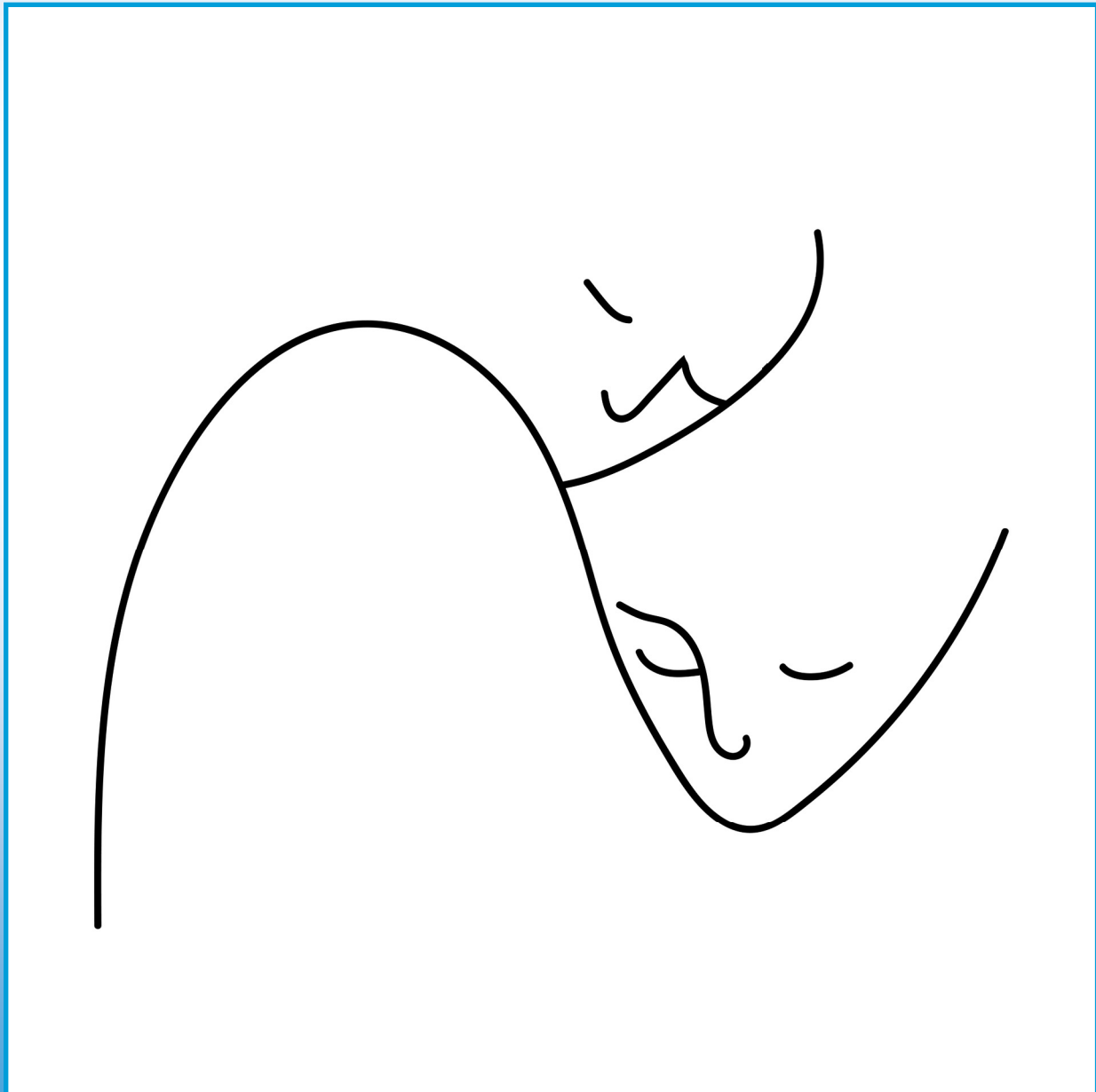




# Somatic Psychotherapy Today





# Somatic Psychotherapy Today

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## Letter from the Editor

Greetings and Welcome to SPT Magazine, Volume 12, Number 1, 2022

It's been another unimaginable year with more twists and turns than anyone could have ever considered possible. Yet, reality's mayhem has eclipsed our imaginations. We have experienced global pandemics and rogue viruses, wars edging on talks of World War Three, financial downturns with stock markets roiling, political overtures ending in radicals storming the U.S. Capital, mass murders, hate crimes, protests for human rights, tsunamis, hurricanes, volcanic eruptions, and more.

With the emotional upheaval associated with all these challenges, it's reassuring to know we have skilled and compassionate clinicians willing to share their expertise with their clients and our readers. Their articles in this issue offer insights into our bodies and emotions. They share ways to connect with our physiological and affective states and strategies to regulate what is out of balance.

Today, I am concerned by the APA's current stance on somatic psychology and somatic therapies. Their website postings define somatic psychology and somatic therapy ([www.https://dictionary.apa.org](https://dictionary.apa.org)) as:

*describing, relating to, or arising in the body rather than from the mind,*

*describing, relating to, or arising in cells of the body other than the sex cells or their precursors (i.e., germ-line cells). Somatic mutations cannot be transmitted to the offspring of the affected individual,*

*the treatment of mental disorders by physical methods that directly influence the body, such as the administration of drugs (pharmacotherapy) or the application of a controlled, low-dose electric current (electroconvulsive therapy).*



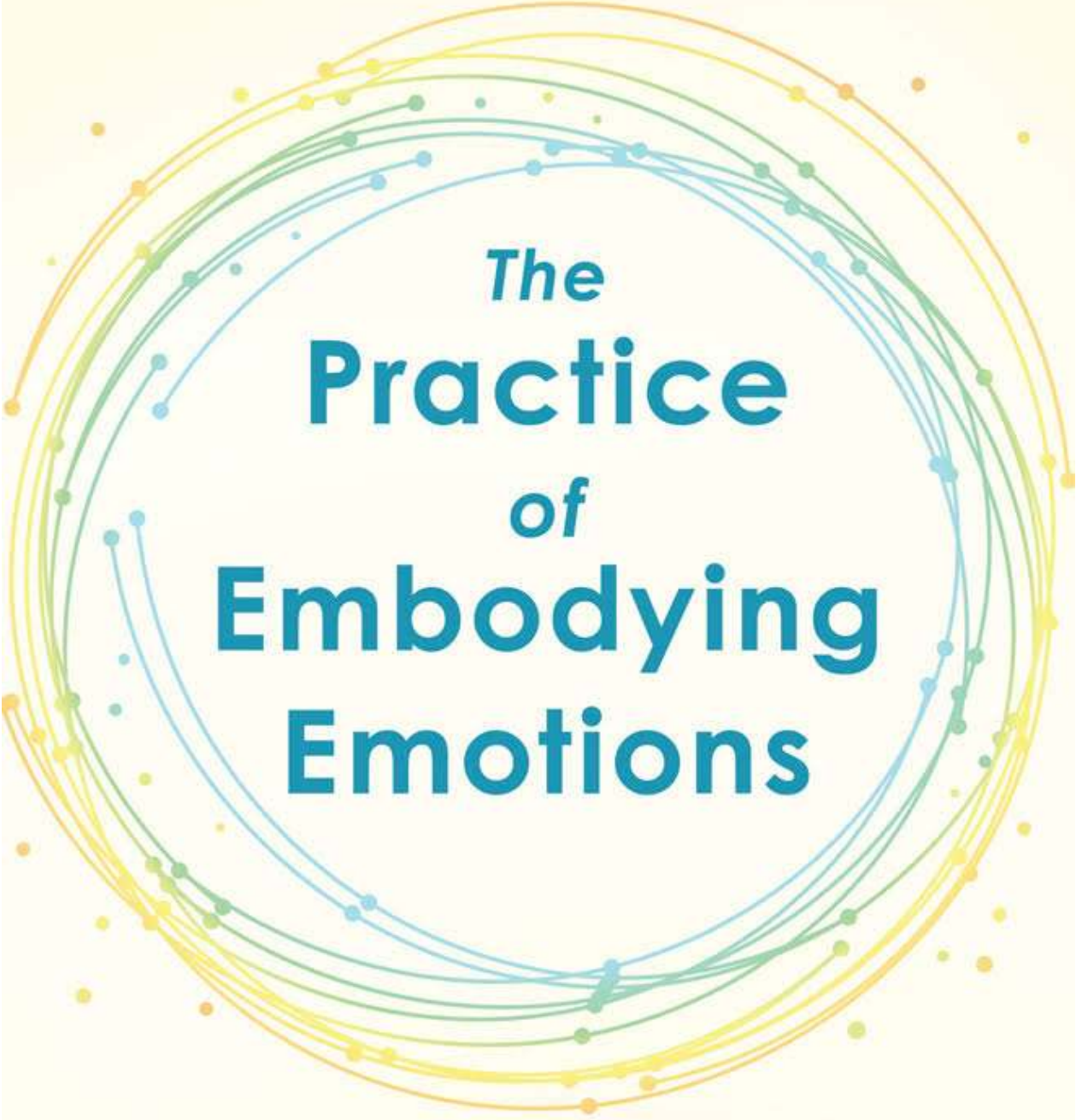
We need a call to action. Separate modalities need to unite for our common good. The USABP is a great resource, a neutral ground to meet and talk about what steps to take. I know that SPT Magazine will join in this effort and continue to offer articles that shed light on and educate readers about our field.

Sincerely,

Nancy Eichhorn, PhD

Founding Editor-in-Chief

"A grand accomplishment."  
—PETER A LEVINE, PhD, author of *In an Unspoken Voice*



*The*  
**Practice**  
*of*  
**Embodying**  
**Emotions**

A GUIDE FOR IMPROVING COGNITIVE,  
EMOTIONAL, AND BEHAVIORAL OUTCOMES

**Raja Selvam, PhD**





### **Reviewed by Nancy Eichhorn**

**Feelings were not allowed** in my childhood home. We learned how to numb out, to banish emotions to the realms of distancing and dissociation. Peppermint fudge ice cream and chocolate chip cookies soothed pain-filled tears that quivered but never came to pass. We lived a bland life, no salt, no pepper, spices made my mother's fingers swell. No highs. No lows. Pure and simple neutrality. Not in the state that Buddhists reach for to end self-inflicted suffering but rather a state of nonexistence.

**Writing today,** I still struggle at times to sit with my emotions, or perhaps it's more accurate to say I still tend to block bodily sensations that start the experience of feeling something. My throat constricts when tears start. My neck is so tight my acupuncturist gave up trying to release it, and my massage therapist tenderly touches it without trying to dig in and create change.

**In the rare instance** that someone asks me how I feel, my response is a courteous, "fine". Unless I'm hiking and then I'm "happy". When I look in the mirror, metaphorically and/or literally, I see my inherited neutrality. Stoic? Absent? Numb? Or perhaps never present and accounted for.

**Emotions are a conundrum.** I know I'm not alone. The plethora of materials available to "help" readers feel their feelings and heal their wounded past is immense. And as many of my readers know, I have read volumes, and I have experienced multiple modalities all in the name of healing. And still, I sit here "stuck" in my quagmire of knowing and still wanting. Every book I read brings me one step closer, and yet I never actually arrive. The closest I have ever come to feeling complete, so much so that 31 years of an active eating disorder simply disappeared, was with

an amazing therapist who understood the intimate dynamics of body psychotherapy, including resonance, attunement, containment, safe touch, and presence. She was a short-lived miracle in my life.

**This morning** I had another such connective epiphany. Reading Raja Selvam's new book, *The Practice of Embodying Emotions*, chapter 9 specifically, I felt like someone in the driver's seat actually knew where he was going, directed by an intuitive GPS taking him and me to an emotional place that made sense: sensorimotor emotions.

**Yes, the phrase is genre specific** and without time to read every word yourself, the meaning might be lost. So, I will share my conscious experience of Chapter 9 and in turn the entirety of Raja's book because he clearly offers clinicians and laypersons information and tools that are useful in one's journey.

### **Diving In**

**The first line in** the Introduction states the book's purpose: "This book is about emotion." It is followed by the expansion that the book is about the body in relation to emotion. Raja's vision is to help clients/readers create the capacity to be with their emotions. The idea is that with greater body space to contain unruly moments in our lives we can tolerate them as they wiggle and waggle through our being and make their way out the back door.



