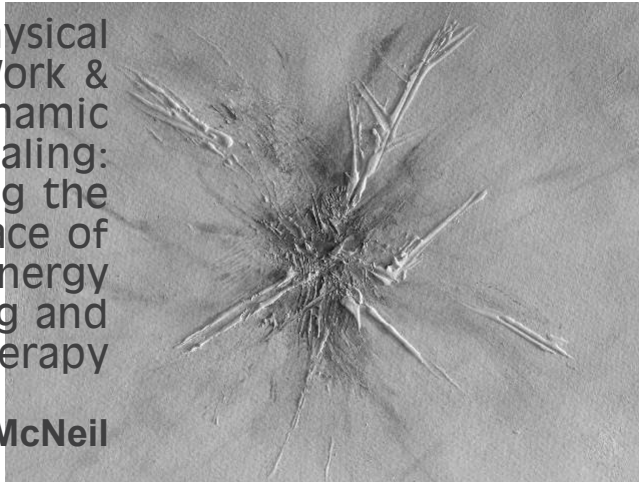


**Metaphysical
Energy Work &
Dynamic
Healing:
exploring the
interface of
subtle energy
healing and
psychotherapy**

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The basics of metaphysical energy work

Metaphysical energy work therapies have developed out of spiritual and esoteric traditions. These therapies are firmly based on the concept of the existence of vital energy or life force. Throughout the ages peoples of all cultures have felt and believed that we have subtle as well as physical bodies. Evidence of this is found in the spiritual and philosophical writings and teachings of the ancient Egyptians, Chinese and Greeks, the indigenous population of North America, many tribes of Africa, the Polynesian Kaunas, the Incas, the early Christians, the Vedic seers of India and the mediaeval alchemists and mystics of Europe.

We now have the discoveries in quantum physics that not only back up these metaphysical concepts but also verify the application of what the logical mind views as bizarre paradoxes. Quantum physics demonstrates that, at the sub-atomic level, one particle seems to know what the others are doing (so-called 'non-locality'), and this offers us a worldview in which energy, thought and matter are all interrelated with 'reality' being co-created by the individual and their perception of their outside world.

Energy work is an integral part of many of the complementary and alternative medicine approaches to health, eg. vibrational medical systems such as homoeopathy, traditional Chinese medicine (which refers to this energy as chi), ayurvedic medicine and yoga (which refers to it as prana). It is also integral to various types of body psychotherapy, such as biodynamic psychotherapy, bioenergetics, Hakomi, Formative Psychology and Gestalt (McNeil, 2000).

Practitioners of metaphysical therapies, myself included, know that we do not stop at our skin. We believe that as well as the physical body we have subtle emotional, mental and spiritual bodies, which most people do not see. We also believe that reality is multidimensional and that we can develop our senses to pick up information or impressions that are regarded in this culture as not normally available. This is often referred to as the sixth sense, although who knows how far the human mind can really develop as our consciousness evolves, or indeed just how many dimensions may exist within the universe. My belief that everybody has the capacity to develop this sixth sense if they wish is supported by research (Benor, 1993) and I am convinced that there is a conscious intelligence running throughout our bodies and minds which, with awareness, can be tapped into.

How Healing can help

The term healing is a generic term as anything which helps another person feel better can be regarded as healing. In this article I use the term healer and healing to refer to work that involves the laying-on-of-hands (on or off the body). As a form of treatment, healing today refers to several modalities, such as subtle energy healing, spiritual healing, Reiki healing, and Therapeutic Touch. All involve laying-on-of-hands. All healers have a fundamental belief that human beings are part of something transpersonal, a 'higher' source of life energy, something much greater than themselves. They work to

connect with a source of unconditional love and so create a sacred space in which to treat clients. They also believe that energy follows thought, so how they are thinking on a transpersonal level is very important. Although the receiver does not have to believe that healing works, it does help if they are open to receiving.

The healer is concerned with the spiritual well-being of the receiver, not just helping with their physical difficulties. Although some healers work simply with channelling energy and do not form a relationship with their client, all healers that I know of who work professionally take some time to talk and listen to their client. Just as in counselling or psychotherapy, the focus is likely to be on helping the client uncover the negative beliefs they have about themselves on a deep core level and to use this information to aid the healing process. Or it may be helping the client come to terms with their situation so that they can live with a greater sense of inner peace. Indeed, many healers work with the dying, to help them end their lives in a meaningful way.

Unfortunately there is still the tendency within the media and general public to trivialise or sensationalise healing, although this is slowly changing as it becomes increasingly regarded as a valuable therapy. The stereotyped image of the healer performing miracles and the unrealistic expectations that this can bring is a major obstacle to receiving the genuine benefits of healing, which, apart from its

deeply relaxing and de-stressing effect, is primarily about finding a place of inner peace and self-understanding. Physical miracles certainly can and do happen but they are rare; most healing is gradual and involves a commitment to change on the part of the receiver, a necessity for any kind of therapeutic intervention to remain effective.

