

Matthew J. van der Giessen
6304 - 109A St.
Edmonton, Alberta
Canada, T6H 3C7
Ph. (403) 438-3757

PSYCHE AND SOMA

by Matthew J. van der Giessen

Published in Massage Therapy Journal Vol.29 No.3

PART I

"Now, when you do this procedure, sometimes you can get emotional release", the instructor says. I look up, surprised. I am standing in the back of a seminar room. Our instructor is showing us a new technique for getting release in the lower back. We are all gathered around the demonstration table watching carefully, some of us taking notes as he speaks.

As our instructor says these words, the room suddenly becomes quiet. I feel the tension of the pregnant pause as we silently skirt around the edges of something that we all know exists, yet somehow never talk about. We have come to what is often unknown territory in the world of massage - the place where techniques of physical therapy touch the psychological depths of the human mind.

Finally someone breaks the silence, asking a question about how to apply the procedure. The room relaxes as our instructor starts talking again. But I do not hear. My mind has gone elsewhere. I wonder again about this silent relationship between body and mind.

"In many ways, massage is a solitary occupation", says writer/therapist Michael Winnecott. "While we may hook ourselves to our clients in a psychic way, they often disappear into territories and terrain we will never know about. We often find ourselves standing alone, working hard, with nobody to talk to." [Massage Magazine #23, pg. 10]

Like Captain Ahab floating alone in a boat on the glassy sea we wait, having no idea where our whale has gone. Skin pressed to skin, we have only the tenuous lifeline of our touch connecting one life force to another. Most of the time, as we work to the conclusion of the massage, our client will finally, slowly surface having surrendered the hold on their body that we call tension.

But sometimes that quietude is broken. Our client will surface with an explosive release of emotion. Rolling, bleeding, the whale has breached, its wounds driving it to the surface, a fugitive from the very depths where healing had been sought. We have touched more than physical dysfunction; in seeking physical release we have touched a wound to our client's very being.

How do we deal with situations like this? Most of us muddle through such releases as best we can, relying on our empathy to guide us. Often that is enough. The client pulls body and being back together again, perhaps checking that it was O.K. to have committed such a social gaff as falling apart, perhaps feeling a bit embarrassed, hoping they won't be ambushed like that again. Client and therapist go their way, forgetting the experience ... until it happens once more.

The silence around psychological issues in massage begins with massage training. Few massage schools in North America include any kind of psychological instruction in their curriculum. This is understandable. Our knowledge of body psychology is relatively new. Massage itself is still largely seen as a physical therapy. Psychological references are often limited to descriptive words like "relaxation" and "stress management".

The truth is, because so many of us are ill equipped to deal with psychological issues as they arise in our practices, our clients are in just as much danger of being the victims of bad psychological practice procedures as they would if we had poor training in the more physical body therapies.

Now you may not be interested in practicing psychology with your clients. And this is certainly not what many of our clients have come to us for anyway. Massage therapy has proven itself as a good prescription for bad backs and injuries without the therapist needing to use psychological skills. And often, to help relieve a client's stress, all we need to do with our touch is care.

Still, the unavoidable facts are this: the body is connected to the mind, and tension in the body is as likely to be connected to psychological stress as physical stress. If we ignore that part of the people we work with, then a part of our clients' beings are implicitly not allowed in the therapy room. The loneliness that Michael Winnecott describes is not just the therapist's, it is also that of the client. Without some psychological awareness, we do not see an important part of our client's makeup, and the client leaves from such an intimate encounter not having been seen.

History

It was not too long ago that very little was known about the way that body and mind interrelated. Many of us grew up knowing "psychosomatic" as some kind of a dirty word; it meant you were making up the problems in your body. But that time is quickly passing. In both the fields of psychology and body therapy, movements that began at the turn of the century have flowered in the last decade, bringing us a wealth of knowledge about how we function in the body. They offer us a new perspective: the body as a way of understanding ourselves.

