

Presencing Issue 21

A Professional Challenge

Unheard Message: Something new is arising from within the world of bodywork. There has always been a hidden truth underneath all of our work with clients: "Someone is living inside of that body." When we work with clients over the year we start to develop an awareness about what will be helpful to different clients. Many of us have developed a keen sense of what methods will be useful with different client conditions. Many of these insights have led to new forms of manual therapy. We must give due credit to those of our colleagues who have brought through new and very effective forms of body therapies, either from their extensive work with clients or by merging their body experiences with other care giving disciplines. New forms have been birthed and, because they have proven more effective, we have committed ourselves to adding them to our treatment repertoire.



Something Missing: In all of our valiant attempts to develop the most effective forms of therapy, we have overlooked perhaps the most significant message: "Someone is living inside that body." It is true that we acknowledge the client's presence during the intake process and at certain times during a clinical session when we ask about the level of pain she is experiencing. However most sessions, no matter whether they are therapeutic or for relaxation, the client is basically uninvolved in what is taking place. It is as if the client drops her body off at the repair facility and picks it up later after the mechanic has finished her job. Our job is seen as: repairing the damage or fixing the symptoms. What is forgotten is that the client has lived in her body for all of her life, and she has direct access to what is happening in her body right now. We don't!



By Inference: In fact we can only infer what the client is experiencing from the signs and symptoms we pick up from our hands or our visual impressions. As far as symptomatic relief is concerned, we develop a kind of sixth sense of what is happening in the body. The client may be asleep, zoning out, dreaming, dissociating, chatting, or experiencing a flashback. We can only infer what is happening inside. In fact if we pay attention to what is happening in our own minds, we are often concocting stories about the client and his/her life story. We spend much of our days as therapists trying to match the stories we have concocted with the symptoms we are attending and the relief we wish to produce.

A Matter of Importance: Perhaps the most significant piece of data in a session is what the client is experiencing right now in her body. I would surmise that this data is much more important than any refinement of technique or practitioner intuition. If the client can tell us what she is experiencing throughout the session we have obtained the Rosetta stone of therapy, the primary material that can take us so much further in discerning our effectiveness. Think about the best and most effective client experiences you have had. I am guessing that the client was more aware than usual of her/his body, both before, during, and after the session. While we place so much emphasis upon third person information like: muscle tonus, range of motion, intake and diagnosis, and even client pain assessments, we are missing the in-the-moment livingness inside the client.

Dedication to Uncovering Truth: I am dedicating the rest of this year to pursuing the "Someone who lives inside the body." Will you join me in this quest? How can we address our sessions to that living presence inside our clients' bodies? What is the evidence of aliveness and conscious awareness that we

can feel? And how can we actively involve him/her in what is taking place during the session? You know that I have been pursuing this goal personally for many years. I have done so because I sense that we are on the verge of a tremendous breakthrough. The hands-on methods we use are only the beginning! We can leave the exploration of cause and the unraveling of client history to the other caregivers. But we have direct hands-on experience of the person inside and she/he can join us from inside the body as it is right now, so that we are both accessing the symptoms internally and externally, tactilely and experientially.



Pursuing the Quest: I will carry out this quest with my clients and colleagues while I'm here in Seattle and during October in Japan. My Presencing Newsletters over the next four months will be dedicated to fleshing out some of the issues with client involvement. I am composing two articles for publication to promote this project nationally. I will be developing some of this material during my month in Japan. I have asked Genjo Marinello to co-lead a seminar November 17th on the role of practitioner guidance during sessions. And Trillium Institute will be sponsoring another Future of Bodywork Symposium: The Role of the Client in Bodywork on the evening of December 28th in Seattle. I hope that you can catch my enthusiasm for this project. What is your sense? Does this feel like worthy effort? I ask again: "Will you join me?"