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Mindbrainbody in Psychoanalytic Theory and Practice: An Expanded Understanding

**Integrating Embodiment and Embodied Process into our Clinical
Psychotherapeutic Practice**

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“I went from being a trumpet player to being a musician. If I’m going to communicate sincerity, joy and innocence, I have to generate that in my body, in my belief system.”

Thomas Hooten, Los Angeles Philharmonic principal trumpet

“The entry (to change in treatment) may be through self reflection or narrative, through establishing new relationships, through learning new behavior, through movement, or through art...Because of my longstanding research program in movement, for instance, I have become interested in the role of movement in mental change and have thus trained as a Feldenkrais Method Practitioner. Just as many systems cooperate to produce stable patterns, so many systems may be available to disrupt those that have become too rigid and maladaptive.”

Esther Thelen, *Psychoanalytic Dialogues*, 2005

Through our bodies, we are deeply connected with and constituted by the world around us. (p. 292)... Our bodies literally reverberate with each other at many levels. (p.8)

Guy Claxton, Intelligence in the Flesh, 2015

“When you let go of what you are, you become what you might be.” **Lau Tzu**

I want to thank my readers for their generosity in time and for their helpful suggestions: Jordan Allen, Leonard Bearne, Dan Bienenfeld, Mark Hooker, John Matsunaga, and Junie, Mayes.

My Primary premises: Everything we do and experience is mediated through our body...our bodyminds. Basic processes of thinking, feeling, sensation, movement, and human connection (intersubjectivity) are deeply and inextricably *embodied and embedded* within a dynamically emergent system with many interconnected subsystems. The world as it appears to me is deeply influenced by my own (familial social-cultural) history and values. I also participate in creating, designing, and interpreting the world I find myself in, to which I then respond. I am influenced by my somatic experience and by my own use of language, thought, feeling, gesture, and movement. Experience is always an integrated whole with continuous feedback loops of mutual influence among all aspects of a person in context. Bodies can change minds and minds can change bodies.

First, I want to ask you, how are you feeling in your body this moment after lunch in our third day of this conference? Are you aware of how you are feeling in your body? We often dissociate from our bodily sensations, sometimes out of habit, or busyness, sometimes protectively. We might become aware fleetingly of a desire to move, to find more ease, fluidity, physical contact, resonance with another, comfort or understanding. However, when our attention is focused elsewhere, our body sensations often fade into background and only occasionally reach awareness, perhaps as a nagging restlessness at the periphery of our awareness until our body hurts, malfunctions, or has pressing needs...or when something feels good, like when someone delighted to see you gives you a warm, connected bear hug.

The word psychology (psyche) comes from the Greek psukhe, meaning "soul". I'm going to use the word *bodymind* throughout this talk, as a shortcut to designate the inseparable concepts "bodybrainmind soul, spirit heart, environment, and field in context...all these nuances are aspects of a whole.¹

A current scientific story holds that our brains evolved to facilitate our complex movement in gravity and to coordinate our many interrelated sub-systems in the service of the whole organism...the whole person. Although there are various stories about the interrelationships among mind, brain, body, spirit, environment, awareness, and experience, (Claxton, 2015) argues that brain is servant, not master of the body (as is often thought); that the brain is more like a chat-room, not a directorate (a subtle shift to a nonlinear and emergent perspective); that how I perceive is instantly imbued with what I want, how I might act, possible consequences, and feelings that embody my values and what I care about. Just as we expanded our psychoanalytic notions from a one-person model to a relational model, so too, we need to expand and integrate a model of embodiment to include a holistic view of bodymind in context.

The body can be seen as having a semi-permeable boundary that separates us, while simultaneously our receptors, the central and peripheral

¹ When I use the term, bodymind to abbreviate, I am including the *brain* as part of the body, instead of isolating it in a reified position within the current more radical views of cognitive science. Shaun Gallagher addresses these radical views in his recent 2015 article in the Philosopher's Magazine (pp.96-102), *Invasion of the Body Snatchers: How Embodied Cognition is being Disembodied.*)

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nervous system, mirror neurons, neurons in the gut (the enteric brain), and neurons in the heart, (what neurocardiology research refers to as the “heartbrain”), along with our fascia (connective tissue), muscles, and all our organs...our viscera -- all serve as resonators and transmitters of information and energy in context that connect us to our relational field, environmental surround, and to our entire bodymind-self--all integrated and interpreted in the chat-room of the brain in the blink of an eye. That’s a lot going on within and between bodyminds!

