CHAPTER 3

Energy Healing

Our remedies oft in ourselves do lie.
—William Shakespeare

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Describe the types of energy.
2. Explain the universal energy field (UEF).
3. Explain the human energy field (HEF).
4. Describe the seven auric layers.
5. Describe the seven chakras.
6. Define the concept of energy healing.
7. Describe various types of energy healing.

INTRODUCTION

For centuries, traditional healers worldwide have practiced methods of energy healing, viewing the body as a complex energy system with energy flowing through or over its surface (Rakel, 2007). Until recently, the Western world largely ignored the Eastern interpretation of humans as energy beings. However, times have changed dramatically and an exciting and promising new branch of academic inquiry and clinical research is opening in the area of energy healing (Oschman, 2000; Trivieri & Anderson, 2002).

Scientists and energy therapists around the world have made discoveries that will forever alter our picture of human energetics. The National Institutes of Health (NIH) is conducting research in areas such as energy healing and prayer, and major U.S. academic institutions are conducting large clinical trials in these areas. Approaches in exploring the concepts of life force and healing energy that previously appeared to compete or conflict have now been found to support each other. Conner and Koithan (2006) note...
that “with increased recognition and federal funding for energetic healing, there is a growing body of research that supports the use of energetic healing interventions with patients” (p. 26).

With mounting scientific evidence now supporting the efficacy of ancient healing systems, the old paradigms of health care are shifting and a growing number of researchers, physicians, nurses, and other health practitioners are embracing a new view of healing that includes energy healing. The health care community is combining traditional methods of energy healing with modern medicine. Energy medicine is the medicine of the future (Trivieri & Anderson, 2002).

**WHAT IS ENERGY?**

Conventional descriptions refer to energy at the physical level and define it as the capacity to do work and overcome resistance. Conventional science recognizes four types of energy or forces (Benor, 2004; Tiller, 1999):

- **Strong nuclear force**: The strong nuclear force binds neutrons and protons in the atomic nucleus that acts over short distances.
- **Weak nuclear force**: The weak nuclear force also contributes to nuclear structure and radioactive decay. Both strong and weak nuclear forces have little effect outside the nucleus.
- **Electromagnetic (EM) force**: This force pervades the cosmos, from atomic structures to chemical molecular interactions and electrical power.
- **Gravity**: This force is weaker than the others over short distances and is active in proportion to the mass of an object. Gravity is the dominant force. Although its effects are measurable, its nature is the least understood and there are no clear theories to explain how it works.

Until recently, Western science assumed that there were no other energies than these four. However, a substantial body of evidence suggests the existence of bioenergies that are not recognized in conventional science. Schwartz (2007) offers a higher, more comprehensive description of energy as being the capacity to do anything, whether at the physical, psychological, or spiritual level. Trivieri and Anderson (2002) state that “the term energy can refer to familiar and easily measurable frequencies of the electromagnetic spectrum, such as light (including color) and sound, or to less familiar influences of living systems for when measurement is currently more difficult” (p. 203). There is also growing acknowledgment among quantum physicists of the role of consciousness in selecting processes that determine which of several quantum pathways are followed (Benor, 2004). Pressman (2006) notes that “more and
more we become aware of the fact that the ‘word’ (consciousness) is the source of all energy” (p. 313).

These newer definitions recognize two types of energy:

- **Veritable energies** can be measured and they include vibrations (e.g., sound) and electromagnetic forces, including visible light, magnetism, monochromatic radiation (e.g., laser beams), and rays from other parts of the electromagnetic spectrum.
- **Putative energies**, also referred to as biofields, are difficult or impossible to measure.

Therapies involving veritable energies use specific, measurable wavelength frequencies to treat clients. Therapies involving putative energy fields are based on the concept that human beings are infused with a subtle form of energy. This vital energy is known under different names in different cultures, such as:

- Chi or qi (pronounced chee) in traditional Chinese medicine.
- Ki in the Japanese Kampo system.
- Doshas in Ayurvedic medicine.
- Prana, etheric energy, fohat, orgone, odic force, mana, and homeopathic resonance elsewhere in the world.

The concept that sickness and disease arise from imbalances in the body’s vital energy field has led to many forms of therapy. For example, traditional Chinese medicine balances the flow of qi through a series of approaches, such as herbal medicine, acupuncture, Qigong (pronounced chee gong), diet, and behavior changes.

