

BODY THERAPY

*MANUAL FOR PROFESSIONALS FROM THE NGO SECTOR TRAINED TO WORK WITH VICTIMS OF
HUMAN TRAFFICKING, TRAUMATED PERSONS AND PEOPLE ON THE MOVE*

Author

Dr. Hajdana Glomazic

JUNE 2023

Contents

<i>Introduction</i>	3
1. INFLUENCE OF EMOTIONS ON THE BODY	3
2. WHAT IS BODY THERAPY?	4
3. CREATORS OF BODY THERAPY	4
4. GOALS OF BODY THERAPY	6
5. BODY THERAPY TECHNIQUES	6
LITERATURE	17

This publication is supported by the Regional Project on Preventing and Combatting Trafficking in Human Beings commissioned by the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and implemented by the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ).

The analysis, results and recommendations in this publication represent the opinion of the author(s) and are not necessarily representative of the position of the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH.

1. Introduction

Body therapy is a form of therapy that is aimed at treating the physical body as well as the psychological and emotional aspects associated with it. Through various techniques and methods, body therapy aims to help clients to get rid of tension, stress and body pain, to improve their mood, that is, to feel relaxed and balanced. Precisely because of its holistic approach to body and mind, body therapy is becoming an increasingly popular form of therapy.

In this manual, we will provide an insight into the theoretical foundations of body therapy, the techniques used in practice and practical advice for the effective application of body therapy. We will also present some of the creators of body therapy and their theories and methods that shaped body therapy as we know it today.

This manual is intended for anyone interested in physical therapy, regardless of their previous experience in the field of therapy or healthcare.

1. INFLUENCE OF EMOTIONS ON THE BODY

The body has a physiological response to stress and tension that can be beneficial in the short term, but can cause negative health consequences in the long term. When we feel threatened, our body responds by releasing stress hormones, including adrenaline and cortisol. These hormones increase blood pressure, increase heart rate, and increase breathing, which can be useful in preparing the body for fight or flight.

However, studies have shown that long-term stress, along with the secretion of these hormones, can cause negative health consequences, such as: high blood pressure, increased risk of heart disease, a weaker immune system, tension, depression and other psychological problems, and even body pains and chronic diseases.

On the other hand, positive emotions, such as love, joy and gratitude, can improve the health of the body. These "good" emotions can reduce stress and increase feelings of well-being, improve immune function, reduce the risk of heart disease, and improve cognitive and other health functions.

In short, emotions and stress have a great impact on the body and health, so in this sense, physical therapy can be useful in several ways.

2. WHAT IS BODY THERAPY?

Body therapy is a form of psychotherapy focused on the body, but it also focuses on the integration of physical sensations, emotions and cognitive processes. The goal of physical therapy is to achieve unity between physical and mental processes in order to establish internal balance and harmony.

In order to establish a balance between somatic and psychological aspects, it is necessary to establish the border between mind and body on the one hand and emotions, urges and desires on the other. In this type of therapy, the connection and mutual conditioning of all these processes is emphasized.

One of the main goals of body therapy is to release blockages in the body. Blockages in the body are places where energy cannot move freely, which can cause physical pain and discomfort. Furthermore, this can have a negative impact on overall health. Through various techniques and methods, this type of therapy can help release blockages and thus improve the general condition and reduce pain and tension.

Physical therapy helps people focus on the sensations in their body. The therapist needs to encourage clients to become more aware of bodily oscillations and sensations. Through this increased awareness of their body, clients can learn how to better manage their emotions and thoughts, and how to cope more easily with stress and other challenges. In fact, it is a popular and effective way to improve overall health.

3. CREATORS OF BODY THERAPY

The creators of body therapy are individuals who, through their research and practice, influenced the development of this form of therapy and the way it is practiced today. Among them are

Wilhelm Reich, Alexander Lowen, Moshe Feldenkrais and many others. Each of them developed their own theory about how the human body works and how it can be used to improve the general condition of individuals and their health.

Body therapy is connected with the development of psychoanalysis. Its founder is considered to be Wilhelm Reich. As a psychoanalyst, he believed that blockages in the body are related to unconscious emotional conflicts. His starting point for his work is his belief, derived from many years of work and experience, that the patient's insight into the origin of the problem through the process of psychotherapy is not enough to improve his condition. He believed that the symptoms of suppressing emotions are reflected in breathing and muscle tension. He called those muscle structures in which tensions are concentrated "muscle armor". He defined seven muscle segments (muscle armors) in which muscle tension can occur: oral, cervical, thoracic, diaphragmatic, abdominal and pelvic.

