

The Wisdom of Our Founders

A Conversation with Jacqueline A. Carleton and Jill van der Aa

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Jacqueline A. Carleton



Jill van der Aa

To celebrate our 20th anniversary, the editorial team wanted readers to meet the Journal's two founding figures: USABP founding editor **Dr. Jacqueline A. Carleton**, and EABP founding managing editor **Jill van der Aa**, who both nurtured and guided the Journal's evolution to its adulthood. We asked them about the source of their inspiration, and discovered two women bonded in mutual respect who, for years, worked together in joyful dedication. They were sustained by their profound belief in the importance of body psychotherapy and somatic psychology and encouraged by the creative discussions of a diverse field in quest of common ground.

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Jacqueline A. Carleton

— **Antigone:** *We would like to know about the inspiration, the struggles, the good points, and the challenges you encountered during the Journal's early years and maturing process.*

Madlen: *Jacqueline, what motivated you to start the Journal 20 years ago? What was your vision for its development?*

Jacqueline: I thought that body psychotherapists needed to be more literate and connected, and this was of interest to me. So, I started a small USABP journal in the United States first. This was before Jill and I met at a conference and hatched the idea of an international journal.

— **Aline:** *Did you have any experience with publishing before you started the Journal?*

Jacqueline: No! In fact, for the USABP, I volunteered to edit the journal, and Robyn Burns volunteered to be the managing editor and do everything I had no idea how to do. Basically, do all the publishing tasks I had no idea how to do.

Jill: The crazy thing is that before Jacquie started, there had been a lot of back and forth between EABP and US-ABP members. Around 1997-98, the USABP was just starting, so EABP was offering them a lot of support. There were discussions, between Michael Heller and Christine Caldwell in particular, about starting an international journal. But the USABP didn't have any money then, and in 1999 the EABP lost a lot of money because of its Congress, so plans were shelved for years. Then, quietly, Jacquie started the *USABP Journal*.

Jacqueline: I remember now, I was on the Board of Directors of the USABP. I forgot about that, and that was sort of my little job on the Board. I was trying to do something with publication.

■ **Madlen:** *[ironically] Yes... very little job! What was the state of body psychotherapy and somatic psychology when you started to publish the USABP Journal 20 years ago?*

Jacqueline: Initially, there was some difficulty between the Europeans and Americans about the name. For Americans, to call something body psychotherapy sounded like, I don't know, gym classes or something. I kept trying to call it somatic psychotherapy. I wanted to use the term **somatic**, not body. But somatic work was very new. Obviously, Reich was here, but in the larger frame, the field was established in Europe earlier than here in the US.

Jill: Yes, the roots go a long way back, don't they? Look at all those wonderful articles in the *Handbook of Body Psychotherapy and Somatic Psychology*, this great handbook that Gustl Marlock and Halko Weiss edited with Courtenay Young and Michael Soth's help. It has several excellent diagrams showing the roots of body psychotherapy going back to the previous century and even further back. That book brought the field together a bit, didn't it? You had done a lot of that with the *Journal*, and then the *Handbook* came.

Jacqueline: It would never have happened without the Europeans. In fact, it's part of why I loved working with the Europeans. The Americans were not as interested in the intellectual and wider frame of it. I hope they are more on board now, and looking at the contributors published in the *Journal* now, they are. But at that time, people weren't interested.

Jill: The exciting thing about Europe is the different languages, the different cultures, the different modalities and backgrounds. Over the years, there have been lots of discussions and arguments because of these differences. I've always thought that Europeans are not as academic perhaps, or not as strict in their thinking, as Americans.

Jacqueline: Jill and I thought the opposite! Europeans have a broader ranging intellectual focus which is a positive in my book. So, I don't see it the same way.

Jill: Something about diversity... before the *Journal* started there were two other modality journals. There

was the *Biosynthesis Journal*, and the *Bioenergetics Journal*. They had been around for quite some years and doing well. But our idea for the EABP and IBPJ was to incorporate all the modalities, to create a place for everybody to have a voice. This is what it has become! A diverse platform that brings everyone together. We talked about finding common ground, and that's what it was for many years: trying to find a place where people would agree with each other, and then, when they didn't agree with each other...

