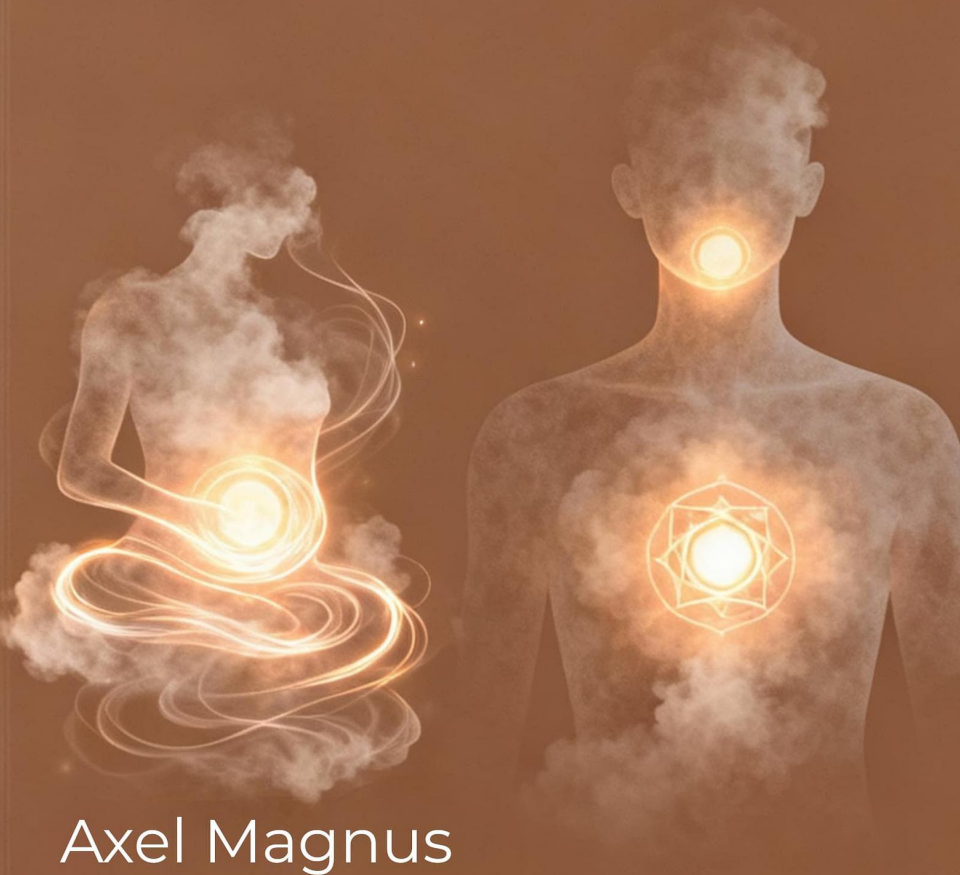


Words That Live in the Body

A Practical Guide to Clean Language,
Metaphor, and Somatic Transformation



Axel Magnus

AXEL MAGNUS

Words That Live Inside of the Body

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The Language Your Body Speaks

Maria sat in her kitchen, staring at her half-finished coffee. “I can’t seem to move forward,” she told her friend on the phone. As the words left her mouth, she noticed something curious her feet had unconsciously pressed harder against the floor, as if literally stuck. She’d used this phrase dozens of times before, but this was the first time she’d felt it in her body. Her chest felt tight, her shoulders hunched forward. The metaphor wasn’t just describing her experience; it was creating a physical reality in this very moment.

What Maria discovered that morning is something neuroscientists have been documenting for years: the words we use don’t just describe our experience they actively shape it. When you say “I’m carrying a heavy burden,” your shoulders may actually tense. When someone mentions “a breath of fresh air,” you might find yourself breathing more deeply. Your body listens to every word you speak, and responds accordingly.

This isn’t poetry or imagination. Research using functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) has shown that when you hear metaphors involving sensory experience, the corresponding sensory regions of your brain activate. Hear someone describe “a rough day” and your tactile cortex lights up. Hear

“she’s so sweet” and taste-related brain areas respond. Your nervous system treats metaphorical language as if it were literal sensory input.

