

# The Body Intelligence Summit™

## Self, Movement & Intention

### Jon Eisman

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Lamara: Welcome to The Body Intelligence Summit, a production of The Shift Network. I'm Lamara Heartwell and we are so glad that you're joining us.

I'm delighted to introduce a special guest today, Jon Eisman. Jon Eisman is the creator of the Re-Creation of the Self, the RCS model, and he's a founding member of the International Hakomi Institute. He's also the originator of Mindful Experiential Therapy Approaches a.k.a. M.E.T.A., both a synthesis of therapeutic models and a clinical collective in Portland, Oregon.

I have the great honor of getting to interview you again this year, Jon. Thank you so much for joining us today. Welcome.

Jon: Oh. Thank you, Lamara. You're welcome and thank you for getting the summit going and all the work you do to make that happen. A wonderful contribution to our community.

Lamara: Hmm. Thank you. Well, I certainly see you as one of the pioneers and the leaders in this movement about body awareness, body intelligence and how to be more present and awake and alive in our bodies. I am excited for the listeners to get to hear some of the wisdom that you have collected over the years in our short bit of time here so anything you would like to start in here on our topic of Self, Movement & Intention?

Jon: Yeah. Thanks, Lamara. Yeah, it's an interesting topic in terms of thinking about movement specifically. There are lots of discussion on movement and how to move well and all those sorts of things, but linking it up with our sense of self and the movement that we have and the subtlety with which the self is presented through movement, I think that's kind of unique and I find it fascinating.

We tend to think of our sense of self as the kind of cognitive conscious awareness that we have that we're here like, "Oh, I'm Jon" kind of thing. We tend to think of our physical bodies as kind of an object or possession that we have like, oh, I have my job, I have my car, this is my body, my body's overweight, my body's in good shape. It becomes a subjectified thing: my body, as opposed to the recognition that our bodies are actually just as much who we are as this kind of cognitive conscious notion of our self. The cognitive conscious

part lets us conceptualize our self but it's also part of the physical body to let us experience our self.

I think it's really important to recognize the physical body, the movements that we have and so forth as part of our actual sense of self like to be able to think from your knee, not just think: "Oh, my knee is doing this," that kind of consciousness.

Lamara: Mmm. Yeah. Thank you. There is such a strong tendency to objectify ourselves and I definitely see that as an issue in our time here of how we relate to our bodies as literally machines that, okay, we're going here and pushing and pulling ourselves around. I like what you're saying just even with the knee to actually, instead of looking down and going, "Oh, here's my knee," to be connected from the inside of the knee. Could you say a little bit more about that?

Jon: Yeah. Definitely. Interesting you said it's like we tend to see them as machines, and I think it's really important to get that they are machines, that the body is designed to move. There's a very sophisticated system of bones, muscle, organs, fueling it with nutrition and so forth to allow that action so that the ability to have action, the mechanical aspect of ourselves is an aspect of ourselves. It's not just a tool that we have. Almost all of our physiology is designed to allow for movement of some sort, whether that's the movement of blood through the vascular system or the movement as you shoot a basketball or something like that.

Tracking the movements that we make and also the movements that we don't make, the inhibitions to movement is one of the most basic measures of our sense of being, our sense of self. We can't just look at it like a tool that I have that I can use. It's who I am and how I use myself, how I apply myself to the world lets us then have a degree of satisfaction or not with our lives. That takes us then to this idea of spatial dynamics because that's where movement happens.

Lamara: Mmm. Yeah. Please explain what spatial dynamics means.

Jon: Well, all movement takes place in space. We are moving from here to there. We're moving left to right. We're moving forward or backward and so forth.

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We can boil it down in a simple kind of way in terms of spatial dynamics with spatial options we have, that we have three choices basically. We can move towards something, we can move away from something, or relative to something else we can stay still. I can move towards a tree; I can move away from a tree. I can stand exactly where I am and not move at all towards the tree. I can even go in a complete circle at a three-foot diameter away from the tree.

So even though I am moving in a circle, I'm still staying in a relative same spatial dynamic three feet away whether I'm moving or not.

Those are the choices we have: move towards, move away, or stay relative to something else still, not moving and then also that's actually the fact of not moving, wanting to sit still. Not entirely. You'll still be breathing. Your blood will still be moving. But on a sort of psychodynamic level, I can decide: oh, I'm just going to sit here.

That takes us to the idea of, okay, if those are our options, then what makes us move one direction to the other is the intention that we have. I want to move towards something for some reason. I want to move away from it for some reason. I want to stay still for some reason.