Jacqueline: When they didn't agree with each other, which is good...

Jill: ...there was argument and discussion.

Jacqueline: It was terrific! I don't think we ever felt that we all had to agree. Our focus was to have diversity, and to let all speakers be heard. At least that was always mine as editor.

■ **Aline:** *I'm curious what these first discussions or first frictions were about. What were the voices trying to find common ground, and what were the difficulties in coming to some common ground?*

Jill: In content or in direction?

■ **Aline:** *In content and in direction.*

Madlen: *Do you remember the titles of the first articles?*

Jill: I know you concentrated on three very important people at some stage, didn't you Jacquie? Stanley Keleman in 2007, Charlotte Selver in 2004, and David Boadella in 2006. These issues are in the Archive on the website.

Jacqueline: Yes, at various times, I published issues that focused on important leaders in the field.

■ **Antigone:** *How was it for you to work alone at the beginning? Was it easy? What inspired you to go on despite the frictions and everything?*

Jacqueline: I really never felt I worked alone. When I was at the *USABP Journal*, I worked with Robyn Burns. Then, I was beyond delighted when Jill and I got together to do the *EABP Journal*. I felt that with Jill, I had a real equal, a colleague, and I was always delighted to rely on her judgment. It was a delicious cooperation. I don't think I did it alone at all.

Jill: I'm not an academic. I'm just somebody who puts on the gumboots, and it was a real privilege to work with Jacquie, who seemed to know all that was happening in the field. She was able to look at different aspects of the field and think: "Oh! This is what we need to present now." It was a privilege to work with Jacquie.

Jacqueline: Well, who you were, and the fact that you were that way, gave me more license to look around and think. I would dream: "We could..." , this kind of thing. And then Jill would bring it all together. It was honestly an incredible professional collaboration all those years.

Jill: The important thing is that we loved it! We were enthusiastic and we loved it, and I sense something of this with this new team. We missed the collaboration when Assaf's team worked in isolation. They were good, but they worked in isolation and then felt thoroughly over-worked, so they handed it back.

Then Madlen, we approached you. I still remember the first phone conversation Lidy and I had with you and Virginia in Bulgaria. I had never heard of any body psychotherapists from Bulgaria, and here were these wonderful women. I was so inspired! I was never disappointed. Years later, you seemed to be that perfect, enthusiastic person who just might take the *Journal* on. And you did.

— **Madlen:** *Yes, I remember it was very emotional for me. And do you remember Jacqueline, when I was in New York four or five years ago? I was giving a lecture at a university, and I invited you. Unfortunately, you were busy. It was unthinkable then that two years later, I would be editor-in-chief of the same Journal. For me, your name was: "Ah! Jacqueline Carleton, the editor-in-chief of the Journal and its beginning founder."*

Jacqueline: Wonderful! I'll take it! Thank you for sharing that! That's so sweet!

— **Madlen:** *Yes! It was an honor.*

Jill: Madlen, you have such a team in Bulgaria. It doesn't seem like you are alone, you have a group of people. Christina, you are one of them...

— **Christina:** *Yes, I'm one of them.*

Madlen: *Anton Darakchiev, Meglena Beneva, and Alexandra Algafari are also part of our team.*

Jill: Wonderful! When you came in, Aline, here was once again the EABP and the USABP working together. We have been longing for that, because after Jacquie left, we lost the collaboration. Then you came. Jacquie had always said: "Aline. Get her, find her, yes."

— **Aline:** *I remember when the Journal started. I was a fledgling therapist studying at Pacifica Graduate Institute in Santa Barbara. I remember the first USABP Congress and the new journal and hearing the terms somatic psychotherapy for the first time. I had a rush realizing that what I did had a name! It's hard to remember that there was a time, at least here in the U.S., when this work had no name.*

Jacqueline: Certainly not any name that was respectable.

