

NEWS FROM The Psychomotor Institute

Information Contact:
Janet Smith (603) 934-5548
PBSP1@aol.com

Key to Trauma Recovery Lies in the Body Trauma Therapist Offers Clues to Treatment in New Book

(Oct. 1, 2002) -- The key to recovery for many psychological victims of terrorism can be found locked in the physical, according to the co-creator of one of the world's leading body-based psychotherapies.

"Hope is primarily a felt, body-state and not only a state of mind," writes Albert Pesso in a chapter on trauma for a new book that will soon be published in Israel. "In trauma, the ego is endangered both by the outside and the inside worlds and when this happens, hope is destroyed and despair is triggered."

Pesso, who has worked with trauma victims around the world, argues that while grief and emotion are normal following a traumatic event, those who become debilitated are likely suffering the after-effects of an emotional shocks or deficits in earlier life.

"At some time the bottom may have dropped out of their life and it was sealed over, but that memory is still locked in their body and has been reawakened by the fresh trauma," says the 73-year old therapist.

The body is involved, he says, because physical memories are created through sensory interactions with care-givers in early life. This is as true of victims of sexual abuse as it is for those plunged into depression following the loss of a loved one to terrorism.

"This is precisely why the body has to be involved in the healing of the ego following traumatic events," he writes in *Between Stress and Hope*, a book edited by Israeli psychologists Rebecca Jacoby and Giora Keinan, which will be published in 2003.

(more)

Pesso believes that treating such trauma victims involves not only allowing them to experience a cathartic emotional release, but also providing them with sensory experiences that fill the void that underlies their inability to cope.

"People who have been traumatized only see trauma, only see danger. They don't hear the birds, they don't see the flowers. But if you give them the satisfaction, instead of seeing all the horrors, they'll be more receptive to the good things out there," he says.

Hope, he says, is usually the missing element of the emotional makeup of those most affected by trauma.

"It is hope that sustains us in times of adversity," he says. "But in order to have hope, one must have a plentiful supply of memories of past satisfaction upon which to anticipate a hopeful future."

The key to helping such individuals emerge from despair, he says, is to allow them to "create new symbolic memories to offset the debilitating effects of past, deficit ridden, personal histories."

Through a therapeutic process that Pesso calls a "Structure," in which individuals playing the role of idealized figures from the trauma victim's past enact a "theater of the mind" by creating the nurturing events missing from the victim's history.

Such sessions "are basically geared to provide the client with experiences that should have taken place in the past and would have provided the satisfaction of fundamental life needs," Pesso writes.

"The pleasure that is experienced when such satisfactions symbolically take place," he continues, "make it possible for the client to have hope in the future."

Pesso has been called "one of the masters of body-based therapy." For the past 40 years, he has been teaching therapists and treating patients using the Pesso Boyden System Psychomotor (PBSP), which he developed in partnership with his wife Diane Boyden-Pesso in 1961. PBSP was one of the earliest somatic therapies and is in use in the U.S. and 11 countries.

FOR A COPY OF THE FULL CHAPTER, *CULTIVATING THE SEEDS OF HOPE*, AND TO ARRANGE INTERVIEWS, PLEASE CONTACT JANET SMITH AT (603) 934-5548 OR PBSPI@AOL.COM

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