



Dr. Taiya Mikisch: The Body is Not Natural



Taiya is a somatic practitioner who has done extensive work and research in Cultural Anthropology and Dance Studies, where she holds a Ph.D. She is the founder of The Mindful Body and teaches embodied resilience & mindfulness trainings at universities in Germany. Find out how our perceptions of the body- as natural- are not fact, but rather influenced by bias, tradition, political dimensions, and cultural context.

TOP EMBODIMENT TIP: Feel the body but think as well.

The Notion of Naturalness Can Be Problematic, in the Field of Bodywork and Somatic Perceptions:

- **Perception** itself is not a fixed thing. Seemingly natural perceptions & feelings change in different circumstances/contexts.
- **Anatomy** is not a universal given. The way we look at the body is **not entirely fact-based**. (i.e. Western vs. Eastern views)
- There are many conflicting **cultural, religious, and political perspectives** on what is natural.
- History shows: **gender relations** and **colonialism** that once were considered natural are no longer considered natural.
- **Evolution of “natural” in dance:** Isadora Duncan, Contact Dance, Somatic Techniques & Embodiment Techniques.

What if the Body is Not as Natural as We Think?

- The body is shaped by **discourse, assumptions, interests, and practices**.
- The **body is not a biological given** but rather, it is **formed & reformed** by the performative act of stating things & practicing things. This aligns with the **constructionist theory**.
- Gender theories & gender identity are influenced by **cultural probes, practices & interactions** with the environment.
- Embodiment practices referring to a natural body can be problematic, by excluding a **political perspective** on the body.
- There is the importance of offering concepts not as truth or facts, but as a way to think about and experience things.

The Body is Political:

- It is important to apply a **political lens** and investigate the **unconsciously biased** views of the body.
- Somatic techniques refer to **universal human nature**, but we can link this to a tradition which places the natural body in opposition to reason, to a more rational paradigm that historically categorizes as western male within a binary system.
- **Somatic and embodiment techniques** have spread in a **western** and predominantly **white** example.
- If we place the body in this **dichotomy** between body and reason, western and nonwestern, male and female, masculine and feminine, we put it on the level of relating to othering, sexism, racism, and the like.
- When we talk about naturalness, we enter a **battlefield of politics, colonialism, sexism, racism, and ableism**.
- When we hold a fixed idea of naturalness, and the natural body, the body is always defined as natural in a certain way, within a **certain context, perspective, or tradition**.

Resources:

- ❖ **Website:** themindfulbody.taiyamikisch.com
- ❖ **Social:** Instagram: [@taiya.mindfulbody](https://www.instagram.com/@taiya.mindfulbody), Facebook: [@taiya.mindfulbody](https://www.facebook.com/@taiya.mindfulbody)
- ❖ **References:** [Isadora Duncan](#), *The Natural Body in Somatics Dance Training*, George, Doran (2020)



Dr. Taiya Mikisch





All Ecology & Research Presentations are Proudly Sponsored by
[Forests Without Frontiers](#)



Forests Without Frontiers is a non-profit CIC dedicated to planting trees and reforesting degraded landscapes with support from a network of artists and musicians, as well as businesses and individuals working to become carbon-positive.

The initiative was founded by Nicoleta Carpineanu (aka Nico de Transylvania), a Romanian, UK-based DJ/Producer who grew up in the forests of Transylvania. We began our first key project in Romania in April 2019 and in our first year planted over 25,000 trees. We reforest land that has been clear-cut, where natural reforestation would not occur. We only plant native, biodiverse species, grown locally and cared for until maturity in legally protected areas, adjacent to existing natural forests. Our aim is to plant one million trees in the Carpathians and beyond by 2025.

OUR MISSION is to preserve our forests and the people and wildlife they nurture, and to promote connection with nature through music, art, and culture.