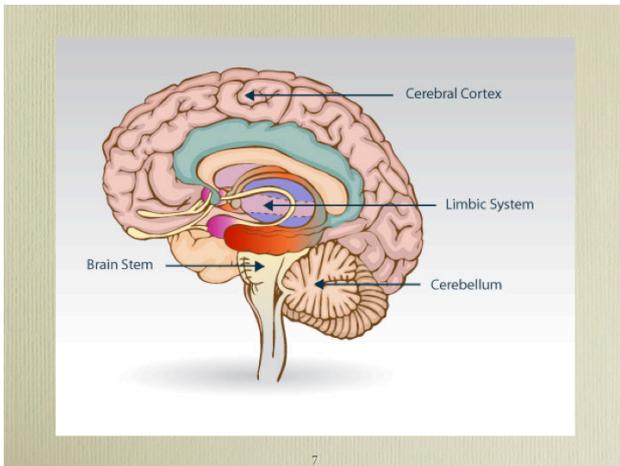
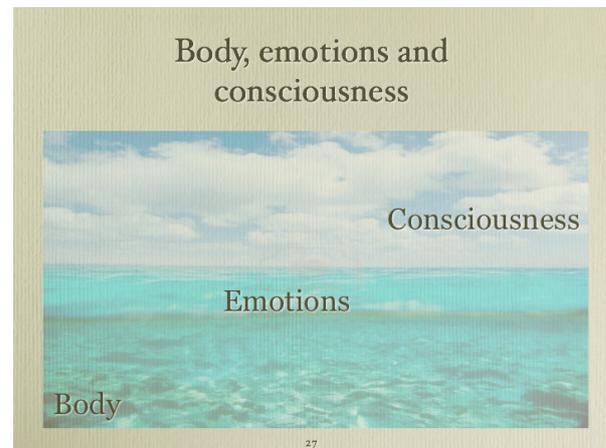


Beneath the words

Non verbal techniques in couple therapy

We like to share some reflections we have made in the last years, working with the couples and with the families. In our beginning as family therapists we thought that to change it was enough to bring the individuals into an understanding view of their life. Soon we realised that **to understand is not to change**. We learned that we need several ways (and above all different languages) to promote the change. Words are powerful for just a few people; many other feel there is something blocked as a knot in the body or in the emotions.

Another big issue for us was to see that in event emerged during a session is much more useful because people feel, people learn on their own (with the guide of the therapist). As in the sports, it is really better to stay in the athletic field with the athlete, to see what happen during the exercise; in this way it is easier to understand, to see the ways of change, of problem solving.



The neuroscientists have discovered a lot of interesting things for us: there are ways in which we behave without knowing what we are doing. Sometimes we don't pay attentions to important sensations and tensions of the body, that represent the beginning of very interesting movements (sensorimotor therapy). If the problem is there, how can we know it? It can be useful to invent some exercises to discover what is hidden. Doing this, we can connect different

parts of the brain, supporting the integration (among body, emotions and words).

Empathy is an important conquest of our species and a way to feel harmony in our relationships. So it is important to check this human quality during a session.

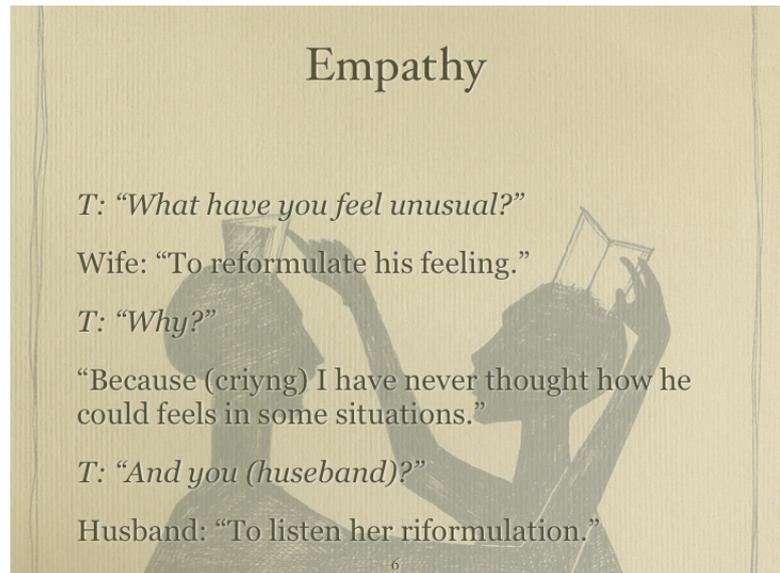
The **empathy play** is our trial. We ask to the partners to seat in front, very close. The task is divided in two parts. One of them (for example the husband) try to tell to the wife a recent negative event involving her, adding the emotions felt in that event. He need to be

clear to express the event and his emotions. At this point the wife try to explain what she has understood about the event and about the emotions felt by her husband. If she doesn't succeed, the husband helps the wife to feel what he felt, in a collaborative way. If she succeed, the first part stops and became the second, in which the wife and the husband invert the role. This trial is very clarifying the level of empathy of the couple and the collaborative power of the partners. It was easier to describe the emotions of the self or the other's? They can link their limbic system and their pre frontal cortex together.

