

## Guided Imagery and Other Approaches to Healing Rubin Battino

**Crown House Publishing Ltd. £25** (special price £22.50 till 31 July from publisher)

Working with those suffering from life challenging diseases such as cancer is, on its own, challenging for counsellors and therapists. Rubin Battino's book contains much that is useful for practitioners involved in this type of work. There are also some very moving descriptions of Rubin Battino's work with cancer patients and the reader is left with no doubt of his commitment to his clients and feeling hopeful about his approach. I particularly liked the distinction between 'cure' and 'healing' which is important when you're working with clients who may not get better, but can achieve some kind of resolution to their lives in the course of their counselling or therapy.

The section on 'nocebo' (the opposite of placebo) effect was particularly interesting to me. Where the placebo effect is where an inert substance is given to a patient who believes it to be a cure and, as a result of this belief, is cured. On the other hand, the nocebo effect is where either an inert substance which the patient believes to be a poison or other malevolent substance, causes illness to occur or, interestingly, where an active substance, such as a known analgesic, has no effect on a patient who does not believe that it will work. Both of these ideas make perfect sense when you think about them, but I certainly hadn't before I read this book.

The 'survey' chapters, describing different approaches to relaxation (chapter 5) and different types of support group (chapter 12) together with chapter 16, which identifies some of the practical issues that need to be thought about in dealing with cancer, were, I felt, the most useful parts of the book although the first two could have been broader in their scope.

Chapters 17 and 18, on nutrition and Native American healing respectively were interesting and introduced a different tone, being written by different authors (H. Ira Fritz and Helena Sheehan). However, since all of the rest of the book had been written by Rubin Battino himself, it was hard to see why these chapters were included.

*Guided Imagery* is written for the US market and there are some parts which would benefit from adaptation for a UK readership. For instance, the contact details for the support groups he describes would not, other than offering the possibility of making internet contact perhaps, be very useful to readers outside the US. Similarly, the sections on dealing with health professionals, e.g. a set of subliminal messages to be communicated to a patient undergoing cancer surgery by the surgeon herself, are unimaginable this side of the

Atlantic. Rubin Battino sums up the relationship between doctor and patient thus: -

'If you can hire a professional, you can also fire them, and you can do this without giving any reasons'.

I'm not sure how easy this would be for the average NHS patient, or, for that matter, for the average US citizen on Medicare.

At a deeper level, the psychotherapeutic parts of the book, such as the chapters on rapport building and unfinished business, are suffused with an underlying belief in control and change rather than experience and understanding, although these are referred to elsewhere. Control and change (fixing the problem) seem to be deeply embedded in North American culture. They are also central concepts in NLP (Neuro Linguistic Programming) which, together with Ericksonian hypnotherapy, underpins Rubin Battino's approach to his work. I, personally, found the references to 'leading' the client and 'changing history' alienating though they may not bother other readers.

The chapter on scientific evidence was particularly disappointing to me, as I have had a long-standing interest in psychoneuroimmunology (PNI). Rubin Battino has clearly read some of the significant literature on PNI and it would have been extremely useful if he could have devoted some space to outlining the basic theory - defining what PNI is and to giving some idea why it might be important in explaining the efficacy of guided imagery with cancer patients. [Essentially PNI is founded on the hypothesis that there is a correlation between an individual's mental/

emotional state and the functioning of their immune system mediated via the nervous system, hence psycho - neuro - immunology. I use the word 'correlation' advisedly since most psychoneuroimmunologists are careful to avoid implying a causal connection.]

Above all, *Guided Imagery* lacks focus. The title suggests a book that will define and explain the use of guided imagery as a healing tool with examples perhaps from its clinical application and some reference to allied techniques. However, the focus is predominantly on working with cancer patients, although lip service is paid to the use of guided imagery with other life challenging diseases. Even having accepted this slightly unclear focus one would expect a general account of the use of guided imagery with cancer patients, but Rubin Battino seems to focus predominantly on his own work and that of a few close colleagues. There's nothing *wrong* with doing this, in my opinion, as his work and approach to it are both admirable, but whether this makes a good resource book for professionals is another matter.

