

Justyna Sienkiewicz-Urbaniak, Szkolenia Gestalt and

Julianne Appel-Opper in conversation about the Krakow Series 2019

Justyna Sienkiewicz-Urbaniak (JSU): There are many body-oriented styles and approaches, how do you describe your approach?

Julianne Appel-Opper(JAO): In general, I underpin my work in the fundamental *dialogical gestalt-herapeutic insights*, especially in the existential, phenomenological, experimental, body-related, creative and fieldtheoretical orientations and in Relational Psycho-analysis who focus on interbodily processes.

I embody a curiosity about what the client communicates to me beside words. What does this living body speak to me and how do I as a living body react and resonate? And how can I work with this communication without pointing at the movements or gestures and thus exposing or shaming the client? I had experienced before that pointing to a nonverbal behaviour can so easily expose or shame the client or just stop a movement or gesture. I wanted to find a way of working from a *relational embodied gestalt practice* in which there are two bodies in the focus, both the client's and therapist's body would be in the spotlight.

Within this context of two bodies communicating together, I have developed embodied interventions and experiments. Rather than merely using words, I believe that announcing and then mindfully presenting visible movements and gestures to the client brings an important therapeutic advantage. In presenting my bodily resonances and impulses, my client can look at her/his own embodied gestalten from a safe distance, taking in as much as this feels safe and comfortable in this moment. The embodied interventions and experiments are developed in a process of respectful small steps both by client and therapist. I believe that teaming-up is important to encourage the client's self-agency. Especially traumatized clients have under-developed self-agencies. Small step processes enable an awareness of the window of tolerance and thus not re-traumatizing the client.

The sequences of embodied interventions/experiments are short, only a few minutes. It has been impressive for me how powerful and healing these explicit, *non-touching* body-to-body-communications have been in the entire psychotherapeutic process. This is why I strongly believe that it is this area in which the client's fixed gestalten can be physically moved on. The tiny movements imprint/impact in a different way as words spoken. They really move the body. Impulses are bodily bridged (communicated/send) and the procedural memory is reached.

There are gestalten that need hearing that have no words, or no words yet. Being open to what the client is communicating with their body as well as their words means that more of the client can be seen, accepted, believed, understood and therefore validated.

A client comes to mind who had done therapy before. She still had not fully changed into a better self-care, as in drinking enough water, sleeping enough, really basic stuff - like a baby. And yes, she was a neglected baby and child. The embodied gestalten of self-neglect broadcasted various messages. Her arms in their low muscle tonus communicated: "I am not worthy of care", whereas her neck's tension signaled: "I do not need care anymore". The longing, the despair, and the "No" were communicated in the bodily being with. The gap/hole of self-care stayed open to be closed only by her parents. With clients like her, I worked with 'the Doer of the neglect' and the 'Done-to of the neglect' as different bodily reactions from different developmental stages to this theme of neglect, which Jacobs might call "Enduring relational theme" (Jacobs, 2017). The client and I developed experiments in which I moved my arms and she watched this, nothing else. She became emotionally 'moved' by my arms reaching out for care. She felt the pain and the longing at a bodily level. This was already a change as the old gestalten held in the body started to defreeze so that her arms got more mobilized when thinking "I need to drink".

Overall, in my clinical work, I contact more the ground than the figure. I describe this as a passive being-with as inviting, listening, receiving the ground as melodies and rhythms of how this person is in the world beside the spoken words. If we look at the body as an orchestra, the musicians come from every stage of life. Body gestalten, in this way, have a certain age and context/field. The movement patterns of the legs, arms, head, spine etc. play their own different melodies of certain themes. From my experience I would say that the body speaks in her/his own melody and wants to be acknowledged and listened to in a respectful way to speak the unspoken.)

JUS: What will happen in the 3 weekends? What can people expect?

JAO: In general, we will work within the following 3 areas:

Therapist's Living Body	Body-to-Body-Communication The embodied Field	Client's Living Body
Own embodiment Resonances Sensations Breathing, voice	Impress each other Cocreate each other's physical reality Traumatic embodied communication	How the body contains How the body speaks Rhythms and melodies
Rhythms and Melodies	Mutual reading regulating each other	Body as orchestra Shopping Belt
Fixed bodily gestalten	Daniel Stern's image of 2 sniffing dogs	The age of bodily gestalten
Alphabet of the Living body	what is communicated beside the words spoken	The alphabet of the living body

Using my experiences of training and teaching since 2001 focusing on the importance of the body in psychotherapy, I offer a safe and respectful space for exercises and experiential processes, small group work, live demonstrations and live supervision combined with theoretical inputs.

[I look forward to my first training in Krakow!](#)

Berlin and Krakow, 23. November 2018