



*staying true to her intuitive impulse to remain, she waited and waited. After about five minutes, she was awash in a wonderful memory of being a little girl in her grandmother's garden catching raindrops on her tongue!*

Intuitive Life Movement® (ILM) is based upon the premise that our bodies are animated by an intelligent life force. When we allow this intelligence (known by other names such as the Tao, Source, or Self) to become the focus of our awareness and the initiator of our actions, we can relax the ever-judgmental egoic mind. Instead of using the body simply to carry out our will, we can learn to trust its guidance in how we move and how we live.

ILM facilitates these changes by teaching us to observe and release into the subtle somatic impulses that arise spontaneously from within. This practice is a way of being fully present in the moment. It helps us feel more alive in our bodies or relate more authentically with others. It is also used for emotional and physical healing or artistic expression. Recently, an ILM student applied it to her Red Cross disaster relief work as a way of staying focused and energized as she tended to large numbers of people in distress.

#### THE BEGINNING

*“Do you have the patience to wait  
till your mud settles and the water is clear?  
Can you remain unmoving  
till the right action arises by itself?”*

*Lao Tzu (Mitchell 15)*

In 1971, during a period of deep self-questioning, I awoke one night and my body began to move “intuitively.” I was not consciously creating movement but remarkably, I was moving with exquisite precision. Although I did not understand what was happening, the movements felt trustworthy, like a lifeline to myself, to something True. As I allowed these movements to guide me for hours each day, I became increasingly connected to my body and at times, I experienced deep emotional release. Even when I felt a painful memory or sensation, I discovered an inner joy and wholeness I had never known. After about four months of moving intuitively, I returned to my life as a young adult. Forever changed, I knew the truth of my identity was something far greater than the person I had been raised to be—something for which I

# INTUITIVE LIFE MOVEMENT®:

## Who are you, right now?

By Shelley Tanenbaum

**G**ayle found herself reaching out toward a group member during an exercise about moving intuitively with others. She later reflected, “I kept reminding myself that I don’t do this kind of thing... I can’t spread out and take up so much room on the floor. I can’t leave myself so unguarded as to stretch out my chest. I don’t do that and yet, I was still doing it. Something else was moving me, some other memory of safety or security, pleasure or unfolding.”

Laurel describes her body’s capacity to physically unwind its pain: “I found myself moving my arm, shoulder and neck in ways I wouldn’t have done ordinarily. It was like untying a knot... I used to feel this hook that nabbed a piece of my muscle. I don’t get that anymore. It undid something in the muscle to let it move where it needs to move.”

Shannon stood in the middle of the room with her eyes looking up and her tongue sticking out. She felt a little silly and wanted to abandon her position, but

had no words.

Eleven years later, I was in a serious accident. While in the hospital, the intuitive movements began again and this time I sensed I had to find a way to teach what I had learned years before.

## THE TEACHING

*There are in the body currents of energy, affection, and intelligence, which guide, maintain and energize the body... Find the spark of life that weaves the tissues of your body and be with it. It is the only reality the body has.*

*Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj (I Am That)*

There are many disciplines, both ancient and new, that help us remember and connect to the Source of life. Unlike yoga or tai chi, ILM does not rely on postures or movement forms, though it can complement these practices. While unfamiliar to most adults, moving intuitively in our body and in life is actually natural to us—we *can* reconnect to this way of being. It is possible to reclaim the authenticity and grace we expressed at a young age before constrictions of family and culture became our habitual way of relating to ourselves and our world.

Anyone who can observe their inner, body-based experience can learn to move intuitively. It involves differentiating what I call “intuitive movements” from four other kinds of movement: habitual, consciously-directed, creative, and free-flow. These four ways

of moving and more importantly, *being*, each have unique characteristics and are necessary to live a balanced life (see sidebar—Types of Movement). They may or may not include mindfulness. They do share the experience of the egoic self in which “*I am the doer*” (e.g. I am *walking habitually*, I am *consciously observing or directing* my walking, I am *creatively exploring* new ways to walk, or I’m *choosing a free-flow* way to walk).

In contrast, when moving intuitively, “*I am the witness and the receiver*” as well as “*the doer.*” Being the witness-receiver-doer requires both mindful attention and receptivity to subtle somatic impulses that are totally of the moment and not directed by the conscious mind. [As I allow the subtle impulses of my body to intuitively guide my movement, I re-experience walking in a whole new way.]

## THE PRACTICE

*If I take a moment to slow down, breathe and feel the support of my chair and the ground beneath my feet, my view suddenly widens. I become aware of my surroundings—sounds, smells, temperature and people. I notice my thoughts and the constrictions in my body. In this moment I have a choice to override my increased awareness and keep going as usual, or simply be with it. In choosing to be with it, something changes naturally. I don’t have to do anything, except just be.*

*I am aware of two aspects of consciousness that call me*

## TYPES OF MOVEMENT

Intuitive Life Movement® is a way of moving, but more importantly, it is a way of *being* in life. It is especially relevant in our relationships with others and with the natural world. The following five descriptions of movement can be applied to almost any life situation.

