

Alison Whitmire: Welcome to Learning In Actions podinar series. Today our topic is your body is your brain and we're joined by our special guest, Amanda Blake. Who I'll introduce properly in just a moment. So what is... I went right through that. What is our intention for today? Well, first we're going to talk about what is the body-brain connection? What does that mean when we talk about your body as your brain? What's the essence of that? Then, instead of just talking about, we're going to experience it. Amanda is going to take us through an experiential situation, which will be connecting our body with our brain. Then we're going to explore the benefit of why that works, what the difference that makes our lives with ourselves, with our clients. Then how we might use this with our coachees. Then we're going to share some resources. If you're interested in learning more about experiential and somatic coaching, we'll share how you can get resources about that. If you want to use some of this with your clients, there's amazing resources that Mandy has on her website that we'll be sharing as well.

Alison Whitmire: So I'm Alison Whitmire, the president of Learning In Action and I'm joined today with my partner in crime, the podinar producer and the head of community and customer care at Learning In Action, Kris Harty.

Kris Harty: Hey, Alison. Hello, everyone. It's good to have you with us. Thanks so much for joining us today.

Alison Whitmire: Thank you, Kris. Thanks for your support with the podinar. So what the heck is a podinar if you haven't shown up for one of these before? Podinar is a cross between podcast and a Webinar. It's interview-style, like a podcast and it's more interactive like a webinar. If you're looking for like a download chunk of content, like a class, that's not it. That's not this. What we're intending to do with this format is really dive in with a thought leader and the difference they're making in the world. Talk about how they're doing that and maybe how you can do a bit of it too. So why do we do these podinars? We do them because we want to support coaches, organizational development consultants, leadership development specialists. In thriving doing what they do, doing what you do. We want to ideally inspire, educate, inform you to do what you do even better. We know that it can be lonely, it can be challenging to be on your own doing this work and we want to support you this way. We would love to engage with you. So how do you chat? So if you want to just chat right now and let us know where you're signing in from today, we'd love to hear that too. Just say, hi, I'm Alison from Bethesda.

Alison Whitmire: You can chat using the chat function, going to chat and pointing the arrow to all panelists and attendees. Then more than Amanda and I and Kris will get it and everybody will hear it and see it. If you have a question, the best place to put your question is really in the Q&A box. You can put it in the chat-box but we may or may not get to it because it's kind of challenging to filter through. If you put a bite-sized question in the Q&A box, it's more likely that we'll be able to get to it in the flow of the conversation. We'll be doing a poll at the end, asking

what you thought of this. We love your feedback, so please respond to the poll at the end.

Alison Whitmire: So it gives me great pleasure to introduce my friend, Amanda Blake. Amanda is founder of Embright, she's a speaker and consultant and coach. In fact, we met when I was one of her guinea pigs when she was speaking at the Capitol Area Coaches Conference and I was so taken with her. I wanted to get to know her. So I feel really grateful for that. She's the author of Your Body is Your Brain and she's the creator of The Body=Brain course. She's a master Somatic Leadership Coach. She's got her B.S. from Stanford University in human biology. She's a Research Fellow from Fowler Center for business as an agent of World Benefit. Welcome, Mandy.

Amanda Blake: Thank you so much, Alison. It's good to be here with you and fun to be reminded how we met as well. It was a delightful... It what's so fun to have you up there. Alison and I were doing physical practices together in front of the room and exploring how we learn through our bodies. So that's what we'll get to do today. It's great to be here.

Alison Whitmire: Yeah, thank you. I'm excited about that. So jumping right in. So when we talk about Your Body=Brain, that's a really bold name for your course. What does that mean?

Amanda Blake: Well, what's funny to me is how many people, even sometimes people who've gone through the course, they actually get it wrong. Say things like body plus brain, body, and brain. Worse, sometimes body versus brain. That's not what we're doing. Body equals brain is really what I mean. Your body is stuff with which you do your thinking, your conceptualizing, your decision-making, your sensing of your next move. That is actually really literal. We have brain material out to our fingers and toes. The nerve cells that exist in our distributed brain are the same as the nerve cells that exist in the concentrated area of the brain in the head. But we have other concentrations of nerve cells in our bodies. Such as in our gut, our heart, [inaudible 00:06:24] through that. Surrounds every muscle and organ in your body. All of this is actually part literally and I mean this very literally. Literally part of our intelligence. So it's really important for us as human development practitioners who are working with people to help them oftentimes make change in their lives, in their organizations. Whether it's their work lives or their personal lives. It's really important that we understand this intelligence and how it functions.

Amanda Blake: So I really do mean your body is your brain.

Alison Whitmire: So if I can confirm what I think I heard you say, that the cells that are in our brains are also throughout our bodies. They provide us with intelligence, just like the cells of our brains provide us with intelligence. Did I get that right?

