

PERFECT TOUCH: USING TOUCH TO HEAL TRAUMA AND NEGLECT

by Mehdi Darvish Yahya

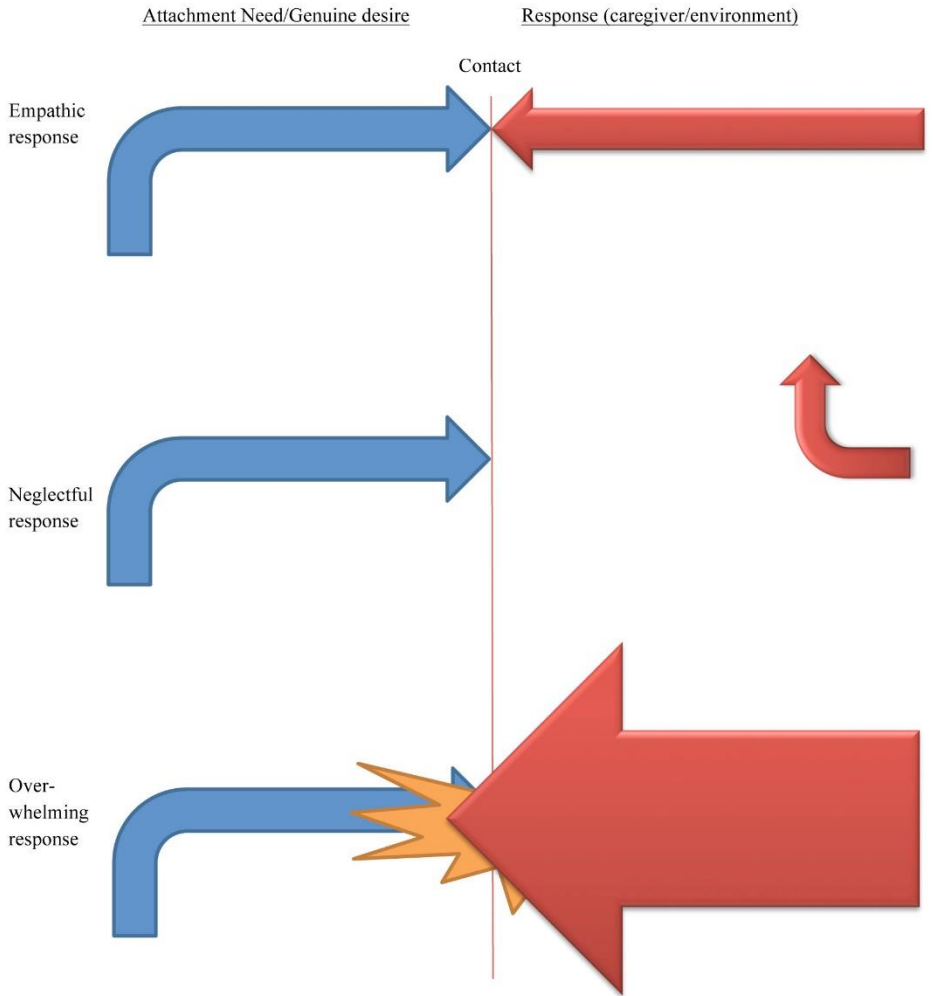
Personal and Political Rationales for Touch

We are born with an innate desire to live. But we are born dependent on those implicitly charged with our care so that we can realize our potential and grow into complete human beings. Once in relationship with our caregivers, the desire to live translates into the need to be seen, heard, held, the need to feel special, important, the need to belong and to matter to someone in this world.

But these desires and needs are not always met perfectly. As a matter of fact we are more often than not faced with incomplete responses at best and other times with negatively overwhelming responses. These latter responses are those violating, abusive, traumatizing experiences that many of us are familiar with. But there is an even worse response that often does not get noticed purely by the very fact that it is an absence of response; when the caregiver does not see, hold, or acknowledge the desire in the child; in other words, when the child is neglected. Although neglect can have many forms and layers, here I primarily refer to emotional neglect; a form of parenting that creates a sense of abandonment, extreme loneliness, in the person.

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The following diagram illustrates these three forms of response by the caregivers to the child.