It's not that those directions are good or bad in and of themselves. So the more I can move towards you to give you a hug, I can move towards you to punch you in the nose, all right? Different intentions of why I might move towards you. I can move away to give you space and room so that you do your thing in a very generous, loving kind of way, or I can move away from you to avoid you because I think there's something toxic about you or whatever.

Lamara: Mmm.

Jon: I can stay still. I can just sit here and wait and see what you're going to do because I care about and respect you, right? Or I can stay still here and try to be invisible and not be seen. That comes back from a very old, primal instinct that animals have to hide.

Lamara: Hmm. Jon, could you elaborate on how it would be helpful for someone to start to be more aware about how they're moving and what their intentions are behind their movements or their choice to not move?

Jon: Exactly. That's exactly the right next thing to ask about. It springs from the whole notion of mindfulness, our ability to be aware of our present experience. Now, I should say that when we use mindfulness – and this is our kind of Hakomi Institute definition of it and Re-Creation of the Self definition. Mindfulness has a 5,000-year history of being used in Buddhist endeavors and so forth.

When we're talking about mindfulness, we're talking about simply an ability, an actual capacity you have to notice your present experience. A lot of the usage of mindfulness, fair enough, is about the application of that so people are talking about, "Oh, I'm going to use mindfulness because I want to reduce my stress" or "I'm going to use mindfulness to detach from present experience so I can get to a higher level of consciousness," right? All of which are fine uses of mindfulness.

The mindfulness itself, however, my definition of it is simply the ability to notice what's going on in the moment and then what you want to do about that. Oh, I notice that I'm attaching to my desire for chocolate. Therefore, I'm going to see if I can suppress that desire or move away from that desire or let that desire flow by. That's an application of it. With that definition of mindfulness then, what I want to be able to do is notice the movements in myself and/or the movements in other people, and then begin to use the mindfulness – external, non-physical tracking, tracking in another – to be able to know what is my intention.

For example, if you walk by and I notice I start to turn slightly to the right, just this almost imperceptible turn to the right, if I'm mindful, I can begin to notice the complex attitudes and emotions and feeling states and so forth embedded in myself that led to: I think I'll move to the right, and then I'll begin to discover my intention. Oh, I'm moving to the right because I want to give you space, I'm moving to the right because I want to avoid you, whatever those reasons might be.

So we want to be able to be mindful to know our intention and also to study others, to notice with others the impact of others' movements on ourselves. If you turn to the right, what do I do with that? Do I immediately think, "Oh, she doesn't like me; she's turning away" or do I think she's turning away; she's afraid of me or she's turning away because she wants to give me space? I can be guessing about those things but it lets me know, oh, I'm having a response to your movement and, therefore, I should go into communication with you about that rather than making an assumption.

I think one of the problems we have in our culture is all the assumptions we make about decisions people take and the very subtle way in which people are broadcasting their subtle movements. We pick up on that and then make an assumption. You look away in our conversation, I think: "Oh, she's bored" or that kind of thing. Maybe you're not bored. Maybe you're taking a moment to think for yourself. So that need for mindfulness and communication? Essential to our relationships with each other.

Lamara: Yeah. Absolutely. One of the things I'm appreciating about what you're describing is how, having that self-inquiry in any of those moments that you just explained, that it creates a little bit of space to actually pause and have some openness of curiosity. Why would that person be moving that way? Oh, why am I moving this way? Oh, how am I interpreting how that person is moving or not moving in relation to me?

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To be able to have that space to just recognize our automatic responses or, in a lot of cases, reactions to be able to recognize: Oh, wow. That person just moved

that way and I noticed that I felt angry. Underneath that, I was hurt as I was thinking that they were turning away from me to disengage with connecting with me or rejecting me and get to see the old roots of that and the power of just that pause to be able to inquire what is actually underneath how we're perceiving ourselves or others.

Jon: Exactly. That's exactly right. Same with pausing to notice what the impact of the other was on myself and also pausing to notice what move do I actually want to make. It might be a habit of mine to pull back when actually I'd like to engage with you.

Also, I want to point out -- I think it's a really wonderful example -- as you were just speaking and the things you were saying were exactly right, Lamara, but you kept saying it's good to give yourself a little space. In fact, what you're actually doing in that pause that you described is you're giving yourself time deciding not to make a movement yet, right? In that time, having time, not space but time to examine what space you're in and what space you want to take up and move towards or away from.

Lamara: Mmm.

