

A Reflection on the Writing of “Emergence: A Tale of Two Boys”

By Neal H. Brodsky



The narrative that plays out in my chapter includes a powerful range of challenges within the families of the two boys profiled – adoption, problems with alcohol, separation and divorce, and issues of multi-cultural identity. I have been affected personally by all of these within my own family system and so the emergence of these boys into their own power and agency within the course of the sessions was something that deeply touched me.

When emotions such as grief or terror are present, when the possibility of pleasure is present, we harm ourselves as humans when we turn away from their exploration and expression. Both boys desperately needed to feel what was really inside them, to step away in the therapy room from the “looking good” mentality that plagues most of us culturally and contributes to the formation of bodily defenses against breathing, movement, emotion and healing.

How does it feel to be “yelled at” by a parent or teacher you need and also distrust? What is it like to be in a body that looks and feels, in part, a different color, or a different culture? Or have a creative mind that is so quick it can hurt as you focus, laser-like, on fear, loneliness and possible rejection? Such experiences beg for exploration of the underlying primitive emotional responses that sometimes first occurred before a child had words. This is



why I am so passionate as are other contributors to "Deep Play," that therapy for children contain words but not be ruled by them. This is also why therapeutic work that combines attention to bodily experience, movement and dynamic play with various media is so magical and effective with children.

On a surface level, I am dealing as a therapist with difficult family dynamics and children effected by them. At the next level, I am aware and focused, when a young person is in the room, on the emergence of character structure before musculature has been patterned, molded and congealed to create the illusion of safety while effectively but sadly holding back essential life force. This patterning along with difficult life events and accompanying painful narratives is what usually brings adult clients into my practice. With children, I am working to see what can be accomplished by stepping in at an earlier stage before deeper "damage" is done.

My work is driven by awareness of what can happen at its worst when a child "falls through the cracks" since I live 20 miles from Newtown, Connecticut, the place where so many children were violently murdered by a young person, undoubtedly in deep

pain himself. I learned how to "dive deep" to the source of pain from my mentors and teachers in the Core Energetics community, from Dennis McCarthy through his practice of dynamic play and from my wife, Judy Gotlieb, who continues to support me and other colleagues with the adaptation of body-centered methods to heal children and help families. Ultimately, the broader vision that propels me is the hope that through this work clients can access life with fuller energy, clarity, purpose and peace – and that a few more will come to feel the deliciousness of just being on this earth. And yes, I am graced with possibilities for healing my own inner children along the way.

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