

A 12 year old's search for self: case report

TESSA THERKLESON

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■ Zusammenfassung

This case report describes a 12 year old boy with complex post-traumatic stress disorder (C-PTSD). For 3 consecutive weeks, a lemon footbath, rhythmical Einreibung using Wala Solum uliginosum or moor extract and heart rub using Weleda Aurum ointment were given. For the following two weeks, a lemon footbath and pentagram treatment using Weleda Aurum ointment were given. The nurse providing this therapy is an anthroposophic nurse specialist. There was no notable change for the first 3 weeks. Then following the first pentagram treatment the child responded as an awake, heart-felt person, who could now communicate positively and share feelings. The combination treatment resulted in a positive response for a child with C-PTSD, with no negative effects reported.

■ Schlüsselwörter

Trauma
Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)
Moor extract,
Footbath
Pentagram
Rhythmical *Einreibung*

Introduction

Complex post-traumatic stress disorder (C-PTSD) was first described by Judith Lewis Herman in *Trauma and Recovery*, followed by articles (1). C-PTSD amplifies and generalises symptoms of PTSD. It occurs when there is prolonged trauma to a victim, who is trapped and unable to escape. Herman describes the complex symptoms that typically manifest in different ways in those affected. There is a disturbed relationship to the world and others manifesting as: dissociative symptoms, ego fragmentation with loss of sense of identity and body image, tendency to self mutilate and be prone to harm from others, somatic symptoms such as digestive disturbances, loss of sensory perception, anxiety and agitation. Epidemiologic research suggests the interaction between a subject, a traumatic factor and the social context combine to increase the likelihood of PTSD after exposure to a potentially traumatic event (2). PTSD is never a coincidence; rather it results from a disturbed interaction between the outside world and the inner self. Margaret Mahler developed a theory of emotional separation and individuation that relates to development of a sense of self in the early years (3). Jay had a difficult birth, emotional separation from both mother and father and repeated head traumas from 10 months. He experienced an array of difficulties, such as inability to look his mother in the eyes since a baby, tendency to space out in class, disturbed social behaviours, loss of sensory perception and anxiety.

The purpose of this case is to describe how a young boy, with an array of C-PTSD symptoms that likely resulted from a stressful and traumatic childhood responded to five consecutive weeks anthroposophical nursing treatments. This case shows a positive response that the mother and extra lesson teacher were confident resulted from the treatments. Anthroposophical nursing acknowledges a fourfold aspect in each person that includes a physical, etheric, astral and sense of self identity as described by Steiner (4, 5). A basic understanding of these aspects is necessary to fully appreciate this case report. Appropriate ethical approval was obtained, including signed informed consent from the mother.

History

Jay is a 12 year old boy, with a sister 2 years younger. He was born in New Zealand and his parents separated, when he was a year old. His father has been estranged from the family since this time. Jay has travelled around the world at least twice spending time in New York at the time of 9/11, Australia, Germany and South America. His mother explains that he feels the loss and rejection of his father and overidentifies with the emotional pain and confusion of his mother. Currently, there is uncertainty around which country he is to live in. Jay experienced physical traumas from a young age, with a history of 'head knocks' at 10 months, 6, 9 and 12 years. The birth was difficult and he suffered croup and digestive disturbances as a newborn, with reflux and lactose intolerance in the early months. His physical development was normal, yet his mother explained, 'he never looked into my eyes'. He had all the usual childhood and travel immunisations.

Jay attends the local Waldorf School. His mother describes him as socially confident, while his class teacher reports he has difficulty interacting with his peers and showing kindness to others; he uses phrases like, 'I would like that you were dead'. Jay has a history of social difficulties in class in Germany and New Zealand, with outbursts of aggression, when baited. His mother is concerned he is now stealing money from home. The extra lesson teacher explained that a pedagogical child study indicated Jay has a tendency to exorcise for seconds, while recently his teacher noted momentary loss of awareness, when light was pouring in a window. He is in the range of normal scholastically. The extra lesson teacher notes Jay is accomplished with crafts such as wood carving yet awkward and heavy in leg movements. He seems to have little sense of pain, for example he did not feel pain from a deep injury to the muscle of his calf, picks sores on his legs that are consequently scarred and tears his finger nails until they bleed.

Recently, Jay was prescribed Weleda Bryophyllum argentum 0.1 % by the Anthroposophic doctor for sleep-walking and sleep talking, which seemed to help.

