

BodyTalk™

Definition/Background

BodyTalk™ is an integrative mind/body energy therapy that draws from ancient Chinese medicine, acupuncture, yoga and meditation, as well as neuroscience, epigenetics, psychoneuroimmunology (BodyTalk, n.d.) and neurolinguistic programming (Bandler & Grinder, 1982). There are over two thousand BodyTalk™ practitioners (Ventegodt, Veltheim, & Merrick, 2011).

BodyTalk™ can be defined as *Character medicine*, a term used to describe the method of facilitating a cure through the client's own innate wisdom (Davis, 2002; Ventegodt, Veltheim, & Merrick, 2011). Innate wisdom is a term used to refer to the body's own capacity for self-healing. BodyTalk™ does not require diagnosis or discussion; it relies upon the nonverbal communication of the client's physical body with the practitioner. The BodyTalk™ system directly treats the body's meridian pathways (see Gallo, 2005, as cited in Schurian, 2013) to balance the physical, emotional and mental levels of the body-mind as dynamic whole system.

BodyTalk™ is based on the same theoretical thread that underlies other energy therapies such as Emotional Freedom Technique (EFT) and Thought Field Therapy (TFT) (Brattberg, 2008; Callahan, 2001; Waite & Holder, 2003). However, BodyTalk™ does not use any verbal affirmations (which are integral to EFT and TFT), relying purely on nonverbal communication between the client's neuromuscular feedback and the practitioner's delivery of subsequent therapeutic techniques.

Theory

BodyTalk™ is rooted in Dynamic Systems Theory, which conceives of the body as a dynamic ecology of cells and microbes interacting with patterns of energy associated with the environment (Ventegodt, Veltheim, & Merrick, 2011; Waite & Holder, 2003). BodyTalk™ is based on the concept that the body knows how to heal itself through its own innate wisdom, which is considered to be the permeating awareness of the body-mind system (Ventegodt, Veltheim, & Merrick, 2011). Traumatic incidents or even mild shock are thought to cause the otherwise self-healing body to harbor ailments because the immune system has been compromised and is not observant enough to pick up the existence of microbes in the body (Ventegodt, Veltheim, & Merrick, 2011).

The physical structure of the body can be understood in the same context as the engineering concept of tensegrity, whereby the body can be free standing and self-supporting due to the correctly weighted connective design of joints, muscles and tissue (Ventegodt, Veltheim, & Merrick, 2011). Likewise 'reciprocal points' across the body define a network of meridian lines which map the flow of vital life force energy. These meridian pathways are the basis of acupuncture, which induces healing through the stimulation of acupoints. Meridian lines are balanced by inducing kinetic motion (triggered by tapping) which catalyzes the integration of blocked energy to re-establish

the tensegrity balance and dynamics of a client's holistic state (Ventegodt, Veltheim, & Merrick, 2011).

Neurolinguistic programming (NLP) (Bandler & Grinder, 1982) is used in BodyTalk™ to teach the client's body how to communicate with the practitioner. NLP has been defined as the study of the structure of subjective experience (McWhister, 1992, as cited in Tosey & Mathison, 2002); it is a theory of learning that is based on systematic links between a person's internal experience (neuro), their language (linguistic) and their patterns of behavior (programming) (Tosey & Mathison, 2002).

BodyTalk™ theory postulates that neurological connections of the brain are mirrored within the body-mind system at physical (e.g. biochemical) and mental levels. Brain impulses are thought to freely circulate intelligence throughout the whole body, not just within the neuron axes (Schulz, 2007, as cited in Schurian 2013). Given these factors, the techniques applied in BodyTalk™ aim to balance communication between the two halves of the brain, which in turn balances the body physiologically, emotionally and biochemically (BodyTalk, n.d.).

In BodyTalk™ theory, negative emotions are caused by disturbances in the body's energy field (Brattberg, 2008). These negative emotions are chemically stored at the cellular level (Pert, 1997) and contain a certain charge that may be held within "active memory." For example, environmental stressors and traumatic incidents can break links in the meridian circuitry of the energetic system that, if not adequately managed at the time, can continue cycling in a specific locality of the body leading to disease in this region or connected regions (Davis, 2002; Ventegodt, Veltheim, & Merrick, 2011). In this way, active memory creates its own morphogenetic field from the memory of previous events. This memory becomes associated with a given emotion and is held in place in the body-mind system by thoughts or beliefs (Ventegodt, Veltheim & Merrick, 2011). Similar to the traditional theory of operant conditioning, animals and humans can learn responses to events that are repeatedly associated with certain emotional-behavioral responses (Schurian, 2013).

According to BodyTalk™ the dissolution of negative beliefs and emotions takes place through a process of integration when the client and practitioner are in harmonic (sympathetic) resonance. Positive consciousness (the practitioner) and negative consciousness (the client's emotions) integrate to induce healing.

