

# THE COACH'S EMBODIED TOOLKIT



Simple, powerful postures to  
bring the body to coaching

MARK WALSH & CHRISTINA DOHR

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# FOREWORD

My own journey with Embodied Toolkit (ETK) has been lined with “ah-ha” moments, surprises and breakthroughs. Why?

Because it works.

The first time I really dove into practising the system was during a teacher training in Brighton in 2017.<sup>1</sup> Over the course of five intensive days I got a taste of all the 26 poses and I can tell you, it is an intense journey.

While not physically exhausting, I could perceive the deeper fatigue that came by embodying and analysing so many sides of my own being and psyche through postural inquiry. It was also a lot of fun and I personally appreciate being thrown into the deep end, discovering new depth to myself, and looking at so many mirrors to shed light on my patterns.

As a physically fit and flexible person, none of the postures posed a challenge in their physical execution, but the internal resistance I experienced, in particular with “Vulnerability Pose” and “Sensuality Pose”, were revealing.

The moment I sat down in the “Vulnerability” posture and embodied its full form, I felt repelled and viscerally nauseous. I hated it. It felt deeply unfamiliar. I wanted to adjust instantaneously to regain stability in my posture and regain balance in the body (as the pose is very asymmetrical and

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<sup>1</sup> This was back when Embodied Toolkit was known as Embodied Yoga Principles, or EYP.

purposefully not stable). Part of this was my background in martial arts training, which taught my body and mind that it was not an intelligent way to sit in case of danger, not allowing for quick response or getting up, resisting pressure and even more so actively exposing vulnerable parts of the body like the neck. Deeper than this, however, I discovered a layer of disgust, judgement and a confusion of vulnerability with manipulation. When adding the sweet facial expression and increasing my rate of blinking my eyelids (note, these are the subtle details in postures which can be highly revealing) it brought up an immediate voice in my head that rejected this way of being as manipulative, deceptive, and acting weak to gain something. Knowing myself a little, it confirmed my own struggle with showing vulnerability and the fear it might be not only taken as weakness but also seen as manipulation, which was against my values. And so, before allowing myself to practise vulnerability, I required some distinction coaching (a technique discussed in later chapters) to distinguish between vulnerability as an innocent and authentic expression from manipulation. Once these were separated, I could focus on familiarising myself with vulnerability itself as untainted.

The other posture that evoked a lot of resistance was “Sensuality Pose” and, in particular, being seen as a sensual woman. This too reflected a rejection of parts of myself, and coming to see feminine expression as unsafe. This was based on unwanted attention I had received as a young woman whenever expressing it freely. I had tamed it and did not allow it, but instead prioritised the martial tougher sides of myself (I am an aikido black-belt).

These two poses brought impactful insights at the time and over the following months, I actively worked on integrating and reshaping my relationship to both. Practising the poses themselves regularly and also engaging in more practices, which allowed these sides to be expressed safely. And guess what? Only seven months later, my peers and colleagues from the embodiment world reflected back to me how much my expression and way of moving and being had changed. I had become softer with less rigid “armouring” that I had been carrying, along with more open and playful. My fear of embracing these qualities leading to me becoming “weak” proved completely wrong. It simply allowed me to embrace more range in my own embodiment and ability to meet the world.

I hope this personal account gives you a flavour of how powerful these poses can be in both, generating insight and also being a vehicle for change.

In parallel to this experience, I started coaching one-to-one, and I realised how each time somebody would share their challenges or aims, I immediately could match at least three postures to explore together. These could be used in coaching to gain a deeper understanding of what was standing in the way of someone’s goals, or move them closer to embracing skills that would reflect their desired outcome. Yes, you COULD just ask clever questions about the topics as a coach, but this often just creates cognitive justifications and no new ideas. Why would one NOT shift people straight into new insights and possibilities through the body? Why JUST talk?

Embodied Toolkit has since become an essential component of my coaching practice, and I find clients resonating deeply with the practical nature of the system, as well as both its depth and simplicity. Nowadays, I use it in nearly all my sessions to shed light on a topic, and maybe 80% of the “homework” practices I give my clients to get a more permanent shift entail at least one posture.

I hope that this book will leave you with a clear understanding of exactly how you could also include this body of work into your coaching practice, and that you benefit from its efficient and empirical nature.

**Christina Dohr**

*Embodiment Coach and Somatic Educator*

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# 1: INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Who is this book for?

This is a practical guide for you if you are a coach or facilitator and want to:

- Include *the body into your coaching* more – in simple, practical ways
- Be able to rapidly shift your own state and perspective as a coach
- Be able to rapidly shift your client's state and perspective
- Use easy and effective exercises to help your clients gain fast and *profound insights*
- Offer short powerful “homework” practices for your clients to shift longer-term

If you know the body matters in coaching and need some clear first-steps to work more with it, then this is a great place to start.

If you are currently training to become a coach and have a movement or somatic background, this work will definitely be interesting to bring the two together.

If you are already a well qualified somatic / embodied coach this will give you another clear and powerful set of tools to work with.

If you have trained in the group version of the Embodied Toolkit<sup>2</sup> (ETK) system before, and would like to expand into working with people one-to-one, this guide offers additional insight into how to approach this work.

## 1.2 Why does the body matter in coaching?

*“It’s accessible, it goes deeply quickly, and it sticks.”*

*“If information alone worked, Wikipedia would have solved the world’s problems and self-help books would be valuable.”*

- Mark Walsh when asked why he works with the body.

Have you ever worked with clients who were overthinking, stuck in the head, perpetuating loops of unhelpful stories, whose mind is so strong that talking shifts little because they will talk their way out of everything? Or maybe you have completed coaching sessions or programmes feeling that you could have gone deeper, that there was potential for the client to tap into more resources or insights? Have you ever worked with clients who were perfectly intelligent, but also totally stuck in a way of being? That’s because they’re stuck in a way of being embodied. Not their height or shape, but how they live as a body – that’s what embodiment is, and it’s how we stay habitual.

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<sup>2</sup> Embodied Toolkit (ETK) was previously known as “Embodied Yoga Principles” (EYP) and was originally designed for yoga teachers before coaches demanded a version!

Minds are problem-solving machines yes, but they are also embedded in a way of being – an embodiment. And if we are to believe Albert Einstein when he states that “We cannot solve our problems with the same thinking we used when we created them”, we require alternatives as coaches to just talking. Shifting a body is the quickest, most direct way to shift a mind. We have all had this experience accidentally while going for a walk or in the shower – a sudden new “aha” moment when we relax and change position – but this can be done far more efficiently and systematically. That’s what Toolkit does.

Beyond just generating new perspectives and ideas, we have also found that adding the body also adds invaluable depth and breadth to coaching. Whole new worlds open up, in fact.

Let’s look at a few benefits here. Assuming that we can shift a lot by simply addressing challenges with our minds and verbal coaching, what do you think happens when we add another dimension? If we don’t have to combat our mind’s stories and iterations and break through them step-by-step, but instead have something empirical in the physical world that is revealing patterns? Because you can easily move the body very literally, and this is the substrate for everything else, it works quickly! You also work around any “resistance”, as the ideas come from people themselves. When someone has an embodied shift, no convincing or explaining is necessary.

We do not agree with the statement that “the body never lies”, but it certainly reveals new truths, and isn’t quite as prone to “lying”! Memory gets reconstructed, stories change, and thinking is very abstract at times. The information that is stored

in our bodies is more tangible, it can be experienced and shows up without filters of sceptical attempts at rewriting the truths to maintain an idea we hold about ourselves<sup>3</sup>. If you stand in a certain way, this is how you stand. Then we can inquire what that might reveal about your life. Maybe you stand in a way that indicates a lack of confidence, sunken chest, shoulders forward and when I ask you about how confident you feel, you might also express that you struggle with showing up confidently. If I had simply asked you whether you are confident, your idea about that in your own head might have been more tainted by how you would like to be instead of how you are. Sometimes self-portrayal and estimates can be very accurate. Other times they are very distorted and maybe hidden in shadow or blind spots.

A lot of this is very common-sense. We think facilitators get it. The only difference is that we have looked at this stuff in great detail and systematised it, which will save you a lot of time and errors.

Working with the body allows us not only to speed up the process of insight, but also the integration of change. It makes it more effective, as we can use concrete movements, postures<sup>4</sup> and embodiments to target change in ourselves. It is much easier to teach someone a more confident way of sitting,

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<sup>3</sup>Some exceptions to this are trauma and addiction, when the body signals us that it needs something which might not be beneficial but has learned it to soothe the pain and ensure survival.

<sup>4</sup>By definition, posture means an intentionally or habitually assumed position, whereas pose implies an aesthetic, artistic, athletic, or spiritual intention of the position. However, we will largely use the terms interchangeably here. If you feel like “translating” each usage to the correct term as you read, feel free to do so!

standing and walking, introducing confidence through the body, than it is to tell someone to just be more confident or to think more confidently. As Stuart Heller beautifully captures, “We move through space like we move through life.” And if we change the way we move through space, we impact the way we move through life as well. People understand body *language*, but *embodiment* suggests that the link works BOTH ways – the body does not just express who we are, it controls and creates it!

Our body always tells and creates a whole story. How we have found love and safety, for example, and critically, how we will continue to try to.

We are also embodied in context and have developed our way of being in response to the challenges and influences present in our lives. Our embodiment is not arbitrary but has developed as a survival strategy and does, or did, fulfil a purpose. Whatever served you in your life to meet the circumstances in the best way possible, either by conforming to the context or by opposing it, will have been ingrained in your embodiment. More on this soon. I just want to make it clear how including the body and addressing embodiment leverages the power of the whole, rather than just an isolated part, of who we are. It addresses our history and entire context as well.

*A reflection question:*

*How much do you already include the body into your coaching practice?*

### 1.3 What do we mean by “embodied”?

One of the simplified definitions we use, refers to embodiment as “how you are”. The *how* is emphasised over what you are, which means it looks at the mechanism of your personality, behaviour and qualities of being. The manner that maketh the human, to steal a phrase.

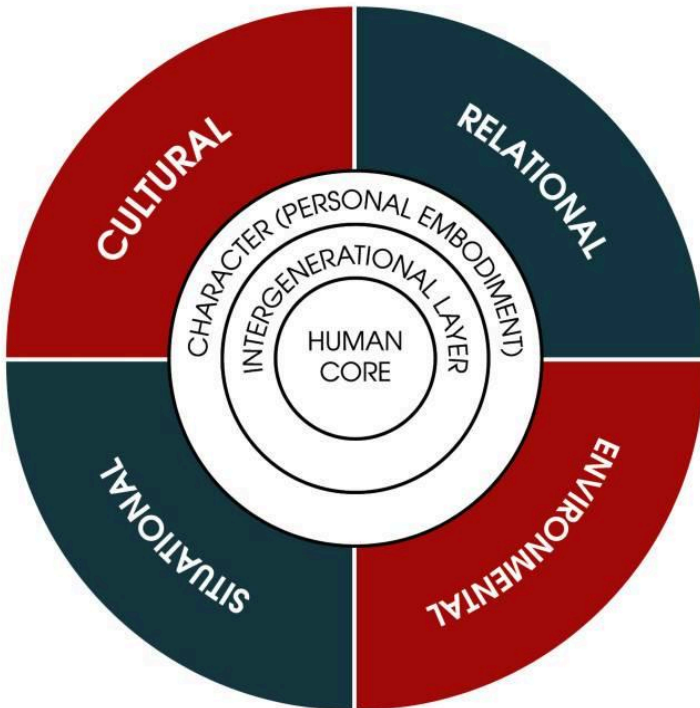
There is an interaction between the physical body and embodiment of course, but it is helpful to move away from thinking it is about someone’s age, gender, appearance, body shape, size, etc. as leading to one embodiment. Throughout history there have been various body prejudices like “bigger people are jolly” and we do not wish to perpetuate them, so this is worth stating early.

Embodiment does, however, solidify various layers of being a human. We could consider it the subjective aspect of the body as one definition, in that it refers to the *how*, of *who* we are.

It includes surface expressions such as gestures, and body languages, but also more global patterns of how we move and how we hold ourselves. “We breathe as we are”, for example. It is also “subjective” in that it concerns how we feel, perceive and process. Embodiment is about the felt body, the “inside out” body, not just the body as an object (how most gyms, doctors, etc. will treat it). Leaving behind a Cartesian body-mind split, embodiment acknowledges the body as part of us, a subjective component of our whole physio-emotional and mental self. The body as such forms the physical foundation of our perceptions, emotions, thoughts, relationships and behaviour.

Embodiment is also profoundly relational, and can not be separated from how we relate to others (past and present) or the world around us. At its core, embodiment is related to connection to self, others, values and the world, and shows how these are not four topics but one.

## CONTEXTS OF EMBODIMENT



Embodiment concerns our way of being in the world, and is shaped by the context we move and grow up in. The socio-cultural and historical programming, our personal and family history, ancestry, training and education we received all shape “how we are”. And it remains malleable and adaptive. Embodiment is equally subject to situational and relational



factors – depending on who we relate to, where we are in a given moment, what we ate, what the weather is like, how well we slept, etc. The above model captures the contextual layers and the inner white circles add a more individual level to the otherwise more systemic nature of embodiment.

The situational factors often inform our momentary embodiment, which we call *states*, while the previously listed factors shape long-term embodiment – *traits* or patterns. I'll say more on states and traits.

The Embodied Toolkit is especially helpful to gain understanding of patterns, which oftentimes prove to be more difficult to identify. Many people and probably clients are relatively capable of describing how they are or how they feel in a moment, although this can also be a big challenge for some (especially if they are not familiar with awareness practices or connected to their bodies). Patterns, on the other hand, can be even harder to spot, they are easily unconscious, blind spots, in the shadows and hence require effort to actively uncover and shed light on. This is because they are so habitual or “normal” to us, like the fish in water that knows nothing else than the water it's swimming in. If you were to ask the fish “how is the water?” it would probably be confused as to what water is. Or in a more human example, the taste of your own mouth is something you might have a hard time noticing consciously, unless you have eaten something with a strong aroma like garlic or smelly cheese.

Even if we become aware of our patterns, the more difficult task is changing the ones we do not like or that no longer serve us. There might be tendencies that you would like to turn the volume up or down on, alter certain traits completely, or

simply learn to access the entire range and spectrum. Let's say you tend to be very quiet and struggle getting yourself heard, and yearn to be more able to show yourself and your gifts. Practising being seen or vulnerable through a pose can help unlock the capacity to be seen or be vulnerable in your life.

The Embodied Toolkit offers you the key to try on new embodiments, new ways of being. There is a clear structure, and a map of how to practise them in a safe way without consequences. You might want to choose to take up more space, embrace being vulnerable, or not take yourself as seriously.

Anecdotal evidence strongly suggests the more range and authenticity you develop in your embodiment, the more attractive you will be. And even if this is not your focus, you will likely develop an ability to respond more appropriately to different challenges in your life by having a larger "vocabulary" of embodiment.

A benefit of practising embodiment through these postures is that it is efficient and can easily fit into a busy lifestyle, which many clients have in our modern fast-paced, performance-oriented world. Instead of needing to do an entire hour of yoga, meditation or attend a dance or martial arts class, you can get tangible benefits and changes with a few minutes of targeted daily practice. All you need is an open mind, the willingness to change and a few minutes each day to explore and embed new embodiment.

For some free resources on embodiment, you may like to explore <https://free.embodimentunlimited.com/>

## 1.4 What is Embodied Intelligence?

To better understand the different dimensions and principles of embodied work, Mark created the embodied intelligence model<sup>5</sup>, which was based on Daniel Goleman's model of emotional intelligence.

One way to think about embodiment is as a type of intelligence, or “a multi-dimensional way to be smart”, consisting of learnable skills. Embodied intelligence is a pragmatic perspective as it provides a map of practical skills that can be developed.

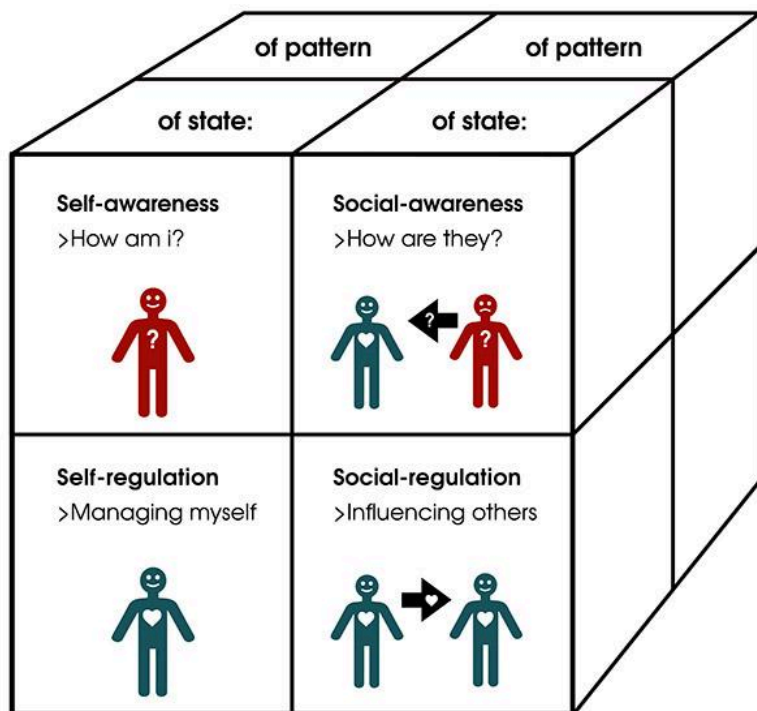
The model serves to demystify the field and to make learning embodiment practical by offering a road map and breaking it into simplified parts.

This way you can think of embodiment skills as involving awareness and choice (or leadership), for ourselves and others, across two time-frames, which leads us to the following depicted cube or four-quadrant matrix.

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<sup>5</sup> Mark created this model in 2010 and started sharing it widely online soon after. Others have since “invented” similar models. For more detailed information refer to the book [Embodiment: Moving Beyond Mindfulness](#)

# EMBODIED INTELLIGENCE



# **2: AN OVERVIEW OF THE EMBODIED TOOLKIT**

## **2.1 Purpose and approach**

The Embodied Toolkit is a principles-based approach to understand and change personal patterns through embodiment practice. Its educational side lies in offering a comprehensive set of poses that can effectively reveal who we are. It further teaches you how to learn and relearn / unlearn patterns, by picking the appropriate poses to balance your existing habits in a targeted manner. It builds freedom to respond more flexibly.

