

this article discusses Rosen work-the article itself had wonderful photos of Marion working. Elizabeth Mayer co-led a one day evening workshop about Rosen work and psychotherapy about a year or more ago. Hope you enjoy it. Science of the Mind

New ways of thinking move from New Age to science

By Chad Jones

Most of us have had the experience of knowing something we didn't know we knew.

A parent suddenly knows when a child is in trouble. Before the phone rings _ and without the benefit of caller ID _ we know who's going to be on the other end. You're thinking about an old friend you haven't seen for awhile and the next thing you know, there's an e-mail.

Elizabeth Lloyd Mayer wants to know why and how we know these things.

What some people might call paranormal activity or extrasensory perception, Mayer calls "anomalous phenomena," or that which falls outside the current realm of scientific measure. She says she doesn't see anything "para" or "extra" about things like intuition, coincidence or telekinesis.

"These events are perfectly normal," she says. "I call them 'extraordinary knowing.' We've all experienced such events, but we lack ways to talk about them seriously."

Like many enterprising thinkers and scientists before her, Mayer, 56, is attempting to bridge the gap between intuitive, creative thinking and hard, rational science. Building such a bridge means changing the way the medical and scientific establishment thinks, she acknowledges, and that happens slowly. But, she insists, it does happen.

And it is happening. Ideas that were formerly part of the New Age fringe _ things like the connection between body and mind, between emotions and physical well being _ have been validated by advances in neuroscience and welcomed into mainstream medicine.

The government is funding research into alternative and complementary medicine, and major universities are funneling funds and resources into research on, believe it or not, anomalous phenomena.

The most recent Gallup Poll reports that more than half of Americans believe in anomalous phenomena such as ESP, unexplained coincidence or prayer healing.

A common response to discussion of anomalous phenomena, however, is for certain New Age, kook or woo-woo alarms to go off, even in spiritually friendly Northern California.

But Mayer, known as Lisby to her friends, is not from the New Age world of crystals, incense and past-life regressions.

She is, in her own joking words, "ridiculously respectable." Mayer is a busy professor, writer and psychoanalyst. Her academic work keeps her shuttling from her posts as an associate clinical professor in the psychology departments at the University of California, Berkeley, and University of California Medical Center in San Francisco. She also spends time at the San Francisco Psychoanalytic Institute, where she is a training and supervising psychoanalyst.

When not on a college campus, she puts her bachelor's degree from Harvard and doctorate from Stanford to use with a private clinical practice in Berkeley. To feed her artistic side, she serves as artistic director of California Revels, the group that produces the annual December pageant "The Christmas Revels" in Oakland.

Opening minds

In spite of her hectic schedule, Mayer has devoted much of the last four years to writing a book called "Extraordinary Knowing," which will be published next year by Bantam/Dell, a division of Random House. A series of ideas from that in-progress book linking hard science and anomalous phenomena also garnered her national attention when, last December, the New York Times Magazine named her one of the country's 67 "top idea makers for 2003."

As Mayer has been researching, writing and listening to people's stories of inexplicable occurrences in their lives, she has also been trying out the material on increasingly receptive groups of doctors, scientists and academics.

"I have been astonished by the openness," she says. "It has been my experience that about 90 percent of the people at lectures or that I chat with at parties are open to the ideas of anomalous phenomena.

"I'm not saying it's true or it's right," Mayer continues. "My point is that we should be talking about it. If you have an experience and you cannot talk it about with your peers, that inhibits the experience. There's nothing healthy in people feeling afraid to talk about something that matters to them."

In the last few years, when Mayer has offered seminars on subjects such as spirituality and theories of knowledge for health professionals, they have filled almost instantly. For 60 available seats, more than 150 people would sign up.

Given a safe environment in which to talk, stories poured out of doctors and mental health care professionals, stories about spirituality, intuition and coincidence _ things they knew without knowing how they knew them.

"It's a battle between the rational and intuitive," Mayer explains. "There's such polarization between the two. But it's not about one being better than the other. Different people have different ways. It's about accepting that and allowing people the safety to be open and to help them do their best work."