Despite these reservations I *would* recommend this book to those working with cancer patients, particularly if they are drawn to working with guided imagery and are comfortable with NLP concepts. This being said, perhaps there is also a gap in the market for a more *humanistically* orientated resource book on this challenging and rewarding area of work.

*Geoff Lamb*

*Geoff Lamb is a Reichian psychotherapist and counselling trainer with more than 15 years experience. He also holds an MSc in Health Psychology and a BSc in neuroscience. See [www.g.c.lamb.btinternet.co.uk](http://www.g.c.lamb.btinternet.co.uk) for further details.*

# Thoughts Without a Thinker; Psychotherapy from a Buddhist Perspective.

Mark Epstein

Gerald Duckworth & Co., 1997. £10.95

Self vs. not-self, ego repair vs. ego annihilation, psychoanalysis vs. Buddhism, can any of these really be reconciled? Can two disparate disciplines such as psychoanalysis and Buddhism, both so central to their distinctive cultures, be brought together in some sort of synthesis? Mark Epstein was certainly not the first to broach the idea. In fact, since the earliest days of psychoanalysis members from both sides of the East/West divide have approached each other for dialogue, however strained that dialogue might have been. *Thoughts Without a Thinker*, however, approaches this potentially explosive mix with such grace and ease that the reader can only trust that its author, Mark Epstein is equally *au fait* with both the Eastern and Western traditions. If my approval isn't enough, the inclusion of a forward by the Dalai Lama should give Epstein's book any further credibility needed.

The beauty of Epstein's work is the simplicity with which it handles some of existence's most widely asked questions. Both Buddhism and psychoanalysis struggle with and provide a degree of knowledge around a problematic human existence, but their individual points of reference can be seen as remote from each other as their geographical birthplaces are. Yet in Epstein's work, the two seemingly opposing systems of thought are brought together with such measured intention, that the reader forgets that Epstein is dealing with what is often seen as an impossible synthesis.

Additionally, the book is written with such clear language that *Thoughts Without a Thinker* can be approached by those who are first timers to both Buddhism and Psychoanalysis. A familiarity with both or either, however, would certainly add to the reader's enjoyment.

Epstein demonstrates his synthesis not by drawing the two disciplines into one, but by pointing out where psychoanalysis and Buddhism compliment each other. While recognising some very important conflicts (not sparing Freud's own stubbornness towards some of his own followers' interest in such foreign influences) he also brings attention to components of both disciplines that are startlingly similar. One example might be the use of mindfulness in Buddhist meditation, and keeping a negative capability (stifling the critical faculty) when doing free association in psychoanalysis. Both practices open up the human mind to whatever is being experienced, while at the same time, cultivating the ability to stand back and pay attention to it.

Perhaps the greatest strength in Epstein's book is his non-judgemental acceptance of both sides of the perceived divide. Readers starting at either point of reference (a classical psychoanalyst or a Buddhist master) probably have the most to gain from Epstein's work. The Buddhist master, or even one who has trained exclusively in Buddhist psychotherapy, may be well surprised at Freud's wisdom and openness to what is conceptually very existential and spiritual. The Freudians, on the other

hand, would be delighted to find what a cohesive psychology of self Buddhism has to offer.

The book is divided into three parts and its very organisation provides an extremely workable framework from which to approach the material. The first part, 'The Buddha's Psychology of Mind' provides an informative précis of basic Buddhist thought and its relevant connections to both psychoanalysis and other forms of psychotherapy. Part two, 'Meditation' focuses primarily on that; taking the reader through valid arguments supporting the practice of meditation as a partner to psychotherapy for both practitioners and clients. The final chapter, 'Therapy' provides the reader with a truly integrated mode in

which Buddhist thought and Western psychotherapeutic tradition can work together providing a sum that is truly much greater than either of its parts.

