

From Survival to Embodiment

Working with Intergenerational Trauma,
Boundaries & the Mind-Body Split
in High-Functioning Clients

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Association for Jewish Psychologists | May 12, 2026 | Zoom



Before we begin —

a somatic check-in.

Overfunctioning

Emotional shutdown

People-pleasing

Notice what happens in your body.



Tanya Dantus

LMFT, SEP | Author of *"The Power of No"*

- 20+ years in the healing arts
- B.A. in Anthropology from Columbia University
- Dancer, yoga teacher, somatic practitioner
- Lived & practiced in Germany for 7 years
- Mexican Jewish — born in Mexico City
- Creator of the RIFRA Method

"I didn't fully understand the depth of this work until I had to apply it to myself."

Many clients don't look traumatized. They look successful.

Client Type A

Articulate. Years of therapy.
Knows all the language.
And goes home and does
the same thing anyway.

Client Type B

Intelligent. High-functioning.
Almost no insight at all.
Can't connect the present
to anything in the past.

Different presentations. Same gap. Between knowing and actually feeling.

“

**Insight without embodiment
is just distance
with good vocabulary.**

— *Tanya Dantus*

These patterns are not just personal.

Grandmother

Survival strategy:
Suppress, comply,
don't draw attention.

Mother

Inherited strategy:
Overfunction. Perform.
Be indispensable.

Your Client

Presenting complaint:
"I don't know why I
can't stop doing this."

We are sometimes working with wounds that are older than the client in the room.

A personal share.

**I explored every
spiritual tradition
I could find.**

Every one except my own.

Hinduism • Buddhism • Zen monastery • Plum Village • Yoga lineages

I didn't see it for what it was.

Then I moved to Germany.

Hearing German triggered something I didn't have language for.

Stolpersteine — small brass squares set into sidewalks across Germany, marking where Jews were taken.

You walk over them. You don't see them until you're looking.



I started looking.

The claustrophobia. The hypervigilance I had always called my personality.

The body holding a memory the mind had never consciously received.

“ **The body receives testimony differently than the mind receives history.** ”



Listening to my great-uncle's Shoah Foundation testimony — his voice — landed in a way no book ever had.

Internalized antisemitism

doesn't always look like self-hatred.

It looks like distancing from your own community

Making sophisticated arguments for why they aren't your people

Rejecting before you can be rejected

Leaving before you can be pushed out

Taking one experience of Jew policing and making it a story about everyone

That is a trauma response. Not a failure of intelligence.

October 7th

Gut-punched. Primal. Immediate.

We had fought for everyone else's liberation.

And when it was our turn —

we found ourselves alone in rooms we had always called home.

*Being unseen by people who claim to care about pain —
that is exactly what our clients describe.*

In communities where intellectual rigor is a point of pride,

this kind of distance can be very hard to see.

Because it looks like health.

It looks like insight.

It looks like doing the work.

It looks like exactly what we were taught to value.

Modern Detachment Syndrome

A trauma-adaptive relational pattern in which individuals appear to be functioning — or even thriving — on the outside, while feeling internally disconnected from their emotional life, their needs, and their sense of agency.

Too Little Affect

Flat.
Disconnected.
Describing horror like a grocery list.
Lights on.
Nobody home.

Too Much Affect

Flooded.
Everything urgent.
Feeling everything with no container.
Crisis to crisis.

Different presentations. Same household. No healthy inner parent running the place.

The RIFRA Method

Root · Impact · Feel · Reflect · Act

R

Root

Where did this begin?

I

Impact

What has it cost you?

F

Feel

What is your body holding?

R

Reflect

What do you want to believe now?

A

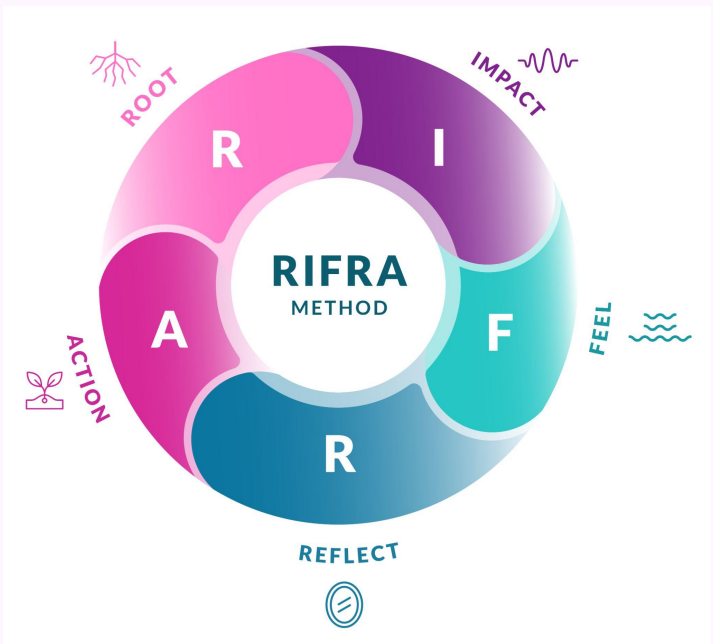
Act

What is one step in alignment?

*Different clients need
different entry points.*

*When action isn't flowing —
that's information,
not resistance.*

**Not linear.
Not a protocol.
A map.**



F — Feel

The middle of five steps. And that's no accident.

Most of these clients have a sophisticated relationship with the story of their feelings.

What they often cannot do is feel them.

The arc: anger → tenderness → fierce protectiveness for the younger part who had to go through all of that.

"What does my body want to do — if it's safe, and no one will be hurt?"

Maya

Composite client — senior director, tech industry

Root-Impact-Feel-Reflect-Action.

Boundaries

A reframe for Jewish communal culture

So what does a personal boundary even mean here?

A collective built on obligation, guilt, and self-erasure isn't actually connection. It's compliance.

Boundaries don't weaken the collective. They protect it.

"I love you and I can't do this." | "Let me think about that." | "That doesn't work for me right now."

Bring to mind something small
you would typically say yes to
out of habit or obligation.

"I'm not available for that."

Notice: tightening? relief? guilt? Where?

What size? What texture?

That sensation is the information your clients are trying to access.

That is the work. Not the concept. The felt sense.

Detachment is not a character flaw.

**It is a survival strategy
that once made complete sense.**

In a community that has known — across centuries,
across generations — what it means to survive:

Choosing to feel.

Choosing to need.

Choosing to take up space.

is, in its own way, an act of repair.



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Questions welcome.

Thank you.

The Power of No: Reclaiming Safety, Boundaries, and Your Voice Through the RIFRA Method - Available Now



Let's Stay Connected!