**The Universal Energy Field (UEF)**

Physicist and healer Barbara Brennan defines the *universal energy field* (*UEF*) as the life energy that surrounds and interpenetrates everything. The UEF may exist between matter and energy. Some scientists refer to the phenomenon of UEF as bioplasma (Brennan, 1988, 1993).

Drs. John White and Stanley Krippner list many of the properties of the UEF (Brennan, 1988):

- The UEF permeates all space, as well as animate and inanimate objects. It connects all objects to each other.
- It flows from one object to another.
- Its density varies inversely with the distance from its source.
• It follows the laws of harmonic inductance and sympathetic resonance (the phenomenon that occurs when you strike a tuning fork and another one near it begins to vibrate at the same frequency, giving off the same sound).

Brennan (1988) states, “Visual observations reveal the field to be highly organized in a series of geometric points, isolated pulsating points of light, spirals, webs of lines, sparks and clouds. It pulsates and can be sensed by touch, taste, smell and with sound and luminosity perceivable by the higher senses” (p. 40).

The UEF is the source of energy absorbed through the seven energy centers (chakras) of the human etheric body, an invisible duplicate of the physical body. Invisible to the naked eye, this highly structured energy field vibrates at a higher energy frequency than the physical body (Gerber, 2000). From the UEF, an attuned healer can direct healing energy to a client. The UEF is also the information storage hologram, the energetic imprint of everything that has happened or has ever been known; therefore, it is the medium by which an attuned healer can access past and future time dimensions and knowledge and perform distant diagnostics.

Benor (2004) notes, “Heat and other measurable energies emanate from the human body” (p. 394). Healers may sense this energy when they pass their hands around the body, and the laying on of hands may work through these known energies.

The Human Energy Field (HEF)

In this era of rapid scientific progress, many of the concepts we were absolutely certain about are no longer true. Of all the stories of exploration and discovery that could be told, none is more fascinating than that of the human energy field (HEF). Scientists have gone from a conviction that there is no such thing to believing with absolute certainty that one exists (Oschman, 2000).

The physical body has an energy counterpart referred to by many names: ethereal body, aura, energy field, bioenergy field, and human energy field. The HEF and the physical body interact with each other, and an understanding of their interrelationship is invaluable for successful therapeutic treatment.

Many people can sense the bioenergy fields of heat and other measurable energies that emanate from the human body. Healers interpret these sensations as indications of specific energy blocks, illnesses, and psychological states. Some of the fields that healers sense appear to involve energies that conventional science has difficulty assessing; auras are just one example. Healers can diagnose an individual’s physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual conditions by examining his or her aura (Benor, 2004).
The work of William A. Tiller, PhD, one of the world’s leading scientists on solid-state physics and psychoenergetics, supports these observations. According to Tiller our eyes detect only a small fraction of the total electromagnetic spectrum and our ears detect only a small fraction of the total available sound spectrum. It can be suggested, therefore, that most of us detect only one band in the total spectrum of reality but that some individuals are cognitively aware of the normally unseen bands (Tiller, 2002).

As McTaggart (2002) states, “Human beings and all living things are a coalescence of energy in a field of energy connected to every other living thing in the world. This pulsating energy field is the central engine of our being and our consciousness, the alpha and the omega of our existence” (p. xiii). The energy field must be tapped for healing to take place. The field is the force responsible for our mind’s highest functions. It is our brain, our heart, our memory, a blueprint of the world for all time. Einstein once said that the “field is the only reality.”

The Seven Auric Layers of the Human Energy Field

According to Brennan (1988), the human energy field has several components and can be divided into at least seven layers encompassing the body. Each layer has its own frequency and hence its own color. Each is connected through the chakras to the physical body.

First Layer: Ethereal Body

The ethereal layer lies closest to the body and is the energy matrix within which bodily tissues are formed prior to manifesting into physical form. This layer has the same structure as the physical body, including all the anatomical parts and organs. This energy field sets up the matrix in the shape of the body parts prior to their cellular growth in their ultimate physical form, and it does so before the cells materialize physically.

Just 0.25–2 inches in width, light blue to gray in color, the ethereal layer is composed of a sparkling web of energy lines upon which the physical matter of the body tissues is shaped and anchored (Brennan, 1988; Govinda, 2002).

