

Nature Therapy with Children with Learning Difficulties

Ronen Berger – The Nature Therapy Center, Tel Aviv University, Israel

Abstract

Therapy with children with learning difficulty is usually described as an indoor activity, centring on verbal and cognitive dialogue. Relating to two case studies conducted in two schools for children with learning difficulties, with behavioural and mental-emotional difficulties this article presents ways in which therapy can take place creatively in nature. It highlights ways in which nature can provide not only a “setting”, but also a non-verbal medium and partner in such a creative process. Relating to concepts from Nature Therapy the article offers practitioners concepts and methods that can be incorporated into their practice.

Keywords: Nature Therapy, Drama Therapy, creativity, nature, ritual, learning difficulties, therapy

Introduction

Most classical, psychotherapeutic methods use cognitive, verbal and/or symbolic means and do not suit children with late development and/or learning disabilities (Berger, 2006; Butz et al., 2000; Nezu & Nezu, 1994). This population often has difficulties working in ways that focus on cognitive channels, which tend to neglect the physical, emotional, social and imaginative mechanisms (Berger, 2006, 2007). With growing implementation of the Art Therapies with these populations, using creative experience in non-verbal and non-cognitive methods (Berger, 2006; Polak, 2000), it would seem that Adventure Therapy with its physical experience in nature could also have a positive impact, and promote different therapeutic needs. Nevertheless, possible impacts of Adventure Therapy have hardly been explored.

Drawing upon examples from two case studies, this article illustrates ways in which the innovative Nature Therapy framework can be implemented with children with late development and/or special needs, in general, and in a school setting in particular. The article aims to highlight some of the potential of this innovative framework for such children and its use of creative methods, rituals and direct contact with nature in particular. The concepts and methods of this framework broaden several of Adventure Therapy's basic concepts and offer a different, perhaps contrasting approach. The article will begin with a literature review, placing the work in the wider Adventure Therapy context. It will continue with a short presentation of the innovative Nature Therapy framework and the research that has supported its development. It will continue with short descriptions of the case-studies, using them to highlight ways in which Nature Therapy can be implemented in such settings. The article will conclude with a discussion followed by some questions for future exploration. Being aware of the limitations of this article, references will be given for further reading on the theory, research and implementations of the work it has presented.

Adventure Therapy – a Review of the Literature

Adventure Therapy* usually takes place in a remote natural location and for a short, intense, duration, using adventure and challenge as a trigger for a cognitive and problem-solving therapeutic process. Ringer (2003: 19-20) defines Adventure Therapy as follows: "Activities involving the combination of physically and psychologically demanding outdoor activities and/or remote natural settings". An example of this form of therapy and the way in which nature intertwines with it, is given by Gillis and Ringer (1999, pp. 29): "Having two persons who have difficulties in their relationship, such as father and son or husband and wife, paddle a canoe will require them to cooperate in order to be successful". Relating to these examples and despite the field's strong historical connection with nature (Mortlock, 2000), it seems that Adventure Therapy relates to nature mainly as a background or/and a "tool provider" for the operation of this problem-solving oriented approach. In the last decade it has also developed "challenge courses" and adjusted to the urban environment, building artificial challenge courses in urban environments (Beard & Wilson, 2002; Ringer, 2003). These courses, which operate side by side with rural Adventure Therapy centers, seek to use the same concepts of challenge and fear, leaving nature and the dialogue with it as a side factor in the process. This process has led to attempts to distinguish Adventure Therapy from Wilderness Therapy, which takes only place only in the wilderness, emphasizing its importance (Crisp, 1998; Powch, 1994). It has also led to growing criticism of its attitudes towards nature (Berlinger & Martin, 2003). This ecopsychological-oriented criticism argues that an approach relating to nature as an obstacle that needs overcoming may educate people not to care for nature, and furthermore may increase the detachment of people from it (Berger, 2007).

