Dear List Members!

This is the last newsletter for 2010 and we’re delighted to be able to feature contributions from members of this mailing group. We know there’s a wealth of experience and knowledge out there to share, so may we again invite you to think of writing an article - long or short - or sending us a previously published piece. We are hoping that the APA website will consider putting the newsletter on their website. We’ll keep you posted on this.


We hope you enjoy reading the newsletter. Finally, we wish you a restful holiday season among family and friends!

Best wishes, Ilene and Heather

In this newsletter:
- New member introduction
- Feature Article: Creativity, Resilience and Chaos Theory - Tobi Zausner
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- Book Review: Kenneth Gergen - Relational Being: Beyond Self and Community - Heather Hill
- East Side Institute – Letter from Gwen Lowenheim
- Body Psychotherapists’ Conference – reflections on Serlin post-conference workshop – Talia Shafir
- Book Notes
- Conference news – the Arts and Health Conference, Melbourne
- And finally..... Plus ca change, plus c’est la meme chose!

Attachment: Working with Trauma in Israel (Ilene Serlin)

INTRODUCTION TO...

Daniel Hyams: I am a British expressive arts therapist working in London. I trained in music therapy, and now undertaking my PhD in expressive therapies at Lesley University, Cambridge MA. I work with both children and adults with emotional and behavioral difficulties, and also facilitate community music therapy projects serving adults with profound learning disabilities.
My research interests are Intermodal Arts Therapies, and developing theoretical foundations for this.

FEATURE ARTICLE:
CREATIVITY, RESILIENCE, AND CHAOS THEORY
Tobi Zausner, PhD, LMSW

Tobi Zausner, who has an interdisciplinary doctorate in Art and Psychology and a Licensed Master of Social Work, is also an award-winning visual artist with works in major museums and in private collections around the world. Her website is www.tobizausner.com. Dr. Zausner writes and lectures widely on the psychology of art and human potential at academic conferences and charitable events, while teaching psychology at Saybrook University. She is an officer on the Board of A.C.T.S (Arts, Crafts, and Theatre Safety), a non-profit organization investigating health hazards in the arts and is also on the Board of All Sentient Beings, an animal rescue organization. Her book, When Walls Become Doorways: Creativity and the Transforming Illness (Harmony/Random House, 2007), is about the influence of physical illness on the creative process of visual artists. It shows that instead of stopping artists, physical difficulties transform them, enhancing both their life and their work. A native New Yorker and an avid reader, walker, and hiker, Dr. Zausner wishes there were more trees, grass, and hills in New York City.

Creativity and resilience have interested me for decades, especially the dynamic interface between them. I wrote a book about this dynamic, When Walls Become Doorways: Creativity and the Transforming Illness (Zausner, 2007a), demonstrating the many ways that visual artists use creativity as resilience in the face of serious illness. The artists’ creative responses not only alter their work but also transform their lives. Not even incapacitations, such as vision problems, cancer, arthritis, or quadriplegia will stop these individuals. In response, the artists change their work and also become stronger. Yet while writing this article, it occurred to me that resilience by itself, even without the production of art, is a creative act.

Resilience is our capacity to bounce back from adversity when life changes in ways that we could not have predicted and would not have chosen (Zausner, 2007a). It is the development of strength during a time of hardship, the capacity to thrive despite major stressors that pose serious threats. Although current difficulties may appear similar to previous stressful events, every occurrence in life is fundamentally unique, as is every resilient response, making human resilience a creative act.

Resilience and chaos theory

There are different forms of resilience. One type is the resilience of a bouncing ball that rebounds from the pavement in increasingly shorter arcs and then eventually rolls away. This kind of resilience can be modeled mathematically as a two body interaction in Newtonian physics (Gleick, 1987; Kellert, 1993) between the ball and the pavement. It is also an example of entropy found in the second law of thermodynamics, which says that systems will deteriorate through a loss of energy and information (Gleick, 1987). Although entropy is considered to be a
universal law, it can have local exceptions (Shannon & Weaver, 1971) and human resilience is one of them.

Unlike the simplicity of a bouncing ball, human resilience is a very complex phenomenon with many interacting factors. As such, it can be modeled metaphorically by chaos theory, a part of the science of nonlinear dynamics, which addresses the interactions of multiple factors. In chaos theory, human beings can be seen as dissipative structures (Zausner, 1996), which are dynamic open systems that maintain themselves through a constant interchange with their environment (Kellert, 1993; Ruelle, 1991). They do this by both incorporating and then discharging energy and information. Not all dissipative structures are human. Some, like the Great Red Spot on the planet Jupiter are storms that have maintained themselves for centuries by taking energy in from the surrounding atmospheric turbulence and discharging energy back into the planet's atmosphere (Briggs & Peat, 1989).

Resilience, complexity, and the reversal of entropy

While humans are shorter lived than this astronomical occurrence, they too are chaotic systems that take in energy and information and discharge it into their surroundings. This energy intake can be in the form of food that is digested and eliminated as waste or it can be in the form of information that once assimilated, may fundamentally alter a life. This alteration can bring the person to a higher level of complexity enhancing the ability to respond with actions that contain more information than the stimulus that inspired the change. Responding with increased complexity and more information lowers the amount of entropy in a system and as such is negentropic and a local reversal of the second law of thermodynamics.

Resilience in response to stress can generate this type of complexity. Resilient behavior is negentropic because it responds to the energy brought into a system through seriously threatening events by strengthening the person's capacity to survive and to thrive. Instead of deteriorating and losing information like entropic systems, resilient people gain energy by becoming stronger in the face of adversity. They also become more complex through integrating the information about stressful experiences as well as their response to them, thus increasing their capacity for resilience both consciously and unconsciously.