Presenting condition

Jay is light weight, normal height, with a pale complexion. He has dry olive skin, blonde fine straight hair and deep blue far away eyes. He lacks muscle tone, especially notable in the calves, tends to have flattened feet that are finely formed and walks bare feet, whenever possible. His overall appearance is flat, with a lack of rhythm in movement. He expresses himself clearly, looks cautiously into one's eyes when speaking, lacks facial expression and has a monotonous voice.

Jay enjoys solo sailing in the local yacht club, swimming in the sea and wood carving at school; activities that require use of the upper body. The upper limbs seem to serve the nerve sense system and carry out the will to sail, swim and carve, while the lower limbs seem to be disconnected, with lack of muscle tone. He is under-developed physically and of small stature. For the past

year, he has been regularly to the osteopath, who has given him foot exercises to train what his mother described as 'lazy feet' that tend to abduct outwards as he walks. Overall his manner is tired and resigned to whatever comes.

Jay's mother is concerned he has had, 'dark tendencies since very young and more recently a sense of hopelessness, lack of self worth, courage and life satisfaction accompanied by anxiety'. Her primary concern is that Jay be helped to, 'relax and gain a sense of inner calm and connectedness'.

Therapy

The intention of the therapy was:

- to reintegrate the physical, soul and spiritual organisms. Jay was given the right to accept or decline any aspect of the treatment.
- to enliven the tired etheric body and bring light and warmth by strengthening the four physical senses: touch, life (nurture), balance (rhythm) and movement in a climate of warmth and trust.
- to strengthen the boundary with the outer world and reconnect the soul being to the physical by enlivening the etheric body using appropriate substances applied on a regular and rhythmical basis.
- to bring balance in the rhythmic system so a healthy integration could occur between the metabolic and nerve sense systems.
- to develop improved ways of coping with conflict and life's problems.

Jay had five treatments, one each week for 5 weeks.

The first 3 treatments involved a lemon footbath (6), full rhythmical *Einreibungen* with Wala Solum uliginosum (Solum) (7) and heart rub using Weleda Aurum rose lavender ointment (Aurum ointment) (8). The footbath brings consciousness and warmth to the feet, while using the drawing and awakening quality of the lemon to reconnect the upper and lower poles. The rhythmical *Einreibungen* using Solum enlivens the physical and etheric bodies helping to strengthen their connection. The heart rub using Aurum ointment was given for inner balance and courage in facing life's traumas, losses and the demands of life that Jay faced.

At the fourth treatment, Jay's mother expressed concern Jay had suffered two head injuries in the preceding week, while she had been away. The mother thought these injuries could reactivate trauma suffered from previous head injuries. The day prior to the treatment, Jay had been assessed by the osteopath and the doctor. This was the first time the mother reported a history of repetitive head injuries. The mother appeared agitated and Jay looked exhausted, despondent and lost, with dark rings under both eyes and no eye contact. He was too exhausted for a rhythmical *Einreibung* and the need for a pentagram treatment (7, 9) was explained to the mother. The intention of the pentagram treatment was to reconnect the soul/spirit with the physical body as well as treat the recent trauma suffered. Jay was given a lemon footbath followed by the pentagram treatment

using Aurum ointment. The pentagram treatment was repeated one week later.

Outcome

The first three appointments to the clinic Jay arrived with bare legs and feet and cool calves. He did not smile or interact except to respond to questions. During the footbath, he sat comfortably relaxed, with head erect and hands on his knees. He was at ease with the treatments, which were given in a quiet, warm and safe environment. He rested 15 minutes following each treatment and was always keen to mobilise. His mother dropped him off and collected him at the first two appointments, the third appointment his mother's partner provided transport as the mother was away. Following each treatment, Jay went sailing in his boat. The mother provided no feedback following the first three treatments.

At the fourth treatment Jay arrived with shoes and socks on. During the footbath, he rested his head in his hands and focused his eyes on the footbath. The pentagram was explained and Jay was comfortable before and during the treatment. He slept over 35 minutes following this treatment. The mother reported that when Jay returned to the car to go home, he looked into her eyes with deep gratitude and said, 'thank you for everything'. Within an hour she was aware she had a new child, a person who could communicate and share feelings. The following week, Jay was 'calmer, more able to concentrate' and more connected to the world and others. The mother was confident this was a result of the pentagram treatment because the changes were evident straight after the treatment. The extra lesson teacher noticed a distinct positive change in Jay's manner that confirmed the mother's observations.