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Despite the recently renewed interest in the effects of overwhelming experiences causing trauma (e.g. war, disasters, rape, abuse, etc.) psychological research shows that neglect has in fact an even worse outcome than traumatic events. Often it is impossible for the victims of emotional neglect to see how they were damaged by their caregivers because there was no specific incident that one can point to as the cause the source of current and chronic challenges.

It is only in recent decades that trauma research has evolved to expand the definition of trauma from the single incident that can lead to Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder to the yet-to-be-accepted-by-the-psychiatric-elite (i.e. those who design and define labels for all *abnormal behaviours*), Complex or Developmental Trauma. And the impact of such prolonged and hideously negative experiences is being shown to include severe challenges in interpersonal relationships, in self-regulation of emotions, and in self-concepts. In fact it has taken over a century of intermittent research, on-again off-again interest in effects of trauma, and frequent admissions by the mental health practitioners of ineffectiveness in treating chronic mental health challenges to finally come to terms with what might be at the root of many emotional, mental, somatic, and social issues: chronic forms of maltreatment by caregivers in early life.

The fictional, wishful, and misguided thinking of the mainstream medical establishment (psychiatry and psychology), with added support and pressure from the profit-seeking pharmaceutical industry, has suppressed the true knowledge of the nature of mental and emotional challenges and has reduced them to a simple mechanical concept of *chemical imbalance*. In this model, people have been reduced to simple machines that can be fixed by putting certain chemicals into their bodies. The fact that this approach can reduce the symptoms of only a minority of *patients* has been shaking the belief in the efficacy of such a reductivist and inhumane approach.

The new movement in psychotherapy has taken up millennia-old practices of mindfulness and attention to the sensations, and the body, and has re-interpreted and explained it in terms of the recent discoveries of neuroscience. We are slowly moving towards an understanding of ourselves that goes beyond the simple interaction of chemicals in our veins. The brave proponents of the new paradigm are champions of the adventurous and compassionate approach to the long-dismissed sufferers of inadequate caregiving. These brave souls

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aim to bring the practice of psychology out of the elite ivory towers back into the hands of common people by bringing attention to the neglected parts of us, our bodies. They are bringing us back to our senses.

Perfect Touch and Re-creation of Safety

The practice of *Perfect Touch* that I am developing in my work with clients aligns itself with this new paradigm. It uses the fundamental sense of touch, the first sense activated in the newborn who feels for the mother's breast moments after birth. Touch is a portal to access the unmet or overwhelmed desires of the person. The purpose of using touch to heal trauma is to correct the violating or abandoning experiences that occurred so early in life that the person cannot find words for, experiences that have been stored in the body, in every organ and joint and muscle, and in every inch of the skin.

An empathic response in touch occurs when the need in the other is seen and understood and responded to with exactly as much pressure and intensity, as is desired by the body. The energy invested in the response must be equal to the energy rising from the body to the surface of the skin. The practitioner of *Perfect Touch* (i.e. a trauma therapist trained in client-directed bodywork) fully considers the location, pace, pressure, texture, direction, intention, and temperature of the touch. The pleasure arising from the feeling of the desire met by the world moves the body forward toward the next step, the next desire to be met.

This is not an endless hedonistic trip. The authentic desires of the body are not *a bottomless pit* as Freud wrote to his rebellious protégé Ferenczi to discourage him from using touch with his clients. This process of call and response between the person's body and the giver of touch is the natural process of the Self developing into completion. Trauma, neglect, abandonment, and fear stand in the way of that completion.

Chronic trauma and neglect (Developmental or Complex trauma) shrink the container of safety in the person's life and the body. Only smaller and smaller places are left where the person can feel safe, let go, and enjoy pleasure. And sometimes there is no place left. The practice of *Perfect Touch* softens, stretches, and expands that container so the person and the body can move towards pleasure again and stay open, more and more, to receiving pleasure. The goal is to trust the

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response of the environment, trusting that the response would match the desire, that the boundaries will be seen, attuned to, and responded to without conditions. This response takes the form of touch (contact), or gaze (witnessing), or words (verbal reflection or affirmations).

