Michael Mahoney

Written by Tammie Ronen, Professor, Head of the Bob Shapell School of Social Work, Tel-Aviv University, Israel

In his book Human Change Process from 1991, Michael Mahoney described the use of traveling metaphors as: "the most scaffolding experience of psychotherapy... since it involves transition and travel...there are paths, modes and abilities for movement, pacing, pause, obstacle, challenges, choice points, destinations, directions, encounter and dialogues..." (p. 273).

In all these aspects, Michael was a man constantly embarking on processes of travel and change. He took advantage of opportunity, of risks, and of challenges, and what attracted me most was his ability to always change. Unlike many of the creative scientists who developed something and then stuck to it forever, Michael always looked for refinements, changes, and improvements in what he had constructed. And I, like many others, saw him as my tour guide, and followed his footsteps.

As a young lecturer, I was just in the midst of hesitation about whether I could really define myself as a cognitive behavioral therapist when I encountered Mahoney's book on Cognition and Behavior Modification (1974), which helped me understand that behavior therapists can also be flexible, creative, and interesting. As I discovered his books on self-control, like Power to the Person (with Thoresen, 1974), I already knew that "when I grew up" I would like to write as well as he did. His books were like poetry to me.

In his way, Michael Mahoney symbolized the shift in behavior therapy that most of us followed, from traditional behavior therapy to the "softer theory" of cognitive therapy and self-control. And then he took a turn onto another turnpike – into the creativity and art within constructivism. Michael described these shifts and turns in his own journey in his book Constructive Psychotherapy (2003): "We are all always in 'process' and everything we think, feel, and do is an expression of this fact."

As he turned more toward constructivism, self-organization, and selfhood theories, Michael started helping us understand that we cognitive behaviorists need to pay more attention to ourselves, our selfhood, and our emotions.

In the book edited by Neimeyer and Mahoney (1995), Constructivism in Psychotherapy, he proposed that future directions and challenges will be in "increasing appreciation of the centrality of personal identity (self) in real-life and everyday experience ... and with the most powerful intimate relationships that have the most emotional power to the individual..." (p. 55).

In the personal realm, Michael was the one who challenged me by urging me...
to write "what you really do, the way you do it, which is unique only to you" when I was struggling to publish research studies appreciated by the university. He had a strong influence on my last two books' journey to publication: *In and Out of Anorexia* and *Cognitive Constructivist Psychotherapy with Children and Adolescents*.

When I was asked to write some words in his memory, I returned to a special book he gave me when he stayed with us in Ohio during one of our sabbaticals. He came to visit us with his copy of the book *The essential Rumi* (1995), the ancient Sufi poet. At night, he used to sit with us in the kitchen, reading poems aloud to us from this book. In the morning, when we were just waking up but he had not slept at all after a fit of creativity, he again joined in the kitchen, this time to read to us what he had written during the night. On the last day of his visit, he gave me his copy of the book of Rumi. He had filled it with signs and underlines. When I looked at the book now, I found inside, his boarding ticket from his flight to visit us. This is one poem he underlined (Rumi, p. 278):

> You have said what you are.  
> I am what I am.  
> Your actions in my head,  
> My head here in my hands  
> With something circling inside.  
> I have no name  
> For what circles  
> So perfectly

I am now in a process of writing a new book on imagery and metaphors. This long planned book of mine was often a subject of conversation with Michael, and he offered me constant encouragement to choose that writing path. When the publisher asked me who could recommend it or write the introduction, without thinking, my automatic answer was Michael Mahoney. Who else?

It is hard to speak of Michael in the past tense. I'd rather think of him as being on a long journey. Being on the road again. I just hope that in this last trip he found the love, rest, and peace he always sought.

Since I have no idea how to end this short writing about Michael, I hope he will not mind if I use his own words, from the first paragraph of his poem that I like so much:

> The Pilgrim in process

> It's a season of transition and you're on the move again  
> On a path toward something you cannot disown;  
> Searching for your being in the labyrinths of heart  
> And sensing all the while you're not alone….  

(Neimeyer & Mahoney, 2002  
*Constructivism in Psychotherapy*, p. 396)

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