

INTRODUCTION TO PESSO SYSTEM/PSYCHOMOTOR

by

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What this work is about is to help people become who they are. The assumption is that the only way people can become comfortable living in this world is to live from themselves. When we don't live as who we really are, we get all the symptoms and all the strains, and all the stress that people complain about when they come here.

It seems that there is a pressure and a push from the inside to realize ourselves. And it's not something that we choose or don't choose, but it is a physiological, psychological and spiritual push to become the people that we actually are: to realize ourselves. The word that makes the most sense to me when I speak about this, is soul - we have to realize our souls. It's a spiritual push. When we are not ourselves we cannot possibly be happy.

This work is designed to assist in this task, this life work, of becoming ourselves. And when we consider the issue of how we go about becoming ourselves, we are faced with a fundamental question. How do I know what is really me? How do I know the truth of who I am? In brief, we see the information in the body as a true source of information about who we really are. We use the body as the receiving set or screen for information about who we really are.

I am convinced that we have a life task of becoming who we are and we just can't get away from doing it. Our life just clobbers us with symptoms when we don't do it. We look at the stuff that's in the body and we say, "That's an expression of how I feel. That's who I really am." Our assumption is that our bodies are endlessly and immediately reacting to everything that we really feel, that our body is a source of truth. Our soul speaks to us through our body, and all those symptoms inside are the energy for what we can become. A part of us that has yet to be born is trying to be born. So when you get the palpitations, and the clutches, and the sweats, and all that stuff, we see that as energy; the seed of the unborn self, the part of the self that is trying to be born. When someone is loaded with energy, that means that there is a lot of self, a lot of power, that is not integrated into the self system yet.

But it isn't enough to just know or be in touch with the potential of your self. The requirement is to be it, to act it. We have to use our bodies in the next, necessary, but difficult, process of acting as we really are. We have to come out of the closet. And that's the difficulty. We have to take the power that's in our body which is the seed, a potential, and let it be the actual. Let it do what it wants to do.

So we create this place, this arena (it's kind of a laboratory) where, with our mutual support, we create enough safety so that it's possible to let that stuff come out and let it be seen. Because we have to act it.

And we let our body then behave as it wants. When you're feeling all those symptoms, what does your body want to do? Does it want to scream? Does it want to hit? Does it want to cry? Does it want to love? Does it want to hide? We allow whatever behavior that's there, in the tension, to come out. That is the second step.

We see in the symptoms the beginning of the cure. When people are loaded with symptoms, its a time to celebrate, because the stuff is trying to come out. It's trying to pop up. So if one tried not to cry, not to let his feelings out, he would be suffocating his soul. Here, we say, let the soul finally come out. Let it begin to be itself. The symptoms are its incipient expression. It's on the threshold of expression.

So when you're in crisis, you're actually in a good spot. The stuff is pushing, attempting to be born, and the power of your soul is going to become available to you. What we try to do here is to make it safe to act, to do what's in there. But it isn't enough to just act as you really are. Since we are social beings, and we are constantly created by relationships with others, we have an in-built mechanism that demands we interact to become who we really are. The behavior that's coming out of us has to be met by something outside. Like the new born baby whose little mouth has to meet the breast in order to get the suckling action satisfied and validated. We need to act, and find the object of the action that's needed to complete the interactive process that we're built with, and receive satisfaction and validation.

What we'll do here is role-play for one another the wished-for response that would complete the action, since the action by itself isn't sufficient. We need to interact. And we provide that here. In the interaction, people are giving parts of themselves the right to be and to be given satisfaction on the experiential level.

Now it isn't enough to get that stuff satisfied. We need to finally internalize the significance of the satisfaction and the significance of the satisfier. We need to convert that experience into some symbolic, or cognitive, or crystallized image for its context. We have to be able to take into ourselves the memory of that validation so that we can keep the validating figures interiorly. Then when we go out into the communities of the universe, we don't have to wait for the validation to come from them. We've got our validation. And if they tell us "You can't behave like that," we can say "I've got my license to be like that, inside me, so bug off." But we have to first get that validation from an exterior figure, before we can face the adverse conditions that might be presented.