Amanda Blake: You did get that right. The intelligence that we have that lives sort of below the neck if you will, has a bunch of things about it that are unique and sometimes different from the intelligence that lives above the neck. So it's a bit of a mix. We don't necessarily do math, for example, with our fingers. I don't do math at all, so it's probably a really bad example. But I'll give you a different example. A friend of mine who was once with a really high-level pianist. Somebody named a very... She was kind of taking requests from this group gathered around the piano. Somebody named a very little known piece of classical music. She said, "I don't know which one you mean. Can you just give me a note." He sang the first note and she just went boom. Her hands were on the keyboard and she was playing it.

Amanda Blake: That's an embodied knowledge, an embodied intelligence. That kind of intelligence can emerge from us very naturally when we just know what to do, for example, in a dangerous situation. When we know what to do in a workplace situation, where two people are in conflict. We just have a way dealing with that. That helps bring that to resolution. So we have all kinds of embodied intelligence and it's easiest to see in very physical activities like sports or music. But it also very much influences other activities that we do in life. Including having an intimate conversation with our spouse, for example.

Alison Whitmire: So how much of that body intelligence is conscious versus unconscious? Thank you, [inaudible 00:09:29] for this question. I might say it like accessible versus, I don't know if I want to say inaccessible or maybe it's just conscious and unconscious.

Amanda Blake: Well, you could use either of those terms really. So by design, our biological systems are actually tuned to keep a lot of embodied information, embodied intelligence below our conscious awareness. So unconscious or inaccessible and that's very much by design. We have, for example, homeostatic systems that manage the temperature in our body and they do that automatically. If we had to think about that to make sure that we were like the right temperature all the time, that would be a lot of hard work. We wouldn't be able to write poetry or run podinars. We need that brain space for something else. So a lot of what happens in our bodies gets put on autopilot. However, the way that that works, what neuroscientists tell us. Is that there's this homeostatic level of what's called interoception or perhaps lead to sense and perceived what's going on for us viscerally. So interoceptive perception happens at a homeostatic level, where we it's very, very difficult to access. Some people with a lot of training have learned how to do that. The second level that is still not really accessible to conscious awareness but it hits the parts of our brain that are involved in emotion and decision-making.

Amanda Blake: So what happens is we'll have some sensation. Before we know it, we'll be having an emotional reaction and taking action. What I sometimes call this is like the genesis of the knee-jerk response. I don't mean that like the medical

knee-jerk response but the behavioral knee-jerk response. When we bring that interoceptive or visceral sensation into conscious awareness, which we can do by learning different techniques, we're paying attention to what's going on in our bodies. Then we start to get more behavioral choices available to us. That knee-jerk response, which happens really quickly in the body and brain, you get this experience and then you take action. You usually going to make some sense of discomfort go away. What we do when we bring that into conscious awareness is we can kind of live with that discomfort for a few moments and see how it's informing us. Make perhaps some more better informed or wiser choices about how to respond to it.

Alison Whitmire: So is implicit in what you're saying, is that we can kind of build our interoceptive muscle or senses? Muscles probably the wrong word but you know what I mean. That we could become more interoceptive.

Amanda Blake: We can become more sensitive to our interoceptive perceptions or sensation or internal sensations. That's also true. So interoception is not the only body perception that we have. We also have something called proprioception, which is our capacity to sense the position of our body in space. Both of these together, interoception and proprioception or in other words, just use colloquially. Our visceral sensations are happy to notice our gestures, our posture, how we're moving. Our capacity to notice all of that combines into something called embodied self-awareness. Not a revolutionary or novel term but there's actually a clear definition for it in the research literature. That is our embodied self-awareness is our capacity to pay attention in the present moment non-judgmentally to what's happening with our body in space.

Alison Whitmire: Okay. So one of the things we wanted to do is have you take us all through an experience.

Amanda Blake: Yes.

Alison Whitmire: So would love to do that now. One of the things I just want to say to the audience is, we know we're sacrificing a little bit of interaction with you for the sake of having experience. So what I hope you'll do is go through this experience with us. Maybe put down the phone and no longer multitask and maybe be with us. Yeah, I'll turn it over to you, Mandy. What are we doing?

Amanda Blake: Pretty good. Well, here's what I would like everyone to do. Alison, if I can just use you as a guinea pig.

Alison Whitmire: Yes.

