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# How can Interactional Bodily Impact Lead a Person to Therapeutic Change ? :

## A Clinical Viewpoint brought by Gendlin's Process Model

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**【Abstract.】** How can bodily impact that produced by personal interaction lead a person to therapeutic personality change? In this paper the author examines the fundamental assumptions and some key concepts of Gendlin's *A Process Model* (Gendlin, 1997), and illuminates its philosophical viewpoint that how the highly advanced symbolic functions including therapeutic personality change coordinate closely and intricately with more primitive and rudimental processes such as behavior and bodily process. From the point of view, it is discussed we can get the clinical understanding that our presence and interactive response could give other persons some concrete bodily impact and lead them to therapeutic change.

**【Keywords】** Gendlin, E. T., Process Model, bodily impact, therapeutic personality change

### Introduction

In PCEP (*Person-Centered & Experiential psychotherapies*) journal, special issue on focusing-oriented therapy, I tried to interpret Gendlin's philosophical work, *A Process Model* (Gendlin, 1997) and clarified some clinical significance of the Process Model (PM) as follows: the fundamental experiential world of human being, a new understanding of representations and imagery, the possibilities for a newer approach to psychopathology, and the function of therapeutic stoppage as a point in therapy (Suetake, 2010) .

But I think there remains much to explore for a full understanding and interpreting of the PM. We need further pursuit of the PM world.

In this paper, I'd like to look out the PM especially from chapter I to VI, and focus

on the issue “how can interactional bodily impact lead a person to therapeutic personality change?”

Gendlin (1996) says as follows:

……Carl Rogers was quite right to posit “genuineness” as one of his three conditions of therapy (along with “empathy” and “unconditional positive regard”).

He was not quite right when he added that the client must “perceive” these three attitudes in the therapist. What I think he should have said is that these attitudes ought not to remain private; they need to be manifested so that they can have an impact, a concrete effect. Human bodies experience their situations *immediately* and *directly*, and not only through the interpretive screen of what they *perceive* or *think* is happening. Many clients begin quite far from being able to *perceive* that anyone understands or cares about them. They cannot even form the thought that someone possibly could. In spite of this lack of perception the concrete interaction will have its effects. The organismic process will move forward and change the person. After enough concrete change, the perceptions of those attitudes can form. (Gendlin, 1997, pp.296-297. Underlines are by the quoter.)

It is obvious that Gendlin thinks that concrete interaction and bodily direct impact are more important than client’s perception of core conditions proposed by Rogers (1957). But why can Gendlin say it that way? What is concrete interaction, and bodily direct impact? And how can interactional bodily impact lead a person to therapeutic personality change?

In the PM, these issues are explored and illuminated philosophically in depth. The PM elucidates, I believe, the problem of how the advanced human functions including cognition and personality could coordinate with primitive or rudimentary bodily and behavioral processes. So I will seize the central issues of PM (chapter I~VI) and explain them clearly and simply. Then I will come back the question “how can interactional bodily impact lead a person to therapeutic change?”

## Fundamental Assumptions of the PM

Gendlin’s PM has no preface or introduction which generally academic books hold. I think this is one of reasons that this book is not impressed easily to approach for many readers, but

I believe there would be an unavoidable circumstance. Thus being, before this book was written there were few concepts for explaining what kind of problems the PM tries to cope with. We cannot realize what kind of task the PM tackles, until new concepts are created in it.

But Gendlin draws our attention to chapter IV-A-d-2 (pp.28-38). We can see there what the PM fundamental assumptions are. So let me pick up on them:

1) **“Interaction first”**

Gendlin says, ‘the interactional event determines the individual entities (or the “slot” for individual entities). Each function “not as itself but as already affected by”.’ (p.38.). “Interaction first” is a concept that means each event functions not as itself but as already affected by the processes that it affects. The PM understands the world not from the perspective of things but of interactive processes.

