

## BONES OF DOJO

*Disclaimer: We are quite certain that all of the Bones of Dojo have not yet been identified. As more are discovered, they will be added. Stay tuned.*

While we are treating Dojo as a science, in the end, any science is still just philosophy.

Therefore, Dojo is not TRUTH or TRUE. It's just one of countless ways of looking at and understanding something. In Dojo's case, that something is, "How are we uniquely human and how do we go about changing in order to have more of the life that we want to have?"

This is not a place where we are going to debate which philosophy is "more true" than another. You walk into Dojo knowing that it is essentially arbitrary; this map is not the territory.

### *General overview of Dojo*

Dojo is an inquiry and a practice around how human beings can change to have more of the life that they want to have. If you are happy with the way that your life is, walk away. Turn around and watch Dojo get smaller in your rearview mirror. I am totally serious about this point: Dojo is NOT for anyone who is satisfied with their lives.

You have been warned.

Dojo focuses on **chains**, which is a sexy way to say **values**. Within Dojo, chains are seen as the manner by which humans cut the larger reality into meaningful, manageable chunks and the means by which these chunks are evaluated and acted on/with.

Within Dojo, meaning is ascribed. Nothing has any inherent meaning or value. Each person brings to each piece of reality their own histories through which interpretation takes place. The interpretation gives rise to all kinds of things: values, voices, emotions, feelings, thoughts, pushes for action, etc. Without our histories, we would not know what anything was, we would not know what value anything has, we would not know what actions to take.

For most of us, these values were laid down without too much, if any, conscious activity on our part. It was simply the water that we swam in, the air that we breathed, the modeling that we saw. No one asked us if we wanted to input the values that were being demonstrated. We had no idea that there was even a choice about the values we adopted. These were simply THE VALUES.

So, now that we are here, valued up one side and down the other, what can we do about it?

The simplest answer is that as we learned and made into patterns the values that currently shape our lives, we can learn new values and work to have them become patterns that will shape our lives in new ways - in the ways we want our lives to go.

That's the theory.

The theory is that if you go into a gym, do the exercises enough times in the right way, you will walk away with a different body, a body more aligned with how you want it to be.

There can be an awful lot of work between theory and results.

There are no magic pills.

There are no magic understandings.

There are no magic puzzle pieces.

There are no magic awakenings.

You are a creature of habits.

These habits, whether you like them or not, are here because they work to have a certain something come about.

They are not going to go quietly into the night.

Habits are in place to give you a predictable and understood life.

Habits are NOT in place to give you what you think you want.

Habits really do not care what you think or want or feel.

Sure, you might strong-arm them for a while.

And they are very, very patient.

And they are very, very strong.

They know that strong-arming them takes conscious effort.

Sooner or later, your focused attention is going to waver and they will take their "rightful" place in your consciousness, guiding you to that next understood and predictable moment.

Habits work.

That's why they exist.

Unfortunately, the you-that-was when the habits were laid down may not be the you-of-now. The understandings that the you-that-was had may not be the understandings that the you-of-now have.

Habits don't delineate between the you-that-was and the you-of-now.

For habits, now is then.

Take the template from then, overlay it on the now, and act accordingly.

Dojo is about creating new habits-of-being that more closely align with the you you want to be instead of the you-that-was.

OK. That's a general overview of Dojo. On to the Bones of Dojo. Each Bone makes sense as a Bone, as a bit onto itself. How each of the bits is connected to the other bits and how they all work together...well, that's a bit beyond what I'm trying to do here. As in a traditional martial arts studio, the complexities of the higher level understandings and experiences depends on a thorough grounding in the basics.

This is about the basics.

Each Bone is a bit of Dojo meaning-making, a way of identifying something that is important within the context of Dojo, both in terms of what it is to be human and how to structure and dance with exercises.

Link enough Bones together and you'll get articulations which can lead to dances.

You will never use all the Bones in any one dance.

Which bones you use in addressing any particular point...well, that's ultimately up to you. You can certainly benefit from watching how more practiced people use specific bones to address specific points.

Ultimately, this is your journey, your path, your gym, your life.

No matter what anyone has to say about it, you still get to choose.

You choose.

Period.

It's your life and your desire to have whatever it is that you want to have.

You choose.

And yes, not choosing is still choosing.

## Bones

### How we come to be Human.

We come into this world as a point of consciousness encased in physicality. Point of consciousness is NOT being human. Being human is what the point of consciousness can become.

