

# INTERNATIONAL **BODY PSYCHOTHERAPY** JOURNAL

## The Art and Science of Somatic Praxis

Published by the European and United States Associations for Body Psychotherapy and Somatic Psychology

Translation by:

IBPJ 2022 Spring/Summer

### **Journal Abstracts**

## Treating Addiction, Trauma and Emotional Loss Together

### A Clinical & Historical Perspective

Gabor Maté

Gabor Maté is a retired physician who after 20 years of family practice and palliative care experience worked for over a decade in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside with patients challenged by drug addiction and mental illness. The best-selling author of four books published in 30 languages, Gabor is an internationally renowned speaker, highly sought after for his expertise on addiction, trauma, childhood development, and the relationship of stress and illness. His book on addiction, *In the Realm of Hungry Ghosts*, received the Hubert Evans prize for literary nonfiction. For his groundbreaking medical work and writing, he has been awarded the order of Canada, his country's highest civilian distinction, and the Civic America award from his hometown Vancouver.

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## Revolutionizing Addiction Treatment with The Felt Sense Polyvagal Model™

Jan Winhall, Stephen W. Porges

This two-part paper begins with a discussion by Stephen Porges, whose pioneering work revolutionized our understanding of the autonomic nervous system. In part one, Porges applies his Polyvagal Theory to understanding addiction. In part two, Jan Winhall, a seasoned trauma therapist, lays out her Felt Sense Polyvagal Model™ of understanding and treating addiction

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that integrates Polyvagal Theory's safety-based neuroception with Eugene Gendlin's felt sense interoception. This paper provides a generic framework that complements and can strengthen any therapeutic modality. This non-stigmatizing, embodied, strength-based model departs from the current top-down, disease-based understanding of addiction that dominates current clinical practice.

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### **Embodied Presence**

#### **The Essential Therapeutic Stance in Working with Addictive Behaviors**

Nancy Falls

The focus of this article is the embodied presence of the therapist. An embodied presence is a core ingredient to work with those who engage in addictive behaviors or have experienced trauma. An overview provides the theoretical framework that informs the understanding of embodied therapeutic presence. Using the polyvagal concepts of co-regulation, social engagement, and neuroception, practical applications and specific strategies for the embodied presence are presented in three areas: creating the brave space, preparing for an encounter, and five essential qualities.

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### **Treating the Heart of Addiction in Women with Focusing and Chinese Medicine**

Dawn Flynn

This article discusses the unique needs of women who have experienced trauma and engaged in addiction. Using a Chinese medicine model, the energetic functions of the Heart, Pericardium, and Blood are seen as developing protective mechanisms used by the body to manage the emotional and physical impact of trauma. These adaptations often result in a sense of isolation and difficulty forming bonds that can lead to addictions. Together with the practice of Focusing and the shared field created between patient and practitioner, this integrated

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approach helps women connect to their innate body wisdom, heal the wounds of the Heart, and support the recovery from addiction.

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## A Non-Directive Positive Reinforcement Framework for Trauma and Addiction Treatment

Steven Hoskinson, Bach Ho

People grow and heal through support. This paper argues that mainstream addiction treatment is prone to reinforcing states of negative affect and negative urgency in the client. These states, especially the latter, keep the client's biology stuck in negative reinforcement—in oscillations of negative affect followed by relief of negative affect, which then potentiates the next cycle of negative affect, and so on. This is the addiction dynamic, broadly considered. This paper outlines a protocol, within a shaping paradigm, to create a positive reinforcement framework for addiction and trauma treatment. This Organic Intelligence® (OI) framework establishes natural relational conditions that are guided by a free association conversation. Therapeutic attunement and a specific reinforcement process amplifies the client's eventual pleasurable and meaningful reflections in the here-and-now, gradually enabling the client's biology to break free of the dominance of the ubiquitous negativity bias. OI proposes this fundamental clinical shift from negative to positive reinforcement because it aligns with the primary, organic impulse—not to process trauma or the past, but to enhance processing capacity.

