

The Canyon Ranch Think Tank

September 1989

An independent report on professional bodywork terminology and definitions

Introduction

An independent group of bodywork leaders met at Canyon Ranch in Tucson, Arizona in September of 1989 to explore issues critical to the emerging bodywork professions. They were to examine some of the unifying characteristics of touch professionals, and the objective of this particular meeting was to study and contribute to the evolution of the core terminology.

The group was invited and sponsored by the Canyon Ranch Foundation and its founder, Mel Zuckerman, as a gift and as a contribution to the bodywork field. Lori White, Assistant Director of the Foundation, chose Carol Carpenter to help organize the meeting.

Organizers Lori and Carol selected the topic to be discussed. After brainstorming possible themes, they concluded that one of the major frustrations in our field is a lack of a common language, i.e., generally accepted terminology or a set of definitions.

The task of clearly defining commonly used terms was identified as a valid scholarly task for a group of bodywork leaders, and as a significant contribution to the profession. The intent was to promote unity in the field by beginning to develop standard terminology defined in a way that would be generally acceptable.

The meeting became known as the Think Tank to reflect its nature as a scholarly exercise, which was non-political and non-partisan. A "think tank" is a group of experts from a particular field organized to do intensive study of a specific topic or problem solving around a certain issue.

The Participants were subjectively chosen by the organizers to reflect a broad range of perspectives, and were not intended to include all possible recognized leaders in the field. In choosing participants, the organizers were looking for certain characteristics to maximize chances for a productive event. Think Tank members were chosen:

- To represent various schools of thought and a variety of styles of bodywork.
- As individuals, not as representatives of groups.
- Because they could be non-partisan.
- Because they could see the "big picture" and look beyond their narrow scope.
- For their cooperative style of interaction.
- For their ability to be results oriented.
- As influential members of the profession who would be able to communicate the results of the meeting to others.

Those that were invited and able to attend were Margaret Avery, Patricia J. Benjamin, Iris Burman, Carol Carpenter, Ray Castellino, Steve Eabry, Kathryn Hansman-Spice, Joseph Heller, Peggy Horan, George Kousaleos, Mary McAlister, David Palmer, and Frances Tappan. Short biographies of these thirteen participants can be found in the appendix at the end of this report.

The purpose of this report is to inform the larger bodywork community about what went on at the Canyon Ranch Think Tank, and to encourage the acceptance of the methodology used and the resultant Terminology. A second objective is to offer a model to other groups who wish to create similar clarity of terms in their own work.

The Think Tank process

The thirteen participants met on four days to discuss and agree on definitions for terms commonly used in the field. The format used was open discussion using a facilitator. Carol Carpenter acted as facilitator for these meetings.

Facilitators are people who lead the group, keeping them focused on their task and working within the ground rules, while guiding them through the process of discussion and formulation of ideas. They need to be able to offer their opinion about the direction the group should go, but also be good listeners and not overstep their bounds as facilitators by being dictatorial.

Ground rules for the discussion were established to maximize productivity. Think Tank participants agreed to:

- Set aside their personal agendas as having no more importance than anyone else's.
- Tell the truth with compassion and always be considerate while being truthful.
- Be willing to look at the big picture. Look far into the future and at the same time, focus on the present.
- Be open to the views and opinions of others and be willing to
- learn and to contribute.
- Be on purpose, on time, and willing to work.
- Be cooperative.
- Be results oriented without sacrificing relationships, i.e., balance of process and results orientation.
- Be comfortable with chaos while working for clarity.

Deciding on which words to define

The first step was to decide on which words the group would define. There was a brainstorming session to make a list of words people thought were important followed by attempts to prioritize the list. There were over 25 words on the list, and there was much discussion about which word to start with.

The group finally concluded that in order to proceed, they had to come to agreement on the one word which would be used to describe the larger field of which they were

representatives. The search for THE WORD was difficult, but was narrowed down to three contenders: bodywork, massage, and touch therapy.

