

An Initial Inquiry: Thoughts on Rosen Method and Spirituality

Part 2

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Part 2

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Abstract

This article is Part 2 of "An Initial Inquiry: Thoughts on Rosen Method and Spirituality." This article includes background material on a preliminary literature review and several post-study reflections by the authors. In Part 1 the team of authors who trained in RMB and RMM explored insights on the perceived relationship of Rosen Method to spirituality among 33 interviewees. Since our process was influenced by our diverse backgrounds and our shared training in Rosen Method, we have added a few additional comments about our individual learning during this project.

1. Literature Review

In our background reading for this project, we identified a number of sources in which Rosen Method practitioners described the occurrence of spiritual experiences and growth while receiving and giving Rosen Method Bodywork. The books and articles we reviewed about Rosen Method date from 1984. We have also viewed several of the videotapes available about Marion Rosen, but did not summarize these sources. We also identified resources on spirituality, embodied spirituality, and descriptions of the emergence of cultural

shifts regarding spiritual practices over time. What we learned helped us as we designed the process for this project. (Note to reader: Marion Rosen is sometimes referred to as “Marion” in this document.)

1.1 Cultural Attitudes and Spirituality

In the years since the teaching of Rosen Method began, attitudes about spirituality have altered, both within Rosen Method and in the culture at large. Marion Rosen acknowledged that Rosen Method training might lead to becoming a practitioner or could be pursued just for personal growth, but it was not suggested that learning Rosen Method offered experiences that could support spiritual development. In the initial era of Rosen Method training, it was important to characterize Rosen Method as a therapeutic and scientifically grounded method that could provide health benefits. Over time there were a few workshops, articles and videotapes that included discussions of spirituality by Marion Rosen as we mention in the following literature review.

The authors were fortunate to be able to connect with a few of Marion Rosen’s earliest students to discuss the history of Rosen Method and when spirituality elements were noted. Most confirmed that spirituality was not typically described or discussed in training when students were focused on learning this somatic therapy. However, many of these individuals shared their own experiences connected to spirituality during their own training process.

The larger cultural view regarding spirituality as a component in healing has shifted over the last four decades, and spirituality has become more openly discussed, as traditional avenues of religious practice and affiliation have expanded. For example, the increase in mindfulness research has contributed to more open discussions of body, mind and spirit. These cultural shifts in public discussion of religion and spirituality have been observed in recent decades, as described by Robert Wuthnow (1998). He noted that Americans’ quest for spirituality revealed a renewed interest in the inner self as a way of relating to the sacred during the 1980s and 1990s. He described a shift among the population towards a more “practice-oriented spirituality” (engaging intentionally in activities that deepen one’s relationship to the sacred) as well as a “seeking-oriented spirituality.” (Seeking spirituality occurs when individuals seek meaning outside religious institutions with a spirituality that explores healing and wholeness.) Both practice and seeking were understood to deepen the spiritual process and foster community connections. He observed that these shifts have led to a resurgence of more individuals pursuing an intentional spiritual practice.



In addition to the increased openness in discussing spiritual issues, there are cultural variations about how comfortable people are in sharing this information, based on the individual’s personal development, experiences and specific culture. Our team of authors has worked in Rosen Method Bodywork and Movement, and we also have experience and training in related “helping” professions, such as counseling, physiotherapy, nursing, spiritual direction, ministry, mediation, and law. This has provided us with a glimpse of how attitudes and conversations about spirituality have expanded over time in other disciplines.

Robert Atchley, a professor of Gerontology at Miami University and later at Naropa University, studied the way aging persons and gerontologists think about spirituality in later life.

Atchley (2009) describes spiritual development as, in essence, an increasing connection with the transcendence (non-personal ground of being) that lies within each human being, whether that person is religious or not. As individuals proceed in spiritual development, they often discover an increasingly large space in consciousness, a more expansive view of life, time, and space, and the joy of service for its own sake. Atchley noted that spiritual “experiences” can be interpreted through three types of consciousness:

1. intense awareness of the present
2. “witness” consciousness, which transcends the personal self
3. transcendent awareness which is open to the presence of the sacred

Atchley notes that for many people, although these are distinctive, they can reside in one person’s being simultaneously. Atchley designed a spirituality inventory to evaluate aspects of the inner journey of elders and sages. Despite the prejudice against “the spiritual” within scientific or academic communities, he felt it was worth the effort to capture an expanded view of spirituality among humans as we age. He found it important to develop a nonreligious language of spirituality that allowed students and researchers to discuss spirituality without being drawn into discussions of differences in theology or religious doctrine. He found it beneficial to have a nonpersonal consciousness or a witness consciousness to be able to see situations more clearly and dispassionately. Atchley acknowledged Ram Das and Dan Gorman’s book, *How Can I Help?*, as a source of inspiration and validation for these concepts. His sample was directed to older individuals, because he found it profoundly important to have people describe their spiritual journey, in their own time and their own way. This inspired us in the development of our questions.

1.2 Sharing Personal Narrative and Beyond

Atchley found that spiritual concerns, experience and development become increasingly important for many people, as adults explore the meaning of their existence and relation to the universe in midlife and later years. For individuals on a spiritual journey, people are often learning to bring “being” back into consciousness. In addition, spiritually committed people often engage in practices that heighten the possibility of numinous, mystical experience. (Atchley 2011, p.158).

We decided that Atchley’s work offered a good model for our inquiry. We found that he examined the spiritual journey by considering the personal narratives of elders. They discovered or developed their own narratives as they reflected on the suffering and joys embedded in their most significant life experiences. Their narratives included a history of experiences, actions, insights, a search for spiritual meaning, and becoming ever more consciously aware of the spiritual aspects of most human experiences.

Over the years of interviews he conducted, people described many qualities that characterize spiritual experiences. These experiences were elicited through a variety of avenues, for example, relational awareness, nonverbal awareness, physical or sensory states, verbal thought, inner stillness, insight, compassion, mental clarity, connection with the ground of being, wonder, mystery and feelings of oneness.