The little story that I would like to tell with that, is that in the bible, when the story of the creation of the world is being told in Genesis, the world is presented to the eyes of God. And with each passing of a new condition, the scripture writer says, "And God said it was good" in effect giving his stamp of approval. When humans come out, he says "And it was good." We get passed. When we get the validation here, it's as if it's from an agent of God. Because we can't just simply get validation from one another as ourselves. We get validation from all of us roleplaying very significant figures (mothers and fathers that we wish we had, etc.,) so that when we get that license, it has power. It's not just my friend saying I'm good. And the license is not just good here. It could be good in other States. It's a universal license. You don't have to give up that right at the border.

That means that part of your work here is not only to do good therapy work, but to get the significance so well crystallized and so well internalized that you can pull it out at a moment's notice. If somebody says you can't be like that, and you're searching for your license, it must be within reach. You have to be

able to find it everywhere. The conversion of the experience to its symbolic cognitive abstraction is important, so that you can own the experience.

Those are the first four steps of the work. Here are the four steps, again, in brief. The first step has to do with energy. The question regarding that is, "What are you feeling in your body? Where's the energy in your body; what's cold, what's trembling, what's painful, what's tense?"

And the next step is, "What's the energy want to do?" What comes from that is the action - where your body acts out the behavior that is incipient.

The third step is "To whom?" That's the interaction part. And the fourth step is "What does it mean?" How do you understand it so you can own it? How do you crystallize the images, and internalize them so that you can make them permanent? There are four other steps that I follow. The words for them are record, experience, expression, and map.

The first four words of energy, action, interaction, internalization, are the formula for the becoming of the self. To become yourself you have to be in touch with the energy, act out the energy, understand it and internalize it, so you can be yourself.

The other four words of record, experience, expression and map are connected with our task of processing events. As humans, we process events. We're not simply passive observers and recorders of events. We digest events. We become who we are as a consequence of those events. We're always recording everything, whatever happens with us,

good, bad or indifferent. We know that inside is a record of the event. Even if it was an accident, we have the scar or memory of it.

But sometimes an event can be so large and so powerful, that although we record it, we may not want to feel the emotional impact of it. We may not dare to experience it. Let's say the event is a death. We say "Yes, so and so died." But the feeling of the loss, the feeling of personal involvement with the dead person, may be so great that what we call "I", (which is our conscious ego), will see the feelings as a wave of energy coming toward it. And what we may call "I" may assess its internal structure and say "Hey, if I let that much electricity or energy go through me, I'll burn out. I'll explode. I'll be swallowed." So what we call "I" ducks, and says "I don't feel that." The feeling of the event then rattles about the body, becoming a symptom. And the person may think "Ooh, what is that strange sensation?" It's the feeling, waiting to be processed, and acknowledged and felt by what we call "I". People may hide the reality of those responses for a long time. They may at some period in their lives experience another event that reminds them of the original event, and all of the body starts rattling. And these people might say "Why do I feel so strange? Nothing important is happening." Yet all that stuff is rattling around again. It's waiting to be digested. It has to be digested by "I".

So what we do here is prop up, or give support to the "I". Physical support, so that when people are in a place where they are willing to feel, finally feel, the awfulness, or the amplitude, of an event, they won't explode. Now when the true impact of that event lands on them they can go "Ouch!" They can finally feel what was previously only recognized as a symptom in the context of the real event, where before they might have only thought, "I wonder why I'm feeling so much."

We can't feel those events without support. That's why we need each other. If we're going to become ourselves, we have to help each other, to live through what we have lived through. Sometimes we survive by denying it. Our bodies survive, but not our souls, because we're no longer being ourselves. The events are so loaded, we say "I'm not feeling that." And we distance. It's just too much. If we want to feel alive and feel ourselves, we have to connect with our experience. This is a place where we can survive the event, become more vividly who we are, and be up to date with who we are and not have a lot of ancient events rattling around in our basements.