Amanda Blake: So I'm going to walk you through this, Alison, and everyone will be hearing that. But whenever I say Alison replace that with your own name. Just what I'm doing with Alison, do that yourself. I invite you to do that. Okay. So let's just start

here. Think about a time, maybe a recent time when you were mild to moderately, triggered about something, upset about something, something was bothering you. Looks like you have one in mind. I don't want to hear the story about it. But as you think about that situation and really imagine it, bring it to life in your mind. Where were you? Was there any sounds, maybe you were talking to someone or maybe getting the silent treatment? So just notice what was happening in the world around. What did you see [inaudible 00:15:17] in to anywhere where you can find a strong sensation in your body. If you can just put your hand there on the strongest sensation that you notice. If you can't reach it, then just notice it. Alison, what does that for you? Where are you feeling a strong sensation as you think about this triggering event?

Alison Whitmire: What's coming up for me is that it feels more like a holistic constriction. I don't necessarily feel it in anyone place as much as I feel it every place.

Amanda Blake: Yeah. What's happening? So you described it as a constriction, so you're feeling every place a constriction. Can you describe that constriction with a little more color and detail?

Alison Whitmire: Yeah. So for me, literally, I felt like my vision narrowed. My thought pattern definitely narrowed. That's why it was so easy for me to think you're like, can you remember the time? Yeah, I remember, it looked like this. Yeah, I think I was probably kind of hunched over and like smaller and girding my loins [inaudible 00:16:46] that translates.

Amanda Blake: Yeah, great. So if you could, you don't have to do this but just notice for you and listeners notice for you. If there's one thing, so you mentioned five or six different things going on that we're all part of, sometimes I'll call this like a constellation. If there was like a central star in that constellation, one thing that was sort of like, it's really about the tightening of the eyes or it's really about narrowness, it's really about the girding of the loins. One thing that sort of seems to be either more prominent than the others or influential?

Alison Whitmire: Something I actually didn't mention but comes up for that. It's like for me, there's like a revving of the engine. I feel it throughout my body and most in the racing. Racing's not the right word, just like the pounding of my heart.

Amanda Blake: Okay, great. So that revving of the engine, that pounding of your heart, just to kind of remember that. Let's set that to the side and let's say that's a part of this constellation of narrowing and girding. Revving, narrowing and girding. So set that aside for now and kind of shake that off. You might actually physically want to move your body and move out of that state. See if you can now imagine a time when you felt particularly resourceful and in a way that feels really good to you. So maybe it's confidence or maybe it's some sense of anticipation. But somewhere in your life, a specific situation where you felt really like powerfully strong, able, capable, ready. I don't need to hear the story but if you just take

yourself to that place in time, in your imagination. That specific moment, who was around you, what happened? Windows or walls or trees or [inaudible 00:19:07] might've been around you. Any particular tastes or smells? Really putting yourself there in your imagination. Then as you imagine that, notice what's going on in your body right now and same kind of thing. If there's a strong sensation, go ahead and find that with your hand as if your hand was a magnet and it could be pulled to that strongest sensation.

Amanda Blake: Again, you may not be able to get your hand there because maybe physically it's like somewhere on your back or maybe it's your whole body. So it's not someplace you can put your hand. Just notice, what is the sensation? What's your posture? What are you noticing, Alison?

Alison Whitmire: What I'm noticing is my eyes, literally, I could see more. It's like going from this to not just kind of normal sight but actually expanded sight. Also, just a feeling of solid bodily grounded-ness. Some gravitational comfortable gravitational pull toward the earth. Yeah.

Amanda Blake: Great. So like a widening expansiveness and a sense of solidity and grounded-ness. So let's do this. What I'd like to suggest you do is go ahead and that narrowing and revving come back in. If it seems hard to access, you can really imagine that situation again. Place yourself in there, in the imagination and just notice how when you do that, your body might have even just a tiny, subtle response. But see if you can amplify that on purpose. You can [inaudible 00:21:23] you can rev a little bit more. There's a gird, see if you can gird on purpose.

Alison Whitmire: Yeah.

Amanda Blake: Narrow on purpose. Now, if you were, in a sense, walking across a bridge or creating a path between this girded, narrowed, revved-up state. What's the first move you would make to get to that expansive grounded state?

Alison Whitmire: Must be taking a breath because that's what I just did. I just, yeah.

Amanda Blake: Yeah. So one of the things that I noticed is as you took a breath, you also lifted your chin and you let your eyes go up and out.

Alison Whitmire: Yeah.

Amanda Blake: Right, so that narrowness expanded as you took a breath. For many of you who are listening, you might also think, my first move is taking a breath. That is so true and one of the reasons for that is because our breath is both under our voluntary control. It's under the control of our autonomic nervous system, which runs those homeostatic mechanisms that I talked about earlier. So it happens adequately without thinking about it and we can also intervene. We

have different breath patterns that accompany different emotions or moods. So shifting your breath is really powerful. If we were all onscreen, I'd say, let's see a show of hands of how many people always remember to do that in the heat of the moment. I ask that question a lot of times and I'd say it's anywhere between 30% and 50% of us. That can honestly say we always remember and it's usually closer to the like 25%, 30%. I question whether those folks are telling the truth. I know I forget a lot.