2) **“A model of time in which a past and a future function in the present”**

He writes, ‘although we use linear time since it is inherent in our language and experience, other kinds of time develops from explicating the explication process.’ (p.7), and he continues, ‘we need a new conception of time, to speak from how we experience the present, but experienced (with and through and by means of ..... ) the past.’ (p.32). Gendlin argues that time is not a linear continuity, but is generated by an organism living, through what he calls “occurring into implying” (p. 10). In the PM, “implying” refers to the implicit possibility of what could occur, and “occurring into implying” generates the living flow of the organism.

3) **“Process events”**

Gendlin says, ‘a third requirement is to include structuring or patterning, rather than only structures and patterns, then even if an interaction precedes, there seems to be no way to arrive at one that is differently structured.’ (p.31). He proposes a philosophical model that is totally opposite to the static and fixed model of organisms and the world, which he critically calls the “unit model” (p. 32). We usually see the world as structured in divided units, and we regard time as linear, passing from the past to the future. Instead, the PM views every phenomenon as a process.

4) **“A nonlaplacian sequence”**

Laplace, Pierre Simon (1749-1827) said ‘If I knew where all the particles of the universe are right now, and the speed and direction at which they are moving, I could tell you the

whole past of the universe, and predict all of its future.’, but Gendlin says, ‘the body’s implying is nonlaplacian --- the implying of the whole sequence changes at each point.’ (p. 31). And he continues, ‘Past experience does not alone determine present events, yet it does function in some way, now.’ (p. 32).

#### 5) “Many factors shaping one event”

Gendlin writes, ‘we find a pattern I might call “many making one”, in which the many and the one mutually determine each other.’ (p35). He proposed a concept “relevance” in *Experiencing and the Creation of Meaning* (ECM) (Gendlin, 1962/1997). The term refers to the extricate interrelations that in the creation of a felt meaning, quite many felt meanings are concerned. And in the PM a new concept “everything by everything (evev)” is created.

#### 6) “Units emerge, and can re-emerge differently”

He says, ‘we need to formulate what is said by this, “not as itself, but as already changed by”.’ (p. 37). In the PM Gendlin does not deny the emergence and existence of units. Nevertheless he thinks any unit (i.e. body construction, code of language, order of nature, and so on) is not unchangeable static entity, but has variability and can re-emerge in the process and interaction (see also “IOFI (instance of itself)” in ECM).

These are the PM’s fundamental assumptions.

### Some Key Concepts in the PM

Now I will try to clarify the central issues of the PM through picking up some key concepts in it.

#### <CHAPTER 1: BODY-ENVIRONMENT (B-EN)>

“Body-Environment (B-EN)” : Gendlin says, “body and environment are one...The body is a non-representational concretion of (with) its environment.’ (p. 2).

“En#2” : ‘En#2 is the reflexively identical environment, not the separable environment but the environment participating in a living process.... Body and en#2 imply each other.’ (p. 2).

Body and en#2 are not same, not similar, but imply each other. Organismic body has and feels implying at all times. Living process can be created by implying.

“En#3” : Gendlin says, ‘the environment that has been arranged by the body-en#2

process....The body accumulates (is) a resulting environment....The life process goes on in en#3.' (p.3).

While eb#2 is functional phase of body, en#3 is the structural and constructional phase of body; for example, spider web, nest of bird, haunt of animal, and buildings, scientific technology, culture of human and so on.

(Cf. "En#1" is the spectator (scientist or hunter)'s environment. They define the en as dividable factors. And "En#0" has never happened, and is not now any creature's en, but is something may some day affect the life process and be en#2.)

#### <CHAPTER II: FUNCTIONAL CYCLE (FUCY.)>

"Functional Cycle (FUCY)" : Gendlin writes, 'hunger implies feeding, and of course it also implies the en#2 that is identical with the body. Hunger implies feeding and so it also implies food. It might imply the chase to get the food which may be far away. Hunger also implies digesting, defecating, scratching the ground to bury the feces, getting hungry again. These are a string of en#2s as well as ways in which the body will be. If digestion is my model instance, then the process is cyclical. Hunger also implies getting hungry again after defecating and sitting a while. I call this a "functional cycle".' (p.7).

