
EDITORIAL

When in doubt, go with the principles

GREG JOHANSON

The trainers of the Hakomi Institute are careful to ground their teaching of particular techniques, strategies, and methodologies in the principles that undergird the therapy; principles of unity, non, mind-body holism, mindfulness, and non-violence. Likewise, I believe the articles in this edition of the Forum do a good job of integrating perspective with practice.

If push comes to shove, anybody closely associated with the Institute will affirm that learning, living, and breathing the foundational principles is a foremost importance when compared to mastery of technique. 1) Being grounded personally and professionally in the principles offers the creative possibility of generating any number of techniques. 2) If one is not grounded in the principles, the techniques literally break down and do not work. A therapist cannot invite clients to turn their awareness inward and be mindful of present experience if they themselves are not an authentic non-violent presence that respects the inner, organic, wisdom of the client. If the therapist is a good actor and attempts this way of working while in fact being ego involved in accomplishing certain objectives, that fact will eventually come out. The client will mobilize defensively, and the process will shut down. The therapist will end up writing off the client as too resistant to work with, or the client will rightfully walk away.

I am personally interested in the principles from two perspectives in addition to that of what foundation builds the greatest possibility of therapeutic effectiveness. One, I am a member of a surprisingly substantial club of psychotherapists who were once engineering students. (That would be an interesting topic for a Ph.D. dissertation.) Ron Kurtz indicates in various places dealing with the history of his work, that he too has a background in physics, computers, and experimental psych. It is meaningful to me that the principles which underlie Hakomi have a substantially wider application than

psychotherapy, and that they integrate a vast amount of material from the new physics, systems theory, biology, neurophysiology, cybernetics, philosophy of science, and other related fields.

Of even greater interest to me is the spiritual perspective. I am an ordained clergy-person in the Judeo-Christian heritage who has had continuous part- or full-time involvement in local parishes since 1968. I recommend Hakomi to my colleagues as a spiritually consistent way of working with people, and am slowly finding the time to translate Hakomi into Judeo-Christian categories, more accessible to those in that community.

The spiritual aspects of the principles came to Ron mainly from immersing himself in Taosim and Buddhism for many years. That perspective simmered on the back boiler along with notions from Gregory Bateson and the rest, and finally started to boil over into the principles as they are outlined in the work today. (See Hakomi Therapy by Ron Kurtz, available through the Institute.

Whenever Ron articulated a particular principle, I automatically plugged in the corresponding concepts from my tradition. When I heard "unity", I thought of radical monotheism. Organicity and mind/body holism reminded me of Biblical anthropology, especially as outlined by Hans Walter Wolf and Rudolph Bultmann. Non-violence brought to mind the essence of the Bible in Shalom and Grace.

Mindfulness is the concept from the East that has the most to teach Western Christians, I believe. In John Dunne's book The Way of All the Earth, he talks of the notion of "crossing over" to the culture and world view of others, and how that crossing over enriches and enlivens one's own tradition when one crosses back. Mindfulness can remind Christians of their own forgotten meditative traditions and open new possibilities.

To add to my own experience of congruence with the principles, I had the opportunity not long ago to talk with Dayton Edmunds, a Native American colleague of mine, currently in North Central Washington. It astounded me to hear him outline all the Hakomi principles in terms of his own spirituality before I had even broached the subject of Hakomi with him.

He said things like, "Indian people are basically space people as opposed to time people. The answer to questions like what is the right time to eat is found by looking to nature, to the space within one's stomach. It is not best to eat at 12:00 noon, but when there is hunger pains within one's belly. And crops. One does not harvest a crop on September 1st, but when the crop is ready in terms of its own growth and fullness. Indian time is not 'late time' as so many people think. It is 'right time.'" Sounds like mindfulness to me. And then he said, "The circle has been very important to my people. Everything in nature reflects the circle. A circle is without beginning and end. You are the first and the last when sitting in a circle. It is inclusive of all." Unity, right? And finally, "When I was young my elders taught me the importance of three things: touching, which is why it is good to have children run naked, (mind/body holism); giving away the things which you have (non-attachment and resultant non-violence); and having a relationship with the Mystery, that reality which is called by many names, including God and Great Spirit," (hints of monotheism, unity, organicity again.)

So, it seems to me that the principles reflect a universal way of understanding life that is seen in the best of scientific and religious thinking. I look forward to the day when they are applied on a wide scale to areas like education, economics, politics, medicine, art, etc. And that day is coming. I am one of those who reads Marilyn Ferguson, Ken Wilbur and Teilard de Chardin and sees communal consciousness slowly rising. One day it should accumulate a "critical mass" of people whose base level thinking is changed and who then will change the concrete realities they live it.

At the same time, I remain a Christian realist, which means to say I do not underestimate in the least the forces of fear and disunity that would continue to work against

more compassionate paradigms. As one contribution to encouraging a greater awareness of the interconnectedness and interdependence of all things, I would like to invite people to use the Hakomi Forum for discussing the principles of the work as they relate to the greater environment in which psychotherapy is done, and in which people live and move and have their greatest ill or well being.



WHEN WE TRY TO PICK OUT ANYTHING BY ITSELF, WE FIND IT HITCHED TO EVERYTHING ELSE IN THE UNIVERSE. JOHN MUIR

FOUNDATIONS OF HAKOMI THERAPY

RON KURTZ

Ron Kurtz is the founder director of the Hakomi Institute. The following article describes some of the foundations Hakomi is based on. It is a tape transcription of a lecture Ron gave to a training group at the Coleman Center in West Germany. As the article indicates, Hakomi is alive, fresh, and developing as new material is integrated and experimented with. Ron welcomes dialogue and feedback, and can always be contacted through the Institute's main office.

I want to discuss the theoretical and spiritual foundations of the work. I want to do that because I want you to be able to reach back into your sources and see where we came from. There's a great deal of emotional, psychological, and theoretical support that comes from having roots, especially these roots, and I want you to have access to them.

There are three main foundations of the work. The first is the body centered therapies of the twentieth century, like Gestalt, Bioenergetics, Reichian work, Rolfing and Feldenkrais. I also include Carl Rogers and Psycho-motor Therapy too. So that's the first root. The second is eastern philosophy and religion, particularly Taoism and Buddhism, with a little Chinese/Japanese medicine thrown in. And the third branch is General Systems Theory and the twentieth century paradigm shift. I'll discuss all three of these.

Let's call the first branch the Modern Psychology Branch. That branch has contributed a lot of techniques for working with the body that I learned from people like Al Peso, John Pierrakos and a few good Gestalt Therapists. I have sampled the work of maybe ten or twelve people, have read the books of two dozen more and I have brought their ideas and techniques into Hakomi Therapy. The character theory, in its original form came from Riech and bioenergetics.

From Buddhism and Taoism, we imported the principles and the emphasis on mindfulness and nonviolence. These pervade the work and

structure the overall process and all the techniques. The entire body of the work rests completely on this foundation.

The third root, General Systems Theory, is still evolving rapidly. Just twenty years ago, half the concepts now part of general systems theory had not even been formulated. They weren't even known about. So we're looking at what must be the most rapidly evolving conceptual system of our time. It has become so general, so grand in its design and scope, that it applies even to the unfolding of the universe, from big bang to galaxies to you and me. It also applies to the unfolding of life. The evolution of any complex organization, living or not, is best described and understood using the web of concepts and ideas of general systems theory. So if you want to describe character, if you want to describe the process of therapy, or the development of the individual, systems theory is the best tool that we have. And it's getting better. But, because it's changing so fast, you kind of have to run to keep up.

Because Hakomi work is open to the changing influences of modern psychotherapy and the shifting scientific paradigm, Hakomi is also unfolding and evolving. When you get deeply into this work, you find it's a continual growth process. You step into this flow and go with it. New ideas, new views of character, new techniques and exercises - the work itself is alive. To keep up with the changes in techniques you have to work with them, and stay in touch with what other people are doing. To keep up with the character theory you just have to read and think about the different ways of looking at people. To keep up with general systems theory you have to read and read and read. The best book about general systems that I know about is The Self-Organizing Universe by Erich Jantsch.

With things changing so fast, it is crucial that we have the principles and our roots in Buddhism to guide us. In a very practical way, meditation, tai chi or yoga, which are living expressions of the principles, help keep us sane through all the shifts and turns.

So those are the three foundations: modern body centered psychotherapies; Buddhism, Taoism and Yoga; and General Systems Theory. I want to point out a couple of things that we derive from each of these branches.

From Buddhism and Taoism we take the spirit of the work. If everything else fails, if you can't remember a damn thing, you're totally blank on technique, you can't remember any character theory, Hakomi vanishes out of your mind, - when all else fails - you can rely on the principles. By themselves, the principles will sustain the work. Gurdjieff said, "If you can pour a cup of tea right you can do anything." I think he means, if you can pour a cup of tea within the principles, with mindfulness, gracefully, nonviolently, going with the grain, embracing the situation as it is, then you can pour a cup of tea right. The presence and love that help you to do that will help you to do anything.

I'd like to look at some contributions of twentieth century psychotherapy to Hakomi. If you said to Fritz Perls, "it's all your fault", Perls would say "put Fritz in the chair over there and tell him that." It was an empty chair and you were supposed to put your projection of Fritz there and interact with that. The process was intrapsychic. Fritz himself was not part of your problem, just your projection of him. There was nothing personal about it. It's important to realize that the work is intrapsychic. The therapist's role is not one of somebody you're working out a relationship with, the therapist is somebody who's guiding you and helping you as you study your own inner world. That's very much like the relationship with a Zen teacher or a Buddhist meditation teacher. They're helping you learn about your inner world. They are catalysts who help the process unfold and then step out of the way. One time, at a meditation retreat, someone said to Chogyam Trungpa that they were angry at him. Trungpa replied, "that's like being angry at the mirror for being fat". The teacher is constantly stepping out of the way. If you get some people who are not very mindful then you have to do this little dance all the time getting yourself out of the way. They like to relate to the therapist. We borrow that intrapersonal perspective from both eastern religions and

Gestalt. In Hakomi, the therapist guides as the client explores their inner world.

There's another important concept we borrow from Reich mainly and it's related to general systems thinking. That's the concept of mind/body holism, the idea that mind and body are parts of one system with various interacting levels. This is quite different from the reductionist approach so characteristic of the "old" medicine and the "old" physics. In Hakomi, we work with several interconnecting viewpoints of the person. We understand some of the ways the body reflects beliefs and emotions and some of the ways beliefs and emotions reflect the functioning of muscles, organs and metabolism. Though these different realms of mind and body interact (in fact, several levels of both), neither one is primary nor totally in charge. Each level has some autonomy. It may seem at first a pity that the situation isn't simpler. Later it's a source of wonder, pleasure and relief - if you don't mind a little uncertainty.

We can even talk about one level of the body as metabolic mind, the metabolism acting as if it had intelligence, which in fact it does. It has a whole storehouse of knowledge. The antibodies for example have an enormous storehouse of knowledge. All these various minds are interacting and effecting each other. I don't doubt at all, for example, that some people have cured themselves of cancer by changing their attitudes. We borrow these ideas about interacting systems from general systems theory and we also borrow mind/body holism, an example of such whole system interaction, from Riechian Therapy and Bioenergetics. This system of thought allows us to look at the body as an expression of mental life, which we do very deliberately and precisely, in the study of character, body structure, posture and behavior. In the short term, we're constantly tracking the person we're working with, for bodily signs of inner experience. I don't trust the words as much as I trust what I see and hear. So we borrow that reliance on the body as an expression of mental life.

We also work directly with the body. We put our hands on it, deliberately and skillfully.

We're not trying to change the muscles, we're trying to interact with the mind through the body. If I reach over and take hold of someone's shoulders, it's not simply that the shoulders are tight, it's that the tightness is a reflection that they're frightened and I want them to access their fear. I'm not working on the body. I'm accessing the mind through the body. We do that in Hakomi and it's based on the notion of mind/body holism. Touching the body that way is, as far as I know, unique to the body centered psychotherapies.

A last connection to modern psychotherapy I want to mention is our connection to Carl Rogers' work. I don't know if he talks about nonviolence, but his use of contact, his staying with the other person's experience, not giving advice, not playing the authority, all that is totally within the principles.

Finally, I want to talk about our roots in General Systems Theory and some of the important differences in theoretical thinking before and after its development.

It's been very difficult for physics to explain how in the hell we all got so complicated, how it happened that we've become such marvelously evolved beings. That sort of thing leaves a terrible vacuum of understanding and every kind of thinking rushes in to fill the space. Thank heavens something's happening to science now which will help make sense of it.

There are three levels of physics. There's the level of old time physics, the atomists and their most recent spokesman, Issac Newton. The only explanation an atomist can offer for how we got so complicated and evolved is: the molecules bumped into each other that way. The atoms, by bumping into each other, like a gigantic billiard game, finally ended up being us sitting here talking this way. Billions of years ago, when it all started, it was all set to end up this way. And tomorrow is just as determined. If all there are are atoms, and all they can do is bump into each other, then that's the only explanation.

It doesn't sound very believable to me. The atomists had atoms bumping into each other

and that was reality. There's a lot of that kind of thinking still going on. It has to do with trying to reduce everything down to molecular behavior, trying to reduce everything down to atoms. Solid matter and forces operating in space. This thinking uses the idea of linear causality. A bumps into B and B bumps into C and finally, we all end up here at Coleman. And of course, there's absolutely no free will. We're all going to end up wherever we end up next year also simply because the molecules are moving that way. It's sounds ridiculous now, but it's all they had. And Newton, who developed the mathematics of this level of thinking, that had one of the finest brains ever encased in a human skull. That's all they had.

