



Jenna Kit Milner

# **Sensing from the Back of the Heart**

A Portal for  
**Subtle Perception,  
Effortless Healing,  
and Authentic Connection**

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For more information or to reach the author, email [jennakitmilner@gmail.com](mailto:jennakitmilner@gmail.com) or visit <http://jennamilner.com/>

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One sees clearly only with the heart.  
Anything essential is invisible to the eyes.

Antoine de Saint-Exupéry

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# Chapter 1

## It Matters Where You Look From (Head vs. Heart)

Shifting awareness from your head to your heart can generate remarkable benefits, such as effortless healing, uncanny subtle perception, and authentic connection. It can even inaugurate spiritual awakening. These are big claims, but it's a big move! In this document I'm going to take you through the basics of heart perception: what it is, *why* do it, *how* to do it, and how to recognize that you *are* doing it.

Let's start with what I mean by *heart perception*. How is it different from ordinary perception? The premise here is that we relate differently to life – we perceive and act differently – depending on which embodied location we “look” from. Different portals in the body catalyze different perceptual outcomes.

The place that you perceive *from* influences both *what* you perceive and *how* you perceive. We are familiar with this when it comes to our ordinary senses. It seems logical that my chin typically only gives me information about what it's like to

be my chin, while my eyes, on the other hand, give me visual information about what is happening outside my body. Likewise, other sense gates – such as the ears, nose, skin, and mouth – give me auditory, olfactory, tactile, and gustatory information about the environment.

Some locations along the inner core of the body are analogous in this way to touch, sight, or sound. They are like sensory portals that make possible a wider exploration of being and knowing. From these portals, we can sense and know. Each is a legitimate and rich source of insight, perception, and communication. Sometimes these locations are called chakras. They are often presented as seven unique centers at the body core, from the root chakra at the base of the torso to the crown chakra just above the head. More scientifically-oriented people might instead identify the relevant anatomy as endocrine glands (for example, the heart, the thymus, the pituitary, or the pineal gland), which receive and transmit information through hormones, pressure, charge, neurotransmitters, or other agents.

Typically, these portals are located along the *midline* of the body. According to numerous health and wisdom traditions, this core channel is involved in how the body develops and operates, how it repairs itself, and how we perceive and communicate with our inner and outer

environments. Many traditions believe that this core channel is also related to psychological well-being and spiritual growth.

Awareness is not static; it can move. Both physical and mental health benefit from the free movement of awareness within the body. This is especially true along the Midline. (I'll capitalize the first initial to indicate that this is a part of the energetic anatomy of the body, and not a physical structure or a simple directional pointer.)

The human embryo develops in relation to the Midline as it grows in utero. All the functions of health and development are organized around the vertical core of the Midline. Later, in the course of our lives, the Midline can get stopped up or obscured through stress, injury, or trauma. Then the flow of energy and information related to healthy function is inhibited. Opening up these inertial portals along the Midline can be a catalyst for healing and deep-seated changes. Awareness is precisely the mechanism for this opening.

I encourage you to shift away from a fixed awareness in the head, which is favored in our culture, and let awareness infuse the body – first into the heart, and later, the belly and pelvis, as well. I don't speak metaphorically, but literally, when I invite you to draw awareness down into the torso from its more typical control tower in your head. This generates byproducts that are not just enjoyable but strongly favor good health (mental and emotional health as well as physical

health), loving relationships, perceptual acuity, and the evolution of consciousness (which could also be called spiritual maturation). You can start this process by becoming aware of the way you live in your body – aware of the way that consciousness inhabits your body.

## ***Aware from the Head***

Most people – at least, many people I come into contact with – habitually hold awareness in the head, with brief forays below the neck. Often the location is behind the forehead and between the eyes.

Usually this mode of perception assumes I am a “me,” and I position myself in relation to other perceived objects in my environment. In this way I can see the fridge, and I can know the cat, from the outer perspective of being someone who is not the fridge or the cat. The fridge is cold, and the cat is gray. That is the *conditioned* (conventional) way of knowing, which is affected not just by my assumptions and premises about these others, but also by my assumption that I am different from and separate from them.

This conventional way of knowing is funneled through the sieve of the already-known. I am calling it a sieve, but it is actually the nervous system or the ego. Both are essentially a collection of habits and filters built up from past experience or

genetics (which is ancestral past experience). There is not necessarily a problem with this. In fact, it is helpful in navigating the physical world.

