

Being and Doing

Find Moments of Mindfulness and Energy
Awareness in Every Day

Bear McKay

The McKay Method®

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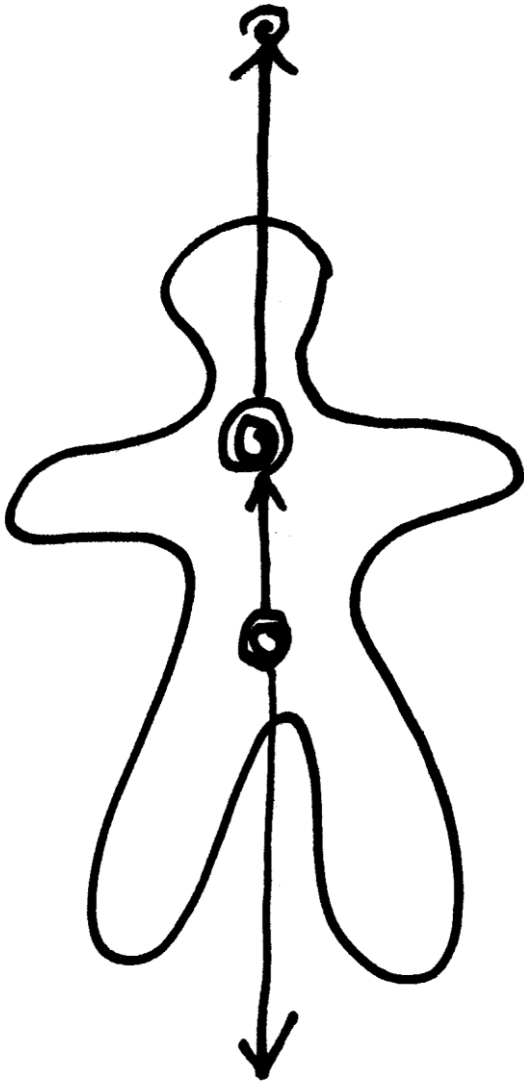
ROCK THE RHYTHM

There is an innate rhythm to the natural world to which we belong. Night follows day, day rises from night; we have our periods of sleep and wakefulness, activity and rest. Expansion and contraction is another aspect of this rhythm we experience every time we take a breath, every time our heart beats and then rests. These dynamics contrast and complement each other; one cannot exist without the other as a reference point. From rocking horses to rocking chairs, this back and forth rhythm is intrinsic, captivating and soothing us as infants and adults. This primal rhythm is also expressed in our lives as states of Being and Doing.

Being is open, spacious, receptive, restful and meditative. It is where we take in, absorb and connect the dots. Doing is directed, focused, active, and invigorating; expressing and actualizing the fruits of Being. In the natural flow, Doing arises out of Being. When the action of Doing is complete, we return to the stillness and reflection of Being, which originates the next action.

The key to our health and happiness is a balance between Being and Doing. When we are constantly Doing and not Being enough we become stressed and unhappy. When we don't get enough breath in we panic and go into high alert. When we don't get enough sleep our minds become unfocussed and our bodies slower, less responsive. When we don't receive enough nourishment, either physically or emotionally, we feel depleted and unappreciated. Recognizing and embracing the rhythm/relationship of Being and Doing will help us be simultaneously more productive, more rested, and more satisfied - available for the full potential of our lives.

THE HARA LINE



PRACTICE: ALIGN YOUR HARA

The Hara Line is a line of energy that runs through the middle of our body. Familiar to those who practice the martial arts, the Hara Line is one of our energy bodies that grounds us to the earth and connects us to the heavens. The Hara coincides with the spinal dynamic of the physical body, which includes the vertebrae, the spinal cord and the core into which our chakra energy centers feed. We can use it as a reference point – aligning the Hara is a technique that instantly creates the state of Being for us.

Visualize the Hara as a ½” line with three points on it. The first point is a few inches below your belly button; the second point is next to your heart and just below your collarbone, and the third point is about three feet above your head.

Start by visualizing the first point, and a line going down from it straight between your legs and into the earth. Then imagine this point connecting up to the second point at the heart. You can place your fingertips at your belly and heart to help you visualize this. Keeping your fingertips in place, imagine the heart point going straight up thru your body and out the top of your head to the third point above. The first point is the most important one for grounding; just doing this part of the Hara Line will help you drop into Being.