Exploring Adventure Therapy's target population, it appears that most of its work is conducted with people who have behavioral and/or authority and/or boundaries issues (Larson, 2007; Mossman, 1998; Newes, 2004; Garst et al., 2001; Fischer & Atteh, 2001;

Kaly & Hessacker, 2003; Long, 2001; Neill & Heubeck, 1998; Price & DeBever, 1998; Russell, 2003; Simpson & Gillis, 1998; Whittington, 2006). The majority of the work is conducted with young people, coming from juvenile delinquency or sexual offence backgrounds, sexually abused youth or youths-at-risk (Garst et al., 2001; Fischer & Atteh, 2001; Kaly & Hessacker, 2003; Larson, 2007; Long, 2001; Neill & Heubeck, 1998; Simpson & Gillis, 1998; Whittington, 2006). There is some evidence of therapeutic work taking place with other populations such as families (Burg, 2001; Bandoroff, 2003), females who suffer from eating disorders (Richards, 2001), people who suffer from psychiatric disorders (Blanchard, 1993; Crisp & O'Donnell, 1998; Eisenbeis, 2003; Roberts et al., 1998), populations suffering from cancer (Sugerman, 2005), people with spinal cord injuries (Beringer, 2003) or other therapeutic issues. It seems that there is little evidence for work carried out with children with late development and in a regular school setting.

Relating to this review and to comments made by Russel & Farnum (2004), it seems that although Adventure Therapy is widely implemented throughout the world, its theoretical foundations are not sufficiently clear. Critical analysis of the core literature (Baldwin et al., 2004, Blanchard, 1993; Cason & Gillis, 1994; Hattie et al., 1997; Hovenlync, 2003; Russel & Farnum 2004; Wolfe [HYPERLINK "javascript:void\(0\);"](#) & Samdahl, 2005) suggests that its theory is not fully established and needs further development. Although there are several concepts that relate to the issues of challenge, such as "challenge by choice" and "adventure-misadventure" (Mortlock, 2000) and methods that relate to the different interactions of the three aspects; wilderness, physical self and social self (Russel & Farnum 2004), it still seems that the theory does not provide a deeper understanding that the processes it seeks to work with constitute therapy. For example: What are the concepts and processes on which professionals can base their observations in order to deepen the understanding and to decide on further interventions? What is the place of "relationships" and "narratives" in the process; what

takes place between the facilitator and the group and among the group members and nature? What are the ethical codes?

As most of the research in Adventure Therapy uses a quantitative approach and focuses on measuring program efficiency and outcomes, it seems that the use of more qualitative approaches, such as Action Research, Grounded Theory or narrative analysis could help to understand the process and further articulate its theory (Baldwin et al., 2004; Berger, 2007; Blanchard, 1993; Hovenlynck, 2003; Wolfe [HYPERLINK "javascript:void\(0\);"](#) and Samdahl, 2005).

Concluding the literature review it seems right to highlight some problematic issues:

It seems that the practice of Adventure Therapy is limited to specific populations. It hardly includes people with cognitive, communication and/or verbal difficulties.

It seems that Adventure Therapy's methods are limited to task-orientated approaches. The use of creative methods, rituals and mind-body-spirit methods are limited, as well as the space given to the spiritual and emotional aspects that the connection with nature contains (Berger, 2007; Berger & McLoed, 2006; Beringer, 2003; Beringer & Martin, 2003; Burns, 1998; Davis, 1998, 2004; Hartig et al., 1991; Totton, 2003; Roszak, 2001; Roszak et al., 1995).

It seems that the theoretical foundation of the field is limited and does not provide sufficient tools to understand the process and build further interventions.

* The term Adventure Therapy (as it is used in this article) relates only to the theory and practice of work that has been specifically titled as such. It does not relate to various other outdoor professions such as experiential learning/education, environmental education, outdoor learning and so on.