These days Mayer is inundated with stories. Everyone has a story.

"You won't believe this..." they begin, or, "The most amazing thing happened..."

Sitting in the living room of her Berkeley hills home, Mayer answers a phone call from a psychoanalyst colleague, and before the conversation is over, Mayer will have heard yet another story about an extraordinary coincidence _ this one about finding a name on a piece of paper in a balloon and a chance meeting decades later.

"People are reluctant to fully accept anomalous phenomena _ for good reason," Mayer says. "Not every coincidence has meaning. Plenty of things happen that don't mean anything, but that doesn't mean we give up on the idea that certain coincidences might have meaning.

"Once you accept that coincidence can be a sort of connection, there's a fear that every coincidence is something we have to pay attention to. That's what's disturbing about potentially anomalous experiences. People are afraid of opening that door and stepping onto a slippery slope."

But as she reiterates often, Mayer says that accepting anomalous phenomena does not mean abandoning rational thought.

"I'm not saying that if you begin to think seriously about intuition or coincidence that you give up on science or training, not at all," she says. "It's like playing the piano. You'll never give a brilliant performance without skill, practice, formal training and an enormous amount of work. But by the same token, you'll never be brilliant if that's all you're concentrating on. At some point, your skill and training takes you into a different, more intuitive state."

Connecting bodies, minds

In her own psychoanalytic practice, Mayer says her investigation into anomalous phenomena has affected the way she interacts with patients.

"I've developed a different balance in my awareness of my state of mind in which I listen to patients," she says. "It is profound and kinesthetic, meaning 'in the body.' It's a physical awareness of your state of mind. That's what so interested me in the work of Marion MDUL <cm,cq> MDNM Rosen."

Rosen is the 89-year-old Berkeley resident who developed a form of touch therapy called the Rosen Method.

After years of work as a physical therapist, Rosen began to notice that working through the tension in a person's body had an emotional as well as a physical effect.

In 1983, Rosen founded the Rosen Method: The Berkeley Center and has since created similar

training centers around the world in countries such as Scandinavia, Australia, Canada, Russia and her native Germany.

After decades of hands-on physical therapy and light massage work, Rosen has worn the fingerprints from her fingertips. In the 21 years since she introduced the method that bears her name, Rosen has found acceptance by the medical and psychological world slow in coming.

"I think minds are opening a bit," Rosen says in a quiet, German-accented voice. "The mind and body connection has taken a long time to be accepted, but to me it's very obvious the two are intricately related. But that is not taught in medical school, so people are careful about it."

Rosen says she understands that what may seem readily apparent to her as she works with patients requires hard scientific data and research to convince medical professionals. She sees that data coming from Swedish studies of the relaxation hormone oxytocin, which can be released during physical contact, and from ongoing research into the relationship between emotion and the immune system.

Rosen's first student, Sarah Webb, who now serves as the Berkeley Center's executive director, says she sees that, more than medicine, the world of psychotherapy is opening up to the potential of body work in combination with the more traditional "talking cure," as Freud called it.

"This kind of work was viewed with suspicion in the '80s," says Webb, 55, from her Lafayette home. "People tended to look at it as flaky or alternative and lumped it in with New Age therapy.

"But over time, psychology professionals have come to recognize how important the body is when it comes to helping people change. Cognitive thinking about change can take people so far, but real change has to happen on a physical as well as emotional and mental level. More and more we see therapists collaborating with body workers."

About a year ago, Mayer was invited to a seminar in which she was asked to comment on the mind-body connection from a psychotherapist's point of view while Rosen worked on a volunteer from the audience.

One of the things Mayer pointed out was the fact that developments in cognitive neuroscience have shifted the way we think about the body and the mind _ not as separate entities but as a unified system in which one has direct impact on the other.

Coming of (new) age

That is a prime example of New Age thinking that has come of age in a scientifically acceptable way according to Gordon Wheeler, the new president of Esalen, the 40-year-old training center near Big Sur that has been the source of many a New Age kook joke.

