Principle 2

Natural Time and the Movement Forms

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Natural Time

Catch Phrase: 13:20 = Our Organic State

“He is always acting in accord with his Self-Nature. His work is play.”

Hui-neng
Introduction

Natural Time is fluid, non-linear, radial, and expansive. It is centered in now; not tomorrow, not yesterday, not on deadlines, but Now. It reconnects us to the cyclical rhythms of nature, the rhythms that unite all life forms. The same basic movement of rising and falling, inhaling and exhaling, of birth and death, runs through every body of life. We are connected by cyclical rhythms.

In Nia, we refer to Natural Time as 13/20, a code recognized and recorded by the Mayans. The Mayans understood 13 moons complete one year, and taught us that there are ongoing cycles in the Universe made up of 13 and 20. In Nia, 13 represents the number of joints in your body; 20 the number of digits. Move your joints and digits based on your own internal rhythm. This is how you define your own movement and pace in Nia. This is how Nia defines Natural Time. One of the most powerful principles behind Nia and Natural Time is that of individuation and autonomy, the ability to move at a pace and depth that feels right to you. This is an energy that physically feels fuller, less hurried.

In 12/60 time, we tend to fixate on accomplishment; we have to do, do, do. We have to do things quickly, and we constantly think about what we are going to do next. We get caught in a whirlwind of “accomplishment”. In Natural Time, you develop a deeper sense of trust and faith in your ability to create and accomplish without the stress of “doing”. You become connected to your own rhythms of creation.

Un-natural time is based on the 60-minute clock and the 12-month Gregorian calendar. Un-natural time (clock time, stopwatch time) is governed by a start and finish, such as the beginning of an hour with a specific end that continuously repeats itself with no variation. We refer to this kind of time as 12/60: 12 months, 60 minutes, 60 seconds. Un-natural time separates you from the primordial impulses of your body, thereby disconnecting you from the natural cycles of your body and life.
Just look at a clock and a Monday-through-Sunday calendar. This framework of 12/60 has become the grid we organize our lives around, rather than natural rhythms and impulses. “Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday” is how we prioritize and express our days, overriding our natural impulses and the carefree attitude that leads us places other than the office. Even though your mind may want to be somewhere else, it’s pulled into “Oh, today is Monday”.

Every Monday, a universal synchronization of stress occurs around the planet because we all so devoutly believe this artificial cycle is a true reality. But I ask you, who created “Monday”? Why do you believe in Monday? Are you willing to consider that no two days ever actually repeat the same energy? Every Monday is a completely different energy experience than the last. By exploring beyond the confines of “Monday”, you will find liberation and creativity. Time is of the mind.

Traditional aerobic exercise uses 12/60 time: everyone strives to move in the same way, at the same time. When you mechanize your pace and movement, as in “staying on a beat”, you beat the joy and autonomy out of your unique movement. When you align your system to 12/60 time, movement is guided, directed, and measured by beats per minute, limiting the aliveness and spontaneity of your system. When you become tied to a specific regimen, you no longer function naturally. This is a detriment to your overall health and vibrancy. Natural Time releases the restrictions of a 12/60 structure. To stay connected to Natural Time, follow sensation – and it isn’t governed by the clock!

I was explaining my path of transformation to a friend who sails. I told her how living and creating in Natural Time has allowed me to experience my life as a meditation. This awareness, more than anything I’ve ever done, changed my entire nervous system. My friend said that when you sail, you cannot resist Natural Time. The law of absolute connectedness becomes apparent when you’re on a boat in the ocean; you must honor nature and sail with the Natural Time of the Universe. If you work with mechanical time, forcing the boat, you lose sensitivity and connectedness to Natural Time. As a result, you lose power – ultimately, you can lose your life. So to me, Art of Natural Time is staying sensitive to the waves of life, moving with the forces that come my way by staying connected to absolutely everything.
Voice of

Body
To the physical part of you, I provide new sensations that deeply connect you to yourself and to the Universe. I awaken your intuitive intelligence and reconnect you to your visionary dream-maker, your magician and co-creator. Through me, all life feels different, more expansive, connected, whole, fast and slow at the same time. Within my flesh, time stands still and moves forward. My eyes are the eyes of the Universe. My hands touch the life force that reunites us all to the heart of humanity.

Mind
To the thinking part of you, I offer a new liquid vision of time. Enter my symbols and mind-shift happens. Thought transmitted through glyph images, I allow you to expand beyond your normal ways of thinking and eliminate boundaries that inhibit the natural flow of life within you. Through me, life looks different, more graceful, balanced, interesting, brighter, and illuminated. I guide you to think with your self-existing yet fully connected universal mind.

Emotions
To the emotional part of you, I offer an energy marked not by drama, but by hope, light, and love. I take you into places of deeper feeling, where all emotions are felt fully. I keep you grounded in the experience of life without judgment, interpretation, or projection. I keep you open to the love that is your guiding power, your ally.

Spirit
To the spirit part of you, I offer re-connection to what you have forgotten. I am your cosmic connection, the one that re-attaches you to the universal flow of consciousness and to creations never before experienced. I am your divine connection to the Great Chain of Being, the spine of creation that runs through all things.
The Body’s Way teaches us that conscious awareness and movement of all thirteen joints leads to whole-body, integrated movement. Such systemic movement fosters a connection to the center, the intrinsic core, and allows graceful and easy movement. This is consciousness infused with movement.

For most of us, movement has become compartmentalized. Look at students who walk into a class: often times they move as though they are comprised of spare parts that don’t communicate with each other. It is true their whole bodies are engaged in movement, but the movement is disorganized and uncoordinated, as if the arm were listening to different music than the legs and the head. Bottom parts move without connection to the top and left-side parts move disconnected from the right, confusing the nervous system and creating separation from wholeness. Eventually, moving as if our body is made of spare parts creates weaknesses that lead to stress and fatigue.

Systemic movement requires us to move as an intelligent, conscious system. Rather than moving as spare parts, we begin to sense and become aware of one connected, whole body, moving and responding to conscious, coordinated breath. This awareness invites us to connect with even deeper layers of awareness and movement.

Systemic movement reminds us that wholeness is the way to access and maintain self-healing. Healing is not a cure or an elimination of disease; rather, it helps us transform the energy underlying an existing condition. This can mean healing the mind through adopting a better attitude, healing the body through improved alignment, healing the emotions through discovering a greater range of expression, or healing the spirit through connecting to a higher self or purpose.

Each of us has our own unique movement pattern, our own Modus Operandi or Method of Operating (a.k.a. “M.O.”). Your M.O. tells a story that reflects your history and life journey. Over time, your body molds and defines itself in ways that diminish or improve systemic functioning. Thus, your M.O. is a unique expression of your life – past and present – recorded in the cells of your body. It is a reflection of your beliefs and feelings, which collectively shape how you interact with life. Though formed by past events, your M.O. carries your physical history into the present and future, for we physically project our beliefs onto our environment and thus create our future.

Your body has the incredible ability to forgive and adapt to the demands you place on it. It will always strive to adjust in order to maintain a certain level of peace, harmony, and homeostasis, or “systemic wholeness”. This ability to adapt and forgive allows you to transform and improve the body’s functioning, even in the midst of extreme trauma and stress. Nia teaches you to observe yourself in order to regain your natural systemic movement. Consciously connecting to systemic movement liberates you from habitual, limited M.O.s, thus dramatically improving functioning. Once you notice what you do and how you do it, you become empowered to change and reconnect your body parts.

We are designed to connect with natural cycles, both with internal cycles, such as our breath and the cycle of birth and death, and with the external cycles, such as the moon and tides. By stepping out of mechanical time and into Natural Time, we reconnect with our internal rhythms and with the alive, ever-present dance within. Allowing your Natural Time to emerge invites creativity and self-expression, rather than mechanized movement. As a White Belt, connect to systemic movement through focusing on Natural Time movement and measure. Play with the infinite expressions of Natural Time.
Craft

Sensing Natural Time involves the conscious awareness of movement and measure. Movement refers to a physical change in positioning, activated through the thirteen major joints of the body. Measure refers to sensory awareness of time and space, activated through the twenty digits. Conscious awareness of movement and measure supports you in moving in your own way and your own time, facilitating the path of least resistance, comfort, and ease.

Recall
1. What is the triad for Principle #2?
2. What does the number 13 represent in the Natural Time code?
3. What does the number 20 represent in the Natural Time code?
4. Which joint is considered joint #8?
Embodiment

Exercise 1: Movement

To sense Movement, begin to activate your joints. You may want to start by moving your left ankle, and then activating other joints, one at a time, until all thirteen main joints are moving. Sense what the movement of energy feels like in your body.

