

Psychotherapy Guidebook



**ORGANIC
PROCESS
THERAPY**

Dan Miller

Organic Process Therapy

Dan Miller

e-Book 2016 International Psychotherapy Institute

From *The Psychotherapy Guidebook* edited by Richie Herink and Paul R. Herink

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Organic Process Therapy

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DEFINITION

Organic Process Therapy is an intense feeling therapy integrating the separate energies of contemporary (primal, gestalt, encounter) and traditional (Freudian, Reichian) forms of therapy into a single energy stream. It states that the body is a warehouse containing within itself all the real and symbolic events and personalities experienced in the past with their emotional connections to fear, anger, love, joy, and pain.

It advocates that the healthy part of the organism is always striving to regain the state of somatopsychological homeostasis (organic unity of body, feeling, mind, and spirit) in which we were born, and which had been fractured by life experiences. For healing, self-fulfillment, and the sense of well-being to occur it is essential to recapture this unified state. To unify the Somatopsyché, people are urged to feel what is happening in their bodies. A pain, a feeling of sickness, or a headache can be the signs of a long-suppressed emotion trying to crash through the defense barrier. “Feel your body,” “Let your body talk to your mind,” “Trust your body!” are expressions that recur constantly. The participant who trusts his body during the course of an

“organic” session finds that it can lead him down a new path toward hidden feeling, toward birth, and beyond birth, to the transpersonal and creativity. Trusting your body ultimately leads to self-healing.

Connections are established within the Somatopsyche by reaching the Organic Self, which is the pivot of organismic intelligence in Organic Process. The Organic Self lies buried in the interface of body and mind. Oversimplified, it is the sum of the basic, original feeling of true Self. During the course of life’s traumas there are accumulations of bioneurotic blocks underneath which the Organic Self becomes encapsulated to the extent that we lose conscious awareness of its existence. However, it is the natural tendency of the body/feeling/mind/spirit (the Somatopsyche) to strive ceaselessly for self-expression and for liberation from the chains of infantile repression.

When the homeostasis of the person is dangerously disturbed the Organic Self provides the person with messages that may become transformed into dream images, physical and emotional stress in illness, or disturbed interpersonal relationships.

HISTORY

Organic Process Therapy was developed by myself (Dan Miller) as a synthesis of my experience and thoughts during my practice and research as a psychologist over eighteen years. My concepts retain Freud’s guiding theme

that the combination of repressed infantile emotions and defense systems erected by the individual in order to survive in hostile, anxiety-arousing environmental conditions creates many neurotic formulae for living. To this was added concepts from Wilhelm Reich regarding body armor and muscular and sexual withholding of impulses, while studies in the physiology of emotions in schizophrenia (Hoskins), and normative physiological functioning, (Cannon, Selye, Goldstein, Lehninger) provided the physiological focus.

My views regarding society's contributions to neurosis come from Fromm, Sullivan, and Reisman and were crucibles in the development of a social matrix of understanding, while the applications of techniques received the most impetus from gestalt, encounter, psychodrama, and primal therapy.

TECHNIQUE

By gradually opening a person's defenses and fixations through deep breathing, body feeling, sound and movement, trauma, which were initiated as early as birth and perhaps before, are recovered and the real emotions of the Authentic Self are felt. Changes that take place are durable and focused rather than haphazard and temporary, because it is a participatory therapy rather than one that is dependent on an expert's authority. The competence of the therapist enables him to work with the level of motivation and defense

brought into it by the participant. He attempts to make the patient aware and responsible for his defenses rather than attempting to remove them by attacking the ego. The participant is not left infantilized with a heavy charge of unintegrated emotional material. It is therefore an extremely effective way of dealing with the potentially dangerous outcome that sometimes follows from the loss of defenses in deep regression therapies.

Activation of primals (regression and catharsis of childhood trauma) in Organic Process Therapy can take place in several different ways: through workshops lasting a weekend to three weeks, a three-week individual intensive, or single individual sessions. Workshops provide a mixture of regressive experiences and “here-and-now” encounters. The combination helps participants establish connections between past and present, separating and distinguishing between experiences that belong to the past and what is relevant for daily life. This occurs particularly effectively in group interactions, when a very emotional encounter with another person triggers a particularly deep regression. A participant, through this flow of feelings, discovers his formerly blocked emotion in the encounter, dissolves it in the regression part of the session, and returns to interact with new awareness, a new sense of his responsibility for himself, and fresh energy for his life.

APPLICATIONS

The therapy works best for persons who are willing to take up an exploration of dimensions of their life experience as a whole, taking risks to uncover emotions they thought were closed to them. The age range of persons most frequently seeking it out are in their early twenties to late fifties, couples as well as individuals. Some successful exploration has been done with teen-agers, but they are carefully screened. There has been no serious attempt to use it in the psychoses, but instances of treatment with borderline and ambulatory schizophrenics have shown some marginal changes. It is counter-indicated when severe acting out occurs in group and individual sessions with the person showing little ego strength to cope responsibly with the reality of the situation.

At present there are centers and therapists practicing Organic Process Therapy in Livingston Manor, New York; Middletown, New Jersey; Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; and Washington, D.C.