

Energy Work A Primer for Plugging Into Your Own Energy

By Barry Kapke

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Energy healing is often discussed as a new, somewhat unexplainable therapy. Truth is, energy work is an effective bodywork that is as ancient as healing itself.

The body is, after all, bioenergetic and seeks 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, in fact, we are intrinsically a part of the energetic web of all life and all things. Modern science is slowly catching up with this basic understanding, historically common to cultures the world over.

Almost all cultures share a fundamental belief that life is more than just physical processes in a body, life is a unity of the physical, mental and spiritual, and is infused with a special energy or force that gives it vitality. Energy healing, or energy work, seeks to restore, promote, and maintain health and wellness to all those elements by influencing and supporting the body's bioenergies. These energies are variously referred to as qi (pronounced "chee"), prana, vital force, life force, *élan vital*, mana and more. When disease hits, it's understood as a disruption or distortion of these energies.

Hands-on Therapeutic Modalities

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

Asian medicine is forthright in its focus on energy. Working from a philosophy that energetic currents 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 direct pressure instead of needles to calm, disperse or tonify energy through energy portals called pressure points.

Shiatsu uses pressure through palms, thumbs, fingers, elbows, knees, and sometimes even feet, to stimulate the free flow of energy through the body. Yet, unlike acupressure, it is focused more on the pathways themselves and less on individual points.

Jin Shin Jyutsu focuses on combinations of points that 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 more physical movement from the recipient's body, including deep stretches, joint mobilizations and specific holds.

Western energy practices also recognize the bioenergetic matrix for health and vitality but differ more widely than the Asian forms in their philosophies and approaches to working. Reflexology is based on a view of the body as having 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 through the use of gentle holds and the energetic principles of attraction, repulsion and neutrality, it seeks to balance these energy relationships.

Even though 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 (hand positions) 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, while 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 sampling of the kinds of work being offered in this ever-growing field.

Non-Touch Modalities

Energy medicine also includes therapies 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 at points along energy channels to restore balance to the energetic pathways and organ systems of the body.

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 minute doses 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 health care 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, 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 diluted solution, or sometimes through a bath.

Similarly, aromatherapy works with vibratory energies of plants, but unlike flower essences, the essential oils of aromatherapy are highly concentrated and potent. 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 chi, aikido and meditation, should also be considered forms of energy work. These are important ways of promoting strong vital energy in the body and mind, improving both health and the quality of life.

Energy work is a valuable ally to good health -- whether as preventive maintenance, a holistic approach to addressing imbalance and 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 and discover the health that awaits within.

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