

Florida Society of Bioenergetic Analysis

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Discovering Needs

An interview with Laurie Ure, LICSW, Certified Bioenergetic Therapist



"Everyone coming to therapy has some unmet needs that are causing them pain in their life. Identifying and to some extent addressing these needs, which often can change from moment to moment, is part of our job as Bioenergetic therapists."

Whether you are a therapist or a person seeking therapy, you have probably asked yourself something similar to: What do I need to be happy? This is not an easy question to answer.

Many of us are disconnected from our needs. Bioenergetic therapy is different from conventional therapies in that it uses the body along with words, to identify a person's underlying and unidentified needs. The body tells us what we need if we can learn to listen.

Laurie Ure has been a Bioenergetic practitioner for over 25 years. She recently conducted a training at the Florida Society for Bioenergetic Analysis entitled, "*The 64 Million Dollar Question: What Does the Client Most Need in this Moment?*" The topic centered on helping the therapist and client identify what is needed in therapy.

Disconnecting From Needs

As children we naturally express our needs and ask for them to be met. So what happens to confuse this process?

"When a child learns that their needs (and wants) are not acceptable to their caretakers," Laurie says, "they learn to shut down their needs and to stop asking for their needs to be met. The child does not realize that it is the caretaker who cannot meet their needs.

Instead, the child internalizes the belief that something is wrong with them for having needs, or with asking for their needs to be met. The child may come to believe that they should not need at all."

If you imagine what it's like to ask someone to fulfill a need, you may feel uncomfortable. Laurie says this is a sign that you probably were shamed at some point for having needs/wants, and this has left a lasting impression.

The Power of Connection

Therapy promotes personal growth which includes learning to be more in contact with yourself, including your body and your emotions. The therapist's role is to assist in the process, but not necessarily to provide all of the answers along the way.

"Therapy is a process of getting back in touch with one's needs, along with one's wants, emotions and expectations in relationships," Laurie says. "When the therapist gives the client permission to express their needs (wants, feelings and expectations), it gives the person a different message. Over time they can learn to identify their needs, to accept them and to seek positive ways to meet their needs."

Being able to identify your needs, wants, emotions and expectations is healing and the first step in asking for them to be met.

Exercise Spotlight

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Connecting with Yourself

To connect with ourselves, we must connect more fully with our bodies. Our body is a very important aspect of self. Ideally we can feel a sense of freedom in our body. This exercise helps us work towards that.

Instructions:

- 1) Stand with your feet beneath your hips.
- 2) Bend your knees slightly.
- 3) Begin by breathing in very deeply and exhaling through your mouth with a loose jaw.
- 4) Slowly allow your exhale to have sound. Any sound that wants to escape is welcome. This can be a sigh, a scream or a word/phrase.
- 5) Ask yourself what it feels like to make a sound. To allow your voice to be only yours in this moment.
- 6) Hold the position and breathe, continuing to explore your voice.
- 7) Now, start to move your body. There is no right or wrong way to do this, just allow your body to move in whatever way feels good to you. Some ideas are to start with swinging your arms or bouncing up and down.
- 8) Breathe and enjoy.
- 9) As always, check in with yourself throughout the process. Is it okay for me to move my body in whatever way feels good to me? Is it okay for my voice to make whatever sounds it wants? Am I allowed to be free in this moment?

Learning to Reconnect

Being connected with what we need is an important part of therapy and personal growth. But learning to identify our needs is not a simple process. A Bioenergetic therapist can help.

“The client generally is not able to identify their needs about how to get to where they wish to go,” Laurie explains, “so an important part of our job as therapists is to act as a guide in directing them towards their desired goal. This can include inviting them to express an emotion which has been repressed, encouraging them to vocalize with words or sounds, working with making boundaries more strongly or practicing reaching out for what they want and need.

“At times a person needs help in releasing guilt and shame or in gaining compassion for themselves and understanding of their situation. Sometimes a person needs nudging to do something that is initially uncomfortable for them, while at other times they need comfort and reassurance. Sometimes humor is what is needed to bring levity or a shift in perspective, and at times quiet and not intervening allows the client to integrate something new.”

For therapists, being connected with our own body and needs is an important part of helping others.

“As Bioenergetic therapists, one of our most important tools is our own self-awareness, which comes from being aware of our own body,” Laurie says.

“As a client is talking, I observe them along with listening to their words. I sense in myself what is blocked in them that inhibits their energy, their expression and/or their capacity for joy in their life. Generally it is some version of fear or anxiety, which manifests as physical tension in their body. I use my intuition to sense what might be their next step towards freeing themselves from this tension, this fear.”

