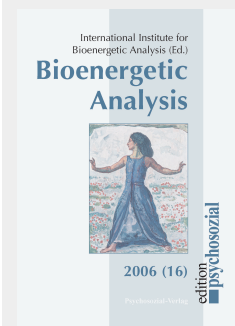


Ron Robbins

What's the Use of Violence?



International Institute for
Bioenergetic Analysis (Ed.)

**Bioenergetic
Analysis**

2006 (16)

edition
psychosozial

Bioenergetic Analysis
16. Volume, No. 1, 2006, Page 29–48
Psychosozial-Verlag
DOI: 10.30820/0743-4804-2006-16-29



Bibliographic information of Die Deutsche Nationalbibliothek (The German Library)
The Deutsche Nationalbibliothek lists this publication in the Deutsche Nationalbibliografie;
detailed bibliographic data are available at <http://dnb.d-nb.de>.

2006 Psychosozial-Verlag GmbH & Co. KG, Gießen, Germany
info@psychosozial-verlag.de
www.psychosozial-verlag.de



This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License (CC BY-NC-ND 4.0). This license allows private use and unmodified distribution, but prohibits editing and commercial use (further information can be found at: <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>). The terms of the Creative Commons licence only apply to the original material. The reuse of material from other sources (marked with a reference) such as charts, illustrations, photos and text extracts may require further permission for use from the respective copyrights holder.

Cover image: Ferdinand Hodler *Ausschreitende Frau*, 1910, oil on canvas, 48,5 x 39 cm

<https://doi.org/10.30820/0743-4804-2006-16>

ISBN (PDF-E-Book) 978-3-8379-6879-8

ISBN (Print) 978-3-89806-517-7

ISSN (Online) 2747-8882 · ISSN (Print) 0743-4804

What's the Use of Violence?

Ron Robbins

Summary

As unpopular as the thesis may be, a look at the processes that underlie our early growth indicates that at every developmental stage new potentials for violence naturally arise. This paper traces the emergence of these potentials as they grow out of the maturational steps of our body. It is suggested that violent potentials can be useful to therapy and the context of their applications is key to determine their value and the meanings we make of them.

Key terms: Violence, Development, Rhythmic Integration, Context, Acting-out and Catharsis.

The World is full of Strife

The world is full of strife.

There are wars between the great world powers.

There are conflicts within different localities.

There are feuds among families.

There is discord between neighbors.

There is friction within a household, between man and wife, between parents and children. Life is short. People die every day. The day that has passed will never return, and death comes closer every day. Nevertheless, people still fight and never once remember their goal in life

All strife is identical. The friction within a family is a counterpart of the wars between nations. Each person in a household is the counterpart of a world power, and their quarrels are the wars between those powers. The traits of each nation are also reflected in these individuals. Some nations are known for anger, others for bloodthirstiness. Each one has its particular trait. The counterparts of these traits are found in each household.

You may wish to live in peace. You have no desire for strife. Still, you are forced into dispute and conflict.

Nations are the same. A nation may desire peace and make many concessions to achieve it. No matter how much it tries to remain neutral, it can still be caught up in war. Two opposing sides can demand its allegiance until it is drawn into war against its will.

The same is true in a household.

Man is a miniature world.

His essence contains the world and everything in it.

A man and his family contain the nations of the world, including all their battles. A man living alone can become insane. Within him are all the warring nations.

His personality is that of the victorious nation. Each time a different nation is victorious, he must change completely, and this can drive him insane. He is alone and cannot express the war within him. But when one lives with others, these battles are expressed toward his family and friends. ... (Nathan of Breslov 1911).

Violence enwrapping our human nature, part and parcel of it, is a difficult thesis. Therapists can recall the reaction, the condemnation that followed Freud when he posited a death instinct to explain the violent dark side of our nature. But in these days of violent war, and escalated human trauma, perhaps there is something to be gained from a sober look at violence, and the terms of humankind.

Violent Therapeutics

I was leading some training in Bioenergetics this year. After a session marked by powerful emotional releases, a first-year trainee came up very close to me and said in a lyrical voice with a dream-like look in her eye that she didn't know if she could remain in the program. The mood didn't fit the message. Then her face grimaced in pain: »Such violence!«

It brings up an issue: Are Bioenergetics and other therapies that deal with primary emotions violent? Are the screams we arouse, and the bed smashes we encourage part of a strange, distorted violent display? Are we taskmasters of the expression of brutality?

And what does it mean when clients and observers ask such questions? If we do enter into the den of violent expression, is it justified?

Dr. Dean Ornish is a leading pioneer on heart health. He developed the first »(...) system scientifically proven to reverse heart disease without

surgery (Ornish 1990). Ornish's treatment grew from the teachings of his Guru, Swami Satchidananda. It includes exercise, yoga, group therapy, low-fat diet and meditation.

