

Introduction to the Essentials of Process Oriented Psychology

**Transcript of an Interview with Dr. Arnold Mindell
Video Recorded in 1986
Conducted by Dr. Grady Gray**



***Introduction by Amy Mindell
September 2021***

The following is a verbatim transcription of an interview in Zürich, Switzerland, in 1986. In the video, Grady Gray interviews Arny about his development of Process oriented Psychology (Process Work). It is, possibly, the earliest video-recorded interview with Arny about his ideas describing this new form of psychology.

You will sense how Arny's previous studies in science influenced his empirical approach to all forms of human experience. This attitude made it possible for him to dive beneath known psychological concepts, and develop fundamental ideas related to nature; that is, to what is actually happening. He also discusses some of his philosophy and attitudes toward working with people in all states of consciousness, as well as his thoughts about training in psychology, and psychology's future.

Some of the ideas and details he discusses in this video have changed somewhat over the years; yet the essence has remained the same.

Arny himself got a little shy when he saw the video recently in 2021, because he felt he was too intense and today would be more related to Grady. He has changed so much since the video was recorded in 1986! But I didn't agree. I felt it was an inspired interview. To me, it captured Arny's vivacious spirit just in the beginning when he was researching, formulating, and developing the very basis of Process Work, and just prior to his development of Worldwork. So, he then encouraged me to share this transcript and video and go forward.

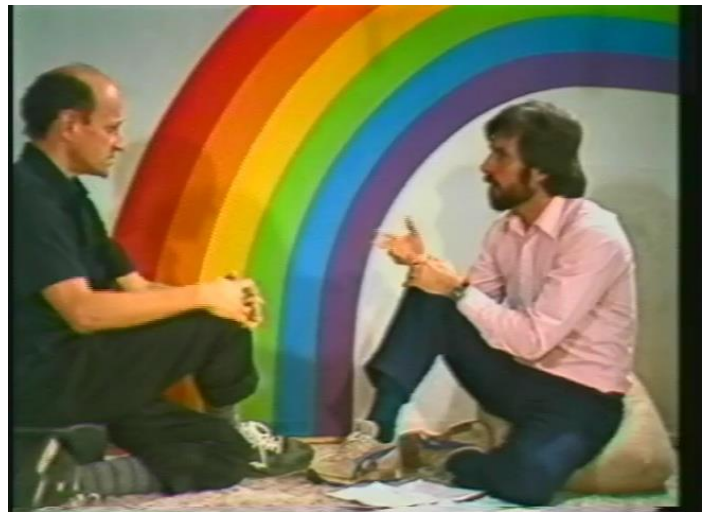
Arny especially thanks Grady for this very stimulating and creative interview. We're very thankful to Jim Patterson for telling us about the existence of the video files of the film, and to Dana Marrs, Grady's wife who, after Grady's death in 2017, sent the video files to us. She thought Grady would be happy if we published the video and transcript and made this interview easily accessible to the public. Finally, many thanks to the film production team.

*You can find the video from which this transcript was taken at:
<https://youtu.be/29xZDZHgYxw>.*

The film begins with Arny and Grady jogging together in the Swiss countryside. Arny asks if running is the beginning of the interview. Grady smiles as Arny jumps up into the air and, with a huge grin, yells "Yahoo!"

Grady: I would like to know more about your psychology, Process-oriented Psychology. How did you create it? What are some of the origins behind Process Psychology?

Arny: Well, I notice that when you say that I created it, I get shy. I feel like I was part of many people who have been creating this. I think every psychology which has worked, and which works for people, follows process in some small way. And I've learned a lot from these other people.



G: What do you feel would be the most important aspects of your psychology that you would communicate to the other psychologies?

A: (*Arny looks down and pauses*) Well, the obvious thing that I would like to communicate is that it's important to follow the individual. What I'd like to communicate is that that is the most exciting thing. And that's the thing people seem to need the most.

G: I'm also interested in pinning you down on some terminology that you use. For example, just even the word "process." Jung talked about the individuation process, and Perls talked about the awareness process. How do you use the term process?

A: Well, when I say process, I mean, right now for example, following your process and mine. And I notice that your voice is a little bit shy or hesitant, and I need to know before we even go further: What it is that your voice is doing? Could you tell me that?

G: Uh, now I'm stopped and I'm also aware of my voice.

A: How does it sound?

G: It sounds, let's see, uhhhh, it sounds a little low.

A: Yes.

G: Maybe a little monotone.

A: Yes. Like how?

G: Like I'm conducting an interview! (*They both smile*).

A: Yes, like you're conducting an interview?

G: Yeah, like I'm conducting an interview rather than a talk.

A: What would be the difference?

G: The difference would be: I might weave the questions that I have more into our conversation.

A: Uh huh. That sounds good to me. That would be following more the process of what's happening between us and would be easier for me too, to answer, I think.

A: So, you asked me before what I meant by process.

G: Yes.

A: There's a lot of people talking about process today. In Process-oriented Psychology, there's a very specific use of the term process. When I say process, I mean the evolution of signals. That's my definition of the term process.

Now, there's a lot to that, because signals don't just come out of the clear blue sky. They are perceived in terms of certain channels. Like, for example, I'm seeing you; you're doing things which are visual; you yourself see things; You are seeing me. You're hearing your own voice. You're probably capable of feeling your body. I know you are. You are also able to move. There

are things which happen in the world around you. Yeah? And you hear things. So those are various channels in which signals come.

