Unlock Healing Through Movement With Mandy Muenzer: Dance, Breath, And Presence Transcript

(Transcripts are generated by AI and may contain errors)

Introduction to healing through movement

What if healing could be achieved through movement, voice, and expression? There is so much healing we see out in nature through animals getting up from a nap.

What do they do? They stretch and move their body. They might shake if they have just experienced trauma of trying to escape from the predator or if a bird hits a window, what's the first thing they'll do is they shake.

We have the ability to do it too. And our next guest on Everyday Ancestral is Mandy Munzer. Mandy is on a mission to facilitate personal and intergenerational healing for as many people as possible through dance, somatic movement and spiritual psychology.

So I'm very excited for you to get to witness and experience Mandy here today on everyday ancestral. Please enjoy Mandy munzer, Mandy. Thank you so much for joining me.

It's been a minute since I last saw you. I know. I think the last time I saw you, you were in an Austin Powers costume, and we were dancing together. Which is a great place to start, actually, because, something that I'm very aware of is, as we become adults, we get very serious.

And I, think a lot of people associate dance and any movement that's beyond exercise as Too playful. I'm an adult. Sure. So how can one find more play in movement?

Yeah, yeah, absolutely. And I see this all the time and I love the point you're making. We get into this like adult mode. Like, okay, I've got to do all my adult responsibilities.

and so I can't have fun while doing that. It's like a paradox for our brains. And it's true to a certain extent, because I will admit when I get in like my airy-fairy, you know, like, woo, I just want to dance.

I want just to sing. Just want have fun. Brilliant ideas come to me and I'm having a great time, but I'll say sometimes then I forget to pay a bill. So this is not, a complete oversight by people who feel like, oh no, I need to be serious because I needed to stay focused, and I had to stand on track with everything.

But I think it's a balance, you know, it is a balanced of those left brain and right brain functions and finding a marriage between the two that can, literally and figuratively, dance together.

Yeah, that makes a lot of sense. I mean, dance is such an ancestral practice. It's, I would assume it's probably one of the oldest ancestral practices.

That and eating, right? I, mean really. But I feel like, well, actually have you ever studied the history? Do you know how dance has kind of shown up historically?

Absolutely. Well, I was actually a world arts and cultures major at UCLA as an undergraduate, and this was an enlightening experience for me. I didn't go into UCLA thinking that that's what I'm going to major in, but I started taking a few classes in that department and fell in love.

And I had been taking dance my whole life and never was taught that it could be sacred. Interesting. What do you mean by that? So it's, you know, it was always fun and fun is sacred, don't get me wrong.

But, in America, and the United States, a lot of dance studios, It's about being cute or it is about entertaining or

wearing flashy costumes and making people go, wow, look at their kicks, their technique.

Ballet can be very, very serious and you're telling a story, but it's very important that you put your toes and have your arms exactly perfect. There's a lot of commercialism in the United States with dance.

All of a sudden, I'm at UCLA taking these cultural dance classes and learning that so many cultures, dance is the central focus of their religion or and a practice that helps bring the community together and it's more about bringing the Community together with these folk dances than it is about, you know, showing off for each other and not that, I wasn't always showing off in my young dance life, but that was a focus.

It was like, how entertaining can I be? Even things like So You Think You Can Dance or America's Got Talent, they're amazing shows and we love those shows.

We love watching the dancers and there can be some very sacred performances. But it is mainly geared towards entertainment versus a religious practice or or everybody dancing together type of a feeling.

Dance as ancestral and sacred practice

It's more of like we're watching one or two talented people and not everybody's a part of that. So I've been really interested in seeing how we can bring everybody into the dance, not make it so much like, oh, talented people versus non-talented people, but to really help everyone find the dancer within themselves, because I really do believe that dancing is healing and that dance connects us with our soul, helps us connect us our play and sense of fun.

And that that is one of the antidotes, is what I was meaning to say, remedies to our current situation where there's disconnectedness from the body, especially the more we get into technology.

And I think for centuries, though, the mind has been valued over the bottom. That's not wrong or bad. The mind is an amazing feature of the human existence, but I think that sometimes the body has been undervalued and the wisdom of Yeah, for sure.

How do you think, because I think you're spot on specifically here in America, but could be elsewhere as well. We're taught at a very young age to do the show me dance or, you know, kind of like, like I always think of, perform like a monkey, here's a quarter, do your act, cause I wanna be entertained.

Yeah. But like, so I feel like we're taught that from a very young age of that sort of dancing for attention, which I think to your point becomes very ego-based and we get very concerned about how we look and how appear to others.

So from your experience, how does one leave the ego behind in dance? How do we let go of ego when we do physical movement around dance. Yeah, well, it's a process, I think, for a lot of people.