— **Aline:** *Right. The thrill was that I could have a professional identity, because I didn't feel I had an identity in traditional psychotherapy nor in the world of bodywork. You were instrumental Jacquie, in the sense of naming so that we could have an identity, in that sense of being a mother.*

Jacqueline: That had been my struggle too! I was into psychoanalytic and intellectual stuff, but then, for

God's sake, I was going to Reichian therapy! What kind of weirdness was that? I hid it. In fact, to get into the program I was in at Columbia Medical School, I hid the fact that my psychotherapist was Reichian. You know... that would have been intellectual suicide.

— **Aline:** *It took courage to initiate – to be part of a team that brings something into being. Of course, there was Reichian therapy, but it felt, I don't know, like it wasn't us.*

Jacqueline: It was stultifying, ultimately. Yes, it went somewhere else.

— **Madlen:** *From these last two years, I see how many absolutely new ways I have learned. What did working for the Journal give you? What did you learn?*

Jacqueline: Oh my God! I would hardly know where to start. Actually, it was eye-opening, because I had the privilege of corresponding and interacting with all the various *Journal* contributors. I also had a place at conferences, which gave me an immediate entrée to all sorts of people. In addition, of course, to the working relationship with Jill, this was incredibly enlightening and delicious. It was just beyond wonderful.

— **Antigone:** *Jill, how was this journey for you?*

Jill: Antigone, first I have to say I was so grateful when after all these years, I could hand the *Journal* over to you as managing editor. I am very, very grateful that you took it up, that there was follow up, that you took it further.

What did it do for me? I came from a very mental family, and I always felt a bit lost. I couldn't ever find my way. So, I got into theater and then into personal growth. Looking and looking to find some place. When I found body psychotherapy, and eventually the EABP, I found a home. I found a whole lot of absolutely crazy, highly intelligent, argumentative people who seemed to have something in common. The secret they had was that the body and the mind were a whole. We had something to say. This was a home for me. Anything I could do to be part of this home, and to participate in it, was pure joy.

We are on a journey and let me say something about that journey. We talked about common ground, that we were looking for common ground. Here in the EABP, there is a think tank, and they are going one step further searching for an overall theory that will include the different methods and approaches. This is a wonderful development and something where the *Journal* has a place. They are looking at discussions and subjects that could pull development further forward. That's exactly what you are doing as well. You are contributing to the field by discovering what is exciting, where growth needs to happen, and also, what is lagging behind that needs attention. All this is bubbling! I'd be interested in how you see your role.

— **Madlen:** *We also found a home. We were lucky to find a home with a mother like you inside. Warm and wise.*

Antigone: *Jill, when I took over from you, even after a year of training with you, I asked myself: "What am I doing here? How am I going to step into your shoes?" All this work you have done. For me, as Madlen said, it was amazing to be in this family, but I didn't know what to do in this family. Thanks to your training, I survived. Then, with Madlen and Aline, we became a great team, and when Christina stepped in, the team became complete. I hope we will continue what you have started. Sometimes I ask myself: "What am I doing here?" At other times I say: "Yes, we did it!"*

Christina: *I'm the newest member of the team, and I am very happy and thrilled to be part of it. I'm wondering what your inspiration for all the devoted work was during these years. What motivated you? Probably you had hard times as well. I can only imagine.*

Jacqueline: The support and collegiality carried me forward more than any intellectual inspiration. It's not like I had huge aspirations for myself. I had huge aspirations for body psychotherapy. Leaving the body out seems stupid. That's important for us to be supporting. But it was the work and the contributors. I was always fascinated by the editorial interchanges with authors, and the variety of articles that came in. And the conferences, especially in my role as editor of the *Journal*, were always enlightening and sent me back with new inspiration. It was a wonderful, wonderful 20 years.

■ **Aline:** *Do you miss being editor of the Journal? Or being more involved with the Journal?*

Jacqueline: Honestly, not at all. I'm delighted to see what others are doing. I'm interested and I'm deeply grateful to still get issues. I peruse them and I'm very happy to have someone else doing it. It was wonderful to do it, but I don't feel any regret. No, I don't miss it. I miss Jill.

