

Pesso Boyden Therapy

It's one that reaches the parts others don't, says
Rose Rouse

When I first heard the words **Pesso Boyden System Psychomotor**, I can't say that I was impressed by the name. "It's a terrible mouthful, isn't it," says **Juliet Grayson**, a respected practitioner of this mind-body therapy which not many people seem to know here in the UK.

Then she mentioned PBSP's distinguishing aspects. "It is client-led and held by a therapist in a group setting where the other participants take on the roles of, for instance, ideal parents," she explains, "and it's particularly good for childhood issues. The client can go back to the age when the wounding happened and heal it by creating new memories on a cellular level."

I was intrigued – I'm a fan of group therapy, I enjoy the dynamic of it and rewards you can reap in awareness and healing. I've done **Malcolm Stern's** year group **Courage To Change**, the **Hoffman Process** and the **Path of Love** – but at the time, I was not drawn to do a PBSP session. The situation changed recently a year into a new relationship when I realised that I was over-reacting in a way that was distinctly unhealthy for this partnership.

Seeing red

I'll give you the example that tipped me over the edge in the direction of PBSP. I'd driven up to see my partner in North Wales from London, which takes five hours. I hadn't stopped, I was looking forward to seeing him, and I parked my car close to his because my sister and her husband were arriving soon. I thought I was being considerate. My partner didn't greet me, he told me I'd parked too close to his car. And he did it several times. However I wasn't just upset, I felt decimated. I was very angry and very upset in a way that was out of all proportion to the incident.

A few weeks later, I found myself sitting in a circle of 10 women and men in a community



centre in Chepstow with **Juliet** as the therapist. In a day, there is time for four participants to do sessions – they are either allotted beforehand, or those who want to 'work' put their names in a hat and there is a lottery for the places – and they last around one hour a half each. I had already booked one.

I was third so I was able to observe what happened to two others beforehand. This helped me decide to really go for it when it came to my turn. I know that you get the most out of it the deeper you allow yourself to go into what is happening. Body, heart and soul. Not forgetting humour. **Juliet** is wonderfully reassuring and funny too. This all helps to make me feel safe.

I'm open about my nervousness. **Juliet** uses a series of techniques, which make me feel acknowledged and encouraged. One is the voice of the witness that she uses to affirm feelings, there are also 'placeholders' – objects chosen from a bag to represent different people in my life from my partner to my parents – so that I can physically see these people while I'm talking.

I tell them about my extreme reaction to my partner's comments. And how distraught I was. And that I'd like to be more in contact with 'my pilot' – that part of me that can witness what is going on and not go straight into reaction. At this juncture, **Juliet** asks a key question: "Where does this issue come from?"

"I remember saying it was such a relief not to feel as though I had to fight"



How to keep calm

Juliet Grayson explains how to maintain a sense of calmness every day

1) Create your own ideal father (or ideal mother). Imagine what he might be like. I remember talking to an African lady who had been adopted. Throughout her childhood her mother would say "Your birth father would have been as handsome as Sidney Poitier," and "Your birth father would have had the wisdom of Nelson Mandela." Make a list of the qualities of your ideal father, the kind of man you needed as a child.

2) Think of one message that you would love to have heard from this ideal figure. Imagine him saying that to you.

3) Imagine your ideal father (or mother) doing something with you, for example going for a walk. Be there, see him through your own eyes, hear what he says, maybe feel him holding your hand. Be 'in the scene' (rather than looking from a distance at the two of you together).

4) If you are upset, connect with your 'pilot,' the part of you that is outside of the upset part, the part of you that sees it and makes choices about how you respond to situations. Practice this first when you are not flooded with strong emotions.

I explain that my father used to hit me too hard when I was around nine and ten. And it felt as though he was going to kill me. His rage was apoplectic. "So that's why it felt as though your partner was going to kill you," she ascertains. "We have something where we say you are putting the principle of your father on your partner, and you can do it in a symbolic way by putting a piece of tissue on the placemaker that represents your partner."

Inner child

Before long, I have an ideal mother – I choose someone from the group – cuddling me as I cry. I really like that PBSP is not just a talking therapy; physical touch and support is encouraged. I find myself weeping at first in a staccato way, but then much more gently. However, what I remember the most is feeling huge amounts of relief. It was like a never-ending unburdening. I felt myself sinking more and more into a comfortable place within myself.

Finally, I was lying like a child on a mattress with an ideal father and an ideal mother. I had my head on my ideal mother's lap, and my legs underneath my ideal father's legs. I remember declaring that I felt free and contained which I'd never felt at home. I remember saying I felt in contact with both of them, which I'd never felt at home. I remember saying it was such a relief not to feel as though I had to fight. I remember saying that I felt as though as I was in my animal nest.

That last half an hour felt like a new kind of freedom. A supported freedom. A contained healthy freedom.

Juliet asked my ideal parents to say – "If we'd been your ideal parents, we would have helped you manage your feelings." I felt so beautifully held and cherished.

Calm & centred

And there was entertainment in the midst of it all too, thankfully. I told the group that I'd thought that I was a recovering drama queen before I met my new partner, when I realised my recovery had been blown apart. There were galls of laughter from everyone.

Afterwards, I felt calmer at my core. I don't feel quite so rocked by incidental challenges like tax bills and partner issues. And if I do, I remember how I felt amidst my ideal parents and reach for their hands. I may not like the name Pesso Boyden System Psychomotor, but I like the methodology.

For more info about Juliet Grayson's work, visit therapyandcounselling.co.uk