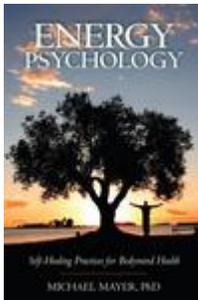


Energy Psychology: Applying Eastern Medicine to Quantum Entanglement

A review of



Energy Psychology: Self-Healing Practices for Bodymind Health

by Michael Mayer

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Reviewed by

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Michael Mayer's *Energy Psychology: Self-Healing Practices for Bodymind Health* is a comprehensive examination of how to integrate somatic and mindfulness techniques into psychotherapy. It explains the commonalities between traditional Eastern health methods such as qigong and tai chi, self-soothing techniques like meditation and breathwork, and modern variants based on the similar energetic principles such as emotional freedom techniques (EFT) and eye-movement desensitization and reprocessing. Mayer combines a deep clinical understanding of these methods with symbolism, dream-work, guided imagery, storytelling, and mythology to integrate the full spectrum of these transformative practices into cognitive restructuring and psychodynamic therapy.

The common reference point in the author's task of tying together these disparate threads is the human body. Mayer brings the therapist and lay reader back, again and again,

to physical experience. He shows that traditional practices had, in common, the goal of creating peaceful and vibrant feelings in one's body; that emotionally disturbing incidents leave physical sensations in their wake, and that, when clients pair the recall of these incidents with calming somatic cues, their impact can be extinguished. He asks his psychotherapy clients how they feel in their bodies while dealing with a traumatic memory and uses the Subjective Units of Distress score pioneered by psychiatrist Joseph Wolpe in the 1950s as a client-rated guide to the success of treatment (Wolpe, 1973).

Neuroscientist Candace Pert (2004) succinctly said, "Your body is your subconscious mind." To emphasize how indistinguishable the mind is from the body, Mayer uses the term *bodymind* in the subtitle and throughout the text. He demonstrates that when somatic processes are integrated into psychotherapy, the therapist and client have leverage points over repairing the self (as Eugene Gendlin, 1978, formulated the therapeutic task) that talk therapy alone does not provide.

Mayer describes the discomfort he felt early in his career as he attempted to keep his practice of psychotherapy separate from a "spiritual self" nourished by qigong and tai chi. When he began to tentatively integrate energy techniques into his sessions, he immediately saw breakthroughs with his clients, especially with baffling, treatment-resistant cases. Energy psychology, by altering the body's electromagnetic energy system, was able to produce success that had eluded Mayer despite his large bag of different talk therapy tools.

Mayer notes that energy psychology down-regulates the body's stress mechanisms (Diepold & Goldstein, 2009; Lambrou, Pratt, & Chevalier, 2003; Swingle, Pulos, & Swingle, 2004). This pervasive effect has made energy psychology successful in treating specific phobias (Wells, Polglase, Andrews, Carrington, & Baker, 2003) and even intractable chronic conditions such as posttraumatic stress disorder (Church, 2009; Church et al., 2009), as it reduces the severity and breadth of comorbid psychological symptoms (Church & Brooks, in press; Rowe, 2005). A review of published energy psychology studies in *Psychotherapy: Theory, Research, Practice, Training* noted the variety of conditions it improves (Feinstein, 2008). In every study that included long-term follow-up, participant gains were robust over time. These characteristics made energy psychology a treatment of choice for psychotherapists treating severely traumatized clients (Mollon, 2007; Schulz, 2009).

Mayer reviews the modern rediscovery of the importance of electromagnetic energy in healing, from the pioneering work on salamander limb regeneration by Yale neuroanatomist Harold Saxton Burr in the 1950s to recent studies using functional magnetic resonance imaging and other imaging techniques to demonstrate that impulses pass from acupuncture points to the brain at speeds much faster than the 50m/s average of neural transmission.

Mayer lays out the wealth of medical evidence supporting the use of acupuncture, listing studies that demonstrate its efficacy in treating depression, fibromyalgia, chronic pain, osteoarthritis, attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder, Parkinson's disease, asthma, and

other disorders. Acupuncture has even been shown to produce immediate and direct effects on the amygdala and other fear-related structures in the brain's limbic system (Hui et al., 2000).

Mayer then links acupuncture meridian theory to techniques such as EFT that employ tapping of acupuncture points instead of inserting needles, in keeping with a recent double-blind clinical trial that showed that tapping pressure produced effects on brain function that were indistinguishable from needling (Cherkin et al., 2009). He lists the studies (summarized on www.emofree.com) that show reductions in fear, phobias, anxiety, and depression resulting from the use of this and similar energy psychology methods. He then weaves these realms together to introduce exercises from his own method, bodymind healing psychotherapy (BMHP).

The second section of the book is a selection of extended case histories using BMHP. Mayer recounts how he has used his methods for treatment-resistant insomnia, anxiety and panic disorders, chronic pain, posttraumatic stress, addictions such as smoking and binge eating, hypertension, depression, and diabetes.

The third section of the book covers how to apply bodymind healing principles in everyday life. It also uses case histories, along with detailed explanations, to show that somatic stimuli such as changing one's posture (one's "stance toward life") or anchoring state-specific states with congruent gestures can reinforce the insights gained in psychotherapy. It explains that dysfunctional cognitions can be addressed with gestures and postures that challenge the cognition and that this brings the body into the therapeutic alliance as a support for the verbal insights gained during talk therapy. Minor weaknesses of the book include numerous typographical errors and the lack of a section about the controversies about and within the field of energy psychology (Feinstein, 2009).

The penultimate chapter of *Energy Psychology* illustrates a 20-minute qigong routine that Mayer advocates for restoring and balancing personal energy after a client has experienced prolonged periods spent serving others. He ends the book with a vision of "the two streams becoming one" (p. 349). For too long, he says, "Western culture has looked at the practices and philosophies of indigenous cultures as 'less than' Western medicine and psychology. We have treated these age-old practices with an attitude similar to the way the missionaries treated the practices of Native Americans" (p. 349).

Now is the time, Mayer believes, for us to come into relationship with the larger whole of which we are a part. As modern psychotherapy increasingly seeks ways to address spiritual growth, transformation, human electromagnetic energy systems, quantum epiphanies such as the entanglement of distant particles, Eastern medicine, and techniques such as EFT that produce very rapid resolution of problems, *Energy Psychology* provides a conceptual framework for identifying how they interact. Mayer shows that they can be integrated seamlessly into psychotherapy to enrich the therapeutic encounter for both therapist and client.

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