The word chosen to identify the larger field must:

1. Reflect what we do.
2. Distinguish us from other types of practitioners.
3. Be acceptable to different bodywork disciplines and intentions within the field.
4. Be politically viable outside the field.
5. Be saleable to the general public.

After much discussion, the word *massage* lost favor as having too much historical baggage to be acceptable to many groups, and also as clouded with many different legal definitions. In addition, our profession could not "own the word" exclusively. It was, however, familiar and largely recognized by the general public.

Touch therapy was objected to because of the word therapy is legally restricted in some states. There is also a sector of the field that sees its scope of practice as a personal service and not as therapeutic. There was also the thought that in this culture the word touch might be misunderstood by the general public as implying sexual touching.

Bodywork was objected to as being unprofessional, as having a "mechanical ring," and as being associated in the general public's mind with auto body repair. However, it was noted that it is being used more frequently in the literature of the field, and in articles written for the general public. It could also be "owned" by the field and it clearly distinguishes us from other health care practitioners.

After discussing each word using the five criteria, it was evident that none of the words would be accepted unanimously. Therefore, a vote was taken on which word to choose as **the word** to describe the field. *Bodywork* won by consensus as the best general term to describe the larger profession.

With *bodywork* chosen as the most general term for the field, the next step was seen as defining bodywork itself. The group decided not to try to define every style of bodywork within the field, but to encourage practitioners of each style to define themselves.

Defining words

To define a word means to state the meaning of the word, to identify its nature or essential qualities, or to determine or fix its boundaries. The question came up: Who is the group defining these words for? Definitions might be different for our own profession, for the public, or for legislation. It was observed that we need to define the terms we commonly use for ourselves first, since public perception and legal definitions should come as a result of a profession's self-definition.

Words used in the context of a particular profession have a specific meaning that is frequently different from the dictionary definition or the understanding of the work by the general public. For this reason, the use of standard dictionaries only offers a starting point for defining professional jargon, i.e., the specialized vocabulary and idioms of those in the same field of work. In developing definitions to be used as professional jargon, it is

up to a group of experts in the field to clearly state the meaning of the word as it is used within the field in a way that is both useful and generally acceptable.

The "one sentence method" of definition

After using a method of definition in which long lists of possible descriptors for each word were made by the group, it was decided to come up with a one sentence definition for each word. The "one sentence method" forces the group to look for the essential concepts and express them in a concise, coherent thought. There is a tangible result that is practical and can be used in a glossary of terms.

In the one sentence method, the word is first put into a general class, and is then distinguished from other words in that general class. The following are examples of simple one sentence definitions:

"A chair is a piece of furniture intended for one person to sit on." "A couch is a piece of furniture, usually made of padded material, intended for one or more persons to sit on."

Note that both chair and couch are in the same general class (i.e. furniture) but are distinguished from each other by the second part of the sentence. Actually, one or two more sentences can follow the one sentence as further explanations, but the one sentence should be able to stand on its own. For example, the one sentence definition of chair could be followed by a second sentence: "Chairs commonly have legs, a seat, and a back." The first sentence still describes the essential characteristics, while the second only adds further information.

The one sentence method of defining words gave the group a disciplined and scholarly approach that offered a focus for discussions and yielded clear results. The first word defined in this way was bodywork.

Bodywork was defined as "**the skillful application of touch to enhance health and well-being.**" By the end of the meetings an explanatory sentence was added to this one sentence definition:

"Bodywork includes a variety of philosophical approaches, theoretical frameworks, and techniques such as massage, movement, and education."

The group decided to further define the words within their definition of *bodywork* so that the intended meaning was as clear as possible. Words that needed further clarification were *skillful*, *touch*, *enhance*, *health*, and *well-being*. Starting with the dictionary definitions, the group added and deleted concepts until the meaning was clear and acceptable to all.

