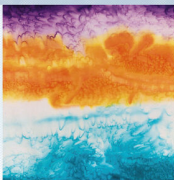


*Ana Lúcia Faria*

## Giving oneself to body and to life

International Institute  
for Bioenergetic Analysis (Ed.)

**Bioenergetic Analysis**  
2023 (33)



Psychosozial-Verlag

### **Bioenergetic Analysis**

32. Volume, No. 1, 2022, Page 71–79

Psychosozial-Verlag

DOI: [10.30820/0743-4804-2023-33-71](https://doi.org/10.30820/0743-4804-2023-33-71)



*Reviewers for this issue:*

Maê Nascimento and Vincentia Schroeter

*Translators of abstracts for this issue:*

Claudia Ueros (French), Rosaria Filoni (Italian), Thomas Heinrich (German), Rebecca Liu Jianpu (Chinese), Angelina Samartova (Russian) and Maê Nascimento (Portuguese)

*Consultant for online subjects:*

Rosaria Filoni

Submissions for consideration for the next volume of *Bioenergetic Analysis* must be sent to Maê Nascimento (maenascimento@terra.com.br) between June 1<sup>st</sup> and September 1<sup>st</sup>, 2023.

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>.

2023 Psychosozial-Verlag GmbH & Co. KG, Gießen, Germany

[info@psychosozial-verlag.de](mailto:info@psychosozial-verlag.de)

[www.psychosozial-verlag.de](http://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: © Vincentia Schroeter

Cover design & layout based on drafts by Hanspeter Ludwig, Wetzlar

Typesetting: metiTec-Software, [www.me-ti.de](http://www.me-ti.de)

<https://doi.org/10.30820/0743-4804-2023-33>

ISBN (Print) 978-3-8379-8429-3

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

# Giving oneself to body and to life

Ana Lúcia Faria

Bioenergetic Analysis • The Clinical Journal of the IIBA, 2023 (33), 71–79

<https://doi.org/10.30820/0743-4804-2023-33-71>

CC BY-NC-ND 4.0

[www.bioenergetic-analysis.com](http://www.bioenergetic-analysis.com)

“Embracing a patient implies accepting the unexpected, withstanding tedium, desiring without demanding, and waiting without any expectation”

*Neusa Santos Souza<sup>1</sup>*

## Abstracts

This text contemplates both my own personal issues and a theorization about giving oneself to body and to life, while taking Bioenergetic Analysis as the main reference. The issue around giving oneself, that is, of giving to one's self and to life is fundamental in the work of Alexander Lowen; I also consider this topic to be a determining factor, since it has traversed and given sense to my life at both the personal and professional levels.

*Keywords:* giving oneself, body, life, Bioenergetics

### A entrega ao corpo e à vida (Portuguese)

Este artigo aborda minhas próprias questões, tanto a nível pessoal quanto teórico, relativas a entregar-se ao corpo e à vida, tendo como Análise Bioenergética como principal referência. A questão da entrega – ao corpo e à vida, é fundamental na obra de Alexander Lowen, e é assim considerada também por mim, já q tem acompanhado e dado sentido à minha vida – pessoal e profissional.

- 
- 1 Neusa Souza Santos (1948–2008) was a psychiatrist and psychoanalyst. She was the author of many studies about madness and psychosis, and one among many professionals who have enabled us to give a new meaning to what among black persons used to be diagnosed as low self-esteem or inferiority complex, which has thenceforth been understood as a psychological distress produced by racism.

### Arrendersi al corpo e alla vita (Italian)

Questo testo contempla sia miei aspetti personali che una teorizzazione sul donarsi al corpo e alla vita, prendendo come riferimento principale l'Analisi Bioenergetica. La questione della resa, cioè dell'arrendersi a se stessi e alla vita è fondamentale nell'opera di Alexander Lowen; e lo considero un fattore determinante, poiché ha attraversato e dato senso alla mia vita sia a livello personale che professionale.