Jon: So just even that subtle -- I'm not picking on you here at all. I'm just saying here's that subtle --

Lamara: Yeah, I get it. Yeah.

Jon: To not quite recognize the essential notion of time and space, and if we give ourselves time we can then decide how we want to utilize the spaces that we're in. That's exactly what we're talking about.

Lamara: Mmm.

Jon: I would like to --

Lamara: I would love for you to elaborate on how this sort of practice is, as you've been working with thousands of people over many, many years --

Jon: Uh-huh.

Lamara: What do you notice how this practice, how it makes the difference in people's daily life?

Jon: Well, first of all, exactly what you said. Not just around the movement but any effort that we make. In Hakomi we call it we study the organization of

experience. Our lives are one experience after another. That's all that happens is our life. We have an experience and the next experience and the next experience, right? It's a question of choosing what you experience is ultimately a responding to experiences we don't choose that gives us that quality of life that we want satisfied or not.

So any kind of mindfulness in that way, really noticing, wow, this is exactly how I'm, what we call "organizing my experiences," how I'm holding my body. These are the emotions that are up. This is the template from which I am operating. That's going to be great.

To then add to that, in one column of that self-awareness is the whole notion of movement gives us that much more subtlety about being able to choose the quality of our experiences and, therefore, the quality of our lives. Just an example you gave, if I notice that I'm assuming in some way, that you're rejecting me because you turned away, then that limits my options. I'll tend to go into one of my defensive structures possibly and think: Oh, she's rejecting me so I need to feel ashamed of myself or I'll reject her first, whatever complicated stuff humans get into.

If I don't notice that, that's by habit it's going to be through this template I have of responding. On the other hand, if I can notice it, I can think: Oh, wait a second. She's turning away but I don't know for sure what that means so let me go into relationship with this person and check and see, contact her. Oh, you seem like you're turning away. Did I offend you somehow or is there something you need for yourself? We can then begin a dialog about how to best interact.

In a similar way, just from my own perspective, leaving anybody else out, I can begin to notice, okay, here's the next moment of my life and what's the truth for me? How am I feeling? How would I like to be feeling? What's my innate, what I call "organic" self position on this is what my life is, this is my next preferred experience? I'd like to go for a run and then I notice myself saying, "Oh, but I'll be too tired." I have this little debate with myself with the more fragmented and self-defensive places. That gives me an opportunity then to notice which self I want to operate from and then the movements that that self wants to make to engage with experience. I think I'll go for the run. If I'm tired, I really shouldn't run. It's an obligation to run. I think I'll take a nap. So I know exactly what next move is the right one for me.

**[0:15:13]**

Lamara:

Mmm. Thank you. Yes. That is absolutely valuable. I keep hearing the word "freedom" as you're speaking.

Jon:

Yes.

Lamara: This sort of practice and this level of body awareness, self-awareness allows people to be more free, instead of the effect of any kind of reactions or habits or behaviors, to be able to have a little bit of – again, it's that timepiece. I'm seeing the being able to be a little bit more separate to be able to make a conscious choice of which direction we want to go instead of having that just take us like a tidal wave.

Jon: Well, yeah, and we had to learn those tidal wave impulses usually as children to defend ourselves when that innate organic impulse to be ourselves wasn't met with success. You wanted to explore the room and your parents yelled at you for making a mess so you've decided, "Oh, I guess I'd better contain my impulse to explore" and you shut something down. We all have those kind of templates, belief systems, learned patterns, schema, whatever you like to call them. Yeah, they've gotten away from being free.

In that Re-Creation of the Self model you mentioned, Lamara, we have a handful but we call it "existential absolutes," the things that the self needs and organizes around spontaneously, like innately, things like freedom absolutely, empowerment, connectedness, beingness, feeling precious and self-worth. All of those get truncated when we don't get to operate from this organic self. In that organic movement then we're declaring ourself and saying, "Yes. This is my right to embrace the world fully."

Lamara: Mmm. If someone is able to live more in that way of following their organic movements and another way of being more aware and in their body, I'm curious how that could actually have an impact on a bigger level beyond someone's personal life.

Jon: Oh. Absolutely, on a couple of levels. Let me back up, give you the biggest statement I can make about it. I think if everybody operated from the organic self, we'd have a much better world. I think almost invariably every problem in the world is caused by fragmented selves interacting with other fragmented selves and not coming up with mutually satisfying "we" consciousness decisions. They come up with little selfish, narcissistic kinds of decisions whether it's to fight over territory or to be on The Jerry Springer Show and accuse your wife of being unfaithful instead of just being mature a person. So, absolutely, the more everybody can operate from this expansive organic self – which is immediately available. Everybody has it. It's just that we've learned these parallel ways of functioning.