Different healing modalities have different styles but they all involve the laying-on-of-hands and follow the same basic



Looking Up

general principles. Here I describe how I work as a healer.

After talking with the client, they are invited to sit or lie down. They will be fully clothed. I prepare myself through grounding, centering, protection and attunement. All these are meditative processes through which I focus on my own body, making sure I feel solidly connected with the ground and with my own centre of gravity. I then open my mind to the 'higher' sources of life energy. Protection is rather like putting on a metaphysical coat – a way of reflecting negativity that may come into my energy field. Attunement involves going into a light trance state, an altered consciousness that is balanced with an alert awareness of how the client may be responding to the interventions. The healer's intention and compassion is important, especially as she is acting as a kind of transmitter or catalyst for life force energy.

I lay on hands either on or off the body, working with my own learned and developed styles of channelling, modulating, and transmuting universal life force energy. Channelling energy refers to the phenomenon of allowing oneself to be a vehicle for life force or universal energy – the healer uses their own body and mind to be a focussing agent and transmitter of this energy. Modulation refers to the way in which I check in with the vibrations I am picking up in the energy field between myself and my client, through my hands in the field (aura) or on the client's body. My hands feel as though they are highly tuned sensors with intelligent minds of their

own. I allow them to guide me as they seem to recognise qualities of vibrations, which I consciously tune into. Transmuting energy is a process through which, once the connection is made, there is a change – a kind of smoothing out of what often feels agitated energy, or there may be a ‘filling up’ of a depletion. Excess energy can leave the body or field in a number of directions and ways. Sometimes I use my hands to ‘break up’ or ‘pull off’ energy that is stuck; or I may hold still in one place, waiting for a feeling of peace to come, trusting that whatever shifts or rebalances of energy are needed are taking place. It seems that vital energy quite naturally goes to the places it is needed. Eventually the field feels balanced and the client has relaxed, may even have fallen asleep. After the hands-on work the healer will use techniques to clear their own energy and ‘close down’.

The healer usually has a knowledge of the chakra system and the aura or human energy field. There is a great deal of metaphysical knowledge and beliefs available from many spiritual traditions, particularly ancient Hinduism. In the West some modern psychologists have developed the concepts of chakras and the human energy field with rigour and effective use (Judith, 2004, 2005; Davies, 1996; Brennan, 1987). Healers also often have skills in the therapeutic use of colour and sound, clairsentience (feeling sensations or emotions through one’s body), imagery (using one’s inner eye), clairaudience (using one’s inner listening capacity), claircognizance

(receiving guidance or wisdom from their higher self or discarnate spiritual beings).

The beneficial effects of healing are far reaching, including physical pain relief, long term help with chronic conditions, and reduced anxiety. At the least laying on hands healing offers the recipient the experience of relaxation, being cared for just as they are and being ‘held’. Relaxation in itself is known to strengthen the immune system.

My background and the development of Dynamic Healing

It took approximately fifteen years of my own personal and professional development in both the psychotherapeutic and subtle energy healing fields before I became clear enough to name a way of working that I had dreamed about since first discovering healing in 1980. I had already begun my own journey in psychotherapy in 1976 because of my emotional problems (depression, bulimia nervosa, night terrors), but a serious back injury in 1979 led me into the field of complementary therapies. When I first received healing from a trainee healer from the National Federation of Spiritual Healers I experienced a kind of ‘coming home’. I had already learned about my own sensitivity through receiving cranial osteopathy, but when I could feel all kinds of changes within my body with the healer standing a few feet away and not even touching me I was intrigued. More than that, I ‘knew’ that I should be doing this too – for myself and for others.

A major lesson for me in recovering from back pain was the intrinsic connection between my emotional states and my subjective experience of physical pain. Without knowing anything about creative visualisation techniques, I had been imagining it and allowing my mind to give me symbols and images that would influence the pain and help me cope.

I had worked for several years in psychiatry and child care as a casework social worker. In the early 1980s I retrained in spiritual healing with the National Federation of Spiritual Healers, and also qualified in holistic massage. Combining these skills with the counselling skills I already had, I began a private practice. I also began teaching healing in adult education in central London. This was a pioneering time within complementary therapies and I was very fortunate to be the first person to get the opportunity to teach healing within the adult education system – most especially as healing was at the fringe of the complementary and alternative therapies. In 1985 I discovered the Association for Therapeutic Healers – a group of professional, pioneering healers who combined the practice of healing with other therapies. I had found a professional healing home.

