Embodied Inquiry
Writing, Living and Being through the Body

Celeste Snowber
Simon Fraser University, Canada

Embodied Inquiry is offered to all who want to deepen the connection to their bodies. Here is the inspiration to see your body as a place of inquiry, learning, understanding and perceiving. Listening to the sensual knowing and aliveness within the body can inform our personal and professional lives and reveal the connections between living, being, and creating. Snowber writes this book in poetic and visceral language as a love letter from the body wooing readers to inhabit their own skins and celebrate the beautiful and paradoxical place where limitations and joy dwell together. Touching on the vastness of our body’s call to us, Embodied Inquiry explores solitude, paradox, inspiration, lament, waking up to the sensuous, ecology, listening, and writing from the body. This is not a manual, but a book to accompany you in befriending the body and let your own gestures, stories and bodily ways of being lead you to listen to your own rhythm. Whether an artist or educator, researcher or administrator, performer or poet, seeker or scientist, you will find this book as a companion to sustain a vibrant life and co-create a better world.

“A beautiful, creative and highly original book. Written with passion and wisdom, this book makes significant contributions to arts-based research, artistic research practice, embodiment, and living artful, intentional and connected lives. A stunning achievement.” – Patricia Leavy, Ph.D., author of Method Meets Art and editor of the Social Fictions series

“Snowber offers wisdom for learning to live exotically, erotically, emotionally, and ecstatically. Reading Embodied Inquiry is like walking on a wilderness trail, in sunlight-infused rain, learning to embrace the possibilities of vitality and vulnerability, joy and grief, love and loss.” – Carl Leggo, Ph.D., poet & professor, University of British Columbia

“Weaving prose and poetry, Snowber awakens our sensual and embodied self at the very roots of living. This deeply personal work will move educators, researchers, artists, and those for whom lived experience is core to their creative process.” – Daniel Deslauriers, Ph.D., Professor, Transformative Studies Doctorate Program, CIIS

Cover image: Parpallo IV, by Mary Blaze (http://blazeworksstudio.com/)

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ADVANCE PRAISE FOR
EMBODIED INQUIRY

“Embodied Inquiry: Writing, Living and Being through the Body by Celeste Snowber is a beautiful, creative and highly original book. Snowber invites readers to understand their bodies as a place of knowing – a place in which to center inquiry. Written with passion and wisdom, this book makes significant contributions to arts-based research, artistic research practice, embodiment, and living artful, intentional and connected lives. A stunning achievement.”
– Patricia Leavy, Ph.D., author of Method Meets Art and editor of the Social Fictions series

“In Embodied Inquiry: Writing, Living and Being through the Body Celeste Snowber offers wisdom for learning to live exotically, erotically, emotionally, and ecstatically. Celeste understands the connections between the sacred, the sensual, the spiritual, and the somatic. She knows how the heart is anchored in the earth, how humour and hope dance a tango, how humanity is hungry for the arts. With an indefatigable spirit Celeste calls us to honour both the known and the unknown as eminently and immanently mysterious. She reminds us to pay attention, to savour each moment, to dance with the body’s insatiable pleasure in being alive. Celeste’s research seeks to reclaim what we know intimately and intuitively as children. In her writing and living Celeste performs a clarion call to linger artfully in the world with more questioning wonder, more elemental attention, more creative consciousness, and more transformative imagination. Reading Embodied Inquiry is like walking on a wilderness trail, in sunlight-infused rain, learning to embrace the possibilities of vitality and vulnerability, joy and grief, love and loss. In lyrical ruminations and poetry, Celeste dances with the body of language so we can learn to dance with the language of the body.”
– Carl Leggo, Ph.D., poet & professor, University of British Columbia

“In Embodied Inquiry Snowber like a benevolent Siren calls the reader to join her on a beautiful sensuous paradoxical journey into the body. For her the body is home and through this text the reader is able to embrace her embodied scholarship to feel, learn and know.”
– Carl Bagley, PhD FRSA, Professor of Educational Sociology, Head of School of Education Durham University, UK
“More than an instruction manual or a hands-on guide, this valuable book is a call to re-inhabit our most precious and essential bodies. When read with full-spectrum vision, it will enliven scholarship and transform daily habits in ways that improve life quality and mobilize creativity. Celeste guides us across multiple thresholds, coming ever closer to embodied wisdom in ways that transcend categories, disciplines and old habits of thought. Her book inspires me to live more fully with its heartfelt call to re-engage the only body I will ever have in this singular life. I recommend it wholeheartedly.”
– Michelle LeBaron, B.A. J.D. M.A., Professor and dispute resolution scholar | Peter A. Allard School of Law, University of British Columbia, Editor of The Choreography of Resolution: Conflict, Movement and Neuroscience

“Weaving prose and poetry, Snowber awakens our sensual and embodied self at the very roots of living. She invites us to mindfully listen to our body and to follow its leads into the act of knowing and writing. Not wishing to settle for a separate methodology her proposal is bold: embodied practices can infuse all forms of inquiry. This deeply personal work will move educators, researchers, artists, and those for whom lived experience is core to their creative process.”
– Daniel Deslauriers, Ph.D., Professor, Transformative Studies Doctorate Program California Institute of Integral Studies

