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TAPPING IN: A MOVEMENT MEDITATION FOR WELLNESS

by

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Bachelor's Degree, Elon University

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Presented in

partial fulfillment of the requirements for
the degree of Master of Fine Arts in Dance

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Artist Statement

I, Victoria Rodriguez, have been dancing for most of my life. My dance training began at three years old at Swan Ballet in Fairfax, Virginia, where I received dance education for a large portion of my childhood. I learned ballet, tap, jazz, lyrical, and hip-hop dance styles at this studio. As I was entering middle school, my mother chose to open a dance studio named 2 The Pointe. There I trained and taught into my high school years and also participated in my high school dance team. I learned the dance styles pom and kick, while through that dance team continued to practice jazz and hip hop. I performed in many Nutcrackers, summer intensives, and miscellaneous performances throughout my studio career at various venues. As I became older and started my dance team career, I was fortunate enough to have the opportunity to teach dance at the C4 Dance Company. Through them, I taught ballet, jazz, and modern children ages 7- 18. I choreographed multiple pieces for C4 company recitals and participated in events such as the local Fourth of July parades with the company. I competed in three regional and one national competition every year, often placing in the top three locally and nationally with my high school dance team. This level of achievement was significant for fostering my drive to succeed in the dance world at a young age.

Unfortunately, during my time on the dance team, I faced my first debilitating concussion, which taught me multitudes about patience and healing and sparked my interest in exercise science. The traumatic brain injury I endured during my senior year of high school shifted my college plans, as I originally planned on being a dance and dance science double major. The concussion and a life-threatening infection weeks before

starting undergrad reorganized my focus to finding ways to be a safe and healthy dancer and person.

The debilitating month I spent hospitalized before starting my undergraduate program helped me understand that all people should pursue life to the fullest and their passions. It also created a determination to live and be successful in a way that did not exist before this event. Discharged just three days before my first year of college, managing post-hospitalization complications and the diagnosis of a chronic illness taught me resilience and tenacity in the face of severe adversity. While I chose not to pursue a Bachelor's in Dance, I completed a degree in Dance Science with minors in Entrepreneurship and Psychology. While pursuing this, I continued dancing and performing through my classes and the on-campus DanceWorks club. I created multiple works of choreography and attended local dance events that helped shape who I am as a dancer today.

The summer before my final semester, I was able to travel to Italy and study at the Florence Dance Center. There I performed across the country in a myriad of spectacular places. This experience allowed me to do site-specific research, so I could participate in the director of Elon University's Dance Program's Site Specific research while simultaneously working with a local Italian choreographer.

After graduating from Elon University, I attended the Gallim 2020 Winter Intensive at Julliard, where I learned acting techniques for dancers. This intensive dance program gave me numerous tools and resources from which I have pulled to create two contemporary pieces. One of these pieces is a reflection on a past relationship and its

impact on my life, and the other is the exploration of a client who hired me to choreograph a mental health journey through dance.

All these experiences, leading to my application to the Hollins University Graduate Dance program, have made me a resilient, tenacious, hard-working woman who is not afraid of a challenge. I have traveled the world and pushed my boundaries on many fronts. I cannot wait to see what opportunities and challenges come after completing my Dance Masters in Fine Arts degree.

Overview and Goals

Tapping in: A Movement Meditation for Wellness is a movement sequence designed to enhance the mind-body connection and improve physical wellness. For the duration of the paper, the definition of “mind-body connection” is effective communication between the mind and body that enables higher efficiency compared to the practitioner’s original baseline. The meaning of “physical wellness” for this paper is completing daily activities with less pain and barriers than the practitioner’s initial baseline. I put these definitions together to allow practitioners to compare their progress to their baseline instead of a universal standard. I created this sequence to lead individuals to a deeper physical connection with their bodies and make them feel more comfortable inhabiting them. In doing so, I have generated what I believe to be a valuable sequence for mentally and physically bettering the human experience through careful research and planning. Today, people are more prone to staying indoors and remaining sedentary; this harms both the psyche and the physical body, as the human body craves movement. I have even used this sequence for my personal growth and stress management while completing the MFA process and have found success in its use on my body.

People in contemporary society face significant health issues, including poor posture in the upper body, misalignment of the pelvis, and higher stress levels. These are all issues I have struggled with and have spent many years researching and treating in my own body. While working through these physical constraints, I learned that healing is not only physical: the mind is paramount to the process. As a result, I embarked on a

significant transformation by taking a more holistic approach to healing my body and tending to my mental well-being in my regimen. Subsequent to shifting my research and intentions, I have reduced much of my psychological and physical pain and have experienced significant improvement in my quality of life.

After discovering the Steven Vaughn (SV) Calibration Method through mentored studio practice classes and completing Physical Therapy (PT) for pelvic misalignment, I became enamored with sharing this healing with other people. The SV Calibration Method is a series of exercises, stretches, and other movements designed to improve physical wellness, and SV Calibration Method is a massive inspiration to *Tapping In*. Through the SV Calibration Method, I contemplated how creating my somatic approach could provide healing. Other practices and modalities that I have looked to for inspiration for this work include the following:

- Pilates, Yoga Mind, Body, & Spirit: A return to wholeness
- Making Connection: Total Body Integration through Bartinieff fundamentals
- Physical Therapy
- Emotional Freedom Technique (EFT) Tapping

Several books geared towards bettering a person's quality of life also influenced my physical investigation, most notable of which would be *The Body Keeps the Score* by Bessel Van der Kolk. I found the methods and ideas presented in such works integral to my wellness journey over the years and thus decided to combine elements from each of them into my healing sequence. Each concept offered a new pathway to achieving wellness, but no singular path alone provided all of the answers I sought.

This thesis work provides people with access to a movement sequence that is easily adjustable for a wide demographic, including children, teens, adults, dancers, and non-dancers alike. This movement sequence aims to increase the mind-body connection, improve flexibility and strength, reduce stress, and decrease bodily pain. For this paper, the definition of pain is a debilitating experience where an injured part of the body sends signals to the brain to experience discomfort. Pain can take away from enjoyment and satisfaction in life, as well as the capacity to function, and lead to mental distress.¹ Improving this condition is paramount to allowing many people to live happier, more fulfilling lives. The elusive “mind-body connection” is essential because a solid mind-body connection allows for a better understanding of the self and attends to deficiency and growth needs. Deficiency needs must be satisfied before being able to fulfill growth needs, as deficiency needs create motivation due to being unmet (such as hunger), while growth needs stem from the desire to develop as a person. Deficiency needs stem from a lack of something necessary in a person’s life. Growth needs become available when deficiency needs are satisfied enough to meet each individual’s needs. Growth needs manifest from the desire to grow as a human. These needs become even more vital when activated as opposed to going away with satisfaction.² It can also become harder to recognize or appreciate issues within the body when disconnected. In my experience, the mind-body connection is integral to understanding what is occurring physically and psychologically.

¹ Padgett, Amy. “The Psychological Effects of Chronic Pain” Augusta Pain Center June 10, 2019. <https://augustapaincenter.com/mind-not-body-psychological-effects-chronic-pain/>.

² McLeod, Saul. “Maslows Hierarchy of Needs” Simply Psychology, April 2022. <https://www.simplypsychology.org/maslow.html>.

When the mind is in tune with the body, it indicates its needs, making it easier to discern wants or impulses over actual needs. For example, if I am sad and want a cookie, it is easier to determine if I am distressed and craving comfort rather than hungry for a cookie. When you know what your body needs, you can tend to those needs effectively and efficiently and avoid unhealthy coping mechanisms such as drugs, alcohol, bingeing food, and more.

Within the movement sequence resides stretches and exercises designed to combat the aforementioned postural issues that plague humans in contemporary society. According to research, these issues include pelvic misalignment, which can lead to low back pain, and various forms of postural misalignment, which can cause neck pain (leading to kyphosis, tension headaches, and back pain). Pelvis misalignment causes systemic alignment issues, particularly in the lower back, knees, and upper body.³ Kyphosis is an excessive outward curvature of the spine, causing hunching of the back.⁴ These issues, which can be highly debilitating if left untreated, are often caused by a lack of movement and long hours sitting at desks. This sequence also encourages reducing cortisol levels and stress, which is known to lead to health issues in excess. Extremely High cortisol levels cause neuroendocrine dysregulation that can hurt virtually every organ and tissue in the body.⁵ My movement sequence helps remedy the problems mentioned earlier by tackling total body wellness in roughly forty minutes. I hope this

³ James W. Day, Gary L. Smidt, and Thomas Lehmann, "Effect of Pelvic Tilt on Standing Posture," *Physical Therapy* 64, no. 4 (1984): 510–16. <https://doi.org/10.1093/ptj/64.4.510>.

⁴ "Oxford Languages and Google - English," Oxford Languages, Google, accessed January 27, 2022, <https://languages.oup.com/google-dictionary-en/>.