Second Layer: Emotional Body

This layer, which is associated with emotions and feelings, follows the outline of the physical body and penetrates the ethereal field. Extending about 3 inches beyond the physical body (Govinda, 2002), the emotional body comprises all the colors of the rainbow in constant fluid motion. The colors become clearer and more vivid when they are influenced by highly energized
feelings such as love, excitement, joy, or anger. Confused and depressive feelings tend to muddy and darken the hue (Brennan, 1988).

**Third Layer: Mental Body**

The third aura body is associated with thoughts and mental processes. Appearing predominantly as a bright yellow light radiating about the head and shoulders, the third layer extends about 3–8 inches from the body (Govinda, 2002). It extends and brightens as the owner concentrates on mental processes. Thought forms appear as blobs of bright yellow with additional colored hues emanating from the emotional layer (Brennan, 1988).

**Fourth Layer: Astral Body**

Through this layer and its associated chakra filter all the energies, thoughts, and experiences that ultimately affect us emotionally, physically, and spiritually. The fourth layer is infused with the rose color of love. This dividing band between the lower and upper groups is associated with the heart chakra through which all energies must pass in transit from one group of layers and from one reality to another. In other words, spiritual energy must pass through the heart process to be transformed into physical energy. Conversely, physical energy transforms to spiritual as it exits through the heart chakra. It extends 6–12 inches beyond the body (Govinda, 2002).

A great deal of interaction takes place between people on this astral level. Brennan (1988) claims she can observe energy forms exchanging between a man and a woman fantasizing about lovemaking. She claims there is an actual testing in the energy fields to see whether the fields are synchronous and whether the people are compatible. She adds that when people form relationships, they grow cords out of the aura fields, through the chakras that connect them. The longer the relationship, the more cords there are and the stronger they are. When the relationship ends, the cords are torn, often causing a great deal of pain (heartache) until they disconnect and reroute within the self.

**Fifth Layer: Template Body**

This layer contains all the forms that exist on the physical plane in a template or blueprint form, like a negative; hence it is known as the template body. This template of the body is projected to the etheric layer (first layer) where body tissues are materialized on the grid matrix upon which the physical body grows. It extends 1.5–2 feet from the body (Brennan, 1988; Govinda, 2002). When distortion in the etheric layer is detected, work is necessary in the template layer to provide support for the etheric layer in its original template form.
To the attuned healer, the template form contains the entire structure of the auric field, including chakras, body organs, and body forms in a negative blueprint format. This layer connects physical reality with other realities.

**Sixth Layer: Celestial Body**

The sixth layer, or celestial body, is the emotional level of the spiritual plane, through which we experience spiritual ecstasy. We can achieve this experience through meditation and other forms of transformation. From here we can reach a point of “being,” where we know our connection with all the universe—we immerse in the Light and feel we are of it and it of us—and we are at one with God (Brennan, 1988).

When the open celestial chakra connects with the open heart chakra, we experience unconditional love of all humanity, of humans in the flesh, and of spiritual love that goes beyond the physical to all realms of reality.

The sixth layer extends 2–3.25 feet from the body in a shimmering opalescent pastel light (Govinda, 2002). It appears to radiate from the body like the glow around a candle.

**Seventh Layer: Ketheric Template or Causal Body**

The causal body is sometimes considered the closest thing to the soul. The record of all that a soul has experienced on the physical earth plane (during current as well as past lives) is said to be contained in an individual’s causal body (Gerber, 2000).

This mental level of the spiritual plane extends about 2.5–3.5 feet in an oval shape around the body. It comprises a shimmering light of golden-silver threads, pulsating at a very high frequency and holding the whole auric form together. It has a thin protective layer on the outside, rather like an eggshell, which protects the enclosed fields (Brennan, 1988).

This golden field supplies the main power current that runs up and down the spine and nourishes the entire body. As this current pulsates up and down the spine, it carries energy through the roots of each chakra and connects them to the energies that the chakras carry into the body.

The seventh layer can be perceived only through the experience of enlightenment—the level of one’s divine self (Govinda, 2002).

**Meridians: Energy Pathways**

Donna Eden (1998) defines *meridians* as “energy pathways that ‘connect the dots,’ hundreds of tiny reservoirs of heat, electromagnetic, and more subtle energies along the surface of the skin. Known in Chinese medicine as..."
acupuncture points, these energy dots or ‘hot spots’ can be stimulated with needles or physical pressure to release or redistribute energy” (p. 96).

