

An Interview with Siegmund Gerken, Ph.D. by Špela Razpotnik, Ph.D.

1) "You define your work approach as "a relational, psychodynamic, body-oriented and mindfulness-centered therapy, and teaching system". Can you tell us how this holistic approach developed?"

In our work we address our human multidimensional reality. Its theories and practice developed out of our 40 years of experience and insights in many approaches like depth-psychology and body-oriented therapy, Gestalt, Humanistic-, Transpersonal-, Existential- and Integral psychology, attachment theories, family systems, family therapy and work with constellations, affective, cognitive and social neuroscience and the development of the social brain and behavioral approaches, as well as Buddhist and Sufi psychology, Eco-Psychology, Shamanic traditions, Energy medicine and our own original research in Trauma and in the energetic dynamics of emotional and somatic processes.

Therefore you can see, that it is not easy, to just find a short headline to describe us. However, it is important for the understanding of the practice, that we include the *relational dimension* - that means we inquire in which relationships the person has lived in the different developmental periods of his/her life and how the quality of these interpersonal relations influenced their view of the world and behavior.

This is then also represented in the psychodynamic of a person. *Psychodynamic* means, that we include the unconscious dynamics, that result out of the personal development and early life trauma and look at how past experiences shaped the present life.

The *integrative body-oriented* work gives us great insights of how we hold these experiences in relation to our emotions and feelings in our body-mind field and it provides tools to open the limitations that we hold in this dynamic. The person is invited to a more conscious breathing, movements, expression, role-play and other interventions, to release excess muscle tension and to open up fixations in the structuring of the personality or ego-self.

These processes are always *mindfulness-centered*, that means guided into an awareness process, that allows the person to center in an integrated, more harmonious space and to act accordingly.

These principles are taught and practiced in our work. And since we like to reach as many people who work with people in our society, we expand our trainings to people in social sciences, business, education and other facets of our society.

2) The name of the approach is "Core Evolution". Can you please lead us into the meaning this name carries? What is CoreSOMA?

The complete name actually is: *The Energy & Consciousness Programs® of Integrative Body-Oriented and Mindfulness-Centered Therapy - Core Evolution®*. It says directly what this work is about.

Research confirms that energy emanates from all living systems. We live in a field of *Energy & Consciousness*. Every human being has a particular energetic constitution based on the interaction of genetics, biology, body physiology, and his or her personal and social environment. To lead a person, a group or an organization to deeper insights, we got to become aware of the multidimensional reality and address life's topics accordingly. We see the *Core* as the representation of the individuated universal life energy that we carry and that evolves in us.

CoreSoma® is a specialization of Core Evolution®, sharing the same underlying theory and understanding with an expanded focus directly on the body (=soma). The same principles, like in Core Evolution apply. However, depending on the interest and profession of the participants (Therapist, Osteopath, Chiropractor, Massage therapist, Energy Medicine Practitioner, or other), the teaching of CoreSoma explores in a more detailed way direct hands on techniques and interventions, internal and external developmental movements, expression of body language and subtle energy field techniques. In Core Evolution and CoreSoma we also do energetic dreamwork since our body is, although unconsciously, fully physiologically involved in every dream.

3) In your presentation brochure you describe one of the focuses of CoreSoma as "inviting the body to speak and ... listening to its voices to be heard". How do you see the awareness of this vital connection of the mind and body in everyday life of people whom you work with? How do you see it specifically in fields where people care for people (caring professions); how do you see it specifically within medicine?□□

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Present research on bonding and psychosomatics underlines the importance of our early nonverbal, but embodied experiences. Therefore working with the body directly through touch can be enormously rich. There are parts of us that are non-verbal, they do not speak the language of the mind or the will. These parts rely on a different type of contact, communication, and presence in order to be heard. When acknowledged, the body often needs only awareness and mindful direction, to reverse or unwind fixations created in the past.

Your body then supports you, living each moment with love and pleasure. The focus is to deepen into our essence and to open the capacity to love as the most profound state of being human. As a body-oriented and mindfulness-centered approach it becomes a cellular and embodied experience.

4) You use concepts of "essence", "inner-self", "the flow of life" ... and similar. Could we call it "essentialist view" or individual ? On the contrary, contemporary identity approaches (within social sciences) describe identity as fragmented, constructed and by definition never harmonious. What is your relation to those approaches?

Developing and teaching a Whole Person Psychology, we embrace both views and expand them with the understanding of the Human Potential in Humanistic Psychology. From my own meditative, mystical and shamanic experiences I know, that I carry a personal essence. On the other hand, having been a developing child, unfolding young man and now an experienced therapist, and researcher, I also know about our fragmentation and constructed egos.