⁵ Agnese Mariotti, "The Effects of Chronic Stress on Health: New Insights Into the Molecular Mechanisms of Brain–Body Communication," *Future Science OA* 1, no. 3 (2015). <https://doi.org/10.4155/fso.15.21>.

movement sequence will become part of the average person’s self-care routine, just as one would keep a skincare routine to maintain skin health. I also believe it may be possible to modify this routine to allow disabled or differently-abled people to achieve their physical wellness. To do so, I think the concerns of each individual should need to provide influence and the sequence modified on a person-by-person basis, as expecting one sequence to work for all people is unproductive and ableist – two things I strive to avoid.

This routine uses myriad lenses to achieve a state of mind-body connection. To fully realize the benefits of the sequence, practitioners should explore each lens individually and in conjunction with the final product.

The Steven Vaughn (SV) Calibration Method

The SV Calibration Method inspired me when I began studying it and pushed me forward in my recovery from the lower cross syndrome. This method helped me regain functional movement. Muscle strength imbalances in the lower back and gluteal region in the pattern of an X, leading to an anterior pelvic tilt.⁶ It provides the ability to warm, stretch, and strengthen the body. The SV Calibration Method came to fruition through a prior Hollins University student who made me realize that I could build a sequence with similar goals if I wanted. Engaging with the SV Calibration Method opened my eyes to what can happen when you blend different somatic practices to create your own. With the introduction of the SV Calibration Method into my life, I could finally reflect upon all of

⁶“Lower Crossed Syndrome,” *Physiopedia*, accessed February 8, 2022, https://www.physio-pedia.com/Lower_Crossed_Syndrome.

the research and studying of somatic methods I had done previously, which led to my thesis taking its current form.

Pilates

I recently received my Pilates instructor certification, and throughout that process, I investigated Pilates profoundly and how it could transform a body through practice and others through teaching. Pilates has six essential principles; breath, concentration, center, control, precision, and flow. Through this practice, individuals may explore the principles of Pilates to help improve the movement's effectiveness. The principles I utilized the most were breath, concentration, precision, and flow. The first principle, breath, focuses on the necessity of breathing in a controlled manner when practicing Pilates. In Pilates, breath work is necessary to manage self-adjustment and correct exercises. Concentration, the second principle, is critical because the workouts are nuanced, and performing them with complete focus strengthens the mind-body connection. Proper attention allows for correct muscle engagement and alignment, which is essential for executing this method. The following principle is precision. Precision is necessary because it provides for the sharpening of mental agility, flexibility, and accuracy. Precision allows clumsiness to disappear and calmly directed action to take its place, which is key to living a balanced life.

Lastly, the final principle is flow. Many practices utilize flow, but in Pilates, it refers to the continuous movement expected within a Pilates practice. This flow helps build endurance and stamina and increases the likelihood of achieving a mental flow state. For the sake of my thesis, I did not dismantle this framework to create *Tapping In*.

However, I did focus on four of the six essential principles. Therefore, I used the concepts from each of the abovementioned principles to inform how I wanted my movement sequence to be performed and practiced. I chose to do it in this manner because I feel that all of these concepts are necessary to develop body control and the mind-body connection, two crucial skills utilized within the performance and practice of my thesis.

Another tool I used to refine the Pilates influence on my sequence was the book *Pilates Anatomy* by Rael Isacowitz and Karen Clippinger. This book provides a detailed breakdown of the alignment and musculature involved in the practice of Pilates movements. Studying this text during my training was paramount to understanding how to integrate Pilates into my sequence to target the intended muscles.

Yoga Mind, Body, & Spirit: A Return to Wholeness by Donna Farhi

This book by Donna Farhi was revolutionary for my Hatha Yoga practice. Like Pilates, Hatha Yoga follows fundamental principles to help students or practitioners understand their bodies and how they work. The tradition of Hatha Yoga has seven moving principles: breath, yield, radiate, center, support, align and engage. There are also five body systems identified:

- the cellular system
- the musculoskeletal system
- the fluid system
- the organ system

- The neuroendocrine system⁷

While all of these concepts are apparent in my thesis sequence, the principles I utilized most from this practice are yield, center, and align. These principles provided the framework to generate the Hatha Yoga lens that influences my thesis. The “fluid body” system most profoundly affected my sequence. The principal “yield” refers to developing enough tone in the body to feel the rebounding effect of resisting gravity. There is a sweet spot of tone where you give in to gravity slightly while maintaining a strong enough resistance against it to rebound. This principle is essential because it allows for the most functional movement at any time. When the body is yielding, it is ready to move and go. The principal “center” maintains the spine's integrity by carrying from the core muscles, while “align” maintains proper functional alignment. These two principles are essential because practitioners would not utilize the core muscles appropriately without application, and injury would occur. When it comes to the “fluid body,” this refers to the liquid systems in the body, such as lymph and synovial fluid. These systems support and move the body uniquely, very fluidly. When applied to my thesis sequence, this gentle fluidity enhances the mind-body connection and allows people to be in their bodies. For this paper, “in their bodies” refers to the experience of being aware of what is and is not happening mentally and physically inside your body.

Another way yoga influences my sequence is the importance of regular practice, highlighted in Zettergren et al. in the study *Effects of a Yoga Program on Postural Control, Mobility, and Gait Speed in Community-Living Older Adults*. This study found that older adults have better posture due to yoga poses and regular exercise. This study

⁷ Donna Farhi, *Yoga Mind, Body, Spirit* (New York: Holt Paperbacks, 2000), 53-54.

highlights the importance of having a movement sequence to practice periodically and the benefits of yoga for mitigating issues such as tech neck. According to Dr. John Michels:

Due to the weight of the head, and improper posture caused by the use of technology, tech neck occurs when the head begins to jut out forward. Common symptoms include: Generalized aching discomfort in the lower neck, shoulders, and upper back; Sharp, stabbing pain that's intense and localized in one spot; Headaches; Reduced mobility or stiffness in the neck, upper back, and shoulders; Increased pain when tilting the head forward and looking down to text; Jaw pain due to misalignment of the cervical spine; Tingling pain and numbness in the arms and hands, related to spinal nerve irritation and inflammation.⁸

This stance reinforces the notion that improper neck posture can cause chronic pain and the individual can resolve that chronic pain through regular stretching and strengthening techniques such as yoga. Hence, integrating yoga ideas is paramount to the success of my sequence.

Bartineff Fundamentals, an Extension of Laban Movement Analysis

There are six fundamental patterns of total body connectivity in this somatic movement practice, which reflect the three basic concepts to remember about movement.

Body connectivity patterns are as follows:

- breath core-distal connectivity
- head-tail connectivity
- upper-lower connectivity
- body half connectivity

⁸ John Michaels, "What is Tech Neck?" Dr. John S. Michaels, MD: Intervention Pain Management, accessed January 2022, <https://www.johnmichelsmd.com/blog/what-is-tech-neck>.

- cross-lateral connectivity⁹

These patterns of connectedness reflect the fundamental patterns through which movement occurs in day-to-day life. The basic concepts to remember about the activity are:

- change is real
- the relationship is fundamental
- patterning body connections is essential¹⁰

Change is necessary because, essentially, the "essence of movement is changed,"¹¹ but the difference in question is patterned and relational, just like these movement patterns. Relationships allow us to connect to ourselves and others. The patterns in this movement practice reflect the connections, changes, and ways in day-to-day life. The basic principle of this thought process that sticks out is relationships. I want this movement practice to foster the mind-body connection, which is the relationship to the self with which most people struggle. This movement sequence can be a way of gently exploring that relationship and inviting healing. Practicing this intentional movement sequence to foster the relationship with the self reflects the principles of Bartineff fundamentals.

⁹ Peggy Hackney, *Making Connection: Total Body Integration through Bartineff Fundamentals*. (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2003), 42-43.

¹⁰ Hackney, *Making Connection*, 42-43.

¹¹ Hackney, *Making Connection*, 42-43.

Physical Therapy (PT)

When I went to PT for lower back pain, I was diagnosed with Lower Cross Syndrome, an anterior pelvis tilt. The following photo highlights the difference between a neutral pelvis and an anterior pelvic tilt.