The purpose of The Toolkit is to grow awareness, range and choice, in oneself and in relationships. In more detail, it offers the below all by means of postural practice:

- Psychological insight into yourself and others
- Pragmatic life skills
- A wider range of embodied possibilities
- Increased awareness of how you are and how you come across
- More choice to develop how you want to be

It does these things quickly and powerfully.

## **2.2 The principles**

ETK has 26 exact poses as an “alphabet” of embodiment but also underlying principles which make it very flexible. It is based on one meta-principle that’s also reflected in the

embodied intelligence model – *awareness and choice*<sup>6</sup>. We need to know how we are before we can change anything. Patterns can be tricky to spot as they are how we are and hence become invisible to ourselves at times. Remember the fish in the water metaphor. Thinking about it alone is often insufficient to reveal patterns. This is why an embodied approach benefits in the discovery. To tap into the principles and realise awareness and choice, we need tools / techniques. This is what ETK offers. A clear method to arrive at both insight and change by using the shapes (postures) and enquiries that follow in this book.

## **Awareness**

Within the awareness principle we also have a cluster of sub-principles that influence how we approach the coaching practice:

- **Familiarity** - by trying postures you will notice what is familiar or unfamiliar
- **Deviation** - how someone does the poses “wrong” reveals patterns
- **Contrast** - patterns can be revealed by comparison
- **Simulators** - one can create embodied metaphors to reveal patterns
- **Body Listening** - the body is worth listening to
- **Body Reading** - patterns can be seen in others with training

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<sup>6</sup> *If you're a coach or facilitator wanting to explore these principles and sub-principles in great depth, you may like THE textbook on the topic, [The Body in Coaching and Training](#).*

We create awareness of how we are, of our patterns and habitual embodiment, by pointing to the above principles. We learn which postures are familiar and which ones are unfamiliar but longed for. We can also understand patterns based on how someone deviates from the shape of a posture, as it's likely that they are capable of seeing the correct posture and that their bodies are able to perform that posture. That leads us to see "mistakes" as an opportunity to spot how their habitual embodiment influences and distorts the postures. Offering a contrast can make it easier to determine familiarity, too. For instance, asking someone to do "No" posture and "Yes" posture and seeing which one feels closer to home. There are also other creative ways to tickle out patterns beyond this that require more training and practice in the individual poses, as well as some basic embodiment coaching. If you are interested to find out more, check out the website offering various trainings: <https://embodimentunlimited.com/>

## ***Choice***

Within the Choice Principle we have a cluster of sub-principles that direct which postures to select for clients to familiarise themselves with, to learn the embodiment and gradually become how they want to be:

- **Growth** - we learn new postures and embodiments to build range and find balance
- **Centring** - we can notice when we're struggling and learning to manage it
- **Emotions** - we can identify how we feel and shift emotions by embodied work

- **Shadow** - we can identify if there is an embodiment we have rejected and re-own it through practice
- **Process** - we can follow and allow to encourage the process of embodiment

“Embodied” approaches to coaching are sometimes presented as esoteric. We hope these principles make things clearer as there is a method behind what we present here.

## **2.3 What are the Embodied Toolkit “Postures”?**

The Embodied Toolkit maps human embodied possibilities with 26 postures and variations of these postures.

A few are postures you would recognise from a general hatha yoga class, like the warrior pose. Most are designed to practise a specific embodiment and contain influences from different disciplines like dance or martial arts (e.g. the “No” posture, which is close to a karate stance). The postures incorporate archetypal embodiments that are cross-cultural and recognisable around the world. Having taught them in many countries now, and developed them with a cross-cultural team, we are clear about this.

The 26 postures offer enough variation to work with to cover the most common life challenges people have. As the entire approach is principles-based, there are many variations, so the number is not set in stone. We could keep creating and adding new ones, but this might add undesirable complexity. The 26 cover enough qualities and archetypal expressions to offer a sufficient “vocabulary” with which to address almost all areas of human existence. Other poses can also emerge as



variations of this basic set, which give a foundational embodiment alphabet.

Within the alphabet we can find commonalities that allow us to cluster the postures into groups and fit them together. The simplest way to organise them is to create the polarity of “yin” and “yang”. Yin poses are often more down, in and back, and are about softening and letting in, like “Receiving” and “Vulnerability”. Yang poses would be more up, forwards and out, coming with activation or effort, weight and momentum forward like “No” and “Pushing”. There are other postures which have a balance of yin and yang in them and so are less easily categorised, like “Support”.

For further understanding of yin and yang, polarity and range, see the embodied work of Dylan Newcomb. His UZAZU Embodied Intelligence system was a major influence on ETK. And, of course, the Taoist and Tai Chi classics. Do not get too hung up on there being 26 poses, or the yang-yin distinction between them though – they’re just a map.

Note that the 26 postures often have several names, too. The postures point to something universal and beyond words. It is easy to get hung up on names, or for people to have a bias or particular associations with certain words. Hence, it’s useful to have alternatives at hand. Ultimately, the name doesn’t really matter, and we have all kinds of fun with translations and nicknames for postures.

As mentioned, the postures can be seen as expressions of “archetypes”, similar to psychoanalyst Carl Jung’s cross-cultural maps of being. The poses distil the essence of a deep way to be human, and capture it in a shape that

suggests the core quality of it. We could even see them as keys to access certain “energies” in oneself. However, we found that “energy” is a word that’s used too loosely and has a woo-woo flavour about it. They could also be referred to as “somatic structures to aid psychological enquiry”... but that’s a mouthful... or, more poetically, as an “architecture of the soul”. The easiest and most widely understood frame is talking about them as qualities of being, or as archetypal activators.

While we keep referring to the embodiments as “postures” and “poses”, this might not be the most accurate way to think of the forms, and rather serves the ease of expression. Each “posture” is a gateway to access an essence, and while knowing the forms thoroughly can be very helpful for revealing tendencies and identifying deviations, it’s not the exact shape itself that really matters. This is why they can all be adapted to suit different bodies without lessening their impact. All the standing poses could also be done seated. Don’t go changing them to suit your neuroses, though! Because of their deeply resonant archetypal nature, they are also surprisingly powerful, emotionally and in terms of generating insights. This is by-design and not to be underestimated.

Each “posture” is actually dynamic, and can be practised as movements. We teach them as poses only because this creates clearer forms that are easy to learn.

We often use the traditional Buddhist model of practising in each of the four positions of walking, sitting, standing and lying down. Due to the nature of the archetypes, however, some are better done from one position, e.g. “Rest” is best done laying still, and enthusiasm tends to involve standing and movement!

They are also "postures" in the sense of attitudes, being affective frames, cognitive frames, relational frames, perceptual frames and behavioural frames. This means they are the implicit "ground" of how we feel, think, see, relate and act.

We'll cover the foundations in Chapter Three, before Chapter Four dives into the photos, descriptions and "common mistakes" to look out for in yourself and your clients for each of the main postures. We'll also cover variations of some of the postures – for example, "Care" pose can be turned into "Containment" pose, a gentle embodiment of boundaries, by turning the palms outwards, and is a more yin way of embodying the yang "No" posture. Along with those, we'll look at extended explorations and partner practices, too.

### **3: THE EMBODIED TOOLKIT POSTURES**

The 26 postures outlined in this book can be broken down into different components that make up a posture. This makes it easier to know what you need to pay attention to in order to do them “right”. As mentioned, there is one shape that brings out the archetypal quality, but when you find your client doing it differently, that is where the insights lie. To be able to spot these differences, however, it is essential that you know which details to look out for and what is a deviation from the actual shape. The forms are reference points that can be changed for practical reasons (e.g. body types and disabilities) but should be known.

The main aspects of each pose to learn correctly include the stance or feet, the positions of the spine, the hands and even the face. Once you understand the general ingredients, it becomes much easier to remember and learn all the poses, along with identify the more subtle elements.

While we introduce the full postures to clients to generate more awareness and insight into their patterns, each posture comes with a “micro” version to be used in daily life. As a minimal version of the full form, these micro postures contain the essential embodiment of the posture but would be acceptable to do at work or in life without looking weird. More on micro poses will be covered in Chapter Six.

A final important note to make before introducing the postures is that they are designed to be non-athletic and can be adapted to any body shape, type or physical limitation. Disability, pregnancy, unusual body types and so on need never be a barrier to exploring patterns with a well-trained and considerate coach.

### 3.1 The Yin and Yang

Yin and yang is an ancient model of polarity mostly associated with Taoism and Chinese philosophy. In the Embodied Toolkit it can aid understanding of the underlying qualities of each posture by means of clustering them into these two categories. Some



postures are distinctly more on one side of the polarity and therefore exhibit particular commonalities in how they are done and which qualities can be accessed through them, while others are a balance of both or could be done in different ways.

It is important to understand that yin and yang are complementary polarities, not opposites. They are two inseparable halves of wholeness. This means we can also use the equivalent postures assigned to either yin or yang in complementary ways and thereby establish balance.

Yin and yang are also constantly moving in relationship, with one containing the birth and creation of the other. Excessive effort creates exhaustion and need for rest, for example, while resting might evoke the desire for activity again. If we stay in resting too long we can fall into lethargy and equally lose balance in the same way overexertion is imbalanced. The visual representation of yin and yang should be seen as spinning in three dimensions, with one giving birth to the other and containing its own demise! It's a map of time and relationships.

The concept of yin and yang is profound and requires thoughtful practise and deep reflection to start to reveal itself beyond a surface understanding. We feel like beginners in regards to it despite years of study, both theoretically and through the body (e.g. through Aikido and Tai Chi). We highly recommend Dylan Newcomb on embodied aspects of this subject. He is the founder of a mindbody system called UZAZU, which was a major influence on the Embodied Toolkit and someone we deeply respect professionally.

### ***Overview of yin and yang***

The following general guidelines may help you to recognise and / or embody yin and yang...

| Yin  | Yang   |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Posture: weight backwards and down</li> <li>● Movement: less, circular, indirect</li> <li>● Action: doing less, rest</li> <li>● Body: interior of body</li> <li>● Direction: down and in</li> <li>● Speed: slow</li> <li>● Muscle tone: relaxed</li> <li>● Eyes: peripheral vision or closed</li> <li>● Spine: flexed</li> <li>● Breath: releasing and slower</li> <li>● Voice: soft, quiet, less sound</li> <li>● Hands: closer to body, palms often up or loose</li> <li>● Temperature: cool</li> <li>● Expression: receptive (listening more)</li> <li>● Emotions: sadness and fear</li> <li>● Body: parts you may like being kissed (medial surface)</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Posture: weight forwards and up</li> <li>● Movement: more, linear, direct</li> <li>● Action: doing more</li> <li>● Body: exterior</li> <li>● Direction: up and out</li> <li>● Speed: fast</li> <li>● Muscle tone: firm</li> <li>● Eyes: open, focused</li> <li>● Spine: extended</li> <li>● Breath: pushing and faster</li> <li>● Voice: firm, loud, more sound</li> <li>● Hands: extended, palms often down or in fists</li> <li>● Temperature: warm</li> <li>● Expression: expressive (talking more)</li> <li>● Emotions: anger and joy</li> <li>● Body: parts you could hit people with / protect yourself with (lateral surface)</li> </ul> |

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nervous system: parasympathetic</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nervous system: sympathetic</li> </ul> |
|---|---|

In paired work, cooperation and competition can be seen as more yin and yang respectively. In relationships more broadly, yin seeks communion whilst yang seeks differentiation.

### **3.2 The postures and their composite parts**

We will begin by outlining the “ingredients” to each posture and then move into an overview of each specific posture, its qualities, deviations and possible enquiries in the next part of the book. Once you understand the individual components and which areas of the body to pay attention to when guiding your clients into the postures, it will become much easier to remember and instruct, as well as spot deviations in the shape of a posture. Remember that it is not only the shape that makes a posture a powerful tool to work with clients, but equally the intention and enquiry that follows and completes the work.

#### ***The base – feet and legs***

For most postures we use a yin or yang base, illustrated below. There are some other postures that have their particular individual stances. Generally, the instructions for creating the base include which direction the toes point, whether the knees are bent or straight, the width and length of the stance and the weighting on the legs.

The base for the yang postures is with the feet as or nearly as wide as a yoga mat (unless a person has physical restrictions),



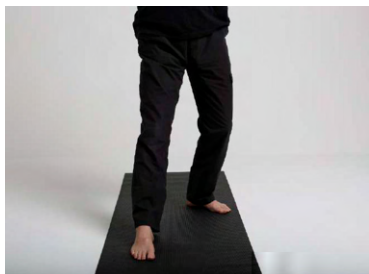
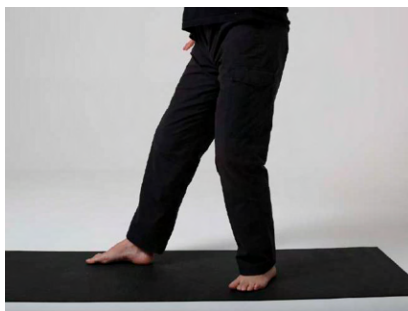
with around 60% of the body weight on the front foot. The front knee is bent and the back leg extended.

In yin postures this is practically reversed. Around 60% of the weight is on the back foot, which is bent (but not uncomfortably so), while the front leg is more straight. Yin postures tend to be a little less wide than yang ones due to this.

For both, the stride length can vary. For most postures, having stability is more important than stride length. Some people are less able to do a long stride due to physical limitations. Adjusting the stance to be shorter in these cases is recommended as long as the weighting is kept in the 40-60 / 60-40 distribution (depending on whether its a yin or yang pose). Width and weighting is more important than length. You might notice a client exhibiting personal patterns in this already, e.g. some people habitually pick a more challenging stride than is necessary, or a less challenging one than helpful. This can be insightful to highlight and potentially reveals interesting relationships to challenge.

### **Yin base**

In yin bases, approximately 60% of the weight is on the back foot. There should be some width, but this should not be physically uncomfortable for people or



stress the knee. The important thing is that the weight is more on the back foot.

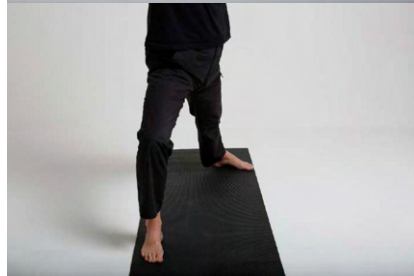
Note that no weighting or foot position should be excessively effortful or stress the knee joint.

## Yang base

The front foot points forwards, with the front knee bent and over the middle of the foot (not the ankle or further back, which is a common mistake that more habitually yin people make. This means some muscular effort is needed.



The back foot is turned out and extended right down to the little toe, giving a strong and stable base (another common mistake is to slightly bend the back knee and not extend it fully). Both feet should be active, i.e. feel “alive”.



## Neutral base

Note that the weight is evenly distributed in a handful of poses (e.g. “Care” and “Support” poses), and in some poses the feet are in a straight line and not wide (e.g. “Warrior” and “Entering”), but many ETK poses use one of either the yin or yang bases.

## *Spine positions*

The two main differences in spinal position are flexion and extension. If you have ever practised yoga, you will be familiar with this from the cat-cow exercises (on all fours). These images illustrate the embodied difference between flexion and extension. You can also instruct clients to round their back to



## ***Hand positions***

There are just a few hand positions used in the Embodied Toolkit. Like the eyes, breath and spine, what we do with the hands can be quite critical to the embodiment of a pose.

In fact, if someone is only able to move one hand and nothing else, you could still do a whole session with them! For example, you can embody “No” with just one hand.

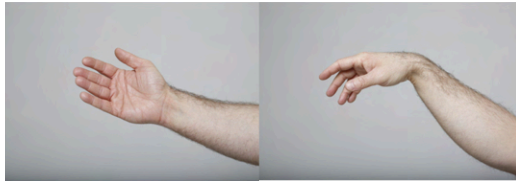
Hand positions are as follows...

**Yin - Receptive**

Open  
without excess  
effort  
- e.g. open or  
*rest* posture

**Yin - Released**

Completely  
relaxed  
(including wrist)  
- as in *letting go*  
posture



**Yang - Fist**

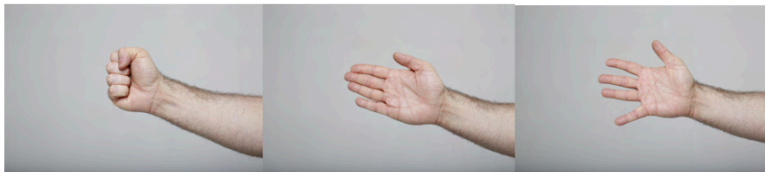
Firm but not  
tense fist  
- as in *no* posture

**Yang - Firm**

Fingers together  
- e.g. *warrior* or  
*authority*

**Yang - Extended  
open**

Fingers spread  
widely away from  
each other -  
- e.g. *taking up  
space  
or giving*



## **4: THE POSTURE GUIDE**

### **4.1 The what, how, where, when, why and with whom of postures**

To practise effectively, it is necessary to consider the “what”, “how”, “when”, “where”, “why” and “with whom” of any pose. All of these can support or undermine a practice. These are always present, always impactful and not reducible to each other.

The postures themselves (or forms of any practice) could be described as the “what” of ETK. The “what” of the shapes is a framework for exploring oneself. Critically though, “how” they are done is the real essence of embodied work. Doing a linear pose in a circular way, or a pose connected to love in a hateful way, utterly changes its effect. Manner matters.

Further, the postures will be quite different when done at different times of day and of the year, and in different environments – the “when” and the “where”. The same pose during morning or evening, or mid-Summer or mid-Winter, is NOT the same pose. Similarly, doing a pose on a mountain top vs in a forest, or in a cathedral vs in a modern office, is again not the same pose. This is easy to miss if you only practise in a controlled environment like a studio, which, while seemingly neutral, is not. Nowhere is.

The “why” of a practice also matters. What is motivating a practice? What is it in service to? A pose built with purpose is not the same as one built without meaning. This is subtle but

significant.

