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USABP Mission Statement

The USABP believes that integration of the body and the mind is essential to effective psychotherapy, and to that end its mission is to develop and advance the art, science, and practice of body psychotherapy in a professional, ethical, and caring manner in order to promote the health and welfare of humanity.



Alexander Lowen, M.D.

Dec. 23, 1910-Oct. 28, 2008

A student of Wilhelm Reich's in the 1940s and early 1950s he developed a form of body psychotherapy known as Bioenergetic Analysis with his then-colleague, John Pierrakos.



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**THE INSTITUTE FOR
BIO-ENERGETIC ANALYSIS**

*A non-profit trust for
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and education*

The Institute was formed in October 1956 for the purpose of promoting research and education in the fields of emotional and physical health. The focus of interest is on the biological energy processes involved in health and illness. Therapeutic techniques are being developed which combine the fundamental principles of psychoanalysis with direct work on the somatic level . . . a bio-analytic approach to the treatment of illness.

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The First Bioenergetic Pamphlet

The Institute aims to coordinate and further projects which relate the findings of psychoanalysis to a knowledge of the energy principles applicable to biological structure and function. Areas in which the Institute is particularly interested are:

The role of muscle tension in emotional and physical illness.

The relationship of body structure and body movement to emotional and physical health.

The energy dynamics of body movement.

Disturbances in motility as a factor in illness.

The relationship of mental processes to the dynamics of energy processes on the somatic level.

Genetic factors responsible for disturbances in the energy dynamics of the organism as reflected in emotional and physical problems.

Principles and methods of therapy in the treatment of emotional and physical problems in children and adults.

The growth and development of the child in response to patterns of child rearing.

Anthropological and sociological studies bearing on the above subjects.

The Institute for Bio-Energetic Analysis plans the following program to help the public in the fight against emotional and physical illness:

A training program for: psychiatrists, psychoanalysts, social workers, nurses, psychologists, physio-therapists, and others working with body movement as it applies to health.

The publication of pertinent information and research.

Lectures for the public.

The furnishing of qualified speakers to interested groups.

Financial assistance to those engaged in related research projects.

The establishment of a low cost clinic to make these new techniques of treatment available to those who could otherwise not afford such help.

Financial assistance to other clinics engaged in similar work.

An Appreciation of Alexander Lowen

Alice Kahn Ladas, Ed.D.

Abstract

In this article, an elder female Bioenergetic Therapist thanks the elder male genius (who together with John Pierrakos, developed Bioenergetic Analysis) for his contributions to the field of psychotherapy and to her life and work. She recounts a few key moments from the history of Bioenergetic Analysis, and reflects on some of the changes and paradoxes which occurred.

Key words

Orgone therapy, Bioenergetic Analysis, *The G Spot*

My relatively high energy and good health at a ripe old age I attribute, in part, (but only in part) to what I learned from Alexander Lowen. For his contribution, I am immensely grateful and continue to incorporate concepts I learned from him in both my life and work.

It is now fifty two years since I wrote and designed the first brochure for the Institute for Bioenergetic Analysis (hereafter IBA) and hired a lawyer, at my expense, to form the IBA. It is likely that I have been a Bioenergetic Analyst for longer than any other living person with the exception of Al himself. He and I are the only surviving members of the first board of directors of IBA. So this seems like the right occasion to talk about a little of the early history as well as what that long association has meant to me personally and professionally.

In 1955, a psychoanalyst wanted to date me. But he lived in his head and practiced in a dark, gloomy apartment. He was also one of the leaders in Theodor Reik's National Psychological Association, for Psychoanalysis. Al had just set up a practice with John Pierrakos at 55 Park Ave. so I sent my would-be suitor for a consult. He became a patient and it wasn't long before he told me about the Tuesday evening seminars. (Al commuted from his home in CT to NYC on Tuesday, staying over through Wednesday and that is how Tuesday became the evening of choice)*. Having left Orgone Therapy and the Infant Research Center of Reich some years earlier, I asked to join the seminar and in short order became a client (a requirement of seminar participation was to work either with Al or John). There were many others in that seminar who, like myself, had left Orgone therapy.