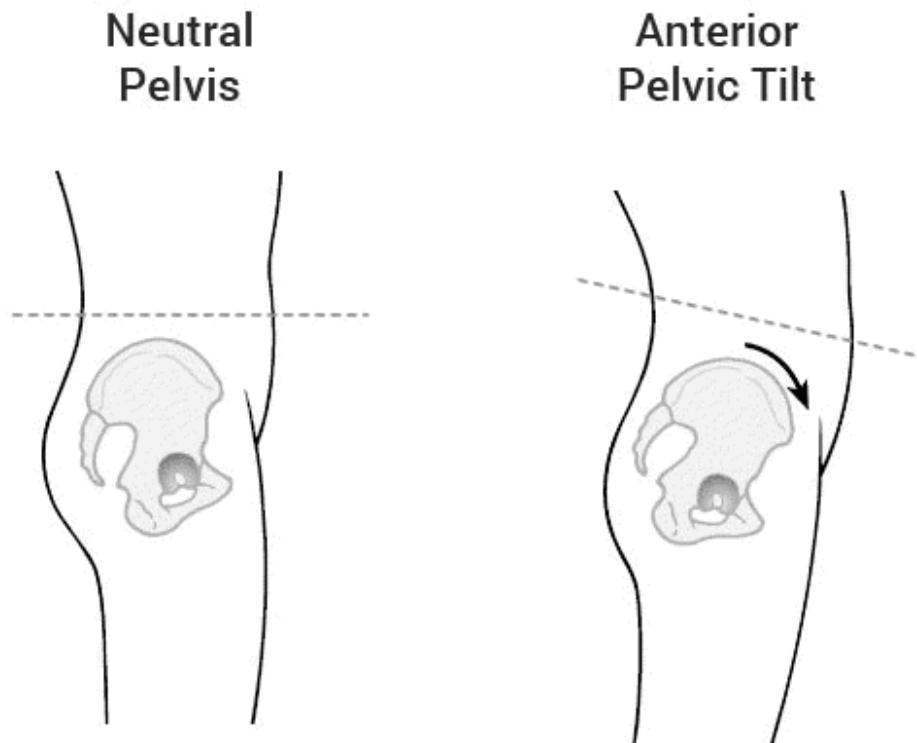


Figure 1: Example of Anterior Pelvic Tilt

This tightness causes pain and tightness in an X formation on the back, shortening the hip flexors, tightening the gluteal muscles, and weakening the surrounding muscles. The treatment for this ailment was long and hard, and I learned a lot through the process. I would do about an hour and a half of daily stretches and physical therapy exercises, slowly getting more intense and advanced as my muscles recovered from the severe strain they were experiencing. This practice accompanied my Deep Pressure Wave Therapy or Extracorporeal Pulse Activation Treatment (EPAT) and dry needling, which

causes inflammation to increase nutrient availability to fuel the healing process. EPAT utilizes ultrasound waves to induce slight microtears to an already injured area. Introducing these microtears from the pressure of the ultrasounds waves encourages increased blood flow to an already damaged area, allowing healing to occur in particularly stubborn/hard-to-heal injuries.¹² Dry Needling involves the use of very thin needles to stimulate muscular trigger points to release them. This procedure loosens and relaxes the muscles it stimulates to alleviate pain and suffering.¹³ After completing recovery for Lower Cross Syndrome, I went back to physical therapy to treat severe neck pain. As it turns out, I had tech neck, a widespread ailment that affects up to 48% of global workers.¹⁴

While healing my injuries, I found many emotions and feelings about myself and my body arising, both positive and negative. I also noticed a high sense of frustration with the monotony of PT and sought to find a way to improve upon it. As a result, many of the stretches and exercises I used in physical therapy have been included in this thesis sequence to encourage the daily practice of these exercises, as I discovered that this is the best way to maintain a pain-free life.

¹² “Pressure Wave Therapy,” Family Foot Center, December 1, 2020, <https://drtoddpinsky.com/pressure-wave-therapy/>.

¹³ Kara Johnson, “On Pins and Needles: Just What Is Dry Needling?” Mayo Clinic Health System, Mayo Clinic, January 2017, <https://www.mayoclinichealthsystem.org/hometown-health/speaking-of-health/on-pins-and-needles-just-what-is-dry-needling>.

¹⁴ Côté, Pierre, Gabrielle van der Velde, J David Cassidy, Linda J. Carroll, Sheilah Hogg-Johnson, Lena W. Holm, Eugene J. Carragee, et al. “The Burden and Determinants of Neck Pain in Workers.” *Spine* 33, Supplement (2008). <https://doi.org/10.1097/brs.0b013e3181643ee4>.

Emotional Freedom Technique (EFT)

EFT combines principles of Chinese meridians and tapping. Tapping is a stress management technique that utilizes ancient Chinese medicine and modern psychology. This wellness method intends to reduce cortisol levels and increase the space between stimulus and reaction. I enjoy EFT tapping because it lowers cortisol levels directly through tapping on eight Chinese meridians in the body. In 2019 Researchers did a study that showcases the physiological effects of working utilizing EFT. The results suggested a positive impact on cortisol levels and other physiological stress markers on the body.¹⁵ Chinese meridians are based on traditional Chinese medicine and are energetic connection points for various energetic systems within the body. While these points are non-physical, there is a physical point on the body that practitioners can stimulate to trigger the meridian.¹⁶ Traditionally, as pictured below, there are more than eight meridian points, but EFT tapping consists of eight points.

¹⁵ Bach et al., “Clinical Eft (Emotional Freedom Techniques) Improves Multiple Physiological Markers of Health,” *Journal of Evidence-Based Integrative Medicine* February (2019). <https://doi.org/10.1177/2515690x18823691>.

¹⁶ “Meridians in Traditional Chinese Medicine?: AMC-Miami, Florida,” Acupuncture and Massage College, Acupuncture and Massage College, September 2017, <https://www.amcollege.edu/blog/what-are-meridians-in-traditional-chinese-medicine-tcm>.

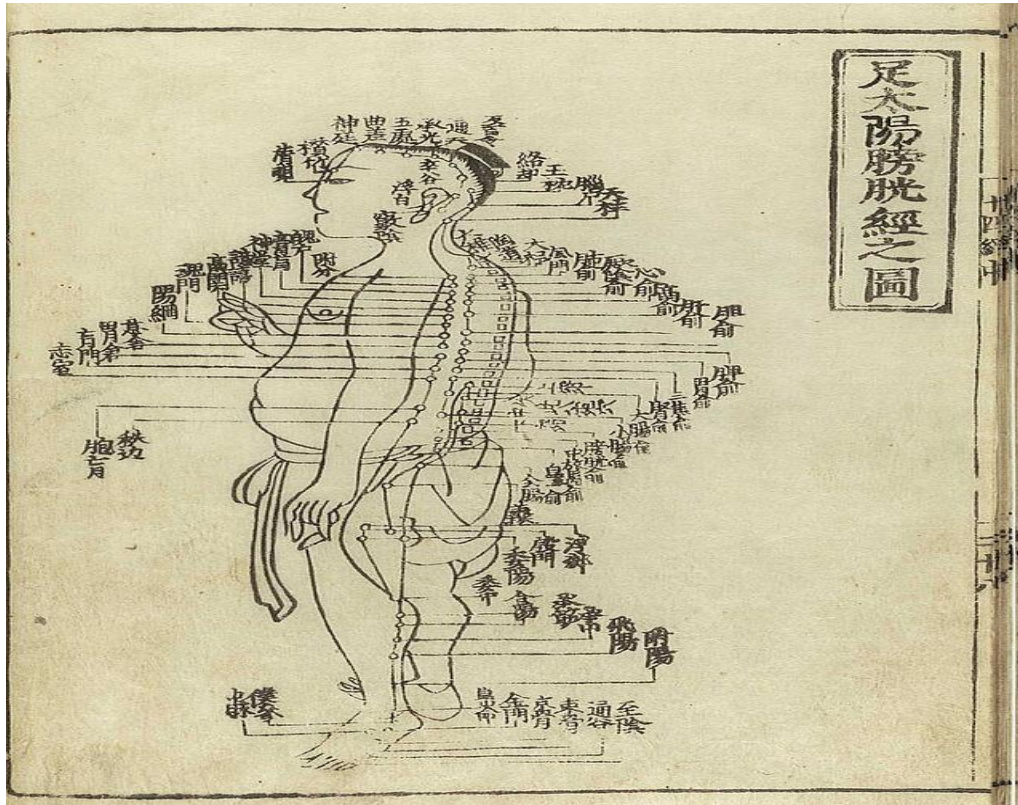


Figure 2: Chinese Meridians on the Body

EFT tapping, combined with varying mantras, has made a significant difference in my personal life and ability to manage my emotions and love myself and the body I was given. An example of a mantra I have utilized with tapping is as follows:

Karate Chop: Even though I refuse to forgive them because of what they did to me...I deeply love and accept myself... (or you can simply say, “I’m OK” if love and accepting yourself is too much right now)

Karate Chop: Even though I refuse to forgive them because of what they did to me...I deeply love and accept myself...

Eye Brow: I can’t believe they did that

Side of Eye: I'm so angry

Under Eye: It's not right

Under Nose: It's not fair

Under Mouth: And I refuse to let it go

Collarbone: All this anger

Under Arm: All this ____ (fill in the blank with how you feel)

Top of Head: In every cell of my body

Eyebrow: I just can't let this go

Side of Eye: Because they don't deserve that

Under Eye: They don't deserve my forgiveness

Under Nose: And I refuse to let it go

Under Mouth: So much anger.

