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Energy psychologists use variety of integrative therapies

April 1st, 2013

In the mid-1980s when psychologist Roger Callahan, Ph.D., and psychiatrist John Diamond, M.D., formulated the foundations for energy psychology, few mental health professionals understood or accepted the paradigm. However, in recent years, this niche area has gained acceptance as integrative therapies, such as emotional freedom technique (EFT), thought field therapy (TFT), tapas acupuncture technique (TAT) and others, have been integrated into psychology practice.

DeAnn Ewart, Ph.D., a private practitioner in Brookfield, Conn., uses EFT, a "simple, streamlined" technique that incorporates traditional psychological procedures with non-Western healing systems. "I teach clients to combine acupressure with cognitive restructuring and exposure," she says. "It's both a clinical technique and a self help approach to shifting the brain patterns that lead to unwanted thoughts, feelings and actions."

During sessions, the client repeats statements while tapping with their own fingertips on points on the face, hand and body. For instance, a client who has witnessed a tragedy, such as the recent school shooting in Newtown might repeat, "Even though I can't get these images out of my head, I fully and completely accept myself." Ewart says, "The acupressure is calming the amygdala at the same time as the client is focusing on a distressing topic, thereby separating unwanted emotional reactions from their triggers."

Ewart tracks clients' progress and witnesses relief for some within one or two sessions, depending on the issue's intensity. "We ask the client to rate the level of distress from one to 10 before tapping, then begin the protocols and ask again about the distress level. This is a concrete way to map shifts and changes," she says. "It's the most effective and efficient technique I've ever used."

Asha Clinton, Ph.D., MSW, private practitioner in Lee, Mass., and founder/executive director of the Advanced Integrative Therapy Institute (AIT), spent 20 years using traditional psychology methods while searching for more powerful ways of treating. Thirteen years ago she founded AIT, a new psychotherapy that focuses on removing traumatic energy through the energy centers in the body's core. "I saw a need for combining analytical understanding of psychological dynamics with the focused removal of traumatic energy. Previously, there was no integrative theory to tell practitioners what to do and why," Clinton says. "In traditional psychology, you are trying to move energy along, but with ineffective methods."

A typical AIT session includes an initial visit during which AIT practitioners obtain a detailed history that gives them a clear idea of the client's childhood issues. "I also observe while taking the history to determine if the client can connect or has attachment issues," Clinton says. After analyzing the history and presentation, she identifies the themes that need treatment. "The client comes not only to understand how the present is distorted by past trauma, but also to remove that influence to a large degree," she says.

During AIT, the client holds one hand stationary on the relevant energy center and moves the other slowly from the crown center downward while repeating a phrase that targets the trauma under treatment.

Although the majority of Clinton's clients present with some form of personality disorder or complex posttraumatic stress disorder, she points out that AIT is used to treat anxiety disorders, obsessive compulsive disorder, somatization and every other major diagnosis aside from psychosis.

Guided Self Healing incorporates every other modality within the energy psychology system, according to Andrew Hahn, Psy.D., founder of this integrative framework and private practitioner in Waltham, Mass.. He explains that the practice combines Eastern philosophies, ancient wisdom and modern day psychology to open up the flow of energy in the body. "All blocks are really an invitation to re-membering who we are," he says, pointing out that memories that cannot be integrated eventually become a symptom. Hahn explains that the body holds visual, auditory and kinesthetic clues to the underlying problem. "What you present with might be a symptom, but the client may not be aware of the real issue," he says. "Every story manifests as a discomfort in the body. We need to find a way to get to the originating template. This is part of the transformation process."

Guided Self Healing uses the Enneagram to help determine personality type, which in turn, directs the therapy. "If you understand [the personality type], you can 'meet' people beyond where they've been met before. You can really reach people's inner selves," says Hahn.

The therapy begins with a five-step process in which the client expresses a desire, works on foundational issues, prepares for and then begins the healing journey and arrives at the destination.

Combining some of the modalities under the energy psychology umbrella with more traditional methods allows Caryn Bienstock, Ph.D., who practices in Rowayton, Conn., to be flexible and meet the unique needs of her clients. At times, she has utilized TAT and neuromovement, which focuses on acupressure points in the hands and wrists and is commonly used by chiropractors. "Most energy techniques are based on acupressure points. The body doesn't know the difference between emotion and pain. By doing a series of taps, like having acupressure, you release energy in the meridians," she says.

