



CHANGING MINDS, SAVING LIVES – PSYCHOANALYTIC INSIGHTS

Welcome to Pamela Nathan’s psychoanalytic series, taking simple gems from the psychoanalytic dreamtime that may become tools for living...

HOLDING

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‘Holding’ follows on from the Psychoanalytic Insight ‘What’s so important about the Mother-Babe Relationship?’. While ‘holding’ is discussed in relation to the Babe in this article, it is a concept that can be applied equally to other individual and community relationships.

During the holding phase the Babe is absolutely dependent.

Jilpie Winnicott says there are two forms of holding:

1. Physical holding/handling of Babe
2. Mother to be able to hold and carry the emotions of Babe.

Babe’s psychological wellbeing is dependent on Mother’s holding ability.

Winnicott *jilpie* has a famous saying: “There is no such thing as an infant”. Babe does not experience needs as needs. Babe can remain in a mode of being in which there is no separation from Mother (symbiosis).

Babe feels kept together and experiences **continuity of being** when held by Mother.

Babe’s creative impulses can be brought into being through holding.

Babe has the illusion of omnipotence (protection against helplessness) and believes it is actually the one creating the breast.

Babe is Breast!

Mother silently communicates, receiving projections and demonstrates reliability and empathy, developing a close emotional relationship and attachment to Babe.

Jilpie Winnicott says Mother’s pleasure has to exist and be visible otherwise mothering is dead, useless and mechanical.

Jilpie Bion says Babe develops an ability to become itself or be itself through the emotional interaction with Mother.

Concepts of holding and mirroring unfold at the level of being. Holding gives rise to being (to be oneself) and to a continuity of being (consistent personality).

Insufficient holding

Babe is forced to react rather than to be.

Insufficient holding produces a threat of non-existence, annihilation and a nameless dread.

It can lead to disintegration (falling to bits) and depersonalisation (losing oneself and not feeling real).

These feelings are the black holes, voids and nothingness.

Insufficient holding gives rise to a false self.

It can lead to poor regulation of emotions, an inability to tolerate frustration and volatility.

Iwenhe Tyerrtye by Margaret Kemarre

We are part of the Land
The Land is us, and we are the Land
That's how we hold our Land.

The Story is the Land and the Land is the Story
The Story holds the people
And the people live inside the Story.
The Story lives inside the people,
And the Land lives inside the people also.
It goes all the way to hold the Land.

The Story goes out and then comes home. As more people come from that country, Story goes further and gets stronger. Story starts in the centre with one person, then it goes wider and wider.

Our kinship shows us the way, the Rule of the Law.
It has come from our Traditional Land,
And also from the Beginning
To know who we are.

Kinship comes out of the country itself,
It comes from the Ancestor Beings
Aboriginal people have grown up
Deep inside the this from Creation
And they live within it and always forever.
Kinship is our roots.

Two cultures can hold each other

It's a touching way of how you can feel for that person, which is the sacredness of that person to yourself, and of yours to him. There's a big line between that person and yourself. And it's a sacred thing. To keep it alive is one of the things we must do. We mustn't run over ourselves, we mustn't go across, we mustn't twist around. To be who we are, you can't tangle up those lines.

The Psychoanalytic Insight, 'Holding' is an excerpt from *The Milky Way* an introductory booklet on psychoanalysis by Pamela Nathan.

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