Collarbone: About what happened

Under Arm: About what they did

Top of Head: About what they said

Eyebrow: Maybe it's time to let this go

Side of Eye: I wonder if I can let this go

Under Eye: What if I can let part of this go

Under Nose: Releasing this anger

Under Mouth: From every cell of my body

Collarbone: Letting it go

Under Arm: Letting it all go

Top of Head: Right now¹⁷

As is evident in the mantra, when the emotional resistance to the desired thought or idea has calmed down significantly, there is a shift in the language utilized to move towards the desired thought. Tapping allows the practitioner to process and feel their feelings thoroughly and then gently release them to move forward. I chose this method as a lens to frame the creation of my movement sequence because I think this skill is compelling and valuable. Practicing in a calm setting makes the craft more straightforward to use in times of crisis. In my personal experience, I have used this technique to navigate negative feelings around my body, anxiety, depression, lack of motivation, anger, physical pain, and more. I have found it to be a valuable tool in all

¹⁷ Ortner, Nick. "Tapping Script: Let Go and Forgive". The Tapping Solution. 2019. <https://www.thetappingsolution.com/blog/tapping-script-refuse-forgive/>.

these areas. EFT is a preventative health measure as demonstrated by previously mentioned research which displayed that EFT tapping helps lower physiological markers of stress in the body.¹⁸ These stress markers have a strong connection to many chronic illnesses and ailments such as “cardiovascular dysfunctions, diabetes, cancer, autoimmune syndromes and mental illnesses such as depression and anxiety disorders.”¹⁹ Seeing how these ailments are prevalent and debilitating, I thought incorporating a technique that unites the mind and body, lowers stress levels, and can change how one feels about oneself was perfect for the work I am trying to achieve. As it currently stands, EFT tapping is at the beginning and end of each session of the movement sequence by tapping on the meridian points and saying the mantras. Doing this to open and close the session has proven very rewarding.

Improving the Quality of Life

While I could write an entire thesis on how these books have influenced me, for this document, I will be focusing on the following works: *The Body Keeps the Score* by Bessel Van Der Kolk, *Maps to Ecstasy: The Healing Power of Movement* by Gabrielle Roth, and *Pleasure Activism: The Politics of Feeling Good* by Adrienne Maree Brown. These three texts, in particular, had quotes that stood out to me in my research in a foundational way. The first book, *The Body Keeps the Score*, was a revelational read for me. As someone who has finally decided to dive deep into trauma healing at this point in

¹⁸ Bach et al., “Clinical Eft.”

¹⁹ Mariotti, “The Effects of Chronic Stress on Health.”

life, the contents of this book resonated with me on a personal level. One quote that stood out to me in particular:

Traumatized people chronically feel unsafe inside their bodies: The past is alive in the form of gnawing interior discomfort. Visceral warning signs constantly bombard their bodies, and, in an attempt to control these processes, they often become experts at ignoring their gut feelings and in numbing awareness of what is played out inside. They learn to hide from their selves.²⁰

This quote struck a chord with me because that is how I have experienced trauma personally, as well as knowing people who struggle to connect with their gut feelings due to trauma. Knowing that others share the same experience highlighted the importance of finding a new way to reconnect to the body and find a haven again. Reflecting on trauma with such an analytical and loving lens has allowed me to recognize better when I need to utilize the healing benefits of my thesis sequence to achieve mental clarity. The following quote that left an impression on me was from *Maps to Ecstasy* and is as follows: "Feelings are neither positive nor negative; they simply are elemental forces in our life energy with their own vibrations and functions. They are essential to our health and well-being. Essentially, fear protects, anger defends, sadness releases, joy uplifts, compassion unites."²¹ This idea has been quite a game-changer for me. As someone diagnosed with Borderline Personality Disorder (BPD), I am subject to intense emotions and moods that can change instantly. BPD is defined as a personality disorder characterized by severe mood swings, impulsive behavior, and difficulty forming stable

²⁰ Bessel Van Der Kolk M.D, *The Body Keeps the Score: Brain, Mind, and Body in the Healing of Trauma*, (New York: Penguin Publishing Group, 2014), 97.

²¹ Gabrielle Roth and John Loudon, *Maps to Ecstasy: A Healing Journey for the Untamed Spirit*. (Novato, California: Natraj Publishing, 1989), 60.

personal relationships.²² This emotional instability is due to repeated trauma during my developmental years that led to poor brain development in the amygdala, a roughly almond-shaped mass of gray matter inside each cerebral hemisphere involved with the experiencing of emotions.²³ This lack of development, combined with trauma, makes my experience of emotion something that has been incredibly debilitating my entire life. This concept was introduced to me when I began treatment for BPD. It wasn't until I read *Maps to Ecstasy* that it finally clicked in my head. Emotions guide us and provide necessary information for understanding both internal and external stimuli, but feelings do not hold a moral connotation. Emotions are something that people should fully experience, learn from, and then release. When I finally came to this realization and began to apply it to the process of finishing my thesis, I found that some of the highly debilitating stress I was experiencing began to lift and become more manageable.

Lastly, in *Pleasure Activism*, I came across one more quote that helped to shape my thoughts and intentions around this sequence. This quote stuck out to me because I am someone who experiences extreme emotions all the time due to my BPD. Having a new and nuanced way to think about the relation of emotions to my health reminds me that they are not something to be avoided but embraced and accepted and released. I think I have gotten better the more I have experienced practicing my sequence regularly, this ability to feel something intense, take it, and then move on. The quote is as follows:

I have seen, over and over, the connection between tuning in to what brings aliveness into our systems and bring the ability to access personal, relational, and communal power. Conversely, I have seen how denying our full, complex selves—denying our aliveness and our needs as living,

²² “Oxford Languages and Google - English,” Oxford Languages.

²³ “Oxford Languages and Google - English,” Oxford Languages.

sensual beings—increases the chance that we will be at odds with ourselves, our loved ones, our coworkers, and our neighbors on this planet.²⁴

This passage caught my attention because, again, the denial of emotions is so detrimental to the person experiencing the feelings and everyone around them. Unfortunately, what most people fail to realize is that when emotions are bottled up or denied, they fester and turn into something that seeps out of your system like a virus, slowly infecting others with undue pain and suffering. I have personally seen the effect of denial of the self both within myself and others I care for, and it consistently is a challenging experience for everyone involved. Instead of communicating effectively and moving through emotion, denial of the self or experienced feelings leads to closed-off, disconnected behavior. In alignment with my goal of helping as many people as possible, this quote rooted down the idea that my sequence should be a tool for the mind and the body so as people take the time to heal themselves, they also will begin to see healing in the relationships and people around them.

Experiential Research Through Self-Application of the Sequence

The process of creating and finalizing this thesis and creative manifestation has been an immense emotional burden. This thesis is a very personal project, and the feedback process has been very hard for me, mentally and emotionally. I found it becoming so unfavorable that I was experiencing extreme mental resistance, a hatred of dance, thoughts of suicide, and other symptoms of severe burnout. In the name of

²⁴ Adrienne Maree Brown, *Pleasure Activism: The Politics of Feeling Good*, (Chico, Edinburgh: AK press, 2019), pg 5.

creating a work I'm proud of, I decided to break from actively working on my thesis paper and creative manifestation and try my best to fall back in love with movement. This process involved a lot of rest, medication, and support. A few weeks into my rest, when reading From "Shusterman's Somaesthetics to a Radical Epistemology of Somatics" by Ginot et. al., I realized that I could utilize the power of my thesis sequence to bring myself back to a place of balance, where I could devote myself to this project in a way that wouldn't create burnout but instead foster my inherent creativity. I was able to come to the realization when I came across the following quote from the aforementioned article:

The second major discursive trait of somatics is to highlight the value of individual experience over and above general experience. Here, the long succession of failures, and, finally, the persistence and tenacity of research legitimizes the founder's enterprise.²⁵

This quote made me reflect on my own personal experiences with the sequence I created and how those experiences shaped the development of my thesis thus far. After doing so I came to the understanding that using myself as the primary research subject further legitimizes my work while allowing me to personally benefit from what I have created. This realization has allowed me to feel more relaxed and comfortable in myself and my research and prompted a new way of reflecting on my work.

As a result of these realizations, I practiced my thesis over a few months, journaling my experiences before and after. To rehabilitate my mind from burnout, I did not create a regular schedule to practice. Instead, I practiced my thesis as often as I could

²⁵ Ginot, Isabelle, Allegra Barlow, and Mark Franko. "From Shusterman's Somaesthetics to a Radical Epistemology of Somatics." *Dance Research Journal* 42, no. 1 (2010): 12–29. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23266984>.

manage without making myself feel overwhelmed or contributing to burnout. To further support my claims about the benefits of this thesis, I have decided to include my journal entries in this document and reflect on them.

Entry: 12/17/21

Before

Anxious but excited

Ready to physically feel better

Very tight and sore from work and life

Feeling the pain of burnout starting to melt away and be replaced by cautious curiosity around my sequence.

