

## **The Body in Therapy**

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### How is the body represented in Psychotherapy?

- Dualism
- Monism

“Mind and brain influence the body proper just as much as the body proper can influence the brain and the mind. They are merely two aspects of the very same being.” (Damasio, 2018, p.117)

“How we use our bodies – our posture, our movement, our cognition, our speech – reflects our state of mind. And similarly, the state of our bodies – our posture movement, breathing, head position, muscular tone – both limits and anchors our state of mind and its potential for change and creativity”. (Aposhyan, 2004, p.12)

“Your body is not just a vehicle for your brain to cruise around in. The relationship is perfectly reciprocal: your body and your brain exist for each other. A body that can be moved or stilled, touched or evaded, scalded or warmed, frozen or cooled, strained or rested, starved, devoured, or nourished, is the raison d’etre of the senses. And the sensations from your skin and body – touch, temperature, pain and a few others... are your minds true foundation.”  
(Blakeslee & Blakeslee, 2007, p.12)

### The language of ‘Feelings’

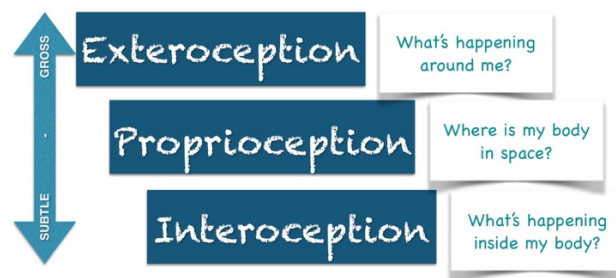
- Sensations
- Emotions

### APPROACH or AVOID?

### The 8 Senses of the Sensory Processing System

1. Tactile/Touch
2. Auditory/Hearing
3. Visual/Sight
4. Taste
5. Smell
6. Proprioception
7. Equilibrioception (vestibular)
8. Interoception





## Exteroception

*“Externally oriented perception... creates maps and models of your body, the world around you, and your body’s relationship to the world”.* (Blakeslee & Blakeslee, 2008)

## Proprioception

*“Your inherent sense of the body’s position and motion in space”.*

(Blakeslee & Blakeslee, 2008)

### Somatosensory homunculus

- A map of your body in your brain
- Receives sensory information from your body
- ‘Representational space’ for each part of the body
- Certain parts of the body are represented in greater detail than others – to do with density of nerve endings
- Does not only depend on sensory input, but also on attention directed toward that stimuli

## Interoception

*“Interoception refers to the process by which the nervous system senses, interprets, and integrates signals originating from within the body, providing a moment-by-moment mapping of the body’s internal landscape across conscious and unconscious levels”.* (Khalsa et.al. 2017)

Interoception involves both bottom up and top down processes

- Interoceptive Awareness
  - metacognitive awareness of interoceptive accuracy
- Interoceptive Accuracy
  - performance on objective tests, eg. heartbeat detection
- Interoceptive Sensibility
  - self-evaluated assessment of subjective interoception

### Factors influencing Interoception

**Genetic** - Hereditary effects

**Social & Environmental** - Sensitivity to cues varies among cultures; Influence of environment (family patterns, societal values)

**Biology** - Body weight, hormones

**Neuropsychology and Neurodevelopment** - Brain damage or abnormal brain development

**Cognitions and Behaviours** - Cognitive eating restraint



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**Mental Disorders** - Effecting the way information is processed  
(Stevenson et.al. 2015)

### **Interoception and Eating Disorders**

'A Brain Based Approach to Eating Disorder Treatment'. Laura Hill (2017).

"Neurobiological eating disorder research in 2017 is where diabetic research was in 1917. We are about 100 years behind".

INSULA - For many people with AN...

- *"The insula fires significantly less compared to those without eating disorders*
- *The body could be sending the brain signals of pain from hunger or fullness, yet the insula is not transmitting the message to the DLPFC, where thoughts reside to make a decision...*
- *Flavors may be hard to detect from low-firing insula taste signals and may need to be sharper to compensate*
- *For many who binge eat, taste may be euphoric during initial bites, and then signals appear to lower or diminish...*
- *High anxiety can cloud or even drown out lower brain, minimal insular signals...*
- *To compensate for insula misfiring and/or overly anxious thoughts, food can be 'dosed' ... to replace the lack of interoceptive insular signals with balanced, individualised recommendations for adults"*

(Hill, 2017, p.65)

*"Many persons who binge eat may not sense hunger and fullness due in part to little or no insular signals. While the body may send signals of pain from not eating throughout the day, the pain may not be sensed interoceptively, due to the low insular firing. Likewise the insula may signal no pain to the higher brain areas even when the gut is stretched beyond imagination from eating a large amount of food in a relatively short amount of time". (Hill, 2017, p.86)*