I've worked with a lotta people that their first class with me, they're terrified to let go of that self-consciousness. And they do feel like they are gonna be judged.

So one of the agreements that I have at the beginning of my classes is, This is a love zone, this is not a non-judgment zone. We're all here to experience our dance and express authentically and It's actually harder, I think, for people not to judge themselves more than it is to judges others.

But I thinks it helps to like voice that in the room so that everyone can kind of agree that, yeah, you know what, this is silly. We're not here to just judge each other, we're just here have fun.

And then when everybody kind hears that that's an agreement in this space, it help to create safety. It's still, even after doing that, it's not foolproof.

I really have to really look around the room and notice what's going on for people and try my best to use different tactics to help them feel more and more safe, whether that's just like a calm, compassionate voice or maybe it is a moment of self-deprecation where I'm like making fun of myself for a minute or I do something really silly to just help people see the range at which they can not care about how it looks.

I'll say things like, don't focus on how looks, focus how good it feels to move. That helps people take the attention off of how that looks but one of the main words that we can use here and what we're talking about is presence, not performance.

Yeah. So that helps me so much. I like that presence. That's something that we're losing a lot of with our current screen habits and our modern mode of modern living.

We're missing out on that present in a moment. Because I even think back to my mom, we would have events and she would always be so hell bent on capturing them on camera.

And I'm like, but you're not actually in the event. You're capturing the vent. I think it started back then when we had those Insta cameras. Of course, now it's extended to these computers in our pockets, which you now have access to the entire world.

So how does someone, well, let's discuss movement as how it serves as a therapeutic tool. Because clearly there's a lot of people, as you mentioned, struggling to be present, but we also have other things going on, traumas, sadness, you know, emotions that are really like stuck in our bodies and they're not getting expressed.

We use that term of like burnt toast when they do finally come out, right? Oh, sure. So how can someone who's not expressing their feelings who's had trauma, how can they use movement and dance?

Yeah, so important. One of the first steps that you learn in mindfulness techniques as well is the breath. And the breathe really is a foundation for all of movement as And when we connect breath with our movement, there can be some powerful things that start to occur.

So even if it was something as simple as, and I think people tend to feel a little less scared if we call it movement versus dance. All of a sudden, dance brings up all of that performance anxiety, whereas movement is like, oh, okay, well, yeah, I just moved while I was talking, like my shoulders did this.

that's movement. So just focusing on the breath in here, you could do it with me. James, go ahead and take a breath and then just let your body move on exhale, however it feels good to you.

Yeah, I could feel my shoulders really like wanna move and relax. And of course now my neck feels all like rubbery. Take another deep breath, and just keep following that thread.

Yeah, you closed your eyes, your neck kind of waddled to the side. You could exaggerate that by then taking that even further by allowing your body to continue to move like a ripple effect after whatever happened very organically with your breath.

And just in that, do you feel a little more calm or a bit more centered? Oh yeah, definitely I feel more in my body. I mean, I think that's a beautiful like in, right?

Is connecting the breath and letting that depth of breath kind of take you through your body and if anything too, i think right away I noticed, oh, my shoulders were tight.

You know, so I immediately went into my buddy upon taking the breathe. Yes, yes, that's a very key part too, is that the breath is helping us to become present to what's happening in the body.

So a lot of times at the beginning of class, I'm cueing the breathe and helping participants to really notice what they're noticing in their body from head to toe.

Oh yeah, okay, feel a sensation in back of my neck. I feel a creak over here in like the side of my shoulder at the base of neck. And then I'm helping cue participants to keep breathing into those places and spaces where they feel constriction, where the feel tightness, whether they're feeling tense, and then to eventually coax them into letting that move, you know, roll the shoulder.

wiggle the head like a snake. And you mentioned like they're closing their eyes sometimes so then that way maybe they are not looking at other people, they aren't comparing themselves to other.

Yes, exactly. But now we're talking about it as though someone went to a class, but really this is something someone could do in the privacy of their own home, right?

Yeah, I keep saying like when I'm teaching club, absolutely. You can do this anytime. It's obviously free. Your breath is free or your body is right there with you.

Um, you can take literally three seconds just to take not just a deep breath, but allow your to move with the breath. So that's kind of the little extra layer, because everyone always says, take a deep breath, but they don't necessarily say, Take a Deep Breath and let your body kind like let go.

And shaking is a somatic technique that is very common in the animal kingdom. You see tons of animals get up and shake off really quick, whether it's just after a nap to kind, all right, I'm up, Or if it's actually like a predator, you know, that tried to chase them and then they have a little bit of trauma stored in their body, but let's say they safely escaped the threat, then you'll see zebras, antelopes, all kinds of different gazelles do this whole like shake off.