There have been two streams of therapy that have tried to understand the mind in its somatic relationship with the body. One, which has come to be called bodywork started with the body; the other, body-centred psychology, from the view of the mind.

Body Centred Psychology

Freud

Much of the development of modern body centred psychotherapy began with Freud. Freud's development of psychoanalytic therapy shows the influence of his medical training. Freud and his colleagues recognized that physical illnesses and loss of control over normal body functions could be the first symptoms to bring a patient into therapy, and could be important leads in understanding what psychic processes were erupting into physical life. Freud also recognized the place of bodily needs in psychic life, perhaps most importantly in the drive of the ego to feel body pleasure.

One other important contribution was Freud's belief that working with a patient's resistance was an essential part of the therapeutic process. As we shall shortly see, this idea would surface in different forms throughout the development of body centred psychology.

Reich

The first move towards describing a specific role for the body in psychotherapy was initiated by Wilhelm Reich, an associate of Freud's in Vienna. Reich developed Freud's idea of psychological resistance by recognizing its emergence as physical tensions. He created a system that catalogued the characteristics of body tensions, describing them as defensive "character armouring". Tight bodies were seen as a sign of held emotional states, blocked expression and low energy levels. It became increasingly clear that the way in which we formed movement and posture were influenced by the ways in which we have learned to relate to our environment. His work was a breakthrough, forming the theoretical basis of body psychotherapy. Building on the groundwork of Reich's insights, therapists learned to read the body of the patient as a way of gaining greater insight into the patient's psychological makeup (for a dramatic example of this ability see Ken Dychtwald's book, "Bodymind", pg. 4).

New techniques were needed to make use of these insights. Reichian therapists soon began to develop more of a hands-on approach to psychotherapy. Clients would be encouraged to flex and move the areas of physical blockage so that the emotional experiences held in the tissue would be awakened and surface. The resulting awarenesses have proved to be of great assistance in facilitating the course of psychotherapeutic treatment. The result has been a proliferation of what we now call body-centered psychotherapeutic approaches. In whatever form it has been used, Reich's essential concept that psychological resistance condensed in the body through the formation of "body armour" has influenced the subsequent development of body awareness in psychotherapy.

Lowen

Alexander Lowen's Bioenergetics is perhaps the most direct development of the Freud/Reich lineage. Originally a lawyer, Lowen was so impressed with Reich's ideas that he left his career and took up training as a psychiatrist. As a disciple of Reich's, Lowen's prolific number of studies on the treatment of psychological disorders through a body oriented psychotherapy provided a solid base to the development of the Bioenergetic movement in psychology.

Bioenergetic therapy sees the body as a vehicle of psychic (life) energy. Tensions in the body are the blockage of that energy and a sign of "splitting off" from body reality. Splitting off from the

body also means a lessening of body awareness, not only dulling the pain of life's traumas, but also life's pleasures. By blocking the movement of life force through the body we not only separate awareness from the body, but the body from the earth, or our sense of groundedness. This disconnection of mind from both body and world is seen as a sign of a breakdown in relationship not only with the body, but with the reality and immediacy of life itself.

Lowen has created a wide range of exercises that are used to draw consciousness back into the body and pull body awareness down. The result is a greater sense of self-awareness at a body level and an enhanced feeling of connectiveness with the world.

Reich's and Lowen's work have had enormous influence the development of the human potential movement and the array of body oriented therapies that movement has engendered. Besides parallel psychotherapies like the Energetic therapy of Stanley Keleman, therapeutic approaches such as Gestalt owe much to the ground breaking work of Reich and Lowen.

Three of the more notable contributions of body centred psychology to our understanding of the body/mind relationship are:

- a) the interrelatedness of events that are first experienced in either the mind or the body,
- b) the formation of psychological resistance into body tensions and,
- c) the creation of those tensions into postures and movements that are characteristic of psychological states of mind.

Later, we will look at the effect of these ideas on body therapies.

