

On the other hand, going it alone can be an extremely lonely and painful business, and even the I Ching seem to suggest that we should meet in groups to develop ourselves: -

*'Knowledge should be a refreshing and vitalizing force. It becomes so only through stimulating intercourse with congenial friends with whom one holds discussion and practises application of the truths of life. In this way learning becomes many sided and takes on a cheerful lightness, whereas there is always something ponderous and one-sided about the learning of the self-taught.'*

It would be easy to conclude with a statement that more research was needed in this area. As a social scientist, I would suggest that none has been done, in that the research, that I am aware of, always uses self-report questionnaires and objective ratings which destroy a variable in the attempt to quantify it. The 'research' has to be in a personal ongoing form, both for the group leader and for the group member

and perhaps to come to an understanding that these roles are not clearly separable is to begin the task of coping with dependency.

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Hans Lobstein

## Another Way In

'I am a psychiatric social worker' she said, 'and I know all about my emotional problems. I only want you to work on my back, that is all, I don't want you to start dabbling in anything else. I am seven months pregnant, as you can see, and the pre-natal midwife tutor who knows your work thought that the pain in my back might be helped by massage.'

I nodded my head wisely. I should have known better than to assume that there must be some additional hidden reason for this pain. I am getting altogether too eager to make assumptions, just because it has happened before. One step at a time. Here is the pain, it may be in the back, the shoulders, the head or anywhere - but that is what they come for and that is enough.

Her name was Helen. it started in the usual way. First session, her back and her neck, a deep tissue massage which I had partly learned from David Gardner some 14 years ago, and he had been a student of Ida Rolf. Ida Rolf's method is now known as Rolfing and is reputed to be very painful, a restructuring of the whole body balance. My own method is less painful and is entirely controlled by the client's own response. When I come across a particularly painful area I look for images which may be associated with it, pictures that fleetingly cross the mind, or dreams that come flooding into memory within a day or two. We can then work on these as well and get in touch with their emotional content.

Helen's back had no pain reaction as I worked on it, to our surprise. There was no pain in any part of her back or shoulders or neck, apart from the usual tensions that are marginally present in almost everybody when they come for the first time. But as I worked on the small of her back my fingers started aching as they had never ached before. I had to rest frequently and my hands were trembling with fatigue. Whatever was going on? I had no explanation for it. Perhaps I should have talked to my fingers and have them talk back to me, they might have told me. Anyway, she had no pain, for the first time for months her pain had just somehow disappeared, and she went home happily.

For the second session I worked on her back again, her neck and her feet. There was no pain and there had hardly been any all week. There was very little reaction at all from her, no dreams and no fantasy images. By the third session when I was working on her thighs, the pain came back with a vengeance, and she yelled. There was a large muscle knot in her left thigh and the pain shot from there straight into the small of her back where it used to be. I had to work very slowly and carefully from then on, partly on her thighs and partly on her back, make the pain come, smoothe it away, make it come, smoothe it away.

'Talk to your pain' I asked her. And later: 'Be the pain and talk to Helen.' And it all came flooding out. Her relationship with her husband, the problems she faced in life. She yelled at her pain, she had her pain scream back at her, her thighs, her legs, her back, all complained bitterly: 'You don't belong to me, go away.' 'I have a good home in your thigh, the more you push me away the more I shall make life hell for you and stay! I don't want to go and I won't have you push me out.'

'How could we come to terms with this conflict?' I asked her, 'see if you can find out from your pain what pain could do, would be willing to do, to be less difficult and what you would have to do in return.'

And she had pain say to her: 'Make peace with me, let me live. I am a good friend to you, I give you warning of anything that may be damaged, that may need help. Don't fight me, don't push me. I want to make friends with you if you will have me.'

Next day she rang up almost at crack of dawn: 'I have had two dreams last night, can I come and tell you about them? I have written them down, the first time I have remembered a dream for many years.'

