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Healing is a Form of Learning: The Resonant Kinesiology Training Program

BY THERESA BACON

The big news in the Burlington, Vermont bodywork community these days is Susan Gallagher Borg's Resonant KinesiologySM Training Program. Borg is a pioneer, an inventor in the world of connections - connections between touch, movement, sound and learning.

She loves to play, and as a student said of her, "She questions everything!" The waiting room of her bodywork office, Alive & Well, is a delight: toys piled on little tables including a kaleidoscope, springing tensegrity structures and wood blocks. All entice your senses, calling out, "Touch me. Try this." And this is precisely Borg's intention - to tickle your brain, to spark your curiosity and your learning. In fact, one of the fundamental tenets of Resonant Kinesiology body-mind work is that "healing is a form of learning."

Borg came to bodywork through music and movement. She is a kinesthetic learner, a natural adept at sensing and modeling the world through her body. Because kinesthetic learners make up only about 10 percent of the population, and because our mainstream educational model is biased toward visual and cognitive learning styles, Borg did not have an easy time in school. She likes to tell the story of how she finally mastered long division in sixth grade by knocking out numerical rhythms with her knees against the desk.

Her sense of rhythmical possibilities was enhanced during her teen years, when the family lived in South America. "Modeling" is a concept Borg uses in her training program. It's that way one body has a feeling what it's like to move like another, from the inside out.

Because teens study and copy other people's body languages more intently than perhaps any other creatures on earth, Borg was fortunate to be under the influence of colorful Latin rhythms, sounds and languages during these impressionable years.

Her unique learning experiences led Borg to wonder about how human beings learn and about what learning has to do with communication. A college singing class provided a wonderful research lab for these germinating questions. The class was taught by an Old World master, who expected students to learn by simply copying him. Borg could do it, while other students were agonizing over their failure. Borg found she could help the others learn.



Susan Gallagher Borg invites students' curiosity about the joints and spaces of the pelvic bones. (Photos by Barbara Leslie)

Borg loves to talk about her own learning process. "My experience in that class led me to wonder, 'Why is it I can say something to this student and they'll go 'Oh' and be able to do it, and I'll say exactly the same thing to the next one and they'll go, 'Huh?'"

"I became really interested in the question of how you teach someone a body response. I believe there is always some way to elicit learning in a person. The process might be verbal, it might be physical, it might mean suggesting an experience: 'Notice how your neck posture pushes the vertebrae against the larynx. How can you make more space in your throat?' I'm always feeling for what combination of words, touches, movements and experiences will result in an understanding for this person."

These early explorations gave Borg the beginning of a vocabulary for teaching people how to perceive directly from someone else's body, so they could learn kinesthetically, the way she was learning. She had to learn to talk about her kinesthetic experience, which up until that time had been mainly non-verbal.

In order to facilitate students' kinesthetic learning, she found she had to ask questions with touch. Time and again, as she modeled students' bodies while they sang, ("attending inclusively," as she puts it,) Borg noticed that "what

was impeding them was not lack of musical ability - it was tension, particularly in the shoulders and neck, and also difficulty with grounding, sometimes due to tension in the lower back, knees and feet."

She found herself doing hands-on exploration, and wondering about how the parts of the body support or interfere with each other, and with singing. This college singing class was the beginning of her fascination with experiential anatomy and kinesiology.

It was in these coaching sessions that Borg also first began to sing into bodies. She wondered what would happen if she and the student played with sending tones into a particular place of holding. "We were amazed at how powerful the touch of the vibration was, inside," she remembers. "They could feel it and I could feel it."

A few years later, Borg's 3-year-old daughter, Kelly, came home from dance class and told her, all excited, about how she meditated like a mountain and how her vertebrae moved like a Slinky along with her ribs as she breathed. Borg had to meet this teacher!

Thus began a seven-year collaborative exploration with Caryn McHose, experiential anatomy and kinesiology instructor at Middlebury College (and Andrea Olsen's collaborator on the recently published *BodyStories, A Guide to Experiential Anatomy*).

"Caryn and I share an insatiable curiosity about bodies and about being human," Borg said. "For seven years we explored each other's bodies and taught everything we learned at Middlebury College and in our public classes for all ages. The first year curriculum of the RK training program grew directly out of Caryn's experiential anatomy class and our shared work."

Borg relies on experiential research, and provides an example for Resonant Kinesiology students: given a problem, she goes exploring. She touches the body, listens for its rhythms and patterns. She explores with the person in conversation, listening to their words for their learning style, their assumptions, their beliefs.

