

Presenting Issue 24

The Client's Role in Bodywork Case Study: Toshi

Toshi was 11 years old when I first saw him for a session in Japan. I was told that he suffered from asthma and had been having panic attacks and difficulty sleeping at night. He had a big exam coming up which would determine whether he could enter a prestigious middle and high school. In Japan at that age the choice of schools can determine a student's whole education career and future choices in life. He came with his mother. He was wearing glasses, was dressed in navy blue shorts, blazer and cap, and backpack. He was short and quite shy and made little eye contact with me and spoke reluctantly through his mother and Koito my friend who was translating. She had told me that his mother had many financial worries because his father was depressed and not working.

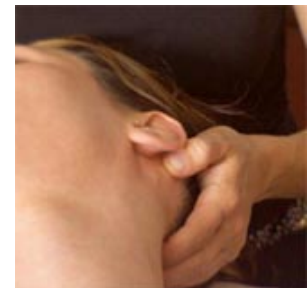


Toshi told me that he was worried about dying. He had recently dreamed of his own death. I asked him to tell me the details of the dream. He said: "I could see myself lying on a bier, and there were mourners around. I could see my face. I was an old man." I



said: "Maybe you have been fortunate enough to now know that you will live to be an old man." I told him that I had a similar dream when I was young. His mother then said that Toshi was worried about the upcoming exam. He nodded. It seemed to me that his mother was overburdened with many financial and safety worries as well as her concerns for her son. She seemed quite anxious and shaky as she was speaking. I remember thinking: "Toshi is also worried about his mother."

I had been in similar circumstances to Toshi when I was his age... a father who was gone and a mother who worried continuously about money and safety. I suggested that we work on his mother together before I would work on him. We could then calm her down and also give him a few things he could do for his mother in the future. We put Toshi's mom on the table. I gave her about 15 minutes of Trager. I asked Toshi to hold his mother's feet as I worked with her head, neck, and shoulders.



He was grounding her energetically and also holding her very carefully. I then asked him to cradle her neck with his hands while I worked on her torso, pelvis, and lower extremities. He could feel the movements coming through her body and he could feel

her body relax! I also showed him some simple movements he could do on his own. She told him that his hands felt very good.



Then it was Toshi's turn on the table. His Mom was quite relaxed and simply sat in her chair, drifting in and out of sleep. I started by giving him the same kind of overall Trager movements I had given his Mom. He told Koito that it felt very good. "Kimochi," "Feels good" I asked? "Hai" he said. After a while I asked Toshi to close his eyes and feel inside his body. He did this. His body had become very relaxed and he was able to

breathe more freely. I then thought of some of the men who had helped me at his age. I asked inside to be shown some way as an adult male that I could help him. I realized that he needed some personal tools that he could use to help him with his fear and physical development. I decided that I could give him some "energy tools" that I use with clients in clinical applications of Reiki.

I showed Toshi how to find his second chakra, two finger widths below his naval. In Japan this spot is well known by martial arts practitioners and is called the "tanden." I asked him to put both hands over the tanden and then I placed my hands over his and gave him Reiki. I asked him to breathe in and out through his hands. This he did and I could immediately feel his hands heat up. I asked:



"What do you feel there?" Toshi said: "I feel much warmth and strength coming into my body." We then moved to his 3rd chakra or solar plexus. "And here... what do you feel?" He waited a while and then said: "I feel comfort and calmness and much warmth." Next we move to his 5th chakra, the throat and upper chest. I was amazed at how quickly he could breathe in and feel the energy in his body. He was also quite sensitive to the kind of energy he was feeling: "I feel something opening and flowing, like wind or water." I looked at Koito and said: "Sugoi!" Amazing!



I then removed my hands and asked Toshi to repeat the three hand positions and breathing and repeat the words he had used to describe the different energies: "strength, calmness, openness." He proceeded to do this on his own. As he did so his hands became quite red! He was taking deeper and deeper breaths. I asked Toshi if he liked breathing into those centers. "Hai," he said. So now that he had the feeling of the energy in his body I suggested that he start to make connections between the centers. By placing a hand on one center and his other hand on another center he

could breathe in "strength" and breathe out "calmness." He could breathe in "strength" and breathe out "openness..." and so on. He actually was learning to move the energy

or “chi” throughout his body. I told him that if he practiced this technique regularly he would become bigger and stronger and his fears would leave. He said he would practice them every day... and he did.

When we finished the session Toshi was speaking directly to me. He was breathing comfortably and standing taller. I was too. I realized that he was very sincere and that he would follow my advice. By giving Toshi some things he could do both for his mother and for himself he became more empowered and self confident. He fully participated in his own session. I am convinced that we can offer tools of somatic awareness and inner confidence to each of our clients. If we start to broaden our understanding of body awareness and working with presence we can recruit our clients into a sense of mutual exploration and discovery. Toshi went on to easily pass his exams, grow taller and more confident. He asked Koito if he could have a picture of me. A year ago I heard that he had tried out and been accepted on the school's kendo team!

