

# Perspective

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**HEALING TRAUMA: ATTACHMENT,  
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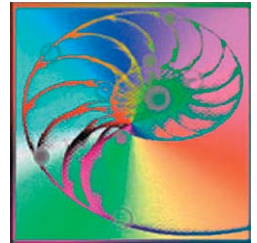
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just beyond the field of the known (which is composed of thoughts, images, memory—the sum of the past). Yalom (and the rest of us) may yet find our way home along this path without a trail.

Despite the book's limitations, there is a lot of insight and wisdom to be culled from the pages of *Staring at the Sun*. Yalom is a brilliant therapist and a compelling storyteller. Most readers will encounter themselves in one or more of the many vignettes or dreams that Yalom includes. His autobiographical chapter detailing the losses he experienced over the course of a long, productive life is refreshing for its candor and transparency.

Therapists searching for a role model and inspiration need look no farther than the old existential master; clients and the educated layperson will find much that is thought-provoking and comforting.

*ROBERT EPSTEIN, Ph.D., is a licensed psychologist and marriage and family therapist in the San Francisco Bay area, who works from a strength-based perspective in therapy and supervision. He co-authored with Stacy Taylor the self-help book **Living Well with a Hidden Disability**. A spiritually oriented book on facing chronic illness and pain, **Suffering Buddha**, is scheduled to be published in 2010. He is also a published haiku poet, and recently edited the anthology **The Breath of Surrender: A Collection of Recovery-Oriented Haiku**—the first book of its kind to address the challenges of recovery from a haiku perspective. Due out next Fall is an anthology of selected quotations from the writings of spiritual teacher J. Krishnamurti. He is also at work on a book of English-language death poems. [taylorstein@earthlink.net](mailto:taylorstein@earthlink.net)  
510 234-7224*

## SOUL SHAPING: A JOURNEY OF SELF-CREATION

BY JEFF BROWN

North Atlantic Books, 2009, \$15.95, 184 pp., ISBN 978-1-55643-810-3

Reviewed by Bob Edelstein

*“When it comes down to it—and make no mistake, it does come down to it—all you are is your soul’s journey. What else is there? What else is worthy of the time that you have been given?”*

*This passage* is the driving premise of Jeff Brown’s book, *Soulshaping: A Journey of Self-Creation*.

In this memoir, Brown passionately explores his personal journey from a survivalist, ego-defended way of being to an authentic, soul-driven way of being. Or, as I would frame it, he explores how he came to understand that we are spiritual beings having a human experience.

While at times Brown’s writing could be perceived as too self-disclosing, I was drawn to his story. I felt compassion for his experiences, both painful and pleasurable. I admired his brutal honesty, and felt a resonance with my own journey. Indeed, I think that is the draw of this book—each of us can find a part of ourselves within the pages. Our longings, our wounds, our healings, our sensing that there is something more to our existence—and in finding that something more, we also discover the difficulty in maintaining daily contact with that something more.

*At the heart of soulshaping there is a profound faith in the human experience, in the karmic significance of our personal identity. . . . Soulshaping is not a detachment model. It is an immersion model.*

This passage sums up another of Brown’s core ideas—his profound faith that if we work through what I call our **existential themes** and Brown calls our *soul scriptures*, we will find a purpose to our existence that transcends our previous knowing. We will begin living a more authentic and actualized life. He explores thoroughly, through his own experience, a basic existential humanistic tenet—the way out of our sense of pain, loss, and confusion, is to move inward and explore our subjective reality. We must immerse

ourselves in our subjectivity, not just analyze it, or we risk, as Brown states, spiritual bypassing—going for the good feelings and thoughts without doing our therapeutic work first. I valued Brown repeatedly exploring this concept and reinforcing the idea that soulshaping, by its very nature, embraces our humanness.

*Be authentic and true to your felt experience. Feel all your feelings. Unless your knowing arises from your felt experience, it is meaningless.*

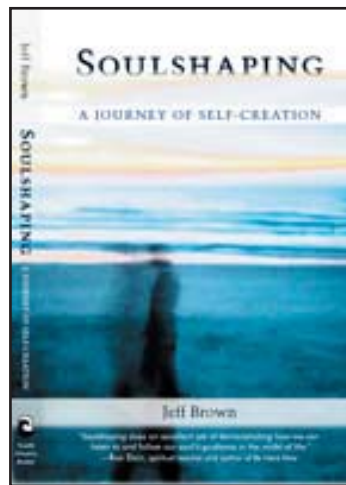
This passage could be a proclamation for humanistic psychology in the emphasis on

the valuing and working through of our emotional experiences, put within a soulshaping spiritual framework. Your soul expands when you see each adventure or life experience all the way through. To do so, you must descend into feelings, no matter what. If you do so,

the experience will reveal its essence, the truth you are subjectively seeking, and you will be expanded.

Brown is very compelling in his presentation of how to specifically go about the soulshaping process, so I would encourage the reader not to forget Brown’s deeper intent—trust yourself and your own soul’s journey, for it is unique to you. You are the creator of your own soul’s journey and while it is helpful to have suggestions from others or feedback from people you trust, ultimately you must trust yourself and your own inner knowing.

