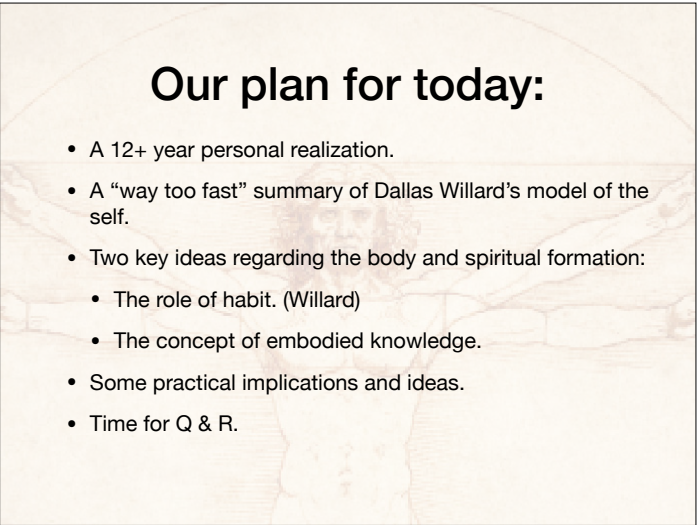


The Role of the Body In Spiritual Formation

DMN 974 - May 20, 2020
Jeff Kuhn

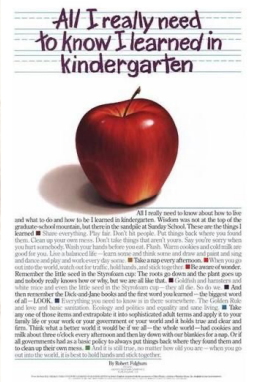
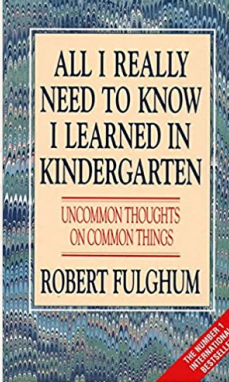
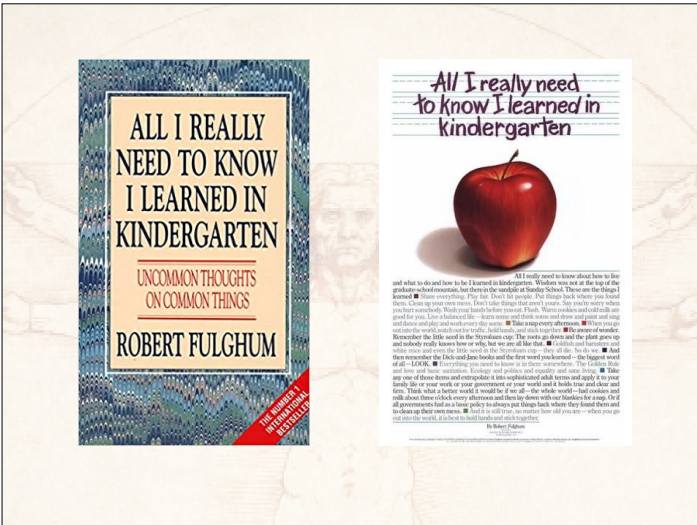
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Our plan for today:

- A 12+ year personal realization.
- A “way too fast” summary of Dallas Willard’s model of the self.
- Two key ideas regarding the body and spiritual formation:
 - The role of habit. (Willard)
 - The concept of embodied knowledge.
- Some practical implications and ideas.
- Time for Q & R.

