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Being in a Psychotherapy Group ~ What's it like?

It is happening again. Jerry finds himself in the "victim" role. Darlene and everybody else in the group can see it clearly. Some members are frustrated and critical of him because he has been here many times before. This time Jerry is even more convinced that everybody else is wrong; he feels misunderstood. One member encourages him to stand up to other group members who are being critical of him. Some members empathize with his pain and try to support him by encouraging him not to fold into his growing resentment and the beginning signs of withdrawal. Jerry is hurt, angry and feels alone in the group. Everyone in the group, frustrated or sympathetic, can see how painful this is for him. His pain is intense and there is no obvious resolution or movement today. Jerry pouts as the attention shifts to Darlene.

Like Jerry, Darlene is also certain the group members are wrong about her. However, she can remember just a few moments earlier how everybody in the group could clearly see Jerry. They were aware he was unable to see what they saw, accept their feedback, or see how this pattern of playing the victim had cost him professionally as well as estranging him from some relatives. Now everybody, including Jerry, can see what Darlene is unable to see about herself. Although she intellectually continued to question how all these people could be so wrong about her. After all, these were the same people she had come to trust, respect and even love during their many groups together. Darlene was in a position to see that these group members were able to see something about her that she could not see about herself.

In an article in Elle Magazine (2204, pp 134-138) Deborah Mason refers to group therapy as the "Porsche" of peer opinion and peer pressure, a place of "hearty, healthy dynamic between self and other." It is a place where a patient can feel the thrill of confronting the "narrow guarded view" another has of themselves as well as the agony of being "ambushed" by your group members. Deborah Mason reviewed the subject of self-perception and examined how well our own self-perceptions compare to how others perceive us. For instance, a person believes he/she is confident and yet their peers perceive him/her as abrasive, or someone thinks he/she is thoughtful while others think he/she is a dishrag. Who is right? Mason concluded in the majority of the cases others were more accurate that the individual's reported self-perceptions (Oltmanns and Turkheimer, 2006). Mason concluded, "chances are, you wildly overestimate yourself, underestimate yourself, or sometimes skew your self-image so profoundly that even your own mother wouldn't know who you were talking about (pg 134)." The self-distortion may be small or huge, but the person may be the last to know how he/she is *really* perceived by colleagues, friends, and casual acquaintances and is probably unaware of how it shapes their actions.



...Continued on page 5

IIGP Newsbites

Four Graduates of the Institute will be making presentations this April at the Annual Conference of the Michigan Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers.

Helene Lockman



Joann Coleman



Annikki Kurvi



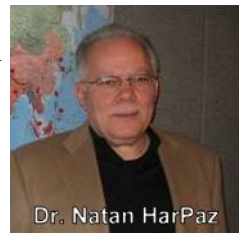
Marcia B. Stein

Helene Lockman, ACSW and Joann Coleman, ACSW will present a workshop entitled, "Navigating the Transition from Individual to Group Psychotherapy."

Annikki Kurvi, ACSW and Marcia Stein, ACSW, IIGP Faculty Member will present a workshop on "Group Supervision."

Natan HarPaz, PhD, IIGP Faculty member, will lead the Annual Institute of the Michigan Group Psychotherapy Society on May 2. The topic will be, "How the Therapist's Personality Affects Treatment."

Leora Bar-Levav, MD, IIGP Faculty Member, went to Boyne Mountain recently for an extended weekend downhill skiing excursion. Leora had last skied as a little girl with her father Reuven, founder of IIGP. She reports it was "like riding a bicycle—it all comes back to you."



Dr. Natan HarPaz



Ronald J. Hook

Ronald Hook, ACSW, IIGP Faculty Member, recently presented on Individual and Group Psychotherapy to the social work class of Mitch Rosenzweig at Oakland University. He also drove over to Hope College in Holland where he presented to undergraduates interested in psychotherapy on the issue of "Emotions in the Body." He continues his travels to Washington D.C., where he recently provided bodywork services to 13 patients at the Bethesda Psychotherapy Group.

Help Us Train Therapists



From left: Pamela Torracco, ACSW; Natan HarPaz, PhD; Paul P. Shultz, ACSW; Leora Bar-Levav, MD; Ronald J. Hook, ACSW; David A. Baker, ACSW; Marcia B. Stein, ACSW.

