

the end of the second day. She is asked humiliating questions about her parenting, her life. She says very little in reply, looks at me often. She fights to keep back the tears. Julie tells the court that she loves her children and there is no substitute for a child's real mother. She is in the stand for less than twenty minutes.

We have to go out while the magistrates make their decision. We wait for half an hour. Once back in the court, we are told the application by Social Services is successful. The courtroom rises, everyone shuts their files and leaves without a glance at Julie. When I stop one of the social workers and ask what happens to Julie now, she shrugs. I don't think Julie has taken in what has been decided. No-

one else is around so I take her home.

I can't imagine or assess the added psychological damage done to those children who will never be allowed to see their mother again. I still can't bear to think about Julie's mental state and how she will cope — probably by having three more babies? But nor do Social Services think much of her. Three weeks after what must have been the worst day of her life, Julie was sent a letter from her social worker, via her solicitor. The letter asked if she would like one more visit to say good-bye to her children and would she like to bring a camera. How did people in the 'caring professions' come up with an inhuman idea like that?

On Rhythm and Time in Bodywork

Silke Ziehl

All living things move, and change, however imperceptibly. For that is almost how we define life — by the ability to move, towards and away from, to open and to close, to interact with the world around. Time-lapse photography has given us breathtaking pictures of flowers opening and closing their petals in the dance of life, and slow motion pictures allowed us to observe the sheer delight of

the movement of seagulls' wings in their elegant and sinuous three dimensional figure-of-eight flight patterns. In order to see and appreciate these movements, we need to adjust time — to speed it up, to slow it down.

Similarly, in bodywork, I've learnt that time, and the rhythms of movement, have a logic and beauty quite of their own. It is important to find the time to focus inward

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— on a body part, or body process, on the flowing and ebbing of body rhythms and movements. Then, real insight and a new awareness, or a memory, can open up and be connected with the here and now. In bodywork, as in meditation, or in paying intense attention to a friend, or when absorbed in some creative activity, time changes. It expands and contracts to quite a different beat — and we are all the richer for it.

Of course, the body is not uniform — different parts move at quite different rates of speed and frequency. The head is fast and, often, has a high rhythm and buzzy frequency. The heart takes much more time and in the 'middle ground' moves more gently and more slowly. The belly has a low frequency, and slower rhythms still — fuller and rounder. Other factors influence the movements of the energetic cycle: the more events and processes are on the outside, the quicker the rhythms tend to be, and the more they are inward and deeper, the more the need for time.

To allow the rhythms to vary, to give time to breathe, to take in, to hold, to assimilate, to focus, and then to let go — these 'breaks in time' weave a web of connectedness and understanding with ourselves and with others. The time spent 'doing nothing' is often the most important time in bodywork. It is then that the meshing between the parts takes place, and attention has time to travel to and with the energetic flow.

Learning to respect the rhythms of a person, an experience, a movement, learning to give ourselves the proper time to be with somebody or something, is a life skill. It is a life skill that often gets damaged by an upbringing and a society

which lives by clock time, by public time, and by other people's timings. The small child who is constantly harassed to hurry up will end up losing the trust and attentiveness to the inner rhythm, and will be alienated from its own bodily-felt reality and knowledge, and from the ability to self-regulate.

Just giving time is often the greatest gift another human being can give us — time and attention, and a willingness to adjust to shared time and rhythm. Observing non-verbal movement and communication patterns we can see a 'dance' between the people involved, where on a bodily level — and almost certainly unconsciously — the partners move in nearly simultaneous rhythms, co-ordinating their interaction like birds in a flock.

When working with the body I am forever fascinated by the changes in speed, in frequency, in energetic landscapes, which I encounter. I am intrigued, too, by the sense of liberation which comes from tissues taking time to breathe in properly, letting go deeply — and then moving on to change.

The childlike ability to be totally in one sensation, one emotion, one movement pattern, and shortly after to change utterly and completely, and follow a different rhythm, pattern and emotion, does not get lost with growing up — only frozen and stuck. And it can be recaptured, and inform our living once again, if we allow the time to complete unfinished movements and patterns. The sparkle of the 'now' can arise with new life, like a phoenix from the ashes of the old — and often it only takes time and attention, and a willingness to play with rhythms.