The third step in our processing of events is to express. Not only does stuff go in that makes us go "ouch," but we also react inside. We may want to express something back at the world, or back at the figures who created that event. But we may not dare to, or we may be helpless, unable to do so. And the story I like to tell in describing this is of a ten year old boy who is the son of a farmer. The farmer is tyrannical, hard working, authoritarian, and a little brutal. He sees the little boy resting under a tree, and whacks him on the head.

The boy may or may not feel that experience, because when we're hurt, our bodies want to hurt back. Although he may look up and say, seeing this big guy, "I'm not angry," but inside, he might want to smash him back. Later, whenever he sees a big guy, the body might start rattling with unexpressed rage, and maybe murder, by this time.

What we do in this place is to create the possibility that the anger that's pent up can have a safe avenue for expression. When we express anger here, we want to give it its satisfaction. And remember that I said that when we have an action we need an interaction to reach satisfaction. So we would have someone role play the hated father. We provide someone who will play the father, who, in the structure, will get smashed and symbolically die, so that the kid who I might have been can finally hit back at that father. When you're frustrated, when you are hurt, the primitive impulse is to destroy the figure that did the hurt.

And I might feel very excited and say "Hurray, I finally killed that old bastard and I see him lying on the floor." I might feel great relief. But if I've designated that person to be my father, my real father, I'm also going to be filled with remorse, and a sense of loss, and maybe guilt. I might say then, "Oh, I killed my father. He wasn't such a bad guy. He did his best." I might remember the nice things he did, and then I might say "I'm sorry Dad." And apologize. I discover that just letting all my anger out may not produce the satisfaction that I thought it would, because it possibly made me more ambivalent, and feel a lot of loss.

So in order to protect ourselves against that outcome, we create special figures that we call the negative aspect. We do this because if I've designated a figure to represent my real father, I've got everything there. And if I'm smashing him, I'm smashing all parts of him. In order to safeguard myself, the part of him that I love and have internalized I keep inside my heart. I just put this negative part out here, and I call this the negative aspects of my father. This role plays not my whole father, but just the part I hate. So I smash the old sock and I won't be tearing a piece of myself out. We do not want to destroy the whole father, because if you kill what you image as your real parent, you're going to kill and destroy a part that's already you now. And we shouldn't do that. So when we release the anger in a structure, we direct it only to the negative part of the real figure, and not to the whole figure.

Now the fourth step in the processing of events is that we create a map, or story, following the event. This little kid sitting under the tree makes up a map. He says "If your father comes by and smashes you on the head, there isn't anything you can do about it." And with that map he'll start making predictions about the future. (All the events of our childhood are used as map making elements for how we should behave in the future.) And by virtue of that map he'll find a teacher, or he'll create a teacher, who'll do the same thing. He'll find bosses who will do that, and he'll marry someone who will do that, and so on. The maps which we make are predictors of our future. We no longer see things as they really are with our negative maps, but instead see them in terms of how we were conditioned by our early history.

By this work of smashing the negative father, we may do the expression that we need to do, but we don't change the map. And until or unless we change the map, we're going to find ourselves repeating the old events but in the new guise of what should be the future. If we hold on to the past in that kind of way we're going to be imprisoned by the kind of life that our past predicts.

In order to offset that, we construct a synthetic, symbolic history, and insert it into our beings, into our memory, beside our literal history. We don't cast out the literal history, because that's what happened to us. It's what is fact. We insert the new history beside it. We reconstruct the old event, but instead of having the negative father smash us, and instead of us just smashing back, and getting our anger out, we also construct a whole new event, with an ideal father. We can experience an alternative action or response from an ideal father, which would give us a different way to look at ourselves. A different way that would meet our needs, and give us a different image of our self, one with greater self-esteem.

