

## Teaching Notes

Week 4 / Restructuring - Jeremy Sortore

### Jellyfish

This is an exploration that asks the practitioner to associate the sometimes-subtle actions of the breathing muscles with analogous full-body movements in the appendicular skeleton (limbs) in order to sense and embody structured breathing with more specificity, freedom, and playfulness.

1. We will start standing up. Throughout this exploration, feel free to move about the room. You can choose 1) how much to focus on your inner experience while you are working, and 2) how much of the environment to take in and how much to interact with the other participants. (Both of these modes can be useful.) Remember to take pauses when needed in order to rest and allow your nervous system to integrate new sensory information.
  - a. Let's take a pause now at the beginning in order to check in with yourself and set a baseline "reading" of your current state. What sensations do you notice? What is your breath like right now? Are there any thoughts or feelings that seem relevant in this moment?
  - b. (It can often be useful to pause with the eyes closed in order to focus attention inward-- if that is comfortable and accessible to you right now.)
  - c. **(Pause/Integrate Sensory Information)**
2. *The Stretch:* Allowing the eyes to open if they have been closed, reach the arms up and away from the torso with an inhalation. When you've inhaled fully, simply release the arms back to neutral as the breath releases back out. Try not to control the exhalation. This is a generous and intentional inhalation-- a bit of "overbreathing" to warm things up.
  - a. Make this a good stretch! Try to feel the sides of the torso stretching along with the arms. Perhaps stretching the fingers apart can help encourage the ribs to spread wide in a similar fashion. Try a reaching in a few directions to explore different angles in the relationship of your arms and torso/ribs.
  - b. Feel free to move about the space as you explore this stretch.
  - c. **(Pause/Integrate Sensory Information)**
3. *The Stretch Part Two:* Adding to the stretching gesture we've been practicing, try allowing the knees to bend deeply with each inhalation. Then, on the release of breath, simply return to standing upright. The belly and pelvic floor can release on each in-breath.
  - a. This movement can feel counterintuitive in some bodies, so it might take a little practice. Remember, on your inhalation, the body is moving in two directions: the knees are bending, so you're going DOWN, but your arms are lifting UP. It's a bit like an accordion. The release of breath on the exhalation is a simple return to a neutral stance-- nothing fancy here yet. Try not to manage the exhalation, as we're just stretching/warming up a generous inhalation.
  - b. Feel free to move about the space as you explore this movement-- arms stretching outward combined with a deep *plié* and a released belly on each inhalation, followed by a return to neutral on the exhalation.
  - c. **(Pause/Integrate Sensory Information)**
4. Discussion: *In this gesture, the movements of the primary muscles of inspiration (the diaphragm and the external intercostals) are mirrored and encouraged by analogous movements in the*

*arms and legs. The arms are mirroring the up-and-out swinging movement of the ribs during inhalation. The arm and side-torso stretch is also encouraging an expanded expression of this rib movement. The downward release of the torso is mirroring the downward movement of the diaphragm during inhalation. A deep bend in the legs encourages release in the pelvic floor and an intentional release of the belly creates more availability in the abdomen for the diaphragm to descend. Breathing actions that can be hard to discriminate in the torso are made concrete and accessible through conscious "choreography" in the limbs.*

5. *The Inspiration:* So far, we've been intentionally muscular in our approach to the inhalation, in order to feel the connection between the gesture and the in-breath. Now, we can let go of "overbreathing" and feel what an impulsive, playful version of this inspiration gesture might feel like. The "stretch" was a slow and somewhat effortful inhalation, followed by a simple and unmanaged return to equilibrium. The "inspiration" is a quick thought and gesture impulse, followed by a delayed return to equilibrium that might carry meaning. It's the beginnings of communicating. We'll look at the quick inhalation first:
  - a. Imagine yourself "dropping open" with a sudden thought-- as if you just remembered a funny story you wanted to share, or you lost your train of thought and then suddenly it came to you: "What was I...?... *[inspiration breath]* Oh yeah!"
  - b. Connect this imaginative moment of inspiration with an easy and quick version of the gesture we practiced earlier. It can be light and fun if you'd like.
  - c. Try this a few times, moving about the room. Perhaps each time you encounter someone new, there's an opportunity to receive a breath impulse from that contact.
  - d. **(Pause/Integrate Sensory Information)**
6. Now we can add structure and meaning to the exhalation:
  - a. Rather than quickly returning to a neutral body position after your inhalation, press the legs *slowly* toward straight and allow the arms to drift *slowly* back down.
  - b. Bring the lip and teeth together to add a light /f/ sound to the exhalation.
  - c. The sound should be fueled by the strength of the legs pushing the floor away and the buoyancy of the arms. The point when the legs straighten completely or when the arms reach your sides is an opportunity to take another breath. Try not to extend the sound beyond the end of the movement, as that is no longer mirroring a structured breath!
  - d. Yes, this is athletic!
7. *Jellyfish:*
  - a. Picture a jellyfish moving through the water. Notice how the jellyfish is rather diaphragm-shaped and its movement comes from the contracting and relaxation of that domed structure.
  - b. Using the gestures we've already practiced, move yourself through the environment of the room. Your movement in space creates a /f/ sound. You are buoyant and easy in your movement and sound-making.
  - c. Perhaps you are living in an ocean of thoughts. Remember to take in this "water" in order to move yourself through the space.
  - d. As you take in thought-fuel through the gesture of inspiration, it is changed within you and emerges more vibrant: add a little voice to your /f/ so we hear /v/ instead.
  - e. Share your vvvibrations with the other jellyfish in the room. See if you can have a /v/ conversation.

- f. Perhaps your jellyfish knows a few words of Omnish, or speaks another language like English. Feel free to allow the thought-fuel in the room to emerge as language or memorized text.
8. *Secret Jellyfish:*
- a. Gradually, begin to reduce the size of the movements in your limbs *without reducing the size of your breath movements*. Do this little by little, so you can gauge your success along the way.
  - b. You can start to imagine that, rather than being inside the jellyfish, the jellyfish is inside you. There is a jellyfish structure in your torso that feeds on inspirations and then helps you produce expressive sound. It's like a jellyfish homunculus, or a jellyfish subroutine.
  - c. At this point, imagine that you are a secret jellyfish in a school of secret jellyfish. Share your secret jellyfish nature with each other through text-- let the outside proclaim human, but the inside is all jellyfish movement!
  - d. Feel free to play and explore in ways not listed here.
  - e. **(Pause/Integrate Sensory Information)**