

Somatic Psychotherapy Today

Volume 5 Number 2

Spring 2015



Somatic Psychotherapy Today



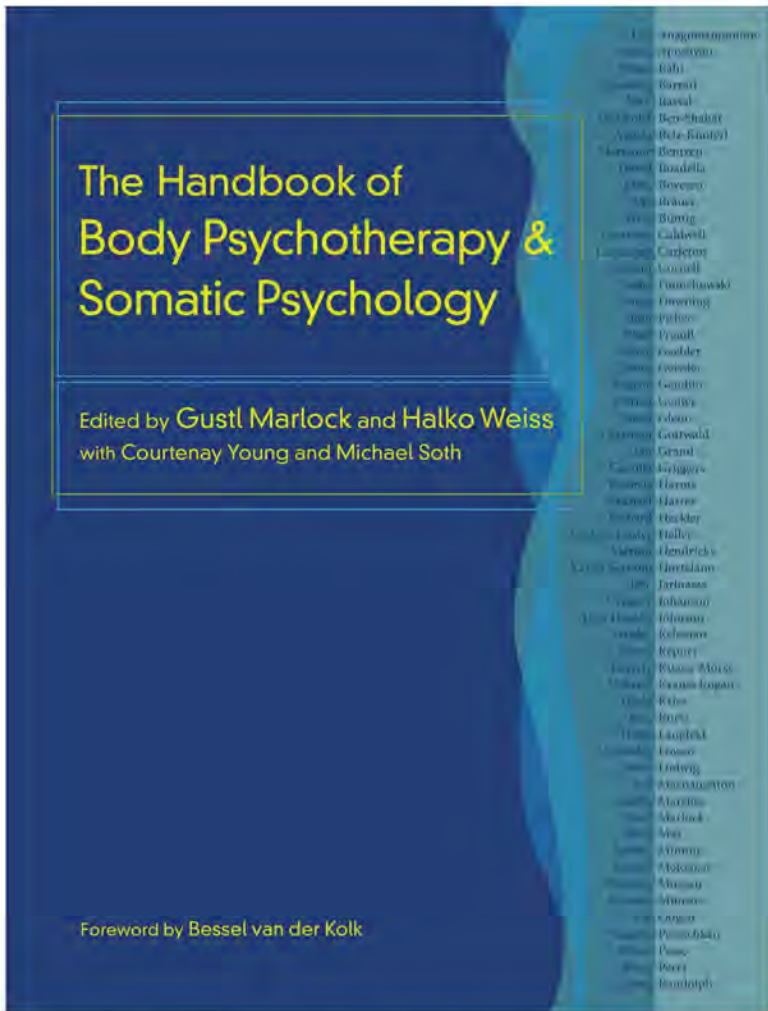
We need your help!



Support SPT Today

Each issue of *Somatic Psychotherapy Today* takes hundreds of hours of time, thought, resources and love. If you find any joy and stimulation here, any educational merit, any clinical application, please consider becoming a member of the SPT community and support our publication with a recurring monthly contribution. You can also become a one-time paying patron or sponsor with a single donation. All contributions must be in U. S. dollars. We welcome individual members as well as organizations wanting to pledge a higher level of support in return for space on our website, on our Facebook page, and in the pages of our magazine.

For information and to contribute please visit our website: www.SomaticPsychotherapyToday.com or contact our Editor-in-Chief, Nancy Eichhorn, PhD at Nancy@nanceyichhorn.com.



Written for practicing therapists as well as those in training, *The Handbook of Body Psychotherapy and Somatic Psychology* is the definitive book on this emerging major branch of psychotherapy.

Psychologists and therapists are increasingly incorporating somatic or body-oriented therapies into their practice, making mind-body connections that enable them to provide better care for their clients. From EMDR to mindfulness techniques, Body Psychotherapy stresses the centrality of the body to overcoming psychological distress, trauma, and mental illness. *The Handbook of Body Psychotherapy and Somatic Psychology* compiles nearly 100 cutting-edge essays and studies that provide a comprehensive overview of this fast-growing field. Designed as a standard text for somatic psychology courses, this book will be indispensable for students of clinical and counseling psychology, somatic psychology, and various forms of body-based therapy (including dance and movement therapies). It is also an essential reference work for most practicing psychotherapists, regardless of their therapeutic orientation.


978-1-58394-841-5

HARDCOVER

978-1-58394-842-2

E-BOOK

AVAILABLE IN EARLY 2015

 North Atlantic Books
Berkeley, California

Handbook of Body Psychotherapy and Somatic Psychology

Gustl Marlock and Halko Weiss with Courtenay Young and Michael Soth

GUSTL MARLOCK has nearly 30 years of experience as a psychotherapist; he is the director of a German training program in Unitive/Integrative Body Psychotherapy and a lecturer and supervisor for psychodynamic psychotherapy at the Wiesbaden Academy for Psychotherapy. HALKO WEISS, PHD, is a clinical psychologist and lecturer for the University of Marburg and for the Bavarian Chamber of Psychotherapists. He is a cofounder of the Hakomi Institute in Boulder, Colorado. COURTENAY YOUNG was resident psychotherapist for 17 years at the Findhorn Foundation, an international spiritual community in Scotland. He was both president and general secretary of the European Association of Body Psychotherapy (EABP) for many years, and has been the lead writer on The EAP Project to Establish the Professional Competencies of a European Psychotherapist (www.psychotherapy-competency.eu). MICHAEL SOTH is an integral-relational Body Psychotherapist, trainer and supervisor (UKCP), with more than 20 years' experience of practicing and teaching from an integrative perspective. He was Training Director at the Chiron Centre for Body Psychotherapy from 1992 to 2010.



Somatic Psychotherapy Today

Our Feature Stories

18	Supporting the Embodied Death: Notes from a Body Psychotherapist at Bedside By Jeanne Denney
28	Preaching to the Preacher By Ronan M. Kisch, PhD
36	Embodied Spirituality By Mette Mouritsen, MD
56	Freedom from Trauma through Spirituality By Katja Rusanen
60	Embodied Spirituality By Albert Pessa
70	If Spirituality is Embodied, Does it Mean You Can Touch it? By Serge Prengel, LMHC
86	Hiding-In: Embodied Spirituality Embedded in the Body By Rick Miller
90	Embodied Spirituality By Elizabeth Morelle
96	Bridging Yoga Psychology and Somatic Psychotherapy By Dawn Bhat, MA, MS, NCC, RYT-500, LMHC
106	Psychology and Spirituality By Dr Itai Ivtzan
108	The Psychology of Yoga: Integration Eastern and Western Approaches to Understanding the Mind By Dawn Bhat, MA, MS, NCC, RYT-500, LMHC

Volunteer Magazine Staff

Nancy Eichhorn, PhD *Editor, Layout Design*

Diana Houghton Whiting,
M.A., BED *Cover Design*

Our Usual Fare

10	From the IBPJ Managing Editor By Jill van der Aa
12	Across the Pond By Jill van der Aa and Lidy Evertsen
16	Join the Conversation By Serge Prengel, LMHC
51	Current Research in Review By Dawn Bhat, MA, MS, NCC, LMHC

52	International Connections By Asaf Rolef Ben-Shahar, PhD
64	Body Wise By Kamalamani
100	Resources By Jacqueline A. Carleton, PhD, assisted by Dawn Bhat and the USABP Interns

Reviews and Reflections

27	The Healing Power of Writing: A Therapist’s Guide to Using Journaling with Clients Reviewed by Sue Roh
42	Change Your Story, Change Your Life: Using Shamanic and Jungian Tools to Achieve Personal Transformation Reviewed By Nancy Eichhorn, PhD
46	Change Your Story, Change Your Life: Using Shamanic and Jungian Tools to Achieve Personal Transformation An Interview with Carl Greer, PhD, PsyD By Nancy Eichhorn, PhD

76	Contemplative Psychotherapy Essentials: Enriching Your Practice with Buddhist Psychology Reviewed by Nancy Eichhorn, PhD
80	Contemplative Psychotherapy Essentials: Enriching Your Practice with Buddhist Psychology An Interview with Karen Kissel Wegela, PhD By Nancy Eichhorn, PhD

Visit our website for up-to-date postings:

www.SomaticPsychotherapyToday.com

Find us digitally @ www.issuu.com/SomaticPsychotherapyToday

Read us on your smartphone: install the app using this link: <http://bit.ly/IssuuOnAndroid>

From Our Editor



I believe in a higher power, that an energy exists outside of me orchestrating harmonic resonance within all living beings including plants, animals, birds, insects The phrase, 'by the grace of God', is how my car came to be named Grace. My faith that all will be well when I am lost in the center of darkness stems from this energetic place. As David Richo (1997) notes:

"Not all of the work is done by the ego. There is another force that comes into play. It is a force that has the power to bring things back to life when everything seems done for. It is known variously as the grace of God, a Higher Power, the Self, the universe, Spirit" (p. 38).

Spirit guides me in many ways; one of which comes in the guise of this magazine. Each theme evolves at just the right moment to support my own emotional growth. Exploring **Embodied Spirituality, I felt blessed to read contributors' articles, to interview therapists/authors, to immerse myself in books and research that support a sense of the miraculous, of Spirit, of a universal life force energy.** My questions, my fears, my blocks were supported by colleagues who came forward to share their journey, their experience with God, with Self (or oneself as a Buddhist might say). I learned. I revised my practice. I experienced new ways of being and from these interactions I grew forward. The world opened in wondrous ways, shifts occurred and continue to happen as I relax, let go of my patterning, bracing, armoring. There is peace in silence, in sitting, in simply being.

Our Spring 2015 issue offers powerful personal experiences that influence professional beliefs and approaches; methodology guided by Spirit, by meditative connection to oneself. I invite our readers to sit in a quiet, sacred space, to breathe and center within, to listen for the guidance that waits for us to tune in so we can flow together as one. And from this connective place, perhaps you might read what **your colleagues have to share, and if you resonate with someone's ideas, thoughts, beliefs, even if you have a differing opinion, please email, let us know. We love feedback. Writers write for an audience and response lets us know how we have been received.**

Warmly,
Nancy Eichhorn, PhD
Nancy@nancyeichhorn.com

David Richo, D. (1997). *When love meets fear: Becoming defense-less and resource-full*. New York: Paulist Press.

From Our Cover Designer



Dear Reader,


I would like to thank Holly Sierra for her gorgeous artwork for this issue's cover. She can be found here <http://www.hollysierra.com/>.

Sincerely,
Diana Houghton Whiting, M.A., BEd



The 1001 Critical Days

The Importance of the Conception to Age Two Period



Our goal is for every baby to receive sensitive and responsive care from their main caregivers in the first years of life. Parents need to feel confident to raise their children in a loving and supportive environment.

Why is the Conception to Age 2 period so critical?

Pregnancy, birth and the first 24 months can be tough for every mother and father, and some parents may find it hard to provide the care and attention their baby needs. But it can also be a chance to affect great change, as pregnancy and the birth of a baby is a critical ‘window of opportunity’ when parents are especially receptive to offers of advice and support.

Ensuring that the brain achieves its optimum development and nurturing during this peak period of growth is therefore vitally important, and enables babies to achieve the best start in life.

From birth to age 18 months, connections in the brain are created at a rate of one million per second! The earliest

experiences shape a baby’s brain development, and have a lifelong impact on that baby’s mental and emotional health.

The best chance to turn this around is during the 1001 critical days. At least one loving, sensitive and responsive relationship with an adult caregiver teaches the baby to believe that the world is a good place and reduces the risk of them facing disruptive issues in later life.

Every child deserves an equal opportunity to lead a healthy and fulfilling life, and with the right kind of early intervention, there is every opportunity for secure parent infant attachments to be developed.

To learn more and participate, please read the official 1001 Critical Days Manifesto, [click here](#).

From the USABP President



Dear *Somatic Psychotherapy* Readers,

Our somatic psychology training and experience is needed now more than ever as our society evolves to no longer tolerate the separation of body and mind. We are the profession that has been involved with bodymind therapies for longer than the latest fad.

Please jump onto our ship! USABP is hoping to not only bring your work into greater visibility but to bring more training opportunities to mainstream settings. People shouldn't have to drive one hour to see their somatic psychotherapist—as many of my clients have to! And I live in New Jersey.

Please tell someone about what you're reading now. Check out our website. Sign up for a free webinar. Join the movement.



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Beth L. Haessig'.

Beth L. Haessig, Psy.D.

President, United States Association for Body Psychotherapy
President@usabp.org



The HUB of everything somatic psychology

Mission Statement

The United States Association for Body Psychotherapy believes that integration of the body and mind is essential to effective psychotherapeutic health. To that end, its mission is to develop and advance the art, science, and practice of body psychotherapy and somatic psychology in a professional, ethical, and caring manner in order to support our membership as they promote the health and welfare of their clients.

Membership Benefits

A list of current and/or future benefits include:

- Earn CEUs (Coming Soon – through our USABP Conference 2016)
- Discounts to OUR professional conference (2016 East Coast)
- Free Monthly USABP Newsletter Subscription (20+ pages)
- Free Monthly USABP Member Exclusive Webinars

MEMBERSHIP AREA

- Locator Service (for clinical and practitioner levels only)
- Job bank
- Member Classifieds
- Member Forum (coming soon)
- Institutional Updates
- Event Updates
- Audio and Video – NOT available online
- Research, research guidelines, the only body psychotherapy research awards competition in the US
- Free Ethics Guidelines- Handbook — the first official guidelines for ethical standards of practice.
- International networking with body psychotherapists, organizations, conferences, academic programs, and professional training programs worldwide
- National publicity to bring greater public awareness to the field of body psychotherapy– and to your practice
- IBPJ (Journal) & Somatic Psychotherapy Today (magazine) emailed directly to you
- Member publications highlighted on USABP website



JOIN US TODAY

www.usabp.org

From the IBPJ

International Body Psychotherapy Journal: The Art and Science of Somatic Praxis



**Written by Michael Fiorini
New York University,
Editorial Intern, IBPJ**



Jennifer Tantia, PhD

The 2015 Research Issue is wholly in the expert hands of Jennifer Tantia, PhD, former Research Chair of the USABP. She has handled editing tasks, from the initial call for papers for this special issue, through the peer review process, to final copyedits. It has been 10 years since the IBPJ has devoted solely to research, and as you will see she has done a terrific job.

In a field such as body psychotherapy, which was marginalized or which marginalized itself for many years, research, in the support of evidence-based practice, is a key to mainstream acceptance. Psychologists of many stripes are currently interested in its techniques, theories, and ways of viewing both psychotherapy and the human condition, but without research to back up what is known clinically, it is hard for them to learn from those already incorporating these concepts.

On the EABP website, www.eabp.org, all you have to do is select the button marked Research to unleash a wealth of resources and materials that have been collected over the years, notably by Courtenay Young and more recently by the Scientific Committee. The following articles included in this issue of the IBPJ, impressively all authored by women, are a contribution to that substantial body of literature.

The first article, Reading and Evaluating Quantitative Research in Body Psychotherapy by Robyn Cruz (US) and Sabine Koch (Germany) provides the means for healing the rift between clinicians and researchers, concisely unpacking some of the enigmatic language and formulas that appear in research literature.

INTERNATIONAL BODY PSYCHOTHERAPY JOURNAL

THE ART AND SCIENCE OF SOMATIC PRAXIS

INCORPORATING US ASSOCIATION FOR BODY PSYCHOTHERAPY JOURNAL

volume fourteen number one spring 2015



EUROPEAN
ASSOCIATION FOR
BODY -
PSYCHOTHERAPY



The second article, by Denise Saint Arnault (US) and Sharon O'Halloran (Ireland): **Biodynamic Psychotherapy for Trauma Recovery: A Pilot Study**, is a long awaited longitudinal study that explores Biodynamic Psychotherapy as it is applied to women who have suffered domestic violence in Ireland.

Correlations Between Tests for Grounding, Breathing and Self-efficacy in Individuals With and Without Chronic Pain, by Christina Bader-Johansson (Switzerland) and Amanda Lundvik Gyllensten (Sweden), seamlessly integrates the science and practice of body psychotherapy, measuring the effects of grounding and centering on psychological well-being.

Laura Cariola (UK), in her study **Semantic Expressions of the Body Boundary Personality in Person-Centered Psychotherapy**, provides psychological insight into how body boundary is a structure formed from early interpersonal development.

She discusses how body boundary can be detected and how it results from familial values, investigates how body boundary influences linguistic expression in psychotherapy, and how it affects the relationship with oneself and other people.

In **Interoception: A Measure of Embodiment or Attention?**, Natasha Buldeo (UK) clarifies the scientific process behind the sentient self, and describes how embodied cognition and the felt sense is based in homeostasis. Buldeo describes the effects of interoceptive awareness when clients are distracted, offering a beginning explanation for how memory is held in the muscles and tissues of the body.

In **Grasping and Transforming the Embodied Experience of Oppression**, Rae Johnson (US) offers a model for transformative learning that translates to clinical practice derived from educational theory, highlighting the strengths of embodied awareness as a sophisticated source for understanding how oppression is unconsciously transmitted to our clients.



IBPJ cover "Aurora" by Aline LaPierre, PhD

Nancy Eichhorn (US) has written a comprehensive review of the past EABP Science and Research Symposium at the 14th European Congress of Body Psychotherapy, which took place in Lisbon, Portugal on September 13, 2014, including studies, debates and future prospects for research in body psychotherapy.

The end portion of this issue includes a look at future researchers with a special student research section, including theses and dissertation abstracts from the US and the winners of the EABP Student Research award. As this field continues to grow, it is important that we give students the support and encouragement they need to become future clinicians and also future educators and researchers.

Adapted from the editorials of Jennifer Frank Tantia, PhD., and Jacqueline A. Carleton, PhD.

Across the Pond



Lidy Evertsen
EABP President



European Association for Body Psychotherapy



Jill van der Aa
General Secretary/Vice President

Report from the annual EABP Council meeting near Frankfurt, Germany with the Representatives of the European National Associations



From Left: Enver Cesko, Kosova; Elfriede Kastenberger, Austria; Dagmar Rellensmann, Germany; Sofia Petridou, Greece; Svetlana Ermakova, Russia; Kathrin Stauffer, COUNCIL Chair, UK; Angela Terpstra, The Netherlands; Steve Elliott, UK; Fabio Carbonari, Italy; Ronen Levy, Israel; Christina Bader, Switzerland.
Photo: Jill van der Aa, EABP Board

The last weekend of January I attended the annual EABP Council meeting near Frankfurt, Germany with the representatives of the European national associations. It was held in the home of the German national association's Vice President, **Dagmar Rellensmann**. She has a lovely big airy (and sunny) training room and housed all participants there, in her adjoining home, or

with friends in the village.

The previous Council meeting, in 2013, was held in Moscow where the snow lay a couple of meters high on the ground. Members of the Russian association escorted us from the airport into town, took us for bus trips around the sights of the city, and on a tour of the Metro! This time the snow was

scattered around; just enough to encourage some of us to take a walk in the neighboring forest during the Saturday lunch break. A **team of three of Dagmar's colleagues cooked** for us – wonderful vegetarian meals from local produce – and accompanied us on our Saturday evening meal out to a restaurant in a neighboring village in a huge restored hay barn!

There are twelve national associations, which deal with EABP matters in their own country, including one in Israel. Most representatives have been involved with their national associations for some years and also attending the Council meetings so they find it easy to integrate new members into the meeting and still keep the depth of discussion; this time new members from the UK, Israel and the Netherlands. I represented the EABP Board at the meeting to give the whole European perspective.

The national associations differ in language, culture and number of members; the German association has 300 members, the Serbian association 16. Italy has nine individual members but four training institutes that also participate in the forum. There are different national laws governing body psychotherapy in each country; in some it is easy to practice as a psychotherapist; in others, such as Italy, a practitioner first has to become a doctor, a psychiatrist or a psychologist before doing a body psychotherapy training. There are also different political climates. In Russia the ruble has fallen by more than 50% since the war in the Ukraine and members struggle to pay their fees.

On some issues the international representatives have quite different visions and there are energetic discussions. However, as they share problems and concerns regarding their own situations they also realize how much they have in common and how supportive and inspiring this interchange is. Together there is a sense of community and commonality and a desire to support each other in their development.

At some stage, during one of the lunches, Dagmar came up with a piece of research about forests of trees where, if one tree is hurt, the others all send hormones or chemicals underneath the ground to these trees to heal them. Despite some skepticism we could all feel this as an appropriate metaphor for the Council. Later, when some of us were walking in the forest, feeling the play of wind through the trees, we literally sensed ourselves as a forest swaying together in the wind and resonating with our problems. When one Association has an issue others have helpful stories about how they have dealt with similar issues or tips how to change things.



From such a disparate group this is a great achievement.

Membership issues are common to all – how can we not only increase membership and bring in younger members but how can we support them in their work, encourage them to grow in their profession – how do we give more value to our members both individually and collectively.

The continuity of each and every one of the Associations depends on the readiness of members to participate on Boards and committees. Despite being the biggest association, the German association is run by two members and they have an excellent Secretariat who deals with much of the administration. However, continuity may be a

problem in a few years as there are also no committees where people are being trained to participate. On the other hand, Greece, with all its political and economic difficulties, has undertaken to host the EABP 2016 Congress and already has a number of enthusiastic participants partaking on active committees.

These members have already had much experience on association committees dealing with ethics, research, membership and training standards. So continuity is ensured. A couple of years ago it looked as if the Serbian association would collapse then suddenly three or four younger members took up the reins and have set the association on a new path. Spain is totally inactive and did not attend the meeting, and Portugal, a new association since the last congress, did not attend. Both Italy and surprisingly enough the Netherlands (which has also been a very strong association) have had difficulties with continuity at Board level but seem to be resilient and coping well.

While the German association may have difficulties with continuity, they have done a lot of excellent work on the level of content and training. Together with a number of training institutes they developed a basic body psychotherapy curriculum, which is now being implemented by many of the training institutes in Germany. This curriculum has been translated into English and made available for other European training institutes. This will help us to find more common ground. A basic curriculum also gives room for specific modalities to bring in their particular methods.

Another discussion at the meeting was marketing. We are asking the national associations to participate in a Europe wide campaign to raise the profile of our profession and to make clear to a wider public what it is we actually do. We are encouraging people to write more and to share their material and distribute it widely through social media. Many have already had articles published in local newspapers or magazines, which can be translated for

adaptation in other countries and passed on to TV, radio, local magazines and newspapers. Although Bulgaria is not a **current national association, and didn't** attend this meeting, they have a very active body psychotherapy community. One of their members competed and came second in a **"Dancing with the Stars" competition. She presented another "make-over program" but** insisted that half of the participants should have body psychotherapy sessions as part of the makeover so that at the end they could evaluate how effective these sessions were in building up the self-confidence of the participants. And it demonstrated that they were!!

I drove to Germany from the Netherlands with our Dutch representative Angela Terpstra and because it was so cold my old **Peugeot wouldn't start for the return journey.** We had to be pushed off by a number of strong-armed members. On the journey back we were accompanied by snow and sleet and heavy rain but despite that we both felt particularly satisfied. The discussions were fruitful – both critical and inspiring, all conducted in a warm atmosphere.

Angela and her colleague on the Dutch board attended the last EABP Congress in Lisbon as well as the Council meeting there. They were inspired to invite two people they met to come and give a workshop in the Netherlands as a special offer for the Dutch members. So a well-known professor emeritus at Oslo and Akershus University College of Applied Sciences, Berit Heir Bunkan, has been invited for a March workshop in the Netherlands and Asaf Rolef Ben-Shahar later on in the year.

Which reminds me, looking on the EABP website I see that many of the European training institutes are running summer workshops or intensives – mostly in either English or German. Fabio Carbonari, a previous author in SPT (Spring 2013) is giving a summer school on Parenting the Parents, July 18-26, near Rome. If you want **a reason to 'Cross the Pond' check out this** whole section <http://www.eabp.org/news.php>.

Athens 2016
15th European Congress
of Body Psychotherapy

The Embodied Self in a dis-Embodied Society

Body Psychotherapy 2016

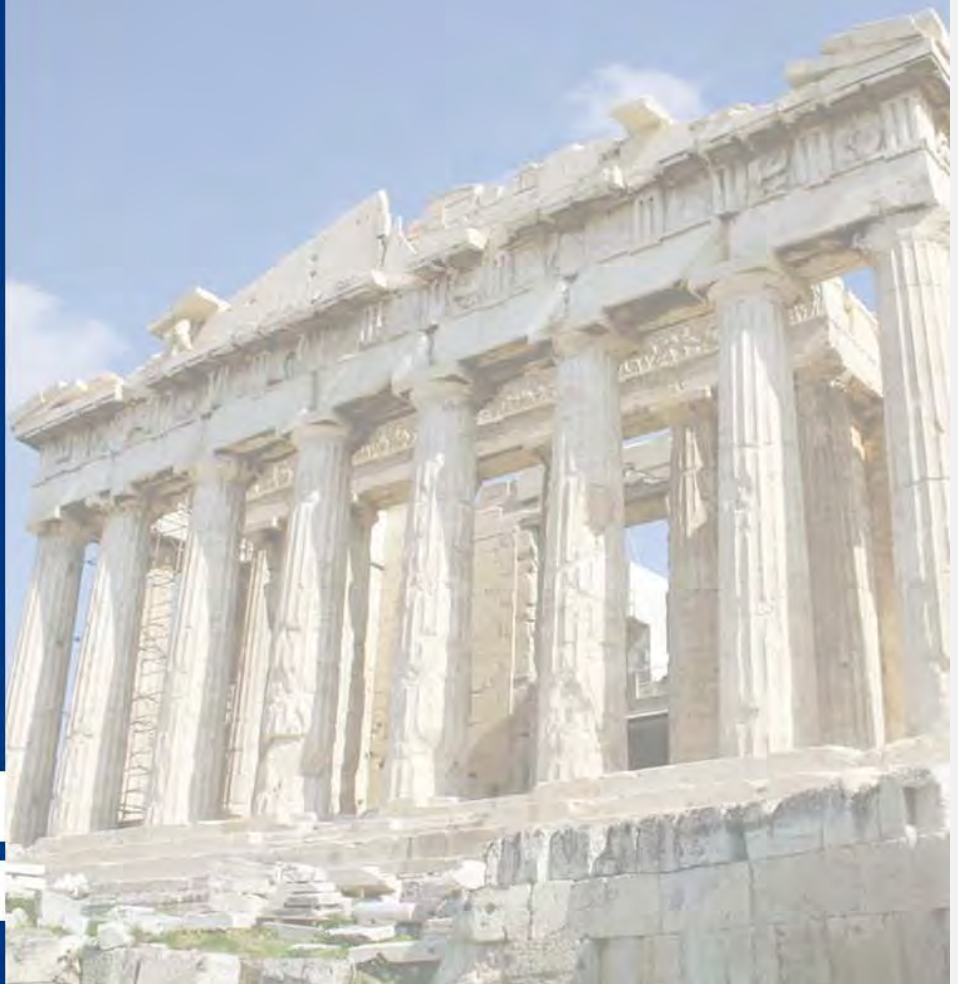
13-16 October 2016

Pre-congress workshops:
11-12 October

EABP

EUROPEAN
ASSOCIATION FOR
BODY-
PSYCHOTHERAPY

ΠΕΣΩΨ
ΠΟΛΥΕΠΙΠΛΗΡΗΣ ΕΝΔΕΞ
ΣΩΜΑΤΙΚΗΣ ΨΥΧΟΘΕΡΑΠΕΙΑΣ



Greece



Yesterday and Today

**Explore the city's rich history
while connecting with
colleagues and delving into the
wonders of the embodied self.**

Join the *What Sustains Me* Conversation

Communication is an essential part of all relationships, and the Internet affords opportunities to network with like-minded colleagues and participate in forums that challenge your thinking and ways of doing. Join the conversation and voice your thoughts on Facebook, Google, LinkedIn, ResearchGate, and more.



We all have beliefs and practices through which we make sense of the world and our interactions within it. Our way of speaking of the way we interact and connect to nature and society takes place within a context that provides a guiding framework, be it scientific, philosophical, spiritual or religious. This exploration aims to move outside of these frameworks, to build bridges by discussing the experience of how we connect to the spiritual or the divine. The key word here is "experience", as opposed to the stories we tell ourselves and others about this kind of experience.

How can a religious person, somebody who is 'spiritual but not religious', and a secular humanist get to understand each other's experiences?

It certainly won't happen if the conversation is about belief systems. So we want to have this conversation at the level where communication is more likely to happen—talking about *experience* in contrast to the stories we build around experience.

In our mind, we were looking for ways to describe the kind of experiences that are often called 'spiritual' in such a way that there could be a common language for all kinds of people who normally don't see eye-to-eye on this topic. But, while the word 'spiritual' is meaningful to quite a few people, it can be a turn-off to people who are wary of anything metaphysical. So we needed to find another handle.

Hence the idea of *What Sustains Me*.

In the words of cultural anthropologist Ernest Becker:

We always rely on something that transcends us, some system of ideas and powers in which we are embedded and which support us. This power is not always obvious. It need not be overtly a god . . . It can be the power of an all-absorbing activity, a passion, a dedication to a game, a way of life . . .

So the central question for each participant in this project is: *What sustains you?*

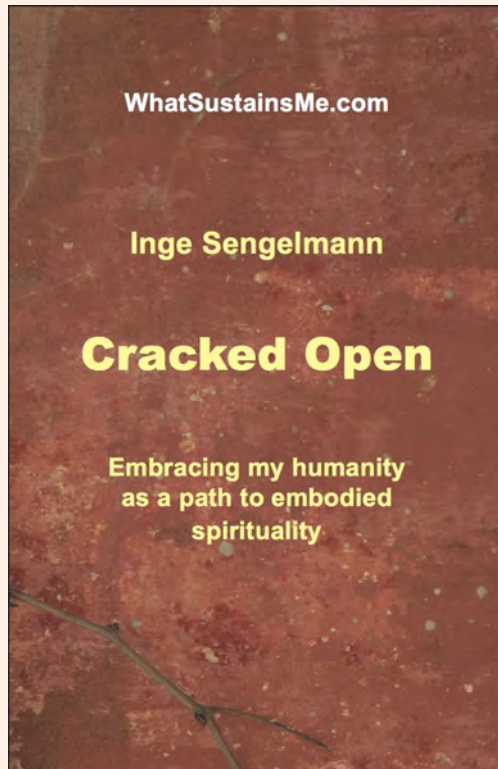
More specifically: *What gives you a sense of peace, meaning and purpose in everyday life? What keeps you going when times are tough, and even gives you the strength to face moments of crisis or despair?*

The key word in this project's description is 'experiences'. We are not describing a specific path, a 'right way' to do things, or a 'correct' narrative of how it all works out. To the contrary, we are coming at it from different approaches and belief systems. We are describing our experiences.

This topic could be described as a 'spiritual quest'. But we are consciously avoiding this phrase, because it can be misleading. For quite a few people, 'spiritual quest' conveys a search for outside resources, beyond the realm of the physical world. Such a definition would exclude experiences that involve inner resources.

Actually, we do not even want to be drawn into arguing whether the appropriate resources are outer resources (such as a transcendent spirit), or inner resources (such as the human spirit). There is a time and place for such discussions, but not in this project.

Our focus is on describing what we experience, as opposed to the philosophical or religious terms under which these experiences are usually framed, in order to find a bridge whereby people who come from different



traditions or beliefs can be nourished by each other's experiences.

So, rather than talking about 'spirituality', we'd rather focus on personal experiences, being open to the different ways in which people may choose to name, or call these experiences. While acknowledging the constructs that frame such experiences, we want to stay grounded in felt experience, via questions such as:

- How do you experience this emotionally?
- What does it feel like in your body?
- How is it in relation to other people?

This project will lead to a collaborative book, each chapter written by a different author, in a personal and

experiential manner. We are letting the book grow in an organic way, with each chapter released as a formatted PDF as it is ready. One chapter is now ready and available for free download. It looks at its best on a tablet such as the iPad but can be read on any computer. Of course, you can also print it if you'd like.

This chapter, *Cracked Open*, was written by Inge Sengelmann, a clinical psychotherapist licensed in



Florida and Colorado, a Somatic Experiencing® Practitioner, and a registered yoga teacher focusing her practice on the treatment of traumatic stress and eating disorders.

You can download the first chapter, as well as follow the progress of this project, and contact us to be part of it, at <http://WhatSustainsMe.com>

Looking forward to hearing from you!

Supporting the Embodied Death : Notes from a Body Psychotherapist at Bedside



Picture © Dyana Van Campen

By Jeanne Denney

Strange. And true. What has taught me most about embodied spirituality, body psychotherapy and indeed life itself, is work and research with people very near death. We might assume that these dying ones, the ones being fed with spoons, withered, demented, silent and curled into their beds in deep interiority are the most disembodied beings on the planet. How could they possibly teach us about embodied life? Shouldn't we, like our forebears, continue to look to sexuality and birth for that? Yet the sacred link between body and consciousness is laid bare in illness, death and dying. Being with dying has given me a much fuller map of life processes than I would have had only watching my children in development, or had I confined my practice of body psychotherapy and transpersonal psychology to a therapy room.

For years, after clients were gone and children were asleep, I stole away to sit at the beds of comatose patients or to interact with people **with dementia and Alzheimer's**. These experiences brought my understanding home. Here body and spirit showed themselves in some kind of unending dialogue as one. We enter, we leave. We engage with body and disengage, unify and divide. I studied the processes and found some kind of implicit

(and implicate) order nested in aging and dying yet one also completely individual. I later saw that these processes are going on all the time; indeed, with each breath, in each life stage we find this same enduring practice.

I have more thoughts and observations about how body, psyche, and spirit dance together in our embodied life than I can bring to this article. What I can share here are four

ideas about death, dying and embodiment through death I might wish every somatic psychotherapist carried. I will illustrate them by sharing a story of my first hospice patient, who I will call Nora. Nora was my first and best teacher. If you are interested in a longer version of this story you can find it [here](#).

I met Nora in a run-down, dismal pink room in a nursing home near my home. A "difficult patient" in her 70's dying from breast cancer, abandoned by family, aptly diagnosed as psychotic, she was one who tortured nurses with loud, incessant demands shouted from bed or wheelchair. She had attempted suicide by climbing up in her bed to wrap a light cord around her neck. She threw things across the room at the nurses and cursed her roommate daily. She threw most people out of her room.

Even the hospice social workers did not want to work with her. On my first visit I simply sat for 15 minutes at the end of her bed watching her sleep. On my second visit, after I introduced myself, Nora simply gave me an, it's about time you got here, look and then said, "Get the book. Write this down." Nora needed a scribe.