Nature Therapy: An Innovative Framework

Nature-Therapy is an innovative, experiential, therapeutic framework taking place

in nature. It seeks to broaden the therapist's static, permanent, controlled environment (Barkan, 2002; Bleger, 1967) into a dynamic, environment that partners and shapes the setting and process of therapy (Berger, 2007; Berger & McLeod, 2006). It develops concepts and methods assisting operation in a dynamic and open environment, using nature's healing elements to support therapeutic processes and open them up to further dimensions (Berger & McLeod, 2006). Nature Therapy integrates elements from Art and Drama therapy, Gestalt, the Narrative approach, Ecopsychology, Transpersonal Psychology, Adventure Therapy, Shamanism and body-mind practices. The development of the approach is based on the author's Ph.D., using an Action Research strategy to connect practical experience and theory-generation, using the latter to influence the further implementation of programs. The process also included Grounded Theory analysis that helped generate theory with a reflexive standpoint that highlighted ways in which the researcher's standpoint may have influenced the research and the theory. The qualitative research upon which the Ph.D. was based, included two case studies that took place in Israel during 2002-2004; the first of which was a program that took place with children with special needs in a school, and the second a training program that combined workshops on the beach under the full moon and subsequent processing encounters (more on this can be found in Berger's Ph.D, [HYPERLINK "http://www.naturetherapy.org"](http://www.naturetherapy.org) www.naturetherapy.org). The Nature Therapy Center was established in 2002 and together with the framework's development it has implemented programs with thousands of individuals, groups, and families in the private, educational and health sectors in Israel. Trainings are provided in several academic institutions in Israel and are currently being developed in Europe. Using examples from two case-studies, this article will illustrate several concepts and methods from this innovative framework, and suggest ways they can be implemented in practice. An in-depth and detailed description of the framework, its underpinning research and the full case-studies (qualitative research) can be found in the author's Ph.D. thesis (Berger, 2008, found also in www.naturetherapy.org).

"Encounters in Nature" – The program and Accompanying Research

"Encounters in Nature" is a therapeutic, educational program developed by the Nature Therapy Center and adopted by the Israel Ministry of Education. The program is conducted in schools for children with learning difficulties and/or special needs. It operates in "natural" spaces within or near school grounds (small groves, parks, or gardens) for two hours a week, throughout the school year. The program is facilitated collaboratively by a therapist and a teacher, who has participated in a week-long training course that taught the programme's basic theory and methods. The facilitators receive bi-weekly supervision in a two-hour Nature Therapy-oriented session. Since the programme's founding in 2002, it has been employed with hundreds of schoolchildren from the entire "special needs" spectrum - developmental delays, autism, learning difficulties, ADAH, ADD, severe behavioural and emotional (psychiatric) disorders. The examples below are taken from this national program.

Research that followed the program aimed specifically to explore therapeutic and educational influences that Nature and specific Nature Therapy-oriented interventions may have on these children; i.e. to see what personal and group issues were triggered and/or supported and to explore specific ways that nature and Nature Therapy may have impacted them. The case studies were based on established principles of qualitative research and case study methods (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; McLeod, 2002; Yin, 1984). Data was collected using open-ended questionnaires that were distributed to the group facilitators after the training (just before the program began) and at the end of the year-long process. The second set was used as the basis for a three-hour interview, in which the participant was asked to reflect upon the year's process. In addition, routine process logs were analyzed in order to broaden the data. In order to generate concepts, the data was analyzed using Grounded Theory techniques and they were coded into "meaning units" aimed at generating a theory (McLeod, 2002; Strauss & Corbin, 1990, 1998). After

the data was analyzed, a draft paper was sent to the group facilitators for their reactions, which were then integrated in the writing of the report and the **full case study articles. This process, connecting theory generation with practical experience, researcher and practitioners, related to basic principles of Action Research (McLeod 2002; Reason 1994) insured the trustworthiness and ethical maintenance of the research. To address the ethical issues of a program taking place with children with special needs, the researcher had no direct contact with the children and the facilitators remained the only research participants. Based on the Grounded Theory analysis of their experience, the theory was constructed and further development and implementation on the program was made.

