THE MIND MOVEMENT

Integrating Body, Breath and Movement in Therapy

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The Recovery College Collective

www.recoverycoco.com
ReCoCo is an independent peer-led mental health charity commissioned by the NHS.

Crisis UK

www.crisis.org.uk
Crisis UK is the national charity for people experiencing homelessness.

Changing Lives

www.changing-lives.org.uk
Changing Lives helps people in England experiencing homelessness, domestic violence, addiction, long-term unemployment, and more, to make positive change—for good.

Metanoia Institute London

www.metanoia.ac.uk

Wimbledon Guild of Psychotherapy London Counsellors' Staffroom

www.wimbledonguild.co.uk

About the author

Lorna Evans is a UKCP-registered psychotherapist and trainer with an MSc in body awareness and psychotherapy. She proudly integrates psychotherapy and the body, focusing on movement and breath as healing tools for trauma, anxiety, and depression. Lorna has been in private practice for many years, previously working in primary care for the NHS and Mind.

Lorna is exceptionally proud to teach trauma-informed yoga and be constantly learning from the students of ReCoCo (NHS Recovery College Collective), Crisis UK, Changing Lives, Mind, and many other trauma survivor groups and charities across the UK. She has collaborated on books, documentaries, and projects with *The Guardian*, Samaritans, *Psychologies* magazine, MTV, BBC, and Sky. She also works as a media spokesperson for the United Kingdom Council for Psychotherapy (UKCP).

Lorna's YouTube channel, 'The Mind Movement', provides positive psycho-educational content and spreads awareness about the importance of trauma-informed practices involving the body, breath, and movement to improve and maintain mental well-being. Subscribe to the channel, and, if you wish, join Lorna for some yoga.

Author's note

For ease of reading, the therapist is referred to as 'she/her' throughout but the points raised are applicable to all.

CHAPTER ONE

Conflicting forces of Mind and Body

In recent years, working with the body in therapy has become very popular, undergoing a worldwide renaissance across the therapeutic community. Tracking along the same timeline as this popularity within our community is a social movement that I call the Mind Movement.

The Mind Movement consists of two main areas of social change.

First, it's a social movement for individuals to talk about and learn to take accountability for their mental health. The aim? To reduce the long-held stigma around mental health and reframing it as a priority in lifestyle.

To talk about mental health and see this as a priority to wellness without stigma is a massive shift in society. The media and

the younger generation are powering this shift. Young people want to have therapy and talk about their feelings.

Clients attend therapy and discuss their personality types, attachment styles, neurodiversity, sexuality, and the trauma held in their bodies. Not so long ago, these were words heard only in clinical trainings. Now, they are part of everyday language.

As young people now make up the majority share of the workforce, this has led to changes in the workplace.

Second, people know that moving their body and exercising improves their mental health and wellness. The motivation to move comes from wanting to be well and to care for themselves, mentally and physically.

Going to the gym, practising yoga, doing weights and workouts, in-person or online: exercise has never been so popular. The Mind–Body connection is no longer a hard sell. People feel the benefits in their own bodies somatically. They feel a reduction in anxiety and depression or in menopause symptoms.

Advances in technology support the Mind Movement. We have mobile phones counting our daily steps and smartwatches monitoring sleep and ovulation while suggesting movement and breathing exercises throughout the day. This area continues to grow and enhances movement and the Mind–Body connection as part of popular culture.

The Mind–Body connection and the knowledge within this book about working with the body, breath, and movement is critical to the future of working with autoimmune diseases, hormone imbalances, and neurodiversity. A lifetime of not feeling safe, dysregulation, high cortisol levels, tightness and stiffness in the body results in physical pain and internal flare-ups that go undiagnosed. Invisible illnesses that endure years of inconclusive testing are today often diagnosed as neurodiversity in the

form of attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). This is connected to hormone levels in women, and we must factor these layers of the body's knowledge into our client work. Your clients know their bodies' pain, anxiety, and neurodiversity are connected to their emotional stress and trauma.

There has never been a better time to bring this information into clinical practice. Using this book will help you begin to understand the connection between Mind and Body and, in doing so, validate physical experience. Most importantly, you will be able to work with your clients and share the knowledge to develop ways to regulate and heal using body, breath, and movement.

