



Jennifer Pilotti: Anxiety and its role in movement



Jennifer Pilotti, movement educator, author of “Body, Mind, Movement”, lecturer for the Navy Senior Leadership Seminar, B.Sc in exercise physiology, M.Sc in human movement, working with clients 18 years. Discover how anxiety affects the body and mind in movement and how we can find ways to alleviate it or experience it a bit differently.

TOP EMBODIMENT TIP: Pick a move you know well and play with the nuances. You get to know the move very well and those nuances will translate into your other parts of life too, like communication or interaction, where it’s valuable.

Lessons of “Dark room experience”: **When we experience fear, it changes how we move.**

- With fear we go into an elevated space for stress and even after, we don’t calm down immediately.
- There can be some chronic stress or anxiety that goes undiagnosed, but movement practises may help.
- **Stress causes altered breathing, coordination and experience of the ground and physical changes.**

Movement is just one part of many that affect our emotional state and how we feel: **Exercise can bring more awareness.**

- **Cardiovascular and strength exercise affect interoception and proprioception** (that can be poor in people experiencing anxiety) **and make changes in the heart rate**, that can be anxiety provoking at first, as body/mind can misinterpret it, but after exercise rate returns eventually down to the baseline and mind gets used to changes.
- Exercise increases dopamine and serotonin.
- **Enriched environments** are good for creating safe and interesting spaces to learn freely and **downregulate**.

Correlation between balance and anxiety: **Practise to throw your center off a bit!**

- **Balance is dynamic, not static.** Try different things out of your comfort zone.
- Goal is: **multisensory integration.** The safer we feel, the more we can feel ourselves and our surroundings and thus more calm and secure feelings are created. Find a safe environment or change your own to suit you better.
- Goal is: **creating variance in physical and emotional experiences, to come down from the head to the body.**

Downregulating: **External focus is good for the monkey mind.**

- Create exercises that require **focused attention. Breathing affects the regulation of the nervous system.**
- For example holding jenga-blocks with hands in line and doing various movement tasks or standing on one leg and picking up objects from the floor.

Grounding is important: **Learning to feel the support of the floor.**

- Find different ways to ground. Start from smaller to bigger movements.
- **Centering:** sometimes moving away from the center can help you to find the center by **creating contrast.**

Resources

- ❖ **Books:** <https://www.handspringpublishing.com/our-authors/jenn-pilotti/>
- ❖ **Website:** <https://www.jennpilotti.com/>



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