

Integrative Perspectives



***Regenerating Images in Memory (RIM™): Awakening the Unconscious for Insight and Healing**

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No journey carries one far unless, as it extends into the world around us, it goes an equal distance into the world within us. —Lillian Smith (1994)

RIM™ *[Regenerating Images in Memory] is an innovative transformational method that can be used as an adjunctive technique in traditional psychotherapy or as an innovative practice model. I developed this method of working with clients after 25 years of doing traditional psychotherapy as a university professor, community mental health program director, and private practitioner. A synthesis of a variety of techniques that access the unconscious mind, this therapeutic tool combines Ericksonian Hypnosis (Gilligan, 1987), Interactive Guided Imagery (Rossman, 1987), and Somatic Therapy concepts; it provides us the language to program the unconscious radar, so we can consciously choose our direction and heal our history.

Practicing RIM over the last 10 years, it has evolved into a completely new practice model. I have labeled it Transformational Coaching to distinguish it from psychotherapy. Traditional psychotherapy is a pathology-centered model where the relationship between client and therapist creates a laboratory to offer clients a reparative experience. The client is considered broken in some way, and the therapist's job is to facilitate the fix. In comparison, RIM shifts the focus of connection away from client and therapist and refocuses on the relationship between client and inner self. The coach is a guide who escorts clients to their inherently whole center beneath the layers of human experience. Repeatedly seeing the remarkable results, I have come to truly trust the wholeness that lives at the heart of every human being. Clients also recognize their true selves and are amazed at their own power and wisdom. It becomes a healing moment and frequently, they are initiated on a journey of relating to their inner self and unconscious mind with increased respect and wonder.

Theoretical Concepts

RIM uses preverbal primary image associations to dip into the well of the unconscious and bring back hidden insights. As Socrates profoundly described eons ago, imagination is the language of the soul. Anna Wise (2002) has demonstrated in the biofeedback lab that the unconscious mind can be heard in the quiet spaces between the chatter of our intellectual thoughts. When you slow down rapid-fire thinking focused on the external world, you sense the insight of your unconscious. Merely by closing your eyes, you begin to focus in the direction of the invisible unconscious. Try it, and notice how easily your attention shifts from external analysis to intuitive sensing.

Research has proven repeatedly the immense power of imagination. For example, Baylor School of Medicine physician Dr Bruce Moseley (Moseley et al., 2002), surprisingly, found that patients who received placebo surgery for severe debilitating knee pain had the same level of improvement as those patients who had the shaving of damaged cartilage and surgical removal of inflammatory material in the knee joint. The placebo group who received “fake surgery” were sedated and given three standard incisions. The surgeon also talked and acted as if it were real surgery, including splashing salt water to simulate the sound of the knee-washing procedure. After the release of these findings, the media filmed people from the placebo surgery group walking and playing basketball, things they could not do before surgery.

More recently, Dr Joseph Dispensa explained in the movie *What the Bleep!* (Arntz et al. & Vicente et al., 2004) that the same parts of the brain light up on MRI when a person looks at an actual object, or if they imagine the same object in their mind. In other words, the brain does not distinguish the difference between real and imagined experience. This is very good news—it suggests that we can transform traumatic or troublesome memories and destructive beliefs, and the mind will integrate the new version.

The relationship between the body and the unconscious has become the focus of an explosion of new

research since Dr Candace Pert (1997) discovered that neuropeptides and their specific receptor sites are scattered throughout the brain and the body, including the immune system. Pert suggests the neurologic patterns of our unconscious experiences are recorded at these sites; thus, the body holds a cellular log of unconscious content that is activated as a default response whenever triggers are present.

The logical mind attempts to keep life predictable by analyzing, thinking, and rationalizing our subjective life experiences. As humans and especially Americans, we have learned to trust our intellectual function to keep us safe, and we expect that if we vigilantly analyze the world around us, we will remain in control. The unconscious, intuitive mind, on the other hand, is illogical, invisible, and ungrounded in reality. Nighttime dreaming is a wonderful example of pure unconscious process. Unlike indigenous cultures, we have been taught to mistrust the invisible, so the insights and gifts buried in the unconscious mind are frequently uncultivated and even feared.

