



KINESTHETICS:
FOUR QUESTIONS ANSWERED FOR CORPUSWEB.NET
BY SUSAN T. KLEIN

1) When and how did you first get in touch with kinesthetics? When was the first time you heard the term?

The first time I heard the term kinesthetics was in the mid 1970's. I was about 25 years old and in the early stages of my exploration of the body as a result of a severe injury to my left knee. I have a vague recollection of hearing the word while I was teaching in my studio on 56th Street and Broadway in New York City. At that time I was teaching and running my studio and also studying Laban Movement Analysis at the Dance Notation Bureau located at 16th Street and Union Square West.

When I first became aware of the term I had already been dancing for about 20 years and had reached a level of significant technical proficiency. I remember being intrigued with the idea that the body had a feedback system which could be named and understood based on the nervous system relaying information from the muscles and bones back to the brain to orient our body. I remember thinking how interesting it was that we had this feedback system that informed our body as to where it was in space and how it worked. I did not realize how truly profound and to what depth I would, in the next 35 years, develop and teach this sense.

Since being asked to write about kinesthetics I have realized how interesting and important a concept it is. My initial reaction to the idea of writing about kinesthetics was very simplistic. It was as if I was back 35 years in my practice and was simply thinking about kinesthetics as a feedback system that allows us to know exactly where all our body parts are in space, the shapes we are making, and allows us to monitor the quality of our movements, our sensations. Early in the development of my work, I dismissed the concept of kinesthetics as not useful to me. I rarely, if ever, use the word kinesthetics in my teaching or in my writing since I have never taught through imitation of form or through the feeling of sensations. However, since being invited to write about it for Corpus, I have come to understand kinesthesia as a much more profound concept than I very casually assigned to it many years ago.

2) What is your idea of kinesthetics?

My idea of kinesthetics is concerned with the concept of experiencing, with a high degree of sensitivity, what we are doing, bringing to consciousness the precision and understanding of how the body is moving as a whole and how the parts exist in relationship to each other. For me kinesthetics is not dealing with the sensations of movement or how the body feels, but rather with the active search, through attention and sensitivity, to where the body is in space and how the body connects in relationship to itself. Kinesthetics is related to my idea that there is a body-felt understanding, an internal knowing that can be developed in the same way we develop or fine tune our other external senses; sight, smell, touch, taste, and hearing. Kinesthetics would be our 6th sense, the sense that tells us where and how we exist in our internal environment and how we connect and relate to our external environment. It needs to be developed in the same way we develop all our other senses. Most of us move without paying attention to the precision with which we are moving, just like we see without noticing detail, taste without discerning the depth and layers of flavor, hear without sorting the nuisances of sound, or touch without discerning the qualities of what we are touching. In general we move mindlessly through life and dance mindlessly through imitation. For me the beauty and excitement in kinesthetics is bringing a body-felt understanding of movement to consciousness. It is fine-tuning our ability to feel, on subtle levels, our soft tissue and bones, to be able to bring to consciousness and full body-felt understanding, how our body functions. Kinesthetics is our tool to bring the body into a deep state of balance, to its optimal state of movement potential.

I have come to realize kinesthesia is actually a crucial aspect of my work. The concept of kinesthetics has explained to me why my work has to be experienced and why it must be learned and mastered on the level of a body-felt understanding. Kinesthesia has helped me understand why my work is so difficult to explain. Through Klein Technique™, the body can be talked about, analyzed, and intellectually understood, but our goal is to make change in the functioning of the body. The work must exist on the level of the body. It cannot exist solely in the mind. Kinesthetics is the body-felt understanding, the internal experience, the sense that makes change in the functioning of the body possible.

Kinesthetics is our sense that allows us to perceive movement in locomotion as well as the movement inherent to the body in stillness. It is this sense that allows us to focus on what we are doing while we are doing it. It requires a split-level of consciousness; one level is doing, while the other level is observing what is being done. Kinesthetics awareness allows us to keep track of what we are doing with our bodies as well as how we are doing it. In Klein Technique™ the active and receptive or perceptive aspects of movement exist

simultaneously. By working slowly and thoughtfully we bring movement and the subtleties of movement up to consciousness, so it can be analyzed and understood. We bring unconscious movement habits up to the conscious level so they can be experienced, understood, processed and changed if necessary. It is this process of discovery, this process of bringing the unknown to the known, the unconscious up to consciousness, and/or expanding consciousness, that enables us to change.

3) Why and how do you apply kinesthetics in classes and your practice? Why not? Can you give an example?

