

Paul Linden will be in Benicassim , Spain.

### ¿Who is Paul Linden?

I am a word person by nature, not an athlete or body person. but when I saw a film of the creator of aikido, something in me wanted to be like him – though of course I did not understand what I saw. For 49 years, aikido has been my laboratory for studying the self in movement.

I am a specialist in body awareness education and the developer of Being In Movement® mind-body education. I hold a Ph.D. in Physical Education, a sixth degree black belt in Aikido and a first degree black belt in Karate, and I am an instructor of the Feldenkrais Method® of somatic education. I have extensive experience teaching people such as musicians, athletes, computer users, pregnant women, adult survivors of child abuse, children with attention disorders, people embroiled in conflicts, and business persons. I have numerous articles, e-books, and videos downloadable from the website. Among them are:

- **Winning is healing:** Body Awareness and Empowerment for Abuse Survivors
- **Embodied Peacemaking:** Body Awareness, Self-Regulation and Conflict Resolution
- **Hands-On Teaching:** Enhancing Body Awareness and Self-Regulation
- **Feeling Aikido:** Body Awareness Training as a Foundation for Aikido Practice
- **Breakfast Essays:** Brief Writings on Body Awareness and Life
- **Embodying Power And Love:** Body Awareness & Self- Regulation (10 hour training video).



### How did you come up with what you are teaching now?

Everything I am teaching I found through aikido, but I think it would be fair to say that most people doing aikido haven't found the same path things.

I'll tell you about two seminal moments in my "Teaching, history" Aikido practice. Thirty-four years ago, I was practicing in the Aikido club at the University of California at Berkeley. It was summer time, and we were practicing on a red wrestling mat. I was a new blue belt, and I remember looking at my partner and saying: "I know that I'm supposed to go "Going along with" along with you when you attack, but I don't know what to go along with." That became my koan. For

the next six years or so, I focused my efforts in my practice on detecting what Uke was actually doing as s/he attacked.

I started with relatively gross “Awareness of uke” observations. Uke was shoving forward with one hand. He was pulling back with both hands while turning his body counter-clockwise. She was moving her right arm in an arc from high to low to strike me in the head with a yokomenu-chi. I tried to detect the trajectory of the attack and make my defense movements follow the same “Trajectory” trajectory.

Whatever I observed, I tried to blend into and move along with, like a butterfly riding on the shoulder of an ox. I spent a lot of time puzzling over how Aikido defense techniques can be logical extensions or developments of Uke’s movements (as differentiated from self-defense techniques designed to oppose or stop Uke’s movements).

Gradually, I began to discern subtler and subtler movement patterns as I watched various Ukes. One uke would attack with his chin held high, and that extra-deep curve in the back of his neck would reduce his balance, making him less stable toward the rear. Another Uke might execute ryokatatori (a grab for both of the defender’s shoulders) with one of his shoulders lower than the other, and he could more easily be thrown to the down-shoulder side.

As I noticed the various and multitudinous asymmetries of posture and movement shown by different Ukes, I began to realize that I too moved in lopsided and strained ways. And I began to pay attention to my own balance in movement.

A key element for me began to be the vertical “Verticality” line through the body. I began to realize that it was around this line that the balanced skeleton was organized and that maintaining this line of balance during action was the key to efficient, graceful movement. (Later on in my practice, I also realized that the vertical line is the meditative “Meditation” line in Aikido. Leaning off the vertical usually signals some psychological over-involvement.) I also began to realize that disrupting Uke’s vertical line was a key to an efficient throw.

The second seminal moment occurred one day while I was teaching a class as a new black belt. I noticed that when people were grabbed by the wrist, they often lost balance “Balance” toward the grab. That was pretty simple, I thought. They looked down at the grab, tipping their heads toward the grab, and it was the displacement of the weight of the head, which caused the loss of balance. (An adult’s head weighs about sixteen pounds, about seven kilograms. You can think of the head as a basketball made of bone and filled with oatmeal. It’s heavy.)

So I told the students not to tip their heads, and I was mystified to find that even though their heads did not tip, the students still lost balance in the same manner. Watching and puzzling, I noticed that they looked down, and I thought perhaps the movement of the eyes was the cause of the imbalance.

So I told the students not to roll their eyes to look downward at the grab, and again I was mystified to find that they still lost balance. After thinking it through, I realized that there was a whole dimension of movement that I had simply not noticed before.

The students were thinking downward, and it was the deflection of their awareness/attention “Attention” toward “Intention” the attack that was the root cause of their physical imbalance. I spent the next ten years devising experiments for myself to develop my awareness of attention and its effects on movement. For example, I practiced walking forward while sending my attention leftward or rightward, and I could feel the differences each projection made in my balance and my gait. I soon also discovered that movement itself also has effects on attention. I realized that posture “Posture” is the concrete manifestation of the shape of the spirit and the key to a very concrete and practical process of “Meditation” meditation. (It was out of this realization that my approach to “Body work” body work arose.)