She scours books, literature and dialogues with colleagues. She writes, she draws, she dances, she plays instruments. From her years with McHose, she has learned to take a body issue to a "practice partner" and then explore it in her own body and in theirs. Like all creative scientists, Borg brings a lively and

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unrelenting curiosity to the question at hand.

This way of doing research and of embarking on studying has been her personal way of healing. When she developed migraines, for instance, she started asking herself lots of questions, noticing what brought the headaches on and what would relieve them.

Nausea was a part of her migraine pattern, and she discovered the vagus nerve can be involved in nausea. The vagus nerve is thought of as an antenna in Eastern medicine. Perhaps migraines are related to heightened sensitivity then? She played with her vagus nerve, using sound, movement, touch and attention.

She learned she could not only perceive things in the environment by tuning in to the nerve and its web in the fascia, but she could also perceive vibrational states. She also started experimenting with sending tones into the sinuses, blood vessels and bones in the head. She no longer suffers from migraines.

So what exactly is Resonant Kinesiology? If you ask 10 Resonant Kinesiology students, you'll get 10 different answers. Not that the work is undefinable, but that its intention involves

attention to a creative process, which happens in the relationship of two unique and delightfully unpredictable human beings.

The Resonant Kinesiologist invites curiosity, and the listening, moving and learning happen in present time. The participants are involved in their experience, their perceptions, their learning - and not in following prescribed modalities. Thus RK is based on the educational rather than the medical model and empowers both the practitioner and student (Borg doesn't use the word client) to come alive.

A Burlington massage therapist, quite successful after 10 years of private practice, embarked on the Resonant Kinesiology Training Program "because, frankly, I was bored. I used to see clients as problems to be solved. Now I see each session as an opportunity for an experience waiting to happen. My sessions are much more mutual now. They're a dialogue and an education!"

Resonant Kinesiology does have methods, which Borg has termed Inclusive Attention, Resonant Touch, Resonant Sound and Resonant Movement. Inclusive Attention involves establishing one's sense of self, and then including the other person in one's attention. Out of this intentional attending/listening/feeling, the communication which Borg understands as resonance can grow.

This level of listening is subtle, but you can practice, and you can learn. Susan explains, "If you were hired for a new job as a textile sorter, you might be able to tell the difference between the fabrics with the nubbles and the ones that were smooth when you started, but within a couple of months you could tell the difference between two dozen different kinds of silk. You need to have enough subtle experience to know the differences."

Borg believes that what is subtle about Resonant Kinesiology is not so much the mechanics of using Resonant Touch, Sound and Movement - it's the intention of resonating with another's body to meet the person and acknowledge their experience exactly as it is.

Resonance is communication. This is such an exciting insight: that on a most basic, physical, kinesthetic level, resonance is more than simply music or vibration - it is a perception or a perceptual sensitivity.

The intention of the Resonant Kinesiologist is to use Resonant Sound, Resonant Touch and Resonant Movement to reach a communication as close as possible to direct communication. Borg doubts there is such a thing as direct communication at the level of human consciousness, but knows from her experience that it is possible "to meet

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Resonant Kinesiology is educational bodywork rather than medical treatment.

The **Resonant Kinesiologist** serves as a resourceful participant in the client's learning by using touch, sound, and movement to evoke learning, growth and health.

Resonant Kinesiology is not a technique; it is a relationship. **Resonant Kinesiology** is curiosity about who you are.

The **Resonant Kinesiology Training Program** is an opportunity to experience learning which will both contribute to your personal growth and enhance your professional practice. The instructors live what they teach.

The wise saying, "Give people fish and they will eat for a day. Teach them to fish and they will eat forever," applies to health as well as to food. **Resonant Kinesiologists** teach with their hands, body movements and tones, as well as with words, so their students learn experientially, in their bodies.

As you participate in the **Resonant Kinesiology Training Program**, you will learn anatomy, kinesiology and human development within your own body, and then learn to be an effective teacher for others.



"I found the pace and the depth of the class wonderful. The combination of movement, then feeling it in the body in a more meditative way, followed by the class lecture and demonstration is a humane way to present the materials."



"I am consciously in my body in a very new way. It is as if my brain and the very cells of my body are one. I touch with my hands and feel and see and hear the layers of fluids. I open up my mouth and sound fills the space."

"IDENTITY is a key word for me with this work. As I get to know my own body and its expressions I feel a more keen sense of who I am, and most importantly, to love and appreciate who I am."

"I've learned some anatomy, kinesiology, some body systems and developmental movement and learned most of it by feel in my body - which means I *have* it."

