

# ***Grounding and shame: establishing connections with our vulnerability***

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## **Abstract**

The experience of shame throughout life produces armouring of the body, which makes it difficult for the Self to be expressed. This article aims to understand the way grounding, shame and vulnerability are related and the implications in terms of relationships, personal and social aspects. The marks left by these experiences are registered on the body and influence expression, spontaneity and vitality of the organism. In order to focus on energetic blocks, especially those of the oral and cervical segments, a group of exercises is described as a treatment possibility in developing body awareness, strengthening grounding as a means to support feelings of vulnerability often present in contexts of shame and humiliation. Imagetic resources in the form of photographic image as well as poetry will be used with the intention of favoring a connection with the body, feelings and perceptions. The term Sufficient-body will be used to counteract the conditioned ideas of inferiority, inadequacy and incompetence. Under this perspective one understands that each body is fully potent to face the experiences of their lives.

**Keywords:** Grounding, Shame, Vulnerability, Sufficient-body.

## **Introduction**

Relating grounding as support for our body and emotional sensations referring to the feeling of shame will bring us back to experiences that might have occurred in the early years of our lives.

Being grounded means letting ourselves be supported by our own legs and feet, meaning giving in to archaic processes in our animal structure; it is likened to having a deep faith in life. Thus, grounding is the primary objective in Bioenergetic Analysis. “The focus of the work should be going downwards, i.e. making people inhabit their legs and feet”, says (Lowen, 1982, p.172).

Lopes (2009) states that “The earth-body of the mother or of whoever exercised the maternal function, sketches out on the the baby-body the first impressions of this relationship with the earth. Our first grounding experience is lived and built within this other body; which shelters, receives, sustains and holds. The quality of this support will mark the relationship that is going to be developed with the ground as well as its subjective correlations; somehow it will also be present in each stage of the rooting process along the different phases of life. The fear of falling, so frequent among us, might be rooted in these first experiences involving space. The feeling of support, as expressed in feelings of confidence and safety; and those of falling, expressed in the feelings of failure and incapacity will be present all along our existence”. (Lopes, 2009, p.152) <sup>1</sup>

Conger (1994) corroborates this by affirming that “shame falls upon the foundations of the bodily Self: our grounding, our sense of limits, our inhibited breathing, our access to a range of emotions and our capacity of being present” (Conger, 1994, p.1).

The existence of a safe environment makes it possible for us to live our weaknesses and vulnerabilities in such a way that does not interfere negatively with our self-esteem, self worth and confidence in our self-expression. The feelings of shame are associated to the belief that we are not sufficient, that something wrong takes place in our body, in the manifestations of our being, in the style of living life and being in the world.

“Every muscle that is chronically tense in our body is a frightened muscle, otherwise it would not defend itself so tenaciously against the flow of feelings and of life. When life is strong and vibrant in the body, feelings, just like the weather becomes variable. As well as the sun might appear after the rain, sadness might be turned into pleasure. Changes occur on the surface and do not disturb profound pulsations which provide sensations of well-being. Repressing feelings is a process of desensibilization which decreases the body’s internal pulsations, its vitality, its state of excitement.” (Lowen, 1995, p.18).

As well as from a biological perspective, in which every cell in our body has a membrane turning inwards and another one turning outwards,

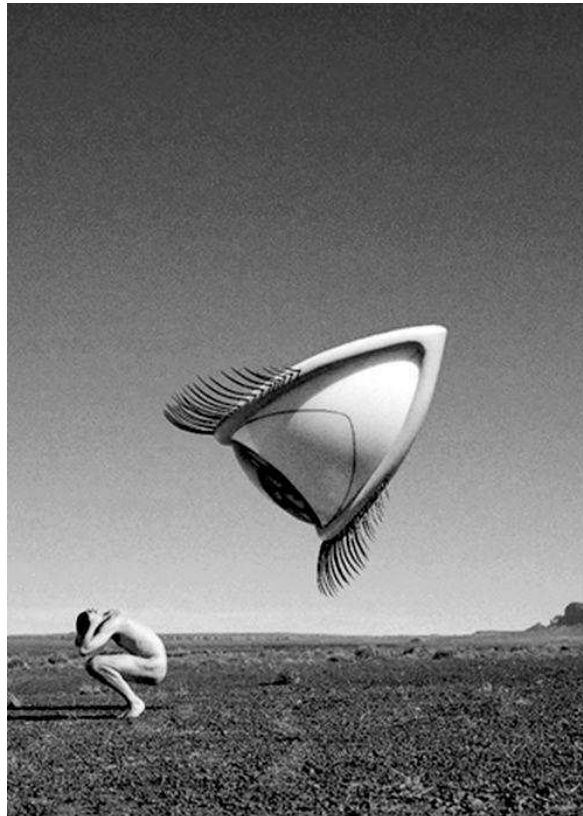
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<sup>1</sup> Citations in this paper were freely translated from Portuguese into English by a professional translator.

