



Presencing

JACK BLACKBURN'S NEWSLETTER
Issue 8 – April 2008

Presence and Touch

Presencing Touch – Sharing of Inner and Outer Awareness

In this issue of *Presencing* I am introducing a new class and addressing two areas of my own work with clients that have to do with actual hands-on and verbal techniques: Decompression Somatics and Foot Decompression Somatics. I started last year looking for a meaningful umbrella to describe all of the methods I use to work with clients – both as a bodyworker and as a spiritual director. The terminology is *Presencing Touch*. The symbol of sharing is the *mandorla* – overlapping circles where an almond shaped center symbolizes the mutual experience of self and other, practitioner and client. The outer circle represents the *presence* that unifies both persons.



And for the first time I am linking my work and that of touch therapists to a current trend in popular culture. For the past six weeks Oprah has been hosting an on-line class with Eckhart Tolle attracting millions of participants around the globe – based upon the ideas and practices in his book: *A New Earth*. I fully accept the concept that we humans are awakening to our true identity as we learn to practice *presencing*. This awakening involves close attention to our interior bodily environment as well as the thoughts, words, and emotions of our ego mind. *Presencing* entails the acceptance of things as they occur including the discomforts of pain and fear, and observing how interior and exterior phenomena reflect one another. And, on a larger scale, observing the close relationship between our collective anthropocentric arrogance and fearfulness and the problems we have created for the Earth.

Bodyworkers and other hands-on therapists can play a very direct role in awakening of humanity out of the nightmare of separation and fear. Touch that involves a sharing of presence can foster unity awareness that brings awakening. Symptomatic relief techniques that require no client involvement (like medicine) can distract clients from their own awakening. I have said before on these pages that the body is a good and reliable servant that can bring us *home* to healing if we learn to listen to its messages. I have recently realized that human beings suffer from one disease - fear of one another. So the task of hands-on therapists is simple: To find ways of *sharing presence* between ourselves and our clients so we can all awaken out of the nightmare of fear. The descriptions below are examples of bodywork modalities I teach that are based upon the sharing of body-centered *presencing*.

Decompression Somatics - Feeling for Balance

I had given Andre about six sessions - But something happened in this session that neither of us could forget. I told him that I was going to try a new technique during this session for the left shoulder stiffness we had never been able to resolve. I told him that it should not cause any pain and he agreed to let me know if he did feel pain. I started to work on his shoulder using the *Trager* moves I'd used on him before to assess what had changed. Then I decided to try some decompression. I couldn't remember the neutral position I'd learned in the class so I decided to try and feel the correct position of the shoulder and arm. I closed my eyes and started to move his arm and shoulder into various positions until I could feel a position of no loading. With my eyes closed I was very sensitive to whether the weight of the arm and shoulder were evenly distributed on the three axes of the shoulder girdle: clavicle, superior margin of the scapula and the posterior and anterior muscles of shoulder rotation.



Andre had shown me some interesting photos of a man in Jalapa who made his money by creating very tall stacks of balanced rocks on the beach for the tourists. I was impressed because I had stacked stones but these stacks were as many as 20 rocks high.

Line of Balance, Axis of Resistance, feeling the Effects of Gravity

As I tried to find balance between these axes, I saw in my mind's eye, the stack of balancing rocks in Andre's photo. All of a sudden I realized that I was balancing the shoulder just like finding the delicate lines of balance in the rocks. I could feel little lines under my hands that seemed to go right into the middle of his upper chest. As I tried to follow these lines Andre started taking deeper and deeper breaths. And his shoulder and arm started to make slight reflexive jerks. With each one he would sigh and breath even deeper. I could feel deeply into his chest. It seemed as if I was balancing many rocks - some near the surface and some very deep inside. I could feel the lines of balance as I felt one level after another. His shoulder

girdle seemed to relax and collapse in towards the ribcage. And the shoulder released its anterior rotation.

Periodically I would check the shoulder for movement using *Trager* and find that it moved more and more freely. Finally he took a deep sigh and many tears started to flow. His shoulder had completely let go for the first time in our sessions together. After the session was over he reported that he could breathe freely for the first time since he was 12 years old. He had been shot with a small caliber rifle. The bullet went through his upper chest entering just above the left lung and exiting in the rhomboid area between his lung and his spine. The wound had healed many years ago but the scar tissue was tight and painful. With the decompressions the effects of the gunshot wound completely disappeared. He felt that the scar tissue had softened to normal.

After this experience I decided to experiment with decompression and other types of positional release in my client sessions. I would take advantage of positions in which bones, connective tissue, and joints were lined up along what seemed to be a line of resistance (or a resolution of different vectors) so that releases were created mostly by sensing for balance along that line. Small reflexes in the client's tissue were like the tipping signals in stone stacking; they helped me to find the line of balance. When the line of balance is arrived at there is a releasing of tension in the bodypart. In rock balancing gravity



provides a downward force of compression and the weight vectors of the individual stones can be aligned in different orientations by feel along an always-present vertical axis; the more unstable the orientation and the greater the number of stones, the finer the line of balance. As with stone stacking I would keep positioning the body parts until a release or shift into balance would take place in the body.