To summarize, through Brown’s passionate storytelling and insights, gleaned from his life journey, three powerful points emerge for me. The essence of life is that it is all a soul’s journey. The heart of the soul’s journey is to have a profound faith in the human experience. The process



of realizing our soul's calling is to feel our feelings fully until we discover what we need to learn.

This is a very inspiring book, and I recommend it both for people searching for hope and guidance in order to find meaning in their lives, and for those who have found meaning and would appreciate revisiting their journey.

*BOB EDELSTEIN, LMFT, MFT, is an Existential Humanistic therapist based in Portland, Oregon. In addition to being a therapist for more than 36 years, he also provides consultation, supervision, and training for professionals. He also provides a one-day workshop entitled Deepen Your Therapeutic Work Using an Existential-Humanistic Perspective.*

*Bob is a founding member of the Association for Humanistic Psychology's Oregon Community and an executive board member of the Existential Humanistic Institute.*

**HEALING TRAUMA:  
ATTACHMENT, MIND, BODY,  
AND BRAIN**

EDITED BY MARION F. SOLOMON AND DANIEL J. SIEGEL  
Norton, 2003, 357 pp., \$42.50, ISBN 0-393-70396-7

Reviewed by David Lavra

**A**fter years of working with children and families in crisis and in desperate circumstances, it was refreshing to read of a connection between brain/mind research and practical effective approaches to therapy. This therapeutic model which specializes in trauma, abuse, and neglect has been developing for decades, and more recently neurological science has unleashed information about the mind's functions that supports their hypotheses. This book represents an advancement in attachment theory in the realm of emotions and unconscious motivations, particularly fear (p. 98).

The last chapter was the most impactful and useful for me personally, as it addressed resolution of trauma-based issues in couples' therapy. Similar to a therapeutic approach

offered in J. Zinker's book *In Search of Good Form*, using intimate relationships we can learn about ourselves and find support while dealing with early issues, bringing those issues and sensations into the now, and rebuilding our relationships. As illustrated here, family-of-origin issues (and traumas) affect us throughout life, but we can best address these issues in therapy. In this last chapter, Solomon clearly spells out the goals of therapy, the responsibilities of the therapist, and the responsibilities of the clients.

In chapter Six, Fosha (p. 245) succinctly concludes that "trauma therapy in essence involves undoing the individual's aloneness in the face of overwhelming emotions", and she describes the basics of Accelerated Experiential-Dynamic Psychotherapy. She states (p. 244) that "all emotional experiences occur in relational context". In that context, therapy transpires, and the relationship with the therapist is a most important curative element. With clear examples, Fosha discusses the parent-child dyad and elements of communication through the three steps of attunement, disruption, and repair. Therapeutic change deals with active parent-child relationships, but untreated affects of poor attachment make therapy important for adolescents and adults as well.

In chapter Five, Shapiro and Maxfield describe the therapy issues PTSD and other traumas, and incomplete or maladaptive primary bonding of child and parent. The AIP model and EMDR treatment are explained. These methods, like others presented in this book, are tied directly to

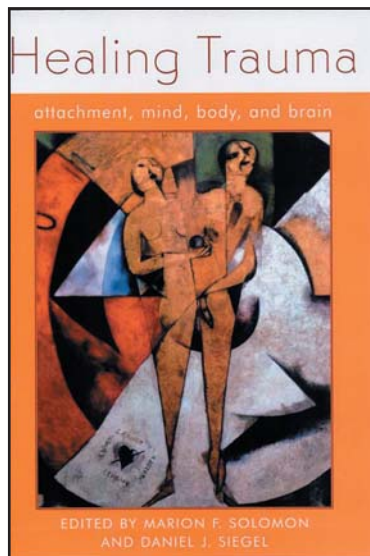
child development, forms of abuse, functioning and development of the brain, mind, and personality. In Chapter Seven, Neborsky describes a treatment model created for anxiety (PTSD in particular) and depression. He states: "It is my central thesis that within each of us there is an unconscious negative processing system that protects us from developing anxiety and/or depression. The system responsible for this function is called the attachment system" (p. 283).

In the first half of the book, issues of abuse and trauma are discussed and integrated with neurophysiological evidence, changes and growth of the brain, and neuro pathways. The effects of relationship and attachment, most critical in the first hours, days, and weeks of our lives, on brain development and behavioral capacities are examined in depth. Studies have continued for at least a half century, but recent technology shows the intricate details of these effects. Specifically, the processing regions of the brain and specialization

of right and left hemispheres are described. The importance of the differences and integration of the two sides underscores the research, and therapies that have been refined. New possibilities for correcting abuse and attachment deficits have emerged.

Every part of this book is dense, full of research and analysis, and fortunately some of the authors repeat major points frequently to help us digest the content. This research and analysis should also augment therapies and serve as a companion book to others such as Elaine Gowell's *Regression and Protection*. The information is critical for both parenting and mental health therapy.

*DAVID C. LAVRA is a semi-retired therapist and teacher, now writing books and living in Latin America.*





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