

## Presidential Address

# PSYCHOPHYSIOLOGY, PSYCHOSYNTHESIS AND THE SEARCH FOR SELF

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### ABSTRACT

In this paper Evidence is presented of the many ways we are all connected. Our physical bodies are an intrinsic part of the substance of the planet; the same oxygen that flows through us now also flows through the fishes, birds and beasts, the oceans, and the plants; the same oxygen once flowed through Jesus and all life 2000 years ago, and through the dinosaurs eons earlier. Physically we are totally connected with all living creatures, an integral part of the web of life on our earth. The reality of our psychological connectedness and oneness is now emerging in scientific explorations such as demonstrations of the effects of prayer on healing; researchers mentally influencing the physiology of others; a myriad of ESP experiments; and studies of healing at a distance. At some deep level, we are all connected in the collective unconscious, the planetary field of mind. Applications and implications of these facts, and tools such as neurofeedback and psychosynthesis for their exploration, experiencing, and manifestation in therapeutic settings and practical daily-life are discussed.

Defining spiritual factors in energy medicine challenges us to examine the relationship between healing energy and over-arching spiritual experiences common to various healing traditions. Love, connections, unity and oneness are emphasized in every spiritual tradition. At this time in world affairs, there is an urgency that we as a human collective begin to recognize our oneness. In this exploratory process we can become aware of the common bonds of love that cement our connection to the universe, that define the Self for whom we search.

**KEYWORDS:** Field of mind, unity, connectedness, disidentification/self-identification, spirit

One of the greatest conceptual challenges to a scientific understanding of subtle energies is to define the role of spiritual factors in energy medicine, and in subtle energies themselves. You have probably heard the now-common explanation of spiritual experiences related to life: “We are not physical beings having a spiritual experience; we are spiritual beings having a physical experience.” In this way of looking at things, is it possible to say “We *are* subtle energy, inhabiting a body?”

Healers typically point to a relationship of healing practices to over-arching spiritual connections and experiences. Many healers experience healing energy coming *through* them rather than *from* them. Some believe healing comes directly through the agency of God, or angelic beings, and in the present conference we hear of many different healing traditions. But there are common bonds. One common bond so clearly shining through is **love**.

Love is surely one of the things that connects us, and being truly aware of connections always awakens feelings of love. Love is felt in the absence of word or deed, and however defined, may well be the most powerful of all subtle energies.

We speak more easily of Qi, Prana, Etheric Energy, Subtle Bodies, of oneness, connections, and transformation than we do of spirit. And yet science is beginning to look at spiritual phenomena, such as prayer and healing, in controlled, sometimes double blind, studies. Peter Russell, probably not entirely tongue-in-cheek, included the words “. . . and (Dare I Say it) God” in the title of his opening address on Friday evening.<sup>1</sup> We *do* need to dare. There may be as many definitions of God among us as there are people in the room. The entire cosmos; infinite love and wisdom; the trinity aspect of God as the creator, the entire creation, and creativity; this last is so beautifully expressed in the Sufi song Bob and Ann Nunley have shared with us:

*What, then, are the names of God?  
Love, Lover and Beloved.*

But whatever definition we hold, spirit is certainly a part of it. The spiritual element is not a silent partner in the business of life, but an active participant in the processes of our growth and transformation. Elucidating the role of

spirit and its relationships to subtle energies by means of scientific study of processes and effects of self-regulation and healing, requires a willingness to broaden our conceptual base to include our deepest experience. Last year in his presidential address, Jerry Wesch discussed the dilemma of the “closet mystic” (scientists with direct personal experience of anomalous phenomena) and referred to the fact that, although science is often hostile to these experiences, more than 50% of us have had experiences of an anomalous nature.<sup>2</sup> In this regard, our new president, Jeffrey Levin has published an article in *Alternative Therapies* in which he shared that almost all of his departmental colleagues at the medical school where he is associate professor have come out of their respective closets, if only with him, and if only in whispers behind closed doors.<sup>3</sup> The title of Jeff’s article is *Walking our Talk, Talking our Walk*, and it is time.