2



3



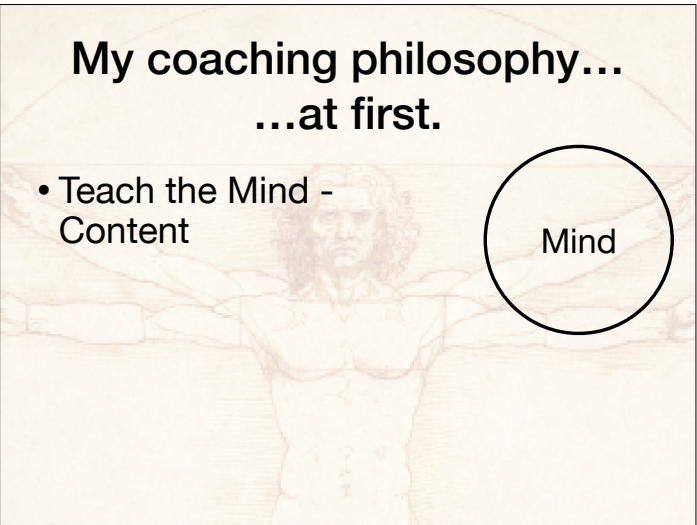
“All I ever really needed to know about pastoring I learned coaching high school girls basketball.”

4



A 12+ year realization

5



My coaching philosophy... ...at first.

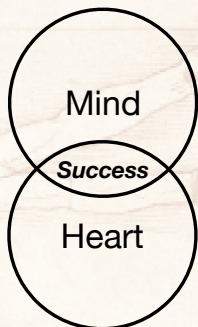
- Teach the Mind - Content



6

My coaching philosophy... ...under modification.

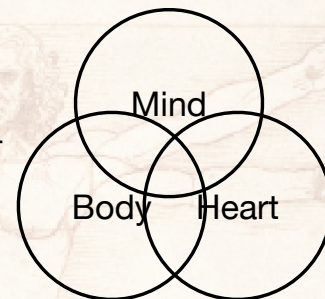
- Teach the Mind - Content
- Cultivate the Heart - Relationships



7

My coaching philosophy... ...under modification.

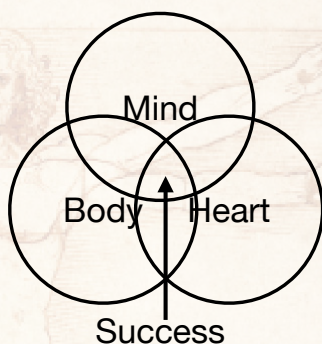
- Teach the Mind - Content
- Cultivate the Heart - Relationships
- Train the Body - Habits



8

My coaching philosophy... ...under modification.

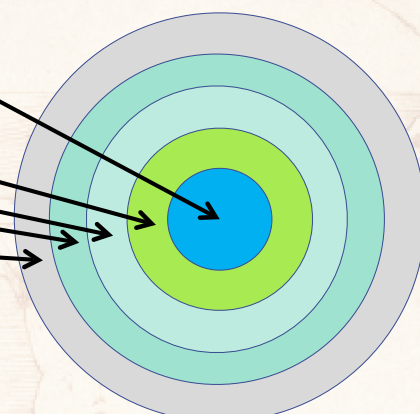
- Teach the Mind - Content
- Cultivate the Heart - Relationships
- Train the Body - Habits



9

Willard's understanding of the "Self"

- Heart (Spirit/Will)
- Mind (Thoughts and Feelings)
- Body
- Relationships
- Soul



Taken from *Renovation of the Heart: Putting on the Character of Christ* by Dallas Willard.

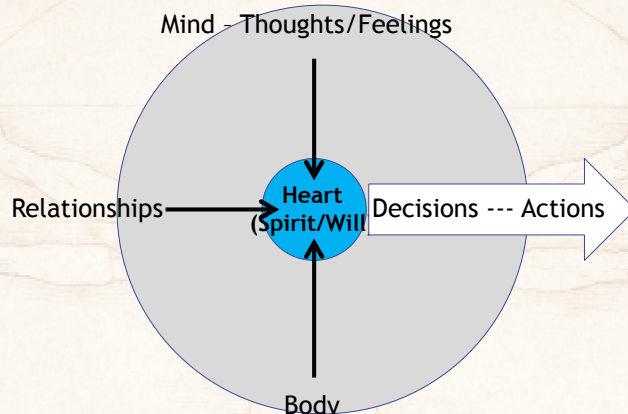
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"The most important one," answered Jesus, "is this: 'Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God **with all your heart** and **with all your soul** and **with all your mind** and **with all your strength.**' The second is this: '**Love your neighbor as yourself.**' There is no commandment greater than these.