1. Left ankle: Flex, extend, and circle your foot, opening and closing the front of your ankle.
2. Left knee: Bend and extend, moving your lower leg closer to and then away from your thighbone. Fold and unfold; close and open the joint.
3. Left hip: Circle your thighbone around in your hip socket, then play with turning toes in and out. Next, allow your pelvis to rock around on top of your thighbone.
4. Left wrist: Flex, extend, and circle your hand and fingers.
5. Left elbow: Bend and extend, moving your forearm bones closer to and then away from your upper arm bone. Close and open the joint.
6. Left shoulder: Circle your upper arm bone around in your shoulder socket, then play with palm directions.
7. Spine: Bend front and back, then side-to-side; twist left and right.
8. Right shoulder: Circle your upper arm bone around in your shoulder socket, then play with palm directions.
9. Right elbow: Bend and extend, moving your forearm bones closer to and then away from your upper arm bone. Close and open the joint.
10. Right wrist: Flex, extend, and circle your hand and fingers.
11. Right hip: Circle your thighbone around in your hip socket, then play with turning your toes in and out. Next, allow your pelvis to rock around on top of your thighbone.
12. Right knee: Bend and extend, moving your lower leg closer to then away from your thighbone. Fold and unfold; close and open the joint.
13. Right ankle: Flex, extend, and circle your foot, opening and closing the front of your ankle.

Exercise 2: Measure

Measure as you move, paying attention to your body in relationship to space.

Measure Space
Begin this practice by clapping your hands together. Next, start to clap again, but instead of letting your hands touch, practice measurement by stopping the hands five inches apart. Repeat, this time stopping the hands two inches apart, then one inch apart, etc. Pay special attention to your entire body in relationship with space.

Measure Stride
Walk around the room and sense for Natural Time. Notice when your movements feel too large or too small. Observe how far your hand reaches, how far your foot steps. Explore and practice finding the right amount of movement for you, movement in which you feel comfortable, relaxed, and free to move your own way.

Measure Relationship
FreeDance to a song while paying attention to your body’s relationship to other objects in the room. As you dance, notice how much space is between your body and the closest or the farthest wall. Notice the distance between your head and the floor, between your body and the speakers, etc.
Recapitulate

Recapitulate, and then in your personal Nia journal, describe your experience while practicing the Natural Time.
Art

To develop awareness of Natural Time sensation, explore movement and measure throughout your day. Pay attention to ways you can isolate each of your joint movements, then practice integrating all joints for systemic, total body movement. Play with measure, noticing your relationship with time and space.

When Dancing Through Life

• Pay attention to the speed at which you move. Does this speed feel right for your body? Do you feel relaxed? Do you feel rushed?
• Activate the tool of Measurement and pay attention to the size of your stride as you walk. Does this size of movement feel right? Does it feel too short? Too long?
• Tie your shoe, open the door, or reach for a glass on a shelf. Notice what parts of your body participate.
• Get up from the floor. How can you make this movement more efficient?
• Take your whole body with you wherever you go by visualizing yourself as fog.
• Integrate your spine with the rest of your joints by imagining you have a kangaroo tail that brushes the floor.
• Imagine your joints unlock secret treasures. What magic and beauty is inside your joints?
• As you talk on the phone, activate the flow of energy through all thirteen joints.
• As you wait for the water to boil, take a journey through your joints; let each joint express itself in a new way.
• Allow yourself to exist without mechanical time for one full cycle of daylight and nighttime. Do not look at a clock. Notice what arises as you step out of mechanical time.
• Imagine your own pace is a unique contribution to a collective dance of life. Your pace is essential to the creation of collective beauty. Allow for your unique contribution to exist.

My Story

As you read about, practice, and embody Principle #2, Natural Time and the Movement Forms, take some time to describe your personal story. How has Principle #2 affected your life?
The Movement Forms

Catch Phrase: 3:9 = Our Movement Skill

“What is the nature of consciousness such that it expresses itself in all these varied forms?”

Ken Wilber
Introduction

The Story of the Movement Forms

We studied various movement forms to balance the feminine with the masculine, the precise with liquid fluidity, the powerful with the yielding. Over time we found that by blending various movement forms, we were able to express and explore different aspects of our physical, emotional, and spiritual selves. The movement forms connect us to a variety of energies, which together keep the body vibrant and healthy. They create different ways of breathing and moving, different energies and emotions. Each movement form has its own personality, and you will naturally be more attracted to one form over the others. Our intent is to help you discover the unique essence each movement form offers. It is not necessary to have studied each form extensively; instead, capture the feeling, the essence each form brings to expressive movement.

In traditional fitness, choreography is constructed by changing steps and patterns frequently, presumably to hold students’ interest or challenge them. In Nia, we use the energy of different movement forms to emphasize specific and unique feelings and sensations. Thus, Nia approaches choreography from an energetic point of view; we repeat the same step and pattern, but change the movement form in order to change the energy. This allows us to stay with the same pattern for longer periods of time, giving both Teacher and student time to deepen their connection to body sensations and form. When choreography stays simple, people can feel and express themselves more playfully.

We don’t teach the actual technique and craft of each movement form. Rather, we give you a sensory taste of each one, a feeling for its chemistry. Remember, it is the chemistry of each form that makes it unique. Capture the feeling of a particular movement form, and you will gain a kinesthetic and energetic sense of each form. Eventu-
ally, you’ll be able to sense each form resonating in your body.

The Movement Forms of Nia include Martial Arts (Tai Chi, Tae Kwon Do, and Aikido), Dance Arts (Jazz, Modern, and Duncan Dance), and Healing Arts (the work of Moshe Feldenkrais®, the Alexander Technique, and Yoga).

The Martial Arts

Tai Chi
In San Francisco every morning, the city’s Asian community ventures into the parks to do Tai Chi. We used to sit for hours and watch bodies of all ages, shapes, and sizes elegantly and effortlessly dance. Each person moved in his or her own way, while adhering to the same basic form. As we watched, we felt energy within our own bodies; we felt their movements in our bodies. Each person seemed to radiate a tangible energy from a place deep inside. What were they connecting to? How did they get there? They were connected to something packed with power and sensitivity, a stillness, a slowness, a grace.

Tai Chi inspired us to move in bare feet. Our thick-soled aerobic shoes, with limited space for our toes, restricted our power. Shoes blocked important signals and cues from our feet. In fact, it wasn’t until our knees hurt that we realized we were not using what actually supports and protects the knees: our feet. Could bare feet provide us with more sensitivity, safety, and information? We knew each foot had proprioceptors, seven thousand little magical nerve endings that send the body vital information. Allowing these proprioceptors to relay information would develop a level of sensitivity that could ultimately provide us with a safe way to move and avoid injury. For the first time, we began to really feel and relate to the world through our feet. Our feet became wise teachers.

From Tai Chi, we learned to walk or travel in any direction by leading with the heel. This action made moving, dancing, and walking more natural and efficient. It made transferring body weight nearly stress-free. When we added mindfulness and an observant pace, the transference of body weight became graceful and lyrical, protecting the tiny metatarsal bones in our feet. We could deliver a safe cardiovascular workout in bare feet while deepening agility, flexibility, mindfulness, and conscious use of energy.

While Nia applies many other techniques and principles from Tai Chi, shifting body weight, leading with the heel, and incorporating mindfulness are the primary tools we use to support a gentler approach to cardiovascular fitness, an approach we call Dynamic Ease. In Nia, Dynamic Ease means moving mindfully and consciously, directing energy along the least resistant path. To connect with effortless movement, you must be physically aligned and centered in the tan-tien, the physical and energetic center located two inches below your navel. Moving from this center elicits grace, harmony, peace, and effortlessness.

Tae Kwon Do
Coming from a traditional exercise and aerobic background, martial arts were challenging for us. We were not prepared for the physical or mental endurance and agility needed; aggression was completely foreign to us. Up to this point, we avoided even considering physical defense, and imagining an attack – much less actually striking someone – was out of the question.

Tae Kwon Do brought up all kinds of personal issues, beliefs, and social attitudes. The world of aerobics left us with a kind of “pseudo-strength.” We thought we were strong, yet our strength was based mostly on superficial appearance. Tae Kwon Do quickly made us aware that we lacked internal core strength. When asked to duplicate a bow stance (which is not a difficult stance), our legs began to quiver within seconds. We realized there was a lot about movement we didn’t yet comprehend.