There are particular qualities of awareness at the level of the head that tend to be highly valued. Awareness at the level of the head is sharp: perception possesses a laser-like delineation. For example, objects and beliefs have strong boundaries and are seen as separate and solid. Such awareness is separative: it clearly distinguishes between the person perceiving, and the object perceived. And because it is sharp and separative, it is also what one might call objective. That is, there is no inherent emotion in, connection with, or felt-sense of what is seen.

Perhaps because we assume that perception is occurring at the level of the head, in our culture *looking* and *seeing* are sensed to be synonymous with sensing and observing and knowing. The phrase "I see" even indicates that you understand. It often feels as though we *know* from behind our eyes. This is so ingrained that it's unconscious for most sighted people.

Habitual consciousness relies on the relatively unconscious assumption of being a separate "someone," residing in a body but usually oriented to the head. This egoic consciousness perceives a separate world outside of itself. It is typically quite fixated on finding and resolving problems.

No one would question the usefulness of the mind in solving a math problem or fixing a broken engine. However, let's say you are interacting with another person. If you see them from the level of the head, then you are looking at them from the outside as though they are separate from you. Imagine conducting anything relational from this perspective – whether dinner with a loved one or negotiations with a political adversary. You imagine yourself as a separate person with a fixed position, and you are understandably focused on meeting your own needs.

When awareness drops lower into the body, we gain insight and clarity of a different dimension. This requires going against the grain of the cultural assumption that perception only happens in the head.

## ***Know from the Heart***

The heart is not just a pump, as we are taught in grade school. The physical heart has the capacity to receive, organize, and transmit information, both to the brain and throughout the body. It has neurons — as many as the cerebellum has. The heart is an *organ of perception*. Its perceptions affect the entire body and coordinate the body's activity. For most of us, such perception is largely subliminal and limited to involuntary physiological activities. But we do

have inklings of other kinds of perception, such as the heartache we feel in response to losing a loved one.

When you sink awareness from your head center into your heart, a different *mode* of insight and perception becomes available. Because it is unlike the usual laser-like analytical mode, heart perception can at first be experienced as blurry or disorienting. Botanist Stephen Harrod Buhner called it the intuitive/holistic/depth mode. Where mental perception separates, heart perception unifies. Although we think of the heart as operating within the physical body, it is also in touch with a field of activity *beyond* the body. James Oschman has reported, "Science can measure the heart's electromagnetic field up to 15 feet away [but it radiates indefinitely]." The heart, it turns out, gives you access to the world: the world of Self, the world of others, and the world of things. The heart doesn't see a difference between these. As far as it is concerned, it is seamless with the vast tapestry of life.

According to the heart, you are part of the field, and so is everyone else. So perception is both enhanced and effortless. When you rest at the back of your heart, your arena of awareness has now expanded to encompass all that you perceive. There is a single theater of awareness. You exist as an autonomous body, and another person exists, as well; but

you are no longer isolated from one another. You – your very boundaries – blur.

Don't look at this as something esoteric or even difficult. Heart perception allows you to know things about others to an extent that is unusual; but it isn't supernatural or even an altered state of consciousness. Rather, it is actually a natural state of clarity and perception that you can amplify through practice. When you see through clear water, objects beneath the surface are effortlessly apparent. Similarly, when you rest awareness at the back of the heart, you are in the unified field, at the origin of what arises. Perceiving from the heart, the tempo has slowed, the mind's turbulence has quieted, and stillness predominates, so you are able to look beneath the surface of appearance. You thus perceive things that are invisible to the eye. You require no special aptitude to see these things; everything appears. To some this looks like wild intuition, but you have simply refined heart perception.

Let's take the activities named in the head perception section: dinner with a loved one and negotiations with a political adversary. Your perspective at the back of the heart gives you immediate, somatic insight into the feeling of *being* that other person. It doesn't necessarily invalidate your own point of view; it just means that you can take more information into consideration. I remember reading a nonfiction book in which a spiritual teacher travels in a cold,

mountainous country. At one point he removes his own coat and gives it away to an impoverished person whom he doesn't even know. He doesn't explain his behavior, but I imagine he was able to *feel* the suffering of the other person, and he could take into consideration both of their situations: his own temporary chill, which could be remedied, versus the other person's, which had no remedy. "Self" and "other" are united in the world of heart perception.

