

Introductory remarks

- and rationale for Psychoanalytic Energy Psychotherapy

[from Psychoanalytic Energy Psychotherapy. By Phil Mollon. Karnac, London. 2008]

“... when I began using my new cure, I wasn't sure it would work. I certainly was not prepared for its spectacular effect. I was amazed. More amazed, possibly, than my patients.” [Callahan 1985 p 36]

Psychoanalytic Energy Psychotherapy is the outcome of one psychoanalyst's encounter with the field known generically as 'energy psychology', which reveals how the conflicts and traumas active within the psyche are encoded as information within the body's energy system. It is inspired primarily by the remarkable and far-reaching work of Dr. Roger Callahan in his development of Thought Field Therapy. There were important figures before Dr. Callahan in the lineage - notably George Goodheart, the founder of Applied Kinesiology, who first explored muscle testing as a source of information about the body's organs and functions, and psychiatrist Dr. John Diamond, who extended this enquiry into the emotional and psychological domains - and many have built substantially on his work since. However, in my perception, he remains the principle figure to whom we owe gratitude for discovering how to identify and treat the perturbations in the energy field that cause psychological and other forms of disturbance, and for distilling this into a highly effective and simple procedure that is easily taught. Like almost all who learn to use Thought Field Therapy and its derivatives, I am compelled to the conclusion that purely talk-based forms of psychotherapy, although not without value, are simply not able to engage effectively with the realm in which the patterns of emotional distress are encoded – the area at the interface of the psyche and the soma, the body's energy field. For this reason, I encourage psychotherapists to consider the implications of TFT and the wider domain of energy psychology.

In using Thought Field Therapy, typically what happens is as follows. The client is asked to think about a target trauma, anxiety, or other source of emotional distress, whilst the therapist guides him or her to tap on a sequence of energy-sensitive points on their own body. After a minute or two, or even a few seconds, of this procedure, the distress or anxiety has gone – and remains gone. Although there are many complexities and subtleties in the process, that, in essence, is it! Further aspects or 'thought fields' may then emerge, each with their own emotional charge; each of these can then be addressed in the same way through attention to the body at the same time as the mind. Insight and further understanding may (or may not) follow. The method is *not* based on suggestion, hypnosis, or charisma, although these are common hypotheses on first hearing of this approach. Callahan comments:

“Another indication that this treatment is neither based on suggestion nor hypnosis is that I have successfully treated a number of people who not only did not have an open mind regarding what was taking place – they

obviously were convinced I was some kind of madman.” [Callahan 1985 p 34]

For me, this realm of the body and its energy is entirely congruent with – and indeed an extension of – the psychoanalysis originally developed by Freud (as distinct from most contemporary forms of psychoanalysis that have jettisoned the roots in the study of the libido and its flow through the zones of the body). As Kennedy (2001) comments:

“... libido is a scientific concept on the ‘frontier’ between the mental and the somatic; it is a psychical entity, and yet it refers to bodily phenomena”
[p 7]

Freud’s ‘libido’ is extremely close to the concepts of subtle energy that we work with in energy psychology (and similarly elusive). Just as Freud tracked the vicissitudes of the libido, its pathways, its flow and blockages in its flow, the ideas, images, and memories ‘cathected’ by the libido, the effects of trauma on the libido, developmental regression of the libido – and so forth – similarly, in energy psychology we track the vicissitudes of subtle energy, the information encoded within it, the disruptions in its flow, the reversals in its flow, and their consequences, and the regressive emergence of previously subsumed anxieties in response to toxic factors. Just as Freud observed the influence of libido on both mind and body, so the energy psychologist studies the interplay of psyche, soma, and energy. Moreover, just as Freud (1920g) discerned the malignant traces of the ‘death instinct’, in states of severe depression, trauma, perversion, and negative therapeutic reaction, so in the realm of energy psychology we detect psychological and energetic reversal, wherein the person’s system becomes oriented towards illness, hopelessness, and self-sabotage. Dr. Callahan regards ‘psychological reversal’ as one of his most important discoveries.