Practicing aligning your Hara will help you be more settled in your daily life and promote a balance between Being and Doing.

THE WILD WEST

In Western culture we have a Being deficit. We are valued for our productivity. Upon meeting someone often the first question is “what do you do?” We are defined by our activity (Doing), not who we are (Being.) We prefer to give than to receive, to talk rather than listen, to act rather than observe. Extroverts are rewarded in the workplace, and the helping professions are consistently paid less. Tangible results, speed and unlimited growth are the ideals to which corporate America strives.

Over-Doing is evident not only at work but also in our personal lives, infecting our families and relationships. Children are overscheduled with goal-oriented activities instead of playing. We spend so much time working to create a picture perfect home that we have little time to enjoy it. Everyone is so busy giving that no one is actually available to receive!

Why are we so addicted to busy-ness? Aside from wanting to be viewed as “a productive member of society,” the position of the giver is more powerful - you are potentially owed payback, you are viewed as altruistic, wealthy and generous. Inversely, it is hard to admit when we need help or support – that is seen as weak or vulnerable in our culture.

How does it feel to be in overdrive all the time, getting very little in return? Doing without the balance of Being is activity gone amok, and the consequence is a life that feels out of control.

PRACTICE: EVERYDAY BEING

I like to integrate new practices by attaching them to something I already do. There are many occasions during the day when you can practice Being. Being is a naturally receptive state, in which you can fully receive whatever is being offered. Always align your Hara first.

Receiving Food – The religious practice of saying a prayer before we eat actually drops us into Being and prepares our body to digest our food. Align your Hara. Take a moment to appreciate the food you are about to eat. This can be as simple as looking at your food with attention, to visualizing all the elements that came together to produce this meal. My children were always impatient with this practice, but just holding hands and saying “blessings on our meal” was enough to better receive our food.

Receiving Vitamins, Medicines, Supplements – Align your Hara. Hold them in your hand with your other hand above, visualizing energy moving from your upper hand into the supplements in gratitude. Imagine the nutrients filling your body with light. I believe this practice also attunes the vitamins to the energy of my body, making them more easily assimilated.

Receiving Compliments and Hugs – Don’t deflect compliments. Stop, drop into Being by aligning your Hara, and take it to your heart. When you hug, move to your right so the placement is “heart to heart.” If you are shorter, let the other person bend down to meet you. Align your Hara. You should feel any tension drain from your body when you do this – a minute of total relaxation and connection.

Receiving Money and Presents – Aligning your Hara, hold the item in your hands in front of you; receive the energy of these gifts in your heart.

Practicing Being can improve our relationships at home, with our friends and in the workplace. If your mind is wandering during a conversation, align your Hara to listen and receive their words. When someone is emotional, align your Hara - Being present acknowledges their feelings without any need for you to speak (you don't have to receive their emotions, those are theirs alone.) After you have spent a moment Being with them you can both move on to Doing whatever is at hand. What is wonderful about this practice is others feel like they have been heard, and it is also beneficial and for us, enriching all our interactions.

It only takes a second to align your Hara and incorporate more Being into every day. Once it becomes second nature you will notice you become less upset over little things and are more aware of how much there is to be thankful for. Integrating a specific practice like this takes gratitude from a concept to an experience.

BODY SLAM

The Being/Doing imbalance directly translates into the body through the roles of the sympathetic (fight/flight/freeze) and parasympathetic (rest and digest) nervous system circuitry. We are literally, physically stressed from the lack of Being in our lives. This is evidenced by the modern prevalence of heart disease (particularly high blood pressure), autoimmune disorders and digestive issues. Adrenaline rushes and high levels of cortisol, another stress hormone, deplete us and compromise our health.

Rushing through our day, trying to get “everything” done, we are often impatient with ourselves and those around us. Anything that slows us down is an irritant - traffic, a long line, computer snafus, children, even the elderly and handicapped. How we act toward others is affected, as well as how we feel about ourselves. Our quality of life is degraded.

Think about the experience of driving when we are in a hurry. That anxiety directly translates into our physiology, and the mere act of getting from one place to another becomes a stressor (no wonder many people experience panic attacks while driving.) Seemingly innocuous situations become survival issues to our bodies, which become translated over time into serious health problems. Eventually this Being /Doing imbalance will literally kill us!

