

A Conversation with Diane Tegtmeier

Diane Tegtmeier, MSW, NCTMB, and Certified Watsu Practitioner has explored healing work from the perspective of social work, massage, energy work and Watsu practice over the last 17 years. This has given her the opportunity to work along the full continuum of physical, emotional and spiritual human process - in talk and touch. Before that her understanding of relationships was grounded in studies of physiology and ecology.



Diane's teaching experience includes anatomy/physiology, personal growth and healing workshops and graduate social work instruction in loss and grief. With an appreciation for the necessity of ethical guidelines, she brings warmth, humor and reverence to what can happen when we try to live them in day to day practice.

Diane Tegtmeier, Inika and Alexander met up at the Watsu Center at Harbin Hot Springs one August afternoon in 2005 for a free roaming conversation/interview about Diane's Aquatic Energy Work and its relation to Healing Dance. We touched on numerous themes:

- how headward motion, waves and flow further energy work in the water
- the influence of intentionality
- hand placement to facilitate polarity flow and balance
- the etheric energy layer
- utilizing figure 8 movements as sacred geometry
- integrating awareness of chakras into aquatic bodywork
- the deeper aspects of Hara Hug
- using waves to bring about bilateral integration
- ideas on the application of spiral movements
- implanting sacred geometry
- verbal and nonverbal approaches with clients
- Multi-Heart Work
- the significance of cervical hyperextension
- integrating different aquatic modalities

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Diane: There are three major areas of energy work that are facilitated in Healing Dance as I practice it. One I know you both (*Inika and Alexander*) have talked about is the cephalic direction, moving headwards. It facilitates energy release out the feet and I see that all of the Healing Dance surface waves facilitate that kind of release. Whether anybody knows they're doing energy work or not; it's going to happen. You can add in intentionality, your knowledge of the energy active positions of the body and the natural polarity and the direction of energy flow. When I'm talking about energy here, according to my training. I mean the etheric layer of energy, which is at and just above the physical body. It's not farther out in the aura and in the higher vibrational fields, although I do work with that layer sometimes in sessions. This etheric energy layer I also differentiate from the meridians that we open, stretch and release in Watsu. I integrate working with both; there are times when I feel attention to one or the other is needed. In the etheric layer there are streams that are just as distinct and palpable and learnable and sensible as the acupuncture meridians. So those are the ones I work with, the primary streams. They each have a direction, just like the acupuncture streams, some of them flowing upwards and some of them downwards.

Inika: Do they create 8's?

D: They do create 8's. Speaking of the figure 8 movements in Healing Dance, I feel from a perspective of sacred geometry that they really help bring a person to center. Especially if you take time after doing the 8's to hold still in center and particularly to hold the part of the body you were figure eighting.

Most of us are familiar with the 7 basic chakras, but there are other chakras evolving in our bodies, too. The knees, for example, are one of these new chakras. It lies in the center of each knee. When figure eighting on the knee rotation for example, I've been getting some esoteric information. Whether it's Healing Dance or Watsu, when you bring the shin across the belly and place the knee, you can connect your solar plexus with the knee. So I use my body's energy field as well as my partner's to create flow, to create movement between us, but only if I'm in a good space, if I'm centered and in my own process. If I want to engage in some other type of relationship with that person or I'm not in a good place, then I know that space between us is very important and I really work to maintain that space as separate as I can. I can be close and connect chakras with a person in the Heart to Heart Arm Wave Facing Toward, which I do a lot, especially if people are really scattered with their energy, or way out there or frightened. It facilitates

moving the heart energy out, if there's some constriction or tightness, which we all have.

