

TaKeTiNa® in psychotherapy

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Defining health as the harmony between mind and body is an ancient idea, asking us to pay attention to our inner thoughts, feelings and our physical body equally.

Descartes' famous dictum "I think therefore I am" tipped this balance towards the physical and has had consequences on our lives ever since, but intellectual analysis alone is rarely enough to relieve emotional suffering.

I. An integrative concept of health

Many people suffer from a 'don't feel anything' depression or thoughts that go round and round in never-ending circles – further thinking obviously can't resolve these, therefore its all the more important that we reflect on this mind/body balance during treatment and give room to emotional experiences. But how can we experience emotions when they are blocked?

This is where the power of TaKeTiNa® comes in. The way of rhythm, the primal power of life, is central to the experience of living for everyone. For example, your heart rate and breathing rate increase during activities but slow down during relaxation. Our world is full of rhythm, from the rhythms of day and night to the rhythms of fish, but we seldom notice them. Therefore, working with rhythm and music in combination with an analytical understanding of any emerging issues provides a fertile breeding ground for a successful psychotherapy.

II. TaKeTiNa® - an ideal platform for the psychotherapeutic context

From the third month onwards the unborn child hears the continuous rhythmic beating of the maternal heart, rhythm is an early intrauterine experience.

In TaKeTiNa®, the sound of the surdo – a deep bass drum, which accompanies the basic rhythm – cradles and secures. Extended long rhythms are reliable structures which can give insecure people a sense of comfort and security.

The power of the TaKeTiNa® process comes from working in musical groups. The support comes predominantly from the community.

People with difficult family situations tend to avoid groups. For them, this can be the first time in their lives where they experience 'belonging' – a basic human need.

The atmosphere created in these musical group encounters is designed to be light and easy. Each individual is free to either participate in the process or be passive. The experience takes precedence over 'doing it right' or achieving a goal.

"I've been totally amazed to be able to feel so high and free in a large group. I've always had unpleasant sensations in groups and the feeling I could faint. This is something I have never experienced and I asked myself what kind of life had I been living before? Through the voice and the music something inside of me was suddenly calmed. I started to cry, at first I was speechless, I had to try and process this new experience. At home I looked at myself in the mirror and it looked as if my eyes had brightened. This illumination lasted another two days." (patient report)

III. The elements of TaKeTiNa® - for an effective psychotherapeutic process

By working with all the senses – with breathing, voice and movement – we can use the body as a source of deep inner knowledge. Emotions are induced by the constant interplay of 'light' and 'heavy' rhythms. Constant repetition during the musical 'work' draws one into the process. As this develops, there is the physical tangible experience of being grounded but also being able to 'let go' within the group. The variety of music and sounds in the room creates an atmosphere which makes it easier to let go of thoughts.

"When I listened to the others, I became restless and hectic. If, however, I focused on me, I became inwardly calm and felt comfortable. So I am experiencing 'myself' whilst in contact with others." (patient report)

Rhythm is very radical. There is only 'in' or 'out' – either one is 'in' the rhythm or one isn't – and you can feel it directly. As the process develops, everyone reaches their own musical limits and then 'falls out of rhythm'. These musical boundaries are challenges and make it very clear how someone is approaching them. Many people in our culture are primarily programmed to learn and perform quickly but are easily frustrated. Some people react with frustration anger or irritation but others become withdrawn and anxious; rarely do they react with humour, calmness and curiosity. So these situations work as a mirror for our personalities and allow us to become conscious of them through our bodily experiences.

“When something didn’t work out and I was under great pressure, hectic and panicking, I noticed I covered myself up and tried to hide my inabilities. This strategy I’d also applied in my day-to-day life. With TaKeTiNa® I had the chance to see inside me exactly what was going on. If I stayed with myself at this first step, then eventually there would come a point where I was ready to take the next step. As I started to do this in TaKeTiNa® I started to be able to do this in my own life. Since then I no longer have everlasting deep holes I can’t get out of.” (patient report)

“I realise that I’m experiencing the same things in TaKeTiNa® as in normal life but I have become aware that until now other people have always seemed very far away and separate from me. In the GaMaLa triangle (a three-person rhythm practice (ed.)) it’s the first time I have witnessed and shared togetherness” (patient report)

In this way, one can discover personal boundaries, respect them and over time expand them.