“Before I met Celeste Snowber (through various publication projects), I had distanced myself from being a mother – or rather, my children belonged to my private life – and not seen or heard in my professional life. Reading Celeste’s work over a number of years now, I have been encouraged (and at first went unwillingly) to feel and share my children in my writing, teaching and editing life. Celeste writes, ‘you have been trained how to read and write. I am calling you back to a place where blood turns to ink, and flesh seeps into your words so they sing and pulse off the page’. Celeste’s work has changed me: it has challenged me too. Her work is political and feminist, but this book ‘is not a new fancy methodology’, but rather ‘an invocation to bring aspects to our lives which will infuse our vocation, creativity and research’. The body is not left behind, lonely and silenced in Celeste’s writing – the book grows out of our humanness: paradox, pain, suffering and our inescapable embodied life-journey. In this way, Celeste’s book is existential. Giving our cells phenomenological time, takes up clock time, and she calls me into lived time – into feeling-full time. Encouraging embodied phenomenal feeling-time, to take time, in patriarchal institutions is Celeste’s gift to us. In this
book Celeste gives organic voice to the lonely body, often unable to breathe and stretch-out in professions and vocations. Celeste’s book deepens her previous work, and at times, is uncomfortable and challenging – in fact this book requires courage – because to be with feeling-full body, as Celeste points out, affects our ethics and decision making, and calls us into depths often unshared. Celeste writes a love poem from the body and I am called by my own body’s sadness – my body is re/membered. Celeste’s book is also phenomenological, where the body and its ‘mores’ are languaged into presence. In kinship with the phenomenological tradition, she attends to depth-language, where the body is not left behind in language-formulation.”

– Amanda Williamson, Principal Editor of The Journal of Dance, Movement and Spiritualities, Honorary Professor C-dare, Coventry University

“You do not have a body. You are a body.’ With this assertion, Celeste Snowber invites you on a poetic exploration of the centrality of your physical self—your cells, blood, organs, and senses—to passionate, soulful living. Drawing upon her years of teaching, writing and dancing, she brings to life your body’s role in making key life decisions, connecting with your creative muse, drawing upon your inherent insights and wisdom, and viewing your longings as thresholds for discovery.

Her lyrical prose, enriched by her luscious Bodypsalms, dances off the page as she feeds us story after story of how her body has nurtured an ecstatic approach to daily life. Her examples tantalize us into action. You may interrupt your reading of Embodied Inquiry to meander along a river bank, get down on the floor to play with children, savor luscious vegetables as you prepare supper, and capture a poem wafting up inside as you watch the birds.

Only one caveat: after imbibing this guide to embodied living, you and your body (and now your friend) will feel more alive, more engaged, more adventurous, and more grateful for your new relationship.”

– Diane Glass, author of This Need to Dance: A Life of Rhythm and Resilience, co-founder of “Tending Your Inner Garden®”

“Poetic, passionate, purposeful! In an efficient, fast-paced, technological world, Celeste, with humour and honour, will stretch you to re-see what you have forgotten; the presence, joy, and wisdom of your body as a place of connecting you to your meaningful life!”

– Mary Beth Cancienne, Ph.D., Associate Professor, James Madison University
“When was the last time you took a moment to laze on your back and marvel at the glorious sky? Or took a moment to simply breathe? Or sensed what lives in your gut as you write or spend time with others? No matter where you may be or what you might be doing, Celeste’s prose will inspire you to live more deeply within your body. From savoring moments of intense pleasure or passion to attuning to the pain that lives within heartache or injury, Celeste invites us to courageously dwell in the fullness of our vulnerabilities. And in taking Celeste’s advice, to live each day with an embodied sense of inquiry, we may co-create a better existence, become more awake and alive, and experience all that there is to sense as we go forward, bodyward, heartward and soulward with no bounds.”

Rebecca Lloyd, Ph.D., dancer, writer and Associate Professor in the Faculty of Education at the University of Ottawa
for my students
over the last few decades
who have dared to go on the journey
to call the body home
TABLE OF CONTENTS

Preface xiii
Acknowledgements xvii
Chapter 1: Let the Body out 3
  An Enfleshed Theory Dances 4
  What Happened to Body Knowledge? 6
  Remembering Your First Love 8
  Bodypsalm for Remembering Back the Body 14
Chapter 2: Solitude and Physicality 17
  Horizontal Inquiry and Sabbath 18
  Embodied Practices 20
  Bodypsalm for Solitude 23
Chapter 3: Waking up to the Sensuous 27
  Landscape of Our Bodies 27
  Sensual Art of Living and Being 30
  Living Romantically 31
  Living Exotically 34
  In Praise of Hips 35
  Bodypsalm for Celebrating the Sensuous 37
Chapter 4: Writing from the Body 41
  Womb-Studio and Writing 42
  Returning to the Breath 44
  Walking into Writing 45
  Lament and Writing 46
  Movement and Writing 47
  Getting Unstuck 48
  Writing from Our Vulnerabilities 50
  Bodypsalm for Writing from the Body 52
TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter 5: Listening and the Body .......................... 55
  Listening and the Senses .................................. 56
  The Body as Muse ........................................ 58
  Listening to Our Passion .................................. 59
  Listening and Insight ..................................... 60
  Bodypsalms for Listening .................................. 62