Bioenergetics' Unique Way to Work with Unmet Needs

Our bodies contain insight into our unmet needs through muscular tension patterns developed in our childhoods. Bioenergetic therapists term this ‘character structure.’ We learn to read these patterns of tension in the body to guide in understanding and helping the client. The character structures can help give the therapist insight into what needs went unmet through what stage of early development.

“All of the character structures have some type of unmet needs at their foundation,” Laurie says. “For example, the person with a schizoid character needs permission to claim their right to exist. The oral character needs support in asserting their right to have needs and wants and to reach out for them to be met. The masochistic character needs understanding of their struggle and encouragement to express themselves. The narcissistic character needs permission to assert their boundaries and to be able to receive love freely. And the

rigid character needs help connecting their heart and their sexual feelings as well as support to assert themselves in going after what they want. This is a simplification but provides a general overview.”

Analyzing body structures to discover unmet needs gives the Bioenergetic therapist deep insight into patients’ inner struggles. Such insight may not be revealed as clearly with only talk therapy.

Final Words

Our body communicates that the work we are doing is working. It does this by releasing tension. Laurie says physical shifts provide visual confirmation of a moment of healing.

“Generally we can know that we have addressed a client’s needs when something shifts in them -- for example, when they take a spontaneous deep breath in a session, when they report feeling calmer or lighter or more relaxed and over time when they have moved towards the overall goals they have identified for themselves.”

Bioenergetic therapists, through their combined focus on reading tensions in the body, observing character structure, working with the body and understanding the person can identify and assist in healing unmet needs in ways deeper than traditional talk therapy can allow. The success of Bioenergetic therapy can be evident in the moment and over time as clients’ bodies release chronic tensions and feel freer.

How I get what I need when I don't know what I want

By: Tom Schneider (3rd year FSBA trainee)

My session has started. The therapist and I are standing a few feet apart. She’s quietly reading my body, noting energetic holding, being open to intuition. Then comes a deep, complex question:

“What do you need today?”

I envy the people who know. Often I have no idea. I feel stupid and panicky,

like something’s wrong with me. Still, the question is helpful, because it forces me to focus, go inside.

My first response is often “I don’t know.” Then the quest begins. It’s like shopping for the perfect gift -- you don’t know it till you see it. In my case, I don’t know what I’m looking for until I find it.

Therapy is a journey without a map-- but many surprises.

Feelings light the path to needs. And identifying feelings isn’t always easy. When I began therapy many years ago, my body felt frozen -- I couldn’t feel anything. That deadness was terrifying.

Bioenergetic exercises helped me develop body awareness. Gradually, identifying and expressing feelings became easier.

For me, feelings arise spontaneously as impulses and aren't easy to label. When I'm in a session, I try to just share them in the moment, unfiltered, in words or actions. I trust the therapist to help me explore, dissect and understand them.

For example, I might I say "I'm feeling nervous, like I'm being judged." Then the therapeutic process starts. Ultimately, it could lead to insights not just about my experience with the therapist but with others in the outside world.

For me, expressing what I'm truly feeling in the moment is enormously important. Over-processing triggers self-judgment, inhibition and shutting down. This can happen in individual work but is more likely in groups. Seeing others showing their true selves in group work is a revelation. Their courage and honesty has helped me heal and show myself more. Learning to recognize, name and handle shame has been a huge step for me.

Not every session works. Then I remind myself to trust the process. Every

session is a domino, and eventually they all tip, creating momentum and a path.

Emotional pain and feeling unfulfilled brought me to therapy. I didn't know what I needed; I just wanted to feel better. Now my life has improved enormously. I still don't know all the steps I need to take to heal, but the process is working. I keep getting more of what I need ... without ever really knowing what that is.

Upcoming Events

Certification Training Events:

April 12-15, 2018

Silvina Henriquez, MA and John Yong, JD

June 21-24, 2018

Ana Murillo and Alberto Wang, MA

Open Workshops:

April 28-29, 2018

Bioenergetics Men's Work
Eric Diamond, PhD

May 18-20 2018

Bioenergetics Women's Workshop
Laurie Ure, LCSW and
Rev. Elizabeth Ann King, MDiv

June 25, 2018

Supervision for Bioenergetics Practitioners
Ana Murillo and Alberto Wang, MA

June 30-July 1, 2018

A Workshop for Couples
Ana Murillo and Alberto Wang, MA

August 3-5 2018

All You Need is Love
Soledad Valenzuela, MA