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Blindsight Trance

by Eric Greenleaf PhD

This is a kind of hypnosis about what to do when there is nothing to do. And It's based on a Willy Nelson tune that has the wonderful lyric, "Still is still moving to me." I don't know what it means in the song, but I always think of this: that even while you are sitting quietly, your eyes are closed, and you are comfy though crowded, that the interior of your body is in motion.

That's right. So that even though your intent is to be still, the interior of your body is still moving: Lungs open and close; heart valves open and close; digestion continues; circulation of course; the lymph that goes through the immune system; even the muscles themselves tense and relax all over the body while we rest or sleep.

And so I'd like you to breath out completely. All the small changes and adjustments you have made may have been really significant ones on a whole range of experiences: everything from the literal food you eat, to amounts and times, to activity, to shifts in feeling and intent. Happily, all this time you've remained the same person. And your body is still making small adjustments to help you. Now I'm thinking it would be very nice for you to invite your body to cooperate more, to be less separate from your intents. You probably know that the body can make rapid changes or modest changes. There are redundant systems in the body that respond very well to

emergencies, for example. They are so powerful they can shut down menstruation or allow pregnancy. They can gain or lose weight rapidly, particularly fluid weight. They can move energy on a dime from the immune system to muscle movement or vice versa. They can induce rapid wakefulness or rapid sleep.

Mostly we don't put these parts of the body function to use. We are sighted, so our eyes see, our brains notice. But I was just reading about "blindsight" -- the ability people with injuries to the visual cortex have to act and move as though they see when they cannot literally consciously see. There is a wonderful video of a man who had a surgery or an injury to the visual cortex -- legally blind-- walking down a hallway strewn with objects which he had not been told would be placed there, and walking perfectly like a sighted person, avoiding a garbage can placed in his way, or a bookcase in the hallway, or things he had no reason to know were there.

There are also blindsight abilities to know the emotion in a face that cannot be consciously seen. So sadness or happiness or anger or sorrow or pleasure in a face, or even in a body posture, can be accurately seen by a blind person. It's a system that we never think to use but that exists as an old, old system, a redundancy. Fish have it; amphibians have it. Unselfconscious vision. They can feel shapes, colors, motion, without having the retinal focus or the color range or acuity that mammals do. So even with your eyes closed, your unconscious mind receives all sorts of bodily information.

And with an intent to be more fit, and in the same body, your body knows what to do. Even though you cannot directly see what to do or feel what to do, yet all of the things you are doing are headed in the right direction. You may be pleased to understand that you will arrive there, as I am pleased to

know that you'd like to arrive there more rapidly, more thoroughly, just by making small obvious changes and letting your body's backup systems work for your benefit, because I think you're not in the way at all. And I'd like you to feel comfortable in that body that in any case has served you so well for so long and continues to, and be pleased to know that you are allowing more comfort, more robustness.

When you have been a help or comfort to others you were the redundant system, the effective caretaker, the organizer, the supportive voice, the compassionate person. So I know that this is doable. So I'd like you to dive really deeply inside, really completely, to just go down and down and down, as though you were traveling somehow to the level of the organs and cells, as though you could tweak the energy up just a hair, still comfortable, and release the storage without quite knowing how, just that everything work a little, little, little bit better -- everything from heart rate to lung capacity, to digestion and elimination of waste, to the immune system’s protective function. The whole building works better and the people in it too when the temperature's set right, when there's the right nutrition available and the right amount of room to move, and movement, enough communication but not too much or too little, enough emotion but not too much or too little.

And somewhere deep inside that sense of motion, the motions of life moving forward, the motions of the billions of cells of the body using stored energy, using stored material, using it and using some of it up. That's the natural way: We store it to be used, not to hoard it, as with emotion we store it up to give it away, store up humor to express laughter, store up love to express compassion, store up anger to express outrage and determination. And you know that there's a backup system that uses that stored material. You know when we think about pets as love machines it's like that: They store it up and at any moment they can release it just by a gesture, a sound, a touch; and they wait for us so well, but not without motion. So I'm thinking wherever there is stored tension anywhere in the body, even in the brain, how nice to release it, let it move; how nice to notice that slight warming or cooling, tingling or calm, that nice comfortable emptiness -- just enough room to move. [Pause.]

And now again slide down and down. Because all these things go on in parallel. The whole project of the body is like a vast escrow, where things happen at random times toward a certain goal. But all together they make a deal, a project, a complete work. So some things happen today, and some happen in a week, and some happened last month, all in the right direction. At some point the escrow is completed when all the parts are in place. And they are all happening within this same conceptual package, the same project box or folder, the same body and mind, part of it now, part later, part

before, part after. And at every level of organization, from the conscious, curious, doubtful, precise conscious mind, to the unconscious, organizing, physical, emotional, planful unconscious mind, to the old little-used systems that come into play when you run to the limit of what you consciously know or unconsciously can manage. All of those ancient systems -- the blindsight systems -- come along to promote our goals. And so you can rest comfortably for a few minutes now, in a kind of nice restorative cat nap. And

when I speak to you again it will be time to stretch and open your eyes, on this nice, cloudy and clear-skied day.

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