The Multidimensional Assessment of Interoceptive Awareness (Mehling, 2012)

1. **Noticing** – awareness of uncomfortable, comfortable, and neutral body sensations
2. **Not-Distracting** – tendency not to ignore or distract oneself from sensations of pain or discomfort
3. **Not-Worrying** – tendency not to worry or experience emotional distress with physical sensations
4. **Attention Regulation** – ability to sustain and control attention to body sensations
5. **Emotional Awareness** – awareness of the connection between body sensations and emotional states
6. **Self-Regulation** – ability to regulate distress by attention to body sensations
7. **Body Listening** – active listening to the body for insight
8. **Trusting** – experience of one's own body as safe and trustworthy

*"Interoception includes a range of sensations beyond taste, including perception of pain, temperature, itch, tickle, sensual touch, muscle tension, air hunger, stomach pH and intestinal tension. Integration of these internal feelings provides*



*an integrated sense of the physiological condition of the entire body and is crucial for the instantiation of the 'self' because it provides the link between cognitive and affective processes and the current body state." (Kaye et.al, 2009).*

*"It is through my body that I understand other people".*  
Merlau-Ponty (1962) Phenomenology of Perception

### **Interoception and Body Image**

*"Your body image is an amalgam of beliefs – attitudes, assumptions expectations, with an occasional delusion thrown in – that are likewise embedded both in your body maps and in the parts of your cortex that store your autobiographical memories and social attitudes. Your family, peers, and culture provide the context, you provide the interpretation". (Blakeslee, 2007, p.42)*

### The problem with body image...is the concept of body IMAGE

The term 'body image' is thought to have first been used by psychoanalyst Paul Schilder in his 1935 book 'The Image and Appearance of the Human Body'. Schilder described body image as *"the picture of our body which we form in our mind"*.

*"'Self-objectification' is the tendency to experience one's body principally as an object, to be evaluated for its appearance rather than for its effectiveness... Interoceptive awareness was negatively correlated with self-objectification". (Ainley & Tsakiris, 2013)*

*"As the body is not simply perceived exteroceptively – it is also felt interoceptively, interoceptive signals and their awareness may play an important role in body-ownership and body image". (Badoud & Tsakiris, 2017)*

### **The 10 Principles of Intuitive Eating**

1. *Reject the diet mentality*
2. *Honor your hunger*
3. *Make peace with food*
4. *Challenge the food police*
5. *Feel your fullness*
6. *Discover the satisfaction factor*
7. *Cope with your feelings without using food*
8. *Respect your body*
9. *Exercise: feel the difference*
10. *Honor your health: gentle nutrition (Tribble & Resch, 2013)*

### **Embodiment**

Integration of Exteroceptive Perception and Interoceptive Signals  
(Badoud & Tsakiris, 2017)

### **Mindfulness**



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“Created by an English Pali scholar, the term mindfulness appeared in the English language in 1881. Mindfulness was translated from the Pali word ‘sati’, which literally means memory. Sati is the act of remembering the present; keeping the present in mind”. (Huxter, 2012)

“From a Buddhist perspective, mindfulness cannot be separated from its context... the 4 applications:

1. **Contemplation of the body**, including posture, actions, physical sensations and breath
2. **Contemplation of feeling**, or the hedonic qualities of pleasantness, unpleasantness or neither
3. **Contemplation of ‘heart-mind’**, including moods, emotions and states of mind
4. **Contemplation of ‘dharmas’** – phenomena, including emotional, mental and behavioural patterns analysed as helpful or unhelpful”. (Huxter, 2012)

### **The Therapists Own Embodiment**

“Managing countertransference to the best advantage is facilitated by mindfulness (being aware) including body awareness” (Rothschild, 2006, p.20)

This may include:

- Sensations you feel in your body
- Visual or auditory images that arise in your mind
- Movement or muscular impulses in your body
- What you feel emotionally

Develop and practice:

- Body awareness
- Body awareness in session
- Tracking arousal in session
- ‘Putting the brakes on’

“We are most vulnerable to compassion fatigue and vicarious traumatization when we are unaware of the state of our own body and mind”. (Rothschild, 2006, p.103)

“Since psychotherapy is predominately a therapy of talk, there is, understandably an emphasis on the use of verbalization as the mediator of subjective phenomena within the therapeutic encounter. However this indicates the problem of mind-body dualism, since there is an assumption that problems of the mind must be dealt with via talk therapy, and problems of the body require a physical intervention”. (Shaw, 2003, p.27)

### **EMBODIED PSYCHOTHERAPY**

- The Therapists own interoceptive awareness and embodied self-care
- ‘Here and Now moment’ and the use of sensation and emotion in therapy
- Embodied strategies used in therapy



- Recommended complimentary practices to aid interoceptive awareness and embodiment

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