So we might have an ideal father, and we'll have someone here role play that ideal father, avoiding the use of any images of our real father. We leave the hated part of the real father, the negative part there, and the loved part in our heart, so that when we construct a synthetic symbolic map, we construct the wished-for father, or wished-for mother. That father might say "If I had been your ideal father back then, I would have known that you were just a kid." So I can have a different set of expectations when I see a big man. He's going to understand. I might want to see how it would feel to have a father who wasn't a farmer, see how it would feel to have a different childhood, with a different set of circumstances.

And people say "Wow, if I did that I'd be a different self." And that's true. That's the only way that we can become who we really are by permitting ourselves to not only embrace our true history, but to embrace the symbolic alternatives to how we could have been treated. The parts of our soul that were never recognized and validated by our real parents can be brought to life by the validation and recognition of the ideal parents.

The ideal parents are the parents of our truth, our potentiality. We can become those things now, because they are now recreated in our new construction of our history. As far as I know, change comes about by our willingness to construct and experience a new and symbolic history that allows us to be all of who we are.

What will make it more powerful is your experiencing the ideal history at the age level that you needed it, and not as the adult you are now. We stimulate this by a contract that we have as a group. When you do your work the contract says that it's your responsibility to construct in your structure a good end. (A structure is the unit of work.) Which means that when you are reliving the old event, you don't just

simply relive it as it was and then stop. Your responsibility is to create a new map, a new end that would be in your best interest. And my responsibility is to be an ally with you in that. We don't only experience the past painful events, which we must do in therapy, we must also construct an alternative experience that is believable for us. With that, we can leave here with something new, rather than simply underlining how bad it was, and still is. So that's our contract.

Accommodation is when you are asked to role play for the different people in the group; you might ask them to role play, for you during your structure. At some point you may be asked to role play a negative father, negative mother, husband, wife or brother. And if you're asked to role play you say "I will role play the negative aspects of your father or mother." This is the ritual of enrollment. Then you wait for instructions. The person whose structure it is will tell you where to stand, what to do, what to say, like, "Please tell me that you never wanted me to be born." If you're asked to say that, simply say to the person, "I never wanted you to be born." And they can react, finally smashing the hell out of you. They don't really hit you. They hit cushions, or the air. You have to act, like in "cops and robbers," as if you were hit. So if they swing at you, you go "Oooh!" as if they were successful. The trick in doing that is to distance yourself, so that while you're role playing or accommodating, and making all the sounds of pain, you let yourself know that, "That person isn't really angry at me. I'm not the real target for these feelings. I'm simply role playing." This way, you won't take it upon yourself and say, "Yup, I am a lousy father. I am a lousy mother. And my kids should want me dead." You don't want to start living the negative role. When I take a bop at you, you make all the sounds of accommodation, "Ouch, ooh, oooh!" And you have to learn to do that accurately. You should keep your own personal stuff as separate as possible, and know that you are doing it in the service of the other person. Anyway, they'll smash you. And in the end they'll ask you to de-role. There's a ritual of de-roleing. You say "I'm no longer role playing the negative aspects of your father, or your mother. I'm myself." In this way, you step out of the role.

The same thing is true if you're asked to play the ideal figure. Someone may say, "Will you role play my ideal father, or my ideal mother." Once again you wait for them to give you a cue as to what to say, what to do, and where to stand. Usually when you're an ideal figure, the person will want you to hold him or her. The ideal figure should never do any holding other than what people ask for. Then they might say "Please tell me that you want me to be born." Simply say those words. Don't elaborate on them, or paraphrase them, or subtract words from them. You simply repeat back the words requested. And when the structure is over you once again de-role. You say "I'm no longer role playing the ideal father, or ideal mother. I'm myself."

Then there will be time for sharing. This time for sharing gives all of us who were watching or participating an opportunity to talk about what went on in us, that gave us insights in our own process while we watched. In the sharing, it isn't time to analyze the person's structure and confront them. It's time to talk about what happened to you while you watched that was important for your own growth and therapy.

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