Book Reviews

Lulu E. Sweigard. Human Movement Potential, The Ideokinetic Facilitation New York, Harper & Row 1974.

> *Through my years of teaching, I had come to realize that teachers and students often lacked an adequate academic or functional knowledge of the human body.*

As a teacher of dance and movement therapy, I feel a strong bond with Ms Sweigard's above comment in her book, "Human Movement Potential!" I have found this book to be 'the bible' for in depth understanding of posture and movement efficiency.

Athletes and dancers often look for results - how the external activity looks, rather than what works best for the body. Ultimately, the body functions normally and easily when the laws of gravity and motion in respect to posture are respected. Following an achievement-oriented model, students strain and injure themselves to perform before they have done the necessary kinesthetic preparation. The key to Sweigard's movement studies is the development of a keen kinesthetic sense from an internal source using the mind/body concept.

Ms Sweigard's method utilizes the neuro-musculo-skeletal phenomenon. She emphasizes the neural aspects because "these hold the secret for securing and maintaining neuromuscular efficiency . . . "

A valuable contributing force in Ms Sweigard's work has been the philosophy of movement education expounded by Mabel Elsworth Todd. The combined efforts of Sweigard and Todd at Columbia Teacher's College produced what now is commonly referred to as **body imagery.** Todd's book ""The Thinking Body" contains the theory and basic imagery that Sweigard outlines more specifically in her book. Their combined research composes what Sweigard calls **the ideokinetic** facilitation. Simply stated: the idea of the motion or picturing the movement without actually performing it muscularly.

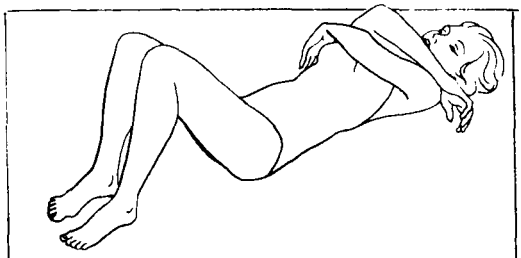
In Part Five: **Techniques to Reduce Strain and Improve Neuromuscular Co-ordination,** Sweigard offers several exercises with kinetic imagery to practice. There are many illustrations of everyday movements such as sitting, lifting, pushing and pulling objects as well as carrying weights, mounting stairs and bending postures. Her general rule which guides one through the pictures of proper mechanical use of the body goes like this:

> *. . . To maintain a good alignment of the trunk with minimal muscle work in movement, good mechanics must be employed; and this means movement must take place in the proper joints, which are mainly those of the lower limbs . . .*

She emphasizes the use of the legs to reduce stress on the spine and warns us that the legs "can function advantageously only when good mechanics are employed in their use."

Another attractive concept in this method can be found in Chapter 19 - **Constructive Rest.** Frequently we have difficulty relaxing our entire body. The mind/body must cooperate to produce true relaxation. I've often used the term 'body hypnosis' to explain this exercise. To briefly describe this supine position:

a. The constructive Rest Posture (CRP) is a lying flat position with the knees bent and the feet about 10 inches apart.



The constructive rest position (CRP).

b. Gravity ***is allowed*** *to pull equally on each vertebra thus facilitating a kinesthetic sense of "heavy, like lead" throughout the length of the spine.*

c. Arms are gently crossed at the elbow over the chest. This is an approximate location over the chest where the weight of the arms doesn't constrict breathing.

d. Kinetic images suggest that the major joints - the hip sockets, shoulder and occipital joints - be loose and hanging downward off the spine. Again, the heaviness of the body at rest. . .

e. To eliminate holding tension in the thighs with the knees bent, a tie above the knees keeps the legs from falling apart and helps maintain the center line of the spine.

A few modifications of the CRP might include padding on the floor, a small pillow under the neck or lower back and bringing the knees to the chest for a few moments to relieve areas of weight pressure on the back of the pelvis. Turning to the side temporarily and rubbing the painful areas also relieves pressure. Also, the transition to standing from the CRP should be done by rolling to each side then to a crawl position to prepare for balance.