After

I was able to achieve a rather deep meditative state which was the relaxation I didn't realize I needed. I am super tired and actually quite hungry. It feels like my body has calmed down and I'm now ready to really rest before I have to go to work. I'm curious as to how my body will feel during/after this shift, as it should be busy.

Mentally I feel calm and relaxed. I feel like a good snack and a nap will get me to where I want to be today, and I'm feeling optimistic about my shift/day which is unusual for me lately.

Entry: 12/22/21

Before

Feeling shitty about not doing this daily as I wanted. But I'm back at it again and ready to feel better. I think completing the sequence more often will inspire me to do it more often! I've been physically tired working and making money for Christmas, and my low back has been killing me. Hoping to find some physical relief and maybe a good nap after this sequence is done today!

After

That was deeply relaxing and revitalizing. I decided to listen to my top music of the year which had a very different vibe than last time. This music is more upbeat and energizing. I noticed myself slightly out of breath at the end due to the pressure on my chest when laying on my back. That was discouraging, but I'm proud of myself for completing this.

I came to some realizations regarding cues for alignment. I really want the head circles to start in the chin and focus on stretching both the back and front of the neck. I do this by drawing a large circle in front of my face instead of around my head. With the hip flexor and hammy stretch, I tried making that a flow today and LOVED it. Felt good within my body and I think I'm going to keep it as a cue.

I feel relaxed but also energized and excited about working on this more. I need to prioritize completing this sequence more often so I can start to reap the long-term benefits I'm anticipating because my body desperately needs those changes.

Entry: 12/23/21

Before

Feeling anxious about Neo because his leg hasn't been doing well. I'll have to check on it after this run.

My body hurts, and I'm sore and tired, but I felt so much better and energized after doing this yesterday that I'm going for day two! I feel proud of myself but also stressed about making this habit last.

Today I'm searching for mental calm in the storm of things I have to deal with!

After

I wasn't as focused and centered mentally as I would've liked the entire time. There were many moments of deep focus though where I was able to send breath to the area to help it expand and use my breath to assist in the creation/decreasing of heat within the body. I think this practice of focusing on the breath really depended on my practice physically without having to add on significantly more time.

I added more reps to some of the heat-building exercises to make sure my body is challenged and gets the stimulation it needs to deeply relax, release trauma, and allow me to process and manage it.

I'm noticing in my hip openers lots of feelings of frustration, especially in regard to my body and level of fitness. I'm hoping to see my body start to relax and lengthen as well as my mind. I think this kind of space will give me room to process all my research and synthesize it into something creative and useful without experiencing severe burnout, which is something I've been struggling with lately.

Entry: 12/28/21

Before

Ahhh! It's my birthday! I'm so excited. I thought what better way to prepare myself for the day than to run my sequence. Got some great pump-up music on and I'm ready to stretch and vibe. I missed a few days because I did take Neo to the ER and it screwed up my flow. But it's okay! Because he's good now and it's my birthday and we're getting back on track.

Today I'm looking for physical release and to work through some anxiety around turning 25.

After

So today the deep mental focus was lacking but the physical release was awesome. I feel so much better, and now I think I'll be a little more pain-free during the day. Usually, I do this in the evening, so I'm excited to see how doing this in the morning affects me and my body.

For sure sleepy, and might need a nap.

Entry: 1/2/22

Before

I've been super busy just trying to keep up with life, Rene asked me to show him my thesis, so we're going to do the sequence together today! I'm nervous but excited because he's not a dancer and I haven't done this for anyone in a while. So many things. Ah. I'm going to get started, so we can finish.

After

It was hard working with Rene as his body is pretty tight, and he looks angry when he's focused. But aside from that Rene reported feeling more relaxed and comfortable after completing the sequence, so I'd call that a win!

Entry: 1/8/22

Before

I'm super anxious and stressed today because I'm tired and need a pre-work nap, but I also need to stretch before work to help with the pain I feel. Therefore, I have decided to modify the sequence and try to do primarily the stretching part of the sequence while on my bed. I want to see if maybe this can act as a subsequence for when I need a good deep stretch but don't have time for a 45 min stretch and strengthening session!

After

I feel a lot better, to be honest. Ready for this nap and in way less pain. The sequence done in this manner was really relaxing and also an excellent option for people who struggle to get out of bed. The tapping/stretching combo with deep focus placement has me drifting off.

Looking at these entries individually, I notice that I often experience many intense uncomfortable emotions before completing the sequence. In some cases, my anxiety even lies in the fact that I need to practice the sequence, and I'm tired or nervous. In every practice, there is an emotional shift to something more uplifting or relaxed emotionally, and physically the release of tension reduces my overall pain. Regarding these journal entries, the trend I'm noticing within myself is a shift to a healthier mindset even when preparing to do the sequence. I may still experience anxiety or stress, but I'm coping with it more effectively. I also noticed that I'm experiencing less widespread bodily pain, which is a vast improvement as I usually experience much daily pain. I would be

interested in seeing how doing more entries over time would affect my mental and physical health.

Process and Potential Adaptations

Over the course of one of my graduate classes I was able to develop a syllabus and lesson plan for this sequence. My process started when I went to physical therapy for lower cross syndrome in my back. As previously mentioned, this healing process was long and painful and taught me a lot about myself as a mover and human being. After I completed my recovery, I realized I needed continuing preventative care that was not an hour and a half of boring stretches and exercises I needed to complete daily outside of my exercise regimen. After being exposed to the SV Calibration Method and realizing there are creative ways to heal the ailments I was dealing with while keeping me interested, the need for the *Tapping In* movement sequence became apparent to me, and the seed was planted. After reading Kimberly Hutt's "Corrective Alignment and Injury Prevention Strategies: Science, Somatics or Both," I felt a lot better about my marriage of both science and creativity. Along the process of creating this sequence I received feedback that I was being too scientific, and therefore not creative enough and agonized over months about how to find balance. Reading this article helped me realize that I needed to simply relax in my practice and trust my process, so my natural creativity could find its way back into my work.

After making these realizations, I began taking time to move daily for about an hour, during which I moved through stretches, exercises, and improvisational movements that felt good in my muscles and bones. Over time, I reflected on the trends I liked the

most and compiled them into a sequence. My first sequence drafts weren't perfect, but I would move through them and make changes according to what helped the flow, assisted with my intentions for the sequence, and felt beneficial to the sustained recovery of my body. After a few drafts, I came up with the base sequence I will teach in *Tapping In* movement classes. Finalizing this sequence was an accomplishment. These classes could potentially even allow for people to become trained in the *Tapping In* movement sequence. It is the foundation that I hope to introduce to people, and I hope that these trained people and I can then explore the world of modifications that can be available to make this sequence more accessible. One aspect that really intrigued me in my search was the discovery of dynamic stretching is more beneficial than static.²⁶ While my sequence does include both, this knowledge really did shift the way I incorporated dynamic and static stretching in my sequence because one of my goals was to increase flexibility and reduce the chance of injury.

For my thesis, I have studied the use of both TheraBands and yoga balls briefly. Some examples of ways the TheraBand and yoga ball can be included in this practice are as follows: During floor sequence one when doing the elbow to knee exercise, the TheraBand can be attached to the foot and hand for resistance. During slow swimming, TheraBands can be placed around the hands, feet, or both, to increase resistance during exercises in the sidekick series such as the leg lifts and clams. The use of TheraBands in this capacity was inspired by a study on Proprioceptive Neuromuscular Facilitation (PNF) training and its effectiveness for increasing contralateral lower limb strength.

²⁶ Parsons et al, "Static vs. Dynamic Stretching on Vertical Jump and Standing Long Jump," *Proceedings 2006: 2nd Annual Symposium: Graduate Research and Scholarly Projects*, (Wichita, Kansas: Wichita State University, 2006).

Contralateral lower limb strength aids in injury prevention, so I decided to incorporate these potential modifications.²⁷ This increase in resistance is good for the body because it encourages “hypertrophy, increased oxidative capacity, and changes in muscle fiber type.”²⁸ If appropriately utilized, all the above mentioned changes will ultimately make for a stronger, healthier dancer in ways that the sequence without resistance cannot provide. For older adults, “Integrating Pilates-Based Core Strengthening into Older Adult Fitness Programs” by Kristin Smith and Elizabeth Smith suggests using Pilates-based core work to mitigate injury. This leads me to feel that for adults over 50, I could include more core-heavy Pilates exercises such as the hundred to minimize their chances of injury better.

We can start the sequence sitting/bouncing on the yoga ball until the wall angels into the roll down. The yoga ball can be used as a tool to lean on when engaging in leg sequence one, and during floor sequence one, it can be used as a prop to remind practitioners of proper alignment in the position and provide a gentle resistance.²⁹ While I'm sure there are more ways to use these props within my sequence, this is an outline of what I have discovered to be beneficial thus far. I intend to continue to explore the realm of use for these tools as I move forward with the *Tapping In* method past graduate school.