When the authors were considering our interview questions, we understood that our interviewees would be sharing their narratives, like Atchley’s population. We used as initial reference points our experiences and those of our clients, and later the insights of the Rosen Method practitioners and teachers in our listening sessions. We found that the deepening and expansion of spirituality was often evidenced by a shift from habitual stories about their experiences, into a different way of sharing. The narrative that

arises after deep reflection and inner work is the thread that leads from early experience to present depth and, perhaps, wisdom. Thus, the authors sought to offer interview questions that would invite a moving narrative, ranging from early childhood experience to later interpretations illuminated by years of Rosen practice.

1.3 Our Description of Spirituality

The authors were aware of a great deal of variation in how people speak about their experience of spirituality as a profoundly individual process. For many, spirituality is “something known deep within,” a sense or recognition of truth, a deep heart understanding. Some consider spirituality as a region of experience, from our own inner experience, often considered part of our nature. Others regard the religion or faith they practice as the source of their spirituality.

Our shared perception is that spiritual experiences often have qualities such as wonder, compassion or clarity. Without a personal inner experience, a person can only guess or imagine what the term spiritual experience might mean. Cognitive understanding and even imagination are not the same as having a direct felt experience. Spiritual experiences can occur through our senses, awareness, or thought. Frequently, individuals on a spiritual journey seek an inner opening to profound, authentic, mystical experience. Sometimes our truth comes through the body.



RMB and RMM facilitate noticing direct-felt sensations, supporting independent, direct experiences. Feeling ourselves from the inside out can help us find a more embodied truth. When we breathe deeply and relax, then we can begin to find more of our tenderness, our kindness, more of our truth.

1.4 Spirituality in Rosen Method Literature

Aspects of a RMB session, and the process between practitioner and client, have been described in a number of books and articles. These include books authored by Mayland (1985), Wooten (1995), Davis (2002), Keller (1993), Rosen and Brenner (2003), Fogel (2009, 2013, 2020), and Green (2016). There are also articles based on dissertations on Rosen Method: Smart (2018) and Bernard (2016) in the *Rosen Method International Journal* (RMIJ), the RMPA Newsletter, and publications by the California Institute of Integral Studies. Our references here were used as guides for our project, but this is not intended to be an exhaustive review of all Rosen Method materials that refer to spirituality.

1.4.1 Descriptions of Marion Rosen’s Perspective

Marion Rosen often used a quote she loved from the Gospel of Thomas:

“If you bring forth what is within you,
what you bring forth will save you.
If you do not bring forth what is within you,
what you do not bring forth will destroy you.”

Our readings revealed that Marion Rosen's reflections and insights on the issues of spirituality evolved over time, just as individual and cultural awareness tends to change over time. In several decades of working, in the USA and around the globe, she witnessed clients and students expressing personal awareness of a deepening spiritual experience. This awareness gradually made its way into her teaching.

"Marion began practicing physical therapy and discovered that emotions were also at work in the body. Her method has now expanded to include the spiritual aspect of the body/mind expression." (Mayland, 1985, 2015, p.66.) Mayland relates Marion's observation that the emotion that clients hold back the most is their love. When they feel their own love, they soon find themselves in contact with universal love, that is, a sense of being a part of everything, an experience of love for everything and everyone.

Marian Rosen, with Sue Brenner, wrote *Rosen Method Bodywork: Accessing the Unconscious Through Touch* (2003). In the story of how she began to teach, she said that Swami Radha and Claudio Naranjo, spiritual teachers and teachers of transpersonal psychology, noticed her work. Swami Radha challenged her, saying that teaching her unique type of touch was not possible. Marion's thought was, "I'll show you!" As she began exploring how to teach her work, ten students arrived and became her first class. In describing her work, Marion referred to states that for some people may be closely connected to spirituality, such as truth and love. "Truthfulness about oneself is powerful, and that is a central goal of Rosen Method" (Rosen and Brenner, 2003).

Elaine Mayland quotes Marion as saying, "I was surprised when I trained my first group of ten people. They were not particularly spiritual people; some were atheists and some were not practicing their family religion. At the end of the training, I asked them what they got from it. They all said, 'I became in touch with God,' and by that, they meant something greater than themselves. I never expected this but now, after 25 years, I can understand it. It has taken that long to deepen and manifest in me, for me to see the thread that goes through the whole process, from physical to emotional to spiritual."

"This work can help one find the core of his being and his connection with all that is." Elaine Mayland (*Rosen Method: An Approach to Wholeness and Well-Being Through the Body*, p.71, (1985, 2015). Marion spoke of how clients find the love within: "But one day I noticed that when people began to let go even more deeply in their abdomens, they seemed to be in touch with a love they had never felt before. It seems to be the last feeling they allow to come up, and only happens when both the diaphragm and abdomen relax completely. A trust has to develop first, and then surrender, in order for the diaphragm to have its full movement. When people access this love, they enter a completely different realm . . . Some people may call it "God." (p.30, Rosen and Brenner, 2003).

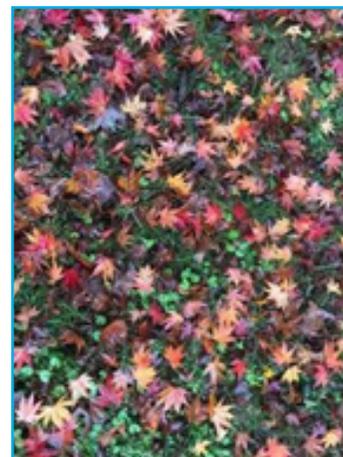
"When the body works correctly, with the diaphragm swinging freely, the spiritual comes in. . . when the body and spirit come together in a state of surrender, opening and trust. It is a state of grace for both practitioners and patients." (p. 31-32, Rosen and Brenner, 2003).

Mara Lynn Keller wrote an article in *Creation Spirituality* (November-December 1993, p.28) called *A Conversation with Marion Rosen and Gloria Hessellund: The Spiritual Dimension of Rosen Method Bodywork*. In the article, Marion clarified that speaking about spirituality with a client could occur not at the initiation of the practitioner but when it emerges from the client's own experience.

When asked whether either had a religious practice they found helpful, Gloria Hessellund responded: "I do have a spiritual practice and it does help. And practicing Rosen Method helps me with my spiritual

practice. I recognize parallels between the two: Rosen invites us to acknowledge reality just as it is; to contact another with awareness, not seeking to change or fix, only to meet the truth and notice what occurs. The feeling of connection as we open in this process is beyond the personalities, beyond all other considerations we might have. It's awe-inspiring, that sense of meeting the soul or essence of another." (p. 30).