“TaKeTiNa® is, for me, a parable of life. I have learnt that I overstretch myself and it’s far better for me and I’m happier when I only ‘bake small loaves’. I made a breakthrough when I allowed myself an hour to only stand on my feet, and really only stand on my feet. The experience was liberating and sustainable. Suddenly everything was clearer and more transparent. Afterwards, it seemed to me that I could finally see my complex problems and therefore try to solve them.” (patient report)

TaKeTiNa® gives a lot of freedom. It just makes offerings, one can take them or leave them. One can follow step by step or be taken by the hand. You can move or lie down, join in or just let the sounds in the room work through you. It’s clear that many people find it difficult at first to give themselves free space and to use it.

“I have laughed at myself as I experienced putting on a brave face and trying to be right. It was incredibly liberating.” (patient report)

Lying in the middle of the group circle is often met with inhibition and mistrust, but it can bring out deep feelings of security, similar to being back safely in the mother’s womb.

“I lay down again in the middle of the circle, it normally feels good. Sometimes I’ve felt like I’m flying but this time strong unpleasant feelings rose up, feelings high in my chest without thoughts or pictures. When they broke away suddenly all my fears were gone. These deep fears I’ve carried for two years were just blown away, it was unbelievably liberating” (patient report).

During the TaKeTiNa® experience, physical memories hidden from consciousness are accessed again and again and through this process; sometimes repressed traumas and feelings are made conscious. For example, a patient who had suffered a tragic traffic accident at the age of 14 during which her best friend died relived images of the experience during a TaKeTiNa® session. These had previously been only been dimly recalled and largely hidden from her conscious mind. In the following sessions she reconnected with feelings from the accident and her grief over the loss of her friend surfaced for the first time. Through this psychotherapeutic process, the mourning she had needed to allow her to move on could be completed. Another important aspect of TaKeTiNa® is the type of consciousness it can induce from creating chaos. By singing certain rhythms and creating moments of tension, the group is made to fall in and out of rhythm. Returning from this state in the TaKeTiNa® process is made easy through the musical maelstrom of the group itself rather than the individual but during this 'falling out of the rhythm' the 'self' lets go. Initially, this experience is often associated with anxiety, panic, or helplessness. However, through the repeated experiences of 'dropping back in' to the rhythm, the fear of loss of self-control fades away. As the sense of constant security strengthens, new and very different ways of finding your 'self' can be discovered. Greater confidence in one's own skills and the creativity of 'existing' deepens. This results in more serenity and less fear of the new. Increasing self-awareness during the TaKeTiNa® process puts the emotional self-healing process into gear.

"Suddenly, I felt my heart clearly but painfully and I was reminded of my mother. I became hot, my heart opened and I had a fuzzy warm feeling spreading through my body which felt great and put me at peace." (patient report)

IV. Playtime with TaKeTiNa® - Experiments and new discoveries

When we open ourselves to our senses, feelings are more intense and our sense of self clearer. Understanding and discovering your own musical boundaries shows you exactly where you are and gives a starting point from which you can develop and explore in exciting and joyful ways, each in their own way in their own time, some faster some more slowly. Goals and speed are irrelevant feelings and the intensity of the experience replace 'getting it right'. In this way, being overly self-conscious and worrying about how others see us is reduced.

The freedom in TaKeTiNa® to 'get into it' and 'drop out of it' at will requires us to take on the responsibility for our own wellbeing. Looking after ourselves is a frequent psychotherapeutic theme practiced in TaKeTiNa® circles. Feelings, which can be expressed freely in the group help to heal traumatic childhood experiences, helping us to relax and release through trust and reliance on others. Doing this through music is both energising and nourishing.

V. Integration between TaKeTina® and TFP - Deep Psychotherapy

Integrating TaKeTiNa® and TFP can lead to a more effective therapy combining the experience orientated TaKeTiNa® and the analytical approach of TFP.

TaKeTiNa® provides for the following possibilities:

- Uncovering problematic conditioning
- Uncovering feelings of marginalisation
- Reconciliation of painful memories
- Acceptance of self
- Discovery of new ways of self help

TFP helps as an analytical therapy procedure which seeks to understand, prepare for and integrate new experiences. Sometimes what might be important for a patient might be to talk clearly about unusual body experiences. Images and memories that arise in a TaKeTiNa® session can complement this TFP work. Conversely, spoken themes in the psychotherapy can be experienced physically in TaKeTiNa® sessions and worked through in a manner of playful ways. For those undergoing psychotherapeutic treatment, TaKeTiNa® can radically support the physically experienced process of self-discovery by providing a firm, calming platform to work on.

"While the therapy for me was a way to understand my past and heal old wounds, TaKeTiNa® was a way to work on my everyday life. I have the feeling that both are equally important." (patient report)