Certainly, like yourself, I'll give you as an example, Lamara, since you're here, the spirit within you that says, "You know what? I believe in the world. I think the world could have more resource and be a better place for all of us to live so I'm going to devote my energies and movements towards creating a Body

Intelligence Summit and seek out other people of like mind and maturity and capacity. I'm going to take all this action to see that something better happens."

If you're in your fragmented self, you would just be trying to make money or you would just be trying to have power or something. You wouldn't have this sort of spirit that everybody grabs on to and says, "Yes. That's good for all of us." So you're a perfect example of this in operation in my opinion.

Lamara: Thank you very much. Well, I'm definitely motivated by this piece of our personal actions and our personal ways of behaving and how that can have an impact on a bigger level so I appreciate what you just described there of how it absolutely does ripple out and make a difference.

Jon: Totally.

Lamara: Before we wrap up here today, I would love, Jon, for you to offer some practice, if there's a practice you could share with the listeners right now that they could put into action in their lives.

Jon: Oh. Okay. Sure. Well, let's do this. I'll lead it like it's an exercise. Instead of talking about it, let's just go ahead and do it.

Lamara: Okay, great.

Jon: You folks listening in, I'll give you a set of instructions and feel free to follow them if you like and see where it leads to. I'll begin by saying if it's okay with you, go ahead and turn your attention inwards towards yourself. While you're still listening to my voice and so forth, let go of taking notes at the moment or staring out the window at the beautiful sunset or whatever you've got going there, and direct your attention towards yourself, eyes closed. It's great if open. Doesn't have to be.

**[0:20:13]**

Summon. Go ahead right now and summon this ability to be really aware of everything that goes on in your field of experience, to notice exactly what thoughts you're having right this moment and the exact angle of your head today, how your back feels against the chair that you're sitting on, the mood that you're in. Maybe you're a little anxious. Maybe you're eager and curious. It doesn't matter. Whatever it is. We're not wanting to say be a certain way. We're saying notice whatever way you are. With this really careful attention, I mean really precise like you could notice not just that you have a foot but that you have a left toe on your foot. This is exactly how your left toe feels.

With that precise kind of paying attention to yourself, go ahead and tune in to your physical body, just your physical presence, muscle, bone, receptacle for air,



breathing in, breathing out. On just the most subtle level you can notice, just go ahead for a moment and consider this conversation you've been listening to between Lamara and myself and on the physical level, not the ideal level but, physically, how does your body respond to the conversation? Do you feel like you're moving towards it? Like your body is mobilized towards the ideas and the talking and so forth? Do you feel like you're just kind of neutral? There's no movement at all? Maybe you feel like you're pulling back a little bit, like, uh, I'm not so sure about this but not the idea of that. On the most subtle level, just considering the orientation. There might not even be movement, actual physical movement involved but just the intention, the impulse towards movement, the orientation towards I'm moving in, I'm moving out, I'm right where I am, and just noticing the subtlety of that.

It might be multiple. Part of you might be leaning in and part of you pulling back. It's like you're mixed about it, like, oh, well, it's interesting and I'm afraid I'm going to have to work too hard or whatever it is. Your body is actually speaking two different directions somehow or whatever combination.

Just keep playing with it. Forget about the conversation with me and Lamara for a moment. Go ahead and picture a bowl of ice cream. There it is sitting in front of you on a table or something a bowl of ice cream. Just right away, as soon as you see that image, notice exactly that same kind of spatial dynamic that the orientation to move towards, to move away from, stay still, to half turn, whatever it is, like your hand wants to go but your body pulls back or your mouth starts to purse forward, your lips go forward. Mmm. Yummy. Ice cream. But then your chest freezes up. Oh, wow. Too many calories or whatever, so just noticing the subtle movement dynamics.

I know we're short of time here. You can do the same kind of exercise with anything. Think about a family member. Think about a project you have to do. Think about a movie you're going to see. There's some way you read about the movie in a newspaper and something mobilizes you. I'm going to move towards it and go see that movie. So just be able to track that the way that you do that and then also the way that you might stop impulses like I want ice cream but I don't let myself have it.

