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Boot Camp for Your Brain



Lincoln Stoller on the Science and Metaphysics of Memory in the Body

November 01, 2016 in Interview

Lincoln Stoller's expertise spans the physical and metaphysical worlds. He earned a PhD in quantum physics, ventured into neuroscience and psychology, and plunged into the realm of consciousness with training in hypnotherapy. His current enterprise is called [Mind Strength Balance](#) and focuses on issues of thought, growth, and identity. Lincoln works with individuals to hone their skills in problem

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solving, recognition, motor coordination, short-term memory, and artistic expression, with the broader goal of helping them develop positive habits, strengthen relationships, enlarge their focus, heighten their awareness, and open their creative mind.

In Part I of this two-part interview, Lincoln and I talked about how memories can be stored in different parts of the body, and how they manifest themselves physically.

Brent: Thanks for talking with me, Lincoln. You've told me that you believe that people store relevant memories in different parts of their bodies. Can you elaborate on that for my readers?

Lincoln: I think different parts of our body have their own personality and memory. Memory *works* when the attitudes and objectives of these parts are in harmony, and it fails when there is discord. You struggle to recall when the context is not relevant or agreeable, and recall assembles itself when you free-associate.

Brent: So how, specifically?

Lincoln: The association with our parts is reasonable: hands being involved in manipulation, and ankles with orientation. But it can be unusual, such as one's hands being involved with deceit for those of us who spent our youth shoplifting. The thoughts in our tissues reflect the emotions that were at play at the time. So, for the shoplifter operating from frustration, their hands may now carry these overtones. What deeper associations emerge when we wring our hands? Ask yourself, what feelings are in your hands?



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Brent: That's really fascinating! Actors tell me that part of getting into character means exploring with hyperawareness the physicality of their character—as well as the mental and emotional states that manifest themselves physically.

Lincoln: I'm looking beyond the obvious and focusing on a dialog with organs, joints, and tissues. Speak to your gall bladder, converse with your uterus, respect the voice in your testicles. Imagine the stories of your body and develop them as separate identities. It's okay that you are making this up; that's how you conjure things into reality.

Brent: Absolutely! Paying attention to these sensations, and where they reside, creates opportunities for reflection and self-knowledge.

Lincoln: Consider a list of phone calls. For each call associate the feeling it will evoke. Where in your body will each feeling reside? Connect those feelings with the calls and determine if the list of feelings is coherent or disparate. You might see this as a somato-emotional prescription for building the memory palace, but it's more than that. Each memory will have a correct place, not just a convenient one. You will better remember—and probably function better too—if the feelings associated with the memories are coherent.

Brent: You bring to mind some of the exercises that Stanislavski advocates in his method acting approach. An actor is asked to stand up, walk across the room, and close the door. The body language associated with these actions can take radically different forms depending on the scene. How does the actor move if the reason



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for closing the door is to shut out a strong, cold wind blowing in from the outside? What if it's to stop listening to an annoying person in the next room? These physical forms of expression will come from different parts of the actor's body, even though the stimuli are imaginary.

Lincoln: Return to the practical issue of storing memory in your body. If remembering is keeping things in mind, and not forgetting is retrieving things from memory, then remembering and not forgetting are different. Remembering is a process of making familiar, while not forgetting can be accomplished through habit. Such a habit is not the things to remember but rather a means of remembering them.

Brent: This makes me think of the origin of writing systems that replaced the oral tradition. There's an oft-quoted passage in Plato's *Phaedrus* in which a speaker laments the invention of writing, what he terms a system of "reminding," which is inferior to "remembering." He claims that writing will discourage people from developing their memories and induce forgetfulness.

Lincoln: We write checklists, develop routines, and become vigilant to changes in our environment. We behave differently when challenged, such as changing our gait when walking over rough terrain, or becoming attentive when walking down stairs. We use sensations and body movement as a memory aid. Many of these triggers are unconscious, so it would stand to reason that by paying greater attention to these habits we could improve our ability to record and recall.

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Brent: We agree on that. I firmly believe that awareness of one's physical movements, including writing in longhand, are strong aids to memory—muscle memory, in fact.