This process of rest may be done before and after physical activity for about 20 minutes. It must be practiced daily at least once. Even, regular breathing,

once established might induce sleep; however, depending on the individual's needs for that day - this is most effective for balancing the main weights of the body in the upright position. I refer to three main units of weight - the head, chest and pelvis. The alignment process based on ideo-kinetic facilitation necessitates imaging movement in the body without exerting any physical effort. It will work effortlessly if one doesn't push because voluntary movement disrupts the subcortical planning of muscular coordination in response to imagery.

My personal experience with the Sweigard-Todd methods has been a process of analyzing and translating this system into practical language. For the past ten years, I have asked students "Which images work best for you?" We are all different in body-type and thus our neuro-muscular responses vary a great deal. If one image "clicks" with you, use it and build on it; alter the imagery to suit your needs and give yourself ample time to relax between each exercise.

Most of us suffer from chronic aches and pains of the neck, shoulders and lower back. How much simpler it might be to take responsibility for healing ourselves rather than depending on chiropractors and osteopaths to do it for us. Students are amazed at how quickly a concentrated, relaxed, neuro-muscular program can correct chronic problems. As in most new patterning of habits, patience and practice serve us well. Without practice and commitment to improving ourselves, this method would have no realistic value.

Claire Risa Cohn

Herbert L. Leff. *Experience, environment and human potentials*, Oxford University Press 1978. p523 £6.25

This is a big book, an important book and a very good book. It is about psychology and about politics; about the private and the public; it is about self and society. And it attempts to reconcile the two through the concept of environmental design. How do we design human environments, and what internal and external forces are we supporting or being supported by, denying or being denied by, as we attempt to carry out our designs?. This is an ambitious project, and one which Leff attempts to pursue with care and thorough ness.

For me the most interesting part of the book was where he gives a set of 37 exercises for seeing the environment differently. These he calls "Cognitive Sets", and here are some examples of them:

> **Seeing the colours in the scene* Really *seeing* the colours and fine shadings of colour around you.
> **Seeing the scene as a collection of abstract forms* The idea is to see the scene as "meaningless" coloured, textured, three-dimensional shapes.

Rapidly switching your visual focus from one point to another in the scene and forming a vivid impression of each view. "I am a camera."
Seeing everything in the scene as perfect exactly the way it is A meditative stance.
Figuring out what the human constructions and other human influences in the scene "communicate" This applies both to intended and unintended messages.
Seeing things in the scene in terms of their probable past histories and probable futures The continuity of time.
Figuring out how the things and activities in the scene affect human wellbeing.
Thinking of how you do or might affect this scene and how it might affect you The action component.
Identifying with the objects in the scene The idea is to try to feel that you **are** each thing that you notice. Also try to identify with the *whole scene.*
Seeing the scene as if you held different value systems
Imagining changes in the scene that would make it a more pleasant place A change component.
Imagining what the scene would be like if the society were changed. And what would it be like if our society were transformed into your vision of the best imaginable type of society - your version of utopia?
Envisioning how this scene might be changed in the future as a result of specific actions that you could take now. "As clearly as possible" is the instruction.
Trying to figure out the most interesting or enjoyable way to look at the scene.

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I think it can be seen, even from this brief and bare selection, shorn of all its illustrative material, what a powerful and wide-ranging tool Leff has developed here. It sparks off ideas for a multitude of workshops and experiential events.

Leff has another invention, which he calls "the comps". This is a set of eight things to think about when one is trying to think constructively about the environment.

Complexity is the experience of unity in diversity. The environment needs to be diverse, but not so diverse that it cannot be grasped mentally and emotionally.

Composition refers to the content, meaning and significance of environmental experience. What values are being expressed - anti-life or pro-life values?

(Leff says a great deal about these latter.) One pro-life value is that "All social primary goods - liberty and opportunity, income and wealth, and the bases of self-respect - are to be distributed equally unless an unequal distribution of any or all of these goods is to the advantage of the least favoured."

