



SPT magazine

Trending Somatic Practices Influencing Our Field Today



The Healing Power of Human Connection While Social Distancing

Volume 10, Number 2 Summer 2020

Somatic Psychotherapy Today Volume 10(2) Summer 2020

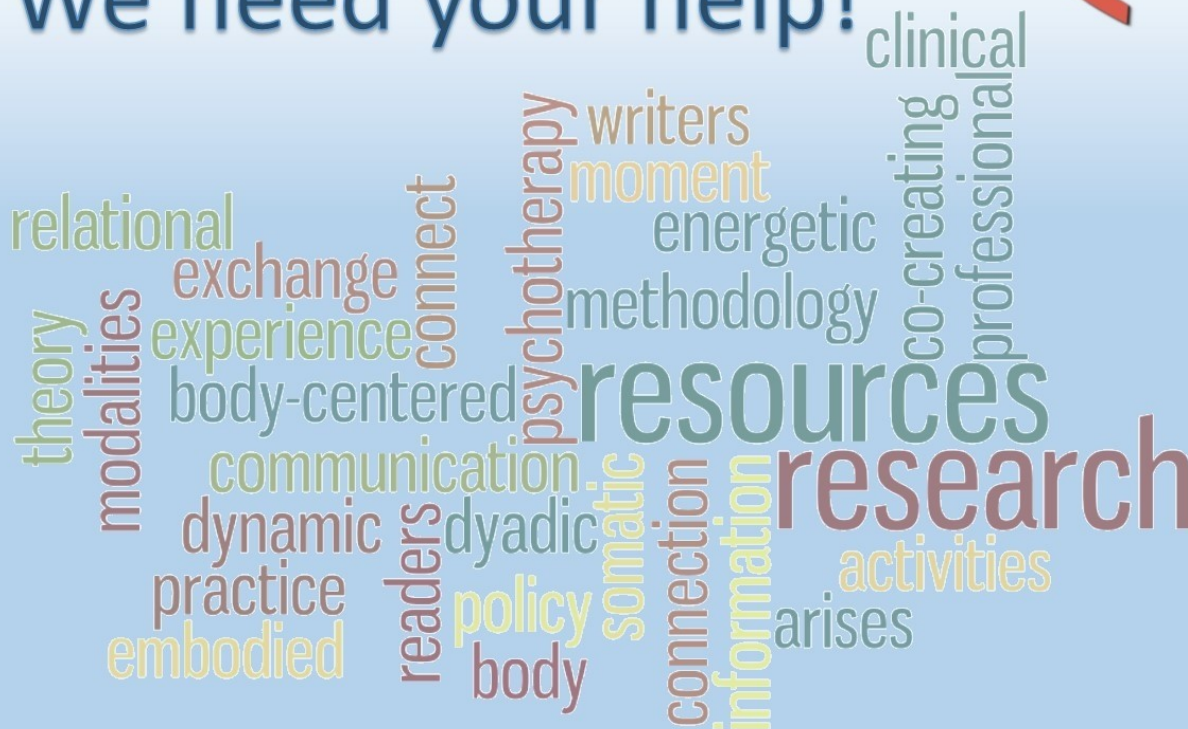
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Welcome to our Summer Issue

The Healing Power of Human Connection While Social Distancing

This has been an unfamiliar, uncertain, un-everything-I-can-imagine year. In January, I had amazing expectations: 2020 was supposed to be my year. According to the Chinese zodiac, used to represent calendar years, this is the Year of the Rat (birth years: 1924, 1936, 1948, 1960, 1972, 1984, 1996, 2008, 2020). Furthermore, the Chinese calendar works in 60 year cycles and this year marks the start of a new cycle. I am a Rat, and I turned 60 in March.

I researched Rats. They represent Yang energy (Yin and Yang are considered complementary forces that interact to form a dynamic system with yin as receptive and yang as the active principle). Rats are clever, quick thinkers, and successful, but they are content with living a quiet and peaceful life. I resonated. I am clearly a Rat,

I envisioned life-altering transitions and transformations—this was my time to flourish. I planned a March celebration in the desert to honor the annual cactus bloom and the start of my next 60-year cycle.

And then the pandemic arrived. An uninvited guest cancelled my party, my plans, my visions. The shelter-in-place mandate meant more than no social connection, it ended life as I knew it. Add in the fear of getting COVID-19 and passing it on to my 90-year-old mother and 91-year-old father (we live together), well the guilt of that has been oppressive to say the least.

My childhood pattern of crawling inside my closet with a book to escape reality crept into adulthood. I isolated. I focused on what I didn't have, what was taken away. I slunk into a funk.

Then articles arrived in my inbox. Colleagues wrote about their work during this fearful time. I reviewed two of William Ferraiolo's books on stoicism and its place in psychology/self help. Stephen W. Porges offered several online talks about social connection while social distancing. It was like they all tapped me on the shoulder and said, "Hey girlfriend, what's with the Miss Negative attitude? You are healthy; your parents are safe. You work virtually; your job is secure. You have toilet paper and hand sanitizer. What else do you need?"

The fog shrouding my heart shapeshifted into a shaft of sunlight. I realized I had isolated and with the loss of human connection I floundered. There have been times in my past when I considered myself a lone wolf: I was a rock, an island, I didn't need anybody.

But, with the threat of a virus potentially killing my parents, I thought I had to move out. They would be safer without my coming and going despite my 200% obsessive precautions —I am the picture-perfect-postcard of a virus crusher.

I researched living options, created a list of pros and cons. In the process, feelings flooded me: I didn't want to leave. My mother was adamant: "We want you to live here." Love flowed. I felt grounded in ways I've never experienced. I also acknowledged my need for human contact. I need mountains just as much as I need to feel the intimacy that comes when I'm with family and close, dear friends.

My vision of life-alerting transitions and transformations is in process. And the articles and book reviews in this Summer issue offer readers opportunities to change, to grow, to flourish, too.

If an article resonates, please reach out to our contributors and let them know. We all need human connection.

And if you find yourself with time and the need to write, please let me know. I've already started Volume 10, Number 3, Fall 2020.



With gratitude,

Nancy Eichhorn, Ph.D.

Founding Editor-in-Chief *Somatic Psychotherapy Today*

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TIME'S UP!

2020 - the time for limits

by Genovino Ferri



MIIIIO. Rivoluzione

1) Time's up for the current relational style

Time is up for humanity's relational style, currently dominant on our planet, with its reactively phallic, defectively insufficient oral trait prevalence, which is ever more borderline and narcissistic. It has produced the entropic collapse in which we find today's Social Living Body.

We now need other trait patterns and other relational styles, with a different how in our relationship with the Other-than-Self World!

The patterns of the aggressively-possessive "**mine!**", of the **lack of respect towards the Other** and of **empathic negligence** are in crisis and which, on a larger scale (complex, living social systems), produce obtuse, "neoplastic" riches. These patterns' blindness means they are unable to envision the entire relationship with the *Object*, only observing its parts and devouring them.

This blindness does not permit the Other *Subject* to be felt, being too polarized by their own, beyond-threshold, insatiable hunger.

The Planet is alive and the biosphere, the locus of negative entropy (the 10 kilometers above us is where entropy diminishes) and of photosynthesis (the process through which Life on the Earth originated), can be compared to a closed thermodynamic system.

In the biosphere, the continuous negentropic flux permits the creation and maintenance of the complex, open, dissipative structures which are living organisms.

A “little man”, who has only been in existence for two million years, which is “just now” in the terms of time itself, has been expecting to be able to play with ancient equilibriums. Fortunately, however, nature also has wisdom and its own intelligent limits.

The "Divine Limit" has been reached by some of this little man’s trait patterns and they are worn out! Other patterns are appearing, facilitated by the catastrophic mark incised by Covid 19, which means they shall be seen more and more.



2) Time’s up for independence

We are dependent on the biosphere and we are no other than it. Building intelligently together with our biosphere may, or may not, seem an attractive idea, but it absolutely must be done!

“Dependence-interdependence” is one of those binomials with which we must make peace, keeping it within the “normal” thresholds of its spectrum. Only through these limitations can negative entropy be produced, because moving above, or below, these thresholds would only produce entropy. In reality, living beings and the biosphere are interdependent.

All living beings live in the same space, they are in the same field and they breathe this same atmosphere of planet Earth. Right now, we need the intelligence of a *homo sapiens sapiens* and the capacity to *Inter-legere*, meaning to read interpretatively, through the lenses of Complexity about our responsibility to respect the environment and all the other living systems. In particular, we must really "take on board" our responsibility to respect the Earth itself, from which Life emerges. This is indispensable and will be decisive, first and foremost for ourselves!

We cannot go on producing the climate changes that are making our atmosphere more and more *toxic* and destroying the habitats of so many living species, which, like us, are inhabitants of this marvellous planet.

Chaotic changes generally favour unpredictable outcomes, but in this case

there is certainly a high probability of "homo", supposedly, "sapiens sapiens" losing out on any further role in evolution.

Interdependence is a circular process and making the biosphere increasingly toxic produces negative feedback for all living things, including man, who I have no trouble today diagnosing as having a "depressed immune system".



3) Time's up for Dopamine (DA) and the Reptilian Complex

Now the clinical psychiatrist in me is asking to speak, having heard the word "depressed".

In other pieces of work, I have described the Living Social Body as being affected by an alarmed **depression masked by acceleration**.

In simple, direct terms dopamine (DA), which is the neuromediator responsible for Action, has become hyper-activated as a response to the depletion in serotonin (5HT), which is the neuromediator responsible for Affectivity.

Clinically, fear is associated with a depressive state which increases noradrenaline (NA) levels, the neuromediator responsible for Alarm, which, in turn, completes the circularity by hyper-activating DA.

The three neuromediators are interdependent in a triangular fashion, which must be respected. Dopaminergic acceleration is beyond threshold. **Red alert!**

The three brains are also interdependent. Pre-frontal, cognitive acceleration (Neopallial Brain) informs the alarm status of the locus coeruleus (Reptilian-Complex Brain) and of the amygdala, the brain-area which registers extreme fear. It does this, in fact, by bypassing the anterior cingulate gyrus (Limbic Brain), which normally registers and modulates affective relationships.

This triadic interaction of the brains is no longer well-balanced, producing a **cognitive dissociation of sentiments**, which favours the dominance of ever more aggressive, reptilian relational patterns. These patterns, themselves, inform and dominate subjectivity, and are unattenuated by empathy and orbitofrontal intelligence.

The three brains are interdependent. and they represent another triangle to be respected. The Reptilian-Complex Brain, with its primitive patterns, does not entertain relationships - it has gone beyond-threshold in its "everything that is different form me is a dangerous enemy and should be attacked." **Red alert!**



MILO. Protection
(Primary Dong Sheng school 东胜小学 in
Luzhy,
Sukhou -CHINA.2016)

4) Time's up for the rarefied-liquid society

Limbic time, for feeling, has been violated - **the time for relationships has been violated**. Relationships belong as "with", as "contact", as "being together" and they have been overwhelmed by an infinite amount of communication, which, not being relational, has no substance over time. These endless communications occur and begin to fade instantaneously, like emotions. They are not like sentiments, which last.

There is no longer the luxury of "memory", or of "the past", there being only a cursory projection of the future, which is, however, dissociative, agitated and beyond-threshold. It blinds and prevents any aware presence in the here and now. In its haste, it overwhelms the Social Living Body, disrupting and inhibiting the organisation of the thoracic area. The chest would otherwise be the principle bodily location of feeling and of empathy, but it is liquefied by the beyond-threshold demands of external time, which robs the person of their own internal time.

The network of contacts has moved (in bodily analysis) from the 4th relational bodily level (Chest) to the 1st relational bodily level (Eyes). Yes, there has been an increase in information, but, under acceleration, the network has become dissociated, unable to bring with it time for "Inclusion", for "Listening", for "Telling stories" and for "Breathing", all of which have more "human" rhythms.

Internal Time, which in being a continuous flow of energy permits stability of identity, has been interrupted. Loneliness and feeling lost have emerged and become much more widespread as the defectively insufficient, oral state of the Living Social Body shouts its pain. The new pathologies, from addiction to autoimmune diseases and from cardiovascular to psychiatric illnesses, are spreading.