Keller then described the way Marion and Gloria respond to spiritual events when they occur. For example, "surrender," a concept frequently seen in spiritual teachings, can be an actual, physical event as it occurs during a Rosen session. Marion explained that it does not come about by a practitioner "doing something, it is something more coming through when you surrender." Gloria said that spiritual surrender cannot be planned and arrives with trust. Both explained that the body arrives at this place of trust when the movement of the diaphragm "swings and we are at peace with our aliveness."



Keller then asked, "How did you come to focus so much on the diaphragm and breathing in your bodywork?" Marion replied, "It came from a very physical point. This other thing came as a secondary benefit, the spirituality experience."

1.4.2 Other Authors Writing About Rosen Method

Rosen Method has been written about in books and articles touching on some of the components that have been profoundly helpful and healing to individuals. An early example of thoughts about Rosen Method by Bevalyn Crawford, writing in *Yoga Journal* (March-April, 1990), notes that practitioners are trained to be with clients in stillness, patience, and acceptance while not knowing, not having an answer, just being present. "A high tolerance for the unknown is important, for practitioners are with the client to sense the authentic self beneath holding and barriers in the body." (p.12)

Sandra Wooten, wrote, in her book, *Touching the Body, Reaching the Soul: How Touch Influences the Nature of Human Beings* (1995), "I have felt inevitably drawn to explore the connection of touch, not only with consciousness . . . but with spirit as well. Reading about David Bohm's inquiry into the questions concerning truth, reality, meaning, language and thought which led him to spend his later life in dialogue with J. Krishnamurti spurred my interest. Bohm eventually came to believe that the single most important feature of reality is 'unbroken wholeness flowing into movement.'"

Wooten continued, "Touch is a biological necessity: touch given in a respectful and contactful manner, relaxes us, leading to insight and expanded consciousness; touch brings us into contact with ourselves and allows an inner journey beyond the known toward a discovery of our essential nature." She shared the concept of somatic resonance, describing how the connection of two people in a RMB session creates a gateway to inner knowing: "In religious and symbolic studies, the opening created by two circles overlapping, creates a mandorla, which is an opening or gateway. This occurs when a hand meets the body in a Rosen session." This led Wooten to examine resonance, which is known in psychotherapy, spiritual practices and physics as an affective resonance, or an epiphany. In later correspondence, Wooten clarified: "As you know, this word came to me in an epiphany after having the question 'What are we *really* doing in Rosen Method?' rolling around in my mind and subconscious for several years. Through research (and prayers!) I came to unquestionably understand:

“Through presence and touch, as used in Rosen Method, in the quietness of a moment, there is an opening created when a soft hand and open heart meets another person, (literally) through *resonance*. This is an unquestionable actual link to our spiritual selves. A true meeting, from one soul to another. Resonance is an actual physical experience that welcomes and allows a spiritual connection with another.” (August 12, 2020 personal conversation)

Marilyn Davis, in her book, *The Rosen Method* (2002, p.35) affirms that the idea of a Rosen practitioner being present to the client and to herself is the essence of Rosen Method. Davis notes that practitioners create a sense of safety and acceptance and love. Practitioners are guided to be centered and mindful so that the shared space with the client is safe enough for the client to call forth the healing that is needed. “An expansion of being is possible not only by the client but by the practitioner as well. The practitioner’s act of being present to the client expands the consciousness of the practitioner, allowing her to locate herself more profoundly in the present moment . . . For the practitioner to be aware both of the client and oneself as present to each other in not only an immanent way but a transcendent way creates a circle of care which promotes acceptance of ourselves as human beings intimately connected to each other and to the natural world in which we live.”

Alan Fogel, in *The Psychophysiology of Self-Awareness* (2009), writes about spiritual experiences in the chapter called, “Coming Home to Ourselves.” He discusses spiritual experiences and how, in many religious practices, there are rituals that enshrine sensing, moving, and feeling within. He notes, “Ritual institutionalizes embodied self-awareness and provides a legitimate reason for believers to come back home to the body again and again. One could say that practicing embodied self-awareness on a regular basis is a spiritual quest, or that practicing embodied self-awareness leads to a greater awareness of things deemed spiritual: feelings of connection, compassion, love and gratitude, forgiveness, surrender and acceptance.”



More recently Fogel writing in the *International Body Psychotherapy Journal* (2020) shares about the therapeutic vitality of Restorative Embodied Self-Awareness. He notes quotes from clients in research articles that speak to the power of transformation possible, describing the links between Restorative ESA and spirituality, awe, grace and something bigger. He also shares concepts related to relational somatic presence and somatic resonance. “When practitioners are trained to become aware of their own ESA-as opposed to trying to remain “Distant” or “objective toward the client -there is more of a possibility for clients to develop similar attitudes of self-awareness and embodiment.”

Shantika Bernard (2016) in the *Rosen Method International Journal* (Vol.9 Issue 1), “Relational Somatic Presence: Meeting Trauma in Rosen Method Bodywork,” described her research on Rosen Method bodywork with persons who have experienced trauma. She indicated Rosen Method has the potential to allow clients an opening into a transcendent experience of change and healing that goes beyond physiological and emotional symptoms. Her study succeeded in highlighting the unique combination of attentive, present-centered, client-specific touch and the relationally and somatically present therapist in RMB. Client participants in the study spoke about experiences of spirituality as they reported a heightened awareness of their intuition and feeling a sense of guidance and unity with a supportive entity, which they variously called source, unity, Great Spirit, or God.

Ivy Green, writing in her book on Rosen Method Bodywork (2016), described the “breath of insight” as a natural, unperformed breath that confirms an emotional truth. Green wrote, “There is a naturally full release of the diaphragm that occurs when we acknowledge what is physically and emotionally true about ourselves in the present moment.” Sharing about the breath of insight, of confirmation, identified in RMB she notes the connection between the diaphragm and spiritual experiences. (p.200) Green describes the diaphragm and how when it swings freely the boundaries of the personal ego relax and expand, bringing a loving connection with something greater than the individual self, such as God, universal intelligence, or universal love.

