

Embodying Embryology

by Cherionna Menzam-Sills, PhD, OTR, RCST[®]

Floating in our private sea for about nine months, we undergo a miraculous coming into form. The mystery of how this occurs must humble even the most scholarly amongst us. Science can now track early prenatal development with increasing finesse, even intervening to enhance or prevent fertility, clone sheep, or borrow stem cells. We still, however, don't really understand how the embryo knows how to do what it does. What we can do with apparent accuracy and benefits to our health and well-being is to revisit the primordial states of being the pre-nate exhibits.

I believe this is an essential aspect of both Biodynamic Craniosacral Therapy and of Continuum Movement. In both practices, we slow ourselves down, settling into a more fluid, holistic state, like that of the embryo. Emilie Conrad, founder of Continuum, has discovered in her years of somatic research into our fluid nature that our tissues shift from gel to sol state as we slow down. She notes that, as our tissues literally become more fluid, they also become more resonant, apparently enhancing cellular communication and function. I believe this is akin to Biodynamic work with the fluid body and its fluid tide.

As we dissolve, we become more like the embryo. The younger we are, the more fluid our bodies tend to be. The fertilized egg is the largest cell in the body due to its huge store of cytoplasm, or fluid. By birth, the percentage of water in our bodies has decreased. It continues to do so throughout life. With aging, we complain of stiffness. Older bodies are relatively dry, rendering them less flexible and resilient. Older people often break bones due to their dryness, while little toddlers may fall on the floor several times each day and just bounce back up again.

As our form becomes more solid, we also become more complex. Our bodies develop as cells and tissues differentiate, becoming committed to being lung, blood, brain, etc. Differentiation occurs depending on context. Cells are influenced by other cells around them, as well as by biochemical information relating to the mother's perception of her environment. If she feels threatened, her baby prepares for a dangerous environment, intelligently developing a heightened stress response. If she feels safe, baby develops accordingly.

Melting with Continuum or Biodynamics enables us to re-form within a different environment. We seem to undifferentiate as we return to wholeness. Here we have access to the amazing potential of this early time.

Our earliest development is primarily directed by deep, Biodynamic forces. As we

grow, we are also affected by forces of various conditions in our lives. Within the safe, supportive field of Continuum or Biodynamics, we can re-align ourselves with what is deeper and more essential than the conditions and their effects. We can embody our embryological potential as we re-form and perhaps birth ourselves anew.

As both an authorized Continuum teacher and a teacher and practitioner of Biodynamic Craniosacral Therapy, I find my knowledge of embryology and embodied experience of it through Continuum profoundly affect my ability to perceive, hold, and be present with my clients. I also use Continuum in cranial sessions and in teaching Biodynamics because it so quickly helps us settle under old patterns and autonomic nervous system activation, facilitating the holistic shift and perception of primary respiration.

One of my favorite workshops to teach is one I call Embodying Embryology. I began teaching it in the late 90s using Body-Mind Centering (BMC) as the movement piece. In the last few years, I have found Continuum to be an even more powerful medium for exploring this material. In this workshop, we learn about embryological development, with inspiration from beautiful images. We take time to deepen into healing primordial states of being using the breaths, sounds, gentle movements and increasingly subtle awareness of Continuum. This workshop can support you in settling deeper, and perceiving embryological expressions in your clients, as well as enhancing your own access to the embryological potential within you.

I teach this workshop in the USA, Canada and Europe.

View my workshop schedule at: www.cherionna.com/classwrk.html

Cherionna Menzam-Sills is an authorized Continuum teacher who has recently relocated to the UK, where she has a private practice. Her work draws on over 30 years experience teaching and practicing various therapies and bodywork. She currently teaches Biodynamic Craniosacral Therapy and Continuum across North America and Europe, often with her husband, Franklyn Sills. More information on Cherionna is available at her website at: www.cherionna.com

To learn more about Continuum and Emilie Conrad, please visit the Continuum website at: www.continuummovement.com

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