The Bodywork Pioneers:

Alexander, Feldenkrais, Trager and Rolf

While Freud was developing psychoanalysis, partly through a painstaking self-analysis, an Australian named F. Matthias Alexander was engaged in self-study of his own. A professional actor and orator, Alexander had found some success on the speaking circuits that were common at the turn of the century. Then tragedy struck. Every time he stepped on stage, he became hoarse. Numerous treatments were tried but without lasting results.

Near despair, Alexander tried to analyze his own behaviour in the hope of discovering what it was that he was doing that aggravated his throat whenever he was about to perform. Eventually, after long and painstaking observation he happened to notice a strange tensing movement he made with his head at the moment he began to speak.

Intrigued, Alexander tried to correct this aberration. But he soon found that this first change necessitated new adjustments to posture throughout his body until finally he had changed the way he held himself from head to foot.

Although these corrections seemed to ease his tendency to hoarseness, the knowledge of what he

was doing wrong did not seem to be enough. Alexander found that even when he had corrected his posture and released the tension around his neck, at the moment that he intended to recite, the tension would suddenly reappear. He would later reflect that the old postures would "dominate any attempt I might be making to employ a better use of myself in reciting." [The Resurrection of the Body, pg. 148] As many of us have ruefully discovered, old habits die hard.

The final breakthrough came with Alexander's discovery that it was possible to command his body to an action but then let it find its own way to carry out the command.

When he did this, something exciting and different happened - the body began to move in new ways, and wouldn't fall under the spell of its old control patterns. He had discovered the possibility of choice.

Alexander, and the bodyworkers who came after him (see Feldenkrais' several thoughtful books on the subject) believed that we were so bound up in the ways we went through life that any attempt at self-correction was immediately contaminated by the ways we have been used to operating. Thus, an Alexander teacher asks the client to "not do". By focusing on not creating the motion or posture that is being corrected, the new, more natural movement automatically manifests. The pupil's role was merely to observe, and allow the movement to happen.

Each of the body therapy pioneers developed forms that allowed the body to find its own patterns of response, to search out its own way to change. Bodyworkers learned to look for that which is lighter, freer, and easier in the body, without forcing what should be. And they found that with the discovery of that freedom in the body, the person who inhabited the body felt freer and easier too.

Although each bodywork approach has found a different way to implement Alexander's discovery, the unifying principle is the same: the job of the mind is to imagine what it wants the body to do, and then get out of the way and let the body find its own way of putting the command into expression.

Thus, the Trager practitioner instructs clients to slowly walk while flicking their foot lightly, "as if they were dabbling the foot in a puddle on a lazy, hot, summer's afternoon". A Feldenkrais instructor might lead a class through a series of rocking exercises, telling them to never force the movement, but rather let the body find its own way to expression.

"The movements are nothing. They are an idiotic thing", Feldenkrais has said of his work. By distracting the mind from "doing" in the old way and introducing new body information change begins.

This emphasis on teaching is essential to the techniques of Alexander, Feldenkrais and Trager. As a student of Alexander, Feldenkrais had learned that problems in body movement arose because of poor or faulty learning; through mistakes in learning how to use our body we were "wired" wrong. Following this premise, the Feldenkrais instructor reteaches the pupil by giving

new information, usually in the form of shifting, continually renewing exercises.

Creating movements that allowed the pupil to explore body awareness without fighting their current limitations, Feldenkrais found that he could teach people to reform their relationship with their bodies, and eventually to their whole being.

In a testament to their belief that they are effecting a profound influence on the mind by working through the body, all bodywork approaches produce a surprising similarity of psychophysical change: longer spines, expanded rib cages and loosened postures, accompanied by an exhilarating expansion and freedom of being. And this despite the fact that their range of technique is as dissimilar as deep pressure, light rocking, the slight hand-touch of repositional movement, or voice directed exercise.

