



Womb As Nest - Dimensional Container of Human Movement Developmental Patterns

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Michelle emerged into the world of Shiatsu in the early 1990s training in Bristol and Totnes. She integrates Shiatsu into her community with her 'Moving Naturally' practice in East Devon. Each week there is a different theme inspired by TCM - for instance in the winter there is 'Braving Bones' and in spring 'Gathering Gall'. Michelle is a somatic movement educator (ISMETA) and holds an MA in Dance and Somatic Wellbeing. Her website is www.movingnaturally.co.uk where information regarding in-person and online sessions is available.

Imagine holding a bird's nest in your hands. How does it feel?

Now bring hand touch to your Girdle Vessel (GDV) - located all around your torso between the lower ribs and where the legs meet the pelvis.

How does this compare with your sense of a nest?

Suzanne Yates reminds us that the GDV 'is the only vessel which lies wholly on the horizontal axis' (2022: 11). The sense of nest and feel of the GDV offers me a wonderful tactile sense of my three-dimensional body, in a Western culture where a relationship with the external world is primarily forward-facing. Daily activities in this digital and electronic epoch include computer work, mobile phone communication, driving, and watching TV, which Conrad suggests 'impels our tissue structure to accommodate a habitual forward thrust stance' (2007: 6).

Accessing the GDV in Shiatsu side position, where there is extensive connection with the front, side and back of a client's body, provides a juicy opportunity for three-dimensional relationship. When there is significant practitioner contact to the client's back body surface, and the client's awareness



and active participation is brought there, it provides an opportunity for a different experience of self which is less forwardly directed. In the Javanese Sumarah Meditation, the back of the body and the spinal column are considered the seat of consciousness. When a person is aware of their back, they can contact their own consciousness, open to feelings of relaxation, and experience a sense of detachment from life events. From this foundation, grounded in the back of the body, the front of the body opens - allowing receptivity and a general spaciousness rather than actively thrusting forwards into life (Romano 2013: 93).

Bring touch to your Girdle Vessel and open to your omni-dimensional breath flow.

Feel the breath move up/down, side to side, forwards and backwards.

A powerful front/back connection can be made through the potent acupressure points CV8, Spiritual Cord of Life, and GV4, Gate of Life. Both names refer to a sense of life source which, according to Estes, can also be said to be found in the female ovaries where all seed stock is laid down prior to a woman's birth, while in men this light of life is in the scrotum (1992: 29).

The human reproductive organ of the womb is a possible container for new life which we might liken to a nest. A dictionary definition of a nest is of a place or structure in which birds or other animals lay eggs or give birth to young. It is a cosy or secluded place (Collins 2011: 679) and becomes our first home on earth.

The foetus is connected to the mother's body by the placenta and umbilical cord which grows out of the navel area where CV8 Spiritual Cord of Life lies. The navel is thought to retain a cellular memory of an outer source of nourishment beyond birth (Yates 2017: 13) and it is well-documented that during womb-time the umbilicus is a source of energy and nourishment providing both growth and the elimination of waste products.

However, Hartley (1995: 29-31), from a body-mind centring



perspective, likens the womb to a container where self-organisation takes place. It is around the navel that foetal movement is formed, providing the foundations for future physical, sensory, perceptual, psychological and mental development. At this stage movement is pre-intentional, with implicit patterns, but these potentially evolve into the explicit form of life after birth. At source, limbs are not organised locally in the muscles but from the body's centre, the navel. From here each limb can know itself independently while simultaneously it is relating to other limbs and body areas - thus connecting and responding to the whole.

In this way there is an important link between the combination of the arm (heaven) and leg (earth) meridians found in the Six Divisions (Palmer 2018). For instance, The Greater Yang Meridian (Tai Yang) of The Creative Family connects the Small Intestine and Bladder meridians, propelling the body through space by reaching and pushing to reflect a person's intention.

What follows is a series of movement explorations which I have offered to my 'Moving

Naturally' class participants to enable them to experience movement stemming from the human navel in a division of upper/lower, side/side and diagonal opposites, which could be regarded as another form of Six Divisions.

Homologous Developmental Movement Patterns

Arrive in supine - with your hands on your navel and legs lengthened wide. Allow each leg to slide along the ground feeling how they connect through the navel.

Move your legs, flexing and extending them into and away from the navel.

Connect your feet to your tailbone. Connect your hands to your mouth.

Widen both arms along the ground on high diagonals. Slide one arm and then the other maintaining a sense of connection through the navel.

Move your arms flexing and compressing them into and away from the navel.

Move your limbs imagining you are swimming breaststroke, being a frog or a rabbit.





Homolateral Developmental Movement Patterns

Lie on the right side of the body and feel the earth connection. Let movement unfold which may travel you on this side. Explore this on your left side.

Arrive in prone. Place your arms alongside your head. Slide your left arm and leg along the ground, then your right arm and leg. Notice the alternation between both body sides.

Discover lizard-like movement, your right limbs flexing while the left limbs extend. Then alternate to left limbs flexing and right limbs extending. How might you travel along the earth like this?

Contralateral Developmental Movement Patterns

Return to supine. Place your right hand on your navel with your left arm extended along the ground on a high diagonal. Let your right leg extend wide to the earth with your right leg bent and the sole of the foot on the ground. Repeatedly slide your extended left arm and right leg away from each other. Discover a sense of the diagonal passing through or nearby the navel. Now allow the left arm and right leg to flex and extend from the navel.

Repeat the above exploration with the right arm and left leg diagonal.



Spend time crawling along the ground.

Psychotherapist Jean Leidloff offers the Continuum Concept, which postulates that the human species at birth expects life to be as near as possible similar to womb-time, where there is continual human contact, and nutritional and elimination needs are met with ease and comfort. Western society has veered away from the in-arms phase of infancy - whereby the baby is in constant contact with another human day and night, where there is no need to signal needs by crying out for attention as immediate human support is constantly present.

She claims that womb-time is the best proximation that a person will likely ever know to the wellbeing state, his innate expectation (1989: 71). I am curious whether the Sumarah meditation, which encourages relaxation, has derived from a culture that has embraced the in-arms stage. What I have discovered is that by reconnecting with the organisational movement found in womb-time, it has in some way offered some kind of rightful expectation of the wellbeing experience. This is echoed by the following Moving Naturally participant's reflective words after exploring the developmental movement patterns.

In the soft protective nest of my womb babies are laid.

Slowly from this sacred place my own wings start to grow.

Delicate and strong they take me into the air, glowing, silent and calm.

Flying over the shimmering sea, the blooming trees, the dark side of the moon, the axial sun.

The healing has begun.



References

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