Resilience as creativity

Human resilience is always a creative act. Resilience is creative because it is a unique response generated for a unique situation. Chaotic systems never repeat themselves exactly (Prigogine & Stengers, 1984) and human beings as dissipative structures are constantly living through new moments in time. Even when the current stressor may appear similar to previous stressful situations, no two moments in time are exactly alike and neither are any two responses. The Greek philosopher Heraclitus (1987) wrote that you cannot step into the same river twice and as rivers flow, changing from moment to moment, so does time flow, reshaping our lives. Resilience is a fundamental part of the human capacity for everyday creativity (Richards, 2007). It is a creative resourcefulness that we use in daily activities such as gardening, cooking, or finding a new way to work when traffic blocks our usual route. Resilience not only keeps us going but it keeps us growing stronger and more complex.
Artists, creativity, and resilience

Although creating art is a constant struggle that requires ongoing resilience (Zausner, 2007b), artists also use creativity as a tool for resilience in multiple ways. They will turn to creativity in response to physical pain, as compensation for lost motor ability, or to fulfill their emotional needs. Frida Kahlo (Mexican, 1907-1954) was an eighteen year old pre-med student when a traffic accident left her severely injured (Herrera, 1993, 1983). Forced to recuperate in bed for months, Kahlo used painting as fulfillment and it became her method of resilience in response to physical impairments. "As the accident changed my path" she said, "many things prevented me from fulfilling the desires which everyone considers normal, and to me nothing seemed more normal than to paint what had not been fulfilled" (cited in Herrera, 1983, p. 75).

Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec (French, 1864-1901), who was born with pycnodysostosis, a genetic disorder that produces brittle bones, impaired walking, and dwarfism (Gelb et al, 1995; Maroteaux & Lamy, 1965), started to draw when he was age three to four (Néret, 1994; Huisman & Dortu, 1964). Art became Lautrec’s method of resilience by creating a world of movement for a child, who could not walk without pain. Although Lautrec loved horses, he was unable to ride and in compensatory resilience Lautrec created artworks of running horses. Later in life Lautrec weakened his capacity for resilience through severe and continued substance abuse (Zausner, in press). Like Lautrec, Maud Lewis (Canadian, 1903-1970) also lived with pain that started in childhood. Lewis had severe juvenile rheumatoid arthritis that continued into adulthood. Despite extremely affected hands from the illness, Lewis propped up her right hand with her left so that she could continue to paint. Using art as a distraction from her discomfort, it became both an analgesic and her method of resilience. As Lewis said, "As long as I've got a brush in front of me, I'm all right (cited in Woolaver, 1995, p. 29).

Norman Rockwell (American, 1894-1978) used art as resilience in response to his emotional problems. Born in New York City, he witnessed urban violence and grew up having a mother who was mentally ill (Claridge, 2001). Even after moving to Vermont, his life continued to be stressful with ongoing depressions, a mentally ill wife, and a subsequent divorce. Rockwell not only addressed these emotional problems with his therapist Erik Erickson, but also sought resilience through his art. He painted the world not the way it was, but the way he way he wanted it to be. There is an enormous strength in the portrayal of yearning and Rockwell’s desired world of small town happiness, political freedom, and good natured humor was congruent with the desires of millions of Americans. People responded to his work in large numbers, its message also providing hope and resilience for them as it did for the artist.

Resilience through viewing art

Viewing art can be a conduit for resilience in multiple ways. It can be a direct social message as in a Norman Rockwell image, an empathic response to the portrayal of pain as in the work of Frida Kahlo, or it can be experienced in the perception of beauty, as in the series of Water Lilies paintings by Monet, who used creativity as resilience in the face of eye problems and cataracts (Zausner, 2007a). We can say metaphorically that resilience is contagious, coming from the artist into the work of art and then to the viewing audience. Both making and looking at art stimulate a resilience that is within us all the time. Resilience is a dormant capacity, an unconscious power that can be brought into conscious awareness through our own creativity and through the creative works of others that alter our environment and our lives.
References

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**REMEMBERING NOT TO FORGET - MARCIA PLEVIN**

The following article - originally published in the DTAA Quarterly, Vol. 2, no. 1, 2003 – offers one person’s experience of drawing on the arts during a time of physical pain and challenge. We reprint it here with the kind permission of the author and of the Dance-Movement Therapy Association of Australia (DTAA).

Marcia Plevin is an American/Italian dance/movement therapist ADTR, NCC, teacher/supervisor for Art therapy Italiana who lives and works in Rome, Italy. Choreographer and dancer before becoming a DMT, presently she practices both privately and within public institutions while continuing her creative work. She is co-founder of Creative Movement- metodo Garcia-Plevin, a training program for educators, psychologists, and artists. Having trained many years with Janet
Walking with long strides, my arms swinging, how I love to feel them swing in rhythm with my feet. The warm sun, the air, a bird’s song fill this simple walk with joy. My heart opens again in gratitude for the possibility of swinging my arms as I walk. Where once I hobbled a meagre 50 yards to the newspaper stand, holding my elbows tight against my waist, wincing with every step, I now do it in a blink of an eye. Where once that short trip for the paper cost me a 40-minute rest at home, I now get the paper, run in and out of the store for milk with little thought of resting on return. This testament to remembrance is a story of recovery and metamorphosis which opened my mind and body to becoming once again a “beginner’s mind”. The term “beginner’s mind” is found in Zen meditation practice and refers to a ready and empty mind open to the inquiry of what “is”. (Suzuki, 1970)

My hips had become carriers of pain that I had to learn to manage and live with. The pain shaped my body into forms which I adapted to continue teaching modern dance technique at the National Italian Academy for Dance, to practice dance therapy, to shop, cook, love. I remember sleeping. Sleeping was always difficult. Activating my body to turn over was a nightmare. Turning over activates a body spiral, a far too complicated manoeuvre to remain unconscious. Waking up to turn over meant doing it carefully, mindfully. Little by little, body movement in space shrank, spirals and rotations lessened. Walking, my head and trunk pitched forward to equalize the weight, I held back. Shoulders squeezed in towards each other. “Who is that?” I asked, as I passed a storefront window. Opening wide, projecting my body into space became dream images. One accepts, perceives the shrinking space, conserves what one has.

Hips: my wonderful hips that rotate gorgeously in spirals, which can fly my legs like autumn leaves, which can hold me up. A place between my top and bottom.

Hips: make it possible to simply go from here to there, to sit down and get up.

Hips: jiggle and sway. Hinges. They allow the middle bowl of my body to respond to gravity.

Hips: are central to the dance of making love.

