



On the Authentic Movement Model: A Space for Creation—A Place To Be

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Abstract

The Authentic Movement (AM) Model involves one or more people moving in the presence of one or more witnesses, whose presence is an integral part of the therapeutic process. After the development of AM in America, the AM model was introduced to Israel and further developed during the 1990s. The AM model is mainly used in group settings, with the model being taught in a compulsory course in programs training dance/movement therapists. While several qualitative studies have explored the significance of these courses for the participants, no large-scale quantitative study had previously been conducted assessing the meaningfulness of these courses. The purpose of this study was, therefore to examine participants' perceptions of the significance of AM courses to their personal and professional lives, using a quantitative methodology. This study indicates that over 85% of participants in the study who had experienced at least one of various of the AM courses available in Israel believe that all students training as dance/movement therapists should participate in AM courses. Furthermore, the majority of participants in the study who had experienced AM courses indicated that being a witness as well as moving in front of witnesses was a highly significant experience for them.

Keywords Authentic movement · Groups · Witnessing · Course participation · Dance/movement therapy training

Introduction

While searching for a place to begin this article, which discusses the experiences of people attending Authentic Movement (AM) courses, I remembered that I had danced from a very young age and that movement had always filled me with joy. So too, later in life, movement was the realm within which I found the freedom to fulfill urges to express thoughts and feelings that I did not externalize through words.

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Today, at the age of 80, I feel this need to move and dance, as it sustains my vitality. The AM model invites participants to use their full range of emotions when moving in the presence of a witness, enabling experiences and sensations that the mover may not be fully conscious of to rise to the surface and be expressed without the need to use words. The development of consciousness during the experience of movement in front of a witness without judgement, contributes to the mover developing empathy for self and others while reaching a fuller sense of self (Avstreich, 2017). When I first encountered the AM model, it seemed only natural for me to engage with it, as many of its elements were already embedded in my work methods enabling an in-depth encounter through movement and through witnessing movement, for the development of the individual's ability to witness both herself¹ and the other.

As I progressed within AM, I was helped by the "inner witness" within me whom I have been familiar with from many years of practice both as a mover and as a witness. I discovered that this "inner witness", which is an inwardly directed representation of the witness who has accompanied my course of development over the years, motivates me and ensures that I am fully present. It also introduces and deepens the conscious awareness of witnessing for my students and patients who, through group or individual work in AM, have also been exposed to their inner witnesses and sampled what they offer our minds and bodies.

After its beginnings in America, AM developed in Israel during the nineties, after American dance/movement therapists including Bat-Sheva Koren and Zoe Avstreich brought it here. To begin with, only a few dance/movement therapy (DMT) practitioners in Israel adopted the approach in private groups based on the model. As the years went by, I realized the significance of the AM model, not only for the personal development of the participants, but also for their professional development as DMT practitioners. In 1999 I introduced a course on AM as a compulsory part of my college's professional training for certification in DMT and other colleges did the same. During the course, students were introduced to the principles of AM, given the opportunity of moving in the presence of a witness, expressing their experiences through various media, and witnessing other movers. Participants work in couples outside of the course hours, reporting on their experiences to the group, and research a topic for a final written paper. Today, courses in AM are given in academic institutions in Israel teaching graduate programs in DMT, as well as privately, with dance movement therapists running several personal growth groups using the AM model. Some dance teachers have also adopted parts of the model in order to discover movement materials for their choreographic work.

Background to the AM Model

The origins of AM as a therapy practice are found in the work of Mary Stacks Whitehouse, who was active in Los Angeles throughout the fifties and sixties. While looking for movement experiences which would cross over the boundaries from the

¹ The feminine 'herself' or she is used throughout, but the paper relates to males and females.

deeply meaningful psychological experiences of the mind, and into the physical body, Whitehouse reached a synthesis, through a kind of alchemy, through which her experience as a dancer studying with Mary Wigman and Martha Graham, joined together with the principles she learned while studying Jungian analysis in Zurich, Switzerland. Her journey led to the birth of a new kind of movement therapy relating to mind and body as one, which she called “Movement in Depth” (Whitehouse, 1979). She based this approach partly on the Jungian technique called “active imagination” (Jung, 1977).