With the exception of the strong physical approach of Ida Rolf, most of the developmental bodywork forms are similar in their light-touch approach to the body. What unifies all the approaches, including Rolfing, is how they view the body as a way of influencing the mind, teaching it to release old fixated ways of holding the body, and allowing a new, more responsive body relationship to develop.

The Meeting of Mind and Body Therapies

Psychosomatic bodywork and body oriented psychology may have come to similar understandings of the body/mind relationship. But more often, their views have been at odds. Perhaps it was unavoidable. One side approaches the body through the mind, while the other side feels that it influences the mind by working through the body.

As a result of the distinctly different approaches to body/mind healing, the two fields have much to learn from each other. For example, bodyworkers have traditionally seen emotional release as superfluous to the release of tension. It was like the steam that escapes when you loosen the lid on a pressure cooker. Sometimes it happens and sometimes it doesn't. What this view doesn't account for is the fact that longlasting change only seems to happen when there is some deeper change in the client's relationship with both body and life. The work of body-oriented psychologists clearly shows us that physical shifts are limited if they aren't related to psychological change. Only lately have the followers of Alexander, Rolf, Trager and Feldenkrais begun to give more weight to the role of the individual's psychology in forming and holding the body. Bodyworkers can now know that the relationship between body and mind is not a one way conversation. Rather, there is a complex intermingling of influences between body and mind, each feeding information back to the other, each continually reforming the other.

In the meantime, body-oriented psychology has been labouring under its own limitation. Because of the medical influence of its developmental background, early body-centred psychologists tended to see the body in terms of psychological/medical disease models (such as Reich's character types) and approached the body through the head. By this I mean that the body

was seen primarily as a way of getting information on psychological disfunctions. There is little recognition of the bodyworkers' discovery that there was a self-healing and transformative function manifesting itself in the body, one that could lead the way to healing if we could only learn how to get out of its way.

The reason for this blind spot on the part of much of body-centred psychology can be seen in its Freudian roots. Essential to Freud's psychology was the idea that the need for sexual pleasure was a predominant drive in the development of human behaviour. Thus, the body was seen primarily as the home of animal instincts and drives.

As important as this discovery was, the role of a deep human need to transform and grow for its own sake was not well received until the broader acceptance of the work of Carl Jung (whose contribution we will examine shortly), and the development of the human potential movement in psychology.

One way to understand this difference in view, and its effect on the development of body-centred psychotherapy is by looking closer at theories on the formation of character types and their physical expression in character armour. One of Freud's discoveries was that denied experiences were repressed and pushed into the unconscious. Here they controlled our conscious lives through subtle influences such as the well known "Freudian slip", having the effect of poisoning our relationships in life. As we have seen, Freud also discovered that these repressed thoughts could have the power to create or influence illnesses and other negative body experiences.

It was from this base that Reich's and Lowen's theories on the formation of holding patterns in the body, or character armour originate. Implicit in their thinking was the idea that if we can weaken or dissolve the hold of the character armour, we will be able to reveal the influence of the repressed experience and work on its psychological healing. *This approach to the body differs from bodywork theory in several important ways. First, instead of teaching the client to "not do" and allow the change to manifest itself, the psychotherapist's work had the more manipulative style of working actively at "undoing" as the therapist tried to help the client release the body and mind from the hold of the early wounds of childhood. Secondly, there was a tendency to fit the client into preset theories (such as Freud's masochistic, oral or anal typologies that were later identified as body character armour by Reich and Lowen) instead of concentrating on finding the thread of transformative truth within.

Synthesis

It is essentially this difference in perspective that also led to the well known theoretical split between Freud and Jung. A close collaborator with Freud in the development of early psychoanalytic theory, Jung developed the view that the unconscious was more than just the garbage pit of the unwanted and diseased parts of our lives. In a psychological parallel of the discoveries of bodyworkers, Jung found in the unconscious the presence of an impulse that moved us toward transformation. It seemed to synthesize material from everyday experiences

with that of an innate ancient memory, a reorganization that presented new, more balanced ways of working with life; and ones that healed. More and more, evidence was mounting that some impulse that moved towards balance and self-healing was at work within us.