Before the year is out, please consider a contribution to our Annual Fund (self-addressed envelope is attached to this Newsletter). IIGP is a 501 (c)(3) qualified non-profit organization that relies solely on the generosity of people like you. Founded in the 1970's, we have trained dozens of professionals in the practice of Integrated Individual and Group psychotherapy. However, a "quick fix" focus has become popular, and treatment mostly by medications (many advertised on T.V.) is now wide-spread. Hoping to buck this trend, we need your financial help to promote our training program. Psychotherapy leads to real change in ways medications cannot.

Reflections-

More than twenty-years after its publication, the words of our founder are considered from today's perspective:

“Affluence and relative security enable individuals and societies to exist in the feeling mode for a while and therefore unrealistically. This is a luxury of questionable merit, since it encourages delusional living. Self-indulgence in the pursuit of ‘more’ is possible only when actual survival is not an immediate concern. Having more obviously does not satisfy the yearnings for more, which are irrational. (See Section 26.)” (p.346)

Reuven Bar-Levav, M.D.

The whole world is in the middle of a terrible financial crisis. We don't know yet how bad it will turn out to be. Thousands are losing their jobs. Huge corporations are in danger of bankruptcy. Even some countries are running out of money!

How did we get into such an economic mess? How could so many seemingly responsible people screw things up so badly? Is it because there are that many dishonest and predatory people in positions of power? What else could account for this desperate situation? Back in 1988 (twenty-one years ago), Dr. Reuven Bar-Levav expressed great concern about the dangers of wealth and luxury. Around the globe, in more and more remote places, people were becoming wealthy—some very wealthy. In what used to be thought of as “out of the way” places like Dubai, Kuala Lumpur, Shanghai, and so on. Why was Dr. Bar-Levav so concerned about this?

We human beings like to pride ourselves on being better than animals because we alone in the animal kingdom can think. But we really aren't very good at it. And much of the time, our thoughts are really justifications for what we feel like doing anyway.

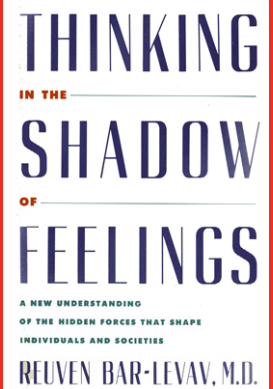
Bluntly put, we behave much more like the other critters in the animal kingdom than we like to admit. This goes not only for the average Joe who works a regular 40-hour week, (that is, if he hasn't lost his job yet!) but it's true for Bank Presidents, C.E.Os of large corporations, and Heads of State.



Over the past twenty years, attitudes toward borrowing and lending money became more and more unrealistic. The delusional belief that large-scale economic growth would indefinitely somehow make it possible to pay back borrowed money lulled people into taking risks they otherwise wouldn't take. People took out huge mortgages on homes they imagined would appreciate enough to justify the risk. Automobile executives ignored the threat of foreign imports, imagining ever-growing markets would forever allow them to profit. Developed nations ran up larger and larger budget deficits, never really explaining to themselves how the debt would be repaid.

Of course, as Dr. Bar-Levav often said, “Reality comes first.” Sooner or later reality will smack us back to our senses. Today, television and the newspapers are filled with stories explaining how unrealistic people have become. People including captains of industry and state leaders. We are waking up. Now we are much more worried about survival. And much less delusional.

—Paul P. Shultz, ACSW
Editor



**Thinking
in the
Shadow of Feelings**
(1988: Simon and Schuster)

The founder of the Institute, Dr. Reuven Bar-Levav, wrote the book *Thinking in the Shadow of Feelings*. The book defines the theory of human motivation that guides our clinical work at IIGP. Each issue of *INSIGHTS* includes a brief discussion of an excerpt from the book. The book is available in its entirety on our website www.iigp.org.

Bill Yochim, IIGP Graduate IN MEMORIAM

I first met Bill Yochim when we were fellow participants in a personal growth group. That was 1969. A couple of years later, when I made a career change from teaching school to practicing psychotherapy, Bill offered to be my field instructor for my University of Michigan field placement. After I finished my degree work, my involvement with Bill continued. At the time, he was president of the Michigan Group Psychotherapy Society, an organization that Dr. Bar-Levav (founder of IIGP) helped to establish.

At the time, group psychotherapy was a relatively new form of treatment in private practice and the Institute did not yet exist. The Michigan Group Psychotherapy Society was one of the only organizations in the state where one could learn about group psychotherapy. Bill practically demanded that I not only join the society, but that I serve as its NEWSLETTER editor. I protested: "I just got my degree!" I just barely am a member!" He didn't care—I was going to be the Newsletter Editor. And with that, I began to attend board meetings. Bill and others like him were deeply dedicated to the mission of the society and gave tirelessly to make the organization grow. Those "others" included many of the current Institute faculty members: Ron Hook, Natan HarPaz, Pamela Torracco, David Baker and of course Dr. Bar-Levav himself.