Two major new ideas and one very special talent, distinguished Al's presentations (and they were mostly led by Al), from those of Reich. One is the idea that energy swings, in a pendular fashion, from head to toe and back again, and it is the disruption of this swing which accounts for many of the difficulties people experience. This resulted in working from the ground up as well as from the top down. For the very first time, I experienced a psychiatrist working with volunteers who were standing up. They wore bathing suits or bra and panties, and were diagnosed by the way they stood and the way their bodies looked and moved. While one may take these concepts for granted today, at the time they were revolutionary. Al's ability to read peoples' lives from his observations, was staggeringly skillful and still is. I doubt it is a fully teachable skill but we all absorbed some of it. Those early experiences shaped my personal and professional life. My body and its sensations are no longer left out of either one.

Al was also giving lectures at which I often introduced him. Because of my familiarity with not-for-profit medical organizations, within a year, my suggestion to form a not-for profit Institute prevailed. It wasn't long either before I introduced Al to an acquaintance, Henry Stratton of Grune and Stratton. This resulted in the publication of Al's first book, The Physical Dynamics of Character Structure.

Soon afterwards, The First International Conference was held at Isles Mujeures. Present were the future founders of other body psychotherapy modalities; among them Chuck Kelley, who was to found Radix Education, Stanley Keleman, who was to found The Center for Energetic Studies, and John Pierrakos, who helped to found IBA but later split from Al over the issue of spirituality and founded Core Energetics. They, and many others, learned much from Al that they later incorporated into their work.

Today I think of body psychotherapies as involving two different basic approaches. Initially, they came from different historical streams of work (Elsa Gindler and Reich) but now are often combined. There are "outside in" interventions and "inside out" interventions. By "outside in" I mean moving from what one can see on the outside to assumptions about how a particular body got to be shaped and move like it does, to the use of specific movements to bring up issues that may be buried. Bioenergetic Analysis (hereafter BA), at least in those early days, was more "outside in" than "inside out". Perhaps this is because it grew out of Orgone Therapy as practiced by Reich. Reich poked at prone patients' "muscular armor" while directing them to breathe. (Read A.E. Hamilton's "My Therapy With Reich.**") Lowen and Pierrakos dug into patients' jaws and neck muscles, put them over the breathing stools and pressed on their chests. They put them in the Taoist arch, had them bend over, beat on their backs at the level of the diaphragm, and encouraged them to scream. Clients were asked to hit and kick the bed. They were taught to gag as a regular morning routine. Despite the later misuse of this intervention by an epidemic of bulimics, gagging can still be useful in helping to facilitate fuller breathing. Over time, BA morphed into something less of "do it to the patient" and more of asking

her/him what they are feeling/experiencing and where in their bodies But it took a long time and was sometimes labeled unfavorably as “getting away from basics.”

Using both approaches seems to me essential. Although today I incorporate many different ways of working, I still find the breathing stool extremely useful (for myself as well as for my clients). Were it not for Al, I doubt I would be working with clients standing up. I still find it helpful to ask my clients (and myself when needed) to take a comfortable stance, to make the best arch they can between their shoulders and their heels, to bend over and to let their bodies relax towards the floor. Occasionally, teaching clients to gag is also useful. And I still, when it is agreed upon and indicated, use touch in various ways, including putting pressure on tense necks and tight shoulders, touching stiff intercostal rib muscles, and, holding the head or placing my hand over the heart or belly. My clients no longer remove their outer garments for the session and much more work is of the “inside out,” client guided, relational variety.

In 1977, an International Bioenergetic Conference was held in Waterville Valley, NH. During that Conference, I wrote an article with the same title as this one: “An Appreciation of Al Lowen”. Where or whether it was actually published, I don't remember but these are quotes from that article. “One of the things which struck me quite forcibly was the very high caliber of the work being done by the younger men in the movement. It is original, fresh, and, in my opinion, important work. It is also really their own. There were meetings in Waterville Valley which Al attended almost unnoticed, taking a seat rather far back in the hall and saying very little. This contrasts sharply with my experience in Reichian groups. Any deviation from the viewpoints of Reich was not permitted...I think it's a tremendous tribute to Al Lowen that he has not surrounded himself exclusively with yes men and that a lot of new thoughts and ideas are being expressed, if not always with his blessing, at least with his acceptance. That's a rare quality in an innovative genius who is the founder of a movement.”

