the freedom to go into it or not, slowly and with awareness—going into the movement slowly, and coming out of it slowly, as an eccentric contraction, inviting the animal to sense what it feels like to go from point a to point b where the "means" is the focus rather than the "end." Within all of these processes, the individual's nervous system is participating in the action as the initiator of the movement process. This is rather different than someone outside of your own nervous system initiating the action (that is, motivating the beginning of the movement), and this is part of the big problem with humans dominating animals. They are the initiator of the action when they are dominating, and therefore, the animal doesn't have the opportunity to express their own natural, healthy movement patterns from the very start of the movement.

JK: In your childhood, you had the opportunity to live in a home environment that included multiple horses as well as other animals. Do you think that had a bearing on the work that you do, and if so, in what way?

GH: Yes, my relationships with other species early in life certainly has a bearing on my work. From the beginning, I related to the horses and dogs in my life as sentient beings who were responding to the environment and things in it every moment, and who needed very particular care and attention.

My mother was a horse trainer, and was also the president of the local humane society. She was very concerned about the welfare of animals generally, and was involved in several harrowing rescue efforts locally. I was taught how to be around horses, of course, as we might have fifty of them at any given time in the stables. But it wasn't the traditional domination approach where one doesn't include the other animal's needs. From the time I was old enough to walk, I was taught not to interfere with the horse's way of being, not to startle or alarm them—never to run up the stable aisle, for example. I was taught to keep my movement smooth and to allow

them to experience the space as their own. I was taught to wait and let the horses come to me. Horses weigh approximately 1200 pounds, and most people who become interested in horses don't understand that horses have a different way that they behave compared with most humans. The dynamics of the herd are very different than the way humans relate to each other. At best, if working with domesticated horses, we have a skill set for keeping horses and humans safe together.

Buck Brannaman, who is known by some as the "horse whisperer" and upon whose work the film "Buck" is based, might look like he's being aggressive when working with horses, but it makes sense to the horse, and the horse gains a sense of trust in the individual as a leader. But I'm not a trainer, and that is relative, too—the level of what a trainer is willing to do with the horse that they consider necessary for accomplishing particular skills and behavior. If you're going to work with horses in competitions, you have to give "clear" cues about what you want them to do. But when I was growing up around horses in training, I was always asking "what if the horse doesn't want to?" This would upset my mother: as a horse trainer she would say that I was "ruining" the horse…in the work I do somatically, asking what the horse wants and doesn't want is at the center of the approach, and that feels a lot more comfortable for me. That is, to put the horse first, rather than organizing your relationship with them around what you want them to do.

JK: I notice a softening in your own body boundaries or edges when you are working with animals—where the feelings you have for them are evident in the volume that you embody yourself. What do you think this communicates, and why would that be important?

GH: It communicates that I care about them, and that I am interested in their well-being; that I am empathetic about the fact that sometimes they have had to carry riders on their back who were not very good riders, and have harsh hands. I have empathy for their various experiences, and for being denied sentience while these experiences are taking place. When I was around race horses in Kentucky, it really struck me how often the horses are moved, how quickly they're bought and sold and have to acclimate to different situations. Not true of all horses, but it struck me as a big part of the race horses' experiences, and I had a feeling of empathy for all the accommodating and adjusting they had to do, how they had no say in where they went or when.

JK: Is there a way that you prepare yourself consciously, before doing a session with another animal, and how would you contrast that with how you prepare to work with another human?

GH: I make sure I'm in as clear a space as I possibly can be, and try to do my own somatic movement before I work with them. Animals seem to be very forgiving with me—if I haven't done that, it doesn't seem to affect it one way or another. I just try to stay in that space all the time I am with them, making a conscious choice about

my somatic state.

JK: Tell us some of the ways that horses have responded to your somatic work with them. How do they express their acceptance of the movement process, and how do you know when you have shifted something important in their experience of themselves?

GH: There are visible signs that are easy to recognize. For example, their head lowers below their withers. This is a sign of relaxation, which is the opposite of being frightened or fearful. They may drop their ears wide, falling away from each other, the bottom lip lowers, their coat will become dappled and shiny, where before it was really dull. This can change within 30 minutes. Their eyes change from dull and listless to shiny and bright. Sighing, yawning, licking and chewing—all of these express how they are digesting the experience. They can also become really curious, where before they were not —and they can become really affectionate. Which to a trainer is a really dangerous thing, because they want the horse to be "under control" at all times. I'd like to bridge that gap, which is another challenge for me working in the horse world.

