

Brainspotting

Rewiring Mental Health

by Patti Bee

Most psychotherapy happens through talking, which accesses the higher, or neocortical, brain. Brainspotting is a mind-body psychotherapy method that connects a place in an individual's field of vision to a place in the deep, or subcortical, brain. This place, called a "brainspot", is used to access traumatic material or difficult emotions and behaviors where a person has been stuck, the rationale being that if material is trapped at a deep brain level, then it needs to be healed at that level.

By accessing the deep brain level in psychotherapy, issues can be processed out of the nervous system and the neural pathways involved can be rewired. In Brainspotting, talk is still used some of the time, but there is also a special attunement between the therapist, the client and the client's deep brain that is giving new hope to trauma survivors and others with mental health problems.

The higher brain is responsible for thinking, planning and solving problems. The deep brain is the source of innate responses, like breathing or recoiling from a hot flame, that don't involve thinking. Many people assume that if an issue is unresolved or stuck, they should be thinking about it or be in a problem-solving mode. Yet, when a person has experienced an event as a survival threat, the fight-or-flight response is involved, and that happens in the deep brain.

David Grand, Ph.D., the founder of Brainspotting, and Frank Corrigan, M.D., a neurobiologist, have concep-



tualized the neurological sequencing of the brain when a person looks at a brainspot. In a 2013 article published in *Medical Hypotheses*, Corrigan and Grand theorized how a particular file is opened during Brainspotting. The basic idea is that when deep brain access is created in reference to emotionally debilitating issues, the brain really does

know how to do the rest and heal. In Grand's book *Brainspotting: The Revolutionary New Therapy for Rapid and Effective Change*, published last year, he explains that where we look reveals critical information about what is going on in our brain.

Although research on Brainspotting is still in the theoretical stages, the treatment method has been used for eleven years, with more than 4,000 therapists trained worldwide. It turns out that Wisconsin is one of the leaders in Brainspotting, with more than 100 therapists trained throughout the state due to the work of the Midwest Brainspotting Institute, which was started by a group of therapists in Appleton and Green Bay.

Therapists are noticing that many clients are able to tolerate trauma work while looking at a brainspot because the special attunement created while on a brainspot informs the brain that the individual is safe. Distress tolerance in Brainspotting does vary from client to client, but for trauma survivors that have found other forms of psychotherapy too difficult to continue, there is hope.

Patti Bee, MS, is a nationally certified and licensed professional counselor and one of the first psychotherapists in the Madison, Wisconsin area to be certified in Brainspotting. For more information, call 608-255-9119, ext. 6, email Brainspotting.Therapy@gmail.com, BrainspottingTherapy.com, or pick up David Grand's book, Brainspotting, published last year.

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Kathleen@wildwoodinstitute.com

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