In the entropic collapse caused by self-consumption, the rarefied-liquid society desperately re-proposes itself, inducing unsatisfied, defectively-insufficient oral states in individuals who have countless needs and ceaseless desires and who are in a compulsive, headlong rush towards mega-profit and towards any objects associated with even a "sheen of status-symbol". It is an ephemeral, narcissistic, covering loop.

You cannot do without the Chest!

5) Time's up for the absence of the Chest



The where, the how and the when of a pathology guide researchers and analyst-therapists in their *supervision* and in their actions; this information permits them to perceive the intelligent sense underlying each condition.

The Chest may be considered a repository of limits, of boundaries and of control. In both psychological and bodily terms, the chest's time of prevalence as a relational level, in the normal progression of each individual's successively dominant evolutive stages, is the muscular stage. The chest appears, obviously, to be indispensable both for better breathing and to organize the passage from smooth to striated muscle. The chest is the necessary negentropic basis from which to deal with the process of individuation-separation from the mother, who represents a powerful attractor. The process of leaving her breast and her gaze and turning upwards, towards greater and more complex horizons, requires organisational autonomy.

The loss, or reduced importance, of boundaries, of rules, of the father and of organisation, which have all been dismantled by the increased velocity of time, only serve to demonstrate the multifaceted influences of this entropic process. The Social Living Body has, first of all, been dragged down into incontinent oral liquidity, then further down into borderline rarefaction and, today, it is breathless, lacking air and oxygen. This symptom testifies to the cyclical process mankind has initiated in our biosphere, as the toxicity "comes home to roost".

Interstitial pneumonia, the potential severe clinical development of COVID-19 is a very worrying indicator. I cannot but associate it with a Chest pathology of the Social Living Body. This is unexpected symptomatology, caused by a virus which has selected precisely this habitat in the human body to replicate. The virus is neither good, nor bad, but would certainly guarantee its own survival better in a host with greater resistance – when the host-terrain dies, the parasite generally dies too.



6) Time's up for the Superego.

The Superego no longer dwells in the family, having moved out to live in the media. This has brought to an end many precious differences which are vital to guarantee the riches of diversity and caused a significant increase in indifference. The Superego has been contaminated by the reactively phallic, defectively insufficient oral trait patterns and by borderline narcissism.

Today, dwelling in the media the Superego is inconsiderate, emotionally uneducated, narcissistic and demanding; it excludes, it is mono-directional, does not reciprocate and is persecutory.

Indeed, by emptying the family and breaking up the circular network that both connected and permitted the "Family Field" with its own atmosphere and its own *delimited* values. The new Superego redirects the motivational vectors outside family, towards other objects to be desired and other packages of values contaminated by the currently dominant trait patterns for which it is Having which defines Being.

The Id, one pulsive pole of the personality, has, for millions of years, been having an intense debate with the Superego, the other pole, which vouches for and censors the personality. When not beyond threshold, this counter-balanced interaction permits, to quote the father of psychoanalysis, a "normally neurotic" Ego, representing a *third*, relatively autonomous position that is informed by the two powerful polar attractors it can move between. The Id today, no longer has an interlocutor which is capable of containing it and the ego is lost, almost exclusively experiencing powerful, primary-narcissistic attraction.



7) Time's up for Omnipotence

And now, a curious, albeit dramatic, scene. The meeting, on this planet, of *the virus* and *homo sapiens sapiens* . . .

It is not even certain that the virus can be included among true living things, since it is unable to survive autonomously, unable to convert food and is obliged to parasitism, being unable to reproduce alone. It is the smallest and, structurally, a very simple being. Man is the greatest, structurally highly complex and a thousand negentropic evolutionary steps beyond . . .

However, the greater being succumbs and leaps protectively to *shut itself away* at home!

Other binomials spring to mind – inside and outside, the invisible and the visible, simplicity and complexity, micro and macro, distance and contact, individual and sharing. However, one comparison stands out as being exceedingly dramatic - **omnipotence** and **impotence**.

The limit makes us potent; its absence makes us omnipotent; its excess makes us impotent.

How do we make peace with the functional intelligence of Divine Limits? How do we bring evolution, the connection with other living systems, the biosphere and the living planet back within normal confines, so that they are not beyond threshold? How do we stay Alive and in contact with Life's Intelligent Limits?

By re-entering our Home and re-inhabiting our own Chest... We have an opportunity to settle back into a protected environment and to re-discover the *reflection* of a field that tells our own story, has our own atmosphere to be breathed back in and our own identities to animate again... It is an opportunity to have a new relationship with the outside, which can be co-constructive, human and, as such, intelligent.

Re-entering our Homes and re-inhabiting our own Chests is an opportunity to re-connect heart and mind and to re-discover an extraordinary, re-vitalising password – **Humility!**

Humility permits us to become more intelligent and more potent; it permits a new relationship, in between heights and depths greater than the Self, and it allows us to cross, upwards and downwards, that rigid arrogant neck caused by injured omnipotence, that castrated neck set down by marked impotence.

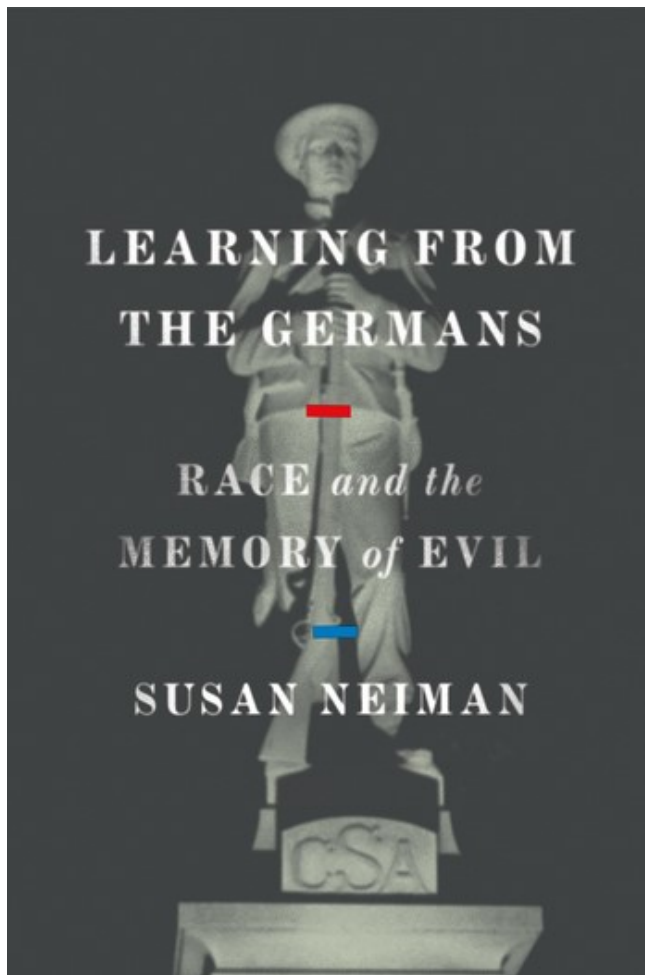


Genovino Ferri

Sincere thanks to Millo, the street artist, for permission to feature a selection of his extraordinarily beautiful artwork from around the world and to the psychotherapist Andrea Aielli for selecting the appropriate mural for each section of this article.

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Written by Susan Neiman

Reviewed by Yifan Zhang

Imagine revisiting a country that once committed atrocities to your own populations; seeing people going about with their everyday lives normally or waving, smiling as they pass you by. How would your instincts lead you to react? Forgive? Move on? Or even, as Susan Neiman suggested, learn from them?

Susan Neiman has a unique background to write *Learning From the Germans: Race and the Memory of Evil*. She knows the duality of belonging to groups of people who are marginalized and discriminated against all the while being considered privileged in other circles. As a white southerner, she stood up against racism generated among her own skin color towards people of color, a color opposite to her own. She seemed to belong to Jews but to Jews she was an American; she seemed to belong to the privileged white group, but she is a Jew who are also victims of discriminations from Caucasians sometimes. This ambiguous, intertwined nationalities, ethnicities, and living contexts make her a perfect fit to provide audiences a new perspective—she calls upon us to learn from the Germans, who should have been her biggest enemies. She urges us to spot the commonalities among different countries, in terms of the development of discriminations, coping of racisms, as well as the flaws and returns of racism when we try to eliminate them.

The book's main point is to use comparative redemption to reveal how the USA and Germany came to terms with their discriminative past, and how Americans in the deep South learned from the way Germans dealt with Nazism and reparation. Overall, the book's contents are promising during our current climate of macro and micro racial discriminations that are persistent all over the globe.

In terms of structures, the book is divided into three parts. The first is an empirical comparison between America and Germany and how they dealt with racism in the past. For example, for Germany, the country has shown progress in dealing with racism by opening up borders to accept refugees of color, and it has shown its regret by a zero-tolerance policy towards Nazism through self-reflection of its discriminative history, but racism is far from complete eradication in Germany. As for Southern America, confederate flags as well as racism were still asked to be kept flying in the region, as proposed by one of the advocacies of the current President Donald Trump. The second discusses the legacy of racism in America's deep south. The third deals with a reflection on how things ought to be, such as how to educate future generations about our pasts and how to peacefully come to terms with those shameful deeds, for example, building statues of correct examples, and eradicating existing statues of white supremacists.



In each section, the author's narrative flow is well designed. Her unique narrative approach is my favorite aspect of the book. Instead of drowning us with facts of all the discriminative histories in Mississippi regarding African Americans, she used connections, references, connotations to string everything together. For instance, she started on page 137 by sharing her driving experience in Mississippi. She wrote about the views she saw, the speed she drove, and how the experience reminded her of victim's names of victims. She further shared how those names then reminded her of all those familiar names she heard in those famous songs under the genre of Blues, which also originated from Mississippi. Especially this song called 'Ode to Billie Joe', written by Bobbie Gentry, a song talking about how a guy committed suicide by jumping off the bridge into the 'Tallahatchie' river.

The river that she happened to drive past. At the very end, she said this again reminded her of another name 'Emmett Till', who was a 14-year-old African American who was lynched and his mutilated body was thrown into this same 'Tallahatchie' river. This all flashed in her mind while she was driving, thus making her speed faster again. All the above flowed and connected with each other by a shared string of thought, each different, yet serves the same purpose to condemn the racial discrimination in America's southern states.

However, without background knowledge of the references she uses, the book might look confusing and plain with just a bundle of names jammed together to be compared with another bundle of names that sound unfamiliar. But, once readers get to know the inferences and annotations behind the names, they can see how each part of this book is perfectly connected.

You may ask, what is the connection between social justices and psychotherapy. In fact, another unique takeaway from this book is the author's opinion on trauma treatments because of social/racial injustice. After the Holocaust, many Nazis were considered morally unhealthy and many treatments followed; however, the author thinks we should witness the sanity of these patients when they conducted those crimes. According to Neiman, proper reparation towards national trauma (especially for the perpetrators during the crimes) such as slavery in America or the Holocaust conducted by the Nazis and the continued resentment, involves facing the pain upfront and having to live with guilt and apologies instead of neutralizing the instance in history. In other words, it is facing the crimes with a strong sense of guilt.

"Imagine an America where people were ashamed to hang portraits of their Confederate ancestors in uniform or to cling to the statues that honor them. Imagine an America where the raw and brutal truth of slavery and racial terror were integrated into historical narratives of American exceptionalism. The first condition of such a transformation would be more profound" (Neiman, 311).

Thus the best ways to cope with PTSD, especially when patients are perpetrators of the crimes, are to acknowledge what they have done, to recognize that they committed the crimes with sanity instead of craziness so one can't use mental illness as an excuse, and to feel guilty and sorry for their deeds.

This book, not quite fitting the genre of psychotherapy and trauma treatments, may be an educational book for readers who have some background knowledge with German Nazis' histories and even German history, and for readers who have strong interest in the racial justices fields. However, if readers are not familiar with these fields, they may need to investigate the topic further on their own in order to understand this book.

That's also one weakness of the book: it targets a special audience and requires the audience to have certain knowledge (I would say similar to expertise level of knowledge) about the field the author is talking about in order to really understand all the metaphors and comparisons.

For example, you need to know who Emmett Till is and what, what 'GDR', 'FRG' , and 'Reunifications' are in order to understand a sentence.