Recent synthesizing of the two views can most clearly be seen in the work of Jungian/Process psychotherapist Arnold Mindell. Bringing Jungian perspectives to the body, Mindell tells us that "when the ego is relaxed the Self masters itself. The body also masters itself"[Dreambody, pg. 100]. His approach has made it possible to work with body and mind by recognizing the unconscious' influence on both in the course of the healing process. Mindell's description of a "dreambody" embraces the idea that the unconscious doesn't just influence the course of our dreams, it also has an influence on the unconscious physical expression of the body as well.

Other psychotherapeutic thinkers like Hakomi Method creator Ron Kurtz have drawn upon their background in bodywork to make active use of bodywork theory in their practise of psychology. Rather than seeing the body through the perspective of a disease model, Hakomi therapists see tension and trauma as an information source, not one to be changed but rather to be supported and freed to expression. (Hakomi Method therapy is also distinguished as being the only psychotherapy to engender a distinct bodywork adjunct, called Hakomi Bodywork.)

Another psychotherapeutic method, Jack Lee Rosenberg's Integrative Body Psychotherapy, concentrates on developing the client's appreciation their defensive armouring, helping them to value it as an important way of expressing their need for psychological and physical boundaries. In this psychological form, tension formation is seen as a way of identifying when our sense of safe, personal space is being encroached upon. We tighten up and pull back when we feel unsafe; we expand when it is O.K. to reach out to the world. As the client learns to value and use their ability to form appropriate boundaries when needed, the tendency for boundaries to become calcified and stuck at a physical level recedes.

Here is where Freud's realization of the importance of resistance in therapy emerges reborn. These new body centred therapies honor resistance as the crystallized defense system of the individual. Their approach is not to stress them or take them away, but rather to support the defenses, perhaps even exaggerating them, and helping the client become aware of the meaning that these defenses have in their life. Change comes as the client discovers the need that originated the crystallizing defense. As the client gets in touch with the originating need, he or she learns new ways of responding more consciously to them. It becomes possible to have more choice about when it is appropriate to use such a defense, and when it is not. The defenses become less stuck both in body and mind.

This revisioned look at therapy has had a revolutionary effect on the therapist/client relationship. The pressure on both therapist and client to make change begins to be lifted.

"In this culture we are taught that we always have to do something", says Hakomi Bodywork

founder Pat Ogden. "We have so little experience with just being with, not having to stop it...not having to change it."

By just being with, these therapists are helping the client to get in touch with the psychophysical blocks, looking for the questions that need to be asked of them, listening to the answers that come up from the body, and developing a trust in what our inner wisdom has to say to us about our relationship with the world.

"If a person gets enough of the right information, the system will spontaneously reorganize itself, without force, without pushing", Ogden says.

As the client learns to allow the feelings and memories associated with the holding to manifest, the self-healing abilities of the human body and psyche are freed. Psyche and soma are together again.

Part II Education

How important are these developments in body/mind awareness to the general massage practitioner? Educator and writer Carole Osborne-Sheets feels it's as important for a body therapist to know about psychosis as thrombosis. Osborne-Sheets, a founding member and instructor at the Institute of Psycho-Structural Balancing (IPSB) in San Diego has been instrumental in developing the Institute's psychologically aware massage therapy program, one of the few in the country.

Why require psychological education for students whose interests might lie in other areas? The school feels that whether their intention is to work in sports massage or psychophysical body therapy, students should have basic psychological skills that allow them to be as sensitive to the needs of the client as possible. The inexperienced therapist is just as likely to do injury at a psychological level as they are at a physical level.

