

Pesso Boyden

Creating lives of pleasure, meaning and connectedness



By Eve Menezes Cunningham

Pesso Boyden is an almost non verbal form of psychotherapy. It's creators, Al Pesso and Diane Boyden, were dancers and choreographers who wanted to help dancers be more creative and expressive. They found that where there were emotional blocks, the body was blocked, too.

Al Pesso believed that life should be full of pleasure, meaning, satisfaction and connectedness. That we should be able to tap into the ability to be all of who we are.

Ultimately, it's a way to help people reach their potential by becoming "more of who you are."

I attended a Pesso Boyden workshop facilitated by Juliet Grayson to find out more. According to Juliet, Pesso is a powerful method that can help with "almost any problem you have had difficulty resolving. Our history directly affects how we experience events today. If I have been roughly treated by an authority figure, I may not expect authority figures in my life today to be kind to me. If I had a difficult relationship with my mother then I may have trouble relating to other women in my life. Often it is more subtle." Juliet has worked with people who've had more than a decade of one to one therapy saying 'I never realised that was connected to this issue' after just one Pesso session. She says, "We also welcome people who have had no therapy at all, and are just beginning a journey of self awareness and personal development."

I had no idea what to expect but the woman hosting it had been very helpful sharing directions and so on so I arrived feeling quite relaxed. There were eleven of us in total. Seven women and four men of a wide range of ages.

One participant had been using Pesso techniques for more than a decade and had come all the way from Belgium. Another

person had been using it for just under ten years. Some were in therapy, others were counsellors and some were training in Pesso Boyden. A few of them were planning retirement and looking at their whole lives rather than focusing on work.

Juliet introduced the day by talking about our five basic needs and how we need them to be met. We all need a place in the world, nurture, support, protection and limits. Juliet says, "When we haven't had enough of something, there's a deficit." Excess causes trauma. Literally, too much has come in. This sensory overload may be in the form of abuse or even from TV. She highlighted the effects of the burning Twin Towers being shown on a loop after 9/11.

Juliet explained that we all have a "deep,

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deep desire to complete things. To make things right, as they should be." She introduced the Pesso way of working by telling us about one of the people she's helped. He had a case of such bad stage fright, he had to be pushed out on stage and he'd frequently vomit.

So in this "structure" (as treatments are called in Pesso), they put together an audience who would laugh at him. But the man remembered that he's actually a good actor and that a supportive person had done something else. So, for the structure, they added a person to fulfil this role.

Then they looked at the historical scene to figure out where the memory had come from. The man remembered growing up with three older brothers and a father who had teased him mercilessly. So, in the structure, they worked on the negative aspects (presupposing that there were also positive aspects) of the brothers. Then they looked at how they could fix it so created a "loving dad" role as an antidote.

This planting of a false memory to aid healing reminds me a bit of Robert Dilts' Reimprinting technique in NLP. As with this, the man in the structure was able to start "operating from a new memory" so things could shift for him.

The final stage of the structure was to bring it back to the here and now, future pacing so he could rehearse using his new responses on stage the following week.

Then it was time for us to experience some structures ourselves. With Pesso, participants get healing even if they're just observing or participating in someone else's structure.

Juliet says, "It's not about catharsis and getting stuff out, it's about getting the healing in." Although the structures I observed were about ideal parents facilitating healing, these techniques can be used in business by creating an ideal coach instead. It's about having some sort of supportive figure.

There are elements of spatial anchoring in Pesso as different people (in specific places) represent these ideal elements. The psychotherapist guides the whole process, adding resources, putting words in mouths and suggesting actions to help the person heal their Holes in Roles (see box out for more information).

Juliet seemed to be incredibly skilled at this >

CASE STUDY: Judy Hallas

Judy was completely new to PB. Someone had recommended it so she downloaded some info. She says, "It's been very interesting with the two different people. Both subjects felt powerfully moved. Something shifted. You need to experience it. It's really experiential. Come with an open mind and see for yourself. Try it."



Holes in roles

Juliet explained that as we grow up, we hear stories about our families and our culture and so stem selves (part of ourself that are ready to fit into any role) go fill those gaps. A little boy might hear that he's now the "man of the house" when he's very young. Even though no one really expects him to replace his dad, he attempts to do so. A little girl may become a caretaker for an ailing mother or father before she's old enough to have received enough nurturing herself. When roles are filled before needs are met, it can leave a gap.

When you reflect back over your early years, are you aware of any holes you may have filled in your parents' or other's lives?

- Who was needy?
- Who did you take care of?
- How does this affect you in your current life?
- How can you begin to receive more?

If you were in a PB workshop, what kind of person might you choose to represent your ideal _____ ("Ideal" not "Idealised" which would be perfect. Ideal is a perfect fit for what you need.)

guidance. She focused completely on what each person needed and avoided mind reading by checking in with them.

I was also very impressed by the emotional bravery of the people who shared their circumstances so they could receive healing. And also (especially after attempting to play someone's ideal mother and discovering that it was much harder than it looked), by the people who were facilitating the healing by filling the needed roles.

I put myself forward for the first three lotteries but decided against it for the final one. I definitely experienced some vicarious healing as promised. It was very interesting but also intense.