Alison Whitmire: They don't have my family.

Amanda Blake: I guess not in Vermont, not mine either. So the reason I mentioned that is because taking a breath is always a really good first and there's something else we can do. What I saw you do, Alison was take that narrowness and you really talked about that. It was the first thing that you mentioned. This constriction and narrowness, especially in your eyes and in your thinking. You opened up that narrowness. So if you could just do that now, like two or three times. See if you can just bring yourself from a narrowness and there might even be a word on attitude that goes along with that. So if one arises, just notice if one doesn't, that's okay. But if you can put yourself in that, it might even just be narrowness, I don't know.

Alison Whitmire: What am I naming with my word?

Amanda Blake: Kind of an attitude or like here's my pattern.

Alison Whitmire: The constricted attitude or the attitude that gets me out of it?

Amanda Blake: The constricted attitude.

Alison Whitmire: Yeah, small is my word.

Amanda Blake: Small, yeah. So go from small, the whole constellation of small. Taking a deep breath and expanding your vision, move into the whole constellation of what's your attitude here?

Alison Whitmire: Yeah, possibility.

Amanda Blake: So if we had more time, the way I would continue to work with this is to have you move back and forth between small and possibility. Many times until your body starts to get a feel for what it is like to deliberately shift from small to possibility, from small to possibility. Then we would start to develop if you were my coaching client, some practices for you to use in your day to day life. How do you automatically make that shift? Build the muscle memory to move from small to possibility.

Amanda Blake: Now, when I'm working with coaching clients, we might spend 12 sessions on this. I've done that. Because this can go really deep, we spent 10 minutes on it here. But the stories that go into being small in a given situation, the fears that might come up around possibility. The necessity of the physical practice just kind of underscore developing a new way of being in the world and embodying it. All of that takes time. So I won't leave you high and dry. Alison promised some resources at the beginning, we'll give you those at the end. So there's more ways that you can practice this. But this is a taste and I want to caveat it with that.

Alison Whitmire: I can see how it'd be just incredibly powerful. So just one question that I wanted to take it back to the audience here for questions. So all that relies upon is my ability to notice when I'm in my word small.

Amanda Blake: Yeah.

Alison Whitmire: Yeah. So talk about what the power of just noticing as I'm going through this mindfulness meditation teacher-training too. It's throughout the work we do at learning and action and relational and emotional intelligence, where we talk about noticing or noticing and naming. What is it that makes noticing and naming so powerful?

Amanda Blake: Yeah. I don't know if I can comment on that broadly. I can comment on that as specifically as how noticing and naming in the body is powerful. In ways that I personally haven't found noticing and naming conceptually to be as powerful for me personally. Everybody learns in different ways [inaudible 00:27:47] but those aren't also powerful. So noticing and naming or embodied experience does a number of different things. One is that it takes us to the present moment. There's, you cannot experience your sensations anywhere else but right now. You may not have noticed this, Alison but I asked you to remember a time with your imagination. But then I asked you, what are you feeling in your body right now? Not what did you feel then but what are you feeling now? We actually can only experience sensation right now. So exploring what's happening in your client's body will automatically bring them to the present moment.

Amanda Blake: Then what happens when we move into the present moment in an embodied way. Is that we come very nakedly into our direct experience. So this is experience without abstraction, without ideas layered over the top. This is actually just like what's happening right now, I'm tightening between my shoulders? So it brings us to the present moment because it's very direct experience. In time as we develop our facility to really sense ourselves more. That direct experience, I've seen this over and over starts to lead towards a doorway. To what one embodiment teacher, her name's Judith Blackstone, calls fundamental consciousness.

Amanda Blake: So this is the very basic primary sense of awareness that all living things experience from an infant to a bumblebee to who knows how a tree or a plant works. But there's a lot of scientific evidence that they deliberately seek out water, that they have ways of signaling one another. So there is this fundamental awareness that runs a current that runs through all living beings. We touched that when we touch into our very direct experience.

Amanda Blake: So coming into the present moment and into direct experience and into our noticing of this fundamental consciousness. Is nourishing, it's restorative. I believe it gives us kind of a line into some wisdom that is bigger than us as individuals.

Alison Whitmire: That feels so true. Thank you, that was really rich. Yeah, I'm still taking that in. Okay, so we've got a couple of questions. We promised we'd come to questions from the audience. I'm going to take the ones from the Q&A box first and then I'll go to Kris to see what's coming up in the chat. So we have a question from Primo Tevo. I've probably butchered that, I apologize. It's these are... She says these are built-in patterns that are ontological and somatic at the same time?