In 1988 I began training in humanistic psychotherapy at Spectrum, a centre for humanistic and integrative therapy in North London. I was keen to develop relationship skills and learn more about psychological processes. I had experienced psychoanalytical,

neo-Reichian, and now humanistic psychotherapy for myself and I very much wanted to combine humanistic psychological processes with subtle energy healing. I remember saying this to one of my trainers at the time, who commented that psychotherapy and healing lived in two rooms in the same house. Since then these two approaches gradually moved closer until they shared the same room, then the same bed; they copulated and nine months later Dynamic Healing was born! I had needed to work separately with psychotherapy and healing until I felt sufficiently integrated and confident in myself to develop my own way of working with them together.

I had several concerns throughout that time about the way some healers and psychics seemed to work. Sometimes psychic information seemed to be given invasively, without permission of the recipient. I felt we needed to be clearer about what was projection and what was accurate psychic information. I was disturbed that some members of the public would seek out psychic readings and place great store by them, even if they were neither appropriate nor very accurate. I wanted to bring as much integrity into the world of healing and psychism as I could.

I also wanted the psychotherapy profession to embrace the value of the sixth sense, to develop a more theoretical basis for those hunches that so often get a corner turned in a psychotherapy session. Another of my concerns was to help psychotherapists take seriously the effect of their

clients' energy on them: to recognise that they are unconsciously immersed in transference and counter-transference on an energetic level, as well as on levels that are understood and worked with in training and supervision. Psychotherapists could employ various techniques that practising healers do to clear their own energy field after giving sessions.

Dynamic Healing

I have given the name Dynamic Healing to the way I integrate subtle energy healing and psychotherapy – I view it as working at the interface between

them. As there are so many 'hybrid' therapies with their own names that I shudder to think I have created another one! However I've needed to use words to define and describe it.

In subtle energy healing the client is usually passive, receiving the laying-on of hands treatment, and relaxing - often very deeply. In psychotherapy the client is usually sitting and consciously speaking with their therapist throughout the session. Although in regressive psychotherapy work and hypnotherapy the client is an altered state, generally in psychotherapy there is an emphasis on the conscious

cognitive part of ourselves. And touch remains rather a minefield within psychotherapy.

In Dynamic Healing the client receives laying-on-hands healing but is not passive. They co-direct the session and at times are actively engaged through talking or expressive movement. At other times they are silent, in a relaxed or meditative state. The work takes place within the exceptionally supportive and loving context of spiritual healing – working within an energised field, a sacred space in which the vibration and power of love has been consciously evoked. I base my work on the values of empathy, warmth and validation, with careful attention to how the client feels, their state of mind, the way they behave, and how they form and maintain their relationship with me.



Energy Portrait

In a session we begin by talking about what the client is seeking help with and we get clear about what our intention is for the session. Intention is a key ingredient – it is as if the universe can support a person energetically once they have made a commitment to themselves.

I then invite the client to lie down on the treatment couch or sit in a chair. I start by giving laying-on-hands healing. After a while I ask them what they are experiencing – usually there is a thought process going on, a memory, dream, a feeling or a physical sensation, such as a pressure in the chest or discomfort in the gut. I will ask them to describe this, to focus on it and bring it into fuller awareness, maybe ask them to give it a shape, a colour, a voice. I follow whichever way the client is able to connect with the issue. I may support them through a creative visualisation process that is generated by them, or they may get in touch with grief or anger that needs time and space to be expressed. When appropriate I may challenge them or support them in taking a risk. Where there is anger they may need to get off the treatment table to do some expressive work such as beating a cushion with a bat, or stamping their feet, at which point I stop using my hands and support them to move. After this kind of expression, I usually, although not always, suggest they return to lying or sitting; we may continue with hands-on work or I complete the session in a meditative way. In all sessions the work generally continues until a satisfactory resolution is

reached. This may not be total, but is the point that is appropriate for the client at the time. I often complete with asking them to choose a colour that feels right for them and together we visualise this entering each cell of their body.

After we have completed the hands-on work, usually we spend some time reflecting on what has happened and looking at what may be needed to help with the integration of the experience. However, there are occasions when it is not appropriate for verbal reflection – it may be more important for the client to remain with their felt experience and not go back into thinking.

While I am working with my hands on and off the body, I sense the subtle energy of the client flowing and changing in a fascinating way, like an invisible dance. I am interacting with the client verbally and empathically, at the same time as 'tuning into' their life force and 'picking up' psychic information that may be useful. There is often a feeling that we are being helped by something or someone greater than ourselves; one client said of her experience, 'I worked through different emotions culminating with my sensing a very special presence at the end of the session'.

