

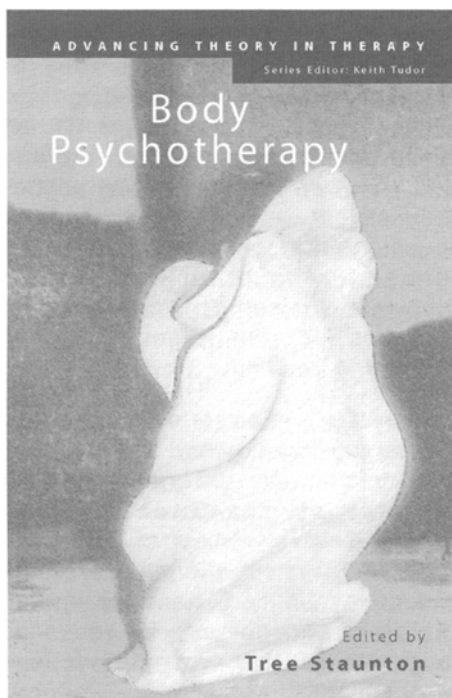
Body Psychotherapy Edited by Tree Staunton

Brunner Routledge 2002. £16.99

Therapists may find this book 'an enormously useful resource – stimulating, comprehensive and responsible' as Professor Samuels says in his foreword, but it is certainly not always easy reading. From the series *Advancing Theory in Therapy*, edited by Keith Tudor, it is aimed at professionals and postgraduates, not trainees or students. Four of the ten contributors are past or present tutors at the Chiron Centre for Body Psychotherapy (UK) and collectively they are all strongly influenced by Freud, Reich and Jung.

The reader gets an overview of the historical development of body psychotherapy, beginning with the relationships between the three influential figures mentioned, and the work of more recent neo-Reichian practitioners, such as Gerda Boyensen, David Boadella, and Lowen

The editor, Tree Staunton who is humanistically oriented, has worked at the Chiron Centre for twelve years. She makes it clear in her introduction that body psychotherapy disassociates itself from other body 'therapies' such



as rebirthing, rolfing, shiatsu, Alexander and Feldenkrais, in an effort to bring itself in from the long-standing cold, into psychotherapy circles. (I have observed a similar growing concern for professional acceptance, in the Breathwork field in recent years).

Nick Totton's analytic approach in Chapter 1. explains Reich's theoretical framework, and his own personal intellectual psychotherapeutic journey away from and back again to Reich's ideas. His discussion of transference and counter transference issues in

body work will be useful for anyone working with the body in a professional capacity.

Bernd Eiden describes the Reichian scheme of character structure, with diagrams illustrating the various body types as interpreted by later neo-Reichians, the development of Vegetatotherapy techniques to release muscle armouring, and then the current scene in the body therapy field. Eiden's involvement in politics in the seventies, leading to the setting up of the Chiron centre, and its connection to other well known theorists, Lowen (bioenergetics,) Pierrekos (Core energetics) makes interesting reading.

The editor's dense and complex chapter on sexuality and body therapy first clarifies the different ideas on sexuality of the three founding fathers. Reich's concept of removing blocks in physical energy expression is seen as limited, because sexual energy is recognised nowadays as containing psychic energy, and love is rehabilitated somewhat.. Staunton explains the body therapist's way of working inter-relationally and the resulting different dynamic to that of other therapists. Difficulties for the body therapist include transference and counter-transference, which can create a different way of being in therapeutic relationship dealing with sexual awareness, as well as with regression during physical closeness, or alternatively, the client's yearning when touch is not given.

Roz Carroll explains the subtleties of biodynamic massage with and without body therapy in chapter four, and shares some emotionally charged moments during her personal massage, then in sessions with

clients. She gives a historical overview of the development of massage by Gerda Boyeson, Norwegian physiotherapist turned psychotherapist, who widened the Reichian focus from muscle structure to the rest of the body, using a stethoscope to listen to internal bodily reactions during therapy.