Shame and Trust

The Self requires a safe body to develop. To the extent that one's natural desires are not met, the body fills with shame and becomes an unsafe place to house the self. The process of *Perfect Touch* is to make the body a safe place again so that the natural development of the Self can get back on track and for the person as a whole to move towards self-realization. This process is one in which the effect of unwanted and uninvited touch is undone, and is replaced with the invited, self-guided and desired touch. In this way, the body learns to not only trust the world to respond according to the body's desires, but also to trust its own voice and expression to ask for what exactly is desired and to put a stop to what is not. Since the process of direct touch occurs at the fundamental level of sensory experience, it bypasses the mental and cognitive processes. This is a much more direct, effective, and efficient way to access and treat trauma than most other common therapeutic practices.

Early trauma (e.g. incest) occurs at a foundational sense level (e.g. touch of the rejecting parent, smell of the offender, etc.) and it is registered on a sensory level. So it only appeals to reason to address the healing response primarily to the sensory level in order to facilitate access to the body memory and then to responsibly integrate the unresolved fragments of the experience into a coherent whole that can then be understood, managed, and mastered by the conscious self-aware ego. Once the touch occurs, the ensuing sensations, feelings, emotions, thoughts, and memories, are brought to the conscious level and gradually integrated.

All this takes place in the clearly defined container of one-way touch. This is not a sexual *exchange*. This is not a mutual relationship. The therapist gives touch to the client according to the client's directions for the purpose of serving the client in exploration of desires, memories, emotions, and beliefs.

In order to counter the shame brought on by trauma and neglect, we must not only acknowledge the shame but explore and dissect it in its every manifestation within the relationship in order to undo the

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shame habit in its physiological structure and the way in which it manifests in the therapeutic relationship. It is only through mindful observation of the shame in the body that we can gradually rid ourselves of shame. This shame is the destructive energy caused by trauma which creates a deficient state in the body and undermines efforts to move forward, to move with purpose, and to express one's truth. This shame is the foundation of oppression: personal, cultural, and political. This shame is what holds us back from feeling and acting complete.

Giving clear information about the body is one way to undo the shame habit. Shame silences the voice. Clear voice breaks the cycle of shame. So encouraging the voice to speak about the body and its true desires is a direct and effective path to undoing shame. The client is continuously encouraged to give voice to the desires and processes of the body moment-by-moment. In other words, the client is a translator of the body's processes for the therapist and the therapist speaks to and interacts with the body through the client.

Client-Centered Practice

The client is guided to turn inward and let attention descend into the body while keeping a *conscious observer* aspect of themselves fully active so it can report on what is seen and felt. This use of "conscious trance" is the core process in *Perfect Touch*. It requires a complete attunement on the part of the therapist to the client and on the part of the client to the body. The therapist invites the client to tune into the body and to report on whatever is observed and then asks if the observed event or sensation requires a touch, or if it needs to be witnessed, or if the person needs to hear an affirmation that will counter the negativity arising from the sensation. This is very important since not all body desires require actual skin-to-skin touch. The therapist's loving presence and exquisite attention is sometimes all that is required and in fact it is a form of contact. We can touch with our gaze.

It is important to invite the client to explore what the specifically observed internal event desires: direct touch, witnessing, sounds or words. This brings attention to the minutiae of the subtle body sensations which went unnoticed long ago and were eventually lost due to overwhelm or neglect. So we are going back to the beginning, to the very small voices in the body that ask for an empathic response and

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rebuild the new structure from there, one sensation at a time.

Pleasure and Healing

Once the body receives what it asks for, no more and no less, it begins to feel safe. The sensory experience can enter a flow of call and response cycles between the body and the therapist. It is essential to note that this way of touch practice, as intimate as it can be, is far from a so-called 'happy ending' erotic massage. We need to be clear that there are many obstacles in the way to truly authentic joy. In order to reach our true happy ending, that blissful full body experience of peace and oneness, we sometimes must charge through painful, frightening, shameful, or rageful passages. In the erotic temples of Khajuraho in central India, there are ancient temples covered with exquisitely carved statues of common and noble people in all kinds of sexual positions and interactions. But every now and then there are also carved images of individuals wrestling with dragons. I interpret these as the hard struggles in the process of reaching ultimate bliss, that sweet union with the *Beloved*.

A common 'happy ending', a sexual climax, is a physical release that momentarily interrupts the constant process of quest for bliss, for *Oneness* with all. There is a sweet feeling in that. But most people can get stuck in that and let go of the bigger journey. And even with that, for those of us who have been heaped upon with shame and fear, approaching an orgasm or even any simple sensory pleasure, can seem as impossible as wrestling dragons.