In »Reversing Heart Disease« (Ornish 1990), Ornish forwards the idea that people who ventilate emotions are at risk. He reports research by Carol Tavris (1982) that negates catharsis.

»She concludes that ventilating anger usually does more harm than good, since the other person generally feels attacked and then retaliates, – a downward spiral that results in both people feeling increasingly isolated from each other« (Ornish 1990).

Ornish goes on to describe his attendance at a workshop with Elizabeth Kubler-Ross, expert on working with death and dying. He had expected to hear lectures, but instead she advised getting in touch with negative emotions. The argument was, to work with the dying, to learn the emotions the dying go through, one should explore ones own dark side.

Kubler-Ross's approach was experiential. She used a method familiar to a Bioenergetic audience: strike a phone book with a hose. (Honor to Bioenergetic practitioners) She advised, »To make it more real, imagine you're hitting someone«.

Ornish writes: »For the first four days, I sat and watched how these mild-mannered people would go up to a mattress with a radiator hose, and turn into Charles Manson before my eyes – helter-skelter«.

Until the last day, Ornish watched in a »detached« way. He reports: then »(...) curiosity got the better of me«. He took a turn, but his expression of anger seemed unreal, false. He mentioned it.

Kubler-Ross probed, »Have you ever been angry with anyone: family, friends, teachers, (...) pretend you are hitting them?«

He then recalled a »(...) professor from college, a former girl friend, a college roommate, a sibling«. He resumed hitting, taking each in turn, and went through a repeating pattern of fantasies. The imagined person responded to his violence:

»First with astonishment, shock, disbelief; then ... anger ... they would fight back ... I would eventually overcome them, they would react by trying to foster guilt: »How can you do this to me?«

Then ... I'd move on to the next person.

It was all very brutal, and I was shocked and disgusted with myself.

After about twenty or thirty minutes of doing this ... I had shredded several phone books, and I still didn't feel any better. Actually, I felt much worse, inside and out ... And I thought, »Well this is very interesting«, I learned *that ventilating anger doesn't free me of it. It only feeds and intensifies the anger.* And that's very useful to know.«

Ornish goes on to write, »A few days after the workshop, one of the other participants committed suicide, perhaps a tragic lesson that ventilating anger is not sufficient to make us feel free«. (So much for Bioenergetic pride. We can only imagine how Kubler-Ross might have processed this analysis).

But let's look more closely: Ornish's thoughts were not the result of a full catharsis. Full release hadn't occurred. He interrupted the change process prematurely. The fruit was a negative judgment.

Ornish's conclusion did not deter Kubler-Ross. She encouraged him to go on with the exercise, asking, »Are you sure you haven't left anyone out?«

Ornish resumed. He now remembered a lecture given by his Guru, Swami Satchidananda. The Guru spoke of:

»(...) a man who found God – not through love of God, – but through pure hatred of God ...«
And he taught,
»(...) being indecisive, unclear, and **stuck in the middle of the road** (Bold RR.), neither here nor there, takes you nowhere.«

Ornish decided to check it out. This time he chose to hit his Guru. That was different, and so was what happened.

»(...) it felt realer than real.«

The Guru was no guilt-invoker, no adversary.

»He just stood there and allowed it to happen. (...) I started getting angry at myself – loathing myself – for hitting him. But I kept doing it. I told myself, you might as well continue; you're never going to know if this has value unless you see this through to the end of the exercise.«

This time there was no stopping »in the middle of the road«. Ornish went all the way, the full course of change. At the end, as he imagined tears of compassion running down his Guru's face, he melted.

- »In an almost mystical, infinitely long moment, a whole series of personal transformations began to happen [to me – RR].
- »Darkness exists only because I am afraid of it and keep it in darkness – a vicious cycle.«
- »(...) If somebody else can have that kind of compassion for my inner darkness, then maybe I can for myself, too.«
- »(...) to the degree I can do that (...) I can begin to have that same compassion and love for other people whenever they display their darkness to me.«

As a result, Ornish reports a changed relationship to his inner demons. Instead of arguing with them, or pretending they didn't exist, he began to welcome them. When he does:

»(...) they lose the power to disturb me in the ways they used to do. – And when I forget, the anxiety and terror remind me« (Ornish 1990).

This time the endpoint wasn't a demeaning analytic judgment, but powerful insight: If someone else could show compassion for his negativity and violence, he too could have compassion – for both himself, and others. He called it a transformation and it endured. Afterwards, he no longer fought his negative thoughts and feelings. They were accepted in this new light.

Not everything changed for Ornish as the result of his catharsis. Even with the evidence of his experience, he kept his demeaning judgment on catharsis.

He writes later in the book, »(...) what really frees us (...) is (...) love, compassion, and forgiveness.« Advancing his ego position, he directs readers to meditation and the imagery techniques provided elsewhere in his book so that they too can find their inner Guru.