Fundamentals of Resonant Kinesiology

1. Each person has all the resources needed to thrive. Some resources may not yet be available to conscious awareness.
2. People make the best choice available to them at the time. While the present usefulness of a choice may be challenged, the original value of the choice and the worth of the individual are consistently respected.
3. Learning initiates change. Our minds evolve in response to physical experience. Our bodies are metaphors for what we have learned to believe.
4. Healing is a form of learning.



Methods

Inclusive Attention
Attending Through Touch
Attending Through Sound
Attending Through Movement

Perceptual Frames

Anatomical Structures & Systems
Kinesiological Principles
Developmental Patterns
Language Patterns

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someone, somebody, very close to where they are."

Borg emphasizes over and over the importance of approaching the client with respect and curiosity and with clear intention. I asked her once whether she thought singing into the body is comparable to the use of ultrasound and other high-tech methods. She was adamant. "Those means are quite different from Resonant Kinesiology. Their intent is to cause a change. The intent in RK is to meet the person where they are, to observe the change, and to follow it. It's not to cause the change; it's to bring attention to the place.

"The change happens in the way the person responds to being met there. It's been my experience that a much deeper and more coherent change happens when you meet somebody and evoke a responsive change. The orchestration of the body as a whole organizes itself in order to make the change, so the change is organic to that body.

"But if I ask this particular body to come up with its own idea of how to change, its response is specific to itself. The likelihood of that change lasting and being in tune with everything else that's going on in that person's life is much higher than if I try to impose something, no matter how much experience I have.

"There's also something very powerful about being acknowledged exactly as you are, whether that's a verbal acknowledgment, an emotional acknowledgment, a touch acknowledgment. There's something tremendously empowering to the person you are working with."

One of the consequences of practicing perceptual sensitivity is that students learn to trust their perceptions. "I have a new confidence in things that aren't obvious," reported an RK graduate, who is just beginning a private massage therapy practice. "I'm learning to follow through and rely on my intuitive impulses."

This attending to what is happening "on all levels and layers" has given her "a real foundation not only for this work, but in life, in relating to friends, family, myself. I no longer shut off parts of myself that might not be perceived, at first, as real."

The Resonant Kinesiology Training Program consists of 12 topics presented over a two-year period. The first year introduces students to the methods of the work, then sends them diving with

sound, touch and movement into reflexes and developmental patterns, anatomical structures, kinesiological principles of alignment and movement and language patterns.

I joined recently in a morning spent studying the feet. Borg's voice was an elfish pipe, tickling us with curiosities, as if aware of its power to lead us on the most wonderful adventure. The voice piped above a tape of African drum music. "What would happen if you initiated movement with the bones of the feet? How do you feel the spring and bounce-back of the earth as you give it your weight? Feel the calcaneus relate to the talus! What happens when you lead with the heel?"



Susan Borg invites a student to learn about the foot bones by feeling them inside the body.

The Latin terms just suggested connections to the mind. But we weren't UP in our minds. We were DOWN in our feet! The floor swarmed with interested feet, which seemed to be re-inventing the step, the plop, the leap, the twirl, the toe-curl.

Then Susan invited us to sit or lie down. "Begin by imagining SOUNDS that can touch along the bones and inside the joints," she invited. Soon the room filled with harmonics more beautiful than Gregorian chant, and with the tingling vibrations of happy feet.

Only after such intense kinesthetic and musical experience does Susan Borg take out her repertoire of anatomy books and invite the resident skeleton Twiggy and her students to circle 'round. We were such a lively, fascinated group - eager to look at anatomical illustrations and learn five-syllable names, having just spent an hour being and moving and living inside our foot-experience.

Lastly, we delved into each other's feet, touching and moving and sounding bones and joints, comparing what we

experienced firsthand with the pictures and names.

Borg is deliberate in the way she uses words and structures experiences. Her mastery of Neuro-Linguistic Programming has taught her much about how to foster learning. Class time is patterned so that the body and all the senses are steeped in the information before the cognitive mind. And, a true teacher, Borg explains her educational methods to her students as she goes along, so they can grasp HOW as well as WHAT they are learning.

Students' comments about Borg's approach are revealing. "I found the pace and the depth of the class wonderful. The combination of movement, then feeling it in the body in a more meditative way, followed by the class lecture and demonstration, is a humane way to present the materials."

Another exclaimed, "I've learned some anatomy, kinesiology, some body systems and developmental movement, and learned most of it by feel in my body - which means I have it."

Resonant Kinesiology, like Bonnie Bainbridge Cohen's Body-Mind Centering™, breaks with traditional medical education, focusing the study of anatomy, kinesiology and developmental patterns on the living human body.