Chapter 6: The Body and Paradox .................. 65
  Gravity and Levity ......................................... 65
  Body and Thresholds ...................................... 66
  Knee Wisdom ............................................... 68
  Dancing into Guidance .................................... 69
  Sternum to Sky ............................................. 70
  Bodypsalms for Living into Paradox ................... 72

Chapter 7: An Ecology of the Body ....... 77
  Dancing in the Alphabet of Creation ................. 77
  We Are Made of Stars and Scars ...................... 78
  Living from Skin, Stone to Sky ....................... 79
  Returning to the Earth’s Intelligence ............... 80
  Bodypsalms for the Earth ............................... 82

Chapter 8: Bodyward ................................. 85
  The Body Is Not Polite .................................. 85
  Jumping Off ............................................... 87
  Domecstacy ............................................... 87
  Visceral Creativity ....................................... 88
  Bodypsalms for the Real ................................ 90

References .................................................. 93

About the Author .......................................... 95
migrate to the life
that wants to be lived in you
one step at a time

Embodyed Inquiry is offered to all of you who want to deepen your relationship and connection to your bodies. To deepen the relationship and connection to your body is to call forth the natural resource of living and being in the world. The body has a language of its own. The body calls to you continuously, the body wants its subtle notes and bold proclamations to be listened to and honoured. This process of the body communicating with you could be likened to a kayaker gliding on the water. The body is a riparian zone, 80% of a baby’s body is water, and 60% of an adult’s body is water. Like water, the body is delicate and strong at the same time. The body, like water, calls to you to flow and cooperate with your own nature.

For too long the body has been looked at as an object, as if from the outside. The body has been colonized, gendered, politicized, medicalized and consumerized. We have for too long bullied the body to look a certain way, be a certain way, or act a certain way. How the body is perceived has a direct relationship to the ability to disconnect from the body’s knowledge and wisdom. What would it mean to live from the inside out? To take back the body, to refuse its objectification is to restore the body to its status of natural habitat. When we are comfortable in our own skins, we are able to celebrate the beautiful, paradoxical site where limitations and joy dwell together.

In this book, I invite you to see the body as a place of inquiry, a place of learning, understanding and perceiving. All of the knowledge of how to listen to the body is already within you. Following the innate knowledge of the body is the ultimate way of being. The body wants to woo you back to yourself, where the voice within your belly and skin has prominence. There is a time to say yes to the grammar of the gut. Listening to the body can be as sweet as a concerto. I invite you to listen to your own birdsong.

Listening to the body is as valuable and its physicality is as integral to our lives as listening to spiritual, philosophical or intellectual guidance. From a visceral perspective, spirituality and physicality are deeply entwined and interwoven in the fabric of our cells. Coming to knowledge and understanding of what it means to listen to the body is necessary for all who want to access
a holistic and healthy path. Whether you are a scientist or artist, lawyer or educator, performer or poet, administrator or physician, you can benefit from a more fully embodied engagement to your life. This book is an invitation to bring the possibilities of how our senses and bodily ways of perceiving and understanding can inform our personal and professional lives.

This approach is not new nor does it represent new knowledge. This knowledge comes from the ancients, the wise ones, the indigenous people and the mystics. You’ve heard it. You know it. That’s because this knowledge is as earthly as the gardener’s hands. I am one of those gardeners, whose fingers write from the earth. My words are what I grow. This book comes out of decades of teaching, writing and researching particularly in the area of bringing embodied ways of inquiry to arts education. My scholarship has also led me to bring embodied inquiry to pedagogy, transforming my teaching and students’ ways of learning and opening up embodied ways of inquiry within curriculum studies and arts-based research. Many years ago, when I began my study and research in embodiment, both as a dancer and scholar, I was struck by how disembodied the discourse on the body actually was. Scholars spoke of embodiment and the body as if it was a linear text, and of the body as if it didn’t blush, pale, weep or sweat. This dialogue and approach was radically different from the life I was leading as a dance artist and mother of three small children.

Over the years I have sought to find ways to show undergraduate and graduate students the incredible resource of their bodies, valuable for their scholarship, practice, teaching and living. In this pursuit, I have found no one text or field adequate. Instead I learned what’s valuable and developed my sensibility by reading broadly and drawing wisdom from a variety of fields, including poetics, curriculum studies, phenomenology, arts-based research, deep ecology, feminist studies and of course, from the experiences of daily life. This book is a companion piece to the vast scholarly work done on embodied ways of knowing and inquiry. May you take this along in your journey and be encouraged that all of life is connected to research, vocation, and how we live in our professions.