Ornish confuses the content of his fantasies with the process. It was, as his Guru had taught, going all the way, full climactic release, that brought him to his enlightenment. It was catharsis and a full letting-go that had brought a rush of meanings. Loving fantasies can get one there, but are not necessary for such experiences. What emerges in a person's mind, as they reach and yield to the peak, is unique to each.

It's hard to fault Ornish for such an error. Love, compassion and forgiveness as a way to liberation, has much more surface appeal than a direction that leads to expressing violent feelings fully with body, mind & emotions. For now, we will leave the mistake uncorrected. To restrict its destructive

consequences, we will later look again at this situation to see what can result from the kind of demeaning judgement that Ornish expresses on aggressive cathartic release.

Rhythmic Integration and the Cycle of Change

Definitions of »violence« emphasize key words: »aggression«, »resistance«, »force«, »turbulence«, »injury«, »destruction«. How does violence develop? Is it natural? What are its forms, and how do they relate to the body?

We will look at these questions from the framework of Rhythmic Integration.

The book, *Rhythmic Integration: Finding Wholeness in the Cycle of Change*, describes psychological capacities and strengths that emerge with each new period of early development (Robbins 1990). Each phase of development has its locus in a period of rapid maturation of a body area. As these new parts come into play, they bring with them a host of energetic and psychological dynamics. It's all part of our nature.

Bioenergetic therapists have traditionally looked at this developmental course from the perspective of psychopathology. The focus has been on the untoward affects of trauma during critical developmental moments, and how they shape problematic character formation. The march of character positions from this perspective reads: Schizophrenia, Schizoid, Oral, Psychopathic, Masochistic and Rigid.

In understanding humankind, such a partial perspective leaves us with a necessarily distorted; even, one might say, with »a pathological view«.

Absent in the Bioenergetic viewpoint is an understanding of the natural process of *normal* psychological development, a look that encompasses the development of strengths.

The Rhythmic Integration perspective allows a broad look that includes the full range of the human being. While still holding to a body base, it centers on the normal capacities that become possible as each new developmental phase emerges in the growth process.

From this perspective, the developmental course reads; *The Silence of the Gap, Dreaming, Creating, Communicating, Inspiring, Analyzing*¹ (Robbins 1999, Robbins 2000). *Solidifying, and Achieving*. This cycle ends in a mo-

1 Analyzing is not included in the Bioenergetic characterology. It relates directly to the Anal Character described in psychoanalytic literature. For a full discussion of this phase see Robbins references cited above.

ment of Climax. Energy falls, and the Silence of the Gap signals a new cycle. Like the pathological perspective of Bioenergetics, the Phases of the Rhythmic Integration Cycle of Change (Robbins 2004) mark a course of increasing energetic levels. Rhythmic Integration sees the course itself as an ongoing repeating factor in all aspects of human life, an existential fact. The march of its qualities underlies human processes of development. As human activities move to fulfillment they pass through all of its phases.

Violence and the Body: the Rhythmic Cycle

With a language that is toned by the natural rather than the pathological, what follows is a look at the development of »violence« through the phases of the Cycle of Change. Each section described gives a brief definition and feel of a Phase, and an example of a violent result.

The Silence of the Gap – The Silence of the Gap arises from the basic body. It occurs without consciousness. At this point, a small disruptive movement to body flow can have immediate violent consequences.

Over the last 5 years, I have worked with a small group of therapists participating in the Rhythmic Integration Panic Project. The task was to develop a method to rapidly treat the problem of frequent panic attacks. The Project has a somatic orientation at its base – it begins with the body, and looks for physical distortions.

We noted small desynchronous movements, like an extended swing of the head, or an extreme holding of the breath apparatus, can serve as the »Starter« of the panic process. As we explored them, we noted these movements were occurring in the silence of the gap. That is they were outside of the person's consciousness. Though we could see them clearly, it took repeated intervention to bring them to the person's attention.

Like ripples that result from a stone thrown on a still pond, »Starter movements« can move unchecked through the body. If the unconscious movements are repeated, or inflamed with thoughts like, »What's happening to me?«, »Am I having a heart attack?«, or »Will I die?«, the experience can result in a powerful reaction: the flight-or-fight response inappropriately aroused, and the person escalating into a full panic attack.

Once we objectively saw the Starters in a clinical situation, we developed a method to quickly change the panic process: find the movement, make it conscious, break the link between it and arousing thoughts and feelings, and

then facilitate a return to natural flow through the establishment of a different movement pattern. For those treated, attacks grew rare. For most, they ceased. Treatment required ninety minutes or less. We researched the method. (Robbins 2002) The results endured.

Small body disruptions, Starters, unperceived in the silence of the gap, could clearly be the foundation of violent, life-diminishing, results.

Dreaming – Dreaming grows through body vulnerability, unguarded moments, when musculature is soft, and unarmored. The pattern begins in the womb. Its hallmarks are sensations and images.

