

The Power of Listening Touch The Rubenfeld Synergy Method®

by Jeanne Reock

In the late 1960's, a young woman in New York City was shuttling back and forth between an Alexander Teacher and a psychoanalyst. She had gone to the Alexander Teacher to get relief from a serious muscle spasm in her neck and shoulders, brought on by her strenuous work as a conductor.

Experiencing the gentle touch of her Alexander Teacher, the young woman, Ilana Rubenfeld, burst into tears as feelings and memories flooded into her consciousness. She got no help from the Alexander Teacher in dealing with this only a recommendation to see a psychoanalyst. The bodyworker was not trained to deal with emotions. Yet when Rubenfeld sat and talked with the psychoanalyst, the feelings and memories would not surface; she was not able to deal with them through just talk alone.

Then came the creative breakthrough. Fascinated by what the body held and how touch elicited so much, Ilana Rubenfeld went on to become an Alexander Teacher, and then to study another approach to the body with Moshe Feldenkrais. She was also actively learning about psychotherapy from Fritz and Laura Perls, the founders of Gestalt Therapy, as well as other experienced therapists. Adding what she knew about hypnotherapy from studying the work of Milton Erickson, Rubenfeld melded it all together and let it flow into her work with Alexander clients. What emerged from this creative brew some thirty years ago is now known as the Rubenfeld Synergy Method.

The unique essence of Rubenfeld Synergy is that it combines gentle touch and movement with active listening and dialogue, imagery, body awareness, metaphor and humor. Touch is an important and subtle form of two-way communication between therapist and client. Yet, most psychotherapists are prohibited from using touch. For clients who have found talk is not enough or who believe that the body and mind are essentially one, the emerging field of body-centered psychotherapy offers new and exciting prospects. Rubenfeld Synergy is distinguished in this new field by its use of a very gentle touch.

In a typical session, the client, fully-clothed, lies on a padded table on their back and is invited to close their eyes to focus inward on whatever they are experiencing in their body in that moment. The client is also invited to share any feelings, sensations, thoughts, or memories that come up. Since how a person lives in their body is a metaphor for how they "do" their life, this focus on the body will usually lead into issues that are troubling the client.

For instance, a client said that she was experiencing tightness in her throat as she lay on the table. The Synergist asked what that tightness might say if it had a voice. "I hate you." Who would it say that to? "My boss." Anyone else, past or present? "Yes, my father." From there the client was invited to imagine her father present in the room and to express her anger towards him, something she may never have done in real life long ago when the anger originated.

Anger or other strong feelings that are not expressed at the time they come up, lock into the body and the unconscious. From these hiding places, they can have a powerful impact on who we are, how we behave, how we feel about ourselves, and even our physical health. The same is true for beliefs that were adopted early in life, but do not serve us well. For instance, a 5 year old might get the sense from those around him/her that he/she is incompetent, never gets it right. Some people go their whole lives with that underlying belief and they perceive everything through that lens. Even though they perform quite well, they fail to recognize that or it never seems good enough; they are always disappointed in themselves.

Unearthing these subterranean beliefs about ourselves and/or about the world and other people, is one of the major benefits of Rubenfeld Synergy sessions. Once we can look at these child beliefs from an adultperspective, we can choose to let them go.

We can release them from our body and from our view of ourselves and the world. We can get "unstuck" from old patterns and move into the full range of our capabilities for living a satisfying and productive life.

A number of important principles guide Rubenfeld Synergists in their work. One is the belief in the natural capacity of all human beings for self-healing and self-regulation. The Synergist is a facilitator and guide, not a magic healer. Each person is unique and each session will unfold in its own way. Responsibility for change rests with the client. Synergists also believe that body, mind, emotions and spirit are dynamically inter-related and that change in one level will affect each of the others and the equilibrium of the whole person.

Rubenfeld Synergists have all been certified by Ilana Rubenfeld after successfully completing a three-year, now four-year, training program with her and her faculty. For more information about Rubenfeld Synergy in your area, visit www.rubenfeldsynergy.com or call toll free 877-RSM-2468. You might also want to read *The Listening Hand* by Ilana Rubenfeld, published in 2000 by Bantam.

Jeanne Reock is president of the National Association of Rubenfeld Synergists. She has a private practice in Rubenfeld Synergy in the Princeton, New Jersey area. She can be reached at 732-297-1394.