Notice how impatience, irritation, disappointment and anger feel in your body. Are there changes in your breathing? Is there nervous movement, sensations of heat, a faster heartbeat, spasms or prickles? How is energy moving through your body? Sometimes we can feel energy rising, spiking outward, contracting, or rushing downward. In situations like these, try taking a moment to align your Hara. It pushes the “reset” button on your physiology.

Being slows everything down; even though the actual clock time is the same, the subjective experience of time is different (notice how time “flies” when you’re having fun, and “drags” when you’re in a boring lecture.) Time is elastic, and we can expand it at will.

Slowing down doesn’t always mean getting less done; when we are sleep deprived, absent minded, distracted or multitasking we often have to do things over. We can multitask and scatter our energy, or we can move with ease between each activity, giving it our full attention, by alternating that activity with a moment of Being. Including more Being in your day can actually increase the quality of your work.

MEDITATION

A new trend in western medicine is to encourage “mindfulness” and other meditation-based practices for their health benefits. Mindfulness, meditation, and being present are other ways to describe aspects of Being. Our physiology gets disturbed by negative thoughts, held and re-run emotional upsets, and relentless activity. Meditation – taking a Being break - offers a way to counteract the toxic effects of stress on our bodies.

There are many types of meditation, from listening to a guided meditation that takes you through various settings or scenarios (like a garden) to sitting in silent meditation on your own. Most meditations have a focus. The focus can be a narrative, an object such as a candle or picture, or something internal like your breath, posture, or a sound (mantra.) These are good ways to cultivate the practice of meditation; eventually focused meditation leads to a more general, spacious, diffuse awareness, which includes everything without preference. Most of us alternate between the two, experiencing seconds of pure awareness before we are distracted; then we use a focus to bring us back to meditation.

When meditation is promoted as a secular health practice its spiritual roots are unacknowledged. The good news is that whether it is acknowledged or not, meditation creates health for us on many levels – physical, emotional, psychological, and spiritual. Whatever brings the value of Being into our mainstream consciousness should be supported. Being is an antidote to what ails us in many different aspects of our lives.

PRACTICE: MEDITATION with a FOCUS

Sit comfortably with your spine erect, on the floor or a chair. You should be sitting forward on the chair so your back is not touching anything.

Take a few deep breaths to settle; align your Hara. Feel the chair or ground supporting your body.

Focus on your breath, your Hara line, or your posture; this gives your mind something to do without wandering from thought to thought.

When thoughts arise, observe them and imagine they are drifting away. Try not to attach to any particular thought. When you notice you are off on a train of thought, gently bring your focus back to your Hara, breath, posture. This will be a constant process.

Don't judge the "success" of your meditation. If you intend to meditate and sit for the allotted period of time, that is a successful meditation. When we have a lot of thoughts our meditation can still be viewed as productive. Like bubbles surfacing from a pond or toxic fumes outgassing, those thoughts are being released from our physiology.

I recommend starting with 15 minutes of meditation once or twice a day, gradually increasing your time to 30 or 40 minutes. There are stages and phases where we meditate more or less, depending on what is going on in our lives, but an extended period of Being on a daily basis is a lifeline to sanity.

WISDOM in the INFO AGE

We are bombarded with information – the fact that we can access so much is wonderful, but making this information overload manageable and productive for us is key. The constant flow of information through visual and interactive media is highly stimulating. Our nervous systems are being challenged in ways unthinkable in the recent past.

Being is much more than a prescription for health...it is essential for the wise direction of activity. Right action, or wise action, arises out of Being. This “gap” moment of Being allows us to observe, reflect and potentially shift direction and change unconscious behavior.

Like an operating program in a computer, our beliefs and instinctive reactions are generating thoughts, words, and behavior in a feedback loop. What’s really happening in the moment gets bypassed while these habitual patterns take over. When we access Being it interrupts this process and allows us to show up, be present, and respond to what is actually happening in the moment.

A person who is grounded in Being seems substantial and solid, and is calm and comforting to be around. That person embodies a balance between Being and Doing, and is more available for self and others. Don’t you want to Be more like this?

Rest into Being, and Doing naturally arises. Once Doing subsides, we naturally return to Being to harvest, collect, and receive - then the next thing to Do arises. Being is the true power behind Doing. Translating information into knowledge into wisdom is the challenge of our age, and Being will help you do that.

Bear McKay is the Director of The McKay Method®
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