

Florida Society of Bioenergetic Analysis

June 2017

Newsletter

Volume 1

The Bioenergetic Process

An interview with Silvina Henriquez, M.A.



Co-director of Escuela de Bioenergética, the Bioenergetics School in Buenos Aires, Argentina and FSBA grad 2010.

Bioenergetic analysis is different

from traditional psychotherapy. Its premise is that, as children, we learn to tighten muscles in different parts of our body as a defense against otherwise overwhelming emotions.

The First Contact

For Silvina, the first part of the process is to build a therapeutic relationship with the client. This often begins at first contact. It can be comforting for some clients to know what to expect when coming to their first session.

"Everything is about energy. Our body is our house. We don't have a body; we are our body. When you ask the question 'How much energy do you feel you have?' most people who come to therapy say less than 60%. But they can't explain why they feel so depleted."

Over time, these emotions become locked in the body's musculature, stop energy flows and limit awareness, feelings and expression. Bioenergetic therapy incorporates bodywork to release long-held emotions and unblock energy, restoring vitality.

In this issue, we have asked a leading practitioner to explain how she uses bioenergetics in her practice.

Silvina Henriquez is a certified Bioenergetic Therapist who has a thriving private practice and leads trainings in bioenergetics in many countries. Her work strongly embodies the core principles of the bioenergetic process.

"In general, the clients who come to my office already know I have a bioenergetics approach," Silvina says. "They might not know what this exactly means but they know it's not only talking therapy -- we work with the body and the mind".

Generally, the first contact is a telephone interview, and Silvina explains that bioenergetics is a body-mind psychotherapy that involves talking and also listening to and working with the body, in a systemic approach. She tells clients that it's important to come with comfortable clothes.

Exercise Spotlight



The Bow

The Bow is a bioenergetic exercise that is often used as a diagnostic tool by bioenergetic therapists. It is considered a stress position for the body, so when doing it, listen to your body and stop when needed. The Bow can help improve breathing and open the chest. It is also a great exercise to use to begin finding vibration in your body.

Instructions:

- 1) Stand with your feet beneath your hips.
- 2) Check your knees and make sure they are bent slightly.
- 3) Make a fist with each hand. Your fists should be relaxed, not tight.
- 4) Place your fists on the small of your back with your thumbs pointing upwards.
- 5) Keeping your weight on the balls of your feet, slowly arch back and allow your pelvis to move forward. Let your knees bend a little more with each of your first three exhales.
- 6) Hold the position and breathe.
- 7) If your body begins vibrating, feel the increase in your energy.
- 8) Stop if you become uncomfortable or feel pain.

The First Session

When the first session begins, the first impression is very important. It starts when the client opens the door, connects to the therapist, tells their story, moves and expresses themselves.

"We listen to the story, to the voice that has a lot to do with our identity, and listen to the language of the body. I pay attention to my feelings, and a 'key word or sentence' that relates to this human being in his own mystery. For instance, a client might say 'I'm strong but tired of resolving everything alone' or 'I need you to tell me I'm OK or I'm going to be OK.'"

After getting a 'big picture' sense of the client's issues, Silvina narrows her focus. "You pay attention to what you feel, and start to zoom in on how well the patient is grounding, breathing patterns, how much femininity or masculinity you see in the body, how much life it shows, and what kind of movements are restricted."

Putting her client at ease is important. "The first thing for me is that the client feels she/he can have enough time and space," Silvina says. "Then I give the bioenergetics contract and ask for permission to do a body reading or diagnosis from the body."

At this point, they both get more active. "We both need to stand up and ground, and then I'll ask the client to do The Bow and then ground again.

Silvina says The Bow is like a Rorschach for bioenergetic therapists. It gives a lot of information about character structures, tensions, where the body is charged or uncharged, how much grounding the person has, and breathing patterns.

The Bow also gives a lot of information about the client's relationship with the therapist and the exercises. For example, the client may ask "Am I doing this correctly?", or they may do a Bow where they split the head [hold their head at an odd angle], or really hurt

their back. "This is a lot of golden information about how they answer to stress in life," Silvina says.

Subsequent Sessions

After the first session, the work continues. Each session is an important part of the process for both the therapist and the client. The therapist learns more about the client and the client learns more about herself or himself. Silvina chooses interventions during her sessions to help the client in their process.

"If the person is grounded, you wait until their body gives you the clue or the impulse where to go," she says. "Sometimes it's a very slight movement, like you want to get rid of some heavy weight on the shoulders -- if you see that, that's the way to go. You may ask the person to follow that impulse by putting more energy in that movement... moving the body to follow the impulses. That is what I learned from Frank Hladky [a bioenergetic therapist, trainer and mentor]; if you wait for the body, it will always give you the clue where to start."

