

Review

“Finding the Energy to Heal Trauma and Dissociation”

presented by Maggie Phillips, PhD

Reviewed by Patricia Thatcher, LICSW

On Sept 15, 2011 Maggie Phillips, PhD, gave an innovative, energetic morning presentation & afternoon Master Class. Dr. Phillips, who has a long list of accomplishments including authoring 3 books & numerous articles, is best known for her ability to incorporate hypnosis, EMDR and Energy Psychology into her treatment model. She chooses Energy Psychology methods because they offer the fewest risks by

- intervening with the flight, fight, freeze response in a matter of seconds
- helping to reverse the effects of trauma
- expanding therapy through a focus on energy systems, intentionality, resolving shame, guilt, and forgiveness without retriggering.

We first reviewed the neurophysiology of the Triune Brain connected by the complex Polyvagal nerve system and it's relationship to the experience of PTSD & dissociation. Flexible, integrative protocols work with the polyvagal system to repair attachment trauma, resolve relational conflicts with ego-state therapy, rebalance an overactive sympathetic system, regulate reptilian brain response and develop skills for self-regulation.

Trauma disrupts connection and then disrupts the ability to look to the relationship for safety and holding. Clinical symptoms come from unresolved traumatic stress held in the body including somatiform dissociation, somatization & conversion as well as medical problems and the reaction to medical diagnosis & treatment. High anxiety & stress worsen the reactions to the symptoms. The goal is to use the various techniques & modalities to help the client keep the polyvagal nervous system in balance so the client gets to the reward of resilience, wholeness, joy, regulation & integration. Using Energy psychology methods help to “thaw” the freeze/immobilization response; balance fight/flight response; assist with self-regulation and enhance relational experience. When a question arose about OCD & PTSD Maggie pointed out that regardless of where the problem comes from we need to unlock the system. Patterns in life result from the freeze response locking in unresolved shock & trauma. Working with the Polyvagal system to clear trauma & unlock the system are necessary. Teaching **Self- Regulation** in every possible way is one of the most important goals of treating post-traumatic pain. **Top Down & bottom up** interventions help clients to use their sensations as an entry way to prioritize somatic experience and use the thinking brain to observe. It teaches us how thought & emotion affect the body & how body experience affects thoughts, beliefs & emotional response.

Energy Psychology

- Roots are in ancient Eastern traditions including the Chinese system of treating meridians (energy channels in the body) to increase the flow of the body's energetic life force (qi/chi).
- Indian yoga traditions work with the external energy field that surrounds the body (biofield) to support the flow of life force (prana) through the energy centers in the body (chakras)

- Psychological and physiological disturbances disrupt the body's electrical system and result in disrupting the flow of the life force resulting in the various physiological and psychological symptoms.

Energy Psychology Exercises:

When utilizing the various exercises Maggie reminded us that it is important to come from a **Trial & Discovery** point of view. Some will work better than others for some people or at different times in their treatment.

She then led us through a series of exercises while suggesting we pay mindful attention to our responses.

Breathing Exercises for Self-Regulation: Allow the mind to notice what you experience as you do the following exercises. It is useful to repeat the exercise thru 5-10 breathing cycles

1. **Diaphragmatic:** place both hands on the diaphragm: breathe in, gently press and breathe out
2. **Calming:** place one hand on chest and one on abdomen: inhale thru nose filling the abdomen first then up thru the lungs, hold briefly and slowly breathe out from the chest down. Apply gentle pressure as you exhale first on the abdomen then on the chest letting go of the muscles in the body.
3. **Foursquare:** Inhale thru nose for count of 4, hold for count of 4, exhale thru nose for count of 4.
4. **Circular:** inhale following the flow of breathe up the more comfortable side of the body; feel breathe cross over thru the belly; exhale follow the flow down the less comfortable side, continue until the breathe cycle feels like a circle. You can also breathe up the midline and out both sides.
5. **Purifying:** Imagine body surrounded by light, healing sound, healing presence: As you inhale imagine sending that light, sound & presence into abdomen, chest, throughout body. As you exhale imagine tension, pain, stress etc is being released.
6. **Body Safe Place:** Repeat the breathing exercise of choice for 5 cycles. Locate an area of the body that is most free from uncomfortable feelings, a place that feels like a refuge where you can curl up like a cat in the sun, repeat the breathing cycle another five times as you put your attention on this experience.

