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## COMMON DENOMINATORS ACROSS HEALING MODALITIES

**Daniel J. Benor, MD, ABIHM**  
**IJHC Editor**

*Thousands of candles can be lighted from a single candle, and the life of the candle will not be shortened. Happiness never decreases by being shared.*

--Buddha.

Is it possible to identify commonalities across the hundreds of variations on the themes of healing?

Between Acupuncture and Zen, your problems may be addressed at many possible levels within the wholistic spectrum. Each modality has its unique characteristics and blends of elements to address your ills – through body, emotions, mind, relationships (with other people and environment) and spirit. One or more of these healing approaches may have precisely the key you are seeking to help you resolve your problems – or may miss the mark in some way that leaves you with minimal response or no benefit at all.

Most of the complementary/alternative medicine (CAM) therapies make broad claims to help many of the same problems. Evidence is beginning to accumulate to show that many of these claims are accurate.

Despite their differences, I am impressed that we can identify several common elements among these therapies - having experienced and studied many of them, and having reviewed the available research confirming the efficacy and effectiveness of a broad spectrum of CAM studies (Benor 2004).

Here is my distillation of the essence of healing interventions – common elements that are found across the spectrum of modalities:

Several exercises are described in this editorial. They are intended as light introductions to the various therapies, not as an instruction manual for doing deep, transformative work on yourself – which is best done with the assistance of a trained therapist.

### GENERAL HEALING FACTORS IN THERAPY

#### ***Facing issues/ not running away from dis-ease or disease***

Making a firm decision to explore your problems is the first step.

Often, we run away from our difficulties. In an initial crisis, avoidance may be a constructive approach. This leaves us more energies to deal with a current situation.

Coming out of the bathroom, Brenda was shocked to find her 3 year old daughter, Sue, unconscious at the bottom of the stairs. Sue had a knot on her forehead from the obvious impact of her fall, and was bleeding from her shin where a broken bone was protruding through the skin. Brenda picked her up and ran to her car, arriving at the local emergency room in record time. She collapsed in a sweat after placing Sue on the hospital cart.

The staff found no fractures, and Sue woke from her concussion a few minutes later. Fortunately, after several weeks' recuperation, she was none the worse for her mishap, a testimony to the natural recuperative powers of a young body.

Looking back on these events, Brenda was amazed at how matter-of-factly she had done what was necessary at the time to deal with her daughter's injuries. She had no memories of any emotional reactions until she handed Sue over to the hospital staff. Then, she was flooded with fear, guilt, and anger at herself for not having prevented Sue's tumble down the steps. Ordinarily, she would have cringed at the sight of such injuries, but in these circumstances she had no emotional responses whatsoever at the time of the accident.

Shutting off feelings in an emergency like this allows a person to be more clear-headed and to do what is logically necessary. Had Brenda been overwhelmed at the bottom of the stairs by her feelings (as she was after arriving at the hospital), she might not have dealt as well or as quickly with Sue's injuries.

In other situations, avoidance may reduce immediate distress, but may leave residues and scars from the emotional traumas. In these situations, avoidance helps us not feel the tensions of our stresses, but does not resolve our problems. Even worse, we may end up investing enormous energies in pretending that these memories and feelings are not locked away inside us, continuing to run away from these buried traumas.

Many therapies offer us opportunities to stop running away from our memories and to face the issues we have buried inside us. Just by doing so, they bring us to a place of healing.

### ***Staying with the primary issues and not getting lost in "meta-emotions"***

When we're seriously distressed, we may complicate matters by getting into what I call "meta emotions" or "meta-reasoning."

Who hasn't reached a point of saying at one time or another,

"I can't take this any more!"

"I'll never get out of this!"

"I'm [something negative] because [fill in the blank]"

This is a more complex but no less problematic form of running away. We end up spinning our wheels in fussing and worrying over our worrying – but actually remove ourselves from the real sources of our distress. We fester in our self-doubts over whether we can manage our issues. We waste our energies in a meta-space that is at least one step removed from the actual feelings that are the source of our distress.

A therapist can provide stress management approaches that decrease the intensity of our meta-anxieties so that we stop spinning our meta-emotional wheels. A really good therapist will help us

sort through the meta-emotions and deal with them so that we can then address the real issues (Benor 2004).