Letting go of ego and performance

pattern in their behavior. And that's, scientists believe that that is them shaking out some of the fear response, the trauma, then the nervous system response.

So we can do that too. Right. I have heard that before. That's so interesting. You just mentioned somatic and I know that something you specialize in.

Can you talk about what is sometic movement? Yeah, so soma is the body. That's the root word is somah. And so, somatic is just meaning embodied approach to these therapeutic methodologies.

So, it's I'd say it's like the combination of mindfulness practices with the body is the simplest way to kind of explore somatics and somatic healing.

You'll see things labeled sommatic healing or sometic arts. Even massage therapy can be put in that bucket, but I'm mainly using it with dance movement.

But it is technically different from dance, right? In the sense that dance might have a connotation or an association with it. Whereas somatic could be any movement.

It doesn't have to be with music. Any expression, right? Exactly, exactly. So, you know, even sometimes I'll have clients just, dance with their fingers as a way to just get movement going without it being this whole thing where they feel like they have to have like a skill set or technique.

There's all kinds of things that combine guided meditation too with somatics and healing and breath and breathing techniques. So all of that is encompassed with Somatics.

And I play around with, it's almost like a having like, a painter with their palette. It's like I have, you know, breath, I like to call it breathing technique.

I'm trying to train my brain out of saying breath work because I don't love the word work in there. So just breathing techniques mixed with movement techniques, mixed some of my psychology background.

One activity that I find so valuable for myself that i love to do with my clients is on shadow work. So getting to dance in the shadow self, meaning like there's plenty of days where Mandy wakes up and I'm just like kind of feeling funky and now I'll do you know a little bit of movement and it helps me to get into a better space within myself.

But specifically, oh shoot, I lost my thought. What was I saying? You're talking about the shadow self. Shadow, yes. So sometimes I can't quite shake that funk or there's something that has happened that really disturbed my peace or I'm just having trouble Like, you know, in psychology, we have this idea of like the authentic true self or the higher self, but then we also have all these other parts of us, and none of those other part aren't us.

But they're just not necessarily the expression of the, is when we're feeling our best self if you will. So it's like we're trying not to make any of those other parts of ourselves wrong or bad because it is all part of the full range of human experience.

And at the same time, no one really loves to hang out in depression. No one loves hangout in anger all the time. I mean, you could argue some people love doing that, but I don't think they really love that.

They might be trapped in it. It's become their comfort zone. I mean, in many ways that's true for people across the board. We have not only an obesity epidemic, but we have a kind of couch potato epidemic where people are so used to not using their body for movements beyond function that They're just, it's almost like they're the 10 person from Wizard of Oz.

Like they need their joints to be oiled. Cause for many people, the last time they danced was probably prom night or even their wedding night. And even then it was like a slow dance, potentially very stilted, right?

So it sounds like maybe a first step is breath, but where does one go? Like what are some good first steps that a person can take? Who's feeling that kind of like rusty body and who's, feeling intimidated by, you know, watching Look Who's Dancing or whatever those shows are and just feeling like, well, they have to be a high performer, because maybe they're a higher performer in life, so they had to a be high-performer in everything, and so, their not even giving themselves the grace to just take a first step.

That's true, too. And I love your example of we are, as a species, we're hardwired to crave fat and sugar and rest as much as we possibly can. I mean, if you really actually look at a lot of the animals, like even our I mean, our domesticated animals aren't as good of an example because they're kind of forced to stay at home.

But even I went on a safari, I was very fortunate to go on the safaria and I'm amazed how many animals, they are just grazing, lying in the pasture, chilling, hanging out.

They're just taking it all in. And then when they need to hunt, they go do that. But the amount of time they actually spend hunting is a lot less than they spend chilling.

Right. I reflected on how It's not necessarily, you know, a bad thing, but we're hardwired to just chill also. And so there is this interesting, I think, relationship where the rubber kind of hits the road a lot with we are telling ourselves we need to do all of these things to either be productive or contribute to society or to keep up with the Joneses or whatever we're telling ourselves.

But our to-do lists become quite lengthy, especially I think in the United States. At least I know I've fallen prey to this idea that I need to be doing things all of the time.

I question that. Well, how much of this is just what we've come up with and what decided is how we're supposed to live and how much of this is counter to what our nervous systems and our bodies really need and want.

Obviously, I'm not suggesting we be couch potatoes all the time because clearly there's tons of negative health benefits to that or negative consequences to And at the same time, I think there's two pockets of people.

There's people that are in overdrive and doing, doing doing to the point where then they are overcompensating by you know, not resting enough and then reaching for sugar and different caffeine and all of these things to keep going on this hamster wheel.

And then there are this other pocket of people where they are sitting on the couch for long periods of time and just not moving at all and not doing it all.