Comprehension means a sense of clarity and insight. The best comprehension is afforded by a well-articulated environment, where the connections can be seen between one part and another, and a sense of *legibility* results. Cognitive education (of the experiential type already mentioned) can help here.

Comparison means that we automatically compare the environment with what we have known. Leff urges that we become more aware of our comparison levels. In this way we can avoid becoming habituated to unpleasant environments, and can work towards changing our own and other people's bases for comparison. This means seeking satisfactions which increase our sensivities to other satisfactions.

Competence refers to the degree to which an experience involves feelings of control, effectiveness or personal power. Do we feel like an origin, or like a pawn? This factor can affect very much the quality of our environmental experience. Does the environment give us encouragement to shape it and our own lives? Does it encourage exploration and creativity? This means that people will need to learn to join actively and share power in the design of their social, economic and political environments. The physical environment can then work to help further change.

Complications refers mainly to the adverse side-effects or unseen obstacles experienced in carrying out positive plans. Leff says that thinking in terms of whole systems enables us to see that any action involves a number of unintended consequences. If we can foresee these, we can make more adequate plans. But one of the complications is that, at the moment, few people seem able to use system thinking, or to act in terms of long-range considerations. So this factor alerts us to problems like feasibility constraints, cost constraints, user difficulties and so on.

Comportment refers to any pattern of action arising from an experience. What are we going to **do** about our experience? Here we are talking about feedback loops (which can become very complex) between the environment and the other factors we have been considering (Complexity, Composition and so on). And again we can ask questions about anti-life and pro-life values - what actions are possible in this environment, and what values do they express? What encouragement is there for cooperative, friendly, mutually creative, playful, intrinsically satisfying, ecologically sound action on our part? And how can we set up environments which do encourage these things?

Compatibility refers to the degree of consistency with a long-range orientation towards cooperation, human happiness and ecological concerns. This is included in the scheme to take account of the long-range experiental consequences of thinking, acting or designing in particular ways.

These are the eight things which Leff suggests we keep in mind when looking at the environment - and indeed they are obviously very general, enabling us to look at any set-up in which we may be involved. He regards them as eight components contributing to the affective (emotional) quality of experience, and claims that they constitute "an incipient theory of happiness".

In his last long chapter on *Utopia and change* Leff goes about the task of suggesting how our newly awakened conscience about the environment can be turned into political action. Some of what he says parallels in an interesting way John Rowan's rather similar chapter in *The Structured Crowd*, but there are important differences too.

The main one, perhaps, is that Leff does no justice either to feminism or to Marxism - the two great theories of what most needs changing if anything fundamental is going to happen in our society. There is perhaps a little too much of the positive, and not enough of the negative, in this book. But in spite of this, the book is very clear about how fundamental the needed changes are, if we are to have a decent society. He lays down five main requirements:

1. *An economic and political system based on equity and distributive justice.*

2. *A high level of resources and ecologically sound practices relative to population level.*

3. *A system of socialization, education, cultural norms and everyday rewards that promotes full ecological consciousness.*

4. *A system which prepares and encourages all people for full participation in taking central decisions which affect them.*

5. *Societal commitment to pro-life, rationality, diversity and experimentation.*

He confesses and allows that this is utopian, but argues that we *have* to think in utopian terms if we want to know what direction to aim in. We should be clear about what we ultimately want - otherwise we are very unlikely to get it.

And there are many good suggestions in here for how people involved in the education of the young could help these changes.

* *Training for problem-solving and using active inquiring methods*
* *Organising the total curriculum in as interdisciplinary a fashion as possible*
**Using the methods of values clarification as an integral consideration in teaching.*
**Encouraging student participation in decision making - sharing power with students*
**Making environmental issues and concerns pervasive throughout the educational curriculum*

*Using cooperative goal structures for students - synergistic education
*Helping students to relate environmental studies to actual local issues
*Involving students (and teachers) in action projects that include striving for pro-life changes both in the school itself and in the broader community
*Extending environmental concerns to cover ecological conscience and ecological action.

