

IN MEMORIAM

Keeping the Flame Alive



Clover Southwell
1935 – 2023

Clover Southwell was one of Gerda Boyesen's first students in the UK. She became a Biodynamic Psychotherapist, supervisor, mentor, and one of the major trainers in England and abroad who touched, inspired, and changed the lives of many people. She wrote extensively, expanding the understanding and depth of Biodynamic Psychology and Biodynamic Psychotherapy, and influenced our field with her clarity and profound love for the work and for life.

In 2000 Clover became a founding director of the London School of Biodynamic Psychotherapy, and for many years she put an enormous amount of work into sustaining it. She continued to work as a supervisor and trainer until retiring in 2019. She was greatly loved, and her service to our community will be remembered with deep respect and gratitude.

Hilary Price
Director
London School of Biodynamic Psychotherapy



Providing the spark!

I am personally very sad to lose Clover. Even though we didn't meet very often, she has been an important figure in my life as a body psychotherapist.

When I trained at the Chiron Centre, and later, when I worked at the Cambridge Body Psychotherapy Centre, Clover was an almost legendary guest trainer and supervisor who would come every so often and deliver a very special day. Few people were able to make me feel seen as Clover did, and she always managed to say something personal to me – invariably short, but enormously compassionate and often extremely helpful. So in my mind, Clover became a bit of an oracle – a wise person who might just show me a way when I was stuck or lost.

It was also Clover who got me started in teaching and writing. In 2000, I was a barely accredited novice therapist, and she asked me to take on teaching the anatomy module to her students at the London School of Biodynamic Psychotherapy. On the strength of my previous training in biochemistry, she calmly took it for granted that I would be able to teach human anatomy and physiology. Naturally, I couldn't resist such a very flattering challenge, and accepted at once. She then followed this up with a lot of interest and praise for my teaching. I owe her a large debt of gratitude for her belief in me and her support – all the more so because the course formed the basis of my later book *Anatomy & Physiology for Psychotherapists*.

In my professional life, Clover opened several doors, planted important seeds, and provided the necessary spark to help me on my way. I am certain she was a similar blessing to many others who, like me, will remember her with deep gratitude and a sense of being immeasurably enriched by her presence. I cannot think of a better way to be remembered than as someone who inspired so much creativity and so much professional flowering.

Kathrin Stauffer

President

European Association for Body Psychotherapy



“The work is all about joy!”

I first met Clover when she interviewed me for training in Biodynamic Psychology in the late 1970s. I had come prepared to speak of my childhood, and expected something more formal. Instead, we sat in the garden of Acacia House, and talked mostly about how I would manage the regular journeys from Cambridge where I lived, on top of full-time work at the British National Health Service. What I found intriguing and slightly unsettling was that she seemed to be gazing at my moving hands as I spoke. She became my trainer, colleague, mentor, and friend, and we collaborated on many projects.

After studying at Cambridge University, Clover worked with refugees in Austria before transitioning to advertising. She did not find her life’s work until the 1970s. She writes, “I knew NOTHING of therapy until late 1970 in San Francisco I went to an Encounter Marathon weekend” (personal email, 2012). She went on to attend groups at Quaesitor, a humanistic growth center set up in London by Paul and Patricia Lowe (aka Clare Soloway), who became Teertha and Poonam after their time at Poona in India. A world had opened up for Clover, and she embraced it wholeheartedly. At Quaesitor, Clover attended groups with trainers, mostly from the U.S., and she did a nine month super-intensive to become a group leader. It was Nadine Scott, a charismatic Bioenergetics trainer, who suggested she might become a psychotherapist. A seed had been planted.

At Quaesitor, Clover met someone who knew the Boyesen family. She went on to meet Mona-Lisa Boyesen in 1973, and Gerda Boyesen in 1974 (personal email, 2012). Clover found her therapeutic home in Biodynamic Psychology and the work of Gerda Boyesen and family. London was a rich and stimulating place to be in the 1970s. Clover was aware of other growth centers, and conversations around people like Ronnie Laing and Jo Berke, who were involved in the “People Not Psychiatry” movement. She recalled that everything began to “burst open” in 1980 at the Gerda Boyesen Centre, which blossomed into a substantial international hub attracting people from around the world wanting to train in Biodynamic Psychology.

I was fortunate to be living in Cambridge; when Clover’s mother grew older, she returned to Cambridge to be with her. We often met. She volunteered at Fulbourn Hospital, a psychiatric facility, and offered movement groups on an acute admissions ward, a group for staff to explore Biodynamic Psychology, and co-led supervision groups with a friend who was an analyst and psychiatrist. When the Cambridge Body Psychotherapy Centre was set up, she came every month to lead us in discussion, which usually began by her asking “What is exciting you?” She had a way of listening and gradually helping us weave our conversation into something coherent.

