**The Therapeutic Power of the Relationship**

What are the best techniques in counselling? How can I learn the practice of therapeutic techniques? These are the most frequent questions asked by beginners. They are eager to learn counseling techniques. Nevertheless they soon discover that the most therapeutic tool is not a good technique, but a good relationship. Indeed, the client´s relationship to the counsellor contains the most powerful forces in the therapeutic process. Change always occurs in the context of a good inter-personal relationship. The techniques you use are of secondary importance compared to your personality and your capacity to be empathic and stablish a warm relationship. Here lies the core of all therapy

**Pablo Martinez** was a European Leadership Forum Steering Committee member for more than 10 years. He currently works as a psychiatrist at a private practice in Barcelona. He has also developed an extensive itinerant ministry as a counsellor, speaker, and Bible teacher. He served as one of the vice-presidents of the International Christian Medical and Dental Association (ICMDA). He filled the role of President of the Spanish Evangelical Alliance (1999-2009) and Professor of Pastoral Theology at several theological institutions. His books have been published in 17 languages. His most recent works are *Mad or God?: Jesus, the Healthiest Mind of All* (Inter-Varsity Press, England, co-authored) and *Take Care of Yourself: Survive and Thrive in Ministry* (Hendrickson Publishers and DictumPress). For more information see <http://www.christian-thought.org>.

**Introduction:** Psychotherapy is the art of healing with the word. We should never neglect this fundamental principle. A wise use of the “word”, genuine communication, makes us deeply human and brings forth a profound healing effect.

1. **The Best Therapeutic Tool is Not a Good Technique, But a Good Relationship**

* Change in psychotherapy always occurs in the context of a good inter-personal relationship (experts from most psychotherapy schools agree)
* The personality of the therapist comes first; techniques are secondary
* The psychotherapeutic techniques work much better when the relationship works
* When two people really listen to each other, they meet. This encounter changes them, remodels them, even to the point of reshaping their neuronal synapsis (as modern neuroimaging techniques have proved)

1. **Key Ingredients for a Good Therapeutic Relationship**

* **Warmth** is the starting point and the permanent background (climate)
* **Empathy and sympathy**, the catalyzers that help to open up
* **Agape love**, willing the best for the patient, is an essential ingredient (Armand Nicholi)
* **Trust** makes a solid therapeutic link (alliance)

1. **Listening, The Core of the Therapeutic Relationship**

*Listening with your eyes is a delicate expression of love”*  (Shakespeare)

Learning to listen and say nothing is more difficult than learning to say something.

* To listen carefully and empathically is deeply healing in itself.
* To listen is to enter; you enter the other person discovering what is in his/her mind and heart.
* Listening conveys a powerful message: “I am with you and for you”
* You hear with your ears, but you listen with your eyes
* When you are listened, you feel understood and loved.

1. **Jesus, Our Model: Encounters That Transformed Lives**

* Nicodemus
* The Samaritan woman: a fascinating process of in depth and holistic healing

**Conclusion:** The best psychotherapist is not the one who masters a technique, but the one who is able to be a real person for a person in need