

## CONFERENCE NOTES

*Our Fall Conference, "Beyond Abstract Language" featuring Sharon Stanley, PhD, was a well-attended and intriguing look at Somatic Transformation, Sharon Stanley's practice for healing complex trauma through the use of body-centered principles. Two attendees offer reflections from their experiences at the conference.*



### Learning from Sharon Stanley: Trusting Engagement through Intuitive Process and Felt Sense

*By Carol Mayes, MSW, LICSW*

I have been thinking about Somatic Transformation, and healing through a shared felt sense with client, for some time. Having recently attended Sharon Stanley's "Beyond Abstract Language" workshop, many ideas were solidified. What I liked about Sharon's presentation was her ability to demonstrate a level of clinical connection that words and readings alone cannot adequately express.

When a client of mine experiences an "aha" that arrives through a knowing within the body, it is a wondrous moment. When I can share that moment through my own empathic attunement, it is always a good day.

My work has historically been a patchwork of psychodynamic, family systems and attachment theories. Somatic empathy is something I may have always used to some degree, in an intuitive and unstructured way. But I had not been so tuned into, or trusting of my own experience, to use it as overtly as Sharon demonstrates. This workshop has freed me to trust my own intuitive process and felt sense, to help clients identify and utilize their own somatic responses in ways that are both freeing and more engaging.

Although I have much to learn about this topic, it is already making a difference for me. I look forward to reading more, learning more and taking somatic practice forward in my work.

Is this a risky shift? Perhaps the risk for me would be to discount the value of this holistic and vital method of practice. Thank you to Sharon for creating this opportunity in a way that very much spoke to me personally and has begun to enrich my practice.

### Sharon Stanley and the Power of Face to Face Contact

*By Jacqui Metzger, LICSW*

A number of colleagues have trained with Sharon Stanley and all speak highly about her and her work, but I met her for the first time at the October 2013 "Practice of Somatic Transformation" workshop. I didn't know what to expect, but hoped to learn more about the relationship between "Somatic Transformation" and the psycho-dynamic and relational work I do as a therapist and psychoanalyst.

I found there was some overlap along with different vocabulary used for familiar concepts. However, the focus on our own deeply felt experiences as well as on paying new attention to those of our patients provided a profound learning experience.

Sharon's presence was powerful; she physically conveyed her passion for and belief in the concepts and ideas she discussed with us. Sitting with her was a visceral experience. Even in that big conference room surrounded by a large group of other clinicians, I felt she embodied the very concepts she was discussing.

There were many moments that stood out but one resonated in particular...early in the discussion Sharon had a power point up on two screens, one on either side of her. There were some tweaks needed with the equipment, and finally she said, "I'm going to turn off the power point and talk with you." The now blank screens became background as we refocused on her and she made contact with us. It was a different kind of contact — one that didn't happen when the screens were displaying power points.

With all the talk about email, texting, and other kinds of electronic and screen communications, and the impact on the quality our interactions, Sharon, in one fell swoop, demonstrated the power of face-to-face contact. In that moment she transformed our collective sense of disconnect to one of connection.