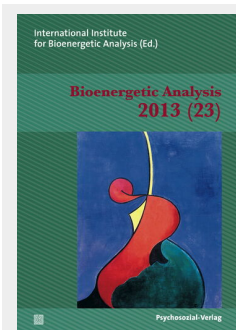


Margherita Giustiniani

Bioenergetic Stool Work in the Lying Down Position and Star-like Life Energy Pulsation



Bioenergetic Analysis

23. Volume, No. 1, 2013, Page 63–74

Psychosozial-Verlag

DOI: [10.30820/0743-4804-2013-23-63](https://doi.org/10.30820/0743-4804-2013-23-63)



Submissions for consideration for the next volume of *Bioenergetic Analysis* must be send to the editor (vincentiaschroeter@gmail.com) between June 1st and September 30, 2013.

Bibliographic information of Die Deutsche Nationalbibliothek (The German Library)
The Deutsche Nationalbibliothek lists this publication in the Deutsche Nationalbibliografie; detailed bibliographic data are available at <http://dnb.d-nb.de>.

2013 Psychosozial-Verlag GmbH & Co. KG, Gießen, Germany
info@psychosozial-verlag.de
www.psychosozial-verlag.de



This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License (CC BY-NC-ND 4.0). This license allows private use and unmodified distribution, but prohibits editing and commercial use (further information can be found at: <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>). The terms of the Creative Commons licence only apply to the original material. The reuse of material from other sources (marked with a reference) such as charts, illustrations, photos and text extracts may require further permission for use from the respective copyrights holder.

Cover image: Theo van Doesburg: *Heroische Bewegung (Heroic Movement)*, 1916
Cover design & layout based on drafts by Hanspeter Ludwig, Wetzlar

<https://doi.org/10.30820/0743-4804-2013-23>
ISBN (PDF-E-Book) 978-3-8379-6894-1
ISBN (Print) 978-3-8379-2265-3
ISSN (Online) 2747-8882 · ISSN (Print) 0743-4804

Bioenergetic Stool Work in the Lying Down Position and Star-like Life Energy Pulsation

Margherita Giustiniani

Abstracts

English

The starting point is Alexander Lowen's bioenergetic stool work, the importance and deepness of its meanings and its therapeutic effects. Then a similar work on these principles, but with the patient in the lying position, is presented and illustrated in its meanings and effects on re-centering and connecting the person towards self-acceptance, love, inner freedom and joy of life. It has been practiced and developed by the author in her office to meet the needs of clients with fragile structures because of major precocious traumas or for clients who have been traumatized by an excessive use of technology and disrespectful invasiveness and a lack of sensibility and trustworthiness by some mass media. This kind of position is also effective from the diagnostic point of view. It is not a substitute for the classic bioenergetic stool work, but a variation to meet the needs mentioned above.

Key Words: Bioenergetic Stool, Life Energy, Heart, Pulsing, Trauma

German

Ausgangspunkt sind Alexander Lowens bioenergetische Arbeit mit dem Atemschemel, die Wichtigkeit und Tiefe ihrer Bedeutung und ihre therapeutischen Effekte. Es wird eine ähnliche Arbeitsweise, die auf diesen Prinzipien beruht, bei der der Patient/die Patientin aber liegt, vorgestellt, und es wird ihre Bedeutung

und Wirkungsweise in Richtung Rezentrierung und Verbindung, Selbstannahme, Liebe, innere Freiheit und Lebensfreude erläutert. Diese Vorgehensweise wurde von der Autorin in ihrer Praxis angewandt und weiter entwickelt, um auf die Bedürfnisse von KlientInnen mit fragilen Strukturen aufgrund früher und erheblicher Traumaeinwirkungen einzugehen oder von KlientInnen, die durch exzessiven Technologiekonsum, respektlose Grenzüberschreitungen, sowie mangelnde Sensibilität und Vertrauenswürdigkeit von einigen Massenmedien traumatisiert wurden. Diese körperliche Position ist auch von einem diagnostischen Standpunkt aus wirksam. Sie ist kein Ersatz für die klassische bioenergetische Arbeit mit dem Atemschemel, sondern eine Variante, um den oben genannten Bedürfnissen entgegen zu kommen.