This is no contradictory or conflict of philosophies. *Essence* for me represents a *state* as well as a *process* of being, in which we are in contact with our individual existence and experience the connectedness of all life. *Essence then becomes a continued process of individual realization*. With the personal manifestation this process then is intertwined with the potential, that the person embodies *and* becomes conscious of; activates and directs in life. This potential is based on the qualities a person brings: the genetic make-up, family, religious, social, and other conditions. It becomes a multidimensional process on the levels of our human existence: Body, Feelings, Thinking, Mind, Will and our developing state of Consciousness.

5) You work in many countries all over the globe. Do you consider any interesting cultural differences between groups you meet?□

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Due to my studies in Ethnology and Anthropology, I have a special interest in this topic. And for sure, there are strong differences, so that I approach a topic or guide an intervention accordingly, based on the individual person and by his/her culture. I honor all our cultural differences, but I focus more on the 'common thread', that connects us all. A Chinese participant will express a different

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understanding of emotions then my client in Colombia. But I experience again and again, that when we guide people into their essential qualities, that we have a common understanding of life and care for each other.

6) In different languages there are different sayings that show the connection of the body and mind. Is there one you like a lot or one that you find is especially interesting?

Yes, in almost every language the body and its organs find a specific representation and description. Very significant is, when people are not sure about themselves and talk about their self-esteem, conflicts or doubts. Then we often make them aware of their state of energy in their body and let them explore the difference of being "No-body" or "Some-body". Everybody feels and understands this difference and can relate it to situations and actions in their life.

7) Your trainings are visited also by people working in many facets of our society like therapy, medicine, social work, education, consulting and others. Why is an approach like yours so helpful for people working with other people?

What makes our integrated work of Core Evolution so effective is that we address a wide spectrum of our human reality. We explore and work with:

- the physical body, its structure, form and the dynamic of expression through movement;
- emotions and feelings, that means how we process our inner and outer impulses;
- our cognitive capacity to learn and structure our thinking;
- the mind - in understanding, knowing, being aware;
- the will - the faculty that gives our energy direction.

In utilizing all these factors we expand the limitation of our personality, realize choices, form clearer intentions and realize ourselves with awareness and mindfulness. Our society from social work, to education, therapy, medicine, business and politics can gain a lot from these insights.

8) There are no coincidences in what we choose for our life mission. How do you see that the work that you do is meant to be the one for you?

In my interview with Meridian University, that you can listen to on our website (www.CoreEvolution.com), I describe my early childhood commitment, to "*bring more light into people's body*". For a long time, that sounded very spiritual. But now working and researching with medical doctors and physicist in Infrared Analysis and Bio-Photon Measurements, I support the expression of my life's mission with science. Therefore, in our work, I can hold the wide spectrum of exploration from spiritual or transpersonal experiences to direct conflict resolution and applied sciences of life. I guide a client or participant into the exploration of their intention for life so they can find a solid ground and expression in their personal and professional path.

9) Is there anything you would like to add?

Yes, I would like to address the changes in society since society changes psychologically and sociologically with every new generation or cultural shift. Therefore, you see psychology, sociology and education, in favor or in resistance to change. In working with the body, and its frozen patterns of history, you have the story of the person always in front of you, no matter what age, generation, or culture. With our teaching, the understanding of the underlying energetics of these patterns allows you to choose the intervention and support for this specific person in his or her personal search for meaning and fulfillment. With that, we not only enrich the person's life, but that of society and mankind in general. □

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Siegmar Gerken, Ph.D, ECP, HP (Psychotherapy) studied psychology, Education and Anthropology. He has pioneered Body-Oriented and Mindfulness-Centered Therapy and Humanistic Psychology since 1971 and is the founder of the Energy & Consciousness programs, www.EnergyandConsciousness.com and of Core Evolution, www.CoreEvolution.com. Dr. Gerken taught at JFK University in the Somatic Psychology Program, at the Santa Barbara Graduate Institute at the Chicago School of professional psychology as well as at the Esalen Institute, Big Sur, California, the renowned Institute for the development of the Human potential. He conducts body-oriented therapy and mindfulness-based trainings at the Behavioral Therapy Training Institute in Hamburg, and specialized Management and Coaching Seminars at Systema Management Trainings. Besides his own trainings in Core Evolution, he lectures and teaches at universities and private institutes worldwide on the interconnectedness of psychosomatic processes as they manifest on the levels of body, emotions, mind, will and spirit. His research in energy field documentation with Prof. F. Popp on psycho- emotional states opened new horizons to scientists and practitioners. He is co-founder of the Scientific Committee of the EABP. Dr. Gerken is a lecturer, therapist, trainer and supervisor.

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