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Exploring time

The qualities of time, space, and weight are the abc's of the moving curriculum. Because they are fundamental, concrete building blocks of all movement structure, we have devoted a chapter to each. Our attitudes about time, space, and weight exert tremendous influence on our daily experience. A clear experiential understanding of these influences can provide a sound base for healthy development and more complex abstraction.

We asked a class to consider leaving their watches at home for a week, and the response was horrified confusion: How will I know what time it is? I have a tight schedule as it is! As adults, most of us are run by our time demands and stress our bodies constantly in the attempt to catch up. As children, most of us experienced many "hurry

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up" messages. A child's sense of wonder and exploration often doesn't match the demands of family life. It's all too easy to be pulled away from our innate connection with the flow of natural time as we become socialized. Our culture's obsession with time might be a great contributor to the rate of stress-related illness most of us encounter. The experiments in this chapter and elsewhere encourage a broader perspective on and experience of time. One of the kindest gifts we can give ourselves is to slow down.

Our sense of time is related to the style in which we make decisions, the ease or urgency of our course through daily life. The sense of being in harmony with the flow of life is confluent with our innermost rhythms. This chapter's activities are designed to increase participants' awareness of choices about time and to experience a renewed harmony between internal time and external events. This chapter treats time as a quality, not a quantity.

STRETCHING SPACE

TO THE LEADER In this experiment, both internal choice and awareness of others are explored. This experiment requires open space.

INSTRUCTIONS TO THE GROUP For the duration of this game you'll *keep moving*. You can go as fast or as slowly as you wish, that's your choice. Move closer to someone in the room until you're as close as you want to be, then begin moving away until you're as far from people as you want to

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be. Then move closer, then farther away. Okay, everyone begin.

(Move for 1–2 minutes.)

Move in from the side and from the back. How does changing your speed change your wanting to be closer or farther away? Change the level of your moving, go higher or lower. Where are you moving from in your body? And now rest, noticing how you feel, what you see and hear in the room.

COMMENT Group or paired discussion can relate this experiment to communication issues, how we decide what we want and where we want to go in our lives, and our choices to respect others' spatial needs.

WHAT TIME AM I?

TO THE LEADER Our sense of time and rhythm has its roots in our experience of the seasons and tides, the cycles of the sun and moon, as well as our internal, biological cycles. A sense of and grounding in our deepest rhythms seems essential to a sense of self, of autonomous identity. We know that most dis-eases are accompanied by dysynchrony, lack of synchrony between internal experience and self-evaluation and perception. By exploring and knowing ourselves as the source of time, rather than being run by it through clocks and rigid schedules, we may increase our sense of harmonious relationship within and without.

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INSTRUCTIONS TO THE GROUP How many kinds of *slow* are there? Mill about the room, going from one place to another, as though you were in a movie and the camera speed got slower and slower. Now move across the floor pretending you're on your way somewhere you *have* to go, and feel that kind of slowness. Imagine you are dropped into a vat of sticky caramel and try to get out. Let your body stretch and yawn as though it were Saturday morning and a whole day that's all yours were in front of you. See if you can find another kind of slow moving particularly your own.

How many kinds of *fast* are there? Let that movie camera speed up now . . . and pause . . . and move through the room as though you were late and needed to get somewhere *right now*. Move being the wind blowing through the trees . . . fly like the hummingbird, whose wings move it at 90 mph! . . . or a blip in an electronic game. Go through the room as though you were on your way to meet your best friend. Do you have another way of being fast? Try it now.

What's your own favorite pace, the speed that makes you feel best? Move at that speed and notice other people as you move through the room. Can you keep your favorite speed if someone else is moving at a different pace? And now let your favorite speed lead you back to your seat.

SPIRALLING TIME

TO THE LEADER This experiment can be used with any repetitive movement, so the students can be in their seats or moving through an open space. Restless points in the

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day are especially good times to use this experiment. The example will use walking, but you can also use arm swinging, stretching, any arm or foot patterns such as shuffling, and so on. It is useful to pick a movement you see students repeating a lot, as different mannerisms make their way through the class.

INSTRUCTIONS TO THE GROUP Begin walking in a circle at your own most familiar speed. It may be faster or slower than those around you. Now begin walking a little faster, and faster . . . more quickly . . . gradually moving as fast as you can . . . and then just begin to slow down . . . a little slower . . . even more . . . and slower and slower, still walking, until your body just winds down and stops. Rest there a moment. Now smoothly and evenly begin your walk, as though you were a robot just switched on and a little bit slow to start. Gradually speed up, faster and faster, until you're zooming along, and then slow down, slower and slower, and stop.

OCEAN EVOLUTION

TO THE LEADER This experiment explores an individual sense of time in an imaginary environment. It can be a deeply renewing and refreshing interval. You can determine the length of the experiment by your choice of music (see the list in the *References*) and your pacing of the instructions. You'll need softer lights and a soft surface with open space.



INSTRUCTIONS TO THE GROUP Meander through the room as a stream wanders over the ground . . . flow along with no need to go anywhere in particular . . . let the stream grow larger inside you until you flow along in a river . . . water everywhere . . . moving toward the ocean. Feel yourself glide out into endless, soft water . . . sinking and finding that you can breathe underwater . . . drifting down to the floor of the ocean. Close your eyes and let go into the currents of the water gently tugging and shifting you along the bottom. What ocean creature would you like to be? . . . a minnow . . . a whale . . . a jellyfish bobbing . . . you choose. Become your creature and find the way you move in water. Let your creature change whenever you want. You can swim up through the water, leap out of the water, or stay along the floor . . . you're completely held and rocked by the water.

(Continue for 2-5 minutes.)

Now begin to float or swim up toward the shore. When you come to land, let your ocean-creature skin fall away, leaving you brand new inside as you climb on land and rest for a moment. Then open your eyes gently, stretch out, and come back to the room.