### S'abandonner à son corps et à la vie (French)

Ce texte apporte un regard, dans le cadre de l'Analyse Bioénergétique, à la fois sur des questions personnelles et sur une théorisation du fait de s'abandonner à ce qui arrive dans son corps et à la vie. La question du lâcher-prise, c'est-à-dire de l'abandon à soi-même et à la vie, est fondamentale dans l'œuvre d'Alexander Lowen; je considère également ce thème comme important, étant donné qu'il a traversé et donné un sens à ma vie personnelle et professionnelle.

### Sich dem Körper und dem Leben hingeben (German)

Dieser Text betrachtet sowohl meine eigenen persönlichen Themen mit dem als auch eine Theorie über das Sich Hingeben an den Körper und das Leben, wobei die Bioenergetische Analyse als Hauptbezugspunkt dient. Das Thema der Selbsthingabe, d. h. der Hingabe an sich selbst und an das Leben, ist in der Arbeit von Alexander Lowen von grundlegender Bedeutung; auch ich betrachte dieses Thema als einen bestimmenden Faktor, da es mein Leben sowohl auf der persönlichen als auch auf der beruflichen Ebene durchquert und ihm einen Sinn gegeben hat.

### Отдавая себя телу и жизни (Ана Лусия Фариа) (Russian)

В этом тексте рассматриваются как мои личные проблемы, так и теоретические размышления об отдаче себя телу и жизни, при этом в качестве основной ссылки используется биоэнергетический анализ. Тема отдачи себя, то есть отдачи себя и жизни, является основополагающей в работе Александра Лоуэна; я также считаю эту тему определяющей, поскольку она прошла через всю мою жизнь и наполнила ее смыслом как на личном, так и на профессиональном уровне.

### 臣服于身体和生活 (Chinese)

这篇文章思考了在以躯体动力分析为主要理论参照下，对于臣服于身体和生活，作为我个人的议题同时也是在理论化层面上的理解。关于给予自己的问题，是指对自己对生活的奉献，这是 Alexander Lowen 工作的根本，我也认为这个议题是一个决定性的因素，因为它已经在个人和专业层面上使我理解了我的生活。

## Introduction

Talking about Giving Oneself makes me go back to the past, to my early childhood, to remember those times when I joyfully and vivaciously relinquished myself to moments when I danced with my parents and my sisters to the music of Cole Porter, N. King Cole, Classical music, and unforgettable melodies.

The play involved placing my feet over my father's feet, while he taught me the first steps of a dance, following the rhythms of each melody. While remembering such moments, I'm taken by the joyful and vital sensations of giving myself to dance, to meeting other people, and to the light and creative movement of my body.

After my childhood, the "giving oneself – joy – dance" equation was eventually replaced by the "fear of giving myself." Many changes, a lot of insecurity and difficult situations associated to personal development, family, and facing life as it is began to take up space and turn me away from dancing.

Today, when I look back at my more than forty-year long professional life, I know that my search has been and will continue to be dedicated to rescuing and sustaining the "giving oneself – joy – dance" equation not only for me, but also for all those who come looking for my professional advice.

Bioenergetic Analysis entered my life in 1986 when, after being introduced to Eliana Izola (a CBT teacher back then at the Brazilian Bioenergetic Analysis Society) at the Sedes Sapientiae Institute, I felt I was taken up by a feeling of joy, energy, and giving oneself that were conveyed by what was being said and the way it was presented.

At that time, I realized I was looking for something like that, and to be able to rescue my sensations and to have the possibility of giving myself to life. I understood that in order to do that I should first rescue those possibilities, and feel comfortable about myself during my own process, if I really wanted that achievement could be reflected in my practice and in my way of life.

Another moment that confirmed to me that was the path to follow was when I met Lowen for the second time. The proposed work involved an "I'm entitled to" exercise, and being able to give myself at that time had a great positive impact on my life. I should not fail to mention the presence, the giving of himself, and the strength of our great master, Lowen.