"Before 1980, the medical establishment and alternative healers didn't speak to each other,"

Wheeler says. "Now it's the most common thing to have a doctor refer you to an accupuncturist or for your HMO to pay for stress-reduction classes that involve some form of meditation.

A generation ago, Herbert Benson did pioneering work that showed mental experiences have a profound chemical effect on the body. That was very new and off the page, but rigorous science can measure the fact that mental and emotional events influence bodily states. The old Western split between emotion and cognition has broken down."

One of the 27 institutes within the federal National Institutes of Health is the five-year-old National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine. The center's very existence indicates that new ways of thinking about bodies, minds and the health of both are being explored by the biggest establishment there is: the United States government.

Delving into the world of anomalous phenomena as she worked on her book, Mayer discovered a vast trove of scientific research at Princeton University, where Robert G. Jahn and Brenda J. Dunne have spent more than two decades developing the Princeton Engineering Anomalies Research program. Thousands of experiments have determined that the human mind, often subconsciously, can have a physical effect on matter outside the body.

"The scientific research being done at Princeton over the last 25 years on mind-matter anomalies is profoundly important," Mayer says.

She adds that serious scientific research on anomalous phenomena has been going on since the 1880s with William James and other Harvard scholars at the Society for Psychical Research and in the early 1900s by the experimental psychologist William McDougall, also at Harvard and later the founder of the Duke University psychology department.

The problem with the research, Mayer says, is that as in our own personal discussions of anomalous phenomena, we don't know quite what to do with it.

"There is no conceptual model to help make sense of the results, and as a result, it gets dismissed," Mayer says.

But, she adds, the more research there is and the more people become unafraid _ or unembarrassed _ to talk about their own anomalous experiences, the better the chances of mainstream acceptance.

With new ways of thinking making some inroads _ "some" being the operative word _ in the worlds of science and medicine, Mayer says she is hopeful that the study of anomalous phenomena can open minds and increase a sense of connectedness and involvement among people.

"There's a sense of crisis in the world because the world is not working the way we're living in it," she says. "How could it hurt to study the underlying forms of human connection to each other and

to our environment? We've got to make it a priority."

Reconnecting mind, matter

Technological advancements in all realms of science, Mayer says, have been "brilliant" at separating mind and matter.

"Now we have to be brilliant about re-connecting them," she says. "That will be the triumph: reconnecting mind and matter without undoing rationality. It's now in progress. The goal is to maintain the scientific world view but know how to go back and forth between that and other ways of thinking. That's the key. One simply cannot be subsumed by the other."

Four years ago, as she was putting her usual psychological research papers into a drawer and embarking on her exploration of anomalous phenomena, Mayer remembers being undaunted by what people might think of her.

"The first time I was at a professional gathering and admitted what I was studying, the response was, 'People will say you're crazy.'" she says. "And I said the ones who do will not remain close friends and colleagues unless they can show me I'm wrong."

Mayer says that in her travels, she has encountered little resistance to her thoughts on anomalous phenomena. She has observed open-mindedness and even eagerness among "top-flight scientific thinkers" and people in positions to promote change.

Shifts in thinking happen at a glacial pace. But change, as we know, is constant. Within the next generation, we may discover that we know more than we think we do, that we're connected to one another and to the world in surprising ways and that "extraordinary knowing" really isn't that extraordinary after all.

For more information about the Princeton Engineering Anomalies Research project, visit [www.princeton.edu/~\[tilde\]pear](http://www.princeton.edu/~[tilde]pear); for the Rosen Method, visit www.rosenmethod.com/berkschool.htm; for the National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine, visit <http://nccam.nih.gov>.

Chad Jones
(925) 416-4853

Theater critic and features writer in the Bay Area Living section of the Oakland Tribune, the San Mateo County Times, the Marin Independent Journal, the Alameda Times-Star, the Hayward Daily Review, the Fremont Argus, the Tri-Valley Herald, the San Ramon Valley Herald, the Vallejo Times Herald.