Based on this experience, Osborne-Sheets feels that a basic psychophysical education should include:

1. History of body-oriented psychology
2. Movement work (ie. Tai Chi and Feldenkrais)
3. Co-counselling and communication skills
4. Techniques to increase and decelerate emotional release.
5. Personal therapy

For those who are pursuing an interest in psychologically oriented bodywork as a primary focus, Osborne-Sheets urges further education in:

1. Personal therapy
2. Study of a body oriented psychology technique (such as Gestalt or Bioenergetics).

3. Basic psychology.

4. Supervision with a psychophysical therapist.

While most schools have not yet developed as specific a program, a movement in the direction of more psychologically aware massage education is starting to show in school curriculums across the country. As well, some psychologically oriented programs designed to augment the massage therapist's training are now available. (see sidebar)

The grey area

As bodywork techniques develop in their ability to awaken the psychological issues of the body therapy client, it may be difficult to see where the responsibility of the body therapist ends and the psychotherapist begins. But for the body therapist who wants to pursue intentional, psychologically oriented work, Carol Osborne-Sheets offers some clear advice. Recognize your limits.

This view is supported by Alexander Lowen. "A massage therapist should avoid psychological issues unless he or she is properly trained to deal with them", he says. "To be a therapist one requires special training and to have undergone a meaningful personal therapy."

Even if you receive a good, basic training in psychophysical bodywork, both Hakomi Bodywork founder Pat Ogden and Osborne-Sheets stress the importance of working with a psychotherapist. This form of body therapy works best when it supports the psychotherapeutic process, Ogden cautions. It is important to know that a competent psychotherapist is working with the client on any emotionally intentional bodywork.

Training in both bodywork techniques and psychotherapeutic methods are essential tools to the psychologically intentional body therapist. They not only help the therapist to have professionally developed skills, they also help the body therapist to recognize limitations and know when it is important to work with a psychotherapist. "I require anyone I see who has more than a mild neurosis to be working with a (psycho)therapist", says Osborne-Sheets. A good caution whether the work you have agreed to provide for the client is intentional or not.

Another grey area is the question of the therapeutic agreement. It is important to find out why the client has come to you, and to honour the client's expectation, making it clear at the outset if you feel you are able or willing to offer that form of work. One client may only want relaxation massage, while another may want to get in touch with a body lost during an early history of family abuse.

The therapist should no more press psychological work on a client than force deep pressure work on a client who only wants light relaxation work. Osborne-Sheets feels that it may be appropriate to initiate a "probe", something she describes as a small suggestion that may increase the client's range of body awareness. But at all times, the practitioner should work by never forcing, only staying in the flow of what the client can respond to.

Massage and the therapeutic team

With the spreading interest in body centred psychotherapy, a growing number of psychologists, whatever their training, are recognizing the essential role of the body as an agent in the therapeutic process. In their search to become more effective psychotherapists they have discovered Lowen's view that it is important to work with the body in the therapeutic process if one seeks to make meaningful change in the client's attitudes. This growing recognition of the body's role in therapy means that there are more opportunities for the body therapist to work in a psychotherapeutic team.

Body therapists who have explored the role of the body therapist in a psychologically therapeutic team find that their contribution varies, depending on the psychophysical knowledge of the body therapist and psychologist, and the needs of the client.

At the most basic level, psychotherapist Ron Kurtz sees massage as a wonderful physical support to psychotherapy, a role that the unintentioned massage therapist can play by helping the client to learn to feel their body and learn a new appreciation of touch. Body therapy can also act as a catalyst for change, bypassing the busy mind while awakening the body, and sensitizing the client to denied issues at a physical level when the psychotherapeutic process has become stuck.

The more experienced body therapist can feed information arrived at in body therapy sessions back to the client and therapist, thus enriching the material brought into psychotherapy sessions. Carol Osborne-Sheets reports that it is also possible for the psychotherapist and bodyworker to work with the client at the same time, especially if the client experiences too much trauma and fragmentation when touched.

To the future

After less than 100 years, the field of bodywork is still in its infancy. The psychophysiology of touch has yet to influence the course of massage with a strong, clear voice. But the potential is there.