Amanda Blake: Yeah. So, hi, Tevo. Tevo and I know each other and hi to everyone else that I do and don't know. Are these patterns? Meaning, I'm assuming Tevo is talking about like the patterns that I worked with him on ontological and somatic at the same time. For those who don't know what those terms are, ontological is essentially like our way of being in the world. Somatic is described often as a sort of holistic body, mind, spirit way of knowing our way of being in the world. So I would say yes, these are both ontological and somatic. This state that I kind of walked you through, Alison has elements of language or conceptualization. As well as physical states, as well as some emotional mood that are all part of what's going on here. So I guess the other thing that I didn't say about and answer to your prior question. Why is this so powerful to notice what's going on in your body? I guess the one thing that I would add to that is that it makes our approach as people working with people more holistic.

Amanda Blake: So we're not just working with people on a [inaudible 00:32:37] level but we're working with people of the body, mind, spirit, mood. That also makes this approach very powerful.

Alison Whitmire: Yeah. Question from Lori Fischer. How does our vagus nerve that runs body play a role in this body-brain connection? She says I have various ideas using tuning note to help that now focus... Not it, sorry. Using tuning note to help that now focus you mentioned.

Amanda Blake: Okay. I think I understand this question. So, Lori, I'm going to give it a shot. So the vagus nerve plays a critical role. Let me just define what that is. So the vagus nerve is a nerve that runs through your brain right down, straight through the middle of you. It parallels your spinal cord but it does not go through your spinal

cord. It's one of 12 cranial nerves that don't run through your spinal cord. The vagus nerve innervates your heart, your gut to a certain extent, your lungs. It plays a really, really important role in all of the homeostasis that I was talking about earlier. Kind of running your systems under the scenes, under your conscious awareness. One of the interesting things about the vagus nerve is that it sends most of its information up to the brain and takes very little direction from the brain. So there's about, depending on whose data you read about an 80% or 90%, estimate of the number of nerves running from the vagus nerve up to the brain. Which essentially means that our visceral sensations are mostly traveling up to this what we typically think of as the central command center.

Amanda Blake: But, actually, that center take that sort of centralized area of nerve cells in our brain. Brain per se, brain in the head, is taking a huge amount of information from the body, especially the trunk, especially the torso. Passing it into assessments of is this good or is this bad? Am I safer or am I in danger? Some of those may be accurate, some of those may be inaccurate. So the Vagus nerve plays a really, really important role. It also plays a really important role in our response to pressure and danger. So anything that we perceive as potentially threatening, including a difficult conversation. The vagus nerve will be activated in a number of various ways, beyond just fight-flight. So it plays an important role in the fight-flight system as well as sometimes having us freeze in response to pressure. Sometimes having us kind of appease an aggressor or communicate in a particular way in response to aggressor.

Amanda Blake: Now, I want to correct something that I sort of misspoke a moment ago. It's not right to say that our body controls all of these behaviors. So I kind of used some language that pointed in that direction. It's not like our behaviors are controlled by our body. But there is a strong two-way influence between our thoughts and our behavior or three-way influence between thoughts and behavior. Behavior and body, body and behavior, body and mind, dah to dah to dah. Breaking these things down is really an artificial distinction. We are whole systems and we kind of operate more like we can pull out different notes on the piano and play them one at a time. But in our daily lived experience, it's more like we're playing a chord, we're playing multiple notes at the same time. What's happening in your body, your behavior, your thinking-self, your mood, it's all woven of the same cloth. So to suggest anyone part of it is causal would be inaccurate.

Alison Whitmire: Thanks for that clarification. Kris, just want to check-in with you and what's going on with our audience.

Kris Harty: Yeah, it's we have a couple of really insightful observations. I'll share the first one with you, it's quite brief. Then the second one after that, which is a little bit longer. But from Annie Pringle, she says this also feels like it offers a sense of connection with self and others.

Alison Whitmire: Yeah, I got that too.

Amanda Blake: It absolutely does. There's lots more that could be said about that. But let's hear the other comments too.

Kris Harty: Yes. So we have a comment from Anne Kruchel and she says, noticing also moves us from being caught in the grip of something unconsciously. To being aware that we're caught in its grip. At that moment, we are no longer completely caught. We have one foot out of the grip, we are now conscious and have the freedom to choose.

Alison Whitmire: Yes.

Amanda Blake: That's incredible, I love that.

Alison Whitmire: It's like a teacher-training buddy.

Amanda Blake: Awesome.

Alison Whitmire: Right.

Amanda Blake: Yeah, that's so well said. Thank you for that, Anne. The one thing that I'll say about that is I often say awareness creates choice. It's practice that creates capacity.

Alison Whitmire: That's great.

Amanda Blake: So we do have the possibility like when we get more aware of what's going on in right now in the moment direct experience, we start to open up more choices for ourselves. But we don't always have the capacity to enact like being calm in the face of anger, for example. Unless we've practiced that shift from narrow to expansive. It's that practice that creates capacity, wherein the heat of the moment, you can bring your expansive self, a different way of being.

