

Psychotherapy Guidebook

LOMI

BODY WORK

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Lomi Body Work

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DEFINITION

Lomi Body Work is an integrative psycho-physical therapy in which deep muscular tensions in the body are released through a series of direct physical manipulations. The Lomi practitioner uses his hands, knuckles, fingers, and elbows to stretch the fascia, or sheaths of connective tissue, in the body and to balance the subtle energy flow in the body. The aim is to allow a balanced and unrestricted flow of creative life energy, increased body awareness, postural alignment, and emotional as well as physical integration.

The underlying theory of the work is that personal integrity is expressed in the physical body through awareness, structural equilibrium, muscular resiliency, breathing, and homeostatic vitality. By directing awareness in the present to muscular tension and through restructuring the body in a way that facilitates physical integrity, associated aspects of the mind and emotions may be realized and responded to in a natural and nourishing way. By examining how people support themselves physically, one can begin to see how attitude is reflected in posture and how conscious posture can affect one's experience of life. Lomi Body Work is a holistic application of

experiential learning that encourages an individual to investigate, acknowledge, and take responsibility for the many aspects of self.

HISTORY

Lomi Body Work was originally developed by Robert K. Hall, M.D., and Richard K. Heckler, Ph.D. Hall, a psychiatrist, was a close friend and associate of the late Frederick S. Perls, founder of Gestalt Therapy, and was one of the first people trained in Structural Integration by its founder, Ida P. Rolf, Ph.D. Hall relinquished his traditional role as a psychiatrist through his association with Perls in 1967. He moved from a mechanistic approach to the body toward a vitalist's perspective of the whole person through his association with Perls, Heckler, and Randolph Stone, the founder of polarity therapy. Heckler, a Gestalt psychotherapist and currently a master of aikido, studied polarity therapy under Stone. In 1970 Hall and Heckler synthesized their knowledge and together created Lomi Body Work.

Lomi Body Work has its roots in related holistic methods such as polarity therapy, Gestalt Therapy, Structural Integration, Proskauer breathing, Eastern philosophy, and the principles of aikido and hatha yoga.

TECHNIQUE

Lomi Body Work involves a series of sessions in which the practitioner

and client work together on specific areas of the body. At least seven areas are focused upon during each session. These are: 1) the extent to which a person is physically aware of his body, his strength, his vitality; 2) the form and function of the body section and its relationship to the person as a whole; 3) breathing; 4) personality expression; 5) manipulating connective tissue; 6) tracing and facilitating energy flow; and 7) exercises that allow maintenance.

Generally, the Lomi Body Work technique promotes the understanding that one's physical as well as mental-emotional way of being in the world consists of many habits, which can be changed. Specifically, these habit patterns change through manipulation of connective tissue and through a willingness on the part of the client to observe and correct posture, breathing, and self-presentation.

The skeletal structure is designed to support the body and the muscular structure is designed to move the body. Maximum muscular efficiency is attained when the body naturally assumes a balanced vertical stance, as defined by a plumb line center of gravity. When the body is out of vertical alignment, muscles compensate to maintain an upright stance in response to the additional horizontal surface area of the body exposed to gravitational pull. Muscles lose their tone and develop a bone-like quality in direct proportion to the degree in which the body is off center — and in direct relation to an individual's sense of personal freedom. The Lomi practitioner

moves to these areas with his hands and separates the congested fascia while the client concentrates on breathing.

Lomi Body Work uses concentration and attentiveness as a center from which to operate. New realizations and personal growth are the product of a cooperative, interpersonal venture between the practitioner and the participant and not a form of mechanical processing done by the practitioner to an individual. The Lomi practitioner is not concerned with forcing a person to fit a preconceived model of structural alignment and proper function. The work is designed to meet the individual needs of the person, be they physical, emotional, or mental, and to support the acknowledgment and appreciation of one's unique nature of existence.

APPLICATIONS

Lomi Body Work is valuable for people of all ages and backgrounds. Certain aspects of the work are emphasized according to individual needs. It is for people who want to understand and feel a sense of command over themselves both physically and mentally. It is not for people who are seriously ill and not to be considered a form of medical treatment for disease.

Lomi Body Work has a wide range of applicability, from people who seek to develop a greater awareness and comfort in their body to dancers and athletes seeking improved functional performance. By releasing tension and

opening constricted areas of the body through Lomi Body Work, the participant can experience the benefits of more efficient carriage. Structural response to gravity becomes more evenly balanced throughout the body. There is less demand on the body through the elimination of inefficient and unnecessary physiological conflict. As a result, circulation is improved, neural flow is less restricted, breathing capacity is increased, and tension is released, allowing graceful and more fluid movement. In general, the vital systems of the body become more responsive to the needs of the individual.

Lomi Body Work is a valuable adjunct to psychotherapy. Clients are encouraged to develop a personal practice that strengthens their will, reveals the extent to which they exercise responsibility, and aids in understanding the relationship between what they do and how they feel.

Frequently, Gestalt Therapy is used as a medium for assimilating new realizations and changes in consciousness that occur through the Body Work. This is not a necessary aspect of the work. But when feelings emerge while releasing tension and freeing the blocked flow of energy, the participant is encouraged to acknowledge and accept his feelings. Much can be learned by investigating the feelings and memories that have been stored in the body. Often they provide valuable insights into unresolved parts of one's personality and lead to growth and integrity when assimilated. Freedom from the bondage of negativity (tension) is essential for a mature and meaningful

life.