The meridians affect every organ and every physiological system, including the immune, nervous, endocrine, circulatory, respiratory, digestive, skeletal, muscular, and lymphatic systems. There are 12 main meridians and each is a segment of a single energy pathway that runs throughout the body. Each segment is named for the primary organ or system it services:

- Lung
- Kidney
- Gallbladder
- Liver
- Stomach
- Spleen
- Heart
- Small intestine
- Large intestine
- Urinary bladder
- San jiao (three heater or triple warmer)
- Pericardium (heart protector or circulation sex meridian)

In 1971, medical scientist Robert Becker conducted a series of experiments to test the theory that acupuncture meridians “were electrical conductors that

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<td>The aura is traditionally described as a multilayer field of energy surrounding the physical body. The dedicated work of two Russians demonstrated that the aura could be caught on film. Semyon and Valentina Kirlian’s experiments with photographing the human energy field resulted in what is now known as Kirlian photography. In 1939, they accidentally discovered that if an object on a photographic plate is subjected to a strong electric field, an image is created on the plate. Unlike a traditional camera that captures light through a glass lens, Kirlian photography is a form of contact photography that captures an image of the electromagnetic energy emitted by any living matter, including human (Gerber, 2000). It may be used in the diagnosis of disease, past or present, in the host body. Kirlian photography is a new field of research for Western medical science; however, numerous practitioners in eastern Europe use this diagnostic technique (which they term bioelectrography). Physical and emotional health and disease can be identified in plants, animals, and humans using this method (Benor, 2004).</td>
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carried an injury message to the brain, which responded by sending back the appropriate level of direct current to stimulate healing in the troubled area” (Becker & Selden, 1985, p. 234). The tests measured the flow of electrical current in the perineural cells just under the skin. The results indicated that each acupuncture point along the way was electrically positive compared to its environs and that each was surrounded by a field with its own characteristic pattern. Later tests isolated the interfering reaction of the nerves along the route, indicating that the response was carried not by the nerves themselves but by the underlying perineurial sleeve.

The Chakras

Chakra is Sanskrit for “wheel.” Eden (1998) notes that “while the term chakra has its origins in India, many cultures have identified and work with these spiraling centers, and any healer who is sensitive to the body’s subtle energies will eventually stumble upon them” (p. 137). Chakras are centers of awareness in the human body. They are neither physical nor anatomical and are found in the subtle energy system (Govinda, 2002). Subtle energies are the energies that exist in the field beyond those defined by the five-sense field, in an energetic spectrum, and in the thought realms, known as the spiritual realm (Micozzi, 2006). Whereas meridians are an energy transportation system, chakras are energy stations (Eden, 1998). Most traditions identify seven major chakras, and each influences organs, muscles, ligaments, veins, and all other systems, especially the endocrine system, within its energy field. Chakras are energy centers traversing the length of the spine, each accounting for a different mode of perception (Smith, 2006).

Chakra work is one of the subtler methods of healing. Hiroshi Motoyama theorized that if an enlightened individual could influence the chakras, the energy output could be measured. Using a lead-lined recording booth, Motoyama measured the energy fields opposite various chakras that subjects claimed to have awakened, usually through years of meditation. His findings demonstrated significantly greater energy levels at those areas than over the same areas on controlled subjects (Guiley, 1991).

The First (Root) Chakra

The root or base chakra is located at the base of the spine at the perineum (Gerber, 2000; Redmond, 2004). It carries life energies up into the body, through the other chakras, as well as down the legs. This chakra is the grounding connection to the earth’s subtle energies; through it we are connected with the earth and our origins (Eden, 1998; Govinda, 2002). Kundalini
energy, the power of creativity, resides in the root chakra. The root chakra is as spiritually relevant as the higher chakras, and it is the chakra in which the desire to satisfy sexual needs arises.

The root chakra, linked to the physical body, is most often associated with the color red, but this is not always the case because other colors can be seen in the chakra in response to various influences (Leadbeater, 2001; White, 2004).

The Second (Sacral) Chakra

Known as the sacral or abdominal chakra because of its location over the lower abdominal area, this chakra is the container of imagination and creative impulse (Eden, 1998). It is located directly over the ovaries in women and over the testes in men. The sacral chakra is the center of sensuality, procreation, and sexuality (Gerber, 2000; Govinda, 2002; Redmond, 2004). The second chakra reveals the affection and compassion of the soul—the essence within. Hence most caring and dedicated healers have a strong and active second chakra.

Linked to the etheric body, the sacral chakra is associated with the color orange (White, 2004).