it is also important to provide the exchange between internal and external processes from the psychological and social points of view. Such communication takes place in order to balance these two forces, providing the being both with a sense of belonging and recognition and with a sense of separation when such a sense is needed for its existence and survival.

### Shame expressed in the body

Fig. 01 Body- Imageticeexercise 01



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Take a moment to relax while you lay your eyes on the above image.

Notice. What part of your body reacts to this image? What muscles respond to it? Or is it the entrails? Or is it the skin, with gooseflesh or feeling hot? What thoughts, sensations or feelings come to you at this moment?

What does your body feel like doing? Walking? Closing your eyes? Do as your body tells and notice how you feel now. Are there any new perceptions? You may register somehow your experience if you like.

Conger (1994) says: Shame occurs every time we feel that we are outside, when we are uncomfortably left aside from the action. Shame is the emotional experience of a rupture in our bond with others. We can, for

instance, feel demeaned, humiliated, exposed or demoted for something we have said or done, by what the others said or observed in our respect, or we might just imagine their judgment and suffer in isolation. (Conger, 1994, p.2).

The contracted body, turned inwards, reduces its possibilities of perception, its capacity of action and thus the cycle of vulnerability feelings is reproduced translating into feelings of inadequacy and insufficiency.

“The mirroring admiration of the peek-a-boo game is a caress that paints proud edges on the baby’s body” (Kaplan, 1978, p.144). I understand that the world of body sensations and of images is present in life at an earlier stage than that of the development of spoken language and that those are incorporated to our most visceral memories. We deduce that those marks produce stories that are to remain inscribed in the body. Institutions such as families, schools, religious institutions or social and cultural ones are ill-equipped in terms of being present, feeling, supporting, helping, receiving the spontaneous feelings of children, whether of anger, rebellion, distrust or fear, as well as displays of vitality, spontaneity, creativity and sexuality.

The stereotypes of “good child and bad child” validate what they are permitted to feel and express and decide that other feelings shall be hidden or even suppressed. Angel and demon cause confusion, ambivalence, rebellion, false Self when they are separated as they underpin the Being in constructing an image to correspond to the expectations set by codes and rules distant from human nature and human needs.

For Lowen (1995) “All human societies rule over the social behavior of its members, but these rules assess actions and not feelings. Civilized societies based on power broaden the concept of guilt to include, aside from actions, thoughts and feelings”. Many times, criticism, depreciation, humiliation are seen as education in order to achieve action that is valued and accepted. To ridicule attitudes and behaviors that are genuine to the child, the teenager and even the adult are ways of social and relational control. Individuals and groups from differing culture or social class are often seen as transgressors of order and in order for them to be included they will often need to deny their own ways of being in the world.

Body forms, aptitudes and weaknesses, skin color, dress, how we walk, how we talk, an introvert or extrovert way, social status among others place individuals or groups in categories that allow for belonging and not belonging. In a globalized world it becomes necessary, for the sake of

human health, to see differences as creative possibilities for life and not with the eyes of labelling, policing and castration, which only create a divided and selective society.

Autonomy, spontaneity and sexuality are vital expressions and manifestations which are constantly repressed by a rigid moral structure, one which perpetuates its values through institutions that reproduce models to be followed. This way, being ashamed of one's self, of belonging to a group, of one's culture or country of origin takes the shape of the body producing forms of action in the personal, relational and social spheres, often reproducing values that are contrary to one's own condition in the world.

### **Building a mask**

Shame causes loss of connection with the Self. Many paths are built by the need to dissimulate real feelings of fear, low self-esteem, devaluation and denial of potential. "The feeling of shame has a disintegration effect on personality. It destroys the individual's dignity and corrodes the sense of Self" (Lowen, 1970, p.177)).