Today, I can say without any doubt that rescuing my energy, my power, the courage to face myself, to give myself every day, and thus to be able to feel comfortable when dancing life away were and have continued to be the guiding principles in my life.

## **Fear of giving oneself to body, to life**

The fear of giving oneself to body and to life is a fear inherent to human beings.

One of the sources of the fear of life and of giving oneself is the act of birth, when we experience a separation from our mother's body. Being born generates a sensation of helplessness due to our separation from the maternal uterus, that is, a safe and protected space, as far as that is possible. We leave that place of basic protection to face the unknown.

We know through all the studies that have explored this topic that the psychic life of a baby, in order to survive such a separation and feeling of helplessness, starts with an experience of fusion that creates the fantasy there are only one body and one psyche for two persons, and they constitute an indivisible unit.

The fantasy of the "single body," primordial in every human being, surely has its biological prototype in intrauterine life, where the "body-mother" must really provide for the vital needs of two beings.

Although it already is a separate being with its innate potentialities, a baby is not aware of that yet. For it, both its mother and itself constitute a single person, that is, they actually are a single person.

To resume the subject of birth, we know that a mother, at this time, still is the fully encompassing environment, a "mother-universe."

The nostalgia we feel of returning to that illusory fusion, the desire to become once again a part of that omnipotent "mother-universe" at the start of our lives and during childhood, without having any responsibility and will, is deeply entrenched in the psyche of each one of us.

The imaginary continuation of that experience plays not only an essential role in the life of a newborn child, but it will also rule its somatopsychic functions.

Both the baby and the child need to have a loving, intimate, and continuous relationship with its mother or someone who might replace her. That is the basis for the development of the personality of a human being.

It is only through its mother that a baby is able to start its personal and actual development process.

Theoretician Donald Winnicott has developed a whole theory about the mother-baby relationship.

He has brought to the realm of psychological studies the concept of *holding* which, in addition to the physical support provided to a baby, also designates everything the surrounding environment contributes to the concept of a life in common. The essence of *holding* lies in the mother-baby relationship. It is the sensibility of a person towards another human being.

We may also understand *holding* as the specific capacity of a person to resonate the basic needs of another. Resonating the other implies the concept of empathy<sup>2</sup>.

We may claim that the life of a human being starts with and through *holding*.

While the development process is under way, the baby also develops the need to separate.

When the mother-baby relationship is “sufficiently good,” it enables for the development of a progressive differentiation in the psychic structure of a baby between its own body and the maternal body.

For it to happen, the “sufficiently good mother” needs to be able to place herself in the place of the baby and know if it needs to be carried on her arms, left alone, change position or place, and etc.

For a mother to be “sufficiently good,” it is also necessary that the environment where she finds herself is safe so she can convey such feeling of security to the baby.

With such favorable conditions, a baby can develop the capacity to believe, trust, and give itself up to the flow of life. The mother’s function is to transform a baby’s anguish into care, and soothe its fears and suffering.

During this process, the mother also recognizes the baby’s need to renounce to her presence so it is able to give itself up to sleeping. For such a relinquishing to happen, the baby needs to feel there is someone who is able to understand it.

This giving oneself up to sleeping can be considered the first experience of giving oneself experienced by a human being.

Theoretician Guy Tonella, in the text “The Interactive Self,” says, “The baby needs someone who makes it fall asleep so it is able later on to fall asleep on its own.”

We have said that the first issue in a baby’s life is integration, and that it may only happen if there is an adequate *holding* stage. If it doesn’t happen, the baby will be exposed to experiences of discontinuity, and the consequence will be an impossibility to integrate both experiences and internal processes.

We must therefore believe that these beings, after they have been born, have been touched and embraced in a family environment according to a certain and specific standard. Now I’m talking about adequate social and emotional standards, within the scope of a standard that is as most harmonious as possible.

Everything is marked in that body that will develop according to its own possibilities and potentialities with more or less flow, energy, presence, commitment,

---

2 Concept of empathy: the tendency to feel what one would feel if he/she faced the same situation and circumstance experienced by another person.

and the giving of oneself. When mentioning possibilities and potentialities I cannot fail to remind that they also depend on the context to which a human being belongs.

