

Call For Papers

Summer 2025

Special Issue Psychoanalysis and Somatics

Guest Editor

Helena Vissing, PsyD, SEP, PMH-C

The International Body Psychotherapy Journal is pleased to announce a call for papers for a special issue exploring the multifaceted and often challenging relationship between psychoanalysis and somatic psychology. As guest editor, Helena Vissing invites contributions that critically examine the theoretical, clinical, and historical intersections – and tensions – between these two fields, highlighting how their convergence is reshaping therapeutic practice while also sparking profound debate.

Psychoanalysis and somatic psychology approach the human experience from different angles. Psychoanalysis has traditionally focused on the workings of the unconscious mind, relational dynamics, and the symbolic interpretation of psychic life. In contrast, somatic psychology emphasizes the body's lived experience, direct engagement with sensory information, and physiological regulation as central to healing. Despite their shared interest in the complexities of human emotion, identity, and trauma, integrating these perspectives presents exciting possibilities and significant challenges.

In recent years, there has been a growing recognition of the value of incorporating body-focused interventions within psychoanalytic practice and applying psychoanalytic insights within somatic therapy. However, this integration is not without obstacles. Some argue that psychoanalytic theories can undermine somatic approaches by overly intellectualizing embodied experience (Orbach, 2006), while others point out that somatic psychology's focus on immediacy and sensation may overlook the depth of unconscious material (Bucci, 1997).

This special issue seeks to address these complexities, inviting contributions that explore both the synergies and the friction points between these approaches..



Suggested Topics

Submissions are welcome on a wide range of topics that probe the depths of this interdisciplinary relationship, including but not limited to:

- **Theoretical and philosophical tensions:** Papers that address philosophical and theoretical tensions between psychoanalytic and somatic approaches, such as conflicts between intellectual insight and embodied experience, or differing views on the roles of memory, unconscious processes, and symbolic representation.
- **Historical perspectives and evolution:** We invite articles that trace the history of psychoanalysis, particularly how it has evolved from its early roots with Freud to contemporary perspectives that increasingly recognize the body's role in psychological experience. How have changes in psychoanalytic theory influenced or been influenced by somatic psychology? What can we learn from the ways these fields have historically interacted, diverged, and sometimes resisted each other? (Freud, 1923; Reich, 1945).
- **Clinical challenges and innovations:** Case studies and clinical insights that illustrate the complexities of integrating somatic interventions within psychoanalytic practice, or using psychoanalytic concepts in somatic work. These submissions might discuss the challenges in navigating transference and countertransference when the body is directly engaged or how somatic interventions can both complicate and enrich psychoanalytic processes (Fosha, 2000; Ogden & Fisher, 2015).
- **Trauma, affect, and body:** Contributions that explore the role of the body in trauma processing from both psychoanalytic and somatic perspectives, including how trauma affects physiological and emotional regulation and the neurobiological basis of trauma treatment. Authors might discuss the complexities of bridging somatic and psychoanalytic understandings of trauma (van der Kolk, 2014; Schore, 2003).
- **Intersubjectivity and embodiment:** Articles exploring the relational and intersubjective aspects of somatic and psychoanalytic practices, such as how co-regulation and somatic resonance operate within the therapeutic dyad. These contributions might discuss how embodied attunement can deepen or challenge psychoanalytic concepts of relationality and mutual recognition (Benjamin, 2018; Schore, 2003).
- **Innovative research directions:** We welcome empirical studies that investigate the efficacy and challenges of integrated somatic-psychoanalytic approaches, including studies on neurobiological markers of change, sensory processing, and the effects of embodied interventions in psychoanalytic settings. We also welcome qualitative and quantitative studies that offer insights into the challenges and potential of combining these fields (Maté, 2010; Payne, Levine, & Crane-Godreau, 2015).

Papers should be submitted by June 1st 2025

Please send submissions to Helena Vissing

IBPJsubmissions@ibpj.org