



UNITED STATES
PBSP
ASSOCIATION

The official
newsletter
of the
USPBSPA



The big news for this newsletter is the excitement many are feeling about our upcoming national conference this next April in San Diego.

Many of us had been feeling a major sense of “incompletion” since we had to cancel our plans for this conference because of COVID. The conference planning committee has been working to make this the biggest national conference on PBSP in the United States since the International PBSP conference in Minneapolis back in 2005.

I am absolutely delighted that Marth Stark, MD, has agreed to be a keynote speaker. Martha has been a real friend of PBSP over the years. Her latest book (available as a [free download here](#)) is an ambitious integration of five modes of therapy, which she calls the Psychodynamic Synergy Paradigm. She devotes a section of her book to PBSP which is included as one of the five modes of psychotherapy.

If you want to see more of her impressive resume, visit her website: <https://www.synergymed.solutions/>.

Integration is something of a theme for this conference as our own PBSP trainer, Matt Fried, PhD, provides a second keynote speaker. In addition to being a PBSP trainer, Matt is also a trainer/supervisor with AEDP, Accelerated Experiential Dynamic Psychotherapy.

There will also be additional breakout workshops on topics such as: PBSP and Brainspotting, using PBSP with ketamine therapy, PBSP and couples work and several more topics.

As with all PBSP presentations, there will be a heavy experiential component to most of these presentations.

But, I have to say, one of the most important functions of this conference will be the chance for everyone in the PBSP community, novice to advanced, to hang out together and have some fun while learning!

I hope you can join us.

Jim Amundsen



PBSP Conference 2024

Join us in San Diego, CA on April 6-7, 2024,
to Celebrate the Fruits of Living.

[EVENT INFO HERE](#) | [REGISTER HERE](#)

The “Jury is IN” Regarding Gender and Accommodating

by Jim Amundsen

Since the beginning of my time in PBSP in the early 1980’s, a perpetual problem has been having enough accommodators of both genders to provide ideal parents. Often PBSP groups would have the problem of being all one gender: most often all women but sometimes all men too. Al Pessa didn’t approve of substituting people of the “wrong” gender for accommodating roles. For example, if the group was all women, he didn’t

approve of a woman stepping in to play the role of an ideal father. This often left the therapist to scramble to find additional accommodators. My method was to enroll pillows (I had a collection of big pillows) and then to enroll my voice as the voice of the ideal figure represented by the pillow. Others had accommodators that they would hire to be in groups that were short one of the genders.

In the last couple of years, I've experimented with ignoring AI's prohibition and have gone along with clients who wanted to have men play women and for women to play men's accommodating roles. I know that there were many reasons why I felt emboldened to do this. Perhaps the biggest reason was my experiences when I was forced to lead structures via Zoom during the COVID lock downs. As much as a Zoom structure is not ideal, I was amazed, stunned even, at how powerful individual Zoom structures turned out to be with the only accommodators being objects on the client's desk. This would include things like paper clips, pencils, rolls of tape and the furniture that they were sitting in. In short, I was super impressed with the fact that it seemed to be the power of the mind's eye and the mind's body and the ability to project meanings created on those stages onto objects that made the accommodation effective. I also experimented with my Zoom structures using verbally produced imagery. Clients would close their eyes and I would describe scenes with no accommodation. If that verbal description was meaningful, I would suggest that maybe they could use objects to represent the imagery that was described. I remember one particularly powerful structure where I had described the ideal parent limiting the client as a child. She liked that so much I had her sit on the floor and enroll the wall as ideal parents that she couldn't push over. That client was on sabbatical from her job and was in a day treatment program. When we ended, she told me that the 6 structures we did o Zoom was the most important and life-changing therapy that she had done in her 3 months of day treatment. (She had contacted me after reading "The body keeps the score," and

received permission to do work with me outside of her day treatment program.)

What these experiences leading structures on Zoom made crystal clear for me was that the accommodating process is extremely symbolic. That is, it's the meanings that the client projects onto the accommodator, whether that be an object or a person, that make the accommodation so powerful. Having a live body definitely increases the power of accommodation, but ultimately it is the power of the human mind to project meaning that is the most important aspect of accommodation. I am now at the point where I don't think twice when a client prefers to pick a female to play a male role or to pick a man to play a female role.

I'm guessing that the cultural progress of not being so rigid about defining gender roles is an important background to all this. But I certainly enjoy some freedom from anxiety when I have a structure group that is not well balanced in the gender of the attendees.



PBSP Conference 2024

Join us in San Diego, CA on April 6-7, 2024,
to Celebrate the Fruits of Living.

[EVENT INFO HERE](#) | [REGISTER HERE](#)

To stop receiving these newsletters, please email 'UNSUBSCRIBE' to uspbspa@gmail.com or
click [Unsubscribe](#)