

BODY PSYCHOTHERAPY AROUND THE WORLD

Body Psychotherapy in Turkey

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ABSTRACT

Body psychotherapy is quite a new approach in Turkey. Although there are Turkish translations of several books by Reich and Lowen, and although trainings have been offered in Turkey for the last ten years, there are as yet no certified body psychotherapists in Turkey. In addition, the lack of a national psychotherapy association highlights the need for a body psychotherapy association to monitor and regulate the training and certification of future body psychotherapists. Consequently, the establishment of a Turkish Body Psychotherapy Association is planned in the near future in the hope that this will support the development of an active body psychotherapy community.

Keywords: body psychotherapy, training, psychotherapy association start, Turkey

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Background

Body psychotherapy is a new approach in Turkey despite the fact that many years ago, several books by Wilhelm Reich and Alexander Lowen were translated into Turkish, and body therapies are practiced in the country. Reich's *Listen Little Man* is the best known of the available body psychotherapy books.

My journey in body psychotherapy started in 1995 when, as a curious high school student, I read *Bioenergetics* by Lowen. I remember how amazed I was to discover a connection between my constantly evolving adolescent body and my mood. In the years that followed, I wanted to learn more, but formal training in body psychotherapy was not possible, as there was no training institution in Turkey.

The first official body psychotherapy training took place in 2008 in a well-known Istanbul mental hospital where Enver Cesko (Kosovo-Nokta Body Psychotherapy Center) presented a workshop on the similarities and differences between positive psychotherapy and body psychotherapy. This is when I became acquainted with Cesko's work, and the foundation was then laid for our collaboration in disseminating this approach in Turkey. Two years later, in 2010, Enver Cesko offered a four-module basic training program in body psychotherapy in Ankara.

After I completed this program, I was, and still am, excited to invite others to experience this approach. I made a few attempts to start a body psychotherapy training in Istanbul, and in 2015, organized a conference titled *Body Psychotherapy and Sex Therapy* at Haliç University, at which Cesko was the speaker. One thousand people enrolled for the conference, 500 attended, and 250 left their contact information for upcoming activities.

In 2009, I founded a training academy, the Crystal Academy Istanbul, and in 2016, the academy offered the first body psychotherapy basic training. Cesko was the trainer in this four-module program. In 2017, I tried to raise awareness about body psychotherapy, and promoted our training in an interview for the Turkish branch of the internationally known magazine, *Elle-Turkey*. In 2018, I started the second body psychotherapy basic training, this time taught by Enver Cesko, Ana Ristic (President of the Serbian Body Psychotherapy Association), and Kostis Gourtsoulis (Hellenic Institute of Vegetotherapy and Character Analysis). This year, I am working on the curriculum for a four-year program that will offer one year of basic training and three years of advanced training. I am also currently in the process of establishing a body psychotherapy association with some of the participants of the basic training. We plan to conduct activities to help body psychotherapy find acknowledgement and support from official and private institutions.

Occupational Challenges of Turkish Psychotherapists

In Turkey, there is no umbrella organization, such as a Turkish psychotherapy association. Although we do have some psychotherapy organizations, Turkey is not represented in the EAP, and, as was pointed out by the European Strasbourg Declaration on Psychotherapy of 1990, there is no legislation supporting psychotherapy as an independent occupation. Moreover, according to the Applications of Traditional and Complementary Medicine of 2011, to call oneself a *therapist* in any field, one must have completed a formal medical education. This regulation applies even to music therapists. The closest title to psychotherapist is “clinical psychologist,” which can be used only if one has: a) completed a master’s degree in clinical psychology following a degree in psychology, or b) completed a master’s degree in clinical psychology followed by a PhD in clinical psychology.

One of the first tasks of our body psychotherapy association will be to position body psychotherapy as a well-established and respected psychotherapy method in the eyes of the public, professionals, and state officials. It will be important to clearly differentiate it from any type of body therapy regulated by the 2011 legislation. I have already made initial contacts with members of the related commissions at the Ministry of Health, and will broaden the body psychotherapy perspective at the bureaucratic level as soon as our body psychotherapy association is established.

