

**INTERVIEW with PAUL KING by Katie Lloyd-Nunn Hawkwood Programme Manager  
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**Paul King** is a co-founder of The Beyond Partnership. He has trained and worked in the field of mind-body intelligence and effectiveness for more than 25 years. He was the first person in Europe to be certified in the Leadership/Conscious Embodiment work of Wendy Palmer. He combines this with other somatic based training and his training in Inner Game coaching, NLP, Feldenkrais (movement-re-education), HeartMath, Tai Chi, Qigong and meditation and mindfulness practices.

Katie Lloyd-Nunn (KLN) You've been working as a practitioner, consultant and coach for 25 years in "somatics." I know this comes from the Greek word *soma* (body). How is that different from body work, physical exercise or yoga practice.

Paul King (PRK) My central interest is in the development of the whole person. Body, mind, emotions and spirit are aspects of an inter-connected whole, yet this is often forgotten and these 'parts' are then approached separately. In my somatic work I emphasise our physical selves as the entry gateway into the process of integrated development. Somatics as a framework itself generally refers to approaches engaging learning through our physical perception and experience.

KLN Do you think the approach of "somatic intelligence" is catching on? If so, to what do you attribute this?

PRK In many ways Somatics is still defining itself. I come across it applied in a variety of contexts some of which I question. There is increasing academic research into the role of somatics in learning and development of children and adults and in psychotherapy, trauma treatment and general psychological and physical healing. It is bringing together such disciplines as physiology, biology, neuroscience, psychology and education as well as some ancient traditions, particularly from the East.

In my own field of work as a coach and consultant working mostly with people who work with or in organisations there is a gradual opening up to the somatic dimension as a key piece in the puzzle for meeting some of the many challenges organisations are facing in leadership, performance, wellbeing and addressing the increasing pressures, uncertainty and problematic stress.

KLN What kinds of effects do you observe when people work with somatic awareness? For example, having trained in Scaravelli yoga and working with body-mind-centring, I enjoy connecting to my body in any moment, using a shopping queue or a traffic jam as an opportunity to re-centre myself and find ways to ease my joints and muscles and feel more comfortable.

PRK The impact can be at a number of levels. It depends on what each person is looking to explore and their own life story. For some it could be about developing a relationship with their body, freeing and developing their energy, developing their confidence, learning how to be resilient under the pressures of modern life. For others it might be work related, developing compassionate leadership, learning to stand up for themselves and speak their truth. With awareness and practice we learn how each of us works as a whole and how when we touch one part of the web of our amazing design it has an impact on everything.

KLN Your approach brings together ancient traditions with modern day science. Would you say that training, development, and coaching have largely focussed on the mind and emotions?

PRK Yes, overall that is true and working somatically through the body provides a powerful additional approach to impact performance, growth and development.

The body can both reveal and influence our mind and emotions. As one book title describes it, *'The Body Keeps the Score'*. Through simple activities and changes to posture and how you use your body you can create significant differences in your ability to lead, listen, influence, be resilient, manage stress, maintain energy levels and generally be more effective. Whether you are a leader or manager in an organisation, a coach, teacher or parent, developing your Somatic Intelligence can make a difference to your effectiveness, health, energy and wellbeing.

KLN Let's talk about your course at Hawkwood in October – [Being Centred: Tai Chi and conscious movement](#). What does the expression "being centred" mean? Is it something we aim to arrive at, to become?

PRK The important thing is to know how to find centre. It is not a question of being centred all the time. The great founder of Aikido, Morihei Ueshiba when asked about his ability to be centred under pressure, said that it was not that he was always centred, he just knew how to find centre quickly. As soon as we try to hold onto something we are lost. In Buddhism we might refer to that as attachment as opposed to being present with the processes of life.

I might describe being centred a state of equanimity and alignment: our sense of 'okayness' becomes inherent, not dependent on context – and therefore requires less energy to maintain. Our resilience and capacity to be at our best under pressure can be supported by being open and relaxed in our posture, increasing our sense of length, softening the front of our body (a gentle smile helps), and working with the breath to bring our autonomic nervous system into balance.

KLN Can we re-train our body-mind to live more effectively?

PRK We can! Observation, practice and a willingness to adapt to new situations can make significant changes. Even a small body shift can sometimes feel huge and challenging, but also exhilarating. It takes a mixture of awareness and intent and a certain lightness of touch. It is not enough just to shift a thought or a belief. Under stress the deeper patterns held in the body will win out. Change needs to be embodied, the body has to be on side.

KLN What can people expect to experience in the weekend at Hawkwood [Being Centred: Tai Chi and conscious movement 20-22 October](#).

PRK We will be working with some simple but beautiful and fluid tai chi sequences. These are enjoyable and energizing in themselves – and can bring a smile to one's being. We will

work with the movements to explore the various energies and elements of Taoist philosophy and we will explore the metaphors of life that are there within the movement sequences. We play with such dimensions as effort and effortlessness, resistance and allowing. We will explore the energy and alignment of the head, heart and hara (belly). If people are interested we will also utilise the somatic approach to delve into their default patterns under pressure and how our limbic system and our psycho-emotional world plays out through the body. I will adapt to what people are there for.

KLN Yes, and they will be able to enjoy the lovely tranquil atmosphere and welcoming ambience of Hawkwood, too! Thank you, Paul.

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