A recent RK graduate who is also a nurse commented on the difference. "When I studied anatomy and physiology in college, it was very dry - like studying math. There wasn't that real appreciation for what we

were looking at: the essence of the body, its living being. In college, for instance, we were taught that the sutures of the skull are closed. They're not! They are living tissue, they move and breathe."

The second year of the RK Training Program touches in much more depth and includes work with core material: brain anatomy, cerebro-spinal communication, the structure of emotion and identity, repatterning. Second-year students make a commitment to the entire program; this allows the group to bond and develop the level of trust necessary for the depth of the work. The second year also offers cutting-edge understanding of boundary issues in therapeutic work, as well as the latest perceptions of modern physics about fractals and chaos, space and time.

Because the training program is based on experiential learning as well as textbook study, students experience a profound acknowledgement of themselves as they practice the RK Methods of Inclusive Attention, Resonant Touch,

Resonant Sound and Resonant Movement with each other.

A student who has a torn ligament in one knee, diagnosed as surgically "irreparable," commented, "When I began the program, my knee was my enemy, a limitation, a part of me I hated. The leg was hanging out on the outside of me. By the end of two years, I was one person standing on two limbs. I feel connected to this leg, and feel I really have two legs to stand on. It's more than just learning to manage or tolerate a situation. I've learned how to move, how to be, with integrity. Ultimately, I've become more myself."

Borg and her colleague, Marcia Reese, are known for their motto, "Any body can change its mind." Borg loves playing with the phrase because "it has lots of puns in it, it's fun, and so it gets people thinking and changing their minds!"

The motto implies that by changing your body experience, you can change your concepts, and by changing your concepts, you can create a different reality - a different body in a different life.

Borg uses rotator cuff tendonitis, a common injury, as an example. "There are many frames of mind that may go with such a body experience. It might be that this is your first experience with tendonitis, and you hold it rather lightly, saying, 'Well, I was playing tennis, I was tired and didn't stretch, and I just hit this one serve and did something to my shoulder.' Your concept is that you made a movement that strained the tissues and all you need to do is return balance to these tissues.

"You might have a very different experience - chronic tendonitis. You might even come to identify yourself as a person who has a damaged shoulder. And even if we arrived in our Resonant Kinesiology work together at a point where the shoulder was free of pain, you might still hold it as if it were in pain, and that might become a part of how your entire posture is for the rest of your life."

Borg is careful to point out that neither of these conceptions is what is actually going on at the tissue level in the shoulder; both are concepts about "tendonitis" and about who you are in relation to it. In the RK work of exploring energy and movement in the shoulder, offering the shoulder some new ideas about its shoulderness and reframing its pattern, "we also have the opportunity to jiggle the concepts around.

"In the first case, we might jiggle the concept that 'Everything was fine, I just did one thing wrong and strained it,' by proposing that life does not consist of discrete events but is a continuum, and the whole movement of the shoulder, the whole way you are with your arm and with yourself, contributes to the way you make a serve.

"In the second case, we might jiggle your identity as an 'injured person.'

This is a limiting belief; its tendrils go out into all of your responses to everything in the world. Changing the response of your arm and offering you some variety in how your shoulder can be in the world jiggles that belief and offers you the possibility that maybe you are something else as well."

The second year RK curriculum also includes brain anatomy and physiology, brain massage and vibrational geometry. Borg has a passionate, long-standing fascination with the brain and has done years of personal research into its anatomy and physiology; she offers her wealth of knowledge to her students

- along with her expertise at singing into the brain.

"I was amazed the first time we practiced brain massage," a student commented. "Susan sent a precise note into a precise point inside my head. I got a hint of the vastness of the interconnections in the brain - you can't think about it too much. It's too awesome!"

Resonant Kinesiology is truly a creative exploration, and so a whole section of the training's second year is devoted to improvisation - seeing, hearing, feeling potential, developing intuition and inventing responses.

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Resonant Kinesiology Training Program



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In fact, the whole program is devised to encourage students' questions (What is reciprocity? How does a bone mend?), and in the second year, design and present a final project. Here again is Borg's purpose: to educate bodyworkers to be forever curious about the mystery of this life-in-the-body, and not to be clones of her style or any prescribed technique.

Final projects are as various and creative as the RK students. One, a singer, made a tape of sounds that resonate with different parts of the body, for anybody to sing along with. Another offered an experiential lesson on fluids using water balloons.

"What exactly is perception?" asked another, who then set up physical, energetic, spiritual and interpretive experiences for his classmates to play with. These explorations ended with drawings. Another student compiled a booklet, "Daily Resonant Kinesiology Movement Routine," integrating movement postures, breathing and awareness of glandular energies and alignment, which were wonderful to teach the rest of the class.