1.5 Literature on Embodied Spiritual Practices

Religious traditions throughout history have often been ambivalent towards the human body. Some traditions tend to assert a more disembodied perspective, or a disinterest in the body as opposed to the spirit. Yet many spiritual traditions describe a profound connection or resonance between the human being, the cosmos and the Mystery. Jose Ferrer (2008) describes Platonic, Taoist, Islamic, Kabbalistic and tantric understanding of the “person as microcosm of the macrocosm,” as well as the Biblical view of the human being made in the image of God. Ferrer notes that in our current time, there is the possibility of integrating a deeper understanding of a fully embodied life, where the body is the home for a complete human being and a source for spiritual insight.

Although our exploratory study is not focused on a review of embodied spiritual practices across the globe over time, we wish to note the significance of acknowledging body and body awareness as part of spiritual life. Many spiritual seekers have recognized the importance of learning to listen deeply to the body as a source for integration and enduring spiritual insight and transformation (Singh 2017, Rohr 2009, Bourgeault 2001). For many spiritual seekers and traditions, the meaning of life is not something to be discerned and known only by the mind, but to be felt in the depths of our flesh, within our heart. These writers agree that various states of being provide a life that is profound and meaningful. “The body is the human dimension that can reveal the ultimate meaning of the incarnated life” (Ferrer, 2008).



Some paths for fostering spiritual insight through connecting with the body use contemplative movement systems. Within the field of contemplative science, the directing of attention to bodily sensations has so far mainly been studied in the context of seated meditation and mindfulness practices. However, the cultivation of interoceptive, proprioceptive and kinesthetic awareness is also said to lie at the core of many movement-based contemplative practices such as Yoga, Qigong, Tai Chi, Liturgical Dance, and Rosen Method Movement.

In addition to the impact of recognized movement approaches to spirituality, being aware in the present moment is a recognized path to spiritual awareness (Some on our team note: this mindful attention guides us to an awakening to the sense of presence within.). The contemporary scholar and mystic Cynthia Bourgeault describes being present as “fully occupying the now in which we find ourselves.” She says a state of presence is extraordinarily important to recognize in ourselves, or “to know and taste in oneself.” Presence occurs, she says, when all three centers of our being—our heart, mind and body—are all engaged and awake. The responses of participants in the study suggest that they had an understanding of presence similar to that described by Bourgeault.

In *Frontiers in Human Neuroscience* (2014; 8:205), authors Schmalz, Crane, Godreau and Payne note that over the past decades, cognitive neuroscience has witnessed a shift from predominantly disembodied and computational views of the mind, to more embodied and situated views of the mind. The concept considers that mental functions cannot be fully understood without reference to the physical body and the environment in which they are experienced. In addition, the authors indicate that it likely plays a key role in the efficacy of modern somatic therapeutic techniques such as the Feldenkrais Method and the Alexander Technique. Western scientists most typically study practices that are based on a non-dualistic view of mind and body, which is inconsistent with the traditional Western view of mind and body as separate entities.

We recognize that there are many paths, practices and techniques supporting embodied spirituality. Several Rosen community members are active in Tai Chi, Qi Gong, Yoga and other embodiment practices like the Alexander Technique. Many contemplative movement practices and somatic therapeutic techniques use concepts such as “being in one’s body” to encourage an embodied experience of the self. We believe related studies on embodied spirituality and contemplative movement can offer illuminating insights for future exploration.

2. Reflections on our Learning Process

Our exploratory examination of the results of this study drew on our shared backgrounds in Rosen Method, our additional professional training in other disciplines, and the framework of a collaborative process. We interacted within a structure intended to consider our questions with care, conduct our interviews with sensitivity, and summarize thoughtfully both what we learned and where we see opportunities for further inquiry. This structure drew on a style of listening that was broad, inclusive, respectful, dynamic and reflective. Gathering information on a subject like spirituality can elicit personal and poetic information, both for the interviewer and for the individual being interviewed.

The interview process touched all of the interviewers deeply and each of us found ourselves moved to offer additional comments on topics of particular meaning. The team discussed the importance of sharing insights with our professional community and then chose to amplify the topics in personal reflections. The following reflections reveal the deep engagement of the interviewers.

2.1 Reflections on the Breath

Our team felt that the particular and unique practice of Rosen Method depends on a focused awareness of breath. This aspect of the Rosen Method was not explored deeply in Part 1 because we viewed it as intrinsic to the method, not a quality that evolved or was evoked by the method. Team member Jane Pittsinger articulated additional thoughts on the importance of breath as follows:

Being able to breathe freely is something most of us take for granted most of the time. As a young child, breathing was a challenge for me and at times just trying to breathe ruled my life when I had severe bouts of asthma. I lived with my family high up in mountains in a country where medical help was many hours away. So I had to find a way to breathe. I would lie propped up with pillows and go inwards into my own body to focus on finding a thin pathway down which the air could travel through a maze of tunnels and barriers, and that would be my work. It was delicate work and needed gentle sensitivity not to ‘frighten’ the

little tubes in my lungs which would respond by tightening up and closing off. Every movement had the potential of easing or tightening the airways.

Many years later as I was discovering Marion Rosen's work, I read in an article by Bevalyn Crawford (The Healing Touch of Rosen Work, 1990) that Marion too had had asthma which led her to experience how letting go of painful emotions helped relieve it. I feel I have a personal relationship with breathing and am fascinated by its essential and undoubted role in our life and yet its delicate, sensitive responsiveness to every interior shift in mood and even thought.

Much has been written about the role breathing and especially the diaphragm play in Rosen Method some of which are referred to in this article (Fogel, Green, Mayland). The role of the breath also comes into many spiritual traditions and practices but are referred to here in a general way only.

The breath is considered significant in Jewish, Sufi, Hindu and Christian practices, to name only a few. The Hebrew word "ruach" means the natural force which represents the breath of life in human beings as well as the creative infilling power of God and His/Her spirit. In the Hindu tradition, there is the concept of "prana" as lifeforce, vital air, breath, or respiration; and there is awareness of the breath in Buddhist meditation. In many meditation and Yoga practices, breath is often controlled or employed in specific patterns to bring about desired outcomes.

