

Synchronicity

With one breath, with one flow
You will know
Synchronicity
A sleep trance, a dream dance,
A shared romance,
Synchronicity
A connecting principle,
Linked to the invisible
Almost imperceptible
Something inexpressible.
Science insusceptible
Logic so inflexible
Causally connectible
Yet nothing is invincible
If we share this nightmare
Then we can dream
Spiritus mundi
If you act, as you think,
The missing link,
Synchronicity
We know you, they know me
Extrasensory
Synchronicity
A star fall, a phone call,
It joins all,
Synchronicity
It's so deep, it's so wide
Your inside
Synchronicity
Effect without a cause
Sub-atomic laws, scientific pause
Synchronicity...

(Words by Sting - lead singer of the contemporary rock group - The Police)

Meditation and Therapy

Awareness from Within

It's so deep, it's so wide
Your inside
Synchronicity
Effect without cause

Realizing happiness is sometimes the most difficult of tasks. We search frantically for solutions when we don't even know what the problem is. We look for formulas and techniques, cures and salvation, that will bring us happiness without developing the awareness necessary to experience what happiness really means. The paradox that so many people live with is one of having the good life in front of us and not being able to experience it. Contemporary society seems to have developed an unspoken attitude that happiness and the good life are beyond us somehow. A great deal of time and energy is spent in the 'pursuit of happiness' when, in fact, happiness is within us.

There is a pervasive feeling of lacking something in our humanness that is certainly magnified in our concern with nuclear annihilation. That pervasive feeling of lacking something is intensified when we expend energy trying to grasp on to the fleeting happiness of the moment. To regain that elusive momentary happiness we seek out others, once again pursuing happiness that seems beyond us.

Therapy is one way people seek to **regain** that elusive happiness. They look to a source 'outside themselves' to reunite them with their own happiness. The simple truth that is often overlooked is that the

source of security, contentment, happiness and freedom lies within each of us.

Meditation is a way to experience that source within us. Meditation is a way of awakening the happiness within us and influencing all aspects of our life, helping us experience the world differently than we have. Meditation is an art that can teach us how to stay centered, focused and aware.

When we are able to stay centered, focused and aware we are most alive and closest to the source and meaning of our humanness. When we can be open to the immediate experience, receptive to what it can teach us and vulnerable to the power to change our being we are truly aware. It is in the moment, when we are sure of nothing that there is the greatest possibility of understanding. Whenever we attend to that moment and become aware of it we are meditating.

This immediate experience is nothing foreign to us. We have all felt it at some time or another. Events of a profound emotional nature such as the death of a loved one or the birth of a child can produce it. Sometimes sexual love, great beauty, pain or an event on a world scale can produce it. Drugs such as LSD and mescaline can give a taste of such an experience, as well as therapy, through approaches such as encounter group experiences and gestalt practices that seek to release the tight grip on emotion.

Meditation can influence the therapeutic relationship by its ability to help us focus on the moment. Practicing meditation teaches us how to stay centered in the moment, focusing on the client

and being aware of the energy flow within ourselves. The capacity for us, as therapists, to focus totally on the client and to accept him/her as they are in that moment creates a feeling of openness and acceptance that develops into a connection with the rest of the world. It is through our own experience of meditation that we can benefit the client. We, as therapists, can provide an environment of acceptance and awareness for the client to explore and make sense of their world. We can provide such an environment only if we aren't expecting the client to fulfill any preconceived expectations for our own means.

A way of avoiding placing expectations upon the client is by developing "an unconditional friendliness towards our self". This is called Maitri in Buddhist tradition, meaning a way of accepting ourselves without conditions and allowing us to be human. It seems a prerequisite to experience accepting ourselves without condition if we are to encourage the client to experience an unconditional acceptance for their self.

One of the basic tasks of therapy is to expand the client's sense of who they are by integrating the parts of self that are alienated (Jung called this integration "making friends with the shadow"). Doing this kind of work in therapy can help the client develop personal stability, self-respect, and an expanded sense of what they believe they can do. Helping the client to do that is possible only if we, as therapists, have struggled with integrating the alienated parts of ourselves also.

Through meditation we can develop an insight into how we try to manufacture and hold onto a fixed identity of ourselves as a defense against the uncertainties surrounding our lives and the alienated shadow within us. Holding onto a fixed identity keeps us at a distance from ourselves and the client rather than sharing in the moment at hand. We identify ourselves as the 'therapist' or 'helper'. Letting go of the role and remaining focused in that moment with the client can release an incredible flow of energy inside us.