FUCY is a concept referring to the process is cyclical. But then what is "the process"?

"Occurring into Implying" : He says, 'implying is never just equal to occurring. Therefore implying is not an occurring that has "not yet" occurred. It is not an occurring in a different position on a time line....Occurring is change; something happens. Occurring into implying can change the implying. The occurring sequence is also a sequence of changes in the implying. So the sequence is not determined from the implying in one event. The process is a changed implying all along the line.' (p.10).

This is the process the PM comprehends.

#### <CHAPTER III: AN OBJECT>

"Object" : Gendlin writes, 'if the creature does not instantly die because some process is stopped, then we have an implying that was not changed by an occurring. For example, the animal remains "hungry", i. e., food and feeding are implied, but do not occur. Now the hunger is not merely the implying into which eating occurs.... then the implying of feeding will remain the same no matter what other events do occur. For the first time in our model we have derived a sense of "the same". Now we are speaking not just of the whole body-identical "environment",

but of a certain aspect of it which separates itself by being absent....What is not here is only a small but separated “part” of the whole en#2. If such an aspect of en#2 is missing, we can speak of “a” process that is separated and stopped. Now there is a stopped process -- separable from the whole process. The part of en #2 that separates itself by being absent plays a special role. It stops a process by its absence. Let us give this part of b-en#2 the ancient name “object”.’ (pp.12-13).

What a curious view on “object” it is! But we can see the special role of the emergence of object. The stoppage of the process causes the stoppage of bodily process at the same time.

**“Stoppage”** : He says, ‘Now there is a stopped process -- separable from the whole process....It stops a process by its absence.’ (p.13).

In the PM, a “stoppage” does not mean that no process is occurring, rather that there is a constant implying of the process.

#### <CHAPTER IV: THE BODY AND TIME>

**“Body, not a machine”** : Gendlin says, ‘the body is the new process which does continue.....Since it is stopped, it does not exist as itself. The stopped process exists insofar as what does continue is different. Now it continues alone without what is stopped. We can say that this difference in the ongoing process carries the stoppage. A stopped process is an unchanged implying carried by a changed occurring. It is carried by the process that does continue, by how that process goes on differently.’ (p.18).

**“Everything by everything (evev)”** : He writes, ‘we assume neither independent units nor a mushy undifferentiated whole. In a coordinatedly structured whole, no aspect exists just so without the others being just so. Each is also the further implying which they all are. The material “parts” are relative to the processes and not as if they existed identifiably apart, and only then entered into processes. The single occurring includes all the differences, and the differences made to each other by these differences, and again by the differences they make. Occurring is an interaffecting of everything by everything (evev).’ (p.41).

**“Law of occurring”** : Gendlin says, ‘Order comes from implying and occurring. Occurring doesn’t just fill out an abstract order. The word “possible” needs a more intricate use. What is possible in implying and occurring is not predetermined. Of course what occurred, could occur. Since it occurred, it was possible. We can reverse this and say: What could occur at

the given juncture, did. I call this the "law of occurrence".' (p.52).

**"Schematized by Schematizing (sbs)"** : He says, 'I want to set up a term for the relation between two things that cross with each other in evening. I say that each "is schematized by schematizing the other" or "sbs". '(p.57).

"Sbs" means that the two do not function as themselves in relation to each other; rather, each functions as altered by affecting the other.

**"Time"** : Gendlin writes, 'to develop our model of time, we have to relate occurring and implying to en#2 and en#3, and the body, so that time can emerge from these.' (p.60), and continues, 'something is past, future, or present depending on how it functions in occurring into implying.' (p.62) Also he writes, 'en#3 functions as a past in the present. We are going to need this concept. And implying is a future that is in the present.' (p.67).

#### <CHAPTER V: EVOLUTION, NOVELTY, AND STABILITY>

**"Evolution"** : Gendlin asks, 'with our new model, can we develop concepts for the theory of evolution?' and says, 'new events might develop in what we called "the stopped process" itself.' (pp.74-75).