Your voice signal, for example, comes across as monotone to you. You hear it. So, the process that you have, to begin with, is hearing your voice and your voice making these signals. Then, by hearing it, certain things happen inside of you, and you have a feedback loop that starts to happen. In other words, you hear yourself talking and, through that hearing, the talk itself is changed.

So that change is the process that's been happening. Process is the evolution of signals: your voice changes, your face changes, the relationship between us changes. So that's what I mean by process. Is that clear?

G: Yes. I'm thinking also about process and awareness. So, your awareness of signals also seems to be a very important part. Th[at] part is the feedback loop, no?

A: Uh huh. There's many parts to process. One is just perceiving. Most perceiving happens unconsciously. Like, I'm sitting here and, in the beginning, I'm hearing things in your voice, and certain things in your voice do things to me that I'm not aware of. So, I got shy in the beginning, and I had a hard time talking to you. Now I feel much better with you. But I didn't know that I was hearing those things. So, when I felt that I was shy, I decided to become conscious of what I already was perceiving unconsciously so I'd perceive it consciously. Then I brought it up to myself. I said, "Well, something in Grady's voice is interesting me." So, I said, "Hey Grad, what's in your voice, man?"

G: So. I'm also shy about this too.

A: Uh huh.

G: I'm feeling also that I would like to know more about your background.

A: My background, ohhh!

G: I know something about you...

A: I had lots of street fights when I was a kid. Yeah, I was in lots of fights. I'm sorry...

G: Yes, street fights and uh...

A: Fell in love when I was seventeen and... what part of my background?

G: Psychology...and the...

A: Well, I came to Zürich in 1960 or 61 as an exchange student from the States. I was a student of physics. And I was interested in theoretical physics. I was studying statistical quantum

mechanics and the theory of irreversible processes (*Arny smiles*). I smile when I tell you that, because...it's still part of what I'm doing, but it just sounds complicated!

G: How is that? How is it part of what you are doing right now?

A: Well, the whole business of observing, of observation, and of taking close account of what people are doing, the scientific aspect of human behavior, makes relationship much better and more fun! That's how it's part of it.

G: So, you moved from physics, which is a hard science, and then moved that to psychology. So, what would be...

A: Well, what happened is, I came over here and I started working with [Marie-Louise] von Franz, and one of the first dreams I had was that Jung said to me in the dream: "You have to find the relationship between psychology and physics!"

G: How old were you at that time?

A: I was twenty-one. So, I didn't know what to do with my life. You know?

G: Yeah.

A: I started doing it. I got into analysis, and I started studying psychology. And physics got boring after a while.

G: You were still studying physics at the same time you were interested in psychology?

A: Yeah, I was becoming a physicist. But I ran out of time with it. It got boring and it didn't have enough to do with people. The ways of approaching things were too standard for me. So, I decided to study psychology.

I went to the Jung Institute in Zürich, and went through the Institute, and got a diploma there, and started my practice. Should I keep going?

G: Yeah sure.

A: I started my practice and then I got bored again! And...

G: That sounds pretty normal.

A: I got bored, Grady. I just couldn't sit all the time and talk! It was dreadful for me. It's right for some people, but for me... I just couldn't do it! So I wanted to get up and do more things. I had to go on with my studies some more. And that's how I got here. I made a big jump (*Arny and Grady smile*).

G: Yeah. You studied at the Jung Institute, and then you went and had a practice for a while, and then you got bored, and...

A: I got sick, and I got bored, and I had body problems, and I didn't know how to deal with them, and I thought to myself: I have to study some more. So, I started studying body stuff, and I studied everything that I could find.

And then there was also something missing there. I've always had this process of trying to search for things. What was missing for me was that everybody that I had been reading about looks at the body as if there's something wrong with it! You get sick and that's not right. You know what I mean?

G: Yes, well I was thinking: This is like a Jungian idea, isn't it?

A: Jung's idea was that what's happening to the person is not a bad thing...it's not necessarily pathological, that it's meaningful. And in body work, the same thing was present, at least in the early 1970s, as far as my knowledge was concerned. Somebody would have a problem with their body, and it would be considered as a disease, as a general rule, instead of something trying to happen. You know...

G: So, how did you begin this thing, this investigation? You made a philosophical leap then--in a sense, in terms of body processes--to look at them as something that's meaningful that's happening. And then, how did you begin to investigate that more?

A: Whenever I've had a crisis in my life, I've always gone back to physics.

G: Yes, OK, so when did you go back to that...

A: So, I went back to studying things empirically. And, I went and then I took my pencil and paper--like that (*Arny grabs a piece of paper and pen and holds them*)--and went and I started working with dying patients, and I started writing down exactly the kinds of things that happened to them. And I made discoveries through doing that.

G: What kind of discoveries?

A: Well, one of the things that I came across right away was that I noticed that, if someone had a tumor inside of him, and you amplified what was happening with that tumor [psychologically], then all of a sudden, the tumor would begin to explode [in his imagination] or would do something. And if you looked into the person's dreams, they'd have also similar explosions.

I wrote all that down, like a very good student of science. But I didn't tell anybody. I was shy. I couldn't tell anybody. That if you go into those things in detail that the... I thought I was crazy.