He explains that when people expand an emotional experience to as much of their body as possible, they can create a greater body space for containing and tolerating it, as opposed to isolating and concentrating it in one area of the body or pushing it aside altogether. By expanding the experience of emotion throughout the body, he notes that people can improve their emotional health as well as physical, energetic, cognitive, relational, and spiritual lives. The central thesis of the book: “involving more of the body in emotional experience can create a greater capacity to tolerate emotion and stay with it for a longer period of time” (pg. 2), rests on the definition of emotion as a “summary assessment of a situation’s impact on a person’s well-being” (pg. 2).

**The book** is divided into three sections. Part I (Chapters 1-4) is an overview of theory, practice, and diverse benefits of the practice embodying emotions with plenty of examples. Part II (Chapters 5 – 9) takes readers deeper into the science behind the practice and into Raja’s modality that he calls Integral Somatic Psychotherapy™ or simply ISP™. Part III (Chapters 10-14) focuses on tools and skills to ‘embody emotions’, including a four-step protocol of emotional embodiment and inter-personal resonance, to help therapists and other readers to start to use the work right away.

**Raja writes** that Integral Somatic Psychotherapy is a “comprehensive psychological approach to embodiment of all levels of the psyche, individual and collective, with emotional embodiment as its primary clinical strategy to improve cognition, emotional, and behavioral outcomes in all therapies and in everyday life.”

**The text** is personally written, a first-person narrator guiding readers through a foundational understanding of body psychotherapy in general and the practice of embodying emotions in particular, and then a deeper look at the theoretical support from the emerging science of embodied cognition, emotion, and behavior in affective neuroscience and cognitive psychology, and from the field of body psychotherapy.



INTEGRAL  
**SOMATIC**  
PSYCHOLOGY™

Parts I and II, well written and informative, are important for readers new to body psychotherapy and Integral Somatic Psychology, as well as for those of us immersed in the field yet unfamiliar with the current literature on these subjects. Raja brings a picture into focus layering past, present, and potential in a workable format that affords integration with the new and the known. The heart of the book for me was Part III, the skills needed to step one step closer to feeling whole.



### **Without Further Ado: Chapter 9**

**Did you know** that researchers created extensive lists/charts of feelings (the basic 6 to 154), which may be categorized as “emotions, feelings, affects, motivations, drives (such as sexuality), attitudes (such as positive, negative, or ambivalent), and temperaments (such as optimism and pessimism)” and more? (pg. 185). Well, I didn’t. Sure, I’ve heard of the basics: happiness, sadness, fear, anger, surprise, and disgust, but more have been added. There’s amusement, contempt, contentment, excitement, guilt, pride, shame, etc.

**Raja lays it all out** including Robert Plutchik’s wheel of emotions that starts with an inner circle of eight so called basic emotions (joy, trust, fear, surprise, sadness, disgust, anger, and anticipation). From here Plutchik combines basic emotions in dyads and triads to arrive at secondary and tertiary emotions to account for most of our emotional experiences.

Raja also shares Gerrod Parrott's framework of emotions (pg. 146). It is a bit overwhelming to even consider.

**From there**, we enter several different realms of emotional perspectives and understanding: the dimensional approach, the constructionist approach, and more. Then on page 197 we hit paydirt. "The Missing Emotions: Simple and Complex Sensorimotor Emotions".

**Raja's examples:**

"I feel as though I have been run over by a truck."

"My body feels like a black hole."

"I felt as solid as a mountain."

**My words:**

"My heart is singing."

"My soul is embracing dawn as the start of all that is new."

"I'm drowning in darkness."

"Dear God, when will this end? I honestly can't take it."

**Okay.** I've been called a "Drama Queen". A repugnant phrase people use to connote what they define as an over dramatization of my experience. Basically they want me to feel happy or sad while I feel embroiled in massive vaults of . . . okay you get it. But here, on the page, Raja spoke to me: "We find such expressions abundantly in fiction and poetry, but rarely in our clinical settings . . ." (pg. 200). Then he postulates that these descriptive phrases of emotion used to capture psychologically meaningful body states that are not usually recognized as emotions might be called body or sensorimotor emotions. He values and encourages these expressions as they are often easier to access and work with than emotions on various lists.

**Descriptive phrases of emotion used to capture psychologically meaningful body states that are not usually recognized as emotions might be called body or sensorimotor emotions.**



**Not to mislead you,** it isn't just over the top expressions. Someone can say, "I don't feel good about this", or "I'm uncomfortable", and this is where Raja starts. Because we can easily access experiences of feeling good, bad, or neutral, we can start working with our emotional experiences right away. Raja demonstrates, with many examples throughout the book, that working with such simple sensorimotor emotions in the body first often builds capacity for more differentiated emotions such as loneliness to emerge with less difficulty than before. Any small vocalization referencing one's affect state is one possible entry point to embody one's emotions.

**At this point,** Raja expands his discussion to include the body and the physiology of emotions. He discusses how our facial affect system (head, face, and neck) plays a part (yes, the Polyvagal Theory is addressed) and ways to intervene using awareness, mindfulness, touch, self-touch, visualization, breath, tracking sensations, and movement. He devotes time to all areas of the body and their significance in connecting to emotions and healing what needs attention by using what he calls "simple area-to-area expansion strategies with just awareness and intention" (pg. 252). He notes that the phrase "expanding the physiology" means "undoing defenses against emotions to involve more of the physiology in the emotional experience."

**Some examples:**

*"As you feel the anxiety in your chest, please enlarge your awareness to include your arms. You can go back and forth between your chest and your arms in your awareness, or you can hold them both in your awareness at the same time. How does that change your experience of anxiety in your chest? Does the chest feel more expanded or a little less constricted? Does the anxiety expand more in the chest area? Does it feel more tolerable than before? What about your arms? Do they feel more expanded? Do you now feel in your arms any of the qualities of the anxiety you feel in your chest?"* (pg. 252).





**Raja works** with easy-to-implement self-touch and movement strategies to help undo defenses that block/constrict our emotions in our clients and ourselves. Through awareness, self-touch, and movement, we can expand an emotional experience locally in one area of the body and connect the experience to other parts in in our brain and body physiology.

*"When facial muscles are being blocked during emotional experiences, processing of the emotion and the situation in the brain is severely compromised. When the face and throat physiology become involved in emotional experiences in the rest of the body through facial and vocal expression, greater clarity about one's emotional experience is possible" (pp. 253-254).*

*"As you feel the fear in the chest, open and close your mouth to loosen the jaw muscles, open and close your eyes to expand the muscles of the eyes, turn your head and neck in different directions, or express the fear through facial expression and vocalization. Do one or more of the above actions and notice what you experience in your chest and in your head as a result" (pg. 255).*

**To connect** the experience of sadness in the face and throat to the abdomen Raja offers the use of awareness to bring the experience from one area to the other, to try to move the sadness down into the abdomen to see what happens. And to place one hand on your throat and the other on the abdomen with the intention of connecting the two areas.

**His conversation** about the neck muscles (based on Bodydynamic Analysis) was an eye opener for me. According to Raja, our neck muscles allow us to cope with or defend against high levels of stress, fear, and shock. Simply moving the neck or gently touching it can help undo defenses, especially when dealing with fear, terror, or grief—touching the back of the neck can help release tension and holding in the throat.

## **Beyond Chapter 9**

**There is more** to this book than Chapter 9. Each chapter in Part III addresses one of the four steps of emotional embodiment work: the situation, the emotion, expansion, and integration. Readers learn the importance of available situational details to evoke and maintain emotional responses. Different ways to access and stay with emotions are addressed as well as ways to expand emotional experiences to as much of the body as possible to increase tolerability over a longer period of time. A seven-step protocol for embodying emotion also helps readers gain more from their practice. The book ends with a fascinating discussion on the importance of resonance—its mechanisms and ways to consciously access it to regulate our own and others' emotional experiences.

**Knowing its time** to close, I offer an invitation to check out the book yourself and a shout out of appreciation: readers have free online access to videos that offer visual demonstrations and guides to complete the steps involved in embodying emotions. To learn more, visit Raja's website at [www.integralsomaticpsychology.com](http://www.integralsomaticpsychology.com).

**Raja Selvam, PhD**, a licensed clinical psychologist, is the developer of Integral Somatic Psychology™ (ISP™). His book *The Practice of Embodying Emotions: A Guide for Improving Cognitive, Emotional, and Behavioral Outcomes* will be available March 22, 2022 and is currently being translated into several languages.

### **Photo credits**

Woman with mask: retrieved from <https://integralsomaticpsychology.com/isp-blog/>

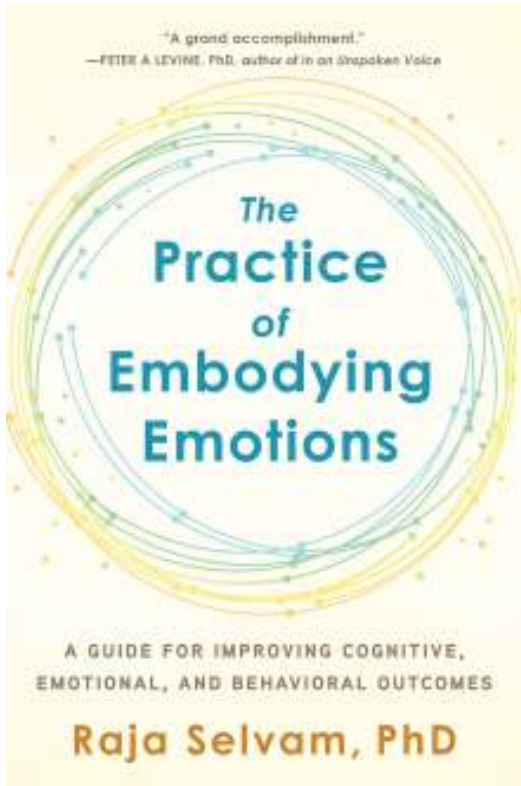
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On Writing *The Practice of Embodying Emotions: A Guide for Improving Cognitive, Emotional, and Behavioral Outcomes*

By Raja Selvam, PhD

**One thing I have learned** about myself is that I am intuitive. An idea appears to spring forth from the depth of my unconscious, without much form but with enough felt sense conviction to pursue it. It acquires shape and clarity and is reality tested in the process of expressing it, teaching it, or writing about it. It is not unlike the process that a painter might undergo in bringing an inspired image in one's mind's eye to the canvas. This I now understand and accept as my creative process. I am sure that others have their own ways of creating. It would indeed be very odd if creativity, that by the very word connotes infinite possibilities, is confined to just one way of manifesting!

**I have not always had** the benefit of the current functional understanding of my creative process, the one I have outlined above. The dominant, unconscious, and rather dysfunctional understanding of the process that has held sway for much of my life is a punishing delusional perfectionistic fantasy, probably shaped by abuse in childhood. That it flows or should flow perfectly from one's mind to paper with no mistakes whatsoever. Delusional as it is, it is an emotionally compelling conditioning, that is always there like my very shadow causing much suffering and carnage in every birthing process, big and small.

I once nearly failed a university exam in a favorite subject because I had to tear up the answer paper forty five minutes into a three hour exam to start all over again because I could not bear the imperfection of what I had written! That this reflection piece could have been written earlier, that I had trouble finding motivation to write it this morning, is a testament to its staying power. However, once I started to type, despite the resistance from the anticipated suffering from the unrealistic performance standards imposed on the creative process by the critic, it lost its power in the joy of the reality of the intuitive creative process I have come to increasingly own and enjoy as my own. Thank God!

**I often wonder how** I have managed to achieve as much as I have in this life, two graduate degrees and two doctoral degrees, licensure as a clinical psychologist, and now a book, despite having such an annihilating critic looking over my shoulders all the time. (I often joke that I should go back and get another undergraduate degree to make up the asymmetric imperfection in my academic record). I am sure that there are many alternative explanations for my achievements including the illusion of free will that would suggest that it could not have been otherwise. I have also a more down-to-earth explanation. When the fear of absolute failure exceeds the fear of failure from the imperfection in the outcome of any effort, I am emotionally compelled to act, no matter the consequence, despite the critic. In a way, I am glad that I have this enormous fear of absolute failure, whatever it might be, rearing its ugly head to become a dominant motivating force in different stages of my life. In those moments of pure abandon, akin to moments of dashing across the freeway with one's eyes closed as though pursued on the one side by a starving tiger, yet somehow unconstrained by the usual hyenas of the inner critic, I find my creative process unfold, despite myself. And however imperfect the outcome might be, there is no mistaking the gratification felt in having spontaneously created something, a gratification I long for.