Thus, heart perception is not just a tool for achieving nifty new perceptions or augmenting awareness. In fact, this level of perception is associated with compassionate relating, enhanced healing, and spiritual awakening. One of the benefits of clinical practice is that we have a relatively sealed environment in which to witness the benefits of heart perception. Relating from the back of the heart leads us to perceive, connect, and act in a way that emerges organically from union with our client. Then we know things that are considered uncanny in our culture, and we can align with the client's actual priorities and needs. An ancient Chinese oracle called the I Ching asserts, "Whoever acts from these deep levels makes no mistakes." This is not a claim of infallibility so much as a way of describing a state of union and flow. When you are in the stillness that centers *you*, then you are in the stillness that centers the activity of your client. It is the same stillness. Far from being a party trick, this actually permits a

clinician to support the client from an intimate and indisputably connected perspective.

Even though I'm emphasizing the simplicity and ease of heart perception, I wouldn't underestimate the amount of letting go that it typically requires. For me it took some time for heart perception to stabilize and become less volitional. It took a few years of disciplined practice before I identified less with the "mini-me" up in the head, and awareness resided with more constancy at the back of the heart. Every so often I would notice that I had stumbled back into a defended or mental position. That recognition would give me a chance to return to the freedom of the heart.

There's no way to get this wrong, because you're already one with things. Heart perception is just catching up to the truth! The primary function of the heart is to be intimate with what is known. However, don't be surprised if you feel a bit frustrated until you get the hang of it. For one thing, *trying* tends to be an activity of the mind, which wants to have more control. As a result, if you seek to cultivate heart perception, using effort and personal will – and trying to get it right – will usually backfire.

Furthermore, orienting perception from the heart can be intimidating for a heart that is well-defended — that is, many hearts. Sometimes when first approaching the heart, what is known about it is the pain or armoring that is held there. It

might feel like too much at first to linger there. There isn't a need to push. Feelings, memories, or sensations arise organically. If what arises is resistance to feeling what's there, then I encourage you to start by feeling the resistance itself – not to push past it.

What follows is a guided meditation to support you in exploring the landscape of the heart.

Listen to the guided meditation  
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## Guided Meditation: **Explore the Heart**

Allow awareness to settle into the heart.

At first, just notice what it's like for you to illuminate the heart. Allow your own unique heart-territory to make itself known to you.

If you aren't aware of a heart that stands out as separate from anything else, that's not a problem. When the body operates as one seamless whole, awareness of the parts fades away. In that case, follow the guidance more regionally – north or south – instead of narrowing awareness to the parts described.

You might experience quiet delight or a sense of effortless intimacy.

But it's also natural, and common, for some reluctance to pop up, some reservations about opening up this territory.

It is really important not to force anything. Start by refining your awareness of what is true, right now. If what is true is that it is hard to drop into the region of the heart, then explore the way in which it is difficult.

You may happen on some defensive barriers that block your way. Or it may be uncomfortable to experience the blurriness of heart perception, compared with the sharpness of perception at the level of the head.

If any discomforts arise, there's no need to push your way in. Instead, linger a little with the discomfort itself. Refine your awareness of what is getting communicated by the discomfort. Is it physical tension? If so, get to know the particulars of this particular tension.

Do you feel a challenging emotion, such as irritation, numbness, or fear? If so, explore the nature of that resistance or habitual reaction. Do you hold particular memories here, or beliefs about what might happen if you relax this walled-off area?

It's common for the heart to carry unexpected memories, beliefs, or sensations. If it feels like too much, then back off a bit. You can take up this meditation again tomorrow. On the other hand, by going into the resistance, sometimes something gives way. In those times, without effort, you land in the heart.

Once you are able to stabilize awareness within the chest, notice what appears. There can be a variety of levels and patterns. Are you intuitively tuning in at the level of:

Tissue (for example, bones, organs, membranes, or fluid)

Emotion (like joy, sorrow or anger)

Energy (the heart chakra, vibrations, or the heart field's toroid shape)

Fractal motion patterns (subtle motions or slow currents)

Sensory impressions (such as darkness, pixels, or audible inner sounds)

Allow the information to arise in awareness without labeling, judging, or intervening. At any moment what you perceive might feel good or bad; try not to be distracted by your aversion to or your draw toward what you perceive.