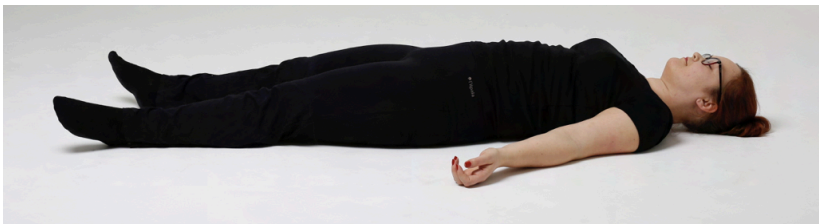
Lastly, there is always a social context for practice. Who you are doing a practice with (actual or imagined) will strongly impact the practice. It's very common, for example, that groups facilitate depth and ease. Specific relationships such as to a teacher, if a friend or lover is present, and whether you feel like you belong to a group, are all major factors. I'll say more on this in the relational postures section.

Before we introduce the ETK postures, do note that they can be used in two ways:

1. They're helpful for applying short-term to shift state
2. They can be practised longer-term to grow new qualities and develop range as a person (this is embodied growth)

You'll find a poster with all 26 poses in the [resources section](#) at the end of this book.

## 4.2 Yin Postures



The yin postures may develop more receptive qualities, such as being more open, soft, accommodating, sensitive and flexible. Note, however, that yang postures contain aspects of these qualities as well. Yin is not passivity, but actively allowing or letting go. Yin is also powerful, just as yang can be loving.

The yin postures are for applying and developing yin qualities in life. As teachers, instructors and facilitators, it is important that we develop as full of a range, understanding and experience of these as possible to enable us to draw out these qualities in others. These qualities are needed in society on a daily basis, and if we want to make changes in life we need to be self-aware and able to embody the yin side.

As ever, notice if there are postures that you find to be more difficult, and practise them regularly to enable you to be of service to others more effectively.

If you're coming from a yoga background, note that various styles or schools of yoga may be more yin or yang, and not cover the complete range. For example, some hatha and Scaravelli schools may be more yin, whilst some "power", ashtanga, acro-yoga and vinyasa schools may be more yang.

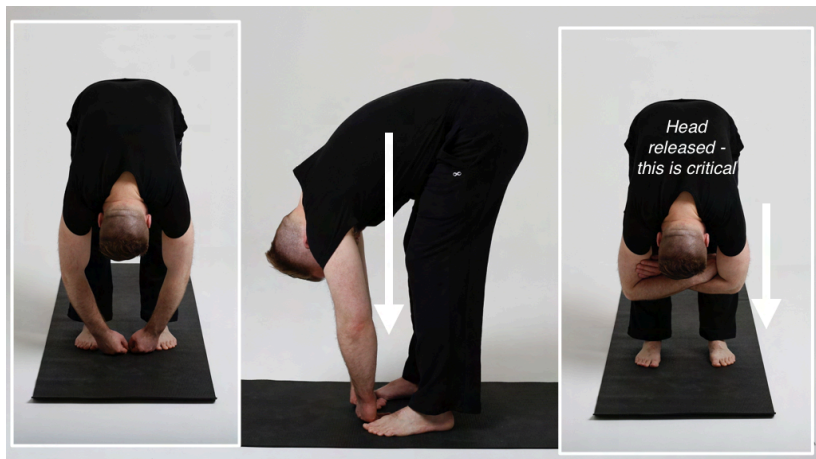
## ***The Yin Postures***

- 1) **Letting go** - for exploring letting go, forgiveness, release and non-attachment
- 2) **Yes** - for exploring allowing, empathy, acceptance and letting in
- 3) **Submission** - for exploring submitting to what is greater than oneself and letting go into this
- 4) **Receiving** - for exploring accepting, taking (e.g. compliments or money), and making requests
- 5) **Death** - for exploring mortality, gratitude and purpose
- 6) **Vulnerability** - for exploring sensitivity, innocence, being delicate, "femininity" and sweetness
- 7) **Openness** - for exploring surrender, allowing and softening
- 8) **Self-care** - for exploring self-love, resourcing and tenderness
- 9) **Inner** - for exploring privacy, not taking space, reflection and going "in"
- 10) **Evaluation** - for exploring discernment, deciding, criticism and judgement
- 11) **Care** - for exploring nurturing, containment, protecting and growing
- 12) **Rest** - for exploring resting, ease and not-doing
- 13) **Inspiration** - for exploring what inspires us, revelation, our deepest gifts and awe



## 1) Letting go

Also known as: forward bend, hanging out



### Guidelines

*Purpose and themes:* for exploring letting go, forgiveness, release and non-attachment

*Notes:* some may have a habitual yang way of doing a forward bend through practice or personality so watch out for this. There are some extra safety concerns when doing this and it may not be suitable for all.

*Safety:* physical issues for some with hamstrings (this is maybe the most physically demanding pose in ETK!), dizziness from coming up too quickly (it's suggested you hold this pose for max three minutes and stop halfway while coming up slowly). Trust issues around letting go may surface.

*Adaptations:* legs can be bent or straight, and a pillow or chair can be used if it's difficult for you to hang. You may or may not hold your elbows, as is comfortable.

## **Posture Specifics**

- *Base:* feet ground and hip socket distance apart
- *Spine:* relaxed, hanging, flexed
- *Hands:* totally relaxed
- *Head:* hanging, neck totally relaxed (releasing the head is critical)
- *Face:* relaxed
- *Gaze:* eyes closed
- *Sound / breath:* “ahhhhh”, out-breath emphasised
- *Movement / attention:* down

## **Common mistakes**

- Not letting the head / neck relax
- Pulling in the toes
- Looking around

## **Contrasts with trying / extending**

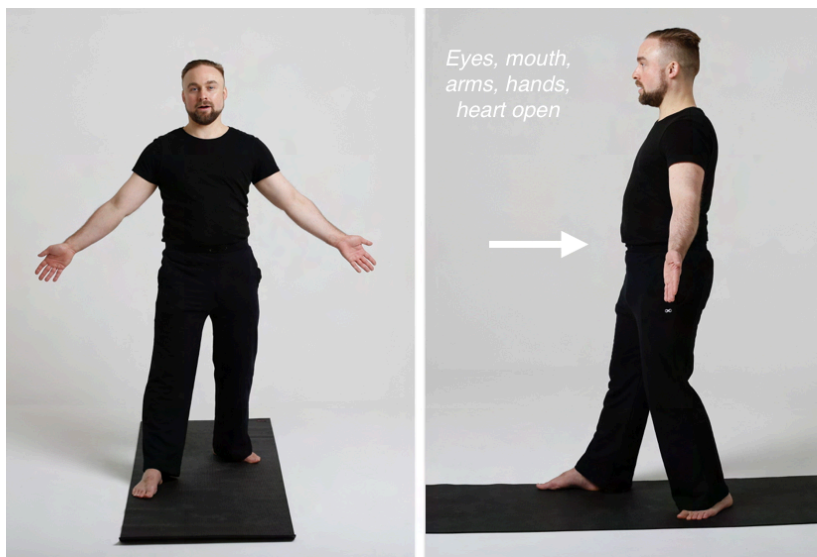
A nice way to teach letting go pose from standing is to contrast the pose with pulling down (as in the Ashtanga Primary Series) and extending (straightening back and taking hands to shins, as per a regular sun salutation), with the pose itself. This is another version of the first opening enquiry in this guide and can help people let go more. It is often helpful to connect and contrast ETK with familiar forms.

## Variation: throwing away

Letting go pose can be done in a more active, yang way by starting standing upright with the hands raised and together and dropping into it more forcefully by “throwing away” the hands and being at the waist. Soft objects like towels and small cushions can be used to really bring this to life! This is a great way to enquire into what needs to be discarded in life more forcefully.

### 2) Yes

Also known as: standing open pose, acceptance pose



## **Guidelines**

*Purpose and themes:* for exploring saying yes, allowing, empathy, acceptance and letting in

*Notes:* surprisingly difficult technically and spiritually for many but mistakes often subtle

*Safety:* usually OK, but the openness may feel very vulnerable to some

*Adaptations:* you may moderate your stance length and width to protect your knees as needed

## **Posture Specifics**

- *Base:* standard yin base (60% weight back), feet as wide as mat if not uncomfortable, front foot facing forward, back out
- *Spine:* slightly flexed
- *Hands:* softly open
- *Head:* upright and relaxed
- *Face:* open, mouth open slightly
- *Gaze:* softly open
- *Sound / breath:* “ahhhhh”, in-breath emphasised, saying “yes” in mother tongue
- *Movement / attention:* towards, from out to in

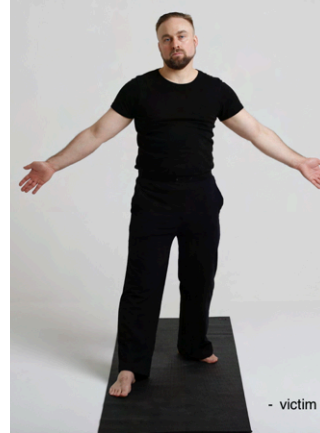
## **Common mistakes**

Yes mistakes are a good example of how the mistakes of one pose slip into other poses. This illustrates how the poses are not just unique archetypes but points on a map.

- Arms coming forwards into giving or rolling around to care pose
- Arms at wrong angle (e.g. too open like taking space pose)
- Face/mouth closed
- Eyes not peripheral
- Spine extended (becomes enthusiasm)

There can also be “near enemy” mistakes, where a pose may be superficially similar to a concept but fundamentally misses the mark. In ETK this means excluding the hint of yin in the yang or yang in the yin. This could mean making yes passive (so it becomes a wet-rag victim pose) or making warrior aggressive.





### **3) Submission**

Also known as: humility pose (we almost renamed it to this, as humility is a less triggering word for many), child's pose, surrender pose



## **Guidelines**

*Purpose and themes:* For exploring submitting to what is greater than oneself and letting go into this. Grief. Deep rest. Going in.

*Safety:* usually okay, but may need physical adaptation. Care needed in addressing grief and can also trigger domestic violence victims some trauma informed approaches teach. Some may not like the name!

*Adaptations:* bolsters or pillows can be placed under the body, or the pose done in a chair (like all others).

## **Posture Specifics**

*Base:* knees wide like hare pose or together like regular child's pose

*Spine:* relaxed, flexed

*Hands:* relaxed

*Head:* relaxed, letting go into floor/pillow

*Face:* mouth open slightly

*Gaze:* eyes closed

*Sound / breath:* silent or gentle "mmmmm", out-breath emphasised

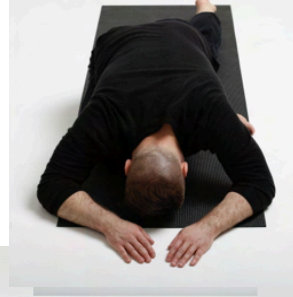
*Movement / attention:* inwards and down. Deep.

## **Common mistakes**

- Fidgeting
- Subtle doing
- Not letting head go

### **Variation: surrender to intensity**

You may like to use a more intense pose and practise surrendering within that, e.g. pigeon pose. You can adapt by changing foot positions or adding pillows as needed.



### **4) Receiving**

Also known as: asking pose, getting pose





## **Guidelines**

*Purpose and themes:* for exploring making requests, accepting, asking, taking (e.g. compliments) and money

*Notes:* you can bring this to life by actually giving people things - e.g. yoga bolsters or pillows. It's "opposite" is the yang Giving Pose.

*Safety:* usually OK, but may need physical adaptation. Not being able to ask for what they want may be a pattern and painful for some

*Adaptations:* moderate stance length and width to protect the knee as needed.

## **Posture Specifics**

*Base:* standard yin base

*Spine:* relaxed, slightly flexed

*Hands:* open and relaxed

*Head:* upright

*Face:* open, mouth open slightly

*Gaze:* soft

*Sound / breath:* silent or gentle "mmmmm", in-breath emphasised

*Movement / attention:* from out to in

## **Common mistakes**

- Arms coming fw into giving or rolling around to care
- Arms at the wrong angle, making a barrier or ready to drop the present!

- Face closed
- Spine extended

### **Variation: making requests**

When using for requests, make it more active with one hand.



## **5) Death**

Also known as: “complete yin”, nothing pose



### **Guidelines**

*Purpose and themes:* for exploring mortality, meanings, values, purpose, gratitude and existential themes

*Notes:* classical savasana<sup>7</sup> pose. Can be done as an extended Buddhist style death meditation, but only with resilient groups (see the following).

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<sup>7</sup> We may occasionally mention original yoga asanas here, as this system was originally developed as “Embodied Yoga Principles” for yoga teachers to bring a more embodied approach into their classes, rather than simply helping people to relax or stretch their hamstrings.

*Safety:* calling it “death pose” with some groups isn’t wise. If people have had recent bereavement, you may suggest that they opt out. I usually do this pose towards the middle of a workshop and not at all in short classes (like stand pose). Handle with care and adapt intensity of meditation to suit groups, some may be fine with imagining crows pluck out their eyes and maggots eat their organs for example, others less so.



*Adaptations:* pillows / boosters / blocks as needed (e.g. under the knees or head), or rest pose can be used as an alternative.

## **Posture Specifics**

*Base:* laying down

*Spine:* laying down

*Hands:* arms to die, 45 degrees, hands totally relaxed

*Head:* relaxed

*Gaze:* eyes closed

*Sound / breath:* silent, gentle breath

*Movement / attention:* none / in

## **Common mistakes**

- Opening eyes
- Activity at subtle level
- Arms too far in or out

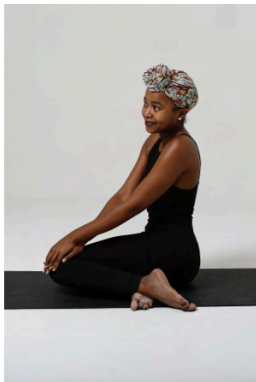
## Death meditation questions

I tend to use death pose somewhat differently than most ETK poses, turning it into a meditation on mortality.

After a guided contemplation on mortality – the inevitability of death, possible manners of death and decomposition process (YouTube search “Mark Walsh death meditation” for an example or look up traditional Tibetan Buddhist versions) – and a period of silence, I usually suggest a debrief with a partner (longer than the usual one minute debriefs) exploring one or more of these questions:

- “What do you want to do before you die?”
- “What is your purpose?”
- “Who do you want to spend your precious time with?”
- “What are you grateful for?”
- “How do you want to be day-to-day given that you will die?”

## 6) *Vulnerability*



Also known as: innocence pose, mermaid pose (from the Copenhagen statue), cute pose.

## **Guidelines**

*Purpose and themes:* for exploring vulnerability, innocence, sweetness, our “inner child”, etc

*Notes:* adapted from a classical Iyengar pose that felt immediately “girly” to me when I first did it! Can be used to explore masculinity and femininity and contrasted with a wide kneed hero pose (seiza). It is highly asymmetrical, with the feet, head and hands to the same side, and the hands placed delicately with a “childlike” quality.

*Safety:* can be triggering if childhood issues or very identified with being tough. There may also be gendered issues, as many usually see it as “feminine” (this is partially true of all yin poses, but especially vulnerability along with sensuality).

*Adaptations:* blocks under the hip or pillows as needed for comfort. Some people (men especially) may need to moderate the pose to handle it emotionally.

## **Posture Specifics**

*Base:* feet off to one side in sitting position

*Spine:* will be slightly side bent to stay upright

*Hands:* delicately placed on top of each other (the quality here is quite important to the pose)

*Head:* side tilt, slightly forward, soft

*Gaze:* looming up, high blink-rate, open, side glances

*Sound / breath:* “ahh”

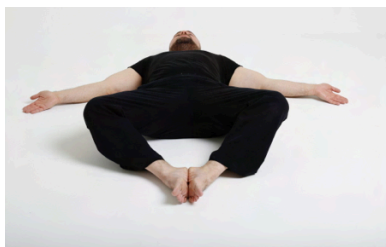
*Movement / attention:* upwards as if shy

## Common mistakes

- Not having hands, feet and nose in same direction
- Making too firm
- Turning into a joke
- Hands too far (not “delicately” touching knee)

## 7) *Open*

Also known as: *supta baddha konasana* variation, prone yes pose.



## Guidelines

*Purpose and themes:* for exploring openness, allowing, softening, empathy

*Notes:* people may close eyes and zone-out so remind them it's not corpse pose but hands and eyes opening are the touch of yang in the yin.

*Safety:* people may feel very exposed (especially women with sexual trauma history), blankets can help, stay in one spot when teaching away from “leg-end” of people



*Adaptations:* supporting the knees with blocks or bolsters as needed.

## **Posture Specifics**

*Base:* lying on back, feet together (further away from pelvis than classically), knees apart

*Spine:* relaxed

*Hands:* open, arms to sides 45 degree, palms up

*Head:* relaxed

*Gaze:* open, face relaxed and “open”

*Sound / breath:* “ahhh”, in-breath emphasised

*Movement / attention:* from out to in

## **Common mistakes**

- Closing eyes and hands
- Feet too close to body-
- Being subtly closed in face / attention
- Arms too wide or too close to body

## 8) Self-Care

Also known as: self-love pose, compassion for oneself pose, huggy pose.



### Guidelines

*Purpose and themes:* for exploring self love, self-care, tenderness, how we look after ourselves

*Notes:* good resourcing pose before for after deep enquiries such as death pose

*Safety:* can be emotional - e.g. sadness, especially if people habitually are very self-critical. In some cultures this is severe and endemic and there are gender differences in this regard.

*Adaptations:* arm positions can be changed for comfort, e.g. hands can be placed with palms on the chest if the “wrap” isn’t comfortable, whilst cross-legged (with a slight drawing-in feeling) or standing variations are both fine. In standing, the big toes touch and the heels are apart.