Again this seems to be a stimulating and useful list, though very compressed - all the proper explanations of unfamiliar terms are there in the book itself.

In spite of its occasional naiveties and jejunenesses this is a book well worth taking seriously. And for those who wish to go further into the areas which Leff has opened up, there is a 33-page bibliography with copious notes and cross-references to make it more usable. For anyone who wants to think about the social implications of humanistic psychology, this is a good place to start.

O. Void

William A. Belson. *Television violence and the adolescent boy*, Saxon House 1978.

This is a very thorough (529) page) report on a big research project financed by CBS in the United States, but carried out in London. It is an excellent example of standard traditional "old paradigm" social research in action. At every point it checks itself for threats to validity and these are carefully controlled. It was started in 1970 and completed in 1975.

What it is trying to do is to see if there is a link between violence on TV and violence in the real world (for boys in London between 12 and 17 years of age), and if so, what that link is. So these two things had to be turned into objective measurements.

Violence on TV was broken down into 25 different categories, and an overall index derived.This enabled Belson to look at the total effect of violence, and also to see whether one or more particular **types** of violence had more or less effect. The boys were asked about what programmes they had watched, and each programme had already been given a score for each type of violence. Thus for example, for overall level of violence **Crossroads** had a rating of 1, **Star Trek** a rating of 5 and **The Untouchables** a rating of 9. So the boy would get 5 points for each and every episode of **Star Trek** he had seen during the period 1958-1971. (Elaborate measures were taken to enable the boys to recall details of this whole period.) So each boy got a total score, an index of the extent of TV violence which he had been exposed to during his whole childhood.

Violence in the real world was assessed by a very detailed questioning procedure asking about different kinds of violent activity which the boy had undertaken or been involved in. Fifty items were included, ranging from "I have lied to somebody" to "I have beaten somebody up", and the boys were asked to give details of anything like that which they had done, and how many times they had done it during the past six months. This was then turned into an index of violent behaviour for each boy.

It was now possible to put these two scores (the index for TV violence exposure and the index for real world violence undertaken) together and see if they matched. Did one go up when the other one went up? The answer was a clear **Yes**, and the relationship was clearest when the real world violence was particularly high.

Now does this mean that violence on TV causes violence in real life, for these boys? There are two other possibilities. The first is that the boys who were violent and watched violent TV programmes were those with disturbed personalities, or with broken homes, or with particular traumas in early life, or with particular social backgrounds, or from certain areas, or of a particular physical type, etc. These would be the real reasons for the link, causing both the real-life violence and the high interest in watching TV violence. This possibility was eliminated by very extensive and elaborate matching procedures. What this means is that each violent boy is matched with a non-violent boy on a large number of these variables (e.g. tendencies as a young child to smash toys, to be noisy, to yell when hurt, etc.). If the differences still emerge significantly, it cannot be due to these other variables. This is what was done, and the relationship did still emerge. So this possibility is ruled out.

The other possibility is that being violent in real life leads to a greater interest in TV violence - having done it oneself one is interested to see how others do it. This again can be dealt with by matching, and this again was done, with the result that the findings were again confirmed.

So it seems that TV violence **does** lead to real life violence amongst adolescent boys. The same research, however, shows that TV violence does **not** lead to greater callousness or acceptance of violence in general, nor does it lead to lack of consideration for others or in boys' respect for authority.

The research also shows which kinds of violence on TV are the worst, in the sense of being most likely to cause real-life violence. These are:

*Where violence occurs in close personal relations.

*Where violence appears to have been just thrown in for its own sake or is not necessary to the plot.

*Realistic fictional violence.

*Violence in a good cause.

*Violent Westerns.

These five forms of violence have the strongest relationship of a causal kind with real-life violence by these adolescent boys. They appear to work, Belson says, by a process of disinhibition, whereby prohibitions are released.

The book also has something to say about other media, such as films, magazines, etc., but really not very much.