During this process, we all build and develop protections/defenses that enable us, in one way or another, to belong to a certain and specific culture and family.

The effect of this process “speaks out” and shows the differences between human beings, the possibilities of proximity and insertion in the world. It is unquestionable that a few among many will be more able to do that, and will count on more resources to deal with life and the world.

After birth a retreat process starts, at the same time, for the large majority of us, a process that is driven by both external and internal factors. It occurs as a consequence of issues involving one’s development, and also due to traumas suffered during such development process. As a result of these factors, the movement of not giving oneself is slowly developed as a means of defense and protection.

Now I remember patient M (37 years old), who looked for my advice because she could not get pregnant. All her husband’s family could say was to have faith in God. The problem was that since she lived in another country our sessions had to be held via Skype. After some time we observed that she suffered from nighttime terrors, and that one of the reasons for her great fear of building personal links was the traumas she had suffered during her development due to her relationship with her mother, who eventually committed suicide when M was 10 years old. After we worked on many traumatic issues, and also executed, using Skype, breathing, *grounding*, and limiting exercises, she said that what had enabled her to become attached to me was the fact that our sessions were virtual, since she had never started a therapeutic process because she feared building a bond to other people. Today, eight years after we started that process, she has had 2 children (through artificial insemination), and has been living back in Brazil for a while. That is when we realized it was important for her to halt the process, because we had explored and worked on a lot of stuff, and now she needed some time to savor everything.

Alexander Lowen, the creator of B. A. (Lowen, 1977) is the theoretician who has brought to light the de-armoring process for human beings. He claimed the condition of giving oneself is the possibility of exiting from states of paralysis, anesthesia, and contraction in which many of us find ourselves. In his view, this act of giving oneself not only implies relinquishing one’s excessive ego control, but also places us in front of three great fears the large majority of us must face, which are: the fear of death, the fear of madness, and the fear of sexuality.



According to Lowen (Lowen, 1986), the “fear of insanity” derives from the subliminal perception that an excessive feeling might drown the ego and might lead to madness, since the ego will be dominated by that overwhelming feeling. “The fear of death” is related to a very primitive experience when a child realizes it is facing death, or the possibility of death, and it leads the organism to close itself in an armor as a defensive measure so as not to feel vulnerable to that possibility again.

When we try to live up to the requirements, illusions and false promises of the current world, we distance ourselves from ourselves and life is then experienced in a frenetic, dissociated, and stressed way. Lowen criticizes this way of living and being in the world and says: “In a mass society success is what distinguishes an individual from the crowd” (Lowen, 1984). He also makes an important analysis about what is considered a successful person in Western capitalist society, and how it has become the ultimate purpose of the large majority of people.

This way of living and doing things through strength of will has been increasingly stimulated by all the media, and by capitalist interests, since this strategy is necessary to ensure the system’s own maintenance.

We know that this effort, in addition to being a very tiresome way of living, generates hindrances in the realm of feeling and in the free flow of movements. This chronic state can also lead to collapse and breakdown, as we observe today in the symptoms of “burnout.” This chronic and compulsive way of doing things, besides being at the service of an illusion of power, eternal happiness and youth, shows that our ways of being in the world are completely stimulated by the contemporary socio-political-economic system.

This way of living also requires an excessive investment in the maintenance of one’s image, considering that “one’s appearance” has acquired greater value in the contemporary world. That is the essence of an appearance-based society. Living off appearance and in function of one’s image removes any possibility of giving oneself to oneself and to life. Lowen then asks: How is it possible to experience the joy and intensity of life, if we live trapped in a ship’s hold?

Lowen also considers that, in a narcissistic culture such as ours, talking about “giving oneself” or “rendition” is equaled to being defeated, but it actually is only the defeat of a narcissistic ego (Lowen, 1997).

This model under which Western societies have organized and developed themselves ends up somehow imprisoning all of us.

