

TAMALPA WORK

Tamalpa Institute, founded in 1978, offers training programs and workshops in the Life/Art Process, a movement-based expressive arts approach. This approach supports personal, interpersonal and social transformation, teaching new models for health, psychology, art and communication.

This work was originated in the 1950's by Anna Halprin, who is among the first pioneers in the contemporary Western world to use dance as a healing and transformative art. In the 1970's, Daria Halprin further developed the artistic and therapeutic aspects of this work and articulated the methodology that is currently taught in our programs.

This work explore the relationship between: body, mind, and spirit; individual, other, and group; and studio, nature, and world through: movement/dance; drawing; creative writing; improvisational performance and vocalizing.

Each art medium as well as each part of the body, acts as a mirror reflecting aspects of self, our relations with other, and the world. We discover metaphoric connections between our art and our life themes, and our personal and collective stories.

philosophy

There is an essential connection between art and life which can facilitate healing and change. We are interested in a new aesthetic that reflects the here and now reality of peoples' authentic life experiences, rather than a beauty based on form or technique. For us it is our real life experiences that feed our art, and our art that informs the real issues in our lives. We call this the Life-Art Process.

The Life-Art Process developed at Tamalpa Institute, is an integrated approach that explores the wisdom of the body expressed through movement/dance and imagination. We use artistic processes and media to explore and deepen our relationship to psychological life, to social issues and to creativity itself.

The foundation of our approach is based on a view of the body and movement. The body holds our entire life experience. We understand movement as the body's primary language. For us movement is synonymous with life. Movement is personality and soul made visible; and dance is body, feelings and imagination in motion. We believe that movement/dance is for all people a way to live a more embodied and creative life. Movement/Dance is a way to connect deeply and authentically; to express the full range of human emotion. The philosophy of our work is based on the following principles:

Our bodies are vehicles of awareness.

There is a relationship and interplay between the physical body, emotions, and mental/imaginal realms.

Body sensations, postures, and gestures reflect our history, our culture and our current ways of being.

When we engage in expressive movement/dance and the expressive arts, the ongoing themes and patterns from our lives are revealed.

When we work on our art (a dance, drawing, poem, song or performance), we are also working on something in our lives.

The symbols we create in our art contain valuable messages which speak to the circumstances of our lives.

The ways we work as artists teach us about the ways we relate to ourselves, others, and the world.

When we enact positive visions through our art, we create images and models that can become guiding forces in our lives.

It is in our art that we find expression for that which disturbs us and for that which we want to celebrate. As we learn how to work with the principles of creativity and the practice of the arts, we are able to apply what we learn to all aspects of our lives.

We live in a world challenged by a widening gap between those with great resources and those with few. Conflicts over economic, educational, racial, and religious differences threaten our shared earth and humanity. With technological forms of communication and information increasing exponentially, and the ever-growing ecological waste of our precious natural resources, we must ask ourselves how we can live differently.

Now more than ever before the interface of art and healing is of paramount importance. The healing arts must be fostered, protected, and passed on as one of humanity's most significant legacies and bodies of knowledge. When so much of our communication and learning occurs through computer technologies, disembodied living seems ever more inevitable. As our technological capacities grow, we are looking for ways to reconnect with our bodies, our creativity, and our souls.

We believe that movement and the expressive arts can play an essential role in the healing of our world. We believe that movement and the expressive arts are essential to embodied learning and change. We believe that art is essential to our quality of life. We believe that art should not be relegated in our culture to a secondary position, an extracurricular activity or commodity measured by its value as entertainment in the marketplace. For us the arts are a powerful way to provoke inquiry, communicate knowledge, inspire understanding and transform society.

The body, movement, and art all call us into an active and creative relationship with ourselves, with one another, and with the world. The integration of the body, movement, art, and healing, an embodied life-art process, is our ethical criteria for a sustainable life. We believe that a life-art process that speaks to and expresses the real and compelling needs of individuals and communities is a new paradigm for education, therapy and social action.

life/art process

Tamalpa Institute, founded by Anna Halprin and Daria Halprin, is a non-profit movement-based expressive arts organization. It is an internationally recognized school for dance/movement-based expressive arts education and therapy. The work originated at Tamalpa Institute has been taught internationally and represented by innovative performance work around the world for over 50 years.

In 1978, Tamalpa Institute began offering the first movement-based expressive arts therapy training and art-based, somatic movement therapy training program in the field. The Institute continues to be a center for research, collaboration, workshops, training programs and performance.

Our work is committed to the exploration and application of movement/dance and art as a healing and educational force. We draw from the wisdom of the body and the creativity of the imagination as a source for authentic expression, artful communication and new ways of learning and living.

A significant part of our work is related to the history of its originator, Anna Halprin, and her innovative work as a dancer, performance artist and teacher.

In the late 1950's dance pioneer Anna Halprin began a radical reshaping of dance that took it from the exclusive ranks of dance as a performing art to the universal context of dance as a healing art.

In the early 1960's Anna began collaborating with other artists and leaders in a groundbreaking movement that was to bridge the fields of dance/movement, art, performance, somatics, psychology and education. These collaborations included exchanges between Anna's dancers group and Fritz Perls (founder of Gestalt therapy), Moshe Feldenkrais (Awareness Through Movement), Carl Rogers (Person-Centered Therapy), and Thomas Gordon (confluent education). The dancers group also collaborated with Anna's husband, environmental designer Lawrence Halprin, the Fluxus group of New York, and others in the avante garde movement. The questions being explored were, What can the arts tell us "here and now" about the experience of being human? What do we know experientially, and what can we learn about the body/mind/spirit connection in our lives today?