Feeling inferior, individuals will trigger a process of distancing themselves from their own sensations and feelings in search of a safe haven in the form of an accepted and valued image. By denying feelings of pain, anger or hostility one restricts body movements, inhibiting and hardening muscles, reducing internal spaces and making it difficult for it to be expressive and spontaneous. Reduced breathing diminishes circulation and communication processes in various parts of the body, reducing sensations, perceptions and energy.

Masks are built as idealized by the ego, shaping emotional and physical features, choosing what they present to the world through subconscious filters, selected behavior, thoughts and actions that will be acceptable by the apprehended patterns following negotiations between internal and external world.

For Lowen (1970, p.175) "repressed emotional expression is a form of resignation that affects the organism in its vitality reducing its capacity of contraction-expansion, which characterizes the formula of living-life". What are the illusions forming this face-mask? Crispation of face muscles works as a defense against possible attacks of non acceptance or humiliation, and it contributes to the continuation and affirmation of what has been experienced. Giving up a mask might bring back feelings of acceptance,

recovering positive concepts about one's self and uncovering creative potential. However, it is necessary to face all hidden feelings of loss of value, which act together in the subconscious and appear in behavior patterns.

### **Body blocks and shame**

Tomkins (1962, 1963, 1987, apud Conger, 1994, p.1) "who places representation of shame on the face, due to the sensitive and intricate muscle structure in face expression: I propose that affection should be primarily a facial behavior". However, Conger (1994) talks about "shame having an impact on the body of the being as a whole".

Taylor (2007) presents: "The skin is the organ of touch. It is one of the largest organs in the body and its embryonic development branches from the same cells that will develop into brain cells. When we awaken the skin by means of pleasurable or painful experiences, we awaken the brain; on the other hand, an alert brain will produce skin sensitiveness". (Taylor, 2007, p.34).

Sensory organs receive and filter information coming from the internal and external world. From an early stage, we capture the signs of affection and react to them, communicating our impressions, building interpretations that are present in our organisms guiding our actions.

"In the history of animal development, the sense of smell is the first of the long-distance senses to develop. Touch, proprioception and taste require physical contact as internal stimulus or at the edges of the body's kinesphere, but the senses of smell, hearing and vision are all adapted to a long reach of the conscience". (Taylor, 2007, p.76)

The feeling of shame, captured by the senses, often manifests itself in body expressions such as a lifeless gaze and crestfallen appearance; shoulder curves, withdrawn pelvis, low levels of energy, weak connection with the ground. Depending on the intensity and frequency of this feeling in an individual's life it might become a chronic posture in which muscle rigidity, reduction of internal spaces between organs, reduced flow of blood circulation and other liquids will lead to weak mobility and low capacity of expression which in turn further stresses a feeling of inadequacy in the world.

Within the body these processes take place simultaneously, mostly subconsciously. Bringing such movements onto consciousness, their quality and history and how they influence behavior, choices, emotions makes

us understand the way we carry ourselves in the world as well as change and consolidate new emotional and body postures.

The body segments in which we will focus on in this work are the oral and cervical segments. Anatomically the segments include: The Oral segment comprises the internal mouth structures, teeth and gums; face expression muscles, mastication muscles, tongue, salivary, palate, nasopharyngeal structures oropharynx, organs of taste, jaws among other. the Cervical segment comprises the neck muscles such as the trapezius muscle, sternocleidomastoid, scalene; muscles related to the act of swallowing, hyoid bone, epiglottis, laryngopharynx, esophagus, larynx, trachea, thyroid, throat and cervical vertebra.

In the oral and cervical segments, as a reaction to feelings of shame and retained anger we find tension around all the mentioned structures, which makes them rigid, hardened or presenting low plasticity and tonus. Anyway, the natural movement of contraction and expansion; of charge and discharge will be affected impacting the whole organism.

Digestion starts in the mouth and we can draw an analogy with feelings following the same stages as the digestive process in a symbolic manner: ingestion, assimilation, elaboration and elimination. Many times we “choke” with feelings and emotions; other times we can lack the selective filter and assimilate food which is harmful to our body and emotional integrity. Sometimes, spitting or vomiting are mechanisms the body uses to get rid of aggression felt when it is invaded in its private space.

