

Minna Martin: A body-oriented journey



Minna Martin is a psychologist, psychotherapist, teacher, and supervisor. She is also author of several books. She is a teacher in two current CAT trainings and a teacher trainee of body-focused psychotherapy (created by George Downing). She is an instructor and teacher of psychophysical breathing therapy and one of the authors of a book *Breathing as a tool of self-regulation and self-reflection* published by Karnac in 2016. In her own therapy work Minna Martin combines cognitive analytic psychotherapy, body-oriented psychotherapy, breathing therapy and mentalization-based treatment.

Summary of presentation

A body-oriented journey

My journey towards becoming a body-oriented psychotherapist wasn't something I had planned or aimed for – it has merely been a search for myself and understanding what is going on inside us. I first wondered if combining body and mind work is possible at the end of my psychology studies. My first profession was a physiotherapist and I started thinking if it would be possible to combine these two aspects somehow. This point of view wasn't very common or popular, so it took some courage and persistence trying to find my own path. I attended a Breathing School instructor education and based first my work on that method. I worked 16 years at the Finnish Student Health Services and at the time I had quite much freedom to create body-oriented short-term group therapies for the students. I was especially interested to work with the patients who had bodily symptoms and illnesses. With these patients I learned that the ability to reflect one's own physical and mental experiences is crucial to be able to sooth oneself and regulate the emotions and sensations of the body. Not being able to reflect what is going on in the body or mind leaves the person vulnerable, sensitive to the fight-flight-freeze reactions and feelings of unbound anxiety. It seemed that the symptoms the patients had were merely the top of an iceberg and the sign of other difficulties behind the scenes. The main problems seemed to be often connected to the relationships with the meaningful people – the way people relate to oneself and the others. Working with breathing, muscle tension and body image seemed to help to form the base for the mental function and self-reflection abilities. Better self-reflection abilities, ability to mentalize, often helps the patient to understand the relevance of the symptoms and other problems.

I spent years to study CAT and body-oriented psychotherapy consecutively and found out that the best way to learn is to write and teach. During this lecture I try to describe some of the things I have found interesting and valuable as a psychotherapist, supervisor, and a teacher.