This book is an invitation to bring the possibilities of how our senses and bodily ways of perceiving and understanding can inform our personal and professional lives. The personal and universal are deeply connected and it has always been my intention to bring together the public and private, political and poetic, therefore my scholarly and creative work is grounded in the lived curriculum and garden of autobiography. This is the garden where stories have the ability to utter one another. We are found in each other’s stories,
whether they are written, oral, danced, painted or poeticized. My invitation to you is to let out your own stories, gestures, and bodily understandings be a place to co-create a better world. This book is peppered with my own autobiographical, lived experience as a way to usher you into reclaiming the potency of your own beautiful and paradoxical lives. The body is rooted in breath, rhythm and poetry and this book leans to a poetic exploration of embodiment. Haikus, poems and language rooted in the senses are part of its offering.

I have been hesitant over the years to create a name or methodology for this kind of work even though it has found voice within the fields of arts-based research and curriculum studies. These fields and their intersection with qualitative research, have opened up inquiry that values the phenomenological, the autobiographical, and the artistic. Arts-based research has burgeoned to live in a multiplicity of ways including poetic inquiry, artography, performative inquiry, arts-informed learning, and many more. What I have to offer is more of a way of being in the world, and can contribute to all of forms of inquiry. This is an embodied inquiry, which enriches all the methodologies of research and practice. There is not one plan, method, or form to follow. Instead, there is an invitation to live through your body and to be open and opened by experience.

I work and live from the premise that physicality, poetics and creativity are deeply intertwined. A return to celebration of our physicality awakens the juices of a creative life. Life in and of itself is an art form and living artfully and aesthetically is central to being responsive to a life. The body in all its fullness is a gift that allows us to walk, run, flop and fall along the journey that is set before us. This is the journey of being open to all of life, its mystery and despair, the ecstasy and sensual. And this ecstatic life is also one, which is open to our tears, for they are prayers, and the moisture needed for all joy to grow.

It is my hope that this book will infuse you with courage to live more deeply from what you already know in your body. May you call your body back to listen to the tenderness and wildness and everything else in between. May you have the courage to live in such a way that you are at home in your own skin. Of course this is not a one-time event, taking place after you read this book. This is truly a life practice.

With that, more than guidelines, I offer Embodied Inquiry as inspiration. It is a book designed to be picked up and put down, to sip in small doses. A few sentences to bring you back to the sentences that your body wants to write. There are intentionally recurrent themes as waves upon the shore. What you
PREFACE

bring to this book in your own lived experience is vitally important. In this way reading is a co-creation. Through its words and your presence, may you connect to the deep knowledge and wisdom of your own body, and may you acknowledge it as the always present map within. A map to your own pilgrimage back to befriending your body. Again, you already know within you all of what I have to say. I intend my words to be an angel’s nudge, encouraging you to trust the wisdom of your own amazing body.
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The pieces listed below have appeared, some in altered form in the following journals and books:

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We do not have bodies;
we are bodies.

We came from the belly and hips
and we must return there.

Snowber, *Dance as a Way of Knowing* (2012a, p. 55)
I commend you, for giving me your attention. You have analyzed and grasped the concept of the body politic and the connections between the body, knowledge and power. You have researched the cultural reasons the body has been absent and present, revered and misused. Now I find myself party to a wide variety of discourses, taking place across many fields and disciplines. I am a hot subject and object; researchers are now taking me seriously. I am even being discussed at the desks of some of the finest institutions around the world.

This is a big feat. Yet in this presence there are absences. These absences are conspicuous and have implications for the intellectuals, scholars, artists, practitioners, and educators who speak about and live from the body. So now it is time for me to speak. I speak to you with a tender heart, and from all that I, the body, want you to live through mystery, paradox, and ecstasy. I am not a text and cannot be distanced like words read on a page. Words don’t sweat or weep, moan or bleed. I do. I have come to remind and rebody you to remember a few ways to bring me back to the centre of your attention. I am more interested in being a centrefold than a fold.

I am a gift for you. Think of me as a personal navigation system to deeply listen to me and hear the possibilities of what can unfold within you, including pain and beauty. I am the all-inclusive map you have been yearning for, a free GPS system to your innermost longing. I am not found in one neat package. I am filled with the wonder and the limitations of all that it means to be an alive human being. It is through me that you feel the wind in your hair, the water on your skin and the sway in your limbs. I live through a sensuous knowledge. I am all about those many kinds of intelligences you speak of, that have been well theorized. I am the lifeblood of inspiration; it is I who puts breath into these intelligences. I am found not only in kinaesthetic or visual intelligence, but how you viscerally feel the waves of movement.
within your flesh, the flutter in your chest, the sigh in your voice, the release in your shoulders, the way you walk into your class or how you glance at a loved one.

I reside in the subtle sensations constantly flowing through you. I am your trusted inner voice. I am the feast for your eyes, the tactile knowing for your skin, and the smell of your sweat. I speak in a language that defies categories. It is the language of the flesh, ripe with carnal ways, which are often absent from the halls of the academy, institutions, and the boardrooms of corporations.

