

INTERNATIONAL **BODY PSYCHOTHERAPY** JOURNAL

Published by the European and United States Associations for Body Psychotherapy

Call for Papers

Summer 2024

Special Issue

Emotion and the Body

In the past twenty-five years, there has been a revolution in our understanding of the role of the body in cognition, emotion, and behavior. Cognitive and affective neuroscience research have clearly shown that emotion determines every aspect of cognition and behavior in every moment of our lives.

This implies that every therapy modality—body-oriented or otherwise—would have better outcomes if it gave emotion and its regulation an important, if not central, role in its treatment approaches.

Neuroscientific evidence in the past twenty-five years has also revealed that cognition, emotion, and behavior depend not only on the brain, but also on how we embody, and the environment.

This has clear implications for all psychotherapy modalities—body-oriented or otherwise. To work with cognition, emotion, or behavior without taking the body and the environment into account would be to provide less-than-optimal care to our clients.

This strong evidence offers all body psychotherapy approaches the material to build a valid theoretical scientific bridge of their own.

In this exciting time of advances in our understanding of the importance of the body in all psychological processes, we are also learning that cognition, emotion, and behavior are not as distinct as we might have believed.

Their physiology is inseparable in both the brain and body. Given that their physiologies are interrelated, it would seem that it does not matter if our work focuses on cognition, emotion, or behavior. One would expect that changing one would change the other two.

However, there are at least two reasons why working with emotion might be a more important or productive starting point than working with cognition or behavior:

- Emotion determines cognition and behavior moment-by-moment.
- The choice of the best behavioral strategy in a given situation is optimal when emotion is available rather than when it is not.

The causal role of emotion in cognition and behavior and the dependence of the body and environment imply that not only should emotion play the primary, if not an important role in treatment, but that it needs to be worked with in relation to the body and environment for optimal cognitive, emotional, and behavioral outcomes in all approaches.

This is all the clearer in the research evidence from the paradigm of embodied emotions. When the face or body are inhibited from participating in an emotional experience—in other words, emotionally defended against—the brain’s ability to process the situation cognitively, emotionally, and behaviorally is severely compromised.

When non-body-oriented psychotherapists work with emotions, they usually focus on what might be in the way of accessing them by providing support for the emotions, and working with various psychological defenses against them, such as denial.

However, because their training does not include the body, they are not aware of how strong physiological defenses against emotions can be, for example, how constriction can form very early on in childhood and persist into adulthood. They also do not know how to work with the body to undo the defenses against emotions—how to access them somatically and regulate them.

As body psychotherapists, we know how various physiological defenses can form against emotions in the various systems of the body and brain. We also know how persistent and potent a role these defenses can play in defending against and dysregulating emotions. We also know different methods for working with such somatic defenses.

Therefore, as guest editor of the **IBPJ Special Issue on EMOTION**, I invite contributions from practitioners of different body psychotherapy modalities to present:

- How your specific approach understands the role of the body in emotions
- Your understanding of the relation of emotion to cognition and behavior
- How your system understands the physiological and energetic defenses that can make emotions inaccessible or dysregulated
- Your methods for working with such defenses to access and regulate emotions
- Expected or predictable outcomes of body-oriented interventions in cognitive, emotional, and behavioral realms
- Different goals of emotional work such as emotional expression, regulation, and capacity building

Please include one or more examples, or a case study, to illustrate your presentation. I also invite work with emotions through the body with special populations such as children and people with borderline traits.

It is my hope that this special issue on EMOTION will offer articles from various modalities in order to inform all body psychotherapists about how each of us works with emotions and the body. This would also be of tremendous value to the increasingly large numbers of psychotherapists who are becoming aware of body psychotherapy and somatic psychology, looking for ways to work with the body and with emotions in particular.

Papers should be submitted by October 31, 2024
submissions@ibpj.org

or contact Raja Selvam
 at drrajaselvamphd@gmail.com if you have any questions