G: How is that?

A: I thought: How is this possible? You go inside the body and you amplify things. Instead of trying to get rid of them, you make them a little bit worse, and they start mirroring dreams! It's very funny. You work with somebody's body... Take, for example, somebody who has a bad earache, OK?

G: OK.

A: You work with his earache. He says, "I have a lot of pain in my ear." And you start to press over here, and underneath the ear in the back, and you start to amplify that.

And he says, "Oh, that really hurts."

And you say, "Well, what's it like, that hurt?"

He says, "Well, it just hurts."

And you say, "No, what's it like?"

And you continue to amplify that, and he says, "Well you know, it's like ...it's like..." and then, after a few minutes, he says, "it's like an incredible drum pounding!"

And then I said, "It's like a drum pounding!"

And he said, "Oh, but this is just what I dreamt last week! Somebody was pounding a drum."

And I said, "And what was he pounding the drum about?"

He said, "I'm pounding the drum, or the drum was being pounded in the dream. It was announcing the beginning of a new era!"

And I said, "A new era is going to begin."

The guy burst out crying. And he says, "It's true, it's true, and I want to do something new with my life," etc.

People do that because they have dreams and then they have things that start to mirror dreams. It's like an automatic connection.

The same thing happens in different channels. He's having something proprioceptive; you go ahead and you amplify that, and then...suddenly "Well, this reminds me of a visualization I've had." Or people have visualizations at exactly that moment.

G: So, you utilize some of the principles from information theory and physics about signals

A: Yes.

G: And talk about the different channels that the information comes in.

A: Yes.

G: And work with what's in front of you.

A: That's right.

G: And somehow that connects with dream or unconscious processes.

A: Yes. The connection is a process itself. People have insights automatically. You needn't help them.

There are several principles behind this kind of work. One of them is the thing that I learned from Jung. It's a teleological concept--the final philosophical idea--that you believe in what's happening and believe in the unconscious. And you try to follow it, and you discover in time that it's meaningful. That's one concept.

Then there's another concept: the idea of information and information theory. Process. The process concept. And then you go ahead and work with that, and you follow the signals and watch how process changes, channels change. For example, this guy is first having a proprioception, feeling something in his ear; and then it changes and he's seeing something suddenly. The same information is being visualized that was being felt before.

Channels change when you get to the *edge* in what you can experience. For example, that pain got so much that he could hardly experience it anymore. He could have perhaps experienced it more, but he felt he couldn't. So then, your process has a sort of wisdom about it and it makes a switch--like that! (*Arny snaps his fingers*) --and says, "Well, this isn't going to be useful going any further like that. You're not going to get any more information. This is as much information as I'm going to give you now. It hurts a lot, and it feels like a drum. The next step is then to see the drum." And I think some of those channel changes happen to make the person whole. To just perceive things in one channel is to be a one-sided person. You need to see and learn how to feel things and be able to represent and express things in many ways.

G: I'm thinking about...somehow...that you said there's a wisdom about the process behind... and it's like there is a master or some kind of a master awareness behind this...that somehow, is ... I'm not sure... have you any ideas about this?

A: Jung called it the Self. Uh (*Arny looks down and pauses*), I don't know really, what's behind it all. I think of the I Ching, that in the I Ching it says that you can represent the changes but the spirit behind them is unfathomable.

G: The Tao.

A: The Tao, yes. So, what's really behind the whole thing, I don't know.

G: Yes, but it seems like you're interested in what this is... I mean, it's like...

A: I'm a worshipper.

G: A worshipper, yes...

A: I believe in it. I've seen it work so much. So I follow it. I'm like a queen following the king. I know that it seems to be right because people grow and they become alive when you follow it. But what is really behind it, I ... (*Arny shrugs*).

G: I'm thinking about the terms that you use in Process Psychology. You talk about primary and secondary process. And I'm wondering if that's similar to Jung's concepts of conscious and unconscious. And also, I'm wondering about... Is the secondary process this thread of the Tao behind?... Or is that... Can you...?

A: Well, one thing at a time. Those are good questions. I use terms called primary and secondary processes, and the reason I do that is--because when I started working with psychotic people or working with people who were in deep body conditions, altered states of consciousness--I could no longer differentiate what is conscious and what is unconscious. And yet there's differentiations and structures.

One of the most mysterious things is that everything that people do is structured--it's highly structured. Even psychotic episodes are very highly structured. So the concept of conscious and unconscious wasn't useful in those altered states.

So, I thought to myself: What is useful here? And I watched exactly what people do in altered states. What they do in altered states is they identify themselves with certain processes. Like, they say "Now, I'm feeling woahhllmmwwwo," and simultaneously say "Oh, that noise out there disturbed me." So, I realized, oh, they don't identify themselves with the noise that is coming in from the outside; but primarily they are identifying themselves with this feeling of "woahhllmmwwwo" and so.

So, the primary process, for me, is what you identify yourself with. It's different than consciousness though. Consciousness for me is a very special term. I don't know if we want to get so theoretical that it will bore people. But I'll tell you quickly.

G: OK.

A: OK. Consciousness, for me, means the awareness of the primary process, the awareness of secondary processes. It doesn't mean just being in the primary process. So, these primary and secondary process terms, these are process terms that you can carry and you can use them all the time in practice. I have not yet come across an aspect of human behavior where they are not useful. So, so far, I had to make these new terms. I hate making new terms, but I had to do that.