The topic of the body, embodiment, and mindbody covers a very large territory. I am going to address a small part. So that we don’t repeat the Cartesian body/mind split on this panel, please take our presentations as part of a whole.

The body and embodiment, with important exceptions, often has been dissociated from our mainstream psychoanalytic therapeutic conversation until recently —actually in a longer view, since the Freud/Reich split when *psychoanalysis, body psychotherapy, hypnosis, and other therapeutic bodywork modalities* went into separate streams of discourse, each developing their own rich elaborations with limited mutual influence among them for many decades.

After the Freud/Reich split, there was an unspoken caution or formalized and intellectualized way of addressing the body within psychoanalysis, as if the body, the bodymind were too messy, too emotional, too sexual, too vulnerable to

shame, to sickness, disability (Emanuel, 2015), illness, and death...existential issues that made us anxious and that posed countertransference complexities.

Yet, over the past few years, the body has returned to psychoanalysis through books, webinars, and conferences, even a recent International interdisciplinary Congress on Affective Touch. *The body in relation shows up* through the detailed and inspirational infant and attachment research and their applications through analogy to the therapeutic dyad (Beebe & Lachmann (2002, 2014); Beebe, Knoblauch, Rustin, Sorter, 2005). For example, self and interactive regulation is very much an embodied, often implicit, procedural, intersubjective process.

Other **bridges** to the somatic include, for example; the focus on the integration of affects (Socarides & Stolorow, 1984/85; Krystal, 1974); brain studies, such as the research on mirror neurons (Rizzolatti, 1996; Di Pellegrino, et al, 1992), neuroplasticity (Doidge, 2015), and memory reconsolidation; dance and movement therapies; sensuality and sexuality (Lichtenberg, 2008); and motivational systems theory (Lichtenberg, Lachmann, Fosshage, 2010) that includes attachment, sensuality, sexuality, and more within a nonlinear dynamic systems framework. Fritz Perls (father of Gestalt therapy) and Ida Rolf, developer of Rolfing Structural Integration, collaborated at Esalen. In the first course I took at ICP as a candidate in 1998, Estelle Shane (Shane, Shane, and Gales, 1997) introduced us to the concept mindbrainbody, Now, with greater attention to

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embodied experience, I reverse the term and use bodybrainmind, or simply, bodymind.

I see these bridges as *linking both the therapist and patient's bodies*, as we directly interact, resonate with each other, embody sensations, create various co-conscious states of awareness, and "*polyrhythms*" together (Steven Knoblauch, 2011) all within a co-created therapeutic context. We also continually move, what Frances Labarre (2005) calls the kinetic dance or kinetic co-transference. A fresh and expanded embodied integration seems underway.

My Personal Interest in the Holistic Bodybrainmind Connection

My personal interest and curiosity in embodiment and the holistic bodymind connection peaked after I personally experienced powerful changes in my own bodymind, when I decided to lose 50 pounds almost 3 years ago. I worked with a trainer at my gym - intensely-at the edge of what I could physically and mentally manage, while also receiving bodywork twice a week to continue exercising at that level. As the pounds dropped off over 5 months, through my sensory and emotional reactions, I became aware of just how much I had warded off my desire for more *sensual and loving connection*. I realized I had engaged my more familiar, habitual intellectual capacities, though while adaptive, even vitalizing, also warded off a sense of vulnerability to shame and humiliation associated with experiencing my desires. My protective, somatic patterns that served to keep these longings out of awareness were expressed as *somatic tightening and inhibition* -- tensing my solar plexus and gut, and a host of other

