

then moves from 'Who are you?' to 'Who you are'.

At the end you have consistency and vision, you know your needs and direction. You can say 'This I will do and this I won't'. You have resolved many conflicts, where one part of you wants something and another part is against it. It's not a final place you reach. The journey itself becomes a way of life. If it ends at all, it ends in enlightenment. The self one is interested in is no longer the individual ego, but the

unbounded self of the spirit. Because, finally, that is who you are.

In this country Hakomi is not taught as a full psychotherapy training, it is a particular method of psychotherapy and therefore best taught to people who already have a background in client or group work. It is taught in modular form and is organically evolving, in response to the interest and energy of the people involved. It continues to receive energy and input from the USA.

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### *Further reading*

Ron Kurtz, *Body-centered Psychotherapy: The Hakomi Method*

*The Hakomi Training Manual*



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## ***Kum Nye: A contemplative body practice***

*Sue Green*

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I first came across Kum Nye in a Cambridge bookstore, enticed by the title *Kum Nye Relaxation*. It's a set of Tibetan Buddhist bodywork exercises made public in the West amid some controversy by Tarthang Tulku Rimpoche. 'Kum Nye' translates delightfully as 'pleasing the body'.

If only. However seemingly innocent on the surface, gentle movements and stretches, nothing arduous, Kum Nye reaches the depths of resistance that many other practices simply cannot reach, notwithstanding Tarthang's frequent exhortations that sensations like being on holiday on a sunny day could well be our

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experience of the practice. Hmm. Dream on, was my not infrequent thought.

The other side of that coin is that real happiness comes from being able to be with our experience, whatever it is — another muscle that Kum Nye calls into play and strengthens, in my experience, anyway.

According to Maura Sills, co-founder of the Karuna Institute, who also leads retreats in Kum Nye and who taught it to me as part of my psychotherapy training, it can go further and deeper than any other Western bodywork practice because it spans both personality and spirituality.

For me, it's as if there are always the two things happening at once, the Western psychological view that our lives have been conditioned by our pasts and therefore need working with developmentally, and the other view, somewhere wrapped up in that, which is that whatever happened whenever, this moment contains within it the gem, the germ, of freedom. It's not that the two views are in contradiction necessarily, it's more like a hologram than another dimension.

Buddhism and Kum Nye give a living experience and a cognitive model of how things arise and pass in this present moment. Western psychotherapy gives insight and experience into how this moment has arisen on the back of what happened in the past. Somehow there's a fuller picture there than there would be if either loop of the bow were missing.

Transformation too has a different slant. In Western psychotherapy, if all goes well, a conservative description of satisfactory outcome might be that negative beliefs become revealed and changed, self-concepts and relationships become

revised in the light of the therapeutic relationship and personal power to accomplish desired goals and deeper intentions becomes stronger. Life develops greater value and meaning, and further reaches beckon.

Within the Buddhist model of Kum Nye however, as consciousness strengthens and deepens, personality patterns can be seen arising in the moment. If witnessed without grasping at content and meaning they can be instantly and deeply transformed. Full stop. End of story. As Tilopa says in his poem 'The Song of Mahamudra', 'Cut the roots of a tree, the leaves will wither. Cut the roots of your mind, And samsara falls.'

I am drawn to Tibetan descriptions of spiritual experience because they both see, and know how to put across, the fact that the practice of inner growth and the practice of body process are simultaneous and interdependent.

Kum Nye is for me mainly about embodiment and contact. Unlike many body practices it is not about drawing the attention in with concentration, it is about first of all using a set of gestures of posture to become fully and thoroughly grounded, in contact with the self, and associated into one's experience. At that point there is a conscious intention to include the people one is with, the room one is in, widening out increasingly to include the world within which the room sits. Each step is taken with awareness, building up more and more capacity to start to see and experience things as they are.

For a psychotherapist, indeed anyone working with people, this is a profound practice for life. Only by being fully in my own embodied experience can I hope to

enter into a present relationship with another. Only by becoming intimate with how I am deep down with being where I am, in my body, only then can I know how fully I am able to be with other people — and it will be different on different days with different people. Perhaps other people have other ways of addressing these questions, but Kum Nye has been the form that I have found most willing to take these matters seriously and also offer a useful means of address. Western psychotherapy has given me a framework for making sense of my life's experience. Kum Nye has given me a framework for what it is like to be in relationship in this present moment — first of all with myself and my own inner experience, and then, later, with that of others.

It's a tough practice, a practice for the warrior in me. Yet even that changes over time. Little by little, the practice gets to me, says, can you feel just a little bit of that joy, that delight, that vital sense of this present moment? Ah yes. There it is. There it goes.

But that's just my experience. Everyone's is different. However, most people I have spoken to about Kum Nye speak about one thing — its capacity to undermine the will, the urge to control. Even though these practices are not difficult, they simply cannot be done by determination, it is just too painful.

Somehow, over time, the practices, particularly when done with others, draw us

to the place of surrender, the place of asking us to trust in something larger than ourselves. They invite and evoke the will, and in inviting transform it. As the will transforms, more space becomes available for that larger intelligence which is inherent in every moment.

I started the practices with the books, and Tarthang says that the practices can indeed be done by a westerner without a teacher. Most esoteric body practices come with strong warnings against this. But Kum Nye is not about controlling energies, it is about allowing experience. Whatever we cannot be with will simply not come through to us, so we are not in any danger. The experience is richer in a group, though I know also that I and many other people have found the practices valuable alone when we have not been able to find others with whom to practise.

In the end, the gift of the practices has so far for me been about how it is to be in my experience and in relationship: that dance in Kum Nye is danced deeply and subtly and has crossovers into everyday experience, offering as deep a contact with the present moment as I am able to embrace, or at least tolerate.

The relevance to being with people who are suffering is obvious, and perhaps there is even a relevance to relatedness in general, even if I may not always wish to be in such full and vulnerable intimacy with experience.

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### *Further reading*

Tarthang, *Kum Nye Relaxation*, Dharma Publishing

Tilopa, 'The Song of Mahamudra', translated by C.C. Chang in *The Six Yogas of Naropa and Mahamudra Teachings*, Snow Lion