Components and Infrastructure of the AM Model

In the practice of AM there are a number of components that constitute its essential infrastructure. These include: (a) Movement of the individual with eyes closed; (b) Movement within a group of people moving; (c) Movement takes place in the presence of a witness or witnesses; (d) Responses by the witnesses and acceptance by the movers (Adler, 2002). These four components may exist simultaneously alongside each other. Thus, the AM model involves working through movement, using a simple structure with one person moving in front of another person. Work using the model can take place in an individual treatment setting, or in groups, but the primary principles always remain the same. The mover enters the movement space, closes their eyes and “listens to” or senses their inner body-mind processes, with movements gradually developing, having originated from within their bodies and their unconscious mind. The movements stem from inner impulses, consisting of feelings, thoughts, images, and memories. One goal of AM is to expand the access of the person who is moving to these sensations, movements, images, feelings, and thoughts (SMIFT)². The mover aims to be in touch with everything that arises within them, and to follow each impulse, allowing movements to flow from them. The time and space moved through are ‘held’ by the witness throughout the session, so the movers are “affirmed” in their movement (Avstreich, 1987, 2002; Adler, 2007; Tortora, 2006; Smith, 2007).

The Role of the Mover

The role of the mover is to allow their movement to be freely motivated by their own internal impulses. That is to say, they are moved by their sensations, movements, images, feelings, and thoughts, in the presence of a witness. One of the important distinctions that Whitehouse made in connection with the AM model was the difference between voluntary, conscious movements a person makes—signified by the active form of the verb ‘to move’—and deeper, inner, involuntary movements, guided by our unconscious minds, which she called ‘being moved’. People ‘being moved’ by internal impulses give up their conscious control over their movements,

² For further expansion on the term SIFT (sensations, images, feelings and thoughts) or its extension to include Movements (SMIFT) see Siegel & Bryson, 2011; Imus, 2018.

their criticism of these movements, and allow their inner emotional impulses to be derived from their sensations, movements, images, feelings and unconscious thoughts to move authentically. Whitehouse, and then Joan Chodorow, believed that unconscious memories and feelings are held in our physical beings, and that a potent way to raise them to the surface is through AM (Chodorow, 1984, 1991, 1999). AM is based on the direct experience of being led by the body, mind and soul, without movement being planned through a conscious thought process (Adler, 2002; Halstrup, 2015; Payne, 2006).

The person moving may experience some conflict at the outset of their movement journey between their wish to be seen on the one hand, and their fear of being seen (due to internalized defenses) on the other. Usually, their need to be seen is stronger than their fears, and the confusion fades. During the movement journey, feelings of joy and pain, anger, rage, frustration and other emotions may arise. These emotions may not be clearly understood. There may be no actual discernment, and distinct associations may be lacking, but they still gain shape during movement (Adler, 2002). The inner work of the person moving, allows her, in the presence of the witness, to develop her own inner witness and the awareness of the nuances of her emotions allowing her to gain refreshment, revelation, rest and recuperation (Lowell, 2007). AM allows movers to “descend into the darkness of unexplored abysses”, to discover secret inner desires, and approach and contain their fears (Adorisio, 2007).

AM also gives a voice to the body without criticism or interpretation. Thus, the role of the mover may be interpreted as allowing their deeply held emotions and memories to come to the surface and, by finding a non-verbal expression, freeing tensions and allowing space for new creativity. The memories stored in the body, and those hidden in the unconscious seeking to emerge, appear as patterns of movement. Spending time within these movement patterns brings submerged memories to our consciousness, allowing their hidden meanings to be discovered. Those aspects of self which may remain unresolved in our body’s tissues, disrupting parts of our lives, gain new energy and may be released through movement (Avstreich, 2007, 2014, 2017). The movers meet a world of creativity, which is opened through these processes, as movement creates experience, and may gain new variations and different perspectives through the moving body. In this way, the body gains an intimate relationship with itself, and gradually relinquishes criticism, becoming devoid of judgement. The mover experiences transitions between distance and intimacy with her body; her movement and her relationship with herself changes and develops (Avstreich, 2017).