French

Le point de départ est le travail avec le tabouret bioénergétique de Alexandre Lowen, l'importance et la profondeur de son sens et de ses effets thérapeutiques. Puis un travail similaire sur ces principes mais avec le patient dans la position allongée est présenté et illustré dans son sens et ses effets en re-centrant et reliant la personne vers de soi, l'amour, la liberté intérieure et la joie de vivre. Ce travail a été mis en pratique et développé par l'auteur dans son cabinet pour répondre aux besoins de ses clients ayant des structures fragiles à cause de traumatismes précoces majeurs ou par une utilisation excessive de technologie, un envahissement irrespectueux et un manque de sensibilité et de loyauté de la part de quelques médias. Ce genre de position est également efficace du point de vue du diagnostique. Ce n'est pas un substitut au travail avec le tabouret classique mais une variation pour répondre aux besoins mentionnés ci-dessus.

Spanish

El punto de partida es el trabajo con el taburete bioenergético de Alexander Lowen, la importancia y profundidad de su significado y de sus efectos terapéuticos. Luego, se presenta y se ilustra un trabajo similar basado en estos principios, pero con el paciente en una posición acostada, con sus significados y efectos al resituar y conectar la persona con la auto aceptación, el amor, la libertad interna y la alegría de vivir. La autora lo ha practicado y desarrollado en su despacho para dar curso a las necesidades de clientes con estructuras frágiles a causa de traumas precoces o para clientes que

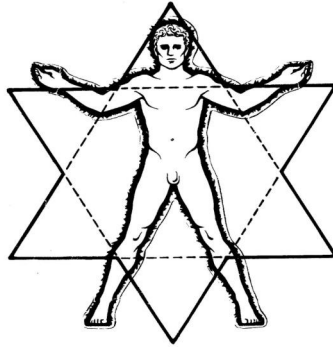
han sido traumatizados como resultado de un uso excesivo de tecnología y de invasión irrespetuosa y también como resultado de una falta de sensibilidad y confianza de los medios de comunicación. Este tipo de posición también es efectiva desde un punto de vista del diagnóstico. No es un sustitutivo del trabajo clásico con el taburete bioenergético pero es una variación que cubre las necesidades mencionadas anteriormente.

Italian

Il punto di partenza è costituito dal lavoro di Lowen con il cavalletto bioenergetico, l'importanza, la profondità dei suoi significati e i suoi effetti terapeutici. Un lavoro simile, che parte da questi principi ma con il paziente nella posizione distesa, viene quindi presentato e illustrato nei suoi significati ed effetti per ri-centrare e riconnettere la persona all'autoaccettazione, all'amore, alla libertà interiore e alla gioia di vivere. È stato praticato e sviluppato dall'autrice nel suo studio per andare incontro ai bisogni di pazienti con strutture fragili per via di gravi traumi precoci o per pazienti traumatizzati dall'eccessivo uso di tecnologie e dall'irrispettosa invasività e mancanza di sensibilità e affidabilità di molti mass media. Questo tipo di posizione è anche utile dal punto di vista diagnostico. Non sostituisce il classico lavoro con il cavalletto, ma è una variante utile per andare incontro alle necessità menzionate.

Portuguese

O ponto de partida é o trabalho com *stool* bioenergético de Alexander Lowen, a importância e profundidade de seu significado e seu efeito terapêutico. Apresenta-se um trabalho similar com os mesmos princípios, mas em posição deitada, mostrando seu significado e efeitos ao re-centrar e conectar a pessoa com auto-aceitação, amor, liberdade interior e alegria de viver. Tem sido praticada e desenvolvida pela autora em sua prática clínica para ajudar clientes com estruturas fragilizadas por grandes traumas precoces ou clientes que foram traumatizados por uso excessivo de tecnologia e pela invasão desrespeitosa e falta de sensibilidade de alguns meios de comunicação de massa. Este tipo de posição também é eficaz do ponto de vista diagnóstico. Não substitui o clássico trabalho com o *stool*, mas é uma variação que ajuda em certas circunstâncias.



Dedication

I wish to dedicate this sequence of bioenergetic work that I have developed in recent years to our great teacher and founding partner of S. I. A. B., Alexander Lowen, who has made bioenergetics an art, to Ellen Green who has been my therapy trainer, inimitable interpreter and leader of bioenergetic exercises classes, to our first trainers Bill White and Jim Miller, and to my Italian colleagues in the first group with whom I began this exhilarating adventure and to the other groups that followed. Some are no longer with us, but the memory of them is always in my heart and in the spiritual heritage they have left behind.

