

Body Tales Intro Sheet

Body Tales ® is a somatic practice developed by Olivia Corson, interweaving inner-directed and improvisational movement, voice and spoken word story for creative expression, communication and healing. Body Tales provides avenues for exploring intuitive and expressive movement, sound and language - and forms for articulating and integrating the important stories that emerge. We hone the sustaining skills of witnessing and remembering. We practice learning and creating from depth presence with our body, one another, and our sacred Earth.

During classes, workshops, performances and retreats, we enter our Body Tales practice - with explanation, demonstration, and modeling - primarily through direct experience, and reflecting on our experience. We explore exercises integrating movement, sound, and language, which sometimes include writing or drawing. These structures are designed to support inner exploration, shared expression and communing with body, community and earth. The Body Tales practice supports authenticity and respect as organizing principles for our creativity and healing. Exploring and experiencing individually, and in dyads, triads, and with the whole group, we draw upon the transformative powers of witnessing and being witnessed, and of giving, and receiving respectful remembering of our pieces. We also practice giving and receiving blessing, healing energy, and lots of thanking! With these tools, we explore our essential relationships, stories, concerns and embodied resources.

As each person creates and shares their own movement stories, and witnesses others, we gain access to Body/Earth experience and wisdom. We gather tools and strengthen access with personal, cultural and collective resources. Our places of individual and collective shadow material and trauma can become valuable community wisdom. We welcome and bring to council our senses, emotions, sensations, imagery, thoughts, and embodied memories, hopes, and needs. We cultivate sources of inspiration, reconciliation, belonging, healing, and well-being. We practice being seen and heard as we are, and being supportive witnesses of others, and of ourselves, our own material, and our world. In Body Tales, empathy and high-sensitivity are valued, accessed, strengthened and protected; and skills for maintaining essential balance and well-being are emphasized and practiced.

We all agree to hold confidentiality with all material that arises in sessions. We encourage discussion outside sessions, with our communities, about what we are feeling, thinking and learning in Body Tales. And we leave out people's names and their specific material in all our discussions. We all take full responsibility for our own well being and level of participation, and we all share responsibility for maintaining and tending the well being of the group.

Elements of Body Tales

Moving, Sounding & Speaking: Sessions include time working alone, and with partners - moving and speaking without music. Each participant brings attention to being with, and listening to, their own body and experiencing their own movement and sound. They explore inner-directed movement and vocal sound, and speak and share their "body tales." They focus directly with body sensations, emotions, thoughts, etc, and engage and learn with the embodied stories, memories, dreams, and resources which arise. Detailed instructions and clear guidelines help create a safe and respectful environment. Body Tales pieces are timed, usually ranging in length from 3 to 10 minutes.

Witnessing is the practice of giving full attention and support to the person moving, sounding and speaking, while practicing staying grounded and present. Active, supportive witnessing is central in the Body Tales practice. It is the root system, which grows and sustains this work. One person shares a "body tale," while their partner witnesses them - seeing and listening in an attentive, non-judgmental way, without interruption or commentary. Partners exchange roles as mover and witness, and in ongoing groups and retreats each person also has opportunities to be witnessed by the whole group. Witnesses practice receiving support from other witnesses, and directly with the larger earth.

Remembering: After each Body Tales piece, partners help one another to remember it. Both partners help remember and repeat some of the words and phrases from the piece – just as they were spoken in the piece - and recall specific movements, without evaluation, interpretation or any other commentary. Movers can choose to lead the remembering time of their own pieces – staying with the practice of speaking back words as they were spoken in the piece. Like writing down dreams, this process helps lift content, insights and values to conscious awareness. It allows us to savor and learn from the specific language, imagery, power and poetry of each piece. This "remembering" helps give important and specific information from the piece back to the mover, and to the witness, and supports reflection and integration. We also practice energetically “setting BT pieces free” after the remembering – allowing the pieces to be themselves, have autonomy, and be of service.

Grounding: Participants receive frequent reminders to connect with the ground, the air, the more than human world, and with their own body and breath. This helps maintain inner balance and capacity for healthy engagement, integration and good witnessing. Participants are encouraged to stay present and respectful to themselves and to the group; to notice and appreciate the support of belonging with the natural world; and to often actively release energy and material that is not our own, and/or is not helpful at this time.

Thanking: Guided thanking, blessing, and conscious touch (touch is always optional) offer simple, effective and ritualized ways to respect, appreciate and support one another. In this way we acknowledge each person's contribution with gratitude and without interrupting her or his creative or healing process with advice, praise, evaluation, criticism, extra ideas or images, etc.

Body Tales Guidelines

These guidelines have gradually evolved along with the BT practice over the last 30 years. We are working to articulate them to help support the depth, safety and continuity of the BT practice. We all learn, practice and contribute to these guidelines over time. They work best when we learn and practice them gently and respectfully with one another. We invite you to share your responses, and we welcome your suggestions.