**"Leafing"** : He writes, 'nature shows many instances of similar bits reiterated over and over, never quite the same. There are pulses of the heart, eye blinks, nerve impulses, and also structurally: Our concept of "sub-processes" of the organism lets us think how this is reflected in body structure, such as pores of the skin, hairs, and leaves on a tree. I will make such intervening occurring a verb, and call it "leafing".' (p.76).

"Leafing" is a term, I believe, that refers to the continuum of our bodily processes conceptualized by analogy with leaves budding one after another, each time looking almost the same, but not entirely the same.

And Gendlin says, 'by leafing, the organism stays in the field of the stoppage. It remains at the spot, and under the conditions, of the stoppage. .... Now new events might form with the environment, which could not have formed before the stoppage.' (p.77).

**"Intervening events"** : He writes, 'a second kind of new events may occur in the so-called "stopped" process.' (p.78). And he gives an example as follows; 'as an example, say a walking animal falls into the water. Walking in water immediately assumes an unusual form since the movements do not encounter ground-resistance. So there is also no foot pressure. The movements will therefore be much wider. We call it "thrashing". The example shows that when the usual



events cannot happen, what can happen may seem like quite a lot more. Thrashing is a new sequence. It is certainly not unorganized. It has the organization of walking but in water.... The implied walking participates in the formation of thrashing, yet the walking does not occur.' (p.78). Gendlin says, 'I call this kind of new events "intervening events". When the usual process is stopped, such events may intervene.' (p.79).

**"The open cycle"** : He writes, 'the leafings and other intervening events are not themselves functional cycles. They are all part of the one implying of the whole body event, not new implyings of new processes with their own ensuing sequences. These new elaborations are not themselves going anywhere. Or, we could say, they go into the blue.' (p.85).

I guess the blue refers to something of an unknown area.

And he continues, 'they are like the fingers of a river that is stopped and spreading out. They go as far as they can; they occur and reiterate since the stoppage remains. So they are again implied. They occur again in so far as they can occur, but slightly differently for having just occurred. Whereas our functional cycle in chapter II was a circle,... this new reiterating cluster is not circular. Instead, this reiterating context is open.... I will call it the open functional cycle (opfucy), or simply the "open cycle".' (p.86).

#### <CHAPTER VI: BEHAVIOR>

**"Registry"** : Gendlin says, 'the body is going through changes in how it is in its en#2, and these changes are changing how the body is in the open cycle sector. Each open-cycle change changes the body further, and this again change how it is in its open-cycle. The body is pulling itself through a sequence of a new kind of b-en changes brought about between the body and its own reiterative sector by the registry of the change, and the change made by the registry. (p.92), and he continues, 'in our new sequence the body pulls itself through the changes made by the registering.'(p.93).

I guess "registry" means the capacity of the body to learn new things and change itself including the development of its neural system and brain.

**"Behavior"** : Gendlin says, 'the body has two environments: its en#2 and its reiterative sector. The body makes and responds to these changes in a feedback relation between itself as a whole (b-en#2) and the changes in its own home-made environment, the leafing open cycle. The body changes itself and moves itself through these changes. We have derived behavior!'(p.92).

**“Feeling”** : He continues, ‘the body moves further as the effect of the registry of how it just moved. It moved and is then affected by re-recognizing what it just did. Each bit of the sequence includes (is made by) the bodily impact (the registry) of how it just was. We could say that the body feels its own doing! Let us try to call this “feeling”.’ (p.94).

**“Consciousness”** : He also says, ‘what I call “re-recognition” enables us to understand how feeling locates into itself. In feeling the body “feels itself” but not as if it were an object along with other objects. Rather, the body feels its environment by re-recognizing what it just did. Feeling is the series of impacts of what the body just did. With feeling the body not only is, but feels the impact of what it “was”. This is sentience. We have derived consciousness!!’ (p.95).

**“Perception”** : Gendlin writes, ‘so far we have only considered the bodily side of behavior, the series of bodily impacts of the open cycle versions. But those also form a series that is part of the behavior sequence. The series of registries in the open cycle (the home-grown environment) -- what is that? The series of open cycle renditions is perception!’ (p.96).