Alison Whitmire: Yeah.

Amanda Blake: Beautiful.

Alison Whitmire: Okay, Kris, anything else for now?

Kris Harty: Just a couple, a few more comments that came in. From Dominique, they say taking in breath provides a space between stimulus and response. When we respond we are growing versus repeating patterns.

Alison Whitmire: Thank you. So, Tevo's got another question. What are the best practices and principles for optimal capacity expansion?

Amanda Blake: Gosh. How long do you have?

Alison Whitmire: I know, right?

Amanda Blake: How far do you want to expand? I appreciate the question very much, Tevo and I don't think there's an answer to that. That we can really pin in a two-minute response. It really, really depends on what specific capacity you want to expand. The practice needs to be tied to that capacity as well as to whatever the specific individual is trying to move from and towards. So it feels like the answer to that would be different for every individual depending on what they're trying to grow in themselves. I would love to answer the question but I don't think this is the forum to do it.

Alison Whitmire: Okay.

Amanda Blake: Well, that's the answer I can give in this forum. Good.

Alison Whitmire: That's super fair. So taking that experience we just had, which was super enlightening and helpful. What is the cue that your client or coachee might give you that they would benefit from some kind of experience like that?

Amanda Blake: Yeah. That's a great question. So I think there are a lot of cues you can watch for. So a really easy one is if your client is starting to drone on and on. You're listening in, your client's just like blah, blah, blah, blah, blah. Right there, you know that they're in abstraction, they're really thinking. They're distant from experience. You can help them get back into the present moment by helping them get into their bodies right there in that moment. They don't even necessarily have to slow down a lot to do that. You can just simply ask something like, "I noticed that you're talking really fast. Can you tell me like where's the revved-up energy in your body? Where do you feel most revved-up right now?" So you can take just simple and help them tune into what their physical experiences is in the moment.

Amanda Blake: So watch for people talking fast or a lot, watch for any physical cue. So I was recently coaching someone, this was in a life coaching demos. It was part of a teaching I was doing. The guy said something like, "Well, I'm really thinking. Maybe I want to move more towards empathy but maybe more it's acceptance or maybe it's compassion." The whole time he's talking about like trying to make this decision, which was very conceptual. He had this was really tight, furrowed brow. So I just asked him like, "What's going on between your eyebrows?" We did a whole coaching that was just around this little space between his eyebrows. At the end of the coaching, he was able to say it's not empathy or compassion or acceptance at all. It's an entirely third thing, which I now don't remember or fourth thing or whatever. But it got him to a really different place of much greater clarity.

Amanda Blake: So you can watch what's going on in your client's body and use it as a cue. Then the third thing that I would say that's maybe a little harder to listen for. But with practice, you'll get better at it. Is to listen for embodied metaphors, which show up all the time. So people will be in a situation where they say, I don't know, I just feel like I'm drifting, like I'm floating. That's a very kind of physical sensation. They'll just say... It's like this albatross around my neck, which is a very physical thing. So listen for embodied metaphors and start asking questions from there. Well, what's that heaviness? Tell me where you're feeling the most heaviness. There's a time where you experienced more of the quality that you want to feel. How's that different from heaviness?

Amanda Blake: So those are the three, I think, useful things to listen for.

Alison Whitmire: Would you mind maybe sharing 30 seconds or so more between like how you worked with the guy?

Amanda Blake: Yeah.

Alison Whitmire: Yeah .

Amanda Blake: Yeah. Well, I'll have to remember. I think what I would say in a nutshell is I started to ask him about this furrowed brow. I started to ask him about and he really noticed this shows up a lot in this. Chronically and especially in this situation. We kind of in a similar way that I explored with you, this narrowing, we kind of explored the whole constellation. So it's not just the narrowed brow but how does this change your attitude? How does this change the way you're thinking in the moment? What happens to your mood? What else is happening in your body? Then we started to explore as I recall. I'm not sure I'm recalling this quite correctly. But I think we really started to explore. Like I had him unfurrow his brow, just do that much. Notice what else started to change.

Amanda Blake: Then from there, we started to explore, what feels different. I think he wound up with some words like something like free and open rather than empathy and acceptance. It wound up being something really different and he was like, "I'm going to bring myself to these conversations in a really different way. Be much more aware of what's going on in my face. Want to bring myself with more of this free and open orientation and way of being."

Alison Whitmire: Thank you for that, that was super valuable. So I'm curious, so when you are going to do... So somatic work is very different. At least for my experience, it's very different for most people.

Amanda Blake: Yeah.

Alison Whitmire: At least the client base I work with that would be very different. So I'm curious about how you orient your clients, the ones that don't come to you because

you're a somatic coach. Maybe they come to you because they have something else they want to work on. How you orient them to a more experiential somatic aspect of your work?

