

Marion Rosen began her training in bodywork therapies in the 1930's in Munich, Germany, working with Lucy Heyer, who had trained in breath and relaxation work with Elsa Gindler, a respected innovator of body therapies. Although raised Christian, Marion's family was of Jewish origins. Fortunately, she was able to escape from Nazi Germany at the beginning of World War II. After a year in Sweden she was able to arrange a passage across Russia to the United States. She settled in Berkeley, California; received a second license in physical therapy from the Mayo Clinic in Minnesota, and has been in private practice for almost fifty years.

While doing physical therapy, Marion observed that if clients talked with her about their lives, they seemed to recover more quickly. She watched for the interconnections between the physical posture and the emotional state of the person, and learned how the body is often "making a statement" about how a person is feeling. She realized that it is important to address both aspects of the individual at the same time.

Marion has been teaching her method to students in the United States, Canada, Sweden, Finland, and Russia during the past ten years. There are Rosen Method Training Centers in Berkeley, California; Santa Fe, New Mexico; the North East; and a major training center in Stockholm, Sweden. Gloria Hesselund, who is Training Director of Rosen Method programs in California and Scandinavia, is very interested in the acknowledgment of our spiritual nature as embodied.

Marion, I've heard you say that it isn't necessary for us to talk about spirituality to people. Why is this?

This is something that has to come from the person's own experience. And when this happens, then it is valid, and we can talk about it further. But to say it from the outside, it's not something that means anything to anyone. It's like when they preach at you in church, and you don't get it...unless, you come with the experience of God and listen from that place. Then you hear it. It's the same with our work.

Sometimes when you are working with people, they say they feel they are being touched by the hands of God.

That's what they say. And the nicest

ROSEN METHOD BODYWORK SPIRITUAL DIMENSIONS

A Conversation with
Marion Rosen and Gloria Hesselund
by Mara Lynn Keller

thing was when a person who said that to me, told me she worked on a person a few days later, and her client said the same thing to her. All of a sudden it made her understand that this work is something way beyond just her doing something, or me doing something; there was something more coming through, when you surrender.

People sometimes feel this surrendering, like a surrendering to God?

This is what I have experienced. Then of course, when you surrender, you have to surrender to something, you don't really surrender to yourself.

Gloria: This surrendering could be to God; or to that sense of connection to the larger whole; to something beyond self. It means surrendering the feeling that it's all up to me, that I have to do it all. It means somehow knowing, no matter what may happen, at some deep level, I'll be okay. It's knowing that I'm in the hands of God; that I am a part of the universe.

Marion: The trust is what comes first, actually. When you have the trust, then you can also surrender.

Gloria: My own experience has been that these come at the same time, hand-in-hand. It's an experience that can't be thought out. Surrender cannot be planned.

Marion: Nor can trust. When the diaphragm lets go, then that feeling of trust very often comes in. We allow ourselves to let go of what we are worrying about, what worries us, we just give up

our insecurities. Another space begins to open as the diaphragm swings; and we feel at peace with our aliveness.

How did you come to focus so much on the diaphragm and breathing in your bodywork?

It came from a very physical point. This other thing, the spirituality experience, came as a secondary benefit. I had asthma as a child, and people told me to learn how to breathe, so I learned about the diaphragm and its movement. I started looking at it in a different way from how the books talked about it. I saw that in the body, when the diaphragm would let go, something special would happen in a person.

I had an experience in Munich one time, when I was first learning to do body therapy work. The woman who was with me had an anxiety attack. As I worked on her diaphragm, it let go, it released, and her anxiety disappeared, and she felt strong. She felt okay. She felt at peace at that moment. From then on, there were many similar experiences that people had when this physical release happened in the diaphragm. There was very definitely a connection between the diaphragm and that particular state I could see in the expression in their faces. They would say, "I'm at peace." One person said, "I didn't know something like this was available."

In the first teacher's training [for Rosen practitioners], when people were asked, "What did you get from this training?" they talked about the diaphragm,

how it moved; that they felt a release, they felt happiness. And they all said they felt a connection to God—irrespective of what religion they were—even if they were atheists. That interested me very much.

So I will talk about this feeling *after* people have had an experience like this.

When I have experienced your work, your touch is so gentle, there is so much warmth, and comfort and help in it. It reminds me of the ancient practice called "the laying on of hands," where there is a deep physical and spiritual healing that comes with faith, or that comes with the touch of a faithful person. This is a long-standing tradition that goes back before Christianity. Would you tell us more about what happens to a client when you put your hands on them?

For me? It's like caressing someone.

There is the feeling of caress. And then there is a feeling of this person entrusting himself or herself to me; and I feel glad. This is how I start out, putting my hand on them. It's like when you have a child, and you caress them, and you put your hand on them, too, to tell them something with touch, to tell them, "I'm here," "I'm with you," maybe, "I love you." It is something like that. Even before I know that I love them; for sometimes I don't love them when I first put my hand on them. But the lovingness is maybe there, if I am allowed to work on someone.