G: You also mentioned the word "edge," and that seems to be an important aspect of the work too.

A: Now, you see, I'm so interested in working with altered states, not just discussing about them, but actually working and dealing with and following people in all sorts of states. I enjoy that, working with people in altered body states and psychotic people, and working with people in comatose conditions.

G: A lot of different conditions.

A: Different things. Working with little, tiny kids, working with babies who don't talk yet. You can work with them intuitively, or you can work intuitively *and* use process concepts. It helps to structure what's happening.

G: You are gathering information in some way. I'm wondering how you structure that information that you gather.

A: Uh huh. Well, I notice what a person identifies [her, their, or] or himself with. That's the first thing. What's closer to his identity. That's primary. What's further from his identity? That's secondary. What channels does the person use with awareness?

Like, for example: You sound to me to be a visualizer. But you just heard me say "You sound to me...", so I'm using my hearing right now mainly with you. That's occupied. So certain channels are occupied and other channels are not occupied.

G: You identify yourself with that particular channel at this particular moment.

A: Yeah.

G: Are there particular patterns for people? I mean, do they tend to use... It sounds like this is the...

A: Yes, there are. I don't have a personality theory like other psychologies, which say personalities are structured this way or that way. That's possible. But it changes a great deal.

For example, I happen to be these days a proprioceptive person. That's the channel I use the most. I'm feeling all the time what's happening inside my body. And I hear. I'm listening very closely. But that can change within two or three minutes. So. I tend to use that mainly, that channel. But it's not an absolute structure, no. And not a personality theory.

G: Yeah. But I've also heard you talk about longer term patterns for people. In other words, I've heard you ask clients for childhood dreams, for example. And that would indicate that you are looking for some kind of pattern or process that happens over a long period of time.

A: That's true, yeah.

G: So, could you talk more about that?

A: There are very short-term processes, those are things like we're experiencing with one another in the communication process, right now. And then we're both also partially patterned by our childhood dreams or myths. Jung would say that they're myths. Childhood dreams pattern a whole lifetime.

So, for example, somebody with a tiger in her childhood dream who goes like this (*Arny raises both hands and makes claws with his fingers*), when you ask her, "What's it like to be a tiger?" This is a person who frequently has all sorts of eczema problems later on. Her body problems are patterned also: eczema (*Arny scratches his leg*), scratching, because she needs to integrate that tiger into her life. And her whole life is a constant battle with integrating that tiger.

G: For example, you made this motion (*scratching*) with the woman who has eczema related to the tiger. Somehow this connection is even more specific for a particular... We could say... Jung might talk about dream figures, or particular symbols, that would relate to particular body processes. Is that...?

A: Yes, it's archetypal. Body processes are patterned. They're archetypal, just like whole lifestyles are. Tiger, depending upon what someone says about a tiger—a tiger like this: rrrrhhh (*Arny shows claws with fingers again*)--has to do with scratching and using fingers more. And being more direct. There are many different archetypal patterns in the body. Yeah?

A typical asthmatic has a dream about walls coming in on her or him and needing to... (*Arny pushes his arms outward like pushing away the walls*).

G: So, the myth of the tiger in the background is like also somehow a... I'm thinking about the causality and teleological aspects of the symbol and wondering: Which comes first?

A: Does she get eczema because she dreamt of that? Is that a causal connection? No. Because she could have gotten many other things too. In other words, she can also have... I'm thinking of somebody who I worked with who has a tiger in her childhood dream. So, if it was causal, then you could say people with tigers in their childhood dreams afterwards...have eczema later on. That's not the case. She has a throat cancer. And I asked her what her throat cancer is like. This is a woman who came to me some months ago with a throat cancer.

And I said, "What's your throat cancer like?"

She said she didn't know.

I said, "Well, tell me what it's like."

And she said, "Well... rhhhh" (*Arny makes a guttural throat sound*).

And I said, "Rhhhh, what?"

She said, "RhhhhHH!!!"

I said, “RHHH!”

And she said, “Rhhhhrrrrrrrr.”

And I said, “What does that sound like?”

And she said, “Well, strange...” She said. This to me sounds like a tiger!”

So, I said, “Well, let’s play tigers together!”

“RhhhHHAA!” she went to me.

And I said, “RhHHAA to you!”

And she came back and forth many times, and she was roaring about different things in her life. And I asked her what she dreamed in her childhood dream. This is a woman who dreamed about a tiger.

G: I was just thinking: This tiger is in a different channel than the other person’s.

A: That’s right. Different channel. Different body part, too. Uh huh.

G: I’d like to ask you some questions about how you begin psychotherapy or process analysis. Do you have any particular goals in mind when somebody comes to you, or particular things that you...?

A: Oh yes. I have lots of goals, but people rarely follow them!

G: Your goals?

A: Yeah! That’s the trouble! You know, I notice I would like to do things. This was already an astounding thing years ago. I would want to talk to people about their dreams. And some people want to talk about their dreams. And other people just didn’t want to do it! And that was a big problem for me: I had to open my eyes and ears. Most people don’t have the goals that I do.

One of my major goals is following peoples’ process, and I like it when people become more aware. I just have a weakness in that area. I’m in love with consciousness. It’s my myth. But not everybody shares it.