Simply notice what it's like for you to be here in the heart. Rest there.

## Chapter 2

### **An All-Access Pass: The SA Node**

Heart perception, in the way I speak of it, is different from perceiving through the physical organ of the heart (on the left side of the body), or perceiving through the heart chakra (in the middle of the chest cavity). Heart perception is different from perceiving emotions. In this approach, our intention is to hone in on a particular *way of perceiving* that is deeply rooted in Stillness. This way of perceiving is initially associated with perceiving from a particular location. At first, I will guide you in identifying this *place*, and the way I identify it will make it seem like a *thing*: the Sino-Atrial Node of the Heart (the SA Node). The SA Node is the tiny crescent-shaped group of pacemaker cells in the back wall of the right atrium of the heart. These cells produce an electrical impulse that makes the heart contract and thus controls your heartbeat.

It is not essential that you experience the location in such an anatomical way. That is why I sometimes call the SA Node *the back of the heart*. The essential activity is to recognize the specific shift of perception that is associated with that place.

When awareness drops into this place at the back of the heart, the effect is to broaden awareness beyond one's own embodied self. This might be startling for you, if you assume (as do most people) that perceptions are solely associated with your own individual body.

The SA Node allows you to toggle between the finite body and the infinite source. It is positioned at the intersection of the human form (with its physical and emotional realities and limitations) and the unmanifest source (which is pure potential). I call that unmanifest source *Stillness* because it has no form or activity, nothing that could take shape or move. It is the *potential* for such movement.

Once, I mentored a talented bodyworker. Because of her other intuitive gifts, she had downplayed the instruction to perceive from the heart. Her awestruck response when she dropped into the SA Node was "I am divine!" This was not a narcissistic comment, but to the contrary was a recognition that the SA Node is a place of contact with the Source — a physical location that somehow participates in non-physical reality.

When perception rests at the SA node, you gain exquisite access to both the embodied experience of life, and the formless void of non-physical reality. (These are palpable not just to trained clinicians but also to anyone who slows down and quiets the mind.) This is the very choreography of your

life: the oscillation between the part (which is your local consciousness, your local body) and the whole (the universal, the transpersonal, the Stillness that underlies and permeates life's activities). The SA Node dances between them. The power of resting at the back of the heart is that we regain perceptual access to this state of wholeness, this partnership between individual and mutual, between form and formless.

Facilitating both sides of the coin – relative reality and the Absolute – is rare, in both therapeutic and spiritual contexts. So the kind of wholeness I speak of here has few precedents. In our materialist culture, we attend to the *parts* of the body as a matter of course. (I have a copy of a cartoon in which the doctor says to his patient, “Hmmm, so the foot guy sent you here. I’m strictly a knee-and-upper-shin guy. You’re going to have to see a lower-shin-upper-ankle guy.”) Similarly, Newtonian physics assumes that one person is utterly separate from all others. Wholeness that includes multiple experiences of “being” – what quantum physics calls nonlocality – is beginning to find legitimacy on the microscopic level. But science has not yet been able to validate nonlocality at the macroscopic level of human beings.

On the flip side (the non-material side), while plenty of spiritual lineages emphasize transcendence – awakening to the reality of the Absolute – it is unusual to find a presentation in which *both* the relative and the Absolute co-exist

perceptually at the same time. One example in which they do is Zen Buddhism. A famous Zen poem called the Sandokai goes deeply into how “ordinary life fits the absolute as a box and its lid.” In my understanding, though, most western religions speak about pure transcendence as the omega point. The body and relative (material) reality is then necessarily relegated to a lesser status.

Imagine perceiving from this threshold between conditioned reality and pure possibility. You recognize that a lot more is possible than your mind typically imagines. The flow of intelligence available through the SA Node means that instead of relying on willful activity or analysis to identify and solve problems, intelligent action takes place spontaneously and instinctively, as part of the unified whole in which it participates. It feels as though you are doing nothing...but everything gets done.

This sounds poetic and unscientific. However, heart perception is a practical skill that can be validated by a trained observer. The practice enhances the effectiveness and versatility of whatever you do. It is perception that carries the sensitivity of a wild animal. It integrates that which is perceived into one unified perception, without being veiled by the mind’s analysis, judgment, or detachment. Instead of “me” being the one to perceive reality, it is awareness as a whole that

experiences reality *through* me. And the SA Node is like a keyhole from where that perceptual lock opens.