In Chapter five I enjoyed reading Babette Rothschild's clear explanation of ways in which body therapists deal with problems of touch intolerance in clients suffering from trauma. She includes practical approaches to post-traumatic stress where touch is contra-indicated. Body awareness, movement and muscle toning techniques are the alternatives, and their use is well illustrated with case histories and a detailed transcript of a therapy session.

Chapter six, by Margaret Landale's, focuses on the use of imagery in body oriented psychotherapy connected to Jung, Robert Assagioli and Winnicot, and to more recent neuro-scientific work. Catharsis was once the aim of body psychotherapy, but its drawbacks are now recognised, and using imagery is a less overwhelming way of dealing with newly released bodily tensions.

In chapter seven, Phillipa Vick introduces the principles of Hakomi therapy developed by Ron Kurtz during the 1970's which seems to amalgamate Buddhist mindfulness with reframing 'core beliefs' positively into a transpersonal therapy. Vick embraces the works of Jung, Welwood, Gendlin, and also the concept of energy, as described in Eastern texts. Vick alludes briefly to Wilber's spectrum of consciousness, dismisses Chakras and does not

convey the profound, expanding experience of transpersonal psychotherapy, which others have written about with greater clarity. As she appreciates, this type of work is difficult to describe, and I had to struggle to follow the application of Hakomi in her energy work with three clients, which seemed devitalised in the telling.

The history of energy work and mysticism continues in Subtle Bodywork in chapter eight by Rose Cameron, moving from transcendental meditation through to Yoga and the martial arts, and then into Quantum physics. We get a birds eye view of alchemy,(which has not in fact 'faded from our consciousness' as she says, but is alive and kicking in the training of transpersonal psychotherapists at the Centre for Counselling and Psychotherapy Education). She finally arrives at the well established premise that our breathing affects our energy field. As she rightly says: 'When we stop breathing in and out properly, we stop pulsating with the rhythm of the life force. This also affects us spiritually, as we effectively shut the door on Tao' which was for me a welcome recognition of the importance of the breath in working with clients.

I was grateful for a captivating and controversial read on body psychotherapy and regression that emerged in chapter nine. Although Roger Woolger is influenced by Reich, he has moved away from what he considers a narrow approach, and his regressional body therapy is closer to transpersonal psychology and allied with modern Russian research into Kirlian energy. Past Life work is Woolger's speciality, and the graphic case histories he supplies in this

chapter convey his enthusiasm while he takes seriously understanding soul, and recognising the difficulty of acceptance of this kind of work in Western society.

In the last chapter Nick Totton considers the future for body psychotherapy and its professionalisation, while accepting that it consists of diverse models which may be difficult to reconcile under one theoretical umbrella. The editor's afterword pursues the same issues as Nick Totton; that of bringing theory and clinical application together when they are represented by the varying models that are portrayed here.

As with animals, each body therapy species is different, and each maintains its individuality. Overall unity and agreement would seem to present difficulties at present. However, the fact that such diverse therapists have contributed to this book suggests a strong inclination towards gaining professional acceptance of body therapy in all its forms.

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Recreating Partnership: A Solution-Oriented Collaborative Approach to Couples Therapy

By Phillip Ziegler and Tobey Hiller

WW Norton and Co, 2001. £25.00

Recreating Partnership is a clearly written handbook that offers therapists a potential way of working effectively with couples. The authors' rationale is derived from their meta-analysis of research which indicates that only approximately 18% of couples appear to benefit from therapy, whatever the model. Ziegler and Hiller seek to improve on that figure and this book is a distillation of their work.

A key theme to *Recreating Partnership* is that the authors have focused on a couple's 'narrative,' that is how partners perceive and interpret the life they have together. Ziegler and Hiller go beyond the concept of a good or bad 'story' to co-produce with their clients 'contexts for tapping a couple's unique resources for positive change' (page 2).

