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The Official Newsletter of the San Gabriel Valley Psychological Association

AN OFFICIAL CHAPTER OF THE CALIFORNIA PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION

September/October 2016

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Upcoming Lunch Meetings

Date: Friday, September 9, 2016
Topic: Working With Older Clients
Speaker: Phillip V. Stradling, PhD, MSG, MA

Date: Friday, October 14, 2016
Topic: Couple Therapy: The Challenge of Treating Infidelity
Speakers: Elany Mueller, MFT and
Megan Torrey-Payne, LCSW



**PLEASE RSVP NO LATER THAN THE FIRST MONDAY OF THE MONTH TO YOUR INTERNET EVITE,
OR TO THE SGVPA MAIL BAG INFO@SGVPA.ORG.**

CE credits available for Psychologists, LCSWs and MFTs

Monthly luncheons are held on the second Friday of the month at the Women's City Club,
160 N. Oakland Avenue, Pasadena, from 12:00 to 1:45 p.m.

Members Costs:

Luncheon, Service, and Parking Privileges...\$22
CE credits...\$20
Audit...\$10

Non-Member Costs

Luncheon, Service, and Parking Privileges...\$27
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Please note: Unclaimed lunch reservations will be billed to the individual--So please claim them!

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



Dear Colleagues,
Summer is almost over, and what a time it has been in our country, and for our world. There has been incredible strife and violence; sometimes it has seemed like it couldn't get any worse. I have been personally grieved to watch the shootings, bombings, and other shows of hatred that have taken place recently. There seems to be no reprieve in the horrors and brutality we've seen. There is also a tremendous spirit of division coursing through the nation with the upcoming presidential election. I don't recall politicians' personalities being so prominent, or so debated by the general public, in any other election. The abrasive discourse we're witnessing highlights how destructive human beings can be when empathy, tolerance, respect, and valuing of each other are cast aside.

The world needs more of what we, as psychologists, promote. I am thinking of values and skills such as: loving and being vulnerable with feelings, staying genuinely engaged with others, thinking critically, soothing ourselves in order to stay engaged with others, and practicing reflection and moderation. I truly hope each of you appreciates the profound value of what you do on a micro-level in your offices, and that we can all continue to think about how we can impact our communities more broadly for the good, on a macro-level. As I've said previously in this space, our clinical work is so focused and micro-level, it can be difficult to imagine how we can make a difference on a macro-level. But we can.

Perhaps the life of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., can offer some insight. I do not want to oversimplify his teachings. But it seems to me they apply abundantly to our current times. For example, moving

(continued on p. 2)

beyond fear and hatred as a reaction to attack and offense (King said, “Darkness cannot drive our darkness: only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate: only love can do that”); speaking out when someone else is harmed (“In the end, we will remember not the words of our enemies, but the silence of our friends.”); combatting injustice with peaceful protest (“Peace is not merely a distant goal that we seek, but a means by which we arrive at that goal”); and fervently hoping and believing that things can get better (“The arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends towards justice.”).

This summer, the Board of SGVPA felt compelled to issue a statement asserting our position, given the unprecedented spate of violence the country endured. (It was posted originally on the Listserv, and is printed in this edition of our newsletter.) As a psychological community, we wanted to speak out. My thanks to all the members of the Board, for their collaboration, and to all those of you who responded. I believe that the majority of us in Psychology are grieved by the suffering and strife, and are seeking ways to make a positive difference.

I also want to remind you that CPA is watching and speaking out on policies that affects psychological practice and consumers of psychology services in our state. Supporting CPA is another way to advocate for positive changes in our society on a macro-level. Speaking and working together, we can surely help shape a better future. Keep on.

Warmly,

Ellen Miller Kwon, PsyD
President

Reminder: Future of Psychology Scholarship applications are currently being accepted! Please contact Dr. Ellen Miller Kwon.