Thought Field Therapy reveals something else that is both crucially important and startling. Quite often, seemingly psychological states, of anxiety and depression, are caused or exacerbated directly by non-psychological factors of ‘energy toxins’ (Callahan & Callahan 2003). These are foods or chemical substances which cause havoc in the individual’s energy system. It was not until the development of such a rapidly effective and precise psychological therapy as TFT that the effects of energy toxins could be identified. If an energy toxin is acting on a person’s system, TFT does not work; when the toxin is eliminated or neutralised by a simple procedure, the same TFT now works easily. This is not merely Dr. Callahan’s claim; it is readily confirmed in routine clinical observation by any TFT practitioner who has trained to the appropriate level. As well as being of immense interest and relevance within Thought Field Therapy itself, this finding of the role of energy toxins has considerable implications for psychological therapies in general since it seems likely that all therapies will be affected in this way. Not all that masquerades as psychological is actually psychological in essence.

Some within the psychoanalytic world are recognising and correcting the trend for psychoanalysis to have lost the roots in the body that were so crucial for Freud – returning to a concern with the embodied psyche (e.g. Bloom 2006). Emotions are bodily events. In a state of anxiety, the body's physiology is highly aroused and organised. Similarly, when we access an emotionally charged memory, our body is in a correlated physiological state. And yet, in much psychotherapy, we work as if relating to an unembodied psyche, rarely addressing physiological experience. In Thought Field Therapy and its derivatives we work with psyche *and* soma, accessing the coding in the body to bring about rapid shifts in psychosomatic experience. Dr. Callahan has further added to our understanding of mind-body interaction by identifying the significance of Heart Rate Variability as not only a crucial marker of both physical and psychological health and sickness, but also an indicator that is highly responsive to TFT (but not to other interventions that have been tested). This highly innovative development promises to be an important outcome measure for identifying effective psychotherapeutic interventions (Callahan 2001e; 2001f; Callahan & Callahan 2003; Pignotti & Steinberg 2001).

How did a psychoanalyst become interested in Thought Field Therapy and energy psychology? Here is how it came about. In the late 1980's I began working in a general psychiatric setting, having trained first as a clinical psychologist and then as a psychoanalytic psychotherapist at the Tavistock Clinic. Although my training in psychotherapy was excellent and I had had a number of years experience, I found that, with many of the more disturbed patients I was asked to see, my skills and knowledge were of limited help. I became aware of how extensive the experience of trauma had been in the childhood and adult lives of many of these patients – and how unhelpful conventional talking therapy, of whatever kind, often was in relation to trauma. Although the troubled people I saw might begin to tell me about their experiences, and we might achieve some understanding of their development and of the dynamics of their mind, this did not seem to help. Sometimes it would make people worse; self-harm would be a common outcome. Talking of trauma, to an empathic and receptive psychotherapist, may leave a person *re-traumatised*. The trauma and its associated affect is activated but left unresolved – the affect simply cycling around the psychosomatic system. This presented an agonising clinical dilemma: many people who have suffered traumas need help in processing their traumatic memories, but accessing the memories leads to a worsening in their mental and behavioural state. As Figley (1999) and Seligman (1995) noted, effective treatments for trauma were simply not available. In the early 1990's Eye Movement Desensitisation and Reprocessing (EMDR) began to develop and I began to hear from colleagues of excellent results using this method. After training in EMDR and using it extensively, I began to recognise that at last we had a truly effective therapy for trauma – one which, moreover, seemed to be able to engage with all the depths of psychoanalysis (Mollon 2005). However, there was still one problem. Although EMDR is a very effective therapy, it can be distressing for clients, and for those who have been most