But in both camps, there's there negative health consequences. And both are basic, are disembodied to a large degree. Both are disconnected from this, the present really.

So one's avoid, you know, kind of avoiding the president by sitting and the other is avoiding present by doing. It's still avoidance. And I love that word, too.

Sometimes I play with that, like, oh, what avoidant dance am I in? What am avoiding right now? How could I express that through dance? Well, that's interesting.

So you actually sometimes, whereas someone might sit there and try to figure out a problem, you're actually like, what, You almost frame it as like oh, I'm in a dance for now.

I mean, either in dance with indecision or I am in the dance over activity. Yeah. How can I, shift that? Is that sound, like is that kind of how your brain kind, labels it?

I love using the Dance metaphor as much as possible. And that was kind what I was actually, close out what I was saying about the shadow dancing. For example, there was one time where I doing this on myself and I allow myself to put on a song that's moody or sad piano music.

Sometimes I'll literally type in sadpiano to Spotify. Then I let myself dance in this moody, constricted, I just want to be in the fetal position way to help that part of me that just wants to curl up in a ball and not go outside, express itself.

Because Mandy on the whole tends to someone who is extroverted, who likes to talk to people, but I do have this part to me, that sometimes just roll up on a ball and hide.

In psychology, when we allow these different aspects of self to be expressed and to explored, there's healing that occurs and there is integration that occur.

aspects of self at the conference table of you can kind of come to consensus and work together to move forward in your life.

Breath, somatics, and body awareness

So in the shadow work that I'll do one time, I kept feeling and you have to get into sort of this meditative state where you're just allowing the movement to lead you and that is a little more advanced.

I admit that because I've allowed myself to go there so many times, this is like comfortable for me. But a lot of times I have to like really give people a runway to this and, and baby steps to get them to, to place.

I kept running into, I keep walking. Here I'll show you really quick. Um, it kept like taking three steps and then stopping, then taking steps, three and stopping.

And it's like I was hitting a That was the dance, that's how it was expressing in your body? That's the, dance that I was doing. And I just, it's like I allowing my body to do the Dance.

And I wasn't, I was really trying to turn off my critical thinking. It's like, no, my body's just doing this thing and then I'm observing myself doing the stance.

And all of a sudden this metaphor just like poof, popped right up into clarity that I doing that to show myself that three steps forward and then backtracking.

And then three step forward, and back tracking. It was a reflection for me, this gets into deeper psychology, but it wasn't my job to judge myself for doing that, it was my to pause, breathe and go, huh, that's interesting.

that's what I'm kind of doing right now in my career, or, you know, that is what i'm doing in right my relationship. And to then journal about it and reflect on it, and allow myself to kind put some puzzle pieces together, not from a place of judgment or shame, but from place curiosity and a Just like, hmm, could I choose to do this differently?

It's okay if I don't, but what could do if were to something differently. And then it's called compassionate inquiry. So it is a technique in psychology to really just be with a pattern.

Dance can reveal patterns to the to anybody who wants to do like shadow work or um dance therapy work that then can help you put puzzle pieces together in your in and keep the good stuff coming.

So hit subscribe and stay curious. This is so interesting because in many ways the dance is revealing some data for the person to then contemplate or kind of process, right?

But do you ever actually find the feeling in the body and then let it integrate and process right then and there? Because I have to imagine if, let's just say, you're feeling stuck or depressed or something that weighing you down and you actually so in that movement you were just showing us you we're kind of taking a step forward a couple steps forward and then you are moving your body back almost like you said like hitting a wall what what if you then physically like imagine yourself busting through that wall or doing all these different things do you think that would then take that energy that's feeling so stuck to a whole other level that you can actually tap into the transformation without even going to your head, where you could just transform the energy in your body and thus break through.

You should be a movement therapist, James. Seriously, that's brilliant. Absolutely. I could have chosen in that moment to not go to my journal. And I think that that would actually be better, or it would have been a better opportunity for me as a movement person to say, well, what would it feel like to just walk through that wall and experience what that feels like in my body to go beyond that threshold.

So I, I mean, it's just brilliant, It makes me think, so there was a show back in the day called Six Feet Under, and it always hit me because there is this very early on, I think it was like the second episode, one of the main characters is talking about how his father has just died and how he feels intensely, but he doesn't know how to express it, he just feels very dead inside.

He's telling this story, though, about these women, I think it was some Greek island, something like that, where he… I can't remember if he heard the story or he witnessed it, but either way, what these woman were doing is they were on the shores and they're mourning their lost loved ones who had died at sea.

And so they were at the shore and they crying to the wind and to ocean and were heaving their body back and forth and doing very much like a trauma or like sadness dance of undulating their bodies.

And he was talking about how he saw them doing this and how was scared by it. He was scare by their movements and I think I think for most people who are closed off, I thinks movement does scare them.