The next level of physics comes along a few years later and it's called thermodynamics. At this level of physics, it's not just little guys bumping into each other, there's a whole bunch of them. And you don't have to study the little ones bumping into each other; you can learn how the whole bunch is operating. This is called thermodynamics. You can study the behavior of masses of molecules, the "rules of the game." At this level, the law of large numbers applies. One important result of this view is that the universe is running downhill. The universe, as a matter of course, will get less and less complicated. If you pour some cream in your coffee and stir it, cream and coffee will get maximally mixed and the chances that they will separate are very slim indeed. If, however, you stir it for a very long time, every once in a while it will get less mixed up for a while. And every two hundred billion, billion years or something all of a sudden you'll have the cream on one side and the coffee on the other. Timothy Leary has made the analogy of a tornado blowing through a junk yard and creating a 747. A remarkable chance occurrence. Yet, that's basically the only explanation thermodynamics has for how we got here.

Why are we so complex? How come evolution? How come the trees grew and the universe isn't running down hill right here on the planet earth and it hasn't been for billions of years? Life has surely gotten more complex. Went from steam and lightning and molecules to cells and now they have disco-

dent, just an unlikely damn accident. Things have been stirring around a long time and then this happened. Well, I want to recommend that you don't believe that theory either. Thermodynamics was an improvement, but it still didn't explain life. It didn't explain evolution. The universe has an unfolding, it got more complex. Life came along. Thermodynamics fails to explain that.

So, who can explain it? The third level of physics is just now coming of age. And at this level, the level of dissipative structures, autopoiesis, systems thinking and self-organization, life can be explained. Let me tell you a little bit about these concepts. The main concept is that of dissipative structures. Ilya Prigogine won the Nobel prize for developing the mathematics of dissipative structures. Dissipative structures get more complex, more organized. They import energy and they export (dissipate) entropy (noise, confusion, disorder). It's like hiring someone to get your apartment organized. They use energy, which they have to import (by eating food) to create order. The dirt and confusion of your apartment is less, the organization, greater, the confusion has been dissipated. The source of energy for the whole process of evolution was imported from the sun.

And at every level at which we are alive, at the level of genetic material, cells, tissue, individual animals, human nature, groups, societies, cultures, at every level we are participating in dissipative structures. Life resists the darkness. Life grows and changes, becomes bigger, smarter, more and more complex and organized. The explanation that finally makes sense is one that rests on system theory, self-organization and dissipative structures.

All dissipative structures have three basic characteristics. One is: it must import energy. We call that kind of system, open. A dissipative structure imports energy and, therefore, must be open to its environment. Life always exists in a context. You can't talk about a person without understanding his or her environment. People are organized systems. People are living systems and must therefore operate in crucial ways as complex combinations of dissipative structures. You cannot understand a person without understanding their environment. You cannot talk about character without talking about the

situation in which that character is operating.

Another thing about dissipative structures is that they must operate at high levels of non-equilibrium. Non-equilibrium is like a spring. We humans have the tension and non-equilibrium of the upright posture, for example. It keeps us a little more awake, a little more alert, a little more capable. The energy stored in this non-equilibrium allows us to move and turn very rapidly. In the Chinese paradigm the tension of non-equilibrium is in the polarity between yin and yang. The Chinese knew about this aspect of dissipative structures. All have a high level of non-equilibrium. If they are anywhere near equilibrium they will tend, in accordance with the laws of thermodynamics, to run down hill and level out. That is, they would tend towards equilibrium.

To be a living thing, there has to be tension. You can think of a relationship between a man and woman. In the beginning the differences are great and this creates some tension which keeps the relationship alive and changing. But, when they start to get more and more similar, the relationship starts going flat. Just as there are dead trees still standing there are dead relationships. They're in equilibrium. Like the cream in the coffee that just got all one color.

The last and most important thing about dissipative structures is that they are self-organizing. They have an autocatalytic component. They are self-reproducing. There is a process whereby the key elements of the structure create and recreate themselves. In an ecosystem, it is the reproduction of plants and animals. These are the key elements that are constantly reproducing themselves. Without that, an ecosystem dies, stops being a living system and starts to run down. With personality and character you also have key elements, related to core material, with which people constantly create and recreate themselves. Think of the man who makes one fortune, loses it, makes another or the woman who marries one alcoholic after another. Think of all the ways we act to make and keep ourselves who we are.

This is the key to living systems on all levels - autocatalysis, self-organization, self-reproduction. All that's needed is the

import of energy, a state of being far from equilibrium and some way to recreate ourselves.

Some general things about using systems theory rather than the models created by the physics of thermodynamics, which is really the study of energy, especially heat: Freud's model is an energy model, actually, a hydraulic model, pressure and all that. Bio-energetics uses the term "energy", but its meaning isn't at all nailed down. If you examine it closely, it's really energy with consciousness. The old model is an energy model and the new model is an information model. That's why Hakomi uses mindfulness as the main tool. Information controls the flow of energy. In Hakomi Therapy, information is primary. Energy flow is important, but it's not primary. It's not the thing we're working with. It's not the thing we're trying to do. What we're trying to do is reorganize concepts and beliefs, core material.

So, information is primary. And it's not linear causality either, it's process thinking. You're not thinking of the individual trees. You're thinking about how the whole forest is working. You're not so much looking at the structure, but how it unfolds. The dynamics are more important than the structure. You get more information from the relation of the parts and the parts to the environment than you do from what the parts are made of. It's the message in this case and not the medium. Who cares if they call you or send you a telegram or what, as long as you get the news.

To summarize, Hakomi is rooted in three sources: modern psychotherapy, especially body centered therapy; Taoism and Buddhism, especially in their principles of mindfulness and nonviolence; and general systems theory, especially living systems, which are self-organizing in nature and are best studied from a process oriented point of view.



AN OVERVIEW OF THE HAKOMI METHOD OF PSYCHOTHERAPY

CEDAR BARSTOW

Cedar Barstow is a Certified Hakomi Therapist and the Administrative Director of the Hakomi Institute. She has a wide range of interest and has published three books: "Seeds, a Collection of Art by Women Friends"; "Winging It: A Woman's Guide to Independence"; and "Tending Body and Spirit: Massage and Counseling with Elders." Acutely aware, as an administrator and organizer, of the need for a clear, simple, and interesting description of the Hakomi Method to be given to people with little or no knowledge of Hakomi, Cedar developed this article with the assistance of members of the Training Staff: Halko, Pat, Jon and Greg. We invite feedback on how it serves the function of explaining Hakomi Therapy.

"I know you did your best," he says gently. The woman begins crying and then dissolves into sobbing. As her head sinks down and her shoulders turn inward, he helps her curl up. He stays with her, neither telling her it will all be all right, nor how to change so she'll do better next time. After the sobbing quiets down, they do some more processing and she discovers a level of acceptance of herself that didn't seem possible before. The light in her eyes and the fullness of her breathing speak to me. I feel very touched. I have been privileged to watch a "master" at work. Ron Kurtz is the therapist. I feel mesmerized, wondering, "How did he know to say this?"; "Why did he do that?"; "How did she feel so safe so fast?"; "How can he go so gently and get such powerful results?" As with all masters, whatever their practise, his work seems magical, effortless and full of artistry.

As a young man working in electronics, Ron became fascinated by how things work--the circuitry and the systems. An insatiable reader, he read about how things work in many disciplines--always searching for ways in which one system fits with or augments another. He read psychology, philosophy, systems theory, physics, biology, anthropology, mysticism, meditation. He got curious about psychological change, healing, the mind of the body, therapeutic applications of mindfulness and nonviolence, the evolution of consciousness. Then, while spending a period of time at the

Esalen Institute, he began developing a new system of body-centered psychotherapy called "The Hakomi Method." Though I say a new system, Ron would be the first to acknowledge that Hakomi is a synthesis of extant philosophies, techniques, and approaches. Among the modern therapeutic masters he has studied are Feldenkrais, Lowen, Pierrakos, Pessio, Perls, and Milton K. Erickson. Even though drawing from the understandings of other disciplines, the Hakomi Method has its own unique artistry, form, and organic process. "Hakomi" is a Hopi Indian word meaning, "How do you stand in relation to these many realms?" This was their ancient way of saying "Who are you?" and is an appropriate description for this therapeutic process, a process in which therapist and client explore the complex web of relationships which form our personal identities.

Ron Kurtz observed that in psychology's quest for the answer to the illusive question of how is it, precisely, that people change, psychologists and other helpers/healers have made a significant shift. As an overgeneralization, they have moved from talking about past experience (Freud, for example); to having a present experience or emotional release (Encounter Groups, Gestalt, Bioenergetics); to studying the organization of experience (Hakomi, Feldenkrais, NLP). Ron is convinced that long-term change happens through studying the organization of experience as it is lived and present (in other words how we do what we do). Thus we may bring to consciousness core beliefs which might be limiting, so that new and more satisfying options become possible. For this often delicate process to take place, a special atmosphere must be created: safety, mindfulness, mind-body interaction, attention to live present inner experience, and a sense of pacing that allows an organic process to emerge without pushing to solve a problem. Ron thinks of therapy as "learning, not just fixing something." This kind of learning is what Fritz Perls calls "the discovery of the possible."

One of the most exciting things to me is

that Ron Kurtz, with the invaluable assistance of eight special students (now Hakomi trainers) who studied with him over the last ten years, has actually taken apart the magic of how he works when doing therapy and put it back together into a very teachable system. The best way for me to describe precisely how this system of Hakomi Therapy works, is to go through verbatim sections of a therapy session and intersperse this transcript with client commentary, descriptions of the process, what the therapist is doing, and some of the underlying theories and philosophies.

The Hakomi session which follows lasted about an hour and a quarter in real time although the client experienced an inner sense of timelessness. The Therapist in this session has studied with Ron and other Hakomi Trainers and is certified in the Hakomi Method. Please keep in mind that these are selected sections of the actual session.

Therapist: A little nervous, huh:

Client: Yes, a little. That wasn't what I expected you to say.

Therapist: You're surprised ((?)) *

Client: Yes, I thought you would ask me what I was here for. I had my little speech all prepared, you know, about how I can't get angry and why that is, and what's not working in my life and (big sigh) and I'm nervous. I'm nervous.

Therapist: So something shifted inside with that sigh ((?))

Client: Yes, it's like the speech was so that I wouldn't have to notice that I was nervous.

Therapist: So, let's find out more about that nervousness. OK? You may want to close your eyes and check with your body. How do you experience this feeling? What signals are you getting right now?

Client: Ummm. (forehead furrows slightly).

Therapist: It's a little hard for you to identify ((?))

Client: Yes, a little, but mostly I just haven't done this before, except in meditation, but that was not out loud. (little smile)

Therapist: You're interested, huh?

Client: Yes.

Therapist: So, why don't you go back inside and check again.

Client: (big sigh)

Therapist: A little easier now, huh?

Client: Uhhuh, well, part of me is taking a deeper breath and not thinking so much and the nervous part of me is wanting to open my eyes and not be here.

Therapist: So, it's clear how your body is taking part in your feelings right now.

Client: Yes.

Therapist: So your body and your feelings are going two places at once.

Client: Yes.

Therapist: Are you willing to stay inside and find out a little more about this conflict?

* The symbol ((?)) is meant to signal a subtle and important part of the process. It is necessary though not sufficient that the therapist embody an attitude of open exploratory curiosity. It is crucial that the client assume this attitude on her own behalf. It is her exploration of her own organic, inner wisdom that leads to transformation. So when the therapist says, "something shifted ((?))", it is more than a simple statement of fact. The tone of voice implies both that the therapist is willing to be corrected and also that the therapist is inviting the client into her own curiosity. If the client only seeks answers that respond to the therapist's curiosity, the process remains interpersonal and bogged down. When the client becomes curious about her immediate experience and explores it in a way that allows the therapist to know what is happening and make some guiding suggestions, a powerful process is in effect.

Client: Yes.

Therapist: You're curious.

Client: Oh, yes!

CLIENTCOMMENTARY:

I'm surprised. Within the first few minutes it's clear that I don't have to explain what's wrong with me. I feel like the therapist is on my side, that whatever is going on right now is of interest. I'm amazed at how quickly and gracefully we get to my feelings. Although some of the therapist's questions sound artificial, I'm interested. I'm not just describing things that I have felt. I'm feeling them vividly from the inside. The interaction feels authentic within the first minutes.

PROCESS:

During the first few minutes, the therapist creates the context for the therapy session. Her first words "a little nervous, huh?" are a simple recognition of present feelings. Her voice is soft, straightforward, accepting, curious. She consistently uses techniques of "contact" and "tracking". She makes contact with the nervousness with a simple, clear acknowledgment: "a little nervous, huh?". She doesn't say, "How are you feeling?" She simply demonstrates in an accepting way that she understands.

Her words continue to be an invitation to go inside. She makes contact both with what the client is saying and with her body signals. Watching another person for clues is called tracking. The clues are often tiny and brief and usually unconscious--a sigh, a slight furrow of the forehead. Making contact with them as the therapist does, "You're surprised!" is a continual demonstration that she is paying attention, understanding, and interested. That in itself helps create safety.

The second thing the therapist is doing from the beginning is inviting the client to turn her awareness inward. Her questions like, "How do you experience this feeling? What are the signals?" require the client to check inside her body to get the information. Again the acceptance and curiosity invite her to go inside. The therapist demonstrates

awareness and her understanding makes it safe for the client to let go of her normal protective, focused outward awareness and be inside, learning and discovering. Mindfulness is available when we feel safe, when we know the outside is being taken care of. Mindfulness is a place of deep knowing. What a privilege for the therapist to be able to meet someone there.

The third thing she is doing is crossing the mind/body interface by continually inviting the client to discover how her body is participating in her feelings and how her thoughts are being reflected in her body. This interface is a rich, lively source of new information. For example, she makes contact: "So your body is taking part in your feelings," to encourage the client to study these dual events.

In addition, the therapist is creating a space where the client and therapist explore information that is spontaneous, interesting or compelling. These qualities are the bottom line, the creative edge of therapy. The therapist lets go of specific goals and stays with an orientation of discovery, helping the client study how she does what she does, how she organizes her experience.