The therapeutic model is grounded in the philosophy of social constructionism, where people experience life through stories. However, Ziegler and Hiller shift the locus of the story-making *between* couples. It is in this interpersonal space that the work begins and is a necessary shift away from focussing on the intrapsychic process within the individual. The authors then link narrative and solution focused approaches to facilitate a collaborative journey with their clients.



Ziegler and Hiller address the dilemma all therapists face in using eclectic approaches – which interventions will suit these particular clients – by emphasising the need for consistent guiding assumptions concerning how therapy best works and how people make changes naturally. Again their meta-analytic approach to research leads them to conclude that building a collaborative relationship with a focus on the future is most likely to elicit good results. The authors might be criticised as clients often do express a desire to look at the possible causes of their problems, but the tone of the book indicates a respectful and enquiring attitude that which starts from the clients' perspective and needs.

Recreating Partnership contains several examples of interventions derived from Steve de Shazer's brief solution focused therapy and is rooted in the assumption that a successful therapeutic outcome depends on a strong working alliance. Rogers is acknowledged to be its major proponent in having developed his core conditions. In elegantly drawing upon concepts from two very different approaches, Ziegler and Hiller avoid the criticism usually aimed at solution oriented approaches: that they are superficial.

The core of the book is the way therapists can 'thicken' the good story narrative and there are some

fascinating extracts from transcripts of their work with couples to illustrate their ideas.

The authors' exposition of their model whets my appetite for more. *Recreating Partnership* is a substantial book that is also accessible. As a handbook, it is perhaps less suitable for the tyro therapist, but could certainly be an important text for training courses.

Well worth the investment, not just for couples therapists, but for any experienced practitioner who wants to locate their work more securely in effective therapeutic approaches and interventions.

Jen Popkin



Becoming a Therapist: A manual for personal and professional development

Malcolm C. Cross and Linda Papadopoulos,
Brunner-Routledge, 2001. £12.99

The publishers' blurb states that this book is a 'unique practical manual, facilitating the movement and growth of the reader.' The book is aimed at trainee counsellors, counselling psychologists and psychotherapists, to act as a 'companion to personal and professional development.' Despite the term 'companion' the early chapters gave me the impression that the authors are assuming readers are

not in personal therapy (for instance on Page 4 and in the Appendix on how to find a therapist). However, later on in the book, especially in Chapter Six, it became clear that the authors do expect many of the readers to be in personal therapy.

This issue for me is the central paradox of the book: if you are on a training programme and in personal

therapy I believe you would find most of the exercises in this book superfluous. If you are not in personal therapy, what are you doing training to be a therapist? Indeed, if the type of self knowledge and awareness raising the authors are aiming for could be achieved through a book, surely potential clients for therapy could just be recommended self-help books rather than getting into the time-consuming and expensive process of therapy? Or are we saying that only clients need that kind of help, while we can manage with a book? That smacks of emotional elitism. It is precisely because personal growth is difficult to facilitate through the written word (although not impossible, I am sure plenty of books have changed lives), and through the lonely activity of working through exercises on your own, that the therapy business exists. As the authors make clear in Chapter Six the evidence indicates that it is the relationship between client and therapist that appears to be important in the client's self development. It is hard to have a meaningful relationship with a book, even one as sensitively written as this one. So my problem with this book has nothing to do with the exercises it contains - many of them are interesting and thought provoking and I can imagine enjoying and benefiting from them in a training situation - or with its tone which is non-judgemental, informative and supportive but rather with the nature of the enterprise. For me (and I imagine for most people), personal growth has involved pain and heartache; I would not have started the journey without the support of a person - a real flesh-and-blood person. I would not advocate opening up any difficult or painful issues alone without a support network in place.

The authors seem to be aware of this need for protection (Page 4) and as the book cannot supply such support it inevitably remains superficial. Even the best intentioned reader is unlikely to go beyond a fairly shallow analysis of some of their preconceptions; if this level of self-knowledge had not already been obtained on their training, I would be very worried about their training programme.