How it started

I consider A. Lowen's bioenergetic stool work the starting point for the application I present in this paper because it is deep, complete, and very effective in tune with breathing movements. It helps unlocking and rebalancing the heart, reconnecting people to themselves (their own self), to their own completeness and integrity, to the lower part of the body in case a blockage of the diaphragm exists, to the pelvis as a seat of vital strength, to the legs and feet as a grounding and support base, stretching the back muscles and helping to open the shoulders and better link with the arms. These, together with the legs and feet, are expressions of one's own aggressiveness (in the Latin sense of moving forward or going towards). In fact they can reach out to satisfy one's own needs, to get, receive, give, defend oneself, lightening also one's own mental defenses and resistances to let oneself go with one's own spontaneous vital flow.

In the original classic stool pose, the body weight is borne on the lower part of the shoulder blades, often the site of tension and locking, which are placed on a bolster

or a rolled blanket fixed to a stool. The feet are flat on the floor and the knees are bent so that the weight can be borne on the feet too. The arms are left apart to the rear and grasp the back of a chair and the head is also left to hang down backwards (Fig. 1).

This position is at first very stressful, although effective: Lowen himself recommends that it is not to be maintained for more than two minutes at first. It is more suitable for robust and armored structures, but as a type of treatment it is very powerful for restoring the natural pulsing of vital energy, feelings and perceptions, in terms of organizing the functioning unit into one that is balanced and harmonious.

I noticed that people who have a more delicate and fragile structure with more plas-matic tensions than muscular ones or who are distanced from their own core experience often find this position too forceful in its classic form and would therefore be blocked by fear. So I thought that, whilst maintaining the treatment principles of A. Lowen, I could find a position in which the stress would be lightened and the person could face up to it.

For this reason, over the years I have developed and tested with my patients a similar treatment with the beneficial effects of the bioenergetic stool, but where the stress is less. In this modified position, the person is outstretched on a mat and the weight is more evenly distributed, being inspired by the position of the newborn and small babies of a few months who do not yet stand up, but who, while laying down, express well through their vibrant opening and stretching movements the central-ity of their vital pulsing movements. The pa-tient feels more at ease and more willing to let go, because of being in a less risky and safer condition and it directs him or her towards more authenticity and less pressure towards an “accomplishment”.

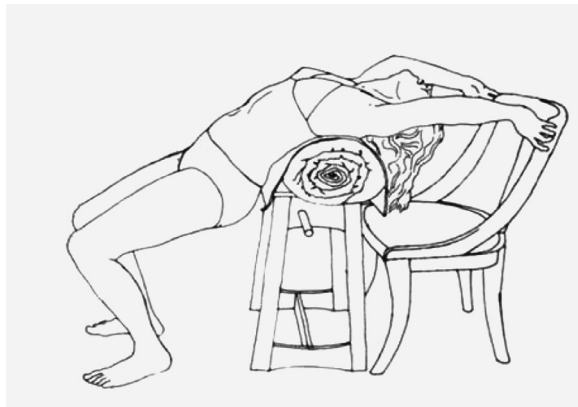


Figure 1: Image taken from “The Way to Vibrant Health” by A. & L. Lowen

Description of the Therapy

The person is invited to lie down on the mat with a tightly rolled blanket or bolster, of a size adapted to his physique, under the back of the shoulder blades, with the

knees bent and the feet placed on the mat as pelvic respiration is mobilized. The arms are open to the rear but instead of grasping the back of a chair, they take hold of the hands of the therapist who is seated on the floor behind the patient, while the head is allowed to fall back and rest on the mat.

Next, the patient is invited to start the following pelvic breathing movements: 1) when he inhales (Fig. 3) he slightly arches himself, pushing on the glutei to assist the intake of breath, the refilling of the lungs and the descent of the diaphragm (W. Reich's charging stage or concentration); 2) When he exhales (Fig. 4) (discharging stage or expansion of the being), he starts exhalation with a slight pressure of his feet on the mat, bending the knees forward to aid the release of his weight on them and at the same time he also lets his arms behind him stretch further, reinforcing his hold on the therapist's hands. The effect of this overall opening of the body, if done well, is that the pelvis will be slightly lifted forwards by spontaneous reflex (the so-called orgasmic reflex of which W. Reich speaks) while the body stretches out, lengthening itself. The pelvis must not be pushed up in any way by the patient because like that the flow of pulses would be interrupted from its autonomous and spontaneous movement. Similarly, the patient must not pull on the hands of the therapist when he holds them to extend the arms during exhalation, to not conflict with his opening and expansion movement. The hold simply constitutes his contact point and boundary like the feet on the mat, the boundaries of his energy pulsing space that reflects a star-form movement as in the figures 2, 3, 4 and 5.

