



Reflections on writing
Spirit into Form:
Exploring Embryological Potential
and Prenatal Psychology

By Cherionna Menzam-Sills, PhD,
RSMT/E, RCST



Spirit into Form led me through a profound and lengthy journey I can only equate to the birth process. I admit that after seventeen years' gestation, I felt an unavoidable urgency to see it take shape as my clients and students eagerly, albeit patiently, awaited its arrival, too. During the final moments, I felt like a small-bodied woman giving birth to a 10-pound baby.

A Budding Writer: The gestational phase

I had known from about age eleven that I wanted to write. Although my stories impressed my elders at that time, it took many years of experiencing life – my own and my clients' – before I felt that I really had something significant to write about. My first book, *The Breath of Life: An Introduction to Craniosacral Biodynamics*, served to warm me up for writing *Spirit into Form*. By the time *The Breath of Life* was published, I couldn't wait to focus on birthing what felt like a record of my life's work.

When I began organizing my notes and bits of writing, I discovered I had initiated the writing process in 2005 in preparation to meet Emilie Conrad, the founder of a mindful-movement inquiry process called Continuum. Her writings were so inspirational I struggled to record thoughts speeding through me. *Spirit into Form* was conceived during those moments. My inspiration intensified as I met and then spent years in close contact with Emilie, who became an important mentor for me. Her visionary ideas and words are infused throughout the book.





Developmental Experiences: My own healing journey

I have been passionate about pre and perinatal psychology and therapy since my first encounter while training in somatic psychotherapy at Naropa University in the early 1990s. I had already experienced my bodywork clients “birthing” themselves off my treatment table. One had called me a “midwife of the soul.” I knew my life’s calling related to this. I had also just begun my own healing journey.

Later in this journey, I often told people I pursued my doctorate in pre- and perinatal psychology mainly because it provided the necessary structure to do my own work. I look back on six years intensive study with pre and perinatal therapy pioneer William Emerson and then four years intensive work with another pioneer in the field, Ray Castellino, and reflect on how essential it is for each of us, as therapists, to do our own work in order to be fully present and to appropriately meet our clients.

The final chapter of *Spirit into Form* is about pre and perinatal experience as unconscious shadow material. I see it as particularly important for therapists to shine the light on our own early prenatal and birth experience because it is so easily relegated to shadowy aspects of ourselves. Without awareness, we tend to project and act out our challenging or traumatic history. My own journey and witnessing my clients and students over the years as they came to terms with their own early history convinced me that my passion for this territory and communicating about it has value.



Coming into the Light: Clarity in Conscious Awareness

My intention in writing this book is to spread the word. As long as our early history remains in the shadows, we remain powerless to create anything different in our lives and relationships. We perpetuate what we are unaware of. In the process, the amazing potential of that time may become occluded by traumatic imprints.

I feel fortunate to have been exposed not only to pre and perinatal psychology and therapy but also to the transformative practices of both Continuum and Craniosacral Biodynamics. Through studying and practicing these visionary healing arts, I learned about what I came to call our "original embryological potential," and how that original blueprint is always available to us. Biodynamics emerged from the field of Osteopathy, carrying with it a basic understanding that there is always Health with a capital "H" and Intelligence with a capital "I" present and alive in our system. When we orient to these universal biodynamic forces expressing a mysterious essence we call the breath of life, we can begin to remember and return to the health that we are. Through Emilie Conrad and Continuum, I learned to further embody these principles through mindful fluid-movement explorations.

Spirit into Form is about understanding where we have come from and who we are. Where we have come from includes both our ineffable spiritual source and our early physical development in the womb, known as embryology. My studies and clinical experience have demonstrated to me repeatedly that these are not separate. The developing psyche is intricately intertwined with how our cells and tissues interact and transform our shape in our early months. I often think of embryonic life as resembling that of adolescents. The body is changing from moment to moment. How do we know who we are when we keep changing?

Life is about change. We cannot avoid it, even when we try. Our earliest experiences can profoundly affect how we meet the changes life brings. My hope in writing this book is that the awareness it offers will support us as therapists, parents, teachers, birth practitioners, and anyone else who spends time with little ones or people of any age who have little ones within them. I observe our world today and wish for everyone conscious awareness of the original potential that awaits our discovery.

Cherionna Menzam-Sills draws on her extensive background in prenatal and perinatal psychology, embryology, bodywork, Continuum, and other somatic therapies, as well as years of working with her husband, Biodynamics pioneer Franklyn Sills, to enhance her writing, teaching and clinical practice. She is certified as a teacher of Craniosacral Biodynamics with the Biodynamic Craniosacral Therapy Association of North America (BCTA/NA), and as a supervisor by the Craniosacral Association of the UK. Authorized in 2007 as a Continuum Movement Teacher by Continuum founder, Emilie Conrad, she integrates Continuum into her work, to enhance embodied understanding and experiential exploration of important concepts. Continuum is a mindful movement practice involving perceptual shifts and healing potential similar to those of Biodynamics.

More information on Cherionna and her work at www.birthingyourlife.org

Photo credits

Emilie Conrad downloaded from <https://continuummovement.com/founder-emilie-conrad-bio/>

Generational layers drawn by Cherionna Menzam-Sills

Coming into the light: Stefan Keller from Pixabay