So this process is about noticing the subtle urges in the body and accepting all sensations for what they are: sensations. When the body's desire is met with attunement and as perfectly as possible, the body's sense of safety begins to be restored. The fundamental sense of safety, that implicit promise made at conception – that the world can and will meet our needs – is broken as a result of overwhelm or abandonment. Once the impact of those early experiences are undone on a foundational sensory level, the trust in the safety of the world can be rebuilt which in turn engenders hope and optimism and a motivation to move on.

Information in the research literature on tactile memory, to the extent that we explore in our trauma healing process, is still emerging. But there is plenty of practice-based evidence to show that touch can access memory, very specific traumatic memories, quite effectively.

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The practice of *Perfect Touch* is about a very slow exploration of traumatic memories through touch while balancing the hardship of this journey with pleasure, which is accessed through the caring and loving nature of the touch. So we build safety and capacity in the body as we move along the journey of integration of the fragments of the self: those floating bits of identity in the dark psyche that are too frightening and too shameful to bring to light. The *Perfect Touch* process allows for the integration of fragments and healing of trauma with pleasure.

In using *Perfect Touch*, disjointed fragments of trauma memories which are stored in the body become activated through touch. Whereas normally this activation of trauma memory would trigger a helpless freeze response (because in the original traumatic event the person's fight or flight response was made ineffective) in the safe container of *Perfect Touch*, the person can stay present (i.e. unfrozen) to the intense energy of the body memory and gradually modulate the internal response. This is made possible by slow and careful movement between two poles of suffering and pleasure. The therapist's exquisite attunement to the client's internal states facilitates the release of long held feelings of fear, sorrow, anger, and finally shame. Tears, angry sounds and words, and energetic movements are expected at this stage. At the end of the process, the client is able to simply accept the traumatic memories as stories of the past which have now lost their sharp and painful edges.

The traumatized person suffers among other things from a symptom that the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM)* calls anhedonia: absence of pleasure, or the inability to feel pleasure. The pursuit of pleasure is not something that conventional psychotherapy emphasises, at least hardly beyond encouraging the client to take part in support groups for social connection, or to go to the gym or for walks in the park.

The capacity for pleasure is something that we hold and practice from the moment we are born into this world. When the newborn baby is held firmly, touched softly, wrapped in warm and soft fabrics and fed the sweetest nourishing milk, when the baby is gazed at with adoration and rocked and sung to lovingly, and is welcomed in every encounter with wide eyes and excited voices, a capacity is built in the baby for pleasures of the senses, and a deepened desire for connection with others and therefore with the self. When this process of call and response, i.e. the baby's excitement to be in the world and to move

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towards connection with others, and the caregiver's almost perfect response, is disrupted by trauma or abandonment and neglect, then the natural journey towards pleasure is broken. It is possible nevertheless, through the healing process, to tune into that historic brokenness and to put back the pieces together through the process of pleasure, a process as natural to us as breathing. With every breath we can experience pleasure in every cell; the breath satisfies the cell's desire, and that is how we go on breathing.

There is much to be explored in the world of healing. We discover more as we shed the heavy veil of oppression, of secrecy, and of shame around our own bodies. For millennia we have had our bodies stand in for our shame, all the unwanted parts of ourselves, and we have buried our bodies under symbols and costumes, under sins and silence, in order to cover up that shame. I am proposing an unveiling and rediscovering of the body in a compassionate and ethical manner that would open the way to reconnecting with those parts of us which have been separated by trauma and kept away by oppression. This is a natural path towards the realization of our true potential for becoming complete.



NAYSHA, THE WOUNDED WARRIOR

by Mehdi Darvish Yahya

Naysha¹ walks into my studio with a look of determination keenly noticing my every movement. She is fifty years old, tall but somewhat slouching forward. She has come to see me on the recommendation of a mutual friend, a mentor of hers and a colleague of mine.

I invite her to sit down and begin talking with her about her history which has brought her here. She speaks of men, many men, who have hurt her: her father, brother, relatives, her father's friends, and partner after partner. For as long as she remembers, she has had pain in her joints and digestive system. She has had vaginal pain, tightness, and yeast infection since age eleven.