**The challenge for me** all along has been how to be consistent with my creative output to enjoy the attendant gratification of embodied creativity. In other words, how to keep the critic at bay to ensure that the experience of creating is not unbearably unpleasant that one loses the motivation to stay with the effort. The common strategy of sitting in front of the computer for a fixed amount of time no matter what the outcome might be did not help much at the beginning. What did help is the habit of journaling my dreams every morning before I wrote anything else. The dreams were already there. I was not creating anything new. I was just recording them. The critic had little to say other than perhaps that I should be doing real work instead. Dreams flow from our unconscious where our creativity resides. Journaling one's dreams is also known to be therapeutic. I found the ritual of journaling cleansed the pathway between the unconscious and the conscious. However, it is the act of teaching without notes in hand that really helped me to silence the critic and create consistently for longer stretches of time. It worked out in the following way. When I taught in front of a live audience, the instantaneous positive reaction of the audience was strong enough to counter the critic to allow the creativity and the gratification it generated to continue to flow. When one is alone in front of a computer, the loud voice of the critic is not contradicted by such external feedback. With positive experiences of creating through teaching accumulated in my psyche, I adopted the writing strategy of pretending that I was actually teaching whenever I sat down to write. You might notice that engaging style in my book, that I am actually talking to the readers from time to time. Now that I have gone as far as having my first book published, I look forward to keeping the flame of creativity burning more consistently than I have been able to so far.



**So far**, I have talked about some of the ways I have used to overcome the hurdles in the process of creation. For a successful act of creation, there has to be a substantive personal motivation as well. For me, I have written elsewhere about how I needed to know more about emotion and its relationship to the body and embody them in order to grow personally as well as spiritually because I lost both in the process of a difficult childhood. Through learning, teaching, and writing about these two topics, I gained greater personal access to both emotion and body. And when I observed that these two pieces, emotions and their embodiment, were extremely beneficial to many others in improving their thinking, feeling, and behavior as well as in transforming their lives in different ways, the substantive motivation to write a book to reach more people with the knowledge I have acquired became reinforced. In the year since I turned the manuscript in to the publisher, I have grown so much more in my understanding of emotion and its embodiment in myself and speaks to the self-generating nature of the creative process and the gratification it is capable of bestowing upon those who challenge themselves to engage it.

**That emotional embodiment** itself is intrinsic to creativity is important to take note of. Creativity is ultimately a cognitive act, at least in writing. The science of embodied cognition has left no doubt that cognition depends not only on the brain but also on the body and the environment. The body that is shut down to cope with emotional overwhelm makes itself less available to the brain as well as the environment, compromising all acts of cognition. In addition, the body and the brain that are thus less connected to the environment are less connected to its fountainhead of their creativity, the collective unconscious. The body that has the capacity to bear overwhelming emotional experiences without shutting down is not only more capable of regulating cognitions, emotions, and behaviors but also more capable of tapping into the infinite creativity of the collective unconscious and manifesting them in various acts of creativity including writing.

**As I mentioned earlier**, people create in vastly different ways. That is, there is no one formula. I have shared some factors that have played a role in facilitating as well as frustrating my creative process. If it were to help at least some in finding their way to fruitfully engage their creativity, I would be most gratified.

With best wishes, Raja Selvam, PhD.

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By Nancy Eichhorn, PhD

I focus my reviews on prepublication manuscripts and "hot-off-the-press" texts. Because I'm a small niche publication, I try to offer readers material they cannot get else where.

But I started to wonder about revised and second editions. All things considered, it can take years for people to write and publish their work. The time, the turmoil, the tears. It takes a toll. Combine joy, release, and celebration to that mix? You just might create a tsunami of emotional and/or physical impact on one's body and soul.

The question nudging my brain awake at 2 am was: *Why* do authors go through that ordeal with the same material? Isn't once done, good enough?

I can see writing a new book. It's like parents having another child. Each birth (and the resultant person) is a totally miraculous event. But to rework the same stuff? It's not a breeze.

The decision alone causes many stalwart authors to pause and ponder the enormity of what they are about to consider. First and foremost, they have to evaluate the ramifications of going at it again.

Two prime questions must be addressed: Will the new material significantly benefit readers who bought the first edition? And is the central theme still viable at its core existence?



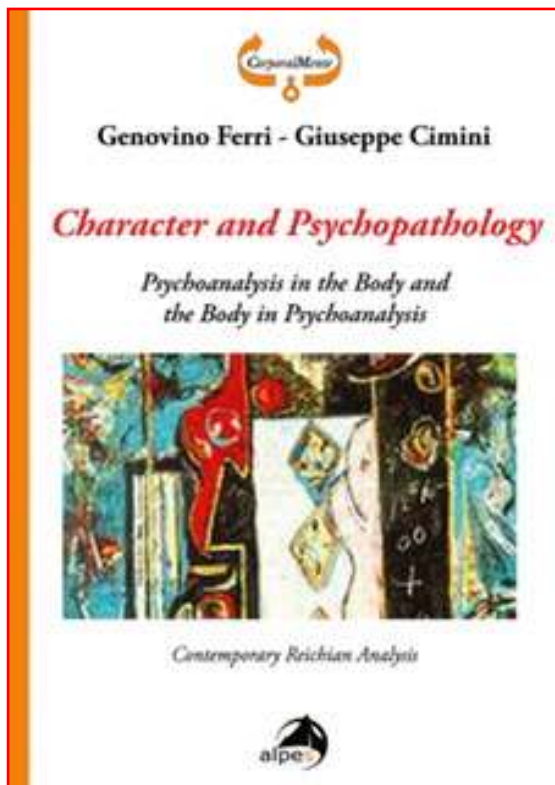
When it comes to books that detail specific clinical approaches, updates and insights are warranted to keep pace with new research, client experiences, reader feedback, and author reflections. Over the life span of a book, people write reviews, they ask questions, they want more (or, at times, less). Authors evolve. They read their book and think, this sounds awkward, or this isn't quite right. Maybe something feels poorly written, or references are outdated. Advances trigger new approaches. What was, is no longer. Many books have staying power despite their age, "the classics", but for books to reach new readers, authors have to align their work with advances in the field to match current knowledge and clinical experience.



Next comes the choice: revision or new edition? They are not the same although both still require a new ISBN and other time-consuming details related to publication.

If an author dabbles a bit, makes a few changes, updates some information, then it's considered a revised edition. It behooves the author to note on the book cover that: The revised edition includes new . . . whatever it is that is new and why

people will want to buy it even if they have the original. This is all part of marketing, bringing the "old" book forward, back into public consciousness with an earmark as to why it warrants another look. If substantial changes are made including a new or revised title, then the book becomes a second edition.



At this point, rather than talk about this process in general, I opted to talk with Dr. Genovino Ferri as he and his co-author Giuseppe Cimini recently announced the publication of the English language translation of their second edition of their e-book for Amazon Kindle. The original publication, released in May of 2018, was titled: *Psychopathology and Character. Psychoanalysis in the Body and the Body in Psychoanalysis. Reichian Analysis.*

The new release?

*Character and Psychopathology: Psychoanalysis in the Body and the Body in Psychoanalysis. Contemporary Reichian Analysis.*

Note the shift in terms so the significance changes from psychopathology to

character and from Reichian in general to a more contemporary approach.

Dr. Ferri notes: "The title has been changed from the First edition to reflect and underline the fact that psychopathology arises from beyond-threshold character trait, the roots of which are sunk deeply into the person's life story and the marks incised by their relationships onto very precise bodily areas."

It was not an easy decision for either author to rework the material. They are both full time clinicians, educators, and family members. Yet, their work matters at a deep personal level, so resonant that they felt compelled to respond to reader comments, to personal considerations, to new advances in the field.

Although the language used is still complex, Dr. Ferri believes there is now greater clarity and ease of reading. Certain concepts, symptoms and fundamental syndromes have been elucidated with tables and more descriptive figures.

Dr. Ferri explained, "Certain illustrative tables, for example, were not present in the first edition which indicate the correlation between the main syndromes (from psychosis to depression and neurosis) both in terms of the peripheral bodily levels marked by relational imprintings during the evolutive stages and in terms of the brain areas reached and, themselves, marked by those same relational imprintings through the sensory periphery.

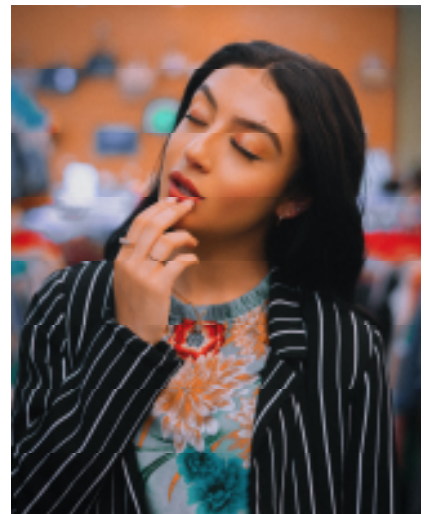
“Tables on the main cerebral neuromediators have also been added, which contribute to the clarification of the relationship between symptoms (such as anxiety, angst, panic, delusion and hallucinations) and the specific relational bodily areas which received dysfunctional imprintings during the evolutive stages.

“A further addition is a table which illustrates the ‘tree of fear’, showing situational phobias, claustrophobia, social phobias and so on, indicating where they are situated along the bottom-up arrow of time in very precise ‘apartment-areas’ in the ‘building’ representing personality.”

Further, he notes, neuroscientific and psychoanalytical correlations with central and peripheral bodily interfaces (the associated brain areas and relational bodily levels) have been added. For instance, relational bodily levels that represent portals through which appropriate psychocorporeal activations can access the dysfunctional areas of a person’s incorporated ontogenetic evolution. According to Dr. Ferri, “these relational bodily levels are sections of the body which have received incised marks (the word ‘character’ itself is derived from a root meaning ‘incised mark’) from the story of that person’s ontogenetic development over time. It is sufficient to think of the range of developmental experiences possible during feeding and breast-feeding. The nature of the experience during a specific time-period of development is therefore ‘marked’ on the body itself in precise peripheral areas and that time is actually represented by the significant imprintings received during the associated evolutive stages.”

Building on the previous example of feeding and breast feeding, Dr. Ferri notes that one way, when used appropriately in the psychotherapy setting, to carefully access the bodily unconscious (represented by psycho-corporeal activations that are neurologically stratified bodily movements, common to all individuals) is to act directly on the person’s relational bodily areas, e.g., mimic the sucking action of the mouth during feeding.

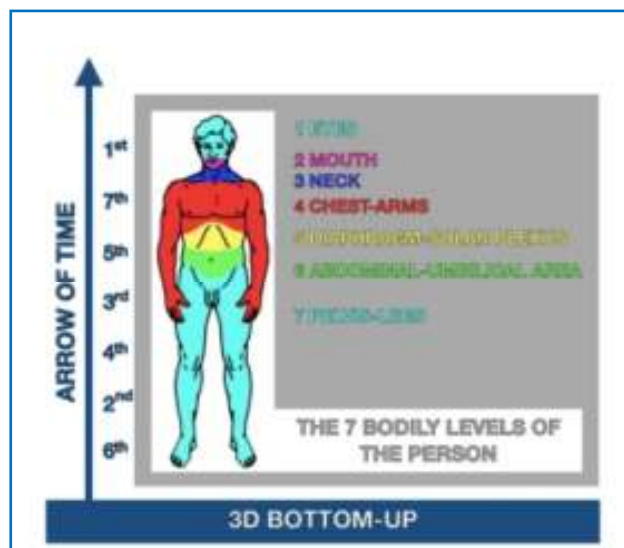
“These bodily activations reveal the analytically useful life-experiences which have been deposited in the various areas, or ‘apartments’, which together represent the ‘construction’ of our personality,” Dr. Ferri said. “We have dwelt in one or more of these bodily apartments ever since our intrauterine life, and they can reveal themselves to be precious therapeutic afferents for psychotherapy.”



In this light, Dr. Ferri shared that the English language edition of "Body Time", dedicated to the correct use of Bodily Activations in Psychotherapy in Modern Reichian Analysis, will be published in the next year.

From Dr. Ferri's perspective and approach he believes that "psychopathology becomes more human and less alienated. It becomes comprehensible. Above all, it becomes possible to make real therapeutic contact, respecting the situation's inherent intelligence and, thus, treating the other as "person" rather than just 'patient'."

The new book also details development of Contemporary Reichian Analysis. Dr. Ferri explained that they continue to seek appropriateness tailored to the needs of the individual in the analytical-therapeutic project in the setting, through its three active principles - the analytical-therapeutic relationship, psychocorporeal activations and psychopharmacotherapy. It is not always easy to take a founding principle/theory and grow forward and yet Reich's work was instrumental in many body psychotherapy approaches and maintains relevance despite decades of change.