The Role of the Witness

In the therapeutic setting the therapist witnesses the person moving. There is a mutually inherent connection between the mover and the witness, evoking a need to be seen and understood that references the mover’s primal essential developmental relationship (Adler, 2002, 2007; Stromsted & Hazel, 2007). This need to be seen by another person continues throughout our lifetime (Schwartz-Slant, 1982; Winnicott, 1971). In the presence of the witness, it becomes possible for the mover to set out

on a previously unknown process, of dialogue between the consciousness and the unconscious (Adorisio, 2007). The witness is a still, silent presence that empowers the mover to be moved by whatever arises from within themselves. The non-judgmental witness frees the mover from the need to please others or make movements with which they have become accustomed or which they may feel are expected. The witness sits at the side of the movement space and 'contains' for the mover a quiet and protected space (Avstreih, 1981; Winnicott, 1986; Payne, 2006). The sense of trust, which is a precondition but also built during the movement process, is what encourages and allows the mover to enter a state of 'inner contemplation' within which she will also find her own inner witness and her own authentic movement (Adler, 1987, 2002; Avstreih, 2014).

It is important to note that by temporarily depositing the movers' markers of consciousness with the witness, the movers do not completely detach themselves from their consciousness and enter into an ecstatic state, but only free up mental energy to be channeled into more internal processes (Whitehouse, 1999a, 1999b, 1999c, 1999d). Yet while consciousness does not move away from the person moving, there is still a burden of responsibility placed on the witness. The presence of the witness is quiet, but not completely passive. The ability to hold a safe space inspiring trust, focusing, witnessing and 'being' with the authentic issues that arise is a challenge for a witness-therapist, and is all the more so for a witness-participant who is not a trained therapist. It is similarly demanding to cope with the non-verbality and sometimes even the internal struggle that takes place within the mover. However, through this process, participants learn the ability to observe and focus their attention and empathy to the other (Avstreih, 2014).

During this process, the witness learns a lot about herself. Apart from focusing on the processes undergone within the mover, the witness must also be sensitive and attentive to the way she resonates within her own body. Witnesses must open up all of their physical and mental channels and allow themselves to be open and attentive to the movements of the mover and to the way in which they meet their own experiential world (Adler, 1987; Avstreih, 2014; Sager, 2015). In order to understand the non-verbal materials, the witness uses his or her somatic countertransference (Wyman-McGinty, 1998).

Processing the AM Experience and the Role of the Group

At the end of the movement process, and before its verbal processing, witnesses and movers are sometimes invited to devote a few minutes to their own personal processing of the experience using artistic tools. This form of processing uses free writing, painting or clay work, to express in images or words the emotional experience as another step in the transition from non-verbal expression in movement to verbal expression (Payne, 2006; 2017; Stromsted & Hazel, 2007). When working in a group, the group may also sometimes use movement expression. In this way the mover gets the opportunity to see and experience the witnesses' point of view directly, not through the word, and the witness is allowed to expand her own range of motion and process her own experience through the movement (Smith, 2007).

The witness shares her personal experiences in the first person in the present tense, a speech style that prevents the urge to give an interpretation and allows the witnessing to occur with full presence (Avstreich, 2014; Haze & Stromsted, 1994). The experience of witnessing as individuals or in a group, teaches observation and a deepening connection with the inner world of the other. Delaying giving a verbal response, promotes trust in the personal processes of the mover, enabling non-verbal and non-interventional nurturing by the witness (Payne, 2017). A similar process is described by Winnicott (1986) in his remarks about the principle that the patient, and she alone, is the owner of her experience. The mutual trust between the mover and the witness is important not only at the beginning of the process, in order to expose the unconscious content, it must also be maintained during the processing, when the mover weaves into it all the parts and voices within it, into her own "true self".

The connection between the mover and the witness and the conversation that takes place between them following the mover's experience are essential parts of the process, always being included, having value for both the mover and the witness (Avstreich, 2017). In a group, the movers and the witnesses still speak in the present tense, using the first-person singular (Haze & Stromsted, 1994). The implication of this is to faithfully continue the experience of the mover and the witness 'here and now', in a non-judgmental manner, which is of primary importance in this practice. After attentively listening to each mover, each witness speaks in the first-person, sharing what seems appropriate to her from her experience of witnessing. The witness may talk about the sensations, movements, images, feelings and thoughts that arose within her, (Imus, 2018; Siegel & Bryson, 2011) without attempting to "know" the inner world of the mover in any rational or intellectual way. The speech in the first person singular also leaves the mover the room to choose what of the witness' words touched or did not touch her. This 'sorting' activity is an essential part of development. In this way respect for the mover and her rhythm is maintained, and she may gain a new angle on her own experiences, and with the help of witnesses may connect to emotional aspects that have hitherto been blocked for her (Adler, 2002; Avstreich, 2014; Payne, 2006). It is also important to look at the materials that came up from the unconscious of the witness and to encourage the feeling of separation between her and the mover. This sense of being distinct is equally important to both the witness and the mover herself (Adorisio, 2007; Stromsted, 2007).

