

Building Trust ... One Movement at a Time

trust (noun): reliance on the integrity, strength, ability, surety, etc., of a person or thing; confidence. www.Dictionary.com

Moving in accordance with our structure Our bodies are built for movement. Specific parts are meant to do certain things: your shoulder joint lets you take your arm forward & back, out & in, up & down, rotating inward & rotating outward. That's what it does. So, in RM that's what we do: we take the joints in their directions, in a very simple, direct way, reminding the muscles, joints, nervous system, everything "oh, this is how I am meant to move in here. This is what I can do". Reminding the body of its capacity and how it's meant to move brings us into alignment with how we actually work. What happens is a sense of recognition where the body says 'this is good, this is efficient, I can do this' & everything works better together that way. Moving the body how it was naturally designed to move develops a sense of trust and that trust then is reflected and becomes manifested in other aspects of your life. In essence, a sense of confidence emerges when you are moving in accordance with your structure.

Habits are a form of distrust We all walk around with habits, both in our bodies and in our minds, and they are often unconscious. We don't know we're doing them. So when you're invited to move in accordance with your structure, there's the experience of 'Oh, I don't usually move this way', or 'I've forgotten I could do these things' or 'this is a little challenging and I wonder why'. We develop awareness of how we have chosen to use and live in our bodies. Habits are created because you don't have trust, they are created to protect yourself. While they served us at one time, these habits may no longer be necessary or useful and could be limiting us. We become the proverbial snake with the skin that's too small, needing to shed the skin and give ourselves some wiggle room.

Emotions are part of the equation Realigning with the structure of the body tends to realign your life. One of the things that is very different about RM is the inclusion of emotions: in a one-hour class we don't work directly with emotions, it's not emotional-release or processing work, but there's the underlying knowledge that how we live in our bodies has everything to do with how we live in our lives. If my muscles are tight and I am holding back in my body, it is pretty likely there is a way that I am holding back in my life. Not an imposition, more a curiosity. If I am holding back my muscles that allow my arm to reach forward for something, how does that translate in my life if I can't reach for what I want? We use that language in the class to allow the experience to come from the student and allow whatever is held to arise, but not to create an emotional experience.

What comes from trust? That's where creativity comes, where we allow ourselves to act on inspiration and passion, where it's easier to move and to move forward, where there isn't the need to hold back because of fear, worry, anxiety, or distrust. There is an openness and sense of possibility that comes when the ground you are working from is one of trust, of being in alignment with how we are actually built. When your body is in alignment you have this deep sense of being where you are supposed to be; this is where vulnerability is experienced as openness as opposed to a need for protection. The movements in RM are for opening the body, opening the heart area, opening to the moment. There's all the moving of the body in accordance with its structure, and there's also the opening and allowing the breath to move freely. When we get scared, we often hold our breath and try to disappear. RM movements are designed for freeing the breath, without thinking about it, creating the conditions for the breath to arise naturally and freely, of its own accord.

Seven essential elements contribute to creating the container of trust characteristic of a RMM class: community, music, movements, words, methodology, presence, and joy.

Seven Pillars or Essential Elements of RMM:

1. Community:

"We are wired to connect." "... mirror neurons ... operate like neural wi-fi." - Daniel Goleman

The first half of a RMM class takes place in a circle, with participants holding hands for support when the class progresses to movements designed to challenge and develop balance. Unlike many forms of exercise classes, there isn't the usual students-lined-up-facing-the-teacher arrangement. The circle provides an environment where everyone can see each other, so it creates an equal-vulnerability set up; students are encouraged to take care of themselves and to listen to their own bodies. Also, unlike many dance and movement classes, typically mirrors are not used in a RMM class because the invitation is to bring students into connection with themselves and with their fellow students, without having to worry about how they look in the process. The invitation is to step out of ordinary life, and to step into a simpler and more intimate way of moving and relating. Some movement sequences and sections are done with a partner, where students are in touch with each other physically, at times in a deep-listening manner, at other times in a fun and playful manner.

