

Glossary of Formative Concepts (1996-2006)

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Abstract

Formative Psychology is an original and complex system developed by Stanley Keleman. It offers a conceptual and experiential framework for understanding how the adult human soma grows and develops. Its main concern is how individuals can learn to influence their genetic inheritance to grow an individuated personal somatic self. In his teaching and writing, Stanley has given language to concepts, experiences and behaviors that can be difficult to articulate. I have compiled this glossary over a period of 10 years (1996-2006), with the intent to give short definitions to his fundamental concepts as they have developed over time.

Keywords

Stanley Keleman – Formative Psychology – Conceptual Framework

Alpha Adult and Second Adult

The Alpha Adult refers to the full grown adult somatic form that is influenced more by genetic inheritance than by voluntary muscular effort (VME). The Second Adult is strongly influenced by their use of VME to develop more differentiated and non-programmed behavior.

Bodying, To Body (used as a verb)

Refers to the use of VME in creating anatomic shapes. To body ourselves is how we voluntarily participate in creating a personal anatomic structure. This process perpetuates experience through the formation of new synaptic connections.

The Bodying Practice, How Exercise

A practical experiential protocol that uses VME to influence somatic structure and behavior. Synonyms for this protocol are: The How Method, How-To Exercise, Five-Step Exercise, Somatic Practice and Somatic-Emotional Method. The Bodying Practice has been explained by Stanley Keleman in his book *Embodying Experience* (1987). Its latest rendition appears in this journal, in Keleman's article "The Methodology and Practice of Formative Psychology."

Body Types

Constitutional types, based on embryonic cell layers (ectoderm, mesoderm and endoderm), that differentiate into three general bodily functions: Nervous system/skin (ectomorphic), muscle/bone connective tissue (mesomorphic) and digestive system/organs (endomorph). Stanley Keleman has brought a Formative framework to the constitutional theory of psychologist William Sheldon, who postulated a connection between body type and temperament in 1942.

Body Wall

The sheath of muscle that covers the body and serves as a boundary between our inside and outside worlds. Its function as a boundary is essential for forming an identity.

Boundary

An anatomical structure that defines an inside and an outside, and acts to regulate what enters and exits.

Containment

The ability to organize a membrane, a boundary for the expansion and contraction of excitatory pulsations.

Cortical influence

Neural communication from the cortex with the rest of the body.

Developmental continuum

The sequence that all anatomical shapes follow as they go from less form to more form. The developmental sequence is: motile → porous → rigid → dense

Embodied, Embodiment

As a fact of nature, all human life is bodied. To embody one's life, however, one must voluntarily participate in the creation of one's personal somatic shape.

Excitation

Bio-electrical current that connects structures and fuels the behavior of these structures.

Formative Psychology

The application of Darwin's principles of how shapes change over time. It is concerned with how individuals form themselves and their world. It teaches individuals how to influence their behavior and experience.

Formative Process

How anatomical shapes change over time, and how these changes influence experience and behavior. Can refer to involuntary forming or voluntary forming.

Formative Method

A protocol for influencing shape and behavior through VME.

Frame and Map

Frame refers to creating a muscular model of a behavior. The purpose is to hold still a motor action and give definition to a pattern of behavior. Map refers to the neural activity of motor behavior. The interaction between a muscular frame and a neural map is the link between behavior and cognition.

Layers, Sub-Organizations

Small muscular changes that make distinct shapes within a larger anatomical shape or pattern of behavior.

Personal Emotional Reality

The body-based subjective experience of one's internal emotional state and of the external world, distinct from the shared consensual reality of society.

Pulsation

The fundamental characteristic of living material to expand and contract. This can be a single pulse or a continuum of ongoing pulses. On the human level, expansion is reaching out, giving, contraction is gathering back, receiving.

Somatic

Bodily; physical; from the Greek word "*soma*," meaning "body."

Somatic Organization

The complex patterns of feelings and expressions that are bodily organized for dealing with life situations.

Somatic Psychology

A psychology grounded in human biological and anatomical process. It studies the evolution of human body shape and the subjective experiences that accompany these changes in body structure over a lifetime.

Somatic Reality

The inner emotional truth that emanates from our biological state, from our basic bodily experiences.

Somatic Shape

The body shapes and experiences that are the physical and emotional foundation for a person's sense of identity and self-reference.

Somatic Self

The organism's inherited bodily organization, sometimes called the natural self.

Personal Somatic Self

The organism uses VME to influence the natural self. This process creates individuated somatic shapes and personal behaviors that are not inherited.

Somatic-Emotional Work

An anatomically based therapeutic and educational approach that addresses life dilemmas in the context of bodily experience, including feeling, emotion, cognition and imagination. Its purpose is to empower the individual to grow a more subjective and personal life.

Startle/Stress Continuum

Reflex behavior that are a response to emergency situations, but can become habitual somatic shapes. The continuum ranges from investigation (startle, caution) → bracing (dislike) → rigidity (aversion, fear) → spasticity (freezing) → withdrawal (submission) → collapse (resignation) → fragmentation (dissolution).

For more information, see http://centerpress.com/articles/the_continuum.html

Voluntary Muscular Effort, VME

Voluntary muscular effort develops from the involuntary reflex act of muscular inhibition. VME is the basis of how we learn to voluntarily stop or hold still an action that is in progress. It is also how we learn to make variation in our inherited shapes and behaviors.

Voluntary Muscular-Cortical Effort, VMCE

The influence of muscle action speaking to the cortical structures, and the influence of the cortical-neural structures speaking to the muscles; now used interchangeably with VME.

Biography

Andrew Gootnick, PhD, is a Licensed Psychologist with private practices in San Rafael and Berkeley, California. He has been associated with the work of Stanley Keleman and the Center for Energetic Studies since 1978. A practitioner and teacher of psychotherapy for more than 30 years, he uses the principles and methods of Formative Psychology in his work with individuals and couples. Address correspondence to: 1000 Fifth Avenue, Suite 5, San Rafael, CA 94901 USA. Email: andrewnet@earthlink.net