Forms of Witnessing: the Simultaneous Intrapersonal and Interpersonal Aspects of Witnessing

It is apparent in AM that there are several forms of witnessing. These include internal witnessing by the mover; the internal witnessing of the observer/therapist, the silent external witnessing, verbal external witnessing and external witnessing through movement. The internal witnessing by the mover may be termed "intrapersonal witnessing". The witnessing by the observer/ therapist is however more complex. It may be considered to have simultaneous intrapersonal and interpersonal elements, as there is internal reflection, but it results from witnessing the other (Adler, 2002). This focus

on the inner self or the intrapersonal element by both mover and witness is an inherent part of the AM model. However, both witness and mover are engaging in interpersonal activity in non-judgmental surroundings, expressing themselves through movement, witnessing the expression through movement of another and expressing their experience of witnessing either through movement or verbally.

Intrapersonal and Interpersonal Aspects of Experiencing an AM Group

The study explores intrapersonal and interpersonal aspects of participants' experience in AM groups. The intrapersonal aspects relate to the person's experiences of self during and after participation in the AM group. These may relate to their ability to move without feeling judgement, revelation of content unconsciously held in their mind and body, gaining insights into self and personal growth. The interpersonal aspects relate to the participants' relationships with others in the group, or their ability to relate to others in their personal or professional lives. In the assessment of the impact of participation in AM groups on personal and professional lives both intrapersonal and interpersonal aspects are explored. Intrapersonal aspects of personal and professional life include contributions to self-awareness and deepening professional identity respectively. Interpersonal aspects include improving relationships with other people in their personal lives and improvements in listening to, understanding and helping patients in their professional lives.

Previous Studies

Several studies have been conducted using a qualitative methodology, to examine the effect and significance of participating in a group organized according to the AM model for participants in an academic course or as a private group (for example: Sager, 2015). However, no large-scale quantitative research has been conducted examining the effect of such a group on the participants. The aim of this study is therefore to characterize the graduates of the course / group organized according to the AM model and to examine their perceptions about the course and its contribution to their development personally and professionally. This study using quantitative methodology is part of a large-scale study that also included qualitative research that will appear in a separate article.

Method

An anonymous internet questionnaire relating to participation in AM courses/groups was distributed in three stages to about 450 graduates of several courses, and various groups led by different facilitators over the past ten years in Israel. Responses to the questionnaires were received from 166 participants, which is about 37% of the number of graduates to whom the questionnaire was sent, which represents a higher than usual percentage in social sciences research (up to 25%).

Participants

There were 166 participants who responded to the questionnaire.

Personal Details

48.1 Of the participants, 95.1% are female with ages ranging from 27–82 (mean = 0.48.1; standard deviation = 11.26); 73% are married; one third are mothers; 85.6% record themselves as being secular, 6.7% traditional, 2.4% religiously observant while 5.5% recorded that their religious observance was irrelevant. On review of the original data, it was found that other demographic details apart from those that were given in the paper were not collected.

Professional Details

Of the participants, 81% have a Master's degree, 14.7% have a Bachelor's degree and 4.3% have a doctoral degree. For 67.7% of participants the highest level of degree they hold is in dance/movement therapy, with other qualifications being in areas of dance (2.5%), education (4.3%), psychology, (2.5%) and various other fields (5.0%). 68.9% of respondents work in the dance/movement therapy profession, 7.5% lead courses associated with mindfulness in movement, 3.7% are dance teachers and 19.9% are not professionally involved with movement.

Experience in Authentic Movement

Around half of the participants (50.3%) had attended an AM course more than 6 years before participating in the study; 32.9% had participated 1–3 years ago and 16.8% had taken part in a group/course 4–6 years ago. For 33.5% the course they took was within the framework of their master's degree in dance/movement therapy; for 20.5% their course was within the framework of certificate studies in movement therapy, while 46.0% attended groups/ courses in private settings. Of the participants, those who had attended courses 26.8% continue to attend an AM course on a regular basis (of which 54.5% are engaged in movement therapy). 25.6% occasionally (of which 69.0% are engaged in movement therapy) and 47.6% no longer participate in any such a course at all. The reasons why they do not continue are varied—large workload, budget problems, engaging in other areas, engaging in movement of other types and more.