**O**ne way to search for Self with a capital S is to explore our **connections** and **interconnections**. At the Life Sciences Institute of Mind-Body Health, in several projects that I will describe, we find that many people in our society do not feel connected to anything. They have little connection, or have lost connection with their family, have no connections with school, the community, the government (other than the courts), and actually have no sense of belonging anywhere. Yet a very important part of knowing *who we are* is knowing how we are related to the rest of creation, knowing how we fit. It is often a sense of separation from one’s larger self, and from others, from our oneness, that brings people into therapy. We see that those who have no sense of belonging suffer from depression, ennui, a sense of abandonment, and poor self-esteem.

In our addictions treatment program, we conduct a Psychosynthesis<sup>4</sup> exercise based on the question “Who Am I?” Often the clients sit over a blank piece of paper and cannot think of one word to describe themselves. Many have no conscious idea of who they are, have never thought of who they are; and much of their recovery, we believe, depends on self discovery. We all have both conscious and unconscious beliefs about ourselves, and these beliefs determine how we behave. Every external act requires that it first be imagined or visualized, whether consciously or unconsciously, and *what* we visualize emerges from our image of ourself. I believe it to be true that nobody can act outside of, or different from, the images they hold of themselves.

As my own work evolved over the years, I focused more and more on aspects of disidentification and Self-identification. I will talk more about this later, but this concept of disidentification and Self-identification has to do with differentiating our True Self, our high Self, from our personality aspects. The Perennial Wisdom tells us “Know Thyself.” Many spiritual traditions focus on “Not Self” as a way of knowing. How are these connected? Are they contradictory, or are they two paths to the top of the same mountain? In this talk I will share some experiences that demonstrate or elucidate connections in the physical, psychological and spiritual domains of Self. First, how are we connected *physically* to each other, and to our home planet?

## I AND MY PLANET ARE ONE

**W**e hear that we are a part of our planet, but for most of us this is not experientially real. We feel and experience ourselves as separate, as just riding on the planet, and this determines our thinking. I want to share some imagery that enables us to look at and even experience ourselves in a way that is different from the usual.

The way we perceive the world is a function of the type of organism we inhabit. We assume that the way the world looks to us is the same as it looks to other people. It's *natural* to assume that how the world looks to us is how the world *really looks*. However, the visual appearance of the world to us is a function of our particular type of eye, and the sounds we hear are a function of our particular type of ear. Humans cannot hear dog whistles, with frequencies well above the audible range of our ears; nor do we hear the trumpeting that elephants can hear as far as forty miles away, because they hear sounds far below the range of human ears. How the world appears to creatures with multi-faceted eyes, or long-range, movement-sensitive eyes like an eagle soaring high in the sky, we can only imagine. Each creature lives in a different visual and auditory world.

More significantly, the way we react to the world, and the beliefs we hold, are a function of our perceptions . . . an exaggeration of “seeing is believing.” Scientific technology in the form of instrumentation is greatly enlarging our ability to get new data, and convert it into pictures, increasing what we *can*

perceive, but that does not affect our every day *internal experience* of the world very much.

So, now I'd like to do an imagery exercise that is based on changing perception. It gives us an interesting glimpse of the world and our connection to it in an experiential way. Imagine that we can make a small physiologic change in our organism, by simply replacing the lens of our eyes with a lens that sees at the level of a high powered microscope. If we were able to see each individual cell, and if we could watch our cells in their living presence, we would be able to see their activities; their metabolism, their relative health, and their interactions with other cells. Close your eyes for a moment and imagine that you now have eyes that can see like a high-powered microscope. How would our seeing the world this way affect our relations with each other, and with our own bodies? How would this sight affect our eating if we could see the relative health and vitality of the food we eat? What prejudices (if any) would humans hold if we didn't see skin color and racial characteristics, but rather could see the life of the cells of each other's bodies? Imagine how this might affect how we raise our children. I think our education, music, art, and culture would be radically different, as well as our every day life.