And I have to wonder, well, love your thoughts on that, but I wonder if it's because it works so well that it is scary. You know, it's such a release, but what are your thoughts on that of like, you know for that person who feels like their trauma is so big and it so much bigger than them and its in their body and and It's it dictating how they walk how They talk how, they show up in the world how does that?

person even begin to shift. I really hear you. So many people, so many are walking around with holding, you know, holding all of that energy and they haven't had a safe place to express that.

And to be honest, that's part of A deeper vision that I have for our world is safer spaces and more of them. So grief spaces, like one of my visions that just automatically brings a smile to my face is like that it would be just as common as going to the gym.

You know, it's like in America, oh, I'm going to the gym, be back in an hour, you know that it would be just as common to say I am going into my grief space or I have this idea for this wellness center that includes some gym aspects, but then really branches out into all of these other modalities that can help people explore these different ways of being able to express and being a little to feel.

And also knowing that other people are doing that and it's not like weird. I think right now it still in siloed spaces are like, oh, the hippie dippy people do that or.

Right, there's a lot of judgment around it. Yeah. From outsiders, I mean, not from the people in it, of course, but the outsiders. And then there's the whole, that's a whole other conversation I probably shouldn't open up, But I was really struck by Prince Harry's story in his book, Spare.

where he talks about feeling grief for the first time, actually feeling for his mother's death. So for 20 years he went without crying over his Mother, and he felt extreme shame and guilt that he couldn't cry for His Mother's passing.

But there's so much that goes into that. There's British culture that is very stoic and they don't feel even more so than in America or in the United States.

And it was plant medicine. It was an ayahuasca ceremony that helped him crack that open. I think there's abuse of plant medicine in our culture right now, but I also think that there are situations where it radically helps somebody like Prince Harry.

It helped him open that up, crack that open so he could feel, and that set him on a healing journey that then helped to really work that out. You had personal experience with plant medicines?

So I did, I have once done ayahuasca and also one called San Pedro, but I had already done so much therapy in my life that I don't think there was, it wasn't so radical of like, oh, all of a sudden I got to feel because I had, I think, already felt so much.

I have been in therapy many, many times since childhood. What I find fascinating about plant medicine, though, and I'm curious for your experience, is that sometimes it shows up physically.

Oh, sure. You start moving your bodies in ways that you historically haven't. that seem out of the blue. So did you experience that where your body was kind of moving sort of uncontrollably?

Like you just, it's almost like, yes, you were in control of it, but you had to do it. It was almost, like you couldn't not move. There was a little bit of like this, I found myself stretching a lot and like kind writhing a bit like snake-like and I felt an energy literally kind of scan my whole body.

It felt like something was like a scanner was inside of me and it was, like, or it you know, the guide for my experience said, oh, that was the Aya. You know?

That was AYA. It was like Ayo was literally going through my entire system and kind of like looking and checking things out. But also maybe was healing me while it was doing that.

Because there's always something more to, you I feel like you can always find more healing with different things in your life and every day is happening.

But all to say, I didn't go into, even though I love dance, there wasn't music on, or it was like this like spa-like music where I was. So it's very like ethereal and in the background, but had they started playing like tribal drumming, who knows what would have happened, you know, really come alive in that way.

I think music has a lot to do with it for me. Well, that's a really interesting point that some people would say that the one thing that we've gotten right as humans and that is truly universal is music.

That we really tapped into a communication expression source with music that would transcend any time and space. Um, and I have to wonder from your experience working with people and then also just your studies, like what role has music played and, are there beats or are, is there certain types of music that brings out different things in your body and dance?

Oh, yeah. Speaking of the drumming, I think that's very ancestral.

Shadow work and emotional release through movement

There's so much history with druming and so it's history of drumning being a part of ceremony. Sorry to interrupt you, but do you think drummin or these instruments that are very basic and like you said, ancestral that have been around forever, do think those tap something different than let's say, a violin that's kind of more, you know, something that was created much later.

Yeah. I think they're probably… Do you think it's just frequencies, and it doesn't matter what instrument, it is just about the frequency? Well, that is a good point.

It's probably a little bit of a both and. I don't know this information, like I haven't studied this, so. But I'm kind of just tapping into. kind of that basic wisdom of it feels like those boom, boom.

I mean, you think about it, it makes me think of the heartbeat and that's the first organ that forms in our womb or in the womb was the heart beat and the drum reflects that and there's like a connection with Earth that I feel like happens with the boom boom that helps like drop us into connection.

But to your point, that's a frequency. So if you're playing the violin and it's that, I mean, automatically my hand went up here to express what a violin sounds like.

Whereas my body went like this to expressed what the drum feels like, so there, necessarily more powerful than the other, although I will say I maybe, I gravitate towards more of that drum.