This discipline required full attention at all times. There was no letting up from focusing our mind or body. The emphasis on precision, intent, and form pushed us...
beyond our edges. Determined to grow and improve, we studied and practiced – four hours a day, four days a week, for over a year.

We slowly began integrating information, energy, and movements from Tae Kwon Do into our classes. Our students were surprised; we had gone from jump aerobics to bare feet, to Tai Chi, and now this: kicks, stances, blocks, and vocal noises. We introduced the easy kicks, steps, and stances, and eliminated moves we felt might be dangerous when presented out of context. What we ultimately chose to incorporate gave Nia its passion, fire, electricity, and voice. Thanks to these stances and kicks, we could eliminate the miserable floor work we had previously used to strengthen and shape our legs, buttocks, and abdomen.

Tae Kwon Do gives us room to play, make noise, be brats, and have a blast. The movements build whole-body strength, joint mobility, and agility. It allows us to discover real strength and power and build a positive relationship to aggression and conflict. The detail and precision of the hand techniques produce elegantly sculpted arms without the use of free-weights, while the powerful and precise movement of chi along the bones and through the joints cultivates alert relaxation and palpable physical vibrancy.

Tae Kwon Do teaches you to stand your ground. The kicks, punches, strikes, and attitude are positively affirming in any situation, both in and out of class. It teaches you to take physical action and to speak up for yourself with an empowered voice. Sounds instill power into your movements and stimulate emotional release, as you yell “yes!” “no!” “yeet!” and “hai!” These sounds release pent-up energy and emphasize personal power.

Tae Kwon Do brings a powerful spirit to Nia. For many people, this movement form allows them to experience the thrill of physical, mental, and emotional power for the first time. Tae Kwon Do offers Nia dynamic choreography with moves that physically and mentally challenge every part of you. Tae Kwon Do gives Nia the “guts” that balance her grace.

Aikido
The martial art we enjoy most is Aikido. The meaning of Aikido is as beautiful as the movement: “Ai” (to meet), “Ki” (spirit), and “Do” (the way). In other words, Aikido is the way of harmony. It encourages peaceful resolution. It is the way of the peaceful warrior.

Our first Aikido class was quite different from our experience with Tae Kwon Do. Everything about Aikido felt softer, lighter, less intimidating, friendlier. We were greeted with smiles from the Sensei, Wendy Palmer, a master in Art of Aikido. We sat on our heels, tentatively waiting. Wendy said, “You must have previously had a rather intense martial art experience.” We relaxed a bit as she looked at us with peace in her eyes, something we had never seen in the eyes of our Tae Kwon Do Sensei. It felt good, safer. It opened us to the possibility that this learning experience could actually be fun and enjoyable.

An Aikido master sees each person’s side of the story. The mind of Aikido holds the intent to resolve conflict lovingly. Over the years, this approach taught us about relationship, about connecting and blending with our environment. Developing the ability to sense and “see” another person’s point of view expanded our perception. Matching and blending with the energy coming toward us – without fighting it – gave us finesse in working with people of all sizes, shapes, and personalities. It helped us adjust personally and professionally to all kinds of situations with grace and ease. It is exhilarating to know you can maneuver and navigate yourself in almost any situation with the finesse of a fish – moving without getting hooked!

We integrated many things from Aikido into Nia. The most recognizable is the technique of harmonizing and blending with energy. Harmonizing is a way of connecting your own energy center to that of your opponent. To blend energy, you simply turn lines into circles, creating spirals of energy that move inward (concentric forces) or outward (eccentric forces). These energy spirals become vortices that allow you to move large amounts of energy
and weight with little effort. When you blend your body with another person, the harmonized union of energy makes it easy to move.

Ultimately through Aikido, the act of overpowering an opponent transforms into resolving conflict without destruction. Use love as the guiding light to intentionally establish harmony and balance and create peaceful resolution. Rather than beating the opponent, you seek to make everyone win. As a result, Aikido does not rely on brute force to succeed, but on the ability to attune with the Universe to prevent death and destruction. Morihei Ueshiba, the originator of Aikido, said, “The true meaning of the term ‘Samurai’ is one who serves and adheres to the power of love.” Thus in Aikido, your shield and armor is your spirit, a spirit that cares for all things with love.

In Aikido, your center is called the hara. This center is used as a second sensory sight with a 360-degree view. The hara is the center from where you physically receive, transmit, connect, and direct energy. You begin by sensing your own hara, then connecting that energy to an external source. With practice you become accustomed to sensing energy – yours, others, and the space around you. It takes years – and it is worth it!

In Nia, entering, blending and harmonizing replaces effort, overworking, and overpowering. As George Leonard, one of our Aikido masters said, Aikido is best understood through the word “GRACE.” G - Ground before you move; R - Relax to efficiently and effectively respond; A - Awareness is the way to perceive everything in order to make a decision and take action; C - Center, touch your center, find it, stay with it, and listen to it; E - Energy, use chi energy to direct your attention. Energy follows attention.

### The Dance Arts

#### Jazz Dance

One day in California, Carlos came to me and said, “Tai Chi helped us reconnect with our feet and center. Tae Kwon Do added precision and power to Nia. How can we connect with senseless fun? We decided to look into Jazz. We found a class where we could personalize our dance experience, gain some knowledge of basic techniques, and let the fun rip! Initially, we reduced the emphasis on technique to create a personalized connection to the spriteness and carefree feeling of Jazz. Soon the expressive nature in our students began to flow, and their faces brightened with authentic Joy and Pleasure. Freeing people from the worry of technique kept them in their bodies, liberated their spirits, and unleashed tons of energy.

Our bodies taught us how to enjoy ourselves. Jazz gave our bodies a sense of spontaneity and playfulness, the missing link we had been looking for – one that inspired us to change our entire lives. Jazz isolations balanced the harder, more serious work of the martial arts and softened the precise, aggressive movements. Many elements from Jazz are incorporated into Nia, such as isolations, syncopation, combinations, leg patterns, and creative choreographic sequencing. Rhythm steps, such as the cha-cha-cha, add light-hearted fun and spontaneity.

While some people are frightened when they hear the word “dance,” most are easily persuaded to let go of the fear once they feel Nia. Everyone secretly wants to dance! Once they realize that “Saturday night dancing” is what we’re talking about, they relax and dance. For non-professionals, dance is about feeling Joy, fun, excitement, and Pleasure.

Adding dance to Nia was frightening, as we thought we needed conventional training in order to dance. Neither of us had an ounce of dance training; Saturday night boogie sessions were the extent of it – yet when we danced, we had fun! We never imagined how the “Saturday night
dancer” could remind us that we all know how to dance. It felt great and took no training. Our fear began to thaw in the face of fun. Our bodies were telling us, “Yes, dance! Bring the play, fun, self-expression, and passion back into fitness.” As always, we listened to our bodies.

As the fitness industry grew, it became more aggressive, replacing spontaneous dance with rigid, masculine techniques. It had eliminated anything fluid, soft, and feminine. We wanted to balance the masculine model of fitness, the one that said, “Hard is better!” We wanted Nia to be effective, efficient, powerful, holistic, pleasurable, and fun – and to encompass both masculine and feminine energy.

We realized we had previously defined “fun” by how much energy we expended. As our ability to do more repetitions increased, we thought we were having more fun. As we got stronger and used more physical effort, we thought we were having more fun. Our ability to push through, to do more and endure, registered as “fun.” We were equating “fun” with strenuous, ego-driven activities – even pain – that actually negated what our body really needed. Dance helped us reclaim fun, electricity, and passion. It felt personal, like a true form of emotional expression. Dance filled us with a vital missing link: playfulness, showmanship, and expression. Nia had become far too serious and was leaving out one of the most important elements: fun! Through dance, we encouraged the element of freedom and expressive play.

Modern Dance

Many brilliant choreographers and dance masters have touched Nia. Francois Delsarte, Ruth St. Denis, Ted Shawn, Mary Wigman, Jose Limon, Martha Graham, Charles Weidman, Isadora Duncan, Lester Horton, Lucas Hoving, and Doris Humphrey all helped establish a solid foundation of movement and language called Modern Dance. Whether pushing the boundaries of compositional form or developing new ideas and techniques, the growth and maturation of Modern Dance provided the dance world with endless ways to express itself. A masterful sense of creative exploration is always present in the work of modern dance.

Both technical training and the expressive exploration of space, time, and rhythm lay the foundation for creating Modern Dance. It offers a rather loose structure to work with, while providing endless resources to redefine and recreate dance. In Nia, Modern Dance allows you the time and space to push the edges and boundaries of what Nia looks and feels like. It helps you personalize your dance by offering ways to change the composition and interpret the choreography.