Research Tools

A questionnaire was developed for the purpose of the study with statements scored on a Likert scale of six degrees from (1) not at all to (6) to a very large extent. The questionnaire included the following sections: (a) personal

demographic characteristics (b) professional details (c) general perceptions (d) perceptions of the course / group according to the AM model (e) The personal and professional contribution of the course / group in AM.

Research Findings

The findings are presented in the following order: (a) General perceptions (b) Perceptions of the course / group in AM (c) The significance of the areas that build the experience in AM (d) The personal and professional contribution of the course / group in AM.

The data from the answers to the questionnaire was analyzed using ANOVA tests and *t*-tests in relation to four independent variables: *the year in which they participated in the course / group* (up to 6 years ago, over 6 years); *Study framework* (private, certificate studies, master's degree studies); *Continuation of studies in the course / group* (regularly, occasionally, not at all); *Profession* (dance/movement therapy, other). No differences were found in all the indices in relation to these variables so the data are presented for all the respondents as one group.

General Perceptions

Participants were asked to rate on a 6-point scale their opinion about their satisfaction with the AM course, the importance of the course for movement therapists and the importance of the course for them, personally. The results showed that 90% of the respondents rated their satisfaction from their participation in the AM course highly (rating 4–6). A high percentage (87%) strongly agree (rating 4–6) that anyone who deals with movement therapy should take an AM course, and 78% strongly agree (rating 4–6) that the AM course was one of the most significant for them. The means are shown in Fig. 1.

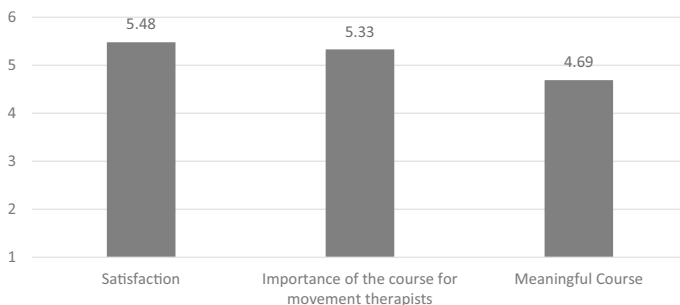
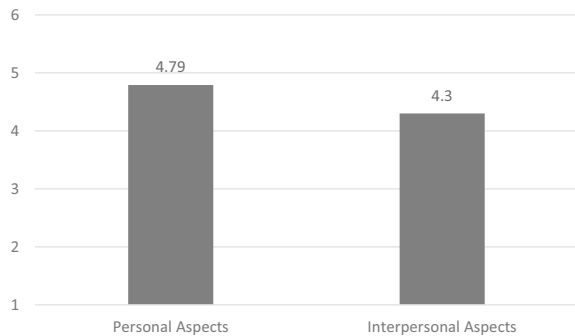


Fig. 1 General perceptions about the Authentic Movement course

Fig. 2 The intrapersonal and interpersonal aspects in Authentic Movement



Perceptions of the Course / Group in AM

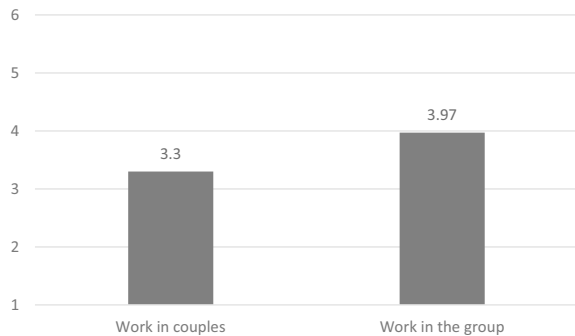
Respondents were asked to rate eight statements describing various aspects of work in AM, on a Likert scale of six degrees. For the purpose of division into categories, a Varimax factor analysis was performed and two factors were obtained that together contribute to 58.08% of variance, but their reliability was low. Therefore, a content analysis between assessors was conducted, accompanied by Cronbach's alpha reliability calculations, and the following categories were obtained. *Intrapersonal aspects*—the statements: I was able to move without self-judgment; I felt an experience of presence without external judgment; The AM brought up materials from within my unconscious; The witnessing progressed my insights about myself; In the movement, I discovered repetitive patterns in me. Cronbach's alpha reliability 0.776; *Interpersonal aspects*—the statement: I found myself in touch with others after the AM; *Working in a couple*—the statement: I preferred working in a couple; *Group work*—the statement: I preferred group work; Indices were built based on the categories, a high value in the index indicates a high level of perception of the content described in the statement.