I was impressed! As a youngster in the field, I found myself among some of the brightest pioneers in the area, people who were interested in the cutting edge of treatment. As I became involved in the Michigan Group Psychotherapy Society, Dr. Bar-Levav, who had recently opened his own private practice, began to conduct his own seminars in his offices and invited some therapists new to the field to train with him. I was one of them, as well as Joe Froslic and Ron Hook. And it was Bill Yochim who first suggested to Dr. Bar-Levav that he establish a non-profit training organization to operate in the same offices as his private practice. Shortly after, Dr. Bar-Levav did indeed form that organization, the organization we know today as The Institute for Individual and Group Psychotherapy.

Bill's passing is a painful personal loss to many of us. He did a lot to advance the mental health field in Michigan, and became an enthusiastic participant in Institute activities. He gave a lot to many of us, and even those who never knew him or heard his name still benefit from his efforts.

Thanks, Bill.

Paul P. Shultz
Newsletter Editor



Bill, engaged in conversation with Paul

"The single most important thing that makes psychotherapy a success is the character of the therapist... this is the core of our training program."

Leora Bar-Levav, MD



Being in a Psychotherapy Group ~ What's it like?

(...continued from page 1)

Today, Darlene has some healthy self-doubt today and she is growing her “observing ego,” her ability to perceive herself as others see her. The process of improving self-perception and correcting self-distortions, what is referred to as the growing capacity of the observing ego, is one of the primary reasons patients need group therapy as part of their treatment. The patient needs the experience of trying to give corrective feedback to a patient who is having difficulty receiving it plus the experience of trying to receive what seems like inaccurate feedback from other patients. It is more difficult to discount a number of group members than one therapist and thus it may not even be possible to grow observing ego in individual psychotherapy alone.

Mason, D. (2004, pp. 134-138). Who do you think you are? *Elle Magazine*.

Oltmanns, T.F. and Turkheimer, E. (2006). Perceptions of self and others regarding pathological personality traits. In R.F. Krueger and J.L. Tacket (Eds.): *Personality and psychopathology: Building bridges* (pp. 71-111). New York, NY, U.S: Guilford Press.

—Kirk Brink, PhD is an Adjunct Faculty Member of the
Institute who practices Integrated Individual and Group
Psychotherapy in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

Training Update

Over the last three years, the Institute has undergone a major re-organization process. As a result, our Marketing and Education Committees have been able to focus energies much more sharply than in the past. The Chairman of the Marketing Committee is Christine Debano, and Rosalind Peters, Ph.D. heads the Education Committee. Owing in large part to their efforts, the entire training program of the Institute has been reformatted and will soon be available in new brochures that are in print at this time. Christine and Rosalind deserve special thanks for the hard work they have put into this project.

Those interested in receiving copies of the new brochure may contact our Administrative Assistant, Annette, at 248-353-5333 or email her at annette@iigp.org.



General Information

Each of the Institute's trainings are offered in a 3 session format for 3.5 CEU's - \$50.00 (Discounts for students.) All seminars are held at 29600 Northwestern Hwy, Ste 100, Southfield, MI. The Institute offers these classes for physicians, psychologists and social workers. IIGP is approved by the Michigan State Medical Society and by the American Psychological Association to sponsor continuing education for physicians and psychologists. IIGP maintains responsibility for the programs and its content. Our programs are approved by the Michigan Social Work Continuing Education Collaborative for Social Workers for Continuing Education. **Reservations are required.** Please send an email to seminars@iigp.org or call (248) 353-5333 for reservations or for special accommodations.

Visit us on the web at www.iigp.org

Introduction to Integrated Individual and Group Psychotherapy
September 29 • 7:30 pm - 9:30 pm • Free of Charge

The Power of Secrets
September 8, 15, 22 • 12:15 pm - 1:30pm • \$50.00

Attachment Theory and Its Implication for Clinical Practice and Case Management
May 26, June 2, 9 • 7:30 pm - 9:30 pm • Free of Charge

Introduction to Integrated Individual and Group Psychotherapy
May 5 • 7:30 pm - 9:30 pm • Free of Charge

Exploring the Formation of Defense Structures in the Face of Fear
April 28, May 5, 12 • 12:15pm - 1:30pm • \$50.00

TUESDAY SEMINARS



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