Amanda Blake: Yeah. So there are a couple different things that I do. I do still work with clients that are kind of naïve to this approach or aren't specifically looking for it. Because I'm now a little bit known for this, more people come to me specifically for this. But I had a lot of years where I was working with people who had no idea. It's actually part of why I went into studying the science because I wanted A, for myself to understand. Why is this so powerful? B, to have a language to explain to people in ways that they could understand.

Amanda Blake: So here's what I tend to do. I will talk about the science because I know about the science and it interests me. So I'll mention a tidbit. Did you know that your vagal nerve has an impact on your fight-flight response and the position of your torso? Whether you're upright or collapsed will affect the way your vagal nerve is communicating with your brain. So that's not something you can do unless you've kind of studied that stuff. But if you do know some of those things, they're great to drop in as like just a throw the intellectual bone. So if you know those things, those are great to drop in.

Amanda Blake: What I would say is if that's not of interest to you or you just don't have that at your fingertips. You can just be really open and experimental with your clients. So I will often just say if I don't want to distract with some tidbit of information. I'll just say, would you like to try an experiment here? Sometimes I'll say something just as simple as, hey, this isn't very well known but we have intelligence all the way out to our fingers and toes. Let's try something with your body that might reveal something new and we'll just see if it works for you. It may or may not. So I tend to be really, really open and invitational and experimental.

Amanda Blake: The other thing that I would say is I tend to start slowly and with very small tastes. The reason for that is working with the body is very emotionally evocative. There's a lot of research behind this. We don't just remember things as ideas but we remember things that's felt sense. So I'll give you an example that maybe some of you will be able to relate to of remembering as felt sense. Long ago I was in a difficult relationship that ended badly. Every time I drove by the exit to where this guy lived, I would feel sick inside, my heart would start to race. I would have a physical reaction to driving by the exit. Now, some of you have probably had experiences. Whether joyous ones or more difficult ones, where your body remembered something, had a particular reaction. So no matter who we're working with, their bodies remember something. Sometimes their bodies remember things that were emotionally intense for them in some way. Which can include trauma and abuse but it doesn't necessarily have to.

Amanda Blake: So just know that working through the body's really emotionally evocative and it's best for us to really start small and stay within the bounds of our competence in working there.

Alison Whitmire: Well, I love how when I think about this idea with some of my clients, their initial take of it. They'll be like this is a really woo-woo. When bringing in the silence and the reason to believe, it's not just kind of what one might call woo-woo. That's yeah, that would definitely [inaudible 00:50:36].

Amanda Blake: Yeah.

Alison Whitmire: Okay. We've got a few questions from the audience here. Michelle is saying this is really resonating with me, that slowing down and noticing is what's happening in our body and our mind. It helps present us with more choices in the moment on that. Thank you. Kelly Holme asks the question, what is one example of a practice we can use as coaches to ensure we're building ourselves as coach capacity? Love that, thank you.

Amanda Blake: Yeah.

Alison Whitmire: I know all this work is good for coaches and you've got lots and lots of resources on it. I'm curious, do you have a daily practice around how you check-in with your body?

Amanda Blake: That is a great question. It's interesting. So it is evolved many times over the years. For a long time, I had a series of movements that I would do in the morning. Kind of just... Yeah, it wasn't exactly exercise but more like a series of movements that I would do. I would do this series of movements around whatever particular quality I might be building in the moment. Now, I tend to do and I've changed up that series of movements many times. Now, I tend to just kind of movement that's a movement of kind of a forward momentum movement. I state a few qualities to myself as I do that. But I really don't do that on a daily basis as I get up in the morning and I do a practice. I might do that a couple times a week or here and there. It depends how much I'm traveling.

Amanda Blake: What I actually find more helpful and effective is to integrate it into my everyday life and everyday moments. So right now, some of the qualities that I'm working with are spaciousness and rest. I will kind of throughout the day check-in with myself. To see how much spaciousness I'm feeling in my body and how much I'm resting or like holding myself up from the chair. So it's not a daily practice the way someone would think about like I have a meditation practice. I get up and I sit down and I do this thing. It's really much more integrated and interwoven into my daily life. Then when I get off, I have a friend that I call and I say, I'm off, what's wrong with me? She says [inaudible 00:53:34]. Then I get help, like all the rest of us.

Alison Whitmire: That's so great. Lucas Dylan asked a question and you said it's a question you get a lot. How is using this technique different if you're in person versus video versus phone?