While readers are on the hunt for what is new, Dr. Ferri shares that the section dedicated to the mutation of the emotional plague found in the modern "liquid" society, which represents a precise snapshot of the world as we see it today, remains largely unchanged.

Looking at the overall changes and considering the process Dr. Ferri and Dr. Cimini went through a second time, I asked Dr. Ferri to talk a little about why he wanted to do another edition, what flowed smoothly and what presented challenges.

Dr. Ferri was candid in his response:

“It has been difficult to contain my passion for body psychotherapy and psychopathology, so one way of expressing it is to try, more simply, to bring the reader to discovery and greater comprehension of the masked, underlying, bodily intelligence in psychopathology.

“There was the wish to make it more difficult for stigma to remain and create distance, the wish to break down the diffidence and fear which alienates and there was the wish to facilitate inclusion and shared research, by offering concrete, evidence-based, scientific means for interventions in body psychotherapy and to create dialogue with psychopharmacological interventions which become ever more appropriate to the real life-story and character of the person.”

The authentic wish is to inspire the reader to look beyond the limit where we would often stop, leaving the other in incomprehensible suffering, stimulating their interest in a body-sense, in a body-code and in body-time, so as to bring them closer to the still *complex* world of psychopathology as the beyond-threshold expression of a character trait.

Genovino Ferri is a Psychiatrist e Reichian Analyst. He is a Member of the New York Academy of Sciences (N.Y.A.S.) and Director of the Italian School of Reichian Analysis (S.I.A.R.).

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Arrow of time chart: Genovino Ferri







In case you missed Dr. Ferri's interview with Madlen Algafari, entitled, Intercorporeity and Intersubjectivity A Conversation with Genovino Ferri, in the *International Body Psychotherapy Journal* 20(2) Fall/Winter 2021/2022 (pg13), we wanted to let you know so you can be sure to check it out.

The interview begins: How did you move from psychiatry to body psychotherapy?

If you don't mind, I would like to turn the question around and tell you how I went from body psychotherapy to psychiatry, which was actually the journey I really made. I went into analysis when I was 23 and a student of medicine. I had a thousand questions, but I had or received only a few answers. My doctor, to whom I would ask all these questions and reveal my concerns, very politely suggested that I speak with a friend of his, a well-known professor and psychiatrist. He in turn proposed a course of analysis, as I was an "intelligent" young man with significant questions. He assured me that a course of analysis would certainly be beneficial. That is how I came to meet my first analyst, who had studied Adler but was also training in body psychotherapy. The first six months were only verbal psychotherapy, which was "nice" – a word I often use to say that a therapeutic element certainly doesn't hurt, yet neither is it significantly effective. "

"If you're ready for true emotional freedom,  
let *Boundary Boss* show you the way."

KRIS CARR *New York Times* bestselling author

**TERRI COLE**

**BOUNDARY  
BOSS**



**THE ESSENTIAL GUIDE  
TO TALK TRUE, BE SEEN,  
AND (FINALLY) LIVE FREE**

Reviewed by Nancy Eichhorn, PhD



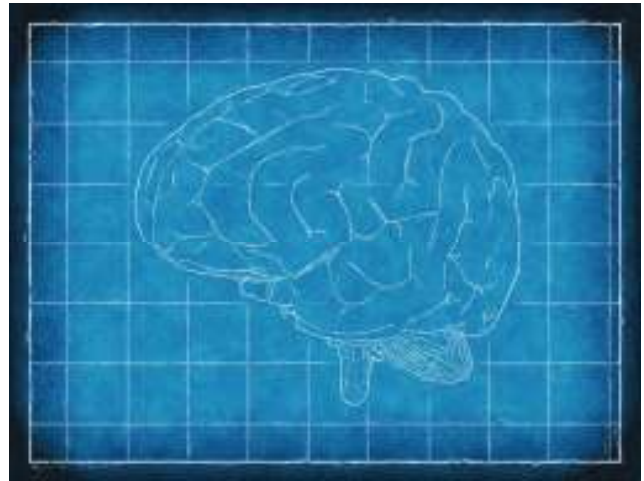
My inner editor smiles (envision a Cheshire Cat grin) when reviewing a new book and its layout includes all the necessary guideposts. *Boundary Boss: The Essential Guide to Talk True, Be Seen, and (Finally) Live*

*Free* by Terri Cole is a well-written, well-thought-out and laid-out guide for people wanting to address their lack of boundaries and learn how to create healthy ones to benefit their lives. The text is designed to inform, educate, and support readers as they confront what is and consider what may be.

The book is divided into two parts: Connecting the dots to the past and Creating the new normal. Readers learn how they might have come to be boundaryless or challenged when it comes to setting boundaries and how to move from past patterning to clear out the old and create the new.



In part one, readers unearth their “boundary blueprint” to discover conscious and unconscious ways they relate to boundaries. Inner child work is designed to highlight the reality that younger parts of ourselves might be the ones making critical decisions for our lives today. Perhaps not such a great idea. To address this, Terri offers what she calls the 3Rs: Recognize, Release, Respond.



Part two invites readers to play with the tools, strategies and scripts and customize them to fit their comfort level. There is a step-by-step process to develop a “proactive boundary plan” and what to do when “boundary destroyers” try to sabotage your growth.

Terri offers pointers on how to use the book. For starters, she notes that it is designed to be read in chronological order, page 1 leads to page 2 and so forth. You have to build a foundation of understanding and begin to cement concepts into your psyche (well, at least do the exercises throughout each chapter so what comes next makes sense). Her organizational layout includes:

- True Talk Tips: she recaps key concepts in each chapter
- Back to You: spur of the moment assessments to help readers personalize the information and apply it to their unique situation
- Boundary Boss in Action: At the end of each chapter there are Top of Mind activities help to expand self-awareness and Go Deeper integration exercises, noted as essential to help create sustainable change.

There is an online portal, yay, filled with bonus material including downloadable, manageable timewise meditations (mini grounding-2 minutes, calm in the storm-8 minutes, self-love-5 minutes, and guilt free boundaries-10 minutes); PDFs are available including the Boundary Boss Bill of Rights, Go Deeper activities, and useful scripts to start language-ing boundary setting in situations with family, friends, colleagues.





Meditation is a necessary component in this process; thus experientials are offered in the book and online. Terri also recommends downloading a free application (Insight Timer with over 130,000 meditations) so there's no reason people cannot carve out time and try. She recommends meditating first thing in the morning, noting "here is a space between fully asleep and fully awake that is the perfect mind space to plant intentions and expand internal peace."

She also highly recommends creating a "safe and cozy space in your home" to focus on your internal space, a Zen Den. Here you can meditate, journal, do the integration exercises, sit in stillness and daydream. This is your place to come and ground, to be in the moment of here and now, not living forward or backward, just breathing (and yes there are free applications to help you breathe with focused intention).

This is an effective package with only one piece missing to perfect it: The reader's willingness to follow through.

This book has enough accessible content and experiential support for committed readers to create lasting change. But nothing will happen if readers do not take the time to immerse themselves in what is being offered. The activities are not time exhaustive. Readers can dig as deep as they want, journal and meditate as long as they want. The idea, however, is to journal, to meditate, to create the space one needs to look at, with curiosity, what was and to consider what might be and how to move toward that without self-sabotage.

Terri recommends that readers pace themselves. This isn't meant to be read in one sitting and miraculously you are fortified with the reserves and resiliency to create healthy boundaries. This is a process that takes time, space, moments of inaction in order to wake up what has been dormant or perhaps sculpt what never existed to reveal your truest essence so it can shine in all variations of light (think bright to shadow), move with equal grace through the thickest or the thinnest of experiences, and land in balance with pleasure in simply being you.



Terri Cole is a licensed psychotherapist, global relationship and empowerment expert, and the author of *Boundary Boss-The Essential Guide to Talk True, Be Seen and (Finally) Live Free*. For over two decades, Terri has worked with a diverse group of clients that includes everyone from stay-at-home moms to celebrities and Fortune 500 CEOs. She has a gift for making complex psychological concepts accessible and actionable so that clients and students achieve sustainable change. She inspires over 450,000 people weekly through her blog, social media platform, signature courses, and her popular podcast, *The Terri Cole Show*. For more, see [terricole.com](http://terricole.com)

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## Tuning into Gravity By Nancy Eichhorn Ph.D.

Gravity matters. Not simply to keep us physically grounded here on Earth, but, at a fundamental level, our relationship with gravity affects our lives from start to finish.

We start life floating in amniotic fluids. It's easy to assume a sense of buoyancy, free from gravity's impact. Yet, gravity is necessary for our physiological development during the second half of our lives in the womb (Sekulic', Lukac, and Naumovic, 2005).

We sense gravity's force from birth forward as we experience our verticality. Standing upright, we learn to manage the polarity of motion and stability. As primary resources develop, such as grounding, balancing, orienting, centering, and more, we build the capacity to orient to the space around us.



According to Darrell Sanchez Ph.D., "Our verticality relates to our sense of security. The ability to orient vertically to our environment enables us to see the full 360 degrees of our surroundings to identify and distinguish between threat and safety, to determine if we should approach or avoid a situation. Successful orienting from functional verticality combines our internal proprioception system with the perception of information from the environment. Well-being and confidence follow from this success as we connect to a more profound, fuller sense of ourselves" (Sanchez & Gettliffe, 2016).

"Connection to our bodies, centering, myofascial responsiveness, and our capacity to experience the space within and around us contribute to a balanced and oriented embodiment. When we are internally aware and attuned to the environment, we know where we are in the present moment, an essential step toward knowing who we are" (Sanchez & Gettliffe, 2016).

When we are out of balance in our lives and our bodies, we may notice changes in our physical, emotional, psychological, and spiritual well-being. Sanchez has explored vertical integration, verticality, and vertical embodiment resources concerning psychological aspects of our experience. He asserts that vertical integration of the whole body within the field of gravity is associated with improvements in our quality of life. To develop and or support vertical embodiment resources, he created the Tuning Board.

Per Sanchez, The Tuning Board is a somatic movement tool that gently stimulates the nervous system at the deepest levels of the brain and spinal cord. The flow of movement stimulation through our vertical human postures carries information between the brain, the body, and the environment.

That movement stimulates the brainstem and the vagus nerve complex on its journey. The soft acceleration and amplification of the natural flow of movement on the Tuning Board make the flow of energy and information present from moment to moment. Fostering a nonjudgmental awareness makes it an exceptional tool for mindfulness movement. The constant movement provides a gentle stimulation of the vagus and visceral sensory organs and the balance and proprioception functions of the vestibular organs, cerebellum, and cortical regions of the brain (Sanchez, personal communication, April 30, 2022).

“The information shows us who we are, what we think, feel, imagine, and what we have experienced. The waves of motion that course through the vertical nervous system in the dance with gravity activate inhibition and recovery of the ventral vagal complex that . . . provides an anatomical basis for historical concepts of the optimal balance among physiological systems . . .” (Sanchez, personal communication, April 30, 2022).

Sanchez explained that somatic therapists can use the Tuning Board to encourage this felt experience of fluid verticality directly influencing the vagus nerve complex. Once they have experienced the Tuning Board for themselves and reviewed available online information ([www.tuningboard.org/somatictherapy](http://www.tuningboard.org/somatictherapy)) and brief videos ([an overview video](#) and [video on introducing the Tuning Board to your client](#)), they can begin



using it with clients. Simply assisting the client to stand safely on the Tuning Board in a neutral position is already impactful; the Tuning Board and the client's nervous system will do the rest.

Darrell is offering a free question and answer session on June 3, 2022. For information, please visit:

[www.tuningboard.org/trainings/#June3](http://www.tuningboard.org/trainings/#June3)

**SPT Magazine readers receive a 10% discount on the purchase of a Tuning Board. Our discount code is: SPT2022**

Please visit [www.tuningboard.org/trainings](http://www.tuningboard.org/trainings) for general information.



Darrell Sanchez, Ph.D., is a licensed professional counselor, trauma therapist, certified advanced Rolfer™, and a movement/therapy/dance instructor.

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# The Voice As Mask

By John A. Baron

*"Our voice is a mask because it helps us express ourselves, it helps us share who we are inside, but it is still just a projection . . . ."*

Rébecca Kleinberger







Masks have fascinated cultures and individuals for centuries. In ancient Greek plays, masks were thought to embody the spirit of the character that the actor played. It was as if the mask itself used the actor to bring the character it represented back to life. The actor could often feel overtaken by the character of the mask. The voice of the actor in the here and now expressed the spirit of the character portrayed.