## Posture Specifics

*Base:* kneeling or standing with feet like inner pose

*Spine:* gently flexed

*Hands:* wrapped around self tenderly, variations for comfort fine

*Head:* dipped but not collapsed, slightly tilted to side

*Gaze:* down or eyes closed

*Sound / breath:* “mmm” “ahhh”

*Movement / attention:* in

## Common mistakes

- Self touch mechanical/ had
- Attention out
- Head not tilted
- Chin up (narcissism variation)

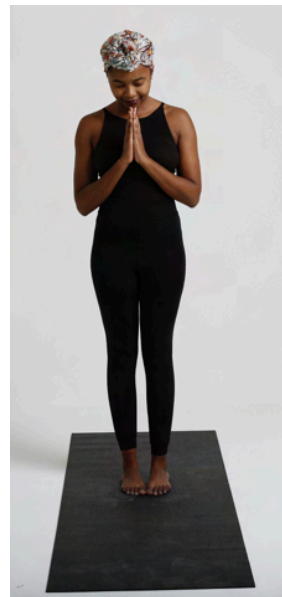
## 9) *Inner*

Also known as: privacy pose, prayer pose, meditative pose, introvert pose.

### Guidelines

*Purpose and themes:* For exploring going inside, privacy, what we keep close to us, inwards focus, etc

*Notes:* Can be combined with various yoga poses.



*Safety:* hard for some. Hands clasped variation may be helpful if “prayer” feels too religious or has bad associations.

*Adaptations:* can be done sitting or standing, and hands can be clasped rather than in prayer.

### **Posture Specifics**

*Base:* standing, big toes touching, heels slightly apart

*Spine:* upright

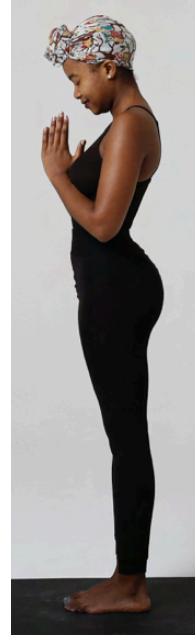
*Hands:* prayer or gently clasped

*Head:* slightly lowered

*Gaze:* eyes closed

*Sound / breath:* quiet

*Movement / attention:* deeply in



### **Common mistakes**

- Elbows out to side (which is the classical yoga style)
- Attention out
- Eyes open
- Chin up

### **A poetic visual interpretation...**

One image I like for ETK is that of going in while engaged in the flow of life.



The image here shows ETK teacher Lucy Sabin and I doing a shared Inner Pose while in central London. What was funny is

that this was part of a photoshoot but after doing this we didn't feel like having photos taken anymore. ETK works!

## **10) Evaluation**

Also known as: critic pose, the knower, the sage, discernment pose.

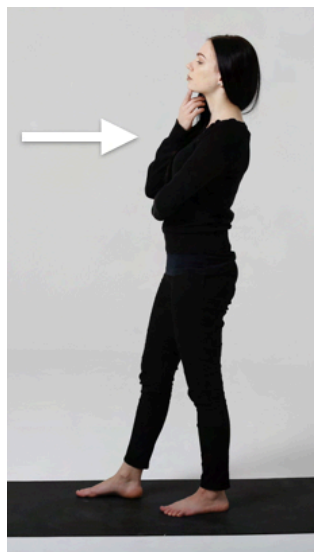
### **Guidelines**

*Purpose and themes:* for exploring judgement, knowing vs not-knowing, discernment, criticism, inner criticism and assessing

*Notes:* This pose can be "positive" or "negative" evaluation, and you see it in life all the time. Someone was literally doing this exact pose in a workshop once, while criticising ETK and saying it wasn't valid. Pretty funny when they realised!

*Safety:* when using in pairs/groups note that it can be emotionally impactful and upsetting to be viewed this way, even though "a game", especially for those with strong inner critics or a critical parent.

*Adaptations:* moderation of stance length and width to protect the knee as needed.



## Posture Specifics

*Base:* standard ETK yin base with weight back

*Spine:* gently flexed

*Hands:* arms crossed and one up, index finger expended. Beard stroking (real or imagined) is a fun addition

*Head:* tilted back

*Gaze:* narrow

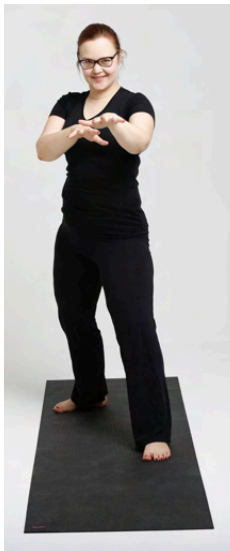
*Sound / breath:* “mmm”, mouth contracted

*Movement / attention:* keeping back from what’s in front



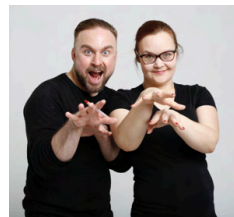
## Common mistakes

- No head tilt/ chin lift
- Smiling, being too “nice”
- Making jokes
- Weight not back



### Variation: Magician Pose

This can be used to explore transcendent or mysterious power. Bring the hands in front with the fingers spread wide and eyes wide. The back foot is weighted but as though it’s about to move forwards to perform magic.



## 11) Care

Also known as: containment pose, hug pose, womb pose, mum/parent pose.



### Guidelines

*Purpose and themes:* for exploring care, containment, and what we're working on/nourishing

*Notes:* a little like some Qigong poses. It can be done with a soft nurturing quality (as though with a child) or a more formal one (like for a business project).

*Safety:* can bring up sadness around a longed for or a lost child, or an "empty nest".

*Adaptations:* moderation of stance length and width to protect knees as needed.

## Posture Specifics

*Base:* 50-50 weighted with one leg forward

*Spine:* flexed

*Hands:* softly extended, 10cm from each other (that's about the width of a mobile phone or sunglasses)

*Head:* very slightly lowered

*Gaze:* looking in space made by arms softly

*Sound / breath:* “mmm”, out-breath emphasised

*Movement / attention:* in and around like a womb



## Common mistakes

- Hands too close / tight (could indicate “control freakery”) or too wide / far (could indicate a “laissez-faire” attitude)
- Hands too limp or tense
- Pose tone too tight or loose generally
- Weight not 50-50



## 12) Rest



Also known as: ease pose, easy pose, chill pose, holiday pose.

## **Guidelines**

*Purpose and themes:* for exploring resting, ease, time out, not-doing.

*Notes:* a classic restorative yoga pose, similar to Alexander Technique's "active rest" and positions from The Feldenkrais Method. Knees are straight up, but more open and inner variations can be explored by changing this.

*Safety:* usually fine though some may have difficulty resting or feel sad that they don't get rest.

*Adaptations:* pillows as needed, arms can be on the body if not comfortable behind the head.



## **Posture Specifics**

*Base:* feet on floor knees directly up, on back

*Spine:* relaxed

*Hands:* relaxed behind head (creates pillow-like effect and inhibits "doing" quality of hands), unless this is not comfortable

*Head:* resting in hands (or on block)

*Gaze:* eyes open and soft

*Sound / breath:* "ahhh" or silent. Out-breath emphasised.

*Movement / attention:* in and down

## Common mistakes

- Closing eyes/sleeping
- Subtle “doing”
- Knees going in and out (open and inner rest variations)

## Variations:

There are many. For some, a Roman-style reclining position, having legs up a wall, or using a chair (astronaut pose)

may be more comfortable. The restful quality is what matters, and blocks, bolsters, sand-bags, etc. can be used to support this and make for a restorative experience. Remember though, it's ETK only as long as you're still exploring the relationship to rest, not just resting without embodied awareness or reflection. It's not “sleep pose”!





### **13) Inspiration**

Also known as: muse pose, the aliens are coming pose, “wow” pose.



#### **Guidelines**

*Purpose and themes:* for exploring what inspires, awe, what has a “wow” factor, what ennobles us

*Notes:* influenced by an UZAZU Embodied Intelligence pose (as several others have also been). It’s complimentary to the yang enthusiasm (down to up rather than up to down direction) and similarly fun for many.

*Safety:* not over weighting back knee, can make some “spacey”.

*Adaptations:* moderation of stance length and width to protect the knee as needed.

## **Posture Specifics**

*Base:* classic yin base, weight 60% back

*Spine:* flexed

*Hands:* reaching up to receive

*Head:* looking up

*Gaze:* wide open

*Sound / breath:* “woooow” “aaaaaa” in-breath emphasised

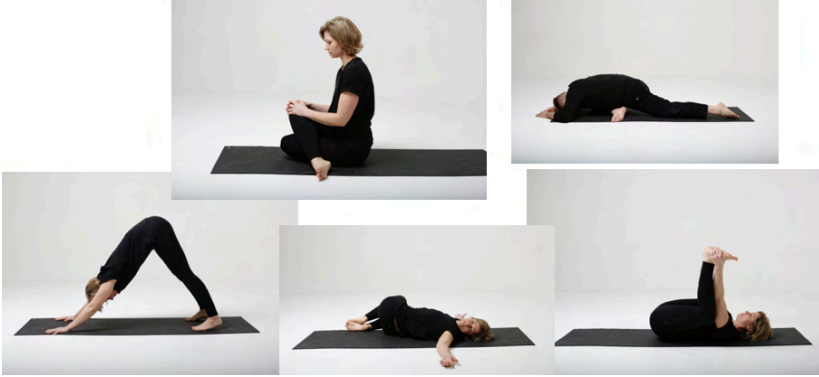
*Movement / attention:* from high up to down

## **Common mistakes**

- Reaching up to grab or being too passive
- Extending spine into enthusiasm pose
- Joking / cynicism

## ***Yin as a theme for any pose***

Aside from the 13 core yin poses, yin themes like surrender and letting go can be explored through many other postures. While certain postures are more fitting, here what matters is “how” the poses are done, as the 13 ETK yin poses are qualities. For example, *how* you let go, practise self love, or rest into a downwards dog pose or happy baby. This is one way of blending ETK with regular yoga practice (see below).



## 4.3 Yang Postures



The yang postures are aimed at developing qualities such as being forceful, boundaries and authority, though do note the paradoxical and related nature of yin and yang as ever. One is at the heart of the other. Yang postures could broadly be said to be "expressive".

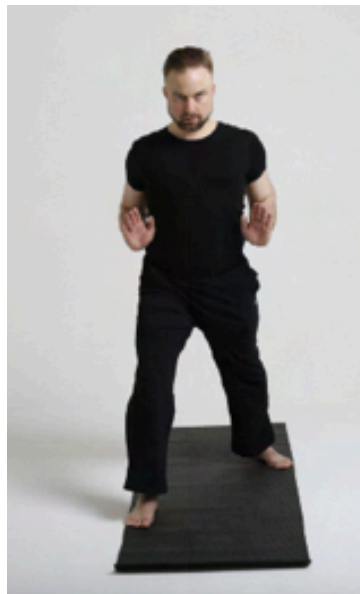
As facilitators it is important to develop as full of a range, understanding and experience of these as possible in order to enable us to draw out these qualities in others. Some qualities are needed in society on a daily basis and if we want to make changes in our lives or those we're helping, we'll we need the clarity, focus and vitality that these yang postures provide.

## ***The Yang Postures***

- 1) **Pushing** - for exploring effort, action, drive, power and ambition
- 2) **No** - for exploring boundaries, with self and others
- 3) **Warrior** - for exploring focus, determination and fierceness
- 4) **Entering** - for exploring entering, courage, directness and confidence
- 5) **Authority** - for exploring declarations, commitment, creating futures and having authority
- 6) **Standing** - for exploring what you ARE a stand for, dignity and resolution
- 7) **Enthusiasm** - for exploring passion, diving in, yang “heart” and active surrender
- 8) **Support** - for exploring giving support and what we “carry”
- 9) **Giving** - for exploring offers (including professionally, sexually, etc.), money and gratitude
- 10) **Taking space** - for exploring taking up space, visibility, being public and fame
- 11) **Joker** - for exploring humour, playfulness and teasing
- 12) **Transcendence** - for exploring spirituality, lightness and “rising above”
- 13) **Sensuality** - for exploring predatory sexuality, flirting and seduction

## 1) *Pushing*

Also known as: power (through all poses are powerful), “raw power”, “bloody minded pose”.



### **Guidelines**

*Purpose and themes:* for exploring moving forward with vitality, effort, drive, ambition, force and determination and in relationship to opposing forces and difficulties. About “just getting on with it”.

*Notes:* this pose is close to “pure” yang. UZAZU-influenced.

*Safety:* potentially triggering as can be perceived as aggressive

*Adaptations:* some people's hands aren't able to be as upright due to rest restrictions, which is okay.

## **Posture Specifics**

*Base:* standard yang base (60% forward)

*Spine:* extended

*Hands:* on hips, palms facing forwards

*Head:* slight forward tilt

*Face:* serious

*Gaze:* focused, forwards

*Sound / breath:* pushing out "Urggghh", out-breath emphasised

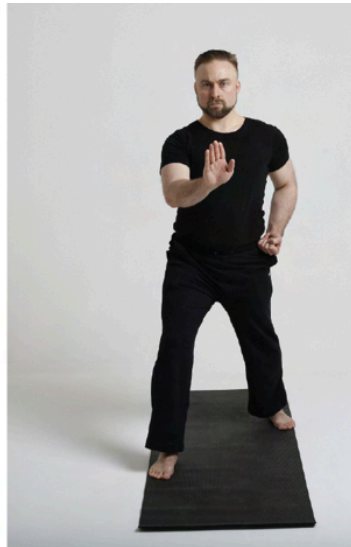
*Movement / attention:* forwards, linear, strong

## **Common mistakes**

- Weight not forward
- Too yin generally
- Hands too far forward (arms outstretched) or at the wrong angle

## 2) No

Also known as: decline pose, barrier pose.



### Guidelines

*Purpose and themes:* For exploring our ability to say “no” to self and others, boundaries, what you don’t want, response to abuse, etc.

*Notes:* often used with a verbal “no” in first language. Karate inspired

*Safety:* potentially very triggering (as well as empowering) as it can relate to violations. Gender differences are common. Handle with care.



*Adaptations:* base can be shorter as long as the weight is still forward.

## **Posture Specifics**

*Base:* standard yang base (60% forward)

*Spine:* extended slightly

*Hands:* one in front of centre, the other in fist by side (at trouser pocket level), neither tight nor loose

*Head:* straight

*Face:* serious, no smile

*Gaze:* focused, forwards

*Sound / breath:* steady and firm, out-breath emphasised

*Movement / attention:* opposing the front

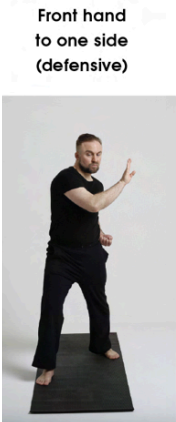
## **Common mistakes**

- Hand positioning
- Not facing
- Weighting wrong
- Many more – see the following...

Whilst we've chosen not to illustrate all of the mistakes for every pose as there are too many, we'll include photos for No Pose due the deviations from the form being a good example of people's personal patterns (i.e. the "mistakes" are not really mistakes, but people's personalities showing through).

In some cases, the deviations may just be physical limitations, as there's no simple A=B relationship in "reading" them, but we have seen patterns. It's always an enquiry.

I see the following eight deviations commonly, although there are many more. Trained ETK facilitators can spot them quickly visually, as well as by using various methods like pushing on the front hand.



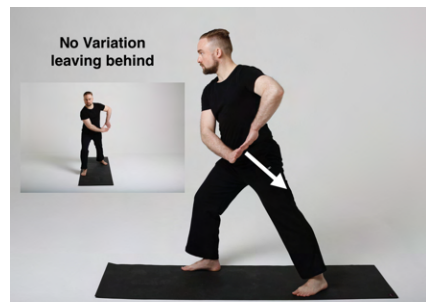
## Variations

The back hand can be extended for those really averse to making a fist. It should still feel active and firm though, like a “karate-chop knife-hand”, not limp. Be careful here though as some may be avoiding much needed fierceness in wanting this variation.

No Pose can also be done with the back hand touching the centre of the chest / heart with the palm to help people connect to the idea that all declines come from care and what you value. This hand can also be a fist but again in front of the heart. This symbolic “touching of the heart” can be part of the pose setup, as it can for almost any posture (as shown elsewhere in this book).

The hands can also be flipped around in care pose (see the yin poses section) so palms are pushing out. This is not only showing the boundaries needed for care but can also be used as a kind of rejection pose, especially when the face is changed to disgust (No Pose is actually more accepting emotionally). Dylan’s UZAZU system has a shape like this with a corresponding sound.

A healthy facing no can be contrasted with victimhood, aggressive or a passive aggressive half-no (see mistakes). Often, contrasting poses with mistakes and “near enemies” (e.g.



confusing being aggressive with being a warrior) helps people tune into the archetype.

There's also a Leaving Behind No variation (illustrated above).

### 3) *Warrior*

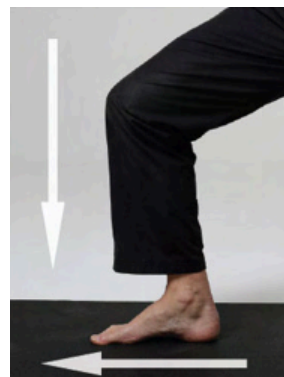
Also known as: fierce pose, heroic pose (not to be confused with classic yoga sitting on heels “hero” pose), champion pose.



#### **Guidelines**

*Purpose and themes:* for exploring “warrior” qualities, focus, determination, resilience and secondarily taking up space

*Notes:* very similar to a classic yoga warrior 2 but with front knee slightly further forward to emphasise the forward direction.



*Safety:* potentially triggering as can be perceived as aggressive. War associations.

*Adaptation:* if needed it can be shorter, as long as the weight is forward, or on a chair (like all poses)

## **Posture Specifics**

*Base:* long, front knee bent, back leg extended

*Spine:* straight

*Hands:* fingers together, arms extended evenly

*Head:* straight, over hips,

*Face:* serious, no smile

*Gaze:* focused, forwards

*Sound / breath:* “ujjayi” (like Darth Vader)

*Movement / attention:* forwards, linear, strong or holding ground

## **Common mistakes**

- Arms not extended
- Smiling or head tilt
- Uneven arms (e.g. back arm drops)
- Head forward from hips
- Back leg not extended
- Soft tone generally

## **Variations:**

There are a number of warrior variations. They can be combined in the usual way with other yin or yang poses, but following are some other examples, too...

## **Fuck You Warrior**

A surprisingly useful embodiment for many to develop!



## **Open Warrior**

For those whose warrior is a bit too fierce!



### **Exalted Warrior**

Useful for looking at pride and fierce aspects of spirituality.