We are in this phase during sleep, but in wakefulness too – in daydreams, fantasy, imagination, meditative trances – altered states of all kinds. It's the body's place in poetic moments, prayer, and encounters with awe.

Remember the Trainee discussed earlier. She stated she might leave Bioenergetics: »Too violent!« When fellow trainees unleashed their anger on the bed she *imagined* her father's violence, and she *imagined* that it was her that was being hit. Hardly able to take the feelings that her fantasies aroused, she blamed the method, and wanted to escape the program.

She was told she could help herself by being aware of her feet on the floor while she watched the sessions. She worked at it, and found it helpful. She stayed more present. What she saw no longer overwhelmed her, but still remained disturbing. Her fear was more grounded. She let me know, however, she may yet have to leave.

We were left with a key question to deal with: What nightmare lay underneath what she saw? The answer came with further work. She slowly stepped up the course of aggressive striking on the bed until it climaxed in a full expression of fury.

Afterward the heart of her story became clear: »I acted out, to get him to understand me.«

She had repeated encounters with her father's sadistic violence. It was to no avail. No understanding could come from a man whose limitations trapped him in stereotyped, sadistic response. Her attempts only provoked further cruelty.

Working with brief repeated expressions of her feelings, she came to accept the reality of her father's inabilities. With it came forgiveness, and then peace. Her violent fantasies passed. No longer caught in the dynamics of Dreaming, she chose to continue in the program.

Creating – Creating grows out of the jerks of reflexive movements. Musculature is spasmodic: nerve-muscle reflexes. The pattern begins in earnest after

birth when the waters of the womb are no longer available to dampen motion. Hallmarks are abrupt reorientations; followed by new integrations. It's what happens in moment-to-moment living. Creativity lies in the synthesizing of fragments into new reality pictures.

Maria, four months, sits in an infant seat. She stares off as a video plays in the background. Her father's voice emanates from the set. She startles; jerks her head toward the doorway from where he might appear, but he isn't there. A piece doesn't fit. Her brows knit in a puzzled look – then she breaks out crying. A scarcely developed reality picture is violated.

Communicating – Communicating grows out of an infant's needs, and the reach that links them with someone who will meet them. The automatic connection between mother and child ends with the severing of the umbilical cord. The hallmark of communicating is a new of linking. It begins with the first cry. When a family's first child arrives, the violent potential of communicating often manifests immediately. The infant screams to get a need met.

This new sound in the home leads to the destruction of family routine. Fundamental rhythms change. Sleep is lost. Sexual relating is disrupted. Self-care routines are shattered. With the introduction of the newborn, there is a completely new set of needs to attend to. The change in family structure from dyad to triad challenges the new parents' ways to help each other with their own needs. Their lives will never be the same. Revolution has hit the home.

»I am completely worn out. I don't sleep much. Up every two hours. I need help from my partner, and I don't ask for much. He needs to be up for his work. Sometimes I don't know how to stop the screaming. Often I feel just crazy! This is not what I expected. I read a lot, and watched mothers. I thought I was prepared, but there's no way to prepare for this. I'm used to doing things (...) and having them done. Life doesn't work that way now. Oh God, the needs just keep coming ... but, of course, I love my baby so much.«

When the infant communicates successfully, someone hears and is moved to meet the need. Both thrive. Love grows. When no one perceives the need, or desires to meet it, life distorts and grows dim.

Communicating is the link that gets needs met. When communications don't communicate, violent reactions and negative actions quickly emerge.

Violence, stemming from failures in communicating, occurs at all levels of life, within our self, our families, communities and nations.

Inspiring – Inspiring grows from the rapid rise in excitement caused by increasing inhalation. Patterning begins with a rise of the chest, and a lift of the head. Its hallmarks are aroused impulses moving things beyond accustomed boundaries. The excitement fired is contagious. It can quickly lead to the destruction of established routines in order to establish new mechanisms of control, e.g. Caretakers rearrange the environment to make it safe; »child-proofing the home« to prevent potential damage by one who has been aptly called, »The Runabout Baby«. This response seems quite natural. It eases the way, makes it safe by placing limits on the potentials for destructiveness that the Inspiring Phase engenders.

The violent potentials of Inspiring, as is the case with each phase of the Rhythmic Cycle, can also be used consciously and with intent to encourage and support the magnification and spread of violence. Demagogues, rabble-rousers and revolutionaries rely on inspiring to inflame passions onto hateful behaviors, riot, explosive violence, destruction and war. The method involves exciting the minds, emotions and behaviors of others in order to move them beyond the norms of controlling behavior.

Psyches react to »The Mother of All Wars«, »Weapons of Mass Destruction«, »War on Terror«, »Shock and Awe«.

The TV set replays and replays the falling Twin Towers. Bush, chest puffed up, lands on an aircraft carrier to announce: »Mission accomplished«. Soldiers cheer. Bold headlines announce bigger-than-life happenings.