Above all this, aside from exterior kinds of things and then responding to things on the outside, just in terms of your own inner world, maybe just right this moment, take a moment right now still at this high degree of mindfulness really paying attention to yourself. Feel your physical body right this second and notice from your body's perspective, not your ideal like I should do this, I should move my arm this way or whatever but your body's actual interior – let your body be in charge so to speak, your interior sense of rightness. Let your body begin to feel what movement this moment will feel exactly right – taking a deep breath,

yawning, stretching, twisting a little bit, adjusting in your seat, whatever it might be. Let that movement just start to happen. Don't do the whole thing but just stop right there as if you've got like almost shifting into gear, and then just kind of study yourself -- what kind of mood goes along with this, what thoughts start to happen, feelings. Do you hear voices in your head? Go for it. Nope, better not do that. Whatever it might be, just studying your own innate desire to move. I think if you play around with any of those things over time, you'll get much more sense of the subtleties of your sense of self.

**[0:25:22]**

Lamara: Thank you, Jon.

Jon: You're welcome.

Lamara: Wow. I loved going through that exercise.

Jon: Yeah. I went through it kind of quickly. You might want to slow down a little bit but...

Lamara: Oh, it's perfect. It was perfect and your languaging is so lovely to listen to. I was inspired by this piece that you were sharing and I want to make a point to share it. You're inviting people to notice what is occurring in their body and what is the impulse in their body first and how so much of our orientation is to notice our cognitive thoughts and to be more hanging out there and not have any noticing, more or less curiosity about the impulses that are happening in our body.

That is such an important piece about body intelligence that is what I am inviting people into on a regular basis and this body of work is how to begin and go as I call drop down from the tower of thought and to begin to notice what is actually occurring in our body and to notice those impulses first. I wanted to point that out for people to be able to connect with what's happening in their body and noticing those impulses and then see what are any thoughts or stories that are connected with those movement and pulses.

Jon: Yeah. It's a really important point, Lamara. I'm glad you're pointing that out. The body is innocent and pure. It doesn't have an agenda other than its own organic agenda. Then the body gets used according to the agendas of the various aspects of self that we have for better or for worse so that left to its own devices, the body will just do its own body thing like the way a cat works. A cat doesn't use its body because it's trying to impress you. A cat just uses its body because it says: I am a body. I'm going to stretch. I'm going to curl up. I'm going to lay here.

Lamara: Uh-hmm.

Jon: I have no guilt about laying around the fire for hours at a time. This is what my body feels like doing. So the purity of that, the purity of what our body wants is an actual, most basic level of self on top of which we have all this sophistication and complication of the different learned social selves that we have.

I think a good example of that too is – all the stuff we have been talking about applies to the more tough stuff around trauma, for example, where the reptilian brain cuts off the cortical part of the brain and the limbic part of the brain to a great degree and just says: I have this very specific simple test I have to perform here. I'm under threat so I'm going to fight or I'm going to flee or I'm going to freeze. Those are my three choices. I'm just going to use my body and do one of those three things. I'm not going to think about whether it's a good idea, whether I want to hurt the tiger or not. I'm just going to do what my body says is the right thing to do. If I'm not under threat, I'm just going to use my body to do all the rest of my survival things in a good way like I'm going to keep breathing, I'm going to search for food, that kind of stuff.

The basic aspect, the most primitive aspect of ourself is completely pure and it's used for the body. It has no intention above that. Humans, of course, are a lot more sophisticated and complicated. The integration between different parts of the brain isn't that strong and so we get this kind of overriding of that simple purity that the body just wants to maintain.

But you're exactly right. To study first what's true at my body level gives us a lot more insight into what's actually true for me or you can feel in a way. You want to reach for something and you hold yourself back. You can feel the tension of holding back and that's the alert then to study more clearly what you're doing and what your intentions are.

Lamara: Mmm. Well said. Thank you, Jon.

Jon: Okay. Welcome.

Lamara: If anyone, our listeners here today is interested in listening to this again, I want to point out that we do have the upgrade package available and you can check that out online on our Body Intelligence Summit site and get lots of bonuses as well and get to hear again and play with what Jon has been sharing in this time.

I also want to let folks know if you're interested in checking out Jon's work or working with him, his website is [hakomica.org](http://hakomica.org) and [meta-trainings.com](http://meta-trainings.com).

**[0:30:11]**

Thank you, Jon. Is there any last thing you'd like to share with our listeners today?

Jon: Just thank you to you and to them for making our world a better place. Just continue to cheerlead together for everybody moving in harmonious and loving ways with each other.

Lamara: Beautiful. Cheers to that. Thank you.

Jon: Great. Thank you, Lamara.

**[0:30:30] End of Audio**

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