The Complementary Role of Psychotherapy and Bodywork in Treating Torture and Refugee Trauma Survivors

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Bodywork can be an essential and complementary tool in conjunction with psychotherapy for addressing physical and emotional pain associated with torture and trauma.
The Physiology of Trauma

Dissociation

Autonomic nervous system hyperarousal

Dysregulation of autonomic functions

Constriction

Loss of sensory assessment and processing

Immobility
Bessel van der Kolk

The Body Keeps the Score: Brain, Mind and Body in the Treatment of Trauma

Body-Brain Connections

Inhabiting the Body

Living in the Present
Stephen Porges

The Polyvagal Theory

Autonomic Nervous System Responses

Neuroception

Visceral States
Peter Levine

Waking the Tiger

Fight, Flight, Freeze

Resourcing

Renegotiating
Daniel Siegel

Pocket Guide to Interpersonal Neurobiology

Relational Regulation

Energy and Information Flow

Integrated Brain
Pat Ogden

Trauma and the Body: A Sensorimotor Approach to Psychotherapy

Window of Tolerance
Uncoupling Physical Sensations and Memory
Mindfulness
Alan Fogel

The Psychophysiology of Self Awareness

Sensing Self

Contact and Movement

Facilitating Embodied Experience
Bodywork

- Embodied presence with the practitioner/therapist
- Focus on supporting functionality rather than “fixing” dysfunction
- Qualitative touch by the practitioner
- Communication with the client
- Modelling of self-regulation by the practitioner
Creating a direct experience of safety
Down regulating the sympathetic arousal
Identifying and exploring resources
Facilitating orientation experiences
Moving slowly through the cycles of activation and relaxation
Strengthening vagal tone
Supporting the completion of truncated or interrupted movement
Supporting what is functioning in the system and not the pathology
Creating a context for the sensations or experiences as they emerge
Integration of Bodywork with Psychotherapy
Establishes an embodied sense of safety

Clarifies sensory experience

Increases resourced responsiveness

Helps re-establish a sense of agency
Creates a physiological framework for social and therapeutic interaction

Decreases hyperarousal and increases vagal tone

Facilitates the capacity to be an observer

Addresses client’s physical pain issues
Integrating Top Down and Bottom Up
Thank you!

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