So who needs this book? Most trainees in the present climate are required to undergo personal therapy for a considerable period of time in order to achieve professional recognition as counsellors or psychotherapists. In addition, most training programmes will probably cover the parts of this book aimed at professional development, that is the chapters devoted to culture, gender and ethics. My answer therefore would be trainees that are unhappy with their training programme, and feel it has not adequately covered the above topics, and people who are considering training as a therapist and would like to have a taster. Even the latter group though, should not be put off if they struggle with the exercises. In my opinion, personal development is much easier and more fruitful in contact with others. The codification of largely intuitive, creative knowledge always loses something in translation onto the page: the process is best when it is active and alive.

While I found the book to be generally well-written, some parts of it jarred. In Chapter Two which discusses the family, there seemed to be an assumption that most readers live in family structures; I am not sure the large minority of people who live alone would appreciate the assumption. I also found the start of Chapter Three

on culture disturbing. It stresses the need not to make assumptions about clients from ethnic minorities, but surely this applies equally to people from the white majority? Other exercises I found useful – such as the fifteen characteristics of an effective therapist in Chapter Six and the guided fantasy in Chapter Five – but I remain convinced that this is not an optimal format for self and professional development. The

existence of this book also raises an important point: how seriously do we take personal development as a profession? I am sure the authors of this book take it very seriously, but I am not sure that this book makes much of a contribution towards it.

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Skills in Gestalt Counselling and Psychotherapy

Phil Joyce and Charlotte Sills

Sage Publications, 2001. £16.99

It is over fifteen years since I did my partial gestalt training, and I have heard how things have moved on. It was good to find at the outset, a handbook about skills, which put them clearly in a context within the preface. The main 'skill' being 'offering a particular kind of relational contact' as the 'heart and soul of Gestalt'.

I have been concerned about views I have come across that gestalt is like a bolt on tool kit that other practitioners can use in bits. I have been wary of this myself, and over the years, did less and less 'gestalt' exercises in my work, increasingly just bringing that type of awareness into my sessions as a basic background. (For example, shifting into awareness work from time to time, as others also might do who were not gestalt trained)

How would I feel about this book if I were starting out training?

Well, this book was put on our reading list for diploma students in humanistic

counselling, and it has been snapped up by the students, quoted in essays, and drawn on by us for some exercises too. This is the sign of something both practical and inspiring, placing theory in a realistic and manageable context.

The introductory tone is chatty and practical without trivialising either the theory or how one might apply it.

Each section has checklists, examples, and overviews and recommended reading, which makes it a good main handbook for trainees. With the newer developed areas with which I was less familiar, I could take in a clear simplified map, without feeling patronised.

Each main theory is explored with case study examples, which are kept simple. This is probably a good thing; the complexities of awkward client situations and reactions are important to acknowledge, but better dealt with in live training and

supervision. Inevitably at times the case vignettes lack the vitality that they have in the embodied session, and any book addressing body-oriented work will meet this problem.

It sets out brightly and briskly with some good practical stuff about interviews, assessment, money, and note taking which suggests how each practitioner might meet their personal way of working in with the necessary requirements and formalities. (As someone who has alternated between religiously taking notes I would never read, and taking no notes at all because I am lucky to get away with a good auditory memory, this is nicely realistic.)

The authors set out a quite purist gestalt frame of reference for the assessments, reminding us that this is, indeed a holistic approach that doesn't just mean a bunch of techniques applied to a generic counselling style. They acknowledge the problem that I would take more seriously, of needing a shared language with referring agencies (DSM etc) but their focus will help a new practitioner keep to a gestalt contract as a 'world view'.

There is a strong emphasis on co-creation work with the client, which fits the politics of the gestalt model of re-empowerment. But as therapists, are we not also called upon as technical 'experts' to have suggestions and offerings of which the client may not yet be aware? This use of our bigger experience is described in practice in the section on experimenting, but not at the outset.

