

When the body tells ... our identity breathes

By Laure Maurin, Narrative Therapist and Yoga Teacher

Following her JNF workshops and her lecture on February 25, Laure details her method of narrative interview of the body.

"The intuitive mind is a sacred gift, and the rational mind is a faithful servant. We have created a society that honors the servant and has forgotten the gift". Albert Einstein

I have often tried in my coaching practice, well before discovering narrative ideas, to bring people back into their bodies. I hosted workshops in hospitals for children with autism or psychosis, poly-disabled adults. I still work today in an occupational home with adults known as "stabilized mental patients".

But the narrative practices allowed me to re-articulate the body, the story and the intuition. It is this articulation that allows so many fertile bridges that I developed during my conference of February 25th and my workshop of the JNF 2018 of Bordeaux. It is also the purpose of this article to give a brief overview.

Why question the body? What benefit do we have to come and listen to our emotions and feelings?

How are emotions going through us? What impact do they have on our body? These are some of the questions that cross the application of narrative practices to working with the body and especially to reading a specific way that the body reinterprets the stories, to give them a biophysical narrative translation.

This concern does not date from yesterday, nor even from the focus of the individualistic and religious Western tradition on the brain, the seat of the "high" functions of thought. In the Yoga Sutra of Patanjali it is said that sufferings come from the ego, from our mind. The philosophy of yoga considers that we are made up of three envelopes that we call koshas: the physical body, the body of energy and emotions and the body of the mind. For traditional Chinese medicine emotions are energies that go through us. Everything is gateway, everything is connected ... except for the Western culture that has dissociated everything!

The practice of conscious breathing as well as meditation allow us to find links by welcoming our feelings and being attentive to our intimacy. It takes work both in concentration and letting go. This movement of dissociation-re-association with the body is also at the root of Ericksonian hypnosis. My experience as a yoga teacher for more than 20 years found in the practice of narrative ideas, which I trained at the Fabrique Narrative, A natural extension; Narratives such as yoga are a way of being in the world of being oneself.

A notion that may have been somewhat forgotten in France since Michael White's death is that the bodily and emotional dimensions are at the center of narrative

conversations. And in the first place because the nature of the experience, even before being projected onto the landscape of action in the form of intentionally meaningful narratives, is sensory. Our senses constantly inform us about what we are going through. They tell us about the environment in which we are, but they also tell us what we feel. For psychoanalysis and especially for Jung, this information and these bodily feelings are directly related to our unconscious. For the narrative approach, we could speak of "corporal narrative unconscious", ie archipelagoes of experiences engrammed in our body but not storied, not chosen to be part of a structure of direction oriented in time.

C.G. Jung defines the intuitive person as someone capable of anticipating certain situations or events by using his own unconscious material. He considers intuition as a function of spontaneous, unreflected comprehension, coming through the path of the unconscious. To extend this vision in the light of narrative ideas, we could consider the body as a reservoir of stories that only need to be told through it, and to learn about dimensions of our identity that are inaccessible to our constantly parasitized mind. by the dominant social discourses.

Starting from the idea that our body is connected to this reservoir of unconscious possibilities of identity, I propose conversations that allow the body to express itself by questioning this intuitive mind, the one who knows, by making our reasoning mind silent. and analysis.

Here is how I proceed. First of all I take the time to reinstall the person in her body, in his breathing, in silence. I ask her to become aware of the breath in her nostrils, to observe how she puts her feet on the ground, then to listen to her breathing, to welcome her breath and to breathe a dozen times consciously. Always focused on the breath, move her consciousness in different places of the body, feet, head, knees ... When the person is ready, ie seems comfortable in this shift to the inner gaze, I propose to settle in the part of the body she has chosen. I let a few breaths be done before asking my first question. All this preamble is important to install a receptivity, a refocusing, another listening of oneself. Narrative conversations are breaths, they open spaces.

Here are some examples of questions:

- Hello, are you François's back? Thank you for agreeing to answer a few questions.
- What drove you to volunteer to express yourself?

- Can you tell me the memory of a pleasant feeling for you?

The intention of this question is to let the person walk in his memory, by questioning the body's feeling. We can specify the sensations, taking care not to return to the mind:

- was it rather, hot / cold, dark / bright, soft / hard? ... let yourself be guided. Does an image come to you to express this sensation?

- What do you need ?

- How will it be for you when you have what you need?

This question makes it possible to express one's dreams, one's hopes, to visualize a pleasant sensation but always in a "corporealized" way, without appealing to categories of the mind influenced by the dominant discourses on the body.

It is also possible to re-member (literally!) parts of the body with others, through the gateway narrative questions:

"What other part of Francis's body would not be surprised to hear you say that?

One can also propose to the body to deliver verbal messages to the attention of the mind. In these questions, my intention is to install a certain solemnity, it is a statement made to oneself, the answers are often full of love and kindness:

- Do you have anything to say that you would like François to remember?

When I finish the conversation with François' back, I thank (always) and I come back to François to ask him one last question. I let a few breaths be done. I propose to François to stretch to re-install himself:

- What did you hear in this conversation that will make tomorrow a difference for you?

I question François as an external witness: what did he hear of importance for him, what resonated? What was said that had never been expressed aloud? etc.
For those who are interested in deepening this work on the body with narrative practices:

On October 3rd and 4th, I will be hosting a professional workshop at the Fabrique Narrative in Paris on this rich subject of conversations with the body, so that each participant can train and master these conversations.