subtle, embodied holdings that I developed as a kid in order to perform and mask what I learned were forbidden feelings and longings. Although I understood this dynamic from previous psychotherapies, I had little awareness of these somatic holdings in my body before experiencing therapeutic bodywork. I went through the Hellerwork Structural Integration series as a requirement in preparation for Hellerwork training (Heller, 1986). Hellerwork is a bodymind modality --a deep tissue Structural Integration that re-aligns the body to optimal functioning and that additionally includes movement education and a dialogue process, a process unique to every person. Shortly after starting the Hellerwork Structural Integration series, I began regular work with a gifted, intuitive holistic bodyworker while completing my therapeutic massage training that dovetailed beautifully with the Hellerwork Structural Integration process. I realized that my previously disowned pattern of *tighten – hide –perform and comply* was part of a much larger adaptive lifelong pattern that emerged out of my developmental history. I expressed embodied tightening as holding myself in and back, inhibiting myself out of fear of being “too much”, expressively...emotionally... attitudes developed within a family frightened of intimacy, and who used words to disguise feelings or unacceptable perceptions. I felt much more protected to focus my awareness in my head through academics, leadership roles, career development, or in more directly embodied ways -- through my musical life, dance, and athletics, safer avenues of embodied expression more oriented toward performance. So, I began to experience and integrate previously dissociated embodied states. With awareness and intention I began to shift my somatic tension patterns and link

them to my feelings, memories, and associated meanings. I continue to be more aware of my embodied sensations, rhythms, and reactions in different contexts – more aware of when I’m constricting in my bodymind, holding back, or performing, then with awareness and intention, allowing my body, my entire bodymind to let go of my tension patterns, to soften, expand, and remain open to the present moment, to the full range of sensory-emotional possibilities... Then, I can access my vitality, my sense of aliveness... access my wider sense of connection with all living forms and with the mystery of being. My protective state of tighten/hide/perform still occasionally becomes foreground. I feel enormous gratitude that now I can more often transform that state while coming into the present moment. My conclusion: Facilitating access to embodied awareness is an important aspect of our work with patients. And, that learning, growing, changing is a lifelong process!

Indeed, this bodymind journey² continues to be work in progress. It led me to **1)** Therapeutic massage and Hellerwork Structural Integration training preparing to work therapeutically with the whole person’s bodymind, **2)** to a cross-cultural inquiry of bodymindspirit beliefs and practices from various perspectives and cultures that include: **a) psychoanalytic perspective**, **b) contemporary scientific perspectives** related to brain science, anatomy,

² — It is like when one goes to another country. The different perceptions, perspectives, practices and connections with people of the new country shed light on one’s own home and world, offering new perspectives, new possibilities, sometimes challenging what is assumed, or has become routine in one’s current life, engaging and loosening one’s emotional, somatic, and energetic adaptations, thus allowing open space for novelty and change.

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physiology, new research on fascia, and quantum physics (uncertainty principle, particle/wave phenomena, influence of observer on the observed, nonlocal entanglement), **c**) ancient bodymind perspectives from Traditional Chinese Medicine, Ayurveda beliefs and practices from India, and perspectives from Shamanistic native American cultures, and finally, **3**) to a journey toward creating a more embodied way to work with my psychotherapy patients that generally does not include touch, but that expands the possibilities of an embodied, somatic-focused, relational, self psychological integrative approach that may lead to greater awareness and integration of different levels of embodied (mindbody) process.

My professional life now includes therapeutic bodymind work from both sides of the bodymind dialectic...from the therapeutic bodywork and body psychotherapy side of the dialectic and from the no touch, yet somatic focused psychoanalytic psychotherapy side...two different practices that inform each other.

East-West Cross-Cultural inquiry -- Bodymind Beliefs and Practices

Concerning my cross-cultural inquiry, first, I'll say a bit about our psychoanalytic history concerning the bodymind and a paragraph about the Eastern ancient traditions. This cross-cultural inquiry needs an entire paper.

There are two links to our current practice with deep roots in our psychoanalytic history. The first is Georg Groddeck (1976; 1977 translations).

