
Primary Activation

—A Way of Helping

by
Lew White

Suppose you found a method of helping your clients which was simple to learn, straightforward to practise and effective in resolving even very long established problems. Suppose too, that up until you found this method you had too frequently felt frustrated by your inability to truly help this client, or that client, to reach their full potential.

That was my position, in my practice as a psychotherapist in Christchurch, New Zealand, in mid 1982. Too many times I was writing my notes at termination and wondering what else I could have done that I hadn't; experiencing a sense of frustration of a greater or lesser degree at the outcome; sometimes even questioning my abilities as a therapist, and the value of 'therapy' in general.

One day, I saw advertised a post-graduate diploma course in Primary Activation, a method of psychotherapy, to be held in another city.

I remember balking at the requirement that applicants were to undergo their own intensive analysis before participating in the course. I said to myself, "Why should I have to undergo analysis - I don't have any 'real' problems!"

And I hesitated.

And I vacillated; and when, finally, I arrived at the Institute to begin my analysis - I was scared!

The therapy (analysis) was intensive. About five hours a day over four days, during which time I experienced so much more than I could have believed possible. Afterwards, I began to notice I felt different, both physically and emotionally. I began to notice others differently; to see them differently and became aware of them responding differently toward me! I was having dinner with my 20-year old daughter one evening, when she quietly and intimately said "I'm glad you're my Dad" - and in that moment I knew that changes had taken place. I had changed.

These changes which P.A. made in my life are still with me. And my wife, the one person in the world to really know, agrees. I now use P.A. as my method of choice with a wide client population of between 25 to 30 cases a week. The process works for the majority of them too, bringing about rapid resolution of a wide variety of difficulties, minor and major, and of both emotional and psychosomatic nature.

The method is easily learned and is simple in its basic structure. We relax the client using an inductive technique which can be recognised as a highly refined light hypnosis. Retaining complete contact with reality, the client is then guided by the therapist to uncover certain specific early traumas which the therapist knows occurred, and which are recognised to be the underlying sources of his/her problems, which perpetuate distorted thinking and unhelpful behaviour patterns. Through the re-experiencing of these early 'scenes', not available to conscious memory, the affect of the experience is diminished to the point where the conscious memory can assimilate the experience and its potency as a trigger mechanism is eliminated.

Since 1962 when J.W.K. Bennett, a therapist in Auckland, New Zealand first put together the basic premises of P.A., some 10,000 cases in New Zealand and Australia have been treated. In each case the identical experiences are found.

The differences lie not in the experience itself but in how the trauma is individually manifested in later thought and behaviour patterns. Knowing not only the nature of the primary activating experience, but also when each one occurred for each client, enables the therapist to guide the client toward a rapid resolution of the presenting problem/s.

In most cases an analysis can be completed within 20-30 hourly sessions. Some cases need more time, some less. In all cases the same process is used because in every case the structure of the problem is the same. Not infrequently a client will re-present after some weeks - or months - or years with a new specific complaint. One or two sessions usually can resolve this newly emergent issue very effectively.

Used by a sensitive therapist, P.A. offers hope to those who we are privileged to help.

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