In conclusion, *Learning from the Germans* offers readers a unique reading experience through its delicate flow of examples and references, and calls on more people, especially those who are privileged and have discriminating ancestors or histories in America to learn from the Germans in order to cope with racial discriminations against African Americans. This book is relevant in terms of current politics and the current situations, with Obama being the first president of color in America, followed by Trump who exerted obvious racial discriminations towards populations of color, for example Asian Americans during coronavirus epidemic, thus providing us with a great way to start reflecting on our history in a racial lens and thus moving on with a better reparation in the future.

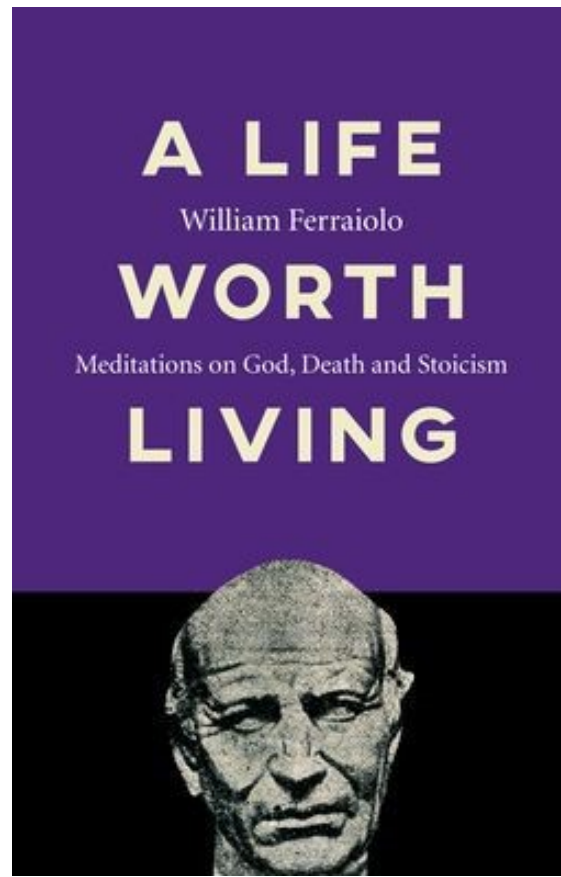
Susan Neiman is an American moral philosopher, cultural commentator and essayist. Being the director of Einstein Forum and a mother of three, she now lives in Berlin. She earned her PhD at Harvard University, and was a professor at Yale University and Tel Aviv University. Being a southern American and a Jew and having spent her life both in Israel and Berlin, her unique living experiences make her the perfect author of this book.



Yifan Zhang currently studies psychology at New York University as a sophomore. She interned as a clinical assistant in Zhang Shu Sheng Clinic of Neurology last summer. As a mentor for high school girls of color in NYC as well as a mentor for first-generation international students at NYU, she strives for equality and justice for all. She is passionate about music technology and social psychology, hoping to use music as a way to improve social relationships between people.

Neiman, S. (2019). *Learning From the Germans: Race and the Memory of Evil*. New York, NY: Farrar, Straus and Giroux Books. ISBN: 9780374184469. Available in hardcover and eBook. Hardcover. 415 pages. Includes references and index.

Photo Credit: Tallahatchie river by cmh2315fl on flickr.



Written by William Ferraiolo

Reviewed by Nancy Eichhorn

Can philosophers create change? Or do they merely entertain intellectual conversations, ask abstract questions about the nature of human thought, the nature of the universe, and the connections between them, and then ponder the possibilities?

If you're William Ferraiolo and you practice Stoicism, a philosophy of personal ethics, you are in fact learning "spiritual exercises" that lead to the development of "self-control and fortitude to overcome destructive emotions".

Reading Ferraiolo's newest publication, I can see how Stoicism, as a conscious practice, can provide effective scaffolding to support self-help, self-growth.

From what I understand, Stoics are not concerned with complicated theories about the world. Their purpose is not to debate lofty questions about human nature or thought. They choose action over reaction; they offer practical ways to become better and happier people who can deal with the problems that arise in life. Their writings, teachings, and spiritual exercises remind us that we can't control what happens outside of ourselves (considered externals in this realm, more on this); we can only control what happens within ourselves and our responses to situations in our lives. They offer teachings to be "steadfast, strong and in control of yourself".

Considered a Hellenistic philosophy, Stoicism has a long history since Zeno founded it in 300 BC. Two significant teachers stand out in Ferraiolo's writings: Epictetus, a former slave who was brutally terrorized and permanently disabled and later founded his own school; and Marcus Aurelius, a Roman emperor whose daily writings to remind himself about restraint, compassion and humility became known as his book of *Meditations*.

The essays in a *Life Worth Living* are Ferraiolo's "ruminations about Stoic philosophy, the existence and nature of God, the inevitability of mortality," and other parts of our human lives. The content examines what it means to incorporate classic stoic philosophy in modern day life. According to Ferraiolo, stoic counsel may serve just as effective today as nearly 2,000 years ago. The human condition remains stable, he writes, and we must still make our way in a world we cannot control. Ferraiolo offers what he calls the IDEA Method, which is comprised of a few central tenets of Stoic counsel as a means to pursue a good life:

I Identify the real issue: this involves our ability to deal with desire and aversion. According to Ferraiolo, proper self-regulation of these two states is necessary to avoid distress and dissatisfaction. "When we are dissatisfied, it is typically a poor 'fit' between our desires and the unfolding of events that cause our distress. We want what is not so. The facts, in and of themselves, are neither good nor bad, but one's attitude toward the facts may cause them to appear fearsome" (pg. 5).

D Distinguish internals (conditions directly related to and determined by a person's will; our opinions, aims, desires and aversions are within our power) from externals (not subject to our will and beyond our power including our bodies, property, reputation, and office). "The wise seek to know their own minds so they may better govern themselves, and do not pin their contentment to winning the hearts and minds of others" (pg. 8).

E Exert effort only where it can be effective. When we focus on what we can control, we can release psychological and emotional distress. “It is unwise, unhealthy, and wasteful to expend energy trying to control or change circumstances that lie beyond one’s control and one’s ability to enact change” (pg. 8).

A Accept the rest. *Amori Fati*. When we resist or reject the world as it is, we end up struggling. The world will always have its way. “Demand not that events should happen as you wish; but wish them to happen as they do happen, and your life will be serene. [Enchiridion, 8]”

Ferraiolo writes that Death can’t be outdistanced but the fear of death can be mastered (which is part of his conversation about anxiety). Stoicism, he writes, holds the promise of gaining control over one’s attitude concerning the inevitability of death. His practice of letting go of fear reaches far beyond death itself in my opinion. There’s an old saying, *there’s nothing to fear but fear itself*. And in this sense, fear is the factor we can control. We can let fear confine us, confuse us, cripple us. Or we can step out of our flight/fight/freeze sympathetic arousal state and breathe and calm and move from reactivity into logic, from knee jerk response to conscious consideration. Fear is a choice. We always have the power of choice.

On God

I appreciated the reality that “Stoics believed in a god of some description, that they lived within a framework of a rationally ordered and governed cosmos. The believed that a properly managed human life must accord with Nature or with the Logos or with the will of Zeus” (pg. 47). It was noted that references to God might just as easily be replaced with the word Nature or The Universe and offer the same meaning. Modern Stoics may subscribe to any religious worldview i.e., Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism. According to Ferriuolo, you can separate stoic ethics and stoic self-rectification from a religious worldview and still attain equanimity. The Stoics appear to be more “centered on cultivating virtue and living in harmony with reason and being indifferent to pleasure or pain” . . . they maintain a take “the world as it comes” and do not seek to govern what is not within their power.

There's always more for me to say, and yet I want to balance my perspective with space for you to read the book and see what resonates for you. When I started reading, I wasn't sure this dense philosophical writing (this is not a fast read) might lead to some sort of personal change. And, as I've grown to learn from Ferriolo's writing, that his depth, his presentation of fact and opinion, and his willingness to nudge readers (and at times outwardly confront them) to consider their place in their lives, not as a hapless victim but as a living being with the ability to look at what is happening and decide how to react (action) or respond (words) is the point and it doesn't come easily. It takes time to read, reflect, consider, decide. The sense of neutrality—there is no good or bad, there just is and how you frame it impacts your being—works for me when I'm grounded and conscious. When I'm in a reactive state however, it's not as easy. It's doable but it takes practice so that my old patterns are replaced with new. I keep processing the book. A specific quote comes to mind and I'm thinking. This is one reason I appreciate Ferriolo's writing style. His words stay with me far beyond the pages of the book and invite me to both ponder and act.



William Ferriolo received a Ph.D. in philosophy from the University of Oklahoma in 1997. Since then, William has taught philosophy at San Joaquin Delta College in California. A practicing Stoic, Ferriolo has published numerous articles in a variety of professional and academic journals. His first book, *Meditations on Self-Discipline and Failure* was published by O-Books in 2017.

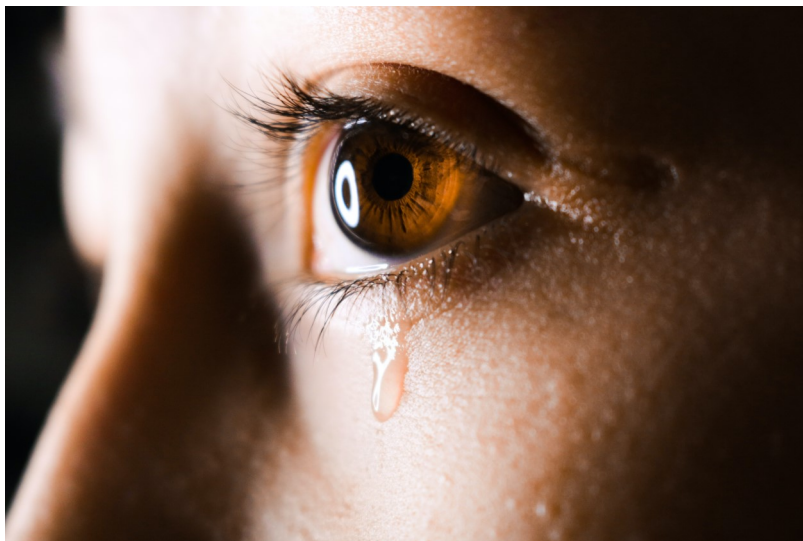


Nancy Eichhorn, Ph.D. is an accredited educator with a doctorate in clinical psychology, specializing in somatic psychology. Her current projects include publishing *Somatic Psychotherapy Today*, work as a writing mentor, workshop facilitator, freelance writer, and editor. Her writing resume includes over 5,000 newspaper and magazine articles, chapters in professional anthologies, including *About Relational Body Psychotherapy* and *The Body in Relationship: Self-Other-Society*. She is an avid hiker, kayaker, and overall outdoor enthusiast. Nature is her place of solace and inner expression.

AN HONORARY URBAN ANTHROPHOLOGIST

by Ronan M. Kisch, Ph.D.

First of all, I have consent from all of my clients to use their stories. Second, I have changed the identity of each subject so they are not identifiable.



Many of my clients are faced with returning to environments which were and are emotionally hostile and traumatizing. They are treated the way they were treated in childhood. Even thinking about these past events resurrects post traumatic stress. But clients believe they have no alternative than to return to those environments. Work, holidays, illness, deaths call for their return. The return then reinforces past emotional wounds. These events occur time after time, but their underlying dynamics are unconscious. I call these events anniversary events (Kisch, 2019). Most often just being aware of returning to these environments is sufficient to trigger anniversary reactions. How does one protect clients from this re-traumatization when just talking about it does not work?

I have clients who return to hostile environments. The individuals that they will encounter, because of intellectual limitations, emotional blocks or prejudices, are neither open to reasonable discussion nor able to be flexible in problem-solving or behavior change in how they treat these offspring. When my clients have traditionally returned to contact with these people, often relatives, they become re-traumatized by habitual behavioral patterns. I tell my clients about the anthropological approach to research to provide them with a tool to gain emotional distance from these troubling situations.

I explain that one major tool anthropologists use for their research is participant observation. Anthropologists immerse themselves into a culture and then make observations of the natives in an attempt to identify and understand their customs, rituals and behaviors. There is a continuum in the use of this tool. It ranges from standing off at a distance and just observing the natives to taking an active part in the rituals. The one stance provides factual information regarding the customs, rituals and behaviors. The other provides experiential, emotional data regarding the traditions. In either case, the anthropologist needs to maintain an objective distance to be able to understand the natives being observed.