The following definitions were agreed upon:

- *Skillful* reflects a high degree of proficiency coming from knowledge, practice, and aptitude to do something well.
- *Touch* is the act of coming into contact with a body primarily using hands, other extremities, or tools.
- *To enhance* is to raise to a higher degree, intensify, or magnify.

- *Health* is a state of being sound in body and mind, and is a condition in which an organism performs its vital functions optimally.
- *Well-being* is a satisfying physical, mental, and social state of existence.

There was considerable discussion about the definition of touch, particularly relating to the word body within the definition. The group agreed to accept body as including body energy fields, as well as the Western anatomical and physiological understanding of the word.

The group also decided to define *bodywork professional* in terms of intention and methods. The following sentence was agreed upon:

"A bodywork professional is one who facilitates somatic change through touch, education, and clear communication in a safe, appropriate environment." Time ran out before words within this definition could be clarified further.

Defining various bodywork approaches

The Think Tank developed ten questions that may be useful as a starting point in creating definitions for various bodywork approaches, whether practiced by an individual or a group of people. The questions are:

1. What is the philosophical "world view" which you bring to your work? Do you believe the world is basically rational, scientific, and linear? Is it more non-linear and relational? Is it all preordained? Or is it some other combination?
2. What is the theoretical body of knowledge on which your work is based? Contemporary Western medicine? Oriental medicine? Ayurvedic traditions? Other traditions? A combination?
3. What is the role of the client in your work? Passive receiver? Active partner?
4. What is the role of the practitioner in the work? Healer? Facilitator? Technician?
5. What is the intention of the practitioner? To promote circulation? To relax? To teach? To treat ailments?
6. What are expectations for your clients? To feel good? To learn? To have general discomfort or illness relieved? To alleviate a disease process?
7. How much verbal communication is required in your work?
8. Does your work require one session or a series of sessions?
9. What techniques and tools are required to perform your work?
10. What is your client's position during your work? On table, floor, chair?

Concluding remarks

Although few terms were formally defined, the group felt very successful and satisfied with the results. Something more important was accomplished, i.e., a number of bodywork leaders from diverse backgrounds gathered together in a cooperative atmosphere and found a way to rise above their differences to identify points of unity. In addition, new friendships and understanding were created.

The results cannot all be found in the short list of definitions generated. In fact, many important points of disagreement were not settled, e.g., massage eluded definition after much discussion. But a methodology was created that the group hoped could serve as a model for other bodyworkers to use to clarify their work.

The development of a glossary of terms for the bodywork profession is a goal that the Think Tank participants endorse. Such a glossary would give the field more credibility, and enhance communication and understanding among ourselves. It is hoped that the greater bodywork community will continue the discussion of terminology. We suggest as their starting point the acceptance of terms as defined here.

Special thanks

The Think Tank participants would like to give special thanks to Mel Zuckerman, owner and founder of Canyon Ranch, for the opportunity to come together in a peaceful and healthful atmosphere to benefit the bodywork community.

Appendix A

Definitions

Bodywork is the skillful application of touch to enhance health and well-being. Bodywork includes a variety of philosophical approaches, theoretical frameworks, and techniques such as massage, movement, and education.

- Skillful reflects a high degree of proficiency coming from knowledge, practice, and aptitude to do something well.
- Touch is the act of coming into contact with a body primarily using hands, other extremities, or tools.
- To enhance is to raise to a higher degree, intensify, or magnify.
- Health is a state of being sound in body and mind, and is a condition in which an organism performs its vital functions optimally.
- Well-being is a satisfying physical, mental, and social state of existence.

A **Bodywork Professional** is one who facilitates somatic change through touch, education, and clear communication in a safe, appropriate environment.

Appendix B

Think Tank participant biographies

Margaret Avery Margaret is owner and co-director of the Desert Institute of the Healing Arts in Tucson, Arizona. She has been a teacher of advanced massage techniques there since its inception in 1982.