Differences in the Perception of the Intrapersonal and Interpersonal Aspects

In order to examine whether there are differences in the perception of the personal and interpersonal aspects, a paired sample t-test was performed and statistically significant differences were found ($t(163)=5.49$; $p<0.001$) due to the fact that the perception of the personal aspect is higher than the interpersonal aspect. The means are presented in Fig. 2.

Differences in Perceptions About Couple and Group Work

In order to test whether there is a preference for working in a particular way a paired t-test was performed and statistically significant differences were found ($t(158)=5.03$; $p<0.001$) showing the preference for group work. The means are shown in Fig. 3.

Fig. 3 Perception of the style of work in Authentic Movement

The Significance of Areas of AM

The respondents were asked to rate 11 statements on a 6-point Likert scale, regarding the significance for them of different areas of the AM course. To divide them into categories, a Varimax factor analysis was performed and two factors were found that together contribute to the variance 66.56%, but their reliability was low. Therefore, a content analysis between the assessors was conducted, accompanied by Cronbach's alpha reliability calculations, and the following categories were obtained. *Moving*—the statements: to move; moving with closed eyes; Cronbach's alpha reliability 0.754; *Witnessing*—the statements, witnessing, watching, observing; *The witnesses responses*—the statements: responding, giving verbal responses, giving responses through movement, giving silent responses, (without words or movement); Cronbach's alpha reliability 0.836; *Receiving witnesses responses*—the statements: receiving witnesses responses to my movement; receiving' verbal responses; receiving witnesses responses through movement; receiving witnesses' silent responses (without words or movement); Cronbach's alpha reliability 0.871; Indices were built based on the categories, a high value in the index indicates perceiving a high level of meaning in this category.

Meaningful Area

To test whether there are differences in meaningfulness between the areas that make up the AM, analysis of variance was performed with repeated measurements and statistically significant differences were found ($F(3,158) = 35.65$; $p < 0.001$) due to the fact that moving was the most significant range, with this followed by being a witness and observing, followed by giving and receiving witnesses' responses. The means are shown in Fig. 4.

In the analysis of variance with repeated measurements, no differences were found in the degree of significance between the different types of witness responses (verbal, movement, and silent) that make up both giving and receiving witnesses' responses. That is, all types of witnessing are equally significant.

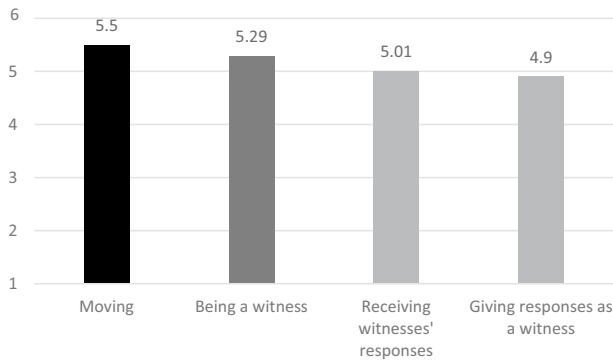
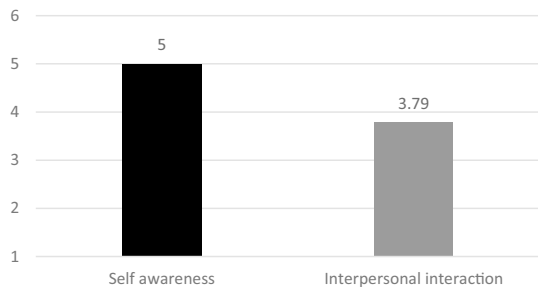


Fig. 4 The meaningfulness of different areas of Authentic Movement

Fig. 5 Contribution of the Authentic Movement course/group personally



The Contribution of the AM Course

The Course's Contribution on a Personal Level

The respondents were asked to rate the contribution of the AM course to their personal lives on a Likert scale of 6 degrees with regard to four different aspects. For the purpose of division into categories, a Varimax factor analysis was performed and one factor was found with a variance of 74.85%. Therefore, a content analysis between assessors was conducted, accompanied by Cronbach's alpha reliability calculations, and the following categories were obtained: *Contribution to self-awareness*—the statement: in my self-awareness; *Contribution to interpersonal interactions*—the statements: in relationships with my family; in my social relationships; in my daily conduct; Cronbach's alpha reliability 0.892. Two indices were built based on the categories, a high value in the index indicates a high perception of the contribution.