During the first few minutes, the Hakomi therapist is doing a number of things. She is making contact and tracking, inviting the client to move from ordinary consciousness to mindfulness and curiosity, crossing the mind/body interface, and paying attention to the things that come up in present awareness that are of particular aliveness.

THEORY:

In Hakomi Therapy, the first order of business is always safety. Feeling safe is a prerequisite for any kind of deep exploration. When we're not feeling safe, our defenses are automatically up, and rightfully so, to protect us from danger. The defenses produce a lot of "noise" making it difficult or impossible to go inside and learn about the part that needs protection. For this client, for example, her "speech about what was wrong with me" was creating a lot of noise.

Client: Mmmm.

Therapist: It's not quite clear?

Client: Mmmm

Therapist: Take your time...a little sadness?

Client: No,...it's...I'm scared.

Therapist: You're feeling scared (her voice softens even more). Can you tell me more about it while you continue to stay inside? What kind of scared is this?

Client: I'm really scared. I don't want to breathe.

Therapist: You're holding your breath?

Client: MMM...(pause, then lots of tears). There's something wrong.

CLIENT COMMENTARY:

I'm finding myself very curious about the details of what's going on inside me. I've meditated before, but I've never tried to get quite so precise. My feelings are strong and authentic welling up from deep inside.

PROCESS:

Having made contact, established safety, and set the tone for mindfulness, the therapist begins accessing her client's particular unique experience--both mind and body--of nervousness. To do this she asks a series of questions which require her to be "inside" in order to answer. For example, "Is that with thoughts or are you seeing things?" There is no right or wrong answer to these questions. The purpose is to ask for details and help her deepen her awareness and study how she is organized around this nervousness which before has been simply familiar, habitual or unconsciousness.

Next, the therapist tries a Hakomi technique called "taking over". Seeing that breathing smaller and stopping her breathing requires energy on the client's part which then is not available for discovering what-

ever it is that she is "stopping", the therapist suggests an experiment in which she will take over the effort for the client. She will do one piece of what the client is doing, so the client can feel safe that it is being covered and allow her awareness to go to deeper levels and to identify more fully with the unexplored part. She's supporting and honoring her natural defense system. In this process it is very important to take over the action of the client in precisely the way she is doing it herself. She takes quite a while making sure that she's doing it right. "Is this the place? How fast?" In Hakomi work, there are many things which can be "taken over": a voice in the client's head, a desire to punch can be held back so the client can safely explore the impulse, a tightening in the stomach, held up shoulders, and so on. Almost instantly as she takes over the shortened breathing, she notices feelings and makes contact with them and begins to ask questions which will deepen and clarify the experience. With this experiment the therapist has chosen an access route to the core belief which is involved here.

THEORY:

There are three important theories involved in this section. The first is the all-pervasive principle of non-violence. The principle of non-violence acknowledges and respects the wisdom of living organic systems to know what is needed for themselves. It is reflected in Hakomi Therapy sessions in several ways. One is the sense of going gently, taking whatever time is necessary--not pushing or demanding in any way and matching the pace of the client. Another is in the predisposition of the therapist to follow whatever process is naturally emerging for the client, to simply be there and assist in exploring the information that presents itself.

Supporting the defense system is a very important component of the concept of non-violence. When defenses are confronted directly, they get stronger and louder. Guarding what's underneath that needs protection. An efficient, compassionate and powerful way to learn about the delicate feelings and memories that have for so long been held back by the defenses, is to support and honor the defenses.

Non-violence is also reflected in Hakomi Therapy by the therapist's embodying and modeling attitudes of compassion, acceptance, trust, and patience--qualities which are much needed in the empowerment and heartfulness of our relationships with ourselves and our larger communities. The principle of non-violence is so vital to Hakomi Therapy that a number of the techniques were developed to enable the therapy to be non-violent, and simply won't work without the corresponding attitude.

Another aspect of the Hakomi approach is its experimental attitude. This relates to the concept that therapy at its best is a learning process. It is not a fix-it process. Therapy is learning how we do what we do, and how we have decided what is impossible. When something seems impossible, we have no choices. By doing little experiments in awareness we witness how we organize ourselves around various inputs, and the possibility of exploring new choices for experiencing and expressing ourselves arises.

In Hakomi Therapy, there are a number of kinds of awareness to pay attention to: thoughts, sensations, tensions, feelings, movements, images, impulses, memories, meaning. By staying with and paying attention to any one of these, the experience will become more vivid and deepen into awareness on another level. Eventually, the vividness of the experience and/or the accumulated information will reveal a core belief normally created in childhood. This belief, if it is a limiting one, functions as a barrier to the normal process of updating the files when new and different information comes in. Transformation is possible when the client is enabled to change his or her mind about the belief.

So far in the session described here, the therapist has made contact with thought and sensation, explored the sensation and some strong feelings have emerged.

Therapist: It seems like something is wrong? Just stay with that feeling a bit. What do you notice about that "wrong"?

Client: (more tears) I don't know. (now crying and shaking)

Therapist: A little overwhelming right now ((?))

Client: Mmmm (She puts her hands to her eyes and bends her head forward). The therapist sees the direction her body is moving and helps her curl up, putting her hand over her eyes. Lots of tears and shaking. The client doesn't speak for some time and then gradually the tears and shaking slow down. Somewhere a fragment of a memory appears: "I think something's wrong with ME!"

Therapist: You're remembering something?

Client: Yes, I'm lying in bed.

Therapist: Can you see where you are?

Client: I'm in a big bed, my parent's bed. (The memory unfolds suddenly with great clarity.) I'm 9 years old. I'm wearing a light blue flannel nightgown. I'm sick. I'm real weak and I can't walk by myself. I have dolls that I'm playing with on the bed and the doctor's here. He's been here before. He's old and not very nice. He says, "If you throw up once more, you'll have to go to the hospital."

Therapist: You're pretty scared about this, huh?

Client: (nods)

Therapist: So I bet you sure don't want to throw up!

CLIENT COMMENTARY:

Client: Yes. I'm amazed. I'm actually simultaneously really being a nine year old and watching myself be a nine year old. These aren't in conflict. It's quite easy.

I notice my head nodding as a child would and my lower lip curling a bit as the sad, scared nine year old would. Here is a piece of this traumatic experience I've never remembered before. I remembered being in the hospital, but not the circumstances of how I got there.

(The session continues with more contact with the child.)

THEORY AND PROCESS:

At this point, the process of mindfulness has deepened from thought to feeling and then a childhood memory. The feelings, as they emerge are pretty overwhelming, since they have been locked up for many years. The therapist makes contact with how strong the feelings are, notices the direction in which her body seems to want to move (curling up) and simply supports this spontaneous behavior, helping her cover her eyes and curl up. This releases a lot of feeling in another state of consciousness which Hakomi calls "riding the rapids." This is a genuine, spontaneous emotional release. There is such intense feeling that mindfulness is simply not available. So the therapist supports whatever behavior the client is doing and maintains contact with the client until mindfulness returns.

In Hakomi, four distinct states of consciousness are used. First, ordinary everyday outward focused consciousness. Most of our lives are lived in this state of consciousness. The second (where most of Hakomi Therapy takes place) is mindfulness: awareness focused inward on present experience. Here, the vast richness of inner experience is available. The third is riding the rapids, and the fourth is the child.

For the client, a childhood memory, at first vague and fragmentary, emerges after the rush of feeling subsides. The therapist helps to stabilize the memory by asking for the details of the scene. "What are you wearing? Is someone else there with you? Where are you? What's happening? How do you feel?" As the client gets more in touch with the event, she becomes noticeably more childlike. Her words get simpler, her facial expressions younger, she begins referring to her nine year old self as "I". In Hakomi, this is the child state of consciousness. It is the fourth state and is a rich source of information about core beliefs which may be limiting to the adult. Since these core beliefs were formed in childhood, it is very valuable to return directly to their source. Now, back to the session.

Therapist: So you're probably scared to eat or move around.

Client: I'm staying very still and only breathing very quietly from right here (sternum up). I move my eyes around, but not my head.

Therapist: You're scared to move.

Client: Well, kind of frozen. I'm not feeling anything!

Therapist: You're not feeling anything ((?))

Client: I'm making it all still on the outside.

Therapist: So if you don't move and you don't feel then maybe you won't throw up.

Client: (Nods and lips purse a bit and head comes down)

Therapist: So, you probably don't want to talk much either.

Client: (Nods)

Therapist: I want to talk to you a little bit. Is that okay? I know you're scared and I know you're afraid something bad might happen...but I want you to know it's okay to tell me how you feel.

Client: (Shakes head "no".)

Therapist: It's not okay, huh?

Client: (Shakes head again) If they know, then I'll have to go to the hospital. (whispers) I think there's something wrong with me.

Therapist: You're pretty confused and scared and you sure don't want to go to the hospital.

Client: (Nods, more tears, holds her knees to her chest and starts rocking back and forth.)

Therapist: (Helps her fold up and rocks her.)

Client: (Takes a deep breath and lets go a bit.)

Therapist: I'm not your mommy or your daddy or the doctor, but I want to know how you feel and I'm happy to be here with you now, holding and rocking you. I know little girls who are scared need to be held.

Client: (More tears and more letting go)

Therapist: Feels good, huh? You need to be held. (Now therapist tracks a little furrow in forehead.) You're worried about what might be wrong with you, huh?

Client: (Nods)

Therapist: I bet you have some ideas.

Client: Something real bad.

Therapist: So you're scared there's something bad inside you.

Client: Uh huh, but I don't know what.

Therapist: So how do you know this?

Client: (Curls up her lip) The doctor.

Therapist: So all this must be pretty confusing. It seems like the doctor is telling you something is bad inside you and you shouldn't let it out by throwing up. You don't know what it is so you're pretty worried, especially about going to the hospital. So you're deciding you'd better be very careful and quiet and still.

Client: Uh huh. (Therapist has been tracking for signs of agreement as she talks).

PROCESS AND THEORY:

The therapist's goal at this point is to assist all the components of this child's experience to emerge so that they can be honored and recognized. She wants to get all the details of the big picture: The client's feelings, how she organizes her body to respond to and reflect those feelings, and the theme, the core belief which is operating here; and the strategy, what the child learns to do about it. The statement: "It's okay to tell me how you feel" is, in Hakomi, a technique called a "probe". A probe is an experimental statement given to the client so that (s)he can mindfully study what it is

that goes on spontaneously when (s)he hears it. It is not given as an answer or advice, but as an experiment. Probes are positive statements designed to be potentially nourishing. If the statement is "taken in", the response will be more relaxation and the therapist and client will then wait for the process to orient around the next thing that is needed. If the client, and this is usually the case, finds a barrier to the sentence (notices, for examples, a voice inside saying, "that's not true" or his or her breathing tightens up or (s)he feels angry), then this is a place for some processing. Normally, a probe is preceeded by a phrase like "what happens inside when you hear the sentence...(pause)." However, when working with the child, the form is less formal. In this case the sentence is used as part of talking with the child and is not set up as an experiment.

Ron Kurtz speaks of four components of a "Sensitivity Cycle." These are four stages in the continuing flow of increasingly efficient functioning. Clarity leads to the possibility of effective action which sets up the possibility of organismic satisfaction. This leads to relaxation of tensions mobilized around the original need and the chance for greater clarity about what the system next needs to orient around. **CLARITY, EFFECTIVENESS, SATISFACTION and RELAXATION.** Processing in Hakomi Therapy is not concerned with solutions, advice or comforting. Rather, the therapist is concerned with helping the client explore the barriers inhibiting the normal organic process of efficient functioning. As soon as the sensitivity cycle is cycling again, the solutions or changes needed will be available and easy.

In this situation, the barrier is the insight barrier at the clarity part of the cycle. She does not know what is wrong ("I don't know what's wrong with me". Because she isn't clear about what is wrong, she inhibits her responses and cannot act as revealed by the probe and seems to be stuck at the effectiveness part of the cycle. This is the response barrier. Because she is inhibiting her response, she can't take action. Unable to act (unable to tell people about her feelings), she can't receive the nourishment which would help her to relax. In turn, when relaxed, she could get more

clarity about the situation. And so on. So the therapist wants to help the client "un-stick" the theme of holding herself down which has evolved naturally from the core belief about it not being okay to let people know. She wants to help her update her files so that her own realistic organic possibilities can emerge.

Working with the child is a special opportunity. Here is a child who made a decision which has effected her whole life and her body. One of the main tasks of childhood is to categorize, order, and make sense of an enormous amount of information, feelings, reactions, experiences. Children's thinking naturally tends to be black and white, either/or, not containing the many permutations and adjustments and allowances available to adults through years of gathering data. Because they are uninformed and have a small data base, children also take information very literally and causally. So, in this client's case, the obvious conclusion from the doctor's statement was that there was something dangerous inside her that she must not let anyone know. She didn't have enough information to know that there were other possibilities.

The child doesn't need to erase or release the experience from his or her life. The child doesn't need therapy. The child simply needs the presence of a compassionate adult to help the child through the upsetting event by understanding, comforting, and clearing up the confusion, so that the child can change his or her mind and replace the old belief with a new, informed one. So the Therapist works with this child gently and delicately as a "magical stranger".

As she does this, now and during the rest of the therapy session as well, she is shifting back and forth from the big picture, the gestalt, the theme, the organization of the process, to the fine grain, the details, the spontaneous events. It's as if she moves from looking in a telescope to looking in a microscope. For example, at the same time that she's noticing that the barrier is the response barrier, that the theme is holding back, and that the body is holding back, she is also quick to notice and make contact with a furrow of the eyebrow, a nod of the head, a slight movement forward, a big breath. Contact with whatever is going on at the moment

keeps the process fresh, lively, spontaneous and flowing, while awareness of the larger context enables the process to reach its organic conclusion and transformation.