Modern Dance provides a stage to create your own improvisation. Balance becomes something tangible, something you can play with. As you play with the shapes and space around you, your body gets to experiment with being on and off balance. One moment you’re losing it; the next you find it! This kind of play helps free your spirit and build trust in yourself. Exploration of movement ignites the imagination, while the emotional impact of creative exploration gives you the courage to step off and try new things.

Duncan Dance

We once had a master teacher from the Duncan Dance lineage in our class. O’Eloel Braun was 80 years old when she came to our class – and she moved like the wind. Her mother was one of Isadora’s greatest students, who then became a great teacher of Duncan Dance. O’Eloel’s movement and spirit helped us see what Duncan Dance could bring to Nia: levity. She was a profound influence.

In many ways, the birth of Duncan Dance parallels the story of Nia. In 1904, Isadora Duncan announced the opening of her own unique school of dance. Like Nia, this school offered students the space to explore dance as well as themselves. Like Nia, her school advocated using Arts as a vehicle for understanding life. Dance was an effective avenue for exploration and learning. She believed, as we do, that dance was the way to most freely
experience the body. Like Nia, Isadora guided her dancers out of the constraints of ballet shoes and coaxed them into sandaled feet. Like Nia, Duncan Dance threw aside corsets, defined moves, and shoes. She called it a school for “New Dance.”

Duncan Dance helped Nia liberate physical holding, as it emphasizes natural, organic movement. The unrestricted, uninhibited movements of Duncan Dance physically conjure up powerful, pure, child-like expressions of emotion. Duncan Dance reintroduced Nia to its innocence, its childlike curiosity. In this movement form, we feel free to explore, to be spontaneous and play. It is easy to reach up into the sky, opening to your imagination and artistic freedom.

The movements of Duncan Dance, like a waltz, polka, or rhythmic walk, physically build leg, foot, and ankle strength. The relevés and extensions help you rise into the sky and return back to Earth. The body develops a beautiful, soft shape from the gentle opening of the front of the ankles and thighs, while the free movements create a flexible spine. Deeply rooted within this dance is the power of imagination, visualization, and imagery, giving rise to the creative dreamer within. One moment we are a bird; the next, a falling leaf; then a floating star! Duncan Dance is filled with feminine power.

The Healing Arts

The Work of Moshe Feldenkrais

We wanted students to have renewed physical and mental health. We found support in Moshe Feldenkrais and his sensory awareness work. As we studied his work, we discovered how to re-train our bodies to function more efficiently. In doing so, we discovered we could sense more deeply if we slowed down. The slow, gentle, and conscious way Feldenkrais uses the body helps support all movement in your Nia dance. Feldenkrais is a beautiful compliment to Nia and FloorPlay. It will gently re-awaken and re-train your body.

Moshe Feldenkrais believed, as we do, that sensing the body in action creates permanent physical change. The Feldenkrais technique is a specific method directed by highly trained practitioners, using either hands-on or verbal guidance to retrain the body and improve posture. Feldenkrais teaches that when it comes to the body, nothing is permanent. We are reminded that we can change our behavioral and movement patterns with proper physical stimulation. Conscious stimulation provides us with tools to improve awareness and break old habits that no longer serve us. Like in Nia, ease is the way.

The Alexander Technique

One of the most dramatic visual differences between Nia and traditional fitness is the movement of the head. So many traditional fitness regimes discourage any movement of the head and neck, yet what is the landscape of the neck like? It is one of the most mobile parts of our bodies. How could we enjoy a healthy neck, shoulders, and back without moving our head? How could we look at the birds and the moon if we refused to move our head? Nature designed the head and neck to move, to orient, look, engage, express, and admire beauty.

The Alexander Technique, created by F. Mattias Alexander, changes patterned, physical responses by focusing on the movement and placement of the head, as the head directly affects your relationship to your entire body. In the best of circumstances, the head should balance and rest upon the sturdy bones of your neck, the vertebrae. The entire weight of your head, the heaviest single part of the body, sits over these bones at the top of the spine. It is a real balancing act.

Proper use of your head is imperative for dance and movement to be comfortable and free. One of the most beneficial tools we use in Nia is directing the head while moving. When you dance or move, you direct your torso up, out, and away from the hips. The Alexander Technique reminds you that heaven too has a gravitational force, calling to you and supporting you. This modality encourages you to lengthen and reach out and up. It lifts
the weight off your shoulders, so your head becomes light, free from constraints and holding patterns.

Thanks to The Alexander Technique, Nia found a way to safely integrate head movement, a vital element of wellness and fitness. Conscious attention to the head supports lightness and ease in movement. In Nia, move your head slightly forward, up, and out. Not up to the ceiling, but away from your body's torso, allowing the rest of your body to follow. Keep your eyes open. Look in the direction you intend to move to connect your head to your whole body. Your back will become stronger and more flexible. Through this technique, we have helped people regain intrinsic and core power and stimulate diaphragmatic breathing in a natural and graceful way.

Yoga
Systematized over 2,000 years ago by Patanjali, yoga is built on universal and ethical principles, postures, personal discipline, breathing techniques, awareness of the senses, concentration of the mind, meditation, and a connection to the infinite. Though popularized by many styles and approaches, yoga requires years of study and practice to comprehend and achieve lasting benefits from.

Yoga is a way to transform your body, mind, emotions, and spirit. It requires going beyond technique and craft, entering into a spiritual relationship with all form. Yoga is a science, a system for re-establishing health. It is an art and a movement form that has contributed to people's health and spiritual wellness for centuries. Anatomically, yoga makes sense: stretching and lengthening muscles is exhilarating and stimulating. Counter and oppositional movements help you develop balance and improve your ability to remain peaceful and harmonious. Applied to Nia, yoga teaches you about the relationships between bones, appropriate energy expenditure, how posture is related to wellness, how the mind exists within the body, and how to breathe. While Nia incorporates many concepts, principles, and basic postures from yoga, like all movement forms, the true art of yoga requires years of study to fully absorb and understand, as well as special training to teach.

Yoga develops sensory awareness and invigorates the spirit. A single posture or breathing technique can deliver dramatic effects, improving the ability to focus, relax, bend, stretch, meditate, restore energy, move effortlessly, and quiet the nervous system. Asanas bring life back into your tissues and all parts of your body – even atrophied parts. In Nia, we use yoga to consciously align our bones and sense where we hold unnecessary tension, which provides us with information about tight muscles, closed and stiff joints, and other imbalances that cause fatigue, reduced power and discomfort.

Yoga is food that heals. It helps you become supple and agile. Yoga, like Nia, is for every body, for every age. It may take some time for you to sit still and rest into yoga, but like Nia, if you give it the time and space, the magic will unfold. What makes yoga so applicable to Nia is the way we can use the moves, concepts, theories, and breathing techniques – even a complete series such as Sun Salutations. Over time, with study, yoga can be used for therapeutic and restorative purposes. For the most part, however, Nia encourages the integration of basic asanas into class. More advanced work is left for the traditional yoga setting.
Voice of

Body
To the physical part of you, I offer unlimited possibilities and choices to create endless body shapes. I speak many distinct languages to inspire new choreography, new ways to create healthier alignment. I give you new ways to heal by opening undiscovered energy channels. Experiment with me to receive the multitude of creative options I provide. Allow my multidimensional creativity to physically support your body, to guide and direct the flow of life force, chi. I offer you the ability to become fluent in a multidimensional body language, to create choreographic variations on a theme.

Mind
To the thinking part of you, I offer endless mental grids on which to create multidimensional choreography, fitness benefits, and healing. I provide you with symbolic images to direct the flow of energy, unique designs your body can create. I help you express yourself artistically. I help you integrate the left and right brain. Open to me and awaken to personal and imaginative ways of being.

Emotions
To the emotional part of you, I offer power, texture, color, hue, energetic width, depth, and height. Notice me; acknowledge my presence and work with me. I help you alter energy levels. Respect my organic nature, for I am responsible for altering the internal pharmacy of your body and brain. I am the essence that gives your movement unique visual structures, energy, and lines.

Spirit
To the spiritual part of you, I offer alchemy, a process to blend human form with spirit. It is I who stimulates and motivates you to take risks, to explore the unknown, and to play. Connect with me by inviting me into your body. Feel me. Sense me next to you. I love to play, to explore, and to create in the fields of free expression.
Science

The Martial Arts

The Body’s Way teaches us to include the essence of Martial Arts in our movements to receive the benefits of grounded conditioning, coordination, agility, relaxation, precision, mindfulness, powerful movement, and focused attention.