### ***Finding and staying in a space of love, acceptance and Spirit***

When we are distressed, it is easy to lose our groundedness, to stray into hurt, anger and despair.

A therapist will help us reconnect with the love, acceptance and awareness of Spirit which are healing (be this our inner knowing of rightness and wrongness, our higher self, or an opening to other connections with the All). In part this occurs through cognitive analyses and restructuring of our beliefs and feelings; in part through reconnecting with and processing our feelings; in part through the corrective experience of a caring relationship; in part through healing energies and vibrations; and in part through resonations of the careseeker with the caregiver's connection with the All.

Specific therapeutic approaches may markedly enhance this aspect of therapy (WHEE, GUS, EmotionalBody Process, meditation, prayer).

### ***Connecting with and accepting the feelings and memories which contribute to the disease/dis-ease, and facilitating their release***

In many cases, psychological stresses and traumas contribute to the development of symptoms and illnesses. Caregivers will find ways to help careseekers open to awareness of these issues and to release them.

Emotional releases are common in psychotherapy, meditation, massage (Clothier), acupuncture, craniosacral work, spiritual healing (Therapeutic Touch, Healing Touch, Reiki), bioenergy interventions (Craniosacral Therapy), and many other therapies.

While such releases may occur spontaneously, the encouragement of the therapist to allow this to happen will markedly facilitate this process.

### ***Giving oneself permission to release the behaviors, memories, feelings, attachments to problems and problematic ways of dealing with them***

Insight is just the first step to many forms of healing. In addition to understanding, one must follow through with the intent to change one's patterns of perception, emotional and cognitive responses, and behaviors, if healing is to occur.

Many a careseeker has wished to be free of pain and illness, but hesitates to relinquish old and familiar patterns of behavior.

Pain and illness can become familiar "friends." A symptom such as pain can actually be helpful in certain situations, such as providing a convenient excuse for not having to do certain things on the one hand, and on the other hand serving as an invitation to family and friends to be more attentive. From their side, family members may come to feel more needed when they are helping an ill person. It may therefore be surprisingly difficult for people who are ill and for their families to deal with reductions in illness and distress.

The support and encouragement of caregivers can help to bridge the chasm – which is often experienced as an enormous void – between old and as-yet-undiscovered and undeveloped new and better ways of dealing with issues.

It is also possible to work on one's own guidance system – that includes memories, feelings, and rules about changing one's patterns of beliefs and behaviors. The Sedona method invites people to ask themselves: 1. "Could I let go of some of this?" 2. "Would I let go of some of this?" 3. "When?" If the answers are yes, this is a potent door-opener to change.

## **SPECIFIC TECHNIQUES PROMOTING HEALING**

### ***Bioenergies***

Bioenergies can enhance any other treatment modality (as well as facilitating changes in and of themselves). This is particularly marked with touch interventions such as massage, acupuncture, acupressure, kinesiology, shiatsu, and reflexology. The physical manipulations, some of which may be directed to meridians and acupuncture points, can be intensified with the addition of spiritual healing.

Numbers of these therapists have told me that they spontaneously find their hands getting warm during treatments – far beyond the warmth that might occur just from friction of hands or fingers massaging the body.

I find in my own practice of psychiatric psychotherapy that my hands may spontaneously become warm as I am engaging in talking/ interactive/ relational therapy. This often occurs without my conscious intent to activate bioenergy interactions. I assume that this is activated through the intent to heal, and that it may occur much more often than is generally appreciated, due to the unfamiliarity of many therapists with bioenergy therapies.

### ***Relating through the heart***

The forming of a heart connection between caregiver and careseeker markedly enhances healing. When I was starting my training in psychotherapy, a wise mentor advised, "If you cannot find something you love in your patient, you should not be treating that person." This is not just a metaphoric or emotional feeling in one person about the relationship with another person. It is an actual link that facilitates healing.

This has been most clearly demonstrated by the HeartMath method of treatment, and supported within that approach by demonstrations of synchronized cardiograms in caregivers and careseekers ().

Having a heart connection is commonly advocated in counseling, psychotherapy, spiritual healing, massage and many other therapies.