In a predictable fashion, I am known to be unpredictable. My sentences are formed with the grammar of the gut. This is a grammar that is often left at the doors when policies are being made or enacted. Though this is perhaps where I am most needed. What would it mean for decisions to be lead by the pulse of the body during an important merger or integrating a huge change to a higher-educational institution? How could attention to the body positively affect decision-making or attend to inclusiveness? You see, it has become in vogue to speak of intuition and imagination in many fields, including leadership, management, health, law, research, and teaching. The diverse fields within education, arts, counselling, and philosophy after all have had major thinkers and scholars that have cultivated other ways of knowing, although I’m always a bit of a side dish. The truth is sometimes the side dish, is the main dish, the ones you adore, like French fries!

AN ENFLESHE an THEORY DANCES

There is a secret the body holds. How you access your imagination, intuition and perception lies within the body. Making a practice of listening to your imaginative, intuitive, and perceptive abilities activates the energy that lies dormant within your own pulsing body. You can know all the steps to a dance – a plié, a turn, a rhythm, or hand gesture, but the steps are theorizing. To truly dance the steps, you need to breathe life into them, to activate the soul – the bodysoul. Go beyond the steps to a place where you can dance again as a child does. I’m after a theory with flesh on it; a theorizing through the flesh.

So many of you let the rhythm of what delights you take second place, or worse, give it up completely. If you attended to the body as you do to the computer, we could really have a party, if not tea! I love to be moved, walked, spun, stretched, and expanded. I need breath and movement for living. I am
often stopped from yawning. How I long to yawn in your seemingly endless meetings! Every profession or field has infinite meetings.

Why don’t you take a break and let me stretch in the middle of your committee or departmental meetings? What if I could stretch, sigh, or even sit on the ground? I am scrunched for hours in front of a laptop. The fingers are getting a work out, but a huge part of me has been left behind. My goodness, it’s as if you don’t have hips or legs or pelvises for that matter. What about entertaining a pelvic inquiry? You have relegated the pelvis to live in the third world as if it is the forgotten sister. Bring her back! From the pelvis you were born and it is to the pelvis you must return to. Activate those hips dear and you may feel the sway of your own heart! A knowing that lies in the centre of your belly may reveal itself. A hidden voice may speak.

You of course, like everyone else, learned to “pay attention” by being still. This is not a true attention or a contemplative or alive stillness, but more like being frozen or immobilized, which of course results in stiffness. Contemplative stillness knows the rhythm of the breath and is in close contact with the heart. This is the sort of bodily attention where one recovers awe at each day.

It is time to make space for me as you did when you were a child. Abandon yourself once again to skipping rope and leaping frogs. Make noises and invent stories as often as brushing your teeth. Here is the place for astonishment and inspiration.

Some of you had begun your early career as professors in education as teachers, for you loved the child within yourself and the child without. Or you began your career as artists or actors because you loved to create as a child or as scientists because you loved to experiment. I am asking you to attend again as a child, the child who knows the body does not lie, but is the place where truth lives, however you may define that. Let me arise from the sitting postures I am in all day. Let me come out and play! Take your students through the physicality of the earth, transgress the boundaries of your confined spaces. The real act of transgression is to bring me to your class, let me out, find the body pedagogy of teaching. Here all teaching is a bodily act as well as mentoring students or colleagues for that matter. Or bring me to the health institution and hear your patients through the stories within their bodies. Let your body be brought to the listening process, where one listens with all of his or her being. You can’t afford not to bring me.

And most of all remember this: it is time to play again. Instead of just hashing issues out with colleagues, go together to the woods, open up your
sternums to the sky, smell the fragrance of the earth and be silent together. It is in the silences that the body has insight waiting to impart. If you allow the body with its senses into research, data collection, analysis and reflection, there may be a different world, a new “academy” – an academy of flesh available to you. You are called to survive and to thrive. Engage with all your physicality and return to nourishing body, soul, heart and intellect.

After all this life is about connection. Your body seeks to connect you to the magic of the life force through the magic of the body. You may all call it something different, but this is about living with jouissance, living with vitality and being deeply alive. Sip the body’s glory in joyful times and may that deepen your endurance in the hard times. The body is not perfect, neither is your nose, back or hormones. Every human being lives with limits. Some more than others. Even the broken body takes its place in our lives. There are times when you are called to pause and pace. Slow down. Soothe oneself into the beauty of writing by hand, walking in shadow, eating mangoes and using more garlic. You are both researchers and searchers. Our lives are a place of research – a living search. It is all too easy to forget to search for and befriend the body.

Contained in this search and research is the rootedness to your humanness, your human beingness. You are often better at human doing than human being. Connection to your body is most alive in the spaces of being, the ontological space of being present – a bodily presence. So ask yourself, and right now: What does your body know? What does your body remember?

In what your body longs for lies the wisdom and the space for rejuvenation. Find the landscape for your expressions as you did when turning your torso in your mother’s womb. I am no longer satisfied to be in the pockets of lives, institutions, academies or organizations. I want to be part of the full clothing – animating your life from within. Come back to what I have given you in the beginning.