A feeling or an action that was prevented from being expressed creates ways and paths for its manifestation. Sometimes the body falls ill, gets soar, freezes, dampens, explodes, gets crazy, but not before trying to keep itself integrated, resistant, connected and protected. In this energetic process the armouring is built and at a chronic stage it will hinder the body’s expression of vitality and natural joy.

A river needs its margins to contain and support it in order to flow, but it also needs open space so it is able to reach its destination. This image can be applied to our organic functioning in which the impulses, feelings, sensations, thoughts and actions need limits and liberation; containment and openness; support and freedom in order to perceive our own feelings and needs.

### **Working shame in the body**

Fig. 02 Body –Imagetic exercise 02



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Looking at the image above what do you observe in terms of reaction in your body? How do you breathe? How would it feel to impersonate this form? How do you feel now? Do you feel like trying any movement? Action/movement changes behavior patterns and influences different systems in the organism.

What is my history with shame? What are your experiences with shame? Both personally and as bioenergetic analysis professionals?

The inspiration to organize this series of exercises presented in the PDW in Salvador – Brazil in 2018 has its roots in experiences that motivated me to further study shame. First of all, the memory of a therapeutic session I had as a student during the Bioenergetic Analyst Training with international trainer Jean-Marc Guillaume in 1999. That was a watershed moment in terms of my capacity of expression, and a personal achievement. Here I retell some extracts of the session to illustrate elements that led to the elaboration of the body exercise I'll describe later.

Session Extract 1 - Working the rigid muscles of my neck helped me broaden my body awareness and as I managed to give in to my feelings, I realized the shame written in my body, mainly on the face. The tension



around neck muscles and jaws kept me from having movements to release anger and spontaneity inhibited from an early age by feelings of excessive obedience.

Session Extract 2 - At a certain point I was asked to show my tongue really meaning “to stick one’s tongue out”, no subterfuge; as a way of facing and directing nonconformity to the condition of oppression and it became, for me, a high point of the session, as I faced feelings of fear while feeling an excitement that liberated movement and also body inhibitions that were very primitive.

In Brazil and in other parts of the world “Sticking one’s tongue out” is an expression often used by children who felt disrespected or affected in an aggressive way in their right to demonstrate their dislike. Because this action is understood by the codes of good manners as disrespectful towards authority and not as a mere reaction to and aggression it is done when nobody is looking and when the child is caught doing it they will often be reprimanded and even punished.

Session Extract 3 - “Sticking out one’s tongue” in the therapeutic process was revolutionary and structuring. Recovering my dignity of being and belonging to the world. The sounds produced in this manifestation made it possible for tongue muscles to find movement and flow, occupying the whole mouth and thus the spaces that had been restricted and standardized in life.

Giving in to the therapeutic proposal and sticking the tongue out, letting out sounds and free body movement to flow made it possible for memories to be revealed and confronted, which made the experience terrifying at first, then exciting and finally liberating. Remembering this moment, I honor Jean-Marc Guillerme; Thank you!

I have found in many of my clients the presence of feelings of shame, humiliation, guilt and the accompanying body blocks, such as: contracted muscles, inexpressive faces, apprehensive gazes and crestfallen posture, necks that are tense and inclined downwards, rigid jaws, trouble swallowing, panting or paralyzed, heat or coldness of face and hands, confusing thoughts of inability and inadequation. Also presenting difficulties speaking, singing, laughing and other expressions related to pleasure, spontaneity, freedom and autonomy are absent in the presence of feelings of inferiority triggered by shame.

In this sense “sticking out one’s tongue” in the relational transference in the therapeutic setting is an exercise for regaining autonomy, a coherent action in response to feelings of hostility suppressed because of fear, by the desire to be accepted and loved. Reacting with the body and its subjectivity to the felt humiliation, the individual becomes connected with the transgressive creative force of the child who plays with active expressions of feelings in the world.

More recently, while in the training process for the Body-Mind-Movement method developed by Mark Chandlee Taylor in the course of Muscles coordinated by Lou Sturm, somatic educator of the above method in Recife/PE Brazil in the year of 2017 I went through the tongue massage that will be described below. Associating the exercise of “sticking one’s tongue out” and the massage of the tongue muscle in association with clinical experiences I organized a series of exercises focusing on shame, grounding and vulnerability.