Meditation reveals to us a way in which to do that. It can help us to utilize every activity of living as an opportunity to grow in awareness and acceptance. Meditation can provide us with access to a broader frame of reference than our limited identity and help us realize many more creative options for how we view ourselves, our clients, and the world in which we live. Based on the foundations of a relaxed body and concentrated attention, meditation intensifies our awareness and enhances our capacity for gentle strength and genuine caring.

How do we learn to meditate? In some form or another we have all meditated. Children meditate when they become engulfed in a story reading. Audiences meditate while viewing an intriguing film. Watching sunsets and ocean waves is meditation. Jogging, playing tennis, and reading are all levels of meditation. Anytime we are focused on the moment without conception of time and space we are meditating.

The ideal is to experience that focused awareness in each moment thus relinquishing the confines of time and space. "We do not meditate just to relax and experience some peace; we meditate to unfold our inner being," according to Swami Muktananda. Meditation techniques are methods we have of focusing our attention.

Essentially there are two primary modes of attending and most meditations can be classified under one or the other of them.

Concentrative

The concentrative mode means to focus attention on a single object, sound or image to the exclusion of all other phenomenon. Such practices as; using a mantra (a sacred word or sound repeated over and over again) or visualization (as in candle-gazing), or through movement (such as Tai Chi or the martial arts) are all ways of focusing attention.

Receptive

The receptive mode opens the field of attention to accommodate all arising phenomenon. Letting our thoughts flow through our minds without restriction. Such practices as Zen Buddhism and Mahayana Buddhism encourage mind flow as opposed to restriction of thoughts.

Concentrative techniques are useful for developing focused attention without distraction while receptive techniques develop our capacity to attend to the totality of experience. Concentrative

methods are useful for stabilizing and energizing the mind. Receptive methods develop a deeply penetrating clarity and insight able to apprehend subtle dynamics of the perceived world and the mental process itself. These methods are the simple means by which we can develop awareness and insight into ourselves and others.

What are the benefits to be gained from meditation? Can it really be a source of growth in the therapeutic relationship? The techniques seem inconsequential considering the power supposedly invested in them. What changes actually do take place within the therapist who meditates that can influence a client's potential growth?

There is a sense of inner peace that becomes familiar and secure. Meditation initiates a philosophy of acceptance toward our self and others that won't be mistaken for indifference or withdrawal. Signs of a developing sense of inner peace include:

1. A tendency to think and act spontaneously rather than from fears based on past experiences.
2. An ability to enjoy each moment.
3. A loss of interest in judging other people.
4. A loss of interest in judging ourselves.
5. Loss of interest in interpreting actions of others.
6. Loss of interest in conflict. Instead, an appreciation for confrontation.
7. Less of a tendency to worry.
8. Frequent appreciation for ourselves and others.
9. Feelings of connectedness with others.
10. An ability to smile through the eyes from our heart.
11. An increasing ability to let things happen rather than to make them happen.

12. An increased susceptibility to receiving love from others as well as giving love to others.

The practice of meditation offers us the opportunity to focus on the moment and to listen to our inner-communication with ourselves and others. It can lead us to further examination of our tightly-held world perspective and help develop a sense of inner peace.

Practicing meditation introduces us to an Eastern tradition that values a style of living less dis-stressful than contemporary complex society. The paradox we can begin to realize is that the good life is really within us not in our 'pursuit of happiness' outside ourselves.

The value of meditation in therapy is in the ability of the therapist who meditates to stay focused and aware of the client without any expectations. Accepting the client and letting them experience that acceptance in the therapeutic relationship invites growth. Therein lies the true value of meditation for ourselves and the value it holds for others.

A connecting principle,
Linked to the invisible
Almost imperceptible
Something inexpressible.

Annotated Bibliography

Goldstein, Joseph, The Experience of Insight Boulder: Shambhala Publications, 1983.

The book is described as a simple and direct guide to Buddhist meditation. Joseph Goldstein has studied for years with the renowned Buddhist meditation master Anagarika Sri Munindra. The author now teaches meditation as a method of learning to see things as they really are. The book is designed to lead the reader through a Meditation course designed to provide an intense experience of Insight Meditation. In addition, many of the aspects of Buddhist philosophy such as the Noble Eightfold Path, the Dharma (teachings of Buddha) and the experience of Enlightenment are discussed. The author has the unique ability to capture the essence of Buddhist thought and reflect it in Western language.

