

# The art of conscious living

## To integrate a traumatic past with PRI

**By: Ingrid Mehtens**

Experiences in our earliest childhood cause our consciousness to divide into three parts: the Adult-consciousness, the Child-consciousness and the Wall of denial that stands in between.

### **The goal**

To reach autonomy, connecting within you and also connecting with others and thus finding harmony here and now.

### **The point**

PRI (Past Reality Integration) as means to an end. Enabling you to step out of a pattern of behavior and to live here and now in autonomy. To feel what you actually need and can develop autonomy and congruity, always in connection with and having compassion for the other person.

Ingeborg Bosch wrote a new book, you see it everywhere in big stacks. The small, smart looking book with the title: PRI and the art of conscious living, it first appears to be a "feel good" book. But at second glance it is no leisure time reading, it is a very informative book in which a whole program is described and explained for anyone who wants to start making a change. Even if the book wasn't originally written for therapists, it invited me to a renewed introduction to the method.

Ingeborg Bosch developed Past Reality Integration (PRI) building on the groundwork of Alice Miller regarding upbringing and the work of Jean Jenson to rise above the damaging effects of our upbringing. The books written by Miller, Jenson and Bosch are intensely studied by us. Bosch is GZ-psychologist and has affinity with eastern philosophy and wants to build a bridge between Eastern and Western thinking. PRI is, in that sense, an integral psychotherapy and with this in mind, she participated in the congress for Integral Psychotherapy (2008). PRI is based on the idea that problems such as; anxiety, fear, stress, depression and addiction, experienced here and now, are in fact not what they seem to be. They are illusions, forms of denial, that steer our behaviour unconsciously. PRI connects to neurological knowledge of the emotional brain (e.g. Servan Schreiber), uses reconditioning principles and exposure in vivo and in vitro and cognitive restructuring. Regression is a useful tool when the tool is used with the guidance of a therapist. First, you have to become aware of your lack of freedom and the specific illusion that you believe in, in order to relinquish your defenses. This requires introspection and self observation, related to mindfulness. Old traumatic events are buried deep in our emotional brain and influence our actions, thoughts and feelings all the time. Most treatment often leads to temporary reduction of pain. PRI tracks down the defenses and teaches us to become aware here and now and to stop living in a defensive manner, by applying a technique they call the "reversal of defenses".

On the site a lot of information is given about Bosch, background, motivation, methodology and much more. But still I want to know more about new insights that are integrated in this book. An appointment is made for a telephone conversation when I can ask questions.

On the phone Ingeborg Bosch is a positive, friendly person and an inspiring storyteller. Immediately it is clear that PRI is simply a part of her, by the animated and natural way she talks about it. She acknowledges that this book was written to make it accessible for everyone. She recognizes my remark about the layers in the text and tells me that people who didn't know PRI at all read it in one go and say "Well that is very interesting, great, clear, I understand", while someone who has more knowledge in this area notices that there is much more to it".

Bosch:" I never would have dreamed and I couldn't wish for more. Because therapists who are working with it comment: 'I touch on something that opens up multiple dimensions". With earlier books we often heard from therapists: "we already know this or what is different this time, what is new about it?" As if the complexity of the content didn't quite register with them. And now with this innocent looking little book it seems for the first time with this group it registered that there is a lot more behind it. It is not simply: you have some defenses and you have to do something with them, no, it is a very exact, almost laser technique, it requires some effort to master the technique. After all, it involves neurological processing. Just imagine a conveyer belt in our brain and everything that we experience ends up in a pile at the start of the belt. Next it is on the belt, processed and at the end of the belt it is archived. The archive consists of cupboards with drawers that are labeled: this was nice, this wasn't, this was very nice: processed. But there are things a child cannot process alone, they need the help of an adult because the experience was too traumatic. It exceeds their inner capacity to handle the big pile that is situated in front of the belt and place it on the belt, process it and store it in the proper drawer. Those are traumas and they stay active and are responsible for the formation of defenses that will be active throughout life. They

encapsulate the trauma, so to speak. At the same time the effect is that it signals, unconsciously, that it is happening now and that we need to protect ourselves against it”.

I.M.: “When the old underlying tension is set in motion by what you call the “symbol” ?”

Bosch: “Yes, what exists there, encapsulated by defense mechanisms and experiences from long ago, give the feeling it is happening now. Because when it is placed on the belt, that moment you feel that it will become extremely painful. Then you’ll be able to see it in a way you’ve never been able before. That’s why in this context we don’t speak of re-experience, but we say to experience it for the first time. If you can really experience that, if you can place the experience in the proper context, seeing that it is over, I survived it, it is no longer dangerous, it will never happen again because I will never be that small, vulnerable and completely dependent child again. When you have fully experienced this, it can be cleared away in one of the drawers. And the draw will say: this was life threatening, but it was 30, 40 or 50 years ago and it belongs to my personal history. It was horrible but it is over”.

