

THE VOCABULARY OF TOUCH

AN INTERVIEW WITH
FRITZ FREDERICK SMITH
DEVELOPER OF ZERO BALANCING

Fritz, you've said that if people were aware of the different ways they use their energy, they could have better relationships, communicate better, be better healers...

Yes, the more we learn about the movement of energy, the more choices we have when we interact with others. I like to describe the special characteristics of energy movement in terms of touch—I call them the "vocabulary of touch." This vocabulary is used in Zero Balancing [a method developed by Dr. Smith for aligning body energy with body structure], and we can also use this vocabulary more broadly—to reflect on the ways we habitually interact with others. When people see their personal patterns, they're often surprised.

When you say "touch," are you referring to physical touch?

Not necessarily. We can touch a person physically or energetically. Touch does not have to be physical. If you and I look at each other across the room, for example, and we "connect" through our eyes, we experience each other in ways beyond simply "seeing." In a sense, we touch each other. Our vibrations, our energy, connect (or touch)—we have an energetic experience without a physical connection.

Would psychotherapy be another example of touching the energy without touching the body?

It could—although I think of classical psychotherapy as more of an analytical, left-brain system rather than one involving energy connection. Not every interchange between people is necessarily "energetic" in the sense I'm using it here. Talking *about* something with a therapist is different than when you *feel* something in yourself—or, in relation to another person, when you *feel* a movement between the two of you,

feel something actually happening between you—that would be an energy movement. This is more likely to happen in any therapy when the therapist and/or the client intends to create that connection.

So we can touch energy without touching structure. Does it work the other way? Can we touch people's structure without touching their energy?

Theoretically, when you touch structure you are also touching the energy. But, experientially, there's no question that you can touch people's structure without contacting their energy. When you shake hands with somebody, for instance, sometimes you feel like you're shaking a wooden hand. The handshake gives you no sense of who the other person is—nothing of "him" or "her" is there. Or, in relation to massage, sometimes you come away from an hour-long session and feel that the massage missed what's essential about you, as though you have never been touched. Or in acupuncture, how many times have we put a needle into the structure but have missed the energy?

Could people do better bodywork—be better therapists—if they understood how energies connect?

There is no question. We can affect both ourselves and others in ways that aren't possible without this understanding.

In what I'm calling the "vocabulary of touch" there are four possible ways of connecting with others energetically: *interfacing*, *blending*, *streaming*, and *channeling*. As we talk about these different ways of interaction, or ways of being with one another, you'll notice we are speaking of boundaries—and the boundaries are different in each case.

With *interface*, the boundaries between two →

people are very clear. There's no sense that the boundaries are merging. With interface, you know where your space ends and my space begins—where your body ends and my body begins. We're clear about who is responsible for what. You'll often see interface in healthy work relationships. People are respectful of each other's boundaries; they give each other clear requests and clear answers.

With *blending*, some of our boundaries have merged and there's an area of overlap. In the area where we've blended, neither person is sure who is who. And we aren't clear where responsibility or authorship lies for what happens within that blended experience. Sometimes that blending is appropriate and natural—maybe we'll sing songs together, put an arm around each other, share something inspirational, just hang out—we blend our energy in a shared experience. At other times, it may not be appropriate. We may get blended into another person's project or issues without realizing it—or they get taken into ours. We've lost our boundaries; and we may begin to feel uncomfortable or used or depleted, and not understand why.

But if we understand we're blending, we could change the energy?

Exactly. If you realize that you are blending and decide it isn't

appropriate, you can reestablish your boundaries and contain your energy—*interface* rather than *blend*.

The third possibility is *streaming*, in which energy passes from one person to another—one person is the giver, the other the receiver. Some people go through life habitually giving of themselves to other people, energetically and in every other way. Mothers may do this to children; husbands may give this way to wives, or wives to husbands—it can go either way. One person is giving all the time.

At times, streaming has an advantage. But people who go through life continually and unknowingly streaming tend to burn out; and their constant streaming may actually not be good for the receiver, may be a burden. At the end of the day, a mother who only streams to her kids is exhausted, and the kids may all be on overload because of it.

This is very different from *interfacing* with the children. When you interface, it doesn't mean that you're less attentive, or love them less—you just have very clear boundaries. So you're in a better position to see what's good for the children and what's good for you.

Are there times when streaming energy is appropriate and helpful?

