



Written by
Ann Todhunter Brode

Reviewed by Nancy Eichhorn

Ann Todhunter Brode has focused on the body, mind, spirit relationship as it shapes our physical relationship for more than 40 years. "Your history determines your shape and eventually your shape determines your history," she writes (pg. 105). Brode is a teacher, therapist, healer, and writer—her articles have been published in Health Source Magazine, Santa Barbara Independent, Huffington Post and our own SPT magazine. We like her voice, her style, her presence on the page. She offers her new book as both an instructional and a therapeutic experience to teach readers how to live consciously in their body.

Brode's intention is to help readers find their way back to their essential body by giving them tools to learn about themselves (body, mind, spirit) and then take care of themselves. She notes that once readers awaken their body's innate wisdom, they'll be "impressed by what it has to offer" (pg. 11). She wants to help readers cultivate a baseline for relaxation and develop body-oriented strategies for

diverting the intensity of stressful times (pg. 12) and teach them how to be more emotionally aware and emotionally intelligent (pg. 13). As readers systematically release restrictions, they can integrate new information and find comfort living in the present moment (pg. 15)

Capturing the overall interaction between the reader and her book, Brode writes that the 'mind' is the seeker, the 'book' is your personal trainer and your 'body' is the master guide.

From the Introduction, readers begin their explorations into mind, body, spirit in 9 chapters (there's also a bibliography and resources and a troubleshooting section).

Each chapter has specific components. Data—science. Experientials are noted as Try This and Explore. 'Try This' offers short experiential exercises to illustrate the concepts being introduced and developed, an on-the-spot check-in. Explore offers in-depth invitations to participate in more extensive processes to learn more. There is science, psychology and short clinical vignettes woven into each chapter. Brode's personal story is not woven in, this isn't about her journey but rather her professional work and people who have benefited from her protocols.

Chapter 1 sets the book's foundation in terms of Waking Up. Readers learn how to start at the beginning, to expand their understanding and explore their body IQ. Chapter 2 is the Body Wisdom IQ Test, designed to help readers see how tuned-in they are to their body. There are 21 questions with a, b or c responses to select from. The questions were written to give readers an idea of how much of their body's intelligence they are currently using. It's also designed to stimulate a sense of getting in touch with your body and inspiring curiosity to learn more. The scoring is simple, and the final result gives readers their Body Wisdom Intelligence Scale (score), which is meant to introduce readers to their body's intelligence, and awareness. After you finish reading *A Guide to Body Wisdom*, Brode suggests taking the IQ test again to see just how much your Body IQ has increased.

Chapter 3 looks at the basics: breathing, eating, sleeping, moving, fitness, etc. Chapter 4 deals with stress and relaxation; Chapter 5, Healing, Chapter 6, The

Emotional Body; 7 Intimacy and Intuition, 8, Body and Spirit and 9 Your Body Wisdom for Life.

The Troubleshooting index at the end is interesting and rather useful. It offers common situations people find themselves in such as: physical pain and chronic tension; sleep issues; anxiety; emotional upheaval; stagnation; old habits and addictions; self-confidence; giving and receiving love; existential crises; and spiritual connections. Each situation has a precise recipe of readings and exercises to personalize the readers experience.

While reading her PDF I appreciated Brode's knack for picking everyday examples, situations that readers can relate to, simple scenarios that we all face with practices woven into the text along with official "to-do" experientials designed to guide us toward full awareness. I was taken by several of her activities such as the use of a mirror to see the self externally from a new perspective, to see what you are seeing with some understanding and then experimenting with putting on a new role (a new facial expression, posture, movement etc.).

Her creative use of terminology offers readers easy to grasp experientials such as the stress-0-meter, the shape of our stress, and our stress foot print. When talking about stress, she starts with a picture of your body—how stress has shaped it. Where are you braced? Heavy? Restricted? She talks about fear living in the body, anger in a clenched fist, sadness in slumped shoulders.

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She looks at the emotional history of your tension and gives concrete examples for what she calls in between times of stress to help readers see themselves, see their stress embodied.

A bit from Brode (page 101):

Imagine a scale that measures action/relaxation for any given activity. Each thing you do registers the select muscles and tensile strength necessary to accomplish the task at hand. At one extreme, resting and sleeping require no muscle work and major relaxation. Because you don't need your shoulders scrunched or your forehead furled, this tension would increase your score on the stress-o-meter. For lifting, driving, or typing you need a specific amount of tension to do the job. If you over-muscle, your score goes up on the stress-o-meter. Pay attention over the next few days to your body tension and see how you score. The following in between times can shed the spotlight on your action/relaxation ratio:

When you wake up in the morning, do you feel rested and begin your day slowly? Or, does your body feel pumped with the tension of an emotional issue, looming deadline, or simple habit?

When you walk to your car do your arms and legs swing easily? Do you feel a bouncy reverb with each step? Do your eyes notice the world around you? Or, are your hands jammed in your pockets, your feet pounding the pavement, and/or your eyes fixed on the ground?

*When you break for lunch, do you truly take a break and show up for eating, relaxing and socializing? Or, do you take your work out to lunch and forget to enjoy the food and company?
Subtracting tension at the beginning (and throughout) your day will reduce the sum of*

stress in your body. Anytime you can let go of stress, you make room for more focus and vitality. When you get to the end of the day, it just makes sense to do a major tension dump.

There are more questions and from this assessment, readers create a picture of themselves. The book is all about readers seeing into themselves, to witness what is and where it might have come from and what to do about it. There are questions to stimulate reflection and the recommendation to keep a journal as well.

Now It's Your Turn

There is much to this guide and jumping is the way to start. You can read the book, interact with Brode (Facebook, website) and via audio/instructional videos that have been designed to facilitate some of the concepts presented in this book.

You can find them at <http://www.anntodhunterbrode.com/media/>

There are three guided mediations to help you relax and focus and videos on waking up, loosening up, sleeping and more.

You can check out Judith Aston's videos that explain simple movement principles and the ergonomics of walking, sitting, support, alignment, and more.
<http://www.astonkinetics.com/instructional-videos/>

Brode is interested in your body wisdom journey. She believes that your discoveries and insights may be helpful to other people, and she invites you to share them. She writes:

Jot down what you've learned, personal insights and healing insights. Include your permission to publish the account. Copy, paste, and format as an email and send it to ann@annbrode.com



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