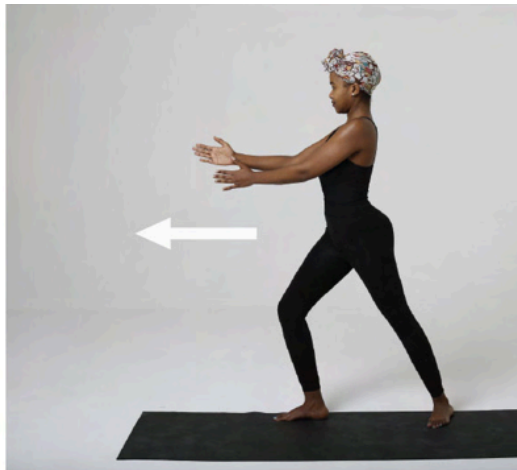
### **Archer Warrior**

Useful for exploring goals and targets.



### **4) Entering**

Also known as: action pose, starting pose, focus pose.



## **Guidelines**

*Purpose and themes:* For exploring entering, moving strongly into life, courage, taking action, direction, confidence, beginnings, etc.

*Notes:* Very similar to classical Japanese sword pose, kendo and aikido “hanmi” pose. Can actually be done with a sword or bokken.

*Safety:* usually no issues, though mentioning the stance comes from sword posture can trigger some.

## **Posture Specifics**

*Base:* long, front knee strongly bent - 70% of weight if possible, back leg strongly extended

*Spine:* straight

*Hands:* fingers together, arms extended in front. No gap between hands

*Head:* straight, over hips, no smile

*Face:* focused

*Gaze:* focused, forwards

*Sound / breath:* “ujjayi”, out-breath emphasised

*Movement / attention:* forwards, linear, fast

## **Common mistakes**

- Arms not extended
- Gap between hands (as seen from front)
- Head forward from hips
- Back leg not extended
- Not dynamic (it's a snapshot of moving forward)



Weight back



Hands too high / off balance



Gap between hands



Hands not extended



## 5) Authority



Also known as: leader pose (though leadership is involved in many poses), command pose, mastery pose, monarch pose, declaration pose.

## **Guidelines**

*Purpose and themes:* For exploring relationship to power and authority, making declarations and creating new futures, commitment, for finding certainty, etc.

*Notes:* inspired by a pose used by Richard Strozzi-Heckler. Be careful with translation of this one if not using English!

*Safety:* one handed version looks like Nazi salute, egalitarian cultures that deny dominance may struggle with it (e.g. Sweden), triggers rebels!

## **Posture Specifics**

*Base:* standard yang base (60% forward)

*Spine:* slight extension

*Hands:* fingers together, arms extended in front and high, palms facing forward and down

*Head:* straight, over hips, no or wry smile

*Face:* serious and focused

*Gaze:* focused, forwards and down slightly

*Sound / breath:* “ujjayi” or just even, out-breath emphasised

*Movement / attention:* forwards and down

## **Common mistakes**

- Arms not extended
- Palms facing out or in

- Hands too high or too low
- Weak base



### **A note on “heart”**

A good way to form many poses with the arms outstretched (e.g. Authority or Giving Pose) is to start with the palm on the front of the chest (in front of the heart) and extend from there. This can give quite a different feel than just going straight into the pose. You can do it several times as needed.

The belly can also be used (it connects to power / intuition) or the head or other significant points (e.g. from a chakra system – note though this doesn't suggest a belief in esoteric energy systems). This can add different qualities to poses.

## From the heart



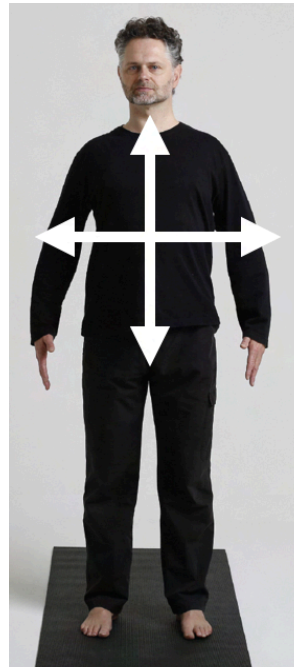
### 6) *Stand*

Also known as: leader pose (though leadership involved in many poses), mountain pose (classical yoga name), declaration pose

#### **Guidelines**

*Purpose and themes:* for exploring what you stand for and what you believe in, dignity, commitment, resolution, determination, courage and pride.

*Notes:* usually combined with “I am a stand for \_\_\_” after being asked in a challenging way. It can feel like many poses at done at once.



*Safety:* people can feel very “seen” in this pose, and unsafe in making a stand. I usually do this pose towards the middle of a workshop and not at all in short classes, and use slightly differently to most poses (like death pose).

*Adaptations:* despite the name, this can be done sitting down if needed (like all poses).

### **Posture Specifics**

*Base:* feet beneath hip sockets, parallel and “grounded”

*Spine:* natural but upright

*Hands:* fingers together, arms extended down but not rigidly, palms facing in.

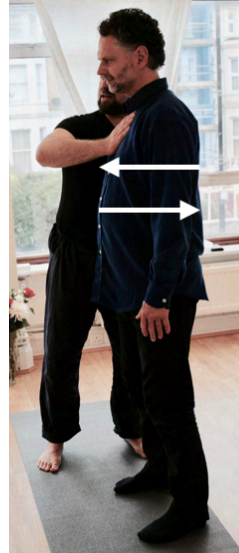
*Head:* straight, over hips

*Face:* calm and dignified

*Gaze:* focused or open, forwards

*Sound / breath:* deep and even

*Movement / attention:* evenly expansive

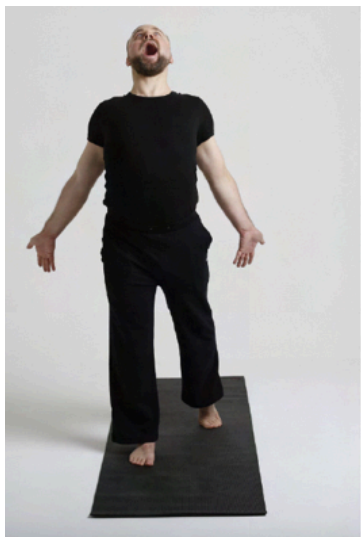


### **Common mistakes**

- Arms not extended or over extended (like classical yoga mountain)
- Not grounded or tall
- Off balance
- Raised eyebrows, tension, collapse or apologetic tone when speaking
- Spine extended / back bend (which feel upright to many yogis)

## 7) *Enthusiasm*

Also known as: hell yeah pose, fuck yeah pose, passion pose, pleasure pose.



### **Guidelines**

*Purpose and themes:* for exploring passion, “heart”, active surrender, sexuality, relation to pleasure, what you love (e.g in work), abandon, wildness, etc.

*Notes:* could be considered a yang yes. Most of the ETK teachers call it “fuck yeah” most commonly, and it’s a fun festival favourite!

*Safety:* often wildly fun but can be embarrassing for more conservative people and bring stuff up around sex. Care with neck in throwing head back needed. A deep backbend is not needed and may be dangerous for some.

*Adaptations:* backbend can be very modest if needed.

## Posture Specifics

*Base:* one foot forward, knee bent, back heel off ground.  
Unsteady.

*Spine:* extended strongly (but safely)

*Hands:* by side palm open

*Head:* back

*Face:* mouth open

*Gaze:* eyes rolling back

*Sound / breath:* “aggghhhhh”,

out-breath emphasised, say “yes!” or “fuck / hell yeah!”

*Movement / attention:* forwards and up, very dynamic (like you about to lead up-and-out)



## Common mistakes

- Too controlled or balanced
- Eyes and head not back
- Mouth not open
- Lack of general passion
- No back bend
- All forwards or up not both
- Stopping as embarrassed

## Variation: taking off

All poses can be done as movements, but enthusiasm is particularly dynamic.



## Variation: Transcendent Enthusiasm

This pose is similar to Inspiration Pose (which has a yin spine) and Transcendence Pose (which has an upright spine).



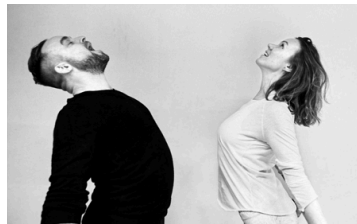
## Variations: yoga poses

Many regular yoga poses such as this lunge have an element of Enthusiasm Pose. Once you know the ETK map you may see ETK poses throughout more “standard” postural yoga practice and deliberately include elements of it (“blended ETK”).



## Enthusiasm in partner practices

You can also include partner variations, as you can see here as part of a slightly wild tango or during general dance anarchy!





## 8) *Support*

Also known as: roots and branches, Atlas Pose (after the Greek Titan), responsibility pose.



### **Guidelines**

*Purpose and themes:* for exploring what we support, what we “carry”, responsibility, what depends on you (e.g. work or kids), burdens, etc.

*Notes:* like a martial arts “horse” stance but with hands up.

*Safety:* generally safe though can bring up sadness around life’s burdens

### **Posture Specifics**

- *Base:* Even weighted, wide stance, knees are quite deeply bent but over the feet, which are out
- *Spine:* upright
- *Hands:* above head, palms up (unless unable to)
- *Head:* straight, no smile
- *Face:* serious
- *Gaze:* forward

- *Sound / breath:* none or “urrggghh”
- *Movement / attention:* none or down

### Common mistakes

- Hands too low
- Knees not bent
- Fidgeting

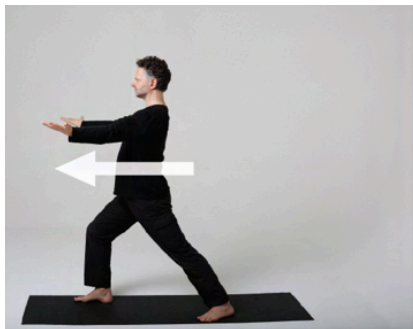
### Variations: Earth Support Pose

For exploring solidity and your contact with “ground”. Is similar but with arms down and palms facing the ground.



### 9) Giving

Also known as: generosity pose



## **Guidelines**

*Purpose and themes:* for exploring giving, generosity and our offers (e.g professional or sexual), as well as for life purpose and attraction.

*Notes:* often formed from hands on heart first. Inspired by a pose used by Wendy Palmer in her Leadership Embodiment system.

*Safety:* generally safe though can bring up sadness around not knowing what to give or feeling like you have nothing to give.

*Adaptations:* base can be shorter if needed.

## **Posture Specifics**

*Base:* standard ETK yang stance (60% forwards and as wide as the mat)

*Spine:* slightly extended

*Hands:* heart height, palms up, fingers spread, arms extended almost straight

*Head:* straight

*Face:* relaxed, mouth slightly open or smiling

*Gaze:* forward and open

*Sound / breath:* “ahhhh” or none, out-breath emphasised

*Movement / attention:* forwards and out

## **Common mistakes**

- Unstable base
- Head forwards of hips
- Arms too wide or narrow

- Arms over or under extended
- Palms turned in, or occasionally out



### Variations: Offering Pose (humble giving)

To create the feeling of offering something “up”, to being of service to something bigger than ourselves. There are some similarities between this and palms-up Submission Pose.



## 10) Taking Space

Also known as: being seen pose, rock star pose, star pose



### Guidelines

*Purpose and themes:* for exploring taking up space, social expressiveness, extroversion, being public, visibility and fame. I use this around “showing up” and being noticed in various domains from marketing to romance.

*Notes:* poses like this can be found in several other systems created independently. Several classical yoga poses are similar too

*Safety:* generally safe though can be a real challenge for introverts and those whose strategy for being safe is to not be seen. Those from modest/fake modest “don’t stand out cultures” like UK, Netherlands and Japan often struggle with this pose too.

### **Posture Specifics**

*Base:* Evenly weighted, wide stance, feet out

*Spine:* upright

*Hands:* above head, palms up (unless not possible physically)

*Head:* straight

*Face:* mouth slightly open, grinning widely

*Gaze:* forward and out

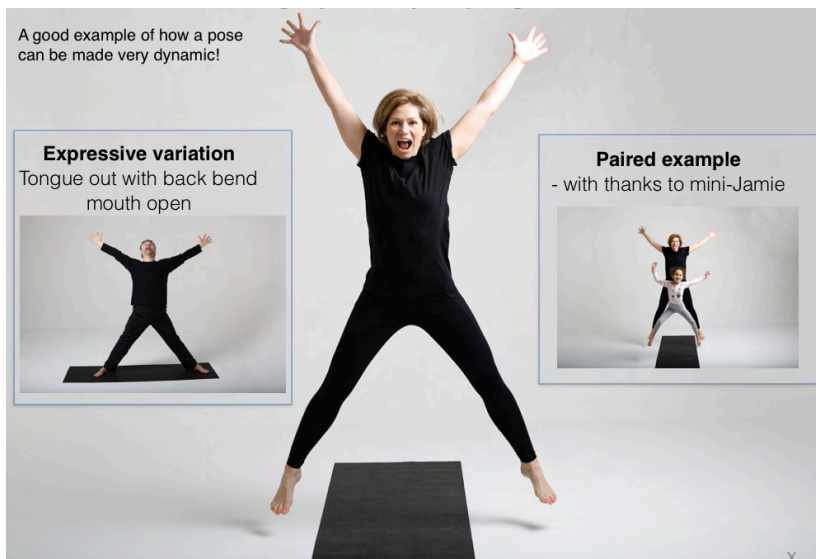
*Sound / breath:* “aaaahhhh”, out-breath emphasised

*Movement / attention:* outwards in all directions

### **Common mistakes**

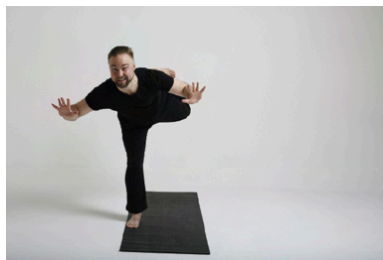
- Arms not extended
- Arms too low
- Backbending
- Attention inwards

## Variations: Jumping, Expressive and Paired



### 11) Joker

Also known as: humour pose, chaos pose, jester.



## **Guidelines**

*Purpose and themes:* for exploring humour, playfulness, lightning-up, teasing and speaking the unpalatable truth by “sweetening the pill”.

*Notes:* perhaps the least “postural” posture as it’s about movement and chaos, so is actually hard to hold (which would miss the point). I believe this was actually created by ETK students in Lithuania!

*Safety:* sometimes annoying for more serious people, care needed physically with those with poor balance and for those with fear of falling

*Adaptations:* moderate safety for when people have poor balance or a fear of falling.

## **Posture Specifics**

*Base:* On one leg, other back and to side, off balance

*Spine:* flexible

*Hands:* palms extended to the front (“Jazz hands”) and moving

*Head:* loose, smiling

*Face:* open, smiling, mouth open

*Gaze:* open, eyes-wide forward and around

*Sound / breath:* “ah-ah-ah”, laughing, out-breath emphasised

*Movement / attention:* forwards / chaotic

## **Common mistakes**

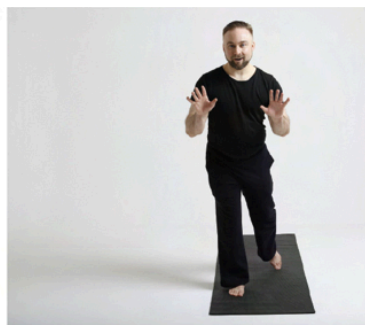
- Too much balance and control
- Not using hands in front



- Insincerity and cynicism
- Quitting!

### **Variation: Curiosity Pose**

Bring your gaze and hands in front of the body, facing forward and open. This is for exploring playful engagement and learning.



## **12) Transcendence**

Also known as: spiritual pose (though they all are), air pose (it can be contrasted with earth pose), elevation pose, “beam me up to the mothership” pose.

### **Guidelines**

*Purpose and themes:* for exploring spirituality, lightness, transcendence, “rising above”, being elevated, getting high, etc.



*Notes:* another quite unstable one that's hard to hold. Can be combined with many poses to give "upper chakra" / spiritual versions of them.

*Safety:* sometimes annoying for more cynical or pragmatic people. Watch for people falling over too.

### **Posture Specifics**

*Base:* Feet close, heels up off ground

*Spine:* upright

*Hands:* arms extend up, palms inwards

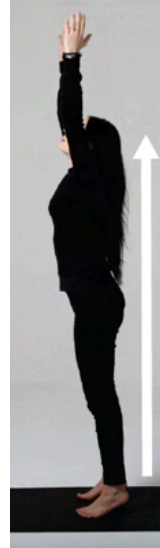
*Head:* tilted back slightly

*Face:* mouth open, in awe

*Gaze:* up and open, eyes-wide forward and around

*Sound / breath:* high pitched noise, "aaaaa" or "breathy", in-breath emphasised

*Movement / attention:* upwards



### **Common mistakes**

- Heels down
- Gaze not up
- Quitting!

### **13) Sensuality**

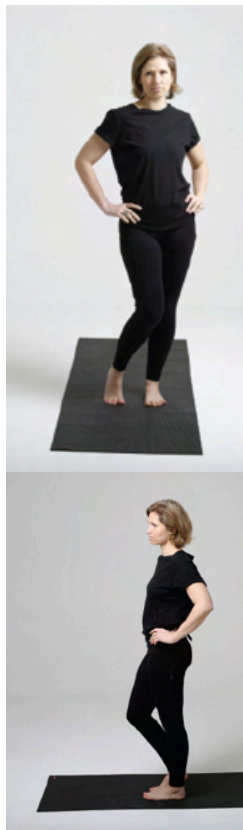
Also known as: sex tiger pose, sex kitten pose, seducer, sexy pose.

#### **Guidelines**

*Purpose and themes:* for exploring sexuality, seduction, sensuality and gender issues

*Notes:* inspired by tango and Latin culture. A very asymmetrical pose. The mouth is key to this pose

*Safety:* can be very triggering for those with sexual trauma histories, and incite unhelpful conversations about gender (though there can be a lot of learning and healing in this, too). May also bring up themes of shame, body image, perception, etc. It needs to be handled delicately and as one more option to try, rather than mandating that people “should” try it. It’ll likely get resistance from non-Latin men and more feminist women, and in countries like Sweden, The Netherlands and Germany. From a technical perspective, yogis and martial artists may struggle with the asymmetry (as they’re not used to doing it deliberately).



