

Incorporating Emotional Freedom Technique into my Psychosynthesis Practice.

Viv Fogel 2016

Psychosynthesis is a transpersonal philosophy and approach to life – founded during the last century by the Italian doctor and psychoanalyst Roberto Assagioli. Initially his concept was called Bio-psychosynthesis (from bios – meaning body) and the psychotherapeutic aspect of it was just one strand of the quest towards self-realisation. As a doctor in the Bergholzi Hospital in Switzerland, (where C.G. Jung had worked), Assagioli noticed that within even his most mentally and personality-damaged patients, there seemed to be an unconscious pull from the core of their being towards growth and wholeness. It was as if, despite the damaged egos and shattered personalities, there still existed within them a core of awareness that was intact and whole. This core unifying principle Assagioli named the self or ‘I’, a concept resonating with Jung’s idea of self.

Strengthening a sense of self and deepening a relationship with it is central to Psychosynthesis. Ideally the therapist embodies that quality of awareness - until something within the client is ready to take that on for themselves: then the embodied self of the therapist is internalised by the client. When this happens there is a palpable and energetic transformational shift. These shifts are further enabled by energy psychology, its ethos and practice correlate deeply with Psychosynthesis. The energy therapy I use most is Emotional Freedom Technique (EFT); in this article I shall for simplicity refer to EFT, although I do integrate other approaches. In EFT the client is shown how to tap in sequence on specific meridians, the energy system of Chinese medicine, whilst holding a problem or trauma in mind.

Brain imagery has shown how parts of the brain are affected (adversely or positively) by thought, visualisation and intention (Hamilton 2008) and (Kolk 2016). The beliefs and messages we send out to our bodies, to others and to the world around us, therefore impact not only on our individual energy system and health, but on the energy systems and ‘field’ around us and beyond. (Feinstein 2015) Tapping with intent, is one way of relieving distress and trauma, and installing beneficial thought. The brain’s plasticity seems to adjust in response. (Hamilton 2008)

The role of spirituality

Assagioli believed that the inner self is connected to something greater or universal which transcends the ordinary everyday and personal. A client may work with a Psychosynthesis or an EFT practitioner without acknowledging or ‘believing’ in a spiritual or higher dimension, yet the effect of working with these therapies, as research shows, does seem to strengthen a belief in spiritual or transpersonal realms (Mason 2012). These days we acknowledge, rather than pathologise, a client’s spirituality, understanding this can help *re-source* them and aid their process of healing and

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recovery. In psychosynthesis, energy is seen as the life-force, life itself, (Assagioli 1970) and the word 'source' is used to describe the wellspring ('god') from where life or energy originates. I offer this explanation as the term is not used in mainstream psychotherapy. The term *is* used by energy psychotherapists however to describe the origins – ie. the *source* from where energy or vitality flows.

“William Tiller the physicist, in his experiments with the subtle human energy system, (ie. of meridians and chakras) as portals to higher dimensions, asks whether it is possible that there exists a parallel system that operates and drives our processes at a higher electromagnetic level of symmetry – and whether that might look like the *source* of life?”

(Mollon, P. 2014 *Healing the Reversed Personality*.)

Blocks to Self-Actualisation and Energetic Reversals

Psychosynthesis, as a transpersonal psychotherapy, sees itself as enabling a person to free themselves from the blocks to the self and (their own) obstacles that prevent them living a self-actualised life – to allow them to become more fully who they are. (Ferrucci 1982). Sub-personalities that may sabotage or enrich us, are seen as clusters of energy - some more developed and apparent than others. We work with these inner aspects and polarities, enabling their expression and bringing them into balance – so we can feel more able to regulate rather than being controlled by them.

In EFT the clearing of blocks or *reversals* within the energy system – such as limiting beliefs, behaviours and self-sabotage – may reveal the layers or 'aspects' of the problem, and we allow, forgive, accept and when ready, see what's possible and make a choice towards that.

Imagination and Will are important psychosynthesis principles – visualising and manifesting an intention into action, and in EFT we can affirm and strengthen our choices, which is empowering. From the material presented in a session therapist and client may then speak something like the following whilst each of them tap on the meridian acupressure points.

'Even though I have this fear of public speaking – I forgive and accept myself/ I know I was made to look stupid at school assembly – and I have compassion for that younger self/ that was then – and this is now – and right now I choose to face this – because that old fear no longer serves me / and a deep part of me loves and accepts me / (tapping continuously) Even though I have some remaining fear of public speaking –what if I could do it? I can imagine myself giving this talk /can see myself speaking without fear/ maybe it's possible /it is possible/ I know I can do it – because deep down I love and accept myself ...'

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Psyche-soma, mind-body

As trauma and past emotional distress is encoded within our energy-system and body - then it makes sense that these perturbations need to be healed psycho-energetically and somatically, as first acknowledged in psychoanalysis. Awareness happens not just in the mind – but in the body. Brain scans show how the heart then the organs receive the information nano-seconds before the brain does. The body ‘gets it’ first. Trouble is that here in the West we have become reliant on the rational mind for proof – our split off intellect - rather than trusting our embodied awareness – our ‘gut’ instincts, our heart and our inner-tuition.

I believe that to be effective therapist we need to integrate body-mind-energy awareness. That does not mean that you have to use touch or become a ‘hands on’ therapist – but that you are mindful of these influences and include them as they enter the ‘field’. *The first deeply significant connection I had over thirty years ago in psychotherapy was a somatic and energetic one. It resonated beyond analytical interpretation and from this and subsequent embodied experiences, I learnt to take notice of what my body and energy system was telling me.*

Transference, the therapeutic relationship and self-regulation

Psychosynthesis does not place the primary focus on transference - it is addressed and worked with only when it calls out to be. Energy focused therapy does not dwell on transference either.

For some clients, because of where they are in their therapeutic process, EFT is appropriate or what’s needed. There may be a fear of the therapeutic boundaries dissolving which would feel unsafe, or that unwanted statements may be ‘installed’ by the therapist, that they may be ‘taken over’ and lose control, or their fear and defence takes them into dismissal of ‘techniques’. EFT is powerful but there has been no evidence that is harmful. It’s true that the repeated statements may induce a slight trancelike or hypnotic effect – but as Kolk states ‘rhythmical interaction’ helps establish ‘internal sensory integration’.

In my experience the therapeutic relationship becomes less hierarchical and more authentic when working with energy therapy. By the end of an EFT session the client often feels more ‘energised’, lighter and empowered - there’s a quality of aliveness. Tapping is done alongside the client (the therapist leads by tapping on themselves) –and enables the client to familiarise the process so as to use it outside sessions to self-regulate and self-soothe or to continue the therapeutic work. If the client permits the

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therapist can tap directly on them and for some this feels much more connected and powerful. The client is not – as some have critiqued - ‘being done to’ – as we, therapist and client, are in this energy field together – and the process is one of respectful (rather than ego-directed) collaboration. The ‘work’ and language comes through you and is not ‘by’ you.

In Psychosynthesis we often suggest ‘homework’, it strengthens will, and in EFT self-work is also recommended. There are always remaining aspects of issues or negative beliefs and sabotaging behaviours that we can tap on and some clients value the regulation and structure of self-work.

References and suggested reading

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