A clue is only the beginning, however. "A memory is held in the body, so you know where to start but you don't know what memories that movement might bring to the session," Silvina says. "All the wisdom is in the client's body and awareness. As the therapist, you help that self-awareness, self-expression and self-possession by being a mirror and showing what you see, and suggesting where to put more energy, movement, attention."

Ending the Client Relationship

There is no specific time frame for the bioenergetics process. Every process is very personal, but Silvina says it won't be less than a year. It depends on the problems clients want to work on or solve, and the resources they have or have to develop in therapy.

Deciding to stop therapy is a collaborative process between the client and the therapist. Silvina waits for the client to bring it up, then may

suggest reducing sessions from weekly to bi-weekly or monthly and seeing how it is for the client.

Silvina says that when she accepts someone as a client and feels they can make a good connection [transference, counter transference] they 'walk together' for a while facing life's challenges. But that relationship is a cycle, and when it ends, the client's life process continues.

When a client is ready to stop therapy, Silvina always asks "How did you come? How are you leaving? Is there anything you feel was not addressed?" She also tells them about the new resources they developed and that they can always come back when they need -- that their time and space is safe.

In the months before the final session, they work on termination patterns clients used before, and how it would be healthier to close this process without repeating old or unhealthy patterns. Separation is not always easy: abandonment issues can arise, some people disappear, and others need to get angry to leave.

Even people who cannot commit to long-term bioenergetic therapy can find therapy beneficial. "Some clients come from abroad to work for a week having one or two sessions each day, then they go back to their lives," Silvina says. "You can do a follow up through Skype. It's not the same, but you can see great results."

Final Words

The bioenergetic process is a beautiful adventure for both the therapist and the client, and it involves much care and respect.

"Everything is about energy," Silvina says. "Our body is our house. We don't *have* a body, we *are* our body. How much energy do we feel we have? When you ask, 'How much energy do you feel you have?' most people who come to therapy say less than 60%. But they can't explain why they feel so depleted."

Silvina believes in the bioenergetic viewpoint: Chronic tensions in the

body and pains keep energy from flowing inside our mental and physical processes. Every tension in our body has a special relationship with something that cannot be free, and it always has to do with

emotions and the kind of stories we create. If you work to release those tensions, you'll have more energy for doing something different, feeling something different. You'll gain

deeper insights and new possibilities of answering to daily challenges.

"Everything that is alive pulsates, and you can see how free someone is in their own body by being aware of how they move, flow, connect."

"Thank you, Feet."

By Kelly Nenezian

I remember my first Bioenergetics Workshop. Soledad Venezuela was instructing, and one of the first things we did was thank our feet. For a person new to bioenergetics, this was an interesting experience. She had us bend over and stroke our feet lovingly saying, "Thank you, Feet." We did this for about a minute. I had no idea what this meant or what I thought of it at the time.

Later that evening, I reflected on the day, and this moment stuck out to me. I began thinking about how incredible our feet are. They give us balance, connect us to the ground, and allow us to move. Why had I never taken the time to think of this before?

I suddenly felt grateful for my feet. From this simple but incredible experience I felt more connected to my body. Now, I thank my feet every morning when I wake up. Not only am I paying attention to my feet, but I also feel calmer throughout the day knowing that my feet will carry me through whatever I may face.

If you would like to start connecting with your feet and body, take a few minutes to do this exercise: Take your shoes and socks off, and sit on the ground with both of your feet in front of you. Look at your feet: Are they pink with circulation or do they appear lifeless and pale? Are they warm or cold? Now move your feet around at the ankle.

Is your ankle tense or does it move freely? Next, wiggle your toes. Do they feel stiff or free? When you are ready, stand up. Notice how your feet feel on the ground. Do they feel firmly planted, or do they seem to only lightly touch the ground? What do your feet need right in this moment?

It is important that when checking how your feet look and feel you do so lovingly and not with judgement. Your feet can tell a lot about your story.

I highly recommend taking some time to say 'thank you' to your feet in whatever way feels right to you. They have walked you through your life and continue to support your journey.

Upcoming Events

Certification Training Events:

September 21–24, 2017
Laurie Ure, LICSW, CBT

November 30–December 3, 2017
Marzena Barszcz, MA and Paul Amberg

February 1–4, 2018
Soledad Valenzuela, MA

April, 12-15. 2018
Silvina Henriquez, MA

June 21–24, 2018
Ana Murillo and Alberto Wang, MA

Open Workshops:

Joy and Vitality
Soledad Venezuela
July 28-30 2017

Bioenergetics and Boosting
Your Leadership Resources
Veronica Morgenston and
Sandra Ramos
August 25-27 2017