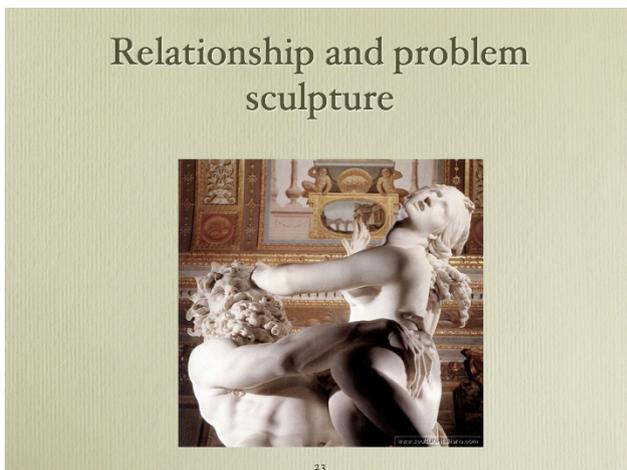
For example a couple "old style" did the exercise: the man was hard and strong and the wife was fragile and submitted. They both don't know there are fragile parts in the man and strong part in the woman. But they can discover this strange phenomenon in this exercise. They can then decide not to change, but knowing what's happen.

Empathy

T: "What have you feel unusual?"
Wife: "To reformulate his feeling."
T: "Why?"
"Because (criyng) I have never thought how he could feels in some situations."
T: "And you (huseband)?"
Husband: "To listen her riformulation."



Relationship and problem sculpture



The **sculptures** are a well knew technique in family therapy. The sculptures are good because they link different levels of our way to feel the relational world. We use the sculptures in three ways (not in the some session).

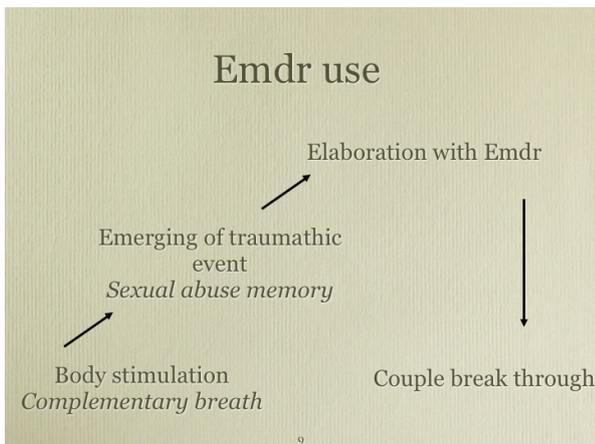
First we can ask to the partners to make the sculpture of the past, of the present and of the future. The sculpture link body sensations with the emotions and with the consciousness. Recently we have discovered

another face of the sculptures, when you ask to the partners to show how they think to **transform** the one of the present in the one of the future. This is not really a sculpture, but a sort of a short movie, in which we observe both the acting of the sculptor and the acting of the other. Is the sculptor active and realistic? And what about the other? Is he active or not? Is he collaborative or not?

Third, we ask to make the sculpture of the problem. Sometimes a lot of words about their problems (and too many hours of therapy) are not so explaining as 15 minutes of this kind of sculpture.

Another trial is called the **complementary breathe**. It consists in a way to breathing together, keeping the naked abdomens in contact. When one inhale the other exhale, and so on for some minutes. The couple need to reach a synchronization. They have to do this exercise also if they are angry, paying attention to the sensations of the body and to the dance they do together. We have seen that if the body makes something in harmony, the

minds will follow. With this exercise they also can do an approach to the intimacy and to the sexuality (if they have or not sex). It is also a way to find deep problems with the traumas of the past, to make them emerge and to treat them. For example with this body stimulation in a woman emerged a traumathic event, about a sexual abuse. Then we could elaborate this trauma using Emdr. Then the couple break through.



The **performance of the attachment type**.

We can discover always the different ways in which the attachment type is involved in the relationship between the partners. In the past we spoke about this, for example analysing the ways in which an avoidant and self-sufficient man can need comprehension while the ambivalent partner need to get stronger. Now we do something different. When we feel that the bodies of the partners are speaking about their attachment type, we ask them to do what they wanted to do, in that moment. For example in a couple the husband told us that he could go away in the corner of the room to cry alone, when the wife didn't believe she could be his support. The therapist asked him to do this, to go in the corner and stay there alone. In the same time the therapist asked to the wife to stay some moments, listening to her sensations and then to reach the huseband. What happened was that when the wife reacheed her huseband he started crying uncontrollably.

The body and the attachment

Emerging of the attachment type
Its body performance
Changing in the session

So it was during the session that the husband could show profoundly his need and the wife could use her resources in a new way, like a secure base.

The role of the psychotherapist

He relates the languages

He heads the emotional and body experiences

He needs to:

1. Bear the silence
2. Bear strong emotions
3. Stay engaged
4. Respect

All these trials are not mere techniques, if the therapists use them as ways to understand and to help the couple in difficulties. The therapist has a deep important role, and he has to be in a strong contact with his feelings and body reactions.

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