I invite my clients to become anthropologists and take a non-judgmental distant stance to study the "natives"— their family members. But, in spite of the fact I offered this approach as a psychological tool, to help distance emotionally, de-stress and protect my clients from re-traumatization, the depth of past emotional wounding and habitual behavior has not allowed this one cognitive approach to be effective.



So, recently, I have taken a new combined approach. First, I utilize chiropractor, Scott Walkers' (Walker, S. 1996) Neuro-Emotional Technique (NET) approach to release past wounds and provide an emotional stability from which to encounter stress. Second, I may also use the Trager® (Trager, M. 1987) somatic approach to identify emotional-physical holding patterns if they are present. Third, I walk over to my bookcase and take a glass rod with floating stars inside which I call my "magic wand." I then walk back to my clients and tap them on each shoulder, I humorously anoint my clients by saying, "With the power vested in me by the State of Ohio, I dub you *an honorary urban anthropologist.*"

My clients find this incredibly humorous. Their serious shrink, me, dubs them "*an honorary urban anthropologist*." The significance of this event is that the humor they experience is sufficient to internalize in their memories and utilize this information to assume a strong stance of emotional distance from "the natives," their family, in future encounters. Furthermore, it allows them to be in those situations with a prospective, cognitive-emotional distance, so that they are not re-traumatized. They develop a new independent cognitive-emotional understanding from these situations and a new sense of their own inner strength. They are able to perceive and understand psychologically who their relatives are and why. Then they are free to make an educated choice as to how they want to respond or not react to the "natives."

Case Examples



Gail

Gail is 58 years of age. Her father was hospitalized following a stroke. He lived in another state and Gail was preparing to visit him. She did this with great trepidation not simply because she was concerned for his health and life. Gail is a gentle, sensitive woman. Gail was the child of her father's first marriage. After he divorced and developed a relationship with a new woman he had another daughter. Gail was then diminished and treated with indifference by her father and hostility with her new step-siblings. When with them, she was the uncomfortable reminder of a former undesirable marriage and family. As she prepared to return to her former home to visit her hospitalized father, an anniversary event, she was riddled with duress. It was an extremely stressful event. She exhibited shallow breathing, shoulders braced, fingers twitching, feet and knees locked together. After performing NET, I shared the anthropological approach, participant observation, with Gail. Then I anointed her an "honorary urban anthropologist." She thought this was particularly humorous. It immediately removed her from her anxiety and braced posture.

Upon her return from her father visit, Gail felt confident about her meeting with her father and even her hostile step-siblings. She shared this event with a relaxed countenance, not being re-traumatized. She told me that she made her visit as an urban anthropologist and her mission was to study the natives. It worked! She said, "The whole event was very successful, but I was an urban anthropologist. That approach helped me to survive the visit and not get overwhelmed with any of the family drama." Gail now has a new tool to address family-of-origin issues.



Susan

Susan, 43 years of age, is an office manager. Unlike her rebellious older sister, Susan is a gentle, soft-spoken anxious woman. Susan's mother in sharp contrast is harsh speaking, domineering and controlling. As a childhood survival strategy, Susan learned to be passive and submissive, not to raise her mother's ire. This trait that she learned as a child with her mother generalized to other life situations and circumstances. While she gradually learned to be more assertive in work situations, when she returned home she would regress in her family-of-origin to her former childhood passive-submissive behavior. This was emotionally punishing for her, but she was unable to transcend it.

Susan was to return home for an uncle's 70th birthday. Again she had trepidation over her return. As she shared this in therapeutic treatment, her breath went shallow and her feet locked together, knees braced. We performed (NET) and discussed the urban anthropological approach. Again humorously, I dubbed her "an honorary urban anthropologist." Susan returned to the birthday event and in the forefront of her mind she was conscious of being an urban anthropologist studying the natives — her family.

Rather than acting out stereotypic passive sibling behavior with her older sister, Susan's relationship with her sister changed. The sister has maintained her rebellious relationship with her mother. However, Susan now meets her sister on co-equal terms often more mature and stable than her older sister. Susan shares her wisdom with her older sister as to how to respond to their mother. The sister has not internalized her wisdom. As for the mother, Susan now addresses her mother with assertiveness and shares her beliefs with her mother regarding the mother's behavior. Susan's mother is now quieter and getting gentler in response to her daughter.



Allen, 55 years of age, came into the office distraught and expressing anger over family distress. His face was tight and pale, his shoulders up, his knees locked together, and his feet pigeon toed. When he spoke, his voice was intense and echoed his distress. Kinesiology (muscle testing) dated his physical holding back to 3 years of age. His presenting problem was his family of origin. He had two brothers and a sister. He no longer lived with them, but often visited his parents at their home. There he also had contact with his brother. Allen described the contact he had with family members as emotionally distant. The parents have had closer, warmer relationships with his siblings. Allen typically felt ignored unless someone needed something. Yet when he returned home he hoped to receive loving recognition from family members.

Allen originally came into treatment and complained of fatigue he suffered for the past 39 years. Allen, who because of his "perfectionist tendencies," was worried about final exams at that time. He feared if he did not do well he would not be loved. He feared that he inherited his mother's anxiety, self-criticism and fear of others' criticism. His father was diagnosed with bipolar disorder. At eight or nine years of age, Allen had been cleaning the yard. He came in and told his father he was doing things to clean up, but his brother would not help him. To that the father painfully smacked him across the face. Allen had periodic episodes of being angry at his father.

Allen had two brothers — one biological and one adopted six months after Allen's birth. Both suffered from suicidal ideation. Allen's biological brother committed suicide at the age of 39. The parents were supportive of the adopted sibling, but not Allen. Allen's adopted brother was a perpetual liar. He had an out of wedlock daughter.

The father was supportive of the brother. In contrast with Allen, he said if Allen had an out of wedlock child, he "would not love him anymore." Allen also had a sister. His sister was fired for stealing from a bank where she worked. Then she was fired from a store from which she stole \$5000 of merchandise. Allen, a helper, after that incident, helped his sister write a resume to get a new job. Allen believed that all of his siblings had low self-esteem. He said that he tried to help them with their low self-esteem.

Allen did not come from a healthy family. Allen continually returned home seeking recognition, confirmation and appreciation from people who clearly were not emotionally healthy and did not possess those traits. They could not give him what they did not have.

Allen describes his parents as controlling. He says that at work he has a controlling boss like his parents. Reflecting back he says that school was an uncomfortable time for him. He felt like "a fish out of water" in high school; he did not know how to cope with adversity. "It was an assault on my nervous system." Allen currently grieved over not being a husband and father. He sleeps poorly and wakes with a limited amount of energy.

Despite of his low self-esteem, Allen is extremely bright. He readily picked up the concept of urban anthropologist. After being anointed he took this approach back home when he visited his parents. With psychological treatment, Allen says he is "seeing his father and mother more clearly." He was able to start to perceive who they were as individuals as a result of their psychological family histories and biology. As a result, their behaviors toward him no longer affect him. Rather than looking to his parents for confirmation he began to recognize and appreciate his own traits and accomplishments to feel proud of himself. He no longer goes to visit his parents as often. Recently after not paying rent, the brother was evicted and wanted to move in with Allen. However Allen now feels a new sense of strength, independence and choice. He chose not to let his brother do that. Allen's nephew will soon have a birthday party. Allen, without any sense of guilt, will not go.

A year earlier Allen was braced and taut. He was riddled with anger over family stress. Now, Allen's face is pink, soft and he radiates smiles. His shoulders are down, knees apart and no longer pigeon toed. As Allen is releasing the stress, tension and holding from his body he is starting to experience himself as he never has in his lifetime. In his releasing, he continues to become aware of and releases the habitual tension in his shoulder girdle and legs. He is happy with gentle rocking. Allen is also being an honorary urban anthropologist with his boss and work is going better. Allen, a spiritual person, had a biblical saying come into awareness that he now holds onto: "All things work together for those that love the Lord," Romans 8:28. Recently Allen's mother said to him, "Allen you are looking so much better."

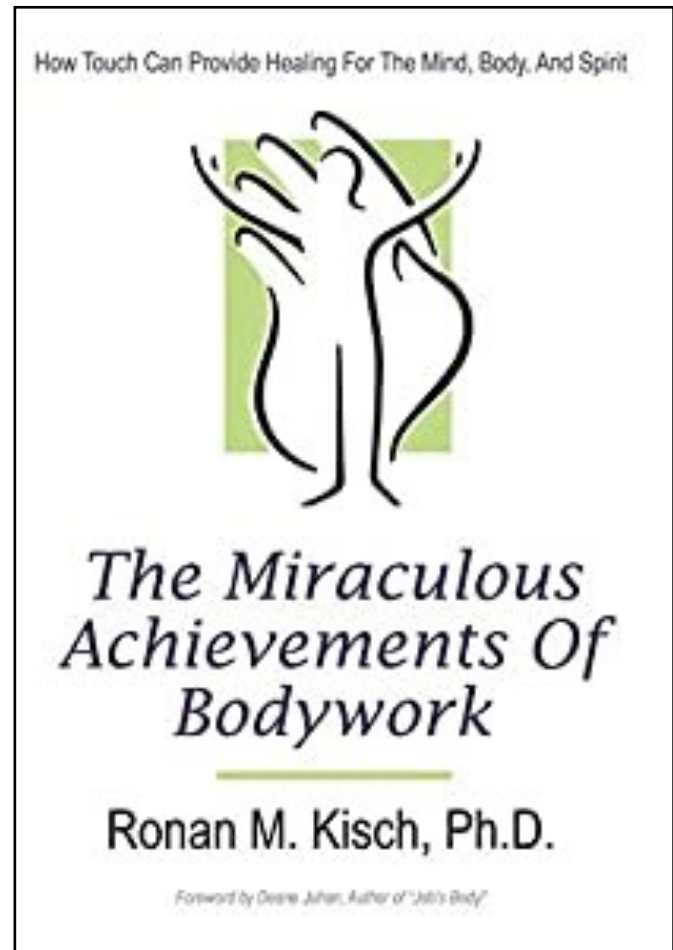
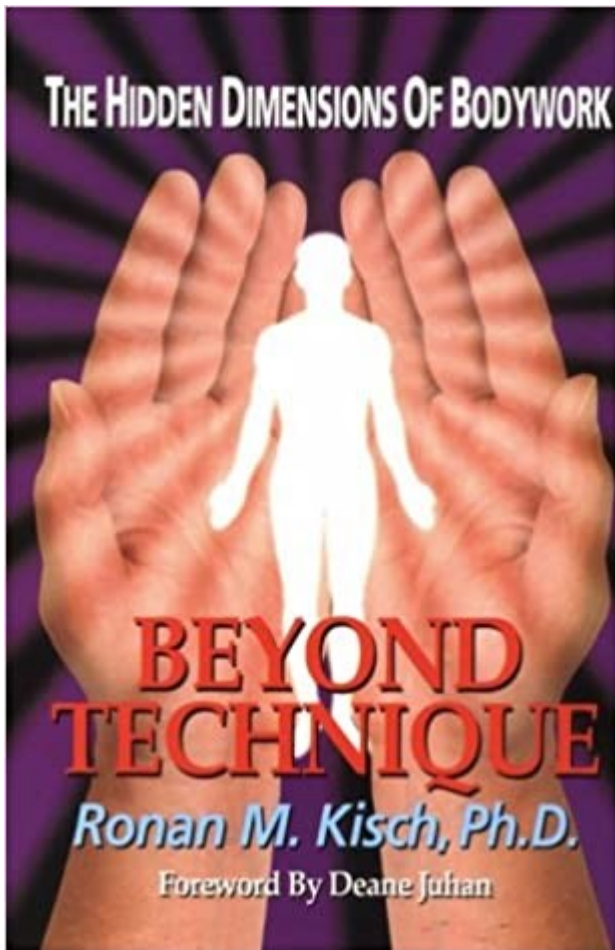
Allen continues to hold bracing in his legs. The bracing is related to guilt which went back to 4 years of age. He felt guilty for not being able to fend for himself. It takes longer to become aware of and release unconscious holding patterns that have been internalized for decades. However, one step at a time Allen is making progress to change his reality and experience of life. He now believes that he is open to find an accepting partner, a partner who is also a giver like himself and one who will appreciate his giving.