My pelvis became inert. Energy, force, weight from the earth had no conduit to pass through to the central part of my body. It bypassed my pelvis and found expression in different parts of my back. To accomplish simple tasks my feet, back and shoulders took over and became my hips. Water became the element of choice. Thankfully, it held me up.

Legs are doors to the world. One of them was getting continually stuck. On some days it felt oiled, on others it squeaked and groaned to open. My familiar internal body image began to dissolve. “I can’t” were words said mentally and verbally more often. Body fluidity decreased as I faithfully practised an ever-changing daily movement practice. I imagined a rock taking form in my left hip. In my darkest moments I saw myself smashing it to bits.

I was too young the orthopaedic surgeon said (at the time I was 48). But what did I have to become in order to have the operation? My body already began to feel like a gnarled olive tree. Attempting to enjoy a day of sightseeing in Tallen, Estonia in the summer of ’94, I felt like I was on an alpine climb. The city has soft hills but from my body perspective they were Himalayan peaks. It dawned on me that I could not go on. Returning to Rome, I made an appointment with the surgeon and said, “Do it”. Ten days later I had replaced my left hip.
No one had ever asked to conserve the head of a femur. After the first replacement, the surgeon’s assistant brought it to me. I wanted to see what it was; a dome shaped object that had the pockmarks and craters of the moon. Curious, I held it with both awe and repugnance. Ten years before when I felt the first ping of discomfort, I was told by the doctor that it began in one of those craters. That small ping sent me to a number of orthopaedic specialists each offering a slightly different diagnosis. Through the years leading up to the first operation I tried aspirin, cortisone, Rolfing, Alexander Technique, not moving, moving carefully, Shiatsu, imaginative visions of healing light, various herbal treatments, Reiki, vitamins. I felt loss, depression, anger, vulnerability, fear.

The first of many challenges to recovery surfaced on the day after the operation when I was placed on my feet. A rush of contradictory feelings surfaced as I walked the first few steps. I looked into the eyes of the physical therapist in amazement. Was it my imagination? My left hip was higher than the right. I could not, would not contemplate this. Disbelief. Rage. My surgeon came by 10 days after the operation. It was so. Medical explanations were given. I could feel anger ready to suck the energy I so needed for recovery. A choice had to be made for recovery, which meant love, affection for myself in the present, and, in the months, ahead not anguishing over what had been done. A beginner’s mind opening to not knowing dawned during the progressive degeneration of the left hip, as I adapted to a physical disability, but I had no inkling of what was in store. What brought me through this period and gave it grace was creativity in the forms of designing, drawing, writing and poetry. The hospital walls became full of drawings expressing the violence of being cut open, disappointment, depression. Crutches became wings and tree branches. Although I physically tired easily, I needed to channel an enormous amount of psychic and repressed physical energy and give it shape. The process continued at home. There, designs became swirling, fluid shapes in dark indigo blues with wide orange and gold paths moving through the darker tones. I was color dancing. Six weeks later I was back teaching at the Academy, seeing patients and walking slowly with a lift in my shoe.

My leg, now longer than my spine was used to thrust me into a labyrinth of unfamiliar sensations. The joy of no longer feeling pain in my left hip was held at bay by subtle compensations in my back which became increasingly apparent as I slowly began to put more weight on both feet. The arduous recovery which held anger away from the healing process challenged my whole being, specifically challenging my already debilitated right hip. My beginner’s mind practice helped in letting go and emptying the anger. What I was gaining in my left leg I began, however, to lose in my right. Equilibrium was ephemeral as mist on a foggy night. Rigorously following the physical therapy, I could not celebrate the pain-free mobility in my left hip while the right began to suffer. Awkward, ungainly, pinched shoulders began again. It became harder to walk and, once more, to turn over at night in bed. An increasingly unknown body was taking shape. Internal chaos began to reign. Was I healing or not? One side was healing as the other was losing ground. Am I going forward or back? I had learned to live with pain. It simply was not finished yet. What is being asked of me again or still?

Four months after the operation, the drive and effort to recover brought me closer and closer to the realization that soon the right hip would need to be replaced. During those winter months, I imaginably became a big, grizzled bear hibernating in the hole of a large tree. The bear lumbered
out in order to make a living, see patients, teach dance classes, visit the doctors, but with an
urgency to get back into the tree hole.

Alone. One comes down to the roots of aloneness. Alone, even when surrounded by loving
friends. I needed to find and trust another orthopaedic surgeon not only to do the replacement
but hopefully to compensate for the longer leg. That choice would ultimately be up to me. Life is
unpredictable.

My work, then, became to search for a surgeon I could trust. I did not rest until one was found
and a date fixed. The search ended with finding a French surgeon who operated in Pescara. The
first operation had been performed by an Italian orthopaedic surgeon in Rome. The date was
fixed for May 5th, 10 months after the first replacement.

A few weeks before the operation out came pens, magic markers and a new addition...scissors. I
began to do what I needed to do. Allowing my hand to move at will, I began using a black pen on
white paper. Graphic lines emerged intersecting and criss-crossing the space. Bright red ink
blotches fell on parts of the design. I remembered the blood coming into my arm (the auto-
transfusion of my own blood which had been taken out for any eventual emergency during the
operation) and at the same time the blood draining from the wound in my thigh. Five days
before the operation I have this dream:

*I get into my car to drive home but nothing seems to work. All the mechanisms have a foreign
feeling and I cannot be sure the car will react to the commands. In fact, there is no immediate
response. I am frightened and cautious. I fear I will cause an accident. I could take the short cut
home but this is impossible because the car can not be manoeuvred in that direction. So I begin to
take the long way. Every manoeuvre I make is very disturbing since the response is unfamiliar.*

The dream would prove to be prophetic on various levels. Through the first and now second
operation I symbolically sought to decipher the message of my illness. Here, I am told so clearly
and simply that I will be taking the long way home. To me this meant it will take a longer time
to get there. Time. Yes. Home to myself but slower than I would be used to. No more short
cuts. I will be in and moving through an unfamiliar landscape. I truly need a beginner’s mind to
let go to the unknown. Without hips, one cannot move, cannot manoeuvre. I need to stop, to rest.
Perhaps my hips had called out for rest earlier, much earlier, and I had not been ready to listen?