This could not be more different than our culture's assumptions about perception and right action. Not surprisingly, it will often feel bewildering, disorienting, or even threatening to the mind. It often takes quite a while before one gathers enough evidence that this strategy will pay off (whether in life or in clinical practice). At some point, trust in this greater intelligence outweighs the historic messages.

When you organize perception around the SA Node, it makes two things possible. First of all, you perceive *more*. Second, it's inherently healing, for yourself or in a clinical context, for your client.

The reason you perceive more is that you are no longer limited to physical reality nor to the experiences of your personal bodymind. When heart perception grew in constancy for me, I noticed that everything I was aware of was literally arising in the theater of my heart. Especially in a place with clear parameters like in my office or in the heightened atmosphere of a meditation retreat, it became apparent that not just my own emotions but also birdsong and buses were happening at the back of my heart or in union with the back of my heart. (Words can't capture this.) This was true of other things that would normally be perceived as someone else's experience: releases in my client's muscles, their specific pains,

the quality of their emotions or thoughts — all of it was happening in “me.” From this spot at the back of the heart, instead of witnessing life's activity from the outside, you are in the picture, so to speak. Instead of things happening outside of your body, all the things – including your body – are arising within this bigger arena. (I’m calling that arena Stillness, but there are many other names for it, including Consciousness or the Self.) This simple, free arising of all things feels free, spacious, porous, alive, and saturated with calm.

As I mentioned earlier, when I go into the stillness that centers my own life activity, I inherently illuminate the stillness at the core of *everyone’s* body, especially those in proximity. This core stillness is simply the Midline, and more precisely, the SA Node at the midline of the Midline. A client wrote to me, “As soon as you get quiet, or however you describe it — reach into the stillness? There is an immediate feeling of warmth in the center of my chest, kind of comforting but frightening at the same time. It's as distinct as if you flipped a light switch — one second it's not there, the next it is. The first time I saw you, it was such a strong sensation that it changed my entire body temperature.” She was describing what happens when I amplify presence at the back of the heart, which is part of my routine as I begin a session.

The reason that heart perception is inherently *healing* is also related to the Midline. To explain this, let’s investigate the

Midline a little more. The Midline is the primary fulcrum of a human being. A fulcrum is like the eye of a hurricane — the still center around which movement is organized. In the same way that the eye of a hurricane is not an object, the Midline is hard to describe because it is not an object. But we can intuitively have a simple sense of our Midline, because it feels like our core. It is the center from which life orients itself, the place from which local awareness does business: the hub of your being.

Because the embryo in utero develops in relation to the Midline, all functions of health in the body (blood sugar levels, for example) have a spatial relationship to the Midline. Homeostasis is the process of all those healthy functions operating in an orchestrated and ongoing way. *Health* can thus be accessed through the Midline.

A core channel at our center is described as fundamental to many healing and wisdom traditions, including the central nervous system of modern anatomy. The Midline is like a hose that carries the subtle currents of health, spraying the body with that life energy and beneficent information. This is not something that has been measured by equipment, but rather something that anyone can experience subjectively, after acquiring sensitivity to these subtle internal activities.

Although the Midline is a unified phenomenon, we can also experience that certain focal points along its length have

their own qualities. To optimize your human capacities, the whole Midline must be able to wake up, vibrate, and communicate. In this document I'm emphasizing the dynamics of the heart, in particular. Resting awareness at the back of the heart has the power to heal and harmonize. Physiological and emotional health are notably responsive to this activity. You can try it for yourself to good effect, and results are often amplified when a healing arts practitioner (or for that matter, a friend or meditation community) joins you.

What is the basis of heart perception's power to heal? My mentor in Biodynamic Craniosacral Work, Charles Ridley, has suggested that this capacity is due to the SA Node's position *between* the vast potency of stillness and the emergence of life activity. (In Biodynamic terms, this is the threshold between the Dynamic Stillness and the currents of Primary Respiration.) It turns out that it is not just the buses and birdsong that arise at the back of the heart, but our life itself that seems to constantly be renewed at that location. When you can contact the dimension that precedes form – the Stillness – then you are no longer driven by the constraints of physical reality. The back of the heart allows us to toggle between the non-physical and the physical. It gives us the best of both worlds. Non-dual perception is perception that is able to observe both the individuality and the non-separation of every so-called "thing," including mountains, thoughts, and your very "self."