Think about the last time you described feeling “wound up” or “on edge.” Did you notice any accompanying physical sensations? Most people experience tightness, tension, or a sense of being poised for action. Now imagine describing yourself as “grounded” or “centered.” The physical shift is often immediate and noticeable.

This connection between language and body isn’t a one-way street. Your body is constantly generating sensations, and these sensations seek expression through words and images. When you have “butterflies in your stomach” or a “lump in your throat,” your body is speaking a language that precedes words. Learning to listen to this language and learning to speak it more consciously opens up remarkable possibilities for change and healing.

The felt sense is your body’s way of knowing something before you have words for it. Eugene Gendlin, who spent decades researching what made therapy effective, discovered that successful clients had one thing in common: they paid attention to a subtle, hard-to-describe bodily awareness about their situations. They would pause, turn their attention inward, and wait for something to emerge from that inner awareness. The clients who bypassed this body-based knowing, staying purely in their heads, showed far less progress.

Your body holds wisdom that your conscious mind hasn’t accessed yet. When you’re trying to make a difficult decision, you might notice sensations of expansion or contraction, lightness or heaviness. These aren’t random they’re your body’s way of communicating what it knows about each option. The challenge

is learning to listen.

Try This: Word and Body Exploration

Set aside five minutes for this practice. You'll need a quiet space where you won't be interrupted.

First, close your eyes and take three slow breaths. Simply notice what sensations are present in your body right now. Don't try to change anything just observe. Notice temperature, tension, pressure, movement. Where do you feel most alive? Where do you feel numb or absent?

Now, think of a word that describes how you're feeling right now. It might be "tired" or "curious" or "peaceful" or "restless." Say this word silently to yourself three times, and notice what happens in your body. Does anything shift? Do sensations intensify or soften? Does your breathing change?

Next, experiment with metaphor. Ask yourself: "If this feeling were weather, what kind of weather would it be?" Don't think too hard let an image arise naturally. Maybe you're feeling "foggy" or "stormy" or "like a calm lake." Once you have your weather metaphor, notice what happens in your body when you use it. Does it feel more accurate than your original word? Does it capture something your first description missed?

Finally, explore texture. Ask: "If this feeling had a texture, what would it be like?" Rough? Smooth? Prickly? Soft? Sharp? Fuzzy? Again, notice any shifts in your body as you try different textures.

What you're doing in this exercise is learning to track the conversation between your words and your body. You're beginning to notice that different words create different physical experiences, and that your body has preferences about how it

wants to be described.

The Metaphors We Inhabit

We often think of metaphors as decorative language, something poets use to make writing more interesting. But cognitive linguists have discovered that metaphor is fundamental to how we think. We can barely complete a sentence without using metaphorical language. We “pursue” our goals, “wrestle” with problems, “overcome” obstacles, “build” relationships, and “navigate” difficult conversations.

These aren't arbitrary word choices they reflect and shape how we approach life. If you consistently describe your work as “a battle” or “a struggle,” you'll approach it with tension and resistance. If you describe it as “a dance” or “a craft,” you'll likely bring different energy to it.

The powerful thing about personal metaphors is that they're not fixed. When you become aware of them, you can work with them, evolve them, and sometimes discover that they shift on their own when given attention. A client who described her anxiety as “a brick wall blocking my path” worked with this image over several weeks. As she paid attention to it, asking questions about it, the wall began to change. Bricks loosened. Gaps appeared. Eventually, she realized it wasn't a solid wall at all it was more like a pile of bricks that she could move, one at a time.

She didn't use willpower to change the image. She didn't use positive thinking or affirmations. She simply paid careful attention to her own metaphor, in a spirit of genuine curiosity, and it evolved naturally. This is the power of working with metaphor at the level where it lives in your body and imagination, not in

your conscious control.

Your Body's Native Language

Before you had words, you had sensations. As an infant, your entire experience of the world was felt, not thought. You knew comfort and discomfort, safety and danger, pleasure and pain all through direct physical experience. This body-based knowing never goes away, even as we develop language and abstract thinking. It remains your first and most fundamental way of knowing.

The problem is that as we grow up, most of us learn to override or ignore body signals in favor of what we think we “should” feel or do. We learn to sit still when our bodies want to move, to smile when we’re uncomfortable, to push through fatigue, to second-guess our gut feelings. We become disconnected from our body’s wisdom.