Some practices invite the meditator to focus on the breath without managing it. What is unique about the Rosen Method as a healing practice is that there is no management of the breath. What this means is that, as practitioners, we pay close attention to and learn about the person from the way they breathe each moment. We do not intercede or expect anything other than how the person presents themselves. We may verbally acknowledge a sense of deepening or when a 'barrier' of tension is revealed in the body but we allow it 'to be' without any need to change anything. In this way we use what we see in the breathing responses as the intersection between the conscious and unconscious. There is a distinct difference between a spontaneous natural breath and one which is controlled or inhibited in some way.

The breath is the ever-present guide and witness of what is transpiring in the client, for every emotion and experience in a person is reflected in how the breath responds or perhaps does not respond.

Breathing is the most direct way the exterior environment enters a person, is exchanged with the internal environment of the body and is returned to the exterior. It metaphorically connects our outer self with the deeper interior self, bringing both together in wholeness. The Greek word "pneuma" wind or air which is reflected in medical terminology is also translated as "spirit". With a Rosen Method practitioner closely observing the breath and guiding us to recognize the ease which comes into the body when the conscious mind connects with some truth or authentic aspect of our inner self, we are enabled to consciously come home to our own authenticity. It is like finding the, at first perhaps delicate, path of truth which becomes more substantial as barriers soften and we grow more fully into ourselves.

References are made in this article to how spirituality includes the coming home to our authentic self, however we may conceive of this, even a "self" beyond our current experience of it: the possibility of experiencing the fullness of being human in our own unique way.



2.2 Reflections on Stillness and Listening and Mystery

Team member John Bosman offered a point of view related to his life in Australia, one that is unique to aboriginal experience but has familiar echoes in Rosen Method. He shared the following excerpts from a presentation on aboriginal spirituality by Miriam-Rose Ungunmerr-Baumann in Tasmania in 1988:

“What I want to talk about is another special quality of my people. . . . In our language this quality is called dadirri. It is inner, deep listening and quiet, still awareness. Dadirri recognises the deep spring that is inside us. We call on it and it calls to us. . . . I can find peace in this silent awareness. There is no need for words. A big part of dadirri is listening. . . .



. . . We could not live good and useful lives unless we listened. We learnt by watching and listening, waiting and then acting. Our people have passed on this way of listening for over 40,000 years. . . .

And now I would like to talk about the other part of dadirri, which is the quiet stillness and the waiting.

Our Aboriginal culture has taught us to be still and to wait. We do not try to hurry things up. We let them follow their natural course – like the seasons. We watch the moon in each of its phases.

We don't mind waiting, because we want things to be done with care. . . .

We don't like to hurry. There is nothing more important than what we are attending to. There is nothing more urgent that we must hurry away for.

We wait on God, too. His time is the right time. We wait for him to make his Word clear to us. . . .

To be still brings peace – and it brings understanding. When we are really still in the bush, we concentrate. We are aware of the ant hills and the turtles and the water lilies.”

John Bosman reflected on the compelling meaning of mystery that pervades reality.

For me, mystery, the 'bubble' of spirituality, is not something sprinkled onto the 'real' world, but is (at) the very core of reality. Reality itself is mystery, is dynamic, it flows, exists in relationship.

Spirituality is experienced when “events” happen. Events like the annual weather change from the wet to the dry season in tropical Darwin. That change happens quickly over a couple of days and is dramatic, moving from an almost intolerable wetness, from mildewing clothes and cupboards, suffocating humidity that all but squeezes out the possibility of life to an atmosphere that is vibrant, dry, welcoming in touch and being.

Spirituality is like a tree growing, like sap flowing into uncharted places.

Spirituality is like learning blossoming into understanding.

Spirituality is like tightness of body or mind uncurling into unimpeded pleasure.

Spirituality is when duty becomes joyful and unmistakable "enselfment".

Spirituality is like the stillness of satisfied hunger.

Spirituality is like when a word finds its place.

Spirituality is like experiencing what is not even hoped for.

Spirituality is like being wanted and not censured.

Spirituality happens when paralysing helplessness asks for help.

Spirituality is recognised in retrospect when joy unshackles attitudes of heart and mind.

Spirituality is equally the domain of scientists , artists, philosophers, politicians, theologians, mystics and children.

2.2.1 Gathering Reflections from the Past

The authors listened to reflections of the spiritual journeys of our interviewees and were often moved deeply by their memories of childhood. Team member John Bosman was inspired to offer the following memory, evoked by thoughts of spirituality and Rosen Method, of a moment beyond time and space in his childhood:

"I can still hear the energy and conviction in my mother's voice. Her words danced towards us like music. She accompanied us into this solemn moment of our lives. We knew that marriage is a festive, serious and free coming together, lasting forever, for always.

A neighbourhood wedding sparked my sister's heart. Here she was, glamorously wearing her bridal veil: a doubled up lace curtain, held together by a safety pin, and her hair held up by a dazzling, dancing bow. Our hands and fingers found shared intimacy and support and soft strength.



All this happened on a bright spring day in war-torn Amsterdam. The year was 1944. My sister was five years old, and I, a favoured brother, aged four, was her groom. My sister has her eyes closed treasuring every detail, every word and touch. I was decorated with a large cellophane bow topped by bright eyes, smiling in a happy face. The photo pictures us looking more into our hearts than into the camera, stepping out beyond space and time."

2.3 Reflections on Presence in the Midst of Change

Team member Catherine Mac Guinness was especially drawn to the topic of presence, as we reviewed and analyzed our interview material. She shared thoughts of the enormous changes in her life during our work on this study and her deep consideration of the meaning of presence.

When we began this study, I was in the midst of moving back to my own homeland, Ireland, following 26 years in California. Meeting and connecting with our team, and participating in the focus group meetings at the very beginning of our study has been a tremendous gift to me. It was a vital way for me to stay more deeply connected to a Rosen community, engage my curiosity, interest, and, in a word, I felt I was bringing Rosen 'home' with me to a land where Rosen Method is for the most part unknown.

Conducting interviews here in Ireland with Rosen people from different European countries and California, who have had diverse spiritual experiences and journeys, has opened me, inspired me, and given me continuous opportunities for reflection, to gain insights, new perspectives and a greater appreciation for my own spiritual journey as a Rosen client, student, practitioner, and movement teacher.