I ask her how she feels about doing this work with me, a man. She says she needs to do this to prove to herself that not all men are evil. It has taken her a very long time to take the step to come to see me. The thought of being touched by yet another man has been daunting (feeling a pain in her neck she mentions a spontaneous recall of memories of being forced into oral sex), and yet she feels it is necessary for her body to find peace and relief from all those wounds.

I'm aware of the immense responsibility I carry by standing in for all the men who have betrayed her. I feel I am asked to share a part of myself with her that is very different from those men. To heal the wounds inflicted and deepened by all those men, and the loss of trust, safety instilled in her by a rejecting and unprotective mother, she needs to experience a deeply empathic and loving feminine, and an ethically boundaried, strong masculine. An attuned and ethical practitioner can offer both, regardless of practitioner's gender.

I acknowledge her courage and the enormity of the journey. I begin to explain how important it is to me to know when and how she feels her 'NO'. Can she say NO with conviction or would she be concerned about my feelings or my reaction. The experience of trauma eschews the awareness of one's *NO* and the ability to voice it too.

I also explain to her how any touch offered in our sessions is asked for and guided by her. And that I would consistently bring her attention to her body in the present moment and would be curious about her genuine and true desire. I would then respond, to the best of my ability, if I can with a full heart, and not out of obligation or any expectation of reciprocity. I would respond either with touch or by observing, witnessing, and reflecting, or by saying words and affirmations that she would give me. The touch would be one-way, and I would wear gloves if I am asked to touch her genitals.

What follows is a brief description of changes and challenges over an 18-month process of working together with Naysha, her heroic journey towards a better life, complete with my stumblings and learning moments along the way. Our sessions had a consistent structure which was a 5-10 minute

¹ Editors' note: Although name and identifying details have been changed to protect this client's anonymity, this detailed case study was written with her permission, and she has approved the manuscript.

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check-in during which she told me about things that had happened since our last meeting and talking about her intention for the current session. Then we would begin bodywork, if that was her wish, with a short debriefing afterwards. The bodywork took up the bulk of the one and a half hour.

We began with a movement exercise in which she would signal me to approach her, or to stop, or to move away from her. To do this I invited her to be fully present and attentive to her internal signals of safety and danger, a quality of awareness that is also mangled by the early and chronic trauma.

Soon into the exercise she began to cry while telling me she suddenly *got it* how her mother never helped her feel safe. Her mother's neglect and abandonment had been stored in her body all her life and just now, with permission and an invitation to attend to the senses, she gained awareness of her chronic sense of danger and stress. When I asked her what she needed in this moment, she asked to be held like a baby and be told positive affirmations as if by an ideal mother and grandmother while she expressed rage at her father and grief over her mother's incompetence.

In our third session, she asked to be touched, fully clothed lying on the massage table, with some pressure along her sides, while she imagined being put back together. As I did that she felt she could do what she had always wanted to do, screaming "Please Stop! You're hurting me. Get your hands off me!"

Two months after our first session, she reported that a longstanding depression had lifted. She was now choosing more colourful clothes and felt she could express herself through mixing and matching various pieces. She seemed more attentive to her own sense of choice and less concerned with what others thought.

During a touch session she felt an old rage but was afraid of staying with it for too long. Father's rage was painful and frightening and she was afraid of becoming like him. I coached her to soothe and ground herself through down-regulating breath until she felt safe enough to feel her anger. She understood "nothing bad is going to happen to me". She held my hand imagining I was her kind "grandpa". She asked me to put my other hand on her "mound of Venus" and spoke of a scene she saw in her mind: a horse in a meadow, strong, fast, and safe. I invited her to let the qualities of the horse settle into her body. She began to move in a playful manner and kick her feet.

Over the course of the next few sessions she seemed to be gradually 'thawing out' the freeze response brought on by the chronic trauma. In Naysha, this freeze state manifested in her loss of awareness of her body and its genuine needs and in her inability to say NO to violating, boundary-crossing behaviours by others. Now by being able to allow and feel the playful and strong qualities of horse along with a deep sense of safety, she was moving towards reconnecting with her innate ability to stop unwanted touch and to protect herself.