Borg's wisdom as an education, or her vision about the work's possibilities, and trust in her students are already proving fruitful. An RK student working as a nurse in a rehab unit has had remarkable results using Resonant Kinesiology with stroke patients.

Another graduate, a computer administrator at the Medical Center of the University of Vermont, uses RK principles dealing with personnel. A bodyworker who has a background in meditation has been combining the RK approach with the ideas of Stephen Levine, conducting workshops for nurses on working with pain, using Inclusive Attention and Resonant Touch. And a dancer and dance teacher is now offering "Kinetics for Kids" classes introducing kids to their bodies through fun, movement, imagination, and solid anatomical and kinesiological information.

Borg has become very excited about offering RK to nurses and other health care professionals, thus beginning a bridge from her modality into the mainstream. She was the main presenter at the Northeast Regional Conference of the American Holistic Nurses Association in March of this year, and began offering a one-year Resonant Kinesiology Workshop Series for health care professionals this past fall.

The Training Program has two other RK instructors, Mitchell Kurker

and Dick Nessen, whose backgrounds are as rich and varied as Borg's. The three together bring a synthesis of experiential anatomy and kinesiology, Insight Meditation, Hakomi Therapy, Neuro-Linguistic Programming, biofeedback, theater, music, education, Body-Mind Centering, psychology, Feldenkrais and Alexander Technique, among other things, to the Resonant Kinesiology work.

Borg enjoys sharing stories of how differently the three instructors approach the same situation. Mitchell, with his years of teaching and practicing Insight Meditation, will often sit bone-still and seem to be barely "doing" anything. Dick, the most visually oriented of the three, engages students with questions and suggestions for visualizations.



"Begin by imagining sounds that can touch along the bones and inside the joints," Borg tells a class.

Borg, who loves to move and sing, will take the body through all kinds of passages, then sit quietly, focus intently and intone. Students learn by this example that there is no one "correct" way to inclusively attend and resonantly respond. And more, each student is encouraged to bring their own wealth of background, experience and creativity to the moment of the work, thus, to really include themselves.

As a teacher, Borg sparkles. Her greatest delight seems to be in eliciting an individual's growth. Like all true teachers, she has the gift of recognizing the potential in her students, their hidden resources. In fact, this insight, this fundamental faith in the student, is the Number One fundamental of Resonant Kinesiology: each person has all the resources needed to thrive. Some resources may not yet be available to conscious awareness. Students thrive in the warm space of such a value.

Borg glowed as she recalled the June 1991 graduation of the first 18 RK students - many of them embarking on or continuing private bodywork practices, some returning to psychotherapy, banking, photography, dancing, journalism and other professions. "You could

see they knew this stuff in their own bodies, in their own style. 'This is me!' came through - lots of enthusiasm, lots of confidence."

Some other things are striking about Borg. One is she seems to be having a lot of fun. People often leave her office smiling. Somebody who knew the 10-to-12-hour days she puts in seeing clients and teaching once asked her what she does for fun. She loves telling this story.

"Fun!" I exclaimed. "I'm always having fun. Learning is fun!" She winks and then shares this fun information: brain researchers have discovered that the learning brain produces endorphins, and thus, when we're learning, we're getting high! Another thing is the basic comment people make about Borg: you just feel comfortable being with her. And another is that she lives what she practices. Her work and her life resonate with her values.

Resonant Kinesiology is first of all about values. Like Ron Kurtz's Body-Centered Psychotherapy, RK work is based on certain principles. These principles are like the Tao - in them is the way of the universe. Practitioners are people who find that their being, their truth, their understanding of the world, and thus their work with clients, resonate with the principles.

A graduate commented that she believes "the Program helped me to rediscover and reaffirm these principles as crucial to my life. Respect for the integrity of the person's wholeness and for the mystery of their evolution and growth, often surprising and always entirely creative. This respect for whatever arises, in oneself and in the other, this listening to everything with such respect and curiosity, are Susan's way of being in the world as well as her way of being in the work."

For more information about the Resonant Kinesiology Training Program or the Workshop Series for Health Professionals contact Susan Gallagher Borg, Resonant Kinesiology Training Program, 28 Pine St., Burlington, VT 05401.



Theresa Bacon, M.A., A.P.M.T., a bodyworker in private practice in the Burlington area since 1986 and daily practitioner of Buddhist meditation, sees mindful awareness practice (Inclusive Attention) as the foundation of healing work. Her background includes training in Resonant Kinesiology. She specializes in working with people recovering from trauma.