

Considerations for Treatment – Prelude to the Energy Therapies

Each person is a product of his or her heredity and environment. Each of us is born with a certain potential, and our ability to reach that potential is then either supported or not by the experiences that we encounter while growing up. Some of those experiences are positive and encourage us to reach our potential, and some are negative and discourage us from doing so.

Each of our experiences is remembered at some level, some consciously and some unconsciously. Memories of positive experiences have one or more positive emotional feeling attached to them, while memories of negative emotional experiences have one or more negative emotional feeling attached to them. These negative emotional feelings fall into three main categories: sadness, anxiety or fear, and anger.

Your positive, life-affirming experiences and your negative, unsupportive ones affect your view of yourself, of others, of the world in general, and even your relationship with God. That is, your experiences are likely to be accompanied by some kind of decision-making process, since it is as a result of your experiences that you decide what you are like, what others are like, and so on.

Negative experiences – those that generate memories which have a negative emotional charge attached to them – are likely to have been accompanied by decisions that limit you in some way. So then we come to the crux of the matter (where the rubber hits the road, so to speak):

*If you always think the way you've always thought,
You'll always feel the way you've always felt;
And if you always feel the way you've always felt,
You'll always do what you've always done;
And if you always do what you've always done,
You'll always get what you've always got.
If nothing changes, nothing changes.*

And that is okay if you are completely satisfied with the way things are going for you. If not, then it is time to let go of any negative emotions that may have become attached to the experiences you had in your past, and any limiting decisions as well, so that you can realize your fullest potential.

This is not to say that all negative emotions begin with negative thinking. Not at all. There are actually two routes to follow to become distressed. Both of these routes to distress begin with some event, which is then followed by either physiological arousal or negative thinking. The first is the “conditioned emotional arousal” route, which works as follows:

Event -> physiological arousal -> “negative”¹ thinking -> distress (i.e., anxiety, anger or sadness²)

The second route to distress, *and the one which is much more common*, is the primarily cognitive route, which works as follows:

Event -> “negative” thinking -> physiological arousal -> distress

Please note that in each case, for distress to occur, both physiological arousal and negative thinking must be present. This suggests two particular approaches to treatment. The first, Systematic Desensitization, targets the physiological arousal; the second, Rational Emotive Therapy (RET), targets the negative thinking. Let me give you a bit of background on them:

In 1958, a psychiatrist by the name of Joseph Wolpe published a book entitled *Psychotherapy by Reciprocal Inhibition* in which he described a learning-based deconditioning procedure known as Systematic Desensitization. In essence, it involves teaching the client to relax and then, while relaxed, to approach the trigger stimulus (event) at a rate which is slow enough for the client to be able to maintain the relaxation. Assuming that the event is not currently harmful, this results in the eventual pairing of relaxation and the event, which teaches the body/mind that its proper response to that particular kind of trigger stimulus is relaxation rather than arousal. That is, the client learns *at a gut level* that there is no need to get “all cranked up” about that particular kind of event. Hence, no more distress!

Shortly afterwards, Albert Ellis and Robert Harper published a book entitled *A Guide to Rational Living* in which they described a cognitively-based approach to treatment in which the client is taught to challenge his or her negative thinking on the grounds that it is erroneous or non-rational – based on such erroneous beliefs, for example, as the belief that it is *necessary* (as opposed to desirable) to be unfailingly perfect or the belief that it is *necessary* to be universally loved – since erroneous beliefs put the client in conflict with the laws of the universe and invariably contribute to his or her becoming distressed (“shooting oneself in the foot,” as it were).

Albert Ellis (*A New Guide to Rational Living*, 1975) identifies a number of different “negative” thoughts that, because they put the individual in conflict with the laws of the universe, contribute to his or her distress. These thoughts – beliefs really – always include value judgements or evaluations of the way things are:

1. I don’t get the love that I want to get, and I should get the love that I want.
2. I am not perfect, and I must be perfect (or at least close enough to it that people can’t criticize me).
3. Certain people are bad and should be punished.

¹ “Negative” thinking merely refers to thinking that is supportive of becoming upset.

² In the case of sadness, the physiological “arousal” may rebound to become physiological underarousal or suppression.

4. The world is not the way I want it to be, and it should be.
5. External events cause most human misery and must be controlled in order to create happiness and avoid sorrow.
6. The unknown is potentially dangerous, so it should be feared.
7. Taking responsibility for what happens is scary and should be avoided.
8. You can't always know what is the right thing to do, so you should turn your life over to someone or something stronger than yourself (Koffmann calls this "Decidophobia," the fear of making fateful decisions).
9. The past determines the present, so I should not be held responsible for what I do with my life.
10. Leisure is more precious than any other activity and should be sought out whenever possible.