Freud himself was approving of Groddeck, who has been called the “father” of psychosomatic medicine. A contemporary of Freud’s, he explored, in his clinic, the use of various modalities, including hands-on massage in conjunction with talk therapy, to elucidate for his patients the connections between their illness expressed somatically and any unconscious mental processes connected to it. In this way, Groddeck pioneered the integration of touch and Psychoanalysis. He is also our link to a range of physical modalities developed in Europe in the early 20th century, such as sensory awareness (Selver, 2007),³

The other connection to psychoanalysis is the work of Wilhelm Reich (Character Analysis, 1933;1945). Reich, a trained German analyst, explored first the idea that defenses were embodied in the musculature of our body as body armor. He developed a systematic approach to these embodied defenses, using his hands to press on various tense areas of the musculature. Reich used touch as an integrated part of his analytic work, focused mostly on the softening of defenses. He was later to try and extend his work to find the physical, energy flow correlate to libido, which led him to his “orgone energy” experiments that over time alienated him from Freud and many in the psychoanalytic community. He also was largely focused on the cathartic aspects of emotional expression (affect) while not being aware of the need in addition for what we now think of as the integration of affects (Socarides, & Stolorow (1984/85); Stolorow (2007); Krystal) (1974).

³ Thanks to Leonard Bearne, Psy. D. for his consultation regarding Groddeck and Reich.

So after the break between Reich and Freud, it's taken awhile for dialogue to begin again among these very rich traditions: contemporary psychoanalysis, body psychotherapy, hypnosis, and other bodymind modalities. People who studied with Reich continued to develop their approach into new directions. For example, we're fortunate to have Jon Sletvold here with us at the conference.⁴

I want to make one point concerning ancient holistic perspectives on embodiment, and bodymindspirit, such as 1) Traditional Chinese Medicine (acupuncture, acupressure, meridians, yin-yang, the practice of Tai Chi, a slow movement martial art form), 2) Ayurvedic ideas and practices from India (yoga, mantra, Chakra system)⁵, and 3) Shamanistic Native American cultures attuned to nature. The point is this: All of these ancient perspectives shared concerns about harmony, balance, holism, flow, and the mutual influence of everything on almost everything else. They understood emergent, self-organizing dynamic systems long before we did. They also understood that we all inhabit the energies of the electromagnetic and gravitational fields

⁴ Others who studied with Reich or who were influenced by him, who went on to develop their own unique perspectives and/or modalities for working with bodymind: Lowen's bioenergetics, Stanley Hellman, Peter Levine's somatic experiencing in relation to trauma, Susie Orbach, William Cornell, Sue Shapiro, Jon Sletvold, Asaf Rolef Ben Shahr, Nitza Yarom, Nick Totton, and others.

⁵ My source for Ayurveda beliefs and practices from India is Depak Chopra, a native of India, who did his medical training and specialty in the U.S. and who integrates his version of contemporary biology and quantum physics with his Ayurveda knowledge and practice. Also helpful were discussions with Mark Hooker, SI, CHP, CMT, and Jordan Allen, LMT, Program Director at IPSB, instructor of Kundalini Yoga and Tai Chi, who have studied Eastern and energetic mindbody perspectives.

of the Earth. Further, they believed that energy flow (chi, ki, prana, meaning universal life force) could be developed and experienced through focused awareness, meditation, movement, and imagery to enhance health, a sense of vitality, and spirituality. Their holistic, metaphoric, even poetic way of expressing relations⁶ was in stark contrast to Western civilization's habits of thought that focused more on categorizing the world and forming abstractions, patterns that emanated from ancient Greek culture. For example, Nisbett, in a series of studies (Nisbett, 2003), shows that Westerners tend to perceive figure/ground distinctions, whereas East Asians tend to perceive relations among and within the whole context. This difference in thought patterns arising out of social-cultural-political contexts led to dissimilar assumptions, differing ways of perceiving the world, and ways of thinking about the bodymind.

Thus, the Western view of the body as assembled parts, a view that still dominates our medical system, for example, and the analogy of the brain as a computer are both misleading, representing a Western bias.⁷

⁶ A 12th C. neo Confucian wrote, "The universe is my mind and my mind is the universe." (Nisbett, 2003, p.17). A key notion is that of resonance, the idea that Man, heaven, and earth create resonances in each other. They are all connected. From an ayurveda perspective: "The source of all creation is pure consciousness . . . pure potentiality seeking expression from the unmanifest to the manifest. And when we realize that our true Self is one of pure potentiality, we align with the power that manifests everything in nature." Chopra Center

⁷ Western thought patterns going back to Greek civilization developed by categorizing our world into parts and forming abstractions. In contrast, the ancient

I see a holistic, embodied emphasis as an extension and additional nuanced focus for us psychotherapists to integrate into our experience-near way of working, even though we don't utilize touch directly, as body psychotherapists and integrative body-workers do.