Bienstock has taught some clients EFT, a tool they can use on their own to reduce anxiety, depression and stress. She also integrates guided imagery and eye movement desensitization reprocessing (EMDR), which she calls a "borderline energy technique," into some sessions. "All of the techniques bypass the conscious mind and are usually shorter term techniques," she says. "When a client is stuck in a pattern, you have to be flexible. If you attune yourself to the person you are with, you know the right thing to do."

The American Psychological Association's Continuing Education Committee recently granted the Association for Comprehensive Energy Psychology (ACEP) two-year approval as a sponsor of continuing education for psychologists, according to Rhea Farberman,

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PHOTO BY Tom Croke
Guided Self Healing incorporates every other modality within the energy psychology system, says Andrew Hahn, Psy.D., founder of the framework and a private practitioner in Waltham, Mass.

executive director of the APA's Public and Member Communications. She explains that the Continuing Education Committee doesn't approve individual continuing education programs, but looks at the organizational level and its capacity to deliver continuing education consistent with the standards and criteria. "The criteria for approval as a CE provider are intentionally broad to allow psychologists to learn about new therapy techniques and monitor their efficacy for particular patient groups as additional research is completed," she says.

Farberman adds, "In general, APA approval of an organization as a CE provider is not an endorsement of any specific course content or therapeutic intervention. Specifically, APA approval of ACEP as a CE provider is not an endorsement of energy psychology as a therapy technique."

Critics might view energy psychology techniques as "strange" and Ewart admits "the claims almost seem too good to be true." But she says, "As a trained psychologist, I must tend to look at things with a critical eye. I want to see the research and evidence, but once you see it, you understand how it works."

By Phyllis Hanlon

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3 Responses to Energy psychologists use variety of integrative therapies



Richard posted:

April 4th, 2013 at 8:25 am

For a dozen years I have practiced a modality whereby constrictions throughout the body are unblocked or loosened. The original name of the practice was Unlimited Body, although there are some who are using a version of the practice with their own names, modeled after the original. It entails a deep level of concentration on the physical aspects, albeit pains, discomfort, or other bodily disruptions, etc. It can be practiced one on one through the clothing where hands are placed onto specific areas allowing for the movement of tissue through the body's own realignment processes. I look to a total involvement by the client and a 100% recognition of their painful areas. Through a gradual consciousness I merely wait for a response to occur. The triggering is felt eliciting a tingling or pulsation which becomes more pronounced and changes during the exercise helping the client stay focused. Actually the client likely will never reach the 100% or total involvement because of avoidance from many outside determinants, whether they be internal or external such as a noise distraction or internal fear. Everyone reacts differently and is their own unique driver on this wonderful path of self discovery and healing. Eventually the client gains more insight into their own unique holding pattern(s) and correlates it with their own unique history. The musculature and tissue surrounding the afflicted areas becomes softer as the realignment process helps to restore the constrictions and proper re-functioning begins..

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Robert Schwarz, PsyD posted:

April 12th, 2013 at 3:39 pm

Great article Phyllis. My only comment has to do with Rhea Faberman's comments, that have the potential to be misleading. I have been directly involved with ACEP's application with the APA for the past 5 years. There have been several attempts at becoming approved. ACEP failed the first two times. Those failures had nothing to do with organizational level or capacity. It had to do with the committee's rejection of Energy Psychology as a curriculum. Energy psychology approaches and their relationship to psychology and psychotherapy are the only thing ACEP offers for CE. In this third and successful attempt, organizational capacity had nothing to do with our success, the committee finally agreed that the curriculum was now suitable for APA CE. The main reason this has happened is that there has been so much more research demonstrating the effectiveness of energy psychology. So while it is technically correct that the APA does not endorse energy psychology or any other approach; the fact of the matter is that the APA CE sponsorship committee now recognizes the energy psychology as worthy of CE credit for psychologists. This is no small matter. Hopefully more psychologists will now be willing to put this remarkable tool in their tool kit. To see the research go to <http://www.energypsych.org/research>

Robert schwarz, PsyD
ACEP, Executive Director

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gregory nicosia, Ph.D. posted:

April 12th, 2013 at 4:03 pm

APA approval of ACEP is a huge change in the policy of the APA that had disallowed energy psychology (EP) to be taught by any approved provider for 15 years. It is not necessarily an endorsement of EP as EP as a therapy, but it is a recognition that the more than 50 published research articles certainly meet the requirements of the APA CE program. EP is among the most powerful therapeutic tools that I have experienced in over 35 years of research and practice. Given APA approval for CE has arrived, psychologists will be able to explore and utilize these powerful healing tools to better serve those that we serve.

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