severely and extensively traumatised it can be hazardous (although there are ways of addressing this). Towards the end of the 1990's, I started to hear of some EMDR practitioners incorporating strange tapping methods into their work and reporting even better results. EMDR itself contains a sensory tapping variant, but these tapping procedures appeared different, involving tapping on particular parts of the body. I learned that this method was called Emotional Freedom Technique (EFT), a derivative of TFT – and, after training in this I found that it did indeed map easily onto EMDR protocols. As I became more experienced in its use, EFT opened up extraordinary new realms of clinical work, enabling much more to be achieved and more rapidly with a wide range of patients. Deep psychodynamic material and trauma could often be addressed easily and gently. Gradually I became aware of the wider field of energy psychology and its many approaches, represented by the Association for Comprehensive Energy Psychology. Within this, I studied widely and deeply, taking workshops in Seemorg Matrix, Tapas Acupressure Technique, and many others. Relatively late in my learning, I realised that although EFT is a derivative of TFT, there was considerably more to grasp in TFT itself. Robin Ellis and Charles Stone taught me the basics of TFT, using the algorithms of tapping sequences that have been found applicable for a wide range of problems, as well as the role of individual energy toxins. Subsequently I took the TFT 'diagnostic' training with Dr. Callahan, learning how to use muscle testing to diagnose meridian sequences, in which it is possible literally to see and feel the perturbations in the energy field. This was an astonishing revelation for me as I pondered its significance: that more or less any state of psychological or physical distress has an energetic coding that can be located through a simple, replicable, and teachable procedure.

Whilst there are many important and valuable energy psychology approaches and trainings available now, I would recommend the potential practitioner to take a training in TFT with Dr Callahan or an approved Callahan Techniques teacher¹, in addition to any other method that may be of interest. This provides a firm grounding in observing and working with the body's energy system and its perturbations that are linked to the thoughts and emotions experienced in the mind. Dr. Callahan feels, with good reason, that his Thought Field Therapy protocol is now so simple and efficient, pared down to its most essential elements, that it would be hard to improve on. This being so, why would I bother to write a substantial further book about energy psychology methods? It is because I feel it is possible to apply the principles of TFT, and other methods derived from it, to psychological problems that are deep and complex, pervading the personality, making use of all the knowledge and observations accumulated over the last century of psychoanalysis. This follows quite naturally, since we know from TFT that whatever is in the mind is also encoded in the body. Rather than purporting to improve on TFT itself, I am writing about its applications to different levels and domains of the psychosomatic system. In addition, I have attempted to draw upon the strengths and methodological nuances of a range of

energy psychology approaches, most of which (but not all) are derived, in one way or another, from TFT.

There is another reason for this book. Those of us who have a background in clinical psychology, in addition to other trainings in psychotherapy, are obliged through the nature of this discipline to enquire and question and, where possible, engage in research. There is much to study and reflect upon here. One of the features of energy psychology approaches is that they are not fundamentally based on theory but on observation of reality. Thus the pioneers discovered aspects of how the psychosomatic system responds, and how to work with it to cure distress and disturbance, leaving a task then of how to explain and theorise about these processes. Different innovators have proposed subtly different theories, some more sophisticated than others. Whilst the concept of a subtle energy system, involving both flow and information, is shared by most within the field, not all practitioners embrace this concept. Some propose, for example, that the somatosensory stimulation of tapping creates a bodily and brain state that is conducive of plasticity in hitherto inflexible and entrenched cognitive-emotional patterns. Moreover, it seems possible that somewhat different mechanisms or processes may be involved in different procedures – for example, in TFT and EFT. I have attempted carefully to examine and unpack these issues and also to review relevant research. In so doing, this is a book *inspired* by TFT but is not itself a manual of TFT – and no implication is intended that it is a text approved by Dr Callahan².

