



# Emotional or Mechanical: Assessing for referral and co-treatment of jaw pain as a Body Psychotherapist

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**Narrative abstract:** Temporomandibular Disorder (TMD) is a common and impairing form of musculoskeletal pain that involves chronic pain and tension of the jaw and facial muscles. In spite of its pervasiveness, TMD's exact causes remain uncertain and optimal treatments are undecided. Current evidence suggests that stress and emotional experiences may be related to experiences of TMD, and some research suggests that psychotherapeutic approaches may be beneficial for TMD. However, minimal research specifically examines how somatic therapy may be applied to TMD.

In this paper, we review current ways of defining TMD and methods of treatment. In addition, we look at how somatic theorists view these symptoms, and review evidence that suggests body psychotherapy could be a useful intervention for TMD, either on its own or in conjunction with other care. We offer suggestions and considerations for body psychotherapists when working with jaw pain.

Based on current research, it appears that body psychotherapy may be uniquely positioned to support clients with TMD, given its ability to help clients process their relationship to pain, bring awareness to underlying stressors, and support self-care practices. However, additional research is needed to further explore the potential benefits of body psychotherapeutic approaches for this population, as well as the development of more accessible assessment tools to support body psychotherapists in working collaboratively with other allied health care practitioners.

**Indexing terms:** Chiropractic; Body Psychotherapist; psychotherapy; jaw pain; TMD; co-management

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**Cite:** Blum JD. Emotional or Mechanical: Assessing for referral and co-treatment of jaw pain as a Body Psychotherapist [Abstract]. Asia-Pac Chiropr J. 2023;4.1 URL [apcj.net/SOT-Abstracts-2023/#BlumJawPain](https://apcj.net/SOT-Abstracts-2023/#BlumJawPain)