I want to go back to the importance of intention. When we teach aquatic bodywork, we teach hand positions to facilitate the movement. You can be pretty unconscious about what you're doing and still give a good session. But if, in addition to your own presence and hydrodynamically facilitating movement in the body, you bring intention to where your hands are on the body, there's going to be a flow of energy between your hands through you, creating a circuit with the person. So, for example, doing a Hip Wave with the hands on the shoulder and hip with partner facing toward, I always make sure to do the other side at some point in the session, because of the polarity--especially knowing that I'm going against natural polarity. Knowing that my right hand is my sending hand and the energy will move out it through me and the person, if my receiving hand is here on the left hip, I'm moving against the natural polarity. Moving against the natural flow of the etheric isn't necessarily a problem. It's sort of like walking against the flow of water in a whirlpool. You're going to bump into what's there. So energy is the same. If I have something stuck, a nice indirect way of working with it is to place the hands off to either side on the diagonal. This will help dislodge and release the block, bringing it into my partner's awareness in a gentler way than placing the hand directly over the area and working on it. This is where training your sensorium, as Jim (Gilkeson) calls it, training your energy acuity, comes in. Does this need a really direct, go-there-get-it kind of approach or do I want to facilitate circulation indirectly around it? So if you do the wave on one side and then the other side and then hold in the assist position with the hand behind the heart, it's good. I will work with my hand on the shoulder and opposite hip in order to facilitate whatever kind of energy circulation is occurring on these diagonals. Then it can be released and it doesn't have to be a big deal; you can feel the person just breath and let go. So awareness of the polarity positions can help facilitate what's going on.

For instance, I'll have the person in a prone position with their head on my shoulder and I sense something in the body is being held. I'll wait for the pressure to build between my hands, and when it's ready to go, only then will I go into a wave. They're ready to move and you can just feel it going. Waves are, in my opinion, indispensable to doing energy work. You can hold a person stationary and put them in a head cushion and do exactly what you would do on land, but you don't have that headward movement. When I do energy work I'll take geisha steps backward as it seems to make

everything go faster and easier, with a lot less drama for the client. They don't often have to go into it. If there's something that needs to come into their consciousness, it will. But often I find things get released that I'm aware of and they are not; they just feel better and start functioning better. So summing it up, it's the knowledge of the polarity positions, the natural polarity in the hands, knowing that you can consciously bring that awareness to your touch and potentiate the benefit of whatever you're doing in the water.

These days everybody is dealing with some form of deep dark fear and I'm drawn there. Now the only horizontal psychic stream in the body runs from a point here in the spleen to the navel to the spleen, around the back to the bottom of the scapula across to the other and down to the front. One of the things that's really difficult in table work is to facilitate connection between these points and movement between them, as I have to first work on the top and then roll them over to do the bottom. On the other hand, while doing the waves, assuming I have a nice support of the head, I'll put this hand on the scapula and the other on the navel and easily facilitate the movement between them. When I'm doing the waves, instead of holding the hip, I'll hold the spleen and liver points, and so when I'm working with someone and intentionally drawn to those areas, I'll make sure the palm of my hand, where the hand chakra is, is right over that position.

I: What about the Hara Hug?

D: The Hara Hug is awesome, it facilitates everything. This connection between the heart and hara facilitates flow; it's more than just touch. From a polarity perspective it connects the upper and lower body. Some of the esoteric teaching I got when I was going through my own uterine problems was that women carry the heart of the earth in their uterus. Connecting the earth heart with this heart really facilitates, not only our own healing as women to be able to feel more here and feel the love and connection with the earth, but also we help heal the earth with that consciousness in the heart. One of the new chakras is below the sternal notch. It's called the high heart, and I use that intentionally in the heart waves. It's the seat of the innocent child, the archetype of the innocent child, the child we've forgotten we were, when we could trust, when everything was okay. It's an archetypal energy that we all carry, but that most of us have forgotten. So especially after working with childhood trauma coming up in a session, I'll often connect the hara and the high heart as a kind of security and awakening for the high heart. The more we work with these chakras, the more they awaken.

I: And the 8's--your were talking about how they ground people more...

D: They are more centering...

I: Does that mean it keeps the brain connected like in the brain gym where we're doing something that crosses the body center that integrates the right and left brain hemispheres?

D: Exactly. It depends on which chakra. When you're doing the hip figure 8, you're organizing it around that axis in the body and centering it in that axis. To the extent you are really drawing the 8 with your eyes, it helps imprint that geometry in the body. To some extent in Watsu but more so with Healing Dance, I feel in addition to releasing the energy, we're doing bilateral integration with the waves. Sometimes I talk to the person in my arms after they have had a traumatic memory or I just know that's where they were, they've connected with the energy of it. I'll ask them to follow my hands with their consciousness, to intentionally do that to imagine they are looking at my hands, and so they are looking side to side and crossing and that can dissipate the energy of the trauma, too.

I: You haven't taken Advanced Healing Dance yet and we are getting into a lot of spirals. That must also allow that energy to flow through more easily. Because we are spiral beings and our whole body structural is spiralic.

D: And do you do it in both directions

I: Yes.