"The book" was a tattered composition book that sat on her nightstand, scrawled with many barely legible, paranoid fragments. For the first few weeks, apart from trying to help her get to the bathroom or in and out of bed, I only recorded paranoid thoughts.

"Write this down . . . The Mafia killed my daughter. They took out her vocal cords and put them in a little plastic bag and mailed them to me . . . "Do you BELIEVE that they did this?!"

"What did they do Nora?"

"They put her in this room with me." She leaned over to me, and said in an exaggerated

whisper, "She killed my baby. How could they put a woman who killed my baby in here?!"

I looked at her roommate, and only saw a non-descript old woman sleeping with her mouth open.

I will pause here to make my first point:

Death is not the opposite of life. Dying is not the opposite of living. It is living.

If you take nothing else from this article, take this, examine it closely and say it 1000 times: "Death is not the opposite of Life".

Unfortunately, the idea that death and life are opposite occurs in the strange, circular definitions of life we have from biology, in our language and almost constantly in media culture. It is in body psychotherapy. We rarely question it. Opposing death and life is a pervasive and profound bad habit, a fundamental fallacy that is body centered in the worst of ways. Freud did it, Reich did it, Lowen did it. Most body psychotherapists do it too. We may be asexual by the time we are dying but we are not unalive. If you carefully watch both body and psyche transform through death, it is clear that we are not somehow exhausting a life force, as Lowen thought, as much as transforming it in a slow, regular sequence, out of a body which becomes heavier by minute degrees (Lowen, 1958, p. 85).

If life and death were truly oppositional, Nora would not have been as wildly alive as she was when I met her. Indeed she was working with intense outrage, energy and courage to be whole in the face of grief she could not bear. Admittedly this case was unusual. In more typical cases people seem to move into more spiritual and interior experiences in dying, yet we claim our physicality in ever new ways as well.



Photo-illustration, entitled, Pearl,
donated by Robin Botie
www.robintotie.com/blog

Whether the work of dying takes place in a silent interiority, or is loud or inconvenient to others, these are intensely lived experiences.

I built a bridge to Nora as I do now with patients in a spiritual emergency, not trying to get her into my reality, but by going into hers, sitting, listening and writing for her. I took an active interest in her care, calling family to get pictures and other familiar things, and questioning authorities about treatment and advocating for her with nurses. Through this she began to trust me.

Over time as body functions failed, Nora became bed bound. She told me more about her life. She spoke in fewer fragments. What she said made more sense; the book became less important. She described the house and the town she lived in accurately. She told me

about her marriage, her children and relatives. She held her stories until I arrived. This "grounding" into reality at first happened through relationship, and perhaps because the processes of dying naturally breaks down defenses.

In sum: we crafted a heart connection, which brings me to my second point.

Both new and old relationships are profoundly important to how dying unfolds, and with what degree of grace.

Hospice cases throughout history document perhaps nothing as clearly as the primary role of relationships. Though we all die, we seem to have some choice in our moment and our company (or no company). We do it with varying levels of grace and ease.

Relationship work in dying unfolds between people in real time, through conversation, care, touch, breath and consciousness. It also operates in the near universal task of the **patient's "Life Review"**. In aging and dying, we predictably regress through history, scanning our catalogue of relationships. We seek to bring life stories to endings we can tolerate. Often surprising things arise to be spoken about. Memories of second grade friends. Lovers from young life. All manner of body memories and longings. A memory of the smell of soil in Iowa or the sting of stitches after a sledding accident. The great satisfaction of touch or being fed by spoon. This is why supporting the heart is so important to hospice work. To revise our story, to tell it, to have someone go with us to honor the ego, to speak truth, is to also release it. In this process of course there are things we wish we had done differently. As therapists we see the same process working **through our client's life changes and endings.** Dying writes this large.

I have come to believe that life's energy in dying, as in growth, moves in wavelike forms through the body in clear, observable patterns.

In dying we work especially hard to make meaning of past relationships and complete present ones. I often say that in dying our whole life story must be re-told from the **heart's point of view. This is indeed hard work** if we have not practiced until then.

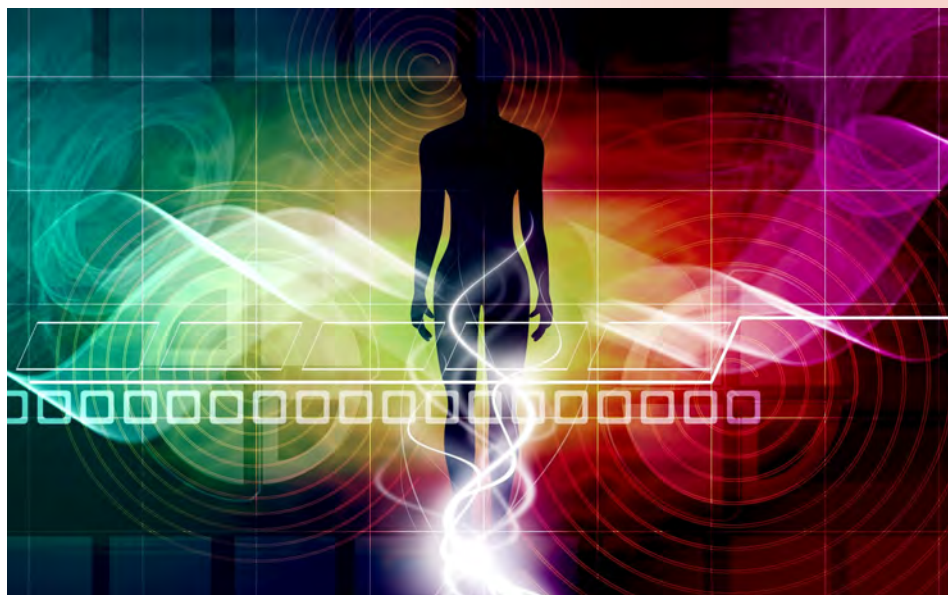
It is well known that tending to past and present relationships is a large part of the **work of dying. Byock's five tasks of relationship closure** (offering and receiving forgiveness, expressing love and thanks and saying goodbye) are experienced again and again as part of closing relationships in death and bereavement (Byock, 1997). Stories of patients who wait for certain visitors or words to be spoken only to die immediately after are legion and ordinary. It is not as often understood that new relationships are also important to the dying for different reasons. Perhaps we need transitional friends to help us leave all we have loved much like we need the hand of the kindergarten teacher as children.

Relationships seem to matter even to people who are non-verbal or comatose near death. There is evidence that they, too, can form new relationships in their dying (Denney, 2008).

I sometimes wonder what would have happened had loving people not wandered **into Nora's room. As heart connection developed and dying progressed, her psyche**

normalized in a way we might more normally **call becoming "grounded"**. How ironic that this psychotic patient was both grounding and healing through dying. Further, the relationships that were allowing her to move toward greater wholeness were not family, but people like me whom she had not known before.

I have come to believe that life energy in dying, as in growth, moves in wavelike forms through the body in clear, observable patterns. As it moves, it traverses through the unresolved blocks and wounds of a lifetime as best it can. This movement represents a unique opportunity to heal. People can and do get stuck in the dying process, something I have written about [here](#) and [here](#). We can certainly die with or without support. However, if we are connected to loving others, we have more resources for the hurdles and resolutions.





©Nikifor85/Dreamstime.com-Icon of the Archangel Michael Photo

And that can make the difference between "good death" and traumatic death, especially as we regress into earliest history and face existential loneliness.

Nora demonstrated something else clearly. The relationships we need may not be just with human others. It could be animals. It could be the beings without physical bodies so routinely seen by the dying. In Nora's case it was me, a Catholic Nun, and Saint Michael, whose sudden appearance was a big turning point.

One day when I visited, Nora had had a recurrence of nightmarish visits from the Mafia. She thought they were hiding under her bed. On an impulse before leaving, I suggested that she invite in some "better friends". While Nora was very Catholic, she was also very angry with God. But through dying and the words of a Dominican nun, she softened to this idea of calling in better help.

"Why don't you experiment with praying when you get scared at night?" I said. "What could it hurt?"

I came to see Nora a few days later. I barely got into the room before she began. "You won't BELIEVE who was here last night."

"Who was here Nora?"

"St. Michael. Do you believe that? And you won't believe what he told me. He said, 'Take everything in your mind and throw it away just like you are pushing everything off of this nightstand.' Do you believe that?"

I did believe it. Wise advice for the dying.

Nora continued to see St. Michael consistently to her death. She was confused because she felt that this was somehow the wrong saint for her situation. It should have been St. Christopher. But as her experience of this warrior saint (who also fought battles with the powers of hell) evolved, Nora began to face and grieve the truth of her children's abandonment. She befriended her new roommate. Nurses and aides began to like her and spend time painting her nails. Friends visited, even her children came once. Most importantly she was commonly joyful and took newfound pleasure in embodied life. "I just want to take a sled and go down the hills with the kids. I want to do everything! I want to make love and eat chocolate!"

I kept bringing chocolate.

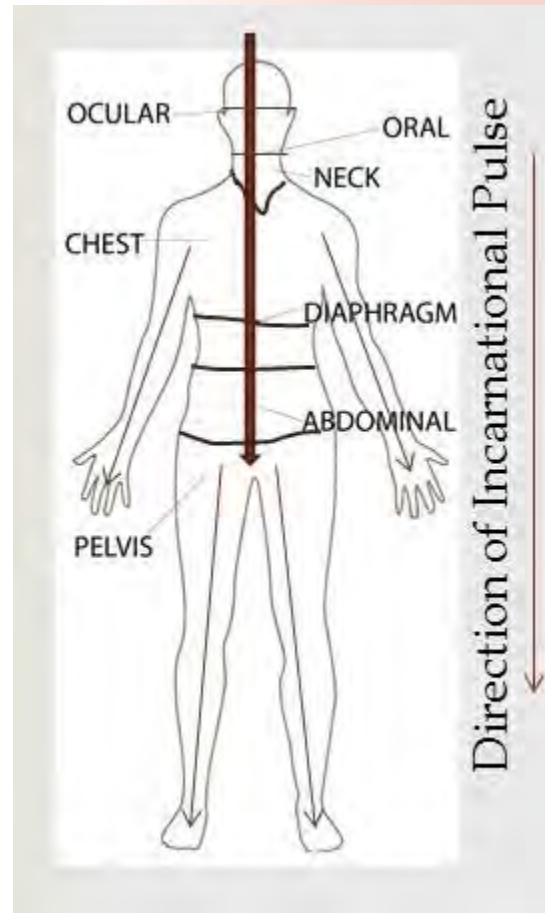


For people nearing death, visions of other beings, friends, family, children, angels, saints are all quite normal. They are occasionally frightening. But most commonly they bring comfort, help and guidance. Strangely, going into spiritual experience brought Nora closer to her embodied life which she was claiming in new ways even as she was leaving it.

Which brings me to how we leave our bodies.

In natural death we lose physical capacity from foot to head, periphery to core, as the psyche regresses in tandem.

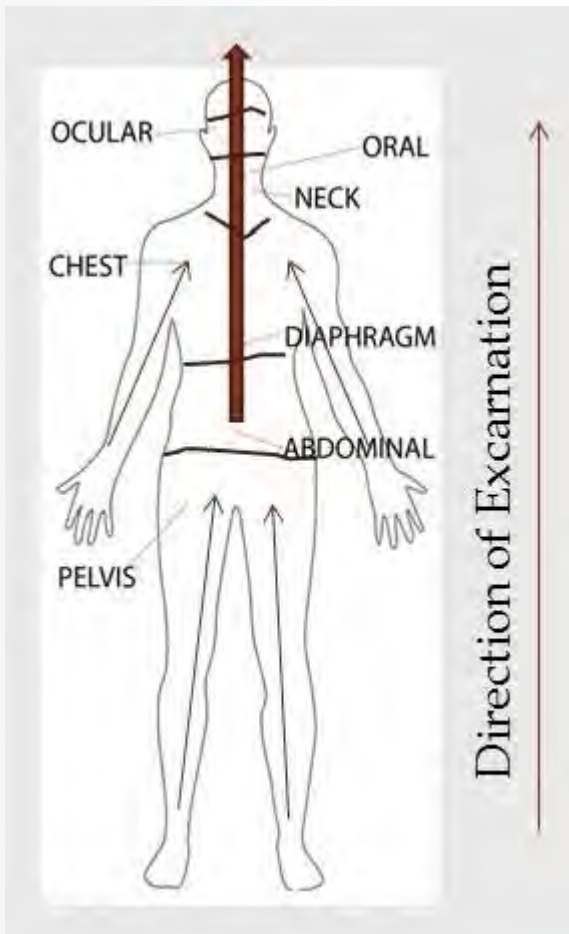
It is pretty simple to see that as we incarnate we grow head first progressively toward a physical ground and outward to our periphery. By about 25 we find ourselves with large, finely developed feet and hands. Hopefully at the same time we are able to engage a world with an ego, intact and



healthy. Consciousness nests in our tissues as we incarnate segment by segment. Reich and others saw this fully incarnated state as being most in life.

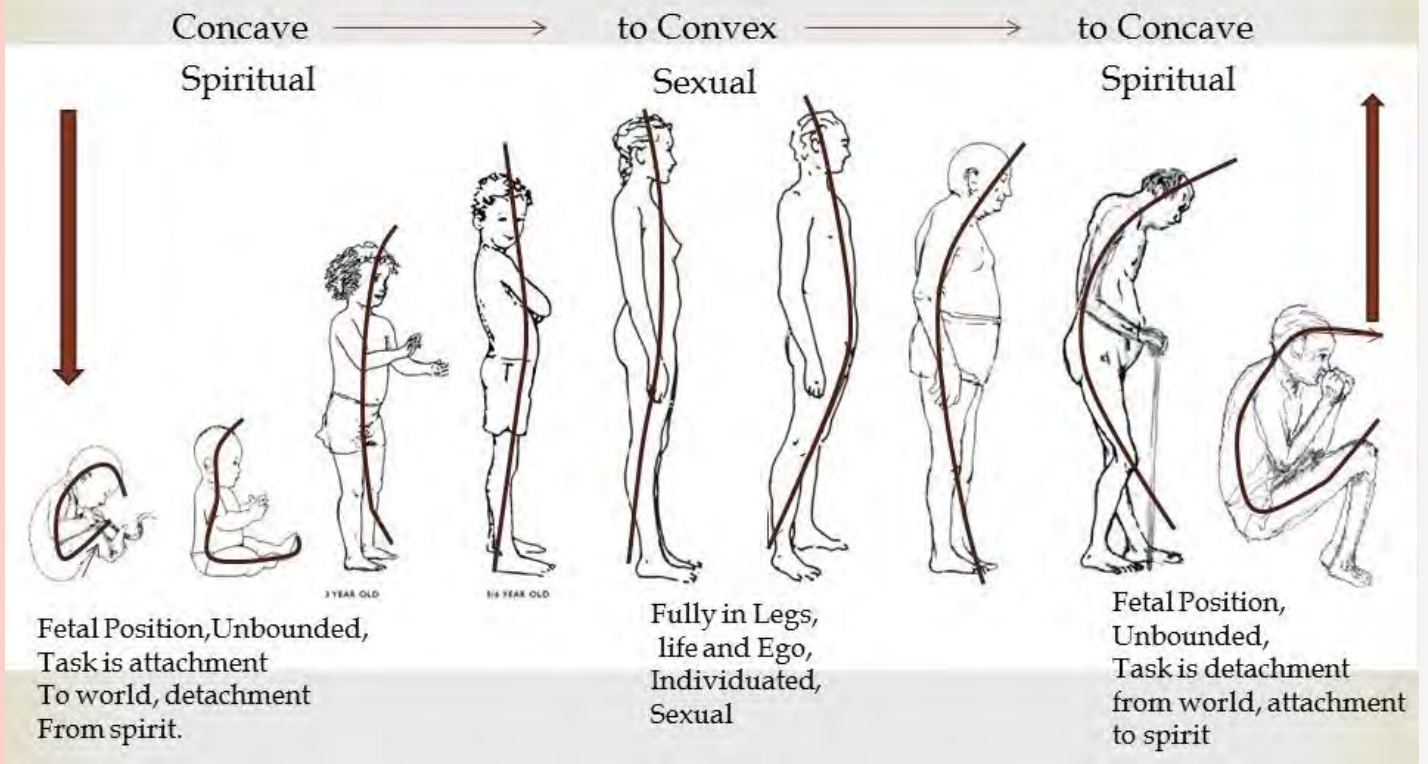
It is also not so hard to see that as we age and die, this process roughly reverses. Physically we lose first what we gained last: physical strength, sexuality, generativity, dexterity, balance on our feet. I call this entire life process the "Allometric Wave".

Prior to our meeting, Nora had lost balance and ability to walk. She needed me to write because she was losing control of her hands. Energy and capacity continued to be lost in a typical, sequential way from distal points (feet, hands, lower body) to upper body, from periphery to core. Nora lost bowel control and capacity to sit upright in a chair. Later her breathing changed and food became more difficult to eat.



The Circular Pulse

As energy moves up and down the body responds with curvature/gesture



As energy rises and returns, perhaps seeking what I call “spiritual ground”, digestion slows and eventually stops. In concert with these physical changes, relationships and psyche change as well; social contracts, intellect, personal power and identity slowly mutate or dissolve. By the time we are in the hold of death our consciousness has become completely transformed. We may lie curled into a fetal position again, speechless, sexless but nevertheless very much living, in touch with a very different self.

This movement is neither tragedy, failure nor some kind of negative intention toward life and pleasure. It is simply an aspect of our nature, a requirement of the breath of life itself. We unfold and fold into ourselves again with regularity in this simple human gesture.

In the process, our consciousness and our relationships, too, transform. We can see a profound order in this transformation. I have called this whole life gesture “The Circular Pulse”. I see in it a full life respiration which operates subtly in the breathing process throughout the body’s life, helping us practice walking the road home.

Which brings me to my last point.

Dying is an iterative learning process that requires practice. A lifetime of practice.

How peculiar. Nora longed for and enjoyed bodily pleasures even as she was losing her capacity to have them. In fact, the healing she received through human and spiritual

support made her more aware of the body and pleasure than when I met her. Dying people often pull back in to body, breath and speech multiple times in their arduous process. Natural dying, apparently, is not completely a linear process but also an oscillatory one. Touch will most commonly pull the dying back into their bodies for a time. This can be especially frightening or jarring if touch is rough, unexpected, or the hands are unfamiliar. However, physical grounding through light, conscious touch or massage can be very helpful, perhaps providing resources for the great change. The pattern of pulling into the body or even the *need* to be pulled in to the body in order to leave it, then, is something to recognize and work with. It is also a pattern I see in people in therapy before they change from one form to another. I like to think that engagement helps provide support for healing and energizes a kind of “catapult”.

Of course Nora died. It was an early morning death following a sudden stroke. I went to the wake where I saw her body dressed in pink, hair done, face made up, the word Mother scrawled across sprays of flowers, her relatives milling at a distance. Her body looked alone in the casket and unlike the wild spirit I had known fighting for light in the nursing home bed. It could have been my imagining of course, but kneeling before her I felt I saw and heard an agitated Nora jumping around in my head saying, “NOW they fix my hair? NOW they bring flowers?” I heard my own silent words of comfort, my thank you, my expression of love, my goodbye (Denney, 2011)

I am sometimes stunned that western body psychotherapy has had so little to say about both dying and spiritual experience. Maybe this is little wonder. Body psychotherapy took root in rebellion against death obsessed



Victoriana and sex-phobic Christianity. It claimed the sexual as good after being seen as evil and discovered the powerful imprint of early development. To be sexual was to be bodily was to be healthy and alive. We have recently focused on birth, attachment, trauma and neuroscience for clues to life. With so much focus on early development, there has been much less interest in later life, the full life span or the spiritual/transpersonal experiences that unfold regularly within illness, natural dying and bereavement. Did we adopt this orientation because Freud saw spirituality as infantile delusion? (Freud, 1962) Because real-time exploration of dying was derailed by a debate about “thanatos”? (Freud, 2014). Because Reich was rabidly anti-spiritual and focused almost exclusively on sexuality as health? (Reich, 1973) Because Lowen saw death as an **exhaustion of life, a thing that “can be**

contrasted with life” but is “not a part of it”? (Lowen, 1958, p. 86). I don’t know. I am still struggling to understand what these men meant when they spoke about death and life. Meanwhile I am drawing my own conclusions from the experience of being with dying people.

Death and spirituality are ancient bed partners, and rightly so. Through bodily trials, illness, deprivation of all kinds, crisis, trauma, Near Death Experiences, or Out of Body Experiences, we are forced into an awareness of a possible life that spans outside of an ordinary, material reality. We call this **different awareness “spiritual”**. It is often considered suspect, inconsequential and in opposition to embodied life rather than in some continuum with it. Unfortunately this awareness has also often been pathologized, even and *especially* in our field. I hope we will examine this prejudice because ironically, through these experiences, we are often taken deeper into body awareness, health and sacredness. Our bodies often change and heal as psyches heal through contact with altered states, not always eluding death but walking paradoxically through it with greater coherence.

Deeper observation of this process challenges models that have sexuality, reproduction, physical function and grounding into a material reality as the sole movers of health and life. We might look squarely at the fact that the process of becoming *both* embodied and disembodied (as in dying or spiritual experience) can open us up to non-ordinary reality, and that these spiritual openings and experiences often have strong bodily components which help us claim even more presence, even deeper sexuality, stability and wholeness even through death. These apparent paradoxes are well worth examining as we expand the conversation about the

nature of both embodiment and life itself.

Jeanne Denney is a body psychotherapist, hospice worker, teacher, and healer in and around New York City. Her training includes Core Energetics, Somatic Experiencing, transpersonal psychology and other body-oriented modalities. She has taught topics related to death, dying, and transpersonal psychology at graduate and undergraduate levels. Her experience also includes being a birth doula, a mother of four children, and an engineer of fixed and moving bridges.

Passages in italics have been retold with excerpts from this previously published story: Denney, J. (2011, March 11). The First Patient: A Hospice Worker's Chronicle. Retrieved February 2, 2015, from <https://jeannedenney.wordpress.com/2011/03/11/the-first-patient-a-hospice-workers-chronicle/>

References

- Byock, I. (1997). *Dying well: The prospect for growth at the end of life*. New York: Riverhead Books.
- Denney, J. (2008). The effects of compassionate presence on people in comatose states near death. *International Journal of Body Psychotherapy*, 7(2), 11-25.
- Denney, J. (2011, March 11). The first patient: A hospice worker's chronicle. Retrieved February 2, 2015, from <https://jeannedenney.wordpress.com/2011/03/11/the-first-patient-a-hospice-workers-chronicle/>
- Freud, S. (2014). *Beyond the pleasure principle*. Newburyport: Dover Publications.
- Freud, S. (1962). *Civilization and its discontents*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company.
- Lowen, A. (1958). *Language of the body*. New York: Grune & Stratton.
- Reich, W., & Reich, W. (1973). *Ether, god, and devil cosmic superimposition*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.



Stillness by Diane Doheny, a marriage and family therapist in Exeter, NH,



The Healing Power of Writing: A Therapist's Guide to Using Journaling with Clients

Written by Susan Borkin

Reviewed by Sue Roh



The psychological benefits

of writing have been studied extensively, but little has been written for mental health professionals about how to effectively integrate writing into therapy sessions. Susan Borkin's *The Healing Power of Writing* effectively tackles this necessity by instructing mental health professionals on how to maximize the benefits of therapeutic journaling. For both experts in writing therapy and those who are just beginning to integrate writing into their sessions, *The Healing Power of Writing* will contribute significantly to your practice. The book is an unbelievably clear and concise guide, elucidating the power of writing in psychotherapy while simultaneously providing a plethora of writing ideas to the psychotherapist.

Although primarily targeted to psychotherapists, *The Healing Power of Writing* offers powerful tools for both clinicians and non-clinicians. We often forget that writing is a powerful therapeutic instrument and, when we do engage in writing, freeform

writing does not specifically target our needs. Borkin, in this book alone, offers over seventy writing practices for the reader to achieve creative and meaningful expression. No longer relying on freeform journaling alone, one can pick and choose which writing assignment will be most effective.

Sample responses and extracted dialogue from her sessions decorate each chapter, which enable a better understanding about **the writing assignment's main objective.** Borkin takes the reader step-by-step through

real life examples: from the initial assignment to the final analysis. Whether it is by journaling or writing letters, she provides the reader with the option to mix, match, and omit assignments.

However, it is also

important to note that Borkin, by no means, is pushing the clinician to integrate writing into his or her practice. In this chapter, she focuses on specific situations in which writing as a therapeutic tool is not advised. Moreover, Borkin emphasizes that writing is an adjunct to psychotherapy and therefore should not be used as a substitute. The clinician should be, first and foremost, a clinician, using writing as a point of clarification rather than his or her main form of diagnosis.

Sue Roh is currently an undergraduate third-year at the Columbia University in the City of New York with a double major in psychology and mathematics. Beyond her course of study, she is interested in international development and founded Save Mae, a non-profit organization that provides medication to the Mae Ra Ma Luang Refugee Camp located along the Myanmar-Thailand border.



Preaching to the Preacher

By Ronan M. Kisch, PhD

Serendipity? Fate? Karma? Divine intervention? What force has brought no less than six Christian ministers to this Jewish somatic psychotherapist? While I clearly profess to be spiritual, I am not religious. Perhaps it is my being an introvert and having a very low profile.

I admit that my spirituality deepened

after I wrote a book about bodyworkers: *The Miraculous Achievements of Bodywork* (Kisch, 2011). It explores bodywork practitioners of different religions, as well as those who profess none, who brought their sense of spirit to their work and the unusual, unpredictable, if not miraculous outcomes of their labor. In addition to reporting about them, I was touched by them. Today, as I go into work, my office is my temple. I have a sense of bringing not just academic knowledge, clinical

techniques or physical manipulation to my clients, but a far reaching spirit of presence, acceptance, and confirmation that reaches beyond myself.

The following case studies reveal how issues of spirituality arise in treatment and how they are responded to in somatic psychotherapy. I have consent to share my **clients' stories and have changed their names** and certain information to protect their identity.

Carl

Carl is a seventy-year-old minister who

does not want parishioners calling him by any title because he believes that only serves to make distance. His father abandoned his family in his youth, and his mother was unsupportive. In the past year his wife died, and he recently had knee surgery. In addition to knee, leg and hip pain, his shoulder hurts. Carl came for supportive psychotherapy.

In a recent session, tight, pale-faced,

twisted in his posture, Carl reported having a poor night of sleep the night before because of his pain. He came into the session carrying Richard Rohr's (2011) book *Falling Upward* that explores religious or spiritual identity in different developmental stages of life. In spite of enjoying the book, Carl opened it and pointed to a particular page in which Rohr was discussing original sin. Carl was particularly incensed over the issue of original sin. What was striking to me was that Carl was physically braced in his upset. He winced in pain and braced more tightly as he continued without stopping to explain to me why the concept of original sin was upsetting to him. His voice was pressured; his eyebrows furrowed and stern.

My focus was not on original sin, but on

the minister's level of agitation and immediate bracing, which then aggravated his pain problems. His shoulders were raised and braced. While his rheumatologist told Carl that he had a chronic degenerative disorder, he did not tell him that relaxation or assuming a meditative state could minimize his bones being pulled together by tight muscles, thereby reducing pain and the perpetual degeneration of the cartilage between the bones.

With Carl's consent, I placed soft, gentle fingers above and below the spots where he

reported pain. His muscles were hard and braced. I had us both breathe slowly; the out-breath stimulating the parasympathetic nervous system (rest and digest) being longer than the in-breath, which stimulated the sympathetic (fight or flight) nervous system. In fairly short order, I felt a gentle, rhythmic pulsation in Carl's muscles. The hardness dissipated. Carl's face now had pink in it. His shoulders were down. His dissatisfaction or grumpiness over having a poor night's sleep was nowhere to be seen. His voice was softer and no longer pressured.

In the session we then explored ways for

Carl to become more aware of his breath. In particular, to be aware of his shoulder when he was reading or discussing matters that he disagreed with, or when he had memories of loss or abandonment or abuse from childhood. If they were tight and up, he could put a hand on his chest or belly and take long breaths out and let his shoulders soften to feel more comfortable in his body and minimize pain. Carl the adult could also talk to Carl the child and verbally, tactilely, and emotionally provide the support and confirmation that was missing in childhood. Releasing the physical/emotional brace might allow him to sleep more soundly at night. It might even allow him to get deeper into spiritual practice and prayer. He could then come back and in the safety of his therapy sessions discuss issues that might arise. A very different man walked out of the office than walked in.

Body Memories Hold Our Reactions

Medical biophysicist and psychologist

Peter Levine believes humans do not discharge or shake off the stress and trauma they encounter. Out of fear of experiencing their terror, they internalize it. They remain in fight, flight, freeze or collapse. Release is a process most often requiring societal support. Too often in our society we do not offer this type of support, which then allows the trauma

to be passed on to future generations. The implicit unconscious memory of these events is reinforced and shapes our somatic and cognitive structure. Our reactions to stress and trauma are locked in our body's memory. Levine calls this procedural memory and says:

Procedural memories are memories of the body — when the body is threatened, we react, we stiffen, we fight, we flee, or we freeze. These are all things the body does — these are not part of the other memory systems —they make up the procedural memory system of implicit memory ... until those memories are changed, the other memories cannot change. While we may have insight, until that change happens from the inside — from the body and the procedural memory — we're still stuck in the cycle of trauma and repetition (Buczynski & Levine, 2014, p. 13).

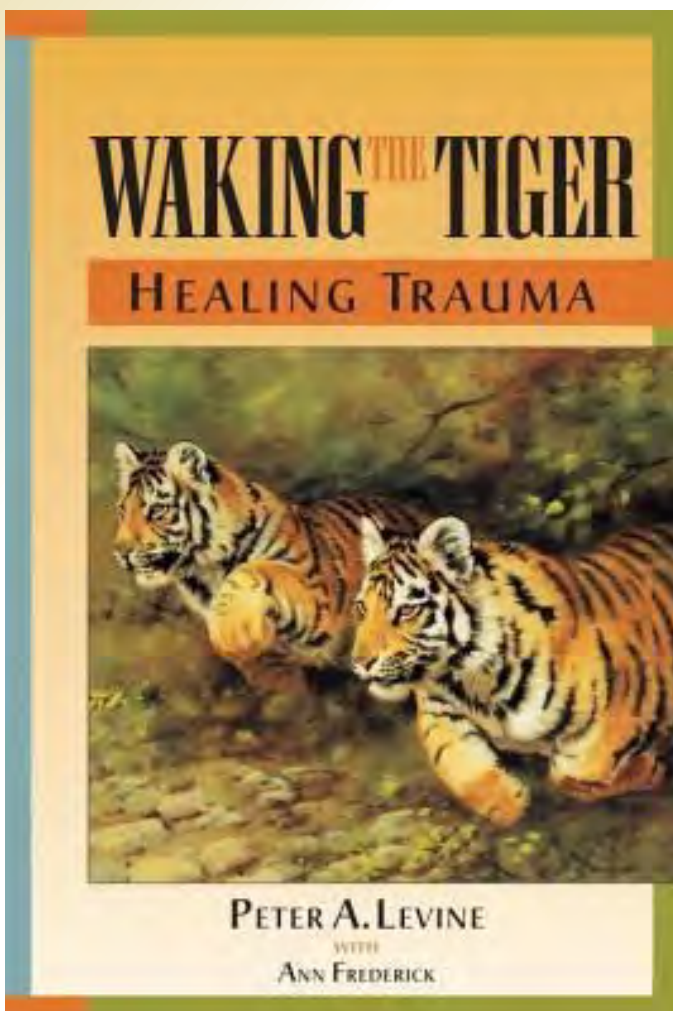
Levine goes on to say:

But, when we're able to have new experiences in our body — not mental experiences or different images — but, new bodily-experiences, only then can the remains of trauma be touched. Without bodily experience, trauma is untouched (Buczynski & Levine, 2014, p. 16).

Pastor Eric

Eric is a soft-spoken, blond-haired, blue-eyed, forty-four-year-old pastor. He originally sought treatment for anxiety issues. In the course of treatment he came into the office somewhat shaken. His neck and shoulders were braced and held an inordinate amount of tension. He spoke of Matthew 14:29 where Jesus' disciples set sail upon the Sea of Galilee after Jesus had fed the 5000. Later that night, after going on the mountain to pray, Jesus walked on the water toward his disciples in the boat. The disciples were in fear believing they were viewing a false mirage. Peter cried out to Jesus if it was really he to call back to Peter and command Peter to come forward. Indeed, that is what happened. So Peter got out of the boat and started to walk on the water to approach Jesus. But then Peter became aware of the wind, the material world, and his anxiety took over. Fearing drowning in the sea, Peter began to sink.

Eric identified with Peter trying to walk on water to connect with Jesus in the face of the opposition of the wind. Upon further exploration, the pastor spoke of the economic problems of his community. He believed the doors of his church were soon to close. He agonized over losing contact with parishioners he had become close to and believed he would no longer be able to provide his support to them.



I performed NeuroEmotional Technique

(NET) with Eric. NET is a hands-on mindbody technique developed by chiropractor Scott Walker. It identifies origins of NeuroEmotional Connections (NEC's) locked in the body and releases the chemical peptides from cells, freeing unconscious, implicit memory. NET is practiced by professionals of different health care disciplines (Kisch, 2014). Walker (2008) states of his approach:

NET is a simple mind-body stress reduction intervention aimed at improving behavioral and physical problems, such as in chronic injuries, subluxations, pain, worry, depression, etc.