- Mark 12:29-31

11

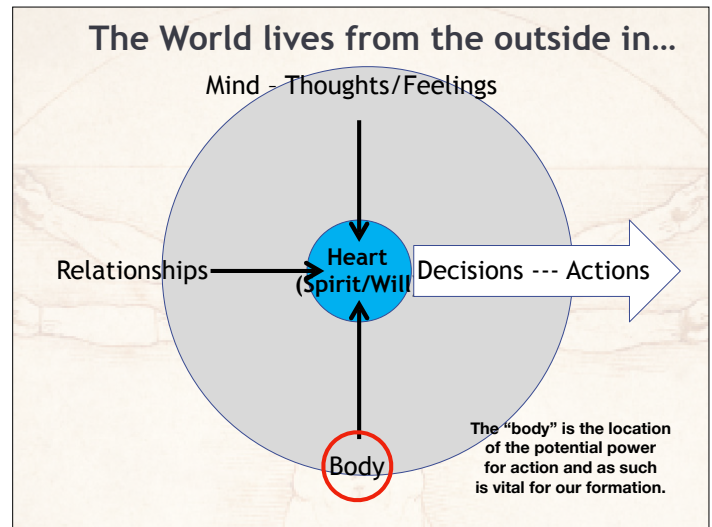
The World lives from the outside in...



12



13



14

Key Ideas re: the body and formation

- The power of habit.
- The reality of "embodied knowledge".

15

Habits within the body:

- Habits have tremendous power, driving the "power pack" of the body from a subconscious level.

16

"It is the nature of the human being that the 'inner reality of the self' settles into our body, from which that inner reality then operates in *practice* ... These various tendencies actually present in our bodily parts can *move* our body in action independently of our overall intentions to the contrary - often quite genuine - and of our conscious thoughts. Thus we act or speak 'before we think.' The part of our character that lives in our body carries us away."

Dallas Willard - *Renovation of the Heart*, p.166-167.

17

"I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do...For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. For I do not do the good I want to do, but the evil I do not want to do - this I keep on doing...I see another law at work *in the members of my body*, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within my members."

- Paul (Rom. 7:15, 18-19, 23)

18

Willard recommends “off the spot” training:

- “The body *must* be weaned away from its tendencies to always take control, to run the world, to achieve and produce, to attain gratification.” (Willard, *Renovation*, 175.)

19

“The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life.”

– Paul (Gal. 6:8)



20

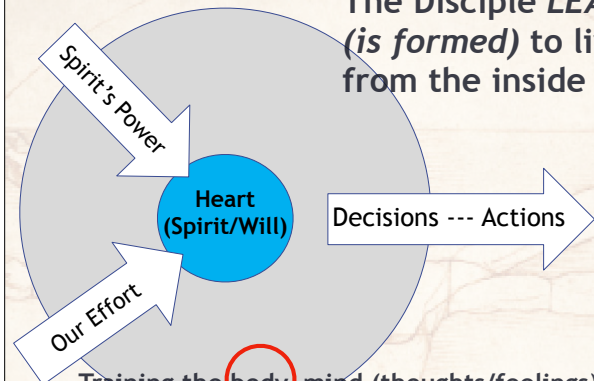
Willard recommends “off the spot’ training:

- “The body *must* be weaned away from its tendencies to always take control, to run the world, to achieve and produce, to attain gratification.” (Willard, *Renovation*, 175.)
- Using disciplines to train (form) the body in moments away from temptation so that when the temptation comes our bodies have learned to act differently.
 - Silence (Tongue)
 - Solitude (Approval)
 - Fasting (Lust)
 - “Losing” (Control)



21

The Disciple *LEARNS*
(is formed) to live
from the inside out...