In her teaching, Clover listened deeply, took time to speak, and paused before responding; her style was slow, but when she spoke, something precious always emerged. In working with any student, she trusted the emergent energy “impinging from within.” She sat with them in complete focus and created safety with her kind presence. She resonated with subtle energy movements, and stayed alongside and inviting of the primary impulse(s) gathering momentum. She stayed elegantly with the process, and with ease changed her presence and tone of voice as the energetic movements became bigger and were accompanied by sounds. As the process unfolded, she moved from a wide perceptual field, deeply receptive to what was emerging “in endless time” into something firmer. She might demand, “Who do you want to say that to?” And as the movements subsided, she genuinely celebrated the new energy that the student had claimed. But the session was not over. She would go on to ask, “How are you going to take that into your life?” –

with no room for wiggling away from setting the intention to live in a different way. For Clover, it was all about developing the inherent latent potential and movement of energy, finding independent wellbeing, and living from there at home in one's body.

Her special contribution to the field was her passion for using language therapeutically, and especially when speaking to the energy. She used language exactly, and would often pause and search for the right word. She would speak, pause, sense into herself, say another word, and try another, until we all knew she had captured something when the "right" word emerged. She didn't like the terms "somatic counter-transference" or "somatic transference." She observed, "That is something quite different, with a whole different thinking and history behind it." She preferred "resonating," as it was closer to what we do. It hurt her deeply to hear colleagues talking about "doing bodywork" and "doing an intervention." She would say, "But we are interacting with persons." And she preferred "flesh" to "body." "Flesh and soul" were central to her. I always assumed that she was aware of how thinking shapes our words, and words shape our thinking, but never explicitly discussed this with her.

Clover was at her best when writing articles in response to questions arising from students or colleagues from current situations, or on an emerging theme in psychotherapy. She was a precise thinker, and had no time for intellectual debate. Discussion with her was always grounded in personal or clinical examples to tease out our perspectives. She liked hearing about differences, and this sharpened our thoughts. She generously shared her articles, and wrote many drafts until something was ready.

Clover was curious, and always mulling over something or other. In her 80s, she was shocked to recognize her colonial attitudes when participating in a workshop on the subject, and readily seized the opportunity to explore her internalized views.

Clover trusted deeply in life, and radiated that trust. When her eyesight was failing, I asked her how she managed to get around busy central London where she lived. She did not use a stick at that stage to indicate her blindness. She was slightly baffled by my question, but as usual she responded graciously: "There is always someone to help me. And, if no one offers, I ask."

As recently as 2018 at the EABP Congress in Berlin, she was part of a panel discussion. Her contribution stood out and she carried the room with her as she ventured her view. She observed "No one so far has mentioned joy! The work is all about joy!"

Clover was the senior elder in the UK body psychotherapy community, and has left a huge gap. We are all indebted to her. And I miss her.

Gill Westland
Director
Cambridge Body Psychotherapy Centre



She kept the flame alive

I met Clover in 1984 at the Gerda Boyesen Centre in Acton, West London, where she was one of the trainers in Biodynamic Psychotherapy. Clover was my teacher, supervisor, mentor, colleague, and a dear and loyal friend, up until she passed away.

Clover discovered Biodynamic Psychology and Psychotherapy (founded by Gerda Boyesen) in London in 1978, and was immediately fascinated by the work. She always remained faithful to its essence, and became one of the most prominent teachers of Biodynamic Psychotherapy, which she taught in London and across Europe and the United States.

Clover wrote extensively about Biodynamic Psychology and Psychotherapy, and about Biodynamic Massage. She had a talent for clarifying and expanding on Gerda Boyesen's concepts and theories, and wrote in a poetic yet precise and unique style that really conveyed the beauty of the Biodynamic work. Her articles have become a central part of the teaching material in the London School of Biodynamic Psychotherapy (LSBP), and a wise and educational resource for each new generation of students.

Gerda Boyesen had asked Clover and four colleagues to take over the training and running of the organization, and make sure that it met with the United Kingdom Council for Psychotherapy (UKCP) standards. Clover worked tirelessly to set up the LSBP as a member-run organization and postgraduate (UKCP-accredited) psychotherapy training school, which she served as one of its Directors. Although many of us contributed to creating and running LSBP, Clover was always at its heart, until she was no longer able. I have so many precious memories of a group of us discussing aspects of the work, or preparing documents together in her flat, and memories of shared weekends in her treasured cottage in the countryside. We are deeply grateful to Clover, for without her, LSBP would not be the training school it is today.

Clover loved and lived the Biodynamic work. It touched her soul and heart, her whole being. She kept the flame alive! She had great faith in and conviction about the Biodynamic method, undeterred by critics who sometimes doubted the validity of the work.

Clover Southwell was a generous, passionate, kind, caring and faithful friend and colleague. She is a shining example of how to live, love, and share a full life. She will be deeply missed.