Inspiring takes place in smaller venues too:

A new committee member arrives at her first meeting with a flourish. When the time is right, she dramatically cries out, »I've watched what's been happening. What am I doing here? Is this worth my time?« Others are drawn into the web. Caught by the excitement of her expression, they eagerly reassure her. They tell her how valuable she will be. It doesn't take long before it is clear; she is aiming toward a position of power.

Enlivened listeners glom on to inspiring words, emotions and actions. Energy carries them beyond themselves into another's orbit of influence. Fascinated, they lose their attachment to self, as they identify with an »Other« who adds feelings and excitement to their experience. Eventually, the caught person may feel the stresses of their overrun internal order. Energy won't calm down. Unbidden emotions spill out. The capacity to evaluate is lost. Sleep is disturbed.

The American Psychological Association gave advice on the web to people suffering disturbing symptoms after 9/11. They offered an antidote to the excessively violent potentials that can accompany the boundlessness that inspiration can engender. Limit the exposure; get the gist – take things in small doses.

These strategies occur naturally in the phase of Analyzing.

Analyzing – Analyzing is an analogue of the body's capacity to digest. Physical patterning begins with the maturation of the sphincter muscles, those of the eyes, those along the body's inner tube from lips to anus, and the selection processes of osmosis. Digestion provides the pattern that underlies the development of the verbal mind and its logical processes. As happens with the mind, things are broken down, focused on, sorted, delineated and clarified.

The individual's mind »digests« what's presented. Osmosis controls what the body assimilates; what passes through, what is taken in. Judgment works similarly on the mental level. The ability to judge allows us to gain control of our experiences, and put things in order, but when we mix into the process hostility and manipulation emanating from unmet needs, violence results. In a classic work on non-violence, Marshall Rosenberg (Rosenberg 2003) leads readers to consider the destruction that can come from judgment, and its less direct forms: labels, blame, interpretations, comparisons and diagnoses of the behaviors of the other. Mixed with hostility, each of these can have a toxic effect, dividing the stream of life-flow within, and between, people. Each can be the gateway to separation, and alienation. For example, label a person »confused«, and listeners may associate the label with the person forever. Even if true for a period, the label distorts reality by leading to the suggestion that someone is *always* confused, and minimizing the fact that in fact no one avoids being confused.

Labels suggest a permanent ongoing state. Diagnoses have the same effect. »He's so schizzy«, or »manicky«, colors the way a person is seen. It limits the other's view of who the person is. Even in the face of contradictory experiences, once a label is attached, it may take forever for the perception to be changed.

The Talmud has a name for such malicious talk, Lashon Hara (Literally, »evil talk«). It's said evil talk, »Kills three: the One Spoken About, The Teller, and the Listener«.

The alienating affect on the »One Spoken About« is obvious. The »talk« directly casts them in a bad light. For the »Teller« the alienation is magnified when the listener realizes the gossip may go on to talk about them.

The case of the »Listener« is subtle. Listeners may begin to listen in innocence, but they are the ones that enable the gossip to happen. They are the target of the words. The moment they take in what is heard, the humanity of their judgment is apt to be compromised. How quickly such words can replay in the head, for how long can they be re-aroused?

A villager who loved to gossip

He knew it was wrong, but he couldn't help himself. It got to the point where people stopped talking to him (...)

Finally, desperate, he approached the rabbi of the town who, reluctantly, listened to him. »Rabbi«, the man said, »I know it's wrong, I know it's harmful, but I just can't stop. Please, help me«, he begged, tears in his eyes.

The rabbi, who had not been spared from the man's rumor mill, realized only something dramatic would get through, make the necessary impact. »Tell me«, the rabbi said. »Do you have a pillow at home? One stuffed with feathers?«

The man nodded.

»Then I think I can help you«, the rabbi said. »Come back tomorrow and bring that pillow with you.«

The man left, perplexed. Why did the rabbi want his pillow? Was there some evil spirit in his pillow or some Kabalistic secret within it?

He spent the next day in confusion, dread and excitement (...)

The next morning the man came back to the rabbi's house, trembling with anticipation. Suddenly, the door to the Rabbi's house opened and the Rabbi walked briskly out of his house holding a large kitchen knife.

The rabbi directed the man to slit open the pillow with the knife.

The man obeyed and before he knew it, feathers were flying everywhere, swirling around him, carried in all directions by the wind.

»Now«, the Rabbi commanded sternly, »bring back the feathers. Restuff the pillow«.

The man looked around, mouth open (...) When he heard the Rabbi's order, saw the severity on the Rabbi's face, he started to cry.

»I can't«, he sobbed. »There are so many feathers. They have gone so far. Who knows where they are, where they went?«

»Exactly so«, said the Rabbi gently. »Exactly so. Gossip, slander, rumor – even if true, especially if true, lashon hara scatters to the wind going we know not where, touching we know not who. How much easier to keep our

own knife – our tongue – sheathed and not have to restuff the pillow (L'Chaim Weekly 2003).«

The lips – a sphincter muscle, are the gates that guard the tongue from speaking.