The day before the operation, I found time to go out into the garden of the hospital and meditate
under an olive tree. I put my hand on its trunk. My body too is gnarled and twisted, scarred and
bent in different ways. Praying, I felt grateful to be feeling trust and surrounded by air that held
a buoyant light.

May 5.

On the morning of the operation a brilliant sun came over the Adriatic sea, slithered across my
room painting a sunburst on my wall. I was ready. Meditation books to my right, oil pastels to
my left, the portable CD waited patiently. In my single room I had the sensation that someone
was breathing beside me as I woke up. In moments such as these, I turn to humour. If someone
can banter back so much the better. The nurses were wonderful joking partners as I laughed my
way to the operating table with them and though the preliminary anaesthetic. After the spinal
injection I was on my side drifting in and out of consciousness. All of a sudden it was over. The surgeon positioned himself in front of my eyes and did a little jig. As he moved much to my amazement, he sang that my leg would feel a bit longer after the operation but not to worry everything would settle in. Like a building, I hazily thought, pilings settling into position, sediment layers, geologic formations....

Being wheeled back into my room I had a strange but familiar feeling. I know this. But I was not prepared for the searing pain in my right groin that painkillers could not help. Not until a dear friend held my hand and we began to breath together was there any sign of truce. If I kept my attention solely on my breathing through the next wave of pain, it would be all right. With my eyes closed, light pastel forms opened up before me moving slowly in large curves around immense space. Light pink and flesh-colored highways curved around my psychic space which I sent down into my right hip. A woman appeared in my mind with long auburn hair. She delicately caressed the ligaments, tendons, the wound around the hip. Every time the pain heightened she would be there. The soothing blanket of color, the woman's visitation, deep breathing, a friend's hand brought me through the first day.

The following day the physical therapist placed me on my feet. Verticality. I let out a cry and had to be put back into the horizontal. I could not stand up.

He came back the next day with a walker. I managed a few steps. I could not articulate, was afraid to ask, did something go wrong? I felt and had the image that my just operated right leg was a huge bear's leg large and muscular, strangely enough much stronger than the left. The left felt long and thin, weak and undernourished, a giraffe's leg. My feet went forward taking my weight lightly with the walker. My brain tried to function in a systematic way. I needed to hold off, not to think, just be, just recover. Just, just, just. The physical sensations of being disconnected were so strong that it began affecting my thinking.

I reached for the paper to draw and instead picked up the scissors. I began a series of cutouts. I did not know what I was doing, my fingers obeyed my hand, my wrist, my heart. Four cutouts of bodies emerged in the next 10 days. I needed to shape some kind of whole form that was all in one piece. I felt fragmented. (Figures 1-4).
May 11.
I sleep fairly well. No painkillers. I wake up calm and tranquil. I am moved to do gestures around my chakra energy centers. My mind/body rests on the middle of my body, the third chakra. Power. Instead of the usual circle of energy widening out there is a gentle enclosing circle. Something has shifted. My body sensations now are of living in the hips of a bear and having a giraffe's legs.
Two parts of my body do not know one another. My top and bottom are estranged. I don't know (feel, sense) myself. But, who is this self? I don't know. Crutches are given to me again. I walk a bit further every day. I begin to own these unfamiliar sensations as mine.

May 12
On non-doing in bed. Whatever comes in through the senses I feel in my body.
A tingling sensation enters my hips. I feel this without asking for more. I am surprised at practising non-doing, how much it truly is.

May 14
Exhaustion. Exhaustion so powerful that I must give in. In giving in I find peace.
Breathing, listening to my body is enough. Resting peacefully, I am without conflict. I am nowhere, in no part of me do I feel in conflict.

Surrender. I am dilating. Opening out. My weight is dropping through the mattress. There is something here about expansion, about boundaries moving, unfamiliar to my body consciousness.
It seems that surrender is allowing a particular state of consciousness. What is this? Can I remember this? Do I have to be sick in order to get here?

May 17
I am emotionally vulnerable in leaving the hospital to take up residence in the rehabilitation clinic.
The sensation of a sharp crack in my head lets me know I could snap.

In my first rehabilitation session I cannot look at myself in the mirror. Tears fall. I am in psychic agony. I cannot accept that I do not know how to walk. My body, I, cannot respond to the requests of the physical therapist. Where is my beginner's mind? I am incapable. The pretence of a "knowing" Marcia comes to an abrupt end. Rage. I am in spitfire rage at what I perceive as a physical and mental blindness. I do not or cannot understand or control anything. I spit at my unknowing. I am horrible to myself. The body I am in does not know how "to do". There is nothing to hold onto. These are my hips. These are not my hips. These are my legs. These are not my legs. I am teetering on my giraffe legs. I do not know who I am when my legs touch one another, come together. Grateful, I shout inside myself. Be grateful that you CAN put your legs together, for two years you could not even do that.

I hang onto grateful, it keeps me from tail spinning into "crazy".

Everyday I design on paper, the walls begin to fill. I learn how to be a learner. Soft, softening
and softness come to me through meditation and my relationship with others: the doctors, therapists, my fellow patients in the clinic.

The summer intensive of authentic movement with Janet Adler was directly in the middle of my rehabilitation stay. Up until then rehabilitation had been primarily physical which was beginning to show results. With crutches, I was beginning to walk. But my soul needed nourishment. Not without a pinch of fear, I decided to do it if only to be a witness. In my heart was a deep thirst and desire to move, although I was fearful about this desire.

With the help of friends I made it to the intensive. On crutches I did move on the periphery or outside of the circle. I worked primarily on the floor in the horizontal. I am very thankful for the witnesses of that circle who helped me see myself, a self I did not know. Through their witnessing I began moving much more slowly, began practising a right measure of force in walking, to cover shorter distances with smaller steps. A poem emerged from those circles;

"A Cantor walks slowly through the shtetl with bowed head.
A snail's pace allows for wonder and awe at small green sprouts of life
bursting through bricks in the road.
He enters a home where shawls and sheets cover mirrors and glass.
His voice lights and lifts the mourning wail of family and friends into depths of sorrow.
Afterwards he stays to drink sweet red wine.
How he found himself telling a joke he can't remember. But he remembers laughing and crying at the same time." (Plevin 1996)

I returned to the rehabilitation clinic for the rest of my stay. In the clinic were patients recovering from strokes, thrombosis and various orthopaedic operations. Many were in greater mental and physical pain than myself. We were all participating in recovery; the small joy of
bending a knee a bit further, being able to lift a fork, being able to speak. When I could manage more agilely with the crutches, I brought a cassette recorder into the day room and began to move and play with whomever was there. Within a few days a small, steady group would show up for a sort of “Simon says” session. This turned into the first ever “dance” performance in the clinic. There were those who pushed the wheelchairs, wheelchair dances, a tango on crutches, moving hand dances, moving eye dances, whatever could move…moved. The night of the performance we were all treated with pizza.