Reconnecting with this wisdom doesn’t mean abandoning thinking or rational analysis. It means adding another source of information one that’s often more accurate than conscious thought alone. Your body registers subtle environmental cues that your conscious mind misses. It processes information faster than thought. It knows things before you can articulate why.

When you learn to listen to your body’s language and to speak to your body through carefully chosen words and images, you gain access to a powerful resource for change, healing, and self-understanding. You’re not just talking about your experience you’re engaging with it at the level where it actually exists.

The Journey Ahead

In the chapters that follow, you'll learn specific tools for working with the language your body speaks. You'll discover how to ask questions that honor your experience exactly as it is, rather than questions that push you toward predetermined answers. You'll learn to work with your own metaphors, allowing them to develop and evolve naturally. You'll explore how changing the qualities of your inner experience its brightness, location, size, sound, texture can create profound shifts in how you feel.

Most importantly, you'll develop a practice of curiosity toward your own experience. Instead of trying to fix, change, or get rid of uncomfortable feelings, you'll learn to get interested in them, to explore them, to discover what they're trying to communicate. This shift from fixing to exploring is itself transformative.

Your body has been speaking to you all along. Now it's time to learn to listen, and to discover the conversation that's been waiting to happen.

The Pattern That Connects

Michael had been coming to sessions for three months when his facilitator noticed something. Every time Michael talked about a different problem his relationship, his work, his health he used the same gesture. His hands would move in opposite directions, as if pulling something apart. “I’m torn between...” he’d say about his relationship. “I’m pulled in different directions,” he’d say about work demands. “Part of me wants to exercise, but another part just wants to rest,” he’d say about his health.

“I notice you keep making this gesture,” his facilitator said, mirroring the pulling-apart motion. “And when you’re being pulled in different directions, what kind of pulled is that?”

Michael looked at his hands as if seeing them for the first time. “It’s like... there’s a rope, and it’s being pulled from both ends. Taut. About to snap.” He paused, something dawning in his awareness. “I do this with everything, don’t I? Everything becomes a tug-of-war.”

“And when everything becomes a tug-of-war,” his facilitator asked, “where did you first learn about tug-of-war?”

Michael’s eyes widened. A memory surfaced childhood, parents divorcing, each wanting him to take their side. “I was the rope,” he said quietly. “I’ve been the rope my whole life.”

In that moment, Michael saw the pattern that had been orga-

nizing his experience for decades. Not just in his thoughts, but in his body, his language, his gestures, his way of approaching every choice. The pattern wasn't causing his problems it was the organizing structure through which he experienced and responded to life's challenges.

The Patterns We Repeat

Your life contains patterns recurring situations, familiar feelings, predictable responses. Sometimes these patterns are obvious: you keep choosing the same kind of partner, or you procrastinate on important projects, or you get sick right after major deadlines. Other times, patterns are subtler, revealing themselves only when you look across different domains of experience.

These patterns aren't random, and they're not character flaws. They're your psyche's best attempt to solve problems, meet needs, and protect you from harm. At some point in your history, each pattern made perfect sense. The challenge is that patterns developed for one context often persist long after that context has changed.

A child who learned to stay quiet to avoid a volatile parent's anger might carry that pattern into adulthood, staying silent even when speaking up is safe and necessary. An adult who once used perfectionism to earn approval might maintain impossible standards even when approval is no longer at stake. The pattern that once served you may now constrain you but it continues because, at some level, it still feels necessary.

Recognizing Patterns Through Language

Patterns reveal themselves through language in several ways. You might notice:

Recurring metaphors: The same images appearing in different contexts “I’m drowning” in work, relationships, responsibilities. “I’m hitting a wall” in your career, your creative projects, your personal growth.

Consistent structure: Situations that follow the same sequence excitement about something new, gradual loss of interest, eventual abandonment. Or: identifying a problem, analyzing it exhaustively, feeling paralyzed about action.

Repeated phrases: “I should have known better.” “It’s my fault.” “I can never...” “Everyone always...” These phrases often signal core beliefs that organize experience.

Predictable body responses: Tightness in the same place when facing different challenges. Nausea before certain kinds of interactions. Exhaustion after particular types of success.

Temporal patterns: Things that happen at the same time each year, the same point in relationships, the same stage of projects.