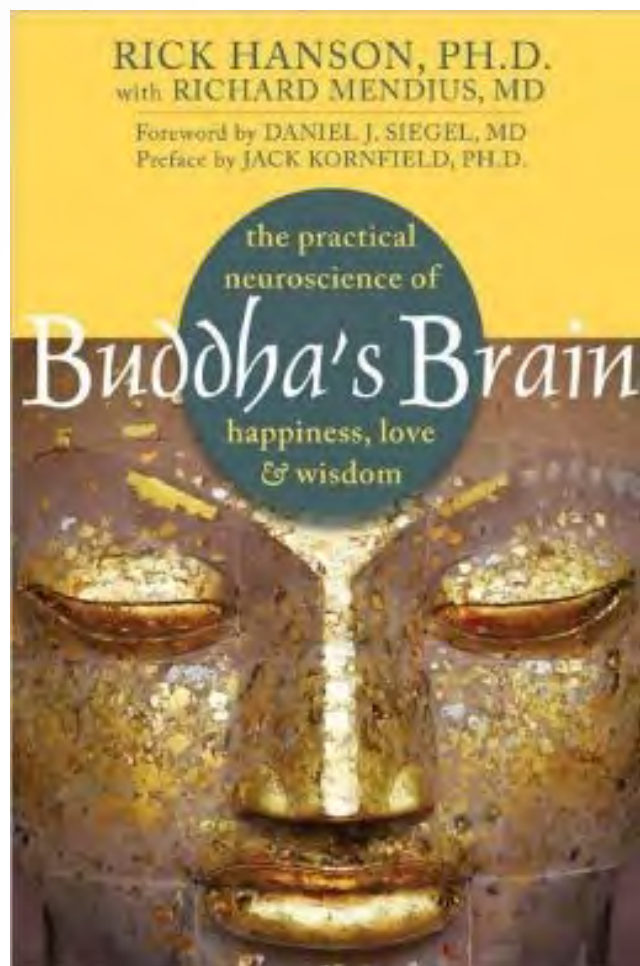
Pastor Eric's issue of anxiety and grief

went back to his family of origin. His mother was needy and demanding; his father passive and dependent. Much responsibility for family routines fell on young Eric's shoulders. At an exceedingly young age, he assumed the role and responsibility of parent in his family. No matter what or how much he did, this youth's feeling was, *I'm not doing it good enough.*

Neurological psychologist Rick Hanson

(2013) points out we have a genetic predisposition to focus on the negative and for the negative to stay more prominent in our memories than the positive.

The bias creates two kinds of problems. First it increases the negative. It pulls your attention to what is or could be bad, makes you over react to it, stores the negative experience in implicit memory. It also creates vicious circles of negativity both inside your brain and with other people. In a variety of ways, this bias increases your stresses, worries, frustrations, irritations, hurts, sorrows, feelings of falling short, and conflicts with others.



Second, the negativity bias decreases the positive. It slides your attention past the good facts around you. It makes you underreact to the good facts you do notice. It slips the good experiences you do have right through your brain, leaving little or no trace behind (p. 29).

While in prehistoric times, this negative predisposition originated to help us to survive, for Eric it made it difficult to have a sense of success and magnified the duress in his community. The desensitization procedure of NET extinguished his anxiety. He recognized his parents' inability to pass on to him what they never received from their parents. He was also able to give himself recognition for the positive effects his altruistic deeds had for others.

George immediately retorted, "God is all loving and forgiving." Able to be forgiving of his parishioner, Reverend George was not forgiving of himself.

And with Trager® movement, a bodymind intervention of gentle rocking (Kisch, 2014), he began to explicitly, consciously, build an awareness of his bracing pattern to release the stress he maintained in his body. The pastor returned to his parish feeling grounded and empowered to address whatever was to unfold with his church.

When next he came for therapy, he reported the issue of the church's doors closing was still there. But, he was feeling good because he had been able to sleep. He was feeling a sense of strength in ministry because he was helping people. And, he had "a deeper sense of connection to God, the ground of all being, the vine, and the bond to Christ."

Reverend George

George was a tall, austere, 64-year-old man. His eye contact was deep and intense. His presence was powerful and commanding. Because of his own personal wounds, he was able to bring a deep sense of empathy and compassion to others. He first sought treatment for issues relating to unresolved feelings regarding family.

Several months after therapy began there were a series of falls and Reverend George was diagnosed with terminal cancer. Following chemotherapy and radiation treatment he walked with a walker. He was shaky. His voice was thin, affect flat, and he was riddled with fear. Applied kinesiology, a testing of muscle strength or weakness, part of NET procedure (Kisch, 2014) was

employed. Muscles become strong when thoughts, feelings, or actions are congruent with the individual. Muscles go weak when the information is incongruent. I asked George if he was afraid of death. "No," he replied; his arm was strong. Then he said, "I'm afraid of God's judgment."

Again, he was muscle tested for this statement. His arm went weak indicating that there was an underlying Neuroemotional Connection (NEC) with this concern. When asked what he would say if one of his parishioners came to him and shared their fear of God's judgment, George immediately retorted, "God is all loving and forgiving." Able to be forgiving of his parishioner, Reverend George was not forgiving of himself. NET was offered, and the issue of his being self-judgmental was identified. This dated back to childhood, and his mother's accusations. Her accusations were firmly locked within his soma, as well as his conscious awareness. After performing the extinction procedure of NET, the issue of Reverend George's fear of God's judgment was eradicated.

In spite of his medical treatment or because of its severity, George's condition declined rapidly. He had a pulmonary embolism. I next saw him in the hospital. His verbalizations were depersonalized, void of affect, faint, brief, and pressured. This austere man reported being afraid to be left alone. He felt lost and frightened in a new and alien cognitive terrain. His oncologist recommendation was to "become accustomed to the new norm."

That was when I took out the Sacred

Frankincense from my pocket and asked if I could put some on him. He replied, "Yes."

I said, "This is the Frankincense Jesus had in his pouch."



He quipped back with authority, "I know."

This therapist was preaching not to the choir, but to the preacher. After I put the Frankincense on his forehead and wrists, George closed his eyes. He was quiet for a considerable time. Then a tear came out of his eye. When asked, "How are you doing?" he replied in a soft voice, but now he spoke with warm affect as if a transformation had occurred, "I was walking the streets of Jerusalem — with Jesus." His fear was gone.



Words Are Always Not Enough

The olfactory lobe sits in the limbic

system—the center of our emotions. It takes a fraction of a second for sensations of smell to enter from the nose and then travel to and stimulate receptors in the emotional center in the brain. Tracey, Imwold, and Baume (2000) explain:

... nerve signals travel along the olfactory tract to reach the olfactory cortex, the limbic system and the hypothalamus in the brain. This is where smells are identified and the body's response coordinated. Smell has the most direct pathway to the brain of all the senses (p. 655).

Mere intellectual words, no matter how

truthful or accurate, are unable to accomplish what direct contact with the body can profoundly overcome. In the presence of Sacred Frankincense Reverend George's traumatic holding was released. In the moment I observed George's transformation, I recalled what psychiatrist and trauma specialist Bessel van der Kolk (2014) tells us—words, insight, and understanding do not release emotional trauma from the implicit body memory of the trauma. Cognition alone does not quiet the limbic system.

Trauma results in a fundamental reorganization of the way mind and brain manage perceptions. It changes not only how we think and what we think about, but also our very capacity to think. We have discovered that helping victims of trauma find the words to describe what has happened to them is profoundly meaningful, but usually it is not enough. The act of telling the story doesn't necessarily alter the automatic physical and hormonal responses of bodies that remain hypervigilant, prepared to be assaulted or violated at any time. For real

change to take place the body has to learn that the danger has passed and to live in the reality of the present (p.21).

In order to release the holding that lies

beneath the prefrontal, verbal cortex, one must use an intervention that articulates with the emotional limbic system. This can be touch, movement, music, neurofeedback, social engagement, even olfactory sensations.

In spite of his earlier agitation, two

months later Reverend George died peacefully at home. I hoped he is walking on the streets of Jerusalem.

In Conclusion

Now at sixty-eight, I find myself with an

ecumenical curiosity reading to discover who Jesus was. Not a single work morning goes by without my reinforcing my sense of spirit. In prayer I reach out to the Universe, beyond myself, and beyond what I know or understand and ask for support, groundedness, strength and wisdom to encounter another workday of peoples' pain and struggles. I ask for the skill and presence to help my clients to find a sense of endurance in themselves to overcome the unknown, unimaginable, and previously impossible. I want my clients to be sufficiently relaxed to be open to perceive and experience both their inner strength and realize their mission on this Earth plane. I want them to take that strength and sense of mission out of my office feeling whole and integrated in spite of returning to a very troubled, often hostile and prejudiced world.

When I was younger, I believed that

with time and growing knowledge within civilization the world would get better, more accepting, loving and giving. Technology, however, and not humanity has taken colossal strides forward since then. In stark

contrast, the nightly news is discouraging, disheartening, if not downright depressing. As I get older, I steadily lose faith in the future and the betterment of humanity as a whole. The spirit I experience in my work and the strength gained by my clients is a counter balance to my pessimism toward the outside world.

Whatever theoretical psychological

context my frontal cortex is in at the moment that I am with my client, whether it be Sigmund Freud, Carl Rogers or Bessel van der Kolk, my presence unfolds within the context of — my client is precious, lovable and deserving. We are all the Divine's children, and whether it was confirmed in us in our childhood or not, whether we implicitly believe it or not, we are all lovable. This is the cognitive/affective/somatic knowledge I try to convey to my clients.

As I watch my clients get stronger and

overcome their presenting difficulties, I have a sense of fulfilling my own mission in my life. As my clients release their somatoemotional holding of past wounds and traumas, they not only open to their own personal potential, but they open to the sense of spirit both within themselves and without. Working with my ministerial clients, I have a particular sense of responsibility. It is not merely the person in front of me that I am working with, but the vibrations that go out to his or her entire parish. Their choosing to work with me is a blessing for me. Many years ago I worked in a hospital as a health psychologist. Up until that time I only knew the death of my elderly grandmother in my early adolescence, which was in sharp contrast to the fact that people died in the hospital every day. As I left each workday, I gave thanks for another day of life. I have perceived every day of life since then as a blessing, along with my wife, Elizabeth.

Ronan M. Kisch, PhD is a somatic psychologist in Dayton, Ohio. He received his doctorate from the University of Kentucky where he was a NIMH Trainee at the Department of Medical Behavioral Science. He received post- doctoral training at the Gestalt Institute of Cleveland. Dr. Kisch is a Certified NeuroEmotional Technique (NET) Practitioner, a Trager® Practitioner, a Nationally Certified Bodyworker, and he holds an Advanced Certificate from the Santa Barbara Graduate Institute in Somatic Psychology. He served as a health psychologist in Dayton's Miami Valley and Sycamore Hospitals. He is the author of: *Beyond Technique: The Hidden Dimensions of Bodywork* and *The Miraculous Achievements of Bodywork: How Touch Can Provide Healing for the Mind, Body and Spirit*.

References

- Buczynski, R. & Levine, P. (2014). Getting to the root of trauma [Webinar]. The National Institute for the Clinical Application of Behavioral Medicine.
- Tracey, D. J., Imwold, D., Baume, P. (2000). *Anatomica: The complete reference to the human body and how it works*. Sydney, Australia: Random House.
- Hanson, R. (2013). *Hardwiring happiness*. New York: Harmony.
- Kisch, R. M. (2014). Transcending the paradoxical brace response: Mind body connection. *Somatic Psychotherapy Today*, 4(1), 72-76.
- Kisch, R. M. (2011). *The miraculous achievements of bodywork: How Touch Can Provide Healing for the Mind, Body and Spirit*. Bloomington: iUniverse.
- Rohr, R. (2011). *Falling upward: A spirituality for the two halves of life*. New York: Jossey-Bass.
- van der Kolk, B. (2014). *The body keeps the score*. New York: Viking.
- Walker, S. (2008). Thinking About a Problem While Getting Adjusted? *The American Chiropractor*, 30 (12), 18.

How Touch Can Provide Healing For The Mind, Body, And Spirit



The Miraculous Achievements Of Bodywork

Ronan M. Kisch, Ph.D.

[www.facebook.com/
SomaticPsychotherapyToday](http://www.facebook.com/SomaticPsychotherapyToday)

Like us and keep
up with the latest
news and updates





Embodied Spirituality

By Mette Mouritsen, MD

What is embodied spirituality?

I guess there might be as many colorful descriptions as there are authors attempting to define not only the term but the actual state of being, as there is no single, widely agreed definition for the concept. Related to me, I was blessed with a rather sudden consciousness breakthrough four years ago that totally transformed my inner and outer life and continues to form and transform my life in many positive ways. I am a doctor and Integral psychotherapist and mindfulness instructor and most of all I am a human being. My intention in writing this essay is to reflect on my personal understanding of embodied spirituality—of living my spirit.

For me, embodied spirituality is a personal process of transformation and in this way very subjective; even though the feeling of connectedness might be the same. Maybe

this is why I can easily write the pronoun 'we' when discussing this topic. While I will do my best to avoid generalizations about spirituality, the topic itself raises many **questions; some of which I don't know the** answer and for others I offer my opinion.

To initiate a conversation with you, the reader, about embodied spirituality, I must first ask, what is spirit and what is spirituality? And then, within these questions, I ponder: where is it located?

I have a sense that spirit is energy, that exists without a specific location and form. I offer an example: When I am dancing intuitively and passionately to music, sometimes it is as if the tunes are moving my body or the body movement follows the rhythm by itself. Sometimes I make

Does the spirit of music embody me? Or am I embodied by the movement of an invisible dancer? Who am I in these moments?

movements that I never dreamt my body was able to do. In these moments I wonder, who is embodying my body? Does the spirit of music embody me? Or am I embodied by the movement of an invisible dancer? Who am I in these moments? I am a body but there is also something more that is moving my body in unpredictable and constantly changing ways, and certainly also moving my feelings.

This example illustrates for me that I am

much more than condensed energy in terms of my body-mind. Something makes me move. The composer, who wrote the music and the musicians who play have been working with their spirit to manifest the music—the elements of the music already existed, waited for them to bring it to form. Together this is moving the spirit of the dance. And in the dance it is not possible to distinguish the body-mind from the spirit; they are one.

For me, spirit is my unique

consciousness in unification with the common consciousness. In my view, we are one consciousness; the separation is an illusion of the ego. The Ego—our personified spirit—needs a point of reference to separate itself from the surroundings to experience its existence; otherwise, there would just be one. And I ask, is that one, you or me or we or it? The fear of not existence creates and evolves the diversity of the Ego. The longing for connectedness is softening the ego.

We are one united spirit or

consciousness, whatever you may prefer to name it. We just can't recognize it because of our ego. We see the world through our own

colored glasses, and as we cannot observe ourselves totally, we will never see the whole picture, the oneness. One cannot see oneness, one cannot find oneness. One can be oneness. So how can I write that I know we are one consciousness?

My experiences are that I often feel the

same as most of my fellowmen in a given situation, we just have different ways to react to our feelings, which are manifested in the body-mind and our behaviour, our ego. So, common human feelings connect us, as well as they seemingly separate us. Another example: When I had this breakthrough, my experience was, an intense feeling of happiness and a feeling of connectedness with everyone and everything. When returning from this state, back to my ego, I felt anxiety, then rejected, then anger. Later I felt sorrow losing a dear friend (my ex-husband), and to some extent my old ego. In the end I felt a blissful forgiveness. Now I often feel gratitude.

My relatives' reaction was at first no

reaction, simply ignorance. They were anxious, but they could not react. They felt powerlessness then anger and later sorrow losing a dear friend, wife, and mum because I had changed. We had many feelings, but we also shared the same feelings, at different times with different reactions. Fundamentally we had a fear of losing someone or something and at the same time we were longing for the connection to someone or something for seemingly different reasons. We came from a kind of symbiosis in our relationship and, in the split into two, the fear and the longing for connectedness started again.



In fact, the first split started many decades ago, when oneness split into plurality in the Big Bang and manifested our existence. Suddenly there was a point of reference because one became two and this created feelings as fear and longing. The fear of being eaten by the other and the longing for reconnection. Of course this is my interpretation of the creation and connectedness of the universe, and what triggered the Big Bang in the beginning? Anyway I invite you to be aware of and curious about the fear and the longing in its many disguises, and how it influences you and others. Although it is our mind that mostly **trigger the feelings, it's the latter that may "run the show"**.

Another important common feeling that I think may be the same as the one we call

love, is the feeling of happiness—to be and to bring happiness connects us and fills up the inner empty space of longing for belonging. In genuine sharing of happiness, the connectedness arises.

Although having the same feelings are not the same as being one consciousness, they are important in connecting living beings. The fear and anger bind and connect us in the distancing, just like the longing connects us in the striving for closeness. Even though we might hate someone, we are still connected through the hate. Behind hate is always a longing for connectedness—to be seen and accepted as we are.

Another reason why I know we are connected in a common spirit lies in the many thoughts that arise in me every second, where do they come from? They are certainly not my

self-development. So where do these words that are flowing through my mind originate? Some have been discussed with other fellowmen, and some arise in me brought by other consciousnesses that I might never have met in this life. The other consciousnesses are open to the common reservoir of thoughts and words that are constantly drifting, transforming, and sometimes being expressed in amazing different ways and contexts.

Through my process, I experienced some out-of-the-blue understanding of the interconnectedness of the body-mind, and the power of the Now. Later on I discovered that there was already written books including works about this by Bruce Lipton, *The Biology of Belief*, especially in chapter 5- 6, how the mind is anatomically and physiologically connected with the body in the stress reaction. And when reading his book it opened my eyes to another old forgotten truth that we are not definitely determined by our genes. This confirmed the transformations in symptoms and diseases I had experienced in myself and my patients.

And Daniel Stern, in *The Present Moment in Psychotherapy and Everyday Life*, especially chapter 12, where he describes the power of the Now. I had experienced that I easily got re-traumatized in a present moment (the Now) even just by a briefly expression in a face, and that I as well was relived in a present moment (the Now) when someone acknowledge me for how I am now. Transformation is a lived experience in the Now. This wisdom came through the space of common consciousness. Before I was living in unconsciousness in a world of scientific beliefs where only matter, the form exists, and the formless has to be proven (observed) before it exists. And in my eager to understand the detail (the symptom) I had forgotten to look at the whole picture, the

interconnectedness of the body-mind-spirit.

Another concrete example is when I play Besser Wisser with my grown-up children (a game where the players pose questions to each other on different categories). Often I do not know the answer, especially when the question is about sport, history, music and geography. But sometimes I notice, when I am still and listen to my intuition, the right answer pops up. From where does the answer come? Surely not from my quiet children but from out-of-the-blue, the common reservoir of consciousness. This may happen for all of us.

If my consciousness changes it influences the ones I mostly relate to in **present time. My relatives' consciousness is in** turn connected with other consciousnesses and so it continues like ripples in the water, like a breath in the air. By the way, spirit in Latin means breath, so perhaps the spirit is moving our breath, and ends it as well in the final breath. I believe that spirit uses the body to become more conscious, even though the body is also consciousness but in a condensed form. The body has the capability to sense and feel, and by this the spirit acquires lived experiences, which I think might be necessary to transform energy and to keep the flow of consciousness.

The energy to be transformed is our thoughts and our feelings and even the body during the life-death circle. Just like ice is transformed into water, which is transformed into clouds, which disappears in the air or returns to water, which returns to ice. Consciousness exists in different forms in the ever-floating ocean of consciousness. In this definition of consciousness, time disappears. We are then pure presence. Through the decay in the materialistic world we define time as passing by. But the spirit inside us has no age. We may still feel young even



Soul Chakra created and donated by Tara Catalano. www.taracatalano.com

though our body-mind grows old.

When something exists, the contrary

polarity must exist because everything is manifested by its contradiction. We would not recognize the light if we didn't know the dark. We would not know of living if we didn't know the death. So who knows about the dis-embodied spirit? I guess we might ask people with near-death experiences, they describe among other a feeling of being pure awareness.

Embodied spirituality is for me then

living my spirit in daily life on earth. Being all

that I am in every moment. When I am in the Now in whatever I am doing, the creativity rises. I am silent, listening to my intuition, and wisdom from other consciousnesses are likely to pop up. A feeling of being connected to something much bigger and wiser than me. As soon as I am elsewhere or not present, I am in a more or less contracted state in the body-mind (the stress response) and by this I minimize the ability of being connected with spirit and the common spirituality. To exemplify this I will return to the game Besser Wisser. If I am eager to win the game, I am alert and I am in the stress response—I am in a contracted state of my body-mind. I do not listen inward for the answer but outward for the recognition and then I do not open up for receiving the answer from out-of-the-blue. Playing, enjoying, and using the full creativity of life happens in the body-mind and spirit.

I believe that spirit is just as dependent

on the body, as the other way around. The spirit grows and learns through our feelings, thoughts, behaviour and movements. Together they create a flow, a movement in time and space. Likewise with any other matter or condensed energy like an animal, a tree, a stone, a car. Like a puppet, the strings are just as much needed as the doll if **the puppet is going to move, they just don't** create a movement, they need the spirit of a puppeteer. And the puppeteer needs the spirit of a theatre and an audience even though he might enjoy the puppet-show alone for a while. The wood and the plastic, which the doll consists of, are still undergoing a transformative process, the process of decay. This is also a flow, a movement just as our body, feelings and thoughts transform, move and get moved. In this way everything and everyone are consciousness and materialised spirituality, just as everything and everyone is transformable, moving, and interconnected. In the end the doll, either made of plastic

or wood, origins from our earth. The transformation of oil into plastic into a doll is made by the spirit of a human. Some dolls have more spirit than others depending on how it is made- the intention and the spirit of the doll maker.

Thus, we all affect and are

influenced by each other; we are beautifully interconnected. The whole human-animal-plant organism is being moved by spirit. Spirit is in us, around us, under us, and above us. Writing this brings deep love and caring feelings for everything around me including the keys on this keypad. Starting to care and become aware of all the small units we are surrounded with, as if they are embodied spirituality, this is for me the beginning of a return toward deep care and love for the earth and the universe. All these reflexions together with my own experiences are the reason for saying that I know we are one consciousness.



The body of mother earth fuses with the spirit of father sky and together they weave the movement of life as reflected in our eyes.

Mette Mouritsen, MD: I am a 53-year-old woman, learning through my life experiences and through other people's ways of being and acting in the world. I also learn through studying books, articles, ec. I specialize in General Medicine, and am certified as an Integral Psychotherapist. I am fortunate with three lovely grown-up children, the fruits of 21-years marriage with my ex-husband. I meditate twice daily. I love nature, to dance, to run to walk, to write and to laugh :)

Many thanks to Nancy Eichhorn for encouraging me to write this essay, and for her helpful questions to make me clarify myself and kindly correcting my "Denglish" expressions.

References:

Lipton, B. (2005). *The biology of belief*. 1. Hay House edition. Translated into Danish as Intelligente Celler, 1. Version 7. Edition 2012, Publisher; Borgen, Valby, Copenhagen. ISBN; 978-87-21-03467-2.
Stern, D. (2004). *The present moment in psychotherapy and everyday life*. Translated into Danish as " Det nuværende øjeblik" 2004 , Publisher; Hans Reitzels Copenhagen, ISBN: 978-87-412-2366-7

Change Your Story, Change Your Life: Using Shamanic and Jungian Tools to Achieve Personal Transformation

Written by Carl Greer, PhD, PsyD

Reviewed by Nancy Eichhorn, PhD



My First Shamanic Journey

I recall lying on the carpet, a pillow nestled under my head. The shaman, an elderly woman with waist-long gray hair, tranquil blueish-gray eyes and a soft voice, rhythmically beat on a drum. The afternoon light faded as my focus filtered inward. I walked down a twisty damp tunnel, spindly roots twined toward me as if gnarled fingers. I heard a melodic voice, syllables concocting a make-believe song of darkness within hope.



I saw a young girl in a thin night-gown twirling on her tippy toes. Her hair was matted; her eyes shone bright with fear. **“Don’t go down there,”** she said, and then motioned further down the path. **“There’s monsters down there.”**

©Stephen VanHorn/Shutterstock

During an hour-long journey I met three of my dissociated parts: the young girl; a teenager lying on a bed of nails, blood seeping from her wounds, refusing to move; and a brilliant ball of white light. Both females spoke with me, shared their fear, their sorrow, their pain. Each agreed to rejoin me with certain rules in place. The brilliant white light released a flurry of crystalline flakes; I watched millions of tiny glittering crystals cascade around me. I felt bathed in light, in love, in life.



Using Shamanic and Jungian Tools Today

Twenty-four years have passed since my first shamanic journey. When I received Carl Greer's book, *Change Your Story, Change Your Life: Using Shamanic and Jungian Tools to Achieve Personal Transformation*, I thought I knew what I'd find in the pages of his text. I was not prepared for the depth of detail—both written by Carl and expected from me, the reader, embarking on a journey of self-transformation. Carl's intention to unite the three tiers of his teachings—shamanism, Jungian psychology, and clinical psychology—resulted in a dense tomb of knowledge and experience. I felt as if he

pulled one of my all-time favorite tricks when teachers gave a page limit on an assignment: reduce the font size, halve the margins, decrease the indentations. Carl has managed to fit a lifetime's worth of work into 221 pages of a 6 inch by 9 inch softcover book. And he offers, in return for your dedicated attention, support to discover and experience: your life span via a timeline; how to course the trajectories that catapulted you into and out of relationships; the patterns behind the behaviors motivating you to seek assistance; sensing into the feeling states prompting pain and suffering; how to float inward yet simultaneously outward and tap into the united consciousness of all that is; how to re-vision and energize your life's narratives to move toward lasting change.

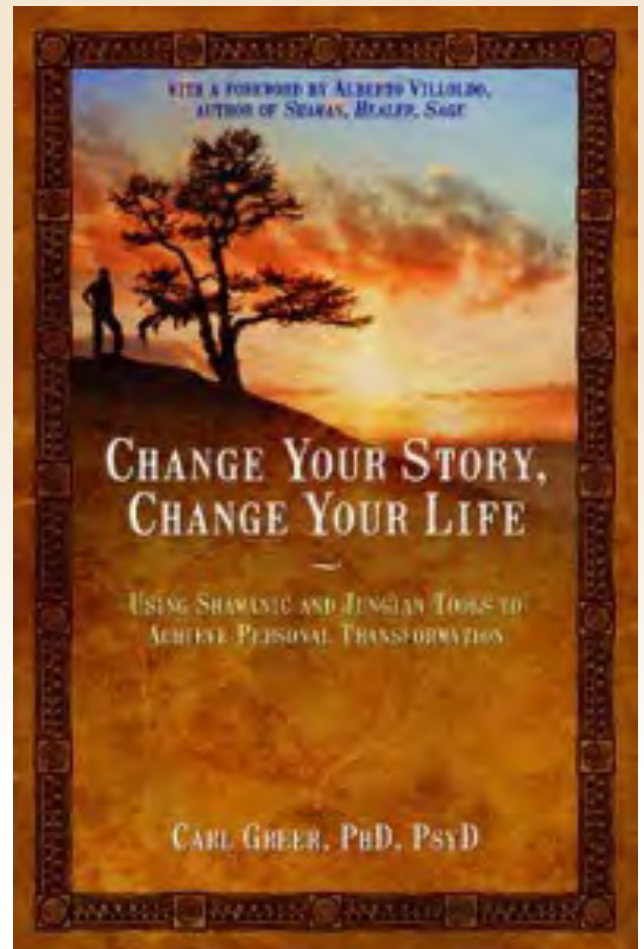
This is not a quick read. Nor is it a fill-in-the-blank workbook with stem starter sentences and pre-recorded CDs offering guided visualizations. This book is both textbook and guidebook; it is both informational and experiential. For me, working full time and then some, I think I want a year to delve into and complete every exercise in this book. Transcripts for numerous meditations and visualizations are provided in the book. Carl suggests you either work in pairs, or in a group, or record the transcript in order to listen and focus and be present with the journey. Other readers have asked Carl to consider creating CDs to accompany the text. I know that listening to the sound of my own voice triggers more criticism than self-exploration—I vote for prerecorded CDs.

Carl clearly provides how-to instructions for both reading the book and for each specific exercise (for accessing both the conscious and unconscious mind). According to Carl, shamanic and Jungian approaches complement one another—the shamanic practices facilitate healing before understanding comes and the Jungian approaches illuminate unconscious processes

in order to consciously examine and then heal. **“Both traditions involve accessing energies, often embodied in symbols, images, and inner figures”** (p. 18). **Although exercises that involve journaling and conscious analysis are offered before those that invite you to access your unconscious mind, the book is formatted such that you can skip around. You can start in Chapter Three with exercises that resonate with you and explore your current story and then move to Chapter Four to rewrite them.**

As you start to revision your narrative, you can experiment with shamanic journeys, **which, according to Carl, are “experiences involving altering your consciousness and interacting with transpersonal realms”** (p. 19) that allow you to access hidden wisdom. By working with nature and journeying, you may potentially recognize parts of your story that your conscious mind does not perceive, and discover new stories for your life that allow you to feel connected to Source (p. 19).

The book’s contents include a foreword by Alberto Villoldo, PhD, author of *Shaman, Healer, Sage*. Carl studied with Alberto and eventually joined his teaching staff. He **adapted Alberto’s sacred space invocation and journeys to the lower and upper worlds for use in this book. The preface provides insight into Carl’s journey and then thirteen chapters walk you through the process. You begin with the transformative power of writing your story, then explore your current story and ways to write a new and better one, while understanding the energies that influence your story. There’s a chapter setting a foundation for shamanic practices, one for preparation, and another to journey and dialogue with guides and symbols. Readers learn how to work with the archetypal energies of death and initiation as well as with dreams and nature to manifest a new story. Ritual and ceremony are discussed along with writing new stories for society. The book ends**



offering ways to live according to your new story. Within the text, Carl also provides anecdotal comments from people working with this process. Hearing about their experience grounds the work, and creates a sense of connection with humanity and the greater Source of energy that exists—a sense of, *I want to try that too*, comes to mind.

Journey to the Quiet

There is a set process when taking a shamanic journey. Carl suggests readers remain open to the unexpected. You can travel to many **realms, each with its own “energies and information that can affect the body, mind, and soul”** (p.117). **A journey, Carl says, is a sacred undertaking. He recommends readers stay open to what they experience, to be fully present without imposing expectations, ideas, or images or over-analyzing the experience. “Simply witness what you experience”** (p.117).

The journey begins with clearing sacred space, cleansing your energy field, and mindfully breathing to come to a place of calm and inward focus. Create your intention of what you want to work on and where you want to journey. Close your eyes, relax, breathe deeply. Begin. It ends with giving thanks, closing sacred space and taking time to be with the experience, and write down your thoughts and feelings so you can process them over time and begin to incorporate any messages or insights you received into your everyday life.

A New Journey

I faced the south, the west, the north and east. I read the invocation beginning on page 96 aloud and felt a deep sense of the sacred, sensed a unification with the wisdom of all that surrounded me. A peaceful relaxation followed. Yet, in the silence, thoughts ricocheted through my mind, rebounded off my breath and came back again. *Drumming*, I thought. Carl had mentioned it might be useful to journey with the sound of a drum or rattle in the background. I rifled through a stack of old CDs. I put on my headphones, covered myself with a blanket, lay on the carpet and breathed. The drumming carried me inward and outward. I was bathed in light.

A voice spoke to me, calmly. It was a voice of wisdom beyond knowledge itself, immersed in compassion and love. I saw a woman dancing. **Lovely. Graceful. I've seen her before in** visualizations; envious of her freedom, of her movement as I live in a tense, tight body. **"You must dance in wind," the voice said. He** spoke further. I kept repeating what he said. I wanted to be present but felt driven to



memorize his words. After several sentences he said, **"Don't try to remember everything I said. Let go. You don't need to hold on. Just let it be. You must learn to let go."** I watched the woman dance and felt muscles in my shoulders, my stomach, my jaw release.

"Dance with the wind and you will be free." My journey lasted 14 minutes. It involved innocent giggles in the arms of a lover from many past lives ago. It involved a deep, immense sorrow and tears—the kind that involve sobs and belly convulsions. It involved messages of compassion and love and release—my invitation to be free, to dance with the wind. I still feel the experience as I write this, here and now.

In Conclusion

Carl Greer set his intention many years ago to meld shamanic practices with Jungian analysis and clinical psychology. The outcome of his vision, of his journey, of his experience culminated in this book. I have read it through once. I will read through it again, taking more time with some of the exercises, taking time to journey—weekly as Carl suggests. I want to explore the lower and higher realms, the matrix, and I want to return to the quiet.

Change Your Story, Change Your Life: Using Shamanic and Jungian Tools to Achieve Personal Transformation

An Interview with Carl Greer, PhD, PsyD

by Nancy Eichhorn, PhD



Carl Greer started wandering along a shamanic path close to 15 years ago. Perhaps even longer if you consider his passion for the esoteric, his extensive martial arts training, and a deepening Qigong practice that began well over 20 years ago. Today, at age 74, Carl is walking in yet another reflective dimension—the sense of wanting to give back to the collective consciousness that fueled his journeys into clinical psychology, Jungian analysis, shamanic healing, teaching, and private practice. His thoughts about giving back and how that would look motivated him, in part, to write this book.

“It found me. I found it,” Carl says

when asked about grounding his spiritual work within a Jungian analytic frame and writing *Change Your Story, Change Your Life*. “I was interested in shamanism all my life. I read stories by Lynn V. Andrews (*a shaman, healer, teacher, and New York Times bestselling author*). But I never felt I was able to pull up and apprentice someplace for eight months at a time. I had a cognitive understanding. I was fascinated. But I never had the

experiential. Then, in (*the year*) 2,000, I read Alberto Villoldo’s book, *Shaman, Healer, Sage*, and went down the path with him. I trained at his Healing the Light Body School and taught as a member of his staff.”

“Over the years I have gone to a variety of places around the world to work with shamans,” Carl adds. “And over those years, I chronicled my adventures.”

Carl culled a decade of journal entries

detailing his experiences. Initially, the stories were jotted down for himself. Writing was a useful tool to help him capture ideas, sensations, considerations, to make sense of all the experiences he was having in the jungles and mountains with various shamans.



He knew that he needed to excerpt and refine the material for his book, needed to rein in the larger expanse of his knowing—he could have gone down more paths, he said, commenting that the early drafts of the book involved quantum physics. But Carl knew that he had to be parsimonious in deciding what to emphasize. It was quite a process winnowing the material down, deciding what he wanted to have and then condense it. He wanted to create a balance between left brain ego consciousness and analysis and right brain experiential. His focal point was always his audience: Who am I writing this book for?

Participants in a workshop on Carl Jung

and Shamanism, which Carl led, expressed interest in doing further training with him. He decided to teach his workshop participants how to operationalize their transcendent experiences into everyday life—the spiritual aspects of their lives were currently not tied into their day-to-day reality; they wanted integration. Carl noticed that people attending his trainings and workshops as well as clients coming for healing work (be it psychotherapeutic or shamanic) were hungry for ceremony and ritual, for being in nature—

nature is transformative, it has its own wisdom, and through it we can connect to our own innate healing. Yet, figuring out how we can best relate to nature respectfully and cautiously, and move beyond the **criticism that this is merely new age “woo woo” thinking, poses a challenge.**

“People were stuck in their story. They had no traction in life. I used the story motif in my workshops, and I really got into the flow of writing my book when I decided to base my work on stories. It liberated me. I like stories, we create our lives around stories. Story then became the idea for the **book. A lot of things flowed at this point.”**

“We all have a story that we can change if we’re not happy with it. I want the book to be a message of hope that it is possible to change. I offer a pathway, not the only way, but a way to do that, which requires using the Ego consciousness to reflect upon what **our story is. At first, people don’t want to tell** the story that is, they want to share the story they want others to believe about them. In order to make changes in your life, you have to be truthful with yourself first, then you **have to take stock of ‘what is’ without becoming emotionally attached.”**

According to Carl, anyone can do it but you have to be ruthlessly compassionate with yourself and look at the entire truth. You have to be honest with yourself and ask, **“What do I want and what is realistic?”** Carl offers an example in the book of a 50-year-old man who wants to become more athletic. **Sure, he can’t do the 100-yard dash in 10 seconds** but he can participate in a race among athletes in his age group. Ruthless compassion involves looking at themes, patterns in your life; for instance, why do I work so hard but never get to the top? Or, why am I always the bridesmaid and never the bride? Or, why do I get into significant

relationships and then they fall apart?

