

Psyche and Soma Mind-Body- Energy System

Polyvagal theory

Psychosomatic processes



Mind-body-energy system

- At one time, psychotherapy operated as if the mind was separate from the body – two psyches conversing in a consulting room. Talking therapy of that kind was not very effective
- In the late 80s and into the 90s, various forms of therapy developed that took account of the body – such as EMDR. This made psychological therapies much more effective
- Somewhat later, neurobiology and physiology became much more integrated into psychotherapy. Allan Schore was a very significant pioneer, but there have been many others.
- With the advent of energy psychotherapy, we now additionally can integrate further realms into the work – making therapy even more effective

What do you feel in your body?

- Guiding the client to an awareness of bodily sensations can be very valuable
- Emotions are bodily events, as well as mental
- Emotions can be channelled into the body and not experienced in the mind – they are then experienced as bodily tensions, sometimes as pain – and sometimes as actual illness
- The energy meridians appear to be one of the pathways whereby emotions are channelled into the body (as opposed to the healthy dissipation of emotions through outward expression)

Bion's protomenal system

- Informational energy that is neither mental nor physical, but could go into either realm
- Potential emotions that are blocked from entering the mind may be channelled into the body.
- They are denied access to language
- They may be either:
 - Repressed (having been briefly or momentarily conscious but then pushed out of consciousness)
 - Disavowed (having never entered consciousness)

Psycho-social projective processes

- Just as emotions can be barred from the mind and projected into the body, they can also be projected outwards into the wider social environment
- Some people create drama and stress and tension around them – and experience some relief from doing so. This is an unconscious process. Sometimes it can take on very malign forms when large group and political movements are manipulated by charismatic individuals
- Sometimes, within a family, one person is (unconsciously) selected to be the victim/scapegoat who will contain the family's (or group's) disturbance

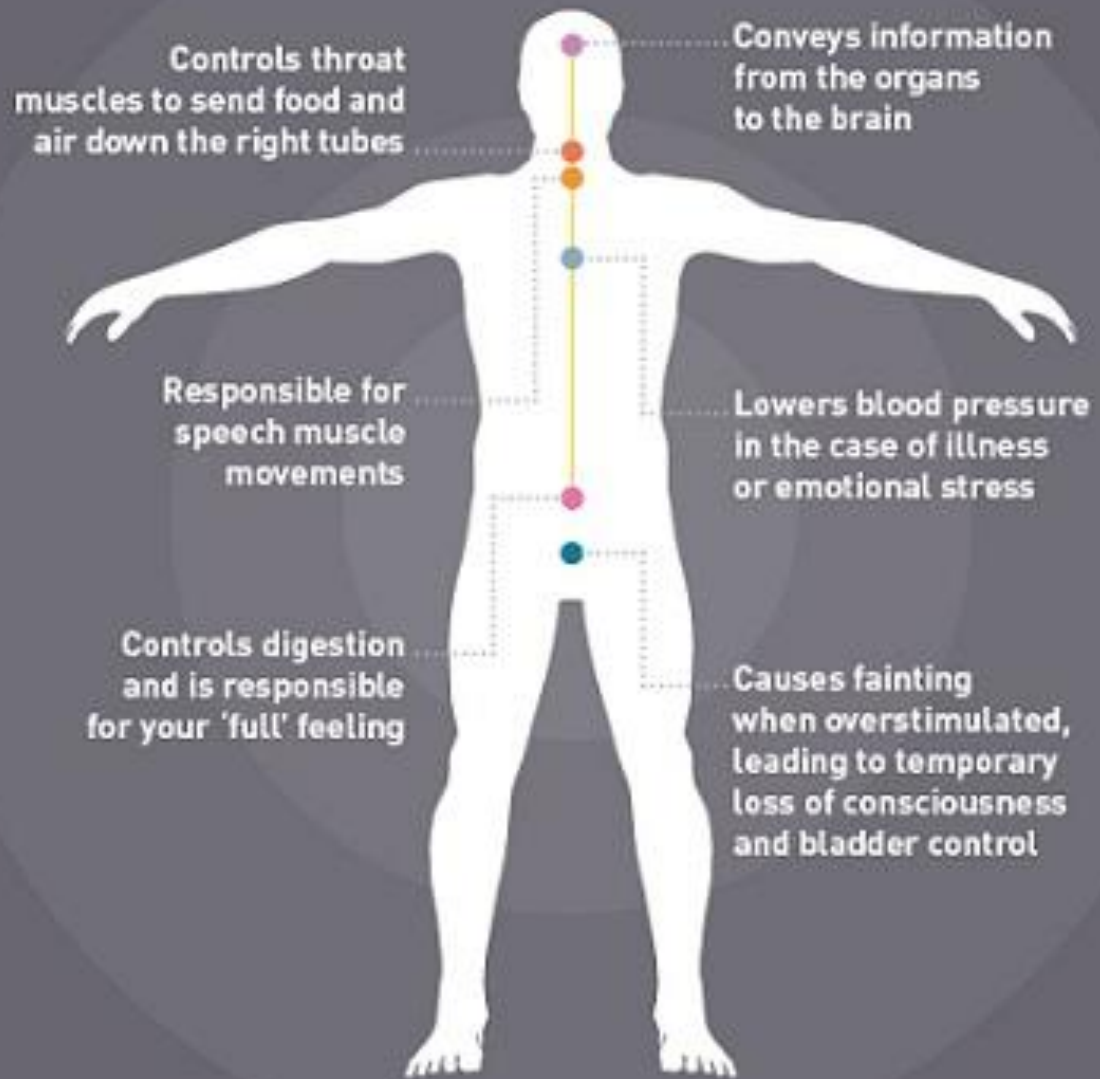
Tapping to the phrase “the emotions in the body”