### **Exercises Part 1 - Theme Vulnerability**

Start by forming a circle with the group, standing up. Feel your feet and legs and their contact with the ground. Breathe deeply and walk around the room, feeling your grounding and breathing.

The group received the consignment that at a certain moment, in an aleatory manner, some of the individuals shall lie on the floor. So some would be walking while others would be lying down and in the sequence the roles would be changed. Breathing and noticing how you feel when you are walking and when you are lying on the ground.

At a second moment the proposal is to walk and then fall (lie on the ground) and wait for someone to come and help you standing up. Observing your breathing, how you feel and what your thoughts are.

At a third moment walk and lie on the floor and only get help when you expressly ask for it. Observing what moves your body, what feelings are present, what parts of your body start the actions and what parts remain inert?

Walk around the room, stop somewhere and do the inverted grounding. Breathing and feeling the quality of your connection with the ground at this moment.

Keep walking and notice how the vulnerability of the fall feels, the feelings of being on the ground and the symbols associated to this place, the need to ask for help, waiting, the looks of others.

### **Exercises Part 2 - Theme Shame**

Work in pairs. One person will be “A” and the other “B”. Facing each other, “A” closes their eyes and tries to remember an experience of shame in their life being aware of what the memory causes to their body, breathing and moving. Stay for a while in inverted grounding. “B” only observes what is happening in the body, the expression of “A”. And then they change roles.

For some minutes “A” and “B” talk about their experiences in the body while recalling the shame they felt.

Still working in pairs, one in front of the other, each person performs circular movements with their heads, to the right and then left. Letting the head back softly massage the front part of the neck and leaning the head forward massage the back of the neck. Feel the mobility of these muscles while in movement.

Touch your scalp with your hands, mobilize the face muscles and neck muscles feeling the skin, the tonus and the quality of these structures, if they are hardened or flexible; keep breathing deeply, letting out the sound of any discomfort or pleasure. With your tongue, massage the inner part of the mouth including the teeth, widen the opening space of the mouth and notice the opening and its dimension.

Go back to the inverted grounding position.

Again, standing up “A” and “B” shall find a spot in the room to perform a 15-minute session for each person to perform manoeuvres and bio-energetic exercises to release tension in the oral and cervical segments.

After those sessions each person will perform longue massage, using lint bandages around the tongue if necessary. Feel the tongue, its texture, weight, volume, marks, tensions, foldings, smell, roughness, voluntary and involuntary movement as well as the sensations, images, feelings and thoughts that might emerge from the experience.

Walk around the room with a loose tongue, showing it. Notice what you feel about yourself and others when you stick out your tongue at them. Do you feel grounded? How do you keep your internal and external focus? What actions do you feel like performing?

After some minutes the pair will have a session of 10 minutes each. Starting with “A”, who will stand in front of “B” and making eye contact will project a memory, person or situation in which they felt shame and experiment sticking out their tongue, taking their time, in a sign of protest, indignation and hostility. Then, they change roles.

### **Exercises Part 3 - Theme rounding, Shame and Vulnerability**

Now working individually, people go back to walk around the room. How do you feel you occupy your body in this space? What shape is formed by your walking movement? What internal images are produced and how do they manifest themselves in relation to the group? At this moment how do you react to the feelings evoked by the exercises? Observe what movements emerge in your body?

Again, form a circle with people standing up, flexed knees, straight back, head aligned, an open chest and holding one another’s hands. In stand-up grounding feel the connection to the ground, to the group, do not repress shame but rather acknowledge its place in life. For a moment make eye contact and breathe one another’s vulnerabilities.

### **Grounding, Shame and Creativity**

Fig. 03Body –Imagetic exercise 03



Font: Pinterest <https://pin.it/c7gekwj4drl42e>

Several feelings disguise shame; it creates many faces that make it difficult for us to confront and show through tangled threads in our histories. Where do we start to untangle this web so well woven by the body, emotion and thought, which is so perfect that we only see its effects in our personal and collective lives. Meireles asks these questions in her poetry Portrait (Retrato):

<i>Eu não tinha este rosto de hoje,</i>	I hadn't the face I have today,
<i>Assim calmo, assim triste, assim magro,</i>	Such a calm, such a sad, such a thin face
<i>Nem estes olhos tão vazios,</i>	Nor had I these empty eyes
<i>Nem o lábio amargo.</i>	Nor the bitter lip.