Rereading these sentences, I am struck by the irony both of the emphasis on men and the fact that it was, at this very same conference, that women Bioenergetic therapists began meeting separately from the men. Also at this meeting, my application to become a trainer was turned down and Dr. John Bellis, a psychiatrist on the faculty at Yale and director of the CT Society for BA, was forced to resign as Director of Training. One reason (and there were others) was that he wanted to include more academic intellectual requirements (like research papers)*** in order for students to become certified Bioenergetic Therapists (CBT). In those days, thinking was still being degraded in favor of feeling and BA therapy was not yet fully relational.

It was the women's meetings which evolved out of this Conference, that led to our study “Women and Bioenergetic Analysis”. The subjects were all women BA therapists. Presented at a conference of the Society for the Scientific Study of Sexuality under the title, “From Freud Through Hite, All Partly Wrong and Partly Right” the women said that BA was very helpful to them sexually and in many others ways (and not in others) but they did not agree with some of the theories of Al Lowen. They thought the clitoris is important and that man is not woman's bridge to the outside world. At this same conference Dr. Beverly Whipple and Dr. John Perry presented their research about the Grafenberg spot and female ejaculation. At my request, they gave me written permission to write about their published work. Eventually we became co-authors of the book *The G Spot and Other Discoveries About Human Sexuality*. It has sold over a million copies world wide in more than 18 languages and includes, in the Appendix, a summary of “Women and Bioenergetic Analysis.” I had to fight hard for that inclusion. Had I been encouraged to teach BA, *The G Spot* might never have happened!

So there is “A most ingenious paradox” as Gilbert and Sullivan describe it. As accepting as Al was, at times, of differing viewpoints, he never acknowledged “Women and Bioenergetic Analysis” nor did he read *The G Spot*, although he was sent a pre-publication copy. At a friendly meeting for lunch, when I gave him another copy of the book, he declared there is no such thing as female ejaculation because he never experienced it. At another meeting of the IIBA Board, he gave, as a reason why I was not to become a teacher of BA, that we disagree about sexuality, but there's the humanity, in the very contradictions.

Without Al Lowen's work to help me stand on my own, I might never have conceived of a book which synthesizes the work of the Freudians and the Sex Researchers. Without Al's work, I would not be the person I am today and would not be doing the best work of my life. His influence on my life was/is major. Thank you Al and may we both live many more years in energetic health.

*One of my fondest memories is of a party we had at Al's home in 1955, where John roasted a whole goat, Greek style

**The Journal of Orgonomy, 31(1),(2) 1997, 32(1), 1998

***Today I am still campaigning actively for research in body psychotherapy

* My co-author and husband, Harold, Professor of Educational Foundations at Hunter College was an inestimable help.

Biography

Alice Kahn Ladas, Ed.D. is a Certified Bioenergetic Therapist (CBT), licensed psychologist, diplomate in sex therapy and social work and a humanist celebrant. She helped to found the Institute for Bioenergetic Analysis in 1956, graduated from the second Bioenergetic Training program, and is on the Board of the United States Association for Body Psychotherapy and is chairperson of the Research Committee. She is first, author of the NY Times best seller, *The G Spot and Other Discoveries About Human Sexuality*. A widow with two daughters and two grandchildren, she lives in a cohousing community in Santa Fe, NM and maintains offices in Santa Fe and NYC. She can be reached at aladas@aol.com.

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How does material in this manuscript inform the field and add to the body of knowledge? If it is a description of what we already know, is there some unique nugget or gem the reader can store away or hold onto? If it is a case study, is there a balance among the elements, i.e., back ground information, description of prescribed interventions and how they work, outcomes that add to our body of knowledge? If this is a reflective piece, does it tie together elements in the field to create a new perspective? Given that the field does not easily lend itself to controlled studies and statistics, if the manuscript submitted presents such, is the analysis forced or is it something other than it purports to be?

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