The Process of Implementing RIM

Founded upon these scientific findings, RIM allows clients to replace unconscious destructive and painful images with positive images in the same way a message on a cassette tape can be erased and a new message recorded. This process offers a seamless flow through four simple processes for transformational healing: (a) Close eyes, relax and slow brain waves; (b) Follow the trail of images through the unconscious; (c) Transform, edit, and delete mental images; (d) Locate pain as felt-body experience; (e) Transform, edit, and delete felt-body experience; (f) Save new desirable images in body. RIM allows us to:

1. Reveal undesirable unconscious images
2. Reveal intuitively correct healing images
3. Write new endings to old experience
4. Re-do regrets
5. Edit, delete, and transform painful memories
6. Rehearse desirable outcomes
7. Free physical discomfort held in the body
8. Settle with those who have passed

For example, a middle-aged widow came in for a session complaining of loneliness since her husband's sudden and traumatic death 12 years earlier. When I inquired of her unconscious mind as to where in her body the pain of her husband's death was hiding, she saw in her mind's eye it was in the skin covering her total body. Deepening her experience by asking the color of the pain, she gasped slightly, and said with a gulp, "Its black, I'm

wearing the widow's black as my skin." When asked what she would like to do with this blackness covering her skin, she said through tears, "It's already changing, soon as I saw it, it spontaneously began to change; it's becoming a vividly colorful mural of life and nature." Within a month, she had her first date in 12 years, and is currently in a relationship.

Research Findings

The RIM method has been tested both in research and clinical experience. The study (Boxwell, 2006) involved 52 participants who suffered from irritable bowel syndrome (IBS). They were introduced to the RIM workbook and audio program (Sandella, 2002) and asked to do the exercises as directed. The clients were able to significantly reduce the hallmark symptoms of this stress-related disorder and to increase significantly the quality of life by using the RIM workbook and audio program for 6 weeks. The findings suggest that individuals suffering from IBS were overly reliant upon their intellectual function, and that the RIM program shifted their attention away from overachieving to trusting their inner guidance. It is interesting to note that those who consistently wrote down their insights following RIM sessions had the best results, and those unfamiliar with their inner life took almost 4 weeks of practice before experiencing benefit.

Clinically, the effectiveness of RIM was tested when a workshop participant whose psychiatric background was unknown spontaneously disassociated at a personal growth retreat far from home.

Jan stood under a sunny tropical sky, as her eyes filled with terror and a faraway blankness, and she fought off an invisible intruder. Rather than trying to draw her out of the disassociation, I used the RIM™ technique of following her fully into the inner experience already playing. When asked what she was seeing or feeling inside her body, Jan described, "a knife in my vagina." Feeling a wince of concern, I continued and asked what she wanted to do with the knife? "Remove it," came her response and I quickly encouraged her to do so. When asked where she wanted to discard the knife, she spoke with intense emotion, "I want to kill my mother with it." After a moment of hesitation, I proceeded to suggest she bring up an image of her mother in her imagination. Immediately, she said, "No, then I would be like her; I don't want to be like her, I want to throw it in the ocean." At which time, she imagined throwing the knife into the adjacent ocean, and seeing it sink to the very bottom where it quickly slid beneath sand and disintegrated. When asked what image she'd like to place in the space where the knife previously had rested, nothing came into her mind. At that moment,

however, across my mind flashed the image of a healthy, strong young tree, so I soothingly shared this vision with her. After receiving her agreement, I let my intuition spontaneously describe the tree roots growing down and out through the soles of her feet deep into mother earth. In this hypnotic moment, I quietly reassured her that this was her new earth mother who was always there to support and nourish her true self. As she and I witnessed her inner process, her well-rooted tree instantly grew and the branches opened upward to Father Sky as she felt the warmth and comfort of tropical sun on her head. When we finished integrating this new image in her body, she was fully present in her body and with me, and immediately asked to return to the group activity she had left only 20 minutes earlier. She easily reintegrated into the group engaged in an art project and drew an image of a small tree with expanding roots and a few rising branches with green leaves. During the rest of the retreat, Jan engaged with the other participants in a new, open way, sharing that she “felt more normal than ever before in her life.” Months later, her partner shared that Jan previously had tried hospitalization, medication, and psychotherapy and nothing had worked until this RIM™ experience.

*With permission of the author, the current acronym for RIM was updated to current usage. If you want to learn more about RIM, you can order Dr. Sandella’s newest book, *Goodbye Hurt & Pain, 7 Simple Steps for Health, Love and Success* [Conari Press Sept.] everywhere books are sold. For more information, visit www.riminstitute.com.

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