

Outgrowing Sensory-Motor Obliviousness

There are those who have written that Hanna Somatic Education is about restoring functions that have been lost through injury, stress, or overuse-conditioning. While this view is true, it is incomplete. It implies that everyone matures completely at some undetermined age associated with adulthood – a kind of “myth of aging” in reverse, and implies that people were once functional in ways that were lost and must be restored through HSE.

A whole host of functional problems results from failure to bring to life (or to mature) functioning that, when confronted with a stressor (a fall, a stressful period), breaks down. Said another way, not everyone matures (and in fact, few people mature) beyond the haphazard demands of their unique life situation and chosen disciplines. Just witness walking patterns in some public place, observe how people sit. Poor coordination, poor movement lead to dysfunction and often to injury. We become how we live.

To account for this unevenness of maturation, I would like to introduce a new term, one that complements Thomas Hanna’s term, Sensory-Motor Amnesia (SMA); the new term is Sensory-Motor Obliviousness (SMO). People are, in various ways, smo.

It is that obliviousness (in which certain functions never developed adequately to begin with, to withstand the stressors of life), that predisposes people to surprise injury. People are oblivious and get clobbered (or head into failures, poor aging, etc.).

Thus, some people bring conditions into your office for which there is no causal injury. Their muscles are relaxed, at rest, but go into peculiar patterns of contraction as soon as they begin to function. It is SMO that predisposes people to SMA.

To understand that point gives us a new perspective on the role of somatic educators. We are not merely aiding the *restoration* of sound functioning; we are aiding the *prevention* of the loss or degradation of people’s functioning and also, as educators, *enhancing* that functioning beyond the common level.

Sensory-Motor Obliviousness is replaced by Sensory-Motor Obviousness: enhanced competence.

PS: I thought of calling SMI (Sensory-Motor Immaturity), but ... you know