## Posture Specifics

*Base:* One heel raised, one knee forward, one hip up (leaving one hip and knee higher than the other)

*Spine:* turned and asymmetrical

*Hands:* on hips

*Head:* turned and tilted down slightly

*Face:* mouth open, attention on mouth, teeth and tongue

*Gaze:* open, can be sideways

*Sound / breath:* open-mouthed breathing, grow or purr

*Movement / attention:* forwards and in, but also away (mixed message).

## Common mistakes

- Turning into joker pose/laughing
- Making “flat”
- Not enough asymmetry
- Quitting!

## Variation: Male “Joey” Sensuality Pose

Men sometimes struggle with this pose due to gender stereotypes, so I like to demonstrate a more moderate version for men, based off of Joey from the TV comedy, *Friends*, and accompany it by saying “How you doin’?”



## ***Yang as a theme for any pose***

As well as the formal ETK yang poses, it's also possible to explore yang aspects within many other yoga postures. Plank or another challenging pose can be used to explore grit and determination, for example, and others like warrior one include obvious yang elements and plenty of challenge to work with. In this way, ETK poses can become themes for any asana. This is one way to practise applied or "blended" ETK, which we also call "ETK Lite".

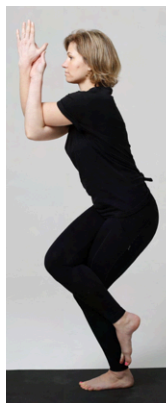


## **Creative use of yang themes**

Here are examples of making use of standard yoga postures in an ETK manner.

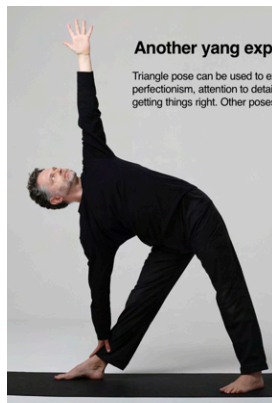


For example, eagle pose (bottom-left)



can be used to explore what's complicated, staying relaxed with complexity and where we tie ourselves in knots.

Another example is using triangle pose (bottom-right) to explore our relationship to perfectionism, attention to detail and how we feel



about getting things right. Other poses can also be used for this.

Neither of these are ETK poses, but for those already familiar with yoga, using different poses in this way can add a new dimension to them.

You will no doubt find your own areas you can play with, yogi or not!

### ***Poses “squared”***

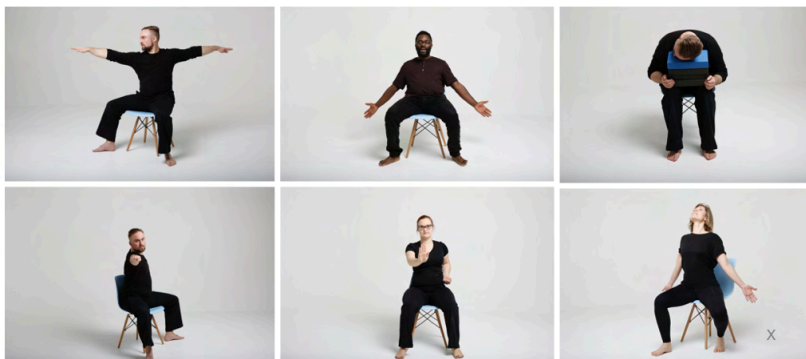
Any pose can be done in the manner of any other pose. For example, you could do warrior pose in an open or yes way, to explore subtler aspects of the pose. This is an advanced way of working but may be interesting to those who have been doing ETK for some time, or if there is one pose you want to delve into in great depth. You could even get fractal on this and explore say warrior open pose in a yes way, but maybe that’s getting silly!

## **4.4 Poses in Different Postures**

### ***Seated poses***

All poses can be done in chairs. Wheelchair users have been in many ETK workshops and a teacher trainee did a whole [teacher training](#) with a broken foot from a regular office chair in Belfast once.

Following you'll see warrior, yes, letting go (supported), no, warrior and enthusiasm, all done seated. Note that legs are usually still positioned with one forwards, and pelvic tilt creates the weighting, too. The basic principles and other body positioning of yin and yang stay the same as you can see, and the rest you can work out easily enough, which is why we've not included all of them seated.



### ***Lying down poses***

Most poses can also be done lying down. Taking Space, for example, can be done as making a star on the floor (if you have enough space!). Enthusiasm can be done as a supported backbend with a bolster. Open Pose itself is essentially already a lying down version of Yes Pose.

This can be good for when people need more support or are just tired. Lying down adds a greater sense of support and ease for most, and is more yin generally. Such poses like transcendence and joker however are not easily done on the floor as their essence does not match this (instability and lifting up in these cases). Once you've practised for a while it will

likely become obvious when to use the floor more and which poses are a good and bad fit with floor work.

### **Working with the floor**

More generally, working with the floor can bring out a child-like quality (as most adults don't spend time on the floor) or create a sense of grounding or safety, which itself can be interesting to work with and a kind of healing for many.

### ***Walking “poses”***

All poses can be done as ways of walking. This may be quite literal, like having the arms open in a walking open pose, or more like a translation of the “energy” of the pose. Walking creates a useful bridge from a formal practice to daily life.

Warrior is a good example of how to translate a pose into walking. As a pose, the stance is long, the back leg extended, and the gaze forward. In walking the stride is long, you push strongly from the back foot and the gaze is forward. The front arm does not literally need to be outstretched as in the pose, but can occasionally point forward to give the idea. The speed is fast and the walk direct, like a Monday morning rush to work. By contrast, letting go pose is more relaxed, slow and less linear. It's like an ambling Sunday afternoon stroll.



## 4.5 Deviations, Bodywork & Adjustments

### ***Deviations***

Different personalities emerge when people all attempt the same pose, as can be seen in the following photos with a group of Russian ETK teachers. This is typical in ETK.

The teacher on the right in the first picture, Tonya, tends to be very humorous about her sexuality, while the sometimes shy Katya (she's on the left of both photos, and has a lack of full arm extension and side gaze in the first) and often serious Ekatarina and Masha (who's in the middle for Authority



Pose. Knowing these people well (I've worked with them a lot), I can see many other patterns, too. ETK poses "expose" personalities, but can also be used for each



person to find their personal "flavour" of a pose consciously – they explore their own "way into it" and expression of it.

### ***Bodywork & Adjustments***

The body shapes itself over time to habitual micro-postures. Muscles shorten or lengthen, become weak or overused. This can make non-habitual ETK poses actually physically difficult.

For example, if someone has a “collapsed” or “sunken” chest, they will struggle not only emotionally but also physically with yang postures invoking a backbend. Because of this, I sometimes use gentle bodywork to help open people up. This may be as simple as in a backbend over a bolster, or more complex hands-on work (with consent).

Usually ETK teachers make “adjustments” only with instructions, imagery and by-example (using unconscious mirroring is a powerful implicit way of teaching), however touch can be used, but ALWAYS with consent in ETK. We are not trying to correct a person as wrong, but rather help someone inhabit both a form and the “energy” that comes with that archetype. These can be very light stroke-like suggestions with a hand to intend in a particular direction, or something more intense. Enthusiasm pose, for example, can be encouraged by (carefully and with permission), taking a person’s head from behind by the hair and putting the elbow gently into the back to encourage a backbend. I also pick people up and run across the room with them embodying this one out! There are many possibilities.

I usually discourage all but the most senior ETK teachers from doing hands-on work, as it is easy to get wrong and brutalise people (as you can imagine, I hope, from this last example), and may mean people do not build the motor skills to do something for themselves, which is the point of the practice.

## 5: FOR THE COACH

The Embodied Toolkit can aid you as a coach in different ways. Fundamentally, it's a great tool to help you deepen the work for clients, allowing you to generate deep insights into patterns and effective shifts to new ones. It can also help you become a better coach by using the postures for yourself. Practising and integrating qualities that you may discover are not as pronounced in you (the long term patterns) or simply shifting into the most appropriate embodiment within seconds to serve your clients best.

This chapter introduces a few ways of how Embodied Toolkit can serve you personally and professionally before even using it with clients. It also introduces some important guidelines to use it safely with your clients later on. If you are already working as a coach, then you will be familiar with the ethics and have received a basic set of rules for how to work with people in this context. We simply want to emphasise some important elements that become crucial when working with the body to ensure safety, integrity and accuracy.

### 5.1 The role of the coach and ethics

In any of our trainings (like the one for [Embodied Toolkit](#)), we will remind coaches and facilitators to take on an orientation of being in service to clients. This means that you take your own personal preferences and biases out as much as possible and aim to provide what is best for the client. Aside from paying you and basic decency, clients have *no* obligations to meet any of your other needs such as sexual needs, esteem needs,

reassurance needs, or whatever, and should not be treated as even potential providers of these in any way. To establish this within the framework of working with a client, we encourage re-establishing at the beginning of every session that the client is fully in charge and may veto any suggested exercise. If you suggest a posture and the client does not feel it matches his or her needs, they may request a change in approach and to be able to let go of your agenda and be able to adapt to what seems most in service.

As another crucial condition, before you start to use the Embodied Toolkit in your coaching, make sure you have learned the postures well enough yourself. Make sure you genuinely embody them yourself. It is not enough to only have read this book, know how they work in theory or have done them once or twice. Deeply familiarise yourself with each one, feel for yourself what it is like being in the posture. What is your own relationship to that posture? Any bias or discomfort you have with any posture will block you from coaching a client into it successfully. As much as you can, make sure to not taint the practice or choice of which postures to use by your own preferences and personal patterns. It can take some time before being able to master all 26<sup>8</sup>, so it might even be a good start to choose 5 of the most common postures to begin with and integrate those into the coaching practice. Taking Space, No, Letting Go, Receiving, and Giving could be a useful starting point<sup>9</sup>. By taking a gradual approach to integrating the

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<sup>8</sup> *There aren't really exact practice guidelines, as this depends on each person, but practising five poses per day, five days per week for three months is often found to be a minimum for those who join the [Embodied Toolkit Certification](#).*

<sup>9</sup> *These are the ones we teach beginner coaches in our [Certification of Embodiment Coaching](#) (CEC).*

embodiment of each of the poses, you can ensure safety and accuracy for your clients.

If you have not been on an Embodied Toolkit teacher training, we strongly advise against trying to learn the postures to teach others purely from this guide. You're likely to need feedback and support to have a sufficient grasp of the nuances of each posture to be able to apply it effectively in the coaching practice. It could lead at best not being effective, but in the worst case even harmful for your clients, as it creates confusion.

Links to all of our annual online training and live events are at <https://embodimentunlimited.com/>, with the Embodied Toolkit certification more specifically at:

<https://embodimentunlimited.com/embodied-toolkit/>

This being said, we know that people will make use of this book as they like, and we'd like them to work with the Embodied Toolkit safely, so here are some more crucial considerations.

## ***Consent***

Respect consent. All ethical embodied work is consensual. A good starting point is to clarify with clients at the start of the sessions that they do not have to do anything they don't want to do, they can veto and change any exercise or posture you might suggest and also give feedback on how well or not it is working for them. A way we ensure this lands we often ask them after explaining "Who's in charge?" and make sure they know it's themselves.

Consent is a key ethical principle when guiding clients verbally into postures, and it is especially important in regard to touch. So while you might be working online, it still applies in not forcing any exercise onto your clients. If you are face-to-face with clients, it becomes even more relevant, as it includes a possibility for touch. Make sure to be impeccable with it. We stress consent for touch so much because it reinforces the idea that a person's body is theirs and not to be violated. This goes right to the heart of embodied empowerment. Sadly, this is much needed for most people, as we have been conditioned from childhood that our bodies are not our own. How many times have you been picked up by a relative, tickled, and been expected to give your auntie a hug without wanting any of it? And these are examples from loving intact homes and families, not even mentioning statistics of abuse.

### ***Adaptation***

While none of the ETK poses are highly athletic, you might still encounter clients who are not capable of taking a shape fully. Postures should never be more than a little physically uncomfortable. If the poses are too demanding physically, people will not be able to focus on the subtler feelings beneath screaming muscles. Sometimes physical limitations, injuries or impairments can limit a client from performing the full posture. The more important dimension is getting to the psycho-emotional insights and hence, there is the possibility to adapt the posture to fit any capacity. Due to their archetypal nature, each pose can be done walking, standing, sitting or lying down. As long as the essence of the quality is maintained, it is possible to adapt.

## ***Calibration***

Capacity can also be limited on an emotional level. If a client is not fully resourced or feels very unfamiliar and uncomfortable in a pose to the point of triggered, there is an option of calibrating the posture. Calibration means that we tone down the posture to begin with and maybe refrain from going into its full expression. We might only start with the stance of the posture and a minimal expression in hands and face. From there we can progressively move towards a full posture. If, for any reason, your client prefers to stop and stick with an intermediate version of the posture, respect that. The point is not to overwhelm clients. So stay aware of your client's limitations, gently encourage but do not ever pressure. Take the role of a cheerleader not a football coach, and if your client is already facing their growth edge, keep them there, possibly help them centre, and only once they feel safe and relaxed should you continue.

## ***Trauma awareness***

Trauma education is now widely available. There is really no excuse for not getting up to speed on the basics. If you are not trauma aware, you will do harm. Note that this does not mean taking on a “woke” ideology or becoming “trauma-malformed” – it just means knowing the basics. ETK as a system has been made as a gentle enquiry process with the widespread nature of trauma in mind, but postures can be triggering and some, like sensuality and authority, should definitely be approached with care.

## **5.2 Prepare yourself with the Embodied Toolkit**

The Embodied Toolkit can be used to shift your own state or embodiment to be in a better or more appropriate condition yourself to coach your client. This could be necessary for two reasons. Some days you might need to shift your own embodiment to be ready to give a session at all. You might feel introverted and a pose that could prepare you to step into the role as coach like “Visibility” or “Authority” can help prompt that more outgoing readiness. Maybe you notice yourself being not very receptive or on the contrary not ready to give. Here you could fall back on the “Receiving” or “Giving” pose to support shifting into a more adapted fitting state.

Another reason for wanting to shift your own embodiment is less personal and has more to do with understanding what serves the client. You could embody the precise quality by means of doing the posture you will introduce to them before, so you can prepare yourself to be able to take them along with you. Or alternatively, you could embody a pose that would be complementary to the one you will work on with them, as to facilitate the process for them. For example, if you were to work on a vulnerability with them, it might require you to access your own vulnerability first, or something else that might help them feel safe in going there, like instance “Support” or “Care” pose. The choice of which pose could be based on your experience, intuition or an enquiry into what they need by directly asking. Sometimes it’s wise to do what the client needs to support them, while at other times you may want to create polarity or do something very different from the client to support them, e.g. making yourself smaller to enhance their space taking.



Here's a list of possible poses to use BEFORE your session:

- **Receiving Pose** or **Yes Pose** to enhance your listening skills
- **Giving Pose** or **Authority Pose** to enhance trust in your skills and tools
- **Taking Space Pose** if you feel inward and need to shift into a state where you can have bigger presence
- **Self Care Pose** or **Rest Pose** when you need a little last minute resourcing

You may also like to use some of the micro<sup>10</sup> poses DURING your session:

- **Receiving Pose** or **Yes Pose** when you find yourself judging or struggling to simply listen when you have so many beautiful tips you could share
- **No Pose** if you need to be firm on boundaries (this could be time keeping)
- **Entering Pose** if you need to interrupt a client

Some poses you may like to use AFTER your session include:

- **Letting Go Pose** to reset and not take on what your clients might have shared
- **Rest Pose** to transition and integrate
- **Self-Care Pose** to recover
- **Inner Pose** to come back to yourself

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<sup>10</sup> Note that during a session you would not use the full shape of a pose but revert back to its micro expression. See more on micro poses in chapter 6.

## 6: THE APPLICATION WITH CLIENTS

Now we will look at what is most relevant once you intend to integrate The Embodied Toolkit into your work with clients: the underlying principles and basic inquiry that will allow you to go ahead and get started. And some further idea of what kinds of challenges you could tackle with which postures.

*“For years I used a blend of NLP, hypnotherapy and felt sensing, but over the past year I've added The Embodied Toolkit to my coaching and the results have been amazing. I love how deceptively simple and yet powerful The Embodied Toolkit poses are in personal change work. The Embodied Toolkit was the missing piece in my practice!*

*At first I wondered how I could introduce The Embodied Toolkit into my sessions as usually we are sitting down and the client may have their eyes closed for 90 minutes. But I've found it's much more enjoyable (for clients and for me!) to be able to move around in a session so now I use The Embodied Toolkit all the time and in many different ways.*

*I sometimes use The Embodied Toolkit as a safe, non-threatening way to explore stuck thoughts or feelings and to help the client relax into the start of a session.*

*Midway, I may bring in a couple of poses to change the emotional state of a client, especially if we've been doing some deep work. This change of tempo and perspective often brings up surprising new insights and different ways forward.*

*And I use The Embodied Toolkit towards the end of a session to lighten the mood and bring in more energy to enable the client to go forward into the rest of their day.”*

– Kate Ryler (Coaches women online around trauma, guilt, anxiety, depression and worrying what others think).

## **6.1 Introducing the Toolkit to clients**

While many people are open to the idea of including the body into a process when told how powerful it is, they might still hold a degree of caution about how that works. To give clients like this a flavour and have a more experiential way of explaining, we give you two very simple exercises to demonstrate why it is important to shift in the body in order to shift how we feel and think.

The first introduces the principles of awareness and choice. Illustrating how embodied coaching works by identifying how you are and how you want to be, and using the body to get there.