**“Behavior space”** : He says, ‘once many behaviors have occurred, each sequence consists of a string of eevens of them. Each implicitly involves the others in its formation. Each is a way of carrying forward a mesh consisting of the others. Therefore each behavior sequence is a string of changes in how the others are functioning implicitly. A behavior sequence is a string of versions of the behavior contexts of all the mutually implicit sequences. An occurring sequence also changes how the others would occur if they were to form after it.... How other sequences would happen if they did would also be different. Any occurring sequence is a string of changes in how any of the other sequences would occur. Since the behavior context consists of how each sequence would occur if it did, we can think of it as a space, a mesh of possible behaviors that the body implies in all sorts of directions and respects. It can be called “behavior space”.’ (pp.102-103).

In chapter VII of the PM Gendlin explores the emergence of “symbol”, “language”, and “culture”, and he emphasizes that these more advanced human processes can be emerged and formed on the basis of bodily process and behavior.

There is more to explore and interpret about chapter VII and chapter VIII of Gendlin's

PM at some other time, because there is no space here for an extended exploration.

## Discussion

Now we come back to the question “how can interactive bodily impact lead a person to therapeutic personality change?”

From the PM’s viewpoint, it can be understood that our living process is consists of very intricate bodily process. And the bodily process leads behavior space and by same token, symbol space. All processes and functions in our living phenomenon are interacted and interaffected each other (see Fig. 1).

So we could say our presence and interactive response could give other persons some concrete bodily impact and lead them to therapeutic personality change.

In conclusion, we don’t have to give up relating and responding to clients and persons, whatever difficult problems or situations they have. Gendlin’s PM teaches us this important clinical point deeply.

.... Then you asked me how the Process Model concept of “stoppage” (implying with new possibilities) relates to the concept of “structure-bound.”

I have been thinking about it since you left.

In the article “Personality Change” this is connected with the concept of “reconstituting,” (when just explicating what is already implicit in the client’s experiencing is not enough. Something more from the interaction is needed to reconstitute a missing experiencing process).

So now I would say that the Process Model fills in how reconstituting works. The interaction reconstitutes a missing experiencing process. A missing experiencing process is a stoppage. The Process Model explains that a stoppage is not just no-process, rather a constant implying of the process, and not just that formed process but any way that might carry the implying forward.

So yes, structure-bound is a kind of stoppage. The concept of “stoppage” came later and has more concepts in it.

But “structure-bound” says something about pathology, whereas just “stoppage” does not. In the usual stoppage and leafing, each repetition is a little different with freshly-formed detail. Structure-bound repetitions seem to be the same without any fresh detail, not each repetition

“a little different.” I would argue today that each repetition is a little different but when we are structure-bound we do not move on from the little different. Instead, we go on from the same, and again from the same, and again from the same. So it may require interaction to stop the structure-bound repetition (means without fresh detail). Any moment of not going on without fresh detail is already a fresh moment, even if we think it is only the stop, the not-going on....

(from Gendlin's letter dated April 7, 2008, Underline is by the quoter.)

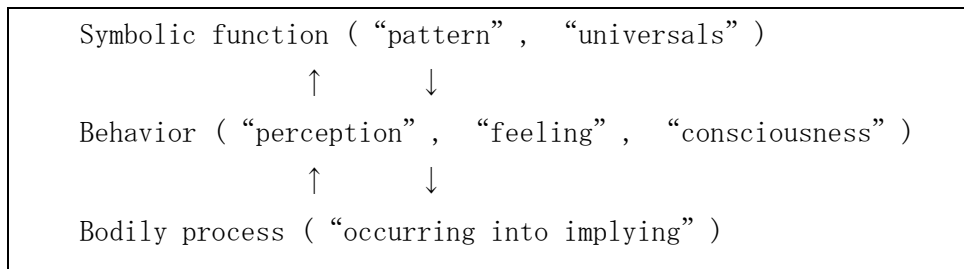


Fig.1. Coordination between symbol, behavior and bodily process

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