Like, I worked with somebody who tried to commit suicide. She just jumped in the water. And she comes out and she says, “Whaaa.” She says, “You know, all I want to do is die.” She doesn’t have the same goals as I do. She wants to die, and I’m interested in her coming to awareness. So, I have to change.

One of us has to change. I'm calling her psychotic, but if I don't change--she's got a really serious depression--if I don't change, I don't have a feedback loop, I'm like also in another world. So, I decided to start changing myself and trying to adapt what I'm doing to follow the other person's process.

So, most of my goals, Grady, I have to tell you the truth, most of the goals really are following the other person's process. And sometimes I'm not able to do it. Then I can't do it.

G: I'm interested in that. What happens when you can't follow somebody's process?

A: I tell somebody. Like I deal with murderers also, from the social services, really wild people. The guy says, "I just like to kill! What's wrong with you, don't you ever have a need to kill?" I said, "Yeah, you know, I don't like my neighbor. I'd like to give him a punch, but I don't want to kill him."

This guy says, "I want to kill." Then I say "Well, we're sharing different opinions and have different belief systems, and I'm not going to follow that with you." And then we get into a relationship process: It's no longer just his, but it's he and me, together.

And he says to me, "But you have to follow me! You have to agree with everything that I say."

And I say, "I won't."

He says, "I'm going to kill you!"

I say, "Well, we have problems."

G: Yes, and what happens?

A: Well, I'm still here, thank God!

G: Yes, yes.

A: But the goals aren't matching, and we have to have a fight. The guy had to learn to fight *verbally*. I told him, if he starts to get off his chair, I'm leaving the room the fastest route possible. So, he has to do it all verbally. It's a relationship process. He started to do that and ...

G: Um...

A: Let me finish this, I didn't finish that story. He started to relate to me verbally. And then started telling me all sorts of things. He had to verbalize his anger. That was important for him. He likes me now.

G: So, you brought in your own process about where your limits were, in terms of his process.

A: Yes.

G: Could you talk about that, how that comes up sometimes? I mean, it seems to be...

A: Yes, sometimes I don't feel like working. I hate helping people.

G: Uh huh.

A: I mean that's not quite true. I really do. But sometimes, you know, when you come in to work, as a psychotherapist, in the morning you just don't want to help somebody. You think "I don't want to be helpful today. I'm too tired or my mind is on another point!" That's also important to bring in. You bring that in and say to the person, "I'm having trouble being with you this morning," and that starts a relationship process going. The person says, "Well, don't you like me?" Then I feel suddenly like I'm there. I feel involved with the other person.

G: If somebody were to come in and look at your therapy or process analysis, for example, they might see a lot of different things going on. You mentioned body work. You mentioned dream work. You're talking about relationship work. How do you know when to do particular interventions in your work?

A: Many different things can happen, but only one thing remains the same. And that is: following as exactly as possible what's going on. *That* I constantly do. But, on the outside, it looks very different. And I watch the signals of the person, to see.

I say "What's going on with you today?" and the person goes like this--(*Arny takes a deep breath, closes his eyes and his body leans back slightly as he exhales*); or today, we were working with someone, and she said, she wanted to work on smoking. And I said, "What is smoking?" She said, "Smoking is..." (*Arny takes a big breath inward, eyes closed, and his body leans back slightly, and then he breathes out*) and I took that as a sign. Her body gave me an answer. So using body signals. I could follow those body signals and work on her body. And then I knew to do that.

Somebody else is telling me a dream and, while they are telling the dream, say "I dreamed about a tiger, a TIGER (*he emphasizes the word "tiger"*) in contrast to the following dream report: "The other night I dreamed about a tiger" (*his hands come up and look like claws*).

So, in the second dream report, the motion is the important thing; in the first, the word and the word association. So, in working with that dream, I'd say in the first one "Well, would you repeat that word? What's the first word you associate to the word "tiger"?" Whereas in the second case, I would say "Go ahead with those motions."

G: Can you tell me a little bit about your practice?

A: It has many aspects to it. I see people sometimes just once. Sometimes only for 15 minutes. That's unusual, but if I'm rushed for time, I'll see people for 15 minutes about something. I'll also see them only once then. Then, I see other people for an hour, or an hour and a half. And I

see some people for a couple of years. Or students, I'll work with individually, over a longer period of time. Then I also see people who come to seminars.

Therapy should be as close to real life as possible.

G: Tell me more about that. What do you mean?

A: What you're doing in your practice should be--or one of my goals is--that what's happening in practice should be as close to the way I really am, as a person, as a whole. So, in my ordinary, everyday life, I happen to be frequently late to things... So, this is part of me. And I work with that, with myself. And when I'm with other people, I work with that, too.

G: I was thinking about how Jung might...what he might think of how you work and the process model that you've...

A: What Jung might think about the process model? (*Speaking as Jung*) "Yeah, the important thing is the living unconscious. That's important! And anyone who is able to get deep down into this unconscious, and to bring it up, and to make it accessible and available and useful to other people, that's the right track. Everything else is avoiding the point." Now I'm integrating part of him.

Now, the thing that Jung meant by the unconscious is--things that we're talking about--both primary and secondary processes. Because they are both unconscious. And Jung felt, and I feel also, that unprocessed, unconscious information is dangerous stuff. Processed information is very rarely dangerous. So rarely...that the early analysts were terrified of the unconscious. They said they were very careful about bringing up [unconscious] information. They thought that would be very dangerous.