Speak tenderly to me and let the wild/erness return or perhaps emerge for the first time. Let your own tissues and cells surprise you into its great mystery.

WHAT HAPPENED TO BODY KNOWLEDGE?

How did our intimate connection to the body get lost in the first place? How has our connection to the knowledge stored in our bodies become dormant? How did it come to be that knowledge that you had in the beginning of your life has now become inaccessible to you? There is so much knowledge,
epistemologies and ontologies of all kinds. Yet, there are continual splits between theorizing and practicing, knowing and acting, listening and responding. Scholarly discourse has given attention to “the absent body,” to the places where the body has not been heard, seen or felt. Having and living in a body is a birthright of being human, but the deeper truth is that you were all born with the knowledge that you are bodies, not just have bodies. This birthright contains a knowledge that is visceral, tactile, visual, audible and kinaesthetic. As your first love, you moved in your mother’s womb and took delight in world outside with all your senses. Unfortunately, you soon learned from your culture and teachers that bodily knowledge was not valued as much as head knowledge. Excelling in the joy of swinging, playing in the mud, pounding on your pillow or listening to your belly doesn’t typically earn you kudos or respect. In contrast, you likely would be praised for executing certain skill sets, such as those related to sports, or having to sit attentively in the classroom. But of course you soon found as you were schooled both within the culture, and institutions that this bodily knowledge was not high on the list of what was valued. A major mistake of schooling is the one that equates paying attention with sitting still. Sitting still creates a frozenness in the body, overriding the body’s natural fluidity. The mind and body are so connected, that in fact, the mind ceases productivity in response to the body being cramped. When there’s no room to breathe, the mind can become narrow. Of course everyone is getting this brain/body connection now, there is scientific proof after all.

What happens at an early age, happens without being conscious of it. Boys and girls grow into men and women who make agreements with themselves, about everything in life really, especially those things concerning their bodies. You learn at an early age, what is important to culture and societies is the appearance of the body. There is a focus on the external, rather than the internal body. This focus on the external body is what leads many of us to make consciously or subconsciously an agreement to not pay attention to the sensing, pulsing, breathing body. One of the reasons this happens is because for many it is easier to attend to what one looks like – a bad hair day, too-tight jeans or a roll in the belly.

More challenging is to be attentive to what is going on inside the body – the quality of your breath, whether there’s tightness or ease or your postural alignment. Often when the mind takes over, multiple splits set in causing a disconnect from the body and many aspects of life. One of the most significant disconnects is to minimize the body as a wise source and experience of information. As you know, information can be received from
the mind and from the body, but even more they are utterly connected. The impact of information from the gut leads to knowledge that won’t soon be forgotten. For instance, the scent of a crab apple or cedar tree may uncover your entire childhood; the scent of rhubarb pie baking has multiple stories to tell. The memory of knowledge lies in your senses.

A loved one can tell you that h/she loves you over and over again, but unless you truly feel this with your heart, it can only be words. Or the reverse can happen, and one cannot mention the word love, but you feel this affection deeply. As humans you were designed to comprehend knowledge with your whole beings – mind, hearts, soul, imagination, flesh. Not all knowledge is the same, content being vastly different. But knowledge that is predominantly received in the mind can be dismissed, but once you get knowledge in the gut it is difficult to forget its impact. The nuances of knowing live in the places between your shoulders and loins, fingers and chest.

In some cultures and societies the mind and thought have been lauded over the body and feeling. All knowledge is useful, but until it reaches to the bones and drops into the cells you tend not to “get” it. An example, consider instructions for how to ride a bike. I could tell you how to move your arms and legs, how to connect your breath to their movements, etc., but until you engage in the visceral practice of riding a bicycle and your muscles develop the motor skills and memory, riding a bicycle will be a theory. Knowledge to and from the body comes via practice. Knowledge likes to get under the skin to have long lasting effects. A tactile knowledge, one where the grammar of the gut has its way.

REMEMBERING YOUR FIRST LOVE

What you know you still know. It just needs to be re/membered, re/bodied back to being. That is why I am writing you a love letter. Actually this whole book is a love letter, but in this chapter I lay the foundation. I am your first love, and I’m beckoning for you to return to me. Come with me and I will again teach you to listen to the churning in your stomach, the flutter in your chest, the loosening of your hips, the subtle sensations in your body, waiting to be discovered and uncovered. I am patient, but sometimes when I need to get your attention I break down. If you ignore me for a while, I grow louder until I get your attention. You think your deadlines are more important. Well your deadlines are not lifelines. I am your lifeline. I wait for you to come home and find the joy of being alive. I am a built-in spiritual director, able to guide you through the terrain in your life. It is all about noticing, a
day-by-day listening. Make some time for me. Walk in the fresh air, even if it is raining. Stretch in the middle of a meeting. Have your tears and your laughter too. Luxuriate in the way paying attention to me can comfort you. This letter is about how to listen to me. This invites you home to yourself. It’s an initiation to embodied knowledge.

