



Dr. Jennifer Frank Tantia: Embodied Epistemology: How Do We Know What We Know?



Dr. Jennifer Frank Tantia is a somatic psychotherapist, author, and lecturer from New York City, specializing in treating trauma and medically unexplained symptoms. She has taught somatic psychology and embodied research at several universities in the United States. Delve into the science of embodied inquiry to learn what it means to not only listen to the body, but through the body: *“The body is not a thing, it is a situation: it is our grasp on the world and our sketch of our project”* (Simone de Beauvoir)

**TOP EMBODIMENT TIP:** Let your exhale be longer than your inhale.

Defining Embodiment: **Embodiment is a State and a Process**

- ‘*Em*’ = ‘put into’ or ‘to bring to a certain state’, and ‘*ment*’ = describes an action, also a concrete result or concept
- “Embodiment is the state of awareness in which sensation, posture, gesture, thought and emotion are simultaneously experienced in the present moment” (Tantia, 2013)
- “Whereas mindfulness is the act of attending to one’s bodily experience, embodiment is the enlivened response to that attention” (Tantia, 2012.)

How Do We Cultivate Embodiment?: **How Do We Know What We Know?**

- **Somatic Psychotherapy approach:** Attend to your aesthetic value of yourself by going in, listening, inviting, waiting for the body to respond, then make meaning from the body’s response (also see Eugene Gendlin’s ‘focusing’)
- Discover your sense of self within yourself, and your sense of self within your environment
- Points of unconscious information from the body brought into consciousness

Major Components of Embodiment Research & Data:

- **Research** seeks to answer questions about human experience such as curiosity, gender, fulfillment, oppression, romantic chemistry, cultural nuances.
- **Embodied Data:** “points of unconscious information brought to consciousness by attending to oneself in the present moment” (Tantia, 2019)
- **Categories of Embodied Data:** size (feeling contracted or expanded), gravity (feeling grounded, untethered, yielding, light/heavy in whole or parts of the body), temperature (coldness or heat flush), viscerosensation (breathing, digestion, heart rate).
- **Movement as Embodied Data:** spontaneous movement, posture/structure, gesture, rhythm/speed.

Embodiment Language: **Finding a Sensory Vocabulary**

- **Describing experience:** Words we seek to describe experience are not simply physical descriptions, they also describe an emotional component that’s wrapped in the physical that’s wrapped in the visceral that’s wrapped in the interpersonal. Words such as buzzy, tingling, heavy, open, and metaphors such as, ‘butterflies in the stomach’, ‘skin-crawling’, ‘heavy heart’ are not just descriptions, because we can actually feel these sensations.

Resources

- ❖ **Books:** *The Art and Science of Embodied Research Design* (Nov 2020)
- ❖ **Website:** [www.soma-psyche.com](http://www.soma-psyche.com) **Email:** [jftantia@gmail.com](mailto:jftantia@gmail.com)
- ❖ **References:** Eugene Gendlin, Michael Gershon, Ruella Frank



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