

From the Receiver's Point of View

Watsu is a personal experience and cannot be shared. This statement may have a controversial ring to it for the community of Watsu practitioners. We see Watsu as an experience of sharing, of being one with another, of loving unconditionally. Yet even in the deepest bonding experience of Watsu, there are two quite different experiences, not one. Two consciousnesses are aware of a unity, coming into it from their separate worlds of values and meaning. I can relate to another's state through my own experiences. I can note outward signs, I can intuit, I can hold a healing space and I can empathize. Ultimately, however, a receiver's experience belongs to him or her alone. In the receiver's realm of sensations, memories, visions, feelings and thoughts, I cannot possibly take part. I think it is important to be clear about this without fearing that the reality of the togetherness we experience will be diminished.

Communication training encourages us to recognize this inviolable nature of individual experience. In conversation, listeners may incorrectly assume they know what speakers mean, despite that words carry varying meanings for different people.. Once I admit to the imprecision of language, admit that I don't really know what the speaker means, then I can begin to find out. To understand another as well as possible, it is necessary to ask questions and cease making assumptions. It then becomes exciting to delve deeper, to get closer to another's experience through a questioning attitude. Sometimes in the process a hidden jewel is unearthed, a surprise to both questioner and answerer alike. I want to restore mystery to my life, let the Unknown approach one step closer and honestly admit what I don't know.

By receiving sessions, by placing myself in the role of the receiver, I continue to learn what Watsu is. In other words, I continue to have my experience of it. In a recent session, I received loving touch that demonstrated what is real, what is healing. A sorrow flooded forth from me and I felt restored to wholeness in an instant. I had the realization that as practitioners, it matters who we are. It's not enough to remember a loving attitude for a session, then leave it. The resolve to be love, to attain to the perfection possible within our humanity is a powerful vibration to carry. Who we are is what we share.

I also learn about Watsu by listening to feedback; I get a sense of what is going on for clients. The depth and power, the color and flavor can be conveyed, if not the thing itself. I want to heed very carefully the inspired and heartfelt words of those who have no concepts about Watsu. At the wall after a session, receivers open their eyes in a state of grace and say the most amazing things, still within the embrace of Watsu. Here are some examples:

"I never want to walk again. I just want to float in the pool. It's ecstasy, going home, feeling connected."

"Now I know what it's like not to have a body. I was so far gone."

"It's magic. I felt I was riding my breath."

"I feel great...light My joints feel completely supple. The moments of stillness I liked, were powerful. The fullness collapsed into the moment, crystallized, the movement needed the stillness."

"Incredible. I knew it would be good, but not this good. So relaxing."

"That was the most nurtured I've ever felt in my life."

"Very beautiful. My whole body feels very alive."

"Now I know what astronauts feel like. Lovely. Sense of body, sense of self."

"That was the most blissful experience I've ever had. It was the most safe I've felt in my life."

"So, deep. I wasn't here. Now I know that I'm not my body, because I wasn't in it."

"Wow. It was like flying."

Receiving sessions and hearing feedback then, are ways of staying in touch with the work. An understanding of the scope of what receivers experience is also important. Watsu is totality. It is a primordial sensory experience. Receivers enter an internal world subject to stimuli from the environment--the enveloping water, movement and practitioner presence. The body assumes beautiful and innocent positions in the water. In the open, undefended state of Watsu, sensory impressions gain full and unfiltered admittance, as in childhood, when the world was a bright and vivid panorama. And then the opening into other dimensions is triggered; dimensions of feeling, earlier bodymind states, places beyond body awareness, beyond thinking.

So, what is the receiver aware of?

Auditory:

- silence
- nature sounds
- the sounds of water
- the practitioner's heartbeat
- the practitioner's breath
- humming, singing, toning or mantra repetition by the practitioner

- music
- mundane conversations at the edge of the pool
- traffic, airplanes

Visual:

- darkness
- patterns of light flitting across the eyelids
- glimpses of the practitioner
- sky and trees
- the ceiling of the pool

Olfactory:

- the smell of fresh air, flowers, incense
- the smell of the practitioner's enchanting breath essence
- the smell of the practitioner's garlic pasta lunch
- the smell of the practitioner's body
- the smell of chlorine, auto exhaust

Tactile:

- temperature of water
- resistance of water
- support of water
- texture of water
- movement of water
- moving through space
- movement at the joints
- the rhythm of movement
- muscles being stretched
- muscles being massaged
- the movement of the ribcage in breathing
- the movement of the practitioner's ribcage in breathing
- the skin of the practitioner (including texture, temperature, hair, etc.)
- the strength and sensitivity of the practitioner's hands and arms
- the nature of the practitioner's body (male or female, hairy or smooth, soft or solid or bony)
- the quality of the practitioner's movement (flowing or jerky, leisurely or rushed, balanced or uncentered, expansive or constricted, allowing or controlling)

Subtle:

- being held and held easily like a baby, child or lover
- being free with space to be, nothing required
- being together with someone, not alone
- the particular energetic presence of the practitioner
- being in the womb
- being a child
- being safe
- being loved
- being okay
- being sensual
- being sexual
- being out of body
- memories
- visions
- thoughts
- feelings
- Light
- Love