Modern bookshelves have a wealth of both Eastern and Western influences that would have had interested readers of even ten or fifteen years ago swooning with envy. *Thoughts Without a Thinker* is a commendable addition to this wealth, and a book, that I believe, should be central in anyone's researches into this often troublesome zone. Please keep your eyes open for the forthcoming review of Epstein's latest book, *Going on Being: Buddhism and the way of Change, a Positive Psychology for the West*.

Aaron Balick

## The Power of Metaphor

Michael Berman and David Brown.

Crown House Publishing, 2000. £12.99.

Berman and Brown's book draws on the ancient arts of story-telling and visualisation and attempts to harness the power of metaphor that lay within them. It aims to enable teachers, trainers and counsellors to help students or clients access their emotions and thus gain insight into how they perceive the world. *The Power of Metaphor* also aids its users to identify what inhibits them from learning or living effectively. The authors contend that story-telling delivers metaphor to the unconscious and that it is our innate ability to make metaphorical connections that permit us to learn. Through stories, metaphor enters the mind with little or no resistance and can thus activate the unconscious and possibly bring about dramatic change. Berman and Brown

believe that one picture is worth 1000 words; metaphor is worth 1000 pictures.

The authors suggest that an imaginative story appeals to the senses and the emotions and that '... it is emotions rather than our logic which drive our attention, meaning making and memory.' Stories can bring about a form of regression to childhood and recreate a child-like state of emotional curiosity.

*The Power of Metaphor* consists of a collection of stories. Each story is followed by a clearly written script to promote guided visualisation. Every story and visualisation is linked to a particular theme such as the promotion of self-esteem. The aim of the script is to create pictures in the mind of the individual being guided through the

visualisation. The guide controls the framework of the journey, but what goes on in the individual's mind is unpredictable. In this way, the 'traveller' may enter a world of 'non-ordinary reality.' Guided visualisation can be seen as a way of 'reconnecting with what we have forgotten' and the process can be traced back to early shamanic practice.

Whereas the authors acknowledge that NLP has introduced several innovations surrounding learning styles, they find that NLP in general hasn't focused enough attention on intuition. This book wishes to encourage users to listen to their inner voices during the guided journeys and thus to access their intuition.

Shamanic practice has similar core elements in countries as far apart as Tibet and Australia. It makes use of the concept of journeys, and one form of journey, soul retrieval, can help people recover from traumatic experiences such as abuse, accidents or sudden losses. These traumatic experiences can induce a situation where the soul leaves the body to escape the horror of it all. The shamanic journey aims to search out and retrieve the parts that have 'escaped.' Some scholars find parallels between shamanistic healing and psychoanalysis, as both create therapeutic symbols leading to psychological release and physical healing.

The role of the guide in visualisation is to engender trust in the process and to believe in each person's ability to interpret and gain from his or her own experience. The visualisations and stories can be used with individuals or groups. After the visualisation, those in a group may wish to share their experience or follow it up by drawing, painting, dancing or singing. As the experience often stimulates emotion, it is more likely to be remembered and

can help people think about their preferred patterns of learning.

Imagery can also be used to rehearse for a future situation and if your visualised situation has a successful outcome you are more likely to approach the real situation with confidence and balance.

The writers see the ability to tap into an inner voice as an extremely valuable resource when all else fails. As did Jung, they believe that, '... the more stubbornly we believe that all increase has to come from without, the greater becomes our inability to tap into our own power for healing purposes.' The aim of the *Power of Metaphor* is to empower both the client groups and the guides implementing the visualisations.

The book is simply written and clearly set out in separate chapters, each focused on one of the themes. There are easily comprehensible instructions on how to lead individual on their guided journeys and the authors include a diverse range of international folk tales to enhance each visualisation. Sometimes there are language exercises for speakers of English as another language.

The trainers and counsellors who use this book need themselves to have faith that they can create an atmosphere where client groups can use this visualisation as an important tool for learning and growth. There are sixteen themes ranging from 'rising above self imposed limitations' (The Eagles' Gift) to 'differentiating between needs and wants' (The Dream Cushion) and 'reconciliation' (The Sun of Suns).

I have tried some of these visualisations with clients and have been surprised and pleased at the way they enable people to access hitherto unexplored emotions.

*Val Simanwitz*