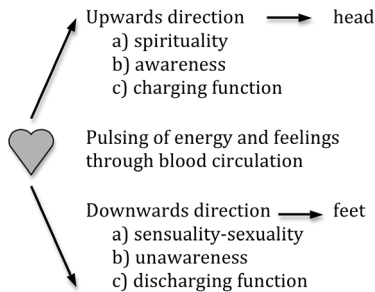


Figure 2: Diagram of the Body. Image taken from "Depression and the Body" by A. Lowen

The patient can alternately keep his eyes closed and open, looking upwards, maybe avoiding initially looking behind so as not to see the figure of the therapist upside down (even if, to tell the truth, in the latter position of the eyes the image of the situation is like that presented to a baby when he is born).

This sequence reproduces the energy pulsing movement, linked with feelings all over the body in the two stages of concentration and expansion. It is as if the heart, lungs and abdomen were the centre of a star and arms, legs, genitals

and head the shining rays, a little like in the famous representation of Leonardo da Vinci of the human body inscribed in a circle (fig.5). Artists and great people often have a profound intuitive awareness of reality and the capacity to express it in its totality,

and along those lines we may also say that Lowen of his kind is an artist.

Performing the Therapy

The necessary time is given by the therapist to feel him or herself into doing this respiratory pulsing movement, to let him or her pause to metabolize what he or she feels, encouraging him or her also to assume the correct position, to balance the times for inhalation and exhalation, to better release the weight on the feet and correctly grip the hands of the therapist during exhalation. Notice whether he or she feels properly the contact of the feet on the floor and lets you feel his or her own presence through the energetic clasp of the hands. Feet and hands are the boundaries of his or her own space, where there is no energy dispersed and that provide a sense

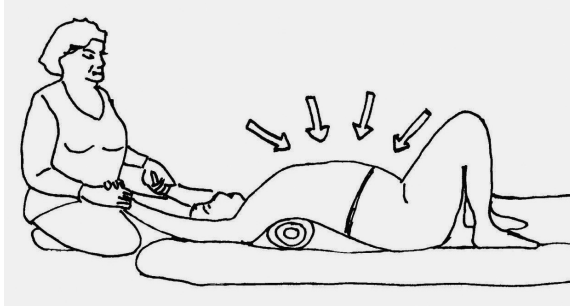


Figure 3

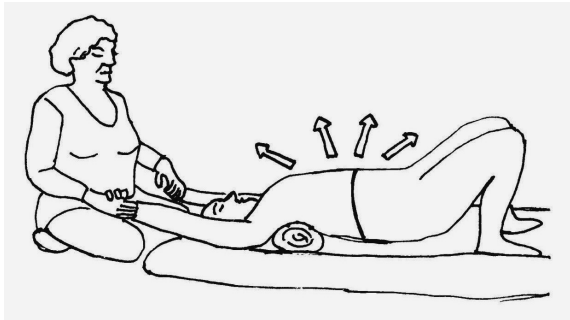


Figure 4

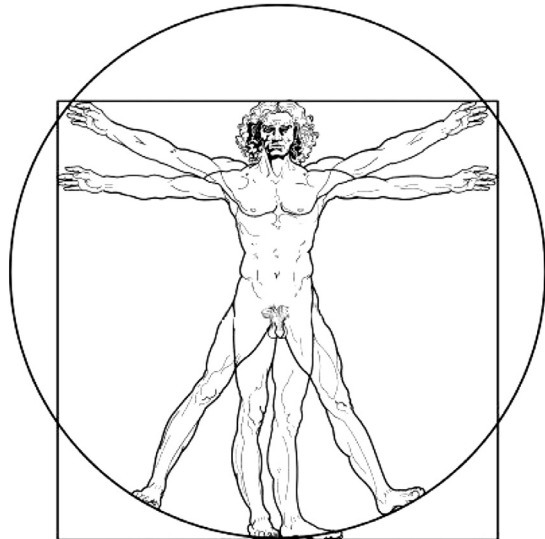


Figure 5: Leonardo da Vinci – The “Vitruvian Man”