But a mask is more than the physical material, be it leather, *Papier-mâché*, or terra cotta. It is a representation of the person in appearance and voice. How many disguises live in our voice, our sounds, and sayings? Our manipulations, politicking, false enthusiasms, cover-ups, obfuscations, insincerities, compromised agreements? How do these actually sound? How do we hear them in ourselves as we do in others?

### **The Human Voice is a Mask**

The human voice is more than a technical instrument, more than a vehicle to express words waiting to be said. Researchers can and do gain insight into how the voice works by studying articulation, breathing, movements of the vocal folds, etc. And their studies aid our work in all aspects of human life (physical, emotional, spiritual). And while these studies are essential, and perhaps at times necessary, technical analysis alone doesn't paint a complete picture. As somatic therapists/educators, we know that the voice reflects the state and being of the speaker, connected or otherwise. It reflects the entire being, the Self, including what is conscious and visible and what is shadowed and unconscious, shifting silently below the surface until "voiced".

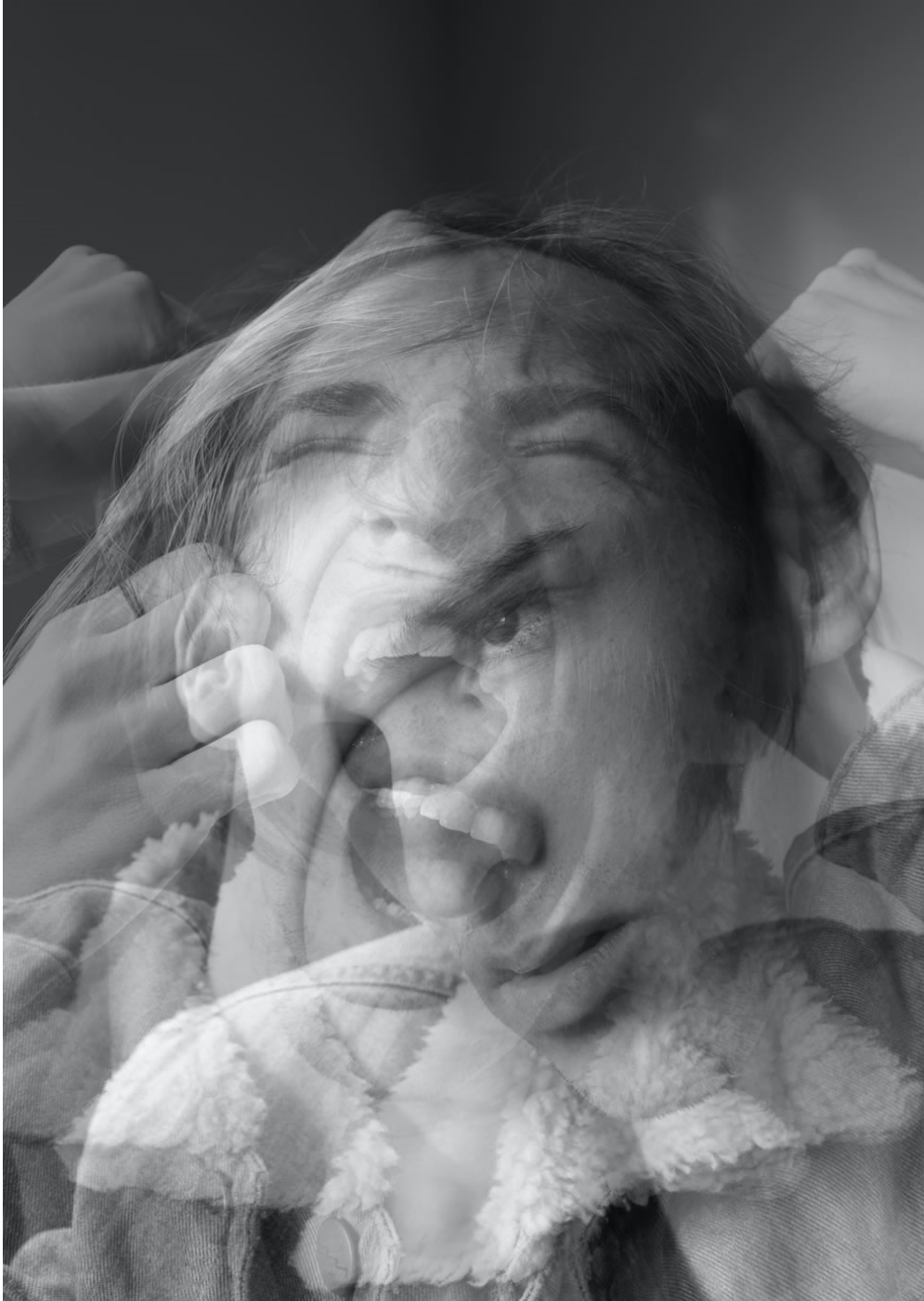


## What do the sounds of human voices hide or reveal?

Our voice can be molded to fit our feelings, be it frightened, nervous, joyful, excited, or even bored. But it can also betray our most profound

truth, silent in the wings: a crack, an unexpected high shrill, a stumbling over words. We have the sense that we can control what we say and how we say it, but the reality is that our voices are layered, and textured. They perform as expected, and at times they break free and reveal our truth, perhaps at times much to our embarrassment or disgrace.

Without wearing actual physical masks, we put on voices to fulfill the demands of roles we find ourselves in, be it the stern father or the



## **How then do we sound in these roles?**

The mask of the roles may become evident to us when we play them. But what happens when the role or mask takes over? When we are unaware of this happening (others may be, though)? When we become lost in them, what then? Lost or found in a role, our voices will express our true feelings in many different ways, like it or not.

### **Voice expresses spirit**

Words take on a new dimension when the sounds behind words - intonation, emotion, pitch, tempo - are enlivened or deadened.

Not everyone will be familiar with the phrase 'Voice Confrontation.' Most will be familiar with its meaning. It refers to the dislike of the sound of our own voice. There is a technical explanation for this. When we hear the recorded sound of our own voice, it is without the bone conduction sounds we hear when speaking. So, a recording doesn't sound quite the same to us as we sound to ourselves when we speak. But there may be a more veiled explanation for voice confrontation: we don't like the sound of our voice when our sound sounds phony to us. Why? Because then we have to admit we are phony.

Vocal phoniness is an indication that vocal masks are at play. When that is the case, what are vocal masks hiding?

'Phony' is a loaded word, one most of us have a strong adverse reaction to. It implies, false, B.S., sham, pseudo, manipulation, and affectation. But also consider these possibilities: unconscious, unintended, habit, buffering, defense, suppressed emotion, insecurity, and nervousness. Then, phoniness takes on another dimension, a more human one.

Perhaps we don't like how we sound when the vulnerabilities hiding behind our voice masks are revealed. The tightening of the throat, holding of one's breath, and pushing of sound, are just some examples/ manifestations of how we camouflage/ armor what we don't want others to see or hear. If the sounds we make doing this resemble croaky adolescents, then the way we mask our vulnerabilities becomes obvious.



*"I sometimes hold it half a sin, to put in words the grief I feel, for words like nature half reveal, and half conceal the soul within."*

A.L. Tennyson

### **Voice masks**

When considering the following 'vocal quirks', please bear in mind, that they are examples. They are not absolutes. There are millions of messages within and behind all voices. The following illustrate a few.

#### **Vocal Quirk 1. Everything in life is enthusiastic**

This may have started with barkers at the fair and picked up by checkered-suited car salesmen in the 1960's, people using their voices to proclaim the truth, whatever they happen to be selling. This voice is used by overzealous preachers, new age gurus, motivational speakers, and hyper podcasters, all armed with chirpy content.

Where there is unnecessary physical tension, there is vocal tension – for example, speaking loudly, pitching higher, rushing tempos. Overuse of this mask exhausts the listener. ‘Rah rah’ delivery puts on an upbeat, smiling mask with too many questions behind it. Why is all and everything reduced to a one-note samba of false cheeriness? Of course, not everything can be whoop dee do enthusiasm, so why make it so?

***"There is a King Who is aware of every Mask you put on."*** Rumi

## **Vocal Quirk 2. Mumbling**

“Erm hume yango shelditz e verbul standitch ...” If you wrote like you sound when you mumble, might you come across like this? Businesswise or otherwise, we can’t afford to mumble.

Working to affect clarity in a person’s sound is one of the most important parts of vocal coaching. The goal of accent reduction, for example, is not to get rid of accents, but to clean up accents so speakers will be understood.

What hides behind mumbles? What does it say about a person’s confidence? Their shyness, opposition, secrets, uncertainties, disagreements? What impression does it give to the listener? What might a ‘mumbling mask’ actually look like?





### **Vocal Quirk 3. Too Quick, Too Slow**

'In-tempo-rate' is my newly invented word for explaining hurried or dragged speech patterns.

Some gifted and intelligent types often speak at breakneck speed. They speak at the pace of their own understanding and not of their audience. Galloping away, they appear to have little concern for their listeners. Thus, they lose them and leave them in the dust.

Listeners' needs need prioritizing. When a speaker adapts their tempo to the pace of their listeners, they will be better received. Getting quick speakers to slow down is a challenge at first, as is changing any habit. But slowing one's speaking opens other doors. The speaker, paying more attention to the needs of the audience, connects more with them.

People may speak too quickly when they lack confidence. Then, they seem to be saying, "Let's get it over with."

Hyper expression is a characteristic of fast-paced speakers. Sounding 'hyper,' is perceived as negative, compulsive, erratic, and even by some as rude. (Yet another unwanted mask for a speaker to consider.)



Speaking too slowly may be a lesser sin than its opposite, but the impression it gives is that of a dullard. Taking one's time while conversing is to be encouraged. Yet, when taken too far, it will irritate most listeners. Behind this mask lurks uncertainty and hesitancy. It says, 'I'm not interesting, or even worse, 'I'm slow!'

Varying tempo in our speaking, in my mind, is an absolute necessity. Why? Because liveliness speaks at a quick pace, while thoughtfulness and depth need more time. Listeners need both. Lack of variance in tempo reveals a lack of nuance and exposes emotional woodenness.

***"I wear the mask. It does not wear me."***

Phillippe, 'Man in the Iron Mask'



#### **Voice Quirk 4. Tight Jaw**

Try this: Tighten your jaw. Now continue to speak with the jaw tightened (many do). What did you notice? What happens to the sound, the story that emerges from this, the emotions it constellates? What does a tight jaw imply?

The masseter muscles of the jaw are the strongest (per sq. inch) in the body. Along with the temporalis, they are the main closers of the jaw. Most people, though, clench them when opening their jaw. It should open by gravity (only partially true. Some smaller muscles with fancy Latin names do their bit also. For example, digastric, mylohyoid, lateral pterygoid). Yet jaw over-tension is rampant.

A tight-held jaw impedes the free movement of the tongue, mouth, neck, and facial muscles - all affecting the way we sound. The tighter the jaw, the more constricted the sound. A tight neck and jaw constrict the larynx.

Jaw tension can be camouflage for holding back anger, or not speaking out. Our tensions are also our armor - the armor that masks the fears and energies. A mask that doesn't want this communicated.

***"Oral armoring (mouth/jaw) can be seen in habitual expressions: sarcastic smiling, continuous smiling, or a contemptuous or smug grin. The chin may be collapsed or pushed forward. The throat can be pinched in a way that results in a whining sound or weak voice."***

Dr. Patricia Frisch

### **Voice Quirk 5. Monotone**

Physical tension will narrow the vocal range. An average person can have a range of between 1.5 to 2 octaves in their voice. A trained singer between 2 to 3 octaves, in rare cases even more. Most people access 16 to 20 notes/pitches to express themselves. What amazing possibilities the voice has.

The higher the pitch, the more vibrant the content. Lower pitches convey ease and connection. But trying to pitch the voice to a particular note will only make the speaker sound stiff and phony. Why? The notes/ranges/octaves/pitches behind our words reflect our emotional connection/aliveness. Intonation, the pattern of pitch changes when speaking, is determined by our emotions.

When our emotions are hidden or repressed, the voice will mirror this. Then we hang out in limited ranges, even to the point of becoming monotoned. A monotone voice is a boring voice. It suggests a lack of connection to both the subject and the self.



***"The only proper mask to wear in life is your own damn face."***

Toni Cade Bambara

## **Voice Masks**

There are many other vocal quirks that serve as examples of voice masks.

Most physical, vocal tensions reflect a disconnect in the person speaking. Disconnections that wear a mask. Using the idea of voice masks adds a needed dimension to body psychotherapy. Vocal challenges are personal; they reveal what a person is hiding - their character, potential, talents, fears, and truth.

