

Bodymind Healing in Psychotherapy: Towards an Integral, Comprehensive Energy Psychotherapy (Originally published in the *Association for Comprehensive Energy Psychology Newsletter*, 2009).

Michael Mayer, Ph.D.

In order to bring the healing abilities of a comprehensive energy psychology to the public, I believe that in addition to the well-known energy psychology methods such as EFT, the field of energy psychology (EP) would be well served by expanding its terrain to include Qigong and methods of energy cultivation from other traditions of meditation and postural initiation (Goodman, 1990), depth psychology, symbolic process traditions, Kabalistic methods, etc.

Qigong (of which *Tai Chi* is the best known system) is a many thousand-year-old method of cultivating the energy of life through breath, posture, movement, touch, sound, and imagery. There is now much scientific evidence about the efficacy of Qigong in the treatment of insomnia (Irwin, 2008), lowering blood pressure (Kuang, 1991) preventing falls amongst the elderly (Province, 1995), etc. The Wall Street Journal (Weil, 2004) said that Qigong is “the hottest trend in stress relief.” Being one of the most ancient forms of energy psychology, it is a natural for integrating with EP methods, yet it is under-represented in EP approaches. Tapping is just one of the many forms of medical Qigong techniques which has an extensive history from which EP can benefit.

As a psychologist trained in keeping alternative medical approaches separate from my psychotherapy practice eventually, due to becoming aware that Qigong could be beneficial to my patients for stress reduction and other behavioral health concerns, I began to integrate Qigong into my practice with cases involving anxiety, carpal tunnel syndrome, insomnia, depression, and various behavioral health concerns (Mayer, 2007, 2009).

The most recent phase of my work began, which I call the *integral* (Walsh, 2006; Wilber, 2000) phase, when I strove to bring Qigong into my work with patients without ever doing a Qigong movement and without ever mentioning a word about Qigong. The greatest Qigong involves cultivating the energy of life by practicing living a life cleared of psychological encumbrances which block the rivers of our chi. On this pathway one can extract out the essence of what creates transformation from Qigong as a Self-cultivation practice; for example a practitioner can use Qigong breathing methods (such as microcosmic orbit breathing), acu-point self touch, helping to facilitate the energetic “felt shift” that comes from a patient’s discovering new meaning (Gendlin 1978), anchoring the gestures/postures that a person expresses at the moment of felt shift (these are oftentimes the same as practiced by Tai Chi/Qigong practitioners), symbolic process methods such as my *Mythic Journey Process* (Mayer, 1994) and *River of Life Process* (Mayer 2007, 2009) which create an internal energy (Jung, Vol. VIII, p. 211-215) that helps a person find a meaningful life path, and helping patients to find a new life stance (Goodman, 1990; Mayer, 2004). Thus one can cultivate “the spirit and soul” (Hillman, 1975) of Qigong (Mayer, 2004, 2007).

I have incorporated these traditions into my *Bodymind Healing Psychotherapy* energy psychology approach (Mayer 2007, 2009). To take another step forward on the path to actualizing the contribution that EP has to make to the field of psychology in general, I believe it will be important to increase the recognition that all psychotherapy is energy psychotherapy. For example, psychodynamic psychotherapies have “libido” at the center of their approach; cognitive therapy emphasizes changes in beliefs, but could benefit from the understanding that these beliefs create somatic changes (Shapiro, 1995) and energetic shifts (Mayer, 2007); and Dr. Eugene Gendlin (1978) revealed that the process of change in all therapies involves a felt energetic shift. BMHP adds that at the core of the process of psychotherapeutic change is a felt energetic shift that creates a new life stance (Mayer, 2007).

The field of energy psychology is in a pre-paradigmatic phase where the most viable course seems to be to incorporate a wide range of energy psychology methods from diverse traditions as research grows and we see which methods are most efficacious for which people at what times. I hope that Bodymind Healing Psychotherapy’s energy psychology approach will contribute to EP becoming increasingly acceptable to the wider field of psychology, and add vital elements to our healing tradition.

Bibliography:

Gendlin, E. *Focusing*, Bantam Books, 1978.

Goodman, F., (1990). *Where Spirit Rides the Wind: Trance Journeys and other Ecstatic Experiences*. Indianapolis,Id: University Press.

Hillman, J. (1975). *Revisioning Psychology*. New York: Harper & Row.

Irwin, (2008). Improving sleep quality in older adults with moderate sleep complaints: A randomized controlled trial of Tai Chi Chih, *Sleep*, Vol. 31 (7).

Jung, C.G. (1960). *Collected Works. (Volume VIII)*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Kuang, A., Wang C, et al, (1991), Research on the anti aging effect of Qigong, *Journal of traditional Chinese medicine, Journal of Traditional Chinese Medicine*,11 (2), 153-158.

Mayer, M. (2009). *Energy Psychology: Self-Healing Practices for Bodymind Health*, Berkeley/New York: North Atlantic/Random House.

Mayer, M. (2007) *Bodymind Healing Psychotherapy: Ancient Pathways to Modern Health*, Bodymind Healing Publications.

Mayer, M. (2004). *Secrets to Living younger Longer: The Self Healing Path of Qigong, Standing Meditation and Tai Chi*. Orinda, CA: Bodymind Healing Publications.

Mayer, M. (2003), ED; Jonas, W. *Healing, Intention, and Energy Medicine*, Qigong Clinical Studies, England: Churchill Livingstone. (Peer Reviewed)

Mayer, M. (2000). *Bodymind Healing Qigong DVD*, Bodymind Healing Publications.

Mayer, M. (1994). *Trials of the Heart: Healing the Wounds of Intimacy*, Berkeley: Celestial Arts 1994.

Province, M., et al. (1995) The effects of falls on elderly patients: A pre-planned meta-analysis of the FICSIT trials, *Jour. of the Am. Med. Assoc (JAMA)*, 272 (17), 1341-1347, May 3.

Shapiro, F., (1995). *Eye movement desensitization and reprocessing*. New York: Guilford Press.

Walsh, R. & Shapiro, S. (2006, April). The meeting of meditative disciplines and Western psychology, *American Psychologist*, 61 (3), 227-239.

Weil, A. (2004). *Self-Healing Newsletter*, September.

Wilbur, K. (2000). The eye of the spirit: An integral vision of a world going slightly mad. *The Collected Works of Ken Wilber*, (Vol. 7) Boston: Shambala.

Bio: Michael Mayer, Ph.D. is a licensed psychologist, hypnotherapist, and Qigong/Tai Chi teacher who specializes in giving his patients self-healing methods for health problems. Dr. Mayer presents his approach to bodymind healing at professional conferences, national/international workshops, universities, and hospitals; and he is a keynote speaker. He is a co-founder of, and a practitioner at a multi-disciplinary medical clinic. Dr. Mayer pioneered the integration of Qigong and psychotherapy, and was the first person in the United States to train doctoral psychology students in these methods. He is the author of peer-reviewed articles, and twenty publications on bodymind healing including five books. Dr. Mayer has certification programs which include Bodymind Healing Qigong for Qigong practitioners/teachers, and a Bodymind Health Practitioner's Certification Program for health professionals. His last book *Bodymind Healing Psychotherapy*, and his new book *Energy Psychology: Self Healing Practices for Bodymind Health* (North Atlantic/Random House, Spring 2009), have received endorsements from top leaders in mind-body medicine. His website is www.bodymindhealing.com.