Maybe you have made an unconscious contract to not listen to your own body. Maybe you feel that is necessary because of time pressure or other circumstances. For example, it could be that you assume the responsibility to answer all your emails within 24 hours or 12 or 3 hours, even if your body is exhausted and needs to rest. It’s important to develop a daily practice that allows you to question what is best for your body. You have lots of years to work it out, so relax into a daily bodily practice of self-care. Don’t see this as one more thing to accomplish. Remember your body is calling you back as a lover. Sometimes lovers forget about time and just relish in the beauty of the moment.

Make a contract with yourself that honours your body. Begin small; tiny, incremental steps are best. As you read through this book, breathe or sigh and take breaks to shake out your body. Then, return. This is a practice you could do with all your reading and writing. If you find you’re getting distracted, stretch and expand, or take a walk. Return over and over again to your living pulse so you may once again be at home in your own skin. Connect to your longings. Accept and honour your limits. Let them be your teachers. Most of all, celebrate your quirks, for only you have them. That is the beauty. Celebrate that you are always called once again to your first love, the body you have and are.

And then, most importantly; what about your voice, your dear deep voice which articulates concerns in your personal and professional life? We spend half our lives finding our “voice” and then we are asked to put it into an articulation of knowledge that is privileged over many other kinds of knowledge. And one wonders sometime where is your body in your voice, both orally and in your literacy? How does your personal and professional voice interconnect? How can you honour your body’s knowing in the midst of all the hats you wear? The body doesn’t respond to or fit into formulas. Formulas or formulaic writing diminish the body’s ability to come to language. All language comes out of the breath and tongue, the rhythms of language are visceral. And this is being caught on, in a few circles, but there is a long way to go to recognize and remember the body back to language. This would be a good travel plan: bring the body home to language. An all-
inclusive excursion where the body infiltrates the way we write, speak, and even think.

You have been trained how to read and write. I am calling you back to a place where blood turns to ink, and flesh seeps into your words so they sing and pulse off the page, dancing into your readers' hearts and minds in a way that is truly re/membered. A kind of knowing that breathes vitality.

Race, culture, class, and gender undoubtedly form our perceptions and ways of being in the world. I have been left out of the conversation, unable to articulate body-based knowledge. The knowledges’ of race, culture, class, and gender are typically expressed in mediums where procedural, rational and logical thought are privileged over artistic, intuitive, and visceral thought. Slowly, this is really changing, I am still concerned about how your voice disappears through these discourses. For some of you, it might work, but I would suggest that many of you are longing or beginning to desire a more organic articulation of your voice. When your true voice comes out, all you have to do is just show up for your life.

The best you can bring to both words and worlds is yourself, because no one can be like you. The world needs all of you, hundreds of thousands of different ways you perceive, live, think, in your different fields. The world needs embodied voices, ones that not only have astute things to say or write, but be expressed in a way that reduces the distance often contained in sharing knowledge. The world needs a knowledge that is intimate, one that throbs with humanity. Only when the body returns to its language can there be the kind of fullness that is possible. The return is an act of transgression. It is an act of emancipation, creating body-wise people.

Return to your voice in all its beauty and depth. Authentic speaking and hearing can occur between yourself and others when the mind, heart, soul, and body are given free reign in the voice. You might be asking, “how do I do this?” To do this, is a small day-to-day practice honouring the body. As you make room for me, you will be surprised how I pop up in your sighs and words.

What I yearn for is to find the origin of words, which have breath in them. These are words dropping from within and without, words that dance on your skin. There are many things you know, and many things you don’t know. The knowledge that is hidden, obscured, and waiting to be grown in your hearts and in your minds is a knowledge that is absent, but in its absence is strength. The absence is waiting. The wisdom is waiting. In our attention to letting the body have its way, letting the body be part of all we say, do, and write, a new kind of knowledge is born. This is what artists know. This is what athletes
know in the flow of their movement. This is what scientists know on the edge of discovery. This is the heart of the creative. I want academics, lawyers, musicians, ecologists, and scientists to be outrageously creative. Return to the play of language, surprise yourself. Drink deep of your own flesh, which calls forth a listening to all the rumblings of your life. I am in your midst, in the small acts of dailiness within and without you.

You’ve got the “footnoting” styles down. And you may notice that this book has few footnotes, as an intentional act of listening to rhythm. I am now asking for you to get your feet in your notes. Take notes with your feet. Teach on your feet. Practice artmaking with your feet. Practice therapy with your bellies. Let your soles become where your soul breathes. Take off those shoes, boots, high-heels and place your worn feet on the earth and let your feet tell you where to go, what to research, where to write the next sentences.

There is never enough of integrating the body into all the diverse ways of writing. The body does not want to be bracketed, or just be utilized as a semi-colon. The body wants to be a comma, constantly breaking up every little intention and action. The body wants to live in multiplicity and thrive in multiples. I am after ecstatic living, even within institutions, be they academic or corporate.