Training the **body**, mind (thoughts/feelings), and relationships to work with our new identity...holy, blameless, children of God.

22

Embodied Knowledge

- This is a deeper concept than just habit. Not just the mind telling the body what to do, but the knowledge actually existing “in” the body.

It's as if the knowledge is stored in the body and somehow bypasses the brain altogether.



23



“Embodied knowledge is a type of knowledge where the *body* knows how to act. A simple and general example is riding a bicycle. Most of us know how to ride a bicycle, and we are able to do it without any deliberation. There is no need to verbalize or represent in the mind all the procedures required. The knowledge seems to be imprinted in one's body. The knowing-subject here is the body itself, not the mind. Or more precisely, it is the mind-body. ”

– Shongo Tanaka,
The Notion of Embodied Knowledge

24

Embodied Knowledge

- This is a deeper concept than just habit. Not just the mind telling the body what to do, but the knowledge actually existing “in” the body.
- This is evident in more “normal” experiences:

25



The body “knows” in a powerful way!

26

Embodied Knowledge

- This is a deeper concept than just habit. Not just the mind telling the body what to do, but the knowledge actually existing “in” the body.
- This is evident in more “normal” experiences:
 - Driving a familiar route without thinking about it.
 - Seeing a much needed washroom.
- But there are more serious examples as well:
 - Deeply embedded tendencies such as racism.

27



“It’s not that we’ve been lazy or insincere. But we’ve focused our efforts in the wrong direction. We’ve tried to teach our bodies to think better about race. But the white-body supremacy doesn’t live in our thinking brains. It lives and breathes in our bodies. Our bodies have a form of knowledge that is different from our cognitive brains. This knowledge it typically experienced as a felt sense of constriction or expansion, pain or ease, energy or numbness. **Often knowledge is stored in our bodies** as wordless stories about what is safe and what is dangerous. The body is where we fear, hope, and react; where we constrict and release; where we reflexively fight, flee, or freeze.”

— Resmaa Menakem (*My Grandmother's Hands*)

28

A young dominant-caste man raised in the Depression-era South had been well taught the rules of the caste system and adhered to them as expected. When he went north in the mid- twentieth century and joined the military, he had to confront the mythologies of his upbringing. “Strange things pop up at us like gargoyles when we are liberated from our delusions,” the white southerner said. Up north, on occasion, he found himself in a situation where black people were permitted in the same work settings as whites. “I thought I was entirely prepared emotionally and intellectually,” the man, an editor at *Look* magazine, recalled years later. But he discovered that he was a captive of his own conditioning, which he called a certain madness. Every time he reached the point where he had to shake hands with a black person, he felt an automatic revulsion that had been trained into him. He recoiled even though it had been black women who had bathed him as a child, had mixed the dough for his biscuits, and whose touch had not repulsed him when extended in servitude. But with presumed equals, “each time I shook hands with a Negro,” he said, “I felt an urge to wash my hands. Every rational impulse, all that I considered best in my self struggled against this urge. *“But the hand that had touched the dark skin had a will of its own and would not be dissuaded from signalling it was unclean. That is what I mean by madness.”*

— Isabel Wilkerson, *Caste: The Origins of Our Discontents*. New York: Random House, 2020, p130.

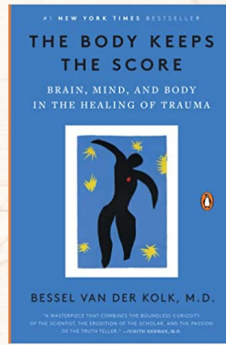
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Embodied Knowledge

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- This is evident in more “normal” experiences:
 - Driving a familiar route without thinking about it.
 - Seeing a much needed washroom.
- But there are more serious examples as well:
 - Deeply embedded tendencies such as racism.
 - And the on-going results from previous trauma.

