

Revival: Somatic Methodism & My Departure from the SE Trauma Institute With Steven Hoskinson

In 1999, months after the birth of my first child Jacob, I boarded a plane to New York to support the first Somatic Experiencing® training in New York City. Little did I realize it was an embarkation onto “the circuit” — professional teachers and trainers who, like itinerant preachers of not so long ago, travel from town to town, country to country to share their version of good news.

In my home state of Kentucky such itinerant ministers — or Circuit Riders — rode on horseback to visit their flock and run “Camp Meetings.”

Camp Meetings often ran for six days then finally settled into a 4-day event, Friday through Mondayⁱ. These events included experiences befitting a somatic tradition that arose from the rich field of the human potential movement and Esalen Institute back in the dayⁱⁱ

“Many people at the early camp meetings displayed unusual physical manifestations: fainting, rolling, laughing, running, singing, dancing, and jerking — a spasmodic twitching of the entire body, where they hopped with head, limbs, and trunk shaking ‘as if they must ... fly asunder.’ At some camp meetings, watchmen carrying long white sticks patrolled the meeting grounds each evening to stop any sexual mischief. Enemies of camp meetings sneered that ‘more souls were begot than saved’” (Beougher, 1995).

I had been on the somatic “circuit” some years, training therapists and other teachers in Europe and the US before realizing important personal ancestral connections. Six unbroken generations of Methodist pastors in the Hoskinson lineage, and both my father and his father had been teachers at one time. Lineage matters. It’s an important map for those who care to join in common causes and for those who will come after us. Publicly acknowledging our heritage and roots serves to bring consciousness to our interconnectedness in what I have described elsewhere as our species’ “Nemo Moment”. Suffering the ill effects of our accidental domestication in this age of fragmentation, we require better tools of connection, and this includes improved naming and tracing our heritage.

Writing this inaugural blog in the wake of my departure after a 17-year career of teaching for Peter Levine’s SE™ Trauma Institute, I know that citing sources and making appropriate attributions is a clear requirement in scientific and academic circles. However, the training community has commercial interests—having a unique and special ‘brand’ is eventually what pays. And, in this information age, sourcing intellectual lineage is readily available.

The United States Association for Body Psychotherapy (USABP) stands in a uniquely opportune position as an umbrella organization for somatic clinical work in the US along with its sister organization the European Association for Body Psychotherapy (EABP) and the Association for Prenatal and Perinatal Psychology and Health (APPPAH).

As 'parent' organizations with more interest in connecting than competing, perhaps we, who are members, might consider a more thoroughgoing look at the lineage and sources that are the common roots of the diverse branches of expression of somatic work worldwide.

Now officially off the SE circuit and at the outset of my Organic Intelligence® embarkation, I want to acknowledge with a deep bow of gratitude my key forbears and theirs: Peter Levine (Olney/Rolf), Stephen Gilligan (Erickson/Bateson), Coryl Crane (Chiba/Ueshiba), and Rob & Carol Cherney (Renard/Gurdjieff).

And to my Methodist ancestors, a bow for the impulse of "method," a special concern for service to the underserved, and for the vitality of a heart "strangely warmed."

Do you have an interest in sharing common interests and lineage in this field?

Let's connect — including at our Association sponsored Camp Meetings: the USABP, in July (Rhode Island, CT), APPPAH in September (Kenmore, WA) and the EABP in October (Athens, Greece).

See you in July!

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ⁱ Beougher, T.K. (1995) "Camp meetings and circuit riders: Did you know?" Christianity Today (45) retrieved online at <http://www.christianitytoday.com/history/issues/issue-45/camp-meetings-and-circuit-riders-did-you-know.html>

ⁱⁱ (cf *What's wrong & the OI Addiction model (trauma)* <http://oiblog.org/working-the-physiology-using-trauma/>)