Looking back, I realize I am forward to myself, walking with swinging arms on a sunny day and living to the fullness of my being. At times I can exceed my limits and have to pull back. Out there on the edge of not knowing there is a more spatially open mind and a body ready to listen. Throughout the two operations I became a creative arts therapist for myself. The creative process, the basis of dance therapy was channeled into writing, art and making poetry. The need to express was strong. Creativity came through parts of the body that could respond…a true godsend. It feels good to be on this side of the tunnel of recovery. Every so often I am called upon to talk with people who have to make similar choices about a hip replacement operation. Numerous clinical situations have brought me into contact with patients recovering from operations, accidents or dealing with pain on various levels. The panic and concern in their eyes is familiar. My remembering puts me in touch with not forgetting how it is to not recognize your self, to lose the self and to find her again.

Plevin M., 1996, A Moving Journal, v.3 no.1 Rhode Island

A review by Heather Hill, Phd

“I am who I am because of who we all are” (Gergen, p.388)

This is a book with a large vision and a courageous writer willing to grasp the nettle and make an inspired attempt to take the concept of relational being and apply it to a totality of our lived experience. Gergen’s relational view is one I very much share, but I have struggled even in my little part of the care/therapy world to advocate for it or to even totally embody it. I am therefore in awe that Gergen, armed with a relational perspective, has taken on the world. I loved this book

While the scope and the density of ideas could be quite daunting, I found myself carried along by the flow of the work. At the time of my first reading last year, I was teaching an intensive four day course. As I travelled into the city each day by train, I was reading “Relational Being” and wildly scribbling notes on significant points. My students became used to my enthusiastic sharing at morning check in time of yet another inspiring Gergen idea!

There is no way that I can do justice here to all the ideas Gergen explores. However, I will try to capture the flavour of the book and hope it encourages your curiosity to read it for yourself. It is decidedly not a book of dogma but a book which invites a willingness from the reader to re-look at our usual ways of being, thinking and doing.

First some comments on the territory Gergen covers. It’s vast. Section 1 of the book – From Bounded to Relational Being – puts forward his basic arguments for a relational perspective. The sections which follow are broadly divided into “Relational being in everyday life”, “Relational Being in professional practice” and ”From the moral to the sacred”, each of which are further sub-divided.

Consistent with his relational message, Gergen has chosen to include multiple voices in his text; his own (multiple) voices along with those of friends and colleagues; what he calls “aesthetic voices”(p.xxv), ie quotations from a wide ranging literature, and “the critic”. Recognising that traditional professional writing “is a genre that separates the knowing author from the ignorant reader; it positions the author as the owner of his or her ideas; it often portrays the author as one whose mind is fully coherent, confident, and conflict free”, he consciously opts to explore a form of writing “that more fully embodies the relational thesis.” (p.xxv). Very importantly, Gergen concludes: “By juxtaposing mixed genres, my hope is to avoid distinct closure of meaning. A space is opened for the reader to generate new associations and images” (p.xxvi). For me as reader, the layers and changing rhythms provided by the multiple voices also made this text much more accessible and pleasurable to read.

Gergen also acknowledges the shoulders he stands on – his “textual companions”. Again this seems very consistent with his relational approach and displays a humility which allows Gergen to emerge as much more human and more of an intelligent inquirer than an expert authorial
voice. I had quite a chuckle over some of the Kenneth the man anecdotes, especially a certain Mary and Kenneth moment. (You'll have to read the book to find out!)

Bauman (2001) has written that society is a “factory of meanings” and that over time, certain ideas become hegemonic. In our western society, a dualist view (mind-body, you-me, either–or) remains the dominant paradigm, as is a dedication to the individual. This hegemonic world view is what Gergen is taking on. However, he is clear that he is not offering an alternative “truth”, nor is he writing an academic treatise. Rather he hopes to offer “a compelling construction of the world, an inviting vision, or a lens of understanding – all realized or embodied in relevant action. The account is not a set of marching orders, but an invitation to a dance” (p.xxv). For me as a dancer, this is eminently appealing!

Gergen states his aims thus:

*My attempt in this work is to remove the reality of a distinctly inner or mental world. This is not to replace it with a behaviorist view of “everything on the surface.” Rather, the attempt is to eliminate the very distinction between inner and outer, and to replace it with a view of relationally embodied action.*

He starts by addressing the traditionally individualist view of self – “bounded being” - and offers instead the concept of “multi being”. He replaces cause and effect with “mutual confluence” and isolated, individual action with the concept of “co-action”.

“In the tradition of bounded being, the person was isolated; reason functioned most perfectly in a social vacuum. In contrast, the multi-being is socially embedded, fully engaged in the flow of relationship”(p.137)

He acknowledges how language itself mediates against a relational view and this is one I as a dance therapist have often struggled with, as I’ve tried to communicate that most basic of dance therapy tenets, namely that “mind” and “body” are not separate – for in talking of two “things” (mind AND body), I am still using dualistic language. This separation, says Gergen, is more a state of language than a state of nature.

*What if there were no nouns? Would our world remain composed of distinct and separate things? What if our only language for describing the world were dance? The movements of the body are continuous, and it is difficult to separate the flow of action into discrete, noun-like entities; like waves of the ocean it is not clear where one movement ends and another begins. If we used dance to teach our children about the world, the world might not appear to us as separated entities. The child might discover a world of endless movement, not discrete “forms” but continuous “forming”. The child might never ask if it were possible to separate the dancers from the dance.* (p.30)

Needless to say all dancers in the world would concur with that! We dancers know that in dancing with the “other”, the dance is a co-creation out of which no separation can be made.