### ***Linking rhythms***

Breathing can be a bridge between therapist and client. Neurolinguistic Programming (NLP) has found that if the therapist matches her breathing rhythm to that of the client, rapport is markedly enhanced and healing is facilitated (Bandler and Grinder 1979). Milton Erickson, the remarkable hypnotherapist, made similar observations (Rossi 1976).

Craniosacral therapists link with the bioenergetic rhythms around the head and spine (Sills, 2001).

In spiritual healing, linking of electroencephalographic patterns has been noted (See WHR EEG link, below).

I am not aware of research on the possible linking of such rhythms in other therapies, but would guess this is a likely possibility.

### ***Bringing in positives to reduce and eliminate negatives***

This is my favorite element on this list.

Combining a positive with a negative reduces the intensity of the negative and often can eliminate the negative entirely. Numerous innovative therapies have developed variations on this theme.

Emotional Freedom Technique (EFT), The Wholistic Hybrid of EMDR and EFT (WHEE), and other Meridian Based Therapies recommend affirmations that follow this format:

State the negative feeling and situation you want to address, followed by a strong positive statement. (At the same time, various body interventions, discussed next, are often introduced.)

For example: "Even though I am anxious about speaking in public, I still love and accept myself, wholly and completely, and God loves and accepts me, wholly and completely and unconditionally."

The affirmation is done while tapping on various parts of the body. With WHEE, the tapping is alternated between left and right sides of the body, and with other Meridian Based Therapies, specific acupuncture points are tapped or touched.

The negative feeling (in this case, anxiety) will be noticeably decreased. It can be entirely eliminated with repeated rounds of reciting the affirmation and tapping.

Similarly, positive attitudes and feelings can be enhanced with WHEE.

After bringing the anxiety about public speaking down to zero, you might install a positive such as, "I can speak in front of any audience and feel comfortable and they will applaud my presentation." To do so, you would use the same tapping routine, adding on the affirmation, "and I love and accept myself, wholly and completely, and God loves and accepts me, wholly and completely and unconditionally."

The positive affirmation will be strengthened, in the same way that the negative was weakened.

This shows us that a strongly positive statement, paired with a weak positive, will make the weaker one more strong.

Other approaches also include the pairing of positives with negatives.

EmotionalBody Process invites clients to create an image to represent the negative issues being addressed. Usually, the image takes the form of a monster or other negative entity. This image is then invited into a space (built with the help of the therapist prior to this therapeutic intervention) where there is love, acceptance, healing and forgiveness. These healing energies are supported by God, Christ, earth energies, angels, and whichever other force or beings the client can muster and connect with. The image is invariably transformed, often diminished in size, and may then either disappear or leave. The image is a metaphor for whatever negativity the client is dealing with, so its transformation translates into a major shift in the related feelings and memories.

"Barbara," a rape victim, came for therapy. She had suffered from a post traumatic stress disorder for two years, with panic attacks, difficulty sleeping, and horrendous nightmares. She was unable to leave her apartment unaccompanied. She had several sessions in which she learned stress management techniques to control her panics.

Then, using EmotionalBody Process, she practiced her image of a safe space, and then pictured her rapist in the image of a vicious monster who wanted to devour her. While frightened of this monster, she accepted the therapist's support and encouragements to invite the image into the "love space." Rather than fighting the monster, she was invited to allow it to do as it wished with her – knowing that she had the resources in her safe space to deal with anything that happened. She watched the monster devouring her feet, then her legs, thighs, pelvis and belly, reassured by the therapist that she could regenerate any and all parts of herself in this imagery space.

She was reminded periodically not to resist, but to totally give the monster what it wanted. By the time it got to her chest, it was slowing down, and after nibbling at one hand, it stopped.

Barbara was invited to ask the monster what it wanted now. To her surprise, it told her that it wanted to be loved. While she couldn't bring herself to offer love, she pointed out to the monster that it was in a special space where there were infinite resources of love, acceptance, healing and forgiveness. All it had to do was to ask, and it would receive these.

The monster followed her directions, and was rapidly transformed into a gentle spirit, which gradually shrank until it almost disappeared. Invited to say anything she wanted to the monster, before it left, Barbara was surprised to find herself thanking it for having kept her safe – completely avoiding any relationships or other possibly dangerous situations where she might have experienced another severe trauma.