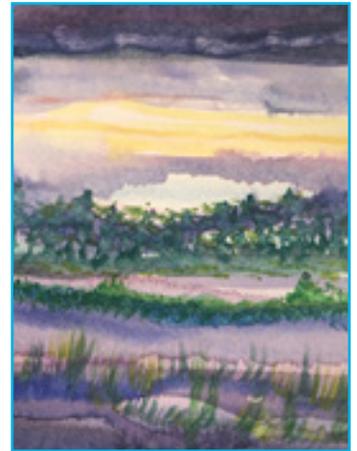
Listening deeply during our own team meetings, and to participants as they opened their hearts and minds to share honestly their experiences of Rosen, and to put into words what is very often beyond words was very moving. It very often felt like sitting on the edge of a vast ocean and wanting to embrace the expansiveness, wholeness, beauty and mystery of the moment. Such connections and moments have carried me beyond myself, and the limitations of my own human condition.

I particularly enjoyed exploring with our team the qualities of RM that support spiritual awareness. One such quality that I was fortunate to explore in greater depth was Presence. As RM students we were not ever given a talk about presence. However, we did learn presence and embodied it through osmosis from being around our teachers and other Rosen professionals.

Sifting through all our participants' quotes, gathering them together, and contributing towards the writing about Presence in Part 1 of our study was so engaging. It opened me to consider so many different aspects and views about presence, and the quotations from clients reflected this, for example: the presence of the practitioner, presence to the self, presence in RMM, and to a greater presence.

It was during this time that I began to reflect on my own Rosen journey with presence. In Rosen Method we work with the body's muscular tension. This tension, I believe, covers over or masks our presence. That spontaneous presence, we so naturally assumed as a baby and small child to ourselves, to nature, and to others, gets lost as we grow, and experience life. I have heard Marion so often repeat this during her teaching sessions with us.

Over the years through the experience of receiving RMB I have become aware that when the practitioner is totally present to me, open and receptive, the whole of me is being seen. This experience of sustained presence allows me to deeply relax into the experience of receiving myself and with whatever arises from within myself.



Through this unique form of RM touch and RM movement over time I have learned to unwind my own patterns of holdings, my lost presence to myself, to nature, to others and to my life began to unfold and to be felt from within.

I believe this is what we do in RM, It is our unique gift. We invite and bring to life once again the lost and true presence of the person. I believe the aliveness we so readily speak about is presence becoming alive.

2.4 Reflections on Learning

Carol Cober offered thoughts on what she learned during the process of this study.

During this project, I felt the support of a collaborative process with a team of colleagues. As we exchanged our experiences and shared our study and practice in Rosen Method I sensed deep support and connection regardless of our different spiritual backgrounds. I was grateful for the insights of the many practitioners, Rosen peers, we interviewed as their diverse backgrounds help me understand the vast possibility that exists in the Rosen Method Bodywork. I have felt a deepening of my spiritual and creative practice over the years due to the restorative embodied self awareness in Rosen Method Bodywork that helped me to connect with spiritual teachers and make new connections and build community. My understanding is now wider.



Like others who shared during this project I found the sustained support I felt from RMB practitioners with a strong spiritual background over a long period of time to be profoundly important. The physical support of another's relational somatic presence has strengthened how I listen within-influencing my creative process as an artist. For me, the benefits of receiving RMB for the past 24 years has led to a deepening compassion and capacity for joy that affirms aliveness after grief and loss. I now understand my painting, pottery and art-making is my embodied spiritual practice. The support of RMB and RMM for listening deeply within, through the body is a gift.

2.5 Reflections on Truth

Team member Jill Breslau felt drawn to respond to the discussion of truth as fundamental to Rosen Method and to offer some photographs that speak to her journey.

“When I was invited to support the team in this endeavor, exploring the interface between Rosen Method and spirituality, I was thrilled. My experiences during interviews and in reviewing and pondering the interviewees’ responses affirmed how powerful and meaningful a topic this is and how committed the Rosen practitioners we interviewed have been in exploring and deepening their own understandings of inner truth. It was a joy to talk to Rosen people about their perceptions, and I am very grateful for being able to participate.

When the team considered sharing personal vignettes about our own journeys or our own perspective on topics of special significance, I resisted. There are so many rich comments in this study, so much to read and hold in our hearts and allow to resonate and unfold. Yet eventually I found that I wanted to share a few thoughts on truth, because Rosen Method has been so valuable to me in my own search for truth.

My father died when I was three, and I think my search for meaning began then, looking in the outside world for answers. When I was practicing law, and in my 40's, a client told me about her mother, who always urged her to listen to the voice within. I remember being stunned and wondering how my life might have been different, from an early age, if I had been guided to listen to my inner voice.

By the time I found Rosen Method, I had been seeking ways of learning to know my inner voice for years, mostly involving exploration of mind and psyche. Rosen Method profoundly influenced my capacity to reach and understand that voice, the voice my body communicated so clearly through sensations, emotions, and responses. Rosen Method offered a potent way of finding my own truth.

For most of my life, I continued to seek spiritual paths that resonated with me. The inner voice I learned to hear and trust in Rosen Method helped me to locate my deepest spiritual truth, to find it among the various traditions and rituals I explored. Like so many of those interviewed, I found love as the essence of that truth; I see it as the gravity that holds the universe together."



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APPENDICES

1. Photo references

Photograph Attribution

Page 49 -- Breslau, Bar Mitzvah at the Western Wall, Jerusalem, Israel

Page 51 -- Cober, Painting, "Grace"

Page 53 -- Cober, Autumn Leaves, Brookside Gardens, Wheaton, Maryland

Page 54 -- Breslau, Little Gidding, England

Page 55 -- Cober, Painting, "Meditation on Violets"

Page 57 -- Breslau, Our Lady of Guadalupe Candle, Santa Cruz, California

Page 58 -- Stowe, Statue of Seated Woman, Annmarie Garden, Solomons Island, Maryland

Page 59 -- Bosman, Childhood Wedding

Page 60 -- Cober, Painting, "Spring Dawn"

Page 61 -- Cober, Painting, "Kundalini Dance"

Page 62 -- Breslau, Shiva Dancing, Ranama's Aashram, Tiruvannamail, India

2. Interviewee Recommendations: Books, Authors, Topics and Quotations

While our intent in this study was to explore responses to certain dimensions of the relationship between Rosen Method and spirituality, we also very much wanted to invite responses to wider aspects of the topic. Thus we welcomed the ideas offered by those we interviewed and found that they enriched, amplified, deepened, and clarified the conversation. We hope readers will find new avenues for exploration.