I think I would, the violin feels like something I wouldn't want to spend like a ton of time in it, more would be accents. It just depends, like there's that dancer, Lindsay something, that dances around with her violin and it's just extraordinary and she's incredible.

Because have you ever heard Terrence Howard, the actor, he talks about that there's this kind of Earth's natural rhythms and he talked about the 432 Hertz.

That is just a fundamental aspect of the universe and that when you actually have that frequency, when it's part of your life regularly, that you actually can shift not only from a…

Basically, he suggests that, you can sift shift. Basically he says, You can, shift on a cellular level through that frequency. Yeah. Have you ever experienced that in your, you know, when you're working with groups and dance of like, that you can actually manipulate how free or kind of how they move based on what music you choose to play?

And then I guess I follow- Absolutely. So you do notice that. The music is hugely, hugely important in my opinion. And I spend a ton of time scouring Spotify and Apple Music for the right songs and putting them in a certain order that will create a journey and that we'll evoke a certainly response.

I'm pretty intentional about like, this song is going to really help them get wild or this songs going help then tap into such deep levels of self-compassion that they will release something or potentially experience crying.

I love that. So in a sense then, going with this idea of the things that someone can do at home to kind of help start freeing themselves, get in their body.

One of, obviously we mentioned breath. We didn't talk about voice much, but I want to cover that after this one. After, just as soon as I make this point, But I think next we should cover voice, so breath, then obviously music and using the music that let's just say if you wanna, if your feeling very small and very dark, or like you said earlier, you're in your shadow that maybe you choose music that is more shadow like to allow you to express.

So you can use that music to manipulate either in kind of honoring the feeling you have or projecting the filling you want. Yes. Absolutely. Those are two ways that they can do it, but then how can we utilize voice?

Well, Fairly simply, by just allowing yourself to make noise. So when I stretch, not only for myself, but for my clients, I really encourage them to just go, ah, ooh.

Like literally do whatever feels good, there is a little bit of an on-ramp for that. And a lot of people are like not ready for and I have to really kind of go, it's okay, like just try it out once, see how it feels.

Because a lotta people have been told to sit down and be quiet so many times that they're very conditioned to never make a sound. But I think also, you know, to get a into what we, like when we're sensual, we make sound.

So whether it's with food, mm, this tastes so good, ah, you know, We tend to express that. Now, some people don't because of that taboo thing. And then also, you know, like, let's go to the bedroom.

When people allow themselves to make sounds, or, a lot of people make sound even if they don't even want to, they just end up making a sound when they climax because that's just…

all that can happen at that moment. So it's a very natural expression, you know, of being human. And when we put a lid on that, it represses that and gets trapped in the body.

The issues are in tissues is probably a phrase you've heard in some of these somatic conversations. So the issues live in the tissues and I really feel like when we you know when, we feel, like crying and we stop or we, feel making a sound and, and stop it can continue to repress things and then that gets that, gets held in, the body.

What's the difference between like transcendental dance or ecstatic dance and Let me also kind of, cause you mentioned like the release and something I sometimes see from people that do ecstatic dance is they'll talk about how they have orgasms on the floor.

And sometimes it just, it's like, I guess maybe cause I haven't experienced that. So I kind sometimes feel like well, is that just the show me gene? Like, Is that the kind look at me, look me Gene?

Or can someone literally have the orgasmic effect that they would have having sex, but have it through dance? Yeah, I think it's possible, but I'd think to your point, like some of that could be the show me thing.

Or look at me, or try to impress. I mean, there's so much psychology, right? Sex is performance. Yeah. There could a lot going on there. However, genuinely, Like let's say somebody's alone in a room with themselves and just music.

Breathing alone and certain breathing patterns can stimulate ourselves to a point of some sort of version of a climax. Repetitive movement. can create that.

And with breathing and the diaphragm and movement in a repetitive way, and if someone's mind is also in the space where they can allow that, I do think it's possible.

I can't say that I've experienced that myself. I think I have experienced what you would say a different kind of like dance orgasm, if you will, where it's like I'm just so in this space of pure elation that, I mean, all time and space

suspends itself.

And that's like a different kind of, it's not me actually having a physical orgasm, but it it me just feeling one with the universe and in a way that it is very like transcendental.

So what is the difference between transcendent and ecstatic dance? Ecstatic Dance? Well, they could be used interchangeably, But my understanding is that ecstatic dance started in Hawaii.

It was a label that was given to having music play or even live drumming or live music and people just getting to move however you want. And it's just like go for it, let the music do its thing and then sometimes people start doing like contact improv while they're ecstatic dancing.

It's free form dance, but it just a label that got put on it specifically out of Hawaii and a group of people that wanted to start this movement. But then prior to that, there's been all kinds of different movements that have come out of what you'd call it conscious dance or transcendental dance.

