

Energy Work: Plugging Into Your Own Energy

by Kondañña (Barry Kapke)

Energy healing is often discussed as if it is something new, but energy healing is as ancient as healing itself. The body is, after all, bioenergetic and seeks homeostatically to maintain balance. Hippocrates, the father of Western medicine, called the body's natural capacity to heal itself *vis medicatrix naturae* – the healing power of nature. We are not separate from nature and are intrinsically a part of the energetic web of all life and all things. Modern science is slowly catching up with this basic understanding, common to all traditional people.

Almost all cultures share a fundamental holistic belief that life is more than just physical processes in a body; it is a unity of the physical, mental and spiritual, and is imbued with a special energy or force that gives it vitality. Energy healing, or energywork, seeks to restore, promote, and maintain health and wellness through various methods that influence and support the body's bioenergies. These energies are variously referred to as Qi (Ki), Prana, vital force, life force, élan vital, mana, ha, ether, orgone, odic force, bioplasma energy, and more. Disease is understood as a disruption or distortion of these energies.

The specific views of bioenergies, and the practices for working with them, vary from culture to culture and from system to system.

Hands-on Therapeutic Modalities

The language of Asian Medicine is very forthright in its focus on energy (*qi*, pronounced 'chee'). Working from an understanding of a network of energetic currents that energize and interconnect all aspects of the body/mind/spirit continuum, systems like shiatsu, acupressure, Jin Shin Jyutsu®, Thai Massage, Breema®, and Insight Bodywork™, seek, in their individual ways, to facilitate unobstructed energetic flow, and balance. Acupressure operates much like acupuncture, but uses the application of directed pressure instead of needles to tonify, sedate, or disperse energy via selected portals called pressure points (*tsubos*). Shiatsu uses pressure through palms, thumbs, fingers, elbows, knees, and sometimes even feet, to stimulate the free flow of energy through the body but unlike acupressure is focused more on the pathways themselves and less on individual points. Jin Shin Jyutso focuses on combinations of points which are gently held for extended periods to unblock stuck energy and to harmonize energetic flow. Thai Massage, Breema, and Insight Bodywork, similarly use manual pressure to facilitate energy movement and balance, but also involve much more physical movement of the recipient's body. Thai Massage and Insight Bodywork introduce deep stretches and joint mobilizations in addition to pressure techniques, whereas Breema and Insight Bodywork combine movement, pressure, brushing, and specific holds, in creative combinations of nurturance and stimulation to effect an integrated harmony of body, mind, and spirit.

Western energy practices also recognize the bioenergetic matrix for health and vitality but differ more widely than the Asian forms in their conceptualizations and approaches to working. Reflexology is based on a view of the body as comprised of 10 vertical zones and utilizes firm thumb pressure to feet, hands, and ears to reflexively stimulate body energies and optimal organ functioning. Polarity Therapy works from a view of positive and negative polarities existing in

every cell of the body and using gentle holds throughout the body and the energetic principles of attraction, repulsion, and neutrality, it seeks to balance these energy relationships. While Reiki has origins in Asian systems, its contemporary practice has developed largely in the West. The Reiki practitioner is a conduit for channeling life energy into the recipient by means of a series of holds on the head, chest, abdomen, and back. Therapeutic Touch directs the practitioner's bioenergy through their hands on or above the recipient's body to promote self-healing and energy movement. Zero Balancing utilizes the practitioner's hands as fulcrums for pressure, while gently pressing, stretching, and bending the recipient's body, in order to align body energy with body structure.

These are but a representative sampling of an ever-growing field of energywork.

Non-Touch Modalities

Energy Medicine is inclusive of the wide array of hands-on energywork systems, as well as numerous adjunctive or complementary modalities that may be employed on their own or combined with hands-on approaches.

Acupuncture perhaps belongs at the top of this list, given its several thousand years of practice. Acupuncture is a medical practice of treating disease through the insertion of needles into the skin along energy channels and points to restore balance to the energetic pathways and organ systems of the body. While the prospect of being needled may sound unpleasant, it is usually not painful and is often quite relaxing.

Homeopathy is another elder in the family of healing practices. Based upon the principle of "Like cures like," homeopathy is a system of natural remedies utilizing microdoses of a substance so distilled that only the vibrational imprint of the original substance remains. It is interesting to note that prior to 1900, most hospitals throughout the United States were homeopathic hospitals. Homeopathy remains a significant and vital part of healthcare in Europe.

Many other healing systems employ the vibratory (energetic) aspects of nature to influence and enhance our own vibratory well-being. Flower Essences, such as the well-established Bach Flower Remedies and a growing repertory of regional essences, are particularly useful for emotional disharmonies. Flower Essences impart the vibratory signatures of plants to resonate with similar vibrations in the subtle energetic bodies of the individual. Flower Essences typically are absorbed under the tongue in a dilute solution, or sometimes through a bath. Similarly, Aromatherapy works with vibratory energies of plants, but whereas flower essences are very dilute preparations, the essential oils of aromatherapy are highly concentrated and volatile. Whether dispersed in the air or absorbed through the skin via a carrier oil, aromatic oils please the senses while they impart their vibratory synchrony to the body.

All things in nature vibrate and these vibrational frequencies resonate with or otherwise impact upon the energetic harmony of the human being. To this end, crystals, color, light, sound, and even thought or prayer can be powerful healing tools.

Practices of energy cultivation, such as yoga, qigong, t'ai ch'i, aikido, and meditation, should also be considered forms of energywork. These are important ways of promoting strong vital energy in the body and mind, improving health and the quality of life.

Energywork is a valuable ally to good health – whether as preventive maintenance, as a holistic approach to addressing imbalance/disease or as a complement to allopathic medical care. No one method is better than any other method. To find what works best for you, explore. See what approach holds the greatest affinity for you. Discover what your body/mind/spirit responds to. Personally, I like to mix and match.

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