Having set out a relational perspective, he now proceeds to take this out into the world. This is where the real stretching happens for we live in a world still wedded to and imbued with individualism and dualism. Whether all Gergen’s arguments are “successful”, I would not presume to comment, but I think that would be missing the point anyway. For what Gergen is doing is breaking fresh ground, by attempting to reframe our world within a relational perspective and thereby expand possibilities upon which those who follow may add upon.
There were many “significant” points that I noted as I read the book, but will merely focus on some of the ideas related to therapy, which is the major interest of readers of this newsletter. Coming with a relational perspective to this area means addressing where the “problem” is situated, the aims of therapy, and the nature of the therapeutic relationship. Not all of this will necessarily be new to therapists currently working in the field, but framing these aspects within a relational lens offers a shift in perspective on the “state” of the field – its varied approaches, benefits and limitations.

Gergen firstly examines how we might examine the concept of “the problem”. In our society with its focus on “bounded” being, the problem is “in” the individual. Furthermore, the problem often is defined by a diagnostic label, reflecting the tendency in our culture to pathologise difference. He submits that the problem is not a problem by its nature so much as through its relationship to context. What is a problem in one society, one context, may not be a problem in others. “In a world where all hear voices, beware the one who fails to do so” (p.275). Problems are social constructions.

Gergen spends some time addressing the biological explanation for behavioural/emotional problems and our increasing dependence on drugs. As he says, this is not to say that there is not a good argument for the “cautious use”(p.281) of psychotropic drugs. However, it is to issue a caution against a reductive view of the complexity of human experience (ie biological explanation), a view which dominates and silences other views and voices.

“Silenced is discussion of the historical and cultural processes of meaning-making, processes that define what counts as a problem and a solution. Attention is removed from the cultural surrounds contributing to states of anguish. We cease to focus on the co-active process from which the meaning of life events is derived. Minority voices go unheard, and the capacities of people together to foster resiliency are undermined.” (p.281).

For me, this comes back to rejecting a one truth approach, whether it be to do with therapy, research, or understandings of human experience generally.

Just as “problems” are social constructions so are determinations of what constitutes good treatment, successful therapy. Gergen believes that the reasoning behind the emphasis on evidence-based practice – “let us honor those therapies most likely to guarantee us something for our money”, is “blind to the relational context that grants to therapy its efficacy”(p.277) and indeed has increased rivalries between various therapies. This arises from a belief that one or other can be established as the truth, which he sees as an “attempt ..to establish a foundation for therapy that does not depend upon the negotiations of people in relationship” (p.276) He decries the politicisation occurring around which therapies are best value for money. ”To reduce the range of reimbursable practices to a handful – as therapists and policy makers are wont to do – is not to render therapy more effective. It is to withdraw valuable assistance to those seeking help” (p.276).

For Gergen, the therapeutic relationship is about engagement in an ongoing flow of relationship and is improvisational. Therapist and client are “engaged in a subtle and complex dance of co-action, a dance in which meaning is continuously in motion, and the outcomes of which may transform the relational life of the client.” (p.282). And of course, this relational engagement goes beyond the room, out into the whole relational web of the client’s life. Gergen states “It is not
mind-repair that is ultimately at stake, from a relational perspective, but relational transformation" (p.277)

This chapter has several examples of current therapeutic approaches which meet to some degree the challenges set from a relational perspective. Gergen wants to go beyond these, by questioning the desire for a “fixed end” to therapy, for how can this be achieved in a world of ongoing motion and relational flow. Successful therapy may be seen as having the client replace a negative with a positive narrative; Gergen brings us back to a concept of multi-being and suggests “Would it not be better for “an individual to have a repertoire of available selves than a single ‘true’ understanding?” “Would it not be better to have multiple ‘lenses’ for comprehending the world than a single lens”. Anticipating that many might baulk at this, Gergen allows his critic to have a say and indeed acknowledges through an example that for some such freedom would not necessarily be appropriate or helpful. His question then is “To what extent, in the present world, should our therapeutic practices nourish an appreciation of ambiguity and the joy of improvisation”.

In this much more democratic, co-active and relational approach to therapy, it is only logical to do as Gergen does, which is to push beyond “thinking” (defined in purely cognitive terms) and the emphasis on “talk”. I am reminded here of the work of Heron and Reason, who introduced the concept of an extended epistemology: experiential (knowing through direct experience), presentational (performative e.g. knowing through the arts) propositional (conceptual), and practical (through action) knowing. There are many different ways to know, think and talk – not all cognitive or verbal. As a dance therapist, I would particularly highlight the aspect that we cannot focus solely on the disembodied mind, and that in some way the body needs acknowledgement within the therapeutic relationship as a mode of knowing. Gergen: “In each new way of talking lies the potential for a new way of relating” (p.291).

Gergen goes on to describe the performative approaches of Fred Newman and the East Side Institute. I might also add here the work of the Melbourne Institute of Experiential and Creative Arts Therapy, which has developed a form of multi-modal inquiry which can be used in a therapeutic context – it emphasises the experiential, the relational, and multi-modal ways of knowing (not only through the arts, but intuition, imagination etc.) Therapy for them is about journeying together with a person as s/he inquires into some aspect of his/her life.

Gergen’s “ultimate hope is for therapy that can liberate participants from static and delimiting conventions of understanding and facilitate unthrottled engagement in the ongoing flow of relationship. As I see the therapeutic challenge, it is to facilitate participation in the continuous flow of co-creation” (p.306).

And, there is so much more as Gergen addresses other parts of our world......