It is no wonder that the Kabala names distortions of the attribute of Judgment as the channel that delivers evil into the world.

Solidifying – Solidifying grows from the outer musculature's capacity to firmly contract and hold. Like Analyzing, Solidifying involves containment, but now the container is the outer musculature, rather than the inner tube.

Patterning begins around the age of eighteen months and continues until around three years old. Its hallmarks are repetition, habit, and issues around negativity and containment. »No!« seems the answer to every request. In the United States the stage is popularly known as the »Terrible Two's«.

Like Analyzing, Solidifying involves containment. Here, however the container is the outer musculature, rather than the inner tube.

A Solidifying process, grown thick, stifles. Constraint leads to grotesque distortion. On a cultural level, it is happening now to the field of psychotherapy. Therapeutic means and purposes are lost as government and insurance bureaucracies, Solidifier elements, become more sophisticated. Some examples:

In the United States, mental treatment in hospitals has become just one more layer of the insurance bureaucracy. The goal is discharge. At the time of a patient's entry into the system, the intake worker formulates the discharge plan. The more money saved the better.

A result: A woman went to the phone book advertisements and called a therapist. With desperation in her voice she said; »I was hospitalized with a nervous breakdown two weeks ago. Yesterday they discharged me saying I was better. They told me to continue my medication, I have no idea what went wrong with me or why.«

Another result: A private clinic has an arrangement with an insurance company that allows them to exclusively serve around 90% of their clients in a geographical area of New York State. The company reports the median length of treatment sessions is one.

A third: A therapist has seen a suicidal patient for eighteen sessions. The last two sessions the patient was feeling somewhat better. The insurance company calls for a routine review, hears of the improvement, and directs that treatment should be terminated at the next session. The patient, suicidal just three week ago, should be discharged.

A psychiatrist speaks of his sorrow. He needs to make a living, and insur-

ance pays him to medicate. They are not happy with him doing therapy. He adds, »It is the same for all Psychiatrists. It's hard, maybe impossible to make it doing therapy«.

He gets some solace in the fact that he tries to use his therapeutic skills to get the patients to follow the medication plan. The literature shows 40% don't comply.

He goes on with statistics: »About 10% get a really good result from the medication.«

Forgetting his commitment to the individual who comes to him, he rationalizes: »When you consider how many people have these problems, 10% can make a real difference to the population.«

He neglects to say that beyond the 10% with »a really good result«, many of the others are left with a host of side effects, and some with an inability to get off of the medications.

The American Psychological Association's Practice Organization announces they are shifting away from developing public relations programs that have mental health concerns as a target. Psychotherapy will no longer be emphasized.

With insurance reimbursements dwindling, they will focus on new markets businesses, general medical illnesses, and military applications. (Of likely interest to readers, they will emphasize mind-body findings that relate to changing behaviors.)

Achieving – Achieving grows from the power derived from the body's capacity to easily alternate both muscular extension and contraction. Patterning begins between three and five – Oedipal Stage. Its hallmarks are graceful movement, stature, the potency of position, the development of ego stances, and the pride and pleasure that goes with the authority of personhood.

We live in a time where the dynamics of Achieving are in full display in the politics within and between countries. Who stands in the position of authority? What are their prerogatives? How absolute is their power? It's played out in competing stances and combative battle.

There are sharp, well bounded, contesting divisions between cultures, political parties, empirical and imagined realities, science and religion, rights-to-live and rights-to-choose, business needs and nature's needs, empirical realities and perceptual realities.

Sides resort to a myriad of strategies to gain an edge. They draw them from capacities all along the cycle of change to advance their cause. At the extreme, they are cast in terms of war.

Ego, command, and pride mark the feelings of power that, as of this writing, are dominating world dynamics. We are in the phase of Achieving. Test, and get put in place. Challenge, and face retaliation. The means are violent; injury and death are daily results.

When narcissism clouds ego's objectivity, there is no attempt to see the other, let alone their needs. When the common humanity that links two sides is missing from the picture, interaction rigidifies. Perspective grows small. A narrowed ability to find alternatives to meet needs results. Narcissism locks both sides in a relationship of maiming destruction. A state of human separation, alienation, and empathic deadness is born into existence.

Strong, well-developed individual positions do not have to lead to absolute life-and-death division. When narcissism is absent, the needs of both self and other can be entertained, encompassed and satisfied. Differences can lead to negotiation, or, even more life enhancing, to the development of solutions that meet the needs of both sides. The view, then, is larger than any one position. The unique-other widens the human perspective of each. Relationship bears the fruits of life.

Climax – The end of a Rhythmic Cycle comes when energy climactically goes over the top in a moment of jagged energetic release. This orgasmic expression is natural, the body base of metaphoric literalizations like »Armageddon« and the »End of Days«.