2. Music

"rhythm binds together the individual nervous systems of a human community." Oliver Sachs

The use of music is one of the hallmarks of RMM. While the choice of music is very personal to each individual teacher, the music selections are always tailored to suit the goal and feel of each section of the class as described below. The music is meant to inspire students to want to move, using rhythms that make moving easy, natural and fun; it is also the ground of inspiration for the movement teacher's creativity, playfulness, and invitation to discovery. Music with definite rhythms is used for warm-up, circle, and across the floor, so students can move together in unison; for stretch and floor work, music with longer phrases support the internal exploration and direction of attention. While music definitely touches emotions, memory, and mood, and we cannot predict how students will respond to any given piece, the intention of the use of music is not to create feelings in students, but rather to allow students the space to connect with themselves through the music.

3. Movements:

'Beauty is the feeling we experience when we discover a harmonious order in art or in nature that appeals to our mind's own drive towards creating order.' Immanuel Kant

The classic Rosen movements came from Marion Rosen's work as a physical therapist. The exercises are based on anatomical structure and sequenced for ease in mobility, creating synovial fluid, encouraging the natural breath, and enlivening the core muscles. The simplicity and spare quality of the movements give rise to awareness of habitual patterns and possibilities underneath those habits. The focus is on allowing the body to work naturally, without performing, striving, or extra effort; the 'goal' is to move according to anatomical structure and ease in breath, not to achieve an aesthetic look or form, and to cultivate the body-mind connection. There is a sense of beauty when we move

in accordance with our structure and each movement is an opportunity for change. When there is a moment of breath, the natural breath, of ease, aliveness and possibility, when the whole being says 'yes!'.

There is a deep comfort or ease that comes from dancing from the inside-out: rather than making yourself conform to a form, it's about getting to know what your form is. If I'm going to dance, who is in here to dance, to express? Coming in first, so I can show you who I am. Come into myself and let myself be part of the equation, vs some idea of who I'm supposed to be or what I'm supposed to look like.

Awareness is the key. If I ask you to swing your arm forward and back, to be in it, to say this is how it feels to move forward and back, to find those limits of movement and to be curious, is this as far as I go or am I limiting. Not to push, but more a question so you can examine and discover in yourself your own limits and capacity. What's valuable about that? Brings us into connection with how we are making ourselves smaller or exaggerating, where there's effort, to find place of ease where it's most natural, least amount of effort, so you have that juice/energy to actually be productive, rather than holding self back. More efficient use of your juice.

4. Words:

“One gains firsthand understanding of the way things are, without reliance on opinions or theories – a direct experience, which has its own vitality. It also gives rise to the sense of deep calm that comes from knowing something for oneself, beyond any doubt.” Introduction to Insight Meditation

One of the hallmarks of Rosen Method Bodywork is the use of words to mirror what is observed in the body, guide awareness inward, and reflect the deep listening and contact with what is unconscious. Words are used in a similar manner in Rosen Method Movement. Simple, clear instructions are used to describe the movements, so the communication is from the body, to the body, without necessitating too much thinking about what to do. The teacher's embodied voice invites students to relax into their own experience and connect with their essence underneath habits of mind. The language of Rosen Method reflects an embodied understanding of anatomy, body-mind oneness, the value of rest, and is used to guide students into self-awareness and to educate without judgment.

5. Methodology:

There are five sections to a RMM class, each with a unique purpose as outlined below. All five sections are intended to enliven and engage the core and the breath, to notice and let go of unnecessary effort, and to invite students to new layers of aliveness within themselves.

1. Warm-up: The class begins with a warm-up section designed to get things started by moving the major joints in all the directions they are built to move using mid-range movements. It is a time to come together and get acquainted with the group and to begin the process of easing into the moment.
2. Stretch: This section is primarily for the upper body and bears similarity to a port-de-bras in ballet, but it's different in that the intent is to discover the self-created limits in one's own body and to explore the possibilities inherent in one's anatomical structure, as opposed to stretching to achieve an aesthetic form. The movements in this section are end-range movements, and invite attention inward into connection with who we are in the quiet recesses of our own experience. This is where lots of yawns often take place as the involuntary, free movement of the diaphragm shows its impact.