However, we can become more sensitive to sensation, to resonance with the somatic, expressed nonverbally and procedurally in our own bodies and in our patients' bodies -- whether through movement, breathing patterns, gestures, eye movements, postures, limb actions, the proprioceptive feel of our bodies in space, the co-ordination of our actions (kinetic channel) facial expressions, muscular tightening, etc., along with narrative expressions of our patients stories through language, language which Lakoff and Johnson (1999) reminds us is very much embodied and socially constructed.

Being sensitive to the nonverbal, implicit and procedural embodied dimensions of experience, facilitates our becoming aware of our *somatic co-transference interplay*...our intersubjective somatic dance. We listen to the implicit with "the third ear" (Theodore Reik, 1948), listen with our gut, with our heart (emotions), opening awareness to our physical sensations. We *focus (visual) or tune into (auditory)* the quiet space of our visceral "felt sense"(Gendlin, *Focusing*, 1982), our patient's felt sense, and to more subtle expressions of our bodies. That is, we can mindfully tune into what we

Chinese philosophers, who favored sense impressions in understanding the world were dis-inclined to use precisely defined terms or categories in any arena. Instead they preferred expressive metaphoric language, lending itself to a far more holistic view of the world and *bodymindspirit*. (The Geography of Thought: How Asians and Westerners Think Differently...and Why, Richard Nisbett, 2003).

sometimes dissociate from awareness in our emphasis on using words and talk as a primary vehicle of expression and exchange. I have learned from body-workers *that our capacity to attune relationally, emotionally, intuitively, energetically with our patients is greatly enhanced through tracking of somatic experience of both therapist and patient. Staying connected with our felt sense while finding expression with words manifests a balanced sense of mindbody.*

Bodies Emerging: A Big Picture⁸

A speaker began her TED Talk this way:

“Do you know that the chances of each of us here being alive on this planet is 1/ in 400 trillion?”

She drew on a scientist’s calculation. Whether accurate or not, her point leads to an appreciation of this state of chance in the universe, of being alive on this planet, part of the larger field of information and intelligence.

...Odds of *one in 400 trillion*...that’s a lot of uniqueness... a lot of creativity just in this room.

About 200 *million* years ago scientists estimate that our human species began to organize – homo sapiens: First, a primitive critter brain, later, the limbic system, and then, about 200 to 800 *thousand* years ago, just a few minutes ago in evolutionary time, larger, more complex brains developed to organize complex movement with the entire nervous system

integrating into our bodywide connections and feedback loops. We were organized to move in gravity... in the world... to meet our needs within a more unpredictable environment. Today we have approximately 100 trillion cells in our bodies—complexly organized and changing moment by moment responsive to our environment, both internal and external, much of which is out of our awareness. The cells of our bodies are continually in motion. Cells live, do their job, perhaps make proteins, provide energy, excrete chemicals, contract, deliver electrical impulses, detoxify, kill off alien bacteria, viruses, fungi, cancerous growths that attack our bodies, clean up debris etc., then die. New cells are born to replace dying cells...continual turnover over varying timespans...hours, days, months, or years. Yet, we remain identifiable as you and me. Over time, we develop a different body, as our cells recycle, while we also remain the same--self-similarity in action.