I.M.: “Hypnotherapists often combine regression with inner child work. If I understand correctly this is viewed by PRI also as the creation of an illusion?”

Bosch: “When you want to give that child now what was needed back then, then our view is that you keep the illusion alive. You sustain a defense layer that effectively keeps the trauma from getting on the conveyer belt and ending up stored in the proper drawer. That is the thought process in PRI”.

I.M.: “In a video clip on the website you are saying that the working processes are innovative. Can you tell me more about that?”

Bosch: “About ten years ago I wrote my first three books and I’ve learned a lot since then. They are still accurate, but I can now formulate more exactly and thus transfer it to others more precisely. During the therapist training I had to explain explicitly to my students, what I do intuitively with clients. Jean Jenson taught me a lot, we’ve discussed it at length, I have been able to add a lot of things, but in the end that is not an education. For some reason, I could apply it in a way that was completely natural and I was surprised to find that not everyone could do it in the same natural way. This is how I discovered that it was not so clear to everyone. The past ten years have been a huge process, because I had to answer a lot of questions and explain what it is all about: what is the essence, how does it really work? People I work with often say: “with you there is no escape’. That sounds horrible and it isn’t nice, but somehow I block the defenses in such a manner that the pain beneath it has no other choice but to surface. That is a process of very exact work, in which the client is the innocent victim of the defenses. I am working with the defenses and that can be quite a fierce fight. Sometimes the defense is really fast, smart and almost invisible, it goes underground and tries to reach the client from behind: a tough situation”.

I.M.: “Yes, we don’t call it a strategy for nothing”.

Bosch: “Exactly, and that’s why I have a method that is precise and cuts right through the defenses. A method that I have consistently made more explicit and the result, ten years after the first two books, is now explained in this new book. Also for the first time I have written explicitly about spirituality. That layer was recognizably there in my first books for someone who was already on that path. But now it is explicitly added for those who haven’t explored it yet, so that’s new. I think it also is a nice book to give as a present for someone, if you don’t want to arrive with a heavy text book.

I.M.: “Presumably, a difference in our method y is that you don’t induce a trance?”

Bosch is surprised. “But in regressions as we do them, people experience the situation, go back to before they were born, experience birth, go back to the first weeks of their lives and enter a layer in their consciousness that they were never before aware of. We may say: close your eyes and go back to that old situation....see it before you...concentrate on that essential moment... feel its effect on you...focus your attention on your body...feel in your body what is happening....let the feeling take you all the way back in time when.....”

I.M.: “Right, that is recognizable, you do work with a trance. Some hypnotherapists call PRI cognitive, as if based on cognitive behavioral therapy. You do use instruments that derive from cbt, like making notes and registering experiences, filling out lists and generally you work more analytically than in hypnotherapy.

Bosch: “We do work with cognitive and behavior, but specifically with feelings. And the body, the body! People who have a poorly developed body awareness will require, before we can start with PRI, a preparatory phase in which they develop their body awareness. In this book regression is not discussed because it is a complicated subject and not very suited for a broad range of readers”.

I.M.: “Isn’t it very complicated to unravel emotions in this way, isn’t it better to do this with the help of a therapist?”

Bosch:"Yes, that's undoubtedly the case. It is very complicated because the defenses are our blind spots. At some point I realized that not everyone in the world will do therapy. That is a utopia. So what to do? I received a technique here that can be unbelievably effective. And I can reserve that for a small group of people who do the therapy, or we can gather our strength and really bring our vision forward to the world. This way you may not always go into depth, but you can reach more people. That is a conscious choice. PRI is fantastic as a therapy, but also people who consider this one step too many can be supported with the basic knowledge of symbols and defenses for example. 'Hmm, I am afraid while there is really no danger: maybe that is what is in the book'. That is the intention that is behind the book, to reach a broader audience, people who will never do therapy, to offer them something that will help them to influence their life, their surroundings and especially the lives of their children in a positive manner.

Sources:

[www.pastrealityintegration.com](http://www.pastrealityintegration.com)

Rediscovering the true self (2000), Illusions (2003). The innocent prisoner (2007), PRI and the art of conscious living (2010).

Ingrid Mehtens is a musician, psychologist and hypnotherapist. She teaches hypnotherapy and psychology at a range of schools. As therapist she offers personal coaching at her own practice in Naarden.