

Cuing the Mind-Body-Spirit Connection

A Practical Guide

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*There Is A Voice Inside Of You
That Whispers All Day Long,
"I Feel That This Is Right For Me,
I Know That This Is Wrong."
No Teacher, Preacher, Parent, Friend
Or Wise Man Can Decide
What's Right For You - Just Listen To
The Voice That Speaks Inside.
~Shel Silverstein*



The Glazed Look. That blank empty stare we sometimes receive when we ask our clients for the 411 on their bodies. Once we see that look, we know we are in for the challenge of teaching someone who is “tuned out.”

Whether our clients realize it or not, we depend upon their participation to help them progress. When our clients can’t tell what’s going on inside themselves, it’s like our partner is MIA.

Our job, which can make a HUGE impact on self-awareness, is facilitating the connection between all parts of the self. That connection, serves as a partner both internally and externally: internally, it partners to the individual within him or herself and externally, it helps the individual partner with us (instructors) in the act of teaching.

People tune out or “lose touch” for any number of reasons. Unless we are additionally qualified, it is beyond our scope of practice to psychologically counsel our clients or treat them for neurological issues. But even if there are underlying issues that necessitate referring out, there are things we can do well within our scope as fitness professionals.

In my practice, I’ve found that certain traits are key for practitioners looking to guide the *Journey Within* of others.

1. Acute Observational Skills (for picking up subtleties in movement quality)
2. Communication Skills: Q & A, Listening
3. Rapport With Client: Trust, Confidence, Removal of Judgment
4. Creativity (for devising inroads to help client connect and learn)
5. Intuition/Instinct/Empathy (Emotional Intelligence)

There are many physical tools, such as biofeedback equipment, which practitioners can use to help people focus their attention within, tap their instincts and utilize their mind-body connection. In this article, we’ll concentrate on the ways we can use communication to enhance this connection.

Step 1: Establish a vocabulary that works

We need to find what resonates with the individual. By using a vocabulary, manner and tactical approach that “click” with our clients, we help them recognize and access what’s going on inside themselves. The process of awakening inner awareness is experimental and is unique to each individual, so it’s important to continually try new things and check back to see if previously effective vocabulary still works.

It’s helpful to know if the person you are teaching is more responsive to visual, auditory or kinesthetic terminology and adjust accordingly. The words that help us tap into ourselves might be very different than those that will help our client get in touch. What is their frame of reference? What words do they use when they speak? What interests do they have? Utilize what you know about your client. Play with alternative teaching tools. It could include using a tune to put the cues to a rhythm (great for auditory learners), certain images or role play! Feeling comfortable enough with each other to venture through this process is important, so a relationship built on trust can be crucial. Remember your partnership!

Step 2: Integrate the vocabulary into communication as a whole

The two primary communication tools I’ve found for helping others deepen their connection with themselves are:

- *Dialoguing*
- *Directed Guidance/Cueing*

Dialoguing involves facilitating an internal conversation that our clients have within themselves. Asking leading questions is an essential part of this process. These questions provoke the client to explore and discover things about themselves. The result leads to greater understanding.

Directed Guidance and Cueing involves giving instructions that lead clients through a process of exploration and discovery.

Dialoguing

Goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Guide client to look within<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Guide client to interpret sensations felt by own body (internal signals)○ Awareness○ Differentiation• Guide strategy development• Trigger “inner speak” to reinforce the lesson• Elicit feedback from client -- <i>this is key</i>
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Examples of Dialoguing Questions:

Elicit Feedback

General	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What/How did you feel during the exercise? • Where did you feel it? • Describe what you felt specifically.
On Work Performed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Did you feel anything working? What? • Who/where was doing most of the work? • Did it feel unnatural/ unsafe/painful or like it was working/getting tired? • What was the challenge? • What part is becoming easier? • Why did you choose to stop when you did?

Increase Ability to Accomplish a Goal

To Raise Awareness and Encourage Client to Work in Partnership with themselves (I call this fulfilling or honoring a conscious request☺)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What strategy can you choose to get past the (specified) obstacle? • Which would be less stable, A or B? • What part of your body is carrying your body weight in this exercise? • If you want to jump forward, which direction do you need to push the floor? • What will balance the effect of gravity during the lunge?
To cultivate the ability to differentiate (fill in the blanks specific to an aspect of the exercise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What do you feel/what happens if_____? • Did you notice a difference when_____? • What was the difference? • In which version did you feel more/less__? • Which way felt easier/more stable/like you had more control? Why do you think?

If the work you are doing is more spirit-connection based, you may ask questions like, “Was there a moment where you felt more open or that you stopped thinking? Lost track of time? Felt focused and free at the same time?” or guide with a direction such as, “As you release the position, take a moment to release into the floor and thank your body.”

Directed Guidance and Cueing

Goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Guide toward a specific focus• Guide to pay attention to body's signals• Guide to make qualitative adjustments to movements• Guide to use his/her KA as a means of achieving a goal• (Use cues that) reinforce the lesson
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Examples of Directed Guidance and Cueing:

To focus attention and hone self-observation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Concentrate on what is happening ____.• Focus on connecting with_____.• Focus on steady energy through your BOS.• During the hamstring stretch, see if you can find the moment where your pelvis wants to tuck.• Take the stretch to the point that it's intense, but not intolerable.• Sense the moment before your body's impulse to guard against the pressure and let me know.
To alter the quality of movement/position	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• In your next set, try to put more of the work (energy) ____ and less work (energy) ____.• Seek to smooth out your movement.• Let your legs and trunk twist help your cable push.• As you hold the wall sit, look for places in the body you can "turn off" or places you can transfer the work.• Try to land as if your feet melt into the floor.• Think about your shin lining up with your shoelaces as you squat.• Feel all 5 toes maintaining contact with the floor as you press your knees away from each other.• Release something you don't need on every exhale (This can be literal, like unnecessary clenching or figurative, like beliefs that undermine confidence or performance).

Other Teaching Tools

By using the above outlined communication tools with our clients, we are helping them develop their capacity to sense and feel, so barefoot sequences (allowing for more proprioceptive input to brain) and other tactile-centric sequences accentuate the desired effect.

Cueing ideas and creative inspiration surround us 24/7. Look for situations and statements throughout the course of your day that spark awareness and turn it inward.

Seek out opportunities to experience various styles of guided:

- Visualizations
- Meditations (including for birth, pain reduction and recovery—a wealth of ideas!)
- Breathing

As well as

- Poetry (great for variety of imagery)
- Sequences from classic Mind-Body disciplines (like martial arts, yoga, Feldenkrais, Alexander Technique, Bartenieff Fundamentals)

We have a great deal of influence on those we teach. As movement instructors, we can guide our clients to understand how to communicate with themselves so that they can move however they need or wish, all the while honoring their body. Right up there with my confidence in the body's ability to heal, I'm a firm believer that we can learn skills and improve our ability to connect -- as long as we "find the way in." Once we do, our clients are more connected, which means we've got our partner on board and together, progress is just the beginning of a very bright future!



Bio

ACSM, ACE & CHEK certified fitness professional and veteran performer, Ilene Bergelson conducts trainings internationally specializing in experiential professional development programming. She is the founder of Lifemoves Health, through which she offers continuing education and private coaching to fitness professionals. Ilene has been published by PT on the Net. Her teleseminars and Light Bytes (audio series) have been heard around the world. Ilene has appeared on Broadway and in front of audiences of every size and developed EmpowerSpeak, her educational series, based on her theatrical experience. Ilene's 20+ years of teaching experience include specialties in empowered communication, paranatal & recovery fitness.