*We are amazing creatures⁹... made up of around 70% water with 80% shared DNA with other life forms. Only 20% of our DNA is uniquely human! And movement is our own particular dance expressed moment by moment throughout our life-time. **How** we move is a major part of our unique nonverbal signature, our kinetic dance. We all learn to walk and move in our

⁹ Any pound of flesh taken from the body would contain elements of 3 nets that if extracted intact, would show us the shape of the whole body —1) neural network, 2) vascular network of arteries, veins, and capillaries, and the fasciae net. (the extracellular fibrous web created by the connective tissue cells that surround everything in the body). Seen in this systemic way, one can see that *we survive as an interwoven set of systems all communicating with each other throughout the body and with our natural, familial, social-cultural, and relational environments, processing the continual flow of information and energy in the surround* (The Concise Book of the Moving Body-Chris Jarmey and Thomas Myers, 2006)

own unique ways as Esther Thelen (1994) taught us. I think of our bodies as living malleable structure, living tissue that embodies in this present moment our total bodymind life experience to date. *Indeed, we are more than the sum of the parts.*¹⁰

There are still mysteries, many viewpoints about the body, the brain, their relation to mind, and, of course, the mystery of consciousness itself, although we have some remarkable inspirational accounts based on neuroscience (Edelman 2000, 2004, 2005, 2007). Edelman wonders in his book, *Second Nature*, does the latest brain research imply that **all** knowledge can be reduced to scientific description? When it comes to soul, heart, and spirit, our scientific descriptions often fall short, especially in contrast with the ancient Eastern traditions in which spirit, heart, and soul is part of an integral mindbodyspirit whole in context.

Our belief systems -- scientific, philosophical, or spiritual, for example, influence how we understand these relations of mind, brain, body, spirit, soul, source, environment, field... beliefs that influence our perceptions and interpretations of experience.¹¹ Mark Solms, (psychoanalyst and a lecturer in

¹⁰ For the brain, central nervous system and peripheral nervous system to function well, it needs good flow of accurate information coming in. So anything in our bodyminds that disrupts or interferes with that flow of information may lead to less than optimal functioning in the "chat room" of the brain.

¹¹ Authors differ substantially in their metaphysical emphases from those who start from a primarily spirit-centered position such as those from humanistic, transpersonal, and body-psychotherapy based positions. Materialists would be doubtful about such claims based on experiments, as put forth by Emoto Masaru, (2001, 2004), a Japanese scientist, that "water that has been exposed to different kinds of thoughts and emotions will form different types of crystalline structures when frozen" (p/ 199). In Corrigan, Payne, & Wilkinson (About a Body 2006, p.2)

neurosurgery at the Royal London School of Medicine, and Chair of neuropsychology, University of Cape Town, South Africa), earlier this year in an extensive web course on “What is a Mind?” proposed that mind is embodied physically and must have four properties to exist: 1) Subjectivity, 2) capacity for consciousness (qualities of awareness), 3) intentionality, and 4) a sense of agency. When asked if mind might be distributed beyond the brain, Solms indicated that it was not an easy question. I bring this up as something to consider given the uncertainties, debates, and unsolved mysteries of consciousness, unconscious communication, and concepts, such as non-local entanglement proposed by quantum physicists.¹²

Sensory-Conceptual Awareness increased with Technology

Our senses have been extended through technology to see wavelengths beyond what are eyes can naturally see, to see our bodies in process at the molecular, atomic, and cellular levels with electron microscopes, to probe the cellular pathways, to detect with sensitive instrumentation vibrations that we cannot feel consciously, or detect sound waves that we cannot hear, or light waves that we cannot see, because they are beyond the limits of our species' sensory range. Too often, we operate

On the other hand the humanists would be sympathetic to talk about subtle energies and would be comfortable balancing Western and Eastern alternative or complementary medical approaches. They, however, would be wary of ostensibly reductionistic remarks made by many brain researchers.

¹² Neuroscience has yet to frame an adequate biological or naturalistic account of human experience. Too often, neuroscientists assume that we are our brain, what Francis Crick (1994) referred to as “the astonishing hypothesis”.

under the premise that if we can't see, touch, hear, feel, taste, or smell some thing, we assume, falsely, that it does not exist.

We are not aware of the electromagnetic and gravitational fields that affect our bodyminds every second. According to Dr. Roger Sperry, 1981 Nobel Lauriet for research in brain function, "Better than 90% of the energy output of the brain is used in relating to the physical body in its gravitational field. The more mechanically distorted a person is, the less energy available for thinking, metabolism, and healing."¹³ (personal communication, Dan Bienenfeld¹⁴, 9/12/15.) The electromagnetic and gravitational fields are to humans as water is to fish. We know now that these fields do affect us, because astronauts that leave the gravitational and electromagnetic fields of the Earth to spend time at the orbiting space station outside these fields of the Earth have major physiological deterioration issues that continue to be researched and specified (Blottner & Salanova, 2015).