Books:

All Sickness Is Homesickness by Dianne M. Connelly

Altar in the World by Barbara Brown Taylor

An Interrupted Life, The Diaries of Etty Hillesum

Bhavad Gita, translations by Juan Mascaro and Eknath Easwaran

Death Must Die, the journals of Atmananda, an Austrian disciple of Anandamayi-ma

Diamond Heart Books 1-3, by A. H. Almaas

The Eleusinian Mysteries and the Greek Goddess Tradition by Mara Lynn Keller

The Enlightened Heart by Stephen Mitchell
The Fifth Sacred Thing by Starhawk
The Golden Verses, by Pythagoras
God Makes the Rivers to Flow by Eknath Easwaran
Hidden Journey by Andrew Harvey
Interbeing by Thich Nhat Hanh
Kundalini Vidya: The Science of Spiritual Transformation: A comprehensive system for understanding and guiding spiritual development by Joan Shivarpita Harrigan
The Naked Now: Learning to See as the Mystics See by Richard Rohr
A New Earth, Awakening to Your Life's Purpose by Eckhart Tolle
Noam Elimelech, a book about a rabbi and mystic
The Practice of the Presence of God by Brother Lawrence
Revelations of Divine Love by Julian of Norwich
The Rosen Method by Marilyn Davis
Sacred Agriculture: The Alchemy of Biodynamics by Dennis Klocek
The Search for Spirituality: Our Global Quest for a Spiritual Life by Ursula King
The Seven Storey Mountain by Thomas Merton
Stories of Spiritual Transformation: The Fulfillment of Kundalini Process by Joan Shivarpita Harrigan
Theology of Peace by Paul Tillich
Unbinding: The Grace Beyond Self by Kathleen Dowling Singh
The Universal Christ by Richard Rohr
Welcoming the Unwelcome by Pema Chodron

Authors noted by participants:

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 Sri Aurobindo
 Meyer Baba
 Cynthia Bourgeault
 Barbara Brown Taylor
 Dianne Connelly
 Eknath Easwaran
 Diana Fosha
 Matthew Fox
 Rene Girard
 Etty Hillesum
 Noam Elimelech
 Carl Jung
 Jack Kornfield
 Krishnamurti
 Brother Lawrence
 Czeslaw Milosz
 Mary Oliver
 Christine Painter
 Bill Plotkin
 Rilke
 Richard Rohr
 Rumi

Starhawk
Thich Nhat Hanh
Eckhart Tolle
Desmond Tutu

Topics:

Concern for Racism and Non-Violence:

<https://www.diocesewma.org/vision-ministry-statements/beloved-community-commission/>

<https://www.facebook.com/belovedcommunityWMA/>

Ibram Kendi's work and Howard Thurman's talks.

Book: My Grandmother's hands, by Resmaa Menakem

Quotations: A few mentioned by participants

The Buddhist "Loving Kindness" prayer:

"May all beings be happy, may all beings be free . . ."

Psalm 121: "I lift up my eyes to the mountains from where shall come my help." In Hebrew, the translation of "from where" means "from nothing." It is like the unknown in Rosen and this Psalm helps me to stay with not knowing.

Psalm 118: "Out of my distress I called on God." In Hebrew this means I called God from my own narrow space, and God answered me in God's space. When I become aware and am in touch with my own narrow space, my muscle tension, God meets me in that space.

"Two Wings"

Observe the qualities of expansion and contraction in the fingers of your hands;

Surely after the closing of the first comes the opening.

If the fingers were always closed or always open,

The owner would be crippled.

Your movement is governed by these two qualities;

They are as necessary to you as two wings are to a bird."

Rumi

The word is like the nest

And meaning is the bird.

The body is the riverbed,

And spirit, the rolling water."

Rumi

"And the day came when the risk to remain tight in a bud was more painful than the risk it took to blossom."

Anais Nin

"The world isn't as it seems,
there is much more than meets the eye.
I will know when I'm ready to know".
I give thanks for help unknown already on its way."
A Native American prayer.

"There is no escape from being incarnate."

"We are all here in our bodies!"

"I am committed to supporting people to reclaim themselves, finding the true self".

"You cannot be who you are unless you are fully in your body!"

This work is about trusting the not-knowing, learning so I make sure the sense of not-knowing does not stop me.

"If you meet your demons, you will find that they are angels."
Anonymous

"The therapeutic process does not begin until the will of the patient yields to the Primary Respiration" (the pulse of Universe or Spirit).
Dr. Roland Becker

"Your issues are in your tissues."
Carolyn Myss

3. Written Survey

Spirituality and Rosen Method: Written Survey Questions

Before your telephone interview, we would like to have more information about your experience. Please respond to these background questions and return them to me electronically or by mail so that I receive them at least one day prior to our scheduled interview time. Your responses will be treated confidentially and anonymously and shared among the interviewing team and in the printed study without using your name.

Please read and respond to these questions with an open mind and open heart. You are invited to take time and to reflect, as there can be no right or wrong answer.

(NOTE: We use these abbreviations: RM=Rosen Method, RMB = Rosen Method Bodywork, RMM=Rosen Method Movement)

Spiritual Background

1. a.) Did you have a spiritual practice, or did you consider yourself on a spiritual path, before you began to experience RMB/RMM?

Yes No

(Note: A spiritual practice could be within a specific faith tradition, for example, Jewish, Catholic, Buddhist, Protestant, Hindu, Sufi, Quaker, Muslim, etc. Or it could be a meditation practice (whether individual or group), Native American, Nature-based, Non-Dual, in a Goddess tradition, or a more independent spiritual practice approach, for example: meditation and yoga classes, or other spiritual study group, or a combination of practices.)

b.) If your response above was yes, please describe.

c.) Do you consider yourself a spiritual seeker?