Levy, Joel, The Fine Arts of Relaxation, Concentration & Meditation Seattle: Sprotsmind, Inc., 1984

The author has spent the last fifteen years exploring and researching the teachings and technologies of human health and consciousness. He has taught approximately thirteen thousand people basic survival skills for mastering the stress of daily life. Currently he is Director of Biofeedback and Stress Mastery programs for Sprotsmind, Inc., located in Seattle. His focus is on developing innovative programs for enhancing mindbody integration and peak performance for sports, health care, military and corporate arenas. In his book, he gives guidelines for developing relaxation skills, explores breathing exercises for heightening concentration, defines meditation and provides a step-by-step procedure for meditation. Also discussed are suggestions for daily living that encourage positive action and satisfying life styles.

LeShan, Lawrence, How to Meditate New York: Bantam Books, Inc., 1974

The author is a practicing psychotherapist and a pioneer in exploring

therapeutic and ethical implications of meditation. He also conducts training seminars in meditation. The author describes meditation thus, "It is our fullest "humanhood" the fullest use of what it means to be human, that is the goal of meditation." The practice of meditation helps to clarify and broaden the human perception of the world. The author gives a concise account and description of the different ways to meditate, the physiological effects of meditation, the psychological effects, the mysticism surrounding meditation and the integration of psychotherapy and meditation. The author offers a set of guidelines for using meditative practices as part of psychotherapy.

Muktananda, Swami, Where Are You Going? Ganeshpuri: Gurudev Siddha Peeth, 1981

Western scientists are now beginning to discover the truth that the philosophers of India have known for millennia: that the entire universe consists of one energy. Swami Muktananda belongs to the ancient lineage of Siddhas, self-realized masters known for their ability to kindle the spiritual potential in others. Where Are You Going? describes the Siddha Yoga path on the journey to indescribable bliss. Siddha Yoga believes the use of a mantra is essential in focusing the mind. Om Namah Shivaya: is said to be able to purify the body as it is being chanted. The words mean 'I honor my inner Self'. Swami Muktananda maintained that, "If you repeat it (Om Namah Shivaya) one-pointedly and for a long time, it will permeate your whole environment." The Swami describes the different stages of the spiritual journey, the nature of life, the recognition of the inner Self, the practice of mantra in meditation, the awakening of the inner energy (called Kundalini), and the function of the Guru,

Watts, Alan, Psychotherapy East & West New York: Random House, Inc., 1961

Alan Watts and D.T. Suzuki were among the first to bring Eastern

though and practice to the Western world. Once considered cultish and far out, their writings are again surfacing and their effort to provide an understanding of Eastern meditative practices to their Western readers is becoming appreciated by a large audience. In this book, the author points out the illusion of ego that Western man/woman clings to and how it is possible to overcome the false sense of self that predominates our being by the practice of Zen Buddhism. The author sees the Western preoccupation with classifying and categorizing as an attempt to flee from the fear and inevitability of death. The author states, "psychotherapy and the ways of liberation (Enlightenment) have two interests in common: the transformation of consciousness, of the inner feelings of one's own existence, and the release of the individual from forms of conditioning imposed upon him/her by social institutions."

Welwood, John, Awakening The Heart Boulder: Shambhala Publications, 1983

Contributors to this book include; David Brandon, Erich Fromm, Richard Heckler, Jack Kornfield, Jacob Needleman, Ram Dass, Robin Skynner, Karl Sperber, Chogyam Trungpa, as well as the author. The book addresses the issue of whether meditative practice can assist and promote the healing relationship between therapist and client. The consensus of the contributors to this book is that it can, indeed, promote healing. The book presents new perspectives on health and the healing relationship that has grown out of a cross-fertilization between Eastern meditative disciplines and Western psychological practice. The orientation of the book is to explore the healing relationship as an intimate encounter that can awaken the heart of both therapist and client.

Wilber, Ken, No Boundary Boulder: Shambhala Publications, 1981

The author explores both the Eastern and Western approaches to personal growth. He examines the Western trend toward alienation from ourselves,

from others, and from the world by fracturing experience into different parts separated by boundaries. The author has developed a framework including the different approaches to therapy, healing, and personal growth, called "the spectrum of consciousness." This approach integrates the essentials of the three major directions in Western psychology; orthodox egoic humanistic (including cognitive behaviorism and Freudian ego psychology), humanistic (Bioenergetics and Gestalt), and transpersonal (Psychosynthesis, Jungian psychology, and the Eastern traditions). Included is an excellent bibliography for each of the perspectives.