<i>Eu não tinha essas mãossem força,</i>	I hadn't these weakened hands
<i>Tão paradas e frias e mortas;</i>	So inert and cold and dead
<i>Eu não tinha este coração</i>	I hadn't this heart
<i>Que nem se mostra.</i>	which doesn't show itself

<i>Eu não dei conta por esta mudança,</i>	I hadn't noticed this change
<i>Tão simples, tão certa, tão fácil:</i>	So simple, certain, so easy:
<i>- Em que espelho ficou perdida</i>	“On what mirror did my face get lost?”
<i>A minha face?</i>	

Taylor (2017, p.6) says: “The habitual form of feeling the world affect directly the way we move”. The need to broaden the world perspective creates a whole new perspective of it, of one's self and of the other. Cultivating in the adult the curious attitude of a child, the openness to learning, the flexibility to remain an apprentice even after carrying a lot of experience is a daily challenge in a society of conformism and standardization. Therefore, creating is a revolutionary act.

Shame contains creative potential that once released will be available to a richer personality. Fears are like barriers to creative processes in life. It becomes necessary to recognize them, make it possible for individuals to express and release the energy contained in the muscles which try to conceal their strength and autonomy. Shame carries all the features of a powerful and vital shadow, but also makes me aware of my limitations and of the limits imposed by the moral rules, codes and culture.

Creativity is one of the basic vital functions that made it possible for humankind to develop on Earth. In Lowen (1970, p.207) we find: “pleasure and creativity are both intimately related, for pleasure offers motivation and energy to creative processes, which in its turn increases pleasure and the joy of living. With pleasure, life is a creative adventure; without it, a struggle for survival”.

In a similar line of thought Nachmanovitch (1993) stresses that “By means of playing and fun, animals, people or societies experience all sorts of combinations, exchanges and body forms, social forms, forms of thinking, images and rules that wouldn’t have been possible in a world ruled only by the immediate values of survival. The creature who plays is more apt to adapt to changes in context and conditions”. Playing both in maintaining and awakening spontaneity, assertiveness, authenticity building a sense of presence, making life a real and significative experience. (Nachmanovitch, 1993, p.51).

In his book on Joy, Lowen (1995) explores the importance of this feeling for body health and committal to life. He says: “Internal freedom manifests itself in a gracious body, in its tenderness and vitality. It corresponds to being free of guilt, shame and embarrassment. It is a quality of the being that all wild animals have, but most civilized beings lack. It is the free expression of innocence, of a spontaneous way of acting, not disguised, true to the Self”.

### **Grounding-Releasing the creative potential**

As mentioned before, there is an infinite array of body and imagnetic experiences which are incorporated before the experiences with words, thus every significant action between the baby and those who take care of it is of huge importance in building the identity of one’s Self (Lowen, 1995, p.189).

Welcoming or withdrawal; criticism or understanding; acceptance or humiliation will leave marks and concepts that might help them with their self-esteem or guide them to feelings of inadequacy and shame. Nachmanovich (1993) says: “Sometimes we need to face a painful battle in order to get to a point in which we no longer fear the child within us. We often feel that people do not take us seriously, or do not consider us as sufficiently qualified. In order to be accepted, we forget our inner source and protect ourselves behind rigid masks imposed on us by society”.

### **The tree of shame and the tree of life**

The image of a tree as a symbol for grounding refers to the representation of the connection to one's roots (the earth, the ground, feet, ancestry, culture) by which we receive physical and emotional nourishment; carry out processes of charge and discharge and experience the vertical condition. For the plant, it is through its roots that it is fixed to the soil, absorbing water and nutrients necessary to its survival. The trunk connects roots and leaves. The conducting vases carry the sap to the leaves and to other parts of the plant.

The human organism with all of its interconnected systems working mirrors a tree. Photosynthesis as a creative process of transformation brings to conscious that creativity is beyond human experience being inherent to life in all its manifestations. Being grounded, in this perspective, becomes an ecologic posture, honoring the earth and being anchored in it might change the utilitarian view of the planet and broaden the concept of creativity so it is aligned to vital processes, at the same time supporting them and being supported by them.