Coming to The Feet



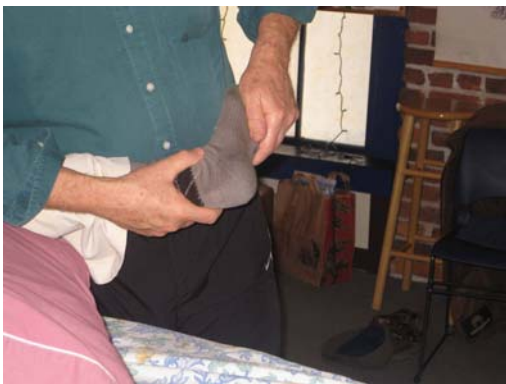
Discovering Foot Decompression Somatics – Jack Blackburn

In 2000 I was demonstrating some of my somatics techniques to some Trager®



colleagues in Germany. I had a client walk for us in her bare feet on a wooden dance floor. She seemed to be leaning forward as she was walking. I noticed that as she put her weight on her feet she was not making even contact with the floor. I asked her if she was feeling discomfort in her feet. She confirmed that the ball of her left foot was quite painful and that she had been experiencing difficulty in walking for some time. She lay down on the treatment table and I proceeded to palpate her

left foot. I found a lot of hypertonicity between the metatarsals and her transverse arch was reversed. I proceeded to tap on the tight tissue and asked her to direct her breath and to feel right where I was tapping... and to notice where the tapping seemed to go - inside her foot. This she did and almost immediately the tissue tone started to soften and the arch started to change. She reported that she could feel a melting of her pain and growing warmth in her foot. As these changes were occurring I would periodically move the metatarsals back and forth and rotate, stretch, and compress all of the joints of her toes to find any residual areas of tightness - and then repeat the tapping and words to keep her focus in her foot. I repeated the same process with the right foot. After about 15 minutes I asked her to get up and walk for us. When she put her weight on her left foot she felt no pain. "It's the first time in years my foot has felt so good." She started to walk and felt a little off-balance. She soon adjusted her walk to the new feeling in her foot and her body became balanced and upright. "I feel like my feet are sinking into the floor and my body feels very relaxed." My colleagues and I were very impressed with the results.



One evening a few weeks later I was working on a female client in Seattle who had joint problems in her knees, hips and low back. Our previous sessions had given her some relief with but I noticed that she had the same complaints - session after session. I said: "I'd like to try something different, this time. I want to end the session by doing some new work on your feet. I have the sense that the reason your discomfort keeps coming back is because we haven't fully released the tensions in

your feet." Because of the complexity of so many joints and types of connective tissue in the foot, I had previously avoided using the decompression techniques. What I found in this experiment was that the combination of decompression and somatics was very pleasurable to the client. I kept her present in her feet by combining verbal interaction and tactile stimulation with a variety of positional releases. She became very aware that her own presencing was producing the effects and she could feel in great detail how her feet, knees, hips and low back were changing. She wanted to prolong the session so she could feel even more releases in her body. When she stood up and walked, her whole body had

changed. She never had a reoccurrence of the joint pains. I realized that this new combined technique was a breakthrough and started using it and refining it in every session and teaching it in my classes.



**Class Title: Decompression Somatics for the Lower Extremities – An
Introduction to Sharing Presence with our Clients
June 14-15 Seattle, Washington
9AM - 6PM**

Tuition: \$280 if registered 2 weeks advance; \$300 thereafter

For more information and to register:

http://www.presencingsource.com/JackBlackburn_DecompressionSomatics.html

1.888.755.4558 or 206.527.0908 or email: jackblac@oz.net

You can register using PayPal through our website: www.presencingsource.com



Similar to homeopathy, this is an extremely effective and gentle modality that goes right to the heart of healing, with no painful side effects. Learn how to take clients directly into their patterns of unconscious holding and trigger reflexive or somatic responses to resolve those patterns. This powerful transformative tool results in core physical, mental, and emotional healing.

This class stems from material that Jack Blackburn has been teaching for many years in his classes: Side-Lying Somatics, Table Talking, Foot Decompression Somatics (Japan), and Being Present with Your Clients. In the last few years Jack's work and classes have been strongly influenced by the writings and classes of Denise Deig author of *Positional Release Technique; from a dynamic systems perspective*, Tom Meyers author of *Anatomy Trains*, Thomas Hanna's articles on *Somatics*, and trainings in *Focusing*, Eugene Gendlin's body-centered counseling techniques.

In this class you will be introduced to very powerful positional release techniques as well as verbal support that helps your client become an active participant in the releases. These combined approaches allow you to effectively

help the client let go of holding patterns in any part of the body. These approaches are particularly helpful for the client's relationship to pain.



- Learn how to find the axis of resistance in muscles and joints
- Learn how to convert resistance into releases
- Learn how to work *with* holding patterns rather than against them
- Learn how to use words and tactile stimuli to support releases
- Learn how to position multiple joints, muscles, and connective tissue to produce overall releases
- Learn how to gently follow releases by feeling subtle reflexes
- Learn how to remain present and create a shared presence with clients

This sixteen-hour class is intended to take you into a wholly different world of client-centered somatics. This is especially helpful for those of you who do clinical work and are aware that so much more can happen for your clients than removal of symptoms. This class is designed to explore various methods of client recruitment and empowerment into their own healing process and life transformation rather than “fixing” clients.

Recommended Reading: *Anatomy Trains* by Tom Myers
Positional Release Technique by Denise Deig
Focusing by Eugene Gendlin
“What is Somatics?” by Thomas Hanna in *Bone*
Breath and Gesture by Don Johnson