One of the key differences compared to Freud's psychoanalysis was the inclusion of the body in the whole issue of human suffering. In addition to character and parts of personality, Reich played a key role in suppressing emotions and the so-called an unconscious video in the muscles of the body that are fixedly fighting against emotions. He believed that it would be difficult for the emotion to leave the body if the patient had frozen sadness or anger. When the mechanism of freezing emotions in the body is repeated continuously in childhood, it becomes automatic, like anything else a person learns. The mechanism works in such a way that people adapt to the situation over time and such automaticity becomes a character, i. e. part of personality. For the rest of our lives, it is what we most often call "I".

The characteristic of Reich's work can be briefly described as a rare combination of depth of insight and patience required to work with a person for years, and gradually go through the process of character analysis. Over time, he placed more and more emphasis on the body and "breaking the armor of character".

This gave birth to bioenergetics, for the spread of which Reich's student Aleksandar Loven is most responsible. Alexander Loven, a famous psychiatrist and psychotherapist, developed a theory of bioenergetics that basically also emphasizes the connection between emotions and the body.

The main principles of bioenergetics are loosening the character armor, deep contact with the body and letting go of all the spontaneous currents that take place in it. This is where most of the psychotherapeutic approaches focused on the body came from.

Moshe Feldenkrais, an engineer and inventor, developed a method of functional integration that uses movement and awareness exercises to improve coordination, flexibility and overall body health. This method focuses on developing awareness of movement and the body in order to reduce discomfort.

In addition to these influential practitioners, there are many other individuals who have contributed to the development of physical therapy through their research and practice. The combination of their theories and methods has created a rich and diverse practice that is applied in the world.

4. GOALS OF BODY THERAPY

Some of the basic goals of body therapy are: release blocked vital energy by removing body blocks (muscular and respiratory); increasing human capacities for experiencing feelings, happiness, love, spontaneity, honesty, flexibility and freedom of expression and enjoyment, including sexuality.

The long-term goal of body therapy is the release of physical blockages in the patient's body, awareness and expression of repressed emotions, their integration with thought processes (verbalization of feelings), etc.

5. BODY THERAPY TECHNIQUES

In body psychotherapy, there are various techniques for releasing body blockages and increasing body awareness (awareness of body sensations, the way the human body reacts to stress, emotions, etc.). Each technique has its own advantages and can be adapted to the client's needs. For example, massage is used to relax muscles, improve circulation and reduce pain, while movement is used to improve coordination and flexibility, reduce stress and tension.

Some of these techniques are very light and subtle (such as touch, some massage techniques, activation of certain muscles, guided fantasies, work with sounds, etc.) and some are very intense and radical (techniques through which affective discharges can be directly provoked and expressing deep feelings (stress positions, etc.).

Which techniques the therapist will apply in working with a given patient depends on the specificity of the patient himself and his/her character-body structure, as well as the phase of the psychotherapy process in which the client is currently.

A typical Reichian session of body psychotherapy is performed with the patient lying on the mat, with his back touching the floor, and his legs, feet, and hands bent. The therapist asks the patient to relax and breathe in the way he normally does. During this time, the psychotherapist observes the patient's type of breathing (how he breathes, how deeply, whether he breathes only through the upper or lower part of the chest, whether he pauses between inhalation and exhalation, whether he emphasizes inhalation or exhalation, etc.). The way the patient normally breathes provides a lot of information to the therapist about how he restricts life energy and allows insight into which feelings the patient is dominantly repressing.

In addition to observing breathing, the therapist also observes other indicators of the patient's body expression, primarily the state of muscle tone in different body segments and eye contact.

Depending on all the collected information that the therapist gathered by observing the patient's body expressions, he plans the treatment and the techniques he will apply in psychotherapy.