At the fifth appointment the mother said, 'thank you for giving me my child, now I too need treatments'. Jay was aware he felt good and somehow different after the fourth treatment, yet was unsure what had changed. He was calm and relaxed during the fifth treatment and was only able to rest 15 minutes. While waiting for his mother in reception, he found a book on 3D stereograms, forms that he has never been able to understand or see. He smilingly said, 'I can now see the picture behind the picture for the first time'. A sense of relaxation and inner peace was evident in his manner.

Three weeks later the mother was coming for her own therapy and wrote, 'after the fourth treatment it was as if Jay had been exchanged for a glowing, open, loving, caring, smiling child with a direct approach. He now looks directly into my eyes and expresses gratitude literally. He is now rested in himself well aware that a change has happened to him.' Jay requested further treatments, which will be given after the mother's are completed.

Discussion

Jay was a child of 12 years, who was exhausted by the trauma of repeated head injuries and family stress. He was described by mother and teachers as anxious, disconnected and socially isolated. Overall he appeared

tired, heavy and resigned to his life. The series of anthroposophical nursing treatments provided a positive shift in Jay's condition. Whenever we give an anthroposophical nursing treatment, we are intervening in the consciousness of the recipient by passing from the physical substance of the human body into the spiritual being. Steiner (5, 4) describes the integration of the physical, etheric, astral and ego in the human being and it is with this insight that the following comments are given.

Ideally, in the first 7 years of a child's life the etheric integrates with the physical organism then from 7 to 14 years the astral organism incarnates. The integration of the etheric organism happens through the physiology of breathing and circulation, which also enable incarnation of the astral organism. When we breathe there is an inner etheric and outer gaseous breathing. When we inhale gases (oxygen and nitrogen), water and etheric formative forces are taken in (in the form of the four ethers i.e. life, sound/chemical, light and warmth). When we exhale we breathe out CO₂ and water into the atmosphere and internally complex processes occur to enable healthy integration of the four ethers. Firstly, we exhale the sound/chemical and life ethers via the nerve sense system into the lung system and thereby the metabolic system, secondly the light ether is exhaled into the nerve sense system and subsequently the brain and thought processes and thirdly the warmth ether is needed to enable the life, sound/chemical and light ethers to integrate into the human being. Without warmth we cannot take in the life giving qualities of the life, chemical/sound or light ethers. This includes warmth received both externally and through the gesture of loving care and nurture. Steiner (4, Ch. 4) further explains that healthy integration of the etheric organism allows us to have soul experiences i.e. the chemical/sound ether allows us to feel, the life ether to be motivated to act and light ether to think. In the first seven years the etheric forces needed to build the physical body are a reflection of sun forces; that is the physical etheric formative forces streaming from the sun are identical to the etheric forces working in the developing child. In the second seven years, the physical is formed and free of hereditary forces gained from the parents and now the etheric sun-like forces are free to work on the astral and ego organisation to be utilised in thinking. The remaining etheric forces working on the physical organism are now a reflection of the moon's formative forces rather than sun formative forces. Ideally, etheric sun-like forces work on the soul/spiritual being and strengthen thought processes, while etheric moon-like forces work on the physical development. Jay's appearance manifested a lack of healthy etheric forces; he was small and contracted in physical structure, and withdrawn in sensory perception and his response to the world and others. Jay is at an age, when both sun and moon forces are active within him and the treatments were given with this understanding.

The treatments given to Jay included a lemon footbath, rhythmical *Einreibungen* with Solum, heart rub

with Aurum ointment then finally the pentagram treatment. The lemon footbath, as described in Fingado (6) is given when there is a lack of body warmth, loss of ability to concentrate, anxiety and loss of self. At each treatment, the footbath gently encouraged Jay to be present in the moment and receptive for the treatment. Heine, in the preface to *Rhythmic Einreibung* (7), explains that the rhythmical *Einreibung* has the ability to release old hindrances, re-connect and re-establish wholeness of being as well as strengthen and create new impulses for change. The rhythmical *Einreibung* strengthens and enlivens the physical senses of touch, movement, balance, life and warmth. Bertram (10) found a fundamental response to the rhythmical *Einreibungen* using Solum for adults with pain was an experience of 'being uncaged'. Solum uliginosum or moor extract is reported to revitalise life forces and strengthen the boundary with the outer world, while offering additional protection in times of shock and trauma (11). Solum is a combination substance that relates to all four ethers as described by Steiner (5); Solum to the life ether, Aesculus hippocastanum to the sound/chemical ether, Equisetum avense to the light/air ether and Lavender oil to the warmth ether. Rhythmical *Einreibungen* with Solum were given to support re-integration and re-enlivening of the physical and etheric bodies. Jay seemed devoid of life vitality and struggled with movement and activation of will forces. Likely, the first 3 treatments were needed to prepare for the pentagram treatment that was given in the fourth treatment.