3. Circle: The last part of the circle is done holding hands to provide support for bigger, more challenging leg movements so they can be done with ease and fun, with everyone moving to the same rhythm and pace.
4. Across the Floor: Students pair up and move across the floor with dance-inspired movements, using the enlivened core and free breath developed in the earlier sections of the class. It is a social time, where students often chat, play, and dance in connection with their partners and encourage each other with lively interaction.
5. On the Floor: The final section of the class is primarily for the spine, to allow the impact of the whole class to be integrated into the body, and to prepare students for stepping out into the world.

6. Presence

As we let our light shine, we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same. As we are liberated from our own fear, our presence actually liberates others.

Marianne Williamson

Each RMM class is a unique combination of the community, music, and movements as they evolve during that specific hour of life. RMM cultivates being in the moment, creating space for what is not habitually allowed, exploring self-discovery, and trust. RMM teachers witness, acknowledge, and respond to shifts in students' bodies without judgment, they use pauses between movements to allow integration of new neural pathways, the natural emergence of breath, and ever-needed rest. The power of presence and responsiveness are what touch students and teachers alike. The embodiment of the movements, the use of the methodology, the qualities developed through the training all are used in service of connecting with what is true in the moment. There is a profound sense of stillness and aliveness that emerge from within each participant and that permeates the group experience.

7. Joy

"You can discover more about a person in an hour of play than in a year of conversation." Plato

'Joy is the feeling of grinning on the inside.' Dr. Melba Colgrove

One of the things that is hardest to convey about RMM classes is how people feel when they walk out the door, the impacts that show up in their daily lives outside of class, and the shifts in the bigger picture of their lives over time. How is it that something based in simplicity can be so profound? How can I explain something that has to be experienced?

A friend used this analogy: if you think of what is going on in our nervous system as an entity the size of the continent of Australia, what we are aware of is about the size of a campfire. Even if we are students of awareness, we may have a bonfire instead of a campfire worth of awareness, but nonetheless, there's way more going on than we can ever know. The synergy of music, movement, and community is much greater than the sum of the parts. The benefits of RMM include increased mobility, flexibility, agility, and balance; relaxation, pleasure, and peacefulness; connection and aliveness; inner awareness and Inter-connection; appreciation of body-mind linkage; graceful aging; and preparation for more strenuous activity. There is also a feeling of ease and well-being from the inside-out, which some of us call joy.

Trust is a sense of acceptance. As with RM Bodywork, what occurs in a RM movement class is a sense of 'I'm okay and everything else is okay'. Things may not be the way I want them to be, or the way I think they should be, but it's okay.

What comes from that place? An ability to respond to what is happening now, to whatever creativity, whatever is forward, vs. to living in the past, or in fear. Opens us up to actually receive what is in front of us, and what life brings vs. being so closed down or held in that we're limiting the info that comes to us. It is profound work. So simple, spare, spareness ... from that the simplicity we get out of the way for what is beyond our knowing. We can be more creative and productive because you take away the self-imposed, artificial, limits. Not that there aren't limits. We have a body and it only does certain things. To live within that form is quite more vast than if we add our own limits based on the past. Trust opens us up to possibilities; not limitless, but opens up to the unknown.

Embody, Engage, Enliven, Enjoy

When people unfamiliar with Rosen Method ask me what a Rosen Movement class is, my '30-second elevator speech' these days goes something like this: "It's a body-friendly movement class where we do simple, easy movements designed to remind us of how our bodies are actually meant to move. We use music to do the movements first in a circle, then with a partner, and then on the floor. The movements come from physical therapy, so they're based on your body's basic structure; the music, pacing and intentionality are all designed to bring about the body-mind-emotion connection. It's about the unconscious habits we all walk around with, and who we are underneath it all, cultivating awareness and ease, and being playful at the same time. People usually feel relaxed and more in themselves at the end. It's quite something. Come try it out!"

Fellow teachers have written short descriptions of their RMM classes and their impact in the varied communities: all have examples of the sense of community that is created, the bonds that emerge between students and across the group.