



Using Emotionally Focused Bodywork to relieve Back Pain and Overcome Executive Burnout

Jim, a CFO from a Fortune 100 company who was experiencing executive burnout demonstrated that **Emotionally Focused Bodywork** can both eliminate acute back pain and provide support for his executive burnout. Equally crucial to his **Executive Therapy** were the ongoing conversations we were having about resolving interpersonal conflicts at work and at home. I was also seeing Jim and his wife for **couples therapy**.

SITUATION

While being the **team leader** for an intense negotiation of a multi-billion dollar acquisition over several months Jim's (not his actual name) back went into **severe spasm requiring medication** and he was now in **almost constant back pain**. The timing of his session coincided with earlier in the week, his having successfully completed the acquisition and giving a press conference. He reported that **his back pain was so intense that in order to get through the press conference he had to sit, rather than stand at the podium**. He also reported that he was going to be able to have his first weekend off in several months, free of any work-related activities. **Jim knew he was suffering from executive burnout**. Well-deserved rest and relaxation was to be the order of the day!

I had found Jim, in the time I had been seeing him and his wife for couples therapy, to be very conscientious with regard to exercising, but not particularly in touch with his body in terms of feeling connected to it or understanding that what was going on was what I have come to know as **executive burnout**. Understandably, given Jim's responsibilities as a CFO in his company, **work came first regardless of the physical and emotional stress, and severity of his executive burnout**. And here was his body talking to him at a crucial moment when **first-class performance was being called for**. Executive burnout was getting in his way.

EMOTIONALLY FOCUSED BODYWORK for Executive Burnout

The first business at hand was **getting Jim out of acute back pain**. Second was to **get him on board with self-help routines** to get him progressively out of **chronic back pain and executive burnout**. And the third was to **get him to recognize his executive burnout**. He had been equal to the organizational task, but at a cost, and now it was time to listen to his body and allow himself to **receive my healing touch and body-awareness coaching** he and his back and whole body were screaming for. **Pain, whether physical, emotional, or mental can only be a teacher when listened to**.

When he lay down on my massage table, not for the first time, for **Emotionally Focused Bodywork** it was with a proverbial deep sigh of relief. It soon became an actual sigh as I (we) **got him out of pain by de-compressing his spine with my hands-on methods so that he could breath easier and more fully**. The combination of the conversation between my hands and his muscles and our verbal conversation as I talked him through letting go of the holding in his body brought a smile of relief to his face. **He was finally relaxing both physically and emotionally**. (See "Learning The Art of Letting Go") **The verbal conversation was about how to perform his executive responsibilities with greater ease and less stress** in light of his recent experiences as the lead negotiator. We talked in this, as well as in other sessions, about the many aspects of his responsibilities and interpersonal relationships at work (and at home) that had gotten him into the condition of **executive burnout**. **He was open to and ready for change**.

Now it was time to capitalize on this teaching moment and **teach Jim**, with major responsibilities, **to take more responsibility for his executive burnout and for the health of his back and body as a whole**.

We ended the session with my talking Jim through a movement awareness exploration by guiding him through slowly bending-over while standing. I could call what he learned a back stretching exercise to release back pain, but I'm purposely not doing so to underscore the difference between mechanically stretching and having Jim organically investigate the inner landscape of his bending/moving body as a whole. Permanent relief was going to come from progressively releasing his whole body in all of its parts, not just his back, and he knew it from inside-out as we repeated this **Body Awareness Movement Process** several times.

RESULTS OF EMOTIONALLY FOCUSED BODYWORK for Executive Burnout

Each time, Jim felt more tangible relief in his back and whole body as we repeated the **Body Awareness Movement Process** and he walked around the room with more self-awareness that put him in charge of his self-healing. The following morning I checked in to see how he was doing and to reinforce his taking a few minutes throughout the day to do his **releasing process** on his own at home and at the office. **Significantly, Jim shared with enthusiasm and relief that he was doing the Body Awareness Movement Process at the office and that whatever back pain was there when he woke up, was gone!** Jim now knows how to eliminate back pain and have a more relaxed body to which he's more connected and thereby be even more successful in his responsibilities as CFO while he is overcoming **executive burnout**. Jim also reported that he was experiencing significantly less executive burnout from already applying the perspective he had gained about the interpersonal and organizational dynamics in his company from our conversation. And, finally, Jim can see that when he is in pain that he might be experiencing executive burnout and he can get the help he needs.