“I found if people are patient with themselves, if they are willing to honor little changes, a little hint of a change, and then in their next interaction they might try to do things differently. Perhaps they will decide to not eat the same food, or drink. It sets the stage for experiments so they can try to get out of the habitual way of responding and maybe move toward change. It’s difficult to get it to stick, to follow through.”

“I suggest to people that because some of the practices are lengthy, that it’s useful to do them in small pieces. I wanted a blend between right brain and left brain approaches. I don’t want readers to be so involved with the left brain that they don’t have the experience, or so involved with the right brain that they don’t apply the experience to their life. This was a challenge and fun to wrestle with how best to do it. The practices I include do echo my use of Jungian language—shadow, persona, anima, animus, complex, and archetype. I explain those terms in the book.”

The exercises in the book teach people how to look at the circle of themes—themes within themes—and the reader’s own ability to self-heal those themes on a cognitive level and in an experiential field. They can be done solo, in dyads, and in a group format.

“No one knows us as well as our self,” Carl says. “Our ‘Inner Knower’ can access our Self through an inner process. We have to be

able to laugh at our inner foibles, to laugh at the experience of how I manage to get myself into this same pickle again. There is no state of perfection, we just move a little bit at a time. We move a little closer to Spirit. Anyone, wherever you are, can move along **that dimension.”**

Writing the book became an organic, one-step-at-a-time experience. “If you would have asked me three or four years ago if I was going to publish a book I would have said, ‘You’re nuts.’ I’m somebody who finds the actual physical process of writing is difficult. I do everything by hand or dictation. **I don’t type and the actual process of writing is arduous.** I had wonderful editors, and my secretary, who has been with me for 47 years (*she’s 87 years old and she’s never missed a*



Photo by Marcela Lobos

day of work because of illness) typed numerous drafts. Then there’s the whole world of publishing and how to publish a book today. I got an agent. The publishers asked: What have you written before, who is your audience, who is your social media following? I had never written a book, and I had no **social media presence.”**

A Blend of Science and Spirit

Shamanic work requires people to come

within, to be in a quiet place where there is less brain wave activity, less frontal lobe action, going from a sympathetic nervous system existence to a parasympathetic state. Breathing exercises, meditation, rattling, and drumming are ways to enter this place, to access and be more available to the energies around you. Here, innate healing possibilities are said to exist and to potentially be stimulated by the practices Carl suggests. His exercises are designed to help readers connect to other realms, what Carl calls the **“transpersonal realms”**, to reference the energy and transformation that is all around.

“Everything that comes in is information

and it affects our thoughts, emotions, and our body chemistry. Our thoughts have consequences. Particularly the parameters that interact with respect, gratitude, **willingness, and the sense of ‘thy will be done’**. Ultimately there’s a greater agency that we can’t control. We come from the quiet

place before Creation, the place before the Big Bang Universe. We can co-create with these energies, more than we think, in our **lifetime.”**

“Just like homeopathy is the energetic

essence of something that has the same biological effect as the chemical from which it was derived, internalized thoughts can affect us. If you put a new symbol into the mix, it **affects all of our systems.”**

Working as a licensed clinical

psychologist, Jungian analyst, and shaman, Carl explains that although his time frame shifts—frequent one-hour sessions when doing classical analysis versus working with a client for several hours then not seeing the client again for several weeks (sent home with exercises to practice over that time) when involved with Shamanic healing—the basic foundation remains the same: making the unconscious conscious. He comes from a depth psychology perspective and works with transpersonal places in the unconscious.





Shamanic nature paintings donated by Carl Greer

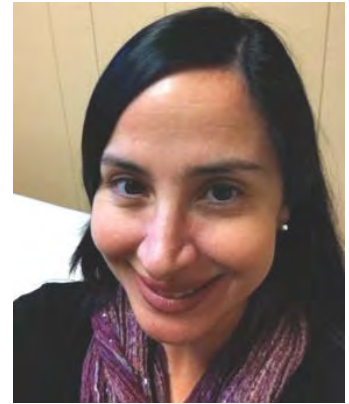
“The dialogue process I describe in the book is like the Jungian active imagination and Perl’s chairs. The relationship with inner figures and symbols is consistent across all three (*psychology, analysis and shamanic work*). Sand tray work represents the inner psychic phenomena; I’m giving the same perspective in the book in the sand painting work in nature. I’m trying to have left brain practices like journaling and reflections as a way to explore the impasse where their story is known, they know what they would like it to be, so why are they not living their new story? Good intentions are not enough. Other parts of ourselves are keeping us from doing it. We get to those parts with practices (shamanic and Jungian), making the unconscious more conscious.”

Carl Greer PhD, PsyD, is a practicing clinical psychologist, Jungian analyst, and shamanic practitioner. His shamanic work is drawn from a mix of North American and South American indigenous traditions and is influenced by Jungian analytic psychology. He has worked or trained with shamans on five continents and trained at Dr. Alberto Villodo’s Healing the Light Body School, where he has taught. Carl is involved in various businesses and charities, teaches at the Jung Institute in Chicago, is on the staff of the Lorene Replogle Counseling Center, and holds workshops on shamanic and Jungian topics.



Research in Review: A Brief Look at Current Studies in the Literature

By Dawn Bhat, MA, MS, NCC, RYT-500, LMHC



Research from the fields of contemporary medicine and mental health is increasingly validating the mind-body continuum, the heart of somatic studies. Drawing from clinical and basic science, phenomenological and case studies, and literature reviews, this column is dedicated to sharing research from multiple perspectives that may potentially impact the field of body psychotherapy.

Aoki, T. & Ikemi, A. (2014). The Focusing Manner Scale: Its validity, research background and its potential as a measure of embodied experiencing. *Person-Centered & Experiential Psychotherapies*, 13(1), 31–46. doi:10.1080/14779757.2013.870925

Japanese researchers developed the Focusing Manner Scale (FMS) to measure focusing attitudes. Focusing professionals have speculated about the influence 'focusing attitudes' has on psychotherapy. FMS correlated with holistic well-being. The authors hope to inform the Western world about the development of FMS and that long-term focusing leads to enhanced FMS scores.

Johnston, J., Dusek, J. A., Streeter, C. C., & Krishnamurthy, K. (2014). Yoga for Patients with Epilepsy: A Pilot Study. *The Journal of Alternative and Complementary Medicine*, 20(5), A68–A68. doi:10.1089/acm.2014.5178.abstract

This study examined the effects on yoga on seizure frequency, quality of life and perceived stress in women with uncontrolled epilepsy. After the six-week intervention, patients reported less seizure activity. In addition, patients reported less seizure worry, increased energy, and decrease in stress. Authors conclude that yoga is safe as an adjunct to standard epilepsy treatment.

Ramos, K., Barrera, T. L., & Stanley, M. A. (2014). Incorporating nonmainstream spirituality into CBT for anxiety: A case study. *Spirituality in Clinical Practice*, 1(4), 269–277. doi:10.1037/scp0000035

While anxiety is common, CBT has been shown to be effective in treating anxiety. In this case study, researchers incorporated spirituality into the CBT model in treating anxiety with positive therapeutic outcomes. The authors' examination suggests that there is flexibility in incorporating spirituality within a CBT framework for the treatment of generalized anxiety disorder.

Dawn Bhat, LMHC is in private practice in Hicksville, NY. She holds graduate degrees in General Psychology and Clinical Mental Health Counseling. Dawn is a National Certified Counselor and a Registered Yoga Teacher (RYT-500). Dawn has been researching somatic psychotherapy under the guidance of Jacqueline A. Carleton, Ph.D. of the USABP since 2010 and has presented scholarly papers and professional workshops regionally, nationally and internationally. Feel free to contact her: www.dawnbhat.com



International Connections

By Asaf Rolef Ben-Shahar

She and the Sea

There it is, the sea, the most incomprehensible of non-human existences. And here is the woman, standing on the beach, the most incomprehensible of living beings. As the human being one day asked itself a question about itself, it became the most incomprehensible of living beings. She and the sea. Claris Lispector (1974,

I hate throwing up. Many people do, I know. I hate throwing up. This is an understatement. I recall a particular event, perhaps ten years ago. I was at Heathrow airport, waiting, hungry, for my night flight, and ate something really bad for me; I think it was a reheated pizza. As I was eating, I already knew it would wreak havoc on my digestive system. I began feeling nauseated before we took off and throughout the five hours flight. Not a wink of sleep. I fought against throwing up as if my life depended on me holding it in. I cannot remember anything from that flight except holding it in, breathing very slowly, avoiding listening to my body who wanted to rid itself from the nasty reheated dinner. As we landed, we had another hour drive to Jerusalem. During this drive I continued the efforts to hold it in. I

bravely managed. I felt green and nauseated and dead. The car stopped and I stepped out and immediately threw up on the pavement, and felt great the second I did.

I was twenty-two, studying massage with a gifted teacher. And one day, during a guided visualisation, I felt my stomach opening wide open. The sun burned a hole in my stomach. I was standing, looking at my own body, and there was a huge hole in my stomach. It was burning, red and hot. And it was okay. I looked around, standing around the pond, and could see strange images behind my fellow students. Each person had a few humanlike shadows behind her or him, in different colours, mostly orange or red or purple. These shadows supported my friends; they were there to help. I then realised I did

not breathe, and it too was okay. I tell a lie, it was more than okay, it was blissful. I was standing there, full of awe, and my body was laying there – in the class—and I was looking at it. The students and teacher were sitting around me, trying to wake me up, to call me back. The eyes of the person who was lying on the ground were closed. Looking down it was strange to note their worry, as I was not worried. One of them touched my feet, and I felt a pull back into the body that was lying there, on the ground, and was no longer watching myself. Then the shaking started, vigorous, uncontrollable shaking. Not cold, but hot shaking. For at least two hours I shook. My teeth chattered, my body shook, and I – for the first time – felt afraid. Am I going crazy?

Twenty years

have passed and in May I will be forty-two. An old woman, wrapped in a black cloak, has been solemnly walking through my bedroom the last few nights. Her presence is heavy on my breathing; it is as if she is mourning some kind of loss. As she measures her pace, busy with her own doings, she also tells me many stories, and I pay close attention to her, attempting to really listen, to try and understand. She has such important messages for me, but I



struggle to follow her words. How can I hear you? How can I let you in without masking your words with my interpretations? Without steering your vague utterance to the things I would most like to hear, or to the words of which I am scared?

Such are the whispers of spirit for me. In

rare moments, when I seem to forget to think myself into existence, I know that she is always present, always guiding, forever whispering to me; standing behind me, taking care of me. Mostly, though, I make an effort to listen to her and therefore miss her words, too busy searching for a wise or desperate understanding of her words. Yet she, she is incomprehensible, uninterpretable. She asks me to surrender to her.

Uri Lotan, a journalist who dedicated a

book to explore the roots of New Age (particularly guruism), wrote: "It's 1980. John Lennon was murdered. Reagan won the elections. Osho fled. We keep searching for the Truth" (2006, p.135). New-age spirituality has contributed to a wider unindoctrinated variety, which was not necessarily bound to religious practice or prescribed dogma. At the same time, to a great extent, it created a spiritual-pop-culture, magnifying the chasm between rigorous psychotherapeutic work and spiritual positioning. Indeed, many methods of psychotherapy have tried to deal with this – including psycho-synthesis, Jungian analysis, Core-energetics and more.

When, at twenty-two, I sought help

following this weird experience, my psychiatrist and psychotherapist dismissed my fear of going crazy. "It sounds like you had a profound spiritual experience", he said. "It may take you time to process it but don't medicate it." But as I enter the sea, being a woman bathing in this unfathomable ocean of

The first noble truth in Buddhism, suffering exists, is not an intellectual one. Suffering is a felt truth, and there is also logic in blocking ourselves from feeling it before we can properly contain it without falling apart.

connectivity or a man seeking to find newness or familiarity in that which was earlier not me, and now seems like something I am a part of . . . but as I enter the sea, a great big sadness accompanies my gratitude. It is the sadness of witnessing suffering – **others’ and my own**. I now recognise that the temptation for disembodiment around spiritual experiences is forever about pain, at least for me.

Surrender is accompanied by noticing

suffering, by feeling it in my body. Suffering hurts like hell.

Disembodiment eases the pain, by dissociating from it.

Dissociation prevents me from being blessed by the surrender.

And then there is this pseudo-spiritual positioning, where I am not present; not to myself, not to anything. Where I can be a spiritual thought, but my body is absent.

“When you call yourself an Indian or a

Muslim or a Christian or a European, or **anything else, you are being violent,”** wrote Krishnamurti (1969). **“Do you see why it is violent? Because you are separating yourself from the rest of mankind. When you separate yourself by belief, by nationality, by tradition, it breeds violence. So a man who is seeking to understand violence does not belong to any country, to any religion, to any political party or partial system; he is concerned with the total understanding of mankind”** (pp.51-52).

But this beautiful phrase does not speak

of the pain that accompanies the act of connection, of not separating oneself from the rest of mankind. The first noble truth in

Buddhism, suffering exists, is not an intellectual one. Suffering is a felt truth, and there is also logic in blocking ourselves from feeling it before we can properly contain it without falling apart. It makes me think of the insanity in practicing psychotherapy. We open our hearts to be wounded. We open our bodies to absorb the pain of the other, to seek aliveness and in its midst to bathe in an ocean of suffering. The fire of spirit cannot but burn us, and somehow this is not a problem to be solved but a paradox to hold. Or, in the words of T.S Eliot (1944):

And all shall be well and

All manner of thing shall be well

When the tongues of flames are in-folded
Into the crowned knot of fire

And the fire and the rose are one

Can the tap be selectively opened? An old

woman, wrapped in a black cloak, has been solemnly walking through my bedroom in the last few nights. She indicates me to surrender, she can hold me with my pleasure and pain, with my fears and hopes. In my attempts to hold it on my own I fail, get swamped by the pain and suffering and shut down. When I remember to let her hold me it is, really, okay. Why do I struggle with this surrender? How come I keep forgetting? I am no longer the terrified five-year-old whose parents scold for noticing ghosts and spirits or the twenty-two-year old, whose connection to his body is but coincidental. I have made a journey. People have touched my soul, and I have theirs. I have known much suffering and great joy and connection. I know the benefits of surrender, yet I fight against it each and every time, only to take a deep breath of

relief when, finally, I let go. It makes me think of the fight against throwing up. Is it necessary? For me, at least, it seems to be so. There is something about surrender into spirit that involves death – the death of my (imaginary?) individuality, into taking part within a larger system, a larger body. And my organism seems unable to surrender without a struggle. But this is not always the case.

Claris Lispector, the Portuguese author

who I have quoted at the beginning of this paper, describes the woman who enters the sea. She gulps sea water; she lets the ocean into her body. As I read her, I become envious of this feminine way of surrender, allowing yourself to be penetrated, to let the world inside of you. I wish I could do this without throwing a fight first. I wish I could **embrace the old woman's calling without** attempting to understand her or to extend effort. Will I ever?

Body and spirit are so intertwined, but,

for me, they are also opposites. I wish it **weren't so. I wish these were only a singular** entity to accept and surrender into. My body aches as I write this. And you – are you lucky enough to have a body, mind and spirit who can surrender to one another without a struggle? Can you open yourself into the ocean without the gagging reflex from the salty waters of the sea? Are there others for whom surrender is only a pleasurable activity? Would I believe you if you said you are one of those people? Is there any hope for me, for us who seem to be unable to live without this struggle?

Oh. But I forgot, how could I have

forgotten? There you are. Here are your eyes, your soft body, your welcoming voice. You invite me to enter you, to join in with you. **"Come to me," you say, and it makes me** want to cry. And as I join you, as I enter you the world disappears and nothing exists but

this connection of ours. I know not where I am, know not who I am, or how long it has been. A minute? An hour? An eternity? It feels so okay to be lost, to be powerful and aggressive and frightened and lost, oh so very lost. Here you are; here are your eyes, your soft body holding me and being held by me. And here, in this connection, there is no struggle. Here, with you, I seem to be able to surrender without struggle – as if I need you to connect. Why would I ever give up this connection? And yet I do.

As if, the old woman nods as I write this,

I cannot surrender to spirit without surrendering to a person. In order to succeed in letting go I need another person – I need you to let go with. It makes me feel dependent on human connection, and more so, on your willingness to receive me. This is both humbling and exciting, and at the same time potentially humiliating.

There you are. The most

incomprehensible of living existences. And in you, and with you, my own incomprehensibility feels bearable. With you I can breathe, and connect, and tolerate the suffering for the joy of being alive, of being connected, of being here.

I hope that we can share some interests and dialogue, and I welcome your feedback, comments, questions and challenges. You can email me at asaf@imt.co.il

Asaf Rolef Ben-Shahar PhD, has been a psychotherapist, writer, and trainer for since 1997. As a psychotherapist, his work is relational body-psychotherapy, integrating trancework and Reichian body-psychotherapy within a relational framework. He enjoys writing and has written dozens of professional papers on psychotherapy, body-psychotherapy, hypnosis, and their integration. He is an international board member for *Body-Psychotherapy Publications* and an associate editor for *Body, Dance and Movement in Psychotherapy*. His book, *Touching the Relational Edge: Body Psychotherapy*, was published by Karnac in 2014. His PhD dissertation (*Surrender to Flow*), focused on the moments of surrender in three different fields: relational psychoanalysis, body-psychotherapy and hypnosis, and these three form the axes of his theoretical and clinical curiosity.

References continued on page 75

Freedom from Trauma through Spirituality

By Katja Rusanen



The question “why?” was an open wound that would not stop bleeding. I was just sixteen but felt my life had ended at the same moment my first boyfriend took his. I was left behind to make sense of it. I wasn’t a survivor of suicide; I was a victim of life.

Undoubtedly, most of us suffer some type of traumatic event in our lives; even the everyday suffering of loneliness and insecurity can be traumatic. These events and their consequences need to be resolved; otherwise, they may potentially block our capacity to enjoy our normal life and negatively affect our well-being. Epstein (2014) explains that death and illness touch us all, and his conclusion is that the way out of pain is through it.

For many years my interpretation of reality was that my boyfriend’s suicide shattered my life. I felt that a part of me died, too. What actually happened was that I left a soul fragment in the moment of time when I heard the news, which is why it felt as if a part of me was gone. This lost part became an anchor that kept me stuck in the past; I was not able to let go of the painful memory.

What consoled me most was a vivid dream, right after his transition. In that specific dream he apologized to me and explained what had happened. During the years since his death, I have grown to understand that it was indeed his soul communicating with me. This experience made me believe that our loved ones who have left this physical realm are still reachable in Spirit. No one is ever lost.

It was hard for me to accept his choice and forgive myself for not having been there in time to save him. I was full of self-blame and felt responsible for what had happened. This guilt made me feel that I was also judged socially. I quickly learned to hide my pain under a smiley mask and kept the pain trapped in my heart. It became a blockage that stopped me from giving or receiving love. I believed in my misinterpretation of this story, that love causes pain, and so it did, as we manifest what we believe.

Living in the Dark

The darkest moment can be seen as a

curse that ruins everything or as a seed of spiritual growth. When I had to face the vulnerability of human life and the power of free will, I felt permanently changed by the experience. The future had lost its meaning; I sensed a lack of purpose. Overnight, the traumatic event made me a Spiritual Warrior who started a journey through a lengthy period without light and hope. I experienced many symptoms listed under Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) according American Psychiatric Association (2013). I was resistant to talk about what happened and how I felt about it, but I had repeated memories. The distorted belief about myself that I was guilty caused self-destructive behavior; it mainly manifested itself in an active attempt to drive away **other people as I didn't** believe that anybody could love someone like me. I was close to ending my own life.

Fortunately, there was a little inner sparkle that kept me here. I had a strong feeling that I had a mission, but I had no idea what it was. I started searching for my life purpose, and I wanted to understand why human life was full of suffering. The **Buddhist's teaching of the impermanence of** everything in our life became a cornerstone for me. I had learned about it in the 7th grade at school. My Evangelical Lutheran upbringing had created a foundation where Buddhist teachings layered on and this opened my mind to see our everyday life differently. I started to awaken and became

interested in learning more about souls, death, destiny and past lives.

Why Do You Stay in Prison When the Door is so Wide Open? (Rumi)

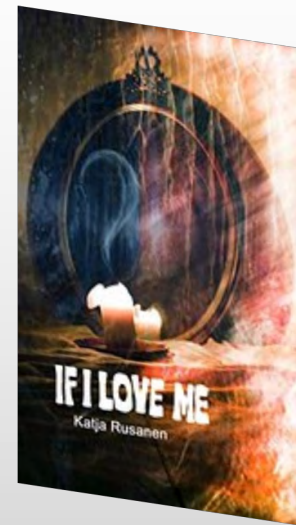
For many years, my thoughts created a

dark prison cell that made me feel stuck in the past. One day I bought a book about palmistry (Rodriguez, 2006) as I wanted to find some direction in my life; I felt lost. This book had **invitingly listed the author's** contact details. Out of a sudden impulse I dialed his number and booked an appointment. With 30 years of experience Rodriguez gave me an accurate reading and at the end of the session he told me **in Spanish, "You can keep** looking for answers outside yourself, but you only find **what you're looking for when you stop and look for the answer inside yourself."** He even offered me a way how to start by simply asking me, **"Why don't you write?"**

That night I started creative

writing the first draft of what eventually became a novel. It was a scary thing to do, as I had kept the pain locked up inside me for so many years. I had wanted someone else to take away the pain and release me from the prison that I had created, but only I was able to walk through that door towards acceptance, forgiveness, and letting go. Twenty-two years after the traumatic event that changed my life, I completed a fictional young-adult trilogy that is loosely based on my own story. Expression is healing and through this process I recaptured the lost pieces of my soul.

"You can keep looking for answers outside yourself, but you only find **what you're looking for when you stop and look for the answer inside yourself."** He even offered me a way how to start by simply asking me, **"Why don't you write?"**



I was finally able to leave the past behind. As one of my favorite characters, Mama Karima, says in my third novel (Rusanen, 2014), "I'm grateful for the lessons I learnt. Suffering and happiness are always in the world, they don't ever end, but you have to choose what you want to carry with you. Our life is a journey of lessons, but every situation has something to teach us."

I saw that one lesson in my spiritual curriculum was learning to Love. I gained an understanding of my life from my soul's perspective instead of only seeing the emotional pain, I could see how this experience accelerated my spiritual growth and taught me compassion and unconditional love. When I use the word spiritual, I mean an inner work to gain self-knowledge, self-acceptance and self-love as well as connectedness with the oneness, which can be called many names like God, Goddess, Great Spirit, or Universe. I support this journey by reading spiritual literature, doing a daily meditation, loving affirmations and listening to my intuition.

Currently I am deepening my knowledge and awareness at the University of Santa Monica, California, where I'm studying for my Master's Degree in Spiritual Psychology. I am re-learning the truth that our essence is love.

For many years my essence was hidden under many layers of pain, but it was always there. I broke down the walls that I had built to protect my heart as I realized how my fear of love caused separation.

It took me more than 20 years to overcome my fear and admit that love can heal even the deepest cut. Slowly I opened those knots that bind hurt and love. I know now that love doesn't cause suffering, it was my attachments and expectations. Spirituality brought me answers that I could not otherwise find.

When I allowed unconditional love to fill every cell in my body, I healed my heart and soul. The traumatic event that I experienced broke my heart open so it could feel even more compassion, love and joy than before. From my deepest emotional pain rises my spiritual growth. I feel gratitude for this journey; I have stepped away from a victim's role. What happened to me doesn't define me. I am so much more than my story.

Every moment that we can share here is precious. We are here to learn and study lessons from our spiritual curriculum. Each and every experience has a teaching inside; we can always choose our reactions and thoughts. Each and every person in our lives

is a teacher as well, and we are also teachers for them. If we choose to shift our focus from pain to the lesson learned, we can free ourselves to move forward. We can seek support on our journey, but no one can give us freedom from the past except ourselves. The door to healing is not locked, everyone can access it. It is important to remember that by clearing the pain and hurt, you will let your true loving nature shine its light and you will see the beauty of life again. Freedom from trauma is **not only possible, it's the great gift** that you can give to yourself.

Katja Rusanen is a Spiritual Life Coach, Inspirational Speaker and Author. Her transformational coaching inspires and empowers people to move from fear to courage, from insecurity to confidence and from confusion to clarity. You can find more info about her work on her website: www.katjarusanen.com.

References:

- American Psychiatric Association. (2013). PTSD. Retrieved from <http://www.psychiatry.org/ptsd>
- Epstein, Mark (2014). *The Trauma of Everyday Life*. New York, NY: The Penguin Press.
- Rumi, & Barks, Coleman (Translator) (2004). *The Essential Rumi*. New York, NY. HarperOne
- Rodriguez Acatl, Francisco (2006) .*Quiromagia, la Quiromancia del Siglo XXI*. Barcelona, Spain. Kairos.
- Rusanen, Katja (2014), *If I Love Me*. Self-published on Amazon Kindle.

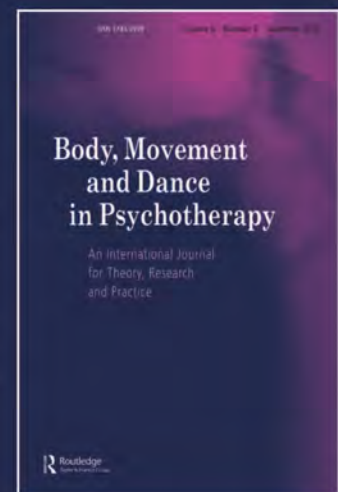
**SPECIAL RATE AVAILABLE
TO MEMBERS OF THE USABP / EABP**

Body, Movement and Dance in Psychotherapy

An International Journal
for Theory, Research
and Practice

Founding Editor-in-Chief:
Professor Helen Payne,
University of Hertfordshire, UK

Body, Movement and Dance in Psychotherapy is an international, peer-reviewed journal exploring the relationship between body and mind and focusing on the significance of the body and movement in the therapeutic setting. It is the only scholarly journal wholly dedicated to the growing fields of body (somatic) psychotherapy and dance movement therapy. The body is increasingly being recognized as a vehicle for expression, insight and change. The journal encourages broad and in-depth discussion of issues relating to research activities, theory, clinical practice, professional development and personal reflections.

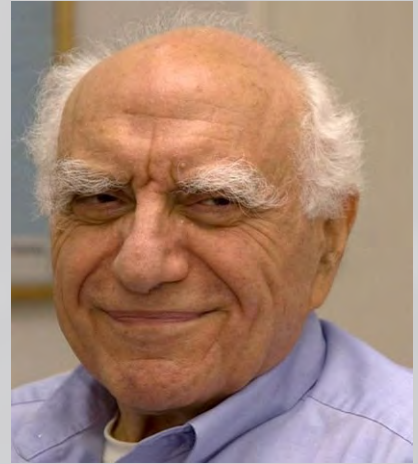


www.tandfonline.com/tbmd

 **Routledge**
Taylor & Francis Group

Embodied Spirituality

By Albert Pessó



Let's look at the title, Embodied Spirituality, for it implies that there are two separate things combined together showing up at once as body and as spirit. As if spirit somehow entered the body. Matter and spirituality are seemingly cast as two different elements in this phrasing and that is precisely what I would like to comment on.

In my cosmology and way of thinking, the body itself, which is made of matter, is in itself divine. Here I use the word divine as an alternative to the word spirituality for the word spirituality implies that spirit is something immaterial and somehow gets encased in material matter. In my cosmology, all that is, is divine. That means all that constitutes matter and all that is forged into life based on matter, is divine, i.e., spiritual. Thus, in this sense spirituality itself is material, and I am convinced that matter itself is divine and not because spirit somehow entered into it.

To me, spirituality is an emergent property. It is just like consciousness, which

is an emergent property that comes out of neural structures because it is a higher order emergent property of the brain. Just as consciousness is an emergent property that arises out of neurons, spirituality is an emergent property that arises out of all the properties of the universe. I can only understand and explain the wonder of consciousness as a spiritual reality while it is so clearly a neurological and therefore biological reality.

Let's make a big jump to the Big Bang—the beginning of all that is. After the Big Bang, spirit didn't invade or enter matter—all that mattered was already being created. It is matter itself that makes life. Matter is the mother (mater in Latin and maternal in English – the eternal maker of life). Indeed, if life is found on another planet it will be the matter of that planet that gave birth to life, not some imaginary other entity that is immaterial that somehow imbues what they regard as dead matter with the capacity to live and be conscious as well.



described as and responded to, as a being with senses and emotions with feelings of fury and desirous of punishing disobeyers or unbelievers. **For isn't that a typical, human royal prerogative?** That notion of god arises from human projections onto the notion of god with typically human characteristics. Another human projection of god as the most loving and caring being is the hope of something ultimate that would have the qualities of genetically-anticipated good parenting. It is easy to understand that projection for if one has an innate expectation to be cared for and that has **not occurred "on earth,"** then we will look elsewhere to experience that innate need and expectation and a loving god is one possible answer.

So, if I want to become "spiritual" or

think of the notion of god, then I have to say that god is all that is. And, if all that is, is matter, then god is matter and not immaterial. That means that every speck of matter is divine and there is no other source of divinity or spirit, if you wish to use that word. Thus, matter is all there is and the ultimate ground for the meaning of everything. I cannot think of divinity as separate from all that is, and I am more than content with the notion that god is all that is.

Just think of the amazing interact-ability

of matter, molecule-to-molecule, gene-to-gene, and all the way up the evolutionary scale to humans. Matter interacts and reacts to other matter culminating in the incredible organization of matter in the brain of all creatures, which are all related to one another and, therefore, part of god, if you will.

And if god is matter itself, god should

never be understood or framed as person-like with human characteristics, often

And if god is matter itself, god should never be understood or framed as person-like with human characteristics, often described as and responded to, as a being with senses and emotions with feelings of fury and desirous of punishing disobeyers or unbelievers.

That leads me to the conclusion that god (and the cosmos) is still expanding and becoming and is not fixed or final with the future all laid out in advance with the reward of heaven for the believer and hell for the unbeliever. I particularly like the notion of god still in the process of becoming because that is linked to the spiritual becoming of the soul via the body.

And what about all the different religions that claim to be the one and only truth? If god is all there is, then how can there be competing gods as there are competing individuals, tribes, nations and religions? **What is that all about in all the religions'** followers who are firm believers in their own truth and condemn all other to hell? Isn't that like an angry human ruler who wants to rule all others?

Spiritual has to be Genetic

There is another element in my definition of god. God being all there is and the universe, as we at least now know, it is expanding and in that way still becoming. That leads me to the conclusion that god (and the cosmos) is still expanding and becoming and is not fixed or final with the future all laid out in advance with the reward of heaven for the believer and hell for the unbeliever. I particularly like the notion of god still in the process of becoming because that is linked to the spiritual becoming of the soul via the body.

Now I can define the soul. The soul is all that I am. I am made of others—a **father's sperm and a mother's egg. I become who I** am by virtue of interaction with those primary others and many others before and beyond them. Therefore, I am not god, for I am made of others, and I must have others in order to fully become myself. If I ever get to a position or place where I feel as if I am all there is,

then I have entered the domain of god, and I become omnipotent. At least in feeling, thought, and sometimes action. But paradoxically, it is satanic forces and not god-like forces that are set loose when I feel I am all there is and I am the only.

People who talk about god often relate it to a voice inside. Well, the only information we carry inside before learning begins is genetic. I attribute so much to RNA and DNA; it has all the history of life from the beginning of time. It has in it the sense that helps replication, and maintenance of life gets passed on. And, life seems to move endlessly toward greater complexity and order. Life is highly adaptable. It gives pleasure and it works. So for me, in that sense of an inner voice, the spiritual has to be genetic. And by **"spirit," I mean genetic forces. I can't** separate spirit from material forces. Life is directional; it lives its purpose and spirit manifests itself through living. The more we see how deep physics is, the clearer it becomes that to refer to mere matter is inaccurate.

Let's look at the thought and the possibility of embodied genetic memory, as distinct from embodied spirituality. There is no question that our genetic messages are in our body. There is the basis for a push toward realization and experience of those interactions that are somehow biologically, neurologically, and chemically conjured up and felt personally, that is, emotionally and bodily.

Our bodily-felt, genetic messages

anticipate feelings of connection and bliss as a consequence of getting our genetic needs met. And, if they are not met or not possibly seen or available in infancy, they may be misinterpreted as spiritual messages and anticipated to be felt in connection with god in heaven and not with deeply satisfying parents on earth. How do I make this clear to those individuals who have taken a spiritual path and have a longing for death as the only way to find bliss?

To clarify the difference between

embodied spirituality and embodied genetic messages I have to ask, what is embodied spirituality? And, what are embodied genetic messages? In order to answer these questions, I offer the notion of shape/counter shape.

All matter is potentially interactive and is

prepared to respond to and relate to the other that is not itself, but is recognizable and relatable. There is nothing in this material universe that does not have the capacity to “mate” with another aspect or element of matter. No part of the material world is alone and of itself. Just as in our human life, when the counter shape is provided that matches, the feeling of pleasure arises as a reinforcement. I wonder what the reinforcement is like and how it is experienced on the material level. Surely there must be a similar reinforcement to such a match.

Just look at the complexity of what we

call matter on the physics level. So full of tiny sparks of energy, mass, and motion that are able to combine with other such elements in extraordinarily complex ways that produce incredibly diverse consequences based on just that foundation.

So, when there is a feeling of bliss that

doesn't mean one should anticipate heaven, for the genes know nothing about heaven. But the genes are prepared to give us heavenly satisfaction when genetic needs are met. Genes always release endorphins of pleasure when the counter shape to their expectations are met in interaction. So the **genes anticipate “heaven on earth” and not heaven after biological – genetic life is over.**

When I tried to think in terms of

embodied spirituality, I had to include the endless becoming of god and the human participation in that evolutionary push to add more to what has been. Indeed, it provides pleasure as well as a push from within. For when we do participate in the fulfillment of the next stage of the becoming and unfolding of the cosmos, there certainly is a sense of wonder and enchantment with the cosmos at large and all human beings as well.

