

## Review of *Bridging Two Worlds: The Integration of Personal Mythology*, presented by Claire Frederick, M.D., APBN.

Reviewed by Mark Geer, Ed.D.



Claire Frederick, M.D., APBN, presented to our membership at the National Heritage Museum on May 16, 2009. Over the past 15 years, Dr. Frederick has been recognized as one of the major contributors to the development and application of Ego State therapy. Based on the psychoanalytic theories of Paul Federn, this form of hypnotherapy was created by John and Helen Watkins. It is founded on the concept of polypsychism, which holds that a personality is a compilation of ego states. An ego state is defined as “an organized system of behavior and experience whose elements are bound together by some principal and which is separated from other states by a boundary that is more or less permeable” (Watkins & Watkins, 1997, p.25).

After a review of the basic concepts of Ego State Therapy, Dr. Frederick discussed Personal Mythology, a social construction psychotherapy modality created by David Feinstein and Stanley Krippner (2006), and elaborated on how Personal Mythology techniques can be integrated into Ego State Therapy. Social Constructionism holds that we integrate our experiences, beliefs, emotions, and actions into *stories* or *personal narratives* that portray the beliefs we have about ourselves, other people and the cosmos (Frederick, 2008-2009 p.4). The stories contain *belief systems* that contribute to the structure of our identity and govern our behavior, memories, and beliefs about ourselves and others as well as the larger culture. The theory holds that to change the personal narrative or story is to change the belief system, which in turn changes the structure and consequently changes identity. Dr. Frederick discussed integrating Personal Mythology psychotherapy techniques into Ego

State Therapy based on the premise that the new techniques can create an “influx of new information”, facilitate “feedback from other ego states”, initiate “drastic rearrangement of the internal family dynamics [ and] promotion of greater support and intervention by more mature aspects of the personality to make rational choices and to institute a dedication to methods of change” (Frederick 2008-2009 p.6.). The techniques were reported to facilitate resolution of trauma and structural developmental repair and heal attachment problems.

Dr. Frederick described three adaptations of Personal Mythology Technique for Ego State Therapy and engaged the audience in two experiential exercises to demonstrate the techniques. *Activation of Parental Imago/ego state* required the participant to go into trance and imagine his/her same sex parent, noticing bodily posture and facial expressions. The participant was then coached to move into the imagined body of the parent and assume the envisioned posture representing the parent. Questions were posed to the participant that elicited the Belief System of the parent ego state. The same technique could be used to access the Belief Systems of the opposite-sex parent and other family members and other significant figures in the participant’s life. The participant then returns to his/her own body and mindful presence. Parental energy was released via exhaled breaths and shaking out of the hands. Dr. Frederick emphasized the importance of always using a formal trance exit to ensure re-alerting.

The acquired new information, which can be realized in thoughts, emotions, and/or bodily sensations, is processed and metabolized. Promoting empathy within the greater personality and other ego states for the suffering and unfortunate belief systems held by the

parental ego state is a priority of the therapy.

The second technique involved *Discovering one’s own Personal Myths* utilizing a journey to the participant’s “Inner Shaman.” A variety of projective hypnotic strategies can be employed to elicit one’s personal beliefs during the journey and questions to the Shaman about the participant’s beliefs, hopes, and habits that cause problems in their life are asked, such as, “What should I be doing? Where should I go? What is trying to emerge in my life?”

The third technique involved *Creating a New Personal Mythology*. This technique employed aspects of the prior two approaches, such as the questioning of the Inner Shaman and ego states. New beliefs can be generated and synthesized into a coherent and positive personal mythology.

Dr. Frederick’s presentation, delivered in a relaxed, personable and, at times, humorous and self-effacing style, offered an incredibly thought-provoking, clinically relevant, and novel integration of theories. Engaging the audience experientially provided an *in vivo* personal exploration that will likely empower many who participated to use the Personal Mythology techniques in their clinical practice. The workshop left me motivated to further explore the techniques and to encourage Dr. Frederick to publish on the topic. In closing, it was a pleasure to learn from such an icon in the Ego State Therapy field. ♦