The Third (Solar Plexus) Chakra

The solar plexus chakra, located over the pit of the stomach, is linked with the pancreas and adrenal glands. It contributes to digestive functioning and the body's acute response to stress (Gerber, 2000). To its left side are the spleen, pancreas, and stomach; to its right are the liver and gallbladder; and to the rear, the kidneys and adrenals (Govinda, 2002).

Eden (1998) describes the relationship between the third chakra and the body's organs as follows:

Each organ's function in your body parallels its role in your emotional life. Consider the organs within the third chakra. As the filtering system that detects toxins in your bloodstream, the kidneys are your prototype for fear and caution, for detecting and eliminating that which is dangerous. As a factory that breaks down whatever is harmful to your system, your liver is your prototype for self-protective anger. As the alarm system that triggers great rushes of energy for emergencies, the adrenals are the prototype for the panic response that mobilizes you in a crisis. As the body's producer of metabolic juices, the pancreas is the prototype for assimilating what you can embrace. As the organ that sends stale air out of your body, the diaphragm is the prototype for grieving and finding closure with whatever is passing out of your life. (p. 152)
Linked to the astral body and plane, the third chakra is associated with the color yellow (White, 2004).

The Fourth (Heart) Chakra

The heart chakra has within its area of influence the heart, lungs, thymus, and pericardium (a protective sac that surrounds the heart). This chakra lies at the center of the chakra system, and in most cultures the heart is linked to the power of love (Govinda, 2002).

As the middle chakra, it has the middle color of the spectrum—green—but other colors may be evident. When the heart chakra emits a golden hue, it usually indicates that the person has a universal love that attracts people to him or her. A soft pink hue is evident in those who are loving, kind, and soft.

Many heart chakras are underdeveloped because people are guided more by their heads than by their hearts. Conversely, disturbances in the heart chakra can cause one to feel easily overwhelmed by others (Govinda, 2002), and people with such disturbances tend to take on everyone’s pain and problems to their own detriment. In this case, they should build up the other chakras to create more balance in the entire energy system.

The heart chakra is the center through which all energies must pass in transit from one group of layers and from one reality to another. This chakra and its associated layer filter all energies, thoughts, and experiences, which ultimately affect us emotionally, physically, and spiritually. Linked to the feeling body, the heart chakra is the central focus between the lower and upper groups (White, 2004).

The Fifth (Throat) Chakra

Expression is the product of the throat chakra. Through it, all energies and information are disseminated as they pass to and from the higher seventh and sixth chakras to the lower heart, third, second, and base chakras. This is the filtering point for all data that is sorted, systematized, and then disseminated as our personal expression. The throat chakra is the center of sound and responsible for speech and communication, as well as for hearing (Govinda, 2002).

The throat chakra’s areas of influence include the thyroid and parathyroid glands. Just as the thyroid breaks down food for the body, it also breaks down the energies that pass through it to maintain the energy body. All energies that flow up and down the meridians of the body pass through this area. Linked to the lower mental body or plane, the throat chakra is normally associated with the color blue (White, 2004).
The Sixth (Forehead) Chakra

The forehead chakra is the spiritual center of awareness, intelligence, concentration, and intuition (Govinda, 2002; Redmond, 2004). The forehead chakra, or third eye, influences the eyes, ears, lower area of the brain cortex, pituitary gland, and the director of bodily operations, the hypothalamus. Through the sixth chakra, we are able to access the psychic plane and traverse the dimensions of time and space (White, 2004).

Modern thinking, intellect, and busy minds tend to dominate the more subtle but powerful connections to the psychic, which are the channels we use to receive guidance and subtle energies beyond our ordinary perception. This chakra—the third eye—is the portal through which we gain entrance to the spiritual world. Many cultures associate it with psychic development (Govinda, 2002).

The color associated with this chakra is indigo.

The Seventh (Crown) Chakra

The crown chakra, linked with the activity of the pineal gland (Gerber, 2000), is associated with spirituality, the soul, ultimate knowledge, bliss, and the integration of personality with life, which gives us a sense of purpose to our existence (Redmond, 2004). The crown chakra relates to the whole being—physical, mental, spiritual, and emotional—in a holistic state of balance. The central themes of this chakra are spirituality, self-realization, and enlightenment (Govinda, 2002). Meditation, prayer, energy work, and rituals are safe but potent ways of opening the crown chakra and deepening our spiritual awareness and connection (Eden, 1998).