I'm not sure specifically with that label, because I teach a modality called transcend dance, which is definitely trying to capture the transcendentallism aspect of meditation of like going to this place of oneness.

but it isn't called transcendental dance. Anyway, there's literally thousands. Like when I first started dabbling in this, I thought like, oh, they're probably two or three modalities.

And I was like oh just kidding. There's like thousands and thousands of different, modalities that people have created. There's conferences where you can just do free-form conscious dance type stuff all week long by, you know, hundreds of practitioners.

So it's more popular than we realize. It's just you have to kind of go down that rabbit hole. Now you're a mom. How are you teaching your kids about their body and movement?

I am not a mom, but I'm a very devoted aunt. I saw those kids, I thought they were yours. Sorry about that. Those are your niece and nephew then? Yeah, my niece & nephew.

Very close with them. From a young age I would turn on music and just help show them both. how important it was just to let your body move and get free and have fun.

I think a lot of people do that. And to your point, it's like, oh, we're doing it with kids, but then we grow up and we have to grow. But I also do try to, like I even buy books about like, you know, what is my body feeling right now to try to help them put those connectors together.

Music, voice, and ecstatic expression

I think that's also important with eating, there's a lot of bridges that we can cross with movement and dance and it helps you to be in touch with your body, therefore, it's going to automatically help you in other areas of your life when it comes to anything with the body.

So with eating, dance can even be helpful with that because you're helping to actually tune in and be present with, you know, your food and understand what it feels like to me full or what feels to like be hungry.

just different sensations in the body and training our kids but ourselves to understand what those sensations mean and what signals the Body is giving us, I think is huge and can help with so many aspects of health.

And when I feel like You know, it's actually a very common feeling. There's like a lump in your throat. It's, like, oh, I need to cry. I don't know when I'm gonna cry, don' know how that's gonna happen.

And even for me with as much allowance of crying and, because I also trained as an actor, like I've really run the

gamut as far as allowing myself to feel all of my emotions and it still can be difficult for me to allow myself, to just, cause it's like, it not easy to be like oh I feel like crying, cry.

I'll never forget one time I was really frustrated and my grandma was sick and I trying to help her and then I went out to the car to get something and hit myself, my head on a tree.

But it helped me cry and i was like, you know what, thank you universe for helping me smack my hand into a treat because I really needed to that cry out.

Ridiculous. Well, I'm wondering about going back to that formal training. Okay. You said you had some formal. I have a dilemma and I am hoping before we are done here that you can kind of support me with.

So my dilemma is that my wife is formally trained as a dancer. She learned ballet and then she also used to do country dance and West Coast swing. So we rarely dance together because whenever we dance I feel like I'm being judged.

Because I am not a trained dancer and I just freeform it and just have fun. And so I could be out of sync, I can be, you know, whatever it is. This is not me trying to throw her under the bus, because I'm not saying she is judging me, it's just how I feel, right?

And, so, what are your tips as someone who works with people through movement of how kind of shift my mindset and or approach her differently so that I don't limit us dancing together by my mind set of feeling judged.

Yeah, yeah. I really hear you just wanting to connect with your wife in that way and that's so beautiful. And that could be even a starter of even just speaking that intention to her.

Oh, I have. Yeah. I just want to connect. And I'm going to let my self-consciousness go right now. Would you be willing to contact with me? But I will also say, as much as it's very responsible of you to take ownership of your part, you know, there could be barriers with that you both can work on as far as she might have some some room to loosen up on her like the technique because I know that's a That's kind of what we were talking about, like presence over performance.

When we're so trained of like, these are the steps and this is the choreography. I can't tell you how many friends I have from different dance experiences throughout my life that, I mean, they're just terrified to improvise.

They're terrified, to just freeform dance. And I'm a weird hybrid where I could do both and I enjoy both. But so many people I recognize are like I thought, for sure the star dancer of this one dance group I was in would be fabulous at improv, you know, and just letting it loose and going for it.

And little did I know like one day in a dressing room she was like, Oh God, no, I have to have my choreography. I don't do that. but you're so freaking good, what do you mean?" And she's like, yeah, no, I just, like I won't.

So it could also be a meeting halfway, you know, of finding, and maybe it's something that needs to be private first before it is public. Well, one thing we thought, it was interesting what you were saying because that was one of my original questions was like when, When does movement kind of become a limitation?

And my thought was that when it's overly formal, when you're too heady about it, right? When you are so trained that you can't actually not do it outside of that.

But one of the things that we were kind problem solving it around was like, well, why don't we go take a dance together that neither of us know? Yeah.

You know, and then kind of approach something from the same level. But then there's the whole other issue of finding time, but. Yeah, like even like Bachata is coming to mind because.

