

USING THE 5 RHYTHMS® TO MOVE THROUGH LIFE TRANSITIONS

Working individually with dancers over many years I am often struck by the huge gap of understanding that so many have about how to apply the 5Rhythms maps specifically to their current life situation. I hope this guide goes some way to opening that door wider for you; they're so powerful used in this way, almost astonishingly effective.

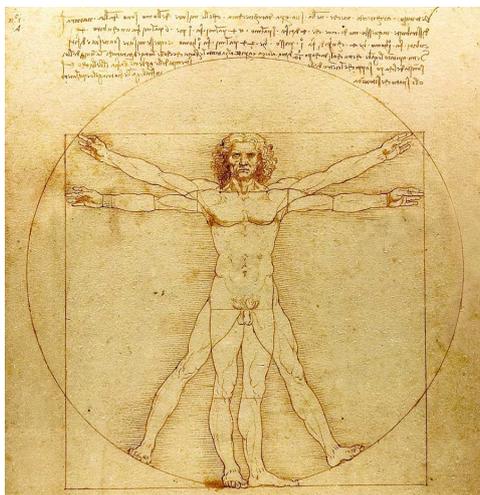


I know many of you just show up at a weekly class, maybe the occasional workshop, and go with the flow of the session as led by the teacher; yet there's so much more you can get out of this if you focus. Every class, and even more so every workshop, gives you a set of tools which only work if you use them.

Here are some of the things I've learnt from using my practice to navigate periods of intense change in my own life. I hope it helps shed some light on your own potential and that of your practice.

BEING WHOLE

The first task when we're undergoing deep change is to stay whole. By this I mean not to go up into the head, losing touch with our physicality and feelings. This is on-going work in progress for most of us, but the remedy is simple: move and breathe with awareness. To even have a hope of doing that in day to day life when times are challenging, regular practice is simply where it's at.



You have to find out what works for you. For me, something every day is invaluable even if it's only a few minutes. When I don't manage this, I start to go downhill and get unbalanced. Doing our practice we become whole, and are better able to handle whatever comes our way. When we've had some time dedicated to that in the day, it's easier to stay in that kind of balanced whole state of consciousness for the rest of the time too.

Practice when times are easier as well. Practicing when we are already in a good space is like putting money in the bank. When times are harder we have resources to fall back on.

ADRENALINE

Then there's the fear and excitement. Change is scary. I reckon I've danced thousands of fear-waves in the last 25 years. (Although to be precise, I'm often focussing on aspects of that energy which are way more positive and life-affirming than the experience we mostly call

'fear': a kind of instinctive felt-sense awareness that is better described with words like excitement, aliveness, alertness, awe.) Many of them short, but thousands nevertheless, because I get activated easily, and I find it essential medicine to keep allowing that energy to be where it belongs — in my embodied heart rather than my head. OK, it doesn't always get me where I think I want to be, but it's much more healthy than not doing it. If you've never done a Heartbeat level workshop then you might want to get to one, which will give you entry-level skills and experience of this. Alternatively it's described in Gabrielle's first book [Maps to Ecstasy](#), or you can [book a skype session](#) with me and I'll guide you through it.



I was particularly deep in this at one point whilst mentoring with Gabrielle to teach Heartbeat in '99, and she had me write down what I was scared of, and then dance those fears. This was massive for me, and I highly recommend it: write them down in as much specific detail as you can, for example not just "I'm afraid of change", but detailing exactly what aspect of it scares you, with whom, in what situation. Then breathe deep into that specific fear and let it move through a wave, with the intention of finding your courage and power through it in Lyrical and Stillness. If you still feel disempowered and in victim mode by the end, do it again (either right there and then or the next day) until a doorway opens that leaves you in a more useful place. One of the huge powers of using the rhythms in this way is that en-lighten-ment is built into the process. There's no value in just accentuating old patterns, and those last two rhythms are vital in giving us the experience of transformation, expansion, and healing.