**N**ow, let's take this a step further, and imagine that we remove this microscopic lens, and replace it with a lens of such high magnification that we can see atoms and molecules. What would our world look like to us then? A description of an atom in Fritjof Capra's book, *The Tao of Physics*, states that if we could enlarge an atom to the size of the biggest dome in the world, the dome of St. Peter's Cathedral in Rome, the nucleus, consisting of protons, neutrons etc., would have the size of a grain of salt, suspended in the center of the dome, and the electrons orbiting it would be the size of motes of dust, at the outermost edges of the cathedral. All the rest would be space.<sup>5</sup> More visually, while watching a program on Nova, the Los Angeles Coliseum was shown, with the statement that if an atom was enlarged to the size of the coliseum, the nucleus would be about the size of a BB, and the electrons like grains of table salt, orbiting at the outermost tiers; and all the rest, space.

Imagine how the world might look to us, with this sort of eyes. We can imagine that each atom might look like a minute sun, or each molecule like a tiny solar system. A human being might appear as a person-shaped galaxy,

with denser and less dense clusters of stars (atoms); the blood stream perhaps as a flowing milky way. If someone went to an apple tree, climbed it, picked an apple and ate it, it might look like a person-shaped constellation approaching a tree-shaped constellation, getting into it and plucking a smaller apple-shaped constellation from it, and eating it. A teeth-shaped field of stars biting into an apple-shaped field of stars, and then, through the interstices, we might watch the atoms separated, reaching the digestive tract, eventually absorbed and disseminated throughout the body. If we watched a mother feeding a bottle of milk to her baby, we might see this as did the child Teddy in a J. D. Salinger novel, in which he relates that he was just an ordinary kid until one day, watching his mother give his baby sister a bottle, he saw that it was simply God pouring God into God.<sup>6</sup>

**I**f we could see ourselves, and the world and everything in it, on the level of atoms and molecules, how would that affect our actions, our culture, our child-rearing (we might watch our children grow from conception through birth, as well as after they are born), our education, music, art, and our own evolutionary process? How would we experience our physical relationship to the world and everything in it? This is a level of reality that we seldom relate to.

Going back to cells for a moment, in High School biology it was once taught that we get a whole new body every seven years. Now through research, it is clear that the rate of cellular renewal is much faster. We get an entire new skin every 16 days or so, as the cells of the top layer are sloughed off, and the newer layers grow toward the top; it takes about 16 days for the deepest layer of skin to reach the surface, and in turn be shed. In some parts of the body cells are replaced in hours or days, in others months, but in all parts of our bodies there is a constant renewal at the cellular level. At the level of atoms and molecules, the exchange is much faster, and it has been estimated by some physicians in molecular medicine that the chance of even one of the atoms or molecules presently in our bodies still being there in 6 months is on the order of one in two billion!

Here we are in this room, breathing together. With every breath we take, some of the atoms of oxygen and nitrogen we inhale were exhaled by others, and in the hour we will spend here together it is likely that we will breathe

in at least one atom from everyone in the room. One statistic says that in every 20 breaths we take, the likelihood is great that at least one of the atoms of oxygen we inhale was once breathed in and out by Jesus, Buddha, Genghis Khan, Hitler, the man next door, and a little girl in China.

The same is essentially true of our food, and water. Let's take water as one more example. So far today I have had two cups of coffee, two glasses of juice, and about four glasses of water. I have put an equal amount of liquid down the drain, where it will, perhaps after many side trips, find its way to the ocean, from which it will eventually evaporate out and join the great water cycle again. It has been said that all water eventually reaches the ocean. On the way a drop may enter a river, get cast into a side eddy, flow to the roots of a tree, move up into a leaf, evaporate from there, join a cloud, rain down in another stream, enter a fish which is eaten by a bear. If we could see this at the magnification of atoms and molecules, we would watch a continuous process of air, water and other substances in the form of food pass into and out of us and all other living creatures, continuously transformed and reused.

**L**ooked at from this perspective, we could observe our *physical* selves as some sort of an energy structure through which the substance of the planet is flowing; a structure organized and held together by energy fields, informed by DNA. Take a moment now . . . see if you can imagine seeing the planetary surface from the point of view of all the atoms and molecules of air, water, leaves, apples and oranges, etc. flowing in and out of everything else. This sensed connection, this dance of each part caring for, interacting with the others is a *manifestation of love*. Physically we are totally connected with all living creatures, an integral part of the web of life on our earth.

