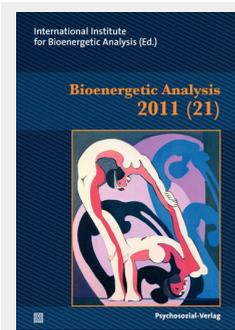


Angela Klopstech

Book Review of: Margit Koemeda-Lutz:
«Intelligente Emotionalität” (Intelligent
Emotionality)



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Infants exposed to long lasting deficits in caregiving and attunement will exhibit an increased sensitivity in their stress genes (p. 107).

Empathy is learned behaviour (i.e. it is a skill that requires training). And there is healing power in mirroring and empathic reactions by therapists to the patients' narratives about trauma, neglect or abuse.

Unfortunately, Bauer (see pp. 140ff.) does not seem to know much about body psychotherapeutic modalities. Maybe a new and fermenting dialogue can begin at the San Diego conference in 2011.

MARGIT KOEMEDA-LUTZ: "INTELLIGENTE EMOTIONALITÄT" (INTELLIGENT EMOTIONALITY)

Angela Klopstech

For a number of years, I have made the case that the viability of Bioenergetic Analysis – definitely in the sense of survival but also in the sense of thriving – will require that it more fully attempts to enter the mainstream with its attendant opportunities and dangers, albeit without losing its roots and core. Among other things, this means re-evaluation of old and integration of new concepts. It particularly means casting a curious eye on the research from contemporary neuroscience and its effect on the understanding of the world of human emotions while maintaining the essence of the bioenergetic understanding of emotions. In her recently published book "Intelligente Emotionalität", which is not primarily intended for professionals, but for a broad readership, Margit Koemeda, the past editor and current co-editor of this journal, straddles this divide gracefully and competently. Unfortunately, at this point in time, the book is only available in German. The appropriate English translation would be "Intelligent Emotionality", and it can only be hoped that an English translation will be on the market soon.

Margit Koemeda is known within the bioenergetic community as a faculty member, board member of the scientific committee, and as a writer and editor. In her home country of Switzerland, beyond the boundaries of her own bioenergetic society, she is intensely involved

in the broader scientific and political world of psychotherapy, again as a writer and in various organizational functions. Her book is both a testimony to and a result of her wide-spanning knowledge, interests and involvements.

This book is about emotions and the role they play in our lives, or in contemporary professional terms, about emotions and their regulation. The underlying notion is that emotions, while they are not the exclusive determinant of our thinking and behavior, “if correctly perceived, carefully attuned, regularly ‘cleansed’, well regulated and intelligently communicated, can become a valuable energy source for your everyday behavior and thinking” (p. 13). Throughout the book Koemeda explains what this means as she describes with many examples how it can be attempted and, hopefully, achieved. True to her bioenergetic background, and her (I assume) personal belief, the author makes it her agenda to show how important it is to give emotions more space in our lives.

The book is divided into two sections, ‘Basics’ and ‘(clinical) Applications’, and contains a ‘checklist for emotional health’ as an appendix. This main body of the book is preceded by an introduction that is a true introduction in the sense that it sets the stage and emotional tone for the book, rather than just giving a list of the following chapters together with an explanatory sentence.

The first part of the book deals with basic questions such as: what are emotions; how are they embedded in and related to cultural context; which role they play in communication and social interaction; and how they develop over the life span. The elaborations on these topics are substantiated and greatly enhanced by an excursion into the field of neuropsychology and neurobiology. The author’s overview of the relevant neuroscience is easily understandable yet theoretically sound.

This is what makes this part of the book stand out in a book market which has recently been flooded with publications on the brain/behavior connection: its immense readability despite not sacrificing and not skimping on slow-to-read theory that provides necessary background knowledge of brain structures, systems and processes.

The first section concludes with case vignettes focusing on specific

examples of how intrapsychic regulation of emotions (regulation within the person) and interpsychic regulation (regulation through and with another person) might be worked at and worked out within the therapeutic relationship.

The second part explores four realms of emotion in more depth: grief and depression, anger and rage, fear and anxiety, lust and love. Using examples from her clinical practice, Koemeda outlines different paths of self regulation within these arenas of emotion. She skillfully imports basic bioenergetic principles, e.g. emphasizing the regulatory function of the expression and or/discharge of anger, without ever talking about Bioenergetics explicitly. I enjoyed particularly the lighthearted chapter on ‘lust and love’, where the author gets down deep into the complications and vicissitudes of the arguably most complex emotion, while keeping an easy touch. In her last chapter she draws careful conclusions between malfunctioning emotional regulation and malfunctioning physical regulations, commonly called diseases.

Throughout her book, Koemeda uses many and various examples, either from her practice as a psychotherapist or at times from literature. Every idea is illuminated by a case vignette or a concrete description. Koemeda’s use of language and writing style are a successful blend of the metaphorical and the concrete, and dovetail nicely with her purpose of demonstrating that “emotions give ‘color’ to our experiences, our behaviors, our communications” (p. 10).

Both content and writing style make the book not only a pleasure to read but also into a good read across the board. Though obviously intended for the general public, it is certainly of interest for the bioenergetically informed reader and anyone who is interested in what psychologists call emotion and emotional regulation.

What makes the book of particular value for bioenergetic therapists is the fact that the therapy vignettes invariably make apparent the underlying bioenergetic thinking, even though interventions are not labeled as such. It may help us as bioenergetic therapists with our identity and self definition. By knowing that we do not have to ‘do’ heavy-handed bioenergetics in order to do bioenergetic therapy, we can take it for granted that we fit in.

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DANIEL SIEGEL: MINDSIGHT

Robert Hilton

When I first heard Daniel Siegel speak in 1999, I thought to myself, this man explains the neurological basis for the work we do as somatic therapists. My response was to his discussion of his first book, *The Developing Mind*. He has since written three other books: *The Mindful Brain*, *Mindsight* and *The Mindful Therapist*. This review is limited to *Mindsight*. You can go to Google on your computer and type in *Mindsight* and find many critical reviews of this book. I have chosen to write a review with my audience in mind. While giving you a taste of the overall message of the book I have deliberately focused on the parts that are particularly relevant to us as somatic psychotherapists.

Siegel defines *mindsight* as follows, “*Mindsight* is a process that enables us to modify the flow of energy and information within a Triangle of Well-Being. The *monitoring* aspect of *mindsight* involves sensing this flow within ourselves – perceiving it in our own nervous systems, which we are calling Brain – and within others through our Relationships, which involve the sharing of energy and information flow through various means of communication. We then can *modify* this flow through awareness and intention, fundamental aspects of our mind, directly shaping the paths that energy and information flow take in our lives.”

The illustration he likes to use in the book regarding *mindsight*, or the monitoring and modifying of the flow of energy, is that of a bicycle wheel where you have a hub in the center, a rim on the outside and spokes that go from the hub to the rim. The hub becomes the inner