As an infant, we are just trying to come to terms with what this thing, embodiment, is. That there are limits to soooo many things: where our bodies end, what is under our direct control, what we can make happen, what we can't make happen, what is predictable, what we don't want to have happen. Pretty much an endless list.

The second part is learning what the rules for being human are. This is when we start being exposed to and incorporating values. At first, it's not like we are aware that there are other options to what we are being told and shown. It's just the way things are. So many distinctions, so many values, so many options.

Third part is recognizing that there is some degree of choice about some of these values. That who you are and what you want to value can be up to you. About some things. A lot of the time, conscious choices about which values to have as one's own are made around pre-existing frameworks, "I was raised Catholic. I can be Catholic or not."

The fourth part is living a life as an adult with values. Change one here, change one there, things pretty much stay the same. For the most part, you stay within the boundaries that you were born into.

While most people can step back and intellectually understand that they have values, most become self-identified with their values.

### Self-identification with your Values.

Simply put, your values are you.

You don't have them.

They are you.

"I hate wombats" rather than, "I have a value system that tells me that I hate wombats."

“I am shy” rather than, “I have a value system that tells me to be shy.”

“The planet needs protecting” rather than, “I have a value system that tells me that the planet is under attack and needs protecting.”

“It should be fair” rather than, “I have a value system that thinks that it isn’t fair and that it should be.”

Part of the work of Dojo is to get a bit of space between you and your values. To have you be able to step back from being your values and experience that they are not who you are.

### Box of Self (BOS)

The framework for the BOS is pretty much hard-wired into the human organism.

Its job, no matter what the external is like, is to keep you in the center of the known, to keep you in the center of the predictable, to keep you in the center of the understood.

Your BOS is not interested in you having any particular kind of life, as long as it fits within the above parameters.

Your BOS is NOT interested in you having a good life. Whatever that means to you.

Your BOS defines your life for you. It tells you what is out there, what it means, what you feel about it, and what you should do about it. The good stuff, the bad stuff, the neutral stuff. It will tell you all you need to know about all of it.

You can see how this is a great evolutionary tool, especially if you imagine being waaayyy back in the day, where there were not a lot of variables out there that were going to mess with your continued survival. Keeping you in the known, the predictable, and the understood pretty much ensured that you’d live long enough to pass along the genetic material.

If you get close to the edge of your BOS, your BOS is going to attempt to move you back into the center by stimulating you with all kinds of noxious messages. Emotions, feelings, thoughts, images, meaning-makings, all can be used to move you away from something that it considers dangerous. Doesn’t matter what you think about the thing. Doesn’t matter what you want about the things. That’s all irrelevant to your BOS.

It will do whatever it needs to do to get you back away from that edge, back into the known, the predictable, the understood.

If it has to, it will hijack your ass and steer you back by itself.

In Dojo, you know if you’re doing “edge work” (i.e. getting close to the edge of your BOS) by the noxiousness that is being fed to your awareness. The trick is to not be in denial of the noxiousness. The trick is to own it and to not do what your BOS wants you to do. You can have the noxiousness AND do what you want to do.

### Vehicle and Contents

In Dojo, there is a distinction between a vehicle and what it contains.

In Dojo, no vehicle inherently contains any specific experience.

In Dojo, no experience is inherently contained in any specific vehicle

Which runs pretty counter to most cultures and personal meaning-makings.

“I want a beautiful partner because that means I’m a wonderful person.”

“I want a job that pays a lot because that means I’m worthy.”  
“I care about the planet because that makes me a good person.”  
“I hate bad people because that proves I’m a good person.”

For most of us, our history tells us that there is a direct link between a specific vehicle and a specific experience.

If you are buying into the belief that vehicle X means experience Y, then you are believing what you BOS is telling you about both. Which might be completely true and accurate in your current experience, a new car might indeed make you feel worthy.

Whatever it is that you want to work on, you’re going to have to get some different options in there about what your vehicles and experiences are around that thing.

### Chains

As discussed above, the word **chain** is a sexier replacement for the word **value**.

In Dojo, there are no inherent values in human beings. All values are learned. Which is actually the good news, because you can always learn and empower new values if you’re unhappy with the ones you’ve got.

In Dojo, there is a continuum for any chain; from tight to loose.

In Dojo, the agreement is that no chain that exists within your consciousness is ever going to go anywhere. It’s scribed into the neural fabric of your brain.