Embodied spirituality is not so much

about the sense of mystery and wonder of the unknown, but a deeply embedded sensory thrill and excitement as we experience and participate in the wondrous unfolding of the mystery of what until now had not yet become and has now arisen to be the newest of what has become inevitably existent.

Albert Pessa is the co-founder of the Pessa Boyden System Psychomotor (with his wife, Diane Boyden-Pessa) and the president of the Psychomotor Institute, Inc. He is the author of many books and articles on PBSP, is a frequent lecturer at universities, hospitals, and clinics, as well as maintains an extensive and intensive training schedule in the US, Brazil, Israel, Germany and many countries in Europe. He and his work with PBSP for the German GTZ Mission in The Democratic Republic of Congo were featured in a documentary by Icarus Films. Albert also leads programs and works with individuals in Boston, Massachusetts. He can be reached at apessa@pbsp.com. His website is www.pbsp.com.



Body Wise

By Kamalamani

Meditating with Character

"It must be really anchoring to practise a faith."

"Oh you meditate, that's why you're so calm."

"Retreat's must be so peaceful, I'd go- if only I had the time."

I chuckle to myself when I hear these

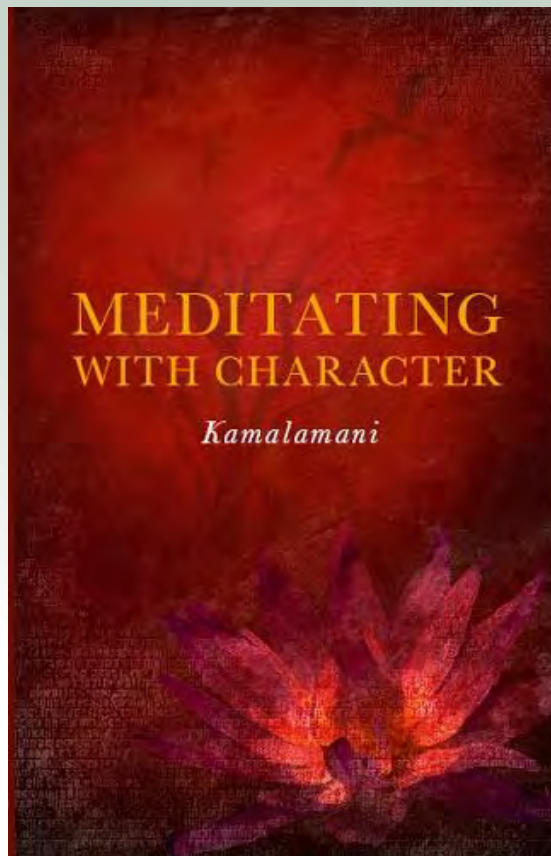
well-meant comments from friends when they discover that I'm a Buddhist. In response, I find anchoring comes and goes; I'm calm in the way that a swan looks calm, paddling like mad beneath the unruffled surface of the water. And, yes, I suggest they make time to **go on retreat, so long as they're prepared to cherish boredom and all the other mental states that will happen along.** Rather than being anchoring, practising Buddhism and meditating have been more akin to having an invisible depth charge planted in my heart-mind.

Right now, Buddhism and meditation are on trend, and it is likely there are more folk

meditating and practising - particularly mindfulness - in the western world than ever before. Which, of course, is great news. Except that misconceptions abound about what meditation and practice are. The dangers of 'spiritual bypassing' (Welwood, 2000) are as present as ever, with spiritual practice having the potential to be yet another drug of choice; a realm in which we run the risk of seeking escapism and fantasy, near enemies indeed. Welwood coined the phrase 'spiritual bypassing' in noticing the tendency of western spiritual seekers to use spiritual ideas and practices to "avoid dealing with their **emotional unfinished business**" (Welwood, 2000, p. 5).

After 20 years of sitting on the cushion, or more honestly, struggling to get to the cushion (sitting's the easier part), I can still magically find myself on my feet with the kettle on in a split second. I am more appreciative of the messiness of meditation and the simple, beautiful, complexity of the Dharma—the teachings of the Buddha— than ever before. Being taught to meditate was the most valuable thing I've learnt, second only to watching myself try every tool in my extensive tool box in **avoiding** meditation and practice.

To draw upon the language of Reich, we meditate and practice *in character*. That's likely to mean that part of us longs to meditate and practise, the other part's running in the opposite direction. Bringing together character structure and meditation practice is profound in understanding the messier and out-of-bounds bits of our experience and embodiment. This fascination with the interface between meditation, the Dharma, and neo-Reichian character structure was what lead me to write my first book 'Meditating with Character' (The grand irony was that I spent three years doing far



more writing about meditation than actually meditating. There's always a catch . . .).

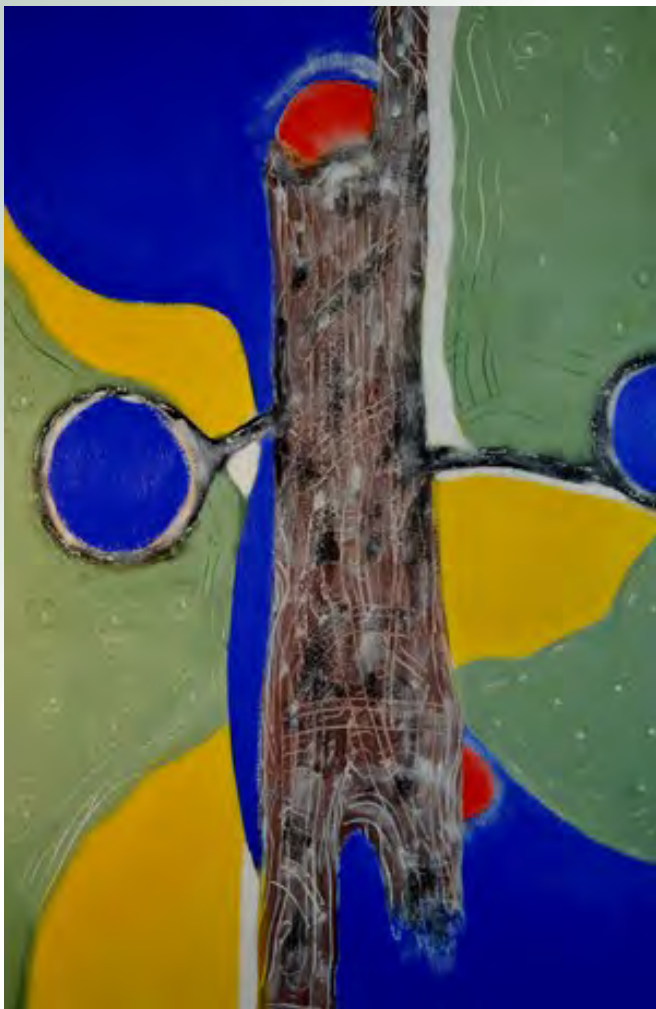
My most familiar characterological strategies are to ping between my top and tail, head and pelvis: either distracting myself in the world of analytical thinking and existential questioning, or bouncing around, entertaining myself and the world, being endlessly and tirelessly fascinating. I distract myself with fantastically complex questions about the nature of existence - a Buddhist speciality, especially with all those lists of teachings. Or entertaining myself whilst bringing to mind the Buddha upon whom I meditate, running a full colour Blu Ray quality film rather than engaging with the koans of form and emptiness, self and other, and self and no self.

I've learned about the simple bliss of making contact with my experience through meditation and character structure. My



I relish the texture of the breath, how its movement brushes my clothes against my body. It rolls on, no pushing or pulling, no beginning or end. Occupying this sense of being a body, even though there's nothing to occupy apart from sensations, feelings, thoughts, and even they keep changing.

'heady' part can now more easily dissolve into the ease of just sensing the softening of the scalp. In fleeting flashes, there is no me or mine in the way I conceive of me or mine in my every day mind. There's just this body, sitting and noticing sensations arise and fall, nothing to do, nowhere to go. A sigh on the out breath as my shoulders drop a few millimetres and I soften into the earth.



'Anchor' by H el ene Fletcher, Cornwall-based artist.
<http://www.helenefletcher.net/>

The entertaining side of my character

inwardly cries out at the relief of being quiet; no audience, performance, or rush. The only job is to be enchanted by the breath and its awesomeness. I relish the texture of the breath, how its movement brushes my clothes against my body. It rolls on, no pushing or pulling, no beginning or end. Occupying this sense of being a body, even though there's nothing to occupy apart from sensations, feelings, thoughts, and even they keep changing. Fear arising as I have no one to entertain but myself, breathing into that fear, surrounding that fear with loving-kindness, I settle and feel an unclenching deep within myself.

After 20 years of meditation and practice,

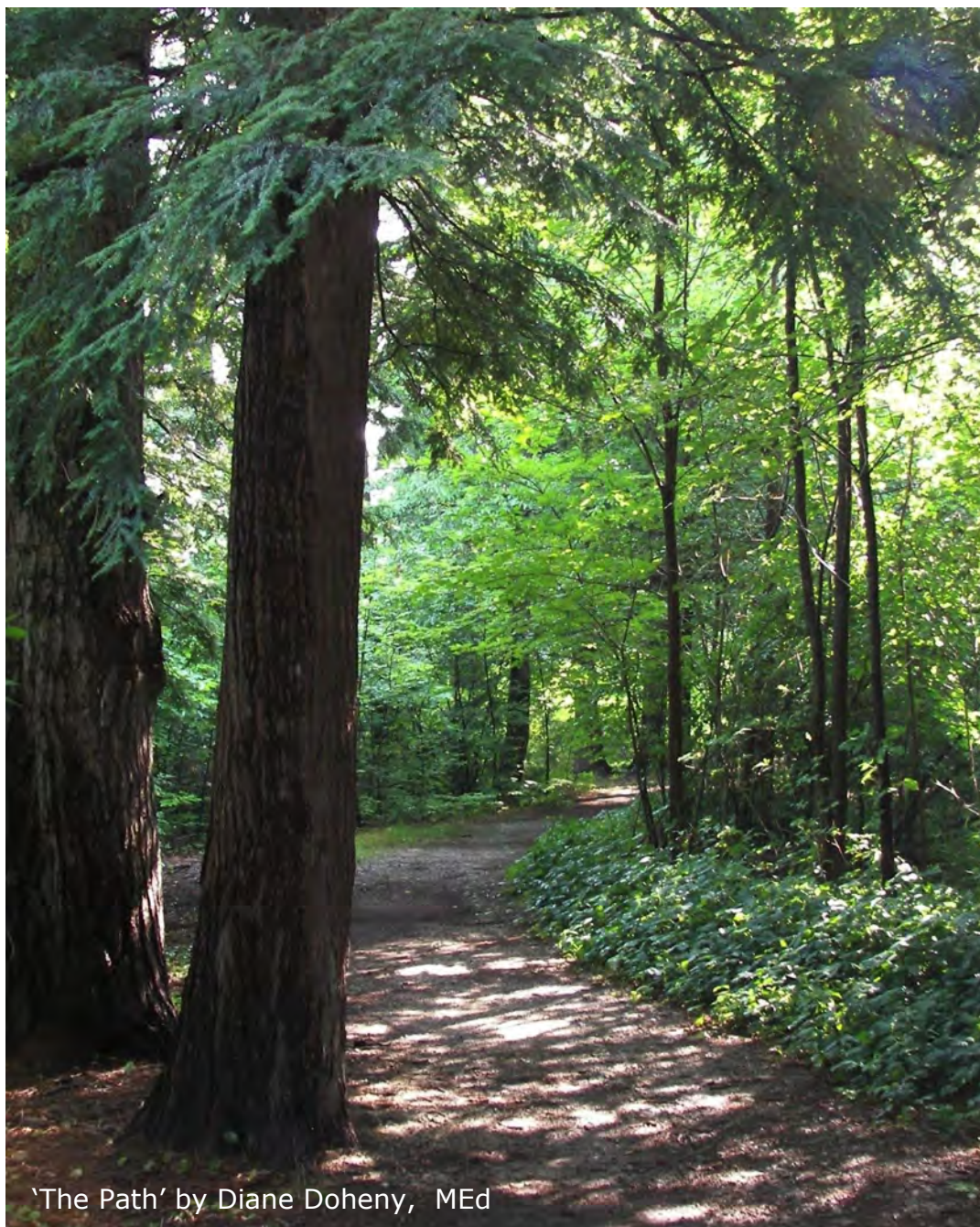
I *do* feel more anchored and calm, but those have arisen as much from the struggles and messiness of staying with my experience as the moments of bliss and inspiration. My experience of meditating with character in mind has been that it's hard to spiritually bypass *anything*, because you are more likely to witness what you're doing, as you do it, becoming more aware of your armouring, little by little. Not comfortable, maybe, but growthful. Spirituality has to be embodied, else it probably isn't spirituality. Meditation and embodied practice offer us an amazing doorway into the heart of the furnace of seeing how our characters were formed from pre-conception to the present day (and how character can change in the furnace's heat). To enter so deeply into our habits and strategies, our views and beliefs, that we come out the other side and wonder what the fuss was all about.

Until, of course, we encounter the next layer of habits and strategies, views and beliefs . . .

Being a Dharma practitioner feels like being an archaeologist, as does practising body psychotherapy. In my practice of embodied spirituality, the theme of this edition, I sift layer upon layer of interesting sediment and different rock strata, each with their historical era and particular properties. We can easily think that the strata are fossilised - character armouring can feel so solid and immovable - but so often that's the story of the clutter in the mind and not the story of the integrating body-mind and the story it has to tell when we listen in

with care, patience, and a growing capacity to dialogue with the multitudes of parts of ourselves, and hopefully, interested others.

The spiritual life is a warrior's path. Not necessarily because it has to involve noble quests, long nights of the soul, or jaw-dropping self-sacrifice - although those seem to happen at various stages - but because it takes training, discipline, persistence, tenacity, a sense of humour, a leap of faith, and an appreciation of the absurd to keep on going. Of course, it's also an ordinary path.



'The Path' by Diane Doheny, MEd

More than anything these days my practice also relies upon leaving from time to time the built, grey world of surfaces and straight lines to encounter greener pathways and hedges; where bird song is louder than human chatter. Where I'm more likely to hear the meow of the cat stalking me, and the rippit of a frog looking for a twilight mate rather than the shrieks of the police sirens. Where I touch soil and weeds rather than keyboard and phone. It's a relief to remember, in these precious moments, that humanity is but one species of life on earth.

I move through the landscape and the landscape moves me. I strike the balance between moving and sitting; not moving enough leads to tightness, constriction, and rusty joints, when meditation calls for looseness, expansion, and fluidity. Embodied spirituality doesn't make sense to me unless I remember my place in the other-than-human world. I can't explain that in words, but luckily Jung can, and did, way before me:

"For it is the body, the feeling, the instincts, which connect us with the soil. If you give up the past you naturally detach from the past; you lose your roots in the soil, your connection with the totem ancestors that dwell in the soil. You turn outward and drift away, and try to conquer other lands because you are exiled from your own soil" (Jung in Sabini, 2002, p.73).

So, as we practise, may we love the mess as much as we love the inspiration, remember our uniqueness as well as our similarity with all our living beings, and practise hard whilst we simultaneously lighten up and cackle at the absurdity of it all. In the first decade of practice I was seeking meaning in things. In the second decade I was practising so as to meet fully the world as I find it. Let's see what the third decade brings. In the words of a respected colleague, the Jungian Analyst and public intellectual, Andrew Samuels:

"I seek to advance a vision of spirituality that is regular, ubiquitous and permeates every

aspect of existence. It is not intended to be a lofty, exhortative, sermonising approach. Quite the opposite. My take on spirituality discerns its worm-like nature, not its eagle-like nature. Spirituality as an underneath as well as an over the top thing. And because approaches to spirituality so easily go over the top, it is often better to stay underneath" (Samuels, 2002).

Kalamani is an Embodied-Relational

therapist, Wild therapist, supervisor, facilitator, and writer, living and working in Bristol, England. She's been a practicing Buddhist since her early 20s and loves seeing how age-old teachings and practices are relevant to contemporary life. She works at the interface of body psychotherapy, ecopsychology and ecodharma, drawing upon her experiences of being a development worker in sub-Saharan Africa, a lecturer in International Development at the University of Bristol, her current meditation practice and being a child lost and found in nature. She is currently finishing her second book 'Other than Mother: Choosing Childlessness with Life in mind'. www.kalamani.co.uk

References:

- Jung, C. (1988). *Zarathustra Seminar*. Edited by James Jarrett. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. Pg 1541. Quoted in Sabini, M. (2002) (ed) *C.G. Jung on Nature, Technology & Modern Life*. North Atlantic Books. Pg 73.
- Samuels, A. (2002). 'A New Anatomy of Spirituality: Clinical and Political Demands the Psychotherapist Cannot Ignore'. 'A lightly edited version of a lecture given in the series **'Psychotherapy and Spirituality'** at the London Centre for Psychotherapy on 26 October 2002'. Accessed from <http://www.andrewsamuels.com> 5th June 2013.
- Welwood, J. (2000). *Towards a Psychology of Awakening: Buddhism, Psychotherapy and the Path of Personal and Spiritual Transformation*. Shambhala Publications Inc. USA.



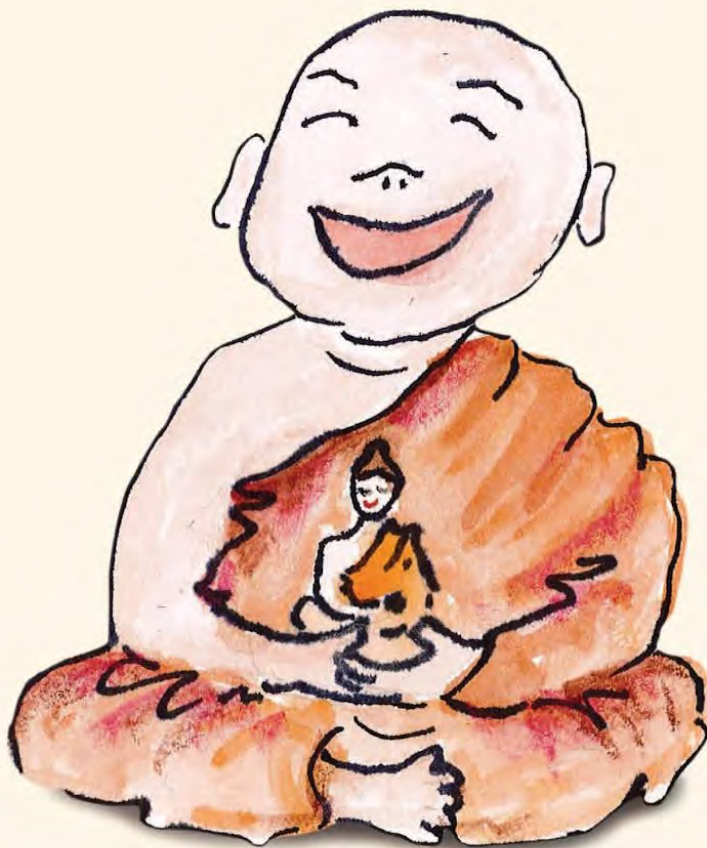
PBSIP
Pesso Boyden System Psychomotor

Pesso Boyden System Psychomotor
A Mind-Body Approach To Emotional Well-Being & Peak Performance

MARIA POZZI MONZO

The Buddha and the Baby

PSYCHOTHERAPY AND MEDITATION
IN WORKING WITH CHILDREN AND ADULTS



KARNAC

Be sure to join the SPT community at www.SomaticPsychotherapyToday.com to receive alerts for new articles and reviews to be posted on our website. Coming soon: Maria Pozzi Monzo, a child, adolescent, and adult psychotherapist in the National Health Service, convinced colleagues, (mostly child psychotherapists) to share their experiences with meditation and contemplation personally and professionally.

Maria will be talking with SPT in April to share her experience creating this remarkable collection of interviews about Buddhism, meditation, and psychotherapy.



If spirituality is embodied, does it mean you can touch it?

By Serge Prengel, LMHC



I ask a question, partly in jest. But only partly. The question is: *If spirituality is embodied, does it mean you can touch it?* Obviously, you cannot touch spirituality the way you would touch an object, let's say a little rubber stress ball that you can physically hold in your hand and squeeze.

The word *spirituality* is an abstraction. A concept. When a concept is expressed as a noun (as opposed to a verb), it gets confusing, because we expect nouns to refer to objects. Conversely, we usually use a verb to refer to a process.

Wikipedia defines *spirituality* as a process of transformation. You and I may not agree on what this process is, or what kind of transformation it leads to.

But we probably could find some common ground around the notion that it is a way of experiencing the world, and of making sense of our experience.

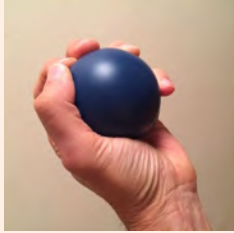
If we talk in terms of process, we sidestep the issues of content, the framework that religions, philosophies, and other belief systems put around experience. For instance: Contemplative practices are common to mystics in a variety of traditions. It is much easier for people of different belief systems to relate to the experience of contemplative practice than to buy into the different belief systems.

Anyway, you ask, is it possible to touch *spirituality* this way?

Well, yes. But not directly. Not the way we touch an object, like that little rubber stress ball I mentioned at the beginning of the article. We need to go through a process in order to do **this**. Remember: We're talking about having a perspective that is different from ordinary reality. Hence the process of getting to this other perspective.

For me, this process involves two shifts which I will briefly describe below.

1. The shift from *outer-directed* to *inner-directed*:

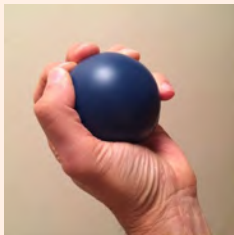


Question: *What are you doing?*

Outer-directed perspective: *I am holding a ball.*

Inner-directed perspective: *I am paying attention to the experience of holding this ball.*

2. The shift from *noticing* to *contemplative*:



Question: *What are you experiencing?*

Noticing perspective: *I am noticing this or that sensation, as well as this or that thought.*

Contemplative perspective: *I am staying with this experience.*

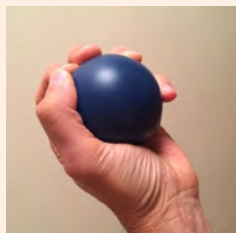
The first shift, from *outer-directed* to *inner-directed*, is obvious. For one thing, it is what we do in psychotherapy, paying attention to experience. The second shift, from *noticing* to *contemplation*, may be a little bit more tricky. I will come back to it later. First, a few paragraphs to put all of this in context.

Our mind is the result of millions of years of evolution. While it got more and more sophisticated, an underlying function has been to address the need to find actionable answers quickly: *What do I do with this new experience?* So, for instance, our primeval ancestor sees a low hanging fruit. The mind process is a quick triage of new experience, to know what category this experience belongs in. This need is satisfied with a quick answer. In this case: *A fruit. Easy to reach. Grab it.*

You notice that this *quick answer* blends answers to two questions: (1) What category does it fit in? *A fruit. Easy to reach.* (2) What do I do in response? *Grab it.*

I put all of it together into what I describe as the *quick answer* because I do not believe that our mind assesses the situation the way a computer would, i.e. first addressing question (1), and then question (2). It's probably more like assessing the situation as a whole (i.e. wiring between brain cells). But I make the distinction between (1) and (2) for this article because it sheds light into what happens in the shifts I described at the beginning of this article.

Let's go back to the first shift, from *outer-directed* to *inner-directed*.



Question: *What are you doing?*

Answers:

(1) The category this situation fits in is: *Holding a ball.*

(2) What action do I take as a result of knowing this: *No need for further action.*

When I write *No need for further action*, I do not mean stop holding the ball. I mean: No need to keep the mind engaged in this. The mind has done its job, the triage, and determined that the situation can continue without further monitoring. *Save brain resources: Disengage mindfulness. Proceed mindlessly.*

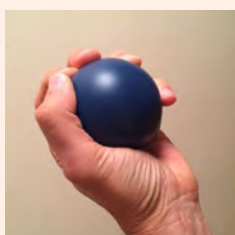
So, in order to experience the shift from *outer-directed* to *inner-directed*, we need to override the sense of natural completion we have as we get the easy answer. There is intentionality. Yes, the triage process has determined there is no special danger or opportunity warranting **continuing the mind's engagement in what is happening. Nevertheless, I want to pay more attention.** I want to shift my focus to something else that the default process has not paid attention to, which is my inner experience. So I voluntarily direct my intention to sensation.

I want to emphasize intentionality. It's the intention to go beyond the easy answer of the triage process. To make this happen, it is necessary to keep the mind stimulated so that it stays engaged. There is an implicit question, or challenge: Go beyond the sense of *nothing special to report*. To do this, be curious and creative. For instance: Compare present sensations to what you had experienced at other times.

As the mind stays engaged, you are no longer just touching the ball. *You are touching inner experience.*

What I am describing here, in the case of the first shift, from *outer-directed* to *inner-directed*, is obvious, especially for psychotherapists. I described it nonetheless because the same process applies, much less obviously, to the second shift, from *noticing* to *contemplative*. I am talking about the intentionality to override the sense of completion that we have by default.

Let's now go back to the second shift, from *noticing* to *contemplative*.



Question: *What are you experiencing?*

Answers:

(1) The category this situation fits in is: *Noticing various body sensations, and probably quite a few thoughts as well.*

(2) What action do I take as a result of knowing this: *No need for further action.*

Here again, the default answer is: ***No need for further action***. The default triage process is highly effective at managing mind resources. Once we have a satisfying answer, we disengage, i.e. we go from ***mindful*** to ***mindless***. There is nothing inherently wrong with this, to the contrary. If we were not able to focus on what is important (i.e. let go of what is less important), we simply could not function. Our mind simplifies reality to make it possible to have information that is action-oriented. We recognize patterns, i.e. situations and the responses that are called for.

Once we make the effort to pay attention to inner experience, we start ***noticing*** our sensations, as well as emotions. Our default mode is triage: We put these observations into some categories, e.g. tensions in the neck and shoulder, or twist in the stomach, or a warm and ***fuzzy sense of peace, or...*** Essentially, once we do this, we have a sense of completion: ***This falls under the category of something I know. This is not something that warrants immediate action.*** And the mind disengages.

So what we need to do for this second shift is to override the natural sense of completion. To intentionally engage the mind, pretty much the same way as I described in the case of the first shift. Intentionality. Stimulating the mind to get engaged. Going beyond the sense of ***nothing special to report***. Staying with the experience, in a curious and creative way.

As we do this, as the mind stays engaged, we are no longer just touching the ball, and we are no longer just touching experience at a given moment. We are staying with experience as it unfolds. ***We are touching experience as it unfolds.***

An active process

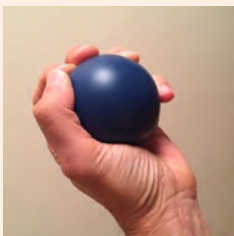
The process I call ***contemplative*** involves engaging the mind in a curious and creative way. This is quite different from what many people understand by the word ***contemplative***: something passive, not very different from the inner world of cows - - the latter comparison meant as a put-down.

Well, cows spend much of their time digesting what they ingest. So maybe that thoughtful look they have as they gaze into nothingness is the physical correlate of ruminating, of the digestive process. But the digestive process, while not active in the way that walking or running are active processes, is an amazingly powerful process. It turns outside materials into inside stuff that we need in order to live and thrive. So, even if ***contemplation*** was just ***ruminating***, it's not necessarily a put-down.

Contemplation, as I see it, is an active process - - just not the same kind of active process as when we walk or run or do math or analytical thinking. In order to get stimulated enough to stay engaged, the mind needs to process experience. So there is intentionality about going beyond the obvious: ***OK, I feel tensions in my neck. But where exactly? Is it the same intensity in both sides? Is it the same experience I often have, or is it even slightly different today? Does it change as I observe it? In what way? Etc . . .***

Intentionality creates a space in which it is possible to stay with the experience. Going beyond the obvious answers makes room for other connections to be made. This is how other memories come back to the foreground. What I am describing here is essentially the experience of Proust tasting the Madeleine cake, and through this taste opening a gateway to memories that were linked to it. These were powerful links – he certainly wrote tomes about them! But they were hidden links, obscured by the more obvious ones beyond which our **default triage process doesn't usually go.**

So what does all this have to do with spirituality? I described the second shift as **contemplative**, which is akin to what mystical traditions are about. I made a point earlier about spirituality being a verb as opposed to a noun. A process. An attitude. A way of interacting with experience. What I tried to do in this article is to outline some practical markers for this type of experience, to make it clear that I see it as something that is potentially available to all of us.



You are touching that same little ball. But you are also touching something else.

With the first shift, you are also touching inner experience.

With the second shift, you are touching the unfolding of experience.

Grasping experience

The word **grasping** refers to touching, but also to understanding. As we physically **grasp** the ball, the mind is **grasping** this experience as **holding a ball**. Once we **grasp** this experience through our default triage process, our need for actionable knowledge is satisfied, no further action is needed, we have a sense of completion. So the mind is disengaged.

For the mind to be re-engaged, we need to override the sense of completion. Which is akin to **un-grasping**, or **letting go**. It is as if the hand opens up, letting go of the ball, letting go of the **sense of holding it**. **Open mind. Beginner's Mind, in the sense of having a willingness to go** beyond preconceived certainties.

So this process is, quite literally, a process of finding a balance between **grasping** and **letting go**.

Active Pause®

As you read this article, you might think that I came up with the example of holding the ball as a metaphor after I had developed the conceptual framework I outlined here. This would be totally misleading. Actually, my experiences with the ball came first.

The idea for this article came from the thought I mentioned at the beginning: **If spirituality is embodied, does it mean you can touch it?** My intention was to describe the work I have been

doing for several years: Exploring mindfulness and embodied cognition in therapy through the experience of holding a little rubber ball, and how this can lead to experiencing spirituality in an embodied way.

In the process of writing the article, I decided to not go into a description of the work, or its **clinical applications**, but to articulate a sense of how it is possible to access one's spirituality in the process of paying mindful, embodied attention to the simple task of holding a ball.

If you are interested in this, I would like to direct you to the website where you can find more information: ActivePause.com. And I would like to encourage you to experiment with it, and to share your experiences, with me and the community at large.

Serge Prengel, LMHC, is a graduate of France's Sorbonne University and HEC Business School. He is certified in *Focusing*, in *Core Energetics* and in *Somatic Experiencing*. He also draws from *Systems-Centered theory*.

He started and operated an ad agency in New York for many years. In the early 1990's, his focus shifted to exploring creativity as a tool for personal growth and healing. Serge is the editor of [Somatic Perspectives on Psychotherapy](#) and the co-editor of [Defining Moments For Therapists](#). He is the author of *Scissors: A whimsical Fable About Empowerment*, as well as several other books noted for their creative approach to important topics.

[Somatic Perspectives on Psychotherapy](#)

Somatic Perspectives on Psychotherapy is about psychotherapy with a focus on embodied experience. Our primary emphasis is on clinical approaches, with **an experiential feel for each clinician's perspective**. An underlying goal is to explore the convergence between clinical practice and the emerging models of the human mind from the fields of neuroscience, evolutionary psychology and embodied cognition.

Would you like to discuss with colleagues around the world your thoughts, findings or questions? The Somatic Perspectives on Psychotherapy group on LinkedIn is your virtual community, already shared by over 5,000 kindred spirits: <http://linkedin.somaticperspectives.com>

The series' editor, Serge Prengel, LMHC, is in private practice in New York City. He also leads experiential workshops on relational mindfulness.

Rolef Ben-Shahar continued from page 55

References

- Eliot, T. S. (1944). *Four Quartets*. London: Faber and Faber.
Krishnamurti, J. (1969). *Freedom from the known*. [S.I.]: Harper.
Lispector, C. (1974). *Soulstorm* (A. Levitin, Trans.). New York: New Direction Books.
Lotan, U. (2006). *News from the Western Front: The New Age Story*. Israel: Madaf.



Contemplative Psychotherapy Essentials: Enriching your Practice with Buddhist Psychology

Written by Karen Kissel Wegela, PhD

Reviewed by Nancy Eichhorn, PhD

“What does the interpersonal relationship considered essential in traditional talk therapy have to do with the solitary practice of sitting silently with oneself in meditation?”

I perched on the edge of a brown leather ottoman. My feet planted on the carpet. My arms folded across my chest. My countenance stern. My clients, a 13-year-old and his mother, were ensconced in two, leather, easy-glide rocking chairs. Their feet raised on another ottoman, throw blankets over their legs. She explained that he had not been back to school for over a week.

Multiple crisis calls the previous week included a SKYPE intervention meeting, an emergency in-person session. Our work to sense into his overwhelm and anxiety, to watch the surge of sensation to circumvent another tantrum, for lack of a better work to describe what his mother offered as a complete melt down, had not worked. He spent most of the week, she explained, lost in a haze of tears, curled in a fetal position on her bed.

Thoughts crowded my mind. *Why didn't she call me? Why did she let him get away with this?* The teacher in me saw a truancy officer on the horizon and human services pounding on the front door to rescind custody for coddling, enabling.

I felt impatient and wanted things to be different than they were. I noticed tension in my jaw—teeth tight together. Felt judgment in my eyes as I made contact with this young man. Sensing an almost aggressive energy wanting to change the current situation. I veered

from incrimination to self-degradation: *My attempts to help this have client failed. I am not the right person for him.*

Then a few sentences from a book I had been reading came into focus as if typed across an interior screen: "What we hold in our mind, our clients pick up on" (Wegela, 2014, p.77). I realized I teetered on a precarious edge, potentially planting negative "seeds" versus positive. I wanted to be present, gentle, appreciative of myself and my clients.

So, in order to let go of my wanting things to change, I consciously sat back, relaxed my shoulders. I connected with my heart, found compassion, felt love. I softened my gaze. Eased my tone. Unfurled my arms and legs and opened to the situation. I sat, present in the moment.

The tone of our interaction changed. The chaotic energy in the room decreased. Tears welled up in the young man's eyes when I asked him what he imagined I would say or do when I learned that he had trusted his 'thoughts', got caught up in the stories reeling in his mind, threw himself into his emotions and became lost in the haze, and he replied, "be disappointed in me."