The words sound strange, but they point to something that is real for me (and for my clients and students). What does heart perception make possible in *your* life? How can perceiving from the back of the heart create more compassion, connection, authenticity, and health?

Try it yourself, with this meditation on the SA Node:

Listen to the guided meditation  
at [jennamilner.com/meditations](http://jennamilner.com/meditations)

or use the qr code below:



## Guided Meditation: The SA Node

Allow awareness to move to (or stabilize in) your chest. Take a few deeper breaths to expand the area. Placing your hand on your chest can draw awareness to the area. Listen to or feel the beating of your heart. Or shine an inner light around the interior of your torso.

Whichever perceptual channel is most alive for you – visual or kinesthetic – use it to explore the inside of the chest.

Notice whether the *anatomical heart* is available. Are you in a landscape in which physical aspects of the chest cavity are manifesting, such as blood vessels, the lungs, or the sternum? If so, follow the anatomical pointers I am about to offer.

If your inner anatomy is not apparent, just follow my pointers more generally, without trying to create or imagine an SA Node that isn't there. Simply use the pointers as directional cues to the neighborhood – down, back, left and right – and don't get hung up on the nitty gritty. It's especially important not to make anything up; stick with what you actually perceive.

We're going to get familiar with a spot in the back wall of the heart.

In particular, there's a tiny spot at the back of your heart that I encourage you to find.

Be so far back that you are at the very back of your body. You might even approach it from the back of your body — coming in from behind the back wall of the heart.

Also, be surprisingly far to your right. A tad to the *right* of the spine will do wonders for finding it. Even though we think of the heart as being on the left of the chest, up to a third of the heart can be located to the right of the spine.

This is an unusual spot, because it gives access to complete perceptual freedom. In other words, instead of looking for a fixed location, we're going to look for a spot that opens up into no location at all.

Don't look too hard for it. Just allow your attention to relax into it.

This spot is central to connecting you to a deep quiet and a profound freedom. A kind of quiet and freedom that have repercussions for healing.

Functionally, the spot at the back of your heart hooks you up to a primordial stillness that is at the heart of healing. Talking about it makes it seem to be “out there” and grandiose. But in fact it’s very ordinary and natural.

Take a bit of time right now to explore what it’s like for you, to rest at the back of your heart.

If you are puzzled, then cultivate a kind of innocent curiosity about it...“Can I just keep returning to the sensation of my physical heart beating? Can I reside there in the back of my chest?” Taking a big breath can expand that inner area. Breathing out can soften it.

And if you do nothing but rest at the back of your heart, for the rest of this meditation, that would already serve a very useful purpose.

Falling back and down from the head to the back of the heart, you access a spacious field of nothingness. You can feel deeply connected, in a wordless way, to an underlying simplicity. And

as you connect, there is an *allowing* that permits whatever is, to be as it is. This is a dimension beyond manipulation, beyond judgments, beyond narratives.

So on the one hand, awareness might still notice all the “stuff.” The personal content might be there: your discomforts, your insights, your feelings. Patterns of health might be there as well: Fractal motion patterns that take place in a juicy fluid matrix or a delicate airy matrix.

But on the other hand, at the back of the heart you access an intelligent, transparent field that in itself has no content. It *contains* or *permeates* all the content.

The content arises. The transparent stillness is the context it arises within. You may experience it as uncluttered spaciousness, or a deafening silence.

The SA node of our heart is a portal to that transparent field.

When you fall into the stillness within, it's like you've submerged underneath the turbulence of the sea to the quiet waters below.

Can you rest there at the back of your heart? If something is unpleasant, let it be. Don't avoid it. If something is delicious, let it be. Don't grip it.

This activity of *being with*, without avoiding or grasping: we could call it inner stillness.

But don't make yourself be still. Just feel the stillness that already exists.

You are letting what is, be as it is.

Rest here for a few minutes, noticing what happens.

## Chapter 3

### Heart Perception: What It's Like

How do you know that this shift of perception from head to heart has occurred? When you perceive by dropping awareness into the back of the heart, it is like dropping beneath the water. The tempo slows down. Experience might seem muffled or blurry compared to the sharp boundaries of things in the air. (Air is allied with head perception.) With heart perception, you are in the ocean along with that which you are experiencing. In the moment, this does not seem esoteric or mysterious, but rather extremely simple. When you perceive from the back of the heart, what manifests in your awareness is simply everything in the field of awareness. The heart's field *is* the unified field of awareness.