So, the techniques that are common in body therapy are as follows:

- Massage: classic massage, reflexology and other massage techniques
- Movement: somatic movement, Feldenkrais method, Tai chi and other movement techniques
- Breathing: breathing techniques to relax and regulate emotions
- Meditation: meditation techniques to relax the mind and body
- Music and sound therapy: sound therapy techniques for relaxation and release of blockages
- Mindfulness - a technique to increase awareness of the present moment and the sensations that occur in the body.
- Yoga - connecting body and mind through various exercises and breathing techniques
- Guided fantasy

6. WHO IS BODY THERAPY SUITABLE FOR?

Body therapy can be beneficial for a variety of people, including those suffering from physical pain, stress, anxiety, depression, and other physical and emotional problems. This form of therapy can also be useful for people who want to increase their body awareness and improve their psychophysical well-being.

Body therapy is suitable for people of all ages, genders and physical conditions. It can be especially useful for people who have experienced trauma or stress, as well as for those who want to work on the prevention of physical and emotional problems.

Also, this type of therapy is often used as part of the therapeutic process for people with mood disorders, such as depression and anxiety, and for people who struggle with stress and tension in everyday life. It is also effective for people suffering from chronic pain and other physical diseases, as it can help reduce pain, alleviate symptoms and improve quality of life.

Therefore, body psychotherapy is effective in working with people who:

- Who suffer from psychosomatic ailments
- Who have a problem with expressing their feelings
- Who suffer from long-term chronic muscle tensions that are the result of accumulated stress
- Who survived various traumatic experiences
- Who suffer from certain sexual dysfunctions
- Who are motivated to explore and improve their personal psychological growth and development

7. Examples

There are many techniques and methods that are generally used in psychotherapy, which can also be an integral part of body therapy. They have in common that they emphasize the connection between body and mind and help in the treatment of emotional problems.

In the following, we will present three techniques and describe them in more detail. These are: grounding, guided fantasy, anchoring and autogenic training.

Technique I - Grounding

The term "grounding" is both physical and psychological. Instead of anxiety, "floating", it is necessary to give yourself the feeling that you are "firmly on the ground".

The exercise is performed in nature so that the body is in contact with it: earth, stone, sand, but if there are no conditions for it, it can be performed in a quiet room where no one will disturb you.

Stand with bare feet on the floor. Feet should be hip-width apart. Spread your toes and soles in order to provide yourself with a stable base. As you do this, look at your feet to strengthen the connection between your brain and the parts of your body that are furthest from it.

Once you've laid the foundation, straighten up and look straight ahead. Feel the points of contact of your feet with the ground, and make sure to distribute the weight equally between the balls of the toes and the middle of the heels. Now transfer all the weight and tension of your body into your feet, but do not collapse your body position and allow it to be absorbed into the ground.

Engage your legs at full length as if you want to dig them deeper into the ground. If you have difficulty feeling the weight leave your body, imagine roots growing from the bottom of your feet, extending deep into the ground beneath you.

Stay in that position for a while and breathe, creating the feeling that with each breath you grow and expand, and that each exhalation roots you deeper.

The duration of the exercise is from 5 to 15 minutes.

Technique II – Guided Fantasy – Emotions

Close your eyes and be in touch with yourself.

Now become aware of all your emotions in this moment.

What is it that you feel?

How do you feel that?

With what thoughts did you create that feeling?

Become aware of your sadness now.

Remember a situation in which you were very sad.

Imagine it as if it were happening here and now.

Be in touch with that sadness.

Where do you feel it in your body?

Now place it outside of you and give it shape, size, color and weight.

What does it look like to you?

Where is it in relation to you?

Now imagine your fear.

Be aware of how you feel fear in your body.

Where is it located in your body?

Now place it outside yourself.

Give it a specific shape, weight, size and color.

Place it at some distance from you.

What does it look like to you?

Be aware of your anger now.

Where is it located in you?

Place it outside yourself and you and give it shape, size, color and weight.

What does she look like to you?

Where does your anger stand in relation to you?

Get in touch with your joy now.

Remember an event when you were joyful.

Where do you feel that joy in your body?

Now place your joy outside of you and you and give it shape, size, color and weight.

What does it look like to you?

Where does it stand in relation to you?

Now become aware of all these emotions of yours.

Line them up in front of you the way you want.

Finish the sentence - You are my emotions and I ... you

When you're done, open your eyes and draw your emotions.

Let's talk when you're ready.

Technique III - "Anchoring" - NLP¹

An "anchor" in NLP is a reference point that stabilizes a certain state. An "anchor" is a link to a past event and enables immediate restoration of that state. It is one of the basic techniques in NLP.