Are you consciously choosing how you are sitting right now? Most likely not. What does it say about your current state? How does it reflect how you feel? After guiding awareness to that, you can invite your client to consider how they would like to be. Let's say they are feeling a bit tired and their way of sitting reflects this in a somewhat slouched position. If they choose to be more awake, alert, energised, for example, ask them how they could sit to support that. Likely they will straighten their spine, sit upright, shoulders back if they were forward. Intuitively, we often know what kinds of embodiment

correlate with how we feel. Bringing awareness to the present embodiment - how you are now - and inquiring about the desired state connected to an embodiment introduces the concept of choice. How do you want to be? And the last part entails a shift in the body, the physical dimension, to achieve that outcome. This middle piece is where tools and techniques come in. Simply knowing how you are and how

Another potent way of demonstrating why it matters to align the physical with our desired outcomes and how addressing posture, breath and movement to support changes in mental states use the dissonance demonstration. First ask your client to bring their shoulders forwards, round their backs and lower their chin. Then have them say something like “It’s such a wonderful day” or “I am so happy”. Encourage them to feel what that is like. To contrast this, invite them to raise their arms up high towards the ceiling, to look up and possibly come onto their tiptoes. From this position, have them say either “it is a terrible day” or “I am feeling down”. Likely you will not even have to explain much beyond the experiential flavour given by these exercises, as most people I have done this with immediately laugh or express how awkward and unaligned each of these two felt. We are so deeply wired to connect emotions and states with body shapes and what they represent that our brain notices when there is incoherence. It just does not feel correct. And this is where the embodied tool kit plays in. We practise the shapes in our bodies that support the way of feeling and being we desire, add the intentionality and slowly the mind and mood will follow.

## 6.2 Coaching Inquiry

The fundamental principles of *Awareness* and *Choice* discussed in chapter 2 inform all coaching inquiries outlined in this guide. Without awareness, there is no choice. Without being aware of which patterns, habits and skills are present in your clients, there is no way of changing them.

There are a few different approaches to build awareness: we can look at **familiarity** or how at 'home' a posture feels for your client, how they might be doing it differently or "wrong" (**deviation**), which one resonates more when contrasting opposite postures (**contrast**). And even encouraging clients to purposefully do it "more wrong" allowing them to exaggerate their personal tendencies and thereby tickling out patterns (**exaggeration**).

By trying on the different embodiments by going into the shapes (postures) we bring awareness to both patterns and desired outcomes. Understanding what skills are unfamiliar but longed for is as important to create a trajectory for change as it is knowing the familiar embodiments.

Once you have identified the patterns, you can help clients build capacities or skills they need and want. Growth edges can be identified by understanding which postures are unfamiliar or by looking at the postures that contrast the already familiar ones, thereby expanding **range** and creating **balance**. Another option is to help clients become comfortable within postures that they struggle with through **centring** within a posture. Sometimes it requires a little deeper work to integrate some postures. There might be emotional connotations that taint their idea of the postures to address, or

a conflating of two possibly unrelated qualities that make it impossible for clients to embrace one when rejecting the other. They keep throwing out the baby with the bathwater. This confusion usually requires **Distinction coaching** also explained in this chapter.

### **6.3 The basic method of inquiry**

This guide is an aid for anyone who wants to dive deeper and integrate the body and embodiment into their coaching practice. And hence we give you the basic method of how to guide an inquiry for a client, which can reveal layers of how clients experience the essence of the pose.

The basic method of instruction and inquiry for any posture is actually quite simple. The most basic version can be broken down into five stages:

1. *Posture (ask them to position themselves in a certain way)*
2. *Awareness (have them feel it)*
3. *Familiarity (ask if they are “at home” in it to reveal patterns)*
4. *Linking it to life (further enquiry to gain insights)*
5. *Process (usually some kind of debrief)*

First, you introduce the posture by demonstrating and asking your client to copy you or by instructing them clearly. Once they are in the posture, you guide their awareness into how it feels being there, what they notice about the quality of the posture (*awareness*). As a third step, you inquire about familiarity or longing for the quality. If a pose is familiar it could be a trait of the person and if it is longed for/ desired there might be a growth edge to explore. If you uncover deviations,

they will inform you about the relationship the client has to the posture, how they do it. At this point you can also choose to look at deviations, or use exaggeration, but we will cover this later on. The fourth step is linking it to life by asking questions around “where in your life do you feel this the strongest?” or “where in your life do you want more of this?”. The final step would be a debrief between you and your client around what they observed, felt, maybe digging deeper into some specific questions or areas.

Two possible sets of questions you can ask while your client is in a posture include:

- What is the felt sense of making this shape?
- Is it familiar or not?
- Are you at home in the posture?
- If it's familiar, is it comfortable? Or are you tired of it?
- If it's unfamiliar, is it something you long for?

These are familiarity enquiries and reveal if it's a habitual way of being for the client.

- Where in your life do you need a bit more (or less) of this?
- How would having more of this impact your life?
- How does this embodiment serve you?
- How would this change your parenting (or management, love life, anything relevant)?
- How does the world look different from here?

These are life-linking questions and help the client reflect on their life through this lens.

From this basic inquiry you can expand into more complex and nuanced inquiries, address themes, combine and contrast different poses and even become creative.

The core idea is that poses quickly reveal patterns, and quickly produce new insights that just sitting like they typically do in coaching wouldn't. The body shows what is typical and what is possible. The poses can then be used to develop new patterns with practice.

To illustrate briefly, let's say your client struggles with being seen and one of their patterns is hiding behind others and letting them speak all the time. You can explore "Visibility/Taking Space" posture with them in various ways. Once you demonstrate the posture, ask them to copy it and guide their awareness to how it feels. Inquire how familiar it feels in their body. Likely, it will feel unfamiliar or even scary. While you or your client might take this as sufficient incentive to desire changing their pattern by practising the unfamiliar posture, knowing in addition that "Visibility" also feels weirdly good (longed for) while scary can help determine this as a direction for growth. The basic method will further lead you to asking your clients about the link to life, where in their life they struggle in particular with allowing themselves to be seen. In their profession, relationship, family or friendships. Maybe in particular situations or circumstances like making speeches or family dinners. Aim for precision in their answers, as the more concrete they are, the more impact it will have when practising the postures and familiarising with the way of being. The clearer the intentions, keeping in mind the precise scenarios for which they are practising, the more effective it will be. The part of debrief would entail talking about what is particularly challenging about the embodiment of "Visibility" and also



designing an appropriate method for practice. What could support the client in entering into the posture, and how does that translate into accessing the skill in their life.

When working on the level of embodiment it is crucial to remember that embodiment is highly contextual (see the contexts model). This is why it matters to be specific when debriefing with clients too. It might well be that the same client who struggles with being seen in their professional context is the most comfortable with visibility when amongst his friends. To make it a little easier to understand the different areas in our life that might influence our embodiment we can refer to the embodied context model where the outer ring represents the contextual influences that especially cause momentary shifts in embodiment. Depending on the situation, environment, people we relate with and even the different times of day, seasons or other cyclical changes, our habitual ways of being are influenced, changed and shaped.

### ***Deviation***

After testing for familiarity and longing within a pose, one of the most revealing ways to generate insight about a client's patterns can be by means of looking at the deviations in the posture. Deviations are the little "mistakes" someone makes when copying the posture. Most clients will have the basic necessary skills to allow them to imitate the shape of a posture. If their eyes work and their bodies are largely capable, there are only two reasons for why they would not do the posture exactly as you demonstrate. They might have poor body awareness and never learned to mirror or copy, and hence struggle to translate. Usually, anyone who has worked with choreography or movement practices like dance, martial

arts or yoga before has a better ability at accurately copying someone else's postures and movement as their eye-body coordination is trained to do so. Anyone who has never might lack these skills. Which is not necessarily bad when we want to focus on habitual embodiments that distort the given shapes. The more precisely and accurately someone is trained to copy, the more difficult it actually becomes to spot deviations. They are like chameleons or shape-shifters, able to take on different embodiments and thereby hiding their own habitual ones. As this is the main second reason for why somebody makes "mistakes" in postures. Their habitual embodiment simply comes through and shows within the posture.

In this way we use deviations to inform us about the client's relationship to the posture, their ability to embody it and also their very unique way of doing that. In the example of a "No" we can detect whether someone is actually putting up a boundary depending on where they position their hand. If it is completely to the side of their torso instead of in front of their heart, for instance, it could say something about how open they remain and still allow for what they are trying to say no to to reach them. Similarly, if the second hand is not in a fist but maybe even just limp and hanging by their sides, it could indicate something about their ability to see through with a consequence in case their boundaries get challenged. Another example could be the leaning forward or backward with their torso, or retracting vs. over stretching the front arm. This could indicate their pattern around aggressively stating boundaries or shying away from expressing them at all. Note that in all these examples, we do not suggest that there is a clear "If they do A, it means B" type of diagnosis. All deviations are explored as an inquiry posed to the client. So that as the coach you

merely guide their awareness to how they are doing the posture differently and what that might indicate, and then you leave them with the question “Where in your life are you doing this?”. The client themselves will know if a pattern revealed in their body also rings true in their behaviour in daily life.

*“I worked with a client, mother of one boy, hard-working and caring who was struggling to connect to herself and her body. Her relationship to food was marked by emotional eating and a history of dieting and weight issues.*

*One session we spent looking at “Receiving” posture to understand how she could nourish herself on other levels that were not necessarily limited to food. She would constantly stretch out her arms further forward, moving weight onto the front foot and eventually subconsciously shifting more into “Giving” than “Receiving” posture. She realised that also in her life she would not actually allow herself to receive fully, always feeling some pressure and guilt that brought her into a sense of needing to return any favour or repay it. Feeling much more comfortable in the role of giving but by that ending up depleted and hungry.*

*Working on staying with “Receiving” helped her ease into accepting that she could also lean back and let others do something nice for her at times. That she did not owe and need to reject kindness, love and attention, but instead could soak it up. And this translated into understanding her relationship to food from a new angle – as a replacement for not feeling nourished, resulting in*

*an opportunity to shift this and rebalance away from food as a giver.”*

- Christina

### **Contrast**

If you were to expand the inquiry, you could introduce your client to “Privacy posture” which is usually the polar opposite of “Visibility” and go through the basic method again. “Privacy posture” might feel very familiar and comfortable. And might reaffirm that given the comparison, one posture is clearly more habitual than the other. You might let your clients also move between the two postures a few times to clarify how they feel differently in the body and also on an emotional level.

There is a possibility of using contrasting postures in a resourcing way whenever the contrasted pose isn’t something we are tired of yet. If the embodiment of going inwards and “Privacy” feels familiar and pleasant, it could serve as a beneficial resource for leading into “Visibility”. Allowing a client to feel Privacy first and then afterwards going into Visibility could make it easier for them. Knowing that they can draw on their comfort zone before stepping out.

Sets of contrasting postures are often determined by the Yin and Yang distinction. The most frequently beneficial pairs to keep in mind for coaching purposes next to “Visibility” and “Privacy” posture include “No” and “Yes” and “Giving” and “Receiving”. The aim is usually to create a balance for clients to be able to appropriately access both polar opposites equally.

*“Recently I led a workshop on boundaries and we contrasted yes and no pose. Very quickly people noticed which was most familiar, and this underlined their issues.*

*It’s easy for people to claim they can “do both”, but when you contrast them it’s usually very obvious that one is much more familiar. It also helps people really feel the essence of each.*

*Doing them in a group, one also sees how differently people do the poses, even though they are not athletic and everyone gets the same instructions! When I pointed out differences people are smart enough to have “light-bulb” moments themselves.*

*Another interesting contrast between people was when I went around and pushed on everyone’s leading No hand. Some pushed back, some held their ground, many collapsed. I easily guessed who would collapse based on their general embodiment and interactions up to that point.”*

- Mark

### ***Exaggeration***

Asking clients to exaggerate their patterns makes the patterns more obvious, and can be a very helpful strategy. It takes a habitual way of being and amplifies it so that it can be felt again. As if putting it under a magnifying glass to better detect what is happening. When working with the Embodied Toolkit, exaggeration also serves to draw out neuroses and habits.

You might work on a posture like “Care”. After demonstrating it to your client and having them copy you, various deviations might already be apparent. From this point, you could ask them to do the posture even “more wrong”. Meaning that if they notice an inclination to lean in any particular direction to allow themselves to do this 30 to 50 percent more. In the example of care posture, some common ways that students may change the shape might include them either closing the circle of their arms more or opening it completely. It might mean they change hand position or rotation, actually going more into a giving or receiving shape. Whatever the change in posture is, you can then use and analyse it in the same way as we did with the deviation principle. Staying with an inquiry and leaving the insights as much as possible with the client so that they are empowered to feel and spot their own habitual embodiment. Similarly, let them draw their own link to life again.

With the exaggeration principle we don’t only establish whether a client has access to a particular embodiment or skill but beyond that inquire into the how of the embodiment. How might they do this embodiment differently (same as in deviation) and might there be a confusion with another quality (i.e. “care” becomes “giving”).

*“Coaching a tech executive recently on life purpose recently I noticed them to a subtle Enthusiasm micro-pose when they talked about a particular topic. It was just a little spinal extension. I had them exaggerate this and go into the full pose to realise how much they loved the area that we were talking about. It was also a lot of fun and an energiser for the session.”*

- Mark

## ***Distinction Coaching***

Distinction coaching is one of the more advanced techniques in this book. It becomes necessary when a client cannot access a particular embodiment because they have conflated something else with it. What this means is that the mixed in quality can keep them from embracing the first embodiment. This can leave them stuck in a habitual manner, avoiding a better alternative, as they cannot see it.

The classic example Mark provides in his book is an unhealthy yang and yin pattern prevalent in our culture, which misunderstands power and love as opposites, rather than two sides of the same thing. Many people equate being brutal with being strong, as they feel it's better to be nasty and not weak; and others being compliant / weak with being kind, as they would rather lose and be victims than be nasty. Your role as the coach in such examples is to help a client make a new distinction in the body, turning this misunderstood polarity into four new options. For example, showing them how they can be strong and kind (as opposed to strong or kind). After creating the distinction, the new way of being which is the desired one to be embraced can be strengthened through practice.

Some other common examples of embodied qualities that many people confuse include arrogant vs. confident (or humble vs. unconfident), fast vs. rushing, boundaried vs. aggressive (another basic yin-yang one) and fun vs. chaotic. Within the embodied toolkit, we can explore many of these

with different postures. One related to power and love comes out in “Authority” when people mistake this for authoritarian brutality. The alternative could be a care and protection inspired one. Giving new options to choose from through the body creates a lot of freedom and can be profoundly empowering.

*“The moment I sat down in “Vulnerability” posture and embodied its full form, I felt repelled and viscerally nauseous. I hated it. It felt deeply unfamiliar and unsafe. I wanted to adjust instantaneously to regain stability in my posture, regain balance in the body (as the pose is very asymmetrical and purposefully not stable). Part of this was my background in martial arts training, which taught my body and mind that it was not an intelligent way to sit in case of danger, not allowing for quick response or getting up, resisting pressure and even more so actively exposing vulnerable parts of the body like the neck. Deeper than this, however, I discovered a layer of disgust, judgement and a confusion of vulnerability with manipulation. When adding the sweet facial expression and increasing my rate of blinking my eyelids (note, these are the subtle details in postures which can be highly revealing) it brought up an immediate voice in my head that rejected this way of being as manipulative, deceptive, and acting weak to gain something. Knowing myself a little it confirmed my own struggle with showing vulnerability and the fear it might be not only taken as weakness but also seen as manipulation which was against my values. Before allowing myself to hence practise vulnerability, it required some distinction coaching (a technique discussed in later chapters) to distinguish between vulnerability as an*



*innocent and authentic expression from manipulation. Once these were separated, I could focus on familiarising myself with vulnerability itself as untainted.”*

- Christina Dohr (Embodiment Coach)

### ***Creating useful sequences of postures***

When working on a particular challenge, there may not only be one core embodiment that your client might struggle with. Drawing on a few different postures can allow for deeper insight into the nuances, and one pose can enable another. A common example when working on themes around confidence and leadership is that the relationship to taking up space (“Visibility”) and also “Authority” are impacted. So helping a client step into a leadership role might require working on both of these postures. At this point, your own experience and creativity comes into play. Maybe the interplay of giving and receiving offers insights into what blocks or could motivate your client. Additionally, you could ask what would resource them to feel empowered and able to step into visibility and authority. Here, the Yin and Yang polarities could inform which postures to seek out as a nourishing and balancing component. Visibility and Authority are Yang, so is there a Yin counterpart like Privacy, Rest or Receiving that opens up space. What do you need to receive to be able to take that role of authority? When do you need to rest before stepping out into the spotlight? Which areas of your life allow you to retreat and be by yourself to recharge? Another classic is that people often find No pose easier after having done Self-care pose as it links it to their self love, and feels less “mean”. All these are

interesting inquiries that could be included in exploring struggles around leadership.

*“A creative client who was changing roles from being a performer, to focusing on becoming a director, developing a performance company with funding from a major arts organisation.*

*We used ‘Yes’ and ‘No’ poses to explore boundaries in work and personal life to enable her to have freedom and focus on what she now needed to prioritise.*

*‘Taking up space’ and ‘being seen’, imagining them-self at the centre of the company, surrounded by people she appreciated and respected (and for that to be received by them as well). To give support, and receive support. To be seen on an international tour and receive both appreciation and criticism, to be confident and stable enough, and to take a stand with their creative voice, making challenging work on deep themes which are sometimes avoided.*

*The coaching helped them find their inner resources and communicate with people to enable them to move forwards confidently professionally.”*

- Vidyadasa (Senior ETK teacher and coach)

## **6.4 Micro poses**

"Micro-poses" are the applied, subtler versions of full ETK poses. To make the postures applicable to clients' daily life, we

take the essence of them and find ways to engage them minimally. Micro-poses are always within the socially acceptable range of body positions that we would find in daily life, so shouldn't stand out as being "weird". The full poses are often too unusual to perform in a normal interaction or conversation. If your client aims to integrate "No" for example and finds themselves in an interaction, it would not make sense to take a full Karate stance and put a hand out in front. This would be really strange. Instead though, they could slightly stiffen one hand or even just narrow the eyes, to "engage" the pose that they know.

Micro poses mainly serve as reminders, keys or anchors to access the quality of the post that has been practised in full before. For "Yes" this could mean just opening the hands for example. For Sensuality it may just mean slightly opening the mouth and making the hips asymmetrical. For Taking Space rather than spreading the legs and arms wider it may just mean taking a slightly wider stance and not contracting. For vulnerability it may mean just a slight head tilt. For Enthusiasm a subtle extension of the spine. Etc.

The question to guide micro poses is, how could you bring the same quality into your being without changing much physically. If you could only move into the posture one percent. Hands, eyes and the spine are often critical.