30

“We have also begun to understand how overwhelming experiences affect our inmost sensations and our relationship *to our physical reality* - the core of who we are. We have learned that trauma is not just an event that took place sometime in the past; *it is also the imprint left by that experience on mind, brain, and body*...For real change to take place, *the body needs to learn that the danger has passed and to live in the reality of the present.*” (Emphasis mine)



Bessel Van Der Kolk, *The Body Keeps the Score: Brain, Mind, and Body in the Healing of Trauma* (p.21)

31

Epigenetics:

- A fetus growing inside of the womb of a traumatized mother may inherit some of that trauma in its DNA expression. This results in repeated release of stress hormones, which can affect the nervous system of the developing fetus.
- A man with unhealed trauma may produce sperm with an altered DNA expression which may inhibit the healthy functioning in the cells of his children.
- Trauma has been seen to impact both the DNA and mental health of children AND grandchildren of a traumatized individual.



— Resmaa Menakem, *My Grandmother's Hands, Racialized Trauma and the Pathway to Mending our Hearts and Bodies*, p.40.

32

Embodied Knowledge

- This is a deeper concept than just habit. Not just the mind telling the body what to do, but the knowledge actually existing “in” the body.
- This is evident in more “normal” experiences:
 - Driving a familiar route without thinking about it.
 - Seeing a much needed washroom.
- But there are more serious examples as well:
 - Deeply embedded tendencies such as racism.
 - And the on-going results from previous trauma.
- **Spiritual Formation must seek to address these deep levels of “embodied knowledge”.**

33

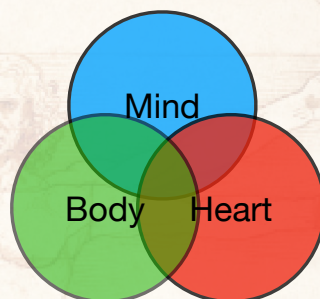
So how do we do that?

- First, we have to acknowledge the role of the body in spiritual formation.

34

• If we only...

- Teach the Mind - Arrogance
- Cultivate the Heart - Emotional roller-coaster
- Train the Body - Legalism



35

So how do we do that?

- First, we have to acknowledge the role of the body in spiritual formation.
- Second, we have to teach and encourage disciplines that engage the body, realizing the complex nature of the connections between brain and body and soul.

36

Body Formation Practices

- Kneeling
- Fasting
- Attending weekly worship
- Raising hands/Open hands/Laying on of hands in prayer
- Solitude/Silence
- Physical acts of service
- Body or Breath prayers
- Meditation/observation/awareness
- Postures of openness to God and to others

37

So how do we do that?

- First, we have to acknowledge the role of the body in spiritual formation.
- Second, we have to teach and encourage engagement with disciplines that engage the body.
- Third, to form (and therefore transform) both the **habits** and the **embodied knowledge** of the body will require interaction and engagement with three specific themes:
 - Identity
 - Safety/Security
 - Time

38

Identity

“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!” (2 Cor. 5:17)

- Identity has to do with who we are in Christ and thus shapes the habits and patterns we seek to develop.
- Identity is rooted in who God is and what God has done, not in our success or proficiency for transformation.

Safety/Security

God has said, “Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you.” (Heb. 13:5)

- A sense of safety and security is needed for healing of trauma that has had a life shaping impact.

39

“From the body’s viewpoint, safety and danger are neither situational nor based on cognitive feelings. Rather they are physical, visceral sensations. The body either has a sense of safety or it doesn’t. If it doesn’t, it will do almost anything to establish or recover that sense of safety.”

— Resmaa Menakem, *My Grandmother’s Hands*, p.6.

40

Time

“Being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.” (Phil. 1:6)

- It takes time for the body to unlearn what it has learned throughout the past.
- The grace of God is the theme that makes this long term process possible.

“In today’s America, we tend to think of healing as something binary: either we’re broken or we’re healed from that brokenness. But that’s not how healing operates, and it’s almost never how human growth works. More often, healing and growth take place on a continuum, with innumerable points between utter brokenness and total health.

— Resmaa Menakem, *My Grandmother’s Hands*, p.12.

41

Questions and Response?

42