

Session 1

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Body Conscious Design and Spirituality

Body Conscious Design encourages designers to think first about what bodies need to function optimally. Body Conscious Design includes both the biomechanics of bodies and also the psychological and cultural feelings and beliefs that a person brings to understanding their body in relationship to their environments. Together, these somatic experiences of the body-mind-environment are the primary criteria for generating and evaluating design.

Designers, architects, and planners can look to these principles when they evaluate existing designs and create new ones, in all life's settings: private, work, social, and public.

1. Body Conscious Design encourages bodily **movement** and a **variety of postures** (at least five in any setting).
2. Body Conscious Design accommodates **variety in human shapes, sizes, and abilities** and hence embraces and insists on **choices**.
3. Body Conscious Design includes all of the **senses**.

When manifested these Body Conscious Design principles can be **subtle or obvious**. They may confront and even defy design and **social conventions**. They may generate **new** developments in research, technology and design or take influence from **historical** precedents. Body Conscious Design accepts and celebrates any new **aesthetic consequences** of truly accommodating bodies.

Surprisingly, when one attends closely to the body, one connects to larger, transcendent, **spiritual** forces. In the context of the Amares monastery we can consider the spiritual component of body centered design. For example, the plan of Amares promotes walking, and we know that walking and memory are connected. Further, walking in all four directions is grounding, and being grounded in one's physical being can lead to transcendence.