## FIELD OF CONSCIOUSNESS AND THE EVERCONSCIOUS MIND

The late Kenneth Godfrey, a Topeka psychiatrist, coined the term “everconscious” to cover our larger consciousness, including all of the “unconscious,” the various aspects and layers of consciousness ranging from the readily accessible, such as what we ate yesterday, through the long-forgotten but

accessible, or still influencing us, and the repressed and unadmitted into awareness, to that large, vast reservoir, the collective unconscious.

**P**ychological connectedness is beginning to emerge as a reality, as we become aware of the **field of mind** in many of its aspects. Elmer Green has written extensively on the subject of the field of mind.<sup>7,8</sup> In our early work with biofeedback at Menninger, some interesting events emerged in the laboratory which are illustrations of being in the field of mind. In an early neurofeedback experiment, *EEG Alpha Theta Training for Creativity* conducted with prosaic Kansas college students, a number of striking incidents of ESP developed.<sup>9</sup> I would like to share two today. Toward the end of training, near the end of the semester, one student had a spontaneous image at the end of his session, of arriving home and being met at the door by his roommate. In the image, the roommate said “Hey, you got admitted into Kansas University!” Our student replied, “How do you know, have you been opening my mail?” and his roommate told him “No, the acceptance came in a window envelope, and I peeked in and saw that you have been accepted.” Well, not thinking too much of it, our student went home, to be met at the door by his roommate, who said “Guess what, you got admitted into Kansas University!” With a strange sense of *deja vu*, the student heard himself say “How do you know, have you been opening my mail?” to which his roommate of course replied “No, the acceptance came in a window envelope. . .”

This occurrence did not upset this student, who thought it was a very interesting aspect of self and reality, but another student was very upset by an experience of foreknowledge. In the evening, shortly after going to bed, his roommate was talking to him about something boring. As the student lost interest, to shut his roommate out, he decided to do a brainwave meditation. He slipped into a Theta state, and then he had a sharp, frightening hypnogogic image. He saw George Wallace shot in the back while walking through a crowd of people. Three days later, listening to the radio while driving in his car, he heard the incident of the shooting just as it was occurring, hitting the news broadcasts simultaneously. He turned his car around and drove at once to the lab, quite alarmed, stating he did not want this kind of experience, did not believe in this sort of stuff, and what should he have done about it? Was he somehow responsible, should he have warned someone, stopped it from happening?



An experience like this can be shaking for a person who is not familiar with the concepts of a field of mind. I remember seeing a program on TV about the many people who foresaw the DC10 crash in Chicago—in which we lost Itsak Bentov, and many others—and who made many calls to the airport, to the FAA and the airport security giving warnings, trying to avert the disaster. There are innumerable occurrences similar to this; when strong emotions are involved, the perturbation in the field of mind is strong enough to come to the conscious attention of many people. All of us know of cases where someone knew of, saw or spoke with, a far-away loved one at the time of their death. Most of us, at some time in our lives, have an experience in which something in the field of mind comes to our attention, our awareness, and if we include events in our larger mind, the subconscious and superconscious, I am sure that 100% of us have been affected, at least in our dreams.

**R**ecent studies on the efficacy of prayer also shed light on the field of mind. In well controlled, double blind studies, patients who are prayed for show clear cut benefit and improvement over those who are not prayed for. For example, patients in cardiac intensive care are divided into two groups at random, and the names of one group are given to prayer services for intensive prayer. In various studies, as their condition is followed, those prayed for do better on all parameters measured; less pain, lower anxiety, fewer returns to ventilators and other life assist measures, and fewer days in intensive care; lower requirement for antibiotics, less pulmonary edema; and various other effects. Not all of the studies are conclusive, and prayer has not been completely efficacious in any of the studies; some people prayed for still do not recover. Nevertheless, the idea of testing the efficacy of prayer in controlled studies make some people feel very uncomfortable. If we believe the improvement is direct intercession, on the part of God, it could indeed cause discomfort. Could we believe that God responds “I hear prayers for John and Mary, so I will make them well; but no one is praying for Ken and Jane, so I will let them stay sick.” Aren’t the people in a double blind study who are *not* selected to be prayed for just as worthy of healing as those who *are* selected?