What you can do is create another value that gets to be stronger and louder than the original value. As the new value gets stronger and more consistently acted on, it will feel like the original value is getting smaller and weaker.

In Dojo, another agreement around chains is that you work on the chains that you believe are keeping you from having the life that you want to have. There are chains everywhere and just because you have one, even a tight one, doesn’t mean that you need to loosen it. If you are happy with what your tight chain is bringing you, leave it alone.

The tighter the chain, the less degrees of freedom you have with it.

The tightest chain (we call them “white hot tight chains”) have only ONE interpretation of what is, only ONE meaning-making, only ONE set of emotions/feelings associated with it, and only ONE set of possible actions to be taken.

Conversely, the looser the chain, the more possibilities there are.

### KOOD (Know, Own, Out, Dance)

**K**now what is happening.

**O**wn (in as full a chakra-ed experience as possible) what is happening.

**O**ut to a (knowledgeable) witness.

**D**ance with it.

Actually tuning in to what is actually happening in your awareness is a big thing, seldom done. Your BOS is going to tell you that all systems are green, everything’s ok, nothing to look at here, no need to investigate for possible nuances, let’s just move along shall we? A lot of people are surprised at what is actually going on once they pause and actually investigate.

**Knowing** what is actually going on rather than accepting a story about what’s going on...it’s a big deal.

Having an intellectual understanding of what's going on is the first step. The next step is to have as full an experience of what is happening as possible. It's the difference between having the intellectual understanding of "I'm angry" and **owning** your anger as a full-body experience of anger.

It's one thing to know what's going on. It's another to make it as multifaceted an experience as possible. And it still quite another thing to **out** it to a knowledgeable witness. There are many different levels of "knowledgeable".

The first level of "knowledgeable" is probably speaking your language. Then it would probably help if they understood what you were talking about. Then if they had sympathy with what you were dancing with. The strongest outing would be to someone who not only understands what you are saying to them, but will give you a reaction that you don't want: they would not be a "safe/supportive" choice.

**Dancing** with it is taking it out for engagement in your life.

Imagine that it's back in the day and you're dealing with your sexuality.

**Knowing** that you're gay is step one.

**Owning** is taking the intellectual knowledge that you're gay and having it be multi-faceted. In Boulder-speak, it's letting your gayness inform all of your chakras. How is it to speak from being gay, to love from being gay, how does your sense of self change through being gay, etc.

**Outing** your gayness. To your close friends, this might be really old news. To your workmates... To your relatives.... To your parents....

**Dancing** with your gayness. How does your gayness inform how you live your life? Well, maybe not the whole entirety of your life. Maybe it colors parts of it. The point is to take it out and dance it.

If the thing that you're KOODing is interpreted by your BOS as not being safe, you can expect all kinds of noxiousness to be coming your way.

### Dojo as Gym

A lot of the work done in Dojo is a lot like the work done in a traditional gym. You go to a gym because you want something to be different. You want your muscles to be different. Things that help a lot in getting the results that you want at a gym are:

1. Being specific. Doesn't help if you go into a gym and your goal is, "I want to have a buff body." There is no piece of equipment that has that as a result. There are plenty of apparatuses that will target specific muscles. You have to choose which muscles you want to work on.

2. Know that there is a slog component to this. You don't go into a gym, have an awakening event, get popped on the head by the good fairy, or have a realization and suddenly your body is where you want it to be. The work takes time. It takes focus. It takes slogging through a lot of reps. It is usually not glamorous or dramatic.

3. It's going to hurt and/or be your flavor of noxious. That BOS is not going to go gently into the night once you declare what you want to have happen. It doesn't really care what you really, really, really (to quote a certain donkey) want. Its job is to keep you in the middle of your BOS. You try to get to one of your edges and work there with the intention of changing that edge, your BOS is going to do everything that it can to get you to abandon your quest and get back to the safety and familiarity of the center of your BOS.

4. While there is a certain kind of energy when you first start challenging your BOS's interpretation of reality, it doesn't last. The high will not last. The high will not sustain you through the slog.

5. You know you're doing work, you know you're building new muscle, when it hurts or when it's noxious. If you are having a fine time, happy as a lark, dancing lightly through your exercises, chances are something is off. Typically, most human beings will avoid the noxiousness/pain. In time, you will be actively hunting that noxiousness/pain. You will savor it. You will actually really, really, really (there's that damn donkey again) enjoy it. Strange as that might seem to you now.