Masks are certainly useful at times. Actors put them on and take them off as the play dictates. We can follow their example. Unmasking the voice, understanding its infinite nuances, and learning to 'read' inferences in the sounds behind words, will help us understand and better communicate with ourselves and others.

Begin by listening. Listen to changes you hear in yourself and others: tone, pitch, tempo, delivery, breathing patterns, silences, pauses, volume, tensions, and variations. Then observe physical movements and expressions. What sounds tend to accompany them? What are the sounds behind words? How does tension or lack of tension play out vocally?

In working with stage actors, I will sometimes have them read their lines out loud in a neutral way, deliberately minimizing expression and immediate interpretation. When doing this, they are also asked to remain at ease as best they can. What tends to emerge then, are emotional perceptions of the character. Perceptions that are not so easily accessed via mere intellectual analysis. Taking one of these emotions, the actor will be asked to 'move it.' The understanding that emerges from this movement can be inciteful. (It may even be choreographed back into the play.) Following this, the actor is asked to find sounds that express this particular emotion and movement. Not words, sounds: notes, pitches, elongated vowel sounds, etc. Not the sound behind the actor's actual lines, but of the chosen emotional perception the actor is experimenting with. The more the actor experiments in this way, the more awareness/ dimension/ subtext is revealed.

*"Now when I speak and remember parts of our vocal work: dialing back the volume, connecting to resonance, accessing continuous air flow, backing off my habitual staccato delivery for example, I find myself speaking with much more ease than before. Then, I realize my old anxieties that accompanied my old speech patterns, were simply not there."*

Anonymous

Likewise, the more we move beyond intellectual analysis of ourselves and others and explore what hides behind our masks, personas (the word persona also meaning 'mask'), and voice masks, the more is revealed.

Awareness is the key to unlocking the mystery behind masks, especially voice masks.

A final thought: what the speaker conceals, the voice reveals!



**John A Baron** began his professional life as an actor in England playing leading roles in professional theatre, film and TV. He went on to become a business owner, corporate trainer, senior teacher and teacher trainer of The Alexander Technique and Voice Coach. John worked with some of Europe's finest voice teachers, winning an Arts Council Grant (UK) to help further his vocal studies.

Along the way John developed special workshops, and training programs for such diverse organizations as Fireman's Fund Insurance, Google Inc. (two-year project), San Francisco Ballet (twenty-five-year project), San Francisco Opera, Weg Der Mitte (Berlin), Cal State Hayward University, The Esalen Institute, Voicetrax (voice actor training company and The Sundance Institute.

He is the founder of FindYourBusinessVoice.com, teaches A.T. from his studio in Sausalito, and one-on-one/ group vocal sessions online.

Websites: <https://johnabaron.com> <https://FindYourBusinessVoice.com>

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## **Persona**

**By John Baron**

Without a stage or play  
he makes the entrance  
moving all his movements with  
a poise  
emanating charisma  
radiating mystery  
around an all adoring public  
of himself.

Oh, that familiar mask  
out of the depths of fame  
appearing night by night  
in gas-lit glare  
retort fantastic, expression,  
gesture spare,  
the name and reputation  
go before him.

Prepared, well performed,  
Processes, well-rehearsed,  
Comportment, and inflection,  
and technique.

And the need for validation  
way beyond the footlights there  
assured now of acceptance in  
the aa – pplause!



*'Ladies and gentlemen  
take your seats,  
five minutes,  
please, five minutes.'*

Backstage dressing room  
break a leg whistle a tune  
eight bare light bulbs frame  
an image bare.  
There he is the very sight  
hairband and  
a face of white  
looking for himself amid  
stick make-up.

*Behind the mask behind  
the words he say's  
behind learning behind  
identities  
behind appearance behind  
fame  
behind the curtain behind  
the name.*

'Oh those harrowing hateful  
moments that I spend alone  
darlings, where's the public?'

(Pause)

'when you need 'em.'  
Feeling like an empty room  
matinee afternoon  
he powders his own face  
in preparation.

'Who am I' he wonders  
why 'standing here inside a role,'  
he waits in trepidation for  
the show.  
The sound of audience, exclamation -  
'Cue actor!'  
Injecting fix into  
This masked-scared soul.



***"A mask tells us more than a face."***

Oscar Wilde

## SOMETIMES THE WOLF CRIES GIRL

*by srwpoetry*

Sometimes the hero stumbles  
and falls right off the page.  
Sometimes the princess  
rolls her eyes and says,  
"I don't want to be saved."  
Sometimes the dragon needs rescuing  
and the villain aches to be helped.  
Sometimes, in the darkness,  
the lost boy finds himself.  
Sometimes the prince is cunning  
and not at all who he seemed.  
Sometimes the witch's kindness shows  
it's she who deserves to be queen.  
Sometimes we shouldn't define people  
based on somebody else's point of view -  
just because it's what we've been told  
doesn't make it true.

<https://www.instagram.com/srwpoetry/?hl=en>



Photo by [Yannick Menard](#) on [Unsplash](#)

CONTEMPORARY REICHIAN ANALYSIS  
and  
CHARACTER-ANALYTICAL VEGETOTHERAPY  
from 1933 to 2022

By Genovino Ferri



**PART 1**

**About Contemporary Reichian Analysis**

Contemporary Reichian Analysis represents a model for Analytical, Clinical and Body Psychotherapy that has been developing, uninterruptedly, along the arrow of time since 1933. It has always moved on, passing in continuity, from Wilhelm Reich to Ola Raknes and to Federico Navarro, until reaching me, and I still have the honor of sharing it today, in 2022.

It is a model which reads the body in psychoanalysis and reads psychoanalysis in the body, connecting and implementing data from the neurosciences, which have been validated over time. Furthermore, our model maintains open channels of communication with all the other schools of psychotherapy.



In this article, I will introduce a set of grammar clarifying body psychoanalysis, which extends not only to psychopathology, itself primarily interpreted as being bottom-up in terms of evolutive time, but also, to clinical psychotherapy, that follows. Perhaps I am outlining a new position, certainly it takes the Reichian paradigm deeper, or is, rather, a "*change in the visual gestalt*" as Kuhn might put it. It represents a change in the mental architecture of observation which emerges from a different way of feeling, I might add.

It is a paradigm which reads the *unconscious* in its entirety, because the unconscious is undoubtedly a "mirror" for what has been deposited in the body.

I will go on to 3D Character-Analytical Vegetotherapy space-time-depth in three-dimensions, which I hold to be an improvement on the methodology developed in 1935, which has revealed itself to be highly appropriate in psychotherapy.

Today's Character-Analytical Vegetotherapy certainly involves the Analysis of the Patterns of Character Traits followed by appropriate Body Psychotherapy through specific, targeted activations. Most bodily activations, or "actings" are phylo-ontogenetic movements deposited in each of us during the development of the evolutive stages. In the setting, bodily activations work like real passwords, which can activate "that time" of relational experience for each person, allowing entry into the depths of the evolutive stages and the stage transitions, as if they were "drawers of time".







"3D" Character-Analytical Vegetotherapy, in fact, acts along the ontogenetic arrow of time, along which lie the sequence of marks incised during the person's life, together with their etiology, as a narration of the individual's successive evolutive stages. Primarily, life takes a bottom-up direction, with bottom-up and top-down circularity, and it has negentropic evolutive movement from conception and intrauterine time onward.

In "What is life?" (1944), Erwin Schrodinger, a Nobel prize-winner in physics (1933) and the father of quantum mechanics, defined negentropy as "a negative variation in entropy compared to an original value, such as the birth of an individual, the origin of life or the beginning of biological evolution". Ola Raknes (1972) also talks about negentropy, saying, "Orgone energy is negatively entropic and negentropy is essential to the creation and maintenance of life" (p. 68-69).

Body to Mind is, thus, the direction of Negentropy. From the body to the mind is, in fact, the evolution of a person's Arrow of Time. This means that the new necessity, arising for psychotherapy and psychopathology, is reaching aspects of pre-subjective relationships, starting from the intercorporeity of the Primary Object Relationship in the first 500 days of life. In ontogenesis, Intercorporeity, precedes and then accompanies Intersubjectivity, reflecting the passage from Self-Object to Self-Subject in the Primary Object Relationship. It is a journey from Conception to Weaning, from water to air, from amniotic fluid to skin contact, from

darkness to light, from the uterus to the breast, from inside to outside, from the umbilical cord and placenta to lips and nipple and from the 6th relational bodily level (umbilical-abdominal area) to the 2nd relational bodily level (mouth).

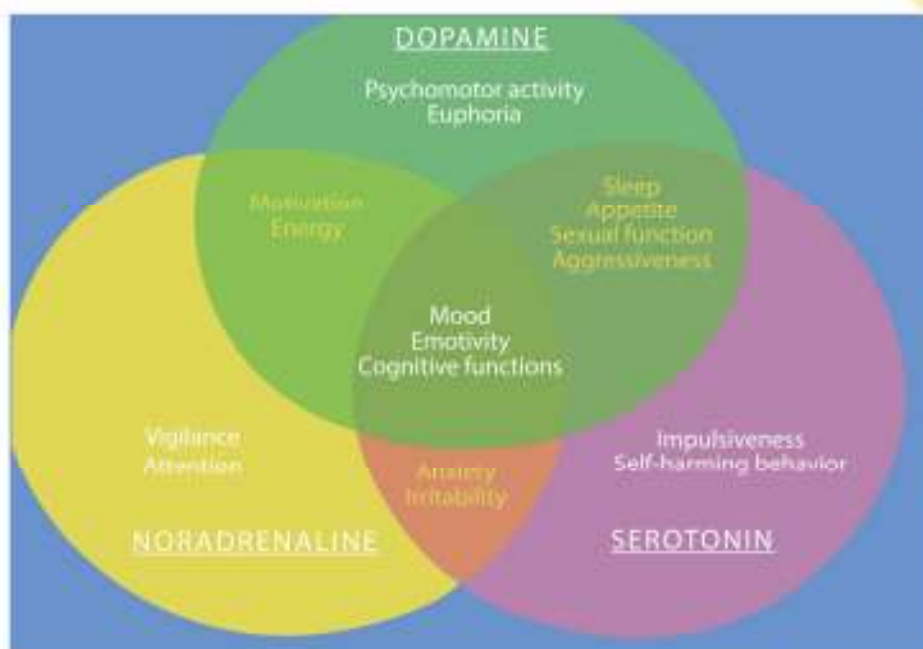
As you will have gathered, Contemporary Reichian Analysis assumes a highly-coherent, three-dimensional, complex, systemic, observational position, which considers the entire life-time of an individual from Intrauterine Time onward. It is an observational position, which considers the relationships which have been experienced and marked at the time of the evolutive stages; it considers the characterological trait patterns that have been incised by those relationships; it considers the corresponding dominant bodily levels during those stages of development; it considers the corresponding brain areas and the corresponding trait-thought patterns for those stages. All of this can be traced, being tied together by the intelligent sense of the life-story connecting them.

It is this precise interpretation that makes the precise insertion into psychotherapy of personalized, deep, structural "Action" possible without running the risk of liquid psychotherapy, or liquid body psychotherapy. If, at a cerebral level, words modify synapses (etymologically derived from the Greek *syn-àptein* meaning "with" and "join"), which is to say "connections," then the "how" the words are said can modify them even more, alignment with what Dr. Stephen W. Porges calls prosody. I would add, however, that the "how" belongs to the language of the whole body and not only to the voice prosody, which accompanies verbal content when you are speaking.

The "how", if we listen carefully, can tell us from "where in the body" that voice and that content is emerging. The "how" is the expression from a particular evolutive stage, from the trait patterns incised during that stage of development, and from the relational bodily levels marked by the imprinting of that stage. It tells us how our Self has been built, with its stratification being like a multi-story apartment building in which the evolutive time of each apartment is co-habiting with its own "Trait Mind".

Each apartment has its neuromediator balance, which I will go into in greater depth shortly. This analogy should make it clear that (compared to words and how they are said alone) the use of an appropriate bodily activation can modify the synapses and the neuromediator dynamic in that story of the "apartment building" even more. In other words, activations can rebalance the specific "Trait Mind" in question. I define a Trait Mind as being a functional, organizational complex that combines an evolutive stage, the trait patterns of that stage and its dominant peripheral relational bodily level, as well as the central brain areas which are, in turn, prevalent during that stage, but we will come back to this.

