

The Healing Power of using Therapeutic Dialoguing in Bodywork **Ursula Popp, 2003**

As humans, we have a deep longing and need to be seen as whole, integrated and healthy beings. We do not experience ourselves as separate parts, broken down into psyche, body, or mind. We are each one of us a whole person. If the body is not well, neither is the psyche, nor is the mind, and vice versa. Pain affects all aspects, so does happiness.

In the last around 100 years healthcare has become more and more specialized. Medical doctors are responsible for the body's pathologies. Psychologists work with mental and psychological problems. In a world of such specialization, a sense of wholeness, interrelation of all parts, and the soul get lost.

As bodyworkers we are not as specialized as doctors or psychologists. We are more generalists who see the bodies of our clients as a whole entity. But why stop there? We have the wonderful opportunity to work with the entire person - body, mind, psyche, soul and all. We are unique in that we have two ingredients available to us most other health care professionals do not have in combination – time and touch. Let's not pass up the chance to take full advantage of this toward our client's advantage!

Therapeutic dialoguing is a powerful tool to go beyond the body and address the whole person. Therapeutic dialoguing is different from a conversation. It involves focus, purpose, and intent. Let me give an example: before starting table work, I let the client talk. I listen as they tell me all about why they came in. I ask them about their lives, and what happened around the appearance of the presenting problem or issue. While I listen, they start to hear themselves talk. This helps them recognize different aspects and engages their mind. Then, on the table, I begin my work with their body. My gentle touch helps them to relax. As their body begins to trust my hands, their controlling, judgmental mind slows down. With further work, they often go into an altered state of consciousness similar to the state we are in just before falling asleep. In this state, the client's inherent wisdom and even their soul can come forth. I encourage them with gentle, supportive questioning and acknowledgment. Anything is possible in this state. I might suggest a conversation with a structure that is experiencing pain, asking it why it exists and what it needs in order to heal. The client's psyche might take them on an inner journey, led by the body's memories. They might remember earlier life experiences or gain insight into what isn't working in their life right now.

My role is to support and help the client see and hear it all - the body, mind, psyche, soul - and to witness the process. It is most important that I use non-judgmental language in my questions, and stay away from interpretations or advice. I follow the client's lead in the topics we talk about. I gently help them stay in the altered state of consciousness so that the quieter, often overridden voice can express its wisdom. This dialogue happens while I do bodywork that is non-invasive, respectful and gentle. As they gain insight, their body gains health.

This process is very rewarding for the client, though sometimes scary at first. This kind of dialoguing does not require a degree in psychotherapy (though theoretical knowledge of psychological concepts and the psyche is helpful). It does require that, as a practitioner, I be willing to look at myself in all aspects; after all, the depth of therapy with the client always depends on how deeply I am able to go within myself. It also requires the ability to listen deeply, the willingness and the ability to see the world through someone else's eyes, and the ability to free oneself of one's own prejudices and judgments. It requires gentleness—both in language and touch—that does not violate the client's sense of integrity when and where they are vulnerable.

This kind of dialoguing gives the client a chance to listen to a deep, knowing place inside – a voice they may never have heard before. The result is a sense of homecoming, of seeing more clearly, and of being seen. The pain might be gone, or not (the client might actually feel some additional emotional pain as a result of getting in touch with sadness, frustration, anger, or loss) but they walk out of my office stronger, with a better sense of themselves and of a bigger picture, one beyond the specific complaints they came into my office with. They might even walk out with a plan for making their life work better. And, as a practitioner, I feel enriched by the experience of listening to my client as they discover their deeper truths and wisdom rather than feeling depleted by trying so hard to fix yet another person's problem.