"We're on the cusp here of an incredible changeover", says Ron Kurtz. He feels that the time has come to start developing new therapist roles, ones that include mind, body and spiritual therapy practises. As individual therapists struggle to find their way to a practise of body therapy that is personally satisfying to them, organizations such as the American Massage Therapist Association and state psychology associations will be challenged to develop credentialling that gives recognition and clarity to the professional practise of those therapies.

Some of that work is already starting. Scope of practise panel discussions at the California State Massage Convention this year included the topic of psychophysical therapy. The opportunity for discussion at forums such as this will be crucial to developing our understanding of the role psychophysical therapies should play in the education and practise of body therapists.

Perhaps the greatest contribution of psychophysical education is its fresh and vital view of the body-mind relationship. Its psychological influences show that body therapy can be a way to bring consciousness to the blocks that prevent full expression of our being, while the bodywork contribution teaches a deeper respect for the body's innate capacity for psychophysical healing.

Working together they promote a revisioning of the client/therapist relationship, one that is less "doing to" and more "being with". And in learning to "be with", we come to see that healing is not just learning to be with the client but also learning to be with ourselves.

But then after all, says Pat Ogden, isn't that what therapy's really all about? hrs. of training. You've developed yourself extensively since you left school, taking workshops and courses that have extended the range of your skills. You feel competent, and most of the time you are confident that you can help ease the physical ills that your clients bring to your door.

Except for one thing. As you've gotten better at your job, every once in a while, something happens that leaves you feeling unsure, perhaps even stumbling: your client goes through an emotional release.

"I never learned what to do in massage school", one massage therapist recently told me. She had learned her emotional release management skills after her formal education was over because she was interested, and because she knew that professionally she needed to know how to be there.

For her own sake, and that of the client.

We all expect that massage should bring up good feelings of release and well-being. But what do you do when your touch initiates emotional pain? Below are some of the basic skills that you should know. They have been contributed by instructors across the country. They are not the answer to competent psychotherapeutic training, but they will provide the first aid skills that will serve both you and your client in times of need.

Creating a supportive environment during emotional release.

1.Keep breathing.

Most of us freeze in an emotionally difficult situation. Controlling respiration is the first step in getting out of touch with your feelings, something you are going to need right now. So above all, KEEP BREATHING.

2.Keep client breathing.

For all the same reasons stated above, your client needs to keep breathing. Breathing will help the client stay with what they are feeling and see it through to some natural conclusion.

Remember, they are experiencing a release. Breathing will allow the client to experience the emotions in the body. By staying in touch with emotions they will ultimately let the physical tensions go too.

3. Let client know that its O.K. to do what they are doing.

People will naturally get embarrassed at showing parts of themselves that are usually so well hidden. They will want to know that what they are doing is O.K., that they are still acceptable. Support the client verbally in what they are doing by telling them that you are there for them, that you hear what they are saying. It can also help to have some extra covers so that you can give them the physical support of covering them up, protecting their vulnerability.

4. Monitor breath to abdomen to decelerate

If your client is starting to hyperventilate, or becomes frightened by the energy of their release, help them to move their breathing awareness to the belly, slowing the breath gradually. This will activate the parasympathetic nervous system and help relaxation to set in. It will also assist the movement of consciousness down in the body, that movement that is called grounding.

5. Help ground by:

- move work to client's feet or
- have client lie on back with legs bent, feet firmly planted and feet hip width apart.
- keep some level of verbal contact so that your client does not drift away. Asking the client to open their eyes at times can be helpful in grounding too.

Other hints

It is important to check with your client about their own needs, and follow them. For instance, lying on the back may feel too vulnerable for some people. Others may need to hold a pillow to their stomach or curl up in fetal position on their sides. Some may start to shiver and need extra covers. In each case you need to keep breathing and have all your body awareness available to you. At the same time that breathing will help you respond effectively to your clients needs it will also keep you in touch with what feels right to you.