When you become aware of these linguistic and somatic markers, you can track patterns even as they’re happening. You might notice “I’m starting to do that thing again” in real-time, which creates the possibility of choosing differently.

Try This: Pattern Discovery

Take a few moments with three pieces of paper or a journal with space to write.

On the first page, write about a current challenge or difficulty something that’s bothering you right now. Describe it fully:

what's happening, how you feel about it, what you've tried, what's not working.

On the second page, write about a different challenge from an earlier period of your life perhaps from your teen years or early twenties. Again, describe it fully.

On the third page, write about a challenge from childhood something that troubled you when you were young.

Now read all three descriptions. Look for similarities:

- Are there common metaphors or images?
- Do similar feelings arise in each situation?
- Is your role similar across contexts?
- Are other people relating to you in similar ways?
- Do you respond similarly in each situation?
- Is there a common need or desire in all three situations?
- Is there a common fear or worry?

You're not looking for identical situations you're looking for structural similarities. The content might be completely different (family conflict, work stress, friendship troubles), but the underlying pattern might be the same (feeling responsible for others' feelings, giving up your needs to keep peace, trying to earn love through achievement).

Write down what you notice. What thread connects these experiences? What pattern persists across time and context?

Spatial Patterns in Metaphor

Patterns often have spatial qualities that reveal themselves through metaphor. Someone might consistently experience problems as being "above" them (overwhelming, looming, bear-

ing down), while someone else experiences problems as being “below” them (undermining, threatening their foundation). Someone might place good things “ahead” in the future while keeping bad things “behind” in the past or vice versa.

These spatial arrangements aren’t arbitrary. They reflect how your psyche organizes information and meaning. When Michael discovered his tug-of-war pattern, he realized he always positioned choices as opposing forces at equal distances from his center. This spatial arrangement made every decision feel like a zero-sum game where choosing one option meant losing the other.

By exploring the spatial qualities of his pattern, Michael discovered he could reorganize. What if choices weren’t opponents pulling in opposite directions? What if they could coexist? What if he could move closer to one without the other disappearing? These questions didn’t just change his thinking they changed the felt structure of decision-making in his body.

Try This: Mapping Your Pattern Spatially

Think of your recurring pattern. Now, imagine it has a location in space around you. Where is it? In front of you? Behind you? To one side? Above or below?

Close your eyes and point to where this pattern lives. Notice how far away it is. Notice its size. Notice if it has a shape.

Now notice where you are in relation to this pattern. Are you inside it? Outside looking at it? Underneath it? Trying to get away from it? Orbiting around it?

Ask yourself:

- “And when I’m [your position] in relation to this pattern,

what happens?”

- “And is there anywhere else I could be in relation to this pattern?”

Don't force an answer. Simply explore. You might discover you can step back from it, move around it, or change your viewing angle. Each shift in spatial relationship often brings a shift in perspective and possibility.

Temporal Patterns: When Things Happen

Some patterns are organized temporally they occur at predictable times or follow predictable sequences. You might notice:

Anniversary patterns: Getting sick or depressed around the same time each year, especially around dates of loss or trauma.

Stage patterns: Relationships that break down at the six-month mark. Projects you abandon after the initial enthusiasm fades. Success that triggers self-sabotage.

Sequence patterns: A predictable chain of events stress leads to shutdown, which leads to isolation, which leads to more stress. Or: opportunity appears, excitement builds, fear arises, withdrawal follows.

Before/after patterns: What happens just before the pattern activates? What happens just after? These bookends often contain crucial information.

Understanding temporal patterns helps you recognize when you're entering familiar territory. You can learn to notice the early warning signs the first links in the chain before the full pattern unfolds. This creates intervention points where choice is still possible.

The Positive Intention

One of the most important discoveries in working with patterns is recognizing that every pattern, no matter how problematic it seems now, has or had a positive intention. It was trying to accomplish something valuable: keep you safe, help you belong, protect you from pain, ensure your needs were met.

Michael's tug-of-war pattern had a positive intention. As a child caught between divorcing parents, seeing every situation as requiring a choice between opposing sides helped him survive. It gave him a framework for navigating an impossible situation. The pattern wasn't wrong it was adaptive at the time.