Amanda Blake: Yeah. So all of them have benefits and all of them are... Yeah, all of them have unique benefits. The value of working in person is that when you have learned specific physical practices or partner practices that you can do, you can work with that person. In a way where you might both be walking around or Alison, we refer to one another at the beginning of this call, where you and I met. We were doing something where I physically put my hands on your shoulders. You were practicing centering in a certain way and I was putting a certain kind of pressure on you. So you can do those kinds of things when you're in person. That's a big value to being in person.

Amanda Blake: Being on the phone, one of the really biggest values to being on the phone is that clients can more easily go inside themselves. So we talked about how those interoceptive sensations are not automatically available to our conscious minds. Sometimes it really helps to be in a quiet space or a space where you're not distracted by looking at someone else. I actually find that sometimes on the phone, clients can actually go much deeper into sensing themselves. Then finally, video has the advantage of you maybe working with someone at a distance. But you can still get visual somatic cues from them, visual embodied cues. That's actually my least favorite way of working with people because there's a lot of visual input. Less of the other kinds of sensory input. So that can actually become sometimes a distraction. But it's a great way if you're starting out with these techniques and you haven't used them before. You can't sort of sense your client on the other end of the line. It's a great way to start.

Alison Whitmire: Yeah. So one of the things we've talked about is the importance of if we're going to do this work, really becoming educated in it. So if someone's interested in this work, what would you recommend they do in terms of figuring out how they would explore using it? Learning it, of course, with themselves and then using it?

Amanda Blake: Yeah. Well, that's the first thing that I was going to say in response. Is that even more so than other approaches to working with people, you have to go through this process yourself. By this process, I mean you have to be able to sense yourself, learn to recognize your own body's cues. The vast majority of us, this might not be you, listener. But the vast majority of us are in kindergarten compared to how much we've educated our intellect. So we're starting out at a whole different level of learning, with a very different kind of learning. If you've ever played a sport or an instrument or done theater or done like sculpture, artwork. You know that to build any kind of muscle memory, you have to practice and repeat and do things over and over.

Amanda Blake: So this kind of learning requires an investment of time. Something I very much resisted when I first started to get into it. It can require an investment of money alongside that depending on how you go about it. But it absolutely requires an investment of time. There are many, many places where you can learn to deepen your own embodied self-awareness. That's what I suggest you do first. Then and I'll say in a moment, a resource on the website where you can get more info about that. But once you're on the path of deepening your own embodied self-awareness, then what I would say is start to integrate what you're learning in your own body into the questions that you use with clients. One of the things that you can do is challenge yourself in any given coaching session, for example. To ask two questions about your client's embodied experience. You can do that starting now. But really develop your own embodied self-awareness first.

Amanda Blake: So on the Embright website, I got this question a lot, actually. How can I learn more? Who should I go study with? People were actually hiring me and paying really high coaching rates for me to just give them recommendations. So I was like, that's not a good use of your money. Let me just write it all down. So there's a resource on the Embright website. If you go I think to embright.org/wisdom-within. Where I have both the guide to becoming a body-wise coach and this Wisdom Within Ebook that I put together. That has practices from a whole bunch of different really amazing teachers. So it's a great survey of field. It's not a complete, there's more that I would like to include. It's not a complete survey of the field but it's pretty comprehensive. A good way to learn how to learn more.

Alison Whitmire: Awesome. Well, we're here in our last minute and thank you so much for joining us all. Kris, if you want to launch the poll to get feedback on today's podinar. If you want to learn more about what we're doing at Learning In Action and learn more about what this thing, relational intelligence is. You can hear about are that at our free training class in October 25th. You can learn more about that and how to sign up @learningandactiondotteachable.com. Kris will put that link in our chat-box right now so you can see it. We're also having a Master Class on discovering your coaching blind-spots. That's coming up in October as well, the neuroscience of EQ and the course of certification class. If you want to learn more about how to connect with me, that information is here. You can jot it down, alison@learninginaction. If you want to connect with Mandy, support@embright.com. Sorry, support@embright.org. Her website is embright.org. There are fantastic resources on her website. Go to her website if you're thinking you might want to become a somatic coach. You can find that at the wisdom/within. If you can find her book, Your Body is Your Brain on Amazon. There are hardcover and Kindle version now. It will be coming soon in paperback. So really great resources on Mandy's website.

Alison Whitmire: If you're curious about what our next podinars is going to be, it's on coaching psychology. Our special guest, Tatiana Bachirova. Hope I said that right. That's

on October 25th. So I hope you'll join us. So, Mandy, I know that was a really fast finish up there on our last minute. Thank you so much for coming. I so enjoyed this experience and personally, I got a lot. I got a lot from it.

Amanda Blake: Awesome. Well, I'm glad. Thank you so much for inviting me, Alison. Like I said, it's nice to end a Friday afternoon on such a fun note. So thank you, everybody, who was able to be here with us. This is great.

Alison Whitmire: Thank you. Yes, thank you, everybody, TGIF. Have a great weekend and see you next time.