In the silent background of these positive changes is a somato-emotional-physical approach that allows these individuals to address life's stresses from a firmer, more confident stance. Their personalities, postures and sense of self-identities are changing as they bring new skills to their life circumstances. Behind these changes is an ability to emotionally, intellectually and physically step back and take a new stance. This stems from a consciousness of humor, "honorary urban anthropologist," and the cognitive-emotional-physical distance it provides from former traumatizing situations. The emotional humor contained in this orientation, an honorary urban anthropologist, creates a buffer against continuing to re-experience past traumatization or experience current traumatization. It allows for the building of a healthier personality and a more successful life.



Ronan Kisch, Ph.D. is a clinical psychologist and bodywork educator in private practice in Dayton, Ohio. He received his doctorate degree from the University of Kentucky where he was an NIMH Trainee at the Department of Medical Behavioral Science. He received post doctoral training at the Gestalt Institute of Cleveland.



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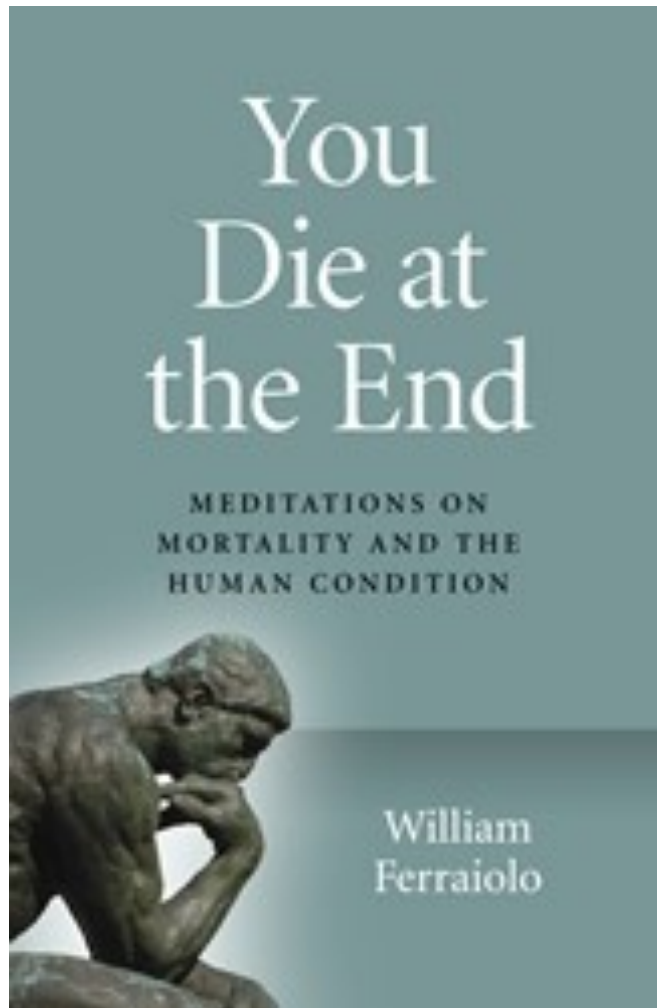
Woman with tear: Aliyah Jamous on Unsplash

Dr Kisch with magic wand

Woman with hair in her face: Hermes Rivera on Unsplash

Man against wall: Nijwam Swargiary on Unsplash

Man on sand by lake: Kal Visuals



Reviewed by Nancy Eichhorn

I recently reviewed *A Life Worth Living: Meditations on God, Death, Stoicism* by William Ferraiolo. While reading, I was drawn to understand Stoicism more deeply, to read more about Marcus Aurelius and Epictetus, two Stoic writers that Ferraiolo quoted throughout the text. Ferraiolo's discourse was educational with a knowledgeable authorial tone.

So, when I started to read the advance PDF of his soon-to-be-released *You Die at the End: Meditations on Mortality and the Human Condition* (June 2020), I felt frustrated by his confrontational style, a voice I had experienced before when I reviewed *Meditations on Self-Discipline and Failure* (Ferraiolo, 2017). To cite numerous clichés, he doesn't sugar coat or mince words.



He is direct, to the point, calls a spade a spade and makes no bones about it. At times his “brutal confrontational” style may be off putting (more on this later) but yet, I read the book, so that tells you something.

You Die at the End consists of 180 “meditations”, Ferraiolo’s “ruminations” in response to Biblical scriptures, Old Testament writings. Early Stoics believed in a higher power (Zeus, God, the Universe) so Ferraiolo’s use of Christian scriptures was not surprising. According to his introduction, the Biblical excerpts touch on topics that are “*directly or obliquely related to the subject around which the meditation centers. This should not be interpreted as an endorsement, or as a rejection, of the Bible passage quoted in each case or of the lesson contained therein. This approach is merely a matter of this author ruminating about elements of the human condition that were sufficiently interesting to make their way into scripture. The fundamentals of a human life on this planet have not changed so very much over the millennia. The world is large and indifferent to the suffering of its denizens, its inhabitants. Perhaps there is a God who is not indifferent. Perhaps there is no such God. There are, however, people who suffer*” (pg.5).

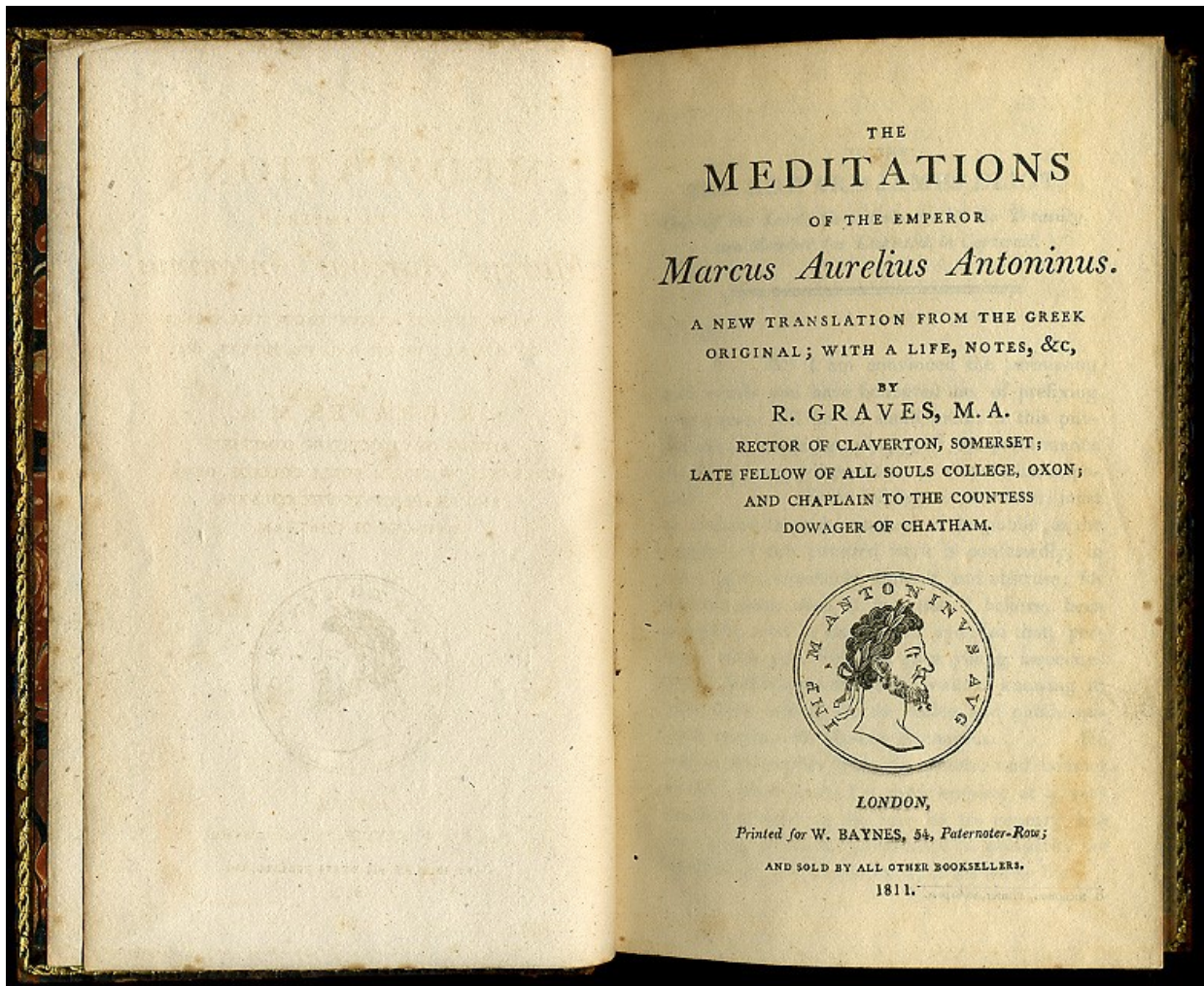
Each scripture is followed by Ferraiolo’s interpretation of and implication in our lives today. His ‘ruminations’ typically start with a question—a guide to look within, to assess our self-perceptions and reasons for being— followed by startling reflections and revelations. Adhering to Stoic precepts, Ferraiolo does not appear to care what others think (one’s reputation is an external event that we cannot control) nor does he allow room for self-pity or self-aggrandizement. He talks directly to the reader, the text is written in second person: YOU. His words loud and clear. He does not hold back.



"If you do not concern yourself with your cat's opinion of your character, and you really should not do so, what excuse do you offer for allowing yourself any preoccupation with what your colleagues, relatives, or neighbors think of you? Your colleagues, relatives, and neighbors are, presumably, wiser and more perceptive than your cat. . . Nonetheless, suppose that the humans, the talking primates of your acquaintance, are, in fact, intellectually superior to your stupid cat—the one that you step on several times each day. Does this give the humans' opinion of you some special purchase upon your imagination? The contents of their minds are entrusted by God, or by nature, to them—and you ought not concern yourself with anything not entrusted to you. What rattles around in their heads need not be any problem for you. Such concerns are, to say the least, unbecoming. Be more like your cat insofar as disregard for humanity is concerned. Better to bat about a ball of yarn than to investigate the ruminations of imbeciles. In the former case, you might get to keep some yarn."

Within a paragraph or two, you are directed to consider: Do you let other people's opinions of you matter? Do you give away your sense of self by worrying with situations you cannot control? Are 'ruminations of imbeciles' a worthy endeavor?

The book follows this pattern throughout. Readers are invited to sit and consider. Contemplating Ferraiolo's writing style—both the second person and the use of language that I find demeaning and insulting at times, I became curious about Marcus Aureoles' writings. What was his tone? Words like stupid, imbecile, idiot and such pepper Ferraiolo's text. I wondered, is this how Stoics write?



Research



Marcus Aureoles' writings in *Meditations* were meant to remind himself to remain at peace in this world. They were part of his discipline to deny himself the luxury of self-pity; he had many losses in his life yet remained steadfast in his belief that "everything that happens is a natural occurrence, in the hands of a benign intelligence that ran through all things". He writes simply of what he learned from teachers, from life. He talks of character and humility, of freedom of will, of self-government and cheerfulness in all circumstances. His writings are fascinating.

According to Aureoles, there was no such thing as tragedy; our interpretation of said events create our suffering:

"The Universe is good and only has the best intentions for humanity. It's up to you, your choice to interpret those intentions, correctly and find peace of cling to one's impression and suffer."

On death, he wrote:

"It is good to you, O Universe, it is good to me. Your harmony is mine whatever time you choose is the right time. Not late, not early. What the turn of your seasons brings me falls like ripe fruit. All things are born from you, exist in you, return to you" (IV.23).