Yes. One time to stream energy might be when the →

The Art & Structure of Touch: Principles of Energy Work

by Craig Carr and Jil Windsor

Our teaching of Zero Balancing, Five Element Energetics, and Colour Healing to hundreds of bodyworkers has demonstrated to us a repeated and common occurrence. That is: energy, when it is experienced as grounded in the structural body through touch, can be understood in a substantially new way by most practitioners. Likewise, the experience of clients who are "met structurally," is altogether different in the context of what is currently framed as energy work.

Zero Balancing, with roots to the osteopathic tradition of masters such as Still and Sutherland, goes further to recognize that the skeletal mass of the body is the conductor of the densest fields in the body's energy system. This orientation in structure establishes a reference point from which the practitioner can create a direct interface with organized currents of movement. For many, the shift in perspective toward the experience of "touching bone level," adds a quality of stability that tends to reduce vague, non-definite concepts about how to feel and work with energy.

This article is an introduction to only a few of the key principles of energy work as we have distilled them from our experience. As you read you may find it interesting to keep in mind that the principles, by nature, also generalize to everyday exper-

ience beyond the clinic. If you are inspired to engage energy more fully in your touch, consider beginning with these specific guidelines.

Principle #1: Change is affected by introducing fields into the body that are stronger, clearer, more definite, and more complete than those that currently exist.

This principle reflects the application of physics (structure) to working energetically with the system. Specifically, the principle states that two frequencies held in close proximity, over time, entrain one another to a new vibration. The lower, weaker vibration will, in a manner of speaking, become stronger by virtue of its relationship to the clearer vibration. Another example of this principle in action can be observed when driving cross-country and finding two radio stations broadcasting at the same frequency. Your radio (physical structure) will naturally sort to the clearer, stronger vibration in every instance.

In bodywork terms, especially from a Zero Balancing perspective, the mission of the practitioner is to use his or her hands to touch structure (bone) and to build energetic fields that hold a new pattern to which the system will entrain. →

other person is in a state of depletion. People who have just had an accident, or fainted, or somehow responded to a situation with a sudden depletion of energy may benefit from having energy streamed into them, in a momentary way. It's almost like a jump-start. However—and this is my bias—streaming as a common strategy usually is disadvantageous, and *unconscious* streaming often leads to depression and chronic depletion. It's important to know what streaming feels like, so if you find yourself streaming inappropriately, you can identify it and stop. There's yet another way of connecting in addition to streaming, blending, and interfacing, and that is...

Channeling?

Yes. With channeling, energy also passes from one person to another. But here, the energy is passing *through* the giver rather than coming *from* the giver, as with streaming. In streaming, the source is our own "energy bank." In channeling, by contrast, we are the conduit from some other source. One problem inherent to channeling is that if the channeler is not energetically clear in his or her own body, the conducted energy may pick up distortions of the channeler and pass them on to the receiver. The energy that

The magic of Zero Balancing as a technique is that the actual *doing* is quite simple. It is gentle, straightforward, and on a basic level involves the limited number of ways in which hands can skillfully push, pull, rotate, or compress the structural architecture of the body. Practice will amplify effectiveness by adding energetic components that are essential elements of high-level touch. These include—but are not limited to—attention, intention, qualities and attributes, language, metaphor, and symbol. These subtle elements can be understood as additional vectors built above clear and distinct structural forms, thus establishing a "fulcrum" (vibration) around which the body/mind will orient.

Principle #2: Touch that communicates trust as well as physical support engenders a sense of safety and the capacity to go beyond known territory.

One of the most extraordinary aspects of touch is that its qualities can bypass the conscious mind and *go directly to the level of experience*. Consciousness grows by constantly looking toward the areas of experience that are unknown. Creating a felt sense of safety allows an individual to clarify issues of personal history in new ways as it empowers the self worth that propels movement toward happiness in the present. A strong interface at the meeting place where touch occurs acts as a foundation for personal change. Dialogue and other techniques involving verbal interaction may remain completely optional to the practitioner.

leaves the person may not be as clear as that which entered. To channel reliably, one usually needs to have done a lot of inner work to clear personal fields. Distortion can be a difficulty.

Do people sometimes confuse the feelings of energy movement with emotions—say, confuse streaming or blending with the emotion of love?