²⁷ Park et al., “The Effects of Self-Induced and Therapist-Assisted Lower-Limb PNF Pattern Training on the Activation of Contralateral Muscles,” *Journal of Physical Therapy Science* 24, no. 11 (2012): 1123–26, <https://doi.org/10.1589/jpts.24.1123>.

²⁸ Areas et al., “Effect of Upper Extremity Proprioceptive Neuromuscular Facilitation Combined with Elastic Resistance Bands on Respiratory Muscle Strength: A Randomized Controlled Trial,” *Brazilian Journal of Physical Therapy* 17, no. 6 (December 2013): 541–46, <https://doi.org/10.1590/s1413-35552012005000131>.

²⁹ Colleen Craig, *Pilates on the Ball: The World's Most Popular Workout Using the Exercise Ball*, (Rochester, Vermont: Healing Arts Press, 20019, 11-12.

I tried to keep in mind during my creative process that while I was using my own body as a model, the heart of the sequence needed to be transferable to other people. I did not want to discount the information that my own, chronically ill body could provide because as Allison Kafer says in *Feminist, Queer, Crip*:

It becomes obvious that people with disabilities have experiences, by virtue of their disabilities, which non-disabled people do not have, and which are [or can be] sources of knowledge that is not directly accessible to non-disabled people. Some of this knowledge, for example, how to live with a suffering body, would be of enormous practical help to most people.... Much of it would enrich and expand our culture, and some of it has the potential to change our thinking and our ways of life profoundly.³⁰

This quote got me thinking about the information my body has to offer since I suffer from chronic, nearly nonstop pain. A large part of this sequence's creation was to help mediate that pain in my own and other people's bodies. This realization helped me feel more comfortable trusting myself through the process, as well as led to the idea of journaling before and after practicing the sequence to better document the short- and longer-term changes of this experience. This quote also helped me realize that complete pain relief is not the overall goal, but as much relief is possible for that body and to better relate to the body and self.

During the creation process, I also tried to apply my dance science undergraduate degree and the knowledge I gained around how the human body works and can be taken care of as a foundation for making the sequence transferable to others. The ailments that inspired this sequence acted as a framework that my dance science knowledge could land itself on to consider the common needs of bodies that aren't my own. Exposing others to this work and generating my teaching materials for the *Tapping in* class allowed me to

³⁰ Kafer, Allison. *Feminist, Queer, Crip*. Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2013.

mold the sequence into something not solely to heal my body. I also took the time to consider dance pedagogy in creating the sequence, as I wanted my teaching method to be accessible to most bodies. When teaching this sequence, I try to be open about my pedagogy with the students because in “Creating Cultures of Teaching and Learning: Conveying Dance and Somatic Education Pedagogy” by Donna Dragon, she highlights the importance of transparency with students due to the lack of transparency historically available to students, especially in the realm of somatics. I agree with this article’s call to action for transparency because I was subject to that lack of transparency in my training. It wasn’t until I found teachers willing to be transparent with me about their pedagogy that I found myself willing to invest in my holistic health and engage myself fully in class and achieve a more fulfilling class experience. Another factor that has been important to me in regard to teaching the approach is intersectionality. In Susan Foster’s *Corporealities*, the compilation of essays highlights the deep need for intersectional ideas in engaged practices such as the *Tapping In*, the method I have created. The need for intersectionality is apparent because, according to the ideas presented in the compilation mentioned above of articles, in my understanding, it seems that intersectional practices and considerations are the only way to derail white supremacy in our engaged practices and, ultimately, our society as a whole. The feedback I have received from all the people who have tried this method helped to shape it into the format it is today, and without that feedback, I would have had a challenging time making sure the sequence could be of use to different types of bodies, as well as ensuring clarity in my pedagogy for the benefit of the bodies that practice this sequence.

Tapping In Sequence

The following is an outline of the *Tapping In* movement sequence:

- Tap **3-5 min**
- Neck stretch sequence (integrate walking into this)
 - Front, sides, look at armpit and stretch, suboccipital release **5 breath each**
shoulder stretch **5 breaths**
- Head roll **5 each direction**
- Torso rolls **5 in each direction**
- Hip rolls **5 each direction**
- Wall angels **5 breaths**
- Wall angels with roll down **5 breaths**
- Forward bend and explore weight in the bottom of feet **5 breaths**
- Alternate bending legs **5 breaths**
- Spinal release in forward fold **5 breaths**
- Leg sequence one
 - Runners lunge **5 breaths**
 - Lunge with knee dropped **5 breaths**
 - Grab the back foot **5 breaths**
 - Hip flexor stretch **5 breaths**
 - Push back into one leg
 - Hip flexor and pushback flows between the two
 - Extended and other bent **5 breaths**
 - Pigeon **5 breaths**

- Push back into one-legged down dog and open the hip, then switch to other side **5 breaths**
- Floor sequence one
 - Serratus pushups **10x**
 - Cat cow **10x**
 - Child's pose **5 breaths**
 - opposite elbow to knee **10x side**
 - bend the back leg 90 degrees and pulse **20x side**
 - come to the stomach for slow swimming **10 total**
 - one-legged kick **10x side**
- Sidekick series both sides
 - Top Leg lift **10x**
 - Sidekick **4x**
 - Bicycle & reverse **4x each**
 - Leg circles in line with hip **5x**
 - Leg circles behind hip **5x**
 - Clams **4x**
 - Killer clams **4x**
 - Lift both legs **10x**
 - Lift bottom leg to top **10x**
 - roll onto the back
 - single leg stretches **5x side**
 - bent and straight

- Bartineff bounce with legs bent 5 breaths
- Leg sequence two
 - Piriformis stretch **10 breaths**
 - Knee to chest with opposing leg extended roll ankle **2 breaths**
 - Extend top leg **5 breaths x position**
 - Cross over and open the leg
 - Switch legs
 - Happy baby **5 breaths**
 - Extended leg stretch (rock if desired) **5 breaths**
 - Happy baby **5 breaths**
 - Open leg rocker to sitting **5x**
- Tap **3-5min**

Successes and Failures

Writing out class materials for the *Tapping In* method was a constructive process for me in that it assisted me in clarifying my intentions and goals in a practical, digestible way. My goal for this method is more extensive than just the thesis project, and I knew having class materials for my practice would be extremely helpful when trying to pitch my class to people in the dance world. This process also helped me highlight successes and failures within my method. Some achievements I came across were that people often report feelings of relaxation, satisfaction, contentment, and release after completing this sequence. I have received feedback that bodies often feel warm, limber, and ready to move creatively, and all of this feedback aligns with the goals I set. Some failures

included pacing exercises, the need for props to protect the knees, and the inclusion of activities that are too nuanced to explore fully in a short period. Finalizing my sequence, creating class materials, and presenting those materials to others highlighted these failures.

Ultimately, through my practice and research, as well as work done with others, I have laid the foundation of a functional sequence. This sequence aims to help mitigate common postural problems, improve muscle tone and flexibility, promote the mind-body connection and allow the practitioner to experience feelings of relaxation and wellness through careful study and crafting. As I continue to utilize this sequence with others and practice modifications, it will become even more accessible to more populations. I hope to complete more research as I teach this sequence to various groups of people and in private lessons. Personally, the sequence will live in the space of being a valuable tool for managing my mental and physical health. I plan to continue to adapt my sequence as I gain more information through practice, and I intend to share this sequence through teaching classes and my peers. This way, I hope to leave my mark on the world and promote healing.

Reflection on Creative Manifestation

The original manifestation of my thesis was far from where it is now. When in the very early stages of creation, the only thing I was sure of was that I wanted to include the actual sequence in my video. I wanted to record myself doing each section from varying angles and edit it together, almost like a promotional video for the sequence.