Moving deeply and passionately through your fears will yield something in the spectrum of courage, empowerment, compassion, and maybe a vision of actions you could be doing differently. Keep your mind open to see windows of opportunity you can jump through as you dance. You're journeying through your own wilderness, and no-one has ever been there before. You're the first. It's a real-life adventure! Keep your eyes, ears, mind and heart open so that life can show you, teach you, help you.

Then there's all the other feelings. Ditto to the above! To come through transition empowered and well we need to keep letting ourselves be emotional:

- Phases of intense anger need space to find creative expression rather than destructive blaming and irresponsible acting out. Learning to keep your balance vertically (rather than leaning out forwards too much, blaming), and keeping your centre fluid (rather than getting rigid about your position, being certain you're 'right') takes a lot of consciousness when anger is up. My practice has been and remains an absolutely essential resource for this on-going growing up process. Having been brought up with all things Staccato as a strict no-fly zone and deeply taboo, it's been essential for me to practice moving with anger through the rhythms both when I'm triggered and when I'm not. Slowly over the years I've discovered that for the most part what we call anger is just the shadow side of a wonderful creative and loving force that can equally well be used for the health and well-being of all.

- The same goes for sadness. There's a lot to let go of when change is afoot, and unless we give ourselves space to feel the grief of letting go, we're in trouble. People, dreams, hopes, self-concepts, all of them wrench the heart when we have to let go of them, and grieving is an on-going practice. Many of us have never really danced sadness in its full spectrum (watch a young child for tuition!), trapped in being sorry for ourselves instead, endlessly circling around thought patterns and beliefs without letting go of anything. True grieving can be excruciating, but when we go through it we genuinely let go. When we're in deep pain it can be very hard to choose "*I'm now going to do my practice and move*", but it's really the most important time of all. The dance is amazing in those moments, because it demands a kind of rigour and adult choice that bypasses the self-pity, insisting that we turn that suffering into art. Thus we are immediately in a position of inner alignment and power again, even in the midst of feeling at our most helpless and hopeless. Remember grief comes in waves: even if it begins very small and quiet, be willing to let it rip you up and tear you to shreds. Become a wild thing, over and over again, until gentleness finds you and the water of your sadness turns sweet. Use the intelligence of your body to handle the stories of your heart, and you will come through.

- Joy too; this one is the easiest for me to overlook or take for granted, but when I remember, it's such a balm and a blessing, and worth cultivating. To dance for joy is lovely, and when things are tough, a little goes a long way. Gratitude is intimately connected to joyfulness, and this too works best when done very specifically: write down three things you're grateful for with as much detailed accuracy as you can ("*I'm grateful for my son's laughter during that cushion fight this morning*" is much more effective than "*I'm grateful for my son*"), and then do a little dance of that gratitude. Maybe even just find one simple movement that you can do 5 times over, that expresses that particular gratitude. Breathe deep with the movement, enjoy it, and give your gratitude to the wide sky.

- Compassion is key. Sometimes I dance whispering over and over "*dear Adam....*" Have you ever done that with your name? Sometimes compassion is a tough task-master: it might insist that you get up earlier than you feel like and go dance in the woods before daybreak. Often when we're in deep transition it's easy to get self-centred in a way that has us losing touch with what others are needing. Then it's on-going practice to look up from your life and see what someone else needs, and how you can be of service without compromising your own integrity. All the work with fear anger sadness and joy is the foundation for that ability, but you can also practice stretching your heart open as wide as it will go while you dance, willing to feel-with the room around you, the town around you, the world around you, and become one with all things in your dance, letting the spaciousness within everything breathe through you.



If you've never taken on your own heart in this way, using the practice to move through your feelings in a very targeted and focussed way, I cannot recommend it highly enough. It's SO useful! If it feels too scary, you could start with that fear: explore the fear of dancing your

feelings alone. Go gently and slowly, just opening the door a little at a time, and stopping to look around you or make some tea or go outside for fresh air or phone a friend when it feels like more would be too much. Go do a Heartbeat-level workshop with someone if you haven't already. Consider getting some support from a teacher you trust, or a therapist who has some experience of working physically like this.