- This can be very helpful when the client has limited access to emotions, or where somatic sensations are prominent, or where psychosomatic illness is present
- Neither practitioner nor client knows the nature of the emotions initially
- Gradually the client will begin to access relevant memories and experiences and the emotions will begin to emerge. There may be sudden and rather shocking intrusions of intense emotion.
- Often it is emotions of anger, rage, or shame that emerge – as well as traumatic shock

Polyvagal perspectives

- Polyvagal theory outlines the way the autonomic nervous system reacts to experiences and regulates responses
- The autonomic nervous system searches for information about whether it is safe to connect with another person: Neuroception
- The desire to connect (when signals of safety are detected) may be countered by the need to survive (when signals of danger are registered)
- Regulating our emotions is a shared dyadic task. Attachment may be viewed as the dyadic regulation of affect. Similar to Kohut's concept of the selfobject function

WHAT THE VAGUS NERVE DOES



Vagus nerve effects on organ systems.

Helps keep anxiety and depression at bay, opposes the sympathetic response to stress, conveys information from the organs to the brain

Controls throat muscles to send food and air down the right tubes

Regulates insulin secretion and glucose homeostasis in the liver

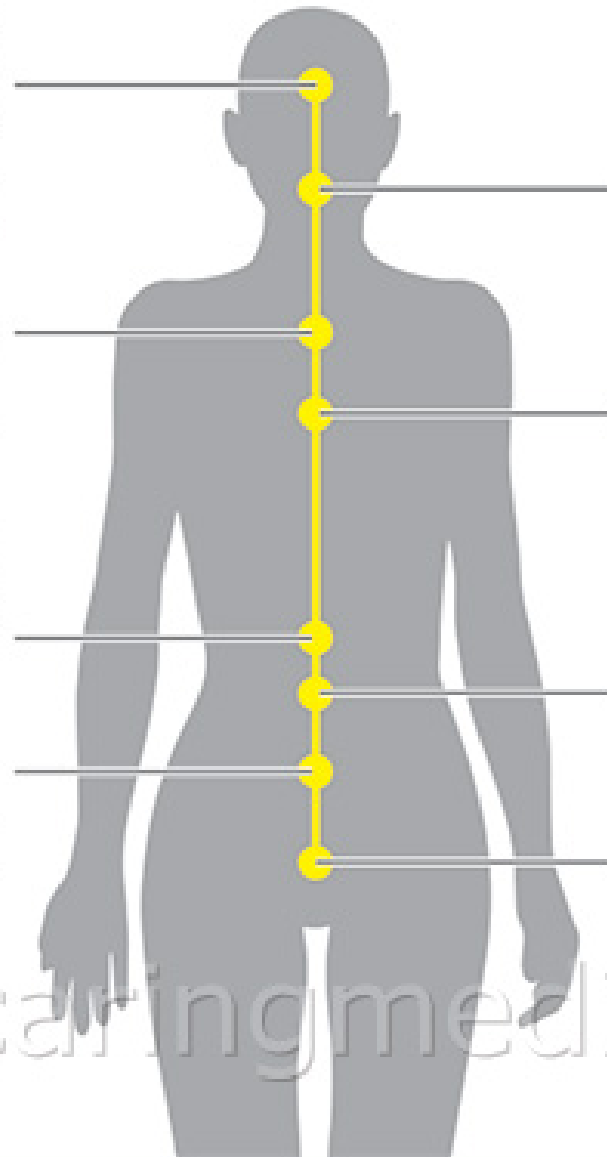
Suppresses inflammation via the cholinergic anti-inflammatory pathway

Responsible for speech muscles movements, gag reflex, swallowing, and coughing

Lowers blood pressure in the case of illness or emotional stress, decreases heart rate, vascular tone

Controls digestion and is responsible for your "full" feeling, increases gastric juices, gut motility, stomach acidity

Causes fainting when overstimulated, leading to temporary loss of consciousness and bladder control



3 modes of neuroceptive perception

- Neuroception of safety:
 - social, engaged, connected
- Neuroception of danger:
 - Fight-flight, taking action
- Neuroception of threat to life:
 - Immobilised, freeze, shut down, play dead

Vagus nerve

- Runs throughout the body
- Ventral vagal system balances the system (sympathetic and parasympathetic systems)
 - processes signals of safety and connection
 - facial information – vagal brake
- If danger is perceived, the sympathetic nervous system is engaged
- If a threat to life is perceived, the Dorsal vagal system engages the parasympathetic system in an extreme response of freeze or dissociation

Interpersonal ventral vagus aspects of EP

- The ventral vagal system accesses social cues for safety – looking for positive facial cues and tone of voice – activating the parasympathetic system – creating a sense of safety – **‘it is safe to be over the trauma now’**
- In EP we pay close attention to the client’s words, mirroring these back in the tapping phrases – increasing the interpersonal attunement and empathy
- A shared informational field of healing is created – activating the social engagement system and down-regulating activity of the vagus nerve – the same social engagement system as in the mother-infant nursing situation