TFT and its immediate derivatives work with the energy meridian system, as used in acupuncture. There are other approaches, such as Tapas Acupressure Technique (TAT) and Seemorg Matrix, that work also with chakras. TAT uses one chakra and Seemorg uses several. Both of these have a quietly meditative quality, allowing deep insights to emerge alongside the gentle clearing of the energetic patterns of turmoil. They also both illustrate how the energy system responds to intention – as does EFT and the approach known as BeSetFreeFast (BSFF). TAT and Seemorg are able to address deep patterns and roots of distress and maladaptive beliefs, even ones that are not accessible to consciousness. Seemorg was conceived in a Jungian psychotherapist's exposure to energy-based therapy and explores all the ways in which we become internally divided and disconnected from Self and from the source of life. TAT seems to enable a dis-identification from trauma and pain, creating a mental space in which spontaneous healing can rapidly occur. This field of energy psychology is immensely rich, endlessly fascinating, and a source of continual teaching. Because the methods usually work rapidly, feedback is more or less immediate. Therefore we learn quickly. I think most practitioners find that our ways of working are continually evolving subtly on a daily basis as we attempt to engage with the more complex and difficult areas psycho-somatic disturbance. Even though energy methods usually work fast, there can still be much to do. Many clients have extensive, multifaceted and multilayered, networks of psychological and somatic disturbance. All the details of these may have to be

addressed. Thus, although energy methods work efficiently, they do not bypass the details of what needs to be done – they are not ‘magic’ (although they can appear so!).

I have aimed to make this book of particular relevance to those with a background in psychotherapy. Therefore, I have included discussion of how to incorporate the energy perspective within psychotherapy and also consideration of the implications in relation to transference. A recurrent theme is my perception of a distorted view of transference that has become prevalent in some psychoanalytic cultures, such that interpretive comments relating to unconscious aspects of the ‘here-and-now’ relationship between patient and therapist are regarded as the exclusive legitimate activity of the therapist (Mollon 2005). This was not Freud’s approach and I believe it is basically unhelpful. It detracts from a proper focus on the internal processes of the client, by assuming that all must be resolved via an external dramatisation in the ‘transference’. Amongst the many problems arising from this excessive preoccupation with the interaction and relationship is that the sexual and libidinal are less likely to emerge, for the simple and obvious reason that the relationship between therapist and client may not be one which facilitates or naturally encourages the sexual, as contrasted with aspects of relating to do with dependence and nurturance. Whilst Freud found sexual material to be ubiquitous, in much contemporary practice, as Kennedy (2001) comments: “sexuality as the central issue for psychoanalysis has been replaced by object relations theory, with its emphasis on early development before the child becomes recognisably sexual.” [p 11-12] – perhaps to its detriment (Green 1995; 2000; Mollon 2005b). When working with energy methods, we can thankfully jettison this anti-libidinal ‘transference’ preoccupation, relegating true transference to its proper position as an occasional form of expression of the client’s inner conflicts and traumas, and get on with the task of enabling the client to become free of the perturbations that disrupt his or her libidinal energy and optimum functioning in the here-and-now of life.

Psychoanalytic Energy Psychotherapy [PEP] provides, I hope, a window into the deep sources that give rise to the vicissitudes of emotional currents that flow through the mind. From this energetic vantage point we can survey the parts, the multiple levels, and the hidden programmes of the psychosomatic system. We have access to realms that are not available through the psyche alone. I have tried to provide sufficient information within each chapter such that any can be read in any order. One point of advice may be helpful. Some sections may, on first reading, seem a little dense, obscure, or confusing. There is a general tendency for the brain to react with a certain perplexity and confusion when first presented with entirely novel phenomena or information³. If you return to it later, it will make sense.

¹ In the UK, consult www.thoughtfieldtherapy.co.uk . In the U.S.A., consult www.tftrx.com

² For example, the term 'energy psychology' is not one that is used by Dr Callahan to describe his work. He emphasizes that it is *information* and not merely energy that is addressed in TFT.

³ Some might feel that certain ideas in this book are rather fanciful - perhaps requiring credulity or belief for their acceptance. As I have got older, I find I am less inclined to believe anything. My assumptions and beliefs have often turned out to be incorrect in various ways. Indeed, beliefs seem merely limiting - an obstruction to open enquiry. Instead, I consider possibilities as working hypotheses - to be accepted, revised, or discarded in the light of accumulating evidence and information.