Barbara realized that she could protect herself without this intensity of fears to keep her safe. She also came to understand that she had been carrying this monster with all the fears of the rape swallowed down inside it (a part of herself), afraid to go near it and therefore unable to release its fears.

The positives of unlimited love, acceptance, healing and forgiveness were able to reduce Barbara's fears and other feelings connected with her horrendous memories of the rape.

This pairing of strong positives with the memories and feelings connected to negative experiences of clients is a common denominator to many other therapies. In most cases, the therapist as a warm, caring presence provides the positive elements needed. It helps enormously, however, when the client can find the positives within herself, so that these are always with her and available for use in other circumstances.

Rounding out the session, Barbara drew on the Infinite Source of positive energies to restore her imaginary self to wholeness. Metaphorically, she was inviting healing, love, acceptance and forgiveness to restore all aspects of her being that had been devoured by the fears engendered by her traumatic experience.

She was subsequently able to use this approach with other, less horrific traumas, with equally good effects.

EmotionalBody Process combines many of the elements common to healing, discussed above, in addition to the juxtaposition of strong positives with negatives.

### ***Using the body as an access to memories***

The body stores memories, particularly those with intense feelings.

NLP is helpful for self-healing, taking advantage of the fact that your body is participating in your conscious and unconscious awarenesses and in your memories of experiences – particularly the

traumatic ones. You can access and reprogram the feelings attached to negative and traumatic experiences with the help of your body. Here is a basic exercise that illustrates this:

Sit comfortably in a chair, and keep your hands in one position on your thighs throughout the exercise. Go back in your mind's eye to a memory of something that made you sad. When you feel the sadness, press your right thigh with one finger of your right hand, and hold the pressure for a few moments. Then release the pressure, without moving your hand from where it is resting. Now release the sad memory from your awareness, taking a few deep breaths to blow away all traces of the feelings it evoked in your mind and body. Next, turn to a happy memory. When you feel the joy of it, press on your left thigh with one finger of your left hand, and hold the pressure for a few moments. Then release the pressure without moving your hand from where it is resting. Now release your awareness from the happy memory, taking a few deep breaths to blow away all traces of the feelings it evoked in your body.

You have anchored your awareness of these positive and negative experiences at those two points under your respective fingers. Do not move your hands or fingers from the positions they are in on your thighs, right over these *anchors*.

Now, simultaneously press both of the fingers that you used previously, holding the pressure for a few moments. Then return to your awareness of the sad memory and observe the feelings that you experience. (Do this before reading further.)

Most people will notice that the feelings connected with the negative memory are markedly less intense.

Sometimes it is too large a step and too great a leap of faith for a person to go directly from their state of anxiety to a state of confidence. A therapist may insert several intermediate steps, anchoring each in a chain of spots from the original, problematic situation to the final, successful one.

"George," who was fearful of speaking in public, found it too much of a stretch to imagine himself feeling relaxed and competent while lecturing – in the course of cognitive behavioral therapy. His therapist planted one or more intermediate anchors between the first and the final one. The second anchor was "feeling confused about whether I might react differently to lecturing;" a third was, "wondering whether I might someday feel differently about giving a lecture;" and a fourth, "I feel comfortable speaking to a small group of people I know."

After establishing this chain of five anchors, the therapist then touched each one, in sequence. This conditioned George to shift from his anxieties about lecturing, through each of the intermediate steps, and finally into a new anchor with the image of being comfortable as he made his presentation to a large audience. After repeating this chained release of anchors several times, George found himself responding automatically with confident feelings to the thought of lecturing.

In this case, the pairings are links to stepwise levels of increasingly positive images. The habit of responding with negative feelings to the thought of lecturing is shifted in small steps towards the end-point of a strongly positive image and positive feelings.

WHEE, other meridian based therapies, and EMDR include various patterns of touching or tapping on the body in conjunction with affirmations that combine positive and negative statements. It remains to be clarified how much the specific places on the body that are touched may enhance the effects of the affirmations. It could be that it is unnecessary to use acupressure points, and that any place on the body may serve as well for these purposes. EMDR suggests that alternating stimulation to right and left sides of the body stimulates right and left sides of the brain, bringing about releases of buried hurts.