There are many types of love. A person with little understanding of the movement of energy may equate or confuse the feeling of energetic movement with "love" or "being in love." They both feel good. A characteristic of "unconditional" love is nonattachment. When we stream or blend, we overlap the other person's boundaries. With this overlap may come a sense of attachment—we've become part of the other person's process. If people use blending as a basic strategy of relationship, they run the risk of codependency, of losing their own perspective.

Let's look at acupuncture and bodywork for another example of energy movement in relation to emotions. Acupuncture and bodywork make a distinction between the emotions of compassion and sympathy. Compassion would be closer to unconditional love and to interface— →

Principle #3: Energy moves in curves. To engage energy more fully through touch, accent a curve.

We live in a quantum, curvilinear universe of circles upon circles, and the body perfectly manifests that nature. Think of the skeleton and there are virtually no 90° angles or straight lines anywhere! At the cellular level and beyond, structures appear as spheres and spirals with arches, vortices and soft, round circular boundaries.

When we touch the body it is literally impossible not to touch energy, but we can engage *more* of it by adding curve to our touch. Our own curved structures (fingers, hands, etc.) meeting those of another assures that, even unconsciously, curved touch will occur. In developing skill we bring attention and intention to curved touch and thereby amplify manyfold our connection to qualities of movement in the body. Practitioners are routinely astounded by the results achieved by this small adjustment to their touch. The principle is the same whether the interface is built at a precise point on bone or soft tissue, comes as a long, flowing and integrative massage stroke, or is a deeply held energetic field such as a Half Moon Vector in Zero Balancing.

Principle #4: A high energy vector entering the system on top of a strong emotional field may create a "standing wave" that persists over time.

When the physical body has healed from an injury there are often minimal or no outward signs that remain. If the incident involved a strong emotion, however, *continued on page 40*

the energetic position where one person is relating to another, yet is not necessarily involved in that person's process. With sympathy, on the other hand, one pours emotion or energy into the other person. Appropriate sympathy is fine; but from the acupuncture or bodywork viewpoint, excess sympathy is seen as a dysfunction.

Can interfacing be carried too far—as in the case of people who never seem to blend with others or stream, who seem never to give of themselves?

I think it's incorrect to say that those who seldom blend or stream are people who don't give of themselves, or are distant and removed. It's fun to blend; yet one can be as friendly and warm through interface—can be as soft and approachable as through blending or streaming. And interface has the advantage of being clear about responsibility within the interaction.

When doing acupuncture, bodywork or other types of therapy, it's my view that interface is the ideal way to relate to the client, because with interface, the intentions and boundaries between the client and practitioner are clear. And in terms of our social activity, I think these same principles apply.

To me, the prime example of unconditional love and the

such as anger, fear, jealousy or grief (among many possible others), a complex interlocking of vibrational patterns may continue in the deep structure of the person. The psyche, in effect, knows no time, and the earlier in life these patterns are installed the more they tend to define who we are, what we believe to be true, and how we will make decisions. By building a clear and strong interface, through touch, practitioners can engage structure and create geometric energy patterns that first meet, then erase, neutralize, or override old and non-useful vibrational forms.

Principle #5: Change lasts longer when it originates from within the body-mind.

This notion is essential to all natural healing therapies and reflects the experience of centuries. As Fritz Smith, MD and Zero Balancing founder remarks, "The object is to create balance, not to provide an experience." It is the practitioner's establishment of a structural and energetic focal point of balance—and the skill to maintain it for a moment—that provides the client with an opportunity to access the incredibly powerful self-organizing force that resides within. The practitioner, once having helped to gather the energy, need only to effectively step out of the way and hold open the space for change to occur.

Principle #6: An experience is an energetic event. There is no such thing as bad or negative energy.

How an experience is translated into behavior, beliefs, and

practice of interface is His Holiness, the Dalai Lama. He is the most open, nonjudgmental, compassionate public figure I know—he is deeply concerned, yet he seems to have a very clear sense of boundaries. From what I know of him, I would say he is not prone to blend or stream with others.

Let's say we could achieve the state of unconditional love. Would we use different modes of energy as we interacted with people, depending on the circumstances?

It's my personal view that the closer we come to unconditional love, the heart chakra, the more we will act without attachment, without comparing or judging ourselves or others. Unconditional love is free from emotional strings, conditions, rewards, manipulations, or hidden agendas—conditions that develop when our boundaries are not clear. According to one tradition from India, enlightenment is to love all, serve all—no strings attached. To me that represents a path of unconditional love.