I feel I have only been able to give you a small taste of this book. It is a book which offers challenges to ways of thinking many of us may be on the way to giving up – but not quite! He gives examples where new ways of doing and thinking are already being embodied in our world. This challenges us to push beyond the known, the “normal”. While I have given attention here to the chapter on therapy, it is really the overall underlying concept of relationship and the boldness to push boundaries, which makes this book particularly worth reading. It invites reflection, questioning, conversation and visioning of possibilities beyond current cultural norms.
Further resources:

Melbourne Institute for Experiential and Creative Arts Therapy (MIECAT) [www.miecat.org.au](http://www.miecat.org.au)
Extended Epistemology – brief summary of participator research and extended epistemology of John Heron and Peter Reason can be found on [http://www.human-inquiry.com/partknow.htm](http://www.human-inquiry.com/partknow.htm)

EAST SIDE INSTITUTE – LETTER FROM GWEN LOWENHEIM

Dear friends and colleagues,

I’m an educational consultant and on the faculty at the [East Side Institute for Group and Short Term Psychotherapy](http://www.eastsideinstitute.org/), the educational and research center that promotes social therapeutics in New York City and around the world. Founded in 1985 by social therapy’s creator Fred Newman and current director Lois Holzman, the Institute has introduced social therapeutics and other cutting-edge approaches to human development, learning, therapy and community building to tens of thousands of educators, mental health and medical workers, scholars and community organizers through its training and study programs and international events.

I’m thrilled to have this opportunity to introduce our work to readers of the Psychotherapy and the Arts Newsletter.

First, a very brief summary of social therapeutics, recognized within both the postmodern and the cultural-historical activity theory movements in psychology, psychotherapy, education and organizational development. As a psychotherapy, it’s a philosophically informed-method in which human beings are related to as creators of their culture and ensemble performers of their emotional-social lives. It’s also the foundation of social intervention projects that bring the social therapeutic understanding of learning and development to therapy offices, clinics, hospitals, classrooms, after-school programs, workplaces, and communities worldwide. Within academia it has, over the decades, contributed to the important theoretical work of scholars and researchers working to create new and more humane and transformative psychological practice and method.

**friends, conversational partners and collaborative colleagues around the globe**

Each year, mental health practitioners, youth workers, educators, social scientists and community activists train in social therapeutics for the benefit of their communities. For example:

- Psychologists in India are bringing group performance to their already pioneering work fighting the stigma of mental illness and supporting the mentally ill to develop
• School teachers in China are learning improvisation and play to energize their classrooms, supported by the largest NGO in China (Holzman’s book, *Schools for Growth*, has been translated into Chinese)

• Ugandan community organizers are experimenting with performatory innovations in educational and public health work with poor children and families

• Teacher educators in Brazil have infused a Vygotskian performatory pedagogy into their pre-service training (Newman and Holzman’s *Lev Vygotsky: Revolutionary Scientist* has been translated into Portuguese)

• In Juarez, Mexico, educators and community organizers are creating alternatives to the horrific gang violence. They just opened up a social therapy center there.

For more on these people, go to: [Reports From the Field](#)

In our training programs and continuing education classes, participants play with our theory/practice of human development and group creativity, touching upon the politics of mainstream approaches and their political and philosophical underpinnings, and the contributions of Marx, Vygotsky and Wittgenstein to social therapeutics.

The Institute also co-sponsors, along with the All Stars Project, *Performing the World*, biannual cross-cultural, cross-disciplinary gathering of researchers and practitioners from dozens of countries who are using theater and performance-based approaches to address the social, cultural and economic problems and human development challenges of their communities.

**virtual learning: a new kind of social creativity**

We began experimenting with online teaching ten years ago and it’s been invaluable in growing our international student body. I’m a latecomer to online teaching—I started just last year—and I’ve come to love it. I’d like to share with you what it’s been like.

Currently, the Institute has four types of virtual learning opportunities in which people from all time zones can study with our faculty (Holzman and Newman included): online Revolutionary Conversations (4-5 week courses), a 5-week Introduction to Social Therapeutics, a 20-week certificate program, Social Therapeutics Online; and The International Class (a 7-month program that includes two 2-week residencies in New York City).

We were initially both excited and skeptical about the new technologies. Our approach to teaching and learning is focused on relationship, group and community building. We were concerned about our ability to build productive relationships with individuals and the group without face-to-face contact. And to be honest, the first couple of years were a challenge. Try as we might, we couldn’t help at times falling back into face-to-face, real-time practices, and it was often frustrating for teachers and participants. Happily, I can say that we have discovered that the online environment—with its timelessness, opportunity to read over new posts, savor old ones and write in different styles—provides an opportunity for a new kind of social creativity. And so, we and our students have come to love this online work! Here’s an example from my experience:

I teach one of our Revolutionary Conversations online. It’s called “Creating the World: How to Foster Creative Community,” and the current class has 18 people from 9 different countries. Let me start by saying, I am as surprised as anyone that I like teaching online. I began my career as a special education teacher, have been a social
therapist, and have spent the past 25 years as an on-the-ground community organizer and organizational developer and trainer. I build things with people. I thrive on face-to-face conversations, phone calls and shared experiences. I knew that I had something to say about building creative community, but the idea of doing it online was daunting for me and it turned out that many of the participants in the class felt similarly. How could we not only learn about creativity, but actually build community when we would never be in the same physical space together, and with people we might never see, many of whom were not native English speakers, and some of whom were in places with intermittent Internet access?

What we discovered was that as long as we were willing (and we were!) to share our fears, misunderstandings, humiliation and mistakes, we could build something strong together. As I have found in so many other environments, the seeming roadblocks can actually be the start of an open and intimate conversation about limitations, differences and inequity. The payoff of taking those risks was that within days we were creating a collective conversation among a postmodern practitioner in the Middle East, a child psychiatrist in Canada using the arts and gardening to heal and create community with abused children, a movement artist researching sustainable practices with indigenous people in Peru, and others. What I marvel at is that this courageous, innovative and caring grouping of people has taught me the poetics of online conversation. The ways in which, because we were not in the room responding immediately, we were able to take the time to play with each other’s words, to turn them around and look at them in new ways, sit with them, and ultimately we were able to create something new and less constrained by “My Truth” or “My Story.”

discovering and developing

The discoveries about learning and development the Institute is making in partnership with our colleagues in the US and internationally are developing us all. I’ve grown as a teacher and a group builder in this postmodern playground and continue to grow as I play with these new international playmates.

I leave you with one last story: A current member of our 20-Week Online Certificate Program, who teaches and studies postmodern therapies, reflected on Newman’s exploration of mental language and the inner/outer dualism. She wrote: “How many things could be softened, grown, thickened by seeing ourselves as poets ("we are builders, we are creators, we become poets!") participating in a shared creative process!”

We’re glad for the opportunity to share this work with you all! And we’d love to hear from you.