The principal neuromediators can be considered to be Noradrenaline (NA), Serotonin (5HT) and Dopamine (DA). They can be associated with the three As - Alarm for Noradrenaline, Affectivity for Serotonin, and Action for Dopamine. These three neuromediators have been present in phylogenesis since some of the earliest steps taken in the evolution of life; they have reached a high degree of specialization in humans. Serotonin (5HT), for example, is also present in vegetables; I was surprised to learn it is found in artichokes. In humans, it regulates affective loss and upwellings of joy, that is to say mood. In order to explain the functionality of these extraordinary molecular building-blocks in relation to the heights evolution has reached, I could mention prolactin, a neuropeptide, which in the pre-mammalian world did not appear to play a highly significant role, but which, as we climb the negentropic column of life, in mammals (and we humans are neopallial, three-dimensional, stereoscopic, optical mammals) has become vitally important during pregnancy and breast-feeding.



Coming back to the three neuromediators, they are in a continuous dialogue among themselves, meaning that they are interdependent. An increase in the level of one of them causes an adaptive response in the other two, seeking equilibrium for the Self in the relationship with the Other-than-Self. An increase in Noradrenaline and in Dopamine, for example, caused by affective loss of an object, can be lowered by an increase in Serotonin, which placates the fear provoked by the loss. In psychodynamic terms, we could say that affectivity reduces alarm caused by loss and reduces any of the angry, reparative, dopaminergic action, which may often be correlated with alarm. Everything depends on the specific life-story from that time of that evolutive stage of development that the person is reactualizing. That is like saying it depends on which floor of their personality's apartment building they are on, and which trait pattern they are expressing, in that moment.

From a bottom-up, body-to-mind, complex-negentropic viewpoint, I would like to underline that this interdependent-neuromediator dialogue should be read and interpreted for every floor of the apartment block we inhabit and thus for each individual trait mind. A bodily activation proceeds from the body's peripheral afferent pathways, along the cortico-spinal pathways, towards the central areas and, completing the loop, returns from the central area's efferent pathways towards the body, again along the cortico-spinal pathways - you cannot know without feeling and you cannot feel without the body. When an action is performed, the cortico-spinal pathways are, indeed, activated. But, when an action is only imagined, only the motor-cortical network is activated - the real action is not being produced. We can each revisit and, in part, rewrite our life-stories with new incised marks (etymologically "character" means "incised mark") by means of appropriate bodily activations. This can allow us to open up parts of our life-stories, and of ourselves, reactivating *that time* and *Bergson's "élan vital"*, which was so dear to Reich, the flow of which is interrupted in historical bodily blockages.

At the same time, by doing activations in this way, we have access to both the analytical content, that is to say, the history of relationships marked on the bodily levels during the evolutive stages, and the clinical-symptomatological aspects of the person, together with the opportunity to cure them. Actings allow us to have insight into our life-stories directly *from the body*, that is often telling us something even before cognitive awareness of it emerges, so let's listen to the body.

In this regard, Contemporary Reichian Analysis listens to Corporeity using three separate languages – verbal language, body language and trait language. I would like to underline that, in the contemporary Reichian-analytical setting, as well as the Analysis of Characterological Trait Patterns and 3D Character-Analytical Vegetotherapy, the Analysis of the Character of the relationship is also of fundamental importance. This, last, is an analytical-therapeutic tool that permits direct dialogue between the analyst and the person being analyzed's trait language, together with the implicit requests deposited in them. In Contemporary Reichian Analysis, we, therefore, give great importance to the analyst's awareness of their own trait and bodily-level counter-transference, both to ensure appropriate construction of the relationship in the setting and, even more so, for when the analyst suggests an acting to the person being analyzed.

“The relationship is a complex living system” (New York Academy of Science, 1999) and, as such, has its own history and evolution. There will always be three of us in the setting, the person being analyzed, the analyst, and the relationship born from the interaction of the person being analyzed's trait patterns with the analyst's trait patterns. Lastly, in this complex interpretation, the setting should be seen as a *small biosphere*, representing an energetic field in which Vegetotherapy's bodily activations will flower, revealing and marking new negentropic life-experiences, to differing degrees of depth, in the person's life-history.





## **PART 2**

### **A Focus on Vegetotherapy in Contemporary Reichian Analysis**

#### **Three stages of development between 1935 and 2022**

Although the third revolution, after Copernicus and Darwin, that of the subconscious, could be said to have started in 1895 with S. Freud and J. Breuer's studies on hysteria, W. Reich, a brilliant student of Freud's, began his psychoanalytical period in 1919. In 1922, W. Reich was already holding his seminar on psychoanalytical technique and in 1933 he made a vital contribution to psychoanalysis with the publication of Character Analysis. Publication of this work was the first "vitally important" negentropic, bifurcation from classical psychoanalysis. Complex, systemic thought had now, in fact, been introduced, which was able to consider a series of connected patterns defining a functionally-greater system and already actually including corporeity. . . "Character", etymologically, means "incised mark" and we might ask - incised by who and where? The answer is incised by relationships in a series of peripheral locations (the bodily levels) and in a central location - the brain areas. However, at the time, there was intense scientific debate permeating society about whether C. Darwin's evolutionism or N. Carnot's determinism was correct because Carnot's 2nd Law of thermodynamics about entropy was in apparent contrast with what Darwin had said about Life emerging through evolution.

This contrast in observational position reflects two opposite directions on the psychoanalytical world's arrow of time. The first, that is top-down, led Freud to the concept of regression; the other, that is bottom-up, led Reich to suggest the concept of reactualization. It would not be until the 1960s that I. Prigogine demonstrated that the law of entropy, the second law of thermodynamics, had not been violated, because, by additionally calculating the negentropy and entropy of an open, complex, living system, it becomes clear that the negentropy produced is at the expense of external order and that by calculating all values of order and disorder, the overall disorder increases. Both Darwin's and Carnot's observational positions were correct, as were both those of Freud and Reich, and they can be integrated in the light of the theory of complexity.

Allow me to share my enthusiasm for the extraordinary *Project*, that sees the contemporaneousness and interdependence of negentropy and entropy on this our Intelligent, Living Planet and focus on the three stages of development of Vegetotherapy.

**The 1st Stage**, Character-Analytical Vegetotherapy, appeared in the horizons of psychotherapy in 1935. Many wrote about their emerging understanding:

*"Reich noted that when the armoring dissolved, a wave of spontaneous, involuntary movements occurred in the body from the throat downwards. If the patient were lying supine with their knees raised at 45° (the position on the couch in the Contemporary Reichian Analytical setting), breathing deeply, then their head would tilt backwards slightly, and their shoulders would move a little lower, as would the chest and abdomen, while the pelvic area would rise slightly. These movements were very similar to a reflex which Reich termed the orgasm reflex." (W. Reich e l'Orgonomia p. 60).*

O. Raknes wrote, *"When the orgasm reflex was discovered in 1935, the emphasis of treatment was moved from the Character to the body. The term Vegetotherapy was intended to recognize this change . . . We speak of Character-Analytical Vegetotherapy to include the analytical work on the psychic and physical apparatus as being one and the same thing (Character Analysis, p. 438).*



W. Reich also noted in his publication, *The Function of Orgasm* that: *By loosening chronic characterological behavior, we can obtain reactions from the Vegetative Nervous System and free the corresponding muscular behavior . . . (p. 307). Neurosis is not only the expression of a disturbance to psychic equilibrium, but is also the expression of a chronic disturbance of the vegetative equilibrium . . . (p.308). It is surprising to see how dissolving muscular rigidity recalls to mind the memory of the situation in which the repression of the impulse occurred... (p.308). Muscular behavior makes it possible to avoid complicated deviations through the psychic*

*structure..." (p.309).*

From 1939 Vegetotherapy was unaltered and unquestioned for four decades, remaining unsystematized until 1974, being used only to intervene on "state". Thus, albeit a meaningful experience, it remained in the background and was almost propaedeutic to orgone therapy. Wilhelm Reich had identified the seven bodily levels and had connected them – he had discovered that there was a type of "corporeity" to the body that underlay the characterological psychodynamics that could be treated by bodily activations. And he had defined the bodily level as being "*the set of those organs and muscle-groups which are in functional contact among themselves... and are capable of inducing an emotionally-expressive movement*" (Character Analysis, p. 453). He identified them, from 1st to 7th bodily levels, in a vertically, top-down arrangement.

**The 2nd stage.** On careful reflection, as I underlined before, Corporeity is implicit in Character Analysis because Character Analysis involves reading *the signs, or marks, incised by relationships in a peripheral location (the relational bodily level) and in a central location (the brain areas)*. Given this premise, I would also, similarly, introduce implicit development along *the evolutive arrow of time* for Character-Analytical Vegetotherapy – it is an arrow that passes through and aligns four generations of analysts and therapists. From this perspective, the figure of Federico Navarro emerges, who continued with Character-Analytical Vegetotherapy, but, together with Ola Raknes, led it in a new direction.

Character-Analytical Vegetotherapy evolved beyond its forty years of stasis thanks to F. Navarro's work of clinical systematization, with the approval of O. Raknes, that structured and organized W. Reich's precious active principle. To asystematic Vegetotherapy for state, he added Vegetotherapy by bodily level, with appropriate, designated actings for each of the seven bodily levels (although it was still from a linear, top-down perspective).

From the Preface to Somatopsicodinamica by F. Navarro, p. 10, I offer Navarro's perspective:

*"It was during his vacation on the island of Stromboli, in 1965, that F. Navarro discovered W. Reich. He had taken a collection of Reich's work with him which had an introduction by Luigi De Marchi and was entitled The Theory of the orgasm and other writings. On his return to Naples, he found that his enthusiasm was shared by a number of colleagues and friends. The idea of taking a training-course in Reichian Character-Analytical Vegetotherapy was put forward, but it seemed close to impossible to do.*

*The only solution would be to contact the Norwegian, Ola Raknes, who was a faithful disciple of Reich's and had been trained directly by him. Once contacted, O. Raknes (who was a psychoanalyst, having been trained by K. Horney, and was a trained vegetotherapist, having done three years of training under W. Reich) accepted the idea of spending his holidays in Italy for a few years. In this way, for three years in a row, Navarro and his colleagues received practical teaching from Ola Raknes that would form the basis of their therapeutic activity."*



*During an interview in Synthesis, Navarro explains: "At the end of the Vegetotherapy training course I did with Ola Raknes, Reich's student, friend and collaborator, Raknes asked me if I had any observations that I wanted to make. Marked, as I was, by my more traditional training in neuropsychiatry, I told him that the clinical methodology had not been organized properly and that you felt the need for coherent systematization... Reich had not actually developed a proper type of method. Raknes gave me a crafty look, told me that I was right and, after a brief pause, added that Reich had not done it because, at a certain point, he had become completely absorbed by his orgone research, but that, if I wished, I could do it. I*

*worked a lot on the methodology, and I showed it to Raknes before he died. This is how Vegetotherapy reached this point – as progressive methodical work on the seven bodily levels, starting from the eyes in order to move energy, to allow it to circulate from the top downwards, to then be expressed in orgasmic potency" (pp. 18-19).*

**The 3rd stage** I hold that a psychotherapeutic intervention is not fully complete if it does not pass along the cortico-spinal pathways, that is to say if it does not pass through the feeling and enacting that together produce awareness. I repeat – you cannot feel and you cannot act without the body. The etymology of the words "sapience" and "sense" indicate the journey from sensing-savoring in the mouth to sensing-smelling in the nose, to then go on to the brain "having sense" and "making sense" of the world. Sensing and feeling have played a key role in our journey to sensing and knowing, together with the fundamentally indispensable impressions and expressions of the body.

I was trained in linear, top-down Vegetotherapy by bodily level under F. Navarro for more than ten years, and I collaborated with him professionally until his death in 2002. He had been the honorary President of the Italian Society of Reichian Analysis (SIAR), which provides and runs the post-graduate, School of Specialization in Psychotherapy, for those with university degrees in medicine and psychology. I now have the honor, and pleasure, of directing this school. It has been recognized officially by the Italian Ministry of Higher Education and Research. My personal training experience in Vegetotherapy with F. Navarro gave me the indispensable foundation for what I consider to be its, direct implicit, subsequent development - Vegetotherapy by evolutive stage. This is derived from a complex, ontogenetically-bottom-up reading of an individual's development and it includes and completes the preceding top-down interpretation.