The exercise is performed by providing a quiet space where the exercise will be performed. If we work with clients, usually the client sits on a chair and the facilitator sits a little behind him/her, on his/her right or left depending on what the client said he/she wants.

The rest of the process is the same when doing anchoring for yourself or with clients. Here we will present work with clients, for easier adoption and understanding.

Choosing the right state

¹ NLP stands for Neuro Linguistic Programming. Starting from the knowledge of modern system theory, linguistics, neuropsychology and psychology, neuro-linguistic programming describes the most important processes of how people observe themselves and their environment, how they process information in their own way, act, learn and change based on this. Based on studies and models of human observation and information processing, NLP makes us aware of the factors that govern our experience and how we create our own experiences. On this basis, which was created from NLP, numerous useful models of action with the most different names have been created in recent decades.

See more at: <https://www.nlpinstitut.com/sta-je-nlp/>

In the first phase, the facilitator talks with the client about choosing the right condition. This means that the client chooses and remembers a situation in which the desired state was intense.

It is desirable to choose a state that can be anchored in different situations, say a feeling of self-confidence. When the client chooses a condition, he/she needs to remember the moment and situation in which he/she had it completely. If they remember the event more clearly, the feeling will e.g. self-confidence in the present to be stronger. **It should be noted that in this process the feeling is important, not the content!**

Choosing the right and strong state is the most important step in the "anchoring" process. If it is performed in a relaxed state in which clients are focused on internal processes, the process will be more successful.

Choosing the right stimulus

The next step is to select a specific stimulus that will be the anchor for restoring the desired state. The goal is to automatically approach the desired state with each occurrence of the selected stimulus without having to think about it.

Thus, clients are told that they can choose a visual, auditory, or kinesthetic anchor. In fact, we tell them that it can be an image, a sound, or a touch. For kinesthetic anchors, it is important to note that there should be some movement or touch that clients do not often use in daily practice, so that the effect is not lost due to "wearing out" of the anchor.

Associating stimulus and response

At this stage, it is important that the selected state and a unique and clear stimulus are associated at the right time. **The right moment is the peak of the experienced state.** At the moment of the strongest experience, you activate the anchor in the clients.

Performance - "Anchoring" - Kinesthetic "anchor"

The leader guides the client through this process by placing a chair slightly behind the client and telling him/her to close his/her eyes and imagine the previously selected desired state. Then he says for example:

Now think of an event when you were completely... (e.g. confident)

As you think about the event when you were completely...go back in your mind to that time and see what you saw then...What do you see...What does what you see look like...

Now as you think about the event when you were completely...go back in your mind to that time and hear what you heard then...What do you hear...What are the sounds...What are their intensity...How are they distributed...

Now as you think about the event when you were completely...go back in your mind to that time and feel what you felt then...What is the feeling of ... (confidence)...How does it rise in you...Where is that feeling in your body...Watch how it spreads through your body...Be aware of that feeling...As its strength increases...

When the clients reach the strongest intensity of that state, it is necessary for the leader to give some signal, which was previously agreed upon. That signal can be a slight nod of the head, a hand gesture...

After that, the leader gently touches the client in a previously agreed place (e.g. a gentle touch on the shoulder) and holds that touch for about 5-6 seconds in order to "anchor" that state,

Then apply a **separator**, which means asking the client for example:

How many chairs are there in the room?...How many are 6 by 5?...Where are the pictures in the room?...

Testing

After the feeling is anchored, it is necessary to test the "anchor" by repeating the process.

The process is repeated 4 times, with the facilitator saying at the end of the "anchoring" process, i.e. when reaching the strongest feeling:

On the second repetition:

Now as you think about the event when you were completely...go back in your mind to that time and feel what you felt then...What is the feeling of ... (confidence...How does it awaken within

you...Where is that feeling in your body...Watch it spread in your body...Be aware of that feeling...As it increases in strength...Now double that feeling compared to last time...

On the third and fourth repetitions:

Now triple that feeling compared to last time...

Now quadruple that feeling compared to last time...

After that comes a touch, then a separator.

After this process, clients should be able to quickly enter the desired resource state just by activating the "anchor".

Note: In the beginning, the process needs to be repeated once a week, in order to really anchor the desired state.