While he believed that *Logos* controls all things including one's fate, he also stressed that we have the freedom to choose how we relate to the circumstances in our lives. And while reading Aureoles' *Meditations*, also written in second person, I saw hints of his approach in Ferraiolo's book. For instance, Ferraiolo's meditation on page 226:

"Do not fret about life after death, the world to come, resurrection, reincarnation, heaven, hell, purgatory, or any of the other post-mortem possibilities suggested by scripture, wisdom traditions, or superstition. Live this life as well, as reasonably, and as virtuously as you can manage. Do your best to be upstanding and honorable. If there is something after this "vale of tears," then a life of decency should be sufficient to secure a palatable version of the possibilities allegedly on "the other side." Sustained decency might just get you to heaven. If, on the other hand, there is no life, no experience, no continuing consciousness beyond this terrestrial sphere, then you have exactly as much reason to try your best to become as wise, as virtuous, as decent, and as upstanding as you would have if the road to heaven lay open before you. Do not be good for the sake of gaining paradise. Do not pursue wisdom and virtue for the sake of applause, accolades, or the approval of other persons. That is shallow, cynical, and self-serving "virtue."

But then I felt his tone shift:

"Indeed, there is nothing especially virtuous about pursuing narrow, material self-interest. If there is a God, He will see through the ruse, and your ersatz efforts will be for naught. Why would the Lord reward selfish egoism? As for the opinions of other persons, since when was the pursuit of public approbation listed among the admirable endeavors? If there is not a God, you owe it to yourself, and to those who depend upon you, to live the most fulfilling and flourishing life you can. You will find it difficult to be a decent parent, spouse, or citizen if you do not even manage to live the life of a decent, honorable human being. What is flourishing without wisdom and virtue? Leave the pursuit of pleasure to pigs, children, and celebrities."

I started to write that Aureolo's tone was not demeaning when I paused. I heard myself complaining and thought, wait a minute. I chose to read Ferraiolo's book. My choice. No one made me read this. And in the space of that pause I realized that I am drawn into Ferraiolo's text despite adverse feelings. I read and reflect. I spend time researching to expand and explore, and in fact I stretch and grow.

I think this is part of Ferraiolo's skill as a writer and a teacher (he teaches philosophy at San Joaquin Delta College). Teachers challenge us. We aren't supposed to accept everything they say as the Gospel truth. They are humans, too. They offer their interpretation, their opinion. Their story is laced with their experiences, their beliefs, their faith. No one has the answer, just questions. And, when posed well, they invite us to delve within.

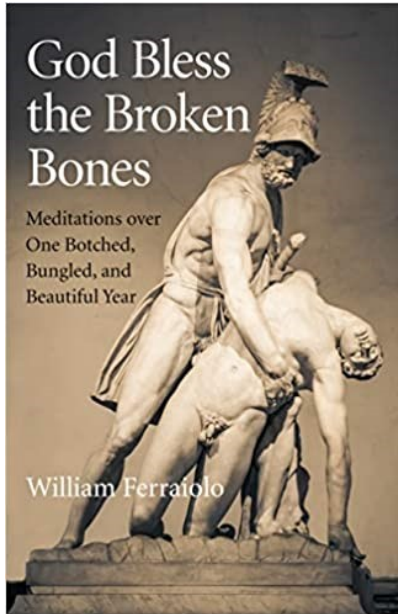


I recalled my Grandfather, a German Lutheran minister in a small midwestern congregation (his story filled with wars and revolutions, famines and economic down turns resulting in The Great Depression, and intense loss across continents). He wrote letters filled with scripture, shared his take on how these words impacted his life and in turn provided lessons to help me change mine. I was supposed to accept his teachings as truth. I grew up with the Bible being the word. As a young woman, I challenged that word, felt it was biased, an interpretation from a male dominated perspective. And yet, it was one interpretation of life and how I might benefit from other people's experiences.

Ferraiolo appears to be offering a chance to consider Biblical scriptures (not the Bible in its entirety but specific passages) and how he views them today in terms of what we, as readers, might consider from a Stoic perspective. However, he does not tell us how to think or feel; rather, he offers meditations/spiritual lessons to encourage self-reflection. What we do with it is up to us.

Coming Attractions

Not surprising, Dr Ferraiolo has two more books on the way—this man is prolific:



God Bless the Broken Bones: Meditations over one Botched, Bungled and Beautiful Year (September 25, 2020)

According to advance reviews: “God Bless the Broken Bones won’t tickle your ears with pleasant words. Instead what you’ll find is a year of one man’s seemingly uncensored thoughts, fears, frustrations, longings, gratitude, and self-exhortations. Raw yet eloquent, William Ferraiolo’s musings reveal the daily challenges to living a life of equanimity and honor, and why there’s no worthier goal. At times this book might offend you. It will certainly challenge you. And if you’re willing, it might change you. I recommend you see for yourself.” Seth J. Gillihan, PhD, author of *Retrain Your Brain: Cognitive Behavioral Therapy in 7 Weeks*.

And then he has *The Slave and Sage: Remarks on the Stoic Handbook of Epictetus* coming February 2021.



William Ferraiolo received a Ph.D. in philosophy from the University of Oklahoma in 1997. Since that time, he has been teaching philosophy at San Joaquin Delta College in Stockton, California. His books include: *Cynical Maxims and Marginalia*, *Meditations on Self-Discipline and Failure: Stoic Exercise for Mental Fitness*, *A Life Worth Living: Meditations on God, Death and Stoicism*, *You Die at the End: Meditations on Mortality and the Human Condition*, and *God Bless the Broken Bones: Meditations Over One Botched, Bungled and Beautiful Year*.

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Moments Like This
The 3 R's of Spiritual Consciousness
With Diane Doheny



Welcome to the start of your unique Spiritual Journey.

This soon-to-be released book is written for truth-seekers looking to raise their consciousness as well as for people like you and me who are seeking relief from emotional suffering and constraint. Through the Three R's of Spiritual Consciousness: Recognition, Realization, and Reflection, you will learn how to listen to your soul's voice and discern it from your ego's negative nature. The tools you will learn in this book will help you feel the peace that comes when you recognize and claim your soul.



Reviewed by Yifan Zhang



How long can you last without technology?

I found myself fidgeting and incomplete after only six hours of a power outage at my house yesterday. Needless to say, every day we wake up to our alarms beeping like a virtual mom then head to the espresso maker bringing fresh smells of the day within seconds. Our driver is on his way to pick us up through applications such as Uber. We unconsciously check our phones five times in a minute so we can engage with our friends across the globe with several taps and clicks on the little shining screens. It's not inaccurate to say that we are all 'cyborgs': we are half human, half machine. We are incomplete without technology.

Technology defines our lives and in return, we define technology through countless means of design. And at the center of cyber design, as argued by Kuang and Fabricant, is the 'user friendly experience'—an experience that occupies the center of our modern life, remaking not just our digital lives, but also influencing business, society, and philanthropy. In other words, technology design focuses on more than the technology aspect, it also considers human cognition, psychology, and culture. The main idea of this book— 'User friendly design'—emphasizes a human-centric experience. The authors suggest that an ideal design involves more than just producing the newest gadgets, it's more about producing products that make people's lives better.



The human-centric technology design is an innovative takeaway from this book. "You have to know why people behave the way they do, and design around their foibles and limitations" (p26). As the book points out, the best design is often not created by talented experts but by the best observers of life and people who have first-hand experience with bugs and failures. The authors started the book with what they learned from the Three Mile Island nuclear accident. It turns out miscommunication between technology and human—the control panel was not giving the correct feedback to the operators while the demands sent by operators were not performed by the machines—was the key reason the accident occurred. The authors furthered to argue that the quality of the feedback is what makes humans feel most natural and is the easiest to react to. Using stories of countless star designers from Silicon Valley, like Donald A. Norman and Henry Dreyfuss, the authors show us how their inspiring ideas are behind the origins of their designs.

For example, why do we feel safer when we ride a horse than sitting in a driver less car? The key is that when we are riding a horse, the horse normally proceeds in its own way when no directions are given; however, when we lean towards a certain direction or restrain the lead, the horse gives away its autonomy to the rider. The idea about driver less cars that customers feel secure to use originated from this similar riding experience :by using car designs sensing the driver's level of focus, the car, like a horse, adjusts its level of autonomy. When the driver is less focused, the car takes control; however, when the driver is more concerned about the direction and speed, the car handles control over to the driver. Similarly, the ideas of our everyday desktop design on our laptops came from our everyday office desks. When we open multiple files, the computer automatically brings forth some for display and hides some behind. It is as if we are putting physical files on top of each other, and if we need a file, we just find it and take it out. The display of that brings it back to the top of all the files we are viewing on the desktop. In short, technology focuses on the fine details in our behaviors that we take for granted. It is actually heavily based on human psychology.

Moreover, this book raised readers' awareness on technology and the elderly by mentioning some phenomena we witnessed in senior and poorer populations. Most younger generations grow up with technology. Metaphors used such as 'browse' or 'desktop' or 'APP' are almost inborn for us. We don't take classes to learn what they mean; we just know when we encounter them after repeated exposures. But for many people, technologies are recent inventions and are hence unfamiliar to them. It is a new language for many. Sadly, it's difficult to blend in with current society if you don't have a smartphone or don't know how to use it. I was at the airport the other day waiting for check-in, an old couple didn't know how to use their phone to retrieve important information and the staff also didn't know how to explain the procedures of using their phones in the easiest way. Therefore, the couple was not allowed to board. They felt angry at the end about how technology was not improving their life satisfaction at all.



We often say it's okay, the elderly or the poor don't need a cellphone, it's not affecting their lives. But are we also implying that the elderly don't have that long a time to live or the poor can't afford one anyway, and it's just okay to let them feel left out by the world? Time evolves so fast that we will also become the elderly within blinks, and how are we entitled to define ourselves as inclusive when we choose to ignore some populations that contributed to the technology we have right now? This makes readers like me ponder better designs for the elderly or the poor population who need an easier user experience.

One drawback of the book is its repetitive theme; to me, it seems like many ideas overlap with each other. However, the book is neat in its structure. Every chapter is dedicated to a theme of a user-friendly experience such as humanity or empathy. And it is easy to understand.

In conclusion, this book offers a new perspective to view technology design—a human-centric user-friendly design. It inspires readers to closely observe our everyday lives, actions, and behaviors; it invites us to ponder the limitations it has on marginalized populations as well. Moreover, it also sees the progress and failures throughout the world and tries to encourage more inspirations from all corners of the globe. Despite its repetitiveness, it is still an innovative inspiration for many rising designers who want to become the next Steve Jobs.

Cliff Kuang is a design strategist at Google and veteran technology journalist at Fast Company and Wired. He has edited or written over 7000 articles on design. His writing has also appeared in New York Times and Bloomberg Businessweek and The Economist.

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Yifan Zhang currently studies psychology at New York University as a sophomore. She interned as a clinical assistant in Zhang Shu Sheng Clinic of Neurology last summer. She is passionate about music technology and social psychology, hoping to use music as a way to improve social relationships between people.

Kuang, C & Fabricant, R. (2019). *User Friendly: How the hidden rules of design are changing the way we live, work and play*. New York, NY: MCD, Farrar, Straus and Giroux. ISBN:9780753556641. Available in hardcover and eBook. Hardcover. 405 pages. Includes references and index.

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Using the Original Tuning Board™ in Somatic Experiencing®

By Darrell Sanchez, Ph.D.



One of the primary resources we tend to lose track of under traumatic stress is our ability to support our vertical orientation. A poignant illustration of this was a video I watched that depicted three soldiers leaving a combat scene. The soldier in the middle, supported by his upright comrades on either side, is crumpled into a slumped posture. The narrator comments that the soldier in the middle is noticeably traumatized and unable to walk upright (Van der Kolk, 2014). In other words, he is no longer able on his own to orient to the world from a state of verticality.

We know as Somatic Experiencing (SE™) practitioners that when confronted with threat our bodies assume certain postures in response. When we go sympathetic we tend to brace our limbs, crouch and shorten our stance as we prepare to run or fight. When we go parasympathetic we take on a posture of going down toward collapse or fetal so as to protect our vital areas and to make ourselves small. In both cases, we have relinquished the full vertical orientation of our spines and nervous systems. This is appropriate when meeting the threatening circumstance. It does not serve us when fixed and habituated postures create an orientation to the world that does not allow us to be free and balanced.



The Tuning Board is a somatic tool that addresses this problem of a non-resilient ability to return to a fluid vertical nervous system. It is increasingly known and used for this purpose in the SE community as well as among other somatic therapy practitioners. A unique balance board device, the Tuning Board gives the individual the task of relating to a comforting constant motion while the spine is in a state of vertical orientation. This movement-related task directly confronts the immobilization or fixation patterns that tend to be so characteristic of trauma, as a connected flow of movement transmits through the body from the feet and ankles upward.

