

Defne Dinler RC 04 **Renewal of the Soul Through Awareness of the Body**



By Müge Mengü Hale RC 92

Psychology is the examination of mind and spirit, but from Hindu Yoga to Sufi teachings many cultural teachings involve a deep focus on body in the renewal of the mind. Defne Dinler RC 04 who is studying somatic counseling psychology at Naropa University, a Buddhist University in Colorado is on her way to becoming an expert of body psychotherapy that approaches body and mind awareness as a whole.

"The idea is new even in America" says Defne referring to the fact that psychology has traditionally been associated with cognitive therapy. "Psychology has established itself as a mainly cognitive profession. A client speaks to the psychologist and they come to their decisions based on this conversation, and the body is mostly excluded during this process."

Body psychotherapists incorporate the body into the healing of the soul. "This school of thought accepts that everything is interconnected in the human psyche. Physical body is not separate from our emotional, mental and spiritual bodies," Defne says.

Body psychotherapy investigates a person's body language when they are in therapy. "We take the body cues as information. It might be a physical hand gesture saying no, which is associated with an emotion not expressed." Awareness of the body's movement and reactions empower the person, who then starts to trust his/her body. "This puts the client in control" says Defne, "It builds the muscle to trust these bodily messages."

"Toddlers have temper tantrums that release the emotional pressure out of the body. Grown-ups slowly shut down their physical coping mechanisms and get unaware of their bodily reactions and the body, and the body feels like an enemy."

"For example, a person in depression might tend to rationalize everything and not get in contact with own feelings. When we observe that someone's energy is all in his head or trapped in the head, we can work on spreading this energy to



An ardent believer in healing powers of animals such as horses and dogs, Defne Dinler RC 04 is training her puppy as a therapy dog to assist in sessions

the entire body, and as a consequence they might be able to cry or unlock their emotions, and release these emotions in a healthy way" she explains.

People who go to body psychotherapy can range from those with deep traumatic experiences to ones who yearn for a happier life or simply want to have a deeper connection with their inner selves.

"Psychology is good for the soul. Anyone can benefit from therapy," Defne says.

Encouraged to learn through memorizing most of her life, Defne realized a physical component was missing in the learning process in her primary education.

"Reading textbooks and taking exams never motivated me. It has to make sense in my body" she says. Robert College was an exception in Defne's life where she was exposed to more tactile and creative learning methods for the first time in her life. "I got my passion for art in RC. The theater and musical clubs were very influential. RC is where I started to find myself" she says.

After graduating from Robert College, Defne received a dual degree in painting and clinical psychology at Washington University-St. Louis in 2009. She worked as an Art Therapist intern at the Barnes Jewish Hospital, Siteman Cancer Center at the Washington University School of Medicine, where she helped cancer patients ease their pains through artistic expression and witnessed dramatic changes in terminally ill patients through the expressive arts.

Encouraged by her mother to pursue her interests in alternative therapies, Defne completed a four-year healing science practitioner certificate at the Barbara Brennan School of Healing in Florida in 2010. This hands-on healing system works with an individual's energy consciousness system to create physical, emotional, mental and spiritual health and this alternative education taught Defne how to track energy in human body.

Studying body psychotherapy is not only a professional goal for Defne, this unified approach benefits her in her personal life. Her experience of Buddhist psychology, an Eastern take on Western science taught her "mindfulness", or to be more aware of herself. "It taught me to replace the thought of 'everything is happening to me' with 'I have a choice in everything'," she says. Learning to observe herself without judgment is what gives her power and control of herself, a principle that she also practices for her clients in her profession.