And now there's lots more techniques available. There's process work that's full of methods and available techniques to bring this material up and to make it constructive. And, I think if you were to ask Jung about that, he would say "That's definitely right."

When I made the discovery that double signals--in other words, things that I'm doing that are incongruent, like this (*Arny makes wiggling motions with is hands in the air and scrunches his mouth and eyes*), if I was doing that--that double signals also relate to dreams. I dreamed myself--when I discovered that double signals relate to dreams--that Jung got out of the grave and started clapping. So, I think he would be very happy about the living reality of the dreaming world, bringing that into this world. That's important.

G: That's your idea of the double, or the dreaming body, in the back...

A: The dreaming body, yes. Bringing unconscious information up, things that are far away from awareness. And not just talking about them as if they are dreams that happened last night. But realizing them as a *living reality*, and bringing *that* to the foreground. That's more important than anything else. All the theory and the structures and stuff like that--if it is useful in doing that, then it's right. That is important. Otherwise, people are, like, dead. They are here and they're

doing one thing, and the whole living reality of their spirit is in another place. So, that's important.

G: How do you bring this out? This seems to be...

A: Well, to begin with, it's like really being a really good observer, looking really exactly at stuff and noticing: This is happening; this is happening. And helping the person become aware of it. Every good therapist, since the beginning of time, has touched that point. And that's like a central point in psychology, I think. It's a point we all need to study much more about.

G: How do you know which signals are probably the most important to...

A: I don't. I notice certain signals and I mention them. And I watch the ones that the people pick up. I don't know. I see your thumb is moving, for example; and I see your pink shirt; and I see I'm sitting here and talking with a certain kind of a voice- -and I would mention all the things that I notice.

Some of them you'll pick up and some you won't. The ones that you pick up, I would work with. Those are like the moving lines in the *I Ching's* hexagrams. That's where change happens. The things that are like in the middle of evolving right now. But I don't know ahead of time.

G: How do you know what particular signals mean, for example.

A: I don't know what signals mean. I never know. I see something happening and it's the unknown. So, I go after that piece of unknown. And I try to find out how to get that unknown to express itself. And then it tells me. I have no idea what body signals mean.

G: How would you go into that unknown, for example...

A: Well, we saw today when we were working, one woman was going like this (*Arny's arms are bent upwards with elbows forward, hands toward the outsides of his face*). Right? She is discussing something with another woman and having some sort of a conflict and she's going like this. I don't know what that means, but I know that her elbow is out in the foreground and her wrist is in the background, and I think to myself: That's something that I would like to amplify or work with.

So, I could either push this out [the elbow] or hold this back [the wrists]. So, I did one or the other. I did this--(*pulling wrists back*). She then said later, "I hate it when people confine me," meaning that she's been confining herself.

So, this signal (*Arny once again shows how the woman's elbows are out and her hands are pulled back near her head*) means that she's feeling confined and that she's fighting against her own confinement.

G: So, as a process worker then, it seems to be very important to go into exploring what particular signals mean.

A: That's right.

G: And not necessarily interpreting from a particular theoretical framework or...?

A: Yes. You can try an interpretation as long as you're not excited by it.

G: As long as *you're* not excited by it?

A: That's right. If you're not attached to your interpretation, it can also be useful. I could say "You mean, this means [the signal of the elbows out and the hands pulled back toward the head] that you're interested in talking about the weather?" That's a bad interpretation. Then she's going to say "Are you out of your stupid mind? It means...!" (*Arny makes a punching motion forward*). Then I know I made a mistake with the interpretation!

That kind of interpretation is meant to provoke or bring out the real meaning. Or you can take guesses. But if you tell people that you think you know what they are doing means, that's a dangerous business. If they're not strong enough they'll believe you, to begin with at least. Then you rather interrupt what's happening.

G: So, it's more of a program--is that what you're saying?-- that you're placing on the...

A: If I say to this woman "Now this [her arm gesture] means, I think that this means, that you are an aggressive person who is shy about expressing your aggression," then what I've done in doing that is, I've interrupted her process by being smart.

G: Ah ha, yes.

A: I'm very intelligent and I've wrecked what's happening with her. Then, I encourage her, by being so "smart," to start to talk to me about what's happening. And then she says, "This does mean that. That's absolutely right." That could be useful at one point, to talk about signals, but it's rarely the case.

G: So, your working with the signals is ...

A: Yes, working with the signals is important. And not just interpreting them. Because the difference is--if I just interpret that signal--then the signal remains inside of her somewhere. That's a way of getting sick.

G: Uh huh. Yes.

A: If you have a signal that's trying to evolve and you don't let it evolve, then it's evolving *somehow*. There's no such thing as repressing the unconscious. It doesn't exist. You can't repress signals.

If you put your arms down like this--(*Arny puts his arms down instead of the earlier position of elbows out and hands back near the ears*)--that tension goes up here (*Arny points to his shoulders and neck*), or it goes down to her chest, or it goes into her heart. And you have people who have chronic tensions up here in their neck. So, that's why, in process work, the concept of evolving those signals is so important.

G: I'm interested in your conception of disease, or...