New research on fascia, our connective tissue that surrounds everything in the body, suggests that fascia responds to information and energy at the speed of light. That's faster communication than information passing through our electrical nervous system. With new research on fascia,

¹³ J. Sch Health 2007 Mar; 77(3):131-7 Research Support. Non-U.S. Gov't
ncbi.nlm.nih.gov

Prevalence and risk factors of poor posture in school children in the Czech Republic - PubMed

¹⁴ Hellerwork for Children, Dan Bienenfeld, Body-Mind Structural Integration Practitioner; Fascia and Movement Specialist, Author, Teacher; "[Align For Life](#), E Book at danbienenfeld.com.

we may find that fascia has a much larger communicative role in our bodymind connection than previously understood.

We have many different rhythms going on simultaneously. We have cardiac rhythms, cerebral spinal fluid rhythm, blood pulsating in the circulatory system endlessly exchanging life giving oxygen for carbon dioxide, the slow undulating peristalsis movements of the gastrointestinal system, Peristalsis rhythm stops when our sympathetic nervous system goes into fight/flight/freeze mode in response to trauma -- releasing cortisol and other neurotransmitters that together stimulate an inflammatory response. I want to emphasize that these complex information systems running mostly out of conscious awareness in our bodyminds nevertheless affect our subjective and intersubjective experience...affect our states of consciousness.

Another bridge, from contemporary neuroscience to the ancient healing practices, comes from current applications of neuroplasticity (Doidge, 2015). Norman Doidge, in his new book, *The Brain's Way of Healing* (2015) brings together bodymind and an energetic focus from the ancient traditions: i.e., use of light, sound, resonance of vibration, rhythm, movement, focused intentional awareness, imagery, and thought – all utilized today through current technology as noninvasive avenues into the mindbrainbody to awaken the plastic brain's own transformative capacities to heal chronic pain, debilitating strokes, brain injuries, learning disorders, MS, Parkinson's disease, and more. It's a statement of how the energies that we inhabit within the electromagnetic fields of Earth environment are

elements that can be focused into powerful forces in health and healing. There is evidence of remarkable medical success with these pathways, which Doidge describes and documents.¹⁵

With patients, using our intention to generate and co-create a sense of embodied presence and flow powerfully facilitates contacting the emotional core of unconscious organizing processes expressed through our verbal, nonverbal, sub-symbolic (Bucci, 2007, 2011), and somatic communications within an engaged intersubjective therapeutic connection.¹⁶

Taking more into account our embodiment enriches our clinical self psychological understandings by drawing us into an experience-near awareness of our bodies, our patients' bodies, and our continuous somatic

¹⁵ Many practitioners now combine the best of Western medicine and Eastern holistic approaches...so-called alternative, complementary, or integrative medicine. These various healing practices are all embedded in very different cultures and belief systems. For example, those in the ayurveda tradition would see purposefulness in all life as the purpose of expanding consciousness...universal consciousness. A common thread among the ancient Eastern traditions is the idea and experience of chi, prana, ki—universal life energy at the center of healing practices, something our Western culture and medical community does not easily acknowledge, let alone embrace. It does, however, have links to mindfulness meditation, which has become popular.

¹⁶ Our focus on the nonverbal psycho-sensory, on movement, and gesture, the evocative, metaphorical, and intuitive in embodied intersubjective clinical participation may expand the potential for a patient to access previously blocked modes of physical/mental awareness and expression facilitating transformation when we attend to preverbal bodily states, shifts in states of consciousness, sensory perception, embodied affective states, embodied co-transference, and the particular meanings they have for a given person.