Figure 3: First Shot from Test Shot Video

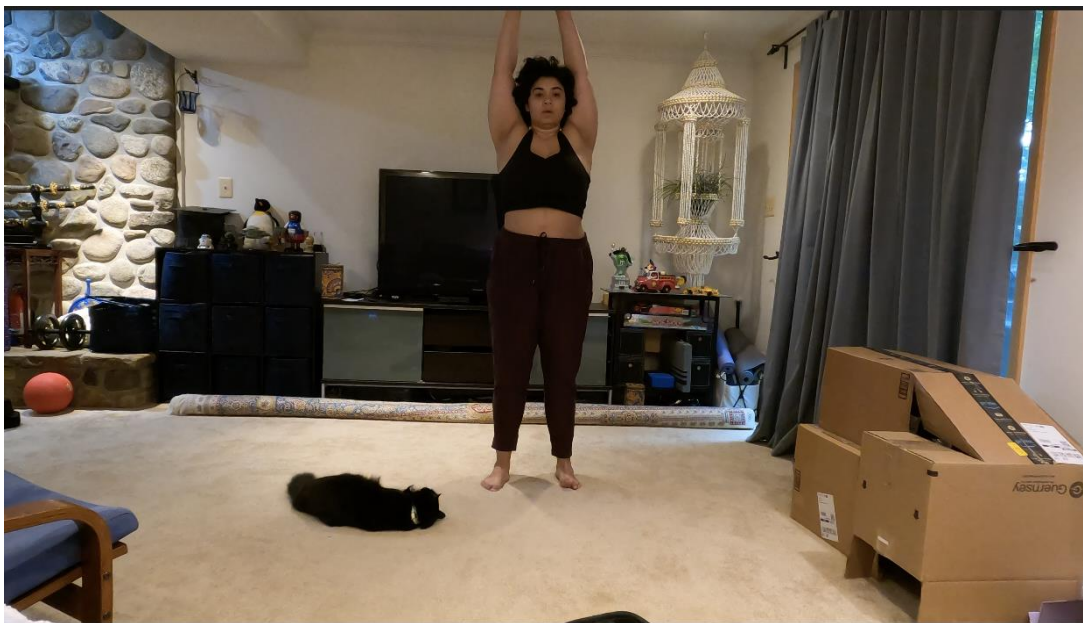


Figure 4: Larger Shot from test shot video

The above photos show two of the various angled shots I planned to use, demonstrated in my parent's basement where I lived. While there was some decent variance in shots, I do feel that I still was very limited in my understanding of how to create interesting visual dynamics through shot and body angle. I was limited in my knowledge of close-ups or mid-size shots and the effect of playing with camera focus when recording. Ultimately to resolve this, I watched a bunch of different creative works and studied film composition. I also hired a videographer who shot the third and final renditions of the sequence. The most influential of all the pieces for me was *Bronx Gothic* by Okwui Okpokwasili, which I will dive into later in this section.

Unfortunately, the problem with this original idea was that it lacked the reflection aspect required in the piece. While the concept was aesthetically pleasing, I was encouraged to be more profound since the substance was missing. I poured over the idea for a while, rewatching my previous videos from my graduate program as inspiration on how to move forward. I realized that in one of my more successful pieces, I utilized improvisational movement to reflect on the information I gathered to create the piece. To make that piece, I collected data through a Google Survey and then organized the data into categories reflected in the final work. I then read through the notes around each category one at a time, allowing myself to meditate on what was said in the notes so I could fully embody the words through movement. I then recorded and edited the movement reflections into a singular coherent video. My response to this video was overwhelmingly positive, so I applied this creative format to my thesis video. Initially, I received adverse reactions to this style of creation because I received advice that it did not have enough choreography. Still, I was fully aware that this creative style has led me

to create movement with the nuance and skill required to get into graduate school. This knowledge left me fully confident that my style of choreography would be suitable for creating a unique reflective video, despite voiced concerns. Ultimately, I remedied this concern by creating meditative dance sequences with the abovementioned process. Still, I went back through the videos to find interesting movements that I could take captivating close-up shots of to ensure the footage was dynamic and creative.

My second plan was to perform the sequence in a dark room, intermixed with my reflective dancing and playing with yoga balls and TheraBands, as those can modify my sequence. The intention behind this setup was to reflect upon the sequence and the modifications previously mentioned in a dramatic, dynamic way. Unfortunately, my vision of this video version was a little unclear. Still, I knew I wanted to showcase the interconnected nature of this piece's components and create a dramatic effect with the use of the all-black room. As I continued with that idea, I could not find a space that would match my needs; I was also unsure that the all-black idea would reflect the lighter nature of the sequence. The TheraBand's and yoga balls required for this version were also expensive and unable to arrive on time. Therefore, I went back to square one. I was disappointed in myself, as I craved the all-black room. Eventually, I concluded that while aesthetically pleasing, the all-black room idea was both too complex and too intense for the emotional tone of the video I was trying to create, and I was able to move on to the next iteration mentally.

For the next iteration of my video, I attempted to record my sequence outside the Occoquan here in Virginia with similar intentions to the second attempt. In this attempt, I wanted to utilize an outdoor grassy area at the Occoquan. I thought this would create a

lighter emotional tone to the video and provide a soothing effect, just like the *Tapping In* sequence. I scouted out the area and planned a day for shooting, but this version of the piece failed for similar reasons as the introductory videos. While highly disappointing, I learned a lot about preparedness for shooting through this experience. Although I had a super rough outline of what I wanted to do it was not as clear and concise as the included shot list later in this section. That is because I genuinely thought I could keep myself organized and creative with minimal written preparation. Still, unfortunately, I was wrong, which was noticeable in the quality of the variance of shots I wanted. Screenshots of my varying shots are visible below:



Figure 5: Shot A from Version Three



Figure 6: Shot B from Version Three



Figure 7: Shot C from Version Three



Figure 8: Shot D from Version Three

As visible in the previous pictures, there wasn't much variation in the shot due to the spacing and the way I had to shoot the scenes. There were more random people at the park I chose than I anticipated, and recording in a way that did not include them proved to be a massive hurdle towards success. Another problem I ran into was the bright light reflecting off the leaves and water behind me at the time. This lighting issue resulted in the overall screen being darker than intended and my skin being washed out. This weird lighting and space limited my capacity for creativity in shots. These challenges and my lack of preparedness led to a lousy check-in. For this rendition, I was going to do the sequence and a structured improv of my reflection on working with each part of the sequence. This idea did not succeed when I received feedback that my shots were boring and didn't have enough variance and that my choreography should've involved more close-ups. As disheartening as this was, I had to take a step back and breathe.

Unfortunately, they were correct about my lack of variance in shots. Combined with the lighting issues, I realized I was being too performative while not being

performative enough. I needed to find a way to refocus myself and bring my heart and soul back into the piece. The energy was being spent in all the wrong areas because I felt deep desperation to finish, which negatively drove me. All I could focus on was how hard I was failing and how intensely I wanted to complete the program. Unfortunately, I faced burnout again around my thesis, and my mental state declined even more. The despair and distress I felt about finishing became overwhelming, and my ability to process feedback and create new and exciting work fell to an all-time low. My initial response to the latest round of painful feedback was to spend hours pouring over my materials and asking myself why couldn't I just figure it out. Some people managed to get this all done in a single year, and here I was still struggling, still making what felt like little to no progress because each time I received feedback, it was more of the same despite doing things very differently and changing vast aspects of my piece each time. I know the approval board was just as frustrated with me as I was with them at this point, as I simply felt like I was drowning under their expectations and could not find my way to the surface. The emotional duress I was experiencing had reached an all-time high. As a result, I didn't look at or think about the creative manifestation for a few months. Taking a break from work helped me gain perspective on what I was trying to achieve with it, not simply figuring out how to satisfy the board that approves my work. After a few long conversations with my mentor and a well-needed break, I realized I had fallen into the trap of simply trying to get it done instead of trying to use my video as an extension of the reflection that is my paper.

To effectively create this video reflection, I decided I needed to dive into my *Tapping In* sequence. To truly experience how this sequence can benefit the body and

mind, I focused on working with my sequence as regularly as possible. I refused to set demanding expectations around how often I would practice the sequence to try to eliminate as much stress as possible around doing the sequence itself. These loose rules are because, in the process of creating this work, I found myself falling out of love with dance. I reached an extreme level of burnout where I had little capacity to regulate emotionally. My mind fell into despair, and the pain of constant rejection of my work settled in my heart. I had to take measures to protect myself and my psyche that would allow me to return to work and finish strong, and setting gentle expectations was a part of this process. Thankfully, my lighter expectations and space from working on the video helped me start to get my mind together. I journaled my experience and emotional state before and after completing the sequence during this healing time. I improved my mood and physical pain levels in the short term after every session. In the longer term, I noticed an overall decrease in my chronic pain and negative attitudes. During this process, I also noticed a bit of a reprieve from my burnout. To see a more accurate long-term prediction, I would have had to work with the sequence for more time, but unfortunately, due dates started to rear their heads again, and I got back to work on my paper and video.

At this point, I felt much less burnt out and mind-numbingly stressed. This stress is because my experience creating the video and document for my thesis has genuinely tested my love and devotion to dance. I was experiencing extreme burnout that was affecting me mentally in a brutal way. Thankfully, the time off to focus on engaging with my sequence is what I needed. I was able to come back to creating my video with fresh eyes that were emotionally capable of handling the severe rejection I was likely to face from my editing board. The next step in creating my sequence was rewatching *Bronx*

Gothic by Okwui Okpokwasili with my current partner. I went into the experience to discuss this abstract work with my partner to gain better insight into how he views works such as this one, as he did not go to school for dance. I remembered enjoying this work during class and longed to share a part of what I appreciate with my partner. What ended up happening was a beautiful moment of pure inspiration. As Okwui Okpokwasili performed, I found myself both enthralled and inspired, her movement was genuine and raw, and her reading of the notes shook me to the core. I fell in love with the way she framed the piece through recording, sound, and physical setup, as well as the genuine and heartfelt nature of the movement. When my partner and I discussed the piece afterward, I could fully contemplate the work, leading to deep inspiration for changes in my thesis video manifestation. I found myself rattling off ideas that ultimately resulted in the video accompanying this paper. I spoke to my thesis mentor, who suggested running with the inspiration I discovered in the piece and allowing myself to see where it takes me.