In order to scape from the traps set by such a system, from these not so powerful ways of operating, from a way of thinking about the world that is completely

in conformity with the dominant and disseminated ideology, changes are and will always be necessary.

We must have the courage to face these issues and leave our comfort zones, and to acquire, rescue, and sustain the power and courage to face the necessary challenges that living requires from all of us.

## Final Remarks

During my process to give myself to writing, I experienced this always-present fear. I took a deep breath, paused for a while, accepted my fear, and continued by being sure that only by giving myself I would be able to face my fears and the process itself.

Everybody, during their development processes, requires care, support, and *holding*. These must be internalized little by little so we are able to sustain our existence and deal with our own anguishes.

One's self-support capacity, and that means having some *grounding*, an axis, presence, focus, attention, responsibility, and commitment, is what enables us to have the courage to give ourselves to ourselves and to life.

Giving oneself, instead of being something dangerous, asserts life, and is powerful. This power encourages us to continue with the daily process of giving ourselves to body and to life.

Only by giving ourselves, we will be able to experience what is new, what is different, and to look at the world in many different ways, and from other perspectives. Thus, we will be able to be in the world with innovative and creative postures, views, actions and understandings, and without any prejudgment of things.

I believe and have based my work on accepting the premise that our work as psychotherapists requires us to create, through a therapeutic alliance, the possibility, for those who look for our advice, of finding their power, their space in the world, and so to dance and live up to whatever is possible for us to experience.

“If we want to build another world, more than organizing ourselves to say “NO,” we’d better dream and connect ourselves through a big “YES”! Emicida – A Brazilian rapper, singer, lyricist, and composer.

Yes to life!

Yes to giving oneself!

Yes to our bodies!

## References

- Bowlby, J. (1995). *Cuidados Maternos e Saúde Mental*. São Paulo: Martins Fontes.
- Han, B. C. (2017). *Sociedade do Cansaço*. Petrópolis: Vozes.
- Pinto, G. C., & Dunker, C. I. L. (2010). *Medo*. São Paulo: Duetto Editorial.
- Ferreira, A. (2009). *Introdução à filosofia de Spinoza*. São Paulo: Quebra Nozes.
- Ferreira, A. (2010). *Introdução à filosofia de Nietzsche*. São Paulo: Yellow Cat Book.
- Hortelano Serrano, X. (2004). *No despertar do século XXI*. São Paulo: Casa do Psicólogo.
- Levine, P. A. (2012). *Uma voz sem palavras*. São Paulo: Summus.
- Lowen, A. (1979). *O corpo traído*. São Paulo: Summus.
- Lowen, A. (1984). *Prazer: Uma abordagem criativa da vida*. São Paulo: Summus.
- Lowen, A. (1986). *Medo da Vida*. São Paulo: Summus.
- Lowen, A. (1997). *Alegria*. São Paulo: Summus.
- Pereira, M. E. C. (2008). *Pânico e desamparo*. São Paulo: Escuta.
- Reich, W. (1975). *A função do orgasmo*. São Paulo: Brasiliense.
- Reich, W. (1995). *Análise do caráter*. São Paulo: Martins Fontes.
- Viorst, J. (1995). *Perdas necessárias*. São Paulo: Melhoramentos.
- Winnicott, D. W. (1983). *O ambiente e os processos de maturação*. Porto Alegre: Artes Médicas.

## The author

Ana Lúcia Faria, CRP: 06/09321, Psychologist, Reich Psychotherapist/Sedes sapientiae Institute and Bioenergetic Analyst/SOBAB (Brazilian Society of Bioenergetic Analysis. Member of the Teaching Committee and International Trainer/SOBAB. Member of FLAAB (Latin America Federation of Bioenergetic Analysis); Representative of FLAAB at FENPB (Forum of National Entities of Brazilian Psychologist); Representative of FLAAB at ULAPSI and member of GT-18-ULAPSI (Latin America Union of Psychology Entities).

luciafariapsi@yahoo.com.br