What's that? So Bachatta is, here I'll just do a very, very brief demo. It's like a one, two, three, tap, one two three tap. And you're, you know it's just your hips.

are mainly swaying. That's different than a cha-cha. It almost looks a little bit like. Different than the cha cha. And why the chata and not cha cha is because cha has got like more of the technique and cha can just be like your hips are connected.

So it's very sensual and you're getting in this rhythm. You know, and it, it romantic and its, its simple. So then I think it's easier to get into it quicker than to have to like learn this whole dance technique.

I like it, I've never heard of that one. Porchata? It's called? Bachata. Bachada. B-A-C-H- A-T-E. And it often with salsa clubs. So they'll have like salsa and bachata night.

Is it a Latin dance? Is a latin dance, yeah. Oh, nice. Yes, yes. Well, thank you so much for joining me. I feel like this is such a hot. topic to talk about here on Everyday Ancestral because it is, I mean, historically, ancestrally, this is one of the earliest forms of expression.

And sadly, in our modern world, for many people, it's getting lost. So I really appreciate your wisdom and you sharing some tips that people can do at home or in groups that will help to kind of loosen up and oil their bodies so that they can be more mindfully in them.

Yes, and for any of your guests, please feel free to reach out or I have little five minute movement breaks that I'll do for conferences or they call them energizers.

Closing reflections on embodiment and healing

So conferences hire me to get up there and get everybody moving for five minutes because they've been sitting for an hour or two listening to talks and different things.

And I also have a lot of those like in my Dance of You program where people get to engage with some of these just quick five-minute ways to reconnect with their bodies, reconnected themselves.

Because like you said, there are a lotta people out there dancing, but there also probably way more not dancing and not moving and truly I think the biggest thing that makes my heart ache about that is that people are missing just the opportunity and the simple opportunity of, yeah, like just turn on a song.

Like you're only one song away from a better day or helping drop them into their heart more. I thinks so much of what we're experiencing We're in our heads a lot, even myself, and that's why I love doing what I do, because it helps me to get out of my head.

And when I drop into my body and then subsequently drop more into heart, I'm a much more present person. I have a more much present auntie to my niece and nephew.

Um, I tend to just feel more at home in my bodies. So then I am not as agitated or, um, I don't know what the other word is that I'm trying to think of, but you saw it.

Sometimes I just don' express in words. This is the most visual episode we've had. Oh good. I am honored. It's not, because I think part of the barrier is is that fear of feeling, but it's also that feeling of being seen.

And it all wrapped up into one. But if you were just to take that all off the table and just say, okay, I don't need to be seen, we don' need worry about that right now, just let me be present with my body just for the sake of my own, health and connectedness, I think that's where people are maybe more likely to start is where it's like benefiting them right away versus trying to tackle those those fears that can be very overwhelming.

Yeah, well, I'm so grateful. I see you, Mandy, and I am really grateful for your time today. We'll put the links to how

people can reach you in the show notes.

Yeah, thank you for your time. I remember when I met you, you shone very brightly in the room. And I feel very clear that that was because of how you were showing up in your body and inspiring everyone around them to do the same.

So thank for showing in a world like that. Please continue. Thank you. We need more of that Right back at you. I was very just honored to have you ask me to be on this podcast and dancing out there with you when your Austin Powers was amazing and hilarious and it was like the best moment of the whole conference for me.

And I think you're a delightful human being doing a lot of amazing work. I use my my pluck seasoning all the time and I just I'm just really grateful too for these opportunities because Funny enough, even though obviously I'm all about being embodied and moving, talking about this in particular and you asking me these questions really helps me to remember why I am doing what I doing and sometimes I can get lost in like, oh, people have heard this or oh.

There's so much dance out there and I will sometimes dismiss what I'm doing internally and conversations like this help really add fire to my fireplace of like, oh yeah, wait, no, Mandy, people absolutely need this.

I've been given this opportunity and this heart for it. I just gotta keep finding the people that could really benefit from working with me or getting in their bodies a little more to help them in our lives.

And so thank you for helping me remember that there are a lot of people out there that need more of this. Thank you. and thank all for participating in today's episode.

There's something I had just started noticing is there's comments. I know that sounds funny, but I didn't realize you can comment on all the episodes, whether you're on Spotify or on YouTube, that you just make comments and it really does help when I see comments, and I do see them, to know you are listening, how you connecting with the topic and to also get a sense of, are you enjoying what you hearing?

So please, leave comments Participate, show up, because we're so grateful for all of you that are showing up or watching or listening. But I don't want you to be invisible.

I'd like to know who you are. So please make a comment below on any platform that you're experiencing the Everyday Ancestral. And thank you again for tuning in.

Stay curious.