To test whether there are differences in the perception of the contribution to self-awareness and interpersonal interactions, a paired t-test was performed and statistically significant differences were found ($t(158) = 14.92$; $p < 0.001$) with the contribution to self-awareness being higher than the contribution to interpersonal interaction. The means are shown in Fig. 5.

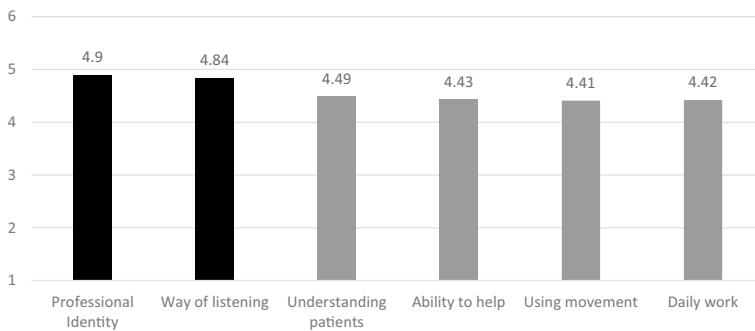
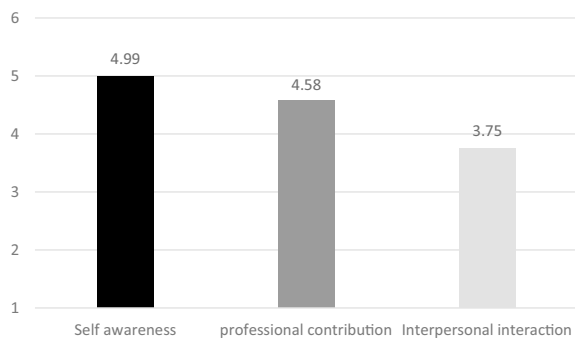


Fig. 6 Contribution of the course/group professionally

Fig. 7 The contribution of the Authentic Movement Course/Group



Professional Contribution

The respondents were asked to rate the contribution of the AM course to their professional lives on a Likert scale of six degrees with regard to six different aspects. They responded to statements that the course contributed to me: in my daily therapeutic / teaching work; in understanding my patients / students; in my way of listening to my patients / students; in my ability to help my patients / students develop their inner contemplation; in deepening my professional identity; through using movement in the therapeutic / educational space. An index was built of the *professional contribution* based on all the statements. Cronbach's alpha reliability 0.943, with high values in the index indicating perception of a high level of contribution.

Since 19.9% of the respondents are not professionally engaged in the field of movement, the statements were not relevant to them and the calculation was made only for those engaged in the movement.

To test whether there are differences in the perception of professional contribution of the various aspects (professional identity, way of listening, etc.) an analysis of variance was performed with repeated measurements and statistically significant differences were obtained ($F(5,136) = 16.57$; $p < 0.001$) due to the perception of the

$F(5,136)=16.57$; $p<0.001$

contribution to professional identity and to the way of listening to patients / students was higher than for the other aspects. The means are given in Fig. 6.

To test whether there are differences in the perception of the contribution to self-awareness, interpersonal and professional interaction, an analysis of variance was performed with repeated measurements and statistically significant differences were found ($F(2,145)=110.82$; $p<0.001$) due to the fact that the perception of contribution to self-awareness is higher than the perception of the professional contribution, which in turn is higher than the perceived contribution to interpersonal interactions. The means are shown in Fig. 7

$F(2,145)=110.82$; $P<0.001$

Discussion

The aim of the present study was to describe the participants' perceptions of the significance of AM courses as well as the contributions of AM courses to their personal and professional lives, using a quantitative methodology. Anonymous internet questionnaires were distributed among about 450 people who had participated in AM courses that have taken place in various places in Israel over the past ten years. About one-third of those approached (166) responded. The data indicate that the majority of respondents are women with an average age of 48, most (81%) have a master's degree and two-thirds of them are movement therapists.

