

Untherapy

Applying the ethics of the heart in body psychotherapy

During this two-day workshop we will explore and experiment with ways of being more ourselves, or moving towards our aliveness – as well as that of our clients, of using therapy as a commitment for mutual growth, and of challenging some of the rigid characterological positions assumed by psychotherapists (like that of the need to suffer), which may easily result in burnout.

Introduction

We are three men, three friends, three body psychotherapists who are teaching one another how to be alive, to blossom, to love and fear and love again.

We have come to think of Untherapy since we found ourselves working too hard both in our psychotherapy practice and in our teaching. How come we attempt to help our clients reconnect with aliveness but remain depleted and tired in the end? As friends, we are helping each other to follow a deep Reichian belief in the force of life, in the pulsation which asks us to join in its movement and dance.

Untherapy is a radical philosophy of challenging therapeutic positioning in order to surrender more deeply to ourselves, to relationship, and to the principle of pulsation. We express Untherapy via many practices, among which is our development of no-synthesis, a pragmatic disciplined practice of enquiry between polarities.

We wish to look at the therapist as an inspiration for aliveness, a model of a vital person, vibrating, vulnerable and powerful who is willing to take risks for life, and for connection.

The guiding principles

Alongside our personal character, psychotherapy (and any therapeutic modality) developed a second skin, a professional character – which is both useful and carries armour. Untherapy challenges, to various degrees, our professional structure – the traditional setting and armour. We wish to ask – what happens if we break/melt/unweave/caress/push our professional positioning? How much of it is used to support connection and how much to escape connection and aliveness? Instead of characterological grounding, we wish to ground into the relationship, into different states of consciousness without using or abusing the professional character to avoid or push away aliveness, ours or our clients'. In a way, we aim for a non-therapeutic authenticity within a therapeutic setting.

Untherapy is an invitation to join a paradoxical space of chaos and stillness, of surrender to the vibration and pulsation of aliveness without knowing where it would take us; of willingness to let go of known boundaries while still remain in them. The following guidelines attempt to preserve the spirit of enquiry in a safe but not-too-safe way:

1. Seeking the vibration of life (the opposite of character) – where am I really alive right now? Following the ethics of the heart
2. Grounding based on surrender, faith and mutual responsibility
3. Willingness to truly be vulnerable in the relationship (therapist as well as client)
4. Maintaining movement – the principle of dance
5. Inclusion – allowing forms to form themselves with little interruption, following the enquiry – what can really happen here? What's allowed?
6. Attention to the dyadic capacity to bear the enquiry without going into shock
7. Willingness to let go of professional knowledge and invest in the subjective experience of the here-and-now-in-relation
8. Investing also in the best interests of the therapist without misusing or abusing the client – using the therapeutic space to be more myself.

No-synthesis

Having its roots in Gestalt, Daoism and relational thinking, in no-synthesis we are approaching polarities – we look into polarities seeking the vibration, their aliveness – following the vitality while maintaining the tension. We may indeed find synthesis between polarities but then compromise a vibratory and pulsatory quality. But what do we do if no synthesis is attained? How do we deal with the chaos? We wish to offer practical ways of dancing with the unknown through positions, between knowing and not-knowing, through movement and surrender. Sometimes we solve this chaos by allowing for conflict (paralleling the outstroke), and at other times we may make love between the polarities (instroke).

Both therapist and client share mutual responsibility for the joy and wellbeing of both – and our entire focus will be on the therapists, since we have experienced how enriching and useful it is in therapy.

In this workshop we will encourage us to challenge the character armour of our professional selves, and enter our bodies – into our personal character, and work from there. This is a scary business, and we would therefore use the workshop to explore rather than suggest you work like this in your clinic.

The workshop

During these two days we will move between exploring sets of polarities and opening a space of movement between them (no-synthesis), while continuously encouraging the participants to arrive as people, not therapists, to notice how the 'body of the therapist' may stand in the way between the two subjects in the room. We will gradually build a container strong enough to include some confusion, challenges and true surrender to joy.

We will work as three facilitators, with groupwork, individual demonstration and work in small groups and pairs to demonstrate and create what happens to us as therapists if we show up to enjoy, to grow, to be of service of the alive pulsation that is in us, as well as that of our clients.