Benefits of Tai Chi

- Finding power through ease; efficient use of energy
- Enhanced ability to move in a grounded way
- Heightened awareness of breath
- Relaxation fostered by slowing down and moving gently
- Fluid, circular movements reclaim and maintain full range of joint motions
- Strength and balance from shifting and transferring body weight; conditioning of the base
- Heightened awareness of the subtle flow of chi through the body

Benefits of Tae Kwon Do

- Develops of systemic power
- Increased strength, agility, speed, and precision
- Integration of breath with movement through sounding
- Emotional release through sounding

Benefits of Aikido

- Conditioning of the vestibular system
- Enhanced power and balance
- Enhanced ability to connect to and move from the hara
- Attunement to your energy and the energy field outside you
- Restored balance through increased awareness

The Dance Arts

The Body’s Way teaches us to include the essence of Dance Arts into our movements to receive the benefits of self-discovery, emotional expression, spontaneous movement, variety, and grace.

Benefits of Jazz Dance

- Encourages playfulness
- Systemic, whole body expression
- Shimmying releases tension
- Core conditioning
- Quick movements and isolations increase agility, speed, coordination, and precision
- Expressive, playful movements bring a youthful freedom to the physical body

Benefits of Modern Dance

- Enhanced range of motion
- Increased strength and flexibility
- Increased balance and stability
- Conditions the respiratory system by stimulating a variety of breathing patterns
- Endless variety conditions the body for all kinds of movements, both linear and circular
- Increased agility and coordination through synchronized movements and timing
- Enhances core strength, stability, and endurance
- Increased bone density from creating a variety of shapes in relationship to gravity

Benefits of Duncan Dance

- Conditions the foot, ankle, and lower leg
- Encourages the opening of joints
- Increases balance and stability
• Conditions the body for graceful and elegant movement
• Encourages spontaneity and expression
• Increases flexibility along the front of the body

The Healing Arts

The Body's Way teaches us to include the essence of Healing Arts into our movements to receive the benefits of improved alignment and function, increased comfort, integrative movement and enhanced awareness.

Benefits of The Work of Moshe Feldenkrais
• Increased sensory awareness, leading to enhanced safety and comfort
• Increased kinesthetic awareness
• Stimulates the nervous system
• Nurtures empowerment through the ability to respond to one’s awareness
• Supports deeper exploration, discovery, and understanding of self
• Increases body awareness
• Encourages systemic, integrated movement

Benefits of The Alexander Technique
• Enhances postural alignment
• Increases comfort in the body
• Fosters efficient movement
• Stops harmful movement habits
• Creates healthy movement habits
• Releases unnecessary tension
• Increases body awareness
• Encourages systemic, integrated movement

Benefits of Yoga
• Aligns bones and joints through the tightening and loosening of opposing muscle groups
• Increases strength and flexibility
• Enhances balance and stability
• Increases core strength and stability
• Enhanced awareness of breath
Craft

Nia blends nine specific Movement Forms: three Martial Arts, three Dance Arts and three Healing Arts. Integrating the chemistry and energy of a variety of forms allows us to explore and express the many diverse elements of our physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual selves. The nine Movement Forms add energy and movement variety to the Nia practice, making it possible to move in different ways and with varying dynamics, speeds, expressions, and personalities.

The Movement Forms 3:9 = Our Movement Skill
The nine Movement Forms of Nia and their catch phrases include:

Martial Arts - Organic Precision
- Tai Chi - The Slow Dance
- Tae Kwon Do - The Dance of Precision
- Aikido - Harmonious Spherical Motion

Dance Arts - Emotional Expression
- Jazz Dance - Fun, Showmanship, Expression
- Modern Dance - Creating Shapes in Space
- Duncan Dance - Free-Spirited, Honest Movement

Healing Arts - Functional Movement
- The Work of Moshe Feldenkrais - Conscious Awareness of Sensation
- The Alexander Technique - Movement From the Top
- Yoga - Conscious Alignment of Bones and Joints

Recall
1. What is the triad for Principle #2?
2. What does the number 13 represent in the Natural Time code?
3. What does the number 20 represent in the Natural Time code?
4. Which joint is considered joint #8?
Tai Chi

Catch Phrase: The Slow Dance

Techniques
- Keep your knees slightly bent to allow energy to travel from the earth into your whole body.
- Lead with your heel as you step forward and to the side, transferring body weight with ease.
- Include your head in your movement by looking at and following your hands.
- Stay open and soft as you move, sensing for spring-loaded joints.
- Move from your energy center, the “tan-tien” or “hara,” a lower center of gravity.
- Use your breath to support your movement.
- Move systemically, using your entire body, all parts connected and flowing freely.
- Move in slow, circular, relaxed ways, grounding your movement.
- Integrate balance, sensitivity, breath, coordination, and systemic movement.
- Stay connected to the earth and allow energy to move through you.
- Allow your weight to shift through center and spread throughout a relaxed yet solid foundation.
- Point your toes in the direction you will travel and shift your weight, sensing for Dynamic Ease.
- Maintain soft vertical alignment, keeping your body perpendicular to the ground.
- Sense the grace of this form and eliminate all unnecessary tension from your body.
- Sense your lower abdomen as you breathe into your body’s energy center, the tan-tien.
- Avoid dangling or ignoring any body part, such as your hands.

- Use the “smile line” of energy flow as you shift your body weight.
- Keep the three body weights vertically aligned: your pelvis supported by your feet, your chest supported by your pelvis, and your head supported by your chest.

Imagery
- Like the wind, allow your spine to move freely.
- Be rooted like a tree, connected deeply through your roots into the earth’s depth.
- Sense fluid energy flowing through your limbs like water running along a stream.
- Become a balloon, your belly full of chi.
- Become a soft willow tree, feeling the wind on your leaves, your arms and hands.
- Like the air, be in relationship to all things internal and external.
- Surrender and melt into your feet.

Pearls
Soft, relaxed, like the wind, fluid, water, grounded, timing, internal, harmonized, equality, rooted, oneness, connected, sensory, liquid, patient, focused, balanced, meditative, graceful, integrated, breath, efficient, strong, agility, energy, compassionate, effortless, natural time, gentle, flowing, circular, supple, quiet, receptive power, joints, open and rounded, chi, Dynamic Ease, wise, floating ribs, mystic column of the spine, systemic, fingers and hands, eye and hand coordination, weight shifting, inner calm, earth, sky, water, wind, nature, waves, God, clouds, a mountain.
Tae Kwon Do

Catch Phrase: The Dance of Precision

Techniques

- Use empowering arm and leg movements, such as blocks, punches, thrusts, kicks, and hand techniques.
- Incorporate sound, intention, efficiency, and agility.
- Deliver powerful punches and blocks while staying connected to your center.
- Stay rooted and aware of the standing leg, which supports alignment as you kick.
- Express emotional energy and integrate breath with movement by making sounds such as, “Yeet, Hai, Yes, No.”
- Become warrior-like in your movement, focused on dynamic precision.
- Ground your stance to move freely and powerfully. The wider the stance, the closer the tan-tien is to the earth, thus more stability.
- Eliminate any unnecessary tension when executing powerful movements.
- Remain alert, preparing for the next moment.
- Before delivering a punch or block, direct your energy down the spine to stabilize your base.
- Practice your technique to develop Dynamic Ease.
- Integrate your hips into your technique to generate more power.
- Maintain relaxed joints as you perform dynamic punches and kicks.

Imagery

- Imagine that your emotional aggression extends through the heel of your foot as you kick.
- Smash through a brick wall with the power of your punch. Let it rip!
- Push red, fluid waves of energy through the room as you punch.
- Imagine lightning rods shooting out of your fingertips as you thrust energy into space.
- Imagine your feet are magnetically stuck to the floor, grounded to the earth.
- As you exhale and punch, imagine a shield of armor lighting up, covering the entire front of the core of your body.
- You are the Warrior.
- The power of the earth’s molten core resides in your belly; let its energy-lava seep down through your legs until you become a mountain of energy, impossible to topple.