The idea of micro-poses also allows coaches to "read" what pose people are in. We are all in some variation of one the poses all of the time! Again, the key thing is studying the "macro" poses deeply so the subtleties become easy. Once you have practised the pose a lot, you only have to "touch" them to activate their essence and get the positive results.

See if you can guess the poses from the pictures below. Some are more subtle than others.

## **6.5 “Homework”**

To help your clients to develop new ways of being and fully integrate the embodiments you discover together during the sessions, it proves useful to work with “homework”. A usual practice would entail choosing one to three postures that the client wants to familiarise with, and repeat them every day. In this way they move from insight to embodiment. “Practice makes permanent”.

Taking the example of practising “No” this could look like including the posture into their morning routine by entering into the shape of it and staying in it for at least one minute. Concentrated full quality, not length of practice is key.

If the posture is difficult for people emotionally, centring may help before the main practice. Relaxing any tension or stress that arises first, breathing, and then entering the pose. We often encourage people to “marinate” in the shape for a while to get used to it, but 1-3 minutes is enough. It is important that they do not only practise it as a mechanical mindless shape, but put full attention and intentionality into it. In case of the “No” it would mean really feeling a sense of setting a boundary and embodying a no with every cell of their being. Images and words (“no”, “bugger off” etc) can bring this to life if needed. Depending on whether you have identified a particular area or situation in which your clients want to learn boundaries, they can coach themselves through a little visualisation of saying no to the particular example. Poses can be done as homework

with or without such a context, and calibration (what is too much or too little) is key. The devil is in the dose, so do not make practice too easy, or overwhelming.

Often in coaching people have dramatic cognitive insights, but by giving people poses as concise powerful embodied practices real lasting shifts can happen. Many of our clients are very busy so the condensed archetypal nature of the Toolkit postures is very helpful in this regard. 1-3 poses for one minute each a day is a typical “prescription” for clients to take away. This is enough that after 2-3 months they will become comfortable and start showing up more naturally in life, though often people see this much sooner.

You might want to give your client different options for how and when they can practise the postures. For some the morning routine idea works very well, while others prefer linking the practice to another activity in their day. One client would do a little self-care pose before meals to nourish herself emotionally before eating, for example. This would shift the focus away from using food as a way to compensate for a feeling of lack of emotional nourishment and the coping mechanism of filling the perceived emptiness inside herself by overeating. Another would integrate the poses into his existing yoga practice, while another did them in office clothes as her computer was firing up in her office each morning. Whatever works works, but we find a routine with a remoner system is best.

*“The Embodied Toolkit is the best homework! I usually ask the client to choose two or three of the most powerful (or most challenging) poses to practise in their outer life between sessions to reinforce the inner changes they are making. After the session I send them*

*photos of me in the pose as a quick reminder of what to do. And I always start the next session with how they used the poses and what changes they'd noticed as a result."*

– Kate Ryler (Women's Empowerment Coach)

*"Imagine you have a pattern that you notice, but want to understand how you developed it.*

*ETK allowed me to understand something that no therapeutic practice was able to do.*

*Entering was a much more deep-dive quality than others for me. I noticed that I had a pattern of not trusting to enter things. My heart raced, and I started to feel unbalanced, unsafe and numb. Even thinking about doing the pose I felt ashamed and unsure...*

*After working with it intensively for six months, thinking that I was finally mastering it, I took a photo of myself and saw that my posture deviated a lot. This is when I asked myself 'where does this all start?' I then stayed in the pose for more than 10 minutes and asked my body 'where did it all start?'*

*Finally, I realised it was my birth.*

*I was too weak to enter... I disconnected my resources from my mother and tried it in the womb alone... my*

*heartbeat stopped. Doctors helped me to survive, to enter into life, and saved my life.*

*Until this exploration I had never known that this had such an impact on my daily life.*

*Meanwhile, I've now intuited a flow that I needed, from Spiritual Warrior to Inner Pose to Receiving Pose before I try Entering, and then I finish off with Self-Care and Stand after that.*

*Now I see that my practice of entering started from day one and will go on until death. And funnily, Death Pose is one of my favourites. Like Bessel van de Kolk says: "the body keeps the score". Yes Indeed.*

*But no one said you have to leave it there."*

- Manja Kendler

## 7: PARTNER EXERCISES

The relational dimension of embodiment is highly impactful. We always exist in relationship to something or somebody else, and while we can address many challenges and issues in ourselves alone, sometimes it is important to look at the influence of relational dynamics. As we often work in one-to-one set-ups with clients, the relational dimension can be simulated through a form of role playing. In this it is not only your client who will enter into a posture to discover their own patterns alone. This time you as the coach get to embody a quality through taking shape aka posture which might support or hinder your client in accessing the embodiment they want to work on.

To explore any interpersonal matter we can use many different ETK combinations, as the entire Toolkit comprises 26 postures which can be combined, and in addition we can now work with variations. To make it easier to understand what possibilities this opens up for us as a coach we will start this chapter by presenting seven basic ways people can be in relationship (so we now have 27 x 26 x 7). Real world relationships are often more complex, but by breaking things down into simple exercises we allow clients to look at the key patterns at work, in a simplified manner. It allows them to isolate dynamics in a non-consequential set-up. ETK again brings awareness and choice, but not to interpersonal aspects. We have found this creates huge insights and can achieve life-changing shifts within minutes.



Our minds are very clever machines that will begin telling highly complex stories about who we are, what we do, or why we do things. This can be confusing enough when focussing on just yourself but when another person is involved as well and we are reacting to them and potentially beginning to wonder about their thoughts, motives and why we are suddenly different than we were just a minute ago on our own, it becomes very complicated. The body highlights more of the what is going on, than “the why” or story. Basic embodied dynamics are a good starting point to focus on before additionally trying to untangle other factors. We have all developed strategies and behaviours with others for good reasons in our past, and sometimes it is less important to understand where, when or why a certain behaviour has started, than seeing how it plays out now. The body is great for revealing this, and for trying new options.

Let’s take No pose again as a simple example. Someone may or may not be easily able to do the pose, but what about if it’s supported or challenged (e.g. by pushing against the “no” hand)? What is someone struggling to say no to? Many things can be modelled.

Another example. Let’s say a client struggles with taking up space and the “Visibility” pose is challenging, we might explore how this is influenced in relationship to another. What happens for instance, when another person also takes the same posture? Does it support them or make it more difficult and bring a sense of competition? Is there a posture that the person (in this case you as the coach) could take that would support - maybe contrasting the client with “Inner” pose, or maybe showing that you are welcoming them in their full expression by taking “Receiving” pose.

The decision of which pose serves the process most, is somewhat based on experience and intuition, as well as trial and error. Similarity vs polarity with a coachee can be useful to think about. You can explore different combinations of postures and see what impact they have. In this paragraph we also give a basic overview of the most common pairs and combinations to make it easier for you to get started.

You can talk about things all day, but setting up “experiments” is usually FAR more impactful. Another thing to note is that the coach is ALWAYS in a pose, so you really can’t not do this work!

Note: on my Instagram there are many examples of me working with people 1-to-1 using ETK:

[@warkmalsh on Instagram](#)

## **7.1 Witnessed or ignored**

This is the most basic relational possibility. This partner exercise is for exploring how others pay attention to us, or don’t. Any posture can be used in this exercise and will reveal patterns which might differ depending on the posture. Insights could relate to your self-image and how you would like to be perceived by others. Do you for example like to be seen in one posture but not another? It can also be used to investigate what you usually get attention for, fame, or how the world ignores you.

You can work with either aspects of being seen in this exercise – being seen or being ignored. Being seen is a major psychological theme, so do not underestimate the power of

this seemingly simple partner set. Especially, when ignoring someone by turning your back or looking away, it could really trigger people. Make sure you set up the exercise in a way that you can calibrate, and your client can signal when it becomes too uncomfortable. We have seen cases when someone immediately bursts into tears when ignored. This exercise can be done in person or online as well.

## **7.2 Cooperation and competition**

To explore cooperation and competition, you can match your client in any posture and find a way to do the posture together that feels supportive and like a team effort. Doing the same posture could allow for exploring professional or private dynamics around parenting, shared business, co-workers or intimate relationships.

Here are a few examples of how the cooperation can be explored with different postures.

- “Authority” pose could reveal how much someone agrees in parenting. Can they form a united front?
- “Evaluation” pose to explore discernment and how others influence judgments. Do colleagues or friends help make decisions, or do they sway someone?
- “Giving” pose to investigate shared offers with a partner
- “Receiving” to explore how a sibling or friend can help accept a situation
- “Care” is a revealing posture to explore with a romantic or business partner
- “No” posture to inquire into what you want to resist together
- “Warrior” posture to investigate what you are fighting for together

Once again, follow the principles and become creative to simulate the needed situation or set up. Choose the posture, bring it into a context of cooperation by doing it with your client. Then inquire about how this changes or influences how your client feels in the posture. Within the cooperative posture, you can decide how close to do the posture too. To be more remote, do them back to back or with more distance.

The flip side of cooperation that can be explored is conflict and competition. Instead of doing the same posture side by side, you can oppose your client here to gain more insight around what competition or opposition brings up for them. Do they access more fierceness and determination in the “Warrior” when facing competition? Or is it hindering them? Yang postures like “Warrior” or “Pushing” are better suited to explore competition than Yin ones.

People have very different relationships to competition. We are taught that it is an essential element of life, and it is, but our society runs on much unhealthy cut-throat competition as well and hence enough people reject engaging in competitive actions. Especially those who live more “spiritual” or conscious lives, the yogis and meditators often resist competition. Simulating it through the Embodied Toolkit can open up to exploring its benefits again, how it can enhance and benefit performance.

## 7.3 Supported and undermined

To explore how we give and receive help, there is a possibility to physically support a client in a posture. For example, if your client takes Warrior pose, you can gently place your hands under their arms to support them. Another option is to place a hand on the back. While very subtle, this can bring profound insights, and we regularly experience people having big breakthroughs around either not allowing themselves to receive help, or never having received it. This can be very emotional.

The inquiry would follow to link the dynamic to their life. How and where in their lives would they like to receive more support? How much they allow themselves to be supported can show up in how much weight they surrender into your hands. Do they keep holding their own weight, or do they potentially immediately collapse into the support? Where is the healthy balance?

The opposite can be explored as well. How to handle antagonism and aggression, or in a more playful way, allowing our mischievous side to come out. The way to set up this in a simulation is by getting your client into a pose and then prodding, poking or annoying them. Gently of course - a one finger poke for example can easily be enough! Depending on the consent and level of calibrated intensity, you can also bring in verbal challenges or even insults. Make sure to always stay in the range of what serves the client and do not start improvising. Agree precisely on the kind of disturbance you create and what you would say to a client to create antagonism.

## **7.4 Contrasted and similar**

For supporting, challenging and further bringing out people's relationship to any pose, you can work with contrasting what they are doing. Instead of doing what they do, you can show a polarising pose at the same time.

The classic pairs to contrast are the same, "Yes" and "No", "Giving" and "Receiving", "Being seen" and "Vulnerability". Having someone model the polar opposite of the posture can be surprisingly supportive in helping bring out the form. Equally, doing what they are doing is also often helpful.

## **7.5 Judgement and praise**

We can use ETK to explore judgement and evaluation, or praise and criticism. Instead of turning your back to your client or actively sabotaging them, you can take on the evaluation posture and allow your clients to feel what it is like to be judged.

Ask your client to do the posture you intend to explore, and then take on the evaluation pose while critically looking at them. If you want to calibrate up, with consent you could add comments of criticism and inquire into how this felt for your client, check in about familiarity and link it to life as usual.

As a contrast to judgement or criticism, you could work with praise. For some of us, it is more difficult to accept compliments than it is to hear criticism, depending on what we have been conditioned to receive. The set-up is the same as

with judgement. This time instead, you just offer verbal praise, or even just an affirming or admiring posture like Yes pose.

*“I led a workshop for performance students using the Toolkit. The students had the support of the course teacher and director who was also in the workshop. She also had training in counselling skills and the students had regular process time together so I knew we were ok to go deep and emphasised the option to opt in or out and calibrate regularly and was looking out for any signs of overwhelm or disassociation etc.*

*We explored themes of ‘being seen’ and ‘taking up space’ as an essential skill and theme for performers, we added layers to this by imagining being seen by an audience of people with appreciation (giving pose) and also with a more judgemental viewpoint (evaluation pose) which was helpful to have their embodied experience of that would be like. We made use of the full wall sized mirrors for them to see themselves in different ways.*

*We worked on creating confidence to be able to help take a ‘stand’ to offer and receive ‘support’ and also the ability to practise kindness and ‘self care’, and care for others to create community with each other in the world of performance which can be a competitive environment. A powerful process of working together with a positive impact.*

- Vidyadasa (Senior ETK teacher and Coach)

## **7.6 Exaggerated and reduced**

Another way to uncover the degrees of how strongly we embody certain qualities is to work with exaggerating or reducing the expression. How does it feel when your client is less or more of something. To set this up, you can have your client either tone down or amp up the expression of a posture, while you take the other option. With this, we can understand patterns of moderation or excess, for instance. If you take “Being Seen” posture and allow your client to explore doing it more than you (or less than you) it can reveal how they feel relationally in their life. How much space can they take up in comparison to other people? Is one more familiar than the other? Reasons for why usually stem from contextual factors like culture, gender images, etc. If you are raised in Japan as a woman for example, it is likely that taking up less space in comparison to others around you is very familiar, whereas a male raised in the US would likely be comfortable with the opposite.

## **7.7 Leading and following**

Leading and following is similar to the exaggeration, but this time allows you to uncover patterns around leadership or being of service. The set-up to explore this dynamic can be done in three different ways. The first way is by standing in front of one another and simulating it through position. Another option is by touching hands in a position and having one hand over the other - the person with a hand over being dominant. And third, by going in and out of a posture and one person leading while the other follows the movement. Especially, if you work with clients online, the third method is what you can use to explore



this. The inquiry following once again revolves around familiarity and linking it to life.

## **7.8 Relational Summary**

The key thing to understand is that we are always embodied in relationship and this can be explored by creating models of dynamics. In this way people can see their patterns and work on new ones. The ways to do this as a coach are many, but if you really embody the poses and understand the seven possibilities here, knowing how to explore any challenge is fairly straightforward. While human relationships are complex, there are not actually infinite possibilities in terms of their basic structure. While beyond the scope of this book many therapists could also benefit from working through the body this way.

## 8: CONCLUSION

We hope this guide inspires you to explore the possibilities of including ETK into your coaching work. Do look up Working with The Body in Training and Coaching (book), the any videos we have online, or the Certificate of Embodiment Coaching for more.

The integration of body and mind is a potent way to help clients gain comprehensive insights and avenues for change. Perhaps more importantly it also contains huge potential to keep developing yourself as a coach and person. It certainly has served us in all these regards.

We certainly hope the Embodied Toolkit proves to be an additional set of tools, to help you and your clients uncover and address patterns and especially have some very concrete exercises in your back pocket for integration and ongoing practice.

As you continue to work with the Embodied Toolkit, please note:

- The Embodied Toolkit is a comprehensive and large body of work and cannot be captured in all its detail in a guide of this size.
- If you want to deepen your expertise and accuracy with this tool we therefore recommend finding a training and ideally a qualified teacher near you so that you can practise the Toolkit Postures in a supervised and guided manner. Even experienced teachers who have studied and practised the postures for years, find deviations

creeping into their shapes over time. It is almost impossible to keep our own habitual embodiment out of how we do the postures, unless we regularly check and receive feedback.

# RESOURCES, TRAININGS & TEACHERS

- You can get certified as an Embodied Toolkit coach or teacher at:  
<https://embodimentunlimited.com/embodied-toolkit/>
- [@warkmalsh on Instagram](#) is a great resource for Embodied Toolkit coaching demonstrations in as little as one minute
- [@embodiedchristina on Instagram](#) for more embodiment learning
- To become a certified embodiment coach and learn some Embodied Toolkit poses along the way, you may like the Certification of Embodiment Coaching (CEC):  
<https://embodimentunlimited.com/cec>
- Enjoy a collection of resources, including the poster of all 26 poses from the next page, at:  
<https://embodimentunlimited.com/coach-toolkit>

This guide is intended to offer a first touchpoint and inspiration for bringing embodied postural work into your coaching practice. The postures are not just shapes and even experienced practitioners can quickly find themselves out of their depth with the psychological insights they can reveal.

If you do work with them, please do so with caution and please follow basic ethics by always crediting the source.

Have fun, explore, learn, embody and enjoy!



# ABOUT THE AUTHORS

## Mark Walsh

Mark is the Founder and CEO of [Embodiment Unlimited](#), and leads embodiment, coaching and trauma education trainings.

He is the author of *Embodiment: Moving Beyond Mindfulness, The Body in Coaching and Training, Embodied Meditation* and *People Un-Pleasing*.

Mark hosts *The Embodiment Podcast* (over 3-million downloads), and led *The Embodiment Conference* (1000 teachers, 500,000 delegates). Seeing a theme yet?



He founded the *Embodied Facilitator Course*, and the *Certification of Embodiment Coaching*. Mark has certified over 2000 embodiment coaches, and taught workshops in over 40 countries.

He gained an honours degree in psychology (despite been an alcoholic at the time), and has taught widely in the corporate world – where he pretended to be a grown up for years –

including with blue-chip companies (e.g. Google, Unilever, Shell, Axa, L'Oreal).

Mark has worked in war zones (including founding a trauma education charity in Ukraine), and entertained over 50,000 children. He has headlined International Coach Federation events, lived with the circus and in slums, taught celebrities, and kissed a princess.

Mark is an aikido black belt, and also has 28 years of experience in other martial arts, yoga, bodywork, improv comedy, conscious dance and meditation.

Embodiment is his obsession, life's work, and frankly, at this point he couldn't get a job doing anything else. He dances like your dad at a wedding, impresses cats with his stroking, and offends pirates with his swearing.

Mark's now tired of writing in the third person. It's getting weird.

## Christina Dohr

Christina is an Embodiment Coach, Somatic Educator, passionate dancer and relationship stewardess.

Her mission is to bring you back to your body and establish the best relationship you could possibly have with yourself and others.

When you work with Christina, you will learn to trust and express yourself more fully, unlearn outdated patterns, and form new supportive habits to confidently create and relate.





