

BOOK REVIEW

The Psychology of the Body

ELLIOT GREENE, M.A., N.C., T.M.B., and BARBARA GOODRICH-DUNN, B.F.S.

Philadelphia: Lippincott Williams & Wilkins, 2003, 365 pages, softcover, ISBN: 0-781-737826, \$35.95

Since the early 1980s, I have taught a yearly course to introduce beginning body psychotherapy trainees and body workers of all types to the principles and techniques of psychotherapy. Now two experienced clinicians have put together a clear, concise, sophisticated guide to the psychology of the body for all practitioners who touch people in the course of treating them. It is precisely the sort of introduction and reference that my students have always needed. Intended for “massage therapists, body workers, somatic practitioners and educators, physical therapists, occupational therapists, or other professionals whose work includes the somatic experience and touching the body,” I would suggest that this guide be required reading for chiropractors, osteopaths, physicians, and other health professionals who have ongoing treatment relationships with patients. Touch is always a psychological intervention, and the authors address a major lacuna in professional education by addressing the ramifications, ameliorative possibilities, and possible pitfalls of touch.

Considerable research has documented the myriad ways in which the effects of physical interventions/treatments are mediated by emotions on a continuum from outright refusal of treatment to the placebo effect. In a simple and concise manner, Greene and Goodrich-Dunn introduce us to what we need to know to understand in a holistic manner, these and other phenomena in the patients we treat.

The Psychology of the Body covers such topics as:

- Why and how massage and other related forms of practice are a psychological intervention
- The role of touch in survival, growth and development, and emotional healing
- The interconnection of the mind and body and how this explains the relationship between tension and psychological defenses
- How the relationship between therapist and client makes an impact on the healing process, how underlying psy-

chological factors influence the practitioner–client relationship, and how touch affects this connection

- A body-centered explanation of psychological defenses, boundaries and limits, such as the scope-of-practice issues and boundaries concerning behavior on the part of both client and therapist
- How to identify the boundary line between performing massage therapy and other touch-based methods and psychotherapy and how to avoid violating that boundary
- The body–mind connection
- How and why emotional release takes place during massage therapy and other touch-based methods
- How to deal with emotional release
- A study of psychophysical patterns created by emotional defenses and how to tailor work with a client based on these patterns while staying within an appropriate scope-of-practice
- A review of major mental health conditions for massage therapists and practitioners of other forms of touch-based methods
- Working with mental health professionals, understanding who they are, what they do, and how to collaborate, network, and refer patients to them.

The book’s simple definitions of essential terms, such as “transference,” “defense,” and “boundaries” are clear and differentiated from their use in common parlance. (One of my favorite examples of this is the way people often use the word “schizophrenic” when they mean “ambivalent.”) Definitions are expanded and made usable via brief case vignettes, discussions, diagrams, drawings, cartoons, and brief exercises. The authors, who are both experienced teachers and workshop leaders, utilize all possible channels of learning. At the end of each chapter there are selected references that readers can use for further exploration. The simple but subtle exercises help the practitioner discover how personal beliefs and psychologic makeup affect the way in which one practices the craft.

Virtually every major concept is treated in this way so that the presentation is both easily comprehensible and re-

flective of its subtleties. For example, before treating defenses in depth later on, the authors introduce the concept under the title "Paradox of Healing," explaining that sometimes a part of a patient, of which he or she is often not aware, is in conflict with his or her conscious wish to get better. This is presented in a way that is sympathetic to both the patient and to the therapist, paving the way for a later, more extended treatment of the defenses of both participants in the therapy.

In addition to being an excellent guide for the audience for which it is intended, this is an excellent introduction for body psychotherapists. And, the sections on how psychological characteristics are reflected in the body would be of interest to practitioners of conventional psychotherapy or psychoanalysis who seek additional ways to understand their patients.

One section of the book is devoted to a specific explanation of how particular emotional patterns are lodged in the body forming a type of "armor" that limits the person's functioning. To this end, the authors differentiate several different types of *bodyminds* (a term used in the book use to emphasize unity of mind and body) in terms of their psychological dynamics, etiology, appearance, and treatment in massage. This brings to mind my only caveat: I wish the clinical examples were taken from more types of body work than only massage. The authors clearly state that this is their area of greatest experience, so using examples of massage is understandable, but it is certainly easy to make "transla-

tions" to other types of situations. And, the specificity of this book leads me to hope that the authors will go on to provide specific works for other bodywork modalities or perhaps expand their examples in a later edition.

The authors clearly distinguish between bodywork and psychotherapy, saying that in bodywork, emotions are a byproduct of the treatment whereas in psychotherapy emotions are the focus of treatment. There are suggestions on how to handle difficult situations. The books includes a section on when to refer a patient for psychotherapeutic treatment, clear discussions on relevant mental health conditions and disorders including symptoms, and an appraisal of the possible effects of touch or massage. The authors also suggest when a patient should be referred and describe the different types of mental health practitioners available.

All in all, this book is a valuable, informative addition to complementary and alternative medical literature and would benefit practitioners at any level who would take the time to peruse its engaging material.

Address reprint requests to:
Jacqueline A. Carleton, Ph.D.

Editor

USA Body Psychotherapy Journal
115 East 92nd Street, # 2A
New York, NY 10128

E-mail: jacarleton@aol.com