It also might take some time to sense what it's like for *you* to perceive from the back of the heart. Sometimes people have to get familiar, first, with resting awareness in the body. But also, as I mentioned, accessing the portal of the SA Node requires that you relax very deeply into the heart, and the heart often carries a lot of history, holding patterns, and emotions — which can sometimes feel like guard dogs at the

gate. It is common that for students and clients of this work, tears, anxiety, other emotions, or memories arise as we drop deeply into the back of the heart.

Your meditation seat or clinical practice is an excellent practice arena, where you can limit input and attune to the way that heart perception registers for you.

Here is the way I first experienced the shift from head to heart. I mentioned in the beginning that it took me years of practice until heart perception became my standard way of perceiving. For me, initiating heart perception would drop me into a slow-motion movie. It was as if the aperture of a camera opened up into a channel of perception that I didn't have when the nervous system was in control. It sometimes felt like being in a fun house: the visuals were magnified, slowed down, distorted, and extremely vibrant.

For me, these intricate visuals always feature a kinesthetic component, so this perceptual channel is better described as "see-feel" or "feel-see" than "see." I *see* what I am *feeling*. It is *three-dimensional*; it doesn't feel flat. It feels very embodied and the shapes are fractal, not linear. It's *holographic*: whatever part I happen to be working with, suddenly I am swept into the whole picture. Each element feels very close up and very big, even though it is actually minute. This channel of perception is not contingent on scale, so I could be see-feeling cellular structure or an entire body.

Your experience of heart perception will depend on your own channels of perception, so you may have a different experience. One colleague with a more auditory perspective says it's like breaking through the sound barrier. The sound barrier is what you think is possible. When you drop into heart perception, you leave behind the reality that your mind thinks is possible, and you open to an unconditioned reality in which a lot more things are possible. You have broken through the surface appearance of reality.

Let's say you are sensing your arm, and a bone in your arm is currently broken. With heart perception, you would have the possibility of touching the level of the physical arm in its pre-conditioned nature, which is unharmed and not-yet-broken (the "original blueprint" for that arm). Or you may touch the more subtle, powerful level of the bioelectrical template that *underlies* form. Alternatively, if you are able to witness how formlessness (what I call Stillness) co-arises with or saturates the body (our form), then you can tap the incredibly potent healing power of the void, in which there simply *is* no separate arm that can be harmed. (Biodynamic practitioners will recognize unconditioned physicality, template, and void as the levels of fluid, potency, and Dynamic Stillness.) The point here is that heart perception is the basis for a perceptual shift that gives you ready access to these phenomena.

When I suggest that awareness drop into the heart, I do not mean to *generate* any feelings in or through your heart. It is not as though you are trying to create an emotion of love or to be kind or “good,” or to ease the pain from your broken arm with positive thinking. To the contrary, you are resting in your heart without any effort to achieve an end result. Strangely enough, this often leads to exceptional success in your activities. In this document I have emphasized its particular effect on perception and healing. But there are so many other ways that heart perception can affect your life. For example, since at the back of the heart you are inherently connected to everyone, you will feel less alienated and isolated from other human beings. Self-esteem will blossom, because you feel full and whole and are less driven to compare yourself to others. When awareness is *aware* through the SA Node instead of the head, it will help you cultivate inner stillness, novelty, and authenticity. And when you aren’t following a script, you are open to doing things that aren’t habitual.

Be patient with yourself as you start. Dropping perception from the head to the back of the heart may be a simple move, but because it represents a quantum expansion of consciousness, it can be a big ask. Please write and let me know how it goes with your own practice; I can’t wait to hear.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR Jenna Milner is a meditation mentor, bodyworker, and somatic educator whose lifelong passion is to balance the expansion of consciousness with grounding in the body. Since 2007, Jenna has pioneered an innovative blend of non-dual meditation and Biodynamic Craniosacral Work called Alchemy of Presence. Online and in-person programs are available for clinicians as well as anyone curious about stillness; CEUs are available for licensed massage therapists. Check out Jenna's blog! <http://jennamilner.com/blog>.