

Practising Embodied Awareness:  
*How can mixed-movement practices inform a new method in peacebuilding?*

By Antonia Salathé

Throughout my studies and work in Geneva, I have observed a recurring problem in international peacebuilding: A profound abandonment of self-awareness and reciprocal empathy, prioritising a distanced standpoint that favours pity and simple messaging over complexity. To counter this, I am developing a educational mixed-movement method that fosters “a tri-fold embodied awareness”—a deep awareness and connection to the self, others, and the world—rooted in my own practises including dance, physical theatre, wellness arts, martial and defensive arts, and principles of physiology, anatomy, and neuroscience. The research process of this method is informed by my nearly lifelong dance training, my BA in choreography and philosophy from Bard College, my current social scientific research and studies at IHEID regarding peacebuilding and development, and my professional work at the Principles for Peace Foundation. I hope that this method can enhance social cohesion, peace mediation, and trust-building activities.

Though some may view the connection between movement and peacebuilding as naive, I argue it is essential; we cannot address global conflicts without first being aware of our own interpersonal relationships. Viewing conflicts from a distant, Archimedean-point blinds us to the immediate opportunities to understand ourselves and each other—opportunities to cross the space between you and me. It is through inner peace, that is, self awareness, that we rise to the occasion of assisting another in earnest.

I believe that creating positive and sustainable peace begins with self-awareness, and proceeds with reciprocal empathy. I define reciprocal empathy as the ability to simultaneously hold an embodied awareness of the self, the other, and the larger structural implications. Thus, reciprocal empathy is fundamentally a praxis, insofar as it proceeds only through action.

At the Geneva Graduate Institute I have been fortunate to teach a mixed-movement course, I call “Intro to Practising Embodied Awareness,” which meets every Monday at 18:30h. The course is free and open to Everybody. Each class proceeds as three interdependent parts, utilising individual and interpersonal mixed-movement exercises:

1. THE SELF: Warm up with mindfulness and coordination exercises to enhance our awareness and attunement to ourselves.
2. THE OTHER: Explore partnering and contact exercises to enhance our awareness and attunement to our colleagues.
3. THE WORLD: Explore improvisation, shifting through multiple levels of awareness and attunement to ourselves, each other, and our surroundings.

In this course, I invite you to try everything, but you do not have to do anything. You are a free agent in this class. We are here together as colleagues and of our own accord. Ultimately, by embodying inner and reciprocal-empathetic awareness we can engage more clearly with the complexities of structural violence and work more holistically toward meaningful peacebuilding and system change, supported by mixed-movement methods.

For those interested in attending the course, find more information at: [Embodied Awareness](#)

*You are always welcome on your own time.*

*Show up late, leave early, observe, ask questions...*

*So long as you come as you are*

*We can find each other*

*In the space between you and me.*