

Energy Psychology An Emerging Form of Integrative Psychology

A Review of



Energy Psychology Interactive

by David Feinstein

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Reviewed by
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☞ Energy psychology is holistic and is based on the premise that the human brain is throughout the entire body. The main principle of energy psychology is “Psychological problems have a counterpart in the client's energy system and can be treated at that level” (p. 17). The goal of energy psychology is not to remove all symptoms, but to restore the balance of an individual intrapsychically, interpsychically, and within his or her family and social system. Signaling a paradigm shift, energy psychology is not interested in insight but in the neurology of change.

☞ The theory of energy psychology is that it works with the body's physical energies to bring about changes in emotions, cognitions, and behaviors. Techniques adapted from ancient Eastern practices that stimulate acupuncture points changes the body's energy field, which in turn changes the neuron firing and therefore change the emotions. In her introduction, Candace Pert explains how this process is built on a link between chemistry and emotions that underlies the related field of psychoimmunology. Research results thus far are compilations of studies from fields of energy psychology, such as psychoimmunology, which show that healing the emotions is key to a healthier psychological and physical life (Dossey, 1993; Pennebaker, 1990; Pert, 1977). These interventions change habitual anxiety responses to familiar stimuli, thus allowing new and more functional responses to emerge.

☞ Energy psychology is a new discipline that has been receiving attention due to its speed and effectiveness with difficult cases involving posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), phobias, and anxiety disorders. To provide a broad orientation to the field, David Feinstein surveyed the work of over 5,000 psychotherapists and submitted his summaries to an advisory board of 24 experts on energy psychology. He then distilled his results into a systematic summary of theory, research, and practice. This summary is the basis of his new book, *Energy Psychology Interactive*, which presents state-of-the-art information to psychologists new to this field.

☞ I first became familiar with Feinstein's work through his association with Stanley Krippner and writings on personal mythology (Feinstein & Krippner, 1988). I found that what impressed me about his contribution to the work on personal mythology held true for this book as well; that is, he is an excellent organizer, formulator, and practical teacher of complex psychological ideas. In this book, Feinstein has been outstanding in that he accomplished that feat again. His methodical and detailed structured lessons include esoteric theory, relevant research, case studies, and concrete exercises for application. Because energy medicine is a new field, much of the research it draws from has been anecdotal and based on small samples. More research is needed on the outcome of interventions using energy medicine techniques in clinical settings with larger samples and mixed methodologies.

☞ *Energy Psychology Interactive* is a very ambitious work in a compact paperback book and CD instructional format. First, Feinstein sets forth the theoretical framework in the context of diversity in psychology and shows how energy psychology integrates ancient Eastern practices with Western psychology. He draws on the modern field of psychoimmunology to connect biology with states such as emotions, sensations, and higher consciousness. Candace Pert, who is a research professor at Georgetown University School of Medicine and author of the seminal book on psychoimmunology, wrote in the Foreword: "Energy medicine has rapidly become one of the hottest areas of what I call 'New Paradigm Medicine'" (p. xv). Given the proliferation of unverified treatment claims and resistance to change from traditional medicine and psychology, Feinstein's book is a valuable expansion of the traditional biopsychosocial model of psychology to include the dimension of energy, and it provides a lucid foundation for a growing interest in integrative psychology.

☞ As a clinician, Feinstein demonstrates seasoned clinical judgment and supervisory suggestions. Using the tools of case studies, an accompanying CD workbook with abundant links to relevant research studies and resources, Feinstein provides a solid clinical methodology. He covers the uses and contraindications of his approach, differentiates uncomplicated phobias from underlying personality disturbances and dysfunctional emotional responses within a special situation, recommends safeguards, and addresses ethical issues about who can practice these methods. Although he is clear that energy psychology is not an instant cure, he also shows how it can be particularly effective with specific symptoms like simple phobias and other anxiety disorders like PTSD.

☞ One technique of energy psychology, for example, involves stimulating acupuncture points while activating an anxiety-provoking image. This changes the client's neurologic connection to the amygdala and other brain structures and reduces the anxiety associated with the stimulus. Mental activities influence energy fields that, in turn, affect physical events. Clinical subcortical trials show that these changes can be rapid and stable. Sharing a psychoanalytic perspective that psychotherapy works when the wounding incident is reexperienced in the presence of a constructive new witness, psychology energy works by pairing the original image or trauma with new positive energy and anchoring these changes in a caring human relationship.

☞ As an educational book, *Energy Psychology Interactive* is comprehensive but succinct. The CD is designed to accommodate

different learning styles, and the reader can self-pace, skip around topics and lessons as needed, or use the materials alone in study groups, or as part of a classroom curriculum. The book, although occasionally redundant or overly manualized, is easily readable and accessible. For those interested in integrative psychology, this book is highly recommended.

References

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