Klein Technique™ is a process, a process of change. Kinesthetics is a tool in Klein Technique™ that allows us to understand the body, not intellectually, but on the level of the body itself. It is the tool that allows us to make that change. It allows us to feel deeply, with tremendous sensitivity, how the body is connected to itself, to the ground and to space. Change can only be experienced in relationship to what is. Kinesthesia allows us to discover where we are in space, how our joints and bones are connected in relationship to each other and the roles the muscles, tendons, ligaments, and fascia play in the coordination of the whole.

Kinesthetics evolves through the cycle of learning and is an essential part to the process of learning itself. I believe we need to learn how to learn. We have to gain a kinesthetic sense in order to learn how to move. The process is cyclical. It requires a depth of feeling, tuning into what already is. It requires quietness, stillness, and focus. We are finding the movement in the stillness, the constant and on-going movement in all the systems of the body. Through the development of our kinesthetic sense we gain an internal knowing of where we are in space, how we are connected to the floor and how our body parts are connected to each other. We have to develop a language of movement that enables us to learn how to move.

It is important to note that our kinesthetic sense does not always give us an accurate reading, or feed us back with an objective truth concerning where our body is in space and how our body connects to itself. Kinesthetics is a subjective sense that has to be calibrated and educated. We define ourselves in the scheme of our habits. Our feeling of where our body is in relationship to itself and in space is based on what we are used to feeling, what we have calibrated to understand as correct. Without focus or attention, our kinesthetic sense maintains our habituated movements. We think we are moving correctly. However, by bringing our habituated movement up to consciousness, we can use our kinesthetic sense to learn whether our habits are serving us, or whether they need to be changed. We can use our kinesthetic sense to re-calibrate our feeling, our body-felt understanding, of what is correct. It is through this cyclic process of learning, learning and re-learning, that we come to the place of what I call an internal knowing. This 'knowing' comes from within. It comes as a result of time, process and

intense work. It tells us, with great certainty, where we are in space and how our body is connect within itself.

In Klein Technique™ we are working on the level of the bone and the muscles of deep postural support. We are learning to feel deeply, to feel the deepest tissues in the body and to move from these tissues. We learn to feel at this deep level of the body and move from within. In this process we also need to learn how to feel the more superficial levels of the body in order to let them go. The tissues, the large external muscles, in general, restrict movement. When these muscles are held, not only do they prevent contact with the deep levels of the body, they prevent movement in the body in general. Muscles are meant to move the body. When they are over-worked or held they act to stabilize the body and they actually restrict movement. When these superficial muscles are held we cannot change our movement patterns. Once we let go the holding in these large over-worked external muscles we can gain access to the deep muscles of postural support that hug the bones. This process is a cyclical process of deepening our kinesthetic awareness. It requires that we learn to feel very deeply. It determines how and when our muscles both release and contract, and when they are held. There is a different quality to the movement of the superficial muscles and that of the deeper muscles. The superficial muscles have a quality of contraction or holding, the 'feeling' we all associate with muscle use. The deep muscles, however, have a 'feeling' of non-use. When using these muscles there is a sense of enlivening of the body, they bring us into an experience of the body as a whole.

In Klein Technique™ we work slowly and thoughtfully on the level of the bone, our deepest structural tissue. We are working using clear commands of direction, for example: lengthen your tail bone down to the earth while at the same time lengthening your spine up through the top of your head to the heavens, connect your sitz bones through your heals into the floor, connect your tail bone to your pubic bone, connect your tail bone to your heals, and connect your greater trochanters to your sitz bones. In order to make these connections, our sense of our body, our kinesthetic sense, must be highly developed to feel the profound and subtle movements of the bones and these muscles of deep postural support. Much of our work is to gain a kinesthetic sense of these deep muscles; the psoas, the pelvic floor, the hamstrings and the external rotators, as well as the bones they are attached to, the bones of the spine, pelvis and leg. This ability enables us to change the relationship of the joints themselves. It enables us to change the relationship of the spine and pelvis to the legs, to bring the pelvis to a full and upright position. It enables us to change how the forces of qi or gravity travel from heaven to earth through the bones, as well as how the forces of movement travel through the body both in stillness and in locomotive movement. The clearer the forces of movement travel through the joints, the more efficient the movement. We use less force to produce more movement. By changing the relationship of these key joints, the sacro-illiac joints and hip sockets, we are connecting the body more fully to the earth. We are enabling forces of

movement to travel in a clearer, stronger path through the body. Since we are using the deepest muscles of postural support to move the bones, the deepest tissue of the body, we produce movement that comes from within. Toward this end, Klein Technique™ develops a profound kinesthetic sense.

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