I wholeheartedly support the intent and political concern to rebalance power, and I also believe (as actually this book teaches) that counselling is a technical skill as well as an approach to human relationships. I wouldn't

want to make a purely 'joint' decision with my plumber about a repair or replacement, until I had heard from her, what parts are available to mend something. The compromise is found in the spirit of mutual enquiry, which shifts the cartoon notion of gestalt (that bossy Perls telling people to do things) to one of basic non-intrusive optimism. However much we need to hear that, from the clients point of view, they are focussed on a problem, the struggle of maladaptation and the risk of change is here clearly framed as creative adjustments, (southgate and randall et al) and the therapeutic space as opportunity to experiment.

It is good to see a whole chapter on unfinished business, (how to "to identify the situation that could not be faced but not be left")

It ends with an interesting working approach to ethical dilemmas, and what feels like a more 'must cover this' section on specific issues, but some aspects are addressed more fully than just being tidied off into the AOB of counselling training. This is indicative of the grounding in real practice. In fact the whole of the last part of the book addresses practice issues. I enjoyed particularly the section on working with difference which was concerned with issues wider surely than its title (Counselling in a multi-cultural society).

My thanks to the authors for such a good summary.

Bee Springwood

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The Joy of Burnout: How the end of the world can be a new beginning

Dina Glouberman

Hodder & Stoughton, 2002. £10.00

Dina Glouberman is of course well known in humanistic circles as one of the most experienced therapists and group leaders, and also as the founder of Skyros as a centre for holistic holidays. She is always worth listening to, and this book is no exception.

What struck me most about this book was its thoroughness. It covers the whole of the process of burnout, from the first intimations, through the worst of the worst, to the new life beyond burnout, and how to deal with that. Every now and then a little bit of scholarship peeps through, and the author is obviously familiar with the literature, but most of the book is about people's experience, including the author's own experience of burnout. There are long cases, short vignettes, personal quotes and lots of good advice, well expressed. This brings the book to life in a very vivid way.

The centre of the book for me was the idea that the best approach to dealing with burnout is what the author calls Radical Healing. This is adumbrated in the very first chapter, where the author says: 'When we burn out, it is our old personality that

burns itself out. Then our soul fire begins to light our way and to bring us joy.' This is indeed a radical message, but by the time we have finished reading this book, we may fully understand what it means.

The message of this book is that burnout is the state of mind, body and spirit reached by those of us who have come to the end of a particular road but have not acknowledged it. The symptoms we feel are telling us that a transformation of our lives is necessary. Burnout demands that we listen.

This is a very readable and enormously useful book for anyone who has had any experience of burnout – and this means a huge crowd of people. It is a book which powerfully reminds us of how bad things can get if we let them. And because it is written by someone with personal experience of the path, it has an authority which does not depend upon the existing authorities in the field – although it refers to them at times. I would recommend it to anyone who is burning out themselves, or who are close to someone who is.

John Rowan

Grace and Grit: Spirituality and Healing in the Life and Death of Treya Killam Wilber

Ken Wilber

Gateway, 2nd edition 2001. £12.99

This book was on my must read pile for ages. It is now my book of the year. It feels all but impossible to review this book in a few hundred words. Reading it has been like one extended therapy session.

-It's a love story warts and all, a touching, moving, wistful, painful sharing that is almost unbearably honest

-It's a crash course in spiritual development told by Ken and Treya as she slowly but inexorably dies of cancer

-It's all about spirituality, life and death, male and female aspects, enlightenment and everything.

-It painfully explores the myths and realities of cancer treatments conventional and alternative with a powerful critique of the worse excesses of New Age thinking that we cause our own illnesses.

I can't criticise this book and do any fancy academic or therapeutic thing with it other than to commend it whole-heartedly to readers of *Self and Society* - read this book and be moved. It is part of a growing literature from people who have faced the slow death of a loved one and somehow lived through the experience and then told us about it. I am thinking here of Ken Evans extraordinary story of the death of

his wife Mairi (Evans, 2000) or Rosemary Kay's (2000) moving novel based on the death of her son Saul who lived for a few brief weeks.