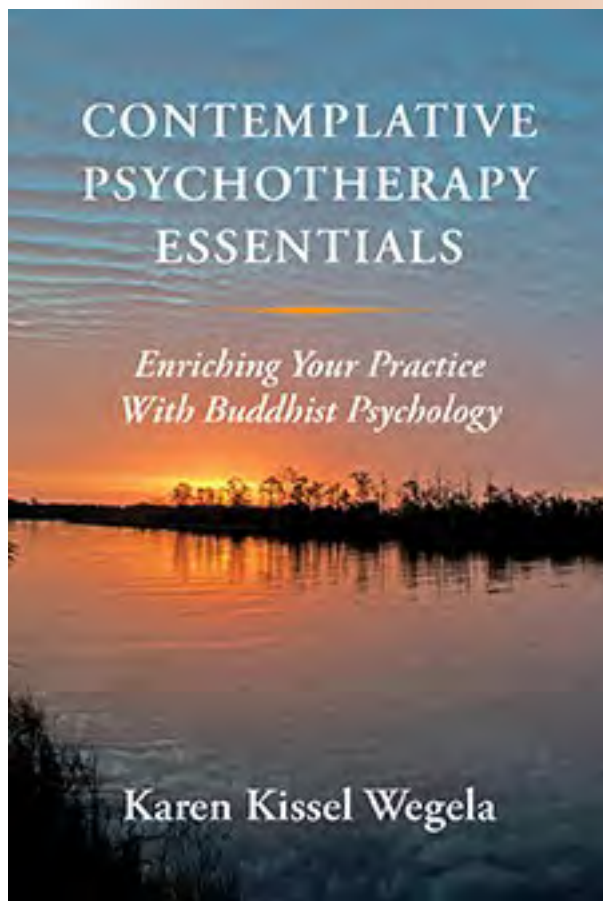
And I almost was. Until I heard Karen Kissel Wegela's voice, on the pages of her text, *Contemplative Psychotherapy Essentials: Enriching Your Practice with Buddhist Psychology*.

Wegela wrote the book to share contemplative psychotherapy's approach—a blend of Western psychological traditions of talk therapy and ancient Eastern teachings of the Buddha—and practical applications of Buddhist principles to the therapeutic journey. She offers clinical case examples, strategies, exercises, and guided meditation instructions.

The book begins with a personal introduction. An overview and thank you to those who influenced her. She mentions meetings and direct teachings with multiple Tibetan Buddhist teachers including His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama, Anam Thubten Rinpoche, Chagdud Tulku to name just a few. **As well, she notes her "dharma sisters, Pema Chödrön, Dale Asrael, Judy Lief and Judith Simmer-Brown."** And her "root guru, the Vidyadhara, the Venerable Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche." Her interactions with more well-

known Buddhist teachers include Thich Nhat Hanh, Jack Kornfield, and Sharon Salzberg. You get the picture that this woman has been involved in Buddhism *a long time* and that her experience is steeped in tradition, ritual, belief. You also learn that her life has been spent supporting others through teaching and client work, that compassion is not simply a word she bandies about but is a way of being.

Chapter one begins with the foundations in contemplative psychotherapy. I had no



When I reread the five competencies of the contemplative psychotherapist presented in chapter three, I noted how simply they outlined an approach to therapeutic interactions: be present and let go; see clearly and not judge; recognize and appreciate differences; connect with others and cultivate a relationship; and act skillfully and let go.

concept of this approach, and relatively little personal experience or knowledge where **Buddhism is concerned other than what I've** gleaned from reading (and reviewing) other books on the topic and my own meditation practice. I read chapter one twice actually: once while on the exercise cycle and then again after my interview with Karen when I **realized that I hadn't paid close enough** attention to the foundational teachings of Buddhism and contemplative psychotherapy. My second experience with the material created the schema, or scaffolding if you will, to construct a deeper, more enriched understanding.

First and foremost, Karen stresses personal meditation practice—the focus in chapter two. The need to be clear and aware, to be with **'oneself' in a place of acceptance, surrender, compassion, love.** **"The essence of mindful practice,"** she writes, **"is to be present, gentle, appreciative of oneself as one is"** (p.129). She offers several exercises to begin and practice a mindful, meditative way of being. Readers are invited to experience **"the unique opportunity of mindfulness-awareness sitting meditation"** (p.21). Wegela asks, **"What can happen when we do take time to just sit down with ourselves?"** (p.22).

Throughout several chapters, Wegela offers meditation and mindfulness practices to do and to teach clients. She also discusses

her struggle with teaching meditation: **"Should therapists teach their clients to meditate?"** she asks (p. 153) then reveals that she has **"struggled with this question" and that she "still feels torn"**. Wegela is a certified meditation instructor and yet, for more formal meditation work, she refers clients to local meditation centers.

Her writing, for me, was a slow, methodical pace. When I sat down and started to read with an agenda in mind, felt rushed to get through the chapter, I found myself slowing, breathing. I settled into the chair. The **have-to-do's vanished. I was simply and completely** present with the text. Wegela offers quotes from other Buddhist teachers, case examples from clients and students. Terms are defined and demonstrated. The material is accessible, user-friendly. A true invitation to not only read about but to also personally experience it, try it out, let it flow within and through. I know my presence with the material is why I shifted during my client session mentioned in **the opening scene. I didn't think about the book, didn't think about judgment,** compassion, love. I was quite close to being lost in old patterns of thought and response. But, the concepts Wegela taught me in this book, rose to consciousness and changed my approach, altered my behavior, and in effect lead to a more genuine, connected, loving relationship with my clients.



©Egal/Dreamstime.com-Buddha Photo

When I reread the five competencies of the contemplative psychotherapist presented in chapter three, I noted how simply they outlined an approach to therapeutic interactions: be present and let go; see clearly and not judge; recognize and appreciate differences; connect with others and cultivate a relationship; and act skillfully and let go.

The remaining eight chapters interweave information, instruction, and interaction. Topics include: creating genuine therapeutic relationships; recognizing brilliant sanity; sowing the seeds of mindfulness; working with **clients' existing mindfulness and mindlessness** practices; exploring emotions; cultivating compassion; contemplative approaches to anger; and finally mandala approaches to supervision and consultation.

I read the entire book, cover to cover, then, when I felt my curiosity piqued, I reread

certain sections. I was fascinated by the concept of brilliant sanity, which is noted to be the root teaching in contemplative psychotherapy. As I understand it now, it is closely related to what is called our Buddha nature—all beings have a nature that is fundamentally good. We all have the potential to be wise, compassionate and open. The overarching goal in contemplative psychotherapy is to help clients connect or reconnect with their own worthiness, their own brilliant sanity (wisdom). Suffering, Wegela writes, occurs when we confuse what is really happening with our own version of **what is happening (p.155)**. **"We mistake our thoughts and opinions about ourselves, others, and the phenomenal world for reality itself" (p.155)**. **Within this vein there are three main qualities to explore through meditation: openness, clarity, and compassion that will allow us to recognize our brilliant sanity, our fundamental wisdom and goodness.**

Continued on page 85

Contemplative Psychotherapy Essentials: Enriching your Practice with Buddhist Psychology

An interview with
Karen Kissel Wegela, PhD



By Nancy Eichhorn, PhD

“When our aspiration is to let our brilliant sanity invite and support our clients’ discovery of their own brilliant sanity, we are practicing contemplative psychotherapy” (p.257)

A teenage boy came to therapy because he thought something was terribly wrong with him. While playing basketball, he suddenly became self-conscious. Now, some therapists might look for what’s wrong—performance anxiety, self-esteem issues, teenage angst—their focus on psychopathology in order to create a treatment plan. Karen Kissel Wegela, PhD, however, prefers to recognize her clients’ “brilliant sanity”.

“I’m more interested in sanity not psychopathology,” Wegela said with a laugh then added that she did teach a course in psychopathology years ago.

After speaking with him, she realized that what the teen thought was wrong was not, in

fact, a problem. “He became aware of his experience,” Wegela said, then explained that brilliant sanity is the non-dualistic, unconditioned mind that all of us have or are. It references the unconditional nature of human experience. The underlying nature of who and what we are regardless of the specifics of what we are experiencing.

“When I write about brilliant sanity, I am talking about mind,” Wegela said, then stressed that it is not the dualistic mind. Brilliant sanity is more aligned with the nondualistic mind as opposed to the dualistic mind, the absolute mind as opposed to the relative mind, the unconditional versus the conditional. “Mind is not just consciousness, which is usually dualistic having a sense of

someone who is conscious of something else. Rather, it is the space, the emptiness within which we perceive direct experience.

“For instance as I’m sitting here talking with you, and I am moving in and out of being aware of thoughts, they come and go, and I am not confused about what’s a thought and what is reality. Just because I think it doesn’t mean it’s real. This concept so changed my life. Awareness is a larger perspective than recognition. It is knowing thoughts are coming and going but not getting caught up in them. Awareness offers a larger capacity.”

A Bit of Background

A former East coast high school English teacher, Wegela enjoyed her one-to-one time with students. She listened to their concerns, supported their growth and experience. A short stint in Colorado, the need to earn credits to raise her pay scale, and a serendipitous decision to take a counseling course lead her to psychology and from there to Buddhism.

During the course of her studies, Wegela **realized that Buddha’s teachings paralleled** her psychotherapeutic work: address painful emotions, seek to understand the source of the psychological pain and its relief, and come from a place of authenticity and genuine compassion.

In 1981, Wegela relocated to Colorado and joined the faculty at Naropa University in the masters in contemplative psychotherapy program. The past 34 years Wegela has published three books and numerous book chapters and articles. She works in private practice as well as teaches. Her intention in



writing *Contemplative Psychotherapy Essentials* was to show how this approach, which originated and was developed at Naropa, offers the potential to enrich the work of therapists with different theoretical orientations.

“I never started out to write any of my three books,” she says with a hint of laughter, a sense of humility. She is present, personal. She shares her own journey in person and in her books. And no, you don’t need to be Buddhist to experience contemplative psychotherapy.

Her first book (1996), *How to Be a Help instead of a Nuisance* (re-issued in 2011 as *What Really Helps: Using Mindfulness & Compassionate Presence to Help, Support, and Encourage Others*) stemmed from tape recorded class lectures and presentations, the audience’s natural desire to want copies, and Wegela’s compassionate response to say, “Yes, of course.” But, a friend said, “No, you can’t give the recordings away. You need that material for your book.”

Karen Kissel Wegela, PhD
foreword by David Richo

what really HELPS

a guide to using mindfulness
& compassionate presence to help,
support, and encourage others

"What book?" Wegela said. Her friend "pestered her" so Wegela sat down and listened to the tapes. She had them transcribed. Then, she set them aside and wrote. "I sit at the computer, and I talk to the computer through my fingers. I'd sit down and knock out a chapter at a time. I'd been teaching the material for 15 years so it was already well-digested. It took me four and a half months to write the book. The second book took eight months. I knew that material well, too, from having taught it a long time.

Wegela sent her first book proposal to a friend and editor at Shambhala publications. It was "an easy entry." She was asked to

write another book—got the contract through an email. "Both books flowed."

"My writing style is chatty, like I'm talking. That's my teaching style, how I speak," Wegela shared. "The process of getting words on paper (or on the computer) is not hard for me. I was lucky. In the 11th grade I had an English teacher who admired Hemingway. He required us to write simply; it was enormously helpful."

"When the first book came out I thought, *Oh . . . My . . . God . . . , people are going to read this, they'll hear all of my personal stories.* I don't think about that when I'm writing. I'm pretty out there in all my books," Wegela said.

"This book was harder to write," she continued. "It's not straightforward from a class I had taught. I had to figure out what I wanted to say; I had to ask myself, what do I actually want to say? Once I knew, I had no trouble saying it. I work at making my writing accessible, and when I am stuck I say what I want to say out loud and it comes to me."

"What really helped me write this book was the question one editor asked, 'What do you think about when you are with a client, what is your experience?'"

Another useful technique Wegela employs is to envision an audience when writing. The first book was her brother-in-law. The second a colleague, and the third was her niece who had just finished licensing as a marital and family therapist. "I'm not literally writing to her, to these people, but I thought about the audience as young therapists just starting out



SHAMBHALA
Publications

or equally someone wanting to enrich their practice,” Wegela said.

The Path to the Third Book

An email appeared in Wegela’s inbox from an editor at W. W. Norton & Company who knew Wegela had conducted a workshop in Toronto related to Buddhism and psychotherapy. She invited Wegela to write a book about Buddhism and psychopathology. Wegela said no (not being interested in psychopathology) and then pitched a book on *mandala* (a Buddhist way of looking at situations which highlights not only their entirety but also the inter-relationships within them).

“The Board at Norton rejected it, saying it was too Buddhist. I revised it a bit and resubmitted it to Shambhala. They rejected it, saying it was too clinical. Both sent nice emails/letters saying they’d love to have me write a book for them,” Wegela said.

Shambhala suggested a book concept, but Wegela preferred at that point to go with a more mainstream publisher in order to reach a larger audience with different theoretical backgrounds. It took several proposals to two Norton editors before Wegela signed a contract. However, they wanted Wegela to make it more about the application of

contemplative techniques.

“The irony is that contemplative psychology is much more about point of view, how one sees things rather than about application per se. It may be more about what I don’t do. I was perplexed about how to manage that. There are not many techniques in the book, except for the mandala approaches at the end.”

The Norton editor wanted all of the Buddhist psychology to be in the first chapter and the rest of the book to focus on applications. Wegela did her best, though she inserted psychology as needed throughout the book. **Chapter 1. Buddha’s teachings.** “They are as straight forward and accurate as I knew how to be,” Wegela said. “I wanted to share the basics: the Four Noble truths, mindfulness, awareness, meditation, the fixed sense of self.

“A fixed sense of self or ego is not same ego as in Western psychology. With a fixed self we believe something is in us that is unchanging, separate, and solid. The Buddhist teachings emphasize impermanence: everything inside of us and outside of us changes, nothing remains the same. The main obstacle to experiencing brilliant sanity is our attempt to maintain and





defend a mistaken sense of who and what we are.”

“I wanted to be sure these ideas were in there, to be sure and talk about Buddha’s teachings and the practice of compassion. I wanted to go beyond simple mindfulness as presented as the latest *in thing*.”

Mindfulness, Meditation, Maitri

“What would make me happiest is for readers to become interested in meditation as a way to work with their own minds. There is nothing else like it. Beyond that, mindfulness, exchange, obstacles to recognizing the **mistaken belief in solid self. I don’t care what people do with it as much as wanting them to connect with themselves and to bring more curiosity to their experience,**” she said.

Meditation, Wegela shared, is not about adding anything extra, you simply sit with your mind the way it is. It is quite ordinary. Her current, favorite traditional metaphor for meditation is seeing how a glass of dusty water settles on its own and becomes clear. The dust settles, the water becomes clear.

“Most people don’t know how to do that even if they are curious about the mind,” she said

and stressed again that the mind is not **thoughts.** “Because we don’t generally experience our minds and bodies directly, we are confused about what is really happening. That leads to suffering. Meditation is a powerful way of working with emotion, too. **As you can tell, I’m big on ordinary.**”

Wegela is also big on *maitri*—loving-kindness—which, she said, is the antidote to self-aggression. According to Wegela, self-aggression is rampant in Western culture—it’s dominant in American culture, European, **Asia, Australia, New Zealand.** “When teaching in Chile, it was rampant,” she said. Advertisements, the constant barrage that you are not okay the way you are contributes. The opposite of self-aggression, however, is not that I am okay, Wegela said.

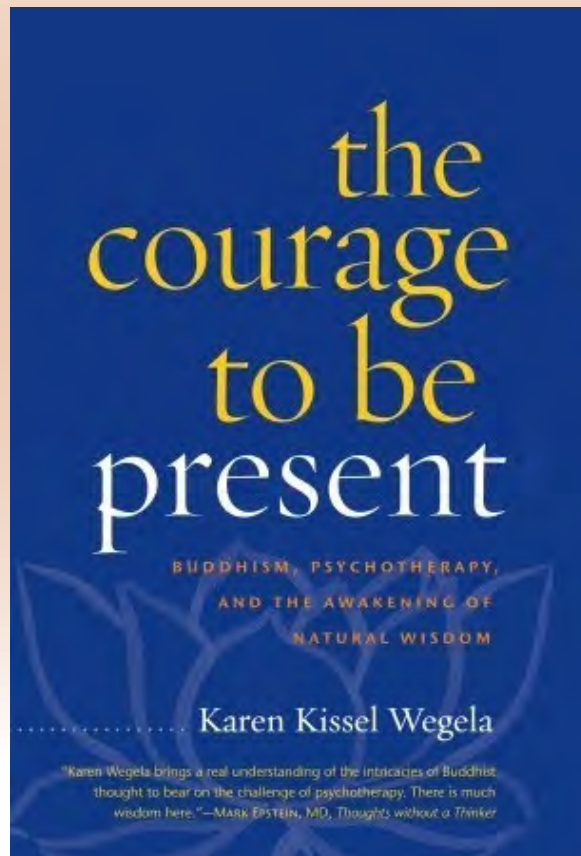
“It’s that you could be with yourself the way that you are, you don’t reject yourself. What is important is making friends with oneself. To accept yourself is not the same as saying you like yourself. We can experience ourselves, be with ourselves and we may not always like what we find. Accepting ourselves means being willing to see what is actually happening in our experience and letting it be what it is.

Bringing it Together

The key part of the path for Wegela is the therapeutic relationship itself, to cultivate genuine relationships. The most important thing in therapy is having an authentic relationship.

“It’s more important how you are with yourself not what technique you use. It’s about showing up and being a real person. The heart of the matter, whether you meditate, whether your mind is empty or not, is kindness. That tops the list. It’s hard to be kind if you are not mindful.”

Karen Kissel Wegela, PhD, a therapist in private practice, has been studying and teaching the integration of Buddhist principles and psychotherapy for over thirty years as a professor in the MA Contemplative Psychotherapy program at Naropa University. She is also the author of *The Courage to Be Present* and *What Really Helps*.



To read excerpts from Karen’s books please visit our website:

www.SomaticPsychotherapyToday.com

Eichhorn continued from page 79

We can, with practice, discover or recover our natural compassion for ourselves and others.

The idea of “exchange” as opposed to transference or counter transference intrigued me as did her discussion on exploring emotions. She wrote about two common, mistaken ways of approaching emotions: suppressing them and acting them out and ways to work with them: acceptance, boycotting (redirection), and antidotes (for example rejoicing is the antidote to jealousy, resourcing is an antidote to fear). She writes extensively about *maitri*—loving-kindness, compassion, friendliness toward oneself. Cultivating maitri and compassion are drawn from the Buddhist teachings based on the

ideal of the bodhisattva (people who have committed themselves to benefiting others) (p.181). Wegela offers a Maitri practice on page 183 that involves a mantra of sorts: **“May I be happy. May I be safe. May I have food, shelter, and comfort. May I be free from suffering. May I be peaceful.”**

I have extensive notes, ideas that I want to pursue. And, I think I would overwhelm readers if I tried to write about it all. As well, it would be a disservice to both potential readers and Wegela. For me, this is the type of book that one needs to experience in its entirety, to explore contemplative psychotherapy—its precepts and practices—and to play with the concepts presented, first hand, not just in a book review.



Hiding In: Embodied Spirituality Embedded in the Body

By Rick Miller

The pursuit of happiness: fortunately gay men can learn to find happiness by looking within rather than outside . . . with a little work.

There is a special place inside the body—a deep and peaceful place—that is accessible through any one of a number of modalities, including relaxation, mindfulness or hypnosis. Years ago I immersed myself in experiential techniques incorporating mindfulness, mind-body work, and meditation. I wanted to add a layer to my psychotherapy practice in order to reach my clients in new ways. It seemed to me that experience, more than talk, could be key to actually shifting self-deprecating perspectives and negative life patterns. I was amazed to see how bringing these techniques into therapy transformed the experience for many of my clients rather quickly: they moved from anxiety and depression into a space of calm and confidence. Happiness and comfort now came easily and readily to clients who could not previously access them. The experience inside the body and mind became unified, giving rise to a new, fresh sense of aliveness.

This is especially relevant to the gay community, as it is common for gay men to seek external validation both through materialism and outside judgment. The initial

rush of gaining such validation is a fleeting experience, and older, disquieting or hollow feelings will likely return faster than wanted. And, of course, the despair caused by not receiving external validation is painful as well.

Gay men have often made a habit— for the sake of survival—of becoming masters at distancing from pleasure and also from further pain. Growing up we did not feel masculine. In our families, schools, neighborhoods and religious circles, we were taught how to be a guy, not a gay guy, but a “real” guy. **Most of us felt as though we didn’t pass for real guys.**

For gay boys, it is perfectly normal to feel different from other kids. After all, we **often are drawn to “different” activities from other boys.** We may be interested in aesthetic pursuits rather than typically “masculine” ones and enjoy the company of female friends rather than “hanging with guys.” Many gay boys and teens were made fun of and bullied as a regular part of their upbringing. The **word “faggot” carries a painful sting as** tensions between the internal and external

world were hard to bear. Shame is usually our biggest secret, even into adulthood.

What are the implications of this inside

our bodies? We split off parts of ourselves in an attempt to fit in. Unlike others, we are a minority in our own families and communities thereby emphasizing the mask of secrecy.

Concealing parts of who we are from the world, even from ourselves sometimes, is what I call "hiding in," the opposite of hiding out, taking shelter inside a fortified secret place. We develop a protective shield that becomes impenetrable,

and most of us continue to carry this shell long after childhood. The trauma of being gay in an uncomprehending world is something we don't get over and decades later we are still protecting and guarding ourselves. Frequently it isn't even

in our awareness as adults. We simply feel stuck or oppressed or anxious.

My hypothesis regarding resolution of

these tensions comes from having had a deep experience of inner alignment while experiencing hypnosis, including sensory experiences based on a developing awareness that the body can be a friend. This is a completely new awareness for many gay men: the body that once betrayed and endangered the individual becomes a sphere of serenity and enjoyment.

Through sensory work, we can begin to

experience a rejuvenation and delight where two things happen simultaneously: *undoing* the old, internalized way of being, and more important, *redoing*, where on a deeper level, an internal sense of aliveness is now felt. As

this happens, space opens up for the real self to emerge — whole, authentic, and confident. Rather than to meld into a socially expected role with central parts hidden, this whole self can be experienced as open and without fear.

These new experiences constitute a movement I refer to as "unwrapped," a

movement through which we come to rely on our entire self. The reflex of automatic compartmentalization falls away as a greater ease with self and others takes root. The expansion of internal resources allows for a

sense of centeredness that is no longer dependent on the reflection of external perspectives. We may now cross the bridge to being our true selves. An entirely fresh landscape lies ahead along with a new feeling of aliveness inside.

This experience, which is

embedded in the body, is indeed spiritual. It shifts us from isolation and feeling stifled to deep connection

and feeling free. You choose the modality that works best for you, whether mindfulness, yoga, relaxation, or any kind of hypnotic experience, including physical exercise, so that an exhilarating experience of new possibility can take root.

As a psychotherapist who utilizes

hypnosis with gay men, I observe how their receptiveness to sensory modalities provides an internal connection that is empowering and creates contentment. It is always exciting to witness as the client's body relaxes and tension releases. It's as though the client is returning home, where he can sit back and allow himself to feel and to be seen, landed in the present. This sense of deep relief is animated in different ways: the client smiles

This is a completely new awareness for many gay men: the body that once betrayed and endangered the individual becomes a sphere of serenity and enjoyment.

or tears roll gently down his cheek, he laughs or simply breathes uninterrupted breaths through his whole body. Frequently they verbalize how they have never experienced anything quite as powerful, confirming again and again the significance of this approach. Clients are surprised by their enjoyment of the process and by the ways in which it affects their feelings outside the therapy room. I too was surprised at first, but I have gotten used to miracles!

Take Tim as an example: he had

frequently felt depressed and unable to trust his own inner resources. With his permission, I began the session with a relaxation exercise. He became increasingly aware of his breathing, the sounds in the room, and the ways in which his body was able to enjoy comfort. The goal was for him to be able to reconnect to his inner strength.

I reminded him that he already

possessed exactly what he needed to make a practice of self-care and access positive resources. Tears streamed down his face as he took in this new feeling.

I asked Tim to recall a time when he felt

a sense of happiness inside and the scene that came to his mind was driving in his car on a beautiful day, as Beyoncé played on the radio. He described this memory vividly and was surprised by the feeling of lightness that came over him—a sensation he had not felt in weeks. He was grinning from ear-to-ear, a noticeable departure from the sad wilted expression he usually had.

When he came back from this sensory

memory and opened his eyes, he looked right at me and joyously commented: “You handed the baton back to me for self-care and I took it. It feels great, I have arrived!”

Imagination is a powerful tool. With this simple introduction to guided relaxation and calling forth his own rich imagistic vocabulary, Tim had already begun to reclaim his ability to transform sadness into comfort.

Mindfulness and other somatic

approaches are powerful tools for interrupting habitual feelings of disappointment. Aligning the body-mind as a place of comfort that is evoked, nurtured and welcomed is the first step. With practice, such sensory awareness can further offer an evolving sense of home that is embedded within.

Interested in reading more? Be sure to visit Rick’s blog: [Unwrapped Mind Body Wisdom and the Modern Gay Man](#)

You are also invited to check him out on [Facebook](#)

Rick Miller is a clinical social worker in private practice in Boston and on Cape Cod, Massachusetts, USA. (www.rickmiller.biz). He has served on national and international faculty for The International Society of Hypnosis, The Milton Erickson Foundation of South Africa, The Brief Therapy Conference, The Society for Clinical and Experimental Hypnosis, The American Society of Clinical Hypnosis, and The American Group Psychotherapy Association. He has been a guest lecturer at The University of Johannesburg Department of Psychology, Johannesburg, South Africa. The curriculum Rick developed (hypnotherapy with gay men including customized scripts) is used at The Milton Erickson Institute of Mexico City, Mexico, and National Autonomous University of Mexico, also in Mexico City. He is the author of *Unwrapped: Integrative Therapy With Gay Men . . . the Gift of Presence* (Zeig, Tucker & Theisen, Publishers, 2014). He is also a contributing author to *For Couples: Ten Commandments For Every Aspect Of Your Relationship Journey* (Zeig, Tucker & Theisen publishers, 2012).

In case technology falters:
www.psychologytoday.com/blog/unwrapped
Facebook: Rick Miller Psychotherapy +

UNWRAPPED

Integrative Therapy with
Gay Men...the Gift
of Presence

RICK MILLER, LICSW



Embodied Spirituality

by Elizabeth Morelle, MACP, RCC

As pendulums swing to and fro, the oceans ebb and flow.

How should we define “embodied spirituality”? What is it, who has it and how can we get it? What attracts me to this topic is that I believe I have met at least two people who represent an “embodied spirituality”: His Holiness the 14th Dalai Llama, and Eckhart Tolle. How do I know this? Well, it was due to the effect they each had on me. How do I know that it was them affecting me? This is where we get into the realm of physics and as far as I know, quantum physics, both subjects outside my field of reference. What I do know, however, is the concept of entrainment.

Entrainment is considered a central principle in harmonic resonance (which is noted to be the preeminent organizing principle of matter and energy in the universe). Essentially, entrainment is when there is a tendency of resonating systems to couple or synchronize with each other. Christiaan Huygens, 1665, discovered the phenomenon when running two pendulum clocks in parallel. The clocks eventually would run at the exact same speed if they were only slightly faster or slower to begin with and when they were hung two feet apart on the same wall. The tiny vibrations caused by the oscillations in each clock was transmitted through the wall sufficient to establish the synchrony between the oscillations through this miniscule synchronizing force (Czolczynski, K., Perlikowski, Stefanski, and Kapitaniak, n.d.). Entrainment, then, can potentially happen when we come into the presence of an enlightened being—they can influence us profoundly.

Since my early teens one of my ambitions had been to meet His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama. **I really don't know why I wanted to meet him!** I just knew that I did. I felt powerfully attracted to this holy man. I travelled to Kashmir in the spring of 1991. I was attracted to places of beauty and majesty and I yearned to learn about other cultures. I felt sick and believed I had some sort of virus. In my travel journal were two postcards, one of Manjushri, the Tibetan deity of wisdom, and one of Green Tara, the Tibetan goddess of compassion and direct **action. I had been "dabbling" in Tibetan Buddhism;** I had prayed to Green Tara to give me an answer as to why I felt so ill.

Arriving in Dharamsala I learned that the Dalai Lama was out of town, away on one of his many important engagements. To my joy, I later heard a whisper that he had returned and was to give a puja at the temple **at 6:00 am on Friday morning. "What is a puja?" I asked. "It is a kind of prayer ceremony," I was told by a fellow traveller.**

As we walked to the temple, I learned that not only was this to be a Green Tara puja but that the Dalai Lama would actually become Green Tara during this ceremony. He was to literally embody the concept of Green Tara.



He would channel her energy. Amidst the hushed but excited tones of the chattering congregation we Westerners filed into the temple, behind the Tibetans. I was directed to sit among the Tibetan women, who were seated at the back, behind the men. The Dalai Lama entered shortly after and seated himself on a dais at the front, to the left.



He began to chant. It was while he chanted and channelled, or embodied Green Tara that I began to wretch. Green Tara was right there and then she answered my prayer. And no, I did not have a virus. Down the hill to the Tashi Dalek hospital I went, in the wake of two monks in their maroon robes with their old style black umbrellas opened to protect them against the heat. Tests confirmed my suspicions: I was pregnant (my partner and I subsequently named our first born, a girl, after the goddess: Tara).

A day later I was further blessed to learn that the Dalai Lama would hold a public reception at his palace. Once again the Tibetans went first, men then women, then we Westerners. When it was my turn, I filed in front of him. The Dalai Lama took my hand in both of his, looked straight into my eyes, and, as if he

knew exactly what was going on for me, said "Oh!" Of course, I am surmising, but to me, at that moment, I felt as though he told me everything would be all right. I had an incredible experience as I looked back into his eyes: I saw a vista of endless space, a vast expanse of plateaus and mountains that extended on for what seemed like forever. It totally blew my mind. As I turned and walked away, I found myself grinning from ear to ear. I looked ahead of me and saw the Tibetan people who had already seen him, also smiling widely. I looked back at the Dalai Lama, and I can only describe my experience as though I were flooded by an ocean of compassion, an ocean that poured and roared through him and from him and out of him.

We create the patterns of our lives by our thinking.

Just as we are what we eat, we are what we think or what we focus our attention on. Our brains are literally molded by our thought patterns. In a study on neuroplasticity and meditation, the results showed that the subjects, Tibetan Buddhist monks, had actually altered the structure and function of their brains over the course of meditating for tens of thousands of hours (Davidson & Lutz, 2008). This demonstrates, therefore, that one's internal physique literally changes, along with our physiology: the landscape into which we sow the seeds of our thoughts is more fertile and rich. It is possible to develop a lived experience of an embodied spirituality.



Copyright ©2010-2012 Kathy L. Kain www.somaticpractice.net



to take over. How do I know this? I am a mystic as well as an empath; I trust the experiences of my body. Through these experiences I learn about reality, life and possibility. It was through the impression, the felt senses of my own body that I understood Eckhart Tolle to be a vehicle for the Divine. And so it was when I met His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama.

Recently on a ferry crossing from Vancouver Island to Vancouver, I met a young Dominican nun who simply exuded Joy and Light. I

The other great holy person I met is Eckhart Tolle. I will confess that prior to meeting him, I had not read much of his writing; I felt there was not much new in it, so I did not pay it much attention. I met him by happenstance in a second-hand bookstore on Saltspring Island, BC, a beautiful Gulf Islands gem where I used to and I believe he now does, reside. I stepped inside the bookstore to find a man seated in a big armchair facing the counter. I saw him, recognized him and found myself flippantly saying aloud to myself (and anyone else within hearing range, including **the man himself**), **"Oh look, there's Eckhart Tolle."** To my great surprise I was suddenly a fan: I felt elated, excited and giddy, and to my embarrassment I started wittering. I no longer remember about what, exactly, but what does stay with me is that in the next moment I found myself aware of a great and wondrous Presence that coursed through him, was with him, but was not him. I felt myself compelled to prostrate myself and worship, yes, worship, not him, but this marvellous Divinity that flowed through him. I did not prostrate myself, for better or for worse, but I found myself by this cursory experience to be utterly convinced of the enlightened state of this man. How has he done this? He has put himself aside and allowed the Greater Spirit

capitalize these words to illustrate the fact that she had embodied these qualities. They were no abstract idea to her. She had become them and literally shone and radiated Love. What a blessing to sit with her! I laughed and smiled in her presence and felt elated by the ecstasy I was sure that she felt, and that I felt merely by being in her presence. How do I know she felt this and how did her presence affect me?

Psychiatrist Dr. David Hawkins in his book *Power versus Force: The Hidden Determinants of Human Behaviour* (2012), describes how he calibrated the vibration of emotion. He used studies that muscle tested hundreds of clients. He found that positive emotions like love, joy and peace have a very high frequency; whereas, among the emotions with the lowest frequency are shame, guilt and despair. The highest frequencies of emotion are bliss and ultimately enlightenment. Frequency, as we know, is vibration, so we emanate the vibrations we resonate with. In accordance with the law of entrainment, the brainwaves of the less enlightened person come into synchronization with the brainwaves of the dominant external stimulus, or the enlightened person. Studies have shown that



human heartbeats can be synchronized with external forces (Anishchenko et al., 2000), while Huang & Charyton (2008) were able to demonstrate that brainwaves could be synchronized to frequencies that could positively affect psychological and emotional states.

We know from neuroplasticity that the brain can change itself according to what we focus our attention upon. Norman Doidge, M.D. talks about this in his book, *The Brain That Changes Itself: Stories of Personal Triumph from the Frontiers of Brain Science*, (2007). Our thought patterns create grooves that can become ruts, in our brains. Psychologist Barbara Fredrickson talked about the upward and downward spirals of emotion (Fredrickson & Joiner, 2002). Each direction tends toward exponential growth. That is, if we think consistently negative thoughts, we tend toward getting bogged down ever deeper into the mire, which can lead to stagnation and depression, including feelings of hopelessness and despair, along with misery and apathy (Fredrickson & Joiner, 2002).

By contrast, if we consistently practice positive thoughts, our thoughts gradually become more and more elevated until one reaches the higher states and experiences

serenity and peace on a regular basis, regardless of one's material circumstances (Fredrickson & Joiner, 2002).

My own much more limited experiences have been based on the work of centring prayer and the wisdom found in a book about Sufism called *Living Presence*, by Kabir Helminski (2002). Helminski (2002) describes how the **consistent practice of "Presence" or the being with and aware of "Presence" results in what are known in the Christian tradition as spiritual gifts. "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law"** —[Galatians 5: 22-23](#)

This fruit is borne as a result of consistent meditation (Helminski, 2002).