dialogue. By anchoring our work in sensations, by noticing and working with somatic co-transference, we engage a pathway of reorganizing the body as an avenue to reorganizing mind, and vice versa. We have multiple pathways to travel within a holistic field of possibilities. **Becoming more aware of how our bodies express our bodyminds in relation to our patients engages more of us when exploring meanings of therapeutic enactments, repetitive and developmental transferences, when exploring how a patient may experience a sense of safety/danger, or a selfobject connection, or conditions of self and interactive affect regulation. When we resonate with our patients in a state of embodied recognition, our patient may experience a new felt sense of intersubjective empathic understanding in states of both similarity and difference.**

CLINICAL IMPLICATIONS: Embodied Therapeutic Dialogue

What can we learn from body psychotherapists, movement oriented therapists, and other therapeutic body-workers about engaging the patient's embodiment through embodied therapeutic dialogue? I draw on skills suggested in Asaf Rolef Ben-Shahar, Touching the Relational Edge in Body Psychotherapy (2014) as well as Gendlin's "focusing" and "felt sense", plus many other ways of accessing nonverbal mindbody knowing that I have found useful. Naturally, each of us would develop our own ways of working with embodied dialogue sensitive to a given patient.

Before a session, I use imagery to focus my own awareness, attention, and intention. I begin with grounding, bringing myself into the present moment –with an open sense of presence, my grounded, higher sense of self available for connection...present to listen with attunement to both my bodymind and the patient's bodymind, I hold space and presence for my patient's experience. I lightly hold in mind the question, "Where do I perceive a primary entry point into this person's bodymind system at this moment? I wait, as we co-create conditions of safety, until the patient can let me into his/her system. I might play foreground/background with words and flesh, collaboratively building bridges between words and sensation, emotion, memory, story, imagination, and play.¹⁷

Self and dyadic regulation, always ongoing, often silently in the background may suddenly become foreground. In Somatic dialogue, I feel into my "felt sense". What resonates at this moment with this person?

I might explore with my patient **how** his/her body feels in a state of vulnerability, shame or humiliation, intense grief, anxiety, depression, or alternatively, in a state of support, sense of freedom, ease, playfulness, humor, passion, or joy? **How** does my body feel when my patient is in those various states?

¹⁷ On occasion, I may even invite the patient to draw a picture of his concern that day, as a way in to accessing not only his story, but his somatic story as well...where he experiences the central dilemma or theme in his body, what that feels like, any sounds or images connected to it, or any relevant sensory aspects, reflecting back his story to him, making sure I understand and honor every piece of it.

Is there something expressed that might become clearer if amplified. Asking the patient to slightly amplify a somatic expression often opens it up to an aware felt sense followed by associations, memories, model scenes, and possible co-transference meanings emerging with more clarity.

How is my bodily comfort right now with this person? Am I feeling connected, disconnected, interested, entranced, bored, irritated, shamed, disgusted, threatened, aroused, sleepy? What am I responding to in my patient's bodymind? In my bodymind?

Even when engaged in verbal dialogue, I hold the body in mind by noticing spontaneous embodied movements, interactive procedural patterns and sequences, aware that movements and sensations are communications. What meanings emerge in this context?

When a patient experiences and expresses healing movement or a sense of safety, expansiveness, playfulness, or joy, I might offer the possibility of anchoring this state in his/her bodymind by asking, "**How** does your feeling safe (expansive, etc.) here, now, feel in your body? **Where and how** do you feel that sensation of safety? ...Is this familiar...something new?"

I generally offer these possibilities without urgency or pressure, without a sense of my agenda for the patient...simply as part of open space for exploration.... for experiencing... for integration.

Staying present to embodied selfobject experience, to what the patient may experience as an empathic failure, and/or to implicit meanings of what

we may be enacting procedurally with each other...i.e., collaboratively working with any and all organizations of experience that emerge is all part of embodied work. I always hold the potential for new modes of mindbody expression in the therapeutic context and beyond. However, I believe the biggest challenge we face for bringing ourselves into an embodied therapeutic approach is to acknowledge and transcend our own professional body armor toward a more vital, open, and fully present embodied therapeutic dialogue.

A Postscript Concerning the Big Picture: I'll leave you with this thought. 99.9% of species that have inhabited the Earth are now extinct. We are earth's new experiment...still evolving. I wonder..., how long will our species survive? ...A story to be continued... *Thank you.*

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