In addition to the Sensitivity Cycle, Hakomi also makes use of character theory. Ron uses eight major body types, each tending to reflect a corresponding character strategy. Contributors to the character patterns by which experience is organized include the structure of the nervous system, metabolism, language and culture, and habits. Character theory is not used to label people, but rather to help the therapist understand a certain part of the client faster and better. There are specific ways of working with each strategy which seem to work best. And there are specific core beliefs which seem to be the basis for particular character strategies. In this situation, the Therapist recognizes a "schizoid" or sensitive/analytic process. There are both strengths and weaknesses inherent in each strategy. (Strategies are normal and necessary in being alive and interacting with the world, and Hakomi Therapy both identifies and affirms the strategies and supports changes in the system. The sensitive/analytic strategy is to hold everything inside from a fear and belief that there is something bad or dangerous inside or some inescapable dangers outside. In very general terms, the approach to use with this strategy is to go slowly and gently, and help the client hold herself in to defend against the fear which paradoxically allows the belief underneath to emerge.

Returning to the session.

Therapist: (Speaks very slowly like an adult talking to a child.) So, I'd like to tell you something. I know how terrible this is for you. You really needed someone to talk to and there wasn't anybody, but you can talk with me about it now. I don't know exactly what's wrong either, but I do know that it's not too terrible because I meet you many years later and your body is very healthy. And I know that sometimes little girls' bodies get sick and don't work quite right. Being sick doesn't mean that there's something wrong with your feelings or that you did something wrong or that you need to hide or pretend. (Therapist notices Client nodding as she speaks.) This is what you were thinking, huh? It feels good to understand,

to hear all this. So you're feeling better now?

Client: I'm not so scared...!

Therapist: It's different inside when you're not scared ((??))

Client: I can breath easier and it's like my chest is more open and my shoulders lower. I can move!

Therapist: Great. So I want to tell you something else. Let's watch what happens when you hear...."It's okay now, to show your real feelings."

Client: (big breath)

Therapist: So something's changed. You can begin to believe that now. Let's just relax and enjoy that.

Client: Yes, what a relief!

Therapist: Is there anything else you'd like to hear that would make you feel even better?

PROCESS AND THEORY:

For the Client the transformation is simple and touching. Her body relaxes and softens as she feels understood, comforted, and no longer confused. The Therapist repeats the probe which earlier seemed impossible and what goes on is entirely different now. A big breath, one of relief and release. It's now possible that it's okay to let people know. The change from impossible to possible is enormous, and the beliefs are clear, available, and satisfying. The session concludes with the therapist and the client spending some time absorbing the new belief. The Therapist also makes sure that the client is clear about what goes on in her body with this new belief--deeper breathing, shoulders lower, a sense of movement. This supports the integration process.

When the process is complete, the client spontaneously returns to ordinary consciousness. The therapy session has moved from contact to accessing to processing to

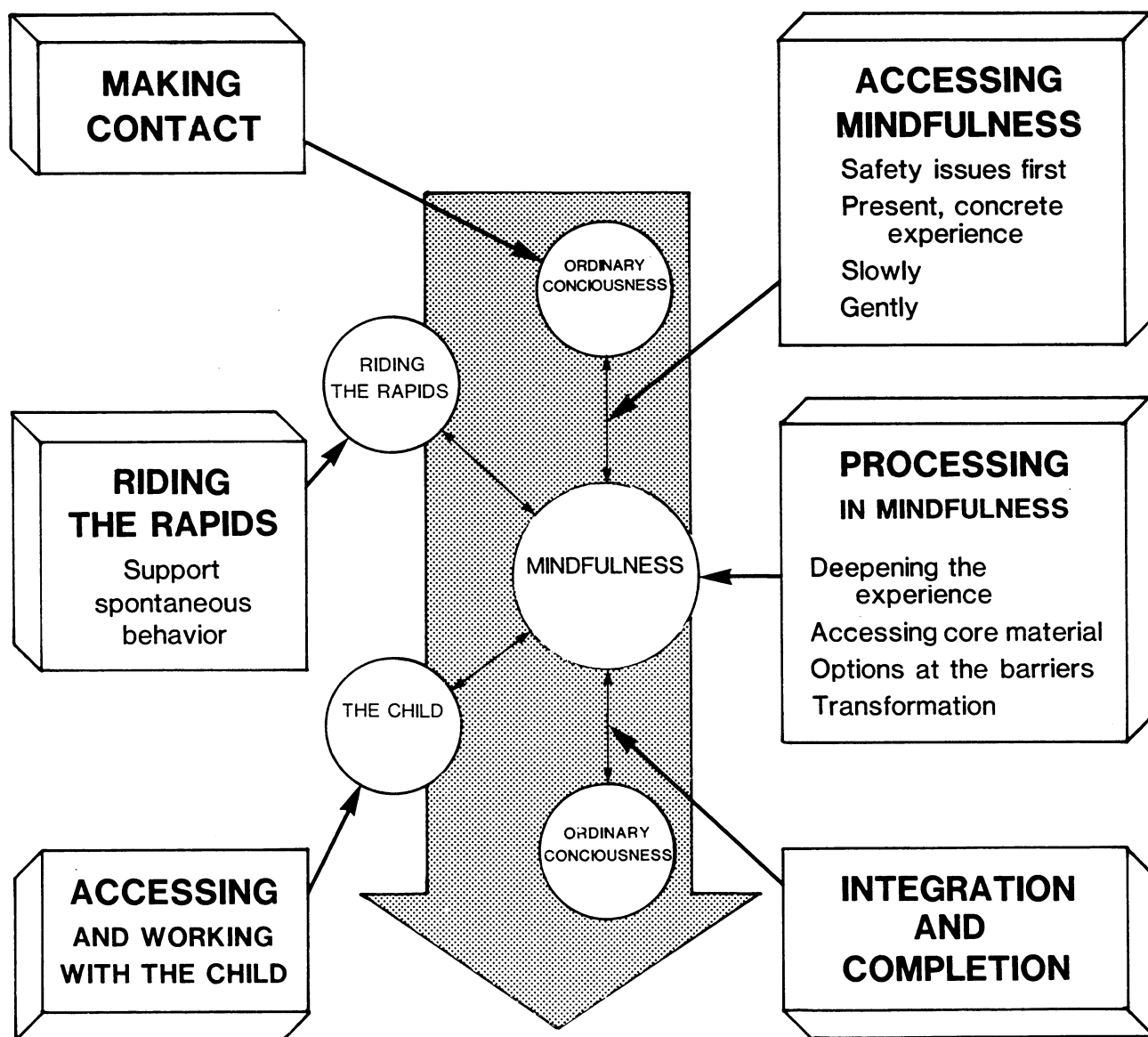
transformation and now to integration. Although transformation in the therapeutic context is immediate, integration in the real world is recognized as an essential and longer part of therapy. Some of the personal changes will occur spontaneously as a result of new beliefs. Other aspects of change will take some time, and some trial and error, as the client discovers her own new sense of when and how much of herself it is appropriate to share in given situations. She will have a system of body cues to help her out. When she notices herself holding her breath or holding down movement, she'll be able recognize the fear and then make a choice instead of automatically, habitually shutting down and hiding. This change took place in an organic process of working with, honoring and bringing to consciousness the inseparable inter weaving of three systems: body, emotions, and beliefs. There is also another essential component of change which has not been mentioned here. As useful as it is to have a system and techniques, there is a healing that comes through the spirit in a manner beyond logical theories and systems. This special gift is welcomed and honored.

In conclusion, I'd like to say something about the goals and outcomes of the Hakomi Method of Therapy. The ultimate goal is the discovery of the possible, the transformation of limiting self-imposed beliefs, and the empowerment which results from new freedom and new options. Another goal is simply accepting the past and moving on as an adult, learning how to take in nourishment in new ways and, having "updated the files" in the therapeutic setting, learning how to apply these new beliefs in the real world. Applying new beliefs is greatly facilitated by understanding the particular and individual body-mind organization of experience which has been created to support and reflect the old beliefs. Just as important, however, are the skills the client learns through Hakomi Therapy. One is the skill of being mindfull of present experience. Another is the skill of using the witness/ observer part of awareness. A third is the skill of learning to notice both the big picture and the fine grain in any situation. There are also attitudes which are acquired in Hakomi Therapy: attitudes of curiosity and openness, patience

and going with the grain, responsibility and non-violence, compassion and respect, and attention and humor. In the biggest picture of all--how the world works--these very skills and attitudes seem to be what's needed for people everywhere to understand our essential interconnectedness and our responsibility for the care and healing of each other and the planet.

*A TOUCH IS ENOUGH TO LET US KNOW
WE'RE NOT ALONE IN THE UNIVERSE, EVEN
IN SLEEP.*
ADRIENNE RICH

STAGES OF THE PROCESS



ANIMAL IMAGERY, THE CHAKRA SYSTEM AND PSYCHOTHERAPY

ELIGIO S. GALLEGOS

This article is being published courtesy of Steve Gallegos and the Journal of Transpersonal Psychology for a number of reasons. 1) It outlines a good methodology that can be used in accessing, processing, transformation, and/or integration. 2) It fosters mindfulness throughout. 3) It incorporates safety, security, and non-violence throughout. 4) It works within as opposed to outside of conscious awareness. 5) It honors and depends upon the wisdom and power of the client's own organismic integrity. 6) It aims at reorganizing around more pleasurable, efficient, nourishing functioning. In short, it is a valuable and compatible way of working that Hakomi Therapists would do well to be aware of. Steve Gallegos, Ph.D. has a background in college teaching that has now given way to more time for writing and the private practice of psychotherapy. He has recently published with Teresa Rennick Inner Journeys: Visualization in Growth and Therapy. Requests for reprints of this article first published in the Journal of Transpersonal Psychology, 1983, Vol. 15, No. 2, pp. 125-136, should be addressed to Eligio Stephen Gallegos, 83 Hancock Street, Lexington, MA 02178.

Contemporary Western culture has characteristically viewed the human being in terms of physical body parts (medical model), social/biological function (e.g., id, ego, super-ego), behavior patterns, emotions, aspects of awareness (conscious, preconscious, unconscious), or elements of imagination (archetypes).

By contrast, traditional Asian cultures have derived a view of the human being as comprised of energy, its movement and blockage. This is the view upon which acupuncture and the chakra system (Motoyama, 1981) are based. In Kundalini Yoga, for example, energy is said to be raised from the root chakra up through the various chakras to the crown chakra, with the energy in each chakra influencing attitudes, behaviors and awareness

(Radha, 1978). The first chakra is centered at the base of the spine and is concerned with one's groundedness and relation to the earth, security, and physical survival. The second chakra is centered in the gut, a few inches below the navel, and is the source of one's emotions and passions. The third chakra is located in the solar plexus and is concerned with power. The fourth is located in the heart and is the source of love and compassion. The fifth is in the throat and is involved with communication. The sixth is centered in the forehead and concerned with the intellect. The seventh is located at the top of the head and is concerned with one's relation to God, the Universe, the Eternal. Western psychologists have some difficulty accepting such theories, given the dominant culture's concern with philosophical materialism, and skepticism about the transferability of Oriental conceptions to Western therapeutic practice.

Recent work by the author attempts to combine both Western visualization therapy techniques (Assagioli, 1971; Shorr, 1983) with certain aspects of chakra theory, in the psychotherapeutic diagnosis and treatment of Western clients, in a Western setting. Specifically, a method of using animal symbolism and imagery in the expressive imagination of the client, has been developed for use in an otherwise standard therapy context. This method produces metaphoric descriptions related to the chakra system in a form that is readily understandable to the Western client and therapist, and which can serve as both a vivid diagnostic tool and a medium for effecting therapy and growth.

PROCEDURE

If the client is already experienced in visualization the procedure may be entered into immediately. If not, then training in relaxation is necessary as well as some initial introduction to the process of visualization. The introductory procedure I characteristically use is that of having the client imagine he or she is a seed that has been

embedded in the earth through a cold winter. Gradually spring comes, the sun warms the earth, and the warm gentle rain begins to fall. The earth soaks up the moisture as does the seed. The seed casing then pops open and the seed begins to grow roots. The roots are nurturing, anchoring, and provide an intimate relationship with the earth.

Then a shoot begins to grow upward, breaks through the soil and begins to absorb the warmth and energy of the sun. As the energy is absorbed, the stem grows taller, eventually developing leaves and then a bud. The bud gradually opens to reveal a beautiful blossom. The blossom stands before the sun and thanks it for its energy. The sun replies, thanking the flower for its beauty.

This visualization can itself be used diagnostically in terms of the richness of the soil, the depth, strength and breadth of the roots, the strength and height of the stem, and the color, size, number of petals, etc., of the blossom, plus any interesting deviations that the client describes as having occurred in the plant's growth. The purpose of the imagery in this procedure is for the client to learn to allow the imagery its process while observing and reporting to the therapist.

The system and procedure developed for contacting what I think of as the personal characteristics of the chakra system are as follows: With the client fully relaxed with eyes closed, he/she is asked to concentrate his/her attention in the center of the forehead, and to become aware of all of the feelings in that area. The client is instructed to tell the therapist when attention is fully concentrated in the forehead. Upon this indication the therapist instructs the client to spontaneously allow that area and the attendant feelings to turn themselves into an animal in his/her imagination. The client is asked to tell the therapist what animal it is and to describe what it is doing. The animal is also asked its name and whether it has anything to tell or teach the client at this time. Following this it is asked if there is anything it needs or if there is anything the client can do for it.

The client is then asked if he/she is willing to do this for the animal, and if the response is positive encouraged to do so. If

the response is negative, the request and negativity are explored further. The animal is then thanked for being there and told it will be seen on a later occasion.

The procedure is repeated for the throat, heart, solar plexus, gut, and the pelvis-legs-feet. This provides a representative animal for the energies of the intellect, communication, heart-compassion, power, emotions and grounding-security. To date only a minimal amount of work has been done exploring the spiritual or crown chakra.

