

Book Review

***The Body Remembers:
The Psychophysiology of Trauma and Trauma Treatment***

By Babette Rothschild
Norton & Company, October 2000, 190 pages

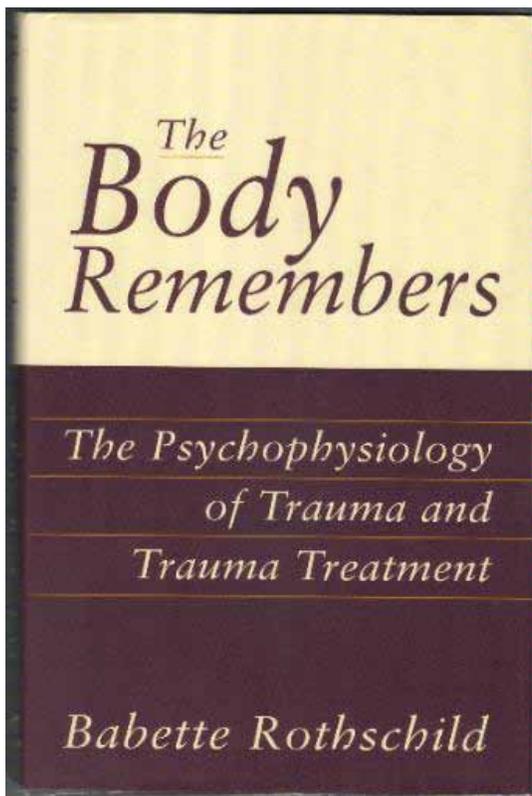
(German translation)

***Der Körper erinnert sich:
Die Psychophysiologie des Traumas und der Traumabehandlung***

By Babette Rothschild
Synthesis Verlag, Mai 2002, 254 pages)

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Babette Rothschild has been a practicing psychotherapist since 1976. Author of *Eight Keys to Safe Trauma Recovery* and the best-selling *The Body Remembers*, and member of the International Society for Traumatic Stress Studies, she gives lectures and professional trainings around the world. She lives in Los Angeles, CA, USA.

I came across the German translation of her book last year and have not read the original English version. Some of my retranslated quotes and statements will obviously not correspond word-for-word with the original English text. Please excuse possible inaccuracies or loose translations. Actually, I initially thought the author was German because of her name: Rothschild.

After working as a Rosen Method Bodywork practitioner for more than 15 years now, I feel that I have finally found a very helpful and precious guide on how to approach and help traumatized clients in a more skilled way. This book confirms much of what I have observed and delivers answers to many questions I have had concerning traumatized clients in my daily practice

over the years. I highly recommend Rothschild's book to other Rosen practitioners, teachers, students or any others who work in the body-mind field. Although I am not a trauma therapist, I often encounter mildly or severely traumatized clients in my Rosen practice. This book is a valuable resource, not only for us practitioners but also for anyone interested in trauma recovery.

Rothschild transmits to us in simple, easily comprehensible terms and language the newest results of neurobiological and neuroscientific research and relates how to convincingly carry them into practice. She explains in a simple manner the significance and relevance of the limbic system (our "survival center"), the purpose and function of the amygdala and hippocampus, the complexity of engraved traumatizing events, their processing possibilities as well as their psychosomatic effects and distinctive features. She gives valuable advice on how to build a confident, safe and responsible relationship with our clients, from the mildly to the severely traumatized.

Rosen Method bodyworkers obviously have learned how to offer safe and confident surroundings. In this book, however, we get additional information about dissociations and flashbacks, how to avoid wrong tracks, how to separate past from present, and why to work initially with the after-effects of trauma. This confirms what we do in Rosen sessions. We have learned how to avoid "falling" into the past. Dissociations or flashbacks do easily happen and I find steering narration and verbal empathy to the NOW and PRESENT can prevent wrong tracks. Certainly we do not wish to DO much with our hands but keep them clear and quiet, at one place, simply supporting the person.

We enter the tricky and complex network of the nervous system, the ANS (autonomic nervous system) and SomNS (somatic nervous system) in order to better understand how traumatized clients regain a feeling of embodiment, felt sense, body awareness and body sensations. Rothschild offers us a huge range of options with which we can enhance and increase body awareness. She extensively explains the somatic resources that interfere with a person's psychology and illustrates to the practitioner how to connect with them and how to offer more resources, anchors, and bonding options through touch and substantiated verbal empathy.

For both clinicians and their clients, there is tremendous value in understanding the psychophysiology of trauma and knowing how to deal with its manifestations. This book illuminates that physiology, shining a bright light on the impact of trauma on the body and the phenomenon of somatic memory. Research has shown that people who have been traumatized hold an implicit memory of traumatic events in their brains and bodies. That memory is often expressed in the symptomatology of posttraumatic stress disorder —nightmares, flashbacks, startle responses, and dissociative behaviors. In essence, the body of the traumatized individual refuses to be ignored.

While reducing the chasm between scientific theory and clinical practice and bridging the gap between talk therapy and body therapy, Rothschild presents principles and non-touch techniques for giving the body its due. The somatic techniques are chosen with a view to making trauma therapy safer while increasing mind-body integration. Reading her case studies at the end of the book made me reflect more on my daily bodywork sessions and certainly inspired me and upgraded my skills with traumatized clients. As a result, I address my questions to the client in a more precise way, while at the same time keeping a clear distance. I choose anchors together with the client and affirm resources in the present, making her feel safe, accepted and seen. Also my touch has changed. I hold a person in one place only, staying there rather than touching at different places and keeping my hands relatively quiet. I make sure she feels absolutely safe, very often not even lifting the sheet.

This book enhances our knowledge of how the mind and body can together ease the after-effects of trauma. It is a gem for Rosen practitioners and other body-mind therapists. I hope to include some of this precious knowledge in my work as a supervisor and teacher in training.

Thanks to Alan Fogel's book and workshops on *The Psychophysiology of Self-Awareness*, many of us have had the chance to enter this amazingly interesting field. Without Alan's initiation and impulse, I would probably not have looked for further literature on this subject. Babette Rothschild's, *The Body Remembers: Casebook*, has also been highly praised by many trauma therapists and experts. It provides the reader with numerous examples of how multiple modalities can be blended to bring optimal healing to trauma survivors.

I chose to quote Peter A. Levine PhD, author of *Waking the Tiger, Healing Trauma* and also from Piet Hein, Danish poet (1905 – 1996):

"The *Body Remembers Casebook* extends Babette Rothschild's earlier and widely read work, contributing to the growing acceptance of the central role of the body in the understanding and treatment of trauma. In particular, this second volume offers practitioners from all treatment modalities clear and specific guidelines for incorporating body oriented insights and practice. And, most meaningfully, Rothschild illuminates the important principle of facilitating clients in finding their own way towards wholeness." (Quotation on B. Rothschild's website, Therapy, 2012, Reviews) Somatic Trauma

"The soul may be a mere pretense,
the mind makes very little sense,
so let us value the appeal
of that which we can taste and feel."

---Piet Hein (Rothschild's quotation in *The Body Remembers*, Chapter 6, page 148, German edition)

Berlin, April 2012