SGVPA Events Calendar

Friday, 9/9/16 — *Monthly CE Luncheon — 12:00 noon*
Working with Older Clients
Phil Spradling, PhD
11:45—Registration
12:00—Presentation begins



Friday, 9/16/16 *Panel Event*
Starting a Private Practice
Time and location TBA



Friday, 10/14/16 — *Special Event*
Moments of Meaning Presentation
South Pasadena Music Conservatory
1509 Mission St., So. Pasadena
7:00—9:00 pm



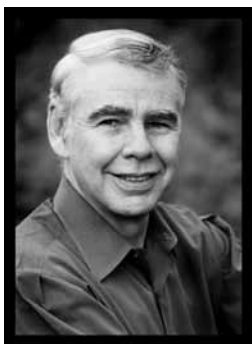
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Megan Torrey-Payne, LCSW
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The Transformational Journey of Aikido

Part II

By James S. Graves, PhD, PsyD



“All the principles and way of being that I found in sitting still in meditation, I have found over the last few months in movement while learning and practicing Aikido . . . ” —Aikido student essay

In Part I of this series, I described some of the psychological benefits of training in the Japanese martial art of Aikido. This article will focus on the relationship between Aikido and the practice of mindfulness.

Aikido Is Mindfulness in Motion

Mindfulness practice as an intervention to promote mental health pervades our field these days. Mindful meditation practices build the ability not only to be present in the moment, but also to recognize a distracting thought, identify it non-judgmentally, and then return to the present moment. This ability becomes ingrained only by hundreds or thousands of repetitions over a long time period.

Aikido is itself a mindfulness training process, fostering the ability to remain completely focused on the moment. Like mindfulness meditation, Aikido practice requires purposeful concentration on every element of a technique to “get it right”—especially during the first few hundred repetitions. An early-stage student, or an experienced practitioner trying to learn an unfamiliar technique, will often have distracting thoughts that take attention away from performing it. This is not unlike the novice meditator who finds it difficult to stay focused on the meditation process. But over time and with repetitive practice, both the meditator and the Aikido practitioner gain the ability to maintain their focus for longer periods.

Practicing mindfulness in the martial context adds the intensifying element of striving to maintain physical safety for both partners—an imperative which may accelerate the acquisition of mindfulness skills. In addition to training in empty-handed forms of Aikido, we also train with traditional weapons, such as the *jo* (wooden staff), *bokken* (wooden sword) and *tanto* (wooden knife). This type of training further intensifies the reality of the attack and thus, increases the need to maintain focus. When a hard oak stick is coming at you, it gets your attention. Like the highly experienced meditator, the long-time Aikido practitioner gets into the “flow” of the technique with little conscious effort—which is the so-called “no-mind response” in martial arts. This is the application of mindfulness in practice.

The Benefits of Learning to Take the Fall

Aikido training primarily involves practicing with a partner, where one partner is in the role of the “attacker,” and the other the “defender.” The pair typically alternates roles after four repetitions. As the defender performs a technique against an attack, the attacker takes the fall, which is a skill-set known as *ukemi* (i.e., taking the fall; see photo). There are about eight different types of falls in early-stage training, with many different variations added as students progress to higher levels. Learning to perform *ukemi* at even a basic level—allowing yourself to tumble head over heels in response to a defensive technique—is often more challenging than performing defensive maneuvers. I explain the challenge of *ukemi* to students this way: while your partner is trying hard to unbalance you, follow the forces in a way that you maintain as much balance and body control as possible—WITHOUT RESISTING. Learning *ukemi* requires courage to progress to higher levels, and trust in one’s instructor and partners to keep you from being injured.



From a psychological perspective, the practice of *ukemi* in Aikido is about developing resilience. An early-stage Aikido student with significant meditation experience (quoted above) describes *ukemi* as being “. . . in absolute alignment with meditation, as it is not about resisting the fall, believing you will never fall or even being opposed to falling, but rather about learning the art of taking the fall.” In the same essay, he writes that Aikido is about becoming “an individual who can survive anything that comes his/her way.” I see this as practically a definition of psychological resilience, which involves the capacity to adapt to trying circumstances. In practice, *ukemi* requires a high level of moment-by-moment focus, especially as this role has a greater vulnerability for injury. Thus, both roles in Aikido practice contain elements closely analogous to mindfulness meditation training.

