

Encountering a Tree - An Ecosomatic Practice

by Doerte Weig and Roksana Niewadzisz

This is an ecosomatic awareness practice with trees.

The practice invites you to experiment with bodily scales, sensations, and boundaries.

Go to a place with trees, maybe an actual forest, or just any site with trees. Look around, wander about, hang out around the trees. As you do this, become aware of your rhythm of breathing. As you inhale-exhale, softly observe if any of the trees are drawing your attention towards them. Don't look for it, just allow this to happen. Allow yourself to be attracted, to be courted or called by a specific tree. If this does not happen, and you want to take the first step, be gentle.

Look at this tree which has chosen you, or which you have chosen. As you get to know each other, perceive the tree's outside details: its height, width, and bark texture; its branch structures, and the shape, colour and amount of its leaves. Notice your rhythm of breathing as you take in this information with your eyes and all your other senses. Relax your sight. You don't have to force it. Just let it rest on these details, and brush their surface. Allow your sight to gently slide, for example, along the bark, softly caressing the wrinkles and knobbly bits. How beautiful it is. As it is. Perfect as it is. Breathe.

Once you feel your first acquaintance is complete, find a way to ask the tree if you could spend some time together. Wait for the response. As you wait, try and attune to all levels of what is being communicated, the visible and the invisible. Do so from a comfortable position. You can stand, sit, or lie on the ground. Whichever way, maybe you are already close to the tree or remain slightly at a distance; maybe you are sitting on the ground, or on a nearby bench. Take a moment to also appreciate the details of the space where you are, and the weather of today.

From your comfortable position, observe again the tree, this time activating all your human senses. Use your capacities for seeing, hearing, and smelling to take in their shape. Stretching towards the sky. And towards the centre of the Earth. Do you feel the need to touch? Can you resist this impulse? How is it to wait with impatience for a touch? Shift your attention to your human skin. You can close your eyes if you like. Deeply sense your human skin enveloping all aspects of your human body. Notice the clothes touching the surface of your skin. Or the wind gently brushing over it. Now imagine what the tree bark feels like. How it smells. Imagine what it would be like to touch the bark with your cheek, or the inner part of your arm, or your lips. Allow your attention to flow along bark and skin, with the sound of the place, and the sound of your breath. Tenderly sense into this very gentle brush of knowing each other with the tree.

Breathe and know that tree roots are often more expansive than their crowns. Trees are both firmly rooted and dancing with the sky. They are not symmetrical. Allow your entire body to resonate with the shape of your special tree, with all its details, and enjoy how this asymmetry reverberates in your body. What a release. Breathe

Now imagine there are dense roots growing from underneath your feet, or from the spaces where your body is touching the ground, growing deeply into the soil and towards the centre of the Earth. As they grow, your roots absorb all the richness of the water, minerals and nutrients into your body. Inhale and imagine water and nutrients flowing through your skin. From the earth through your skin into your feet, ankles, calves, knees, thighs, pelvis. Flowing up into your spine, through your kidneys, liver, stomach and lungs. Into your shoulders, expanding into your arms, elbows and hands. And into your head, face, and brain. Only to circulate and make their way back to the ground in an eternal flow. You are the roots, trunk and the crown. You are safe, you are firmly rooted in the ground. Exhale. Breathe.

Become aware of how you feel your human state today. Don't judge it, just gently perceive. Do you feel tension in some point in your body? If yes, try and breathe into this tension. Try and let go especially of the tension in your face. Breathe. Exhale, inhale. Try to imagine that with every inhale the oxygen which the tree has helped create, is getting right to this place of tension. With every exhale you can release tension, and offer carbon dioxide back to the tree. Allow yourself to rest in this cyclical movement of air and water. Feel your body follow this flow with soft inner movements. Maybe your spine begins to tingle with a gentle bilateral move. Maybe you begin swaying. Sense your entire body resonating with the shapes and cyclical qualities of trees and vegetal life. Breathe. Exhale. Do an internal dance. Enjoy.

Your date and dance with the tree can finish here.

But maybe you would like to get even closer, and deepen your contact into physical touch. With the sensitivity you have generated, ask whether the tree resonates with your wish, and wait for the response. Be gentle. Listen. Maybe you will rest your back against the trunk, or fully embrace the tree. Or maybe you just sit close whispering your stories to them. And listen some more. As you imagine this, or physically touch and communicate with the tree, stay with your breathing, with the water flowing in your body, and with the cyclicity of air and water you share with the tree and all vegetal life. Just allow yourself to become together with these amazing beings that humans call trees. Be present and aware with your human body and all the beings which make up the ecology of where you are right now. Allow yourself to see, feel, sense differently. To perceive ecosomatically body and ecology with affection, respect, and care. Breathe, exhale, inhale and know we are all connected through the worldwide air-water-root system.

When it feels right, bring this sharing with the trees to an end. Open your eyes, if you have them closed. Find a way to say goodbye to the tree you have been connecting with. Say Thank you for the time you have spent together. And come back soon. The trees are waiting.