6. If you are going to be working at the edge of your capacity, you really want a spotter. Your spotter knows what you are doing and what your intentions are. Your spotter knows that their job is not to do the work for you. Your spotter knows that their job is to keep you from hurting yourself. Your spotter knows that their job is to provide just enough support to get you over that hump that you couldn't get over yourself, in that particular moment.

7. When you're going to the gym, you are going to the gym to get work done. Sure, there might be some socializing or navel gazing involved. And, the more you focus on doing what you came to do, the more you're going to get done. There are all sorts of ancillary things going on at the gym. It's your choice on what you want to focus on. Your BOS is most certainly going to try and convince you that there are soooooo many more important things to focus on rather than getting down to the work you came in to do.

### Funneling

IF your BOS believes that some topic or some thing is dangerous, a typical coping mechanism is to keep the discussion about "it" broad and general and vague.

"I want more intimacy in my life."

"I want to be able to be in touch with and express my anger."

"I want to stop being a doormat."

"I want more excitement in my life."

"I want to stop procrastinating."

"I'm afraid of rejection."

In Dojo, while these are all undeniably true desires, the point is to narrow it down so that we can effectively work on it.

It's in the specificities that the muscle-building takes place.

### Dancing with what is

The first part of Dojo is about "what is". In terms of your particular value system, what is actually here and now. Not what you want it to be. Not what you think it should be. What actually is. Yes, a big part of Dojo is about getting what you want out of life that is currently not happening. Unless you have an idea of how the whatever-it-is-that-is-there-instead is functioning in your life, chances are that your BOS is simply going to sandbag you.

There are three basic value realms: your PC values, your un-PC values, and your buried values.

PC simply means those values which you use to guide you through your normal, everyday life. It's your Public Face.

Un-PC are those values which your BOS tells you are "bad," "going to get you in trouble if anyone finds out," and that you are conscious of. Easiest example is the sexual

objectification of others. Pretty standard “this is not a thing to put out there for others to notice that I’m doing” and we all do it.

Buried values are usually associated with, “Nope. I don’t do that. Nope. Not in my repertoire. Don’t know what you’re talking about.” Usually due to some strong historical messaging by others, strong enough so that you put it away, out of sight, out of mind, out of experience.

### *Dancing with what might be*

The next step is about “what could be”. Still operating mostly from historical understandings/awarenesses/meaning-makings about what the possibilities are. Usually about broadening thoughts/feelings/emotions/meaning-makings around specific areas.

“Hmmm. I’ve always thought of Republicans as devils incarnate and not only heaped abuse on them, I will go out of my way not to engage with them. I wonder what would happen if I put most of that aside and tried to get to know them as people.”

### *Some Dojo principals that we dance with:*

1. Adults can talk about anything.
2. All human values are made up.
3. No single event necessitates any one action. Nothing has inherent meaning. How you react to any action, that’s, ultimately, up to you.
4. Own your yes, own your no.
5. No felt experience will actually cause your head to explode.
6. None of us are born with values. We are taught values. We can learn new values.
7. Safety is a personal issue, personally defined. It is usually about not going somewhere or acting in a particular way because of the belief that an experience will arise that is intolerable to the present construct of self.
8. Stepping closer to edges of your box will result in noxious felt experiences. These noxious experiences are designed to have you retreat back to the center of your box. They are designed to have you avoid something. If you want to work, seek out the noxiousness.
9. You can choose to embody values that are more closely aligned with what you want to have in your life.
10. Dojo is an evidence-based practice. There is no doubt that you want what you want or don’t want what you don’t want. Wanting is not practice. What are the actual “rocks are hard, water is wet” practices that you are engaged with to get you closer to the life that you want and further from the life you don’t want?
11. Dojo is not PC. PC is usually in the center of the box. We are intent in getting to the edges of our boxes, not playing nicely in PC-land.
12. There is no TRUTH in Dojo. There are a bunch of working postulates/hypotheses. Everything can change.
13. Knowing, Owning, Outing, and Dancing with what is happening now is the first objective.
14. The safe word is AVOCADO. Say it loudly. Say it a couple of times. Step out of the exercise. If someone you’re working with says “AVOCADO,” disengage and walk away. You are part of the AVOCADO. Do not try to work with their AVOCADO. Someone else will work with it.