I want to propose a field-of-mind explanation that could include prayer as a special case. William Braud and Marilyn Schlitz have shown conclusively that people can influence the physiology of others.<sup>10</sup> Influencers were asked to either calm or activate subjects, located in another room, and being measured

by electrodermal response equipment. During the influencing periods, the “sender” used self-regulation of the effect intended, activation or calming, as well as mental imagery sending the response to the subject. The effects were very strong and consistent. It can be hypothesized that the effect of prayer occurs in the same way; the intention and caring are “sent to” or “received by” the one prayed for in the *field* of mind, *the mind we all share*, and this is what generates the healing effects. The same hypothesis can explain studies in which the beliefs of the doctor influence the healing, creating a sense of faith in the patient. But clearly the efficacy must rely not only on the intention, power and consistency of the sender, but the receptivity, in all its many aspects, of the receiver.

**M**y favorite story of how faith that one will heal effects one’s healing—(the effect of the “field of mind” inside the body)—is shared by the noted cardiologist, Bernard Lown, in his introduction to Norman Cousins book, *The Healing Heart*.<sup>11</sup> He describes a patient who was critically ill with irreparably damaged cardiac muscle following a massive heart attack. With congested lungs, uncontrollable rapid heart beat, chaotic arrhythmia, and labored breathing, he required both oxygen and an intravenous drip of cardiac stimulant to keep him alive. On rounds at his bedside with a number of other physicians, Dr. Lown pointed out the patient’s “wholesome, very loud third sound gallop,” denoting the heart was straining to the point of failure. Following this, the patient remarkably improved and was discharged from the hospital. Later Dr. Lown asked the patient about his miraculous and unexpected recovery; and the patient indicated he knew exactly what had happened. When he heard the doctor tell his colleagues his heart had a wholesome gallop, he **knew** he was going to get well. He realized that Dr. Lown might try to soften things for him, or cheer him up, but he knew that the doctor wouldn’t lie to the other doctors, so he knew he was going to get well. Faith, in this case, played a huge role, and changed his belief, his visualization, changed the “field of mind” inside his skin, and changed his heart behavior and physiology.

Was his healing a placebo response? Placebos are, by definition, inactive. But the placebo effect is both active and specific. The same inactive ingredient—a “sugar pill”—can cause nausea and vomiting when posing as an emetic, pain relief when posing as an analgesic, sleepiness when posing as a hypnotic, and

wakefulness when posing as an amphetamine. The reaction is caused by the “name”—the meaning—given to the placebo and by the ensuing visualization and expectation of the named change occurring. Dr. Lown’s patient recognized this in saying he thought the doctor might tell him his heart was healthy just to cheer him, but *knew* he wouldn’t lie to his colleagues. . . ipso facto. Responding to suggestion, *responding* to a placebo, and responding to prayer are all forms of **field-of-mind** action. And the responding, itself, is a form of self-regulation, albeit not always conscious. This can help explain why a prayer “that the best outcome for the individual will happen,” or that “God’s will be done,” works the best. And when to us it seems that a prayer was not answered, the person did not improve, perhaps those prayers are answered just as much, and the very best thing for that individual has indeed occurred.

In his book *Healing Words: The Power of Prayer and the Practice of Medicine*, Larry Dossey has pointed out that if “the kingdom of heaven is within”—the “Divine Within” concept that is part of most of the world’s spiritual traditions—one cannot pray to a God that is outside of one’s Self; if God is present in every one of us, the Divine factor, the **God** factor in prayer is internal, not external, to everyone.<sup>12</sup>

**L**ast year, right during this conference in June, *Time* magazine published an issue on healing that included an article on a pilot research study on healing at a distance, conducted at the California Pacific Medical Center by Elisabeth Targ, Ellen Levine and Fred Sicher.<sup>13</sup> The pilot study showed much promise, and was subsequently expanded in a well-controlled, more comprehensive study just now completing analysis. In a second, comprehensive controlled study by this group, Mietek Wirkus, Ursula Thunberg, and Peter Norris, who are here today at this conference, are among the healers who took part.<sup>14</sup> Mietek was a participant in the pilot study, and Ursula and Peter are among 11 of Mietek’s students who were accepted in the present study. The people who conducted the study have written to the healer participants to say that the results, soon to be published, are sparkling and will have a profound effect.