Flow, through the full course of the Rhythmic Cycle, is key to well-being. Ego holds fast to its position. It aims to maintain power, position and honor. But everything has its time. When that time comes, Ego is overtaken and surpassed by a powerful flow of life energy. The moment of climax cleanses blocks and distortions to The Silence of the Gap.

Climax? – Desire can carry you there. So too, can the pains of violence. As the phoenix rises, a new cycle begins.

Conclusion

With each phase of the Rhythmic Cycle, a new potential for violence emerges. I believe, the acceptance of man's violence as part of his nature, gives a true picture of the existential terms of the human condition. As a therapist, what does it mean?

We'll gather some pieces from the above to consider a critical key in evaluating the meaning of violence.

Chronic body blocks do violence to flow as it moves through its course. Blocks result in distress that brings people to psychotherapist's offices. But blocks violating flow isn't the whole story. The reverse is also true.

Flow does violence to blocks. Body Psychotherapists aim for the removal of blocks. Therapy advances through the directions therapists give to clients to encourage violent moments of release, and acceptance of the movements and sounds that accompany them. With release, the person moves more freely, looks more alive and vibrant. With integration of the experience, life shifts for the better.

Earlier we saw that Dean Ornish took a different view. He stood against »ventilating« anger. He quoted Tarvis:

»The psychological rationales for ventilating anger do not stand up under experimental scrutiny. The weight of evidence indicates precisely the opposite: expressing anger makes you angrier, solidifies an angry attitude, and establishes a hostile habit« (Tarvis, 1982).

While writing this article, I attended an all-day seminar devoted to material related to trauma and relationships. The speaker, renowned in his field, reviewed a suggestion from a scientist that worked with the brain. In instances involving traumatic experiences, structures of relevant parts of the emotional brain may need to be activated for therapeutic change to be made.

Responding to this, I forwarded the idea that bodywork that activated rage in the client could be a possible way to engage the emotional brain. The presenter quickly dispensed with my suggestion. I was told that rage only begets more rage – echoes of Tarvis. The speaker went on to say, therapists shouldn't use methods that arouse their client's rage. Others in the audience quickly concurred.

This belief flies in the face of the beneficial results seen by the Bioenergetic psychotherapist when working therapeutically with rage. In therapy, Bioenergeticists use exercises that arouse rage. They employ hitting, kicking, and yelling to energize and enliven undercharged bodies to unify movement by breaking through fragmenting blocks, and to provide direct self-knowledge through the primal experiencing of aggression and power. They may encourage the expression of rage so that the client can learn its interpersonal function, work on containment issues, or feel at one with all humanity as everyone shares this instinctually shaped emotion.

Analyzing these two disparate views, Ornish versus Bioenergetics, on the subject of ventilation of rage and anger leads to a resolution of the difficulty.

First, consider another quote by Ornish. Again, he is quoting Tavis:

»She concludes that ventilating anger usually does more harm than good, since the other person generally feels attacked and then retaliates – a downward spiral that results in both people feeling increasingly isolated from each other« (Ornish 1990).

This description of »ventilating anger« and its untoward effect is an example of the »acting-out« of an emotion. The situation fostered in a therapeutic setting is quite different. The intention is therapeutic. No one feels attacked. No one gets hurt. There is no retaliation. There is no increase of violence. In therapy, ventilation, properly directed, brings healing. The expression is not »actingout«.

It is the context, the intent and the terms of the situation, that make the difference. In therapy, rage and anger are aroused and expressed for the purposes of growth and well-being. Relationship, boundaries and therapeutic tools, along with conscious and objective client participation, establish an environment that is safe, honest, and reflective. Work takes place to integrate what is experienced. The results of working-with anger are quite different from what Tavis describes, the acting-out of anger.

How can we understand another thing Tavis describes? How can we understand why acting-out, even when it leads to harm and increased interpersonal isolation, often leads to its repetition?

A careful look at the body's experience in the moment of release provides the answer. In fact, there is an *immediate pleasure* that occurs with the acting-out of rage and anger. It is no surprise rage and release reoccur. Each repetition of acting-out reproduces a pleasurable feeling of freedom that rewards, and encourages its reproduction.

Typically, the pleasure of release that accompanies violent acting-out and its conscious memory are quickly lost. The aftermath takes one from the inner experience, and brings forward relatively long-lived consequences: self or other hurt, violated or curtailed; feelings of alienation; the re-establishment of suppressing blocks or even the creation of new ones.

In therapy, when therapists ask clients how they felt *about* an acting-out experience, they often say, »Badly!« However, a slowly reconsidered remembrance of the experience brings the client to the realization that, *as it happened*, the release felt good.

Long-lived suppression of release is not the answer either. It's a form of »acting-in«. Traue (2005) argues that suppressing emotions has negative psychosomatic consequences. To support his view, he presents an extensive his-

tory. It ranges from the Psalms in the Bible, and runs through James, Freud, Reich, Alexander, and »a huge field of research«.