Patricia J. Benjamin, Ph.D. Patricia is currently National Director of Education of the *American Massage Therapy Association*, and also serves as their National Historian. Since 1985 her articles on the history and philosophy of massage therapy have appeared in *The Massage Therapy Journal*. She has a massage therapy practice near Chicago, Illinois.

Iris Burman Iris is director of Educating Hands School of Massage, which offers classes and workshops in a variety of bodywork approaches. She is also owner of Educating Hands Bookstore in Miami, Florida.

Carol Carpenter Carol is owner and director of the National Holistic Institute near San Francisco, California. She also currently serves as Chair of the *Council of Schools* of the *American Massage Therapy Association*. She graduated Magna Cum Laude from the University of North Carolina with a B.A. degree in psychology.

Ray Castellino, D.C. Ray has been studying polarity therapy since 1971 with teachers such as Randolph Stone, Pierre Pannetier, and James Said. He was the founding vice-president and past president of the *American Polarity Therapy Association*, and presently serves as Legislative Chair for APTA. He teaches and practices in Santa Barbara, California.

Steve Eabry Steve offers a variety of bodywork styles in his private practice in San Luis Obispo, California. He is concerned about the evolving form of the bodywork profession.

Kathryn Hansman-Spice, M.S. Kathryn is the director of the Potomac Massage Training Institute in Washington, DC. She is active in developing seminars and training programs, and maintains a private practice in bodywork. She is currently vice-chair of the *Council of Schools* of the *American Massage Therapy Association*.

Joseph Heller Joseph spent ten years as an aerospace engineer with NASA before becoming involved in the human potential movement in 1970. He studied bio-energetics, gestalt, and psychosynthesis, and did workshops with Buckminster Fuller, John Lilly, Virginia Satir, and Brugh Joy. He studied with Ida Rolf in 1972 and became president of the *Rolf Institute* in 1975. His articles have been featured in a number of new age and health journals, and he has written a book called *Bodywise*. Joseph lives in Mt. Shasta, California.

Peggy Horan Peggy is a member of the massage and teaching staff at *Esalen Institute* in Big Sur, California. She is currently involved in the expansion and development of the Institute's Massage School, Healthsprings Outreach Program, and Guest Exchange Program. She has been involved in the field of bodywork since 1969 as a massage practitioner and as a student of Trager, Shiatsu, Gestalt, dance, movement, and childbirth, and is a practicing direct energy midwife.

George Kousaleos George has a degree in clinical psychology from Harvard University. He has been a SOMA Bodywork Practitioner since 1978, and SOMA Instructor since 1984. He is a member of the Florida State Board of Massage, and Chairman of Continuing Education since 1986. George lives in Tallahassee, Florida.

Mary McAlister Mary is president of the *Shiatsu-Anma Practitioners Association* and coordinator for the Southwest Regional Chapter of the newly formed *American Association of Oriental Healing Arts*. She teaches at the Shiatsu Massage School of California and practices at the Tao Healing Arts Center in Santa Monica, California.

David Palmer David is the publisher of The Bodywork Entrepreneur newsletter and former owner/director of *The Amma Institute of Traditional Japanese Massage* in San Francisco. In 1986 he coined the term on-site massage and has been instrumental in developing the market and training practitioners for chair massage. He developed the first special chair for on-site massage, the High-Touch Massage Chair, and founded *On-Site Enterprises*, which has trained over 1,000 practitioners in the techniques and marketing of seated massage.

Frances Tappan, Ed.D. Frances has been practicing, teaching, researching, and writing about massage for over thirty years. She was Associate Dean of the School of Physical Therapy (1959-1972), and retired as Associate Dean of the School of Allied Health Professions in 1975 from the University of Connecticut in Storrs. She is author of the book *Healing Massage Techniques-Holistic, Classical and Emerging Methods* (1988). Frances lives in Storrs, Connecticut.