D: That seems to be important, rather than just spiraling out, because the spirals spiral up and down. In a lot of the tantric work there's so much emphasis on the upward spiral and upward movement. In my experience, if once you're up, you don't come back down again, what has been transformed and where you travel energetically in the upward movement isn't made available in the physical body in everyday life to love and service. You can experience the ecstasy, the joy, but if you don't bring it down, all of that isn't as available.

Alexander: You use an interesting phrase, "implanting the geometry in the body. Can you expand on that?"

D: The body responds to energetic language in several forms, and one of them is sacred geometry. Each geometric form has its effective impact on the body. Whether it is the spiral, square, circle or rectangle, it influences the organization of energy. The triangle is the most stable geometric form. Say you experience something going on in a person's heart, the tendency is to go there and stay there and wait for something to happen. You can really facilitate integration by bringing a hand off to the side and creating a flow between these two places, then shifting your hand over to the opposite side and bringing a flow between them. So when you're are in the Hara Heart Hug, holding only the hara and heart can be unstable if a lot is going on. If you want to stabilize that then hold the left and then the right hip. It helps create a triangular circulation in that part of the body. Whatever was strongly felt, it gives the opposing feeling an option to express itself, and the third point integrates the two.

It's like two people arguing: I listen to one who has a really strong position and then I listen to the other who has an opposing position. I sit and just support, listening to each, asking, what do you need to be supported? I can help them integrate the polarities. You can do the same thing on the body. We all have such polarities on the right and left sides of our bodies--one side wants to go and the other side says no, I am afraid. Holding them and bringing the third point in-- I am the third point between the two--integrates the polarities.

The infinity symbol has much in common with this. It takes you, allows you to move through the polarities without stopping, just staying in flow, holding two opposing ideas in your mind at the same time and being at peace with them.

In all the aquatic work, the consciousness of the person in our arms goes travelling and it can be wonderful, awesome, blissful and healing, And there's the other approach that has you inviting attention to what's going on and the client follows what's going on. You can do that more easily on the table-- you're talking and the person usually doesn't leave the body as readily as in the water. This approach adds another dimension, not better or worse, every once in a while that might be helpful. Most of the time we don't talk to the person in an aquatic session and there's an unconscious communication between their body and our hands. And then there's the other extreme, as when David Sawyer sits the person up and asks, what's going on right now? Is this related to something else? I find myself moving between these approaches, depending on the client and session.

I might pick up the head and say watch your legs and see what they want to do. But I really hesitate to do that because I don't want to invade what is going on in their process. So I usually ask the body in thought a number of times, is this the time to interrupt or not? I wonder how you two are working?

I: Sometimes I'll tap the sacrum, for instance, and that brings the attention there. I really feel that in every place we touch there is a consciousness and that just by touching it gets in.

D: I think it does, too.

A: I am not sure that I work in that framework. I respond intuitively to movement and nonverbal signals. I agree with you completely that awareness is everywhere, and I'll experiment with touch, touching the cheek, the heart, behind the heart, but I don't work from a system that acknowledges the esoteric energetic reality of the body. I just go from movement, what presents itself, in a more naive fashion. But that I find quite exciting as it is.

D: There has been a challenge for me since I started doing aquatic work. My progression was from psychotherapy, which is all talk, to energy healing which is touch and talk, to aquatic bodywork, which has no talk, just movement, water and touch. So as I integrate all of these, there's a constant judge going off, asking is this the right time? and then shifting gears. Thank God, in the last year or so, it just happens, it seems right, and I'm not questioning which system I am in. I think in our group work it comes through so strongly, that we're all operating out of and drawing from our inner library

A: How would you describe your collaboration, the two of you?

D: I would say it's a new cutting edge in aquatic bodywork, incorporating all the other modalities. It really facilitates healing, potentiates it.

A: For those of us who are reading the transcript, what are you doing?

I: We call it Multi-Heart Work. So it's two, three or four people on one person in the water and its not really any moves per se, but just allowing

whatever shows up to come up, often the person goes underwater with a noseclip, but doesn't have to.

A: Do you establish a group mind, a group awareness?