The problem is that patterns often persist in service of old intentions even when those intentions are no longer relevant. Michael no longer needed to choose between his parents, but his psyche hadn't updated its operating system. It kept running the same program even though the original problem no longer existed.

When you discover the positive intention behind a pattern, several things happen. First, you develop compassion for yourself rather than self-judgment. The pattern isn't evidence of your failure or weakness it's evidence of your resourcefulness in difficult circumstances. Second, you can honor what the pattern was trying to accomplish. This reduces internal resistance. And third, you can explore whether there are now better ways to accomplish that same positive intention.

Try This: Discovering Positive Intention

Think of a pattern you'd like to change. Now ask yourself: "What is this pattern trying to do for me? What's it trying to accomplish?"

Don't accept your first answer if it's negative ("It's trying to ruin my life" or "It's trying to keep me stuck"). Keep asking: "And if it's doing that, what's the positive intention behind it?"

Keep going deeper:

- "And if it accomplishes [intention you discovered], what does that do for me?"
- "And when it does [that], what does that allow?"
- "And what's important about [that deeper intention]?"

You're looking for core needs or values: safety, connection, freedom, recognition, belonging, autonomy, respect, love.

Once you identify the positive intention, ask: "Are there other ways I could accomplish this intention now? Ways that serve me better in my current life?"

Your body will often respond to this question with ideas or images. A sense of possibility might emerge. You're not forcing change you're exploring whether evolution is available.

Pattern Origins

Most persistent patterns have origins in early life, though some develop in response to later trauma or significant events. Exploring pattern origins isn't about blame parents or others who influenced your patterns were doing their best with their own patterns and limitations. It's about understanding.

When Michael traced his tug-of-war pattern back to his parents' divorce, he wasn't blaming them. He was recognizing how his young psyche made sense of an overwhelming situation. This understanding created space for update and evolution.

Clean Language questions useful for exploring origins include:

- “And when [pattern], how old could that [pattern] be?”
- “And when [pattern] is [that age], what happens just before [pattern] starts?”
- “And where could [pattern] have come from?”

These questions invite exploration without assuming specific causes. Your psyche will take you where it's useful to go. Sometimes you'll remember specific events. Other times, you'll get a general sense of a period or atmosphere. Both kinds of information are valuable.

Try This: Timeline Exploration

Imagine a timeline stretching out in front of you, with your birth at one end and the present moment where you stand. Your future extends beyond you.

Think of your pattern. Ask yourself: “If I were to float above this timeline to the place where this pattern began, where would I go?”

Let yourself drift to that place on the timeline. Notice approximately how old you are. Don't worry about precision an approximate age or era is enough.

Now ask: “And what's happening for me at this age?”

Don't force memories. Simply notice what comes. You might get:

- A specific memory
- A general atmosphere or feeling
- A sense of what life was like then
- An understanding of what you needed

Ask: “And what was this pattern trying to do for me then?”

Acknowledge the pattern’s original purpose. Thank it for trying to help.

Now ask: “And what did I need then that I didn’t get?”

Notice what comes. Often, the pattern was compensating for an unmet need. If you’d received what you actually needed, the pattern might not have been necessary.

Finally, ask: “And is there anything that me at that age needs from the present me now?”

You might offer your younger self understanding, compassion, protection, or assurance that things got better. This isn’t just imagination this is a conversation between different aspects of yourself across time. Your nervous system responds to this communication, often with a felt shift of relief or settling.

Patterns and the Body

Patterns live in your body, not just your mind. When a familiar pattern activates, your body responds with a familiar constellation of tensions, sensations, and postures. Learning to recognize these somatic signatures gives you early warning that a pattern is beginning.

You might notice:

- A specific kind of tightness in your chest before withdrawing from conflict

- A particular heaviness in your shoulders when taking on responsibility that isn't yours
- A sensation of emptiness before seeking external validation
- A quality of agitation before self-sabotaging success

These body signals often precede conscious awareness that a pattern is activating. If you can catch the somatic signature early, you have more choice about whether to continue down the familiar path or try something different.

This is where Clean Language and body awareness work together powerfully. You can ask: “And when [body sensation], what’s happening?” or “And when [body sensation], what happens just before that?” These questions help you track the pattern’s structure and identify early intervention points.