This book aims to bring together ideas, theory, and practical tools that are accessible so you can begin to integrate them into your client's work. Rather than seeing differences in ways to work with the body in therapy, I will highlight the overlap and connections in thinking to support your practice.

There are many terms used in therapy when working with the body: embodiment, somatic, body psychotherapy, and bioenergetics, to name just a few. However, I will keep things simple by using the term *body awareness*. This makes it easier for the reader and avoids giving one term precedence over another.

Our work as therapists, coupled with recent neuroscience research, emphasises how trauma becomes held in the body and how a bodily understanding is essential for professionals working with trauma, emotional stress, anxiety, and depression.

Our clients often carry a complex range of unprocessed embodied feelings that cannot be expressed via talking alone. They struggle to express their feelings verbally. Yet the skills to begin working with body awareness have been lacking in our clinical training, and now the hunger for this knowledge is at an all-time high.

The Mind and Body are fully integrated, and what the therapist notices in the client's body and experiences in her own body, breathing or other nonverbal phenomena, is vital to bring into awareness with our clients.

Nonverbal phenomena and countertransference are primitive, potent, heavy forces, and can feel uncomfortable and challenging to work with—your noticing and awareness of these moments and changes in your body—however, your dysregulation will be valuable to your learning.

Throughout this book, we will take time to notice, breathe, move, and get steady and comfortable. To check in with what the material is changing within ourselves.

Right now, this subject is experiencing an explosion of interest within the worldwide psychotherapy community as a wave of fresh thinkers revitalise the subject. Advances in neuroscience and interest in treating trauma are generating a significant amount of new research to support the use of the body in therapy. Working with the body has recently become very popular in therapy.

One catalyst is the 2014 bestselling book, *The Body Keeps the Score* by Bessel van der Kolk. Once a niche subject that I would often feel uncomfortable discussing with my peers, his book is now a Penguin bestseller, still in the top ten nearly a decade after its first publication.

I am surprised but filled with joy whenever a client tells me they have read it, have it in their bag, have heard about it, or listened to the audiobook. Today, Van der Kolk continues to push boundaries, and I'm grateful to him for being a disruptor, speaking freely, and integrating yoga into his work. This book has transported the work of body psychotherapists, previously viewed by some as being more of a new-age pseudoscience, into real, credible science.

There is now a familiar pile of books that clients have often collected to understand their own conflicts of Mind and Body. I would also suggest these for further reading. They are not therapy books; they are bestsellers that cross over the world of therapy and wellness. *What Happened to You* by Oprah Winfrey, *Women Who Run with the Wolves* by Clarissa Pinkola Estés, and Gabor Maté's *When the Body Says No*.

During my clinical training, I always sensed the conflict and divide between the Mind and the Body. It often made me sad, isolated, and cut off from my body.

I recall a client asking me, 'Where do I go for my Mind, Body, and Spirit? Am I supposed to go to the doctor's for my Body, you for my Mind, and church for my Spirit?' This question solidified for me the idea that all three need to be integrated.

I set out to learn how to integrate working with the body into therapy. I have brought theory, science, yoga and extensive research together to make sense of something that previously baffled me, and I will share with you how I work and why.

Today, it seems normal that we want to learn more about how to work with the body, breath, and movement in therapy in the same way that we may choose to learn more about attachment theory, diversity, neurodiversity, or working creatively.

However, in the past, this was not the case. When therapists first started working with the Mind and Body, there were substantial psychoanalytic conflicts. I will shine a light on these while highlighting today's competing forces of Mind and Body.

My students often ask, 'Why do we need to understand the theory and history of the body in therapy?' The simple fact is that without good theory, we are without direction. As Kurt Lewin said, 'Nothing is so practical as good theory'.[1] By reading the theory, you will see weaknesses and incomplete aspects

of the topic. This will enable you to challenge, improve, and change it.

Working with the body in therapy feels new and exciting. However, it's important to note that it hasn't always been this way. When exploring the theory and lineage, we will see how political and social timelines have affected the science narrative, in particular when it comes to women.

The history of psychology was, and frequently still is, presented to us via the work of older white men—women were marginalised. In mental health and special needs, they worked in the trenches while their more famous counterparts got all the glory, publishing deals, and press coverage. For example, not many have heard of Emma Jung, Laura Perls, Ida Rolf, or Beata Rank.