A few months later, Naysha reported many meaningful insights. She felt an old anger that seemed to belong to her five-year old self. The anger made her feel out of control and she ate junk food to calm the feeling. She also reported an improvement in her hearing. In the body work part of her eighth session, she asked me to hold the back of her neck while touching her solar plexus, and described it as "like holding a baby". This resulted in a tremendous release of sorrow. She said "I am completely new" and praised herself for giving her children "what I didn't get". She stated the connection between the tenderness in her nipples and the chronic yeast infection under her breasts with the unwanted touch by her father; it was her body's way of fighting against his aggression and violence.

In the next session, fully clothed, she asked for touch everywhere on her body. She wanted different parts to be held and rocked. She also guided me to move the toxic energy out of her body and to throw it away with flicking motions. She suddenly sat up and burst into tears, stating she felt ashamed for feeling aroused. She wanted to be hugged and expressed her fresh realization that she didn't have to "endure touch". She reported she felt naturally lubricated - something that she said "had not happened in years!"

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Throughout her process, Naysha was imaginative and open to speaking about her mental imagery, no matter how painful and ugly it was. On the one hand she was able to find strength in her imaginations of the horse, the safe meadow, and a familiar wolf pack. These images connected her with a deep but long-lost sense of safety, intuition, and purpose. On the other hand, she was active in letting go of the “toxic waste” that she had carried in her body and her mind for so long.

About nine months after we began our work together, Naysha’s father died. In the next few sessions, she felt light, spacious, and more open to experiencing joy and pleasure. She wanted to move and dance, and wished to be touched more in pleasurable ways. In a session, she asked to be touched all over her body with some focused touch on her sacrum, and pelvis, and gentle touch on the genitals, she said “It is like I’ve been waiting for this all my life”. She wanted to absorb the joy and pleasure of this experience while she also felt her habitual armouring against pleasure.

It was at this point in the process that she reported she felt healthier, more energetic, and her thinking was clearer. She had no pain and felt more sexually aroused. She felt more excited more often and was masturbating twice as much as before. She felt less hungry, especially for junk food. She spoke of a felt sense of being in a “plaster mould” that stopped her from being alive. This seemed to be an apt description of what trauma had done to her sense of self in the world; there was always a degree of separation that blocked her ability to experience the reality of her life. She guided me to gently touch different parts of her body as if I were massaging a baby while she told those parts they were safe.

Later she reported she felt more confident facing “all men ever lying” to her; “I feel like me for the first time”.

When we met up for our fifteenth session she announced “I got it that I can give up the belief that that any man coming close to me is going to have sex with me. When I gave that up, I felt safe with you”. Later she asked for touch in the mid and lower body. The touch triggered anxiety related to “dad”. There had been a flare-up in the yeast infection and hives on her inner thighs. As Naysha guided me to touch her legs I noticed a drop in temperature in the area between her hips and thighs, and I asked her to tune in to the area and see what she noticed.

This method of bodywork is more of a *client-centred* practice than a *client-guided* one. There are times when clients might ask for certain touch because they believe the touch to be necessary or expected. This is the indoctrination and disempowerment caused by generations of ‘experts’ imposing their will on ‘patients’ and telling them what they should want and how they should accept what they are given. A practitioner’s finely attuned attention to the client’s body can help the process. We can keep bringing client’s attention to their bodies and to the work of staying present to their bodies’ true needs in the moment, regardless of what they *expect* to experience in a session.

In the next session, Naysha expressed lots of anger towards her mother and “all the selfish things she did”. In the bodywork, she guided me in a touch that helped her feel an opening up in the upper chest. She then asked me to slide my hands down her sides and lift her hips. She recalled her father lifting her as a baby to change her diapers. She allowed herself to feel a lot of tremors and tears. I coached her in making sounds that vibrated her belly from the inside. She felt the urge to move and I encouraged her to run in place, and kick and hit the massage table with her legs. She asked me to lift her hips again in the exact way her father used to do. She was able to stay present and differentiate the present moment from the old experience.

This was a critical shift in her in that she was able to prevent herself from being ‘hijacked’ by the old trauma memory, something that makes a traumatized person get lost in the frightening feelings and experience the memory as if it is happening in the present moment. This is how trauma damages the sense of time in its victims. To heal from trauma, it is necessary to arrive at the point where we can see clearly ‘that was then, this is now’.

In the next little while she reported her urge to declutter her home while in the bodywork she

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worked on “clearing energy blocks”.