Pearls

Antagonist, attack, defend, react, sharp, solid, masculine, protective, thrust, aware, danger, survival, life and death, speed, start and stop, forceful, cutting, direct, quick, blast, intentional, conscious, precise, focused, directed, sudden, no hesitation, strong base, slice, strike, kick, punch, block, fear, alert, contact, power, passion, male, warrior, hurt, pushing, aggressive, productive, adrenaline, instinct, discipline, timing, resistance, rage, anger, hand, fist, feet, knuckles, elbow, keen, now, present, calculated, creative force.
Aikido

**Catch Phrase: Harmonious, Spherical Motion**

**Techniques**
- Integrate circles and spirals into your movement.
- Use conscious energy work to ground or center.
- Move from your hara.
- Become connected.
- Blend and harmonize with the space around you. Like an ant, you can move much more than your own body weight if you blend and harmonize, rather than force and fight.
- Move energy along the bones with radial extension.
- Infuse your movement with a harmonic resonance.
- Focus your awareness on your hara, your lower belly. Practice moving energy in toward your center, and then out away from your center.
- Blend your energy with the energy of the person next to you. Don’t fight them; move into them. Focus and direct your energy with the intention to create a loving and peaceful resolution.
- Allow movements to originate from your center.
- Fall without hitting a hard edge on your body. Do not resist. Blend and surrender into the floor.
- When turning, feel yourself in the center of a spiral, supported by your vertical axis.
- Extend energy out into space without force, using less muscle effort and more directed energy.
- Keep your feet close to the earth’s surface as you step, lifting only enough to clear the floor and protect the skin.
- Focus and apply intent to all you do; energy follows attention.

**Imagery**
- Visualize yourself inside a spiral of light; move your body in this cylinder of energy.
- Blend with the energy around you like watercolor; blend and bleed into paper.
- Root through your feet like a tree, deeply connecting into the core of the earth.
- Look from your hara, as though your hara has eyes that see in front, behind, and all around you.
- Visualize energy streaming out from your hipbones like headlights beaming in front of you.
- Move as if your feet have eyes that see deep into the earth.
- Imagine another you, a body double, entering you from behind and filling your physical body with its added power.

**Pearls**
Win-win, entering, continuous, flowing, spirals, circles and lines, recycling energy, centering, perpetual motion, seamless, turning, concentric circles, eccentric circles, centripetal, centrifugal, belly, hara, intent, focus, earth, sky, in and out, infinity, figure-8, in tune, cooperative, harmonizing, energy, peaceful and powerful, rotating around an axis, yielding, bending, swirling, adapting, going with, center, grounding, relaxation, awareness, throw, roll, fall, expansive, soft edges, systemic motion, guiding and being guided, connected, fluid, directing energy.
Jazz Dance

Catch Phrase: Fun, Showmanship, Expression

Techniques
- Practice isolations, rhythms, steps, syncopated body motions, expression, and various patterns. Have fun!
- Become the charismatic entertainer.
- Incorporate chest isolations and hip movements to condition your core.
- Use hand and facial expressions to develop your own style of Jazz.
- Release physical and emotional inhibitions to develop organic skill.
- Create theatrical expression with your entire body, including your face.
- Shimmy your shoulders while exhaling.
- Isolate one body part, and then move it in different rhythms and syncopation with varying ranges of motion.

Imagery
- Visualize your entire body as one large mask that expresses, electrifies, and entertains the audience.
- Become popcorn, “popping” one motion out after another from all parts of your body.
- Shake energy off of you like a dog shaking off water.
- Become a sexy entertainer, a seductive cat on a hot tin roof.
- Imagine the color red flowing into a part of your body, energizing your movement.

Pearls
Snap, crackle, pop, interpretive, playful, angular, attitude, jazzy, soulful, vital, happy, hands, impulsive, lusty, sassy, sprite, demonstrative, showy, exploration, alive, fun, electrifying, shimmy, uninhibited, teeth and smiles, sudden, up and down, short and fast, choppy and linear, fluid and percussive, pulsating, variety, rhythmic, asymmetrical, upbeat, sensual, release, contract, isolated, burst, energetic, spontaneous, expressive, surprising, wild, skillful, quick, diagonal, projection, free, magic, motions, spontaneous, total attention, hips, hands, fingers, shoulders, entertaining, outward, toward the audience, sexy.
Modern Dance

**Catch Phrase: Creating Shapes in Space**

**Techniques**
- Explore free, expansive movements, using creative visualization and play.
- Create various geometric or interpretive shapes in space, changing posture and flow of energy in the body.
- Use directional changes.
- Experience the sensations of falling, recovering, contracting, expanding, and releasing.
- Use all planes of movement and be expressive.
- Become the dramatic, expressive, and creative artist.
- Play with weight, space, time, tempo, and flow to foster different rhythmic expressions.
- Distribute your body weight over each foot to change the line and force of energy.
- Play with polarities in your movement.
- Find “on-balance,” then find “off-balance.”
- Make circular, linear, and axial movements.
- Let your creativity add unpredictability to your movement.
- Move through all three planes of movement: low, middle, and high.
- Feed yourself with a sense of dramatic play.

**Imagery**
- Move your legs as though they are made of taffy that continues to soften and grow longer.
- Squeeze into and out of spaces as though you are toothpaste coming out of the tube.
- Splash your energy to the ground like raindrops falling into puddles.
- Dance your spine as though it were an accordion playing a tune.
- Move as though the air is prickly, responding quickly and moving from the left to the right, from up to down.
- Dance as though you have no energy, like a snail or a slug.
- Move through “thick” and “thin” air.
- Fill your movements with life.

**Pearls**
Moody, serious, free, bound and unbound, introspective, cubic, cylindrical, long and short, up and down, percussive, somber, lively, languid, space and time, on and off balance, above and below, tight and loose, full and empty, form and formless, momentary, recovery, sharp, slippery, silk and metal, wildly emotional, balance, shapes, space, fluid, connections, heavy, light, round, square, angles, circles, lines, corners, retrospective, playful, contrasts, gravity, surprise, aloof, collapsed, rocking, expressive, endless, start, stop, continuity, mechanical, natural, stride, linger, stop, freeze, hot, cold, staccato, explosion.
Duncan Dance

Catch Phrase: Free-Spirited, Honest Movement

Techniques
- Practice extension, heartfelt expression, movement toward the sky, and elegant posturing.
- Express yourself freely, spontaneously, honestly, and fully.
- Explore lightness.
- Rise, pushing the ball of the foot into the earth, opening your ankle joints.
- Relevé by connecting to and pushing off of the earth.
- Let your arms reach toward the heavens.
- Allow lightness under your feet.
- Extend without creating muscle tension.
- Sense flexibility without strain.
- Reach out from the heart and up to the sky.
- Move in gentle, fluid ways.
- Run, skip, hop, waltz, glide, and walk, inviting a whimsical nature into your movement.
- Move and let the child in you explore the borders of your imagination.

Imagery
- Use your imagination to explore dreams, fairytales, myths, and stories as you dance.
- Move as if your arms are golden wings of light; fly and feel the wind ruffle your feathers.
- Become an emotional butterfly, effortlessly rising.
- Curve your arms and body like a bird soaring high into magical heavens.
- Look up, reaching into the sky, into hope and possibility.
- Feel the sunlight streaming onto your chest, its light glistening on your skin.
- Undulate like silvery smoke rising from a passionate fire.
- Dance with your free animal-self.
- Rise high onto the balls of your feet, making space for light under your heels.
- Unleash all parts of you and fly high, easy, and light.

Pearls
Movement from the soul, child, spirit, angelic, freedom, flow, spontaneity, natural, nature, walking, running, playing, skipping, harmony, line, form, communicating, social, interactive, hope, positive, assertion, Joy, response, rediscovery, awakening, remembering, Joy of play, coordinated, effortless, ease, unbound, listening, a spark, fresh, the pulse of the legs and feet, rhythm, steps, spring-like, thrusting up, descending down, fairy-like magic, slow, moderate, primal body, inner-core energy, sequencing, smoothly sliding waltz, bouncing polka, melodic phrases, gestures, imaginary scenes, creative, within, connected to, elements, discovery, fascination, exploring, unfolding, center, emoting, emotional, radiating up and out, becoming a part of the surrounding space, immediate, limitless.
The Work of Moshe Feldenkrais®

Catch Phrase: Conscious Awareness of Sensation

Techniques

- Become aware of and continue to pay attention to all body sensations.
- Seek comfort and Pleasure and listen when your body says, “stop” or “no.”
- Seek Dynamic Ease as the path to moving and living in sustainable ways.
- Adjust your movements to improve alignment, technique, and Pleasure.
- Practice becoming consciously aware of all your movements by focusing on sensation.
- Intentionally relax.
- Move as if you had all the time in the world.
- Choose simplicity over complexity: explore one simple movement for ten minutes.
- Direct your movement with awareness.
- Connect to the three states of existence: asleep, awake, and aware.
- Sense your body in space.