The heart rub and pentagram treatment used Aurum (gold), the metal of the sun and the principle substance in Weleda Aurum rose lavender. Fingado (7) portrays gold as having a noble lustre, being immune to outside influences and able to restore equilibrium as well as bring light into the human being. Jay needed the sun forces of Aurum ointment to revitalise and balance the rhythmic system so a healthy integration could occur between the metabolic and nerve sense systems. The heart rub using Aurum ointment was given with this understanding. The pentagram form is the form of the etheric body as it connects to the physical organism and the pentagram treatment is given to stimulate the connection with the cosmic etheric forces. The pentagram treatment is given to someone who has experienced physical or emotional shock, or is suffering from extreme stress and fatigue (9). It is helpful, when there are tendencies to space out and/or there is one-sidedness in the physical and/or soul spirit being, or a disconnection between the physical and etheric bodies. Jay's behaviour indicated detachment between the physical and soul spiritual being in the day and night; he seemed to space out in the day, his legs seemed to be disconnected from his upper body, he was anxious and his sleep was disturbed. He had suffered repeated head injuries since a baby and appeared physically and emotionally exhausted.

The sluggish polarity first described by Steiner (12) and further enhanced by Holtzafel (13) is evident in Jay's overall tiredness and heavy body; the head is heavy and

the will weak. The muscular skeletal system is weak and there is loss of nerve sensory control in the lower limbs. Jay seemed half awake in his head and asleep in the lower body. He suffered from anxiety and had momentary lapses in consciousness. The treatment given intended to reintegrate the physical, soul and spiritual being. König (14) explains anxiety as a dark place occurring, when there is a disconnection between the physical and soul/spiritual bodies and it is associated with a disturbance in the sense of touch. Alternatively, pain results from increased consciousness, where consciousness does not belong in the physical body and it could be described as light or spirit filled. It is as if the light forces become stuck in the body and push in order to be released. Steiner (12) defines organs as those with an awake consciousness and those with a sleepy consciousness, and suggests, when there is 'I' and astral congestion in an organ with sleepy consciousness (e.g. muscle and joint tissue) then pain is experienced, while congestion in an organ connected to consciousness (e.g. brain) leads to fits. Jay experienced no pain or major fits yet had a weak sense of touch in the lower limbs and seemed to have lapses in consciousness. It is possible that the fragile connection between the physical and soul/spiritual bodies caused momentary losses in consciousness, lack of sensory perception in the lower limbs, disturbed sleep and a half-hearted emotional response to the world?

Anthroposophical nursing treatments are effective, when given with loving warmth and conscious awareness of the condition and the substance being used. Axline (15) in *Dibs in search of self* speaks of the importance of nurturing the trust of the child and the parent(s), when working with children suffering personality disorders. Loving care and nurture by another adult allowed Jay to open his heart with gratitude firstly to his mother then to his friends and ultimately resulted in the mother asking for her own therapy. There were no negative effects reported and Jay was aware he felt more connected to the world and others following the fourth treatment.

Conclusion

This case report shows a combination treatment was needed to shift a long standing physical and soul/spiritual imbalance. Normally, a lemon footbath, rhythmical *Einreibung* with Solum uliginosum and heart rub with Aurum rose lavender would be appropriate for a child with Jay's symptoms. The effectiveness of these treatments appeared minimal for Jay and was inappropriate following further head injuries. Following the pentagram treatment, for the first time this 12 year old boy was able to express feelings, appeared calmer, more connected and looked his mother directly in the eye. The mother and extra lesson teacher were aware these changes followed the first pentagram treatment. The pentagram treatment is worthy of consideration, when managing trauma, stress, exhaustion and disconnection in young children of this age. Eight weeks after therapy,

the mother reported that Jay was now demanding to be allowed to 'speak my own truth' and 'not own all her personal problems'. He had developed a defiant attitude that was challenging socially at school and home. Jay asked to be baptised and confirmed.

Dr. Tessa Therkleson (PhD)
 88 Pomare Road, Lower Hutt
 New Zealand 5010
 tessa@ratohealth.co.nz
 www.ratohealth.com

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