This embodiment of spirituality is further rooted in our beings by actions of service: surrender to the Divine. Mother Theresa and Amma are two saints devoted to the Divine through active service to humanity. When we open our hearts, focus our attention and practise ceaselessly, we can aspire to, and perhaps achieve this experience of a life lived **while fully "Present", a life of embodied spirituality.**

Spirituality then becomes rooted in the body when we sustain a practice such as meditation, prayer, or service, on a consistent and regular basis. As we focus our attention on higher frequencies of emotion such as peace, love and joy, we begin to experience **these emotions and other "spiritual gifts"** more and more as the pathways of our brains develop. Eventually we emanate the frequency of these qualities into our surroundings, supporting the harmonic resonance between the more enlightened one and other less disciplined and practised souls who come into contact with them that leads to entrainment. In certain belief systems it is understood that one can embody the deity. His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama embodied Green Tara. In the Christian tradition during Holy Communion, we literally consume the

blood and the body of Christ. We embody the spirit, or essence, the essential beingness of Jesus Christ through this ritual. We really do have the possibility to create, through our thoughts and actions, a life of serenity, peace, love and joy. How exciting.

Elizabeth Morelle, MACP, RCC is a registered clinical counsellor living in British Columbia, Canada. She specializes in somatic psychotherapy focusing her care on women and trauma related issues. With a background in shiatsu she has an interest in the wisdom of Traditional Chinese Medicine and likes to incorporate that into her practice, alongside the currently predominant paradigm of western science. That and her natural inclination towards creative expression give her a kaleidoscopic view into the art of therapeutic healing. www.elizabethmorelle.com



For all questions Siegmar and Cornelia Gerkin may be reached at:

The International Institute of Core Evolution & CoreSoma

Info@ CoreEvolution.com • <http://www.CoreEvolution.com> •

+1 [\(707-937-2309\)](tel:7079372309) or [\(707\) 202-5372](tel:7072025372)

Copyright © 2015 International Institute for Core Evolution & CoreSoma, All rights reserved.

Bridging Yoga Psychology and Somatic Psychotherapy



By Dawn Bhat, MA, MS, NCC, RYT-500, LMHC

As I contemplated what I might write about within the context of embodied spirituality, yoga resonated with me on a deep level. As a registered yoga teacher with a background in psychology and a psychotherapy private practice, I am curious about integrating yoga practice and concepts in the mental health field. In the present article, I am going to share my journey, a short narrative, about discovering something incredibly profound about myself as I formally practiced and studied classical yoga.

In my early twenties, I lived alone while I worked on my master's degree in general psychology. I was also in therapy with my first analyst. I read incessantly. I did yoga and wound up teaching group yoga classes. In my experience, psychotherapy did not affect me in the ways yoga practice had. I learned things about my Self through methods that did not appear in my traditional psychotherapy/analysis process.

Yoga was transforming, transcending and indescribable. So, I put down my neuroscience textbooks (my school work), realized the limitations of a radical behavioral approach to therapy and psychometric testing (my day work), and I practiced yoga and meditation daily (my spiritual work). I tried to read about the mixture of these subjects through the writings of the psychiatrist Mark Epstein and Georg Feuerstein and the research of Richard Davidson but then it wasn't quite a field of study. I was becoming disenchanted with

and eventually lost interest in graduate study in psychology. On a neuropsychology fellowship, I walked around Athens, Greece on my thirtieth birthday and thought I should instead start studying yoga more seriously. I knew in my core that yoga had a lot to offer modern psychology, but I could not find much on the subject then.

I decided to study for three years with Georg Feuerstein, PhD, a scholar of yoga history, philosophy, and literature. I was awarded a partial scholarship and was certified in 800 hours of traditional yoga studies. As a result, I was changed on deep personal, emotional and spiritual levels – ways unlike that of academic psychology and my personal process. I was delving deeper in these ancient yoga studies, which was synonymous with studying my Self, while living contemporaneously more simplistically than ever – it was transformative beyond my imagination.

It was through my yoga and meditation practice and studies that I paused and stopped it all to find out more about this vague felt sense I had. Without yoga practice **(abhyasa) and study (svadhyaya), I don't** know if I would have been so determined to get to the core the felt sense issue. My body seemed to know something my mind could not quite grasp and did not have the language for. At the core of my personal experience, I felt a sense that something **wasn't right, that there was something missing, that I needed to do something to be**

Yoga is becoming more mainstream and commonly utilized as a complementary and alternative mental health treatment.

whole. I tried to lessen the degree to which it influenced by present-day lived experience, sometimes consciously and occasionally compulsively. I did yoga and meditation formally nearly every day for a few years.

During this period, as I turned the age of 31, I had an epiphany that revealed what was at the root of my suffering: I discovered I was adopted at birth. This peak experience was traumatic and liberating. The extraordinarily complex nature of the adoption experience and late discovery phenomenon are not discussed in this article per se. However, I do want to share the tremendous influence yoga **can have on healing, shifting one's perspective and understanding of a situation.**

In line with bringing research related to somatic psychotherapy, I decided to look more closely at yoga, yoga therapy, and yoga in psychotherapy through the scholarly writing of Georg Feuerstein, Ph.D., who made yoga philosophy and science accessible for practitioner and teacher of yoga, and played a major role in bringing yoga into academia, research, education and therapy. He encouraged me to study psychological concepts in the yoga tradition and offered to mentor me. Though I missed that opportunity, I am extremely grateful to review one of his final works, *The Psychology of Yoga: Integrating Eastern and Western Approaches for Understanding the Mind* published by Shambhala in 2014 in this issue of *Somatic Psychotherapy Today*.

Yoga Research and Integrative Therapeutic Implications

Yoga is becoming more mainstream and commonly utilized as a complementary and alternative mental health treatment. Yoga therapy as a field is currently in the maturation process with a paucity of original studies on yoga from a psychological lens (Roth, 2014). In Roth's study, she found four explicit components of yoga that produced a

psychological benefit: breath, mindfulness/meditation, relationship with self and connection with body. In addition, this study identified three implicit components with psychological benefit: increased distress tolerance, openness to yoga and using "mat as metaphor" for life. Yoga as a mental health intervention appears to benefit those suffering from anxiety, trauma, and substance and mood disorders the most. Although little is known about integrating yoga in mental health care, there has been a surge in research from a biomedical lens.

Yoga research has demonstrated that stress related imbalances can be corrected (Streeter, Gerbarg, Saper, Ciraulo and Brown, 2012). When hypothalamic-pituitary adrenal axis and the sympathetic nervous system are chronically activated, GABA activity is simultaneously reduced. This is what typically occurs is stress related disorders, which can have dramatic effects on other bodily functions contribution to physical diseases. GABA is an inhibitory neurotransmitter that calms excitation in the nervous system. Yoga practice increases GABA levels, increases activation of the parasympathetic nervous system and reduces activation of the stress response. In this theoretical paper, Streeter and colleagues (2012) include a contemporary understanding of Porges' Polyvalgal Theory and suggests that yoga works on the vagus nerve. That's why people walk into a yoga class anxious and walk out calm.



www.eziahp.com

Leaders in the field of yoga therapy are affirming the role yoga plays on balancing the autonomic nervous system and that yoga asanas are not the only path when it comes to yoga therapy (Hughes, 2015). The ANS is nothing new to the field of body psychotherapy and somatic psychology. The role of the ANS (Bhat & Carleton, in press) typically involves balancing the sympathetic and parasympathetic branches. Somatic Experiencing, a modality of body psychotherapy, works at the level of viscera and interoception. Psychological symptoms such as anxiety or physiological ones, such as nausea, and panic associated to survival charge/freeze form an implicit, somatic memory. Shifting from narrative or cognitions, to somatic awareness is a cornerstone in somatic psychotherapy and yoga alike.

Efforts by the Trauma Center, founded by Bessel van der Kolk, have been integrating psychological trauma treatments with yoga. Yoga skills for treating trauma include centering, grounding, mindfulness, curiosity about experiencing the present, empowerment, affect-regulation and befriending the body in trauma informed way (Emerson & Hopper, 2011). To create a trauma-sensitive yoga class, yoga teachers need to be provided with a solid knowledge base of trauma. Psychotherapists are encouraged to work with the body in the therapy session by using yoga skills that help regulate the nervous system. Traumatologists such as van der Kolk and Peter Levine strongly emphasize the significance of working somatically with the body / mind because traumatic stress is stored in the autonomic nervous system. Given that the popular yoga culture can be too overwhelming, it is necessary to extend yoga to individuals affected by trauma experience.

As such, there is a rationale for combining yoga for optimal mental, emotional and spiritual health and the expanding dialogue about somatic psychotherapy and yoga therapy in mental health. Contemplative practices often attract individuals suffering with trauma. People may use yoga or other contemplative practices as a spiritual bypass and do not do the psychological work (Hughes, 2015). Somatic psychotherapy may be the place for individuals to work through the psychological

issues to move towards a more embodied **spirituality**. Using Feuerstein's *Psychology of Yoga* (2014) could be vital in understanding psychological concepts from a yogic perspective (see my review in this issue).

Practical Considerations for Integrating Yoga in Somatic Psychotherapy

Similar to ways in which meditation and mindfulness have recently been acknowledged in the scientific community, psychological concepts in the yoga tradition can offer a tremendous amount of wisdom about the nature of the mind that hopefully science will slowly catch up on. Mindfulness has gained increasingly more credibility across disciplines and fields, including neuroscience and psychology. In 2012 my husband (a psychiatrist) and I attended a mindfulness conference in New York City with Mark Epstein, MD and Jack Kornfield, PhD. A member of the audience asked Dr. Epstein a question at the end about using mindfulness or Buddhist meditation when he does psychotherapy. **To the contrary of my belief, Epstein didn't.** He said sometimes a few patients convince him to teach them but he usually refers patients to other meditation teachers and will talk with them about their separate mindfulness practice and its similarities to psychotherapy and psychoanalytic thought. He does teach mindfulness but at a meditation center or in the venue I attended. He noted something about the first line of treatment for bipolar disorder is lithium. Using meditation as a primary treatment method may be counter-indicated in some illnesses. Why would anybody want to deny somebody the gold standard of treatment?

Yoga asanas are not, by definition, psychotherapy, but yoga practice has the potential be therapeutic. A few years ago, I started to see articles that psychologists and psychotherapists were recommending yoga but now I am starting to hear some people whispering that yoga can be done in psychotherapy. The extent to which one uses yoga as a technique in psychotherapy may be a personal choice but it may also vary across **states and clinicians' licenses and liability** insurances, at least, here is the United States.

Yoga is a mind-body, holistic approach as somatic psychotherapy. In one of the first texts on body psychotherapy, Heller (2012) discusses hatha yoga in chapter one. Yoga is the oldest discipline combining psychological, psychological and complex body dynamics. Yoga is a complete system and practice that promotes engagement of the organism. **Yoga's way to engage postures is a reference point for contemporary professions such as physical therapy.** Yoga today is popular world-wide. As yoga continues to grow, in popularity and touch various subpopulations, knowing yoga is going to enhance a somatic **psychotherapist's ability to help individuals** move away from suffering and toward transformation.

Dawn Bhat, LMHC is in private practice in Hicksville, NY. She holds graduate degrees in General Psychology and Clinical Mental Health Counseling. Dawn is a National Certified Counselor and a Registered Yoga Teacher (RYT-500). Dawn has been researching somatic psychotherapy under the guidance of Jacqueline A. Carleton, Ph.D. of the USABP since 2010 and has presented

scholarly papers and professional workshops regionally, nationally and internationally. Feel free to contact her: www.dawnbhat.com

References

- Bhat, D. and Carleton, J. A. (in press). *The Role of the Autonomic Nervous System* in Weiss, H., Marlock, G. & Young, C., The Handbook of Body Psychotherapy and Somatic Psychology. (English-American Translation).
- Emerson, D., and Hopper, E. (2011). *Overcoming trauma through yoga: reclaiming your body*. Berkeley, Calif.: North Atlantic Books.
- Feuerstein, G. (2014). *The Psychology of Yoga: Integrating Eastern and Western Approaches for Understanding the Mind*. Boston: Shambhala.
- Heller, M. C. (2012). *Body Psychotherapy: History, Concepts, and Methods*. W. W. Norton & Company.
- Hughes, L. (2015). A Taste of SYTAR 2014. *Yoga Therapy Today*, 11(1), 16-19.
- Kornfield, J. and Epstein, M. (2012). *Mindfulness, Freedom & Love: The Benefits of Buddhist and Western Psychology*. New York Society for Ethical Culture.
- Roth, A. L. (2014). *Yoga as a psychological intervention: conceptualizations and practice integration of professional psychologist-yoga teachers*. University of Minnesota. Retrieved from <http://conservancy.umn.edu/handle/11299/168288>
- Streeter, C. C., Gerbarg, P. L., Saper, R. B., Ciraulo, D. A., & Brown, R. P. (2012). Effects of yoga on the autonomic nervous system, gamma-aminobutyric-acid, and allostasis in epilepsy, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder. *Medical Hypotheses*, 78(5), 571-579. doi:10.1016/j.mehy.2012.01.021

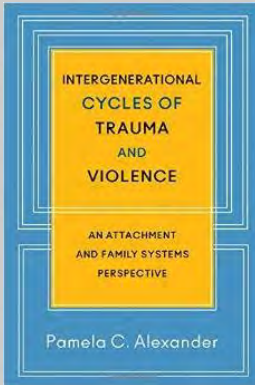
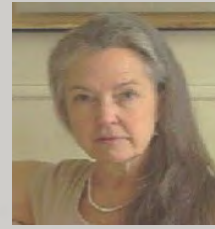


©Jamesd29/Dreamstime.com

Resources

Jacqueline A. Carleton, PhD

with the assistance of Dawn Bhat and the USABP Interns



Alexander, P. (2015). *Intergenerational Cycles of Trauma and Violence: An Attachment and Family Systems Perspective*. New York, NY: W. W. Norton. ISBN: 978-0-393-70718-2. 370 pages.

Reviewed by: Michael Fiorini, New York University

The aim of *Intergenerational Cycles of Trauma and Violence* is to give readers a well-supported and all-encompassing contemporary understanding of cycles of abuse within family systems. To this end, it offers up-to-date research findings to back up a broad range of discussion topics that are designed to be both informative and reliable for independent study, gathering of expertise, or as a supplement to refine related research. As one of the few books specifically covering intergenerational violence, it draws upon a diverse array of scientific findings, coupling them with critical analysis that

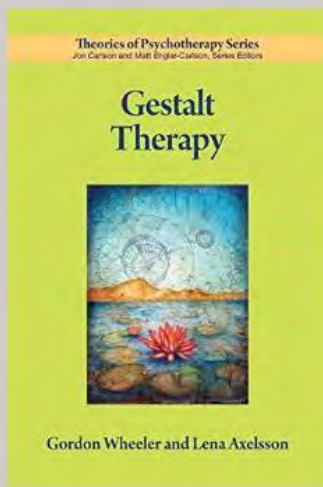
effectively characterizes the sheer complexity of the topic.

The book attempts to break down the cycles of violence that occur within families across generations, and it incorporates a wide range of psychological schools of thought to achieve this. With an overall concentration on parent-child attachment relationships and the family contexts they occur in, it also draws upon genetics and neurobiology findings, peer victimization and partner violence research, child sexual abuse considerations, and special populations analysis. Special populations here include incarcerated persons, foster or adoptive care families, law enforcement, and the military. Throughout, the book centers on how systems of attachment drive later development, parenting, relationship styles, and the manifestation of violent tendencies. In a parting-thoughts section, intractable influences like culture and gender are also considered. In this way, the book can be seen as central to the development of expertise on this topic, and it is one of the few books to focus on this particular facet of such forms of violence.

Taken as a summation of its parts, *Intergenerational Cycles of Trauma and Violence* is a highly detailed and useful book

for anyone interested in conducting research or who would like to expand their understanding of violence, how it affects relationship dynamics, and how it is reinforced domestically. For clinicians, it is invaluable diagnostically in its framing of violence within the family and how that violence defines attachment and relationships in those affected by it. The book, in its multifaceted approach, leaves few if any stones unturned in regards to what is currently known on this topic. Though at times quite dense and even challenging to absorb in its entirety, the work is all the more compelling in that all its parts assist a more coherent understanding of its whole, and necessarily so; The collection of knowledge offered is interpreted critically, and presents for readers a highly complex topic with numerous avenues of new and promising research to pursue.

Pamela C. Alexander, PhD, has conducted family violence research for over thirty years. Notable amongst her work is the first randomized clinical trial for survivors of incest, a study on psychotherapy outcomes for motivational interviewing with male batterers, and evaluations for the Army and Marines' home visitation child abuse prevention program.



Wheeler, G. & Axelsson, L. (2015). *Gestalt Therapy*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association. 154 pages. ISBN: 978-1-4338-1859-2

Reviewed by: Anny Reyes, New York University

Gestalt Therapy is part of a series of books aimed at creating learning materials about major psychotherapy theories for professionals and graduate students. Gestalt therapy techniques are widely utilized in daily psychotherapeutic practices, however there are many clinicians who might not fully understand the theoretical underpinnings. The authors provide a comprehensive overview of the theory and philosophy behind Gestalt therapy, its emergence from Gestalt psychology, and its therapeutic practice. By providing a historical overview and the context in which Gestalt therapy emerged, the authors elucidate the shared ground that has evolved among the families of schools of behaviorism, psychodynamics, and humanism, which many still do not fully understand.

An entire chapter is focused on the practical use of therapy, which includes several case studies that highlight the

implementation process. Some of the most practical aspects of **the book are the authors'** personal experiences with clients and their interpretations of these experiences, which are included in each case vignette. The authors hope to demonstrate the methodological application of the approach by providing different cases that highlight particular dimensions of Gestalt therapy; by doing so, the authors also target a wider range of types of clients. A drawback of writing **the "Therapeutic Process"**

section as anecdotes or descriptive accounts is that the authors did not include step-by-step guidelines. The readers who are new to Gestalt therapy and wish to implement the approach with their clients might need a more user-friendly resource guide.

By comparing and contrasting Gestalt therapy to other widely used forms of therapy such as Cognitive Behavioral Therapy, the authors further expand the effectiveness of the approach. This also provides readers with familiar information they could use to clarify their own assumptions and perspectives. Wheeler and Axelsson include an overview of the neuroscientific perspective on Gestalt therapy. With the current inclusion of neuroscience into psychological research, it is important for clinicians to examine the role of neuroscience in their theory of choice. This book provides just enough theoretical information, practical application, and supportive evidence to establish a foundation for the novice or to further strengthen the practice and knowledge of the experienced clinician.



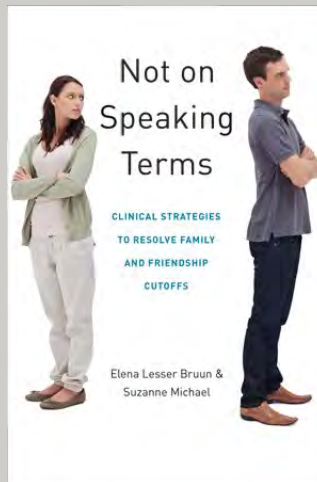
Keith-Spiegel, P. *Red Flags in Psychotherapy: Stories of Ethics Complaints and Resolutions*. (2014). New York, NY: Routledge. 243 pages. ISBN: 9780415833394.

Reviewed by Sue Roh, Columbia University

Patricia Keith-Spiegel's **Red Flags in Psychotherapy** is an engrossing series of short narrative non-fictions, but the deeper message within these narratives identifies the potential ethical qualms that even the most seasoned psychotherapist may encounter. Artfully disguising its main message with her choice of narrative non-fiction, Keith-Spiegel does not tire the reader with hundreds of pages of moral pedagogy. Instead, she recognizes the power of storytelling in learning and uses her creative power to help identify warning signals, or **"red flags," for the psychotherapist**. *Red Flags in Psychotherapy* takes the reader on an ethical rollercoaster with its powerful and compelling narratives, preventing future ethical mishaps.

The book begins with the vantage point of Sammy. He receives an email, marking the long awaited moment that Sammy has anticipated: his induction into the League of

California Psychologists Ethics Committee. Eager to get started, he arrives in Los Angeles for a weekend meeting, in which he and his colleagues are in charge of judging complaints lodged against twelve psychologists. The **patients' complaints are** appalling, and one wonders how a licensed psychologist with years of practice committed such a thoughtless error. However, each chapter takes us into the minds of both the complainant and the accused psychologist, and the reader comes to find in each situation blurred lines of right and wrong. However, Patricia Keith-Spiegel does not mean to petrify the psychotherapist with her narratives. By constructing each case using a non-fiction narrative, Keith-Spiegel is able to clearly identify for the reader each red flag. Thus, when one encounters a similar situation, the psychologist is able to take necessary action, preventing potential harm for both the psychologist and the patient. Prior to his induction, Sammy treated psychologists under review for ethical misconduct with disdain. But, after closely examining these twelve cases, he soon realizes that not every psychologist is guilty. He even feels sympathy for each psychologist, as he considers his own near misses. He could have easily been one of those twelve psychologists, yet he is one of the jurors. Sammy leaves Los Angeles with a more nuanced understanding of ethics, his profession, the human mind and condition, and himself.



Bruun, E. L. & Michael, S. (2014). *Not on Speaking Terms: Clinical Strategies to Resolve Family and Friendship Cutoffs*. New York, NY: W. W. Norton. ISBN: 978-0-393-70704-5. 232 pages.

Reviewed by: Michael Fiorini, New York University

This book deals extensively with the concept of cutoffs, the abrupt severance of communication between two previously close parties. A large portion of *Not on Speaking Terms: Clinical Strategies to Resolve Family and Friendship Cutoffs* is dedicated to defining, illustrating, and giving examples for a plethora of different kinds of cutoffs that one might encounter. Because the primary audience for the book is therapists, the book is written as a handy guide to how to approach cutoffs within the psychotherapeutic setting with strategies discussed on how best to undertake this process. Specific contingencies are offered for each of the listed causes of communication loss, both in the case of effective or ineffective treatment results. Coupled with these are selected examples to characterize how different forms of cutoff can manifest.

Cut-offs are a relatively broad topic that, as this book

demonstrates, require a great deal of study and analysis to be better treated clinically. Does *Not on Speaking Terms* effectively define and outline for therapists what to know and expect to apply for the treatment process? As an opening entry, it offers many valuable talking points, strategy options, and points of reference. Still, it is not all-encompassing, and to be sure each listed section could have several volumes dedicated solely to the interpersonal dynamics they discuss.

As this is the first book dealing specifically with cutoffs and how to approach them within a psychotherapeutic setting, this book breaks new ground in how cutoffs and conflict can be defined and resolved. Because cutoffs are a fairly common occurrence within everyday life, they are also unavoidably linked to psychotherapy as a result. In writing this book, the authors have laid a generalized foundation for treatment that many are likely to find useful, especially if they have faced difficulty in the past trying to work through the effects of cutoffs with clients. As the emotional and social impacts of cutoffs become better understood and studied clinically, the content covered in this book can no doubt be expanded and become truly comprehensive.

Elena Lesser Bruun, EdD has served as a clinical associate professor of psychiatry, as the associate dean for student affairs at the New York University School of Medicine and as the president of NYAMFT. Suzanne Michael, PhD has worked as a family therapist, an assistant professor of social work, and as a director of education and health-centric programs.



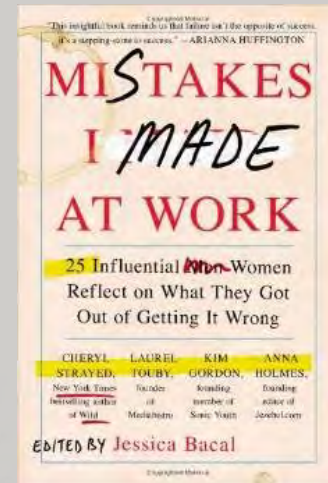
Bannink, F. (2014). Post Traumatic Success: Positive Psychology & Solution to Help Clients Survive & Thrive. New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Company. 397 pages. ISBN: 978-0-393-70922-3.

Revised by: Anny Reyes, New York University

“We cannot see our reflection in running water. It is only in still water that we can see” (Ten Lessons from the Bamboo, page xvi). From the symbolic meaning of the book’s cover to the **“Ten Lessons from the Bamboo”**, which the author provides as an introduction, this book captures the essence of positive psychology. By focusing on clients’ strengths and what is working for them, the author provides a different outlook than the one often used when treating clients with post traumatic stress. This paradigm shift allows professionals to empower their clients to ameliorate their symptoms while focusing on increasing resilience, self-esteem, and self-efficacy. This provides clients with a positive approach to post traumatic success and to attaining an even higher level of psychological functioning than before.

Dr. Bannink integrates traditional cognitive behavioral

therapy (CBT) and solution-focused brief therapy with new elements of positive psychology in order to create new forms of therapy that are not focused on pathology, but rather on the **client’s positive attributes**. He provides a comprehensive guideline with hundreds of exercises, stories, cases, summaries, and interventions that could be implemented into clinical practice. This approach allows readers to further understand the theories and interventions. All interventions in the book are structured in a similar way, with example of cases, exercises, and step-by-step guidelines. Bannink provides therapists with specific tasks they could give their clients and with countless questions that the therapist could ask while implementing an intervention. Bannink also provides stories that are compelling, inspiring, and uplifting. One could see how sharing these stories with clients could have a positive impact on their outlook toward their current situation. The readership is mainly intended for professionals and students, however family and friends of trauma survivors who like to integrate a more positive approach could find this book very helpful. The practicality of the book and the step-by-step guidelines allow anyone who reads the book to understand and implement the approaches.



Bacal, J. (2014). Mistakes I Made at Work: 25 Influential Women Reflect on What They Got Out of Getting it Wrong. 252 pages. ISBN: 978-0-14-218057-0.

Reviewed by: Anny Reyes, New York University

Throughout my life I’ve read many narratives of successful women. Their stories were inspirational, uplifting, and a life lesson within itself. However, this is the first time that I read a book in which every narrative, every story, every interview does not focus on the success, but on the mistakes a group of high-achieving women have made in their careers. Bacal provides a collection of interviews of twenty-five successful women from a variety of fields. From psychology, to engineering, to politics, we explore the narratives of how these inspiring women were able to prevail in times of failure. This book transforms the cliché **“You must learn from your mistakes”** into **“How do we learn from our mistakes and how can we apply these lessons”**.

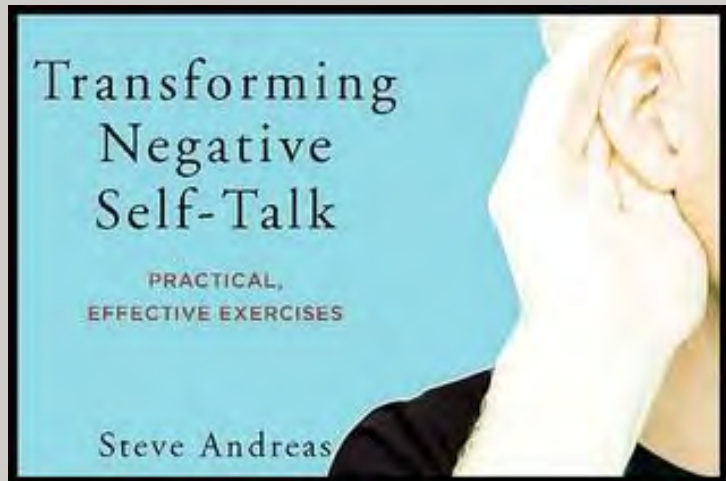
The book is divided into four parts, each corresponding to a **specific theme: “Learning to Take Charge of Your Own Narrative”, “Learning to Ask”, “Learning to Say No”, and**

"Learning Resilience". Bacal provides an introduction to each part of the book and shares her own experience and the lessons she has learned in her own journey. Each chapter starts with a quote and a short introduction to the interviewee, followed by a short narrative about the lessons they learned from their mistakes and failures. All interviewees share tips at the end of each chapter that are germane, practical, and encouraging. One recurrent theme in all of the stories is that one should never strive for perfection but allow mistakes and failures to become part of **the development of one's career and life**. Even though the book is divided into different themes and further divided into chapters, the stories do not follow a chronological order and therefore could be read in any order the reader might prefer. One could read the book in one sitting or use it as a source of daily inspiration. The book is easy to read, but nevertheless powerful and life changing. Bacal creates a space for conversations of imperfection, failures, and trials and tribulations, where this group of successful women brought mentorship value to their **"mistakes stories"**.

Andreas, S. (2014). *More Transforming Negative Self-Talk: Practical, Effective Exercises*. New York, NY: W. W. Norton. ISBN: 978-0-393-70973-5. 130 pages.

Reviewed by: Michael Fiorini, New York University

The central concentration within *More Transforming Self-Talk* is on the critical inner voice, or voices, that have a negative impact on the psyche. In discussing such voices, the book characterizes them as

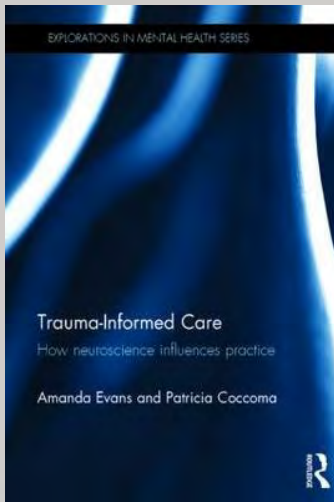


necessarily coming from external sources, though they need not be related to people we know personally. Andreas creates a framework for individuals to reframe their relationships with these negative or berating voices so that they can be effectively treated in a lasting, positive way. The book comes in stark contrast to previous notions for dealing with said voices, arguing against the use of combative or contrary responses to these unconscious personae.

The method that is advocated for use in this book aims to both alter the manifestation of a troubling or negative voice, and to find, through experimentation and self-reflection, a way for the voice to become positive. Altering here refers to anything characteristic of the voice, be it the tone, volume, exaggeration of expression, or affect that allows one to know who is speaking. The voice, here, is internalized from another source, and is critical as a means to create some positive result relevant to the context in which it was first heard; Andreas sets a framework to work backwards to derive whatever that is. There is, as well, a warning and overt awareness that to simply cause such voices to go away is to also deny a part of the self that wishes to be

expressed, and so instead the goal becomes finding the positive basis for the criticism the voice brings forth.

Overall, this book has a slant toward client-centric goals and helpful viewpoints and exercises that serve to assist working through and even benefitting from negative internal voices. Despite it being readable to the layperson, it is also useful for therapists to rethink how they might approach talking about and restructuring a relationship their client has with an internal voice or voices. Most significantly, this work reflects an approach that contrasts existing and more mainstream approaches to relating to or reacting against internal voices, as well as countering new-age concepts of voice removal and emphasizing the positive role such voices have on our development as individuals. Though more could be done to drive the latter point home, the book is meant more as a workbook than anything else, and so this last principal should be thought of, as in the book, as a departing thought. The meat of the book looks to be a useful alternative and supplemental approach to countering and reframing what is normally potentially difficult and damaging affect work.



Evans, A. & Coccoma, P. (2014). Trauma-informed Care: How neuroscience influences practice. New York, NY: Routledge. 162 pages. ISBN: 978-0-415-64012-1.

Revised by: Anny Reyes, New York University

Trauma-informed care focuses on understanding the impact trauma has on the human experience and how this can help shape interventions. One of the main goals of the book is to assist practitioners to better understand how trauma affects the brain and how these changes can be explained through neuroscience research. The authors also provide interventions that are supported by neuroscience findings, which can be tailored to meet the **patient's need**. The initial authorial intent was to provide readers with evidence-based research on trauma from different countries and cultural backgrounds, however they found that the literature was limited to Western countries. The scarcity of neuroscience research on trauma presents a conundrum for practitioners who come across patients from multicultural and multinational backgrounds.

By providing an in-depth review of the neuroscience literature in

a user-friendly resource guide, the authors hope to assist practitioners to better understand the uniqueness of each individual from a neurobiological and physiological perspective.

By understanding the biological aspects of trauma-related symptoms practitioners can better understand the emotional, cognitive, and physical impact that trauma has on an individual and how these symptoms could be unique on their clinical manifestation. As the authors state, the thinking/feeling system of the brain is interconnected with the fear circuitry system, making traumatic experiences unique to each individual. Therefore, not everyone who experiences a traumatic event will consequently experience trauma-related symptoms or develop a trauma disorder. This is an important concept to grasp, as assessment and interventions should be based on each **individual case**. **"The meaning of the traumatic experience varies from person to person" (page 10)**.

As we all know the field of neuroscience has very complex and abstruse terminology, concepts, and theories. Evans and Coccoma do an exceptional job at introducing and describing the neurobiological aspects of trauma and providing a review of the literature. The authors offer definitions and explanations of concepts throughout the book and they use terminology that is adequate for the intended readership. They do this very well by providing the relationship between familiar concepts and neuroscience. For example, the authors explain how reoccurring flashbacks and hyperarousal symptoms present in PTSD and personal trauma-

related disorders could be explained by the over activation **of the brain's stress response** system in the absence of a current threat. The book is intended for researchers, practitioners, clinical social workers, and policy makers with no neuroscience background. However, those with some neuroscience background or with expertise in the field would appreciate the simplicity but yet comprehensiveness of the book.

The first four chapters provide an overview of trauma-informed care, the types of trauma, the neurobiological aspects of trauma, and resilience and trauma recovery. The rest of the chapters are dedicated to reviewing neuroscience-based treatments that are available for treating specific types of trauma. Throughout these chapters the authors reiterate neuroscience concepts, definitions, and theories, making the material easy to follow. The authors do not provide step-by-step guidelines to the treatments explored in the book, however they do provide references and further reading. It is worthy to note that this book is not intended to be use as a treatment guide but as a literature review. Overall the book is a great introduction to neuroscience-based treatments of trauma disorders and to trauma-informed care.



Psychology and Spirituality

By Dr Itai Ivtzan

Psychology and spirituality must combine to bring about growth.

Growing means daring to go beyond your personal boundaries. We all conduct our lives according to our personal definition of self, which carries with it a series of boundaries and limitations. Growth means pushing the **boundaries to expand one's inner space**. In practice, this implies that certain options, which were previously out of bounds, are now permitted and available. You have pushed your boundary, you have grown, and **therefore you have the choice to say "yes" to certain things that used to be an automatic "no" in the past**. This process frequently provokes two conflicting emotions: excitement and apprehension. While the adventurous prospect of going beyond your own boundaries and exploring new territories is exciting, it also provokes apprehension and anxiety. New experiences touch on the unknown, and most of us are intimidated by the unknown.