Such irrational beliefs put the individual into conflict with the laws of the universe and inevitably lead to frustration, disappointment and distress; whereas challenging these irrational beliefs and substituting more realistic beliefs for them leads to harmony and contentment.

Both of these approaches work remarkably well. Both, however, take a reasonable amount of time, and we keep searching for methods which are quicker and even easier to apply. One group of these newer treatment methods are known as "energy-meridian-based therapies" – Thought Field Therapy (Callahan), Emotional Freedom Technique (Craig), Be Set Free Fast (Nims) and Matrix Work (Clinton).

Quoting from a book by James Durlacher (Freedom From Fear Forever, 1994):

"Some five thousand years ago the Chinese began observing a phenomenon of energy in the body that they eventually called CHI (pronounced chee), which means 'life force.' They found this energy flowed through the body from the chest to the hands, from the hands to the head, from head to the feet and then back to the chest. They found that there were no anatomical channels (tube-like conduits) as there are with arteries. However, the energy seemed to flow along particular lines or pathways [which they] called meridians.

They found there were points along these energy meridians that, when stimulated, could balance or transfer energies to make them flow freely and evenly, restoring normal function to various parts of the body. This could be accomplished by several methods, including using finger pressure, using sharp bamboo slivers, using fish bones, burning of herbal substances (moxibustion) on the skin surface, and using metal needles [and, as you know, the use of metal needles (at least in this country) is known as acupuncture]. Over the years, the various points along each meridian were numbered and named in accordance with what occurred and what organs were affected when they were stimulated.

It was also observed that each of the meridians had a specific emotion connected with it, and that if a person had an over or under abundance of that emotion, balancing the energies could restore the person's normal emotional balance." (pp. 39-40)

In 1966, a chiropractor by the name of George Goodheart found that:

"...another way of stimulating the various points of the energy meridians was to percuss

(tap) the point with the finger tip. He described the procedure as a way to relieve pain and presented his results in 1979 at the annual summer meeting of the newly formed (1974) International College of Applied Kinesiology.” (p. 41)

Shortly afterwards, a psychologist by the name of Roger Callahan contacted George Goodheart, took the applied kinesiology training, and began to adapt applied kinesiology to psychological problems. In 1981, he published a paper called “A Rapid Treatment for Phobias,” and Thought Field Therapy was born.

Now, as was previously mentioned, the Chinese found that specific meridians were associated with specific emotions. Thought Field Therapy is based on the premise that the cause of *all* negative emotions is a disruption in the body’s energy system, and that these negative emotions can be eliminated by tapping on various (acupressure) points on the energy meridians to restore the energy balance *while thinking of the disturbance*, just as proposed in Chinese medicine so many years ago.

That in itself was hardly original; however, Callahan does seem to have added one important piece to the puzzle of emotional disturbance and its treatment, and that is the idea of Psychological Reversal. It was his experience that tapping at certain places on the energy meridians was successful in rapidly eliminating emotional disturbances in approximately 60% of cases. In trying to understand why the success rate wasn’t higher, he came to a couple of conclusions: first, that progress was being blocked by a kind of low-self-esteem-related self-sabotage and, second, that this self-sabotage – which he called “psychological reversal” – could be eliminated, at least temporarily, by having the patient say “I accept myself even though I have this problem” (stating the specific problem that the client consciously wants to eliminate) *while tapping or rubbing on certain energy-system-related points on the body*.

Callahan began offering training in this new method, which he called Thought Field Therapy (on the grounds that “the trauma is encoded in the Thought Field”), and an engineer by the name of Gary Craig was one of the first people to invest in that training. However, Craig disagreed with Callahan on a few basic points and is now promoting a variation of Callahan’s Thought Field Therapy which he calls Emotional Freedom Technique (www.emofree.com). The main differences are as follows:

Callahan (TFT) says that disturbances (perturbations) in the thought field function as triggers for the physiological, neurological, hormonal, chemical and cognitive events which result in the experience of specific negative emotions; and that a perturbation and the negative emotion that it controls can be eliminated by tapping at particular points on the energy meridian(s) while attuned to the thought field associated with that particular negative emotion. Callahan (TFT) determines the location and the tapping sequence by various diagnostic procedures or uses algorithms that are likely to work for specific problems. Craig (EFT) says that the above may be true but that, if you routinely correct for any potential psychological reversal and then tap on enough meridians in any order, you will eliminate the disturbance regardless of the kind of emotional problem. The standard EFT procedure simply uses the more common tapping points starting at the top and working your way down the body (upper body only), and repeats the process until the problem is eliminated. This method is not universally effective but it does tend to work in about eighty-five to ninety percent of cases; and when it does work, the effects are very dramatic.