



UNITED STATES
PBSP
ASSOCIATION

The official
newsletter
of the
USPBSPA



Top left to right: Trainers Matt Fried and Robbin McInturff, Miles Hudson, Connie Guthrie, Terri Glass-Williams, Alessia Vivod. Bottom, left to right, Shannon Burke, Jessica Ruegg and Supervisor, Joanna Ware

In spite of the fact that there is the exciting news that a live, in person, conference is being planned for April 2024 in San Diego (see below), for me the real headline news is the completion of the three-year training program.

Training therapist in the PBSP method is the reason for this organization's existence.

It is with the greatest of pleasure, satisfaction, and admiration that I can announce that these six folks have completed their training towards becoming PBSP therapists. This group of enthusiastic and dedicated folks completed three years of training, which met for four, three-day weekends per year, plus met in regular InterVision groups. This represents considerable financial, time and travel commitments on all their parts.

Congratulations,
Jim Amundsen



PBSP Conference 2024

Up until COVID-19 hit, the USPBSA had managed to put together three annual, national conferences. The last one was four years ago. There were plans to hold a fourth one in San Diego, CA when the pandemic hit. At long last, we're able to pick up where we left off. Thanks mostly to the dedicated efforts of Aimee Pearson, PsyD, there is a vibrant interest in PBSP in the San Diego area.

Part of me wonders if we will want to continue a yearly conference, primarily because of climate change crisis – I think that the world is looking at the question of what

“necessary” travel is. (During the 9/11 crisis, when planes were grounded, our air quality went way up.)

Nevertheless, I view this conference as a worthy necessity. We are, after all, a bodily/relational model of therapy and as wonderful as Zoom was when it was really needed there is no substitute for face to face, person to person meetings. For me one of the pleasures of PBSP has been not only its incredible power as a psychotherapeutic method but equally so the enjoyment I get from hanging out with other people who also love the method.

Psychotherapy is a bit of a weird profession. Many people don't know what it means to be a psychotherapist, much less a PBSP psychotherapist. If I say, “I'm a teacher,” many people have some understanding about what I do. If I say I'm a psychotherapist, a common response is, “Oh, that means you can read my mind, I better be careful.” I believe that being amongst fellow PBSP travelers offers crucial support for us all.

The theme for the 2024 conference, “Celebrating the Fruits of Living”. I hope you can join us in San Diego, CA on April 6-7, 2024, to celebrate our continued existence as a community.

[REGISTER HERE](#)

Good Questions by Jim Amundsen

A psychoanalytic colleague posed a question via email, “Why has PBSP stopped dealing with anger so much (why isn't there negative accommodation anymore)?”

Answer: If I were to attempt to describe Pesso's position on rage, and anger in general, and why it's not a primary step in trauma work, in psychoanalytic terms, I'd say the Pesso position is similar to Kohut's position on anger. That is, that anger/rage is a breakdown product and not the “bedrock” of any particular symptom. In Pesso's language, when abuse happens it breaks down the structure of ego. For Pesso the ego is like the skin on our body. The ego differentiates between inside and outside and is the collection of processes that mediates the relationship between inside and outside by controlling inputs that the inside milieu needs and controls the outputs. Normal anger is a kind of assertive energy that helps us to maintain ourselves. As Pesso puts it, anger is in the service of the survival of the self (and sexuality is in the service of the survival of the species).

When human development goes as it should, anger is “ego wrapped” which means (in the language of psychoanalytic thought) that anger can be a “signal” that something is unsatisfactory and appropriate action can be taken. This means that Pesso (like Kohut)

doesn't see aggression as a primary "mover", but psychobiological need states are what motivates us.

In a rage state (what Kohut called "narcissistic rage") there has been an injury to the ego system (that may have already been in a weakened state from developmental issues). To encourage or promote rage expressions means that the person is reliving (remembering) the injury event. Pessó, under the modern knowledge that "neurons that fire together, wire together," thought that it was counterproductive to spend much time remembering the injurious events. Thus, he came to advocate that as soon as the memory was revived a new, healing, reparative event should be created. So, in a PBSP structure, a healing scene is created where the event wouldn't have happened in the first place or remedied in some other way.