## **In summary**

It appears that diverse CAM therapies, based on a variety of theories and approaches, may have many healing elements in common.

It will be interesting to see research that can clarify whether there are, indeed, differences in the spectrum of effectiveness and efficacy of the different therapies, as claimed – or whether the similarities in the approaches, as discussed above, are the elements that contribute to their positive results.

A way to begin to explore this question would be to do a broad survey of therapists who practice diverse CAM approaches, and a second one to survey careseekers with various types of problems – to see whether different approaches produce different effects.

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## **IN THIS ISSUE OF THE IJHC**

Nick Arrizza, MD is a Canadian psychiatrist who works through telephone consultations with clients, individually and in teleconference seminars. His innovative method of healing, Mind Resonance Process™ is a marvelously rapid, extremely potent form of Cognitive Behavioral Therapy. In the course of an hour's session, Arrizza can facilitate dramatic changes in core beliefs. I can personally testify to the efficacy of this method. My disbeliefs in my ability to was entirely erased, with profoundly helpful shifts in my self-perception, self-confidence and self-image. (In addition, Arrizza suggested working on my beliefs about death, to eliminate my belief that death is inevitable. This was not successful.)

Arrizza's method demonstrates many of the principles discussed in this editorial. It includes the elements of facing one's conflicts squarely, giving oneself permission to relinquish old patterns and explore new ones, opposing negative beliefs with positive ones, and having the support of a warm, accepting therapist who is nevertheless firm in suggesting changes and who provides new approaches to do so.

Angie Buxton-King shines a strong healing light in working as a healer in the National Health Service in England. Working with an open-minded physician on a cancer unit at a children's hospital, she has demonstrated that spiritual healing can be enormously helpful in reducing pain, anxieties, and side effects of medications. Her work has been so helpful that spiritual healing is now a prescribed therapy in this hospital – not just a recommended possible intervention.



Jaentra Green Gardener is a healer who cured herself of multiple sclerosis (MS) and in the process of self-healing developed strong spiritual healing gifts. She has gone on to teach others the Three Heart Balancing method of healing. Different from most methods, this approach strongly recommends that healers work together in groups – particularly when they are helping someone with a serious illness. Gardener told me that helping people with cancer is easier than helping people with MS. In this article, she shares how she and groups of healers – who may include family members of the people who are ill – offer healing. With serious illness, she also recommends working on people several times daily during the acute phases of illness. Healee reports provide details on how Three Heart Balancing can help some people but not others.

Michael Greger, MD is still in medical training, completing his internship. He shares a series of clinical experiences and searing criticisms of the conventional medical system – from his clinical years in medical school. Chapter 1 of his book, *Heart Failure*, is reproduced in this issue of IJHC. It is a testimonial to his struggles to maintain his humanity, offering wholistic care to his patients as people, not just ministering to their physical needs.

Robert Jager, from Tasmania, Australia, suggests a helpful approach to overeating, developed out of his personal struggles with this problem. His is a form of Cognitive Behavioral Therapy combined with imagery. He finds this approach helpful with many other people with whom he has worked.

Francesca McCartney, PhD, has had intuitive gifts since childhood. She developed and honed these gifts into tools for helping people understand their physical and psychological problems. In an IJHC interview, McCartney discusses her personal and professional uses of clairvoyance and how intuitive readings can clarify issues underlying a variety of problems.

Carol Spence, previously a very successful real estate agent, was stopped in her high pressured career by a severe bout of Hepatitis C. Spence describes how she was helped by holistic counseling and through the intuitive medicine interventions of Francesca McCartney. Despite the early predictions of her doctors that her chances of recovery were slim, her laboratory reports now show she is free of the disease.

In his regular column on Wholistic News Reviews, Larry Lachman, PsyD, reports on new developments in dealing with cardiac pain, group therapy interventions for people with cancer, stress in diabetes and childhood asthma, depression in the work place, and surprising findings about patients' preferences regarding physicians' self-disclosures.

Our poetry page is graced by an excerpt from Brad Walton, *How Does the Heart Know Love*, and by a whimsical window into the aging process from Ric Masten.

Ric Masten also contributes to our humor page, with a poem on men's foibles – when it comes to using the toilet.

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