As the studies of prayer and healing at a distance are showing, working through the mind/body connection, our bodies are an intrinsic part of the overall field of mind. In fact, it is a tenet of Yoga that “All of the body is in the mind, but not all of the mind is in the body.”

## BIOFEEDBACK AND PSYCHOPHYSIOLOGY

**B**iofeedback has been instrumental in furthering mind-body research and understanding. In the late 1960's Elmer Green formulated the now-familiar Psychophysiological Principle, first published in the Proceedings of the International Congress of Cybernetics in London in 1969.<sup>15</sup> The psychophysiological principle affirms that "Every change in the physiological state is accompanied by an appropriate change in the mental-emotional state, conscious or unconscious; and conversely, every change in the mental-emotional state, conscious or unconscious, is accompanied by an appropriate change in the physiological state." Elmer pointed out that it is this principle, *when coupled with volition*, that makes mind-body self-regulation possible. In the psychophysiological domain, the mind-body, or the bodymind as Candace Pert calls our embodied self, is one entity: the mind and the body aspects of ourselves are indivisible.<sup>16</sup>

The spiritual parts that presumably survive personality death are not limited, of course, by the physical, emotional and mental connections.

Biofeedback therapy of various sorts has been found to be efficacious in a wide variety of conditions. Persons using biofeedback-assisted self-regulation can bring about voluntary changes in blood circulation, muscle tone and activity, galvanic skin response, blood pressure and pulse rate, frequency and amplitude of brain rhythms, gastric motility, and indirectly, hormone levels, immune responses, and the psychological correlates affecting anxiety and panic attacks, depression, pain and fear. For many, the sense of self-mastery outweighs the benefits of symptom reduction, and carries over into every aspect of their lives, bringing with it confidence and joy.

Recently there has been great growth in what is now termed neuronal feedback, or neurofeedback, research and therapy. Since the early work of the Greens, Joe Kamiya, Barbara Brown, and a few others more than 30 years ago, the field of neurofeedback has developed into many areas. The brain is showing itself to have incredible plasticity and healing ability, and/or versatility of function. People with closed-head injuries, and post-stroke traumas, are recovering most of their former function with neurofeedback. Even after brain traumas from birth, like anoxia, Margaret Ayers has shown we are able to train injured brain

cells toward normal functioning as much as 40 years later.<sup>17</sup> People can learn to greatly ameliorate the effects of conditions such as epilepsy and Tourette's syndrome with effective brainwave biofeedback. Countless kids have learned to overcome the symptoms of attention deficit disorder and attention deficit-hyperactivity disorder, and eliminate the use of Ritalin and other stimulants, with the use of EEG biofeedback. This is exciting and rewarding work.

## NEUROFEEDBACK FOR ADDICTIONS: EXPLORING THE EVERCONSCIOUS SELF

**E**qually exciting are the inroads that are being made with alpha-theta training for substance abuse addicts. Back in the early seventies Ken Godfrey M.D., a psychiatrist then at the Veteran's Administration Hospital at Topeka, was one of the first treaters to use EEG Alpha biofeedback in the treatment of alcoholics. This innovative clinical work was developed further by us (Elmer Green, Dale Walters, Steve Fahrion and myself) in the Voluntary Controls Program at Menninger, and then put in a highly successful, intensive, controlled study by Eugene Penniston at another V.A. hospital in Fort Lyons, Colorado.