Jill: It's exactly what you say. The collegiality and the cooperation we shared inspired me too. When you left and Assaf's team came in, I lost motivation and I missed you. I was, at that stage, working on the idea that we must continue this wonderful *Journal*. We must find new people who feel the same joy in the collaboration that we did.

■ **Madlen:** *And how do you find the current state of the Journal? The new design? The content, new sections, new rubrics that we introduced?*

Jill: Exciting, very exciting! Jacquie, do you remember when we continually talked about this "scientific journal"? Do you remember that, or was that my obsession? That we had to have a scientific journal and that we had to be accepted?

Jacqueline: I remember, and we tried to make the *Journal* become part of *them*. I remember that. I was on board. Now I'm wondering if some of what we tried to do would be more possible today.

Jill: I agree. To your question about how we find this last issue: wonderful and not only because it has so many new and delightful articles in it. I could feel your excitement and your involvement in it. To involve the community, to bring in a variety of therapists on different issues is so important. We're not a big association. We're a small community of people with a mission. What you are doing concentrating on talking with a variety of international members and bringing in fresh ideas is lovely. Go ahead and keep going. The layout is lovely, and thankfully much of what was difficult has been cleared up. Wonderful editing, Aline.

Jacqueline: I absolutely love the artwork. I have no interest in your repeating what we have done. I love that you're experimenting, and to me that's the delight of watching it. I have no investment in what we did. That was the groundwork, and terrific. Use us and go forth.

■ **Christina:** *In that sense, is there anything you would like to see in the Journal in the future?*

Jacqueline: More of what you're doing. I absolutely love it. I'm more excited to see: "Oh! what will you do next?" I'm totally into it. I don't have any agenda.

Jill: I keep listening and looking at what's happening in the field. Where are the exciting developments? You are leaders in the field, the *Journal* is a kind of a leader. It's a follower in some ways, but it's also a leader, because you are showing the creative aspects that a lot of us would not see otherwise. You're bringing the field together. And along with the EABP think tank's looking for a unified theory, this is highly important.

Jacqueline: As you speak, I'm thinking about Gandhi's famous saying, something like: "There go my people, I must follow them." You know, that's the kind of leadership: leadership, but also not. That's how a journal needs to be.

■ **Aline:** *Madlen and I were looking at where article submissions are coming from. Here in the United States, many of the submissions are coming from graduating students who are adapting their dissertation research for publication. New directions are emerging from the creativity of these practitioners entering the field with their fresh ideas...*

Madlen: *...with such interesting topics, so different.*

Jacqueline: I definitely enjoy supporting the academic programs here, supporting the students, and making a pipeline to the *Journal* and into the field.

Jill: Thankfully the European Training Institutes now require students to write a paper to graduate. This is happening here too. You are right, new directions are emerging here as well. It's great to see what students are doing. In addition, Courtenay on the Science and Research Committee has been promoting the need for case studies.

— **Madlen:** *We have included a case study in each of the last four issues. The new rubrics are also very well received. Not only the Case Study rubric, but also Body Psychotherapy Around the World and Professional Ethics.*

Aline: *Jill, you had mentioned previously that the current direction of the Journal is running between a scientific journal and a magazine. Antigone conducted a survey in the beginning to help shape our direction. Members wanted a sense of dropping into what their community is up to, and not just an immersion into science. So, we're trying to ride an edge that brings both together. We hope that practitioners who are turned off by research and hard science can get introduced to it, and practitioners who love science can drop into the more human, relational, emotional part of our community.*

Jacqueline: That would be superb! Beautiful mix!

— **Antigone:** *Our goal is to make the Journal the voice of body psychotherapy. We want to reach this diversity, and have people feel that there is something for them in our Journal. As Aline said, both academic articles and not so academic ones.*

Madlen: *We are still attentive to the quality of every article.*

Jill: It's important to keep the quality of the writing up, and you are doing that. It requires a slightly upbeat content. Yes! It's a great job.