Can we, or should we, always act from this perspective? I think in the living of everyday life we need to utilize most forms of energy movement, at one time or another—they all have their strengths. Yet these are worlds within a wider world. Cultivating the widest perspective of uncon- →

identity by the body-mind will vary greatly from person to person. As a practitioner, the most useful perspective to maintain is that all of these behaviors and beliefs reflect a positive intention at some level. Discovering and mirroring those positive intentions means meeting the client with no judgment and creating the permission for new choices and greater self-acceptance to emerge.

In conclusion, these few principles begin to outline the natural laws that embrace our every touch. We have found these guidelines paramount in expanding both the effectiveness of our private work as well as in communicating the experience of energetic touch to practitioners in our workshops. We have identified a few more, with corollaries, and suspect you may also have uncovered or developed some ideas about the principles of energy work. Clearly, the discovery of the art and structure of touch is a work in progress, open to everyone and a compilation of ideas based on the experience of many people. ■

Craig Carr, LAc, Senior ZB Faculty, and Jill Windsor are professional trainers who have presented many Core Zero Balancing Programs together since 1992. They are Directors of the Center for International Healing Arts in Santa Cruz, CA where they maintain a private practice and through CIHA support the bridge between complementary and mainstream ideas about healing. The Art and Structure of Touch is their creative growing edge. Their workshop specialty is tailoring processes for both individuals and groups learning new touch-based skills. They would enjoy hearing your comments and inquiries at E-mail: CIHA_CJ@aol.com and phone: 408-457-2076.

ditional love would serve us well—ourselves and all of humanity.

Going back to working with energy, does it help if the receiver knows about, and accepts, these concepts of energy?

To work with energy, the *therapist*—the bodyworker, the acupuncturist—needs to accept its existence and know how to use it; to *benefit* from energy, we do not need knowledge of energy theory. In fact, knowing too much may actually interfere if it leads a person to stay in his or her left brain. Trying to figure out what is being done and tracking the energy while receiving a session, may block or alter the natural movement and balance of the energy. And certainly the chances of the person experiencing the energy movement are greatly reduced.

In my own work of Zero Balancing, I rarely discuss therapy as part of a session. Not only does discussion put people in their left brain, but also it may come up against different belief systems, which further engages the cognitive process. I've long been guided by a sign at the Esalen mineral baths: "Let the warm water flow through an empty mind."

What implications does the vocabulary of touch have for acupuncture or bodywork?

The reason this model is important for the acupuncture (bodywork) world is that all this works through the needle (hands). You connect with the point, and when you've entered the energy you can *interface* with it, *blend* with it, *stream* into it, or *channel* into it—depending upon your bias, your skill and training, and the needs of the patient (client). What happens is much more clear if the therapist has determined, for example, "Through the needle (hands) I want to interface with this person. I want him or her to have the experience of really being in touch with humanity without losing identity. And I'll give that experience by interfacing with his or her energy for a moment." That can give the patient (client) the experience of really being recognized as well as connected. The next patient, (client) will have a different need, of course, and therefore a different scenario. If you know this vocabulary, you can refine the quality of your acupuncture (bodywork), because through your needle (hands) you can do much more than tonify, sedate, or transfer the energy. You can fine-tune. You have additional ways—and more precise ways—of working. It's a matter of your style and skill, and the patient's (client's) need.

I have a question about streaming. Isn't it draining for practitioners to stream their energy? Would it be better to think of channeling energy to another person instead of streaming? When people are trained in therapeutic touch, they're often told to think of channeling energy from a source beyond themselves rather than streaming it from their own "energy bank." →

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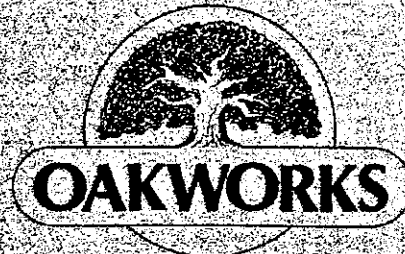
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I think there's a real possibility of acupuncturists or bodyworkers being drained when they stream through their work, as anyone can be drained who streams too much. I would say that channeling has some advantages here over streaming. However, as I indicated earlier, it's not quite that simple. First is the issue, *what* are you going to channel. Second, according to my understanding of the physics of energy, *when* we channel energy, a siphon effect occurs—as the energy passes through a body, it may pick up the vibration of unresolved or chaotic issues within the tissues. So the energy that leaves us may be different from the energy that entered us. If the practitioner or “channeler” is not clear—has many unresolved energy vortices, has not cleared personal history, or has a lot of internal prejudice—this unresolved material may come out in the channeled energy or the channeled information.

