

BOOK REVIEW

Intimate Journeys: Stories From Life-Changing Therapy by James F.T. Bugental (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1990) 335 pages, \$24.95 hardcover.

James Bugental is 75 now; the journeys recounted in this book take place when he was 50. Thus, in some sense, this is a backward glance at a different era. However, as Dr. Bugental says in his Preface, although there are many differences between the 1960s and the 1990s and between himself then and now, in the writing of this book he became aware of "much continuity... The things I write today when I am seventy-five, were as true in most respects when I was fifty, at the time of these experiences." "Jim" Bugental, as presented within the pages of this book, is a therapist concerned with, as the subtitle indicates, life-changing therapy. Thus, in sessions, Bugental's emphasis is on one's subjective experience now. He is an existential therapist. However, whatever one's therapeutic orientation, there is much to be gained from journeying with him through the therapies of the five clients presented here.

There is Hal, a fellow therapist, who comes to therapy because he cannot deal with his teenage son. Louise, who has spent her life pleasing others, comes because she feels hollow and empty inside. Jennifer insists on seeing Bugental immediately as she is afraid she will kill her husband for having an affair with a mutual friend.

Kate, a detached scientist, is dissatisfied with her performance at work. And Frank, a blue-collar worker very different from Bugental's other clients, is self-sufficient, lonely and angry.

As Bugental weaves together his sessions with these individuals, ultimately bringing them all together in his therapy group, the reader is privy not only to their struggles and resistance to change but also to Bugental's most intimate thoughts and struggles with them. He does not present himself as the perfect therapist with all the answers. Indeed, Bugental is much too honest for that. Rather, he shows his humanity, which includes getting caught by Frank's constantly bullying and challenging attitude, or coming close to going too far with Louise. In these instances the reader overhears his conversations—often arguments—with him while in session with this client. As he says toward the end of the book, he made mistakes but somehow both he and his clients survived and everything worked out. That it did work out, I would say on the evidence of this book, is due to Bugental's integrity and genuine caring for his clients, and also to his intentionality, which is an important aspect of his therapeutic philosophy. Bugental's intention is also to help client claim his own intentionality.

There are many wonderful insights in this book that easily apply to Core Energetic therapy, such as:

The point is that the client in life-changing therapy needs to be as wholly present as possible. And that means all the aspects of the inner life must be exposed, including reason and emotion... This principle dictates that the therapist must continually monitor how fully present the client is and deal with the ways that presence is lessened. The chief instrument for tracking this crucial state is the therapist's own presence, (p. 66) and

I get a sense of vital involvement when I let myself experience my own emotions and wanting; when I let ideas flow out from me without trying to prethink them for any reason; when I am spontaneously in my body; when I am really open with another person who is with me in the same way; or when I explore deeply within myself in solitary inner exploration

or in the process we call depth psychotherapy, (p. 76)

and

Truly life-changing psychotherapy is—and needs to be—a life engagement between two people struggling with each other and with the forces in both that deny life, restrict awareness, and limit growth. It is messy, its borders are unclear and often shifting, and its processes are continually evolving, (p. 138)

There is a particularly moving account of a session with Hal in which Bugental encourages him to shout out his hurt and anger. As he does, Bugental joins with him, screaming his own anger and frustrations until they are both crying. After they have both quieted, Hal looks at him and says, "You too, Jim?" "Yes, oh yes." he answers, as they both weep again.

There are many moving movements in this book, and I thank Jim Bugental for sharing them.

Joan A. Groom, M.A.