** The full and detailed case studies upon which the following examples are based, can be found in Berger's Ph.D. and in two case study articles that were published in Emotional & Behavioural Difficulties (Journal), Vol 11 (2) and Vol 13 (4).

"Going on a Journey"– an Example from Practice

A class of eleven children, aged 7 - 9, participated in "Encounters with Nature" in the 'special-needs' school, Galim, in the north of Israel. The group included children with learning difficulties and acute behavioral problems. The program aimed at strengthening the participants' self-confidence and self-esteem, developing coping mechanisms and helping the children to consolidate as a group. It also aimed to help them make the transition into a new school, to internalize its norms and acclimatize. The program was built around a structure of a (made up) story that told a tale of a group of American Indian children going on their traditional maturity journey in nature. During this voyage the children had to meet and cope with physical and spiritual challenges which, when successfully confronted, would enable them to be honored by the tribe, acknowledging the transition they had made from childhood to adolescence. Every meeting started inside the classroom. After the facilitators re-told the Indian story and reminded the group of its

contract, everyone was invited to go out and walk in a line (a custom in this school) to the "nature room". In this room, which was used only for this program, the opening ceremony took place. Using a "talking stick" the participants shared their feelings and their expectations for the day. Then the group was invited to leave the room and start different outdoor activities. The opening ceremony was kept as a structure throughout the year.

The program was built in phases, aiming to use the metaphor of the maturation journey of the children in the "Indian story". Each phase took place in a different location and under a different mode of work. The idea was to form a cyclic, year long journey, beginning and ending in the same place.

Seeking to unite the group and help it develop non-violent communication skills, the first phase in the year's program focused on challenges and adventure games, using activities such as crossing a river or going through a rope-course. Then, aiming to empower the participants, connect them with strength, develop creativity and support their individuation process, the work was extended into creative work. This unit included artistic activities such as building power symbols and totems to help the children overcome different challenges on the journey. In order to help the group take more responsibility over the process, exercises such as preparing gifts and preparing food over a fire were integrated. After the group had united and the violence had decreased, a new mode of work was introduced. Using the framework of the story the group was invited to build a "home in nature", a place for everyone to gather and "be" before the last cycle of work and the conclusion of the journey. It was the first time that everybody worked together. Although different children had different ideas about the way the home should be built, the previous process and the concrete objectives helped them find productive ways to communicate and succeed in building the home. It was the first time when everyone could sit calmly together in one enclosed space, feel safe and "be" (as opposed to "do"). Concluding this unit, aiming to help the individuation process and as part of the

"Indian journey tradition" a name-giving ceremony was performed. Concluding this year-long "maturation journey" the fourth and last unit was introduced. The group received its most important mission: to take care of a pair of falcon chicks, wounded when they had fallen out of their nests, until their successful rehabilitation and recovery. This process allowed the children to touch upon complex issues such as vulnerability, injury, emotional abandonment, hope and care from a distanced perspective, talking about the birds and not directly about themselves. The year ended with a ceremony in which the group hosted all the school's pupils and teachers for a special event in which they told the journey's story and released the recovered birds back to nature...

From Practice to Theory

This case study, taken from a year long Nature Therapy program for children with learning difficulties and acute behavioral problems, can be used to illustrate a few concepts and methods used by the Nature Therapy approach. It highlights the way in which the **framework of a story** can be used as a narrative container in a year-long therapeutic program. It shows the way in which the story and metaphor can be used to place the work within a larger context: one that not only defines and normalizes the group voyage, but furthermore helps give it meaning. This incorporation of story-making techniques and use of metaphors relates to the Drama Therapy concepts of "distancing", and the "as if reality". It helps to convey a therapeutic-educational message in an indirect way, without intimidating the group and building up resistance (Jennings, 1998; Lahad, 2002; Landy 1996). It talks about the difficulties that the Indian children met with on their maturation journey and not on those that the participants experience...

