

Interview: Psychologist Barbara Croci Working Without a Therapist

What's Happening Editor Lucia McKelvey talked with Process Oriented Psychologist Barbara Croci from Zurich, Switzerland. She will give a talk in Eugene, a one-night seminar and a one-week seminar (workshop). At the end of the interview is more information on these.

L.M.: At age four you met the Indian Yoga teacher Yesudian, whom you would later study with. How did it happen that you were introduced to Yoga at such a young age?

B.C.: My father took me. He was very interested in these things—Yoga and psychology. We later read books together, or he would read them and then I would. At age 12 we read *Autobiography of a Yogi* by Paramahansa Yogananda. At age 14 we read Carl Jung's autobiography, *Memories, Dreams and Reflections*.

At age four I was too young to get into Yoga, but by age 11, I was going regularly, once a week, to learn Yoga. I liked it very, very much; it was the best hour of the week.

L.M.: Why? How did you feel?

B.C.: I just felt fantastic—I had a new sort of freshness and was full of energy. I would sit in the bus on the way home and look around at the people and think, "These poor people, they don't know how I feel!"

L.M.: You studied and then taught "movement." What kind of movement was that?

B.C.: Rhythmical movement. When I was 18, I went to a movement school in Germany, the Medau-School, for 2½ years. It was a college for girls, a very famous school. We all lived there and were moving all the time! We did Yoga as well as sports, music and plays.

The theory this school was based on is that every movement you make is from the center of your body (touching her belly). Everything you do is with the whole body. There are several basic movements—walking, jogging, skipping, springing and leaping. It's all done with a certain consciousness—moving from your center and being aware of your whole body. Girls from there went on to teach or into the healing professions.

L.M.: And what did you do after that?

B.C.: I began teaching. I returned to Zurich and taught in high school, and also young children at private school, ages 3-12. I taught them spontaneous theater (improvisational) and rhythmical movement. Then I went to Italy to teach. I taught Yoga, rhythmical movement and classes for pregnant women.

L.M.: Are there also well-known women Yogis?

B.C.: Yes, there have been and still are highly spiritual Yoginis in India. When I was 24, I went to Paris and studied at the Yoga Institute there which is headed by a woman, Eva Ruchpaul. I received a diploma and went back to Zurich and taught Yoga for several years.

L.M.: And then you got into Process Oriented Psychology. That was the next step, wasn't it?

B.C.: Yes, I felt something was missing. I wanted to understand more about the connection between body and psyche. I wanted to know more about my fantasies, dreams and relationships.

A colleague of mine convinced me to go hear Arnie Mindell speak. She described him as very lively, very mercurial. I liked his lecture very much and went to

three more. He talked a lot about fairy tales, especially in connection with the body. He also talked about Yoga. I introduced myself to him and met him for an hour. He worked on a dream with me and that helped me very much. Then I started analysis with him and a year later I started his first training program. I was in his first group. Now I am also a trainer. I also give seminars.

L.M.: So your specialty is a mixture of Process Oriented Psychology, Yoga, movement and meditation?

B.C.: Well, Process Oriented Psychology includes all this kind of work. In my seminar in Creswell and at my talk I will focus on how to work with yourself alone. There are many, many ways to find your own process, and I will

This helped me very much. It was a fantastic meditation. All of a sudden I understood my dream. I did everything upside down. Instead of using the body feeling channel, I used the auditory and visual channels. This was hanging upside down!

L.M.: And so in the seminar, what would be the next step?

B.C.: In the afternoons we get more into movement—the kinesthetic channel. We find a comfortable position, and then feel if we want to move. But then we move very, very slowly, trying to observe where the movement wants to start and what it wants to change in you. Just watching yourself make the smallest movement can teach you a lot. Then come the bigger movements. You get up and stretch, or run or dance

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try to teach how to do that without a therapist, by yourself. Hopefully it should get you into body work, yoga positions, dance, dream work, or just sitting and working on what comes up. You'll also find out how to work on a chronic body symptom. Or if you need to search for the right place to sit, this is a Vision Quest, and we help you do that. We also do relationship meditation. We show how to work on a relationship problem in a meditative way together.

L.M.: So these are basically tools you can learn to use to find your own process?

B.C.: Yes. We usually begin the day at a seminar with a few Yoga positions. This helps you get into contact with your body. I show a few positions on the first day. By the second day, you find your own positions—whatever is best for you. During the Yoga positions you are first involved with feeling your body a lot. If there is something that comes up, pictures, memories, etc., you can start working on that.

The next step in the seminar is sitting meditation. We try to observe what channel we are in.

L.M.: So the point is not necessarily to try and relax and let go of worries, but to observe your own process and find what you need to work on.

B.C.: The point is not to follow a program, but, yes, to find your own process. There are times when you have to work on something very hard. At other times you are just relaxing.

When meditating, we try to observe whether we are seeing, hearing or feeling—these are the different channels we may be using. Then we amplify what we see, hear or feel, and then we change the channel because we tend to get stuck in a certain channel.

L.M.: So channels are the ways in which we receive information about ourselves?

B.C.: Yes, they are the ways we experience ourselves. The dream-body expresses itself in different channels. For example, I had a dream that I was hanging upside down. The following day I had a lot of difficulties during my meditations because of the noises in the room. I usually go very much inside and feel my body. But this day I didn't succeed because of the noises. So I turned myself completely around and listened very carefully to all the noises and looked around at what all the people were doing.

or become a panther in the jungle if that's what you need.

Each person gets into her/his own process, but sometimes one person's process will affect another. Perhaps someone begins to cry and you are very bothered by this person. Well, that then is your secondary process, something that wants to come up, something you need to integrate. Then we can work on that.

L.M.: The essence of Mindell's Dreambody Theory is that the dream will express itself somewhere in the body. Do you have any other techniques that help a person experience the connection between the dream and the body?

B.C.: Yes. Ask yourself directly "Where in my body do I feel the important dream symbol or dream figure of the dream?" For example, "Where do I feel the horse, in my legs or in my head?" "Where do I feel the nervous mother-in-law?" Maybe you'll find out she's in your head as a headache.

When working alone with a body symptom like a headache, you have to identify with both the victim and the pain-maker, and this is the hardest thing to do. What does the pain-maker want? In my case, I had a headache. I felt it come up my neck behind my ear. It was like a fire. It said to me, "Do this one thing only, work on the thesis, do nothing else." My scatteredness was the pain-maker. I really wanted to stay focused and write my thesis.

At the seminars we write a lot too. If you write down your dream, it helps so much. We also do active imagination with the dream. We talk to the dream figures. We also have colors to draw whatever comes up.

L.M.: This has all been fascinating to me. Is there anything you want to say in summary?

B.C.: I'd like to say that working on yourself is very important, at least for someone who does not want to depend on a therapist. It is definitely one of the most difficult things to do, but it can also be very fascinating and a lot of fun.

Barbara's talk will take place on Aug. 19 at the Unitarian Church, 40th and Donald Sts., at 7 pm. The next evening, Aug. 20, she will give a 3-hour seminar on working with oneself. It will also be at the Church at 7 pm. And beginning Sept. 6 she will give a six-day seminar at the Center for Well Being in Creswell, Oregon. You can call 895-2953 or 942-8060 for more information about it.



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