Two years ago, in his Presidential Address, Steven Fahrion shared some of the results of our controlled research (Life Sciences Institute of Mind-Body Health) of a neurofeedback training program for addicted individuals in the prison system at Ellsworth Correctional Facility.<sup>18</sup> The research compared our substance abuse treatment program that *included* daily alpha-theta training with our essentially similar program, directed toward transformation and self-discovery, *minus* the neurofeedback. As a result of the significantly greater success of this program with the alpha-theta trained group for paroled individuals, the Kansas Department of Corrections has just decided to expand the program. The controlled research is over, considered to have been a good indication of the usefulness of brainwave training. The alpha-theta part of the program is being expanded so that all individuals in the treatment program at Ellsworth will receive neurofeedback as the central part of their addiction treatment package. Next week we will begin the process of training two newly hired addiction counselors for the prison program.

The Kansas Department of Corrections also contracted with us to train the staff of a “within the walls” therapeutic community to provide alpha-theta neurofeedback for the inmates in that program. In the case of this therapeutic community, we are not providing the treatment package. The program is being run by a national addiction treatment contractor, in this case Gateway, who bid for and won the contract. When the request for proposals (RFP) went out, neurofeedback was mandated as a part of the package by the Department of Corrections, with the training and supervision of the neurofeedback component provided by the Life Sciences Institute.

**O**ne thing that has been very encouraging to us is that the Department of Corrections in Kansas has recognized the value, indeed the necessity of having good training for the addiction counselors who will conduct the treatment, so that the programs will have a greater chance of succeeding. When we informed the Department that we believe a 30-day training program, including 30 brain-wave sessions, is necessary for the people we hire and all those we train, to try to assure that providers are qualified to do the training, they agreed to fund us for providing it. This was a very important point for us. Years ago in the Biofeedback Society we strongly promoted the idea that biofeedback practitioners should themselves gain mastery of self-regulation techniques before they taught them, but this idea never gained sufficient popularity. Without this experiential base, therapists do not know first-hand the power of their tools, and underuse them or do not “train to criteria” or even realize that there is a learning watershed, a point at which the training “takes” and becomes a part of the person, of their way of doing and being in the world.

Our training program consists of a 30-day, full 8 hour, comprehensive program which essentially is a prototype of the training we want addiction counselors to provide for clients. This has worked out quite well, and we believe comprehensive training transmits the philosophy, the ambiance, set and setting that allows transformation to occur, and real life changes as well as sobriety to be maintained.

Individuals who experience transformation achieve sustained sobriety in large part because of the other changes that occur. Broad and far-reaching personality changes include less psychopathology in depression, anxiety, poor self

regard, delusional thinking, and decreases in avoidant and aggressive behaviors. Positive changes include increased warmth, stability, caring, abstract thinking, conscientiousness, self-awareness and self-control. Many of our clients have reported more joy, more confidence, learning to like themselves and to feel more at ease with themselves and create better relations with others. Their focus is on what they want **for** themselves rather than on what they are wanting to avoid; their visualizations and self-image are transformed.<sup>18</sup> As an outgrowth of the effectiveness of the controlled research at Ellsworth, one year ago we also began a program in our community, for the Shawnee County District Court system. We will be concluding the first year of that program this month. The Federal Government has renewed their grant support for the coming fiscal year, and we are waiting for the final decision from Shawnee County.

**I**t's strange how things work out. In 1970 I came to Topeka for an extended visit, and ended up staying because I had an opportunity to be a participant in the first Theta brainwave research conducted by Elmer and Alyce Green. The experimental group consisted of persons with psychological training and meditation experience. Staying (for a year, I thought at first) meant getting a job, and putting my children in school, and now, 27 years later, I still live in Topeka. For me, being involved now with the prison programs has been a return to where I first began my work with psychophysiological self-regulation.