In one session a client had memories of the sexual abuse she had experienced. She benefited from the process without have to speak of any of the details of this memory. My role was to be a solid presence for her, to help her feel grounded, and my hands moved and cleared energy as she went

through her own process of release.

Occasionally a client coming for Dynamic Healing actually needs a straightforward, silent healing – sometimes because they need to integrate the work we have been doing, and sometimes because they are prone to overwork their mental faculties and need an opportunity to move beyond thought. They may be using 'waterfall' verbal content as a defence against feelings. On the other hand, someone may choose to receive healing in silence as a way of avoiding, or distracting themselves from the painful emotional issue they have come to work with.

Sometimes I ask the client's permission to share what I am picking up. I always sense something while working hands-on; an image, thought or feeling that the client may connect with. I support them while they explore it with find their own words or images. Such images often seem to be associated with a very early experience – the birth process or intrauterine memories or even a past life. There are other deep experiences that cannot be named. Sometimes at the beginning I feel strong resistance with my hands– the client's energy field pushes me away. It is really important to share this.



Crown Chakra

The contact the client thinks they want often is not the contact their body or energy field wants or can tolerate. Once this is acknowledged, I usually feel a major change in the field and their energy starts to flow more freely.

In these sessions I use myself as both healer and psychotherapist, interchanging the skills of both disciplines. I use the experience of somatic resonance all the time, as my own body picks up clues and tunes in to the client. For example I may feel a moving sensation in my gut or around my heart; I may notice a change in my breathing pattern; I may suddenly feel sad or angry. An image may come to my mind, which stays with me, so I take it seriously as it is often a clue, or key that helps the client find their way into what is hidden and awaiting healing. In my experience different possibilities come with being in a more meditative state of mind. As a dynamic healer, I move between

the 'attuned state' of my mind to the cognitive, interactive state.

Often clients reach the core of their issue more quickly than with general psychotherapy, although I do not understand why this happens. One client describes this: 'At the start of the session it's like I'm trying to find something in a room at night with no light on and the curtains closed. Soon after the hands-on work has started I will become aware of a word, phrase or image percolating up from a very deep and otherwise inaccessible place. I can't really tell where the idea percolates from, my mind or body, as it feels like both at the same time. It feels as though it comes from deep within me and makes its way up into my consciousness... a shift of energy occurs and if I just stay with what is happening and the hands-on work continues, sometimes silently and sometimes with gentle questioning, I come to an understanding.'

Dynamic Healing in groups

I have also used Dynamic Healing with a group of healers working with a group participant as the client, and myself as the facilitating therapist. Participants need to have experience of receiving and/or giving healing, and to have some knowledge or experience of psychotherapy or counselling. I work with the energy of the group, as well as my own. A group can hold a powerful energy field of unconditional love – a great support for the client.

The participants prepare as if to give a group healing, i.e. each grounds, centres, protects and attunes, firstly by themselves and then with each other. After meditating together we begin giving healing, some laying-

on-hands, others simply quietly 'holding' the energy. It's important that the client does not feel overwhelmed: the number of people making direct contact with them is discussed before we begin. I proceed as in an individual session, except that other members of the group may acquire useful psychic information which, if appropriate, is shared. Evidence of the reality of the energy field is seen as often hand movements made by one healer are spontaneously mirrored by another. Everyone in the group is affected by the work and we take time given afterwards to discuss and process individual experiences.

Contraindications

Not all psychotherapy clients are going to be open to the idea of laying on hands healing, and it would be completely inappropriate to suggest doing Dynamic Healing with those who are not. Many clients with histories of serious abuse may not be able to tolerate closing their eyes and going into a meditative state while their therapist touches them. Some people may find it impossible to use non-verbal communication without disassociating or splitting. On the other hand, sensitive, aware touch can sometimes help to prevent disassociation. I am also extremely careful if the client has a borderline personality, where there may be strong transference issues in the therapeutic relationship.

Holding awareness of both the intra- and the interpersonal relationships in the session is part of the psychotherapist's skill; there is an added dimension in Dynamic Healing of client and therapist possibly relating to transpersonal

beings – spirit guides, angels, deceased loved ones. Such experiences lift the therapeutic relationship beyond the ego or personality level. Many clients understandably would run a mile from such phenomena!

Conclusion

For me Dynamic Healing feels natural and satisfying. Surrendering

myself to a 'higher' loving energy and being engaged in allowing a process to unfold phenomenologically in an unseen way frees me as a psychotherapist from relying solely on my own senses and cognition. As a healer I can use my psychic abilities and impressions in a sensitive and appropriate way, feeling comfortable with knowing but without knowing how I know.

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Organisations

The Association for Therapeutic Healers www.ath.org.uk

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