Aikido training is certainly not for everyone. It requires a desire to engage in a vigorous physical activity, as well as enjoying the challenge of learning a non-intuitive martial strategy. But for those who meet these criteria, consistent Aikido practice plays a positive role in psychological development, in addition to the development of physical skills and stamina. Aikido as mindfulness in motion certainly contributes to positive psychological development.

Dr. Jim Graves, a long-time member of SGVPA, has a private practice in Pasadena. He is also Owner and Chief Instructor of Southland Aikido in Monterey Park, holding a 5th degree Black Belt with World Aikido Headquarters in Tokyo and an Instructor Certification with the United States Aikido Federation. He can be reached at j.graves@sbcglobal.net.

The Interpersonal Triangle: Working the Triangle—A Way of Listening

Part III

By Sam Alibrando, PhD



Since this is the third installment of a series, here's a brief review of the main points from Parts I & II. (Members can read the entire articles by checking out the archives on the SGVPA website, July/August 2015, and January/February 2016.)

The Thesis: There are three dimensions of the psychological world:

- *Power* (height) dimension, based on Karen Horney's "moving-against" relational style; and Wilfred Bion's *Hate* link. The psychological orientation of this dimension is the Self (singular "I" or plural "we").
- *Heart* (width) dimension, based on Karen Horney's "moving-toward" relational style and Wilfred Bion's *Love* link. The psychological orientation of this dimension is the (care for and need of the) Other.
- *Knowing or Mindfulness* (depth) dimension, based on Karen Horney's "moving-away" relational style and Wilfred Bion's *Knowing* link. The psychological orientation of this dimension is neither Self nor Other, but Knowing.

(Significantly, these three modes are *not* personality styles. Rather they are each one of three discrete axes on which we interpersonally move, in three dimensions.)

- Each movement or dimension can be either positive or negative. The *negative* of each dimension is driven or established by anxiety, is the basis of reactivity, and portrays different types of sub-optimal functioning.
- The *positive* dimensions cannot stand-alone, but exist only in a dynamic balance (synergy) to each other. We know this synergy as therapists when we are able to listen deeply (positive-Toward), while being observant, consciously present and contained (positive-Away), and able to keep good boundaries and tell the client truths about themselves (healthy-Against). This is what I previously referred to as our therapeutic "sweet spot."

I ended the last article with the question, "How do we move our clients (and ourselves as therapists) from implicit negative modes to a more positive synergistic mode of relating?" We do this by using a process called "working the triangle," which I'll illustrate with an example. If you remember the CEO from the second article, you'll recall he kept poor boundaries (negative Toward) with his staff, and had outbreaks of rage (negative Against) when frustrated. When I was coaching him, I asked him a simple question: "What dimension are you not using?" The answer was obvious. "Moving-away," he replied.

Dr. Sam Alibrando can be reached at Sam@apc3.com.

You see, the secret feature in working the triangle is not trying to reduce what you are doing that is negative, but increasing the positive of what you are not doing. We spent the next few months *not* trying to make him less angry, but instead finding ways to build more mindful responses into his interpersonal repertoire. As he began doing this, he became more balanced *in all three dimensions*. Whenever someone brings in the positive energy of the "missing movement," it automatically corrects and augments the other dimensions—thus synergy.

I refer to the Interpersonal Triangle as a meta-model because it transcends theoretical orientation:

- As a psychoanalyst you would "analyze" your patient's resistance to each avoided dimension. With the CEO, an analyst might explore his fear of being insignificant, —a basic anxiety associated with moving-away—and perhaps tying it to transference and/or his early life experiences with a parent.
- If you are a cognitive-behavioral therapist, you will explore and question their dysfunctional thinking about moving-away.

