

The Six Phases of Somatic Depth Process

(Excerpt from Chapter 11 of *What's Behind Your Belly Button? A Psychological Perspective of the Intelligence of Human Nature and Gut Instinct* by Martha Char Love and Robert W. Sterling, available on Amazon. This document and its contents may be used and copied as educational material as long as reference to source is included.)

While we had not read of his work on *initiation* prior to initially identifying these six phases of depth process, there is an interesting relationship to Henderson's (1967) three stages of initiation and these six phases. The late Dr. Joseph Henderson was a renowned psychoanalyst and author who was an early practitioner of methods developed by Carl Jung to explore cultural influences on the unconscious mind. Both Henderson's model and the one we are presenting include the idea that the process of individuation or wholeness has no actual final stage or phase, as the process will always begin again. There is also an important separation in both of these models of the consciousness of the individual from the awareness of the external world that must take place before an exploration of the inner world may truly begin. This initial separation of consciousness is necessary in the individuation process of the true self identifying and accepting the "you" from the "not you", or one's authentic self and responses from the learned and often foreign and external perception of self.

In the somatic depth process, the individual moves through a cycle of six phases of depth work beginning and ending the cycle with an initiatory experience. We identify and name these six phases *Initializing* or Opening the Doorway; *Identifying*; *Dislodging*; *Dispersing* or Going Back to the Source; *Absorbing*; and *Integrating Initiation* or Experiencing the Self. Each depth method either takes the person into the awareness of a new phase of the cycle or further into the one he or she is presently in when they begin the process. The amount of time the individual stays in each phase varies. We have found in our own personal studies of these phases that we move through a phase more quickly if we employ a variety of somatic depth methods to assist us on our journey. We have also found that the Somatic Reflection Process as a primary and sole technique employed is highly successful in the movement and completion of these six phases toward self-awareness.

In the *Initializing* or Opening the Doorway phase, we become aware of an important affect we are experiencing. This affect is part of a complex that has been triggered from an experience in the present. In this phase, we usually feel surprised to stumble across our pain but intrigued and curious about continuing our inner exploration.

Soon after Opening the Doorway, we experience the second phase that we call *Identifying*. In this phase we become aware of the source of the affect and personality complex in our past experiences, and of the meaning and impact of those experiences on us. We become aware of the state of our organism, and the source of externalized judgments in our thinking. We learn to identify the source of the external judgments about ourselves that we accepted as a part of our own thinking. We identify the confusion that accepting these external judgments has caused us. This is similar to identifying the inner critic and the difficulties we have as a result. As we identify the source of the externalized judgments and thinking that we are still using, we become aware of the difference between it and our internal, organic needs. We become aware of the tension that occurs between our thinking and feeling and we identify the tension of opposites that we hold within our psyche. This is often painful work but we also realize that it is healing to become aware of suffering that we have held captive deep in our unconscious for so long. It is therefore also compelling.

In the third phase, we experience *Dislodging*, in which we begin to separate the awareness of our inner feelings from our thinking. With our increased awareness of the difference between our feelings and thinking, we reevaluate our thinking and decide if it serves our own needs as a person. Our thinking and feeling awareness need to be separated in order to embrace a more effective way of thinking that considers the importance of our instinctual feelings and somatic responses.

In the fourth phase, we experience *Dispersing* or Going Back to the Source. In this phase we imagine giving up something we originally experienced as a misconception. For example, we may give up a distorted idea about ourselves that we accepted from an authority in our life or that we assumed as a child, lacking information to make an accurate assessment.

In the fifth phase, we experience *Absorbing*. In this phase, we hold onto or keep something of value to us from the depth process experience. Here we reach a deeper level of identifying the affect involved in the issue, with greater sensory memory of the experience. We keep the insights that we have during the process work and become aware of the impact of these new insights, quite often resulting in a feeling of the numinous, or a feeling of awe and a connection with energy greater from the source of life itself. In this phase, we experience a feeling of being full in the gut area of my body as we feed ourselves enlightened consciousness, an integration of some aspects of our psyche. We may feel a spontaneous healing of some physical symptom at this point in the process.

In the final sixth phase, *Integrating Initiation* or Experiencing the Self, we experience a feeling of closure. Often we continue to experience the numinous that we had begun to feel in the absorbing phase. We feel wholeness. We feel full inside our bellies and centered with my mind and body as one, connected to all of life and its source, and open to all potentiality in the universe and our own being. After a period of rest, we feel ready to undertake another cycle of depth work, but usually on a new issue or around another hidden personality complex.