D: One of the things we do is practice on each other. We started that way and now have others to work on. It's a different kind of practice, just allowing the blending of what already is an energetic recognition of each other. Those of us working together have had that kind of resonance. If two people are working on one and those two people love each other, then what channels through the body of the person worked on is a hundred times more potent than when there's not that relationship. So we're working on building our healing relationships between us. We all bring different backgrounds of what we know about touch. So in the best of sessions, I sense where Inika is, for instance, and that gives me a signal of where I should be in the body or vice versa. Or someone else is more familiar with the person and therefore leads. We sense or ask, and with a gesture send someone over to a foot, for example. So it is about hand placement and following the energy in the body, how it moves. Sometimes it's lots of movement and will take four of us to manage it and move the person around. Other times it's very quiet, just holding a persona and creating a cradle. The body finds its own line and what it needs; we just support it.

A: So, aquatic laying on of hands with an energy synergy?

D: Well, laying on of hands suggests a similar thing to what faith healers do. But there's a little more science and knowledge beneath it. We know what's going to happen and energetically, and even physiologically, we maintain support of the body.

A: You're not hitting anyone on the forehead and having them fall backwards?

D: No. (smiles)

A: Is the Healing Dance modality in some way most conducive for your work?

D: Yes

A: Why might that be?

D: Because of the ongoing physical movement and flow that facilitates the energy movement and flow. I felt that even before I took Healing Dance; I found myself doing some of that naturally. To stand in one place, as is taught in Watsu, didn't seem to facilitate it as much. Once I learned Healing Dance, I found that the more I am connected to the person, the more information the person is sending me about what wants to happen, then the more my response flows into a Healing Dance move rather than a Watsu move.

A: I have another question for you. David Sawyer talks about people longing to return to a pre-birth state, state of spirit, when they are arching. Do you have sense of that in your work, what could be going on for people?

D: It was interesting when I took his class and heard that. Because it's been a question I've had from the beginning: what's happening when people go into this automatic hyperextension and hold it? And that makes sense to me. In the case of the person who was gestated in a toxic womb, that would set an energetic imprint for other kinds of toxic attractions throughout life. The arching, then could be any type of freeze trauma.

I: Let me out of here.

D: Yes, let me out of here. For David to make that assumption and suddenly help the person implant-- I don't question his success with that, he is amazing with what he does, but to generalize, I'm not sure. I wouldn't say no. What was so fascinating about that is how much we download in the womb that serves as a magnet for similar experiences.

A: Feldenkreis talks about how many people go through life in some degree of startle reflex, where they're a little bit bowed forward to protect themselves. I sometimes get the sense that the arching is the body's natural reflex toward freedom, toward balance, and also toward pleasure. I've seen that so many times, such pleasure in arching. I wouldn't put one value on it.

D: It's about watching how it's done. As you just did it is different from other ways. No matter what there are heads that just won't get neutral. Those heads I just hold in both hands and massage at the neck however I'm feeling to allow it to open. I have a fairly regular client who spreads all his fingers whenever I get anywhere near his arms. I don't see that as pleasure at all; that's trauma. So, David really did help me see some of what we work

with and think is stemming from childhood could definitely have a precursor, and you can get to that and transform that then.

A: Sometimes I wonder about when people go into an interactive dance that seems to have a lot of integrity in it, a lot of presence of themselves. That might have to do with the prenatal stage when there's plenty of room in the womb and movements are just beginning to be explored. There's such an innocence and naturalness in that. It's a question in my mind where the origins are. What do you think about that?

D: I think it definitely could be that in addition to the body just needing to move in a certain way, to move in a certain way or to assume a mudra so that there's an energetic form that's being held. And sometimes it's just wanting to control a session and not wanting to let go.

A: Focusing on your relation to Healing Dance, do you find that you have the tools to facilitate someone in releasing out of holding patterns or do you rely on other techniques and approaches? What else do you bring into it?

D: I don't know that I've ever done anything purely one or the other except when I'm practicing sequence in order to practice it. In sessions I use whatever I have to facilitate whatever is happening. I use it all. In fact there are times, it may be sacrilegious to say, I don't know what I would call it. Somebody pays me for a Watsu because that's what I'm certified in. But I do everything. I rarely do purely one thing. I know we have to have it in treatment form so there's a way of teaching, but once we go off, it's a new modality in every session. If I were to videotape myself in the last twenty sessions I've done, I'd say its probably seventy percent Healing Dance moves and thirty percent WaterDance or Watsu.

A: So you're finding the raw material to adapt those moves to your purposes or to what you feel your client needs...

D: More raw materials in Healing Dance than in the others.

(The tape ran out here. Oh, well...)