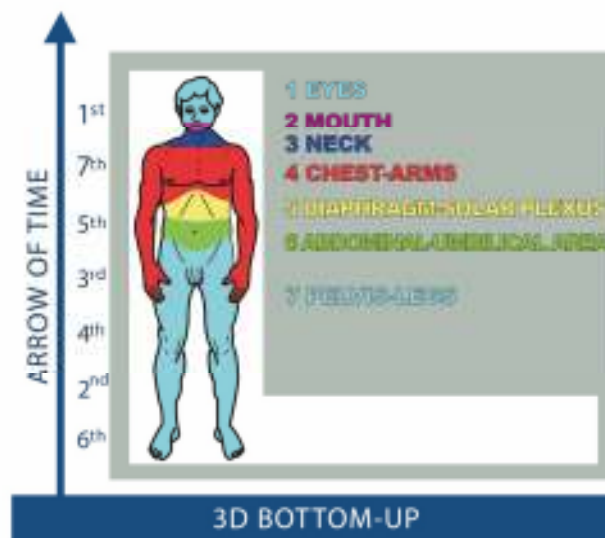
Looking back, I would date the start of this further transition to 1983. It carries us through to the concept of "Trait Mind" and Contemporary Reichian Analysis. It was in 1983 that I witnessed what was, to tell the truth, inadvertently, me taking the first step. There was a rather heated debate in Valencia in Spain, at a, then, European School of Orgonotherapy (S.E.OR.) conference, about which bodily levels were implicated in psychosis. In the end, F. Navarro, with his typical, great intellectual honesty, agreed with my theory that "the peripheral area with greatest involvement in psychosis was the 6th relational bodily level (the umbilical-abdominal area) and that, although it was certainly still involved, the 1st level (eyes, ears and nose) was only secondary, following on from an *earthquake* in the 6th. Clinical, beyond-threshold symptomatology of the Self's field of consciousness, therefore, only represented the consequence that was most easily visibly to the observer making an objective examination of the patient in a case of psychotic decompensation.

It was an accidental revolution, and, from there, hitherto unimaginable developments became possible. That agreed definition of psychosis would reveal itself to be an extraordinary key, facilitating entry to the individual's bodily levels in their (ontogenetic) bottom-up sequence, from the very beginning of the person's life. As a consequence, two significant modifications followed: The bodily levels were re-ordered by their (successive) "evolutive relational functioning" giving the 6th, 2nd, 4th, 3rd, 5th, 7th and then 1st, as the revised order and - the concept of the negentropic arrow of time was introduced.





The evolutive stages were redefined three-dimensionally (in 3D), while the bodily levels were linked with the *relational objects for each stage*. These relationships leave incised marks, that are then expressed in the Character Trait Patterns deposited during each specific stage of development. In this way, we can see that the person's real life-story, rather than their phantasms, come into the setting and can carry us, from the peripheral afferents to the central nervous system.



Intrauterine time burst tumultuously into Character formation, modifying and revolutionizing psychopathological nosography and anchoring it to the person's real life-story and to their personal expression of corporeity. This made psychopathology seem less alien and more human, and it made it, three-dimensionally, more comprehensible. Psychopathology has become easier to reach, therapeutically, in the setting, using our three appropriate, active principles – The Analytical Therapeutic Relationship, Bodily Activation by stage Vegetotherapy, and Character-Analytical Psychopharmacotherapy.

The great attention paid to the relationships for the bodily levels led to the introduction of the Analysis of the Character of the Relationship between the analyst and the person being analyzed in the setting, in 1992. This highlighted another type of counter-transference - trait and bodily-level counter-transference. Character Analysis has been the identifying fractal of our school of psychotherapy, and it moved onto a greater order of magnitude by applying it to the analytical-therapeutic relationship, defining it as being like a complex living-system. It is a third, complex living-system in the setting, in addition to the analyst and the person being analyzed and it has its own character, its own history and its own language.

In an article published in 1999, in annual no. 879 of the New York Academy of Science, I underlined that a new subconscious language was revealed in the setting - *the language of relationships*. *This permits the analyst's and the person being analyzed's traits to have a dialogue, or, to be more precise, it allows the implicit requests present in their traits to have a dialogue, with the possibility that a new relationship can be born and develop.*

How can we fail to notice the parallels, in the setting, with DNA's double-helix?



## Conclusions

In 2016, coming back to clinical-therapeutic considerations, a new functional-organizational complex was identified involving the evolutive stage, the trait patterns, the relational bodily level and the prevalent brain areas at the specific stage of development. The Trait Mind, which agreed with G. Bateson's Embodied Mind and with F. Varela's Enactive Mind. The arrow of Time had led to its emergence. The concept of the Trait Mind allows us to avoid foreshortening ontogenetic time; it allows us to read the progressive, bottom-up emergence of the relational bodily levels according to the evolutive stages, and it allows us to plan every therapeutic intervention that we make with three-dimensional precision. That is to say, we can carefully plan every therapeutic intervention into the "apartments" of the "Building" representing our Personality from a privileged, informed position.

Character-Analytical Vegetotherapy in today's setting has become geometric "psycho-surgery", using appropriate bodily activations, which are efficacious passwords permitting entry to Time in the Body and into the "dysfunctional apartments" in the "Building" of the person being analyzed. With regard to this, I cannot fail to mention that my latest book "Tempo nel Corpo", (published as a paperback in Italian and Greek, to be published in September, 2022 in Portuguese and, shortly, to be published as an e-book in English, entitled "Body Time"), contains descriptions of the 20 main bodily activations that have marked the life-story of our school of psychotherapy, from Reich to Raknes to Navarro to Ferri.

Today, we can *reduce* the time psychotherapy takes by individuating the nature of the implicit and explicit requests more precisely and, at the same time, we can increase the depth of the intervention made in the setting, by entering the right "apartments", with our phylo-ontogenetically-targeted bodily activations. The Reichian analytical model, over the four generations of analysts, has been able to perfect its guidelines, to become ever more appropriate for psychotherapy, for psychopathology and for psychopharmacotherapy.

Our model is, epistemologically and scientifically, highly-coherent and places it, at the very least, at the cutting edge of the latest developments, or, more probably, somewhat ahead of its time. The actings elaborated by W. Reich, O. Raknes, F. Navarro, and by G. Ferri (SIAR), form a continuous line covering almost all of the possible windows throughout the evolutive stages of an individual's development. Thus, they permit more precise insertion of the vegeto therapeutic bodily activations into the "apartments" of Evolutive Time that our "Trait Minds" inhabit in order to return them to equilibrium.

**Genovino Ferri** is a psychiatrist and Reichian Analyst trained by Federico Navarro, who was himself trained by Ola Raknes, who was, in turn, trained by Wilhelm Reich. He is the Director of the Italian School of Reichian Analysis (S.I.A.R.) in Rome, Italy, a post-graduate college of higher education. The college offers higher degrees in Psychotherapy for Bachelors of Science in Medicine or Psychology and is recognized by the Italian Ministry for education, higher education and research (*Ministero dell'Istruzione, Università e Ricerca*). The school is accredited by the EABP FORUM of Body Psychotherapy Organizations. He has been a member of the New York Academy of Sciences since 1999 and is also a member of the International Scientific Committee for Body Psychotherapy. He is an International Trainer of Contemporary Reichian Analysis in Europe and South America (including Rome, Athens, Sofia, Berlin and San Paolo). During his professional career, he worked as the Director of the Psychiatric Unit at Atri Hospital, in Italy, and as the Director of the Public Psychotherapy Service for the Province of Teramo, Italy. He is also the President of the Italian Association of Body Psychotherapy (A.I.P.C.) and is the founder of "Studio Analysis" a social-centred psychotherapeutic clinic in Atri, Italy. He is the Editorial Director of the *CorporalMente* series by the *Alpes Editore* publishing company.

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Peter Sedlmeier

# The Psychology of Meditation

Varieties, Effects, Theories,  
and Perspectives

 hogrefe



Written by Peter Sedlmeier  
Reviewed by Nancy Eichhorn

The word 'meditation' has been part of my lexicon for over two decades.  
The act? A continual struggle.

I know meditation "works." Clinical studies have shown the mental, physical, and spiritual benefits of daily meditation practice. But what exactly counts as meditation?

Is it mindfulness?

Focusing on mantras?

Detaching from your body and drifting into some unknown energy field?



Photo: Kelly Sikkema from Unsplash

What outcomes can you expect? Is it to awaken? Liberate oneself? Reach a state of enlightenment? Does it lead you down a spiritual path to discover the meaning of life? Or does it help you overcome your problems, a form of self-help therapy?

Once you decide to meditate, what guidelines do you adhere to? Should you lean toward Western meanings and directives or embrace Eastern philosophies and practices? Whose teachings should you follow? Buddha? Jon Kabat Zin? Osho?

While my questions were not explicitly addressed, I did find answers and more in Peter Sedlmeier's (2022) new book, *The Psychology of Meditation*. Noted as a "leading meditation scientist and practitioner," Sedlmeier offers a representative overview of meditation with a scientific slant. Divided into four parts, the text guides readers through varieties of meditation, the effects of meditation, theories of meditation, and concludes with Part 4: Perspectives. He notes that the first 10 chapters build the foundation to support the endpoint, Chapter 11: Perspectives on Meditation Research.

One of Sedlmeier's prime reasons for writing this book was to focus on "future prospects of meditation research" (pg.231):

*" . . . I am not aware of any other book that makes so many pains to prepare the argument that meditation research definitely needs to be improved—regarding which, some suggestions will be offered here" (pg.X).*

This is an academic read, not a how-to—you will not learn how to breathe or reach a state of equanimity, but you will understand the reasoning behind these states and traits. By classifying this book as a scholastic endeavor, I am not saying it is boring nor implying that it lumbers along, dragged down in heavy data, cluttered with genre-specific language that bogs and boggles one's mind. What I am saying is that readers will receive succinct, articulate, well-written, supportive data (cited) to help them create an expansive picture of meditation—its forms/types, a timeline of origins, and most significantly, clinically and scientifically based perspectives/information that I have not seen gathered in one place before. This was a fresh read.

Sedlmeier builds a solid case to support his assertion that there is "inconsistency in how it (*mindfulness and in my mind meditation, too*) is defined, measured and implemented as a meditation practice" (pg.41). His discussion on research using meditation with healthy-ish practitioners and populations with health issues covers enough ground to be fascinating without being overwhelming. He devotes time expanding on what he classifies as four main traditional meditation approaches, two from Hinduism and two from Buddhism: Samkhya-Yoga, Advaita Vedanta, early Buddhism, and Zen. He notes that these four approaches "should give a good impression regarding what kinds of theories stand behind traditional systems of meditation"; the theoretical presentations are designed to "explain how and why these meditation techniques work" (pg. 174).



Photo Credit: Greg Rakozy on Unsplash

I felt as if readers were invited to reflect beyond commonly held definitions of everyday terms, to experience a perspective of meditation beyond the norm, and to immerse themselves in a scientific sphere of curiosity.

“Peter Sedlmeier is Professor of Psychology at the Chemnitz University of Technology, Germany. He teaches research methods and cognitive psychology. Apart from the psychology of meditation, his current areas of interest include intercultural research, time processing, and computer modeling of cognitive and statistical processes. He has had an ongoing meditation practice for more than 20 years, mostly Zen, interspersed with some extended excursions into the Theravada world, and some experience in Yoga meditation and TM.”



# The 'New' Collected Papers of Biodynamic Psychology, Massage & Psychotherapy: 2022



In Celebration  
of the 100<sup>th</sup>  
Anniversary of  
Gerda  
Boyesen's  
birth

EDITED BY COURTENAY YOUNG

The 'New' Collected Papers of  
Biodynamic Psychology, Massage & Psychotherapy: 2022  
Edited by Courtenay Young

Gerda Boyesen's 'genius' shines through the writings of herself, various family members, colleagues and trainers, students, practitioners and even clients and supervisees in this new book edited by Courtenay Young.

According to Young, "As one reads these articles, one gets a sense of the breadth and depth of Gerda Boyesen's Biodynamic works, and gets occasional glimpses of its brilliant heights, as well. Nearly all aspects of theoretical, clinical and practical work in this field are richly examined."

He explained that the book was produced in celebration of 100 years of Gerda Boyesen's birth. "There are about 150 substantive articles from 50 different authors. There are more than 1,500 pages and over 850,000 words. It is a collection, a canon, a compilation, an anthology, an album, a compendium, possibly even a treasury."

Thank you Courtenay for providing our readers with a free comprehensive outline, available on our website.



Courtenay Young, originally trained in the Biodynamic method, and is now a British psychotherapist, author and editor. He has written over 60 published articles and written and edited several books. He is an active supporter of psychotherapy in Europe through his work within the European Association of Body Psychotherapy and as the Editor of its *International Journal of Psychotherapy* for over 10 years ([www.ijp.org.uk](http://www.ijp.org.uk)). He was the English-language editor for *The Handbook of Body Psychotherapy & Somatic Psychology* (North Atlantic Books, 2015).