YOUR SIGNIFICANT OTHERS

Then there's the people in your life. You don't need them to be there in order to dance with them and work out some of the stuff that's going on. One time last year I was feeling a deep sense of conflict with four different people simultaneously over the same issue. I 'placed' each of them in one corner of the room and spent a couple of hours finding my freedom, my truth, and my next steps with them. It was incredibly useful, and quite astonishing in several ways that went on to bear fruit in each relationship. If you have an issue with a friend, family member, or colleague at work, 'ask' them to be present in the room with the intention of resolution and mutually creative solutions, and then dance with them. Let your feelings come. Say things — or shout and scream! — as you dance. 'See' and 'hear' their responses. Dance your ass off and then sit in stillness 'facing' them to speak and listen with your heart. Open your mind to see what next steps are called for, remembering that just because you get an insight that a particular action may be a good next step doesn't mean you 'should' do it. You're always the decider. Be open to receive all information and then in the coming hours or days you can choose what to do about it. If you get a call to do something that's scary and you feel blocked in that fear then you could take that fear back onto your dance floor and work it through until you find your courage and power again. You could open to seeing possible moves that are more creative than 'normal', like writing a poem, sending a piece of music or a picture, offering to help them with something.

The next two sections are what sets this all apart from therapy, and in my view are essential ingredients if you want to integrate your 5Rhythms experience into daily life and let it guide you through stormy waters.

CREATIVE ACTION

It's all very well doing your healing, releasing feelings, and generally dealing with your stuff, but until you give something from your experience, it doesn't really move beyond navel gazing. Look up from your life and create something of beauty. Even if no-one apparently sees it — it could be an arrangement of leaves under a tree that will have blown away by the afternoon — make something as an offering to the world. Turn your suffering into art. Of course you're doing this every time you dance to some extent, though whether it's art or navel gazing depends upon your intention: choose to enter your dances as an



artist, so it's not so much about what you can get as what you can create. This takes your movement practice beyond 'useful tools' and into something that's magical, surprising, uplifting and generous. But beyond times when you're 'dancing' as well — you could create



something on any scale, as small as [a haiku](#) or as large as [creating a charitable organisation](#) to help people deal with the same issues you're moving through. Even without trying, life will probably present you with a myriad of little moments through your days when you have the opportunity to give something to others in a way that is connected to your inner journey. You don't have to explain that to anyone — indeed it's probably much better that you don't, or your self-importance will rush in and grab you — but you can just quietly gladly give to the moment.

PRAYER

Last and not least:

Find ways to be in communion with the big mystery

With that invisible spirit-realm that exists interwoven with the material realm we see around us

Speak to it, listen to it, and play with ways to cross the bridges between these worlds.

Everyone has to find their own way of doing this; it's a very individual thing. Maybe even the language I've already used in these few sentences is too weird and off-putting for you. Fuck it. Doesn't matter about the words. It's about whatever you can sense in the silence that's inside your breath.

"There's only one of us here..." Gabrielle Roth



WE WERE MADE FOR THESE TIMES

Once a year I offer the workshop Deep Focus, which is specifically aimed at studying this kind of precise use of the 5Rhythms maps. [Check out the events page](#) to see if there's one coming up.

I very much hope this has been useful for you to read. It's been interesting for me to write, giving me a reflection of how much I've learnt over the years, of which this is just a glimpse. You can absolutely create a path for yourself that will empower your choices, deepen your capacity for life, and en-lighten your perception if you apply the tools you have and use them with dedication, imagination, and persistence.

If you're in deep transition as I have been for the last couple of years, then I wish you good luck and good choices from the bottom of my heart. This is not an easy moment to be on earth, but it is wildly wonderful in a way, and as Clarissa Pinkola Estes said: "[We were made for these times](#)".

[← Back to Downloads](#)