Carlien van Heel
Biodynamic Psychotherapist
Supervisor (UKCP reg) and senior trainer at LSBP



The unifying force

My partner Jochen Lude and I first met Clover in 1978, when we moved to London to train at the Gerda Boyesen Centre for Biodynamic Psychology and Psychotherapy. We were peers in an advanced training group with Gerda. Occasionally Clover was also our teacher, as she was more experienced, but this did not prevent us from becoming good friends.

Clover was one of the purest practitioners of Gerda's legacy. Biodynamic work had changed her profoundly, and given her, as it did most of us, a new purpose and meaning in life. She loved presenting the biodynamic approach in different training institutes, and travelled two months each year to California for more than a decade, teaching leading Bioenergetic psychotherapists about Biodynamic principles and methods.

It was very close to Clover's heart that the Biodynamic approach should remain as close to Gerda's original teachings as possible. There was never any doubt in her mind that Biodynamic massage should remain an integral part of Biodynamic Psychotherapy, whereas other Biodynamically-trained therapists decided to keep massage work separate from psychotherapy work.

Clover had a special and unique way of working with energy as the unifying force connecting body, emotion, mind, and spirit. She used either massage or vegetotherapy to unblock the trapped life force (libido), and free the *primary personality*. She focused her teaching on the importance of using the right words, as well as touch, to reach deeper levels beyond defenses, and facilitate the *impinging from within*. She was connected to her own essence, and while teaching had her special slow way of speaking, which helped others leave their busy minds behind.

Clover had a joyful, deeply spiritual, and life-affirming personality, and it has been a pleasure to have her as a friend. She walked her talk, as they say, and was always authentic and connected to her deeper Self. In her fifties, she joined the Church of England as a way of being part of a spiritual community. This became an integral part of her life.

We had a lot of fun together. She loved the outdoors and her cottage near Cambridge, where she lived an earthy, robust life growing vegetables, cultivating her roses, and enjoying walks in muddy boots. Together, we took plenty of relaxing weekend walks on wild beaches near our home on the English South coast (West Sussex), or near our holiday home in the Algarve.

I will always remember her buying her last car – a sporty red convertible – which she enjoyed tremendously, and which was an expression of her open and adventurous nature. Clover also adored playing Racing Demon, a quintessentially English card game she had enjoyed since childhood. When playing, she revealed her competitive and fierce personality – she was truly unbeatable. She also played the harmonium, and delighted in sessions with her singing teacher.

Clover had been progressively suffering from memory difficulties, and was finally diagnosed with Alzheimer's. Soon after, she went into a care home, where we visited her frequently. She was well cared for and free from pain.

It has been a gift to have had Clover as a friend and colleague, and we are sure she will be greatly missed by many.

Bernd Eiden
Retired Director
Chiron Centre for Body Psychotherapy





The following excerpts from Clover’s writings* convey her distinctive energy and the depth of her legacy

... in a sense it does not matter which aspect of the organism you choose to work with first: re-awakening repressed memories, encouraging emotionally expressive movement, massaging the muscular consistency ... Any fundamentally effective work on one aspect of the organism will, in time, inevitably affect every other aspect.

On life energy

Biodynamic Therapy works with a Person’s Life Energy. Life energy is the force which moves us, which enlivens our physical substance. Everything that happens in us – physiologically, mentally, emotionally – is a manifestation of the energy moving in us: our thought processes, memories, fantasies, creations; our cell-building, blood flow, shivers and swellings; our actions, impulses, ecstasy, pain. These are all manifestations of life energy moving through the intermingling planes of human existence. We are not just flesh, we are not just feelings, we are not just spirit, we are not just consciousness. Our humanity lies in the continual interfusing of the planes. Our energy movements do not keep tidily confined within separate planes. A stream of memories may flow into a muscular change, the rhythm of rage may transmute to super-vitality or to ecstasy. Biodynamic Therapy works through these inter-fusings of energy, allowing the movements in one plane of living to precipitate or to strengthen activity in another plane, hitherto less ‘open’ to the client.



* Clover Southwell’s articles are published in Courtenay Young’s *The ‘New’ Collected Papers of Biodynamic Psychology, Massage & Psychotherapy* (2022).

Knowing ourselves

Many of us have lost our connection with our primary selves. We don't really know ourselves at this level. We restrain our exuberance, suppress our feelings, hide our fantasies, deny our spiritual experience, and repress our most troubling memories.

Gradually we develop a secondary personality. Though this secondary personality may serve us quite well in some aspects of life, it tragically limits the breadth and depth of our inner life, as well as the richness and authenticity of our relationships.

The core objective of Biodynamic Psychotherapy is to help a person reconnect with their primary potential. The more a person is in touch with this level and able to follow its promptings, the more fulfilling their life can be.

Note

The London School of Biodynamic Psychotherapy uses Clover's writings extensively in their training literature.

In 2016, Rubens Kignel interviewed Clover. Their dialogue, titled *Help Somebody to Feel at Home in Themselves*, can be found at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Py-y7CvksAk>