Influenced by these collaborations and by her work with the dancers and artists who gathered around her, emerged what Anna Halprin called a "Life/Art Process®" -- an approach based on working with peoples' own life experiences as the utmost source for artistic expression. From its beginnings, the work was grounded in group learning, group creativity, and the actual life experiences of those she was working with. The work took place in spaces that extended from the dance studio and performance stage, to urban city streets and natural outdoor environments.

Daria Halprin, a young dancer, performer and participant in Anna's earliest dancers' groups and performance company, was inspired to continue studies with Fritz Perls in Gestalt therapy, and went on to pursue the interface between dance, psychology and theater. She brought these influences to the forming of Tamalpa Institute where she worked on developing the bridge between movement, art and psychology that informs the approach today.

Following two decades of collaborative experiments and exchanges, workshopping, research and performance works, Tamalpa Institute was formed with a vision to refine, articulate and teach an approach that would be a creative, healing and transformative process in the lives of individuals, groups and communities.

Through collaborative research, teaching and exchanges with colleagues in interdisciplinary fields of practice, our school continues to evolve in response to new developments in related fields and to the challenges and compelling themes of contemporary life.

Our guiding purpose is to explore and respond to the question of how the expressive arts might contribute to a more embodied, creative, and participatory world in which art as a healing force is fostered.

The Tools

The Body: We live in and through our bodies. The body contains and reveals our entire life experience. It is through the body that our physical, emotional, mental and spiritual levels

become connected. It is through the body that we can come to know ourselves and the world. Expression, healing, change, transformation are acts of embodiment. What wisdom do our bodies hold?

Movement/Dance: is the body's primary language. It is in movement that we express our personality, our conditioning and can discover new resources. Movement channels feeling and evokes feeling. Movement takes us inward to our interior experiences and outward to express our experiences in space and with others. As our movement repertoire enlarges, so does our emotional and imaginal repertoire. All of life is movement, everything in our universe moves. Everyone moves, If we say that all movement is like a dance and that everyone is a dancer, what are the dances that our souls call for?

Voice/Sound: giving voice to our experience, creating the sounds to accompany our dances, the sound of an image or feeling, the voice of the group in harmony and disharmony. If our body could speak what would it say, if our drawings inspired songs what would we sing?

Drawing: challenges us to grapple with and shape our images. Drawings hold the memory of movements and feelings after they have vanished from time and space. Drawings are gifts from our imagination. What are the colors, shapes, textures and symbols of our imagination? What will be drawn out?

Dialogue: finding the words, speaking them, writing them, and bringing aesthetics back into our language. As we find and shape our words, we become storytellers and poets of our individual and collective stories. What to say, how to say it, what narratives do we create?

Improvisation: learning to play, seriously, intensely, spontaneously, taking risks, experimenting, committing to what's happening, being fully in the moment, letting go of judgements and attachment to an outcome. We stay open, willing to be surprised, nothing is a mistake, everything becomes workable and we work creatively with whatever comes up. Spontaneous, unknown play, what will happen?

Performance: is a metaphor for coming forward, coming out, being seen, communicating with others with all of our senses. We meet stage fright and excitement, our inhibitions and breakthroughs, meeting the eyes of the world, connecting the personal story with the collective story. Can we stay present and authentic? How are the witnesses moved?

Reflection: What is my art telling me? What does your art evoke in me? How is it connected to my life? What am I learning? What would I like to do differently? What's in the way? What are the available resources? How can I, and how can we live artfully in our relations and in our

Method

In our work we explore the relationship between the physical, emotional, mental/imaginal

and spiritual levels of experience and expression. We explore the relationship between body, imagination and soul, between individual, other and group. Our art processes, artwork and learnings arise from these explorations.

1. The Three levels of awareness and response:

The physical level is addressed through the study and practice of basic principles of human movement and dance.

The emotional is addressed through the examination of autobiographical material and explored through the mediums of movement, drawings, writing, performance and therapeutic practices.

The mental is addressed through the study and practice of elements of the creative process, communication skills, and presentation of theoretical principles and concepts. The imagination is stimulated through all of the art mediums of the practice.

We believe that the spiritual aspect is enhanced when people are able to express themselves with awareness and creativity on all three levels.

2. Movement Ritual: a structured sequence of movements that increases awareness of movement, range of motion, flexibility, and serves as a foundation for creative movement explorations.

3. The Psychokinetic Imagery Process: a system for exploring the relationship between body, feeling and image/imagination by shifting between movement, drawing and dialogue.

4. Movement Studies: exploring the elements and principles of space & time, rhythm & force, inertia & momentum, body part articulation, range of motion and gesture applied to creative expression in movement.

5. Body Part Explorations: developing awareness of anatomy and posture, relationship of body parts to each other and to the whole body. Personal and collective themes and metaphors associated with each body part, relationship of body parts to feeling and imagination.

6. The Five Part Process: a map used to enlarge awareness and expression and to facilitate the exploration of life themes and events therapeutically in order to generate resources for creativity, insight and change.

7. The RSVP Cycles: a map and structure used for designing and scoring themes, intentions, resources and activities to generate individual and collective creativity, problem solving and projects. R= resources, S = score, V = valuation, P = performance.

8. Creative Writing: identifying resources, journaling on themes, poetry, gestalt dialogue, scripting on the body parts, shaping narratives.

9. Performance: identifying and shaping themes and material, coaching, showing, feedback, recycling.

10. Witnessing and Active Listening: theory and techniques for communication skills,

conflict resolution, giving and receiving feedback. Specific approaches for giving non-critical and non-analytical aesthetic feedback. Working with a communication model- I see, I hear, I feel, I imagine