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BODY PSYCHOTHERAPISTS’ CONFERENCE: 
Unraveling Trauma: Body, Mind and Science Looks at Role of Dance and Movement in Post-traumatic Growth and Reintegration

By Talia Shafir

Dr. Ilene Serlin’s post-conference workshop, offered at the U.S. Association of Body Psychotherapists’ October 22-24, 2010 conference at JFK University in Pleasant Hill, California, was a welcome expression of the breadth and depth of the growing unified field of Somatic Psychology. The title, Dance/Movement Therapy: Post-traumatic Growth Approach to Trauma, brought to light a seldom discussed aspect of body-centered trauma therapy: “What lies beyond healing?”

As a participant, I welcomed the opportunity to experience a therapeutic approach that allowed my body to shape an emerging story, create its own intervention and move into transformation of feelings and thoughts in a holistic way. I discovered that my body moved beyond the speed of thought, that it had a rhythm and a tempo all its own.

One of my favorite parts of the day was creating a movement chorus with other participants. I learned to “listen” with my body and what it feels like to live in the story of another by sharing and imitating movement. The modality of dance/movement soon created camaraderie regardless of the ethnic and cultural background and psychological state of individual group members.

What was particularly helpful was the element of movement from inside to outside and back again. The day was well balanced with introspective self-exploration as well as relational dialogue. The exercises mirrored self-regulation as well as interactive strategies of each of us, while revealing an emerging group dynamic.

Trauma has become the “designated driver” of somatic therapies. It is important to remember that the event in and of itself is not what creates the entire map. What comes on the heels of the traumatic moment, what support is available, what resources we have to self-regulate, what foundational elements are still intact – in other words, the map of the road to repair – is the essential component. As somatic therapists, we look for what’s missing in the foundation, where the client has come to a halt physically, emotionally, cognitively and spiritually.

Dance/movement therapy is an important concept in the healing of trauma because it embodies the flow that creativity is in its essence.

I truly walked out of Dr. Serlin’s workshop, not only with a wealth of knowledge about my own body’s range of motion and the beliefs I carried that either supported or limited that movement, but with a sense of “I can do it!” I was left with an appreciation for my own dance and movement and a much needed reminder of the resiliency of the human body.

Talia Shafir, PhD(c), C.C.Ht, is a doctoral candidate in Somatic and Spiritual Psychology at the International University of Professional Studies completing research in adult attachment status and somatics with Dr. Martha Eddy, Director of the Center for Kinesthetic Education in Manhattan. Talia’s background includes Sensorimotor Therapy for the Treatment of Trauma and PTSD,
Psychophysical Therapy with Bill Bowen, Developmental Somatic Psychology™ with Dr. Ruella Frank and Dr. Eddy’s Dynamic Embodiment-Somatic Movement Therapy™. She also serves as a trainer for Dr. Roger Woolger's Deep Memory Process™, a somatically inclusive regression therapy for trauma and PTSD.

BOOK NOTES

Recently, on ABC FM radio here in Australia, there was an interview with Esther Sternberg, author of "Healing Spaces", rheumatologist, and medical researcher at the National Institutes of Health. This interview can be listened to via the ABC website http://www.abc.net.au/classic/throsby/stories/s3035228.htm. Notes from the website:

*Dr. Sternberg is widely recognised for her discoveries in the mind-body interaction in illness and healing, as well as her ability to translate her complex scientific subjects for lay-audiences.*

*Her latest book is "Healing Spaces: The Science of Place and Well-being" is published by Harvard University Press (2009)*


If any of our readers have read one or other of these books, we invite you to write something (no matter how short) on it/them for our next newsletter.

CONFERENCE NEWS

Arts and Health Australia
THE ART OF GOOD HEALTH AND WELLBEING
2ND ANNUAL INTERNATIONAL ARTS AND HEALTH CONFERENCE
Sydney Myer Asia Centre, University of Melbourne
16-19 November 2010 (www.artsandhealth.org)

In November, I co-presented at this conference with an arts therapy colleague, and over the three days enjoyed attending a rich array of presentations. Presenters came from many professional backgrounds - the arts, the arts therapies, psychotherapy, community arts, health, education, research - but all convinced that the arts had a lot to offer in terms of human growth and human flourishing.

I did just want to mention some key points that emerged for me from this conference about the arts and what enables arts experiences to be transformational:

- They need to be experienced in the context of relationship. They are relationship-based work.
- The arts address the emotions, which as neuroscientists are discovering are important in thinking, knowing and learning.
The arts offer a space for people to find themselves, to try out different ways of being, to connect to others. There needs to be an honouring of the art form – not in terms of product, but in terms of mindful participation and full engagement. And this type of participation comes from being involved in something personally meaningful. Mike White of the University of Durham, U.K., made an important point about the fact that the arts address emotion and that emotion is an important means of learning.

Finally many presenters talked about the issues of evaluation and evidence-based research in an area of human experiencing where the important questions to be asked are not necessarily reducible to numbers.

What was exciting for me was that there was an incredible enthusiasm and passion about the arts work among people from so many different professional formations. Hopefully, this means there is a gradual rebalancing taking place in the worlds of therapy, education, research and a recognition that humans need both reason and emotion, "facts" and imagination.

Heather Hill

And finally....

**PLUS CA CHANGE, PLUS C'EST LA MEME CHOSE** *(the more things change, the more they stay the same):

Extract of letter from William Dean Howells, novelist, to Mark Twain (S.L. Clemens) *(From The Faber Book of Letters, ed. Felix Prior)* -Nov.5, 1875

My dear Clemens: The typewriter came Wednesday night, and is already beginning to have its effect on me. Of course it doesn't work: if I can persuade some of the letters to get up against the ribbon they wont get down again without digital assistance. The treadle refuses to have any part or parcel in the performance; and I don't know how to get the roller to turn with the paper. Nevertheless, I have begun several letters to My d ar lemans, as it prefers to spell your respected name, and I don't despair yet of sending you something in its beautiful hand-writing – after I've had a man out from the agent's to put it in order. It's fascinating, in the meantime, and it wastes my time like an old friend...

Yours ever   W.D. Howells

*(Even in the 19th Century new technology was a challenge!)*