Imagery

- Moving with conscious awareness enlivens the senses, including the imagination.
- You are a cat. Move with the efficiency and attitude of a cat.
- Allow your physical sensations to take you on a journey where “skin bliss” predominates.
- Feel and sense your weight like leaves falling effortlessly to the ground.
- Allow your movements to evolve like a string unwinding from the center of a spool.

Pearls

Somatic, individualized experience, energetically coherent, living, biological, genetic, functioning, animalistic, simple, felt, perceived, psyche, self-conscious, language usage, symbol motivated, sensitized, layered, ancient, reflective, threaded, patterns in time, optimal, behavioral, healthy, healing, body, mind, spirit, emotions, transparent, adapting, proprioception, undulation, useful, life-line, unified, systemic, human, body education, self-adjusting, body-centered, individualized, therapy, internalized, assimilating, applicable, species, creature, responsible, holographic, connected, oneness, biofeedback, completion, body-conscious, newness, creative, meditative, mindful, supersensitive, internally directed, reflection of the nervous system, accessible to awareness, sensation, feeling, thought, senses, states of existence.
The Alexander Technique

Catch Phrase: Movement From the Top

Techniques

• Direct your movement from the top, paying special attention to the placement or posturing of the head.
• Establish body awareness to improve alignment, self-healing, and increased comfort.
• Look in the direction you want to move; your head will connect your energetic body to your physical body.
• Become consciously aware of the head, neck, and shoulders.
• Become aware of the 360-degree radial energy around the head.
• Allow your head to move slightly forward and up.
• Lie down on one side and then roll to the other side. Does your neck roll with you or remain stiff?
• Sit down. Does your head collapse into your shoulders or does it move forward, up, and out?
• Follow your hands as you dance, watching them with your eyes.
• Move as an integrated whole, connecting every part of your body to every other part.
• Think about how you wish to direct your movement.
• Practice inhibiting your physical and emotional responses in order to create change.
• Practice the process of projected, conscious direction.

Imagery

• Your head can connect you directly to the field of your imagination.
• Play with your imagination by using your “inner eye” to visualize.
• Rise from earth as if the sun’s rays have magnetized your head.
• See your head floating like a cloud over the center of your spine.
• Effortlessly allow your head to move up, out, and away from your torso, as if your ears had wings.
• Breathe and imagine white smoke rising along your spine, elongating your neck and moving your head up, out, and away from your torso.
• As your head moves up and away from your torso, imagine the “feet” of your torso pushing down into your hips.

Pearls

Internal, subtle, not-doing, consciousness, exploration, three-dimensional, ease, flexibility, health, physical freedom, sensing, perceiving, transforming, operative, physical, emotional, imaginative, natural, resourceful, beneficial, carriage, body weight, organism, attitude, relationships, unbound, free, method, available, accessible, healthy joints, “new approach to,” conscious mind, aware, whole, neuromuscular, discovery of patterns, re-patterning, effortless, equalized, balanced, continuous, efficient poses, postures, simple, useful, authentic, organic, don’t try, easy breathing, automatic, grace, naturalness, easy involvement, no overdoing, no underdoing, breaking habit, thinking and moving, total condition, head up; body follows, lightness, upward direction, visualize instead of doing.
Yoga

**Catch Phrase: Conscious Alignment of Bones and Joints**

**Techniques**
- Stretch, contract, lengthen, and twist, sensing postures (holding stillness) and motion.
- Balance movements, seeking more comfort.
- Perceive form and structure in an organic way.
- Pay attention to your breath as you move.
- Seek alignment, comfort, ease, and relaxation.
- Rest into poses and stretches, seeking a place in which no part of you is struggling.
- Use mindful repetition to improve technique.
- Soften your eyes to align the subtle or energetic body with the physical body.
- Honor Your Body’s Way.
- Recognize your own unique sensations as you develop strength and flexibility in your movement.
- Avoid forcing your body into any poses that are not comfortable.
- Come out of a position with as much attention and care as you entered it.

**Imagery**
- Imagine you are being held in the arms of Mother Earth as you rest in child’s pose.
- In tree pose, become the tree. Feel the roots of your trunk going deep into the earth.
- Breathe into your ribcage as if you had gills.
- Breathe and imagine your breath filling the spaces inside you where you need extra support.
- Imagine your spine growing up into the clouds like a vine of love blossoms.
- Extend energy through your arms and beyond your fingertips like rays of sunlight streaming out of you, touching the world.

**Pearls**
Bones, alignment, counter-force, postures, muscles, ligaments, extensions, strengthening, flexibility, stretch, agility, gentle, powerful, focused, conscious, long, receptive, unity, oneness, balance, presence, harmony, internal, effortless, endurance, guided, light, unending, length, lying, sitting, prone, inverted, backbends, infinity, spiritual, expansive, long bones, short bones, liquid, supportive, restful, restorative, distance, projected, energy, line, easy, peace, stillness, active, elongate, committed, opening, closing, soft, supple, breath, belly, tangible, sensed, perceived, somatic, body-centered, fingers, toes, systemic, aware, triangles, angles, sympathetic and parasympathetic nervous system, external and internal, attentive, timeless, ageless, letting go, surrender, soft eyes, open mind, multidimensional.
Recall

1. What is the triad for the part of Principle #2 known as The Movement Forms?

2. What are the three Martial Arts incorporated in Nia? What is the catch phrase for each?

3. What are the three Dance Arts incorporated in Nia? What is the catch phrase for each?

4. What are the three Healing Arts incorporated in Nia? What is the catch phrase for each?

5. For each of the nine Movement Forms, list five pearls will help you sense the chemistry and energy of that particular form.
Embodiment

As a White Belt, it is important to be able to identify and initiate the unique sensations associated with each movement form, regardless of the specific movement being performed. Practice energizing your movements with each of the Movement Forms, using the supporting text from this chapter as your guide.

**Exercise 1: FreeDance the Movement Forms**

FreeDance (anything goes movement-wise) for a few minutes, energizing your movement with one of the Movement Forms (e.g., Tai Chi). Use the supporting text in this chapter as your guide. When you feel ready, switch to another Movement Form. Repeat until you have practiced each Movement Form independently for at least a few minutes.

**Exercise 2: Energize the 52 Moves with the Movement Forms**

Next, practice the 52 Moves of Nia, energizing each of the movements with one of the Movement Forms (e.g., Duncan Dance). Repeat, practicing the 52 Moves with the energy of another Movement Form. Continue until you have practiced the 52 Moves with each of the Movement Forms independently (this will require multiple practice sessions).

**Exercise 3: Decode the Movement Forms within a Nia Routine**

Practice any Nia Routine, focusing on sensing the Movement Forms within the structure created by Debbie and/or Carlos. Pay attention to how Debbie and/or Carlos have woven the many forms throughout the Routine.

**Exercise 4: Energize a Nia Routine with the Movement Forms**

Practice any Nia Routine, focusing on one or more of the Movement Forms. Notice how choreography you have done before can feel brand new if you energize the movements in new ways.

**Measure Relationship**

FreeDance to a song while paying attention to your body’s relationship to other objects in the room. As you dance, notice how much space is between your body and the closest or the farthest wall. Notice the distance between your head and the floor, between your body and the speakers, etc.

**Recapitulate**

Recapitulate and then in your personal Nia journal, describe what you experienced while practicing the Movement Forms.
**Tai Chi**

| I am often soft, relaxed, and internally calm. |
| I move through life tenderly. |
| In confrontations, I am fluid like water, yet I remain strong and grounded. |
| My emotions are mindful and balanced, respecting of the world around me. |
| I am internally harmonized and I value equality in all things. |
| I am deeply rooted and I seek oneness and connection with everything. |
| I am efficient and compassionate, and I move through life in effortless, natural ways. |
| I generally feel patient, focused, meditative, and graceful. |
| I breathe with great ease. |

**Totals**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TRUE</th>
<th>FALSE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Mostly true:**

Your energy personality type gravitates to the martial art Tai Chi. To balance these soft attributes, also practice Tae Kwon Do to incorporate precision, and Aikido to incorporate harmonious spherical motion into your movement and life.

**Mostly false:**

You need to add more of this energy personality type, incorporating more of the *Slow Dance* into your workouts and life.
Tae Kwon Do

In life, I respond like an antagonist and defend myself by attacking the other.

I react in sharp, masculine, and protective ways, thrusting my energy out to be seen and felt.

I am keenly aware and I live in “survival mode,” always ready.

I love speed and power.

My way to move through life is to start and stop, to be forceful, cutting, direct, and quick.

My voice and body gestures tend to “blast”.

I am physical, conscious, precise, focused, and directed in my life, getting what I want through hard work.