Through this conversation, I finally realized I needed to use the video to reflect on my experience working with the thesis sequence. But at the same time, I also wanted to pay homage to the original sequence itself. Ultimately, I chose to do this by creating a loose storyboard. The storyboard is as follows; I would record myself doing the sequence as a whole, broken up into three smaller sections. Then, I would reflect on each section by looking at notes I took about my experience doing the sequence and translating that into natural movement. These movement reflections would then interweave through the movement sequence to create an interesting flow to the video.

The third time around, I came into the video production much more organized. I rented a room, visited the location prior, and made a shot list which I sent to my

videographer before our shooting. Included below is the notes/shot list I created to guide my videographer:

For my work, I would like to take inspiration from this piece as I want to decorate that rehearsal space in Sherwood, set up a stationary camera, and then maybe another camera get some close-up shots. I also like how in this piece; they play with the camera's focus and think that could be utilized for my work. In terms of the dancing and movement, I want to create a sound score that guides the performance phases. I like the sound score to reflect the development of the experience of doing the thesis sequence over time. I believe that I want to alternate between doing the sequence, improvising the experience, and either reading my journaled experiences or having audio of my journaled experiences be included in the sound score of my piece.

- Lighting: soft lighting from the sides; maybe explore using the natural lighting in the Sherwood space and lighting we bring in. I want the room to have warm tones and give off a relaxing vibe
 - Blue lights, maybe? Or green?
- Stationary camera:
Front on the shot, capturing all of the dance space
- Closeup camera:
 - Play with focus during times of chaotic/fast movement
 - Zoomed in on the face during me tapping, maybe even the camera moving around my body while closeup
 - During head/body rolls start with a closeup shot of head and slowly pan out to entire body

- Upper half of my body shot during the wall angels' portion, switch to full body shot of me bent over for the next shot which will have to include a closeup
 - Shot of just my feet working and moving, especially in the portion of the sequence where I'm exploring weight shift in the feet
- In "bend back leg 90 degrees and pulse" closeup of just the legs working for
- Leg circles in line/behind hip closeup on feet/lower leg working
- clams/killer clams shot from behind to see musculature
- Closeup of open leg rocker where when I'm at the top of the rock, my face and legs are on screen

As is apparent in the shot list, I was not entirely sure how I wanted some of the more minute details to come together, such as lighting colors, but I had a solid framework and understanding of the core features and shots needed. I intentionally left a few things to be decided on the day of recording because I knew that once I entered that creative flow, my brain would know what was necessary to pull the final pieces together. This time I had almost ten closeup shots planned and dynamic shots of myself doing more interesting movements during my reflection pieces. This shot and idea list ended up becoming a fantastic guide for me mentally and my videographer. On the day of recording, we started with all of the *Tapping In* shots and close-ups first. Then I spent some time reflecting on my journey and decided on the color scheme for each improvisational section and the emotional tone. Figuring this out was paramount to my success because it allowed me to channel the necessary emotions associated with the

three areas of my journey with the *Tapping In* method. After recording the three sections, with the help of my videographer's dancer daughter, we pulled out dynamic choreographic moments in each improvisational piece that I should highlight through a closeup or other interesting camera shot. While tedious, re-recording the emotional moments in my choreography allowed me to have plenty of visually exciting material that helped enhance the intentions behind each phase of my reflection.

A secondary benefit to my creation of the shot list was my ability to share it with the video editor I hired. I also hired a video editor to ensure that my thesis video was of professional quality. After working closely with my videographer, he sent over the video clips, and I had a lengthy chat with my video editor. I explained to the editor the intention behind the piece, the emotional score of each colored section, and the general layout I wanted for the video. After that point, it was up to my video editor to interpret my instructions, and six iterations later, we were able to celebrate the creation of the final version of the video. This milestone was a turning point for me in my thesis journey, as it instilled in me the confidence, I needed to know that not only could I finish and successfully get my degree, I am capable of doing it at a standard I am genuinely excited to share.

The final video is a significant change from my original iterations, but I find that this version is much more inspired and heartfelt. After noticing the well-thought-out decorations in *Bronx Gothic*, I selected the lotus flowers on the floor to reflect resilience and the tribulations of life. I wanted a simple costume to focus on my bodily expression, hence the black dress and shorts. The changing colors in the backgrounds of the video reflect the underlying emotional experience associated with each section.

The first, red, is turbulent and anxiety-ridden. The red section reflects how I felt when first focusing on the sequence; I also experienced overwhelming emotional duress multiple times in this process. At that time, I was drowning in my emotional pain and burnout, struggling to pull myself out. I was just a ball of stress and constant anxiety, and my creativity and productivity were limited. The gentle and repetitive movements of my emotional and physical pain sequence were too much stimulation. My mind felt numb and tired, and doing anything felt like a chore. I did my best to embody this chaos through my improvisational movement, which also doubled as an energetic release of my attachment to the pain and suffering I endured. All of this pain and chaos slowly melted into the blue section. The blue is the transition to a calmer existence with more connection to self and control over my experience, which was my experience in the latter half of working on my sequence. A quote that illustrates the transition is as follows:

Let me reassure you: trauma symptoms are not character flaws. If you've developed trauma symptoms, it means that you've survived something that was intensely frightening, painful, and/or emotionally shattering to you. And if you are still standing, you've done an excellent job of surviving and probably have many skills that you're not even aware of yet.³¹

The blue section reminds me of this quote from Susanne Babbal in that it reflects that there are things to learn and grow from through deep trials and tribulations. When dancing in the red section, I was too lost in the turbulence to learn and find peace, but in the blue section, a sense of calmness began to wash over me. The equilibrium is slow to show itself, starting in my head and slowly making its way down my body to my feet until my entire being is shrouded in the sense of calm and understanding. For this

³¹ Suzanne Babbal, *Heal the Body, Heal the Mind: A Somatic Approach to Moving Beyond Trauma*, (Oakland, California: New Harbinger Publications, 2018), 511.

calmness to wash over me, I had to pour myself deeply into the *Tapping In* sequence, allowing it to act as a moving meditation.

Practicing tapping outside of the sequence was also very beneficial to restoring my nervous system. This technique proved very beneficial in teaching my nervous system that I did not have to be in such an extreme state of arousal. The sequence's gentle and repetitive movements were stimulating and calming for my body and nervous system. My *Tapping In* movement meditation was enough to force my body out of its constant fight or flight mode and into a state of rest and relaxation. Creating this shift in my nervous system was the key to unlocking my creativity and patience. One of the ways I trained my body to achieve a state of calm was through the tapping incorporated into my sequence. By starting and ending with tapping I was also able to train my body to realize that when I tap, calmness and focus follow. When this calmness and focus became more consistent in my practice, I was able to consider beginning to release the mental and physical pain I was suffering from at the time. While this process is near complete, the blue phase introduced me to a sense of calmness and wellness that I sincerely longed to experience. It is incredible how much relief I experienced when I finally exited the anxious chaos that was the red section and began to melt into a peaceful mind and body.

The purple section then reflects the goals I have yet to achieve. These goals include reaching a place of contentment with the self and rediscovering the love of dance and life. I may not have fully reached the purple stage in my journey, but I find myself getting closer daily, especially with my *Tapping In* sequence assisting me. In the months since finishing the creative manifestation, I have been able to freely practice my *Tapping*

In Sequence in a more leisurely way, which has proven to be what I need to continue on my path of healing. I have found myself releasing trauma and deep-rooted emotional pain more freely in my day-to-day life. I can also continue better to regulate my nervous system and keep it out of fight or flight with the assistance of the *Tapping In* sequence. This practice has proven to reduce my overall stress and physical pain. Still, it has also increased my creative functioning, mental resilience, and ability to utilize proper coping mechanisms. As it stands, I will lift heavy three to four times a week and practice the *Tapping In* sequence one to two times per week. This practice allows me to reap rehabilitative movement and strength training benefits. I hope that through strength training and working on my mentality around dance through my sequence; I will be able to heal my relationship with dance and my body and finally indeed venture into the purple section being my daily reality.

In regards to the white sections, these sections are more emotionally neutral and focus on my body in its practice of the *Tapping In* sequence. The order and intermingling of the clips in the video reflect my journey with this sequence in application to myself and the people I have utilized in my research. The movement in each section is very personal, and I hope my experience and emotion permeate the background, creating an emotional journey that is both relatable and hopeful for change and growth. At the end of the day, though, my ultimate goal for this video was for each person to take what they needed from it. Ideally, people will relate to my experience in some way and possibly even feel a sense of connection.

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