Lincoln: Muscle memory is linked to a movement or sense, things that remind us to pay attention. We can intentionally imprint patterns through sense and movement for the purpose of remembering. We can heighten our awareness of movement and sensation using focus, visualization, and repetition. Regain sensation and we regain memory.

Brent: Lincoln, you've given us so much food for thought, and we haven't even gotten to your hypnotic regression work! I want to make sure we cover that. Before we do, do you have anything you'd like to add about your perception of memory?

Lincoln: Memory is not data. It is a process, and as a process it develops according to the needs of the organism. What we call a memory is a tapestry of associations, each being a one-dimensional thing without context, a rudimentary thing. Only when these threads of sequence, feeling, vision, name, emotion, sound, and story are woven together do we recognize the result as "a memory."

Brent: And that story may be part fact and part fiction, correct? Our memories can play tricks on us over time. Age, experience, and other variables can color, cloud, and filter our recollections.

Lincoln: It is important to acknowledge that no matter how certain our memory, it may be false. There is nothing wrong with this so long as you

understand that memory serves a function and should be measured by its effect. Most of what we remember never happened, we just “copy and paste” to fill in between the things that did.

Brent: That’s a great segue to my last question. How does your work heighten people’s self-awareness and ability to remember more going forward?

Lincoln: I work with my clients’ subjective measures of memory. I try to reframe a person’s ideas in order to better fit these memories to the designs they are trying to create. The art is in the listening because neither their reality nor what they’re trying to create is fully known to them, or to me.

Brent: So, in essence, you listen less to what they say and more to what they mean.

Lincoln: I try not to pay too much attention to their words, but rather to their lilt, rhythm, and melody, to hear what they’re saying as a piece of music. I don’t hang on every note but pay attention to the feelings and associations that are emerging in them and in me. I’m looking for a reality that’s different from what they say, which means different from what they remember. I want to dis-understand my client’s version, and re-understand their problem as an opportunity in the context of their history, circumstance, and abilities.

Brent: You accomplish this by taking people into a trance, right?

Lincoln: Yes. In trance, everything is more fluid, and suggestions trigger new associations which, in turn, create new memories. People say to me, “I don’t know if I’m just making this

up!” And I say, “It doesn’t matter. You can’t make up how you feel about it, and the feelings drive you.”

Brent: You’ve told me that what a person feels, regardless of the story, often becomes as powerful as an absolute certainty. It becomes, in effect, the truth. Their truth.

Lincoln: Truth does not exist by itself. Truth is how you feel about something: the stove burns, sorrow motivates, love is meaningful. These truths hold beyond the reasons and memories on which they’re built.

Brent: So, you’re not really sharpening their memory as much as you are helping them understand how they intrinsically remember—and feel—about an experience.

Lincoln: The question is not how to improve your memory, but how to distill it. How to transfer the essential juice into your personality and, having done that, open yourself to receive new recollections of the past, and new memories moving into the future.

Brent: And you believe that these memories that we carry forward actually have deeper roots in the past than we might imagine. Is that correct?

Lincoln: We carry memories of our parents, and these are not memories of just our parents but our parents’ memories of their parents as well. I always assume that it goes way back. We are working on growing out of our need to be parented, which is also our parents’ need to be parented. We are growing into our ability to be parents... to our children, to our own parents, and to ourselves.

Brent: What are the most useful, meaningful memories that we should strive to elicit?

Lincoln: I see it as a process of rearranging our memories, like some great game of Tetris where the pieces that fit together to “explain” each other then disappear. In the end, if we’re lucky, the only memories we retain are the memories that define who we want to be. It is safe to say these are memories of love.

Brent: Well, that is a beautiful sentiment to end on, Lincoln. Thank you so much for sharing your wisdom.

Lincoln: It’s been a pleasure.

Visit Lincoln’s website, [Mind Strength Balance](#), to learn more about his practice. Among the offerings are guided visualization exercises he has created that stimulate body awareness. (They are MP3s available for downloading for a very nominal fee.) The idea is to listen to them as you fall asleep. They induce intentional dreaming, which then requires that you give yourself some time in the morning to process the result. I have tried them myself and found them astonishingly effective.

Tags: memorization, hypnotherapy, neuroscience, psychology, metaphysics, Stanislavski, Plato, creativity, education, health, theater, science, actor, memory

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