Technique IV – Autogenic training – Complete

Autogenic training is a psychotherapeutic technique for overcoming stress. It is a set of selected relaxation procedures aimed at releasing psychological and physiological tensions. It can be performed independently; regularity in repetition is important; it is recommended once a week until it is practiced.

Preparation for relaxation takes place by first securing a quiet place and determining the position for exercise (charioteer's position - chair without backrest; pharaonic - chair with backrest; position in an armchair and lying position).

Then close your eyes and do an exercise - **switching off your senses**.

Instruction:

Turning off the senses: *focus your attention on the sounds that surround you. First higher, and then quieter and quieter ...*

After that, one of the preparatory exercises is done, by choice:

- Naming of body parts - facilitators name them, and participants direct their attention to body parts
- Counting breathing – breathing is counted from ten to zero
- Balancing the mood - proper breathing
- Naming of objects - those with which they are surrounded, to calm acute fear

Instruction:

Counting Breaths: Now start counting your breaths. Start counting from ten and go to zero. One inhalation and exhalation form one unit.

Autogenic training follows.

Instruction:

Autogenic training Exercise 1 - Arm weight

Focus your attention on the right hand and then on the left hand. Look for and find the feeling of weight in both hands at the same time. When you find it, describe it with the words: "Hands are heavy." Look for this feeling several times. Make sure you are relaxed and calm. Describe it in the words: "I am relaxed and calm".

Autogenic training Exercise 2 – Hand warmth

Focus your attention on the right hand and then on the left hand. Look for and find the feeling of warmth in both hands at the same time. When you find it, describe it with the words: "Hands are warm." Look for this feeling several times. Make sure you are relaxed and calm. Describe it in words: "I'm relaxed and calm".

Autogenic training Exercise 1a and 2a – Weight and warmth of the legs

Focus your attention on the right leg and then on the left leg. Look for and find the feeling of weight in both legs at the same time. When you find it, describe it with the words: "Legs are heavy." Look for this feeling several times. Look for and find the feeling of warmth in both legs at the same time. When you find it, describe it with the words: "The feet are warm." Make sure you are relaxed and calm. Describe it in words: "I'm relaxed and calm".

Autogenic training Exercise 3 – Rhythm of breathing

Focus your attention on your chest. Watch how your chest rises slightly with each inhale, and falls slightly with each exhale...

Try to fit the sentence: "I breathe calmly and evenly" into the rhythm of breathing.

Make sure you are relaxed and calm. Describe it in words: "I'm relaxed and calm".

Autogenic training Exercise 4 – Heart rate

Focus your attention on your chest and your heart. Search and find heartbeats. When you find it, describe it with the words: "The heart beats calmly and evenly."

Make sure you are relaxed and calm. Describe it in words: "I'm relaxed and calm".

Autogenic training Exercise 5 – Stomach warmth

Focus your attention on your stomach. Look for and find the feeling of warmth in your stomach.

When you find it, describe it with the words: "The stomach is warm."

Make sure you are relaxed and calm. Describe it in words: "I'm relaxed and calm".

Autogenic training Exercise 6 – Freshness of the forehead

Focus your attention on your face, on your forehead. Look for and find the feeling of freshness.

When you find it, describe it with the words: "The forehead is fresh."

Make sure you are relaxed and calm. Describe it in words: "I'm relaxed and calm".

Do a REVOCATION.

In order to slowly return from the state of relaxation, recall can be done by making a light hand movement, a light movement of the neck, hands ...

LITERATURE

- Brown, R. P., & Gerbarg, P. L. (2012). The Healing Power of the Breath: Simple Techniques to Reduce Stress and Anxiety, Enhance Concentration, and Balance Your Emotions. Shambhala.
- Martinec, R, Šiškov, T, Pinjatela, R i Stijačić, D. (2014) Primjena psihoterapije pokretom i plesom u osoba s depresijom. Soc. psihijat. Vol. 42 Br. 3, str. 145-154
- Totton, N. (2003). Body Psychotherapy: An Introduction. Open University Press.
- Van der Kolk, B. A. (2014). The Body Keeps the Score: Brain, Mind, and Body in the Healing of Trauma. Viking.
- NLP institut: <https://www.nlpinstitut.com/sta-je-nlp/>
- [https://sr.wikipedia.org/sr/Telesna psihoterapija](https://sr.wikipedia.org/sr/Telesna_psihoterapija)