Without competitive ego, privilege, or nepotism (Anna Freud is a good example), their work did not make it to publication, and, thus, their names have all but disappeared.

Wherever possible, I will highlight the names of the women who contributed to the advancement of working with the body in therapy and their impact. I will list much of their work in the 'Further reading' section at the back of the book for your own research. I wish I had had more access to their work when I was completing my training, as I feel it would have made it far more exciting and accessible for me to connect with their theories.

There is little past research or publications on the history of the body in therapy from people of colour to help us understand the psychological impact of racism and discrimination on those from BAME (Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic) communities. Luckily, that is beginning to change with the contributions from, for example, Dr Aileen Alleyne, Susan Cousins, Eugene Ellis, and Dr Dwight Turner. Susan Cousins stresses, 'We profoundly need

to address the shortcomings of racial competency in therapeutic training and professional practice' and 'Call for accountability, challenging colour blindness, highlighting implications for a therapist, trainers/trainees: supervisors and therapy organisations'.[2] For more on this, see the 'Further reading' section at the back of the book.

A worldwide pandemic

The pandemic sparked an even greater interest in working with the body, nervous system, and immune system. Working with trauma became front and centre in our work, whether in-person or online. The hunger to understand where trauma is stored and how to begin working with it is at an all-time high.

Trauma occurs when choice is taken away from us. Humans need choice to self-regulate, feel safe, create coping strategies, and thrive. Self-regulation is essential for our sense of agency, positive self-esteem, and well-being.

We find equilibrium through the gentle rhythms of eye contact, smiling, crying, talking, laughing, shaking, hugging, and unconsciously regulating the breath.

When the coronavirus pandemic arrived in 2020, these choices were taken away, and the Mind and Body conflict returned front and centre. And, this time, therapists were living through the same storm as their clients.

Our bodies were reduced to simple data and morbid statistics while new laws were passed based on science unsupported by any research and bad strategy. It was all about how best to manage the political risk of the data. The impact and risk to our minds and mental health were removed from the headlines with little effort to communicate the potential dangers these decisions would have.

Driven by a narrative of fear, history has proven that if you scare people enough, they will do whatever you say with no questions asked. By isolating, splitting, socially distancing, and silencing people, that is what happened.

As a result of this tension between the Mind and Body during the pandemic, we're all now on the front line of the next one. A tsunami of mental and physical illness across all generations—children, young people, parents and the elderly—caused by the dysregulation of a human race who had a primal need to feel safe. I knew it was coming. This is my work every day.

The world changed—we changed

As a therapeutic community, we are now addressing the lack of diversity within our profession. When using the term diversity, at the time of writing, I am referring to people from a range of different social and ethnic backgrounds, different genders, sexual orientations, ages, and those with a hidden or physical disability.

In doing so, our community is starting to address the social issues raised by the social movements #MeToo, Black Lives Matter, and LGBTQ+ and the systemic misuse of power, privilege, and rank in society. I hope, as a community, we become more interesting, vibrant, accessible, and relevant to people seeking therapy.

In October 2020, Dr Dwight Turner, psychotherapist and senior lecturer at Brighton University, posted a picture of himself on LinkedIn wearing a black leather jacket with a silver cross around his neck. He was told, 'You look more like a bouncer than a therapist'. Dwight challenged the therapeutic community to share pictures of themselves, their bodies, who they are now, and what they look like, not what people believe a therapist should look like.

Quite quickly, the beautiful, honest images appeared of punks with green mohawks, single mothers pushing prams, male therapists in sportswear, and people with tattoos and piercings, all giving permission to be yourself in your own body. Allowing us to be comfortable rather than colluding with the stereotype of what a 'typical' therapist should look like.

> To be nobody-but-yourself—in a world which is doing its best, night and day, to make you everybody else—means to fight the hardest battle which any human being can fight.
>
> e. e. cummings[3]

As a community, we have changed our ways of working, becoming more creative, innovative, and diverse. The pandemic forced us into it, but a dramatic event caused every major shift in social change thinking. Online working offers new income streams and flexibility to therapists and clients.

This book is about my hope that people will begin to integrate theory, science, and movement techniques into their clinical practices. So, read on, get curious, and start connecting the research and science with your clients' narratives.

I believe the future will bring these changes and future practitioners will automatically include working with the body, breath, and movement without it being an afterthought or missed altogether.