This is Ken Wilber with a human face, Ken Wilber in love, in pain, in anger and fear, getting drunk, suffering and coming through. To Wilber fans it will be unputdownable but this is more than merely another ground-breaking book by him. Indeed the many extracts from his wife Treya point us to another talented and gifted writer with much to tell us about human living.

Ken describes a scene where he is in Germany where Treya is getting some heavy duty chemotherapy and he gets drunk among a group of elderly German men who speak no English and he no German. They persuade him to join a drunken group dance, *"I start laughing, then I start crying, then laughing, then crying. I would like to turn away, to hide what is happening to me, but I am locked arm-and-shoulder into the semicircle. For about fifteen minutes I seem to lose all control over my emotions...I would like to claim that my big satori about accepting Treya condition... came from some powerful meditation session... But it happened in a little pub with a bunch of kindly old men whose names I do not know and whose language I did not speak"* (p310-311).

Treya is able to articulate how being with her illness, not denying or avoiding it but living it led to some extraordinary self developments. These involved a real claiming of who she was as a woman but also the way that the ever present prospect of her own death changed how she lived her life: *'I suddenly thought, if I do become well for long periods of time, will I lose this deliciously keen knife-edge of awareness I now have, this satisfyingly one-pointed focus? Certainly I and others have felt some inner restrictions burst and new creativity pour forth under the pressure of this illness. I would hate to lose that... It's rather like carrying a meditation master around with me at all times, at any moment the roshi could unexpectedly give me a sound whack!'* (p320).

The great spiritual traditions all aim to help us deal with the reality of human suffering. We can minimise it, deny it, take drugs to numb the pain but if we do inhabit a universe of meaning then in our worse suffering there is some point that can be found. It does not justify or explain it, indeed Ken Wilber was heart broken by the death of his wife, but it does suggest a purpose being served. If you can bear it and want to know more this book will take you forward and on the way there will also be times of joy and illumination.

William West

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Life Lessons – how our Mortality can teach us about Life and Living

Elisabeth Kubler-Ross and David Kessler.
Simon and Schuster, 2001. £10

Dr. Elisabeth Kubler-Ross, the well known author who pioneered a new approach towards the terminally ill, suffered a stroke in 1975, and she now spends her life in one room, in a wheel chair. Nevertheless, she has collaborated with David Kessler, to produce this latest moving book. Kessler, also an author who works in the same field, acknowledges Elisabeth as his mentor and very close friend.

A message from Elisabeth at the front of the book is hauntingly personal. Our lessons in life involve working on our smallness, getting rid of our negativity and finding the best in ourselves and each other...we are here to heal one another and ourselves' – David Kessler wants to pass on the truths of life he has learned both from her and from his own work with the dying. The 'we' voice of the two

authors is sometimes separated, their initials showing which part each has written.

The Life lessons cover: Authenticity, Love, Relationships, Loss, Power, Guilt, Time, Fear, Anger, Play, Patience, Surrender, Forgiveness, Happiness, one per chapter. Open the book anywhere, and you will find wisdom distilled from the authors' experiences of helping others as well as themselves to face their mortality. I particularly liked the nudge to the work addicts among us in the chapter on play: 'playing keeps us young at heart, puts passion in our work, and helps our relationships thrive'.

Elisabeth uses herself as a case in the chapter on surrender, to explain how she learned to appreciate that although she can no longer use her left leg and arm, she can still talk and think. Now dependent on the services of others, she accepts that she needs

to learn how to receive, after a lifetime of giving and nurturing others. 'To surrender to life as it is can miraculously transform situations. It is in this surrender that we are able to receive'. In the chapter on anger she reflects on how to deal positively with this very difficult emotion, especially when incapacitated.

This is a very practical guide to dealing with different situations of everyday existence, from which we can learn important lessons about how to be happy, in any circumstances. I appreciated the fascinating anecdotes and ideas on the best way to live and to let go of life when the time comes. The more academic might regret the lack of theoretical ideas, bibliography or index. But I think many readers will find it highly inspirational and informative.

Vivienne Silver-Leigh



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