Another concept it illustrates, relates to the **use of rituals**. Jennings, one of Drama Therapy's pioneers and an anthropologist said that "...rituals are (also) about transitions

from one social state to another, so they guide us through changes in a very specific way” (1998, pp.103). Hazan, a leading anthropologist said that "the purpose of the ritual is to create order within the chaos” (1992, pp. 91). Relating to these quotes and other references that highlight the potential of the incorporation of rituals in therapy (Al-Krena, 1999; Berger, 2006; 2007; Grainer, 1995; Jennings, 1995, 1998; Jerome, 1993; Jones, 1996; West, 2000, 2004) it seems that they could help these children cope with different transitions that the program contained and with vague and uncertain episodes within the process. In the above example, the ceremonies were used as an "organizing" element; the repetitions giving the participants a feeling of control and confidence. The facilitators reported that the ceremonies helped them to create a safe space, in which the children could experience spontaneous activities while the clear and safe framework was kept (Berger, 2007). In addition, they reported that the use of rituals helped the children distinguish between the classroom environment and the "Encounters in Nature" one, and create the transition in a smooth and safe manner. A different kind of ritual was used to connect the children with their strength and help their individuation process. One example is the "**Name-Giving Ritual**", which enhanced the children's self-image and allowed them to be seen and recognized as individuals within the larger group. Here, each child received a new name, based on a positive characteristic in him/her, which had been discovered during the previous meetings. This intervention encouraged participants to externalize and develop positive behaviors (as apposed to aggressive and distractive ones); transforming the common behavioral approach into a playful and rewarding group activity.

The work with birds of prey illustrates a way in which the "**Nature Conservation**" method (Berger, 2004) can be implemented. According to this method, the therapist tries to match the therapeutic needs of the individuals and the group with a relevant nature-conservation need. Again, the idea is to use the distanced story that the rehabilitation project includes as a pathway to working on personal stories. From the

research that accompanied the work, it appears that the work with birds of prey not only allowed the children to normalize their own stories, seeing that wild and strong animals must also deal with similar issues; it also gave them pride and a larger sense of meaning (Berger, 2007).

The four modes of work that were presented in this case-study also mark the developmental, human - nature relationship axis of the Nature Therapy framework. It starts by using the adventure approach, relating to nature as an obstacle which needs overcoming, continues on to an artistic approach, relating to nature as a 'strength giving partner' addressing it in a symbolic and less concrete way. It goes on with the "building a home in nature" work, relating to nature as a safe place to be in - a home. It concludes with the bird's rehabilitation, for which the children use their strength to take care and help "nature".

The research that followed this program shows that it helped the children to strengthen their self esteem, expand their coping mechanisms and develop communication skills and flexibility uniting them as a group... (the full research article can be found in the author's PhD (Berger, 2007).

"Building a Home in Nature"

A class of seven children, aged 8 – 10, studying in "Ilanot", a school for children with special needs in the city of Naharia, Israel, participated in a "Encounters in Nature" program. The group consisted of children with a mild to medium degree of retardation or other late development symptoms, and mainly suffering from anxiety issues. The aim of the program was to widen the children's communication skills, strengthen their self-esteem and confidence, while helping them establish their integration as a group. Aiming to provide the participants a safe feeling and help them build up their trust in the facilitators, the year- long program began in the classroom. The children stood and looked through the windows, to see the changes that autumn brings about. Through this

