

In Memory of Herbert Spiegel, MD

June 29, 1914 - December 15, 2009

I first met Herbert Spiegel in Manhattan when he was well into his 80's and I was a young post-doctoral fellow at Cornell Medical School. We hit it off from the beginning and Herb invited me to watch him in action at his office. Since that time both my wife and I had the privilege of visiting with Herb periodically and spending quality time with him, his wife, Marcia Greenleaf, and occasionally with his son, David.

Several informative accounts have been written in memory of Herb (e.g., <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/01/10/health/10spiegel.html>). Inspired by text prepared by Marcia and a commemorative website, which she created as a labour of love (see www.drherbertspiegel.com), we wanted to offer another perspective complementing what had already been published about Herb's life and accomplishments.

Herb began his training in psychoanalysis at the William A. White Institute with Harry Stack Sullivan, Erich Fromm and Frieda Fromm-Reichman. World War II interrupted his formal training in psychiatry and by 1942 he was a Battalion Surgeon with the 1st Infantry Division. Herb described his life on the battlefield as a "clinical practice that began with 1000 men during the invasion of North Africa."

On May 7th, 1943, a German tank broke through the Allied lines lodging a steel shrapnel into Herb's ankle. Injured and decorated with the Purple Heart, Herb returned to the Walter Reed Hospital in the US. During his convalescence, he wrote his first papers on the psychiatry of combat (Borch-Jacobsen, 1944a, 1944b) and helped in the formulation of a new diagnosis, physio-neurosis, now called PTSD (Kardiner & Spiegel, 1947).

The first psychiatrist to return from the war, Herb continued to discharge his duty at the Mason General Hospital on Long Island teaching military psychiatry. While there he had ample opportunity to use hypnosis, as he had in combat, to treat trauma and anxiety. Crafting a string of clinical demonstrations, he used to showcase the power of suggestion with feats such as hypnotically-induced blisters.

Discharged from service in 1946, Herb embarked on his journey into mind-body interactions. Although he returned to psychoanalytic training after the war, he continued to develop his interest in and expertise with hypnosis. He learned the advantages of short-term psychotherapy with hypnosis compared to long-term analysis (Spiegel, 1944a, 1944b). His successes and failures laid the groundwork for his role as a successful clinician, scholar, and teacher (Spiegel, 2000; Spiegel & Spiegel, 1978, 2004).

Herb opened his psychiatric practice in New York City in 1946. Consequently, he became a pioneer in hypnosis and treatment strategies for habit control, anxiety, insomnia, phobias, dissociative identity and eating disorders, pain management, trauma, and coping with medical problems.

In 1960, he joined the clinical faculty of the College of Physicians & Surgeons at Columbia University to teach a course on hypnosis. For twenty two years, this course educated health care professionals about the mind-body interface for health care professionals around the world. With Columbia as his academic home, he lectured at medical institutions in the US and abroad consulting other professionals and providing legal testimony, including in high-interest cases such as “Sybil” (Borch-Jacobson, 1997a, 1997b), Sirhan Sirhan (Turner & Christian, 1978) and Peter Reilly (Connery, 1977).

By the 1960’s, he had proposed the Eye Roll Sign (ERS), the vertical mobility of the eyes, as a possible correlate of dissociative capacity and the potential for hypnotizability. He later developed the Hypnotic Induction Profile (HIP) (Spiegel & Bridger, 1970), a putative index of different degrees of manifest hypnotizability in a clinical setting. These two measures, the ERS and the HIP have since been used by many a clinician to assess individual differences in mind-body capacity and the potential for treatment responsivity (Spiegel, 2007; Greenleaf, 2006; Spiegel, Frischholz, Fleiss & Spiegel, 1993; Spiegel, Greenleaf, & Spiegel, 2005).

Believing in a strong association among personality styles, the ERS and degrees of hypnotizability, Herb developed the Mind Styles Questionnaire (Spiegel & Spiegel, 1978; Spiegel, Greenleaf & Spiegel, 2005), which identifies those with low ERS as Apollonians, after the Greek God of logic; those with high ERS, Dionysians, after the Greek God of spontaneous emotional expression; and those in the mid-range, Odysseans, after Homer’s mythical man who wandered to find his way home (Spiegel & Spiegel, 2004; Spiegel, Greenleaf & Spiegel, 2005). Herb’s last paper (2007) reviewed ERS and hypnotizability.

Throughout his life, Herb was a leader. He was articulate and outspoken; championed the concept of individual differences in psychiatry and medicine; and attempted to transform clinical intuition into measureable variables. Herb combined art, science, and poetry. His unique gift was a balance of intuition and intellect. To remember him in his own words: “Therapy is both an art and a science. If you can measure it, it’s science; everything else is poetry.”

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