There have been many studies into the importance of AM, its contribution to the well-being of individuals and their development both through being a mover in the presence of a witness and as witness, (for example: Adler, 1987; Avstreich, 2017; Chodorow, 1999; Payne, 2006). As discussed in the introduction, AM encourages processes of change by evoking the participants' inner world and allowing its non-verbal expressions. AM encourages a different type of movement, stemming from inner impulses, rather than fitting habitual patterns or responding to external expectations. This in turn allows consciousness to develop, encouraging choice and self-acceptance. Empathy towards the self and the other develops along with a presence that abstains from judgment and considering consequences (Avstreich, 2017). The findings of this study indicate that 90% of participants express a high-level of satisfaction regardless of the length of time that has elapsed since participating in the course. The participants report identifying great importance in attending an AM course for anyone whose professional occupation is movement therapy. Also, they report that the AM course was one of the most significant courses for them during their study period.

As noted above, in the practice of AM there are a number of components that constitute its essential infrastructure: (a) Movement of the individual with eyes closed; (b) Movement within a group of people moving; (c) Movement takes place in the presence of a witness or witnesses; (d) Responses by the witnesses and acceptance by the movers (Adler, 2002). These four components, which exist simultaneously, were found by the study participants to be of a very high level of importance with averages ranging from 4.9 to 5.5 on a 6-point scale. That is, the study participants see all components of the practice of AM as meaningful to them.

The practice of AM can be examined from two perspectives. (A) Firstly, in terms of domains—the person being the mover, who may be their own internal, intrapersonal witness who then may receive the responses from the external, interpersonal witness—or the external witness, who observes the mover without criticism, holding a conscious space for the mover, with this external witness then adding their own non-judgemental response, whether it be through silence, or through words or movement—an intrapersonal or interpersonal view that exists simultaneously (Adler, 2002). On the one hand, looking inwards into the mind or spirit, while also being aware of the other, who may be a motionless witness or another person moving in the group. Developing the ability to focus on the inner self, thus gaining a deep familiarity with one's inner world is one of the most important contributions of AM courses to the participants. Encouraged by the presence of witnesses whose still, silent presence empowers the movers, the movers develop their ability to be in full presence, in unison with what arises within them in motion or in the absence of motion. They experience existing, without needing to please others, to be enthralling, to do something for others, while being deeply attentive to themselves. This type of listening allows quieter intrapersonal and interpersonal witnessing, in a more accepting, non-judgmental manner, without analysis or interpretation. This listening allows the other to be the guide and the teacher. It builds confidence in that which springs up from within the inner person, developing acceptance and love (Adler, 2002; Avstreh, 2017; Payne, 2006).

This study shows that the intrapersonal perspective was perceived as being most important. This was expressed by the high degree of importance attributed to movement and the ability to move without self-judgment, while listening to the inner witness discovered while experiencing this type of movement, together with deepening self-awareness. This intrapersonal aspect is the heart of AM although at the same time the interpersonal aspect is also of great importance. The personal aspect refers to the opportunity of the research participants to learn about themselves and their inner world and develop it. To experience the possibility of a benevolent and intimate relationship, a relationship of caring and deep listening, of waiting for what will emerge from the other, of unconditional acceptance (*ibid*).

The practice of the AM also contributes to the professional development of its participants. Through participation in an AM group all the elements that build the concept of 'being a therapist' are perfected. Listening, the ability to be with others in the moment-by-moment presence of active listening that has somatic listening and countertransference and use of movement in the therapeutic session. All of these were perceived as improving to a high degree by the study participants. AM was found to contribute the most to professional identity and to the skill of listening. These two components can be seen as part of the participants' personal development. In other words, the research participants see the components of the practice of AM as contributing to their personal and professional development, beyond their perception of the great contribution to the interpersonal component as well. Or as one participant wrote "This is a practical way of observing and personal work in which I can be in touch with my present personal being in an attentive and open way and reach beneficial changes and beneficial courses of action and free self-realization."

Conclusion and Recommendations

This article presents the perceptions of participants in an AM course about the importance of the course for them and its contribution to them personally and professionally. They recommend that all movement therapy students take this course. As a result of my of experience regarding the contribution and importance of the practice of AM to the individual's personal and professional development, especially for movement therapists, an AM course in Master's degree programs for training movement therapists in Israel is recommended, and indeed most programs do include these courses. The findings also showed that participants perceived that taking part in AM courses improved the way they listen and approach their patients, with this aspect being relevant to all therapists, and therefore such a course in the various treatment programs is suggested. An additional recommendation is extending the current study to participants in other countries to examine the universal contribution and impact of AM for a broader audience of participants.

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