process, the tutors presented the dynamic and experiential work the class was about to enter, as well as the idea of a joint facilitation which was new to the children and the school. Next, they went outside for a few minutes and brought some objects into the classroom, examining and studying them in an experiential manner. Two months later, the group started to meet in the schoolyard, in a relatively remote spot, which allowed them a more intimate mode of work without being disturbed by other school children. Work at this stage was based on the "Building a Home in Nature" method (Berger, 2004, 2006). In this technique the symbolic yet concrete process of planning, building and maintaining a home in nature is used to promote a parallel therapeutic process of building a personal, inner safe home. During this phase, the children chose locations, planned, built and maintained personal homes, constructed from materials they found in the area. This creative process enabled them to work on personal and interpersonal issues, such as boundaries (boundaries which a home has), partnership and belonging (the home location in relationship to other homes, cooperation in its building and maintenance). They were also able to address other personal issues that relate to the wide psychological concept of "home" (what does a home include? what is inside and what remains outside? what gives the home strength? the materials it consists of?) (Berger, in press; Berger & McLeod, 2006). As winter crept up, the environment changed: rain and mud took over, plants sprouted, and animals such as migrating birds and earthworms appeared. At the beginning most of the children were afraid and disgusted by the earthworms, running away or trying to kill them. As time passed, together with the teacher's mediating work, holding the animals and showing them to the children, their anxiety and fear decreased. Some pupils even started to like these animals, while one even shared her food with a spider that according to her "was sharing his home" with her home.

Dan (an assumed name) engaged with the process of birth and maturation (growth) of a tiny plant, which sprouted from a rock he placed in "his home" boundary. He was excited by his discovery, and overwhelmed by the strength and persistence the plant had as it

made its way through the hard rock. Dan was worried that its roots would not have enough space to develop in the rock and that it would lack the nourishment it needed to grow. Using story-making techniques (Gersie, 1997; Lahad, 1992, it became evident that the plant's coping story had touched upon some traumatic experience in Dan's life: moving from one home to another; facing the question of his own roots and belonging. Following this line, aiming to expand Dan's sense of capability, the "plant coping story" was used to extend the personal story, by focusing on the coping mechanisms and strength Dan had found in complex moments of his life. This mode of working combines elements from Lahad's (1992) and White's (2004) approaches to working with traumatic episodes, as it used the story of the plant as a way to connect the child with his own strength and abilities, as well as to connect him to the primal sense of continuity and cycle shared by all living beings (Macy & Fleming, 1998).

As the seasons changed and spring arrived, it became too warm in the "homes" location. The children suggested finding a different and more suitable area to establish their territory. This change, brought about by nature, gave them a chance to re-examine their relationships with each other and the dynamics within the group. They decided to build a common home, as opposed to the individual homes in the previous location. During this process, the children chose a small grove in the center of the schoolyard, claiming their territory within the school, prepared to defend it from older children in case needed. For the building process, the children used materials they found in the new location yet bought symbolic items, with an emotional significance, from their previous individual homes. Using the image of Nature Therapy as a form of ritual, the final meeting of the year revolved around an activity in which each child chose what object from the home he/she wanted to leave behind and what to take along for future journeys. It concluded by building a communal sculpture which symbolized the whole process.

From Practice to Theory

This case study illustrates Nature Therapy's attitude towards the environment, relating to it as a central component in the process. This attitude influences both the methods and concepts it contains and their implications in practice. The case study illustrates a way in which a method such as **Building a Home in Nature** can be used in a year-long process. It highlights its potential, using non-verbal modes of work and direct contact with nature to promote basic personal and interpersonal issues. The choice of the location of the "home", the manner in which it is constructed and maintained are symbolic to the dynamic and psychological issues such as the child's sense of boundaries, his perception of space and his status within the group (Berger, 2007).