Linked to soul and the causal body (mental level), the crown chakra is associated with the color violet (White, 2004).

ENERGY HEALING DEFINED

Every culture includes the concept that energy can be sensed around people, animals, and plants (Slater, 2005). The ability of humans to tap into and deliver these unseen energies is the fundamental basis of all energy healing. Dossey, Keegan, and Guzetta (2005) explain energy healing as follows:

The philosophy underpinning energetic healing is that the soul/mind precedes energy and that energy precedes biology. Radical, yes. It changes everything. If the soul/mind somehow determines the form energy will take, it is ultimately the builder of biology, chemistry, emotions, relationships—everything a person experiences. The body, mind, emotions, and spirit are integrated; in other words, they are different reflections of the same energy and of the same consciousness, not
separate phenomena. This philosophy enables us to chart our own healing, rather than rely just on outside forces to help us heal. (p. 173)

Slater (2005) defines energetic healing as “the process of using a coherent energy field to induce a change in one’s own or another’s field” (p. 176). Energy healing alters the subtle flow of energy within and around a person or organism. It is based on the belief that our life force creates energy fields that become unbalanced during emotional or physical disease. Because our energy fields are part of an interconnected whole, an individual’s use of focused intention can aid in the health and well-being of another.

As a result of their diverse educational and experiential backgrounds, researchers and practitioners in the field of complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) have different intuitive understandings of the concept of energy healing (Hintz et al., 2003). Although the term suggests an exchange of energy during healing treatments, consistent findings of energies have not been identified across different healing modalities (Benor, 2004). Therefore, the term energy healing is broadly meant to describe the basis of healing in various practices, such as Qigong, Reiki (pronounced ray kee), Therapeutic Touch, acupuncture, pranic healing, spiritual healing, and distant healing.

Energy healing does not identify a particular type of energy. For instance, distant healing appears to act in a nonlocal, nontemporal, and nonmediated manner and does not conform to the commonly accepted definitions of energy (Dossey, 2002a). In another form of energy healing, the healer acts as a channel, allowing positive energy to pass to the healee through one hand and extracting negative energy with the other hand. In a third form, the healer sends energy out through the palms of both hands to the healee.

According to holistic psychiatric psychotherapist Daniel Benor, MD, ABHM (2004), “Many healers suggest that it is a biological energy (bioenergy) interaction between the healer and healee which produces the healing effects. Healers report that they harmonize healees’ bioenergies that have become disorganized through trauma, toxins, disease or degenerative processes” (p. 1). Benor (2004) continues:

While skeptics theorize that healing is no more than a placebo (“sugar pill”) effect, produced by healers’ suggestions and healees’ expectations, this theory is clearly contradicted by the research evidence of healing effects on animals, plants and other living things. The fact that healers can improve the health of animals and plants supports the healers’ claims that healing is definitely more than a placebo. The skeptics may not be entirely wrong, however. The placebo effect is actually a manifestation of the enormous self-healing capacities of people to alter their own states of health and illness. (p. 2)
Research demonstrates that energy healing helps relieve pain, reduce anxiety and stress, accelerate wound healing, and promote well-being (Eliopoulos, 2004). Energy treatment modalities have been used for stress reduction; reduction of inflammation, edema, and pain; improvement of appetite, digestion, and sleep patterns; and reduction of anxiety, panic attacks, depression (Leddy, 2006).

Energetic healing ability varies among individuals. In A Practical Guide to Vibrational Medicine, Dr. Richard Gerber (2000) says, “Learning to channel healing energy is actually fairly simple. But the degree to which we may each become successful healers will vary from person to person. For instance, most people can play a game of checkers or chess, but not everyone will graduate to the proficiency level of chess master” (p. 398).

**TYPES OF ENERGY HEALING**

Energy healing programs emerged from both a spiritual tradition and a scientific approach. Despite their dual theoretical foundation, these programs have more similarities than differences. Most programs recognize the spiritual layers of the energy field. Even those that evolved within the nursing profession with a strong scientific base, such as Healing Touch and Therapeutic Touch, include reference to the spiritual levels of life. Energy healing provides an arena where science and spirituality clearly meet.

Today, energy healing courses are available under a myriad of names, including Reiki, pranic healing, Qigong, distant healing, Therapeutic Touch, and Healing Touch. All of these can be assumed to be some form of energy healing.