In another example from the second article, I worked with a woman who was constantly being "hit on" by her male boss. A healthy (positive-Against) response to this would be for her to set a boundary with him. However, she had notable fear of saying "no" to authority. To work the triangle in this case was to explore her fears of moving-against, and risking the loss of the attention she sought from a parent figure. Perhaps a cognitive-behavioral therapist would have explored her faulty thinking about this. A mindfulness therapist might help her mindfully hold her conflicted feeling without acting them out.

In this way, working the triangle is a guide of where to focus and how to listen. We can even use this as therapists when we get thrown off kilter in a session. If we find our self becoming impatient (Against) and emotionally detached (Away) from a client, we should consider different ways to Moving-toward the client, for example, by listening deeply to what they are experiencing. This should bring us back to our "therapeutic sweet-spot."

In closing, you are invited to go to Power-Heart-Mindfulness.com to download a copy of the Relationship Circle, depicting positive and negative attitudinal and behavioral examples of each dimension. And while you are there, please take the free *Interpersonal Triangle Inventory*. I also would like to mention my new book, *The Three Dimensions of Emotion*, which is now available online.

Psychology and Family Law

The Importance of Empathy in the Legal Profession

Part II of a Series

By Mark Baer, Esq.



In Part I of this series, I started describing a program I gave at the first official meeting of the Bruin Professionals Lawyers Affinity Group on the importance of empathy in a lawyer's work. Among other things, I explained the main variables

which determine how much a case will cost in legal fees and costs, and why potential clients are increasingly more reluctant to retain lawyers to assist them in resolving their legal problems.

In my program, after going through those variables, I stated that attorneys are gladiators who are brought in to effectuate a "win" for their clients. In support of my statement, I mentioned that recently, a family law attorney addressed her colleagues as "fellow warriors" on the Listserv for the Family Law Section of the Los Angeles County Bar Association. Furthermore, in April, at the Beverly Hills Bar Association's program titled, Tips from the Legends, one of the "legends" present referred to himself as a gladiator. In any case, all of the "legends" on the panel agreed that the level of contention has increased with each successive generation of attorneys.

I commented that regardless of what people want to call it, when "gladiators" or "warriors" are on either side of an adversarial process, I'm afraid we're talking about combat or war. That reality, in conjunction with the increased level of contention shown by each successive generation of attorneys, works to make matters in which attorneys get involved that much more combative. I asked if anyone disagreed with that assessment, and not a single attorney present did.

At that point, one of the audience who has been practicing law for 43 years shared his opinion that lawyers used to concern themselves with solving problems, and that now it's all about "winning" the case at all costs—rather than simply working to solve the problems at hand.

He then described how much more civil attorneys were with each other when he was first admitted to the Bar. He mentioned that, unlike today, attorneys extended common courtesies to each other in terms of scheduling and granting extensions to each other, among a great many other things. Attorneys used to give opposing counsel the benefit of the doubt that they were being truthful with the information they

conveyed—although possibly slanted in their client's favor. Now, he opined, attorneys just take the position that the opposing counsel is somehow deceiving them.

This man went on to note that our colleagues now argue about pretty much anything and everything, and that a great many of those arguments involve personal attacks against each other and their respective clients, and have little or nothing to do with the case itself. He suggested that attorneys seem to have forgotten the Golden Rule, which is, "do unto others as you would have them do unto you." In sum, he commented that attorneys have either forgotten or completely ignore the important social skills they were taught in kindergarten.

This idea was echoed in a recent article by lawyer David Ruiz, in which he suggests that avoiding disciplinary actions for misconduct is simple, and can be summarized—according to Susan Chang of the California State Bar—in the simple rules: "Don't lie, don't steal and don't cheat... *It's what you learn in kindergarten.*"

I asked my group of lawyers if they felt that the public was unjustified in its belief that lawyers unnecessarily create conflict. In the discussion, some mentioned that clients *expect* their lawyers to behave argumentatively. They surmised that the media's portrayal of lawyers has greatly added to this expectation by causing the public to erroneously believe that the best attorneys are those who are the most contentious.

