



BODYDYNAMIC INTERNATIONAL

Somatic Developmental Psychology



It Takes Courage to Stay in the Shy Moments

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A man enters a party with many new faces; to join in, to connect with these unfamiliar faces, he makes a joke. Everyone stares at him, no one laughs. The joke falls flat because it was loaded with harsh humour and this party was not the best place to share it. At this point, the man probably experiences feeling a sense of shame after seeing the response. He looks awkward and becomes quiet. It is an uncomfortable situation for all.

After his failed joke, the man barely speaks to anyone the rest of the time he is there. The shame got stuck or the man got stuck in the shame. The awkward incident prevented him from socializing and feeling connected with other people at the party. After the party ended and the man headed home, he noticed that he was very lonely. He was so caught up in shame that it was all he was sensing, along with some bodily pain. All his attention and energy went to trying to regulate himself in this feeling.

Please join us at our upcoming workshop at the 16th European Congress for Body Psychotherapy, September 6-9, 2018, in Berlin, Germany

So, what can he do? What can a therapist do to help a person to move forward? What resources and strategies can a person get from Bodydynamic in this case?

In our upcoming workshop at the 16th European Congress for Body Psychotherapy, September 6-9, 2018, in Berlin, Germany we will present the basic theory and understanding of how shame influence our lives, what tools you can use to work with the emotion and we will present physical exercises related to this theme.

Shame from a Bodydynamic Perspective

As humans we seek contact. Our quality of life depends on how well we can socialize. Being liked by our friends, belonging to a group to our family is not only nice, it gives us a feeling of safety—together we have survived. It lays deep in us. Shame and shyness is a point to regulate how we are together.

In Bodydynamic we believe that we are born with an inner sense of dignity and a drive towards mutual connection, which is part of all later learnings that form our personality and our way of being. These two basic drives work together continuously much like a "tuning fork" as the body seeks a sense of balance that affects all areas of our lives. Every second of every day, we cross a boundary into new realities and challenges. We are 'exposed' when we step forward, when we say something or show an interest and at the same time try to stay true to ourselves. For example, job interviews, making new friends, dealing with disappointment or dealing with joy, seeking support or help, and even figuring out how to 'be' on a romantic date, there is an unconscious sense of

-how much can I stay in connection with myself and with others, be part of,

or

- how much do I protect/ stay in myself in connection and as a result disconnect with the surroundings,

or

-do I leave sense of myself to stay connected and as a result lose myself.

If we have been shamed in our childhood and our actions were personalized, so not just our actions were wrong but we as a person was made wrong, most likely we will not even sense the shyness. Instead, we may go directly to the feeling of being wrong or feeling that the world is wrong, and we may either start bullying our self (that critical inner voice we all hear putting ourselves down, attacking us for our misdeeds) or we may lash out at others, at the world.

Shame in this instance is a defence mechanism and Bodydynamic does not want to break defence mechanisms nor make them disappear. Our defence mechanisms have helped us to survive. If we can acknowledge and make space for them, we have an opportunity to get out of stuck old patterns and create or develop new ways of being and acting.

To understand the system of Bodydynamic, it is important to keep in mind that Lisbeth Marcher created the practice, which became a theory. It is unique in that the aim is to honour the defence mechanism and to create more so a person has options to choose from. Another aspect is that, in Bodydynamic, therapists work with the physical body. The *Body Encyclopaedia*, written by Lisbeth Marcher and Sonja Fich, describes how the different muscles are connected to various themes that arise in therapy sessions.

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Bodynamic has developed therapeutic approaches both verbally and bodily. In this practice, we work with seven main emotions: joy, sadness, fear, anger, disgust, sexuality/sensuality, and shame. We acknowledge that our emotions have a bodily reaction – chemical and neurological—and that they come with an impulse to act. The more we can stay with the actual emotion, the more we can take responsibility for our choices and thereby our actions.

When we look at reactions to shame as a defence mechanism, we see that bodily and behaviourally it has a variety of responses:

- read cheeks,
- hot hands,
- faster heartbeat,
- the impulse is to look down/away,
- impulse to hide,
- either get very quiet or start talking about something else,
- make funny moves or joke around,
- getting an empty feeling inside or just wanting to disappear,
- talking the moment away,
- going into the sense of being wrong,
- saying inappropriate things.

A way to think about shame is that the feeling tells the mind that I need to do something to correct some behaviour I felt ashamed of. In that way, shame can be an extremely helpful reaction—it becomes a signal so that we can stop and reflect. We are aware of something we did, and after evaluating we understand that maybe it was not right. It takes courage to experience shame and stay in contact while it feels very unpleasant.

In the therapy room, as therapists, we often tend to back away when the client becomes shy, perhaps a normal response in our relationships outside the therapy room as well. In Bodynamic, we believe it is much more beneficial for the process to address the reaction, for instance saying to the client, “I see that your cheeks are red now and my guess is you are a little shy now, is

that true?” To stay with the shy moment or feeling of shame can become a resource that can open the door to be more authentic, and to be more present with all the qualities. You can be more you.

In Bodynamic we have developed ways of working bodily with

- connectedness,
- heart contact,
- feeling backed by yourself and others,
- how to develop usable boundaries
- sensing our limits,
- creating and maintaining energy,
- ways of positioning ourselves,
- the feeling of self-confidence,
- being able to balance different roles.

Bodynamic has specific ways of working with these themes that can be helpful in addressing issues around shame. The goal is that, in the end, the client feels courageous enough, strong and connected enough to go the field of discomfort and gather all the diamonds there.

We look forward to sharing more about Bodynamics at our September workshop.

For more information now, please visit: www.bodynamic.com or email us at info@bodynamic.dk

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Lene Wisbom

Lene is a senior Bodynamic teacher. She teaches worldwide at all levels in Bodynamic International. She has published Bodynamic Books, written several manuals and revised all other manuals used in the educational programs. She is a board member and a member of the planning team in Bodynamic, a member of the Danish Psychotherapist Association since 2001, and a member of the European Association for Body Psychotherapy since 2012.