In subsequent sessions the animals are introduced to each other to observe how they interrelate and they are helped to work through any conflicts. Their counsel is then sought about which one of them needs most to grow and the others are asked to support that growth. The animals can also be used as a support system in working with any other material that emerges. One other avenue appears to be helpful in the client's growth: having the client become each of the animals, one by one, to gain an experience of that particular perspective. This is conditional upon each particular animal's acquiescence. Each animal is always treated with respect and dignity. The therapist must always remember that what is being ultimately dealt with are elements of the individual which may have been rejected and/or negated, and which need to be welcomed back into a harmonious integrated whole.

The growth that the animals undergo may be a growth in size or a transformation into a completely different animal. This growth has characteristically been followed by changes in the client's relationship to the environment in terms of thought, feeling, and behavior. The reverse is also true; changes that the client has undergone in everyday life may be reflected in changes in the animals or in their relationship to each other.

GENERALIZATIONS

The Intellect animal has characteristically been observed to be a bird, frequently an eagle or a hawk, or a large cat such as a lion or a lynx. It has also non infrequently been a monkey. Beyond this, individual aspects appear to be characterized. One of our clients was a young lady just graduating

from college, whose head animal was a fox. She had used her intellect very adaptively in learning to take tests and give teachers feedback they sought but had never encouraged her intellect to grow into its own dimensions. It roundly chided her for her neglect.

The Communication animal has generally been the least developed of the animals, frequently appearing as a snake, a turtle, a caterpillar, etc., indicative of primitiveness and defensiveness. This is usually one of the first animals to undergo growth and transformation; a snake becoming a bird, a turtle becoming a dolphin, a caterpillar becoming a white crane. It is possible that this lack of development is a cultural phenomenon; we may not learn to communicate as much as we learn how to not communicate, which is the origin of deception.

The Heart animal (love, compassion) has varied greatly and, in the few cases where there have been similarities, is either a lion or a bear. Beyond this, individuality emerges: a fish in an intensely Catholic person, a dove in a peacemaker, a chicken in a young teenager afraid of his emerging passions. Occasionally two, or even three, animals appear at a single chakra. This is possibly indicative of a divided energy which needs to be healed. The two animals may be indicative of a divided orientation or polarization: a perplexed husband with a lover whose heart animal is both a turtle deep in a canyon and a fledgling eagle on a high ledge. Circumstances may be that both animals are willing to merge voluntarily in which case a third animal emanates from their union. But most frequently there is a conflict that needs to be resolved first.

The Power animal seems highly individual, perhaps a wild stallion that needs to be tamed, or a sleek, black panther, or a rabbit. In several instances it has been a dragon. One minor generalization is that women appear to have a power that is hidden (a raccoon, an ostrich, a teddy bear) and which needs to be unmasked or developed. A young lady whose power animal was two rams butting heads had given half of her power to her lover and found herself in frequent conflict with him.

The Emotional animal appears frequently as a large or spirited animal (a whale, a gorilla)

and occasionally as an animal that is restrained: a caged tiger, a tethered or hobbled wild horse, a hibernating bear. One of the first tasks at hand may be to free or awaken the animal, but this is done only with the acquiescence and support of the other animals and after conferring with the animal as to why it is restrained. Typically the other animals rejoice at the freeing of their colleague.

The Grounding animal has usually been an animal that is sure-footed, or that lives close to the earth: a prairie dog, a rabbit, a mountain goat, a deer, antelope, or kangaroo. This is characteristically a beautifully supportive animal, and may teach the client how to run or how to be at home in nature. One individual whose other animals were all large, powerful animals, had as a grounding animal a rabbit. In an imagined council of the client's animals the rabbit expressed a fear of the others because they were all so big and powerful. The others all expressed support and encouraged the rabbit to grow to be their equal, whereupon the rabbit grew to be a giant rabbit, ten feet high, who was extremely settled and no longer afraid.

Mention must be made of the intensity of feeling and emotion that these animals draw up and of the deep warmth and support that is felt from them. Of course, this is a factor that appears to be characteristic of visualization in general, that feelings are much closer to images than they are to words or descriptions.

Frequently the animals will bring up unfinished business. One individual, whose head was an owl looking at the full moon, had as a heart animal a raven that seemed to be alternately black and white, and who was quite angry. When the raven was asked what he needed, he said he wanted the client to give him his head. The client suddenly recalled a situation of several years past where he had decided to allow his heart to be his guide, but after getting into a dangerous and frightening situation, became very calculating, always seeking reassurance. Upon questioning about this old event the raven indicated that he had specifically led the client into that situation to teach him how to surmount fear but the client had not trusted him adequately. They had been at

odds since that time. The client apologized and acknowledged that he had gone back on his commitment to his heart whereupon the raven became settled, took on a brilliant black sheen with feathers tipped in white, and took the client for a long flight. From that day the client's relationship to his wife changed from apprehensiveness to rich involvement.

One exciting aspect of this work is that the client is well able to observe where a difficulty occurs and can marshal the support of the remainder of his energies rather than nebulously identifying completely with the difficulty. This more direct use of the client's energies is also extremely helpful for the therapist and it is not unusual for significant changes to occur in a single session.

Another area where this approach is extremely helpful is in understanding relationships between individuals. Frequently people who are close will observe that they have similar animals. Or if there are areas of conflict, they can localize them specifically. A man and wife who frequently argued were found to have as Communication animals a snake which was frequently sneaky, and a white stallion that tended to stomp on snakes. In processing, the snake encompassed her Power and Emotional animals whereupon it turned into a bird. The bird and stallion got along well and the couple's arguments came to a halt.

CASE STUDY

As an illustrative example, I present here a case study of Jane Doe. When I met her she had been in therapy for five years. Her symptoms were depression, self-negation, and suicidal tendencies. Previous therapists had encouraged Jane to enter into "non-suicide" contracts and she admitted to me at the end of her therapy that she had restipulated the contract almost daily in order to keep from committing suicide. She was 34 years old, divorced, with two children. Her manner was intense and her voice was high-pitched. She initially expressed fear of me. I assured her that I respected her and trusted her ability to grow, and would do nothing to threaten or pressure her, which she accepted. She told me at the time that she hated herself because she was not perfect. I told her that I felt each human being was a beautiful

flower deep inside. She replied that she was sure there was no flower within herself. I had her do a visualization for getting in touch with that inner flower. Jane expressed surprise at what she had seen: a tiny baby.

At our next meeting I explored her history. She had grown up on a remote ranch in northern Wyoming. Her mother was dominating, usually angry, and defensive. Jane felt she had never been good enough for her mother and had not been wanted from the time she was born. Her older sister had a personality similar to that of her mother. Her father was passive and quiet.

She said she felt like she was nothing. Her existence was a deep dark well with a lid over it. The only delight there had been in her early life was when her father took her hunting or fishing with him. Although he was also reticent with her, on these occasions she felt he truly cared for her. When asked if she could give each of these little girls a different name, this one she called "Richness." The other's name was "Nothing."

She also expressed a tendency to want to withdraw into a corner where she would be safe. I assured her she was free to retreat to the corner whenever she wished as she was also free to come out of that corner, and I encouraged her to practice both of these movements so they could both become voluntary.

At our next individual session I asked her to place the chairs in the room to represent a position of family members at home. Mother and sister chairs were placed in the center of the room, her own and her father's were placed in two corners. As a newborn baby her position was at the center of the room, but in that position she immediately felt jealousy from her mother and sister. As she removed herself to the corner, she felt her father also move to a corner in silent support of her.

In the Visualization--this was done in a group setting resulting in less initial information than is usually derived from an individual setting--Jane's Intellectual animal was a giant eagle. She was standing below it and could only see its legs and lower body. Its first words were to tell her

how dumb and stupid she was. In dismay she asked why it was saying that to her. It replied that it wanted to give her an example of what she does to herself.

Her Communication animal was a weasel, and at this she felt demeaned.

Her Heart animal was a dead dog, encrusted with a fungal growth, lying on a stone slab in a cave. She was visibly disturbed at this.

Her Power animal was a white bird in a cage, which when released from the cage became a large dragon roaring in anguish. Its anguish was over the dead dog.

Her Emotional animal was a small fuzzy bear who reached inside of her and removed a small blue stone which he then showed her. Its soft glow illuminated the room with a good feeling.

Her Grounding animal was a porpoise.

At this first council meeting the animals agreed that their first task was to bring the dead dog back to life. They all gathered around the dog, whereupon an infant child appeared. Jane immediately recognized the infant as a fetus she had aborted at the age of 19, and over which she had come to feel extremely guilty and had continuously condemned herself. There was also a 15-year-old boy present whom she recognized as the aborted fetus had it be allowed to live and grow. The boy told her that he was not angry at her, that he was comfortable where he was, and that Jane had to accept what she had done without condemnation. After great internal struggle, acknowledging her immaturity at the time she had the abortion, she "owned" her part in it.

Upon this the dragon ceased its lament, the weasel turned into a swan, and the dog regained its life. The animals rejoiced in celebration. Her voice developed a mellow gentleness.

On a subsequent occasion, Jane came to see me quite depressed. She said the 15-year-old boy had been presenting himself in imagination, wanting her to go with him. She refused and was quite fearful. In a visualization she agreed to go with the boy only if

she could take the dog with her. He agreed and led her over a hill. At this point the boy began to change, growing large and frightful. Jane recognized him as her anger against herself. Her initial response was to attempt to suppress him but he only grew larger. Her other attitude was to escape from him but she knew he would pursue her. At my encouragement she asked him if he would be willing to help her grow and he agreed, whereupon she embraced him and he immediately dissolved. She felt strong and settled, and the dog took on an extraordinarily beautiful glow.

At a subsequent meeting Jane confessed that she was upset because her dragon, to whom she had become fondly attached, had begun to change, and she was trying to resist the change, wanting to keep him as he was. He had already lost his scales and his body had become rather hairy; she knew his legs were trying to grow longer. She was very sad at this and demanded that he stop changing, upon which all the other animals became passive and unresponsive. We discussed her difficulty in letting go, and she agreed to engage in a visualization where she allowed the dragon to leave. She told him goodbye and he went over a hill. I encouraged her to fully experience the sadness of letting go and she cried. A moment later a brown winged horse flew toward her and she knew this was her power animal transformed. He took her for a ride to a distant valley where she found a small girl named Richness who was herself.

A month later she came to see me and reported that her thoughts of suicide had become very intense. In discussing them she also revealed to me that they had always been accompanied by a feeling of terror. Upon closer questioning she revealed that whenever she felt the terror her thoughts immediately went to suicide. We agreed to meet the following week to do a visualization where she would encounter her terror directly, and I asked her to reaffirm her nonsuicide commitment.

When we next met she reported having experienced intense anxiety during the intervening week, with several sleepless nights.

In the visualization we first gathered all her animals together and asked them if this would be an appropriate time for Jane to

encounter her terror. All acknowledged that the time was propitious except for the eagle; he remained silent. They were all then asked if they would support her in the encounter and they all said they would.

I then asked her to allow her terror to present itself to her as an image in her imagination. It appeared immediately as a large, bearded man cracking a whip. He looked much like her father. She asked why he was cracking the whip. "So you'll be afraid," he replied. She asked what he wanted of her. He replied, "I want you to disappear." When she asked if he would be willing to give her his energy for her growth, he answered that he would not. I then had her ask him to tell her when he first appeared in her life. She immediately saw herself as a very small child, together with her sister, jumping on a bed, making noise and having fun. Her mother was sick in bed in an adjacent bedroom. Her father suddenly appeared in the doorway, enraged. He removed his belt and whipped them both brutally, leaving welts and blisters on her body.

I then asked her to take any animals with her that she wished and return to that early scene to heal the two girls and the father. She took the dog and flying horse with her. The dog licked both girls' wounds, which healed them, and the father was also healed of his rage.

She returned to the cave with the animals where Terror was also waiting. He was now tiny. She asked again if he would give her his energy for her growth. He refused and grew big again. I had her ask him to show her the second time he came into her life.

She saw a scene of herself as a small child with her hands tied behind her back. She didn't know the circumstances. I had her see the scene just prior to this. She saw many people at her parent's home. It was a party. She went to the bathroom by herself, proud that she was doing this alone, but she emerged without her panties. Her parents were shocked, spanked her and tied her hands behind her back. She didn't understand why they were upset as she thought she was doing something good.

I had her return to the scene, taking any animals she wished, to heal the little girl and the parents. She took the swan and the

bear and at the last minute had the dog come also. There were so many people that she couldn't seem to do anything. The swan then engaged them and kept them occupied while she untied the girl's hands and soothed her. She had both parents lie on the floor. The bear unzipped their chests and with his jewel erased something from the heart of each.

Upon return to the cave I had her ask Terror to show her the third time he entered her life. She then saw numerous events of chastisement, punishment, rejection as if they were being projected on the wall of the cave. I had her ask all the animals to stand with her and beam a healing light on the scenes. At the end of this procession of events Terror was gone, the whip lying on the floor, and her father, clean-shaven, was standing before them, hat in hand, staring at the floor. The animals informed her that she needed to unravel the whip and macrame it into a wall hanging. She engaged her father's help in doing this. It became a wall hanging that she suddenly recognized as one she had made five years earlier while in a psychiatric ward. All the animals then danced in celebration with Jane and her father.

When I saw her two weeks later, she was amazed that there had been no further thoughts of suicide, as these had been so omnipresent for the past five years. There was a clear, direct look in her eye, her voice was calm and settled and she told me that several friends had commented on how changed she looked. The small fuzzy bear had grown to full size, and each animal had a blue, glowing jewel in its heart. She felt deeply joyful.

DISCUSSION

The uniqueness and individuality of each of the animals is difficult to convey in words. The animals have their own personalities and specific orientations as much as individual human beings do, but they seem naturally oriented toward preferring cooperating with each other. They are occasionally overjoyed when first encountered as having finally been given recognition, and they are quite aware of their value to the individual. One woman's emotional animal was an octopus. She was horrified because she interpreted that as

meaning she was emotionally clinging and she began to cut the octopus' arms off. It was horrified at this, chastised her, and told her that it was through the tentacles that she maintained contact with others and should be appreciative of them.