The linking of the circuitry that takes place during healing sessions establishes a temporary localized morphogenetic field that represents a new probability for better functioning within the wider body-mind's morphogenetic field (Ventegodt, Veltheim, & Merrick, 2011). The morphogenetic field probability is collapsed through intent into the energy body of the client and stored using the sternum tapping technique. Light tapping on the head is thought to induce kinetic energy that creates a standing wave, catalyzing the integration of a new morphogenetic pattern, which the body then uses to fix disconnected links.

Further tapping provides energy for the reorganization of the molecules to the changed energy body, while tapping on the sternum ‘stores’ the fix (BodyTalk, n.d.). Changing the morphogenetic blueprint of an individual is thought to bring about lasting changes in structure and function of the individual’s body-mind (Ventegodt, Veltheim & Merrick, 2011).

The BodyTalk™ protocol chart is a theoretical counterpart that helps the practitioner to determine weak or broken energy circuits during each session. Each section of the chart addresses certain aspects of functioning, including physical, mental, emotional and energetic frequencies that are found within the body (BodyTalk, n.d.). Breathing techniques may be utilized during the BodyTalk™ sessions to help establish which frequencies within the body need correcting (Ventegodt, Veltheim & Merrick, 2011).

Procedure

Although verbal discussion is not essential, BodyTalk™ sessions may begin with a general discussion of the client’s health and any issues they want to address. The practitioner creates a neurolinguistic program that teaches the client’s body to respond non-verbally to closed questions (i.e., those that require ‘yes or ‘no’ answers) through involuntary neuromuscular movements. These movements form the communication between the practitioner and the client’s innate wisdom (BodyTalk, n.d.; Davis, 2002).

Once a connection with the innate wisdom has been established, the practitioner may silently ask any given question. The practitioner will begin each exploration of circuitry links by asking the innate wisdom whether BodyTalk™ is required. If the body’s response is “no” then further questions can be asked to determine more suitable forms of treatment. If the body’s response is “yes,” the BodyTalk™ protocol is followed to help the practitioner decide on the energy releasing techniques to be used in any given session (Davis, 2002).

For example, the client’s hand may be placed over one of the links (e.g., the ovaries) while the practitioner will touch lightly over a corresponding area to correct any breakdown in the vital energy body (Ventegodt, Veltheim & Merrick, 2011). Using the intent of focus on these points, the practitioner will very gently tap the client’s head to release any blocked energy before tapping the sternum to store the linked connection (Ventegodt, Veltheim & Merrick, 2011).

In BodyTalk™ workshops such as Mindscape, the Client creates their own unique conceptual framework as an interface for the mind’s intuitive activities, facilitating the relation between creativity and intuition/innate wisdom. Various techniques may be applied. For example, the Hydration technique is designed to increase the transportation of water molecules across the cell membrane to facilitate uptake of nutrition into the body (Ventegodt, Veltheim & Merrick, 2011).

The BodyTalk™ procedures highlight that this treatment may not be suitable for all conditions. However, BodyTalk™ practitioners emphasize that it may be particularly

useful as a potential therapeutic option for animals and individuals suffering from trauma-related disorders, given that it does not expose the participant to further trauma.

Review

No peer-reviewed studies of BodyTalk™ have been published in academic journals. This review therefore only briefly summarizes two unpublished research dissertations on the subject.

Davis (2002) used a protocol that investigated the effects of distance BodyTalk™ therapy on groups of captive tropical birds. In Davis' randomized, double-blind, controlled study, a single healer located three thousand miles away from the avian sanctuary delivered healing to seventy parrots using a human surrogate.

Davis found that parrots that displayed pathological behavior, likely due to traumatic maladaptation to human environments, displayed a significant reduction in these behaviors following a series of five treatment sessions over twenty-five days ($p=0.011$). Although there are limitations to the extent to which interpretations can be drawn from the data, this study provides a preliminary foundation for empirical research of the BodyTalk™ system.

Given that BodyTalk™ does not require diagnosis or verbal communication between client and practitioner, and that the delivery of the therapy is noninvasive, the system may be an ideal therapy for animals (Davis, 2002).

In an unpublished Master's Dissertation, Schurian (2013) reviews a variety of energy therapies including Healing from the Body Up (HBLU™), whereby the first technique applied is BodyTalk™. One of the reviewed studies was carried out by Swack (2009) who used HBLU™ across six sessions over a three month period with a single war veteran patient in the successful treatment of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). In a later study, with a small sample of three women, all of the participants recovered completely from PTSD following HBLU™ (Swack, 2012). However, this study and Schurian's overall review offer little clarity on the exact methods used in HBLU™ and therefore make it difficult to interpret the role of the BodyTalk™ system.

The fact that each individual has an infinite number of possible meridian link combinations and complexities of connections makes it difficult to control for the techniques used in BodyTalk™ research sessions. However there has been virtually no research to formally establish this therapy's true strengths and weaknesses.

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