The three-way relationship - Client-Therapist-Nature, is another basic Nature Therapy concept that relates to nature as a living, dynamic, working environment. This concept invites the therapist to extend the classic therapist-client relationship and include nature as an active, third partner, one that can shape the setting and process alike. In the above case study, the change of climate and the warming of group space were used as a trigger to change the setting and open up the process into new directions. The wish that the group made to change the activity space and build a new home in it, was used to expand the patterns and dynamics within the group, moving from personal, secluded "homes" to one shared "group home". With respect to this concept, therapists are encouraged to develop specific standpoints. They may take a central position and work directly with the client, relating to nature as a backdrop or tool provider. Alternatively, they may take a quieter role, remaining in the background and allowing the client to work directly with nature, the therapist acting as a human witness, container, and mediator. Dan's story illustrates the interplay of these two positions and the way they can help a client cope with traumatic events and gain from the experience. It also shows how the experiential and metaphoric work in nature can be used to express taboo stories and widen their meanings. Dan's story highlights a way in which direct contact with nature and its cycle can help a person expand the concept of continuity in its widest sense,

connecting the personal life time (and story) with universal time, which people, animals and plants all share (Berger, 2007).

From the research which followed this program, it seems that the program reinforced the children's abilities to address different psychological issues, improve their communication skills, and develop flexibility, while uniting them as a group. The research findings also showed that the program helped to change the participants' attitude towards several issues, i.e. from feelings such as fear and alienation to feelings of care and partnership. It also showed that an experiential mode of work can help children with special needs learn and understand basic ecological concepts, such as the changing of seasons and cycles of nature. In addition, it can aid them in developing manual skills such as working with a hoe or a rake. (Full details of this case study and research can be found in the author's Ph.D.).

Concluding the Journey – Summary and Discussion

Drawing upon examples from two case studies, this article presented a creative and non-verbal framework in which nature-orientated therapeutic work can take place with children with learning difficulties, in a semi-urban natural environment and in a school setting.

Relating to Adventure Therapy's literature, the article challenged some of its theoretical foundations and its use of concrete and task-oriented methods and attitudes towards nature in particular. It has argued that Adventure Therapy may be missing out on important therapeutic elements contained in the direct contact with nature, and as may not be using its full therapeutic potential or taking advantage of the ecopsychological (educational) aspects that this work can contain. As an alternative, this article has presented a refreshing Nature -Therapy approach, its methods and concepts and their implications in practice. The article has challenged some underpinning issues in Adventure Therapy, calling for their application to wider populations, particularly people

with cognitive difficulties and/or delayed development.

To date, very little research has been published on Nature Therapy, in general, and on its application to people with learning difficulties, in particular (Berger, 2007). I am currently engaged in evaluative research on the effectiveness of such programs with different groups in various natural settings, and the issues involved in designing professional training programs. In developing this approach, my basic assumption is that nature contains resources that can support emotional, spiritual, mental, and physical personal well-being, which in turn can be used for psychotherapeutic purposes (Abrams, 1996; Berger, 2007; Berger & McLeod, 2006; Beringer & Martin, 2003; Burns, 1998; Davis, 1998, 2004; Hartig et al., 1991; Roszak, 2001; Totton 2003). I believe that the intentional use of nature as a resource can be effectively integrated into work with any kind of client seeking to develop and heal, and can help promote the positive health of people with verbal difficulties, in particular. My hope is that as more practitioners develop and disseminate their own ways of doing therapy in nature, a broader set of cases and research studies will emerge, facilitating the construction and presentation of a more fully articulated theoretical framework.

Author's Biography

Ronen Berger is the head of The Nature Therapy Center, Israel.

His Ph.D., entitled "Nature-Therapy – Developing a Framework for Practice" combines his former occupations in the fields of ecology, drama therapy, body therapy and dance, in the development of an integrative theory and method. He currently runs Nature Therapy programs for the Israeli Ministry of Education and postgraduate Nature Therapy training programs at Haifa University, Sapir College and Telem (Siminar Hakibbutzim College), Israel.

Ronen is the father of two children and lives in Kibbutz Snir in the north of Israel.

Email: HYPERLINK "mailto:ronenbw@hotmail.com" ronenbw@hotmail.com

His Ph.D. can be found at: HYPERLINK "http://www.naturetherapy.org"

www.naturetherapy.org

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