

**ANGLIA RUSKIN UNIVERSITY  
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY  
ABSTRACT**

**“Re-joining the Stream of Life” -**

**An Integrated Model of Trauma group treatment via  
Dance Movement Therapy and Somatic Experiencing®  
for older women suffering from spouse abuse**

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This research explores a new Integrative Trauma Therapy Model, which is comprised of two methods: Dance-Movement therapy and Somatic Experiencing, in a Group setting for traumatized patients. The aims of the research were:

- (1) Exploring how, if and in what ways the model as embodied and enacted in a therapeutic programme developed by the therapist and experienced by the participants of this research is effective in healing those subjects, who are traumatized women suffering from spouse abuse.
- (2) Exploring and defining the healing indicators which indicate and provide evidence of any progression among the participants from being ‘victims’ of the traumatic effects of spouse abuse to their becoming ‘successful survivors’.
- (3) Inquiring, exploring and defining which aspects of the model could be said to enable the healing process.

The conceptual framework combined theories of trauma, Neuro-physiology and survival, body-mind connection, emphasizing use of resources and Positive Psychology. As a piece of applied research it is focused on practice and on practical implications.

The participants were 14 older women ages 60-83, victims of long lasting spouse abuse. They were all clients of a centre for domestic violence in Israel where the researcher is a practitioner. This research study accompanies and is focused on the characteristics and effectiveness for the research participants and subjects of the practice of the programme, which is underpinned by theories, and the therapeutic model developed by the researcher practitioner.

The research was post positivistic and inductive, using Action Research of the practitioner -researcher type, with features of Appreciative Inquiry. It used mixed-methods of mainly qualitative but also quantitative research instruments which were: modified TSC-40 Trauma Symptom Checklist; group interviews; personal interviews; metaphoric cards; self-drawings; graphic representation of change scale; closed questionnaire which accompanied the involvement of the participants in the therapeutic programme process, the researcher practitioner’s practice. Data was triangulated.

The main findings showed that: The Integrative Trauma Therapy Model was effective in healing the effects of suffering from trauma, enabling the women to move from the ‘victim stance’ towards a more successful ‘survivor stance’. A positive change is clearly presented, showing relief in the trauma symptoms: depression,

anxiety and dissociation. There has been a great improvement in personal abilities as a result of the treatment especially in the ability of connecting to the body.

Five body-mind healing indicators were found as part of the healing process: body-mind integration; vitality and aliveness; self-regulation and relaxation; empowerment; and self-boundaries. The use of resources was found as another healing indicator.

Most of the women reported a very high level of change on all the indicators. All the women experienced a change in their sense of empowerment.

The main themes found to characterize meanings in this healing process are: empowerment, internal locus of control, lightness, flow, nurturing, trust, growth, faith and hope.

The conclusions are: The Integrated Model of Dance-Movement Therapy and SE is useful in a group setting in working with traumatized people. This newly developed; Integrated Model adds new knowledge to trauma treatment in using body-mind approaches.

The research results strengthen the therapeutic approach and the philosophical belief that focusing on resiliency, resources and the body's natural innate capacity to heal contributes to coping with trauma even if it was accumulated for many years.

As a central principle in working with traumatized populations and especially abused and repressed women, empowerment, reflectiveness and connecting to the body are crucial not only in treatment programmes for them, but also in research carried out for 'sensitive populations'.

In the progression from 'victim stance' to survivor, a transformation can take place not only for the purpose of healing from trauma but also enabling the individual to **'re-join the stream of life'**.

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