So what are we to make of these findings? First of all, how big is the effect? Well, on serious violence it does appear to be quite large. (Serious violence includes such things as "I have beaten someone up", "I busted the phone in a phone box", "I flogged a dog", "I tried to force a girl to have sexual intercourse with me", "I slashed the tyres of some cars in a car park", and so forth.) Belson says:

> *Thus only half of London boys were involved at all in this more serious form of violent behaviour in the six month period covered. Moreover, violence at this serious level accounts for an average of approximately 6 acts per boy in six months, compared with over 200 acts of the less violent kind (in that same period). However, having said this, we must take careful note of the fact that an average of 6 acts of this seriously violent kind aggregates to an enormous amount of serious violence in the London area in the course of a year. Furthermore, 12 percent of London boys appear to be quite heavily involved at this level.*

So if this is the size of the problem, and if TV violence does play an important role in causing it, as this study demonstrates, what are we to make of this?

There are still some puzzles. One is that juvenile delinquents, as we know from a mass of other research, tend to stop committing offences when they get a bit older and start to settle down. Presumably this would apply to what we have called "real-life violence" as well. But the violence on TV would remain the same, and it is hard to see how it can be so very important as a causal determinant if this is so.

Another puzzling point is that juvenile violence is much lower in this country than it is in the USA and yet many of the TV programmes rated as violent in this study did in fact come from the United States. Presumably the general culture has a big influence on the general level of violence, and it would be **within** this that TV violence would have its effect. There are a number of tricky and complex questions here which this study does little to resolve.

A common weakness in studies of violence is to ignore the very interesting fact that violence which we approve of is not generally called violence at all, and, by those who observe it, is not usually even seen as violence at all. It is seen as punishment, just deserts, comeuppance, justice (or rough justice, or poetic justice), retribution, getting one's own back, and so on and so forth. This study, too, ignores this very well-established fact, and hence makes the problem appear simpler and more straightforward than it is.

In spite of these difficulties, I think it should be recognised that this is an uncommonly sensitive and well-designed study, which deserves more consideration than it seems to have been given by most people concerned in this area.

If one were cynical enough, one might predict that this study will be ignored by others working in the field simply because it is so good, and shows so clearly how poor most of the other research already done is in comparison.

John Rowan

LIFE CYCLE BOOKS *Series Editor - Leonard Kristal.* Harper & Row

Middle Age - Majorie Fiske
Growing Old: Years of Fulfilment - Robert Kastenbaum
Human Sexuality: Feelings and Functions - Leonore Tiefer
Pregnancy & Birth - C. Macy/F. Falkner
Adolescent - John Conger
Understanding Stress & Anxiety - Charles Spielberger

The original idea for the series is healthy, fostering what seems to be a prevalent trend to self-help through expert information-sharing.

I was not sure how valuable these books would be in practice to the public for whom they are designed, so I tried some out on appropriate friends. I got a mixed response. "Understanding Stress and Anxiety" was not found helpful by the sufferers I know: they thought it was too academic and not practically useful.

A similar comment came back on "Middle Age: the prime of life", which surprised me as I had found it hopeful and encouraging, although maybe containing a counsel of perfection which most of us might find daunting:"Utter honesty in our closest relationships is the principal source of strength". I am sure it is true but that doesn't make it easy to put into practise.

All the books struck me as surveys of current research translated into popular language rather than self-help manuals. So perhaps they would be useful to first year social psychology students as a guide to further reading.

The "Pregnancy" book, which I found slightly boring, apart from the many beautiful, sometimes amusing illustrations, was praised by a pregnant friend who found it a refreshing change from the instruction manuals with which well-meaning friends have showered her. She said its superiority was due to its general approach in contrast to the specific advisory angle she was getting from her other pregnancy books.

I feel I can give a qualified recommendation to the series, as potentially useful in community centres or clinics where the appropriate seekers may find them. They could be used well in Life Experience classes for teenagers in schools and colleges.

Richenda Power