Psychology and spirituality: The meeting point

Psychology and spirituality could be described as **"feet on the ground, head in the sky"**. Psychology represents the **"grounding" effect**, in which the mind is used for thinking,

rationalizing, and understanding life. Spirituality transcends rational thought and **evolves intuitively over one's lifetime**. Living a full life would mean embracing these different aspects of life, and maintaining a balance between them. Most people tend to search for a single unambiguous answer and dismiss all others. They either follow the mind-oriented psychological path or the intuitive transcendental one. Many members of the academic milieu reject vehemently all intuitive alternatives; they strongly believe that life should only be experienced through the mind. But many spiritual groups with which I am acquainted first-hand, see the mind as the enemy, and consider intuitive transcendent experiences as the only valid tools in life. By adhering to their one-sided views, both groups are restricting themselves. While being well equipped to deal with certain situations, they are ill equipped to deal with others. Rather than being contradictory, mind-based and intuitive-based experiences are complementary. They represent two aspects of the entity we call life. Certain moments in life require mind-oriented skills, while in others one must let go of the mind and act **intuitively**. Having both options at one's disposal at any given moment offers greater flexibility and taking action properly. This could happen only when both the

psychological and the spiritual are alive within you. To realize in full the potential of growth in your life, you must be able to shift between the psychological and the spiritual poles in accordance with the situation and at your own choice.

Psychology and spirituality: Interdependence

Because psychology is based upon the mind, it has an important role in our journey towards self-awareness. Psychology is the means to explore and map out your mind, and understand its hidden motivations. The mind contains fragmentary information that ultimately defines who you are. Psychology helps you get in touch with this information, and gain insights on who you are and how you define yourself. Spirituality, on the other hand, aims to transcend this rational processing. The newly acquired ability to transcend that which has been acknowledged is the point where psychology and spirituality meet. To transcend something, one must be aware that it actually exists. In other words, awareness is the key word. To become who you really are, you must transcend your illusionary perception of yourself. Since this illusion is based upon mind constructs, the awareness gained through psychological processing is necessary for spiritual transcendence. By exploring your psychological processes you get acquainted **with your mind's definition of yourself.** Psychology is therefore crucial to the spiritual journey for transcendence. Thus there is a strong bond between psychology and spirituality: Psychology is the means by which you get to know your mind, spirituality enables you to transcend your mind. They are essential for one another.

Be sure to join the SPT community at www.SomaticPsychotherapyToday.com for alerts for new articles and reviews. ***Awareness is Freedom*** is currently being reviewed and will be posted on line.

Itai Ivtzan

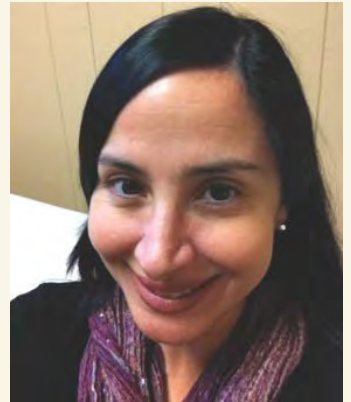
Awareness is Freedom



The Adventure of Psychology and Spirituality

Dr Itai Ivtzan is passionate about the combination of psychology and spirituality. He is a positive psychologist, a senior lecturer, and the program leader of MAPP (Masters in Applied Positive Psychology) at the University of East London (UEL). If you wish to get additional information about his work or contact him, please visit www.AwarenessIsFreedom.com

The Psychology of Yoga: Integrating Eastern and Western Approaches for Understanding the Mind.



Written by Georg Feuerstein, PhD

Reviewed by Dawn Bhat, MA, MS, NCC, RYT-500, LMHC

A Personal Note

What fascinated me, having studied with Georg, was how seeped he was in the yoga tradition and that he intended to explore Eugene Gendlin's Focusing; yet, my impression is that he was unaware of the fields of somatic psychology and body psychotherapy, though he does include a brief comment on Reichian physiology, which I note later in my review. Knowing Georg and being academically immersed in somatic psychology, I respect how difficult it is to comprehend Eastern thought and dogmatic modern psychological science. Personally, I was as engaged reading this book (583 pages, released posthumous, 2014), as I was with most of his writings. My intellect was nourished by Georg's study on yoga psychology. My heart filled with gratitude for this absolutely wonderful work. My inner awareness came to a place of stillness as I realized, felt, and witnessed the connection and space deep within.

Georg Feuerstein, PhD wrote what might be the most comprehensive work on the subject of the psychology of yoga today: *The Psychology of Yoga: Integrating Eastern and Western Approaches for Understanding the Mind*. One of the world's finest scholars of yoga, Indian and Eastern spiritual traditions, Feuerstein



Georg Feuerstein 1947-2012

authored numerous books and can be credited with bringing yoga into academia, education, research and therapy. In this volume, Feuerstein focuses on understanding the mind by integrating ancient yoga tradition, Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, and modern psychology in his formation and conceptualization of yoga psychology.

The Eight Limbs of Classical Yoga

1) Yama - moral discipline: nonharming (**ahimsā**), truthfulness (**satya**), nonstealing (asteya), chastity (brahmacarya), and nongrasping (aparigraha).

2) Niyama - self-restraint: This branch is composed of purity (shauca), contentment (samtosha), asceticism (tapas), study (**svādhyāya**), and dedication to the lord (**iśhvara-pranidhāna**).

3) Asana - posture: Contrary to contemporary popular opinion, Patanjali did not teach any postures specifically but sought to capture the essence of meditational posture.

4) Pranayama - breath control: involves the control of the in- and out-breath

5) Pratyahara - sensory inhibition, or sense withdrawal: control of the senses that bring attention into the outside world

6) Dharana - concentration: fixing attention on whatever inner object has been selected for the contemplative process

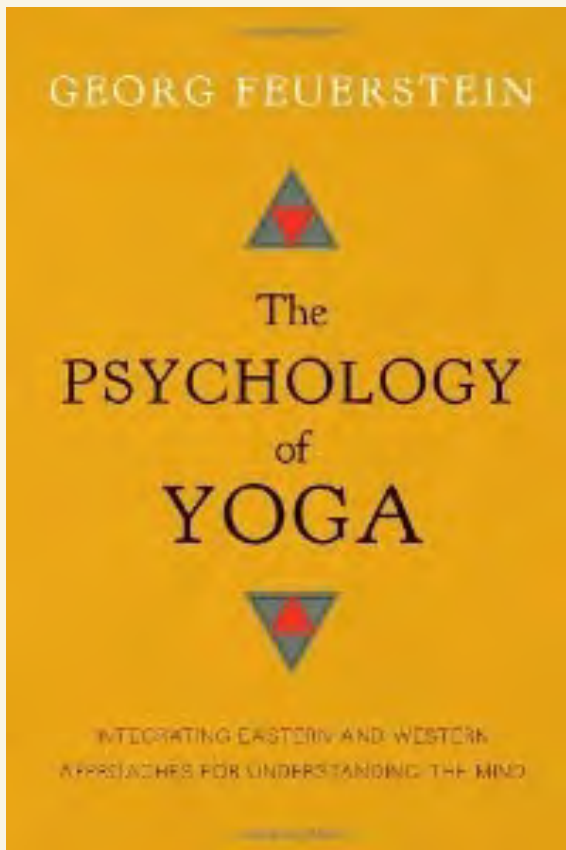
7) Dhyana - meditation: the process of sustained mental concentration

8) Samadhi - ecstasy: consists of the temporary merging of subject and object in a state of supernormal lucidity

In the preface, Feuerstein openly admits that exploring the psychology of yoga was “challenging” and “I would probably not have dared to attempt this study if I had gauged its difficulty before embarking on it with my **usual enthusiasm and boldness**” (p. 1X). Readers who keep this sentiment in mind may avoid being overwhelmed by the terminology and the mixture of modern versus yoga psychology, Buddhism, Tantric, Indian and so forth. Yoga predates Buddhism, and it is plausible that the Buddha himself studied with the yogis of his time.

Yoga is popular today and reaches people worldwide. Given the expansion of yoga classes in modern culture and the therapeutic implications of yoga, it is important to open by saying that yoga is much more than postures (asanas) and breath work (pranayama).

Feuerstein discusses the similarities and differences between yoga psychology and modern psychology in Part One: The Foundations. The fields are similar only in that both value pragmatism—the application of the relative understandings. In contrast, Feuerstein presents a sound argument for the differences between yoga psychology and modern psychology. Yoga psychology is concerned with transforming the person to transcend reality, attain enlightenment and with the whole person – body, mind and spirit. Modern psychology is concerned with proper functioning of the ordinary individual and treating neurosis or undesirable character traits. Another difference is methodology. Yoga employs introspection through meditation; modern psychology relies on external experimentation. Modern psychology has a goal of objectivity. Yogic knowledge is concerned with a spiritual adventure of inner transformation, subjectivity. Traditional yoga aims to reveal the core of an individual distinct from its conditioning. To free the transcendental Self **from the bodymind or recognize it’s always been free** is the goal of yoga.



Suffering: Going from *Dukha* to *Sukha* on the Spiritual Path

Suffering, called *dukha* in Sanskrit (a classical language in India), often brings people to the yoga path and into the **psychotherapist's office**. **Buddhists recognize** the universality of human suffering through the four noble truths—there is: suffering; a cause to suffering; potentially an end to suffering; and the way is the eightfold path. Feuerstein notes eight types of suffering in Buddhism: birth; old age; illness; death; encountering pleasant experiences; separation from pleasant experiences; **not attaining one's desires; and inherent in the five aggregates** (the body, sensation, perception, subliminal karmic impulses and consciousness). It appears that the Buddhist perspective complements, enhances and (some of which) is even derived from yogic thinking.

When the body is in connection with consciousness, the experience is joy or happiness, *sukha*. ***The Yoga Sutras of Patanjali***—the text of yoga aphorisms or threads Patanjali compiled from earlier Indian/Hindu works (i.e., Rig Veda,

Upanishads, Bhagavad Gita among others)—associates suffering with the universal experience of change in the phenomenal world, anguish in the face of loss, unconscious in the form of subliminal activators (*samskaras*) and conflict in the *gunas* (the building blocks in the phenomenal world).

Feuerstein points out that suffering is psychological and is a cognitive response to pain. Similar to Viktor Frankl (an Austrian neurologist and psychiatrist who founded logotherapy, a form of existential analysis), Feuerstein acknowledges that humans want their suffering to be meaningful. Taken from *The Bhagavad Gita*, a Hindi scripture, Feuerstein described the source of suffering to be the desire for worldly experience or pleasure.

From a yogic perspective, the antidote to suffering is a mind that is not troubled by passion, fear, or anger. A yoga practitioner is to discern the self from the non-self or the real from the non-real. Yoga is inner stability that is attained by controlling the senses. By cultivating a particular kind of awareness of the Self, a person can immediately recognize the egoic stuff such as self-centered emotions, impulses, motivations, and thoughts. Instead, a person can move forward into the depths of inner freedom. Psychology also talks about pleasure and pain, which have neurobiological substrates suggesting that seeking pleasure and avoiding pain are adaptive or maladaptive behavioral manifestations. While this line of research is found in the addiction and motivation literature, Feuerstein clearly acknowledges that transforming suffering has more of a spiritual tone. Feuerstein asserts that any comprehensive consideration of the psychology of yoga would have to include karma and reincarnation, which are rejected by modern psychology because they are not considered scientific.

In Part Two: Mind and Beyond, Feuerstein further lays out yogic concepts and that of modern psychology in understanding the mind. Readers are introduced to new ways of thinking about psychology and the study of

From a yogic perspective, seeing ourselves as the ego and not the Self is limiting and binding and opposed to freeing and liberating.

the mind by exploring neuroscience, sensorium, unconscious processes, emotion, the body, knowledge, awareness, and consciousness from the lens of yoga. This section is highly technical and complex but not intimidating. While it may be difficult to understand for people with little background in yogic thought, Sanskrit, and **Hinduism**, Feuerstein's depth and breadth of knowledge and his clear writing make it a great introduction for newbies.

While Feuerstein seems to jump around, it is important to remember that the yoga tradition did not arise from a linear trajectory—it is comprised of various other schools of Indian thought. For one, the Samkhya tradition is closely related to classical yoga, and is an understanding of the structure and function of the mind. *Samskara* corresponds to the unconscious in modern psychology. *Citta* can be translated as mind. **Understanding Samkhya's influence on yoga** becomes important in understanding yogic concept of purusha, the witness, or the transcendental self, which is discussed in the final chapters of part two.

The chapter on The Sensory Apparatus discusses the five senses (*indriya*), which are: faith (*shraddhā*), energy (*vīrya*), mindfulness (*smṛti*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*prajñā*). The yoga and Samkhya theory of sensory functioning is about realizing the Self and that the sentient being is not the 'I'. For this review, I will merely share some of these terms to orient readers to yoga philosophy. For those whose interest is piqued and have a desire to study yoga psychology further, I recommend reading Feuerstein's other writings and perusing the website, Traditional Yoga Studies.

The Unconscious and Its Mechanisms

While acknowledging that Freud brought the term 'unconscious' into modern psychology, Feuerstein respects the influence of earlier philosophers, scientists and physicians on unconscious processes. Using Freudian terminology, the id is at the core of unconscious, the ego is consciousness, and the superego is the parent. From a yogic perspective, seeing ourselves as the ego and not the Self is limiting and binding and opposed to freeing and liberating.

The concept of the unconscious has been the subject of scientific and scholarly scrutiny, especially within the materialistic-behavioristic paradigm. Feuerstein is curious about depth psychology, which through clinical evidence, proved unconscious exists. Feuerstein again acknowledges Frankl and his attribution of a spiritual side to the unconscious. This spiritual force is what drives people to make meaning out of their lives and suffering.

From a yogic perspective, the unconscious is a place where desires are stored. The desires prompt one to move towards action or embodiment. The unconscious mind holds these *samskaras*, subliminal activators, which are impressions from past experiences. *Smṛti* as used in *The Yoga Sutras* means unconscious memory. Though no reference is made to somatic psychology, perhaps this yogic term is similar to the implicit or somatic memory.

According to yogic teachings, an individual is to transcend all unconscious processes. Freedom lies beyond unconscious impulses or drives, which influence the narrative and history of an individual. In order to move

towards freedom, in a yogic sense, one is to overcome the cause of *kleshas* or afflictions, which are: ignorance (*avidya*), I-am-ness (*asmita*), attachment (*raga*), aversion (*devesha*), and the will to live or survival instinct (*abinivesha*).

Emotions, Affects and Motivation in Yoga

Feuerstein reviews psychiatrist and Buddhist practitioner Mark Epstein's views on emotions, as emotions bring people to spiritual practice and into psychotherapy. Epstein suggests that during meditation we allow affects to surface while witnessing them through the practice of mindfulness. We let the emotions, thoughts, and pain simply be. In yoga, practice may be about getting in touch with and experiencing affects.

Feuerstein stresses that the emotions in classical yoga have been ignored mainly because of the strong rational, cognitive side of yoga. In fact, Patanjali does not ignore positive and negative affects. In addition, *raga* (attachment) and *devesha* (aversion) are discussed. Yoga teaches to not cultivate pleasure or pain but instead equanimity (*upekshā*) or calm indifference through stilling the mind-stuff. A yoga practitioner learns to control and cease the mental fluctuations (*chitta vritti nirodha*). The *vrittis*, or whirls of the mind, include emotions, cognitions, or sensations, and in the language of yoga: correct perception (*pramāna*), misperception (*viparyaya*), imagination (*vikalpa*), sleep (*nidrā*), and memory (*smṛti*).

Essentially, there is a deconditioning of the mind and a motivation to move toward *kaivalya* or liberation/freedom. When one realizes one's true nature as *purusha*, the transcendental self, it is freeing. Ultimate awareness is an aspect of our being that is devoid of mind. The truth is, ordinarily, we never are in a neutral disposition. The exception is self-transcendence.

Feuerstein acknowledges that strong emotions tend to arise especially in the context of interpersonal relationships but reminds readers of the moral practices in yoga – *yamas* and *nyamas*. The five moral

Perhaps, the most relevant chapter to somatic psychotherapists is about the subtle body, which consists of the *soma*, the enlivened, natural body and a spiritual/ breathing body.

disciplines (*yama*)—nonharming, truthfulness, nonstealing, chastity, and greedlessness are the cornerstones of spiritual life.

What does yoga say we do with emotional triggers? The yoga practice technique, *pratipaksha-bhāvana*, thought replacement, has similarities with the field of positive psychology and cognitive behavior therapy. **It's about expression rather than repression.**

Feuerstein seems to encourage psychological techniques in tandem with yoga practice, as he noted that emotional stabilization is primary and yogic practices such as *pratipaksha bhavana* are secondary.

By transcending the ego-personality, emotions, which are part of human experience, in their negative form, are overcome so an individual can contribute harmoniously socially. Feuerstein discussed that in many scriptures emotions are described but prescriptions on how to deal with them are not given. It can be inferred that a good place for dealing with emotions and feelings is in psychotherapy. Spiritual and yoga practice **does help to improve one's** condition in the future by affecting the inverse relationship between *karma* and liberation. **In the present, a person's life can temporarily be** painful limiting spiritual practice and the use of psychological interventions is a sound decision from spiritual and conventional perspectives.

The Subtle Body: Its Structure and Function

Perhaps, the most relevant chapter to somatic psychotherapists is about the subtle body, which consists of the *soma*, the enlivened, natural body and a spiritual/breathing body. Eastern spiritual traditions suggest that the spirit or soul is closely

attached to or works in tandem with the subtle body and separates at death.

Feuerstein boldly traces Western psychological science to Hinduism and ancient yogic texts. A section on research opens with a discussion on the late 18th century scientist/physician, **Frans Anton Mesmer. Mesmer's** work on animal magnetism and mesmerism gained little credence in its day and was

credited as magic, at best. However, this line of research eventually lead to the validation of the *subtle body* and the rise in the interest with hypnosis. Incidentally, research on hypnosis is at the root of the field of somatic psychology and body psychotherapy with Pierre Janet, Charcot and others. Interestingly, hypnosis was much earlier recognized in the pre-dated Hindu Vedas.



According to the ancient yoga texts, the *subtle body* is immaterial and associated with *purusha*, which enjoys all experiences. In Vedic terms, the postmortem body is made of light. In Tantric schools the *subtle body* receives close attention, as it is a vehicle to realizing truth and within contains great knowledge. The *subtle body* represents

reality and the cosmos at large.

The subtle body is made of *prana*, life force, which is cosmic energy and found all over. *Chakras*, or wheels of layered life energy in the body, and *nadis* are transport lines of *prana*. The *chakra* system is complex with seven *chakras*, from the base of the spine to the crown of the head. The main three *nadis*, *sushumna*, *ida* and *pingala*, are associated with each of the three *gunas*, *sattvic*, *tamasic*, and *rajasic*. *Ida* is on the left and is symbolized by qualities such as cold, blue, moon, feminine or wisdom. *Pingala* is on the right and is symbolized by qualities such as heat, red, sun, masculine and compassion.

These *nadis* are said to originate below the center of the navel. Hatha yoga attempts to balance *ida* and *pingala nadis* in the body, which correspond to the parasympathetic and sympathetic nervous systems, respectively. It is believed that when balance is restored in the body, the *sattvic kundalini* energy flows. Certainly, balance and regulation in the nervous system is a goal of somatic psychotherapy.

The Serpent Power: The Goddess in the Body

Hatha yoga grew out of the Tantric tradition. Both recognize the power of the *kundalini-shakti*, spiritual energy represented by a serpent or coiled snake. This goddess power, *Shakti*, is responsible for all aspects of creation and evolution. In contrast, Shiva is transcendental awareness. Shiva and Shakti are inseparable.

Feuerstein recognizes that there is not a Western concept for this spiritual energy but finds that **Freud's concept of the libido** might be the closest. According to Freud, when a person had a certain quantity of sexual energy, libido, it rose to the brain and was converted into psychic energy. Anxiety neurosis manifested when this conversion failed. Psychologically speaking, conscious and unconscious forces are driven by libidinal forces.

From a biological perspective, scientists have been trying to understand *kundalini* and spiritual seers, such as Gopi Krishna, who wrote subjective testimonies of awakening this energy. While Feuerstein refers to "**Reichian physiology**" when discussing scientific skepticism about the concept of *prana*, I wonder if Feuerstein had been more familiar with the growing field of somatic psychology, if he might have gone into more of a **comparative analysis of Reich's theory of orgone energy**.

Knowledge, Wisdom, and Gnosis

Feuerstein discerns that intellectual knowledge and wisdom are different.

Conventional knowledge is an intellectual comprehension of information about a subject. Whereas, wisdom transforms a **person, enhances one's life and has great healing potential**. Though knowledge (*jnāna*), wisdom (*prajñā*), and gnosis (*samyag-darshana*) are discussed, Feuerstein is mostly **concern with vidyā, a higher form of knowing**— one that is spiritual in nature.

Modern psychology has had a short history compared with that of yoga. Feuerstein outlines various schools of psychological study that may focus on the psyche, self, behavior, cognition, sensations, perceptions, emotions and consciousness. What appears to relate most closely to yoga, according to Feuerstein, are humanistic views and a transpersonal model of consciousness. Again, it appears that Feuerstein may have been unaware of somatic psychology as an emerging field, which as a bodymind approach has many similarities to yoga psychology.



Feuerstein presented Freud's five layers of the psyche: unconscious, consciousness, preconscious, ego and superego. As I expected, Feuerstein paid attention to the work of Carl Jung, who was interested in yoga and incorporated yogic techniques into his analytical work. Inspired by Jung, Abraham Maslow studied human potential and self-actualization. A person who is self-actualized has gratified basic needs for belongingness, affection, respect and self-esteem. Maslow described the attitudes of self-actualized individuals as values similar to those of spiritual traditions, including yoga. Some of these values (truth, goodness, beauty, unity, wholeness, aliveness, perfection, justice, order, simplicity, playfulness, and **meaningfulness**) were associated with 'peak experiences' —happiness, bliss or ecstasy. Incidentally, all of which are goals of spiritual seekers, 1960s experimenters with psychoactive substances, and those seeking psychotherapy.

In addition, Assagioli's psychosynthesis, which integrated spiritual traditions contributing to the field of transpersonal psychology, appeared to have intrigued Feuerstein. Assagioli himself meditated for hours a day when imprisoned for one month in the late 1930s due to his Jewish descent, studied with Blueier, and collaborated with Maslow. Feuerstein also offers a key discussion on consciousness and pure awareness.



Pure Awareness, the Witness and Self

In yoga the ultimate Self is *satchitananda* (pure being, consciousness/awareness and bliss), which may also be called *purusha*. When the *vrittis* or activities of the mind are brought under control, the Seer remains as its true nature – pure awareness. The Seer is the transcendental Self or the Witness. To shift identification with the *vrittis* to simply being is an intrapsychic event and one that could have been given more attention as a focus in psychotherapy.

Feuerstein demonstrates there is a difference between the invariable witness and the variable self. The image of two birds, one enjoys the fruit and one looks on, represents the individual self and transcendental self, respectively. The transcendental self is the witness, pure awareness or consciousness. In yoga, the dualistic teaching involves *purusha* and *prakriti*, the unmanifest and the manifest. In contrast, Vedanta, another branch of Hindu thought, is a nondualistic approach. Whereas, Buddhism does not speculate about a transcendental reality but teaches that the world and the psyche hold nothing permanently and that everything is constantly changing. Regardless of metaphysical stance, the witness, reality and awareness are ever-present.

The witnessing self has an important role in psychotherapy. In yoga, the self is at the center and is surrounded by *koshas*, sheaths or layers, which correspond to states of mind. The *koshas* are: bliss, awareness, mind, psychosomatic energy and the physical body (in Sanskrit: *ānanda-maya-kosha*, *vijnāna-maya-kosha*, *mano-maya-kosha*, *prāna-maya-kosha* and *anna-maya-kosha*, respectively). Feuerstein would say that the field of psychology is similar to working within the *mano-maya-kosha* and recently the *vijana-maya-kosha*.

In addition, science as a whole accepts the **physical or 'food body.'** From a yogic perspective, removing each layer or veil of illusion (*maya*), bliss is realized. However, this is not a mental process but intrinsic to the self.

Differences Among Concepts of Ego, Self and Purusha

Yoga understands the ego as the identification with the mind and body. Feuerstein compares that with psychological concepts of the self and ego. In yoga, the process of connection between the self and the Self (*purusha*) is called *samyoga*. *Avidya*, spiritual ignorance, comes in seeing the ego-personality for the transcendental self. A cause of suffering to the yogin or yogini is the fear inherent in the duality and disconnection. Seeing the self as *purusha* is a change or shift that happens in the mind. As aforementioned, this spiritual process could be incorporated into psychotherapy process.

As noted in the discussion about the *koshas*, a step down on the spiritual ladder is the awareness associated with the mind or buddhi. As such, there is the Witness (*purusha*) and the process of witnessing. The mind can be conscious of itself, which is self-consciousness. Mindfulness practices and meditative disciplines, such as vipassana, cultivate self-observation and the process of witnessing. Self-observation is a process in the nervous system. Feuerstein notes that self-observation, psychologically speaking, is often unreliable and rejected. However, this phenomenological and experiential concept is accepted in and often at the heart of somatic psychology and body psychotherapy.

The Yoga Path is discussed in Part Three: Mind in Transition, which may provide a helpful understanding when integrating yogic concepts in psychotherapy. Feuerstein explored other dimensions of yoga practice such as sound, mantra and dance. He

also compares and contrasts nature of the student/teacher (*guru*) relationship with that of the analyst/analysand.

The goal of yoga is liberation through self-realization. To transform the mind is to **transform one's entire life.** The yoga path can be interpreted as continual inner control, mental simplification, or inner purification. Feuerstein states that physiologically we must be able to take control over the animal part of our brain and reminds us of the eight-fold yoga path. Yoga practice, as noted earlier, is much more than yoga postures.

Meditation & Mindfulness

Meditation and other contemplative practices have become increasingly supported by research, especially neuroscience. Meditative techniques and meditative states may vary. In yoga, concentration means a merging with the object, which is called *samadhi*, which is an immediate goal of meditation. Liberation is the ultimate goal where the spirit wakes up to itself.

In similar vein, mindfulness practice, which consists of the continuous, nonjudgmental observation of bodily and mental processes, notably breathing, feeling, and thinking, has become mainstream and incorporated in many traditional psychotherapies.



While Feuerstein discusses the yogic perspective on death and dying in one of the final chapters, it is not one of insignificance. Yoga is an attempt to understand the nature **of one's existence, life and mortality**. For more on this subject matter, Feuerstein points readers to what the Dalai Lama thought was one of the most important books civilization has ever produced: **Robert A. F. Thurman's *The Tibetan Book of the Dead: Liberation through Understanding in the Between (1993, xvii)***.

Feuerstein concludes in Part Four: Analysis and Relevance with his commentary about a future integration of yoga psychology in Epilogue: Toward a Western Yoga. Feuerstein asserts that **"Indian thought—be it Hindu, Buddhist, or Jaina—has a distinct advantage over contemporary psychology when it comes to the issue of spiritual freedom and the path to freedom"** (p.445). Although Jung insisted that yogic methods are too forceful, Jung believed that everything should be done to help the unconscious reach conscious awareness to free the mind from rigidity.

What may be extremely interesting to somatic psychotherapists is Feuerstein's discussion on body-oriented therapies in **general and Gendlin's Focusing in particular**. Feuerstein called Focusing somatic concretion, which is feeling the identified problem in the body, and indicated it was a biologically based spirituality. He stated that Focusing was an alternative to **samadhi** or enlightenment. Feuerstein was so impressed he intended to study it. The Six Steps of Focusing are: 1) Clear a space; 2) Felt sense; 3) Get a handle; 4) Resonate; 5) Ask; 6) Receive. While he goes into a description of Focusing, he seemed intrigued that the process allows the felt sense to speak.

Lastly, there are three Appendices: Hindu, Buddhist and Jaina Yoga, A Survey of the Literature of Yoga Psychology, and the East and West in Antiquity. Much of these final pages are scholarly in tone. Should anybody become seriously interested in the psychology of yoga, Feuerstein was the leading scholar of Indology and he surveyed the relevant literature from antiquity to present-day. The yogic view and for that matter Indian spiritual traditions, Oriental or Eastern views of psychology could be taught alongside modern psychology.

Feuerstein called Focusing somatic concretion, which is feeling the identified problem in the body, and indicated it was a biologically based spirituality. He stated that Focusing was an alternative to *samadhi* or enlightenment.

The Psychology of Yoga: Integrating Eastern and Western Approaches for Understanding the Mind is an important contribution. While this volume is about the psychology of yoga and understanding the nature of the mind, there are few direct clinical applications. Feuerstein suggests that for an individual to be able to **"engage Yoga properly, we must do a certain amount of preliminary psychological work. Otherwise we are apt to carry our confusion over into our yogic discipline"** (p.53). To support

this process, a somatically oriented psychotherapy may be indicated. On a final note, given the rise in acceptability of and accessibility to yoga in integrative mental health, **Feuerstein's psychology of yoga is a marvelous contribution.**



Dawn Bhat, LMHC is in private practice in Hicksville, NY. She holds graduate degrees in General Psychology and Clinical Mental Health Counseling. Dawn is a National Certified Counselor and a Registered Yoga Teacher (RYT-500). Dawn has been researching somatic psychotherapy under the guidance of Jacqueline A. Carleton, Ph.D. of the USABP since 2010 and has presented scholarly papers and professional workshops regionally, nationally and internationally. Feel free to contact her: www.dawnbhat.com

Birth Psychology Association for Prenatal and Perinatal Psychology and Health Present!

Peace on Earth Begins BEFORE Birth


The Prenatal and Perinatal Psychology Educator Certification Course

Study Prenatal and Perinatal Psychology Online
Birthpsychologyedu.com
educate@birthpsychology.com

11 Modules of Core Competencies
 Mentor-Supported
 Professional Teleconferences
 Low Price - At Your Own Pace

Register on the classroom website
 Try our **free** Module
 Read inspiring stories from professionals:
Classroom.birthpsychology.com



Association for Prenatal and Perinatal Psychology and Health




Pregnancy . . .
Birth . . .
First Breath . . .
First Look . . .
First Touch . . .

These early experiences have deep meaning for humankind.
 Learn about birth psychology in a new online course from the experts and become an educator in prenatal and perinatal psychology:

Birthpsychology.com
educate@birthpsychology.com

Improve birth outcomes, empower clients and patients, enhance healing
 Change the world through birth psychology education!



PROFESSIONAL TRAINING IN INFANT DEVELOPMENTAL MOVEMENT & YOGA FOR BABIES

Taught by Elyhne Skove, LCAT, BC-DMT, NCC, RPP

GoGo Babies™

For more information visit
www.gogobabies.net/workshop
 or call (718)643-6064

SAVE THE DATE

United States Association for Body Psychotherapy Conference 2016

Providence, RI
 Rhode Island
 Convention Center



JULY 21 - 23, 2016



Somatic Psychotherapy Today

Trending somatic practices influencing our field today

An invitation to write for us, with us, with support along the way. Your writing can contribute to and enrich the 'body' of critical and reflective content, as well as to the clinical expertise, in the 'field' of body psychotherapy.

Whom can you write for?

We suggest that – for a professional article – you consider:

The EABP/USABP peer-reviewed **International Body Psychotherapy Journal** (for original work only): www.ibpj.org

The peer-reviewed journal of **Body, Movement and Dance in Psychotherapy** (for original work only): www.tandfonline.com/toc/ibmd20/current#.VBfpFS6wJRU

Or (for German authors) **körper – tanz – bewegung**: Zeitschrift für Körperpsychotherapie und Kreativtherapie:

www.reinhardt-verlag.de/de/zeitschrift/51830

(You will find the necessary “instructions for authors” on their various websites.)

Or: for something a bit more conversational: **Somatic Psychotherapy Today**: <https://www.SomaticPsychotherapyToday.com>

Or: Something for a newsletter of your particular professional association, modality association, or national association in psychotherapy;

Or: A comment or a thread in one of the **Somatic Perspectives LinkedIn** group discussions, facilitated by Serge Prengel:

www.linkedin.somaticperspectives.com

Or, possibly, a chapter for an edited book, on a particular theme, possibly like one of the series being published by **Body Psychotherapy Publications (BPP)**: www.bodypsychotherapypublications.com.

Or: Something to be published somewhere else, at some other time, in a different medium; or for a personal internet blog; or . . . maybe just for your personal journal.

What can you write about?

You can write about attending a recent Congress, or seminar, or about attending a different event; - or about your student thesis; - or your experience of writing your student thesis; - or a special or particularly interesting case history; - or an aspect of your personal therapy; - or about working with a particular client group; - or about a development of theory or practice; or - even about your reflections on the field of Body Psychotherapy.

How to get started writing professionally?

There is an article in the journal of *Body, Movement & Dance in Psychotherapy* www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/17432979.2010.530060#.VBfsNC6wJRU (You can also find a free copy [here](#).)

And there are some recent guidelines about how to write a professional Body Psychotherapy Case Study: www.eabp.org/research-case-study-guidelines.php.

There are also many articles on the Internet (in different languages) about how to write.

If you want any further assistance with where to publish, or with the process of editing, or re-editing, or with the complications of the publication process, the following people may be able to offer you some help. They are all professional body psychotherapists, editors and writers:

Nancy Eichhorn: Nancy@NancyEichhorn.com

Jacqueline Carleton: jacarletonphd@gmail.com

Gill Westland: gillwestland@cbpc.org.uk

Jennifer Tantia: JFTantia@gmail.com

Courtenay Young: courtenay@courtenay-young.com

Sincerely,
EABP Publications Committee

RESEARCH ISSUE

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

Jacqueline A. Carleton, PhD

EDITORIAL

Jennifer F. Tantia, PhD, BC-DMT

AURORA

Aline LaPierre, PhD

ARTICLES

Reading and Evaluating Quantitative Research in Body Psychotherapy

By Robyn Flaum Cruz, PhD & Sabine C. Koch, PhD

Biodynamic Psychotherapy for Trauma Recovery: A Pilot Study

Denise Saint Arnault, PhD & Sharon O'Halloran

Correlations Between Tests for Grounding, Breathing and Self-efficacy in Individuals With and Without Chronic Pain: Who is "Standing with Both Feet on the Ground?"

Christina Bader-Johansson, M.Sc. & Amanda Lundvik Gyllensten

**Semantic Expressions of the Body Boundary Personality
in Person-centred Psychotherapy**

Laura A. Cariola, PhD

Interoception: A Measure of Embodiment or Attention?

Nitasha Buldeo, MS, MSc

Grasping and Transforming the Embodied Experience of Oppression

Rae Johnson, PhD, RSW, RSMT

STUDENT RESEARCH SECTION

United States Masters' and Doctoral dissertation abstracts

Abstracts of the three winning papers of the EABP Student Research Award

CONFERENCE REVIEW

EABP Science and Research Symposium

at the 14th European and 10th International Congress of Body Psychotherapy:

The Body in Relationship: Self—Other—Society

Nancy Eichhorn, PhD

The image on the cover is Aurora by Aline LaPierre, PhD