**Fig. 04- The tree of shame.**



Font: Pinterest <https://pin.it/g5m6dv5fb36gzq>

The metaphor of a tree of shame has its roots on “harmful” soil, receiving rejection, abuse, abandonment, un-met needs, which will hardly yield any good fruit, in the sense of the natural sweetness of fruits that receive love and acceptance. On its leaves, the result of what it received are low self-esteem, perfectionism, anxiety, addiction, envy, loneliness. In

its trunk actions take place to break the cycle through expression and recovery of power, in the sense of reuniting with one's Self.

**The tree of life:**



Font: Own collection

The tree of life in which the nutrients of the fertile soil will lead to sweet, gracious and vital fruit. Its complexity lives in simplicity. Faced with life...live!

**Body - Imagetic exercise - 03**

Standing up, perceive your body as the tree metaphor. Feel the roots, trunk and leaves. In a grounding position, breathe and feel the connection of these parts forming the whole of your organism.

Are there any trees nearby? Go near it, if possible, feel it resonate on your being grounded.

Incorporate the experience creating movement, dance, a drawing might broaden your consciousness regarding the experience.

Being grounded enables you to access the essence of life. It means enough flexibility in face of challenges and the necessary awareness to keep balance. Acknowledging the body wisdom and its basic needs for breathing, movement, expression, creativity and sexuality. Freedom, autonomy and limits in the dialogue with external possibilities to organize efficient action so that the organism remains anchored, vibrant and abiding to human ethics.



## Grounding and vulnerability

Lowen (1970, p. 227) says: “Steps taken from a defensive position of control of the ego in the direction of the aforementioned position of creative attitude are given by patients as they move towards reality”. And he mentions five steps in the process; first, identification with the body; second, acknowledging the principle of pleasure as the basis for our conscious actions; third, acceptance of one’s own feelings; fourth, understanding the interdependence of all functions of the personality; and fifth, humility that refers to the understanding of the relative helplessness in which we find ourselves in the universe.

The statement, on the text above: “the aforementioned position of creative attitude” Lowen (1970, p.227) refers us to feelings of vulnerability when masks are unfrozen and the *Self*, the original creative instance, can be presented to the world. The Bioenergetic process begins by unfolding the threads of body memory in which pain and pleasure are often mixed; slowly untangling the knots makes room for authenticity and flexibility. So, the body vibrates.

Fear of failure, of not deserving love and acceptance, of ridicule, of error, of humiliation finds new perspective under the eyes of reality opening internal spaces and giving in to the body and human condition. Being rooted includes the most diverse emotions, being able to express them and refrain expression taking as a reference internal and external realities, not in a reactive way, but in a creative and integrated one.

Kali, Hindu goddess of creation, preservation and destruction manifests the fusion of opposites, life, death and rebirth. Positive and negative aspects of creation and in its representation is depicted sticking out her tongue prompting the overcoming of fears not by denying them, but by facing and welcoming them.

Fig. 06 – Kali



Font: Pinterest <https://pin.it/07d343r2gPTsjP>

Going back to the body expression of “sticking out one’s tongue” and observing that it comprises feelings of freedom, assertivity, non-conformism, beauty, acceptance of body parts that are often seen as not socially acceptable to be shown in public, resistance, creativity, refusal to submit, sexuality, limits, courage, stresses the need to strengthen this expression in adults, not necessarily in the physical act of showing the tongue, but as the metaphor of its meaning. Grounding as an attitude internalized by the body will support the acknowledgment of the totality of feelings.

### **Sufficient-body – a refreshed view from the perspective of shame**

The meaning of Sufficient-body, which has been developed by me, deriving from my work with the theme of shame and its connection with feelings of vulnerability is intended to stress that each and every body possesses the essential, is equipped with what is necessary to experience their own lives.

Contrary to body registers imposed by shame and humiliation, be them of inadequacy or insufficiency, this perspective means bringing acceptance of human diversity and its manifestation of the innumerable ways of creating life in this planet.

“Inner freedom is manifest in the gracefulness of the body, in its tenderness and vitality. It corresponds to being free of guilt, shame and embarrassment. It is quality of the being present in all wild animals, but one which is absent in most civilized beings. It is the physical expression of innocence, in a spontaneous way of carrying one’s self, bearing no disguises and being true to the *Self*.” (Lowen, 1995, p.23).