A: Disease is information that has somatized itself. Like Rumpelstiltskin falling into the ground at the end [Arny is referring to a work he did with a woman earlier in the day]. He doesn't die, he stays in the earth, in the body.

Take an example. For example, of a woman who has a cramp down here (*points to his lower abdomen*). OK?

G: Yes.

A: She's got cramping down here. We saw also an example of that today. And so, she's got information, down here, of some sort, right? During her work, her hands come like this (*both of Arny's thumbs are in his pockets and the four fingers of each hand are outstretched*), as a double signal. This is somebody who has to stand like this quite a lot.

So, we worked on that double signal. So, what does that signal mean? And through working with it, [it] came out (*Arny bounces up and down a bit on his heels, puts his elbows out further, arms more rigid, his jaw tight*): "Well...I'm pretty tough!" Remember?

G: Uh huh.

A: Lots of straight forward shooting, and just being direct and communicative. Right? That comes out. But this whole area with her [lower abdomen] right? Also here this area is cramped. So, she has an edge, or she has a shyness, or resistance against expressing herself in a direct way. She would prefer to be more adapted--like everybody else. So that information then doesn't get a chance to express itself, and doesn't evolve, and it goes somatic--so to speak--into the earth and expresses itself from there. I've worked with her also at an earlier date about the cramp she has in her colon, and it turns out to be something like this (*he pounds one fists into the other hand showing power and strength*).

G: So, I'm interested in the medical model and how they might also deal with this particular area [the colon area] for example, and this particular case. Let's say it begins to harden and turn into some kind of mass or something, or a tumor. And then, rather than...they would do something else.

A: Well, this is a good example as this is a person who has just been to a gynecologist. And her gynecologist said that she felt some hardening up there and thought it could be cancerous and went into further examinations. And, it turned out, it wasn't the case. Had it been cancerous, the medical model would then try to remove that right away. And that could also be very useful. But

it still doesn't *process* the information that's down there, and the chances of that information becoming less tractable are then greater--less tractable meaning that the information becomes even more distant from awareness. The medical model needs also to be treated with importance: at a certain point, it can be important to take something out.

G: I would like to ask another, general question about your therapy and I'm wondering: What do you feel are the most important tools or techniques in process work?

A: Hmm (*Arny looks down, hand on his hand and pauses*). None of them.

G: None of them.

A: No, but the philosophy.

G: OK.

A: Because the philosophical point of view that somebody has determines everything. It creates techniques; it creates the relationship with people; and it also completely determines what you're able to observe. And so: The paradigm that one is working with is more important than anything else. Should I go on?

G: Yes, I'm interested in what the paradigm is.

A: So, the paradigm that I'm aware of, at least in Process Work, is that what's happening is probably meaningful; and that experience shows that, through bringing that information out, the person is whole-*er*--they are more complete, and they are more together; and their body symptoms have a tendency to disappear, at least in the moment that they are able to bring the information out. So that's a paradigm, right?

G: OK.

A: In contrast to other kinds of paradigms. So that paradigm produces methods; and it uses methods that already exist--in contrast to other paradigms, which say, for example, that you should understand everything. It's important to understand what's happening. That's also a paradigm. If you work with that paradigm, it produces tools which help you to understand. In contrast to producing tools that help you understand *and* evolve things. So that's what I think is the most important thing in process work.

G: It's the philosophical...

A: Yes, assumptions.

G: Do you use a lot of the concepts from Jungian background and your background in physics? I'm also interested in what other psychologies you have used particular tools from.

A: I've learned a great deal from meditation.

G: Uh huh!

A: And the most important thing to me, however, is the concept of awareness and the belief in what's happening. And also the idea that the individual is right. It's so simple.

G: Even though they may have some beliefs that they are not quite right, or somebody else, or society, might have some beliefs that they are not quite right.

A: Everybody believes that they're stupid. That's very right. Nobody thinks that the feelings they're having are important.

Everybody comes in, originally, considering that what they perceive is not right: nobody believes what they see; they don't believe what they are hearing inside themselves; they don't believe what they are feeling; and nobody, *no one*, believes in their spontaneous movements; and nobody believes in the fact that they trip across relationship problems. So, the result is that having a personal process is, today, Grady, is still like incredibly rare. It's unbelievable!

People are always asking you to tell them what to do with themselves. It's very foreign, still, in this day and age, that people--in spite of all of the talk about freedom--that people believe in what's happening inside of themselves. It's incredible. It's just incredible.

G: That seems to be a big problem in the world today. So, I'm wondering: What you feel the role of psychology would be in the rest of the century and beyond. What do you see the role of psychology being?

A: I don't know when this particular point I'm going to say is going to be meaningful. But one of the roles that psychology has to manage is to put the person back inside [her, their, or] himself: To make every human being believe in what you're seeing right now; and what you're right now hearing; and what you're right now feeling; and the movements you're making; the relationships problems you have; and the things that happen in the world around you.

That, if psychology is going to work, it's going to have to turn people back to their inner teachers, inside. And then they're ready to come out again. That is a role that it needs to do.

G: What do you think is the most important thing in the education of a process-oriented psychologist?

A: The most important thing is to be aware of your assumptions. That's what I really think. Not the learning of techniques. But to be aware of the assumptions that you have and your feelings about people. That's what I think is important in training.

And then to have a very broad training; you have personal analysis to learn how you behave in relationships; to have video work about how you deal with people; to work yourself and have supervision on what's happening.

