

Psychotherapy Guidebook

RADIX NEO-REICHIAN EDUCATION

Charles R. Kelley
Julie Wright

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Charles R. Kelley and Julie Wright

e-Book 2016 International Psychotherapy Institute

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

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Radix Neo-Reichian Education

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DEFINITION

“Radix” is an archaic term meaning “root, or primary cause,” and is used at the Radix Institute in the same sense that “life force” is used. The radix is not energy, but a substratum that is the source of both energy and feeling. The radix flow is experienced as feeling or emotion and is expressed in the spontaneous expressive movements of the body. Chronic muscular tensions (the muscular armor) block the flow of the radix and the feelings expressed through the flow. Radix Neo-Reichian Education, then, is a form of personal growth work based on loosening the muscular armor, and so freeing the radix flow. The process is experienced as an opening of the capacities for feeling.

HISTORY

The Radix “education in feeling” process is a development growing from the work of my (Charles Kelley) teacher, Wilhelm Reich. Reich was a psychoanalyst who began his work with Freud. He began to find that blocks to progress in analysis were held in bodily tensions. Out of this observation came his two major discoveries. First, he discovered and described the

existence of the muscular armor, that is, how blocked emotion is held in the chronic patterns of tension in the body. Reich's second major discovery was expressed in his concept of "orgone energy," the tangible life force we call the radix. The Radix Institute was founded in 1960, three years after Reich's death, to do scientific and educational work with Reich's concepts.

TECHNIQUE

Our primary approach in using the radix to free the armor is the Radix Intensive, which is performed by one teacher and one student, usually in the presence of a small supportive group. The student is invited to deepen his breathing and to allow whatever happens. He is not to force any feelings, but to allow whatever feelings arise, or if none come, to accept it. The teacher will work to expand the breathing and to help the student release the tensions and blocks to expressive movement and to feeling expression as they appear.

The Intensive is experienced as a freeing of feelings, an expansion of awareness, an opening of consciousness. A course of Intensives is an extended trip done without drugs, the goal of which is the growth in the capacity to experience and express deep feeling. The Intensive frees feeling that is blocked by muscular armor, opens feelings that are buried, and softens and releases feeling that is held for fear of explosion. As connections are made with the feelings, awareness of the body grows. The body feels increasingly

alive and integrated in its movement and expression.

The student is not taught what to feel but how to release the feelings that are already there. Usually this involves first the surrender to some painful emotion, such as grief, fear, or anger, which must be experienced before the emotions of joy, love, and pleasure can emerge and deepen. We are not free to choose what to feel, only to choose whether or not to feel. Radix education in feeling is a process of coming alive emotionally.

APPLICATIONS

Dramatic changes occur as a result of this process repeated over time. The voice can drop, the eyes become less tense and more seeing. Men often regain the capacity to cry and women often regain the capacity to be angry and assertive. The frenetic person can become focused and centered; the withdrawn person can become more open and in contact with others. The sexual experience can change profoundly as the capacity for full sexual surrender develops.

The fundamental form of the Radix Intensive is the small supportive group. Being present as others start “feeling” and helping them emotionally are highly important parts of the work. Effective group work can be done on a weekly basis, in a sequence of monthly workshops, or in an extended residential program workshop. The more blocked the individual is in feeling,

the greater the value of the extended concentrated residential work. Day after day feeling work has a powerful cumulative effect. An excellent introduction is a one- to three-week residential “feeling” workshop. Most students will eventually participate in some individual sessions as well. The advantage of individual sessions is simply to provide more concentrated expert time to an individual’s special problems than is possible in a group situation.

The Radix Intensive is also an effective way to work with couples, each working in the presence of the other. The couples’ Intensive helps mates to experience their relationships on the deepest level, whatever that is for them. When existing feelings are opened and experienced in this way, couples tend to come together strongly or to separate, based on the way they feel. They seldom stay in the uncertain, unresolved, unsatisfying limbo that characterizes so many man-woman relationships.

One of the innovations of Radix work is the development and synthesis of group techniques from many sources to deepen and support the Intensive experience. Body awareness exercises, Feldenkrais exercises, encounter techniques, bioenergetic stress positions, Branden sentence completions, Gestalt techniques, and other exercises are integrated with Reichian body work and used along with the Intensive to deepen and expand the feeling capacities of the student. Many of the exercises are designed to help integrate the student’s expanded feeling capacities into his life and his actions. There is

a sharing on a deep feeling level, often developing among group members that can be a profoundly moving experience. The group allows a high level of participation, since much of the support work is done all at once, in dyads or in small sub-groups. At no time is everyone just watching the leader work with one person. This has two advantages. As everyone works together, there is a lot of freedom to allow feelings to come and to give and receive support from other group members. When emotional support for the work comes from other group members, there is a tendency to form close connections among group members rather than to develop a dependent relationship with the group leader, wherein he represents a father or authoritarian figure. To us this is as it should be.