When Patterns Serve Multiple Functions

Complex patterns often serve multiple purposes simultaneously. The procrastination pattern might be protecting you from the risk of failure (if you don’t fully try, you can blame procrastination rather than ability), while also rebelling against internalized pressure (delaying asserts autonomy), while also creating the adrenaline rush needed to finally focus (deadline pressure as stimulus).

When a pattern has multiple functions, trying to simply eliminate it often fails. Each function needs acknowledgment and alternative solutions. This is why rushed attempts at change often backfire you’re trying to remove something that’s doing multiple important jobs.

Clean Language’s ecological approach respects this complexity. Rather than forcing change, you explore: “And what would

need to happen for things to shift naturally? And can that happen? And if that can happen, what happens next?" These questions invite change only when all parts of your system are ready.

The Pattern Isn't the Problem

Here's a paradox: the pattern itself often isn't the problem. The problem is usually one of:

Lack of flexibility: The pattern always activates, even in situations where it doesn't serve you. You need more options, not necessarily the elimination of this option.

Outdated context: The pattern made sense in one context but persists in different contexts where it's no longer adaptive.

Unconscious operation: The pattern runs automatically, below awareness, giving you no choice about whether to engage it.

Rigid intensity: The pattern activates at the same intensity regardless of the situation's actual demands.

When you understand patterns this way, the goal shifts from "getting rid of" the pattern to developing more conscious relationship with it. You're not at war with your patterns you're seeking to understand them, update them, and expand your repertoire of responses.

Michael's tug-of-war pattern didn't disappear entirely. In some situations genuine conflicts with real trade-offs it was still a useful frame. But it stopped being his only frame. He developed other ways of approaching decisions: as experiments rather than commitments, as both/and rather than either/or, as evolutions rather than revolutions. His nervous system gradually learned that not every choice required battle.

Tracking Patterns in Real Time

Once you're familiar with your patterns, you can begin to notice them as they're happening. This real-time awareness is itself transformative. Even if you can't yet choose differently, the act of witnessing "Oh, I'm doing that pattern again" creates a tiny gap between pattern and identification with pattern.

In that gap, something new becomes possible. You might notice without judgment: "There's the tightness that means I'm about to withdraw. Interesting." Simply naming it, watching it with curiosity rather than reaction, begins to loosen its grip.

Over time, this witnessing consciousness grows. The pattern still arises patterns don't disappear overnight but you're less merged with it. You can see it as a pattern rather than as reality itself. And in that seeing lies the seed of freedom.

The pattern that connects isn't something to escape or transcend. It's something to understand, befriend, and consciously choose whether to engage. Your patterns are part of your story, carriers of your history, evidence of your creativity in the face of challenge. As you learn their language, they become allies in your continued evolution rather than constraints on your possibility.



About the Author

Axel Magnus is a transformation specialist and researcher with over 30 years of experience in Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP), mentalism, and personal development coaching. He has helped 500+ clients achieve breakthrough transformations and reached more than 9 million people through his educational content across multiple platforms, including YouTube where his videos have garnered over 9 million views.

Axel's unique journey spans from aeronautic engineer to transformation guide, including diverse roles as a masseur, healer, Zen Buddhist meditator, therapist, embalmer, clown, magician, yoga instructor, handicapper, choir singer, modeler of excellence, researcher in presence sensing, voice-hearer, forecaster, cook, game coordinator, web designer, dancer, carer, scout leader, gas reader, bricklayer, and access controller. This unconventional path has given him profound insights into human nature and the art of personal transformation that he weaves into his work.

He has trained directly with industry legends including Richard Bandler (co-creator of NLP), Paul McKenna (world-

renowned hypnotist), and Anthony Robbins (peak performance coach). His expertise in Deep Trance Identification techniques bridges traditional NLP methods with cutting-edge transformation approaches.

Fluent in English, Spanish, and Czech, Axel specializes in helping ambitious professionals break through limiting beliefs and create lasting change. As a published writer and content creator, his work has impacted millions of learners through articles, books, and multimedia content, maintaining a thriving community across his platforms.

Axel continues to explore the intersection of technology, spirituality, and human potential through his websites innerknowing.xyz and vladimirklimsa.com. When not working with clients or creating transformational content, he can be found mastering Linux systems, performing mentalism, developing Hugo-based websites, or discovering new ways to help people unlock their unconscious potential.