**Reiki**

Reiki is a combination of two Japanese words, *rei* and *ki*, meaning universal life energy. This ancient healing technique involves the transference of energy between practitioners and their clients to restore harmony to the biofield, increase the client’s energy to heal, and balance the body’s subtle energies (physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual) (Trivieri & Anderson, 2002).

Reiki principles evolved from ancient Tibetan Buddhist healing practices and were handed down from teacher to disciple (Trivieri & Anderson, 2002). There are many varieties of Reiki, depending on the beliefs and experience of the teachers. Considered to be a spiritual system, Reiki has been used by practitioners of Christianity, Buddhism, Shintoism, Hinduism, and Islam.

Reiki is used for treating a variety of health conditions, including the effects of stress, chronic pain, and the side effects of chemotherapy and radiation therapy. It is also used to improve immunity, a sense of well-being, and
recovery from surgery and anesthesia. Reiki has been demonstrated to decrease anxiety and promote relaxation, support the healing process, and ease distress (Potter, 2007). Clients usually experience a deep feeling of relaxation after a Reiki session. Other experiences include a feeling of warmth, tingling, sleepiness, and being refreshed.

Reiki practitioners undergo a number of training levels. Although Reiki has not received the same degree of scientific study in the United States as Therapeutic Touch and Healing Touch, evidence of its efficacy does exist (Trivieri & Anderson, 2002).

**Pranic Healing**

Over 5,000 years old, the ancient Indian spiritual tradition talks of a universal energy called prana (Brennan, 1988). *Prana* is a Sanskrit word that means “life-force.” The Chinese refer to this subtle energy as *qi*, and the Old Testament refers to it as ruah (“breath of life”). Yogis practice manipulating this energy through breathing techniques, meditation, and physical exercise to maintain altered states of consciousness (Brennan, 1988).

Pranic healing is a highly developed system of energy-based healing techniques that utilizes prana to balance and harmonize the body’s energy processes. The method is a simple yet powerful and effective form of no-touch energy healing. It is based on the principle that the body is a self-repairing living entity that possesses the innate ability to heal itself. Pranic healing therefore accelerates the healing process by increasing the life force, or vital energy, on the affected part of the physical body. Diseases appear as energetic disruptions in the energy field before manifesting as ailments in the physical body. Pranic healing is applied on the bioelectromagnetic field known as the aura. The aura contains the blueprint of the physical body; this bioplasmic body absorbs life energy and distributes it to the organs and glands.

**Qigong**

Qigong is a combination of two ideas: *qi*, the vital energy of the body, and *gong*, the practice of working with *qi* (Kligler & Lee, 2004). The original concept of *qi* came from the ancient Chinese philosophical theory of primordial energy, which states that all things in the universe (with or without life) are formed by an invisible yet ever-existing *qi*.

Qigong stems from an ancient Chinese self-healing energy medicine method that combines movement and meditation. The term *Qigong* was first used in modern China in the 1950s to define a type of health-promoting exercise that emphasized breathing regulation (Schlitz & Amorok, 2005). This self-healing
modality stimulates and balances the flow of qi (vital life energy) along the acupuncture meridians (energy pathways in the body). In China, Qigong is a national self-care system of health maintenance and personal development that cultivates inner strength, calms the mind, and restores the body to its natural state of health (Trivieri & Anderson, 2002). Qualified instructors now teach it in the United States in innovative hospital programs, churches, adult education centers, and community fitness programs.

Qigong practitioners develop an awareness of qi sensations (energy) in their bodies and use their minds to guide the qi. Visualizations are used to enhance the mind-body connection and assist healing. Benefits include enhanced vital energy flow, improved circulation, improved resistance to disease and infection, and enhanced immune function (Trivieri & Anderson, 2002).

Distant Healing

Throughout the history of the human race, people have believed that healing can be done at a distance (Dossey, 2002b). Distant healing, a term now used at the National Institutes of Health and at an increasing number of hospitals, may be defined as a conscious act of the mind, intended to benefit the physical and/or emotional well-being of another person. Distant healing includes deliberate thoughts, wishes, feelings, images, intentions, meditation, rituals, or prayers.

Terms such as intercessory prayer, nondirected prayer, energy healing, shamanic healing, noncontact therapeutic touch, and spiritual healing have been used to describe interventions that fall into the category of distant healing. Each term describes a particular theoretical, cultural, and pragmatic approach to attempt to mediate a healing or biological change through mental intentions (Targ, 2002).