Methods and Techniques

A search shows that there are no body psychotherapists in Turkey who are members of the EABP or USABP associations. In Turkey, I am the person with the most training hours towards a BPT certificate, and am quite close to getting my certificate.

So far, the body psychotherapy techniques taught in the trainings are Radix, Mind-Body Medicine, Bioenergetics, Vegetotherapy, and character analysis; participants have enthusiastically embraced them. I hope to include additional modalities, such as Bodydynamics, because based on the number of Somatic Experiencing groups in the country who would like to take the Bodydynamic training, I believe it would greatly expand our Turkish body psychotherapy community.

To expand our community, I also collaborate and promote our trainings within the physiotherapy department of an Istanbul university. My team and I intend to further collaborate with the local universities and hospitals, as well as carry out scientific research

to show the benefits of body psychotherapy to our Turkish audience. There is not a single article published on this topic or on any BPT application in Turkey. This will be one of the many tasks of our body psychotherapy association.

Cultural Aspects

The non-verbal aspect of body psychotherapy is quite appealing to our population of Turkish Mediterranean Middle Eastern culture, for whom non-verbal communication surpasses verbal communication. The body psychotherapy discharge techniques really help express the suppressed feelings, and word completion helps unspoken and unquiet thoughts to surface. However, there is much to explore in the field before we can make any sound generalizations.

Considering Turkish culture, using some of the body psychotherapy techniques requires particular diligence, particularly for those applications that include touch. Drawing a rough conclusion from the observations of several therapists and doctors, some patients and clients have no problem with physical contact with the therapist or doctor in a treatment setting, while others do, especially if the therapist is of the opposite gender. This depends on the personal values of the client or patient, the sociocultural subgroups they come from, and so forth. In our body psychotherapy trainings in Istanbul, we inform participants at the very beginning about the practices of body psychotherapy, and we mention contact. So far, we have not experienced any limitation regarding physical contact on the part of participants. However, in stating this, I am aware of how insufficient our small training groups are in terms of representing the country's population, considering the diversity of sociocultural subgroups. I believe the issue of touch can be overcome by developing a clearly delineated code of ethics, passing it on to our students, and informing our clients. Our training will include non-touch techniques, and I think we will discover more about specific challenges in the field as body psychotherapy techniques become more widely used.

Nowadays

I am currently working on the curriculum for a four-year program that includes a year of basic training and three years of advanced training. The program includes modules from several schools of body psychotherapy: Character Analysis, Vegetotherapy, Radix, Mind-Body Medicine, Bioenergetics, and Bodydynamics. I am also holding online meetings with many of the proposed trainers, and am in the process of establishing a body psychotherapy association with the help of participants from the basic training program. We plan to work toward having body psychotherapy acknowledged and supported by official and private institutions, as well as meeting the requirements of the EABP and USABP. We will need support from the EABP and USABP in terms of know-how, contacts, and, if possible, considering the current economic crisis in Turkey, some funding. It is my hope to be able to host an EABP meeting in Istanbul in the future.

All in all, in addition to training body psychotherapists and attracting new clients, our aim is to create a vibrant body psychotherapy community in Turkey. We are aware that we have a long way to go, but we have hope, energy, and persistence.



Celâl Eldeniz is a therapist, voice and acting coach. After completing studies in science and art in Turkey, the United States, and Greece, Eldeniz has pursued a career in three areas: drama, music, and psychology, working as director, writer, acting coach, and singer. His work in the field of the arts has merged with his knowledge of therapy (body psychotherapy, positive psychotherapy, neuro-psychoanalysis, cognitive science, music therapy, and hypnosis) and he has specialized in the fields of drama therapy and music therapy. He teaches university courses on stage performance, the psychology of music, music history, managing self-performance, and conflict resolution.

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