I feel it is a privilege to be allowed to put my hand on someone, and that they have the trust to allow me to do that. And I also feel some kind of connection, when I have my hand on someone. It's like this animal connection of closeness. I just feel very close to a person when I can do that.

Do you think of your work as loving touch? Do you think that is a good way

"As it is not proper
to cure the eyes
without the head,
nor the head
without the body;
so neither is it prop-
er to cure the body
without the Soul"

SOCRATES

to describe Rosenwork?

I would hate to have *that* in print, because the same thing is true as with spirituality; it only holds true when you have the experience of it. If you say to somebody, I feel love when I touch somebody, it sounds very, very corny. But if that person experiences what I experience, or Gloria experiences, or you experience, when we touch someone—there is that feeling which is released in us which brings forth a sympathy for that other person. Sympathy...that's not quite as corny.

Do you use the word compassion?

No. It's not compassion. That's not what it is. I feel awed by the other person. Respect.

Gloria: Appreciation.

Marion: Appreciation, yes. That's more like it. Appreciation for that being that is Gloria, that is Mara, that is whoever I touch.

It reminds me of Albert Schweitzer's term, "reverence for life."

That's right. Reverence. That word I could accept. How this came to me, I don't know. When a person comes in the room, and I think I have to work with them, I don't feel loving at all, they are just *other* people. But the moment I put my hand on them, something happens, something shifts in me. I couldn't tell you what it is. But I know that whatever it is, transmits itself. I know it.

Gloria: It's something in the way we've learned to touch; we really take in the person as she/he is. This requires an open-ended touch, a non-manipulative touch. And that open hand, without agenda, already communicates to the person an acceptance. There is the quality of curiosity, too, that we bring into the touch. Feeling with our hands, "how is this person, really?" Just wanting to know who she or he really is, without having to have anything be different—this communicates something of appreciation, engagement, love.

Is there any religious practice that you find helpful?

No; except that I know somehow that God exists. And I feel a connection, to whatever it is, whoever it is, something beyond me. It seems like it is a given. I think this has been with me for a long time: it happened during that time—Hitler's time in Germany. I had this

experience of seeing a woman's face up in the sky. I don't know if it was a dream, or a half-dream. And the whole sky was this face, and it said, "I will take care of you, don't worry." That was all. And I have had the feeling of being taken care of, ever since. I don't know who the woman was. I don't know what it meant. I cannot tell you anything about it. I can just tell you that it was an experience where the feeling of it lasted. The knowing of it.

Gloria: I do have a spiritual practice and it does help. And practicing Rosen Method helps me with my spiritual practice. I recognize parallels between the two: Rosen invites us to acknowledge reality just as it is; to contact another with awareness, not seeking to change or fix, only to meet the truth and notice what occurs. The feeling of connection as we open in this process is beyond the personalities, beyond all other considerations we might have. It's awe-inspiring, that sense of meeting the soul or essence of another.

Marion: The inner truth of the person. But see, if we would start by *talking* about that, they would think, "What is all this nonsense?" There has to be a way to let people find the way to it themselves.

Gloria: I agree. We cannot know what we will meet ahead of time. Our work is about living with the unknown. Respect for the unknown is an accepted aspect of Rosen Method, as of many spiritual teachings. What occurs through relaxation or through opening to the spiritual is more open-ended than anything we can predict or plan. Bringing curiosity and respect for the unknown to hands-on contact, allows both practitioner and client to be together in the realm of discovery. To listen to people discovering their own truths, their own spirituality, or sense of God, is just amazing.

How does the spirituality arise in the work we do? I feel it is a natural outgrowth of our human nature—when we are not interfering with who we truly are. Chronic muscle tensions can be seen as the physical reflection of those interferences. The easing of the breathing, through relaxation, can be seen as a physical reflection of opening to the truth.

What you are saying, Gloria, reminds me of the saying from the Bible, that "the truth shall make you free." This is similar to the quotation that Marion

uses so often, from the Gospel of Thomas: "If you bring forth what is within you, what you bring forth will save you. If you do not bring forth what is within you, what you do not bring forth will destroy you." How does that guide your work, Marion?

It is about the holding and the unholding. What we hold back makes the tension, the holding, the set-nesses, that is what makes the body become rigid, to lose its life. And what we bring forth, that is the aliveness in us. Jesus believed this. And I believe it too!

And the tensions are what make our spirits go astray?

Holding back is what makes the body and the soul go astray. And the opening to the truth is what allows the soul to be free. To tell the truth, and to have someone tell us the the truth...this is what will set us free, what will save us from destruction. ☸

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