The animals also become intimately comforting and the client gains a great sense of richness from their presence. As the animals learn to love and support each other, love and care appear more frequently in the client's life. In fact, some very recent work has involved asking the animal that most needs to grow to stand in the center of a circle with the client and the other animals around the periphery. The peripheral participants are asked to beam their love and support at the center animal as if it were a light. In some cases this alone has been adequate to induce a transformation.

The transformation can be sudden--a turtle suddenly exploding into an elephant, for example. Or it may also take some days to occur during which the client is aware that the animal is changing and may be aware of certain parts but is unable to tell what the animal is becoming. Not infrequently the animal will disappear, only to reappear later as a different animal.

And the animal is also independent of memory. Occasionally a client will forget what a certain animal was, especially early in the imagery, but when he goes to meet the animal, recognizes it immediately when it is seen.

CONCLUSION

This therapeutic process was initially developed when the author observed similarities between the chakra system and the totem poles of the Northwest Coast American Indians. This therapeutic process also acknowledges a relationship between those tribal Indian transformation rituals and modern psychological transformation. This relationship is being explored in a separate paper. In any case, it is possible that the use of animal imagery, as metaphoric description, may be of therapeutic value in other systems as well.

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A NOTE ON HAKOMI THERAPY AND PSYCHODRAMA

GREG JOHANSON

Greg Johanson is one of the trainers of the Hakomi Institute and the editor of the Forum. He is a United Methodist minister currently serving two churches on the old Klamath Indian Reservation in Central Oregon. A lot of his interests and other publications are in the area of religion and psychology, spirituality and therapy, and he is currently working on articles dealing with spiritual perspectives on Hakomi. He also is a contract therapist with Lutheran Family Services of Oregon and a doctoral student in clinical psychology. The following two articles outline some of the connections and integrations Greg sees between Hakomi therapy and psychodrama and biofeedback.

Psychodrama is a natural cohort for Hakomi therapists in many ways. It deals with character from the same perspective of creative act, drama, the ability to access and switch roles, and add to repertoires, etc. It has a nice body of techniques for deepening one's experience. It builds into the process the ability to try a scene over and over again from different modes of being, attempting new options, or to step back and simply watch it being done by others, allowing oneself the luxury of reflection outside the busyness of the action. Doubling for another person, saying for them what they might not be able to verbalize for themselves, can have the effect of a probe. Having other people in the psychodrama report their feelings from participant perspectives can also provide new rich information that can rattle consciousness in the manner of a probe. The whole process is particularly good for kinesthetic people who need something concrete to work with, something they can see, touch, etc. Psychodrama can be fun and provide a setting of safety to experiment with possibilities for growth. Finally, a person involves more of their being in the process when they are moving, relating, talking, etc. and not simply sitting and reporting as with certain other therapies.

The possibilities for accessing and deepening a person's experience was the central thing

that struck me in the first psychodrama group I attended. The group began with an invitation for everyone to get in a meditative space and allow to come to memory some incident in which they felt lonely. A woman then started her psychodrama by beginning to describe the scene she had in mind. "Let's see, I'm in my room, and there is a desk here and window over there and ..." The leader, a skillful woman therapist, immediately jumped in in an engaging, organic and non-offensive way and started a conversation with a number of questions that directed the woman back into her experience, slowed her down, and deepened her state of meditation. "Oh, you have a desk here? What kind is it? One of those with ..." "Does the desk have drawers? Show me where they are." "Do you remember what was in the drawers? I bet you had pens and pencils and paper in the middle one, right?" "What was the picture you kept in the second drawer? Can you describe the people and the background?" Before long the woman was deeper and deeper into her experience, the memory which had started out somewhat vague was quite vivid in her mind, and a good creative space was developed to work in.

This kind of structure for a group is a nice option for Hakomi therapists to have in their hip pocket for ongoing groups or topical workshops. Simply choose a subject such as anxiety, loneliness, guilt, power, whatever, allow the word to be a probe, and ask for mindfulness in relation to memories. A wealth of material is generated to work with.

It does not take a lot of people to incorporate psychodrama either. One time a woman along with a friend dropped by the office I was working in out of curiosity for what Hakomi might be. In our making contact kind of chit chat it came out that the woman had a background in drama kind of things and that probably predisposed me to think in psychodrama terms. We stood up in the office group room and began with a little body reading. The woman gave me the impression of a sturdy pioneer woman capable of and used to a lot of work. She acknowledged that she had done a lot of work but didn't feel equal to the

task, (an aware compensated oral, right?) I was also drawn to her shoulders, the left one in particular. It seemed to have some kind of invisible weight on it. I came up with a technique out of the blue I had never used before and asked the friend to use her hand to press down on the woman's left shoulder, and asked the woman to guide the process and "get the force exactly right" in terms of pressure, direction, etc. After hanging out and mindfully accessing the right physical sensation, the woman put both her hands up over her left shoulder and said it was like she was carrying a heavy bag, a burden that was slowing her down from moving where she wanted.

In psychodrama fashion, I then invited her to act that out. I had her grab her friend's hand over her left shoulder with both her hands, the friend simulating the weight of a heavy bag. I then had her slowly and mindfully walk about the room dragging this burden. One trip around the room and she said, "I've got it. It's my children. They have felt like a burden I've always had to carry that has interfered with me going on with other things I have wanted to do with my life."

We all stopped walking. Not sure what to do next, I used one of my stock fillers. "What are you aware of now?" (Ye olde gestalt standby.) She reported a pain or ache of some kind around her heart and lower back. I then asked her friend to put one hand on the heart and one on the lower back and had the woman adjust them to feel most right. She acknowledged that that felt good and nourishing to her, and after a short period we went for meaning. "What do those hands mean to you right now? What would they be saying if they were using words?" The woman had never done Hakomi work but she was a good aware person and she got it quickly. "They are saying, 'You can rest now. You have worked enough today. I'll be on the job for awhile.'" When I had the friend repeat the words verbally, she had to allow the strangeness of being the one supported to blow by, but then let down into the experience and visibly relaxed and straightened at the same time.

She felt much better about taking care of her kids at that point, realizing that she didn't have to be on the job all the time. She

could get support and rest once in awhile and that made a tremendous difference in her overall outlook on life. The whole session took about 10 minutes starting from the body reading. It was a kind of Hakomi-psychodrama combination; the type of thing that can happen when one is grounded in the work and open to whatever techniques might be helpful.

Psychodrama, like any other form of therapy, has the potential for getting off track and not being helpful. As any Hakomi trainee might guess, this happens when the Principles that undergird Hakomi are violated. The Principles have wide application beyond Hakomi work and beyond psychotherapy. It is my bias that psychodrama practitioners who are not already consciously or unconsciously grounded in the Principles, (and many of them are,) could sharpen and enhance the effectiveness of what they are already doing by getting enough Hakomi exposure to be grasped by the new paradigm Ron is talking about.

Mindfulness for instance. We all know that you have to slow down to be mindful. The pace of a psychodrama can be quite fast and much valuable material that is evoked by participating in a scene can be lost when the psychodrama director-therapist does not slow someone down and ask them to check in with what just got stirred up.

It is especially distressful for me to witness a not-quite-informed psychodramatist try to override a character problem rather than explore the barrier the person has to certain issues. For instance, in one scene a woman played out being ineffectual at getting her husband to put down the evening paper and pay attention to what she was trying to say, (Oral predicament.) The therapist-director then had her witness a stronger, self-possessed woman do the scene over and effectively get the husband's attention. The woman was then encouraged to do it the same way. "Now make sure you stand right in front of him, ask him to put the paper down, make direct eye contact, use a strong determined 'I will not be ignored' tone of voice, and get him to acknowledge what you are saying." The woman complied and tried this new approach on for size, was congratulated for her success, felt good, and was encouraged to go home and actually do it.

Here is where my distress happened. If the woman had found a new freedom, option, and encouragement to be different, it would have been fine. Tracking her experience closely as she attempted the 'stronger woman' approach, there were many bodily and voice intonation signs that suggested she was scaring herself. I have no doubt that she went home and screwed up the new undertaking, adding to her 'I don't have the power' mentality.

The whole thing could have been a wonderful therapeutic happening if the therapist had also been tracking the woman's responses and asked her what she was aware of after doing the strong attempt. Then the woman's fear could have come out, been deepened, explored, and the oral issues of being afraid to be strong because strong people are not supported and given to, accessed. Then the woman could have explored the issue of what she needed in order for it to be ok to be strong, and finally redone the scene without characterological interference with her strength. The therapist in question here could benefit from knowing how to explore various barriers. Psychodramatists in general often seem to major in working at the response barrier, and often use group encouragement and strong direction to get people to overcome their inhibitions. That only works well, realistically, in a small percentage of cases.

This brings me to the overall issue of doing psychodrama under the old authoritarian paradigm. Coming from a Hakomi perspective, I was shocked and scandalized to witness the following work done by a nationally acclaimed, certified psychodrama trainer: A woman was sufficiently motivated to work that she was given third place in the line up that night. However, after witnessing the first two people do their scenes, she got cold feet and said she had changed her mind and did not want to do her scene after all.

The leader responded by saying, "Come on. Yes, you can do it. You'll be glad you did afterward. Come on group, let's give her a little encouragement." The group cheers her on and clap their hands along with the leader. The woman repeats her desire not to go through with the psychodrama. The leader

keeps up his insistence. Finally, he goes over to her, extends his hand to help her up from her seat on the floor. She can't resist this direct appeal, accepts his arm, and is led by the hand to the middle of the stage. He starts her into the scene and struggles through it with her. Four times during the work she repeats, "I don't want to be doing this." Four times she is ignored and the work goes on, finally to completion.

And what was the scene she did? Being a little girl who was lost, couldn't find her way home. So she ends up in a police station unable to get the attention of the sargent behind the desk to listen to her problem. Her issue? Nobody listens to me! The session had been a characterological, therapeutic disaster. Whatever else was going on, the main thing that stuck out was that the sargent running the show and 30 other people in the room were not listening to her, not taking seriously what she was saying, i.e., "I don't want to be doing this." So her world view was impressively confirmed.

To add to the confusion even more, after she was finished and sat down, the leader checked in with her and asked, "Do you feel better now? Are you glad you went ahead and did it?" Her answer? "Yes, I do. I'm glad I did it." Others in the group murmur congratulations and support. I am dumbfounded. It is incredible that she said that. Am I completely off base in my perceptions? But then during the feedback at the end of the group, I say among other things that I didn't like what happened with this particular woman (though things went nicely enough with others) for the above mentioned reasons. I tell her I'm glad she kept up her protest as much as she did. When the feedback opportunity gets around the circle to her, she does confirm my perceptions and thanks me for being able to articulate them. Her fooling herself had to do with the group-think phenomenon that goes on when one is in the midst of a like thinking group without an atmosphere conducive to dissent.

It was not that the leader was a malicious, power hungry person without good skills. He was simply grounded in the old authoritarian "I'm the doctor with all the training and I know what is best for you" model. The group

was too on the whole. They thought they were being compassionate by saying "It may be painful, but it is for your own good." The model led to this gross violation of the principle of non-violence and accompanying therapeutic calamity.

Had the leader been schooled in notions of unity and organicity that lead us to believe that the wisdom is within (the other, the one being worked with), the whole thing would have gone in another direction. The resistance of the woman would have been valued as good spontaneous experience, live stuff. She would have been invited to tune into it and learn from it. "A little fearful, huh?" "Why don't you hang out with your hesitance and fear for awhile and see if it will tell you more about itself. Take your time." Just these questions alone would be helpful in the sense that she was being listened to, taken seriously. Certainly she and her experience would be given priority over some artificial agenda that says we have to do a psychodrama scene now. It would have demonstrated non-doing, no preferences on the part of the leader as well as acceptance of the woman as she was. Then she might have accessed some important material or perhaps have felt the freedom to go on and do her scene and learn that way.

So, the overall point of this little note: Psychodrama can be a wonderful therapy to employ or it can be catastrophic. What makes the difference according to the Hakomi perspective is the person of the therapist. Is he or she living and breathing the principles of unity, organicity, mind-body holism, mindfulness, and non-violence? Or as I sometimes put it, in agreement with Peter Koestenbaum, is there a spiritual consistent value structure that underlies the work and transcends the application of a collection of techniques?

A final observation in connection with character theory. Massochists don't do so well in psychodrama unless carefully worked with. They like the closeness of the group, but easily feel under the spotlight and pushed to perform. Result: stuckness. Psychopaths, if present, need to be given a lot of free reign and encouragement to set up and direct the drama just the way they want to -- going with the flow of their character to start with or losing them. They can also put on a good act of course, literally, and miss themselves in the process. Schizoids can sometimes also get caught up in their 'as if' behaviors and be putting on a good show that does not access their reality. Orals, compensated orals, and especially rigids gravitate toward, and enjoy psychodrama the most.

NEVERTHELESS . . . I BELIEVE!

HOWEVER DARK THE IMMEDIATE FUTURE, ALL IS NOT LOST. HUMANITY WILL LIVE BY THE FAITH AND THE HOPE, THE LOVE AND THE SUFFERING, OF A SMALL NUMBER OF MEN AND WOMEN, WHO ARE TO BE FOUND IN ALL CAMPS, DISPERSED THROUGH ALL PARTIES AND THROUGH ALL NATIONS, THE MEN AND THE WOMEN WHO SAY: "NEVERTHELESS AND IN SPITE OF EVERYTHING, AND WHATEVER MAY COME, I BELIEVE." THEY ARE THE "SACRED ROOT," THE SAVING REMNANT. IN THEIR HEARTS LIES THE FORCE OF THE RESURRECTION WHICH WILL COME AFTER THE NIGHT.

*PIERRE VAN PAASEN
"DAYS OF OUR YEARS" 1940*

THE USE OF BIOFEEDBACK BY HAKOMI THERAPISTS

GREG JOHANSON

See introductory note before psychodrama article.

