

### **>> Balance within the body - Feeling in balance through a resilient autonomic nervous system**

During this morning we will have a look at the balance within the body, especially the balance between the sympathetic and parasympathetic nervous system. We discuss this in the context of different mental health issues and we will have a look at what the possibilities are for psychomotor therapy.

The sympathetic and parasympathetic nervous system together form the autonomic nervous system (ANS). A lot of mental health issues are linked to a lack of resiliency and flexibility within the ANS (Kemp & Quintana, 2003). Resiliency of the ANS is reflected in the heart rate variability (HRV). Higher HRV correspond with a more resilient and flexible autonomic nervous system. Reduced HRV has been found in a variety of psychiatric disorders including schizophrenia (Berger et al., 2010) bipolar disorder (Henry et al., 2010) attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (Buchhorn et al., 2012), major depressive disorder (Kemp & Quintana, 2013), social anxiety (Alvares et al. 2013) panic disorder (Wang, 2013) and conduct disorder (Beauchaine et al., 2007).

HRV reflects the autonomic flexibility and it can be considered a marker of one's capacity for self-regulation, social engagement and psychological flexibility (Kemp & Quintana, 2013). Increasing HRV or supporting an increase in HRV can be one of the goals within psychomotor therapy. Different practices can be implemented to work on increasing HRV, like breathing (Tharion 2012), yoga (Nagendra, 2015), meditation/mindfulness (Lumma, 2015) and physical exercise (Routledge, 2010). All these practices are very useable within psychomotor therapy. In the morning we will have a lecture and practical work about what HRV is, what the importance is of increasing the HRV and what the possibilities are within psychomotor therapy. You will experience some of the practices/exercises yourself.

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## Summerschool 2015 – ISRP PARIS

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During the afternoon we will experience what „Balance“ through self-expression means in the work of some important dance- and art therapists.

Be prepared to explore balance as a dynamic, ever changing process, in which you explore different polarities of it.

We will start with exercises in body awareness and will move on to focus on our own personal creative processes by experiencing them through art therapy methods – hands on!

### Self-expression as a Means of Balancing Emotional States of Mind

In this workshops you will become acquainted with self-expression as an important key element in healing processes which can also be applied in psychomotor therapy.

Art therapy and movement/dance therapy base their methods on the knowledge and importance of perceiving and expressing body sensations, feelings and thoughts.

Expressing feelings by dancing, painting, writing or working with clay launches a creative process through which the focus is on personal development leading to a deeper consciousness of oneself. It helps in balancing the psychological well-being and contributes to a better contact with the inner self and its processes. The awareness of ones needs is empowering and enables a better communication of emotional states of mind in social contexts.

For Paolo Knill, one of the first scientific art therapists, „it is the practice of the arts and the art works themselves which act as a change process“. In his book, „Minstrels of Soul“ many of Knill's main theories are presented (Halprin, 2009, S. 75).

In movement and dance therapy Mary Whitehouse and Trudi Schoop describe the balancing effect of self-expression.

Mary Whitehouse (1999) describes in her approach „authentic movement“ the importance of the inner life. For Whitehouse „the body is the personality on the physical level and movement is the personality made visible“. Her approach focuses on the significance of developing kinesthetic awareness in order to connect **movement expression** with emotion and subjective responses. For Whitehouse, the therapeutic experience rests on the bridge between inner movement and outer movement authentically expressed (Halprin, 2009, p. 64).

Trudi Schoop, a famous Swiss dance therapist, agrees with Whitehouse and describes people being pulled by opposite forces. „Schoop believes that movement/dance offer a way to free up repressed and conflicting emotions. Schoop used improvisation and performance guiding

her clients to exaggerate the *expression of emotion* in posture and movement and to enact the extremes and various parts of themselves like a cast of characters.“ (Halprin, 2009, p. 65)

Daria Halprin (2009) brings elements of art therapy and dance therapy together and proposes in her book „The expressive Body in Life, Art and Therapy“ a new view of the healing process in therapy:

„Movement-based expressive arts therapy works quite actively to bring „inner“ sensation, feeling and image into „outer“ action by employing the full range of the creative arts: movement/dance, drama, voice, painting, poetry and other forms of writing, ritual and performance. This approach also focuses on the creative process as a psychological mirror and suggests its own particular interactive dialogue between witness and mover, and individual and group, as well as working with themes and metaphors in a particular way.“ (Halprin, D., 2009, p. 65/66).

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