We spent some four hours working on these dreams. In the first one she was in Canada. She was being pursued by three Red Indians, she hid under a bridge in the river but they spotted her all the same, the water would not cover her head. She ran off again but they caught up with her and shot three arrows into her, white feathered arrows, one in her thigh and two in her back. She screamed with pain and tried to pull them out. Eventually she tore them out and left a wound bleeding. We worked on it Gestalt-fashion. Be the Red Indians, be the arrow, be the water, be the wound, be the blood. Gradually the dream changed, the pictures changed in her mind. The Indians became her mother. Her mother was furious with her for losing her virginity in Canada.

The second dream was quite different. She was in a large church, walking down the aisle with a man in a large stetson hat. Around her neck she had some heavy wooden beams that weighed her down. 'Talk to the man in the stetson hat.'

'I want you to find out who I am and what I am and where I am at. I want you to ask me about myself. I want you to be a god and a father and a teacher to me. I want to be taken over, directed, shaped by you. I also want a tumble of sympathy. A tumble of sympathy, do you hear? I want you to take me to bed and . . . no, perhaps I don't. I want sympathy, warmth, contact, a feeling of security and attention. I get it in bed. After all, not even you can ignore me in bed! Ha, what a laugh! I don't ignore myself in bed. I take notice of me, I take notice of my sex? I willingly have a tumble to go with the sympathy but primarily for the sympathy. I am warmed by you and I want to repeat you. I'll do anything for sympathy. But I am also afraid of you. I want you to be god-father-teacher and I want a sympathetic tumble. Can I have both? I am nervous and tense. I am angry with your neutrality. There is no direction, no shape, no movement from you. I am embarrassed, I feel silly. You are not interested. You want to get on with your work, you don't want to be bothered with me. I am tightening up inside and I am numb and dead. I feel dead, here in this church. I am weighed down by these beams around my neck, and I am close to death, you are taking me there, I am taking myself into death. You are failing me. You are not telling me what to do, helping me, you are a failure. You use me, I am being used by you as I have always been used by everybody, you particularly. I look up to you, you bastard, I ask you for help and you fail me, you just make use of me. I want, I want, I want - oh, I want so much! So much. And you give me so little. I am a high class wanter but only a learner taker! You don't even look at me. I love you and you leave me screaming inside, tense, unfinished, frustrated, ignored - but I say politely, I am all right. I am all right, I am contented. I am a little girl who wants to please you. You don't even ask me where I am or what I want. And I don't make an effort to tell you. An effort? I don't make an effort? What is all this about? I make a hell of an effort but I say: I am all right, I am contented. You go to sleep. You always go to sleep, a mixture of arrogance and surface servility. I find you physically exciting and I feel intoxicated but I am afraid of you. The danger I feel in you makes me alive, stimulated, on edge. You are the man, the only man who bothers to bring me to orgasm. Everyone else is too tired or too bored or too selfish or simply doesn't bother. I have come to accept that, superficially I accept it as a fact, a reality, though I won't accept it emotionally. I am just very very sad about it. So when you go off to sleep I expect more from you, I am furious. I hate you.

You made me pregnant, do you know that? For the sake of one orgasm I had your child, you lousy bastard, your child that you don't want to know about. I had your child and you don't know it and John doesn't know it. Your bloody child that you don't want. I kill your child because you don't want it, because you don't want me, you even pay for the killing. I kill my child inside myself and I am dead now, dead. I married John because you don't want me, he wants me, and he wants this child. It should have been yours. What will you make of this now? I have this weight around my neck, these wooden beams, the yoke I carry for your memory. Do you see this yoke around my neck I carry for you? I am my yoke for you, and you don't want to know. Well, you are going to have it. I want to be alive as I was once with you, as I am with you. I want to carry on being alive without you. I tear my yoke from my neck and crush it against you. It goes right through you, you don't blink an eyelid. I hit you and cut you with my yoke and push you but nothing. Nothing! No substance!' She turned to some cushions and hit them with her fists, with her full force, 'nothing, nothing, nothing! You are nothing, nothing, no substance! Nothing, all this for nothing, for nothing! You are like a ghost, my old ghost. Your neutrality is nothing, a vacuum. It is a waiting, let me take my turn, my trip, let me take what direction I want to take. You don't push me, you wait for me to push myself, no help from you, no direction, no pushing, nothing. So you don't produce your version of me. I am not you, you are you and I am I. The initiative, direction, shape, energy, must all come from me. What you offer is a space around me, I feel free in my movements, my anger, my despair, my joy, I feel free, tall and strong. So I don't really want a daddy or a teacher. So I don't need to be the little girl any more, no more reassurance, I get into these roles which are in me to play at. I see myself in them, dislike them, recognise them, feel them, discard them, my guts are getting weak, I am staggering. I am staggered. I am reacting to you in a way that is unique, not pieced together from scraps of old experiences stuck together by grim determination. I am new. I am new. I feel the potential in me to create something new, to create a new relationship, not with you but with *all* of you, you and you and you. I am creating something new and the old has to go. I arrived wanting to be 'directed' but called it 'helped,' and to be tumbled sympathetically, and I now leave you being free of you, being free in myself for not wanting to be helped, contained. I don't need you any more.'

