

“Working on the Mattress”

An in-depth one-term weekly CPD course for practitioners working within body-oriented and holistic traditions

with Michael Soth

12 Thursday evenings 17.45 – 20.45

at the Chiron Centre for Body Psychotherapy, starting April 22nd 2010

Working on the mattress is one of the essential pillars of traditional Body Psychotherapy. A wide variety of styles and approaches to this way of working have developed over the decades: with and without touch, with and without focus on the breath, with various stances from allowing (biodynamic ‘impinging from within’) to challenge (bioenergetic or vegetotherapy). In this territory, Body Psychotherapy also overlaps with other approaches like rebirthing and holotropic breathing.

Generally speaking, the profound potential of this particular embodied way of working (in terms of spontaneous and regressive experience) was traditionally achieved by focussing almost exclusively on the client’s intra-psychoic and bodymind dynamic: the client’s physical sensations, inner movements, emotions and breath as well as images and thoughts.

However, this rare and precious focus on the bodymind depth of the client’s internal experience can move into the foreground at the expense of attention to the relational dynamic between client and therapist.



Deep Breath ©Melanie Weidner 2005 ListenForJoy.com

Bringing together awareness of both internal and inter-personal charge

In this course, we will draw on all the various techniques and approaches to working on the mattress and find ways of becoming more familiar with them. However, the main aim - beyond technique - will be to integrate the depth of the intra-personal with that of the inter-personal charge. We will work at the edge of the possibility that a deep embodied awareness of oneself may come together with a deep embodied awareness of the other, creating a profound and intimate space of mutual impact as well as entanglement.



The therapist's habitual stance and style

In this territory of intersubjective experience, our own habitual stance and style as therapists become central to the work. Our identification with our habitual style as well as our attachment to it, constitute our subjective foundation and circumscribe both our potential and our limitations as therapists. We are aware - as wounded healers - that our habitual stance, with its embedded preferences, is rooted in our values and beliefs, but also in our wounds and defences.

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All therapeutic 'truths' can be used to avoid uncomfortable dynamics and can acquire defensive functions – this is true for clients and therapists alike. In principle, a therapist's habitual preference for the intra-personal and embodied can be as defensive as a habitual preference towards the inter-personal and relational. In this course we will pay attention to the defensive uses of either of these two polarities, as well as their transformative potential within an overall framework that I now describe as integral-relational, bringing together relational and embodied ways of working.

Holding polarities and containing extreme states

In the highly charged, potentially regressive context of lying down, spontaneous and reflective, somatic and mental, habitual and emergent processes become tangibly constellated, and open into a way of working that can range across all the bodymind levels of subjective experience, from the raw and instinctual to the refined and spiritual. This places high demands on the therapist's own capacity to be present between such intimate and existential extremes as wholeness and fragmentation, pleasure and despair, merging and isolation, integration and conflict, authority and woundedness and a unified sense of self versus multiplicity. This course aims to deepen, widen and enhance therapists' perception, understanding and creativity in these areas of intersubjective intensity and vicissitudes.



Theory & meta-psychology:

integral, relational, intersubjective and systemic (parallel process)

Although theory is not the focus of the course, you may be interested in the paradigm which informs it: in a nutshell it's an integral, relational, intersubjective and systemic paradigm, drawing on a wide variety of sources and the diversity of therapeutic approaches and modalities in an integrative fashion. We are aiming at not just battling against, but *transcending* dualistic assumptions embedded in our culture and our profession, especially regarding the mind-body relationship – a tricky, fluid and paradoxical position.

Following in Reich's footsteps, we can consider transference and countertransference not just as having somatic aspects or being reflected in right-brain-to-right-brain interactions, but engage in them *as* intersubjective bodymind processes. In this perspective, psychology and biology become inseparable polarities – differentiated, but mutually related: body, emotion, *psyche* and mind as fractal parts of a dynamic, integral whole in relationship.

We will work in such a way that these abstract notions remain alive and experience-near, through attending to the detail of the charged bodymind dynamics occurring in the therapeutic relationship.

An underlying systemic perspective helps us notice how – within the therapeutic relationship seen as an open system – similar dynamics are replicated between the various sub-systems, levels, parts and the whole via *parallel process*: internal dynamics get enacted between people, past dynamics are repeated in the present, mental dynamics reflect somatic ones, cultural dynamics appear intra-psychically and so on. This kind of awareness – we might call it holographic (or, after Wilber: second-tier) – finds a new framework for understanding and containing unconscious processes like projective identification and other entanglements.

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The group as container

As a closed group for the duration of the term, we will together build the relational container necessary for such work to become possible in an authentic way. This course will be offered only once and will not be repeated in this form in the future. It provides an unusual context for intensive work over the period of three months, with participants working in live sessions with each other as well as occasionally in the middle of the group. It is a requirement of the course that participants have had both previous experience and training in a *psychological* bodymind or body-oriented approach (i.e. not only bodywork).

Learning objectives: a detailed list of possible learning goals is available – contact Michael.

About the tutor:



Michael Soth is an Integral-Relational Body Psychotherapist, trainer and supervisor (UKCP), with more than 20 years' experience of practising and teaching from an integrative perspective. Drawing on concepts, values and ways of working from a wide range of psychotherapeutic approaches across both psychoanalytic and humanistic traditions, he is interested in the therapeutic relationship as a bodymind process between two people who are both wounded and whole.

He has written numerous articles and is a frequent presenter at conferences. Extracts from his published writing (including several book chapters) as well as summaries of presentations are available at www.soth.co.uk. He is currently preparing a training for group leaders and facilitators and is also organising a new project, offering CPD training for therapeutic and helping professionals.

Dates: 22 April, 29 April, 6 May, 13 May, 20 May, 27 May, 10 June, 17 June, 24 June, 1 July, 8 July and 15 July 2010

Times: 5.45pm - 8.45pm

Venue: Chiron, 26 Eaton Rise, Ealing, LONDON W5 2ER

Interviews: *if you have not trained with Chiron or are not connected with it in any other way, we recommend and require that you come to 30-minute interview with Michael, before the start of the course*

Booking: *via Chiron, 020 89975219 or email: chiron@chiron.org*

Fee: £600. *Please register in writing, enclosing a non-refundable deposit of £100 by 31/3/2010. The remaining fee of £500 is payable by 14/4/2010.*

Contact *(for any queries regarding the content of the course):*

Michael on Tel.: 01865 725 205
or email michael@soth.co.uk

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