Movement Confronting Immobility

Beginning with this basic dichotomy of movement confronting immobility, there are multiple ways in which the Tuning Board can support the goals of SE work. The Tuning Board introduces movement as a resource in the form of a very intimate and caressing type of movement felt at the deepest levels of the central and autonomic nervous systems. This flow of movement affects both the non-conscious reflex system and voluntary motor systems. As the movement and the fixation come into direct communication, an awareness task arises: how are these fixations presenting themselves in our embodiment? What is being revealed in regards to the sensation, image, behavior, affect, and meaning (SE's SIBAM) modes of expression?

Part of the skill for the SE practitioner is to support that process of opening awareness that is happening by helping the client to track SIBAM expressions in a titrated way. With the practitioner's support, trauma-related structural fixations come into awareness in a safe context. With awareness comes transformation, as areas of the body previously less responsive to the movement inevitably begin to participate in this "dance with gravity." This meeting place of deep intimate movement with the characteristic immobilization of trauma is rich in unconscious information that can be tapped in a process of trauma resolution. SE practitioners support this process with their presence, kinesthetic resonance, micro-sensing, mirroring and titration skills.

Kinesthetic Resonance



Unlike a typical SE session, the client is now standing up and faced with a movement task. That requires the practitioner to be more resonant, and to become more of a resource for the person, who is no longer just sitting in a comfortable chair. Tracking someone on the Tuning Board elicits greater presence, observation skills, self-awareness, and embodied empathy in the practitioner. I call this kinesthetic resonance.

The person is now vertically oriented as our design and nature intend. In this position the individual is able to orient fully to the 360 degrees of the environment while being supported in maintaining an internal awareness. This represents an important dimension and level of working an SE session. The time on the Tuning Board can be titrated; it doesn't have to be the whole session. The practitioner can use it for shorter or longer periods, depending on how the session evolves.

Building Confidence and Resiliency through Embodiment

Along with our loss of a sense of verticality, a loss of connection with and confidence in our own "embodiment" accompanies the trauma experience. To be embodied means to be alive and to inhabit and experience our human form as fully as possible. Being alive always implies movement. Another benefit of the Tuning Board as a somatic tool is to restore confidence in embodiment. We can observe this increase in connection and confidence in the simple task of someone learning to stand on the Tuning Board and manage the constant movement through their body. Confidence in embodiment is a necessary resource in traversing traumatically stressed territory.

Part of what we're restoring in terms of confidence and embodiment is the capacity for resiliency. Resiliency is often spoken of in terms of flexibility and tone. To that, I like to add the term "elasticity." All of these terms evoke the freedom to expand and contract, and to come to a resting state. Ideally, all three of those states are available and none of them are lost to us. In trauma responses or fixations, we tend to lose one or more of them.

Breath and the Vagus

A very basic example of how that works is with breathing. In healthy resourced experience, the diaphragm is free to contract, the lungs are free to expand, and the breathing body is allowed to return to a resting instant before the next inhalation. Breathing restrictions are another fundamental way in which trauma compromises coherent embodiment. Standing on the Tuning Board with this constant movement encourages resilient breathing behavior. Little by little, through titration and pendulation, the fixations blocking some aspect of the breath begin to let go restoring greater breathing tone.

The movement experienced on the Tuning Board likewise stimulates the vagus nerve in multiple ways: through the breath, through reflexes, through the vestibular system, the viscera and from the constant motion that is moving through the spinal cord. The respiratory centers of the brain, the vagus nerve and nuclei and the vestibular nuclei are all in close proximity in the medulla and the pons of the brainstem. Standing on the Tuning Board, the movement of the feet and ankles is constant. We are eventually looking for a mirroring of that motion up at the brainstem where those important nuclei are located. Freeing fixations in this area at the top of the spine where it meets the cranium supports important functions of the vagus nerve, which is continually monitoring the heart and respiration centers and overall homeostasis.



Supporting SIBAM Associations

In the course of an SE session, as things progress toward integration and coherence, we witness our clients making associations between the SIBAM elements. Making associations between our thoughts, our feelings, and our actions in the process of healing and wholeness is a naturally occurring function in we humans. We know as SE practitioners that this association process is highly compromised in traumatic dissociations. Using the Tuning Board for vertical orientation in a state of natural healing movement deep in the nervous system, a practitioner can be working the somatic experiencing process and methods. This has profound implications for the meaning of coherent embodiment.



Although this tool can be used by any somatic therapist to promote vertical integration and embodiment resourcing such as grounding, centering, orienting and balance, it is especially compatible with the perspective, goals and skills of Somatic Experiencing practitioners. For more information on Somatic Experiencing, visit the SETI website at: <https://traumahealing.org/>

Somatic Experiencing®
TRAUMA INSTITUTE

For more information on the Tuning Board in general, including upcoming trainings, visit www.tuningboard.org.

To purchase a Tuning Board at a 10% discount, use discount code SPT2020 to reference this article.



Darrell Sanchez, Ph.D. is a licensed professional counselor and trauma therapist with a background in movement therapy, somatic experiencing, dance, creativity studies, structural integration, and other somatic modalities. Dr. Sanchez has published articles on creativity, the body's memory, Rolfing structural integration, the Tuning Board, and vertical integration and resourcing. He has been practicing and teaching creativity and therapeutic modalities based on the art of integration of mind and body for forty-five years.

Reference:

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Darrell Sanchez, Ph.D.



healing through embodiment

“Because the Tuning Board will never be perfectly still, the individual is challenged to find, and quietly attune to, a relative stability, while surrendering rigidity, fragmentation, and holding patterns to motion.”

Darrell Sanchez, Ph.D., Tuning Board creator



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“It is a brilliant invention that enriches every kind of somatic work, particularly SE. To directly learn with Darrell about the many-faceted possibilities of using the Tuning Board is an exquisite opportunity to deepen your own clinical skills.” Dr. Peter Levine, Ph.D

www.tuningboard.org

Join Darrell online
Thursday, June 25, 2020
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“Using the Original Tuning Board™
In Somatic Experiencing™”

The Shattered Oak

*Overcoming Domestic Abuse
and a Misdiagnosis of Mental Illness*

Based on a True Story 🍂 *Sherry Genga*

Reviewed by Nancy Eichhorn, Ph.D.

I finished reading *The Shattered Oak: Overcoming Domestic Abuse and a Misdiagnosis of Mental Illness* and realized I hadn't drawn a full breath since page one. At some points in the text, I simply stopped breathing.

The character's voice drew me in. It wasn't necessarily the writing. At times there was just too much detail, so much so that it was repetitive. But Barbara's first-person voice created an impact. She was distant in moments, disconnected from reality, and then smack dab in the brunt truth of her situation. She sounded emotionally and developmentally stunted; considering the content of her experiences, her tone of voice and language use rang true.

It's amazing that her daughter wrote this, as if channeling her mother's presence, letting her energy be on the page all the while having to relive not only her mother's experiences but her own as she too dealt with the repercussions of her mother's abusive situations.

I had difficulty fathoming the intensity of Barbara's life, the chronic stress and abuse both self and other inflicted. And yet, I felt compelled to read her story, a sense of honoring her resilience, her courage, her attempts to maintain a positive position in dire situations. I appreciated her need to journal, to capture her thoughts and feelings on the page, a container for what she couldn't comprehend herself at times.



The story starts in the middle of one-sided fist fight—an angry man pummeling his wife’s face again and again like a heavyweight boxer going after a title. He leaves her numb and broken on the kitchen floor. After he drives off, their three young daughters cautiously come downstairs to tend to their mother. They know the drill and fetch ice packs, spoon feed her with pureed baby food. She writes, “I am too weak to care, and my face too swollen. For the moment, everyone is scared and frightened of this demon in our house” (pg. 15).

The insanity of her story was mindboggling. She endured a torturous life from start to nearly finish. She had no rights, no freedom, she was “stripped naked to the core” (pg. 86) raised in abuse, married into abuse, and medically treated abusively (sent to a sanitarium, lock down ward after two hospital interventions for attempted suicide), even her trip to the National Institute of Health to participate in a clinical trial for Cushings Disease left her feeling like a “walking test tube”, a “human lab experiment” (pg. 99).

Her torment didn’t end with her eventual divorce. She craved peace yet when she grasped it, for just a moment, her past crowded in and sent her off the edge—literally. She jumped off a cliff into a river far below knowing she couldn’t swim, almost downing (her second suicide attempt, on a timeline, but she saved herself).

This sense of a continual cycle of abuse is familiar— people tend to be drawn, albeit unconsciously, into situations that fit their historical past as well as put blinders on and pray for the right outcome despite knowing it’s not going to come. But to be inflicted not only by laypersons (her parents, her husband) but also by medical clinicians? It was heart wrenching to hear her experience as she was forced to take mind numbing drugs, subjected to electric shock therapy to silence her into submission. She captured the essence of a human soul wasting away. Thank God an angel appeared in her life, a nurse who took time to notice, to care, to fight for Barbara’s rights.



I couldn't help but care about this woman. She was continually struck down, even her rosary beads were taken away. With steadfast faith, she visualized her beloved beads as she prayed again and again for

God's strength to survive the next worst thing. At one point, strapped to a medical table as if on a cross as electric shocks flowed throughout her body and out her feet, she compared her experience to that of Jesus on the cross. She dies inside but comes to life, finds the will to move forward with a positive approach to life. She sets her past behind to live in the present moment. At the end of story, she finds moments of release in nature.

The book ends with a postscript:

"On the very day we were doing our final edits before going to press, Barbara passed away. Her soul now is free . . ." (pg. 116).

Barbara's story is not emotionally easy to read, and it has the potential to trigger readers' emotional wounds from their own abusive pasts. And yet, it offers first person insight into experiences that clinicians might benefit understanding, that family members supporting loved ones recovering from abusive situations might gain some insight, and that survivors themselves might appreciate as they struggle with their own healing path.



Nancy Eichhorn, Ph.D. is an accredited educator with a doctorate in clinical psychology, specializing in somatic psychology. Her current projects include publishing *Somatic Psychotherapy Today*, work as a writing mentor, workshop facilitator, freelance writer, and editor. Her writing resume includes over 5,000 newspaper and magazine articles, chapters in professional anthologies, including *About Relational Body Psychotherapy and The Body in Relationship: Self-Other-Society*. She is an avid hiker, kayaker, and overall outdoor enthusiast. Nature is her place of solace and inner expression.

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Rosary beads: Anuja Mary Tilj from Pixabay



The Shattered Oak

A reflection by Sherry Genga

My mother's life was not easy. She dealt with and battled domestic violence, child abuse, suicide, and eventually mental illness. She was affected by and surrounded by the nature of mankind's cruelty. And yet, she gave my siblings and I her gift of strength.

In writing *The Shattered Oak*, I came to terms with her thought process and experienced her level of bravery and reliance. I finally comprehended her intense strength, courage, and determination by acknowledging her survivor skills and her deep love of faith that provided her comfort that she was never alone.



Sam Lee Staubach
Mazoku Designs

As I wrote her story, I was able to put my mind at ease because I knew the content and the nature of her story, nothing was made up. I knew her circumstances and her reality intimately—I was there. When writing, I chose words that exposed the dignity, integrity, and honesty that captured my mother's essence. In this light, I decided to have my mother, Barbara, narrate her story, letting the content come from a third person rather than a first or second. I felt the impact might reach out and grab readers by the collar and bring them into the story.

And, as readers became enveloped in her story, I hoped they might experience a sense of enlightenment in the realm of empathy and be offered an opportunity to get outside of themselves and see things from a different perspective. Throughout the book, Barbara never tries to teach (and absolutely does not preach) something. Her voice shares her "experience, strength and hope", as opposed to just giving suggestions. She was and is a survivor, and in that way, a role model. But more than just surviving, she has become a student of life—someone who learns as they move through life. For our family it is never about being right (as opposed to wrong); focusing in the present moment as much as is humanly possible, we all try to do the next right thing.