The problem with »acting-out«, or »acting-in«, does not lie in violence per se. Rather, the problem lies in the intent and conditions of its action. *Context* is the key. It determines whether acting-out might better be phrased as healthy expression, or acting-in better understood as mature containment. Context determines whether violence is benevolent or malevolent.

The above discussion dealt with the client expressing violence. Can it be beneficial for the therapist to act with violence?

Again, we turn to context for the answer. Context is the key to understanding the harsh, startling interruption that is used as part of the treatment of frequent panic attacks.

For example, Starters occur spontaneously when a person reports a panic experience as if it was presently happening. Without training however, the movement remains outside of their awareness. For the person to be able to catch and feel their movement as it occurs, a facilitator has to abruptly point it out to them when it appears. A second or two of delay, and so much has passed through the person's body and consciousness, the chance of noting the Starter is lost.

In working with the Rhythmic Integration Panic Protocol, abrupt interruption, a moment of violence, jerks the client's consciousness from a dream-like flow to one that is more alert and observational. The therapist then asks the client to retell the story, while trying to note the Starter's reappearance.

Both story and movement now vie for attention in consciousness. This sets up a creative struggle to focus on two things at the same time. The tension feels a bit like what occurs in the child's game of trying to pat the head while rubbing the stomach.

Eventually, the client becomes immediately aware of the link between critical parts of their story, and the spontaneous appearance of the Starter. This awareness is one important step in the change process that is used to reduce their frequency of panic attacks. The protocol will lead them through others. This step uses abrupt intervention, a brief violence, as part of its method. Violence here is benevolent, clearly in the service of life-fulfillment, and the living of a wholer, more integrated, humanity.

This article began with the writing of Reb Nachman of Breslov on the prevalence of violence. It ends with words from Reb Nachman on peace and the path to it; a path that is humankind's task to develop.

A Prayer for Peace

*May we see the day when war and bloodshed cease,
when a great peace will embrace the whole world.*

*Then nation will not threaten nation,
and mankind will not again know war.*

*For all who live on earth shall realize
we have not come into being to hate or to destroy.*

*We have come into being
to praise, to labor and to love. ...*

Reb Nachman of Brazlov (1972)

References

- L'Chaim Weekly (July 25, 2003) Restuffing the Pillow. Available at <http://www.lchaimweekly.org/lchaim/5763/779.htm>.
- Nathan of Breslov (1911) The World Is Full Of Strife: Sichos HaRan 77. In Rabbi Nachman's Wisdom. Breslov Research Institute. Translated by Kaplan A. Available at http://www.nachalnoeva.com/breslovcenter/articles/article_strife.html.
- Ornish D (1990) Doctor Dean Ornish's Program for Reversing Heart Disease. NY: Ballentine.
- R Nachman of Brazlov (1972) A Prayer for Peace. Adapted and translated from Hebrew, from original in: Likutei Tefillot, part II, 53 in: Mahzor for Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur – A Prayer Book for the Days of Awe. NY: Rabbinical Assembly.
- Robbins R (1990) Rhythmic Integration: Finding Wholeness in the Cycle of Change. NY: Station Hill.
- Robbins R (1999) Anal and the Analytic. In: Bioenergetic Analysis 10 (2) 71–87.
- Robbins R (2000) The Anal and the Analytic – Part II. In: Bioenergetic Analysis 11 (1) 83–106.
- Robbins R (2002) Body Approaches to the Treatment of Panic. In Schmidt L J and Warner B, Panic: Origins, Insights and Treatment. Calif: North Atlantic Books.
- Robbins R (2004) Rhythmic Integration and Bioenergetics. Rhythmic Integration: Tab Rhythmic Integration. At: www.rhythmicintegration.com.
- Rosenberg M (2003) Nonviolent Communication: A Language of Life. Calif: PuddleDance Press.
- Tarvis C (1982) Anger – the Misunderstood Emotion. NY: Touchstone Books
- Traue H, Deighton R M & Ritschi P (2005) Emotional Inhibition and Disease. In: Bioenergetic Analysis, Psychosozial-Verlag, 15, 55–88.

About the Author

Ron Robbins has been a practicing psychologist and psychotherapist for 40 years. His theoretical interest is in the process of change as a path toward wholeness. He has utilized insights gained from this interest to develop a successful one-session evidenced-based method to treat frequent panic attacks. He is currently evolving a curriculum of wholeness that uses body dynamics to mature early life potentials for use in fuller living. He has been a frequent contributor to the Journal of Bioenergetic Analysis, a former trustee and an international Trainer for over 35 years. His book *Rhythmic Integration: Finding Wholeness in the Process of Change* was acclaimed by Alexander Lowen.

Ron Robbins PhD,
151 Academy Street, Poughkeepsie,
New York 12601.
Robbins@panicproject.com