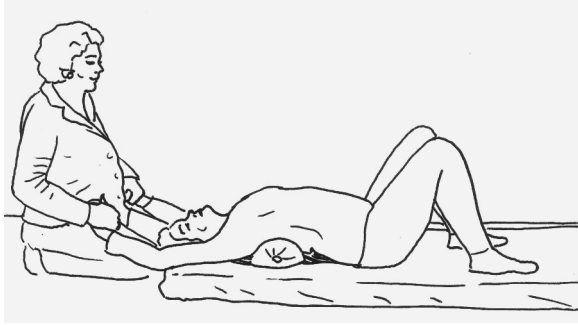


Figure 6

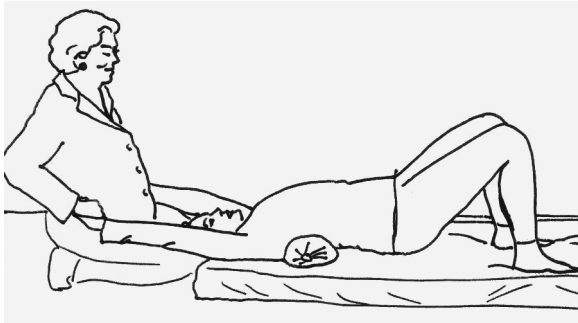


Figure 7

of security to the patient, while tensions in the legs, spine and arms are released (Figs. 6 & 7).

This position aids the opening of any loop of tension in the diaphragm area and the restabilizing in the person of the natural life pulsing, as it should be at conception and birth, through growth and adult age.

It is also important to encourage the emission of vocal sound during exhalation, until the movement becomes more fluid, natural and spontaneous.

Effects

This is a technical level description of the sequence for the requirements of explanation, but on the psychophysical level the effect is beautiful and enlivening and the results fabulous because it nourishes on the physical level as well on the spiritual one through a feeling of love, vitality, integrity and gratitude towards the joy of life. Gradually the eyes are illuminated, the respiratory undulation made fluid, the person perceives his own vital energy in either a pleasant and joyful or powerful and reassuring way, or both of these, according to what are his own needs to be satisfied.

The person feels more united, in better contact with himself, with his own heart, more contented and at the same time freer to open himself up. Thus, he can little by little take repossession of himself, reinforcing his own grounding once on his feet, towards self-assertion and the joy of life and so finding help in overcoming traumas and pain.

For a schizoid character it can be a more gradual method for gaining access to his own feelings, not perceived as dangerous or menacing, above all for feeling alive.

An oral character is helped in this way to escape his inspiratory block: he can recognize his needs that are to be satisfied and his right to ask and learn how to exercise them.

The psychopathic character is more venturesome in having his feelings descend to the abdomen, thanks to the handhold of the therapist as well as the support of the feet on the mat, to regain possession of his true vital strength and power, finding in that support for his own true self.

The masochistic character finds help in escaping his expiratory block and tension in the anus and throat, even with all the slowing down and involution that his ambivalence brings about.

The person with a character structure based on rigidity who adapts well to the classic bioenergetic stool can also be left to use this position to experiment with the heart-genitalia link in a rather more simple and comfortable way.

Regarding a person with a narcissist character structure, in this position and with the performance of the pelvic breathing movement, he feels encouraged to probe inwards contacting his inner self from which he has been distracted by his ideal image, refilling the feeling of internal emptiness and so feeling the real joy and pleasantness of life.

In everybody with these character structures, before they express what they feel, it shows in their eyes.

Some comments of patients after the experience are the following:

“I feel more room in the belly and I ‘m more comfortable” (at times one feels gurgling descend and flow into the abdomen during the treatment).

“I can feel myself right down to my genitals, it is lovely! I also feel my feet more firm and relaxed”.

“My back has stretched and it seems well supported on the sacrum, what strength! I no longer even feel the shoulder blades taut!”

“I no longer feel anxiety and I feel relaxed; I didn’t realize I was very tired and stressed. I could almost go to sleep. Thanks!”

“I feel liberated from the sense of pain and feel that I have the desire to live and still do many beautiful things”. Etc.

Attention

The patient stays in the position represented here, experimenting also under your guidance, until he manages to reach his normal and spontaneous movement in breathing in tune with the charge and discharge phases. He must not get tired of the experience, but proceed gradually because it becomes metabolized¹. When you feel

that the experience attained its purpose of putting the patient in better contact with himself and the flow of his vital energy and after having taken away the handgrip and the blanket roll from under the shoulder blades, you invite him to put one of his own hands on his chest and the other one on his abdomen, leaving him in the company of his renewed sense of self and his feelings, without making requests on him or inviting him to speak. You will place yourself to one side sitting next to the mat, while quietly waiting and observing. After some moments or minutes it will be the patient himself who speaks, otherwise you then invite him to give his impressions, exchanging them with your own. Then, after the customary stretching, invite the patient to change to the “bend over” position and rise to his feet.