This doesn't mean that anger is ignored. Just yesterday I led someone in a structure who had been traumatized. Her presenting problem was she wanted to deal with how she responded to people in authority, in particular, policemen. What emerged was that while she was a therapist intern and was visiting a client in prison, she was physically assaulted by a guard. She did her best to fight him off, but as she reported her experience, said she was "appalled" by how easily the much bigger male overpowered her. When she reported the incident, her complaints were dismissed with no consequences to her attacker. As we do in structure work, an object was enrolled to represent her attacker and another object (a pillow) was enrolled to be a "protection" figure (who, if he had been there, would have protected her). As soon as the attacker was enrolled, she exclaimed with rage, "I want to kill him, I could strangle him." As she went into that anger state, I noticed her holding the pillow that was representing her protection figure in such a way that the pillow was restraining her hands. I suggested we experiment with a "limit" figure that would help her deal with how angry she felt. She agreed and as the procedure started, she said she would prefer her hands to be totally restrained (no movement allowed). She was then instructed to attempt to strangle her attacker while the limit figure restrained her hand movements with the "limit" figure saying, "With me it's ok to feel as rageful as you feel, but I'm not going to let you hurt yourself or anyone else." She did this with a lot of force until she relaxed. There was more but that intervention proved to be decisive. At the end, she reported much relief and relaxation because she realized that she had "been worrying about my anger" for a long time.

So, the healing action wasn't so much in the expression of her rage, although that was involved, but in the ego wrapping her rage. The assault (abuse) had fractured her ego and her sense of control over her own actions (PBSP calls this "unbounded anger"). That is, unconsciously she was afraid that if she accessed her anger, she might attempt to kill someone (particularly police, which, apparently was why she felt anxious when she saw a policeman or police car). The issue, in the PBSP view, was that her ego functions were weakened so she felt as though she couldn't touch her anger without danger.

The point being that if I had focused on giving her an opportunity to directly express her rage, say, beat pillows with a tennis racket, ego wrapping would not have occurred and in fact the weakened ego feature may have been reinforced.

I offer this case because I think that it illustrates how rage can often be a “symptom” of a weakened ego (often going back to developmental issues) and that the time spent reliving injuries and the helplessness that goes with them, can simply reinforce the injury and helplessness rather than repairing anything. Pessó came to believe (in a way that is very similar to Kohut’s theories) that the Freudian “id”, as a cauldron of untamed aggression and sexuality, was a result of development liaisons and not normal state of affairs.

US PBSP events & training



PBSP Senior Trainer, Gus Kaufman, will be leading a workshop, “Using PBSP to heal attachment wounds and trauma (including compulsory heterosexuality and policed gender roles)” at the American Academy of Psychotherapists (AAP), 68th Annual Institute and Conference, October 18 – 22, Raleigh-Durham, NC.

More info about the conference can be found at:
<https://www.aapweb.com/events/national-events/>

PBSP Senior Trainer, Gus Kaufman, will also be presenting a workshop (available via Zoom) at the 34th Annual International Boston Trauma Conference.

More info about the conference can be found at:
<https://traumaresearchfoundation.org/lp/34th-annual-boston-trauma-conference/>

PBSP international trainers (organized by Tasmin Pessó) will be putting on a one-hour workshop by Swiss trainer Monique Cuppen on Place Holders and Bookmarks on May 18, 2023. This is open to anyone who has completed a PBSP training program (you don’t have to be certified).

Contact Tasmin Pesso (tpesso@pacbell.net) or Gus Kaufman (gkaufmanjr@aol.com) to obtain a Zoom invite.

Trainer and USPBSPA President, Jim Amundsen, is starting to conduct “Saturday Structure” days on an approximately every other month basis.

For the schedule of these personal growth days, see his website:
<https://jimamundsen.com>

Please refer to our [Events](#) page for full details on all our upcoming events and training programs.

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