G: The most important thing, you seem to be saying, is about the sense of meaning and following what's right there in front of you. And this seems very simple and...

A: I think it is. I think it's the most ancient idea that exists. Follow the Tao. The problem is, in the past, that we haven't known *how*. The philosophy is right, but there is the relationship between philosophy and science.

G: Yes.

A: Following the Tao is a wonderful idea. Everybody, every good psychologist today says they are trying to follow process, or follow the unconscious, or something like that. But then, they have to find out what process is, they haven't defined it exactly. Then they are just following the programs they have in their head.

G: I think there seems to be an intense desire with psychologists themselves to somehow unify. How do you think that might be done? What do you think could happen to have that?

A: Well, psychology is in a pre-scientific phase, I think. I don't think it has to become a science, but it has characteristics of a pre-science. Thousands of things happening, hundreds of psychologies.

People and the psychologists...the worst thing is psychologists hate to talk to one another. They don't learn enough from one another. And so that means to me that the first step in the process is that they need to be *more* fragmented--that fragmentation is important, that there's all sorts of very powerful individual therapies being developed in specific channels. So, the dream workers are doing lots of work in the dream world; and the body workers are finding very specific techniques on how to move the body about; and the dancers are beginning to find new methods about working in dance. But at a certain point, all of these channels begin to overlap.

And I think the next step in psychology is going to be not just wanting to come together, but finding a neutral language and a neutral paradigm that is neither psychic nor physical, nor movement oriented, nor dream oriented. It's neither personal, nor family oriented. Some sort of process concept is going to happen as a unifying concept in psychology. Something that has a process orientation and that, I think, also is related to information theory, is going to be very useful. That's what I see happening.

G: Something similar to what you've developed.

A: Yes. Well, I think that I must be one person making an attempt to unify psychologies. In other places, there's other people who are trying to develop powerful things, too, as well. Yes?

G: It seems so difficult to try to bring these together. And I'm thinking about learning as a process therapist...in bringing somehow...making this mish-mosh of particular paradigms...and making some sense out of it. It must have been confusing for you in the beginning, when you brought different things together.

A: Well, I read all the different things, and I got confused. And just didn't.

G: Uh huh!

A: I put them aside. And then, I decided to start with the individual and follow that person *exactly*. And then I found that, if you follow an individual exactly, that that individual process brings the different psychologies together. In any one given process, you might do family work or body work or dream work. You know.

G: Uh huh. I'm wondering if there are any questions that you might ask yourself right now, if you were over here, and that you would like to know from yourself.

A: I would ask me, "How do you help people to have a beginner's mind?" How do you help people to become aware of all the beliefs that they have? And how do you help them to become aware of the things that are already programming their awareness? And how do you get them to really open up to the reality of the person, the reality of people? How do you do that?" I would ask, "How do you do it?"

And I would introduce that question by saying, "Already you look all around the world, and you look at human relationships, and you see people have certain programs in their head about how they are behaving, how they should behave, and how the other one should behave. How can you make them aware of that, and help them begin to open up?" That, for me, is a central question. That's what I would ask myself if I were sitting there.

G: Yes. So, let me pretend I've just asked you that question. Does an answer come for you?

A: (*Pause...looking down*) That's a hard question. Wow, that's tough. I notice I don't have an immediate answer, so that means something to me. Not having an immediate answer means that the question is important. And that I want to ask everybody that question. And they should ask themselves the question. And I want to tell them my experiences with it, but I don't have an answer to it.

G: What are your experiences?

A: My experiences with that question are that the people who are most open are the ones... It doesn't have to do with age. It has to do with a certain youthfulness, and an openness and willingness to find out more about life. And a lot of people aren't. They have studied something, especially therapists, strange to say. They have already studied what they studied, and they stopped studying. They have "diplom-itis": they've got their diploma, and their studying has stopped. And so, they also don't encourage the "research-fulness" in their clients. They also don't bring that into what they're doing. They don't say "Let's see and find out what is happening today."

So, I can only talk about the state of the situation right now, but I can't... I don't have a recipe for it.

G: (*Smiling*) I'm feeling like I would like your response about the film and your feelings and thoughts about doing this.

A: Well, I was uncomfortable with filming in the beginning. The whole business of filming. I don't know. I was uncomfortable with it. And now I don't care any longer. My response to filming will be more complete when I see the effects that it has, and how many irritations it causes, and whether people have also an open mind looking in from the outside.

G: Anything that you're concerned about...

A: How many of my shadows will be disagreeing with me and, uh, what this stirs up. Then I'll know what my response to the film is (*smiles*)!

G: (*Smiling*) Thank you very much for having the interview.

Arny and Grady grab each other's hands and smile.

Video Copyright © 1986 by Dr. A. Mindell, Research Society for Process-Oriented Psychology, Zürich, Switzerland

Production: Video-Laden, Zürich
Camera: Adrian Zschokke, Marcel Müller
Sound: Felix Singer, Urs Hirscher
Technical Editing: Marcel Müller
Editing: Mariann Leber, Grady Gray
Director: Mariann Leber
Co-Producer: Madeleine Ziegler, Mariann Leber
Executive producer: Grady Gray
Project Director: Arnold Mindell

Transcript Copyright © 2021 by Dr. A. Mindell, Portland, Oregon, USA