JK: Do you think somatic work is as effective in rescue environments as it is in a typical guardianship environment?

GH: Yes, it is very effective, surprisingly so. The work is profound with rescue horses—their personalities change so radically—going from being reserved and shy, even head-shy, to being curious and engaging with people. These are things the caregivers can see and have reported as continuing afterwards. There can be dramatic shifts—where horses who would not even bring their heads over the stall door, after the session would take their heads out to see further, to engage with others who came to see them. It is very moving to witness these changes. The work creates trust again, and they start to believe that there's a place for them after all.

JK: What are some examples of the somatic work you've done with canines?

GH: One rescued canine with whom I worked had a high profile, and touched the heart of everyone who knew him because of his formidable spirit. His body was stunted from malnutrition but his heart was not. He was all love, and I had the privilege of working with him towards the end of his life. He was a Great Dane—only six months old—but his growth had been stunted as if he were just two months old. He couldn't walk, only crawl, so I would work with him on movement patterns, helping him learn how to crawl along the floor better. His rescue guardians had me work with him repeatedly, as they saw how much joy it

gave him and helped him to feel more alive. The rescue organization funded his somatic education on the recommendation of his foster parents. Although he didn't survive long, it brought relief and joy into his physical experience, which also brought joy into the life he shared with his caretakers and other animals in the home.

JK: Do dogs respond differently than horses might, or is there a response that you can observe across species?

GH: There are definitely differences between canines and horses. Typically canines are not "in training," where horses often are or have been. The first thing with a horse is to let them know this is very different than a trainer or rider expecting anything of them. With dogs, that's not usually the environment they are living in, where there are expectations they have to meet whenever they are around humans. I've worked with a lot of older dogs and rescue dogs, and they leave a mark on me, some of them are so full of love, and so special, but for one reason or another, they haven't gotten what they needed to thrive.

Depending on their personality and how their guardian has interacted with them, sometimes dogs are playful or goofy, and then they have to realize "oh I'm supposed to be feeling what this movement feels like," and that is different than where they're starting from. At that point, they start to get more of what we're doing. I worked with a golden lab with some problems, and the veterinarian could never decide what had happened to him. But he really enjoyed the sessions a lot. Normally he would be all attentive to his "father" guardian, but when he was with me he was really paying attention to the experience *he* was having. So they said "he really likes what you're doing." Sometimes it does feel that there is a bit of playfulness that you have to get through with canines, when you introduce the idea of "notice what it feels like to fold your paw underneath. Notice what the pads of your paw feel like"… they do pick it up quickly, after they realize you aren't just playing with them.

But the playful response doesn't happen with a horse. That's what dogs do with humans, they play and romp. With a dog, working somatically requires a different position of your body, too. Sometimes I never actually see the top of the spine of a horse… and with a dog you can see the body fully. If a movement doesn't feel good for a dog, you can get so involved you forget, but a dog's first defense would be to snap, whereas a horse would cow kick… if you're leaning over the dog or the dog is lying down, that's not a smart thing to do. They startle differently, and with a dog you don't want them to feel crowded, and have to be mindful of how you place your body in relation to theirs not to crowd them or elicit a protective response. With humans, there are additional considerations. For example, you have to be aware that parts of your body don't touch or intrude near particular parts of your client's body, so as not to be confused with sexuality. With a horse it is so much easier, because I don't have to be self-conscious about social inferences in relation to our human bodies.

JK: What would you suggest other humans can do, to help access greater physical and emotional understanding with non-human animals?

GH: Imagine what anything you do might feel like for the animal experiencing it. Anything you're seeing or doing, even do the movement you see them do, to understand better what they are experiencing. Practices of mindfulness, whether that is meditation, somatic movement, Tai Chi or Qi Gong, each of these help us to become more sensitive in our own bodies, deepening our experience of embodiment, which makes us more sensitive to others' experiences. The therapeutic yoga trainings I did had a huge impact on the quality of my touch as well as my own embodiment, and my understanding about sharing the space with others.

If you don't possess your own embodiment, how can you relate to the embodiment of others?