Lying face down on the table one day she remembered being sodomized by her father. She noticed how by habit she tightened her body and held her breath. I asked her if she wanted to tune into those feelings now. She asked me to hold and open her hips at the same time, which prevented her from tightening her genitals. She then released many tears with anger. As she shook and sobbed intensely she said “This is my body, I am not bad, I did what I could to stop it”. Indeed she had done all that she could, despite the great cost to her body and her physical health.

In debriefing the session, she said: “This was new! I feel a burst of love and a heart opening. This is beyond the earthly reality. This is the deepest work I have ever done!”

During this period she was involved in clearing her father’s place to prepare it for sale. This was a constantly triggering experience due to the fact that she often came across things he collected for his sexual obsession, or objects with which he had violated her. She became highly agitated in a session during this period. After helping her to get grounded through breath-work, movement, and sounds we ended the session early.

In the next session about a week later, she stated she had come back despite the bad experience last time and fear of that happening again. She seemed like a severely wounded but proud warrior who could not and would not accept defeat.

In this session, she spoke about feeling her father on the left side of her body, even smelling a putrid odour on the left side of her forehead. She sensed a viscous fluid in her lower back between her hip bones. I focused her on the flow and how it was emptying out from one side of the body. A new joyful light energy began emerging in her uterus, filling her pelvis, and the right side of her body. She was able to focus on the pleasure of this experience, which felt like another shift in the habitual tendency to focus on the pain and fear. When she felt the fear she also felt very angry and called out “Fuck off! Enough is enough!” She seemed to feel her power to stop the intrusion.

In an email she stated: “It has been a powerful week. I am more aware of the change/awareness that I have with my power to see things differently... I am happy and celebrate every small thing I accomplish”.

In the following sessions she was gradually able to focus on pleasure. While she noticed sensations that in the past would have made her “freak out”, she was able to *stay with them*. In the world outside she reported she felt more confident, and less guilty or ashamed.

At some point in a bodywork session, she began to respond more positively to touch, feeling excited and engorged, and asked for touch on her G-spot and clitoris. Quickly though she became overwhelmed with pain. On reflection it seemed to me that we were both excited about her progress, and we might have rushed forward too fast.

In the same way that a child’s development can be disrupted as a result of untimely, unwanted and uninvited sexual touch, the healing process can be disrupted by rushing towards ecstasy if the client is not equipped to manage and regulate the experience. Such an experience can be triggering and traumatic in itself. So while dealing with effects of sexual trauma, we must keep in mind all aspects of the client’s experience which would empower them to invite and receive that state of bliss in complete safety and with full mastery. We cannot impose sexual happiness on anyone.

Naysha reported that despite (and maybe because of) the previous session, she felt better about herself and “loving every part” of herself. “It’s a strange way of viewing myself” she said. In the body work that day she moved in and out of anxious and reactive states, and she managed to connect with her inner safety. She guided my touch to experience pleasure around her groin and vulva while staying present to the sensations.

In our final session, she set her intention to feel love for her Self. While receiving touch, she felt overcome with feelings of self-love and her constant longing for it. Feeling her grief she sat up and cried, laid down again, and this time noticed the divide in her Self: the older, motherly and mature

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part, which she named “the wise one”, and the “little one”, who at my invitation was able to stand in the corner of her bubble, observing and learning from the wise one.

In this final session, Naysha was able to recognize and to differentiate two important parts of her psyche, parts that had been sent *into exile*, her “inner child” carried the early life wounds. Another part had matured through hardships and had discovered her truth through raising her own children. She wrote to me later that the newfound awareness of these two aspects helped her achieve better mastery of her day-to-day challenges. “The realization that I have a choice on how I respond to experiences has made such a difference on how I live my life. I am always surprised at how my life continues to change every day. I am comfortably growing into my own power with ease and excitement”.

And a few months after finishing our sessions, Naysha wrote: “I realize that even though I have never felt loved from a child’s perspective, it is an old pattern that doesn’t apply and that I have always been surrounded by people who love me. I also came to the realization that it is safe for me to be well... There is power in knowing that I don’t need to be sick to be safe”.

Reading this I imagined her taking her constant armour of pain, infection, and numbness off and walking away from the battle which had been imposed on her by her traumatic life. Now she could rightfully focus on her own desires and voice them to the world with confidence, and best of all, without shame.