Nature of the Therapy

The type of treatment presented here also has a maternal nature, given the contact of the patient's hands with those of the therapist in the grip and the support to the feet on the floor that place him in a position of greater autonomy. The patient receives contact and support through the hands of the therapist (symbolic mother)¹ and a greater support towards autonomy from the placement of the feet on the ground (our common mother). Hands and feet also constitute the boundary of our autonomy. Naturally, the therapist must be present but light in clasping the hands, encouraging the patient without being invasive. This position can serve to reinstate on an energetic level the nourishment that was lacking at an earlier attachment stage as support for his own being and feelings towards autonomy, independence and serene detachment.

The contact between the hands of the therapist and those of the patient is one of presence and boundary. The only difference is that the patient takes hold of the therapist's hands and the therapist is there available to his hold, as if to be the mother of the child. It is an encouragement for serene detachment towards autonomy where this was experienced in a traumatic way in infancy and is also a nutritious recovery of energy and feelings in the case in which it has been deficient in the attachment stage.

I do not consider it useful for the patient to make him dwell on his trauma during therapy, but simply approach it to overcome it.

1 As I have written in my published article in *“BIOENERGETICA PER TUTTI”* (p. 57): “We think of a child still free of tension in his expressive movement: he wants to be taken in his mother's arms, opens the arms and legs and stretches forward; there is request and expectation in his eyes and it is clear that his movement starts from the centre and the message that arrives is not simply visual, but also energetic, like a thrill”.

Again, why has the treatment a maternal quality? Luisa Muraro speaking of word and language as a gift of the mother and again as the expression of the symbolic order of the mother, tells how a rule of language operates not as a law but as a living norm, a norm that also comes from all the vital functions of the human being, that thus translates the authority of the mother as a mould and transmitter of life with that norm. And this position can be an access route to this vital norm with a feeling of respect and love for ourselves and the mother in us.

Naturally, this kind of work, which follows the bioenergetic stool principles but in the lying down position, can be tried out more than once in the course of the therapy before moving onto the classic bioenergetic stool. It is not a substitute for A. Lowen's bioenergetic stool but just a variation in the position to meet the therapeutic needs of people with major traumas. Finally it is not miraculous, but it serves to establish a good reserve of faith in the patient's own vitality and in the beauty and richness of life, and can be a good help to overcome his own problems or at least manage them in a more productive and beneficial way.

References

- Lowen A. (1977): *The Way to Vibrant Health*. Harper Colophon Books.
Reich W. (1942): *La Funzione dell'Orgasmo*. Milano: Sugarco.
Lowen A. (1972): *Depression and Body*. Penguin Books Inc.
Lowen A. (1971): *The Language of the Body*. Macmillan Publishing Co. Inc. NY.
Lowen A. (1990): *The Spirituality of the Body*. Macmillan Publishing Co. Inc. NY.
Muraro L. (1990): *L'Ordine Simbolico della Madre*. Editori Riuniti.
Lowen A. (1975): *Bioenergetics*. Penguin Books Inc.
Stallone Alborghetti M. (2003): *Bioenergetica per Tutti*. Universo Editoriali.

About the Author

Margherita Giustiniani, CBT, B.A. local trainer, founding and teaching member of S.I.A.B. (Società Italiana di Analisi Bioenergetica) was born in 1940 in Turin, Italy. She now lives and works in Rome. She belongs to the first Italian B.A. training group. She was still a teacher in the public middle school at that time and she had introduced bioenergetic exercises in her school classes with very good results for her pupils. After having organized updating courses for the teachers in the school on sexual education, she left the state school sector and dedicated herself only to psychotherapy private practice, teaching in S.I.A.B. training groups. She has also

been S. I. A. B. School Director from 1992 to 1994, and organized and led, with the cooperation of some colleagues, some experiential workshops on love and sexuality, Eros and spirituality, the importance of breathing to get in touch with oneself etc. on Santorini Island, Greece, in the years from 1988 till 1995. Finally she has written some articles for professional magazines, given lectures for S. I. A. B. and participated in national and international conferences.

Margherita Giustiniani
Via Colli della Serpentara n.15
00139 – Rome – Italy
margherita.giustiniani@alice.it