### **Is more education what you are doing? more Therapy?**

The bodywork that I do is not therapy, it is transformational but as an educational modality. If you are aware of changes in your body in response to challenging situations, you can evaluate your actions and choose the most efficient and effective responses.

I do not diagnose or treat diseases or injuries. I teach people how the human body works. I am supplying the owner’s manual that should have accompanied us when we were born.

### **What is this work useful for?**

In a sense there’s only one thing I do: I teach people to understand and change the distress response -- which is to become small in a number of different ways. It could be tight with anger or limp with resignation etc. I show people how to open their body and create inner spaciousness.

Basically there are two uses: improving performance in a present task, and changing relationship to a past event. a task could be giving a speech or kicking a ball or writing a book. Any physical or intellectual task is improved by putting the body into a state of calm alertness and compassionate power.

A problematic past event could be any situation, which has resulted in diminished capacity for living or acting. A trauma is an event, which overwhelms a person’s survival skills, and which teaches a person that they are not capable of controlling what happens to them. This learning becomes part of the structure of the self and people create coping strategies based on the knowledge of their weakness.

We cannot change the past, but we can in the present learn skills and strategies, which would enable a person to change the outcome of the assault if the same thing happened again the present.

### **Is your work the bridge between the not well said Body and mind?**

We have two forms of language: one form focuses on the body, and the other form focuses on the mind/feelings/experiences. Most people put their attention on one or the other, so in a sense I am creating a bridge between the two by showing people how to pay attention to both at the same time.

### **Write briefly about the 5 points that you teach to everyone. Why them?**

I don't teach them to everyone. When I'm working individually, I pick and choose from a much larger range of exercises that I have developed. The five exercises are the simplest, most widely applicable process, and they are something that is easy to learn and remember. And they can be taught and passed on without being an expert. I developed them precisely to give people something very simple and widely applicable. These exercises start with relaxing the body.

### **Exercises will be briefly describe**

### **Nowadays people are talking about Emotional intelligence, What is this for you? Can Being in Movement a complement for Emotional Intelligence?**

I don't know much about emotional intelligence. My impression is that it involves being aware of and understanding people's feelings. My body teaching would help with that by giving people the experience that emotions are actions done in the body and by showing how to become aware of those actions.

### **Why do you say Peace starts in the body?**

Imagine that you are negotiating a peace settlement with the terrorist who tortured and killed your brother. What would your body do? You would undoubtedly feel distress of some sort and that feeling would make it difficult if not impossible to think and act peacefully. By deliberately replacing the natural distress reflexes with calm alertness and compassionate power, there would be a possibility of creating peace.

### **Can we then being in Peace in the world?**

Probably not. If we do not try, then definitely not. But if we do try, then perhaps.

### **What are we doing wrong as a society?**

What are we doing wrong as a society? So many things. But not paying attention to the lived experience of the body is the foundation for much else that is destructive. How could we treat other people, and the earth itself, the way we do if we could FEEL what we're doing.

### **How do you apply your work to Coaching? Is this a Somatic Coaching work?**

It is not a form of coaching. Some of my fundamental principles are different. For example, I teach resources and challenge people to use them in ways that are more similar to martial arts. In the end however, BIM and NVC are natural allies. I have taught many coaches and they have been quite sure that Being In Movement contributes to coaching.

### **What kind of practices in terms of Movement could you recommend to Young people as education?**

I can't. There are so many different movement possibilities, and the fit between any discipline and any person is hard to predict. I suggest that a person watch the teachers and see whether the students are treated the way s/he would like to be treated. One thing that would be important to me is that any teacher ought to explain and test their movement patterns. I often get people in class who has been told by another teacher "this is the right way to do that movement" and when I ask why, it turns out that there was never any explanation of how and why it's better. The students can't really learn movement. They can just memorize.

### **And to the elderly? (since we are living longer today).**

Keep moving. Push the envelope. Be interested.



**Do you make any recommendations in your classes about how to take care of yourself like nutrition, exercise, meditation or others?**

I teach my forms of exercise and meditation. I don't really have anything general to say about other forms. When I observe people doing their exercises, I can often make helpful suggestions about biomechanics and attention. And as for nutrition etc., I don't make suggestions where I have no expertise.

**Could you talk about how was for you first when you discover that you had Parkinsons disease?**

Well, it was a shock. I never went through typical stages of anger, denial and such. and I dealt with the shock: many times every day I would stop and say the word "Parkinson's" while relaxing, grounding and exhaling gently.

Parkinson's – aaahhhh. After a while, I could be with the Parkinson's and not go into to shock.

**What would you say to the ones that have it? Any recommendations, or even for people that they are in chronic illness.**

Much of any kind of pain/suffering that we experience is a result of hating the pain. There is some actual pain, but by resisting or giving up, we amplify the pain that is there. As I often say, what's the point of having pain and misery if you can't make jokes about it.

**Tell us something that you want to share and we have not asked you for?**

Life is like an exercise bicycle. The harder you pedal, the better you get. But in the end, you don't get anywhere at all.



For more information about Paul Linden  
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