The creative potency presented in Reich by the “genital character” and in Lowen by a “primal natureza” is recognized as inherent to our animal part, which is so important for us to remain human. From this core, our senses of belonging, survival, creativity and sexuality emerge.

Along human history, life in its amplitude was denied and captured by rigid social structures, supported by tradition and with little openness to renewal; which is paradoxically intrinsic to life. Reich coins the term “living-life” declaring that there are differences between being open, free and in movement, which denotes a fine tune with vital processes of the organism and attitudes of denial, contention and imprisonment of those.

In *Podres Poderes* (Rotten Powers), Veloso (1984) sings:

<i>“En quanto osho mens exercem seus podres poderes;</i>	“While men exercise their rotten powers;
<i>Índios e padres e bichas, negros e mulheres,</i>	Natives and priests and gays, negroes and women
<i>e adolescentes fazem o carnaval”.</i>	and teenagers make the Carnival”
<i>E segue: “eu quero aproximar o meu cantar vagabundo daqueles que velam pela ALEGRIA do mundo.”</i>	And follows: “I want to liken my vagabond singing to those who care for the JOY of the world”

Lowen (1995) says: There is pain in life, as well as pleasure, but we can accept pain as long as we are not attached to it. We can take loss, if we know that we are not condemned to endless mourning. We can take the night for we know the day will come and we can take sadness when we know that joy will grow again. But there can only be joy when our spirit is free. Unfortunately, many people have been nullified, and for those people joy is impossible as long as they don't get cured.”

People, societies and cultures develop ways of repelling spontaneous movements of life, overvaluing attitudes that are seen as civilized, which often excludes what is simple, natural, unstable, intuitive, impermanent in an attempt to develop a disguise of life that reinforces the unrooting, which in its turns feeds the process.

In Lowen (2007, p.165) we find: “The objective of my therapeutic work is to help people recover their feelings of connection to others and to life. Becoming grounded is the only way to restore this link”. Reestablishing grounding is finding support for vulnerability, fluidity, strength, mobility, supporting freedom from the pre-established scripts that hinder creative expression of feelings, adventure and giving in to life.

The body work in bioenergetic analysis enables change in the somatic and psychological structure that contributes to developing new perspectives on one's self and the world. Recovering sensitiveness in the body to welcome the different forms of being and supporting life's singularity and complexity.

## **Conclusion**

This article proposed the task of reflecting on grounding, shame and feelings of vulnerability. Focusing on body blocks, especially of the oral and

cervical segments, it aims to better understand somatic and psychological aspects in the establishment of a false Self, symbolized by the building of personal and social mask, when feelings of shame and humiliation are present in the life of individuals. A set of exercises has been developed with the aim of promoting consciousness about shame in the body and of its manifestations on personal, relational and social levels. Exploring the tongue muscle has a core importance in this study. In general, in Western cultures, the physical expression of “sticking one’s tongue out” is used by children in situations in which they feel invaded or disrespected and is perceived by adults as disrespecting authority and often punished. The spontaneous Being, which is assertive and creative is often refrained and shame installs itself causing feelings of vulnerability and unrooting. Grounding, creativity, autonomy, among others are presented here as means to restore and recover a body which is free from the ties of feelings of inferiority, feeling undervalued and inadequate. Image reading resources were developed by the author, the body-imagetic exercises, with the intention of mobilizing the body by observing images and vice-versa, these exercises should be coupled with energy blocking release exercises. Such proposal originates from the knowledge that our body and image memories are present long before the development of speech and thus contain a wide and deep array of tools and stories about ourselves that can be mobilized by the images. We also looked at the creative potential of shame and that by recognizing and integrating it to our consciousness it becomes possible to reignite the notions of limits and the capacity perceive and build safe spaces for expression. The term Sufficient-body has been introduced as the understanding that each and every body is equipped with the capacity to being potent. The subject of shame is too instigating and deep in the individual and social levels, as well as in the roles of clients and therapists in bioenergetic analysis; in spaces of education and social clinic; in the field of research and wherever it is possible to use body processes to broaden internal and external sensitiveness to respect and value of the diversity of life. I then conclude by offering the piece of poetry from *The Body’s Contradictions* by Corpo de Carlos Drummond de Andrade as an invitation-attitude to the voice, to the gesture, to spontaneity, to limit, to shame, to boldness: “Saio a bailar com meu corpo” (“I go dancing along with my body”).

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