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## The Somatic Post-Encounter Clinical Summary (SPECS) A New Instrument for Practitioners and Researchers to Measure the Wisdom of Somatic Intelligence

Aaron Freedman\*, Theresa Silow\*, Steuart Gold, Thomas Pope, Denise Saint Arnault

\*co-first authors

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In creating a research project to examine the effects of somatic psychotherapy, the authors needed a measure to gather somatic data to be filled out by therapists. After multiple iterations, and balancing clinician experience with research efficacy, we created the Somatic Post-Encounter Clinical Summary (SPECS). SPECS is a one-page tool to track and measure the process, interventions, and qualitative outcomes of somatic psychotherapy, to train somatic psychotherapists, and to structure data collection of their sessions. This paper explains the development, methodology, and usage of SPECS for clinicians as well as researchers. SPECS helps clinicians reflect on their practice and improve their skills, as well as providing a simple uniform structure for many different specialists to report on the process of somatic psychotherapy. SPECS also can be used in larger research projects for gathering data about the process and efficacy of somatic psychotherapy. We hope that it will be widely used and improved by practitioners and researchers in our field as well as adjacent and related fields.

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## Developing Relational Trauma Therapy

From the breakdown of the running technique to a new trauma methodology

Kolbjørn Vårdal

The article describes Merete Holm Brantbjerg and Kolbjørn Vårdal's professional journey to create the Relational Trauma Therapy method. Its development is described through the lens of Alvesson and Kärreman's five methodological principles for qualitative research and focuses on the challenges encountered using the "running technique" which originated in the Bodydynamic shock trauma methodology and eventually led to a breakdown. A breakdown is determined to have taken place when empirical observations show a lack of fit between theoretical expectations and actual experience. Brantbjerg and Vårdal saw two breakdowns: first, a collapse trauma reaction in clients using the running technique, and second, some clients developed a very strong attachment to the therapist while using the running technique, and strengthened a pattern of needing the therapist to regulate high arousal.

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Through defragmentation, defamiliarization, and working through the problems posed by these breakdowns, Brantbjerg and Vårdal created new methodologies, such as the principle of dosing, and designating different stages in the trauma resolution process. This article informs the reader of Brantbjerg and Vårdal's broad scholarship, and how they integrated reflexive critique into developing Relational Trauma Therapy.

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### Borderline Disorder in Contemporary Reichian Analysis

Genovino Ferri, Luisa Barbato

Tea is a young Italian woman with borderline personality disorder. After taking her clinical history, we use Character-Analytic Vegetotherapy to summarize her therapeutic process and how it manifests as activation in her body. We review the theory of borderline disorder in contemporary Reichian analysis. Character-Analytic Vegetotherapy is presented as an embodied therapeutic technique with remarkable complexity and methodological articulation.

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### Life, Entropy, Information, Emotions, and Trauma

Homayoun Shahri

This article introduces concepts from biology, chemistry, thermodynamics, and information theory to derive a unified theory discussing how life is sustained based on the reduction of entropy within the living organism. It shows, based on information theoretic neuroscience, how the concept of entropy can be extended to the psychological system and suggests that emotions represent entropy within the unitary psychosomatic structure. The relationship between emotions and feelings and the role that each plays within the psyche is discussed together with techniques for discharging excess energy related to emotions. A simplified theory of object relations and self-psychology is presented based with a technique that can speed up

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the treatment of relational trauma. Based on the presented theories, memory reconsolidation theory is discussed. Two techniques are introduced based on memory reconsolidation theory and information theoretic neuroscience which potentially erase the emotional content of traumatic memories and the treatment of shock trauma.

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### Getting to Know Reich

## The Origins of Body-Psychotherapy The Concept of Character from Freud to Reich

Håvard Friis Nilsen

In 1925, Wilhelm Reich published his first psychoanalytic monograph, *Der triebhafte Character* [The Impulsive Character]. Surely one of the most important publications from the psychoanalytic publishing house that year, Reich's clinical portrait of the "impulsive character" was a path-breaking study of what we today call "borderline personalities" and laid the conceptual foundation for his later venture into character analysis of body postures and eventually the emotional expressions of the body. Today, the original Freudian theoretical understanding of "character" is usually forgotten or overlooked, in favor of a more simplistic concept of body expressions. This paper revisits the original development of the character concept from Freud to Reich.

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