Mindful Attention: What fires together stays together. As Dan Siegel says “where attention goes neural firing goes. And, where neurons fire, new connections can be made”. Paying mindful attention to the rhythms of the body can be useful in regulating hyper/hypo activated states.

Meridian Therapies: useful to treat energetic imbalance; soothe general anxiety & stress; reduce emotional distress; change negative thought patterns & beliefs; treat panic, phobias, depression, mood disorders, eating problems, PTSD, chronic & acute pain, autoimmune dysfunction.

- Three boosters:
 1. Drink plenty of water before & after doing any work
 2. Treat neurological disorganization- an energy imbalance that can cause the nervous system to be confused and impairs mental clarity, resilience and overall health.
 3. Treat reversals – body's energy system activated to both initiate change and resist it.

We had great fun tapping our collar bone, thumping the sternum & rubbing the rib cage to clear the disorganization while rubbing the neurolymphatic spot on the left side of the chest while repeating “I deeply & completely love & accept myself even though I have this problem” to treat the reversals. We corrected overenergy with the **Crossover Technique** where we crossed the left ankle over the right; held arms out and crossed the right wrist over the left bringing the palms together into a clasp and folding arms in to rest on chest while closing eyes and breathing. There was the opportunity to experience tapping on the 8 acupressure points for the **Emotional Freedom Technique (EFT)** and to observe Maggie utilizing energy testing and EFT with a volunteer on stage.

Energy Testing/Checking is a biofeedback mechanism & ideomotor signaling of the body based on the way muscles stay strong with what the system perceives to be positive and goes weak with what the system perceives to be negative. By gently pressing on the forearm above the wrist while the person puts their attention on a thought (like my name is ...) the arm will either stay firm or go weak. Staying firm is usually a yes while going weak is usually a no. There is research that validates energy testing.

Master Class: After an energetic & lively networking lunch about 25 of us regrouped for the Master Class.

Here Maggie went into more depth about how to utilize other EP modalities to treat Trauma & dissociation. She reminded us how important it is to use **trial and discovery** and staying flexible while working with clients.

1. activating single meridian points for self- regulation:
 - Hold Top of head- integrates change.
 - Hold or tap temples on both sides about 3” above the ear helps with hyper-vigilance.
 - Rub Above upper lip & below lower lip at the same time to bring calm alertness and to treat fear.
 - Chording is used for body integration by touching & breathing while holding 2 points at the same time while placing attention on the problem. An example would be touching the 3rd eye and the sternum while breathing and putting attention on the problem and noticing what happens.
2. We all had the opportunity to experience the 9 step **Tapas Acupressure Technique® (TAT®)**
3. Maggie then worked with a volunteer using muscle checking and the **Fragmentation Protocol** for working with Ego States.

We ended with the reminder that the promise of Energy Psychology is

- to restore wholeness by addressing fragmentation & inner conflicts;
- strengthen inner support, empathy, cooperation;
- provide new information for frozen states;
- provide developmental functioning without risk of destabilization;
- allow for resource intervention with parts and whole personality;
- while retesting validates change and helps identify additional needs.

For further information & resources please go to www.maggiephillipsphd.com

www.eftuniverse.com

www.tatlife.com (latest version of TAT)

www.traumahealing.com (SE)

www.energypsych.org (Association of Comprehensive Energy Psychology: ACEP)

Consult *The Promise of Energy Psychology* by David Feinstein, Donna Eden & Gary Craig for the best overview of the field and its research.

Check out the article “Integrating Energy Psychology and the Meridian Therapies into the Treatment of Trauma and Dissociation” published in the NESTTD Newsletter in spring & fall of 2007

Local trainings held by NESTTD members:

- For EFT training, contact:
Caitlin Williams, NESTTD member, at CAITWILLA12@gmail.com and energytherapyassociates.com.
- For training in TAT, contact Pat Thatcher, Past President of NESTTD, at patthatch@thelifeworkscenter.com

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