Leave room for quiet time at the end of the appointment. When your client leaves, let them know how you feel about what has happened. Give them feedback on the effects on their body. Let them know that this will not happen all the time. Some people will be devastated by such unseemly social behaviour and may be afraid of coming back if it means they will always feel so raw. If important issues come up such as childhood physical or sexual abuse, suggest counselling.

Above all, give your client support for who they are and what they have done. You have touched upon a wound, a place where artificial defenses have been put up to protect a breach in your client's integrity of being. It is important that you honour and support your client's need to protect this raw place in their life. Your client does not need you to go in and fix it - conversely

they might be terrified that you will pull away and abandon them. It is your job to be guardian of the supportive environment, honoring your client's need to heal and supporting their ability to do so. Then the miracle of inner transformation can occur, and your charge as a therapist will have been done.

Finding a school

Psychological training for the bodyworker is still a rare commodity. But it is there for those who are willing to look, and to look hard at the program that a training course offers. They are available in two levels.

Psychological awareness for the massage therapist

For massage therapists who want training that will make them more psychologically aware, some AMTA registered schools across the country offer varied forms of psychological training in their programs. Some of it offered as a part of their full training program and some as elective workshop training outside of the regular course structure, making it accessible to the working professional.

The intent of these programs is to make the massage therapist more psychologically sensitive. They are not intended to train those interested in becoming psychophysical bodyworkers. The language surrounding this form of training has yet to be clarified, so you must be a careful consumer when shopping. Words like "bodywork" do not necessarily mean that the training has a psychological component. Words like "body/mind" in course descriptions will likely lead you in the right direction but never assume. Always ask, stating as clearly as possible what it is that you want.

Career training in Psychophysical bodywork

Remember the words of Alexander Lowen. "A massage therapist should avoid psychological issues unless he or she is properly trained to deal with them."

Leaders in the field are unanimously agreed in this respect. There is no fast track to the practise of intentional psychophysical therapy. Training involves 2-4 years, including the need for intensive personal therapy. Programs that offer less than this should be viewed with some caution.

Most of the programs that work with intentionally motivated therapists work on a periodic workshop format. The programs have been created so that professionals have the time to integrate the therapeutic approach into their practises, and lives.

Because of the difficulty of gathering information on what is available in this new field, the list below is admittedly partial. Our apologies to those who may have been missed.

Psychologically Intentional Bodywork Training

Hakomi Bodywork
P.O. Box 1873
Boulder, CO
80306

Ilana Rubenfeld
Rubenfeld Synergy
115 Waverly
New York, N.Y
10011

Body Therapy Institute
P.O. Box 202
Saxapahaw, N.Carolina
27340

Postural Integration
450 Hillside Ave.
Mill Valley, CA
94941

Body Mind Institute
11081 Missouri
Los Angeles, CA
90025

Florida Ins
titute of Psychophysical Integration
5835 Marine Dr.
Tampa, Fl.
33609

Bibliography

Alexander, F. Matthias, *The Resurrection of the Body*, edited by Edward Maisel, Boston, Shambala Books

Brown, Malcolm, *The Healing Touch, Life Rhythm*, Mendocino, California

Dychtwald, Ken, *Bodymind*, Los Angeles, Jeremy Archer Inc.

Feldenkrais, Moshe, *Awareness Through Movement*, Harper and Row

Kurtz, R. and Prester, H., *The Body Reveals*, San Francisco, Harper and Row

Kurtz, Ron, *Hakomi Therapy*, Boulder, The Hakomi Institute

Lowen, Alexander, *The Language of the Body*, New York, Collier Books

Mindell, Arnold, *Dreambody*, Boston, Sigo Press

Reich, Wilhelm, *Character Analysis*, New York, Orgone Institute Press

Rosenberg, Jack Lee et al, *Body, Self and Soul*, Humanics Limited, Atlanta