Studies have provided evidence that certain individuals, operating at a distance under controlled conditions, can positively affect a wide range of living systems, including plants, microbes, animals, and human beings. Distance, even thousands of miles, does not appear to limit the effects of healing (Schlitz & Braud, 1997).

Therapeutic Touch

Derived from the ancient technique of the laying on of hands, Therapeutic Touch is a contemporary interpretation of several ancient healing practices that consist of a learned skill for consciously directing or sensitively modulating human energies (Krieger, 1993). Therapeutic Touch was developed in the early 1970s by Dolores Krieger, PhD, RN, and Dora Kunz, a gifted and
respected healer. Both were contemporary pioneers in integrating the spiritual dimension of healing with mainstream professional nursing practices. According to Krieger (1993), several basic scientific assumptions guided the development of Therapeutic Touch:

- All the life sciences agree that, physically, a human being is an open energy system. This implies that the transfer of energy between people is a natural, continuous event.
- Anatomically, a human being is bilaterally symmetrical.
- Illness is the result of an imbalance in the individual's energy field.
- Human beings have the ability to transform and transcend their conditions of living.

Therapeutic Touch is based on the theory that the body, mind, and emotions form a complex energy field (Krieger, 1993). In this form of healing, there may or may not be contact with the client's physical body, but contact is always made with the client's energy field. Practitioners move their hands over the client's body to become attuned to his or her condition, with the intent of strengthening and reorienting the client's energies. Practitioners use the subtle energy fields in and around the body to identify energy imbalances. A typical session lasts 20–30 minutes, while the fully clothed client sits or lies down. Practitioners first center themselves to become harmonious and more deeply connected with the client. Then the practitioner performs an assessment and utilizes his or her energy to effect the client's recovery. Healing is promoted when the body's energies are in balance (Freeman, 2004; Moore & Schmais, 2000; Rankin-Box, 1996).

Clients report a variety of benefits, including feelings of relaxation, improved energy levels, pain reduction, reduced stress, and a general sense of well-being (Trivieri & Anderson, 2002). Studies have demonstrated the effectiveness of Therapeutic Touch in a wide range of conditions, including wound healing, pain, depression, immune function, hypertension, osteoarthritis, migraine headaches, and anxiety in burn clients, among others (Benor, 2004).

Therapeutic Touch is taught mainly by nurses but also by laypersons, and it is currently used by doctors, nurses, and other health professionals in the United States and throughout the world (Seaward, 2006). The most important aspect in healing is the compassionate, focused intentionality of the practitioner toward the client. Hundreds of research studies have been conducted documenting its efficacy for both mental and physical illnesses (Freeman, 2004; Trivieri & Anderson, 2002).

Therapeutic Touch has been associated with relativity theory, quantum theory, and nursing theory.
Healing Touch

Developed by Janet Mentgen, RN, in 1981, Healing Touch is a variation of Therapeutic Touch. Using their hands with light or near-body touch, Healing Touch practitioners help to clear, balance, and energize the human energy system, thus promoting healing for the mind, body, and spirit.

Healing Touch skills are becoming increasingly validated in healthcare systems around the country, and the method is now part of client care systems in many U.S. hospitals. This form of energy healing hastens the healing process, helps to relieve pain, reduces anxiety, and improves one's overall sense of well-being (Trivieri & Anderson, 2002). It has been demonstrated to provide comfort in end-of-life care by providing increased calmness, improved breathing, increased relief of pain, and increased relaxation (Wardell, 2007). Hospitals that support the practice of Healing Touch as part of their integrative healthcare system have found that it facilitates the return of compassion to the forefront of client care.

KEY CONCEPTS

1. Scientists and energy healers around the world have made discoveries that have changed our views about energy healing.

2. The types of energy healing modalities include Reiki, pranic healing, Qigong, distant healing, Therapeutic Touch, and Healing Touch.

3. In these times when natural therapies are increasingly accepted by a wider proportion of the population, healthcare providers can derive profound benefits by adding this extra dimension to their practices and using the unseen energy of the human body—where a large proportion of disease begins—to treat the core of the problem.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. What types of energy healing methods have you experienced and how have they affected your health and well-being?

2. How would you define energy healing?

3. What are the characteristics, locations, and purposes of the seven chakras?
Both Therapeutic Touch and Healing Touch have been sanctioned by the American Holistic Nurses Association since 1989.

REFERENCES


CHAPTER 3 • ENERGY HEALING