She came back for a fourth session the following week. Her baby turned around during that session and she did not come back after that. She rang up and said she was so much better but would ring again if she needed to come back.

Another client, a young man in his early twenties was sent to me by the occupational therapist of his psychiatric day hospital where he spent most days. He had developed intense pains in his neck, and headaches. I worked on his shoulders, his neck and the rest of his body, in sequence, to release tensions and generally alleviate the tightness in his body. At the second session I asked him to walk into his body to see what he could find there. 'I walk into my mouth and down a deep hole where it is very black. I get into this tunnel but I can't see very much, it is so dark in here. I can feel the walls, they are damp and rough, like stone. I think I am in my shoulders making my way down my left arm. The tunnel is now widening and there is a large black cave. The walls are now elastic and I can easily push them, they are black rubber and there is a bit of light coming in from behind me. But I can't find any way out, whenever I get

against this rubber wall, it just gives, there is nothing to show any opening anywhere, it's like being inside a soft rubber balloon, black and velvety all over. I cannot get out, I am stuck in here for ever. I push and push and push, but you won't give way. Let me out! Let me go! Why do you want to keep me in here, why don't you let me out? You are too soft, too pliable, I am too soft, too open for you. I have no resistance, I am too eager to push myself around. I push myself around? You push me around! I want to get out. I will tear you to get out. I tear you open, I make a small crack, I rip you open. I am out! There is a grey mass of gooishness out there and I fall into it. I work my way through this to my elbows and down into my hand, this is much easier going. But there is a heavy door in my thumb. I cannot get into my thumb through this door. But I can dig under it, I can dig the ground from under this rubbish in here. My thumb is so full of rubbish, no wonder it hurts, I hurt. No wonder I hurt in my thumb with all this rubbish. I shall have to tidy this up in here, put the rubbish into neat heaps and sweep up the floor. I can make the thumb work now, I can oil the gears and clean out the dust, and the machinery is beginning to work again a little bit, though it is still pretty rusty, no, not rusty, sort of clogged up. I am clogged up. Now I have managed to clean up my thumb I can go back again, I get back into my arm and up to the shoulders, this is amazingly easy all of a sudden, where has all the blackness gone, this rubbery velvety balloon? Not even a shred of rubber anywhere, though there are some black spots on my white bones, bones picked clean and looking a bit dead. Wake up, bones, you have work to do! Wake up! The thumb has started to work again and you will need to help him get going! I am back in my shoulder and see the muscles are a bit grey, they need exercise, some fresh air. I get back into my mouth and I am out again'.

By the fourth session his pain was almost gone, and at the sixth session he sat on my settee for a long time, his head in his hands, saying mostly to himself:

'I am so much better now, I don't really need to go to that hospital any more, do I? Long pause. 'I suppose I could go back to work, really. I am a photographer by trade and that is a very competitive job. I suppose I may not get a job, I may not be able to make a living. (Long pauses). Who is going to look after me? Perhaps I had better keep going to the day hospital after all.'

He had made his choice. He quite deliberately made a choice, and I left him with that. Sooner or later this personal choice will come back and his pain may come back, and he will have to face it again and again. Having faced it once it can never go away. It is the most difficult choice in the world. Do I take responsibility for myself? Am I good enough? How good is enough? Sooner or later I shall have to grow up and wean myself, but it is a frightening prospect. Perhaps I had better stay dependent, perhaps I had better stay ill. After all, it is my choice.