To let me out is to truly let me be. To let me be is to let the river flow rather than pushing the river. By now in your life, you may have managed to get yourself through several institutions, have several degrees and have had a variety of jobs and relationships. You are highly skilled, attuned to the nuances of your field and have a wealth of knowledge and experience. You might have a stack of books by your bed, dozens of emails to answer, and have an over-booked schedule for the next few months. In this case, as in all, you really can’t afford to live without the wisdom of the body. I will be the one who will bring you balance, rhythm and health. Chances are if you don’t listen to me, I also may be the place where much of your physical or emotional pain is located. So, I really need to be let out to play.

Letting me out is like building your immune system. So dangle your feet. Skip on the beach, lay in the grass and watch clouds. This too is research. I think of lying in the grass as a horizontal inquiry, one that connects your body to the earth. The earth loves to hold you. Here, as one form shifts into another, your body-spirit can imagine life’s possibilities.

From all this talk of the body, you may be wondering where the practices of keeping the body fit figure into the equation. I am concerned with your physical sustainability as I am that you come alive to yourself, others, and the world through your senses. I want you to return to a sensual knowing where
you are rejuvenated in the eros of the everyday. What wisdom, knowledge and experience do your senses have to communicate to you? How does sound, colour, light, texture, touch and smell inform your moments? What does sensuous knowledge have to teach and how can you trust your senses as a place of wisdom?

The body is trustworthy. It will break down and change from injury or age; you can trust this will happen. You can also trust there is a wellspring of wisdom residing in your cells. This inner guide is waiting for you to consult with it. Speak tenderly to your body, speak to your body as a lover, luxuriate in the seasons of who you are becoming. Even your limits are a source of information and grace.

It must be mentioned that the body is a place of paradox. None of you are left untouched by pain, suffering or loss. Here is the place I have often called, “paradoxology” – in praise of paradox. You are invited into deep vulnerability and it is in this place that worlds can open up to you. Now it is not as if you have to suffer to have meaning, but your fragility as a human is something you share. It has its specific colour in your life and can be a place of beauty and transformation.

Take for example a dancer who has a severe injury and must learn to find other sources of movement to express the inner resonances. An injury or limit can invite one into moving in ways and combining other forms as voice, poetry, or site-specific work that may not otherwise occurred. The limits in the body can be a place for grace, an opening to the unexpected. No matter what, the body does age, you can count on this reality. The body needs to continually reinvent ways of moving and living that express and sustain vitality.

You may not be able to run anymore because of your bad knees, but what about kayaking? You may not be able to play hockey, but what about yoga? If you are in discomfort try a massage. There are many ways and alternatives to stay connected to and move your body. Through limits and constraints, you are challenged to leave predictable ways of moving and change the repertoire. This requires you to be an embodied creative. Comfort zones can be left behind, opening us up and discovery is a never-ending source of delight.

For example, you may be called to change the speed in which you undertake your days. Slowing down could be an act of transgression. When the body slows, it gives you a chance to really feel your feet rooted on the earth, to experience a sense of being grounded. When you feel your roots, you can fly. Levity and gravity are partners.
The body roots you inward and connects you to the interior life and what deeply matters. You may not even know what that is, but your deepest longings are waiting to be uncovered. You need all your strengths, including the physical, emotional, intellectual and spiritual for the journey of your life. Two lovers’ strength and health resides in both their solitude and companionship. The body needs time alone and together with others. And as lovers need to rediscover the beauty in shared presences, delighting in small and often simple things, so too the body needs to find these small delights. The smell of the sea or pine, an expanse of the chest, releasing to wet tears, or a spontaneous burst of joy.

Rediscover your own dear body-guide, foot by foot, hip by hip, heart by heart. I have been longing for you to come home for quite some time now, and it really is about living more effortlessly with more ease and more delight. Bodily knowing and understanding is your life guide. It is always with you as you search and research. Now go let your body stand up and stretch.
CHAPTER 1

BODYPsALM FOR REMEMBERING BACK THE BODY

Remember back the body
    flames in the belly
    calling one to live
as each day is the first and the last
    Your life is a precious
entity of cells and blood
    quirks and sentences of glory

Remember back the passion
    don’t let the awe
    slip from your fingers
toes, hips, pelvis and voice
        Draw back into presence your own calling
    for what you are meant to do and be
        on this glorious planet
coupled with the paradox of terror and beauty

    It is not only the earth
        which needs greening
    but your own precious soul
sometimes lost in the meetings, emails or laundry

Remember back all of you
    messy and unpredictable
    veins pulsing with a hopefulness
to thirst for more.
    Hunger is your spiritual director
    Coming in all forms –
        Discontent or agitation
Press on to what is nudging you
    breathing you back into
inhabiting your own body

    The calling of your life
    lies at the door
    waiting for you.
In solitude, ideas are nurtured into an incarnational reality where art is eventually birthed, syllable by syllable, movement by movement, pigment layered upon pigment. Solitude teaches one the art of attentiveness to the opening of a bud, to a child’s startling questions, and to the beat of one’s own heart.

Snowber, *Writing from the Body*. (1995, p. 3)