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the relief of painful symptoms is in the pain itself

short-cut about about pain experience in bodypsychotherapy

giving up the battle against pain in one's life can release a whole process of personal transformation

my first bodypsychotherapy session is now more than twenty years behind me. at that time I has already been active in the german and European peace movement for several years. I had taken part in demonstrations, sit-ins in front of armoured vehicles and in blockades of transportation. I was often busy as a leader and had taken over responsibility for the health of participants in these demonstrations. so I became an apparently strong accomplishing individual, a "doer", but inside I continued feeling gloomier and emptier. I could do everything, I had success in the peace movement as well as in politics, yet I felt a stubborn wall around me, through which anything could seldom reach me.

I came to my first bodypsychotherapy session in this condition. I was going to receive from a man who came to the door dressed in the gown of an zen monk. he led me into his sparse and ordered room and offered me a place on a rice-straw mattress. introductions, explanations, undressing and beginning the session were all part of a seamless experience in which with every touch of this man, I felt pain. I bit my teeth together until he guided me in deepening my breathing and expressing my pain. this was the end of my role. the end of my strength and manipulation. I was confronted with the simple, painful truth of my body. I felt myself again and could allow myself to be responsive.

this first experience continually influenced me in my later development as a practitioner and thereby contributed to my giving special attention to the phenomenon of pain in bodywork and the differentiation between pain which comes from body difficulties and pain which comes from mental burdens for which there seems to be no physical cause (phantom pain). on the body level this differentiation doesn't give us any special knowledge, since the body reacts with the same standard of every kind of pain. the mirror or measure of the body's control of pain, called endorphine, is just as high in individuals with mental burdens as in individuals with body difficulties!

in our time many individuals try to completely avoid pain in their lives. in germany, every fourth person regularly takes medication against pain. this differentiates us from other ages. for e axample, from france, near the end of the 19th century, when the bourgoeise, as a social fad, "purified" lusty and erotic feelings with pain (later this became known as masochism); or from indian america, where the control of body pain was a continuing part of ritual. in our culture, individuals react to pain with frequent sadness or resignation. the phillipine burial rites - in witch there is a stick and image of the deseased next to the grave and the mourners are invited, not only to give their tears, but also to unburden themselves of all frustration and guilt on the deceased - appear foreign to us.

during my research into the ways of handling pain in other ages or cultures, I have further differentiated my opinions about the experience of pain in bodypsychotherapy. in the accompanying table, which I will explain in my research paper, I offer a summary of our sensory experience of pain and how we can deal with it in bodypsychotherapy.

sensation	physiology	action
deadness	neurons block each other simultaeouly	work slowly; give less or more stimulation
swollen, tender pain in tissue	hyperacidity of tissue or high endorphine level; lymphatic excess	support inhalation preparing tissue for work
hot, quick	conducted by neurons whose axons run without synapses from midbrain to spinal marrow	search for more information about experience; e.g. movement work (cere-bellum integration) or deepen experience (integration of memory in the cortex and forebrain)
dull pain	a-delta and c-fibers	try to improve the emotional state and preparedness to express
reactive pain; lots of motor activity	fight-flight-syndrome; high adrenalin	give security; work with inner self-aware- ness so that the nervous system can disconnect from outer processes and connect with inner process
sweeter, melting pain	thixothrophic effect in fascia; both halves of the brain are synchronized	usually bodywork is efficiant

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