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Trauma and the Body: A Sensorimotor Approach to Psychotherapy

Pat Ogden, Kekuni Minton, and Clare Pain. New York: W W Norton & Company, October 2006. Price: £21.50, 345 pages.

In their book, Pat Ogden, Kekuni Minton and Clare Pain introduce a somatic-based approach to trauma treatment. The book is divided in two parts, theory and treatment.

Part one presents theoretical foundations and the rationale for the authors' sensorimotor psychotherapy approach. It bases on psychotherapeutic theories and on recent research on the interplay between sensations, cognitions, emotions, and behaviour. First, the authors describe findings on physiological and emotional dysregulations following traumatisation which cause profound alterations in information processing. Subsequently, they examine posttraumatic regulatory patterns of arousal and offer a therapeutic "modulation model". Chapter three outlines the physical consequences of trauma-related attachment dysregulations. Chapter four explains different processes of orienting responses and their alterations in traumatised individuals. The following chapter describes various defensive subsystems, their origin and physical components, possibly leading to PTSD. Furthermore, the authors present the role of action systems and tendencies, psychological systems, which support adaptive responses optimising survival. Chapter seven illustrates actual neuroscientific findings on the effects of trauma on the brain and their implications for using body-based treatment strategies.

Part two of the book outlines treatment philosophy, principles and clinical skills for the theoretically funded three-stages sensorimotor treatment approach. Chapter eight provides an orientation to the principles underlying sensorimotor psychotherapy, and applies hierarchical information-processing theory to clinical practice. Chapter nine presents mindfulness techniques, facilitating the regulation of arousal and focusing on present experiences of the patients. Chapter ten describes techniques that help to develop somatic resources and thereby bring autonomic dysregulation under control. Chapter eleven describes how the patient is enabled to process traumatic experiences somatically, and how to develop a sense of mastery over the intense feelings. The last chapter describes the final treatment phase, focusing on future life going beyond trauma and trauma-related symptoms.

The book - aimed for clinicians working with traumatised individuals - is clearly structured and written, leading the reader pleasantly from theory to practice, while revealing the authors' creativity and high experience in the field. Its first part provides an excellent and comprehensive review on theory and actual scientific knowledge on the effects of traumatisation, neurobiology and psychotherapy research. In the second part, the authors practically introduce their sensorimotor approach for the treatment of severely traumatised individuals. This approach bases on the theories and findings described earlier, plus on the authors' immense therapeutic understanding and experience. The authors use the sensorimotor level, complimentary to traditional psychotherapy, which focuses primarily on affect and cognition. In integrating cognitive and somatic interventions, linking word-based with non-verbal-based modes of processing, they address psychological and physiological symptoms of traumatisation. The presented sensorimotor techniques are described clearly and demonstrated with case materials; they can be integrated undogmatically into everyday trauma related psychotherapeutic work. Unfortunately, the techniques are presented quite briefly. Therefore, I think that extensive training and experience in trauma-therapy are needed prior to applying the described sensorimotor techniques. However, I strongly recommend this fascinating and essential reading, as it offers clinicians of all orientations a

variety of psychosomatic treatment strategies which allow an integration of trauma-related physical manifestations in their psychotherapeutic trauma treatment.

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