Exercising the Other Side of Cognition

Noah Riskin

Even in such a highly scientific and technological society, we are still physical beings in a physical world. In other words, the physical dimensions of our experience remain critically important – not just for overall fitness and health, but for self-awareness and social cognition, including empathy. The message is that cognitive and physical intelligence are equally important. More, physical intelligence is not just about being a skilled athlete or dancer; it has much more to do with our ability to read and respond to the subtle and highly nuanced realm of communication that continually takes place between our mind and body. Along these lines, the curriculum I developed is intended to help such students coax the powers of concentration, problem solving and creativity they possess down into the body to link such cognitive abilities with the physical dimensions of their experience. In the end, our work to intellectually and physically excavate the core of our physical experience, where the body and our physicality play a foundationally important role in cognitive and social intelligence, suggested that bodily awareness is both accessible and matters as acuity in this realm can dramatically change how we meet with the world.

Biography:  Noah Riskin is an independent artist, writer and educator. As a former national and international champion gymnast, Head Men’s Gymnastics Coach and founding director of the Physical Intelligence Initiative at MIT, his work references his background to explore the meaning of the body to the human experience.

Noah holds a BFA from The Ohio State University, an MFA from The School of the Art Institute of Chicago, and a Med in Human Movement from Boston University. His forthcoming books are: Body of Knowledge: The Message and Meaning of Physical Intelligence and The Art of Falling: Note on Body and Being from Middle Life.