

SELF DISCOVERY - Travelling to greater depths and widths on a two way highway

Travelling around your body 101 - Know your body parts and functions more intimately

How many people are suffering from health concerns or lack of confidence in their bodies because they have not travelled the highway of self discovery and body discovery?

When you go travelling, it would be crazy to choose and book a flight to a destination before doing some research on the place – where to go, what to do, when to travel and what the local hot spots are. Yet you may be travelling around in that body of yours without being familiar with it and without having done much research on it.

As a youngster you may have been told off or ridiculed for being interested in your body, particularly in parts that were considered “private”. You may have never seen any of your family members naked because such exposure was seen to be shameful, embarrassing or naughty. Exploration of your body may have been seen as taboo. What does such secrecy, shame and judgement do at a cellular level in your body and just as importantly, why deny yourself of such important parts of your body - just as an eye, tongue or ear is important? For many of my clients who have borne this shame, ridicule and judgement, this has often manifested in their sacral area in the form of sexual and reproductive difficulties.

Many people are having sexual relationships without even being familiar with their reproductive organs, what they are, where they are, what functions they carry out and what inherent wisdom is held in these organs. If people were taught more about their cycles – in particular the menstrual cycle and the workings of that - this I believe could also reduce the unplanned pregnancy rate and possibly the rate of elective abortions. If couples understood the variations that occur in hormones, mucus, sexual desire, mood, cravings, appetite, vitality and attractiveness throughout the changing menstrual cycle, this could allow for fuller sexual expression and deeper intimacy by the couple working together through the ebb and flow of these factors.

Your mode of transport – Get familiar with it.

If you drive a car it pays to know a little about the motor and mechanics of the car in case things go wrong, or put differently so things can go right! It pays to know how to jack up the tyres and to keep the oil and water topped up. Even if your mode of transport to your destination is a plane, you would certainly hope that there is an expert maintenance engineer who has attended to the aircraft before take-off to ensure a smooth and comfortable flight.

When you think about it, your body is what has most intimately been involved with you throughout your life journey. It was there at your conception, it developed in your mother’s womb and it has been along every road (and detour) in your life journey. Likened to a computer, it has stored all of your experiences, reactions, thoughts and feelings. As Carolyn Myss (*1) puts it, “your biology is your biography” – what is going on in your bodies is a reflection of your life journey to date.

Why might it be important to start looking at the relationship between your biology and your life journey to date? More often than not you take your body for granted until ill-health creeps up on you, and it is suddenly when investigations are being carried out that you “come up close and personal” with body parts and body functions that you really haven’t been aware of. Back to the

travelling idea, there is nothing worse than heading off to your destination and the plane gets diverted for engine failure or the train gets derailed.

Start travelling, discovering and researching more! Why? Because the journey will be far more pleasant and disruption free, you may miss the detours which you otherwise may have had to follow and you also become the active adventure traveller, rather than the passive person lugged around destinations and landmarks. Put in the health sense, if you are in tune with and know the mechanics of your body and your body biography (*2), that is helpful for preventing possible complications, useful for diagnostic purposes, it is a good feedback loop, you become a participating, responsible traveller and your health and life journey will run smoother.

Know what's in your first aid kit

Whenever I travel, I pack a small medical kit of "just in case supplies". What is in your medical kit? What drugs, medication, substances, food, herbs, naturopathic and alternative medicines and therapeutic modalities and mind-body strategies do you take with you? What do you know about them? What do you know about the mixing of them and their effect on you and your body?

A friend of mine has a pantry full of sports supplements in the form of powders, capsules, drinks and bars. His trainer has personally used and recommended them so my friend, who is an avid sportsman and likes to keep in tip-top shape, is also taking them, without necessarily noticing what they are doing to his body and mind, not to mention the bank balance. From my understanding he doesn't really know what is in these preparations, nor has he considered how they interact and what effect that has on his body.

Equally what about people who are prescribed antidepressants, but who are not told that these drugs can be habit forming, incredibly difficult to come off and can leave people with a very "flat" feeling that can have an ongoing impact on other parts of the person's life? eg. libido, friendships, motivation, eating habits...

Just because the "professional" has told you that you should take a certain something, doesn't necessarily mean it's the right thing for you. Take your own opinion, values and wisdom into consideration. Ask questions and inform yourself about medication or supplements you are taking. Determine with a health professional what will work for you, not only in terms of your physical body, but what fits your values and route you wish to take in your personal health journey. One destination does not fit all. One mode of transport does not suit all. People have different travel and different travel company preferences. Some like to go it solo. Others like the group travel experience. Some like to go with a backpack with the basics. Others like to go fully kitted out. Keep that in mind for yourself and determine for yourself how you wish to travel.

Be comprehensive in your travel - Depth of your travel experience and the underlying core stuff

Often you may deny yourself of the most comprehensive care and attention you require to make some positive changes by misleading, lying or giving little information. You may do this with your doctor, specialist, psychologist, counsellor, weight management consultant or other support people, but your body doesn't lie. I give you an example. A young woman came to me because she wanted to have a baby. One of the first things that came up in the healing work was around drug use. She swore black and blue that neither she nor her husband was taking any drugs and no doubt she gave

this information to the fertility specialist. Her body however was saying otherwise. On further probing and prompting, she finally admitted she and her husband were not only using marijuana, but they were using one of the hardest drugs available - certainly a factor when it comes to trying to conceive and not to mention the impact of the underlying issues leading to drug use in the first place.

Give whoever is supporting you a comprehensive and honest overview of your situation. Limiting what they get to hear definitely limits their responses or suggestions to you. Don't ever think something is silly, unimportant or unrelated. If something is on your mind, explore it as it will almost certainly have relevance and it may in fact be the key factor. Start noticing the patterns and multi-factors underlying your situation, rather than seeing your illness or present situation in isolation. It's a bit like going to Paris. There is a difference between seeing the Eiffel Tower and knowing and understanding some of the underlying history of Paris. More often than not the "professionals" only see a quick snapshot of you on your day trip, so fill them in with the bigger picture of your entire travel journey to date.

Width of travel – open up your travel options

It is not only important to travel comprehensively, but to also travel widely. What do I mean by that? Often our experience of a country becomes even more impressive when seen in the context of another country – not for judgement's or comparison's sake, but to notice the different experiences and to receive value from that. With your health and your life in general, travel widely. Broaden your experience, your interests and your knowledge. If you typically address your health in a traditional medical way, why not research into alternative options? If you typically have a mammography, you may also wish to research and consider thermography. If you have travelled the antidepressant route, why not start exploring other options that address the key issues from the core. This could be in the form of a mentor, creative outlets, organisations who can help you with your finances if that is leading to your depression, an exercise programme, career guidance or something else.

Travel companion rather than pilot – You are both the experts sharing the journey

For me it has helped having a two way relationship with the "professionals" in whatever situation I find myself in rather than renouncing them as the only expert. See them as companions who help you in your journey, rather than being the pilot of your journey.

Take the information they are giving you but do your own research as well. Don't only listen to "knowledge" but listen to their wisdom and that of your own, their attitude, their compassion and their belief in you. Ask the questions you want and ask for clarification if you do not understand. Value your own opinions and preferences. With a two way open and honest relationship, both of you contribute your expertise, observations and experience for a more fulfilling, healthier and more personalised journey. Bon Voyage!

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*1 Myss, Carolyn www.myss.com

*2 Body biography by Janelle Fletcher www.janellefletcher.com