The Writing Process

I encountered some challenges when writing that I had to learn to overcome. My mind was always engaged and constantly focused on my content. It was hard for me to be physically present in the room because writing consumed, mesmerized, enchanted me. During this time, I listened to every word spoken on the radio, including song lyrics, and even nouns and verbs in conversations. I used my skill as my own secret weapon. I wanted to know what words were more powerful and best described our emotions. It was my own experiment to find the right mixture of words that gave readers the explosion they looked for in a magnificent book making it a true must read.

To help me remember my thoughts I took advantage of my 'notes' app on my I-phone. I used the voice button to record them because I can talk faster than write things down on paper. I spoke out loud without any lost ideas. This became a valuable tool to help me organize my thought process more quickly and efficiently. I printed my phrases from my home computer whenever I had time. What I had to do next was look at my sentences printed on paper. I needed to put all the words together like a puzzle. I thrived on the challenge of piecing my sentences into structured paragraphs and chapters. I honestly enjoy doing things that I am not familiar doing and finding the capability to do so.

My major frustration in writing the book was finding time. I had to find a way to write every day. I noticed that if I didn't keep my thought process fluent and frequent, I had to reconnect with the current. It was like I had to jump-start my brain's creativity all over again figuring out how to be my main character. So, I adapted, and I took time to write every day. By replicating these actions, I made it possible for every chapter to flow with enormous empathy creating an experience for the reader to hear a voice of integrity, hope, and strength.

I needed to write this book because I wanted silent voices to be heard. I knew as a young child that my mother's story needed to be told or turned into a movie, it was just a matter of when. Barbara was and is a survivor; in the book she reassures readers that asking for help is a strength, not a weakness. She shares her experience that it is possible to recover after trauma, stress, or extreme anxiety. She shows us how she released her fears and replaced them with gratefulness to find her ability to move forward; her passion for gratitude allows her to face her fears. Barbara's experience in journaling and acting like her own therapist helped her to overcome negative self-talk. She discovered a way to face her fears and her depression by filtering and releasing the feelings and then letting them go. She figured out that having a positive attitude was the "secret

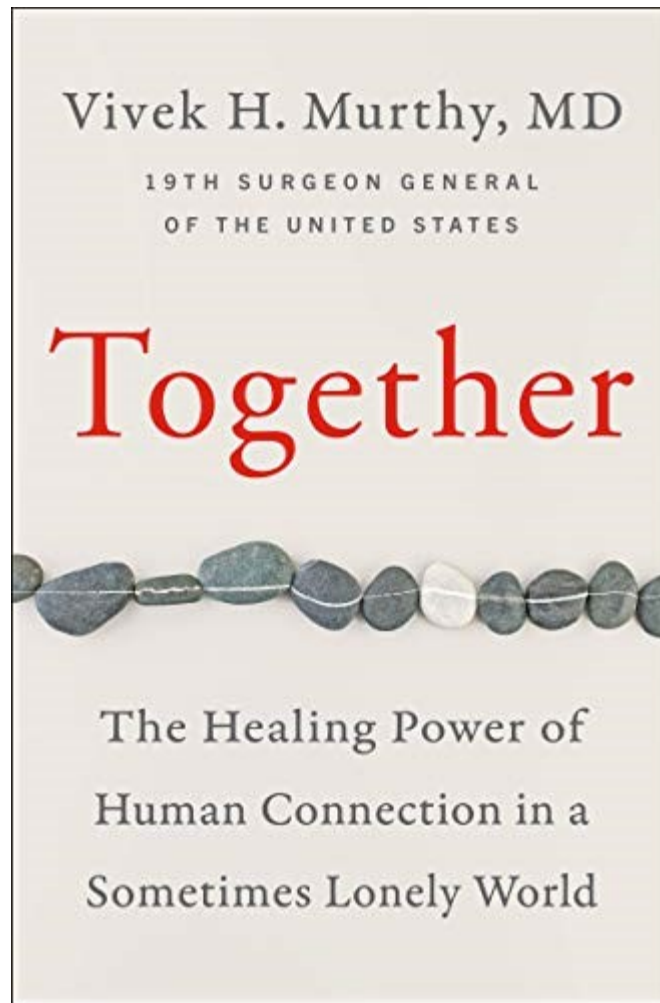
ingredient” in managing her survivor skills as she navigated through life. Her lesson learned was that “the power of positivity” was the best way to navigate through her destructive negative self-talk thinking. She had to find her strength and independence. In *The Shattered Oak*, she navigates readers toward an understanding that if they can find self-love and worthiness, in time they, too, can heal.

I also hope that readers learn a sense of healthy skepticism. When consulting with health professionals, please get that second and maybe third opinion. Beware of assumptions that shut down exploration for explanations even with experts. I also want readers to remember to always think outside of the box. The obvious answer is not always the correct diagnosis as evidence in this book.

Currently *The Shattered Oak* is being used by psychologists and counselors at recovery centers. After clients read it, they spend time together processing its contents, speaking about the similarities in their stories and commenting on how it is helping them heal from trauma. www.theshatteredoak.com



Sherry Genga is the owner and founder of Spring-eze Women Shoe Inserts. Her entrepreneurial nature evolved from her current 27-year career as a waitress in the High Roller lounge at Foxwoods Resort and Casino. She shares her experiences in classrooms with young entrepreneurs at local colleges to inspire them and offer the skills and resources to invent and develop new products. Her philosophy led her to the Connecticut Manufacturing Resource Center program, which helps small and midsize businesses in areas such as supplier development and securing a manufacturer for their product. Sherry is married to Jason Genga, and she has two children, Justin and Nicole. She resides in her small town in Connecticut where she grew up.



Reviewed by Yifan Zhang

In 2018, one block away from my university dorm, a student committed suicide. His head was in a plastic bag when his roommate walked in and found him dead. Rumors were flying around: victim was an Indian. No, he was an African. Wasn't he Chinese? Rumors guessed about potential death causes, and one important factor was loneliness.

Loneliness has become a crucial problem in contemporary societies, and human connection in social settings help us heal both physically and mentally. Such is the theme of the book *Together: The Healing Power of Human Connection in a Sometimes Lonely World*. Loneliness has its evolutionary basis, according to the book's author Dr. Vivek H. Murthy, the first Surgeon General of the United States of Indian descent. According to Murthy, it's a universal phenomenon worldwide. The solution to loneliness is finding a community to connect with others in the society. However, the stigma around loneliness, which makes us believe that showing our loneliness is shameful, prevents us from stepping out of our comfort zones to connect. Dr. Murthy wrote *Together* with the hope of bringing people closer together, to create connections even as we endure this global pandemic where social distancing is enforced.



Reading this book in the beginning, I felt like I was listening to my grandparents lecturing me with clichés—we are becoming lonelier due to society advancements, but we need to find our communities. As the book proceeded, it started to hit me hard in the head—I started to reflect deeply on what I had never questioned myself. To start, the book argues that loneliness is a friendly reminder, not a negative stigma that we just want to get rid of. This is an unconventional categorization of loneliness. In this perspective, loneliness is similar to hunger. When we are hungry, we eat. So, when we are lonely, we look for outside connections. Such normalization of loneliness not only prevents the establishment of negative associations we tend to think of when mentioning loneliness, it also helps people to react quicker instead of tripping over the thought, “Why do I feel so lonely?” In fact, I often treated loneliness more as a threat than a signal, leading to my exaggerated loneliness. When we focus on loneliness itself instead of seeing it as a reminder for connections, we tend to be trapped in this negative feeling. We then self-doubt and feel abnormal and shameful to share our concerns. But when we see it as a friendly signal from our mind, we can override our negative judgments about ourselves and embrace loneliness to progress further.

Because of his Indian descent, Dr. Murthy’s identity and his immigration background lead him to also focus on loneliness from the perspective of cultures. He proposed a model of how different cultures nurture various types of relationships. I think his model must be one of the most innovative and appropriate in so doing.



He said: this model is like a bowl, with different cultures having different bowl shapes. People living in certain cultures interact differently depend on the bowl's shape.

For example, many individualistic cultures in the West have a bowl of great width and modest depth. People within such communities walk around freely with no enforced contact with each other. Sometimes, people come across others and establish relationships. But closeness is never a necessity in such individualistic cultures. Loneliness is aimless wandering in the bowl alone. For collective cultures, however, bowls are narrow and deep. This leads to everyone so close to each other with almost no space to be oneself. Everybody stands shoulder-to-shoulder, even stepping upon each other for mutual support. What we need to achieve, as argued by Dr. Murthy, is a third bowl to include the benefits from the above two bowls. This bowl makes group interactions necessary for individual development and at the same time gives room for everyone's free expressions.

However, this is harder to do than to say. It's almost impossible to build a united community in individualistic Western cultures by just introducing programs promoting kindness in our neighborhood. This type of propaganda normally only attracts people who are already interested or are already doing similar things, instead of attracting people who tend to be alone and value individualistic ideas the most. So, the effectiveness of his proposal is under question. In my opinion, the best way to connect people in an individualistic culture is to gather them together through their individual benefits. For example, in order for residents of luxury apartment buildings to find a community, provide them options to provide feedback about their neighbors. People with the worst feedback would potentially face difficulties continuing further residency in the building. This way, feedback forces people to mingle and say hi to each other. But in conclusion, any measure to turn a culture in its opposite direction, even in a little bit, is extremely hard to do because cultural norms already create inertia.

After loneliness, the book discussed the process of connection. On connection, there was one point that might be inspirational to every current society. A good community is based on a good belief that connects everybody together. However, if this communal belief is based on hatred and exclusion to groups that are different from our own, then the community is more vulnerable to loneliness. The book used the example of Derek, the son of a former Ku Klux Klan leader. He felt a strong community connection before going to college because he was surrounded by an extremist community with shared beliefs about other races. Derek didn't have the chance to step outside of his group, so he took their group belief for granted. However, as he found out the truth about his community and their distorted racist beliefs, he aligned with the outside world, leading his former community to exclude him. Therefore, he felt extremely lonely since the outside community also excluded him because he was the son of a KKK leader.

Such cases of false communal beliefs are everywhere around the world, especially during this special COVID-19 time. We wake up to news every day. Based on different geographical locations you hear different sides of the story. Nevertheless, the content is always similar. For people in the US, they see news about how the Chinese government did a bad job while they United States has everything under control. For people in China, using a personal experience, the news is mostly about how the Chinese took control fast while the US is still not enforcing social distancing. Each side is blaming the other for their fault while taking credit of their own side.



During a global pandemic where almost every country is infected, claiming our differences and emphasizing WE or YOU is not helping the global spread. We are pushing people away from our border saying, "You don't belong here, go back to your country and infect your people, not ours." It's understandable that any country has limited resources and our own group should be taken care of at first. But still, it's sad to see people grouping each other based simply on skin color differences, or ethnicities, or nationalities. I thus wonder what it might be like if the categorization of communities was based on humanity, not on specific human features. With all the supportive connections, it might be a wonderful world with the most efficient dealings for this pandemic.

Such belief problems also cause racism to be prevalent in the current society, no matter which country it is. Just as the book said, when a community that serves empathy only for its own like-minded members, it is destined to be alienated by the larger society. If we only allow members to get in our community by the way they look, such connections are too conditional to sustain.

For many communities, we welcome people of our own race but disrespect those who are not. This practice will always be condemned, either by the outside, or the inside conflicts. Why don't we broaden our empathy for a larger group with criterion based just on justice and humanity?

In conclusion, *Together* is an insightful book for all of us who are actively practicing social distancing at the moment. It showed the origin of loneliness and ways to connect with others. With its lively narrative stories of patient cases and the writer's personal stories, the book does a good job focusing our attention on the rising problem of loneliness and the importance of human connection in order to heal both our physical and mental health. Just as the book argued, Covid-19 increases our physical distances indeed, but this precious shared experience may pull us even closer.



Vivek H. Murthy, MD is the 19th Surgeon General of the United States. He graduated from Harvard University and earned his MD & MBA in Yale University. He also founded the nonprofit Doctors for America in 2008.



Yifan Zhang currently studies psychology at New York University as a sophomore. She is passionate about music technology and social psychology, hoping to use music to improve social relationships between people.

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Murthy, V. (2020). *Together: The Healing Power of Human Connection in a Sometimes Lonely World*. New York, NY: Harper Collins Publishers. ISBN: 9780062913296. Available in hardcover and eBook. Ebook. 326 pages. Includes references and index.