## THE SEARCH FOR SELF

The first job I found was as a clinical psychologist at the Kansas Reception and Diagnostic Center, a maximum security prison intake and evaluation center where inmates generally spent a minimum of six weeks on their way into, or out of, the prison system. I soon became aware that this population was very different from what I had imagined beforehand. It seemed that we were locking up our youth, and setting the stage for them to become hardened criminals. To a large extent, it still seems that way to me. In psychosynthesis terms, for the most part these men identified themselves with narrowly defined roles based on limited experiences and behaviors, and beyond that had little sense of Self. What was even worse, the system *also* identified them narrowly, probably even more so than they did themselves, seeing the inmates not as individuals but as a uniform entity, referred to as "they," and attributing the behaviors of *any* to

*all.* So many of them feel, and are, “dissed” by society—discounted, disregarded, disused, dismissed—and have no idea of their wonderful inner worth and potential

**W**hile working at KRDC, I had the opportunity to run a treatment group. I decided to have a psychosynthesis group, using some didactic presentations, combined with visualization, imagery, and a series of “identification” and “Who am I” type exercises to facilitate self-exploration and self-image change.<sup>19</sup> In the psychosynthesis exercises I have chosen to use in a time-limited program, techniques are systematically taught which provide deep insight into the “raw materials” of the inner self, and help integrate them for use in the outer world. I hoped that everyone could realize and experience a part of their great human potential.

Self-image is central to how we think and behave, in accordance with the tenet “The mind operates in accordance with its image of itself.” The images we hold mold our thinking, and we behave in line with our image of who we are. And it was my intention to help these incarcerated individuals to enlarge their self-image, to discover how much more they were than they believed, within the confines of the images held by them, and thrust upon them.

## PSYCHOSYNTHESIS

I had discovered Psychosynthesis only a couple of years before, in 1967; this psychological model felt like an intellectual and emotional home-coming, because it fit the psychospiritual model with which I grew up, based . . . among other things . . . on the teachings of the Tibetan as offered by Alice Ann Bailey.<sup>20</sup> I wasn’t aware of it at the time, but the founder of Psychosynthesis, Roberto Assagioli, was a direct student of the Tibetan, (R.A. in *Discipleship in the New Age*) as well as a physician and psychiatrist who studied psychoanalysis with Freud in Vienna.

In creating Psychosynthesis, Assagioli brought together psychoanalytic and psychospiritual concepts, and formed an integral psychology that not only can examine our past associations and experiences for how they have molded what we have become, but also provides ways for consciously directing our future being.



Psychosynthesis subsumes some basic psychoanalytic concepts, such as developmental defenses and fixations, the importance of unconscious processes, and transference and countertransference. Instead of the Id, Ego, Superego personality construct of Freud, Assagioli sees the basic structure of the person as a Center of Consciousness and Will, capable of observing, and directing, all the psychological processes and the physical body. Thus, Psychosynthesis is proactive, and encourages and facilitates conscious participation in the evolution and growth of the self. It provides a theoretical model of the nature and structure of the human personality, a comprehensive, dynamic psychotherapy, and also a way of being in the world.

One of the central concepts of psychosynthesis is that we are dominated by everything with which we *identify* ourselves, but can be in control of, influence and make choices about every aspect of self from which we are *disidentified*. This is a fundamental concept, the realization of which affects every aspect of life. Basically, it affirms “I have a body, but I am not my body; I have emotions, but I am not my emotions; I have a mind, but I am not my mind; I have desires, but I am not my desires; I have many roles, but I am not the roles, I am self-directed, and not only the actor but the *director* of the acting. As a center of consciousness and will, I can observe, direct, and integrate all the psychological processes, and the physical body.”

**P** psychosynthesis is an ideal psychology for partnering and harmonizing with biofeedback theory and applications. Both emphasize self-regulation; both have as central core concepts of the human person, and for human development, consciousness and will, awareness and volition. In the case of Psychosynthesis, Consciousness and Will are at the essence of the human person, around which all the psychological processes and the physical body can be integrated; in the case of biofeedback, acquisition of self-regulation is dependent upon awareness and volition; in fact all human action (other than the purely reflexive) proceeds on the basis of awareness and volition, of consciousness and will.

Psychosynthesis is also an ideal psychology for exploring our spiritual dimensions, bridging the personal and the transpersonal aspects of self. Through its exercise, we can explore our own individual uniqueness, as well as our connections with each other, our planet, and the cosmos. Regular practice

aids in the development of the intuition. And intuition brings to us a dawning awareness of our own higher nature, a realization of our spiritual connections, and spiritual attainment.

In this way, as we move toward the wholeness that is our destiny, we embrace our diversity. We are One, and we are Many.

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