Therefore, in the therapeutic context, I would still rather come from interface, thinking in terms of stimulating the person's own energy or engaging their own internal world, rather than adding to it from an outside source.

Sometimes it feels as if people are pulling energy from you—forcing you to stream. What's a good way to respond in this situation?

In my practice I've developed a number of ways to work in such circumstances, the most important being interface. I may also be a bit more formal in my persona, more the “doctor” than the friend, and take more responsibility for the subject matter of the conversation, so it doesn't needlessly drift into areas of emotion inherently prone to streaming—areas such as deep sympathy or grief. In more extreme cases, I directly shield myself with a buffer of vibration.

How can we help people in everyday situations, using this model? For instance, how could we use the vocabulary of touch in relating to somebody who's very sad or grieving? Or to my teenager who's really mad at me?

I'd like to summarize the distinctions before answering the question. First, we're assuming that energy exists, that vibration is one characteristic of energy, and that any emotion—anger, sadness, fear, and so on—has a unique vibratory pattern that is archetypal for that emotion. Secondly, this model assumes that emotions and thoughts, as vibration, can be held within our tissue. These held vibrations are like vortices of energy in the ocean; and like an ocean vortex, these vibrations stay in form in our tissues for long periods of time. The third assumption is that elements of the vocabulary of touch—interface, blending, streaming and channeling—are ways of interacting with energy.

Now to the question. Let's assume that a person is agitated, hyperactive, or borderline hysterical, meaning that the vibration in the body is in excess. It is too rapid, too fast, too amplified. In this case, the therapist—or friend or parent—would want to quiet the vibration in the person's

body.

If you were to quiet hyperactive energy with touch, you could do it through blending, streaming, or interface. Again, I would choose to work from interface. I would make quieting movements on the person—pressing down, containing, holding, comforting. I'd make any type of physical motion in my hands that would help quiet the vibration.

If someone is chronically depressed, however, the energetic movement would be to increase the vibration, to stimulate, to enliven that person. Again, this can be done through any of the modes.

How one approaches the emotional body of another person is a matter of style and experience. I know very excellent therapists who work through blending and do very good work and get very good results. My personal experience leads me to interface because it has fewer built-in problems for me than does blending. But for someone else, that may not be true. In understanding the vocabulary of touch, each person can find what works best for him or her in various situations. Just knowing possibilities is the beginning of the exploration

Would you say more about a layperson using this “vocabulary” in their relationships with others?

We've already talked about some of the guidelines for this vocabulary—how relating through interface keeps boundaries clear, yet can be warm and supportive. How a brief period of streaming can give a depleted person a “jump-start.” How blending can bring a sense of community and sharing on a deep level. How channeling can bring a “breath of fresh air.”

So people who know these possibilities can observe how they're interacting with others, and then choose how they use their energy in relationships.

I teach a lot and often I see two light bulbs go on in people—one, when they understand *they have a choice* of interfacing, blending, streaming, or channeling; and two, when they realize *they have unconscious habitual patterns*. They suddenly see themselves: “Why, I've been streaming into my children all this time!” Once they see the possibilities, they begin to change. When people find they have a choice and use it consciously, they're often amazed at what follows. ■

Resources

- *Inner Bridges: A Guide to Energy Movement and Body Structure*, by Fritz Frederick Smith, (Atlanta, Georgia: Humanics Press, ©1986).
- For information about Zero Balancing and other energy therapy workshops, contact the Zero Balancing Association, P.O. Box 1727, Capitola, CA 95010, (408) 476-0665.

Dr. Frederick “Fritz” Smith received his degree in osteopathy in 1955 and became a medical doctor in 1961. In pursuit of a deeper understanding of illness and health, he studied Eastern as well as Western therapies, becoming both a licensed acupuncturist and a certified Rolfer. His studies coalesced into Zero Balancing, a therapy that aligns body structure and energy. Recently retired from his medical practice, Dr. Smith now devotes himself full time to developing and teaching Zero Balancing, as well as conducting other energy therapy workshops.

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