I move quickly and intentionally, without hesitation, working towards a goal.

I stand in a strong base and my words are exact and powerful.

Totals

Mostly true:

Your energy personality type gravitates to the martial art Tae Kwon Do. To balance these harder, more forceful attributes, also practice Tai Chi to incorporate the Slow Dance, and Aikido to incorporate harmonious spherical motion into your movement and life.

Mostly false:

You need to add more of this energy personality type, incorporating more precision into your workouts and life.
Aikido

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>TRUE</th>
<th>FALSE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In life, I am all about win-win.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I enter into rooms with a sense of oneness, connected energetically to the world.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I breathe and move as a continuous, flowing spiral of energy.</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I recycle my energy, never wasting time.</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I always center myself and speak and move from a place of center.</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I move with grace and seamless dynamics, turning lines into circles.</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I speak with conscious intent and focus.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am cooperative, peaceful, and powerful.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I yield my position to include others; I bend, swirl, and adapt, going with the flow.</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Totals

Mostly true:
Your energy personality type gravitates to the martial art Aikido. To balance these harmonious attributes, also practice Tai Chi to incorporate the slow dance, and Tae Kwon Do to incorporate precision into your movement and life.

Mostly false:
You need to add more of this energy personality type, incorporating more harmonious, circular motions into your workouts and life.
## Jazz Dance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>TRUE</th>
<th>FALSE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I am all about the snap, crackle, and pop in life.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am interpretive and playful and parts of my life are wild.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I often express myself in jazzy, soulful, vital, and happy ways.</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am impulsive, lusty, sassy, demonstrative, showy, alive, fun, and electrifying to my friends.</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I love to shimmy, dress for the party, and be uninhibited.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I share my smiles with the world.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I love movements that are short, fast, choppy, linear, and percussive.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I love rhythmic, asymmetrical, upbeat, and sensual actions.</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I contract, isolate, burst out, give my total attention, and want to be seen and heard.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

### Totals

<p>| | | |</p>
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<tr>
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</table>

Mostly true:

Your energy personality type gravitates to Art of Jazz Dance. To balance these fun, expressive attributes, also practice Duncan Dance to incorporate free-spirited honest motion, and Modern Dance to incorporate more shapes and contrasts into your movement and life.

Mostly false:

You need to add more of this energy personality type, incorporating more fun and showmanship into your workouts and life.
## Modern Dance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I can be very moody and serious and enjoy emotional expression and drama.</th>
<th>TRUE</th>
<th>FALSE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I move between feeling free and feeling bound in life.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am very introspective and go inside to be expressive.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>I can be very on balance and then fall off balance.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>I love playing with extremes and contrasts.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I love not only form, but also formlessness.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I react and recover with ease.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am wildly emotional and change shape easily.</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I love contrasts, gravity, surprise, and the start and stop of life, as well as moments of continuity.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Totals**

### Mostly true:

Your energy personality type gravitates to Art of Modern Dance. To balance these changing and on/off-balance attributes, practice Jazz Dance to incorporate fun, showmanship, and expression, and Duncan Dance to incorporate free-spirited, honest expression into your movement and life.

### Mostly false:

You need to add more of this energy personality type, incorporating more of the dance of creating shapes in space into your workouts and life.
**Duncan Dance**

I am all about the soul and I move through life in childlike ways.

I am a free spirit, angelic in heart and mind and free with my body gestures.

I flow spontaneously through life.

I love things that are natural, like walking, running, playing, and skipping.

I am social, interactive, hopeful, and positive.

I am almost always Joyful.

I am a fairy-like dreamer who creates and re-creates new experiences for others and myself.

I love to relate to life through my primal body, an inner core of love and Joy.

I love smoothly sliding waltzes, a bouncing polka, melodic phrases, childlike gestures, imaginary scenes, and any creative process.

**Totals**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TRUE</th>
<th>FALSE</th>
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</thead>
</table>

**Mostly true:**

Your energy personality type gravitates to Art of Duncan Dance. To balance these childlike and free attributes, you should also practice Jazz Dance to incorporate fun and showmanship and Modern Dance to incorporate more shapes and contrasts into your movement and life.

**Mostly false:**

You need to add more of this energy personality type, incorporating more free-spirited, honest expression into your workouts and life.
The Work of Moshe Feldenkrais

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I am all about sensation.</th>
<th>TRUE</th>
<th>FALSE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I am somatic; I love the body, the corporeal, the physical.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am individualistic.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I live life as a functioning, animalistic being.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel and perceive life and others in a tactile way.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I relate to things both modern and ancient.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am reflective and create patterns in time.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am healthy and love anything healing.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I know how to adapt, adjust, get body centered, and assimilate.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Totals**

**Mostly true:**

Your energy personality type gravitates to the healing work of Moshe Feldenkrais. To balance these conscious and sensory-based attributes, practice the Alexander Technique to initiate movement from the head, and yoga to incorporate conscious alignment of the bones and joints into your movement and life.

**Mostly false:**

You need to add more of this energy personality type, incorporating the conscious dance of sensation into your workouts and life.
The Alexander Technique

I am subtle and gentle.

I explore life with ease and flexibility.

I love freedom, sensing space, perceiving, and transforming.

I am physical, emotional, imaginative, natural, resourceful, and unbound.

My communication methods include being available, accessible, conscious, and aware.

I seek simple, useful, authentic, and organic ways.

I am keenly aware of my balance and posture as I move through life.

I am aware of myself as a physical, emotional, and mentally integrated being.

I am kinesthetic and love touch. Living in a body feels easy and pleasurable.

Totals

Mostly true:

Your energy personality type gravitates to the healing art of the Alexander Technique. To balance this, practice the work of Moshe Feldenkrais to incorporate conscious awareness of sensation, and yoga to incorporate conscious alignment of bones and joints into your movement and life.

Mostly false:

You need to add more of this energy personality type, integrating more movement from the head into your workouts and life.
Yoga

I love physical human structure and relate to bones and alignment with great excitement.

The sensation of counter-forces and postures drives me to achieve greater physical awareness.

I can be gentle, powerful, focused, conscious, and receptive.

My focus in life includes unity, oneness, and balance.

My energy reflects harmony and an internal, effortless endurance.

I am guided by light and have the ability to sustain.

I love lying down, sitting, being prone, and playing with backbend motions.

I speak of spiritual, expansive, and supportive ways of living and being.

I am about peace and stillness, committed to preserving my body’s ability to be open, soft, and supple.

Totals

Mostly true:

Your energy personality type gravitates to the healing art of yoga. To balance this, also practice the work of Moshe Feldenkrais to incorporate conscious awareness of sensation, along with the Alexander Technique to incorporate movement from the head into your movement and life.

Mostly false:

You need to add more of this energy personality type, incorporating more conscious alignment of bones and joints into your workouts and life.
Teaching Preparation

After you have personally practiced, embodied, and received the benefits of Principle #2: Natural Time and the Movement Forms, allow this Principle (or one aspect of this Principle) to become the focus for your Nia class. At home, practice explaining the Principle ahead of time, as though you were talking to your students. For example, briefly describe the Principle and how to use the triad components of Natural Time. Or share a few of the techniques, imagery, or pearls of the Movement Forms throughout your “class”, so your participants experience the essence of one or all nine Movement Forms. Share your personal story of how you incorporate this Principle in your life and receive its benefits. Educate, motivate, and inspire your students to connect to Natural Time and the Movement Forms to seek balance as they dance in and out of class!
Nia Brings Healing and Passion for Life

My journey with Nia was sparked one day in 1986, when I received an enthusiastic phone call from my dear friend who said that she had discovered something that combined the things I loved – movement, spirit, and fitness – and was a perfect fit for me.

“Denise,” she said, “You’ve got to do this class called Nia! It’s everything you enjoying doing, all in one class! It’s Tai Chi and yoga and jazz and dancing and breathing! You’re going to love this!”

My friend had just danced Nia with Debbie Rosas Stewart and Carlos Ayarosas, the founders of the then new body-mind fitness practice called Nia. I was so compelled by my friend’s enthusiasm for Nia that within a couple of weeks I was in the Nia White Belt Intensive – even though I had only seen Nia on a video! I took a leap into the unknown, based on my intuition that Nia was going to be a perfect fit for me – and I’ve never looked back, I’ve just kept spiraling upward!

“At that time, I was a partner in building a resort retreat based on well-being and the connection of the body and mind. Nia seemed the ideal fit for our philosophies on the body-mind connection and how it can affect all realms of our being and the way we walk through life.

Denise Medved, Hendersonville, NC, USA