I then shared that according to Bill Eddy, LCSW, Esq., who is co-founder of the High Conflict Institute, "We are seeing high conflict behavior increasing in every setting: in legal disputes, in divorce, between neighbors, among family members, against organizations and government agencies." He contends that people are "learning fewer relationship conflict resolution skills as a direct result of the media, which "shows adversarial conflict resolution for entertainment and gaining market share."

In any event, the consensus among those present was that it was our responsibility to advise clients that it is *counter-productive* to create unnecessary conflict. As responsible professionals, it is virtually unethical of us not to do so.

As this series unfolds, the significance of the information presented here and in Part I will become obvious. Both lawyers and non-lawyers alike need to grasp the importance of empathy within the legal profession.

Mark Baer, Esq., can be reached at Mark@MarkBaerEsq.com.

POSITION STATEMENT

A Response to Recent Violence

As an association of psychologists, the Board of SGVPA is deeply concerned by the recent violence that has occurred, both nationally and internationally, targeting the LGBTQ community, black men, police officers, religious groups, as well as hundreds of innocents. These events are an assault on us all. They not only threaten our safety and our freedom, but they traumatize us.

Through our training, psychologists are in a unique position to understand the impact of trauma. Trauma tends to activate extreme reactions as a way to deal with vulnerability. Repeated exposure to violence through the news and social media coverage broadens and sustains a feeling that the world is unsafe. This is particularly difficult on those who have experienced direct violence, but strains us all.

We are particularly alarmed by how this violence has fueled hysteria and hate. We hope to strongly resist a polarization in our dialogue, and encourage a thoughtful and respectful dialogue rooted in empathy for all persons. We advocate for understanding and measures that strengthen community and build bridges between alienated groups.

SGVPA supports those of you who treat victims of violence in your therapy offices, those who treat perpetrators of violence in your therapy offices, those who do the arduous work of social reform, and those who work to keep our society safe through law enforcement and the armed forces.

While no single individual, group or country can resolve the complex issues of our world, we all have an important role to play. We encourage members to communicate their views and feelings about current events, as well as thoughts about how we as psychologists can be more effectively involved in efforts to create solutions to the increasing violence in the world.

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Evidence-Based Poetry

By Catherine Fuller, PhD



This poem is for anyone who has loved a girl—a child, a patient, a friend—and has wished to see her flourish. I used this poem as a life raft of sorts when my daughter was leaving for college. The words “that she be her own orchard” sustained me.

Young Apple Tree, December

A poem by Gail Mazur (b. 1937)

What you want for it you'd want
for a child: that she take hold;
that her roots find home in stony

winter soil; that she take seasons
in stride, seasons that shape and
reshape her; that like a dancer's,

her limbs grow pliant, graceful
and surprising; that she know,
in her branchings, to seek balance;

that she know when to flower, when
to wait for the returns; that she turn
to a giving sun; that she know

fruit as it ripens; that what's lost
to her will be replaced; that early
summer afternoons, a full blossoming

tree, she cast lacy shadows; that change
not frighten her, rather that change
meet her embrace; that remembering

her small history, she find her place
in an orchard; that she be her own
orchard; that she outlast you;

that she prepare for the hungry world
(the fallen world, the loony world)
something shapely, useful, new, delicious.

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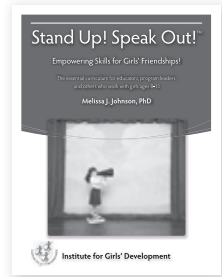
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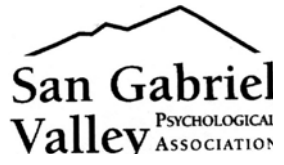
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