Biofeedback can be a useful part of a Hakomi therapist's practice if employed within the wisdom and guidelines of the Principles. This article will discuss biofeedback from the perspective of the Principles.

By definition, biofeedback is simply information given to a person about their physical condition at a particular moment. Bathroom scales and oral thermometers are the most common examples of biofeedback equivalent. Modern technology has now made available on a widespread basis the possibility of measuring muscle tension (EMG), galvanic skin response (GSR), blood pressure (BP), brain waves (EEG), temperature, and is now working on methods to access gastric secretions, hormonal levels, and the status of internal organs. Temperature and muscle tension equivalent are most common to outpatient clinical settings.

Philosophically, biofeedback has been and is a mainstay in the movement toward the new paradigm in medicine, the paradigm that recognizes the inherent capabilities of a person to both prevent illness and to heal through the self regulation and self control of such stress indices as heart rate, blood pressure, muscular tension, temperature, and breathing. This voluntary control of what was previously thought to be automatic bodily functions represents a drastic change in the role of a patient in the Western world in our day and time. Hakomi therapists are in complete agreement with this movement. All of the principles outlined by Ron Kurtz point directly to the desire to empower the person as opposed to making them dependent on some exterior authority. No therapy makes it clearer than biofeedback that it is the patient's responsibility to do something about their life and that it is to the patient's credit when they do so. Who else is making the needles on the meters go back and forth

than the person themselves? If a person attempts to abdicate responsibility by saying something like, "Doctor, I still wake up tense in the morning," a good therapist will not get into taking responsibility for who has responsibility, but will respond with something Ericksonian like, "Yes, it takes a lot of practice, for a number of months, for the results to generalize from day time to night time."

In a pure medical setting biofeedback is used for direct symptom control, or indirect symptom control via higher mechanisms, non specific therapeutic mechanisms. However, as Heiner Legewie of the Max-Planck Institute fur Psychiatrie in Munich points out, the boundary between organic and psychosomatic functional disturbance is not fixed. Is a tension headache cured by training the frontalis muscles in the forehead to relax or is the therapeutic success due to the concomitant indirect effects of general relaxation? We don't know. In a traditional psychotherapy setting biofeedback might account for 25% of the therapy and be mainly used for monitoring relaxation/tension levels, identifying conflictual topics, and circumventing intellectual defenses. Many therapists with general practices play it by ear and use biofeedback in any combination of ways.

MIND-BODY HOLISM:

One of the most obvious Hakomi principles that biofeedback helps to underline is that of mind-body holism. Though notions of psychosomatic medicine and mind-body-spirit integration are seemingly wide spread in our day and time, it should not surprise us to find that the majority of folks still are not on to it. To a great many people one might encounter in a general psychotherapy practice a headache or back pain is just that and has nothing to do with frustrated sexual issues or dislike of the boss at work. And the reason they posture themselves the way they do (though it is totally out of whack with peace with gravity) is "That is the most

natural easy way to stand for me, so what?" Some estimates say that recurrent, non-responsive conditions treated by physicians today are 75% psychosomatic. This idea is not in the consciousness of the people being treated. Unconsciously, it is still more acceptable to most Americans to have physical problems than emotional ones, and so they do.

MINDFULNESS:

Biofeedback encourages a number of the dimensions that go along with mindfulness.

Signal to Noise Ratio: Relaxation is a standard aspect of biofeedback. Again, many people do not see the logic, necessity, or time for relaxation unless it is ordered by a doctor. So some people are well helped by having the "doctor" prescribe and teach relaxation. In so doing of course, the person can become exquisitely sensitive, allowing the desired signals to emerge much more clearly from the noise of everyday life.

Some therapists when dealing with something like Raynaud's Disease (pathological coldness in the hands) will ask someone to practice raising the temperature in their hands 30 to 40 times a day for two to three weeks. It is probably more realistic that somebody get to it six times a day. In either case, what is desired is that a person learn the relaxation response, be able to quickly, automatically, effortlessly go into a quiet state of non-tense alertness. It might take three to six months for the average patient.

Throughout the training a good therapist is teaching sensitivity, weaning people off the machines as quickly as possible, turning the meters on machines away from view and asking the person to give the correct reading. It does not take long before a therapist can meet someone at the door and ask, "So what temperature are your hands running today, Hank?" and get the correct response, "Oh, I don't know, about 92.6 I suppose." The same thing with muscle tension indicators for anxiety, guilt, etc. This is a wonderful happening for many folks who before training were only able to differentiate a charley horse from normal muscle tone.

Non-Doing: Another plus for biofeedback is that right from the beginning the person

learns the wonderful Taoist lesson that effort leads to failure. One simply cannot mobilize force and will to do combat with a meter indicator on a muscle tension machine. "I'll make that needle go down if it's the last think I do!" Precisely the last. Same thing with temperature. One has to let go, give up control, simply lay back and passively watch the indicators of the machine along with one's own experience, and somehow down the track, the body spontaneously learns to go one way and the other. After that level is reached, which might take a number of sessions, a person can begin to have more self conscious control through the use of imagery, visualization, etc. First, the person will normally have to find that level of not being mobilized and learn to differentiate it from the normal levels of tension associated with doing.

Awareness-Turned-Inward: The hallmark of mindfulness of course is becoming a witness to one's present experience. Good biofeedback practitioners, and certainly Hakomi people dealing with biofeedback, will always be using it as a tool to help the person explore internal states of awareness and what they are associated with, what they mean. "Why do you suppose the needle moved when we started through your day and hit 9:00 a.m.? What are you aware of when I mention 9:00 a.m.?" "Well, I don't know. I like my work." "Just hang out with the experience of 9:00 a.m. for a moment and see what emerges for you. It is good that it is mysterious and murky at this point." "I get a sensation in my upper stomach and neck." "Great. We don't have to do anything with that. How about just hanging out with it in a non-judgmental, curious kind of way and see if it will tell you any more about itself, no rush." "Greta! It's Greta this stiff-necked, overly important, too helpful secretary that brings me my morning mail along with a presumptuous agenda for my day." And the work is underway.

Sharp biofeedback practitioners focus awareness on two feedback loops that are important for the way a person interprets and experiences their world. One is the perceptual-cerebral loop. They help people become aware of how they automatically perceive situations and interpret them to themselves as in "every new woman I meet is contemptuous of my cowlick," and how that interpretation

mobilizes patterns of tension in the body. Emphasis is also put on the muscular-cerebral feedback loop. A person learns that every time they tense their muscles in a certain way, regardless of the presence of any objective situation (new woman), the brain is tipped off that a situation appropriate to withdrawal and defensiveness is present. So here is a good example of attempting to examine the "how" of how we do ourselves which Kurtz is always stressing; the way we process information.

The concept of patterning is important here. Ron talks about Pribram's holographic theory of the mind. Hakomi people will appreciate an article by Gary Schwartz titled "Biofeedback and Physiological Patterning in Human Emotions and Consciousness." Schwartz applies Pribram's ideas to the wave patterns of combinations of neurophysical, endocrine, and muscular systems that underlie the perception of emotions. There is a lesson here in organicity and complex non-linear determinism. Hakomi trainees know from tracking practice that the same muscles in the face can be involved in slightly different ways in expressing different emotions. So, at one time we track and guess, "a little sad, huh?" and another time it is subtly different and we go with, "a little skeptical, huh?" Many times we might not be self conscious about all the clues we are using to get our impression. If the person had a biofeedback electrode monitoring a specific point on a specific facial muscle, it is basically impossible to distinguish the readings involved in sadness and skepticism. Schwartz makes the point that many different physiological systems that combine to produce subjective gestalts need to be monitored to get a more accurate reading of the overall pattern of an emotion. He talks about synergism, how the whole is greater than the parts while dependent on the organization of the parts for its emergent properties.

This theory does come down to a practical, methodological implication. Normally in biofeedback, all we have the luxury of monitoring is one clue, one muscle for instance. However, sensitivity to this one muscle can give a clue to the meaning of the overall pattern and emotion. The way to help the person get at the whole is help them generalize. "What else are you aware of as your

neck muscles tighten?" "What is happening to your abdominal muscles at the same time?" "Do you feel more or less nauseous?" "Are your eyes more focused or defocused?" "What word describes the overall quality of this mobilization?" "What situations tend to bring about this pattern?" "What is the earliest memory you have that involved this pattern?"

In addition to deepening awareness of the overall pattern someone is generating, it is always important to generalize the relaxation ability beyond the office. Any good therapist knows that nothing has been done if a person has learned to relax in the office and then goes out and gets completely tense and enmeshed when the elevator is late. So they will have the person fantasize and act out different situations once the relaxation has been mastered in the quietness of the office. "You have another appointment after you leave here? Great. Fantasize going out of the office to the elevator and standing there while it is later and later in coming. Watch how you mobilize yourself. See if you catch the tension subtly coming over you. What do you have to do, what do you have to tell yourself to suspend that growing mobilization?" "Practice watching the same thing when you go over to you in-laws."

This is an important step that is neglected to the detriment of the patient. Often times a patient will come to a biofeedback therapist and learn how to control their blood pressure. The differences between pre and post training might not be that great. However, if the post training is compared to the blood pressure recorded in their medical charts which was taken in a normal hospital setting, the differences can be impressive. Laboratory settings are usually quiet and non-threatening, nothing compared to the potency of real life variables.

NON-VIOLENCE:

A couple of things in relation to non-violence. Is biofeedback really necessary? Does it lead to any better kind of relaxation than other methods we can employ? A number of articles addressed themselves to this point. Richard Surwit and David Shapiro have

one titled, "Biofeedback and Meditation in the Treatment of Borderline Hypertension." They compared the effectiveness of blood pressure biofeedback training, EMG biofeedback, and meditation. There was no difference overall. Meditation would actually be given the edge. It has a quicker effect at the start as well as improvement over time.

William B. Plotkin of the University of Colorado confirms this result and goes further. His article is "On the Social Psychology of Experiential States Associated with EEG Alpha Biofeedback Training." What he found is that the quality and intensity of positive values associated with the alpha experience such as pleasantness and relaxation have no actual relationship to alpha enhancement as recorded by EEG patterns. Good experiences have more to do with variables of social psychology. For instance, a person must perceive themselves to be successful in the task believed to lead to the alpha experience. The setting is important. Such qualities as compassion, acceptance, and encouragement provided by the therapist are needed. You can be in literal alpha EEG patterns and still be bummed out. Here is an interface with hypnosis.

So, Plotkin concludes that profound experiences are within the realm of normal people. They have the skills. EEG equipment is not needed. People have a natural ability for self control and self regulation that they have hitherto not been willing to grant themselves. The biofeedback researcher, by taking control, allows the person to give themselves the experience they thought not under their control and circumvent their self doubt.

Those are nice conclusions to be aware of I think. However, you or I knowing these things don't matter a twit when it comes to someone coming to our office asking for biofeedback. I believe it is simple elitism on our parts if we scorn a person's expressed desires and belief out of our superior knowledge of a better way. Non-violence says something to me about taking a person where they are at. After writing this much about biofeedback, I don't mind sharing that I am not that excited about it or disposed to use it myself. I would rather avoid it when it comes to first choices. But Ron has taught me a lot about going with the flow. I find it so much easier not to argue with people

anymore. If someone comes in and says, "What shall we talk about today?", a classic set up for a power struggle over who has responsibility for the session, I quickly pick a subject I like, like Opel GTs or how the Trailblazers did on their last outing. It usually takes about 75 seconds for the person to bring the session back to something important to him. They are just checking me out to see if I am invested in being a good therapist that day, running some particular agenda or number of them. So, non preferences, non-doing, going with the flow, non-violence, in relation to biofeedback or anything else. If biofeedback is all a person is open to, motivate for, I'm not into arguing with them about the necessity or superiority of other methods.

There is a good case in the literature that illustrates my bias nicely. A successful, hard driving businessman with a wonderful pain on his right side. The type who would have a heart attack 20 minutes before doing a presentation, breathe his way through it and do the presentation anyway. Completely anti-therapy of course. "Just roll up your sleeves and do it if it needs doing."

However, through the pressure from concerned family members he agrees to a biofeedback, stress management program. The therapist agrees to take him as a client and hooks him up to the equipment and teaches him some self regulation and control. A non-offensive, non-intrusive invitation is given for the man to simply be aware of whatever comes into his consciousness and share it with the therapist if he wants.

The man does learn how to manage his stress better and is encouraged to keep coming. It is important for him to have the measurable experience of success biofeedback offers. Then about the tenth session he spontaneously finds himself making a connection between the pain on his right side and his supervisor at work. The therapist processes that as much as the man is willing and available for. The feedback sessions continue. The man of course is getting quieter and more sensitive. At the 18th session a connection comes to him about the pain, the supervisor, and his relationship with his father. He is reflective, has his sadness available to him, and he is willing to process that with the therapist.

I like that illustration. Nice, easy, no confrontation or fuss. Things happen when they are ready to. The man's initial wants and non-wants are respected regardless of the therapist's hunches which saw the broader picture from the start. There is faith and trust in the healing process that transcends needing to make something happen, in a particular way, on a particular schedule.

MISCELLANEOUS ISSUES:

Children: Biofeedback can work quite nicely with children. Children accept the acquisition of physiological control skills as quite natural and the control might be a valued rarity in their otherwise externally dominated life. The learning process should be designed as one of play that fosters self exploration and self responsibility. Directions should be simple and the expectation implicit that they can do something. "Become quiet inside and make the needle go down." Children can learn the importance of attending to the body even in the midst of social pressure to the contrary such as a teacher scolding a class. Parental permission and encouragement are important for this kind of endeavor. Children will often not let the therapist be a stranger for long. They like modeling and the sense of having a compatriot in a special field not everyone is privy to. So, they will often ask the therapist to perform the task they are being asked to do too, to join with them in the adventure.