— **Aline:** *Many submissions come from authors whose first language is not English and therefore are hard to understand. We've discussed how to keep the essence of their writing while increasing the ease of reading. We believe the level of writing should be high, honoring of the authors, yet easy to understand. In such cases, we are stepping in with heavier editing to support non-English-speaking authors, so that their level of clarity matches that of English authors*.*

Jacqueline: That's really important for the reputation of the *Journal*. For its acceptance.

Jill: You've done an excellent job on that. There are a couple of authors whose writing I knew before they came into your version of the *Journal*, and I realized you had done a lot of work to make them readable because they just weren't readable.

— **Aline:** *Exactly. We cannot maintain a professional standard if there are articles in the Journal that are not readable because sentences are literal translations that makes no sense in English. Readers move on without getting the benefit of that author's contribution.*

Jacqueline: Or they make a judgment: "It's illiterate." This is quite problematic for the whole field of body

psychotherapy in general: "Body? They must not have minds..."

That's been a mission of mine in New York. I've often given presentations at psychoanalytic institutes and other organizations that don't incorporate the body in psychotherapy at all. I've tried to open that up a bit over the years, not recently, but in the past.

— **Madlen:** *My impression is that the other schools, other modalities, step-by-step are speaking more and more about the body. I see many of our colleagues from the other psychotherapeutic modalities here interested in reading the Journal.*

Jacqueline: The flowering of neuroscience has made a huge difference. It opened huge doors.

— **Aline:** *It did. It struck home strongly some years ago, when I was attending Allan Schore's study groups and he said something to the effect of: "We now have this beautiful neuroscience, but we don't yet know how to apply it clinically." I sat there as a somatic practitioner thinking: "But we do know what to do clinically. Come and hear what we have to say." That is when I realized that as a field, we have to step up and show what we know.*

Jacqueline: In their language...

— **Aline:** *They didn't know to come and listen to us back then. We had no research.*

Jacqueline: I totally agree. You and I were clearly in the same position. And absolutely, we had to modify, make articulate, and translate so that the larger field could understand what we were about, and realize how important it is. It is so important, Aline.

— **Aline:** *I don't know if body psychotherapy was as marginalized in Europe as it was here.*

Madlen: *Yes, yes; it was the same.*

Jill: It was at the beginning. Looking back at the history of EABP, the first board believed that they had to keep in contact with all the European psychotherapists, because otherwise body psychotherapy would be marginalized.

So, they worked very hard, and are still working hard, to make sure that we are not marginalized, and you said it so clearly, to bring the body back into the dialogue.

— **Madlen:** *Here, during our last national conference where all the schools participated, the biggest surprise for us on the first day, before the lectures, before the workshops, was to see the colleagues from the psychoanalytic school open with: "First, we need to start by warming our bodies." It was a very big surprise for us!*

Jacquie and Jill, what do you think about the future of body psychotherapy?

* When an article is available in an author's native language, it is published on the IBPJ website in its original language.

Jill: Joop Valstar was a mentor for me. At some point, he said: “You know, we’re working very hard now, but maybe we won’t even exist in a few years. Maybe everyone will have taken everything we know into their own fields, and we’ll die out.” That’s always stayed on my mind. Are we going to survive?

As we talk today, I have this feeling that of course we are going to survive! We are strong, we are stable now. We have our feet on the ground. The EABP is 30 years along the road. The IBPJ is 20 years along the road. The USABP is also 20 years along the road. We are here now. I think the future is to keep on going and keep working. As I always say, put on your gumboots and get stuck in.

Jacqueline: Another way of thinking of success would be for us to simply be folded into the larger space. I’m not so sure that’s a bad idea, but I understand.

Jill: I fully agree with you actually, but it’s nice to exist.

Jacqueline: It can’t happen right away, so we might as well exist!

Jill: Well, from the two old moms to the four new moms: Good luck! We have become the grandmams now and you are the moms!

■ **Antigone:** *Thank you very much for being with us today.*

Jill: Thank you from us also. It’s been wonderful to feel your enthusiasm and your expertise going forward. Impressive.

■ **Madlen:** *We’re grateful, and a big, big hug. Warm hug. Virtual.*