**1. Habitual Movement** is the movement of everyday life. Automatic, predictable and goal-directed, there’s generally little conscious attention paid to the kinaesthetic sense. We repeat long-term patterns of movement, muscle tension, and posture without awareness that we do so. These habitual patterns reflect organizing beliefs and images about ourselves and the world that are out of conscious awareness. *When moving habitually, the sense of “I” reacts to the world and identifies with experience.*

Exercise: Raise your arms up, then down. Repeat.

**2. Consciously-directed Movement** engages increased awareness of goal-oriented movement and the kinaesthetic sense. The focus of attention may include: the quality of movement, the internal felt sense, time and spatial orientation, as well as thoughts, emotions, images, or memories. Acquiring a new skill, such as learning to drive, requires consciously-directed movement. *When moving consciously, the sense of “I” intentionally observes, directs, repeats, or alters experience.*

Exercise: Raise your arms up, then down with conscious awareness of your movements. Repeat.

## TYPES OF MOVEMENT cont

**3. Creative Movement** expands movement possibilities. Using the body as an instrument, we can explore different ways to move, the use of space, rhythms, emotional expression, storytelling and interpersonal relationships. *When moving creatively, the sense of "I" intentionally creates and explores the experience of movement.*

Exercise: Explore creative ways to raise your arms up and down.

**4. Free Flow Movement** is a type of creative movement in which the body moves freely in a fluid motion. Moving in this way, the body seems to take on a life of its own. Free flow movement may at times be confused with Intuitive Life Movement. Free flow movement can help to free up habitual patterns of movement and thought.

Exercise: Explore raising your arms up and down with free flowing movements.

**5. Intuitive (Life) Movement** is a way to connect with a deep sense of Self directly through the body. To move intuitively, we mindfully scan the body for subtle, non-directed somatic impulses and other cues such as sensations, tension, breath, images, or currents of energy. We allow these inner cues to guide us with effortless precision. Each experience is unique, but typically includes a release or unwinding of physical or emotional constrictions and an inner stillness. Intuitive Life Movement can be accessed with or without an "intention." *In Intuitive Life Movement, the sense of "I" is not only the doer but also the witness and the receiver.*

Exercise: Let your arms hang in a relaxed way. Scan your body and notice where the very *first* somatic impulse or other cues are to raise your arm. Keep scanning for the second impulse, third, etc... Allow your body to be moved effortlessly, moment by moment. (The cues may occur anywhere, such as the heart, back, belly, toe, breath.... There may also be an absence of observable movement.)

*into presence. One is mindfulness—still, open, receptive, multifaceted, and non-judgmental. The other is release—to the precise impulses within my body. This process is not personal and yet, is profoundly intimate. As the impulses become the foreground of my attention, my thinking mind quiets. My body effortlessly begins letting go of tension, my spine lengthens and I soften. [I'm in a restaurant with friends. No one knows I have shifted my attention, but our conversation has become slower, more focused. I notice others are sitting up straighter too!]*

Intuitive Life Movement shares challenges that are familiar to practitioners of many spiritual traditions. One of the most significant obstacles we have in common is the ego's attachment to its identity and habits. Our egoic identity has learned to survive in our world. Accustomed to being in control, it does not readily surrender its "knowing" to the "not knowing" of being in the moment. Moreover, habitual patterns of thought, feeling and action rush in unbidden in daily life regardless of our best intentions. Neuroscience has shown us that these habits exist in the most powerful parts of our brain. Fortunately, as an intuitive life mover keeps choosing a deeper truth, new neural networks are strengthened and more options for living consciously emerge.

By affirming the connection between our physical

body and the Source of our being, Intuitive Life Movement reveals our innate intelligence. It is here, not surprisingly, that we meet another challenge: our cultural inability to nurture such a natural and instinctual expression of our Self. It is helpful then to enlist the support of community or a trusted friend to reinforce our ILM practice. As we move intuitively with others, we can experience in relationship a kind of love, honesty and joy that is rarely but easily accessed. In the end, the reward for persisting through the challenges is the freedom to trust our lives and who we are—right now.

*Shelley Tanenbaum, Psy.D created Intuitive Life Movement® to share a healing process that has been transforming her own life for decades. She is a psychologist and senior Hakomi therapist who specializes in body-mind integration, health in relationships and the treatment of trauma. Shelley also helps people navigate the paradigm shifts that follow spiritual and other extraordinary experiences. She was co-founder and co-director of an East Coast yoga center from 1979-1999.*

**For more information visit  
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