It was amazing to see visible healing as the structures progressed. One of the people at the centre of them reported feeling well contained and safe. She appreciated being able to follow the emotions welling up safely to gain closure. ●

CASE STUDY: Sue Bradshaw

Sue is doing some Pesso training. She met Juliet while working for a car company. Juliet came in as a consultant and Sue was impressed by the way she worked so attended a Pesso Boyden day. She did a few separate days before deciding to pursue it as she was already an NLP Practitioner and Coach. Sue says, "Don't run before you can walk. Take it gently. It's helped me come to terms with the death of my father and other 'over-helping' people issues. Go to a day. You can read about it until the cows come home but until you witness it or, better still, do a structure, you don't know."

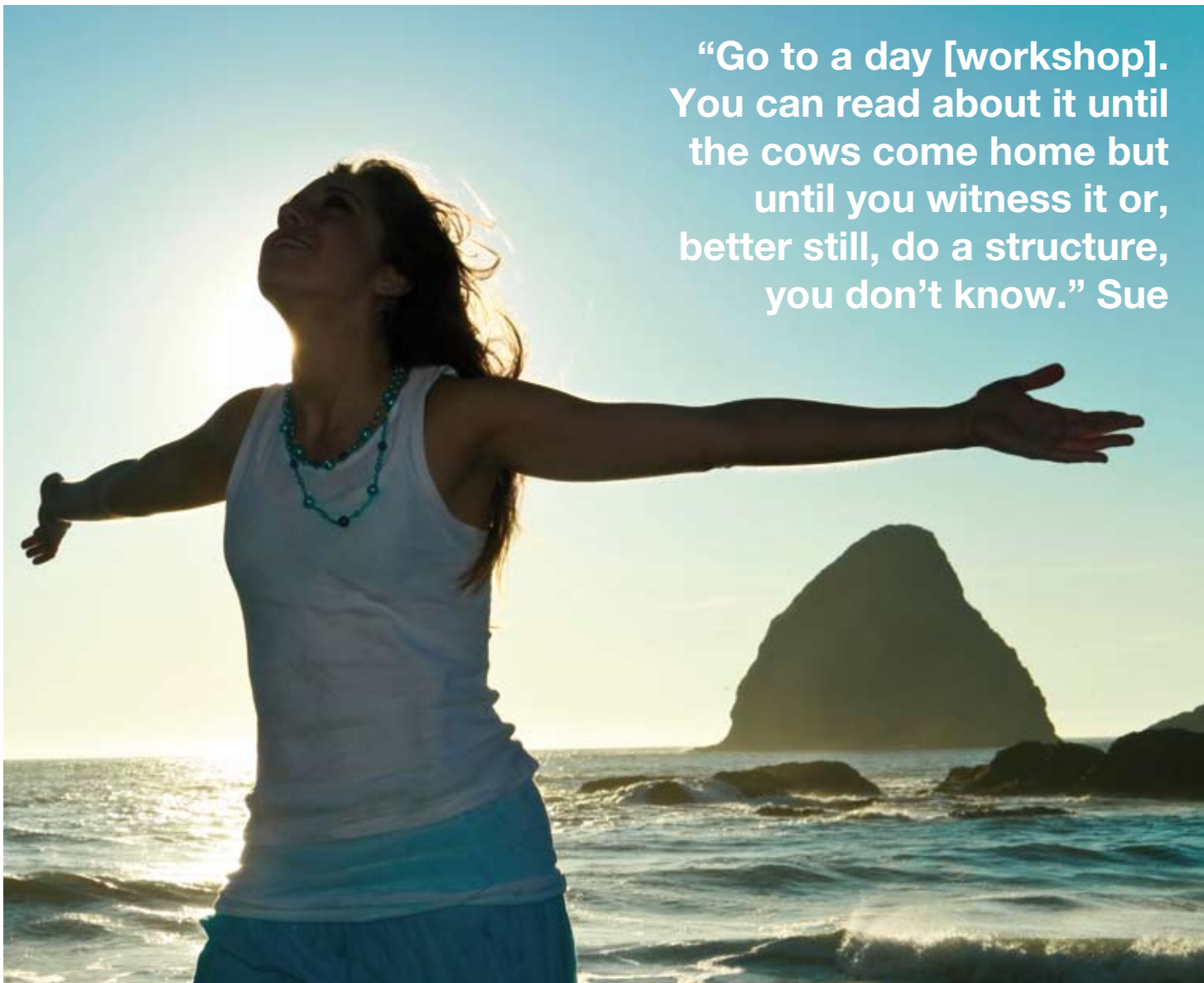
Dates

Juliet also runs training courses and corporate training in assertiveness, negotiation and helps people working with relationships. The following Pesso Personal Development events are open to everyone:

- 22nd January in Itton, Monmouthshire, South Wales
- 28th and 29th January in Lewes, Sussex
- 4th, 5th and 6th February residential course near Glastonbury, Somerset
- 12th March in Middle Barton, Oxfordshire
- 12th and 13th May in Lancashire

For more information or to book a place, please email Juliet on therapy.counselling@virgin.net or call 01291 638805.

For more information about Pesso Boyden, please visit www.pbbsp.com



“Go to a day [workshop]. You can read about it until the cows come home but until you witness it or, better still, do a structure, you don't know.” Sue