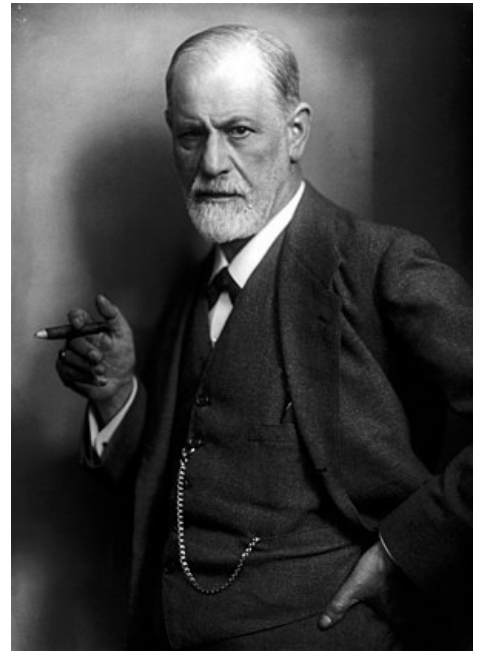


# Founders of body therapy

## Sigmund Freud

Freud was the first person to study the body. He argued that **the Ego** is primarily a bodily ego. This means that the experience of the ego develops as the experience of the body. If a person has an ego deficit due to inadequate ego-forming bodily experiences, analysis and insight into the problem will not be sufficient to bring about change. Change is brought about by providing bodily experiences that contribute to the development of the ego. Ego growth and development comes through learning through experience, not through analysis. The developmental and therapeutic implications of Freud's view of the ego as a bodily ego provide a theoretical rationale for working with the body in psychotherapy.. The first part of the treatment is based on the fact that cognitive work alone is not enough. The second part consists in the implication of working with the body. Furthermore, Freud was interested in hysteria and obsession. In hysteria he saw the transformation of psychic energy into motor behavior, while in the dynamics of obsession he saw the substitution of thought for action.



Sigmund Freud

## Sándor Ferenczi

Ferenczi experimented with modifying the traditional psychoanalytic method. He claimed the ineffectiveness of the traditional method in the case of certain psychological problems **He developed activity techniques**. to work with these problems. They are based on the thorough attention that Ferenczi paid to the muscular activity and bodily expression of his patients. His technical innovations include, for example, the prohibition of urination immediately before and after a therapeutic session, the prohibition of nervous movements, stroking or sniffing certain parts of the body during the session. He also used relaxation exercises to overcome inhibitions and resistance and free associations. "The fact that the expression of an emotion or the motor activity to which the patient is compelled secondarily evokes memories from the unconscious lies partly in the reciprocity in affect and thought emphasized by Freud. Awareness of a memory may elicit an emotional response, but the patient's forced activity or liberated emotion may equally reveal the repressed thoughts associated with these processes."

## Wilhelm Reich

Central to Reich's approach, and perhaps his most important theoretical contribution, was the concept of **muscle armor**. Reich argued that neurotic childhood instinctual conflict (a chronic conflict between instinctual demands and opposing demands of the social world) is achieved through a general change in human functioning and the creation of a new character. This character is an organismic phenomenon that manifests itself on the physical level as chronic muscle tension (=muscle armor). Muscle armor serves to deny or block impulses to action that are incompatible with character. Reich's concept of muscle armor therefore led to an understanding of defenses as a function of the whole organism. This means that character defenses are manifested in the physical structure of the body. In 1949, Reich introduced **the classic psychoanalytic method** involving intensive physical contact with the patient. It was both diagnostic and therapeutic contact. By palpating the patient's body, Reich diagnosed the muscle armor and found out in which places the energy is bound. This energy could be released by applying pressure to points of tension in the patient's body. In doing so, Reich created a guideline for other therapists by making direct physical contact with the patient an important part of psychotherapy. He also encouraged eliciting strong feelings and dealing with them during the therapy session. These feelings were often evoked through techniques working with body contact. Another area of his interest was the development of Freud's concept of **libido**. Reich conceptualized libido as a measurable physical energy, which he called "bioelectric energy" and later "orgone energy". This was another step towards introducing a unified concept of soul and body. The connection is **orgone**, a physical substance whose flow is disrupted or blocked by muscle tension, i.e. muscle armor. Reich described that the release of muscle tension produces one of three types of biological arousal: anxiety, anger, or sexual arousal. In 1942, he viewed the orgasm as a basic biological balancing mechanism by which excess orgone is discharged. As Reich moved from psychotherapy to "orgonomics" and "life energy" research in the 1940s, he entered increasingly controversial areas, resulting in severe limitations to his acceptability to the professional community.

## Alexander Lowen

In 1954, Lowen together with John Pierrakos founded the Institute for Bioenergetic Analysis. **Bioenergetics** is defined by Lowen as "the study of personality from the point of view of the body". This investigation is based on the thesis that man is his body and that the body is an energy system. Personality is considered the way an individual

is in the world, bodily and in relation to the body. The way a person moves and holds their body has diagnostic significance in determining their character type.

In 1974, Lowen presented **five basic formulas** (holding patterns) that a person uses in the creation of his character:

1. Holding together in response to fear of disintegration or fragmentation, which defines the schizoid character.
2. Holding on to someone for fear of rejection or abandonment, which defines the oral character.
3. Holding up for fear of falling down (from failure or the dominance of others), which defines a psychopathic character.
4. Holding in (holding in) in response to the fear of giving something up, letting go and giving way to feelings, which defines a masochistic character.
5. Holding back in response to the fear of falling on your face, of being overwhelmed by the emotions of love and surrender, which defines a rigid character.

Lowen points out that rarely does anyone exhibit just one of these patterns. Rather, it is about five ways of being in the world, which represent five syndromes, the signs of which are present in different combinations and with different strengths in each person. These patterns, or types of character, can be directly read from the structure of the body and the way of movement. For this reason, bioenergetics relies heavily on "reading the body" to learn about personality. Therefore, the bioenergetic therapist will observe the patient's body (usually in a swimsuit) while standing and moving with the aim of diagnosing the character from the body structure.

## Links

### Related Articles

Psychological and social theories of mental illness

### References

- SMITH, Edward W. L. *Tělo v psychoterapii*. 1. edition. Praha : Portál, 2007. ISBN 978-807-3671-440.