Yes No

2. a.) When you began your RMB/RMM training, did you work in a formal role in any faith community, religious organization, meditation group, or other spiritual study group?

Yes No

b.) Please write in your role: minister, priest, nun, formal religious education teacher, meditation teacher, other

3. a.) After you completed RMB/RMM training did you work in either a professional or a lay/volunteer role within a faith community?

Yes No

b.) Please specify your role: Minister, priest, spiritual director, pastoral counselor, lay clergy, meditation teacher, other

c.) Do you currently work in a spiritual setting?

Yes No

Rosen Method Background

4. How long have you practiced RMB/RMM? If you are retired now, how long did you practice?

- 1-5 years
- 5-10 years
- 10-15 years
- 15-20 years
- more than >20 years

5. Specify all of your RM roles. (Please check all that apply)

- RMB Practitioner
- RMB Teacher
- RMB workshop leader
- RMM training teacher
- RMM teacher

6. a.) What drew you to study and explore RMB/RMM?

b.) Did your spirituality/faith practice have any bearing on your seeking bodywork and specifically RMB/RMM?

Yes No

Observations and Personal Interpretation

7. In RMB and RMM, we are working with the body, and yet often people indicate they reach a spiritual dimension. Some describe it as “non-ordinary awareness”, or expanded consciousness.

a.) Have you observed something like this in yourself when receiving RMB or participating in RMM?

Yes No

b.) Have you observed an experience like this in clients?

Yes No

8. For RMB Practitioners:

a.) As a practitioner, when you touch, do you feel a sense of deep respect, reverence, and appreciation for the clients you touch?

Yes No

b). Do you interpret this within the framework of your spiritual tradition or practice?

Yes No

c). If there is another word or phrase that better expresses your experience, please provide it.

9. For RMM teachers:

a.) As a teacher, when you are leading and experiencing movement, do you feel a sense of deep respect, reverence, appreciation for the clients moving with you?

Yes No

b.) Do you interpret this within the framework of your spiritual tradition or practice?

Yes No

c.) If there is another word that better expresses your experience, please provide it.

Client Experiences

10. Have clients in your practice or movement groups, described spiritual experiences to you (while in your practice or movement groups)?

Yes No

11. a.) Have you referred a client to a spiritual director, for meditation classes, or for other kinds of spiritual guidance?

Yes No

b.) Have you referred a client for guidance regarding something you or the client perceived as a kundalini awakening or spiritual emergence issue?

Yes No

Written questionnaire feedback

If you wish to share other aspects of your experience of the connection/intersections of your spiritual life and your Rosen Method Bodywork or Movement practice, please feel free to do so in additional pages attached to the questionnaire.

Please return your responses to me at

Thank you for participating and sharing your insights.

I look forward to speaking with you on _____.

4. Interview Protocol

In-Person Telephone Interview Questions

Date: _____ Interviewer Name _____

Interviewee Name, Telephone, and E-mail

Name: _____

Telephone: _____

Email: _____

Thank you for participating.

Let me remind you that everything in this study is confidential. Your name will not be used ever in the printed result of the study. We respect your anonymity, and I will not attribute to you anything that you share. We anticipate this interview can be completed in approximately a one hour-time commitment (1 hour). I am happy to schedule additional time if we need it or if we are interrupted. These questions will ask about your opinions from when you received RMB work, during your training and when you have given RMB sessions as a practitioner or provided Rosen Method Movement classes.

I would like to record this session for my own recollection process; do I have your permission to do this?

Yes No

Just a reminder: when we are discussing spiritual experiences, we are not limiting ourselves to what we perceive as positive.

Sometimes spiritual experiences may be felt as negative/painful/or traumatic when they occur and are only seen in retrospect as openings to our growth.

(NOTE: We use these abbreviations: RM=Rosen Method, RMB = Rosen Method Bodywork, RMM=Rosen Method Movement)

1. Do you recall any spiritual experiences from childhood, and if so, can you provide an example?

Yes No

Example:

2. Have you ever had a similar type of experience occur in the context of a Rosen session or movement class? Yes No

Describe:

3. During the time you have been involved with RMB or RMM, have you had any experiences you would describe as spiritual emergence or spiritual awakening experiences? Yes No

Please elaborate:

4. a.) In RMB or RMM have you experienced non-ordinary awareness or expanded consciousness?

Yes No

b.) Have you observed this in clients? Yes No

c.) How frequently does this occur?

- Often
- Occasionally
- Rarely

Probe: How can one reach spirit through the body?

5. a.) Do you find that your spiritual practice helps support your work as a Rosen Method Practitioner or RMM teacher? Yes No

b.) Explain:

6. a.) Do you find that the support of experiencing RMB/RMM helps you in your spiritual practice, strengthening, sustaining, supporting your spiritual growth? Yes No

7. We are exploring the qualities of RMB that provide support for spiritual awareness. Which of the following list do you resonate with. Note: interviewer will read through each word.

For example:

- presence Yes No
- touch Yes No
- listening Yes No
- non-judgement Yes No
- connection to increased body awareness Yes No
- self-reflection Yes No

enhanced trust in intuition	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>
capacity for connection to others	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>
experience of joy	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>
experience of release or freedom	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>

Other _____

Comment, if desired:

8. Many people come to Rosen Method having experienced suffering. Some overlook this or minimize this and may not “see or feel it” because it is blocked.

a.) Has the practice of RMB or the experience of RMM provided you with tools to address suffering in your own life? Yes No

b.) In your RMB or RMM, do you find your spiritual practice helps you to be present to suffering? Yes No

Comment, if desired:

9. Some people mention that the embodiment learned through RMB and RMM helps them to pay attention and sustain awareness regarding surrender and letting go. Have you found Rosen Method useful to support this type of awareness in your life?

Yes No

Comment:

10. Have there been changes in your spiritual life--for example, in your spiritual practice, spiritual group affiliation, or your experience of your own spiritual development--that emerged after you began working as a practitioner?

Yes No

Comment:

11. Is there anything else you wish to share? Yes No

12. Do you have a favorite quote or book that helps you describe your understanding or experience of spirituality? Yes No

Thank you for sharing your insights.