THANK YOU FOR BEING ON TIME: It is important to begin together! Please arrive 5 - 10 minutes ahead of start time to land and greet one another, so we can start (and end) on time together. Let your teacher know ahead know if you will be missing a session, or will be arriving late, and please check in with the teacher if you need to leave a session early.

Please refrain from wearing or using perfumes, strong scents, or chemicals, and from using mind-altering drugs (including alcohol, and taking care with sugar, caffeine, etc) before and during sessions.

Self-care: Each person is encouraged to be sensitive to her/his own needs for safety and comfort, and to assume full responsibility for their own level of participation, respectful inter-actions and inner journeying. Please modify exercises when necessary to help them work for you, and consult the assistant, or the teacher, if you feel compelled to engage in an activity which is related to, but different from what the group is doing (writing, or resting, etc). We are all in a (hopefully life-long) practice of offering patience, kindness, empathy, caring, honesty, encouragement and support to ourselves and to one another. Body Tales facilitators, and their assistants, are either fully engaged in the work or actively witnessing. Please bring questions or difficulties that need resolving during sessions to your teacher, or class assistant. You are also welcome to contact your teacher outside of class time with questions, suggestions and challenges arising for you in Body Tales.

Integrating: In Body Tales we re-making and re-sanctifying oral traditions, and encouraging and supporting an embodied value system in which the well being of the Earth is central. We are creating self-revelatory and transformative movement theater, and building creative kinship and community to support these processes. This form has powerful healing and therapeutic aspects, which can bring up profound personal and societal issues that may not be fully settled or integrated within BT session time. Our group time for reflecting on what comes up for us in our own material and in our witnessing is valuable and limited. Be aware of, and allow for, the necessary time and support to rest, and to integrate your thoughts and feelings before, during and after sessions. We each continue our own vital integrating and processing time between and outside of sessions with our own sources and practices for supporting our well-being, creativity and healing.

Confidentiality: We all agree to keep material that arises in sessions confidential. We encourage discussion outside sessions and with our own communities about what we are thinking, feeling and learning. However, we do not name or identify particular people's issues or material. We leave out our class member's names and specific details during any discussion about what is being stirred within us and what occurs during sessions.

Not Referring: Within the BT group, we engage with our own learning process - including our curiosity, reactivity, vulnerability, expressive needs, etc - primarily through the BT form, (rather than through process circles or conversations or emails between participants). We are free to explore and share pieces which may name and refer to anyone and anything outside of our BT group. We do not do pieces which name or refer to any other person in the group, or to their material, families, personal lives, etc, including your teacher and her assistant. This maintains respect and support for each group member's material and their creative and healing process. We often explore and share pieces which are sparked by our witnessing. We start right in our own material and practice not referring to another participant's piece or material.

Permission: In session and outside of sessions, we practice asking and receiving permission before discussing any BT material, or our own BT creative/healing process/experience. Always check with BT people (including the teacher and her assistant) - first asking and receiving permission - before discussing BT pieces/material between sessions. This protects participants from having their material come back to them in ways, or timing, that may not be helpful. It builds safety, allows for privacy and integrating time, and helps support each person moving at their own pace, and in their own way, with their creativity and healing.

Inter-group Process: Most of the individual challenges, responses, memories, needs, etc, that may surface for us in our Body Tales time become the rich substance that we bring directly to - and explore within - our BT structures. Inter-group process is not our focus, nor our area of expertise. Please take issues which require extra support to your teacher or her assistant, and/or to your support system outside of Body Tales. With your teacher's support, and inside the BT form, we practice giving and receiving what is helpful, and gently sorting through and keeping out what is not helpful energetically.

Sharing/Learning/Practicing these Guidelines: We can all practice using gentle, non-blaming reminders such as: "Oh, just a reminder - we ask permission before discussing anyone's BT material." Or - Oh, just a reminder to contain/avoid teasing, (using nick-names, giving unasked for advice, etc)." When in doubt - pause, or ask if the comment or topic is OK with the other person. We practice saying simple phrases to maintain healthy ground rules like: "Thank you for asking. Yes, It's fine to refer to, or discuss - my piece, or your material", etc. Or "No Thank you, not right now", or "thank you for your caring - I don't want to talk about that right now", or "I'd love to make a phone date to speak about this together later", etc. These ways of communicating help give us all more spaciousness and choice, and help to grow and maintain the value of our work, and a healthy group bond in support of our individual and collective creativity and healing.

Body Tales Core Faculty:

Founder Olivia Corson: oliviamcorson@gmail.com www.bodytales.com (510) 332-1953

Lysa Castro: lysa@lysacastro.com www.lysacastro.com (707) 823-2652

Olivia and Lysa both offer individual sessions - contact us for more info.

Your tax-deductible contributions of any amount help sustain this valuable work!

You can donate any amount securely at - www.bodytales.com - or mail checks made out to:

Third Stone Productions, PO Box 3454, Oakland, California 94609