Contraindications: It is best to require a medical check up before accepting anyone for biofeedback. Generally speaking, a psychotherapist should not accept anyone with diabetes, stroke history, heart disease, high blood pressure medications, thyroid medications, phlebitis, bleeding ulcers or epilepsy. The reason is that the homeostatic balance of the body is changed through the relaxation. Blood clots can break loose, and people can overdose on their medications. One would need to be working closely with licensed medical people to alter this rule. Hakomi therapists in general would do well to follow this guideline since we also work toward relaxation and meditative states that influence body chemistry and balance. In general, it is good to have a working rela-

tionship with licensed health care professionals such as M.D.'s, Naturopaths, etc.,

One therapist reported a case that illustrates the necessity of effecting proper titration of medications during biofeedback. He was working with a patient whose sensitivity to the tricyclic anti-depressant Tofranil resulted in hypomania and the patient leaving therapy. Vertigo is a somewhat common reaction in some Type A, sympathetic dominant patients: kind of a decompression response from learning to relax. With insurance and disability benefits being what they are today, a final caution or contraindication is that of patient who is receiving a lot of secondary gains from their symptoms.

IN CONCLUSION:

Biofeedback can be important. It will probably never live up to all the hopes some people have put in it, but for all the reasons outlined above, it has its area of service. When I have talked about good biofeedback therapists in the body of this paper, I managed to leave out all the infinite ways biofeedback can be improperly used and wasted. I would hope that Hakomi therapists working within the guidelines of the Principles could put biofeedback to the best of uses. Certainly Hakomi folks who want or need well rounded generalist practices or who want to specialize in stress management, health psychology, and receiving referrals from the medical community will want to consider biofeedback as a part of what they offer. Formal training and accreditation in biofeedback can be obtained from the Biofeedback Society of America, 4301 Owena Street; Wheat Ridge, Colorado 80033; Tel (303) 420-2889.

(NOTE: Many of the articles referred to in this paper can be found in the NATO Conference Series of books, Biofeedback and Behavior).

TRUST SHOWS THE WAY.
HILDEGARDE OF BINGEN

USE OF ELEMENTS OF HAKOMI THERAPY WITH SERIOUSLY EMOTIONALLY DISTURBED ADOLESCENTS

CAROL R. TAYLOR

Hakomi therapy has been most noticeably associated with individual and adult group therapy. (Though do confirm the Summer 1984 edition of the Hakomi Forum for articles on couples therapy and multiple impact family therapy.) Carol Taylor was one of the early students of Ron Kurtz who immediately began experimenting with Hakomi therapy in her work with seriously emotionally disturbed adolescents. The following article is a brief account of how she applied a couple Hakomi principles and techniques with a particular student. It might seem overly simplified and overly miraculous to those not familiar with Hakomi therapy. She has a wealth of other similar clinical experiences, though not ones which happened so fast and directly, that hopefully will eventuate in a full length book. The article is offered here to alert readers that work is being done with Hakomi and adolescents and to encourage others to share their experience with various groups and settings. Carol is a therapist for the Lane School Programs, an educational and treatment program for seriously emotionally disturbed adolescents operated by Lane Education Service District in Eugene, Oregon. Prior to her work at Lane, she created a program for treating emotionally handicapped persons in the public school setting at Sam Barlow High, Gresham, OR. Those interested may contact Carol by writing her at 581 Brookside Drive, Eugene, OR 97405.

For the past ten years, I have worked with adolescents who are certified under the guidelines of Public Law 94-142 and Oregon Administrative Rules as being "Seriously Emotionally Disturbed." These young people do not succeed in the public school setting without extra educational and behavioral help. The population is made up of "deprived" individuals--deprived educationally, emotionally, physically and spiritually. In many cases these youngsters live in situations which are both "handicapped" and

"handicapping".

How could a method like Hakomi fit the needs of such a population in the institutionalized setting of the public schools? Actually, it is a natural fit--so natural that its healing ability far transcends any of the methods I have observed in my 20 years of working with young people.

In the beginning, the therapist must realize that the S.E.D. adolescent clients have already, for what they believe to be very legitimate reasons, learned to be defended. Many of these defenses represent some of the reasons these students simply don't fit in public schools. Their defenses are the most likely reasons they were LABELED. Step one is to provide an environment which is so safe that for perhaps a moment they can drop their suspicions and allow the therapist in for a brief interlude. Establishing their trust is "trick." The truly disturbed adolescent is certain that there is no such thing as a trustworthy adult. Getting under their defenses is the number one challenge. I have observed that many emotionally disturbed young people have developed keen intuitive senses. Once genuine regard is perceived through this sensitive screening, the therapist will be given the needed access.

Creating a mindful state within that person becomes the next great challenge. Why should this population be mindful of anything--least of all themselves and what is going on within them? Mindfulness has meant to them much pain and futility. They know pain, and they don't need a vehicle to provide more of it. I attempt to create a "bridge" thought that mindfulness can lead to positive growth and a way out of some of the pain.

I will share with you an example of the importance and application of these two basic Hakomi concepts in my work with Todd, a 13-year-old referred to me by a school counselor. Todd knew pain. He was the only child in a home with mother and step dad. Step dad

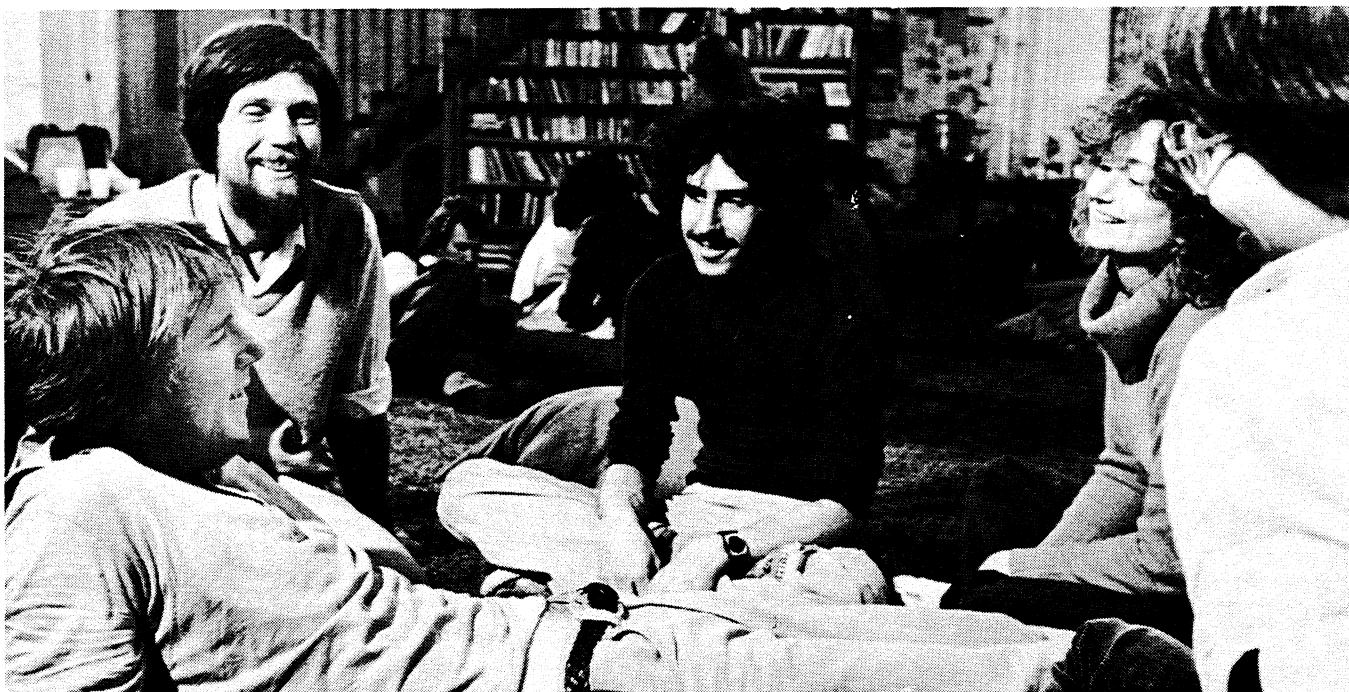
was an alcoholic and mom was seriously depressed. Todd came home one day to discover that mom had committed suicide. He was sent back to live with "real" dad. "Real" dad chose not to keep him and sent him back to grandmother (mother's mother), but "real dad" kept the boy's possessions. Todd was harassed in school and was referred to me when he was discovered lying on the football field, taped and bound, as a sort of "freshman initiation rite." Todd was angry, hateful, vindictive, foul-mouthed and impossibly rude in classrooms. According to his teachers, he was failing all of his classes, and they simply wanted him out of their classes as he was ruining learning opportunities for the students who wanted to learn.

When I first met with Todd, he stated that he was not interested in working with a counselor--as a counselor in the past had "gone behind his back" and repeated things he had said to other adults. I did a lot of listening on that first visit, and the outcome of that visit was that we made a decision to see each other again and signed a contract that anything we said would only be shared with each other's permission.

Our second visit began on a much different note. Todd appeared to be pleased that I was there. Our previous contract had been main-

tained. I believe there was an atmosphere of trust and safety. After a brief period of mutual sensory scanning, I asked him to close his eyes and simply be very quiet. I then gently offered the probe, "What happens when I say,...'I'm here for you.'?" Those four words opened the flood gates and Todd and I began a ride on the wildest rapids imaginable. Here was a kid who blamed himself for his mother's death, who hated his step dad and also blamed him for her death, who could not believe that his very own father would steal from him--let alone not want him. Here was a boy who, every time he looked in the mirror, wanted to take his own life; a kid who tortured himself with these painful thoughts.

Four simple words, "I'm here for you," unleashed this torrent of feelings. Things are much happier, now. Grandma joined our counseling sessions and began a strong and stable support system. The school counselor "inserviced" the teachers in such a way that they were able to view Todd differently, and Todd began to make amazing improvement in his classes. This was viewed by the staff as a miraculous achievement. The key to opening the doors for potential success was the regard for safety, mindfulness, and a simple probe, "I'm here for you."



Total Satisfaction Massage

Rich Ireland

Rich Ireland is a Hakomi student who has completed the advanced phase of the Institute's training. He conducts a private practice out of the Oregon School of Massage in Portland, Oregon, which includes hands-on body work as well as psychotherapy. A number of massage therapists and other body workers have completed Hakomi training in order to increase their skills in dealing with emotional material when it surfaces in the context of their work. The following article alludes to that possibility toward the end. The main focus of the article, however, is an application of Hakomi principles to massage work itself. The principles on which Hakomi therapy rests have wide application beyond the realm of psychotherapy. The Forum is interested in dialogue with people who search to integrate those principles in body work, medicine, education, politics, economics, religion, etc.

Massage therapists have a wonderful opportunity to apply the principles of Hakomi therapy. Inspired by various training exercises, I have been experimenting with what I call "Total Satisfaction Massage".

The massage gets its guidance from the client. Clients need to be able and willing to maintain a mindful state of consciousness, which the masseur encourages with questions that require them to keep their awareness focused on live, present experience. "Go into your body... Let go of notions of previous massages and just notice what you are experiencing right now... What tensions or relaxations are there?... See if you can get in touch with what wants to happen first. It might be a touch, a holding, a deep pressure, warmer feet, less or more light, a moment alone... Whatever is the first thing... If you want to simply be massaged and not have to direct the experience, that's OK. If you want to switch from one mode to another during massage, that's OK too."

Once the person has identified their first need, the therapist goes for more precise information and keeps at it until the part gets exactly what it needs as evidenced by the person's internal sense of satisfaction. "Is this the exact place?... right amount of pressure?... deeper pressure?... another sense of what might happen is emerging?"

When precision is accomplished, often acknowledged by a deep relaxing exhale, the masseur encourages the client to stay with and enjoy this feeling of satisfaction until it reaches an organic sense of completion, and

the body begins to re-orient around a new need. This moment of "satisfaction attention" keeps people from spreading into their normal habit patterns and teaches them to listen to the inner wisdom of their bodies. When the work on the hand has been completed, for instance, it does not necessarily follow that the other hand is the next place to go. The body will seek its own sense of balance.

The masseur is maintaining a non-violent stance throughout, in the sense of honoring the organismic integrity of the client. Instead of "knowing" what is needed, we ask. Because of our training and skill we can propose doing particular techniques. When we do so, we keep the client mindful so that the technique functions like a probe, an experiment in awareness. If the client's experience confirms that it is just right, fine. If it is not quite right, that's OK too. The client can guide us, correct us, into what would be more precise. We remain guided by the client's response.

This massage certainly changes the traditional role of the massage therapist. It definitely requires moving more slowly than normal as both therapist and client make the massage the focus of a meditative experience. Traditional patterns of treatment may or may not apply. I have found this procedure very effective for encouraging relaxation in the client, while requiring less physical work for the therapist, though more precision and skill. It is a creative, experimental way to work calling for hands, elbows, knuckles, words, changes in the environment; whatever is needed to bring satisfaction.

Not all people are able to participate in this type of massage. For some, it might take some gentle teaching to help them learn how to cultivate and use a mindful state of consciousness; to help them let go of the busyness and goal directedness of everyday, ordinary consciousness. The massage works particularly well with people who have already had a lot of body therapy. It helps them to get out of ruts and patterns and into the possibility of fresher and deeper experiences.

Sometimes this form of massage can lead into Hakomi therapy. This might occur when the client is encouraged to simply be mindful of what they are experiencing and various feelings and memories arise that they are interested in processing further. It certainly can happen if the therapist supports the person in searching out the meaning of various patterns of tension or satisfaction. The massage can drift between psychological therapy and massage depending on the client's and therapist's contract and comfort level while doing so.

The whole procedure operates out of the principles. Non-violence and mindfulness have already been mentioned. Belief in the body's organic wisdom that will lead it to its own sense of balance is another basic underpinning. The whole process uses a mind-body interface, which of course assumes a belief in mind-body holism.