

“Groups and organizations, like individuals, also have a subtle energy plane which is formed by combining individuals’ energy planes and also by the energy and information exchange among people during their interactions, as well as between people and their environment.”

Energetics and OD

By Alla Heorhiadi
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Working with energy is “in” in OD. At least, writing about working with energy is in, usually as part of discussion about new science that includes chaos theory and quantum mechanics. In *The NTL Handbook of Organization Development and Change*, Juliann Spoth has a chapter, “Working with Energy in Organizations” in which she notes that the word *energy* “is omnipresent in popular organization development (OD) literature” (p. 424). This year, at the OD Network conference in Baltimore, David Stone talked about working with groups and energy, which generated an excited response from the conference audience. We assume that he senses the energy in the room, names what he senses, and in doing so provides a way for people to talk about the energetic level of relationship. At the same time, while writing and talking about energy is popular, we see little evidence that OD practitioners have the skills to work with energy, nor are there recognized programs to train practitioners to use energetics in OD practice as there are in other parts of the world.

In this article we describe energetics and how energetics can be a valuable part of OD.

What is Energetics?

We define *energetics* as the discipline that involves application of the knowledge of the universe supplied by quantum physics and some ancient traditions, to promote individual and organizational healing. Energetics deals with the subtle energy

fields that underlie physical objects and events. Tiller (2004) defines subtle energy fields as fields that are not generated by fundamental forces such as gravity, electromagnetic and nuclear forces. Quantum physics experiments showed that physical matter is nothing but “frozen light” (Gerber, 2001), or in other words, physical matter is energy moving at a slower speed. Energy in some Eastern philosophies is referred to as “subtle matter”, which has high frequency vibrations and, thus, is less dense than physical matter.

Each physical object has two different planes, physical and energetic. The physical plane is tangible and can be perceived by one’s sensory organs. The energetic plane is composed of subtle energies. Subtle energies are difficult to detect because many of today’s measurement instruments use electric signal responses which have much less speed than light speed, while subtle energy fields travel faster than light (Tiller, 2004). People, who are themselves energetic beings, have the potential to detect subtle energies, and with training can discern and interpret the energetic plane.

Take, for example, a human body. A physical body that we see has subtle energy fields, to which some people refer as an aura. These fields can be measured and photographed with the right equipment (Gerber, 2001). The Kirlian camera was designed to photograph auras of people or other objects. The AMI machine measures the electrical characteristics of the meridians, which are micro-tubular channels that carry a subtle nutritive

energy to the various organs, nerves and blood vessels of the body. The Voll apparatus measures changes in electrical skin resistance at the acupuncture points, which are located on the meridians. The fact that these machines were developed in Russia, Japan and Germany indicates the global search for knowledge in energetics.

The experience of working with subtle energies in healing and study in the area of quantum mechanics, motivated us to expand the concepts and skills that were used in the energy healing of individuals to OD consulting. We concluded that a successful OD intervention, one with a long lasting positive effect, would be more likely if it is preceded by an energetic intervention.

The several energy fields compose the energy plane that is a holographic template, and carries information about a human body and guides its growth and development (Gerber, 2001). As Burr (cited in Oshman, 1996) wrote, energy fields provide the “blueprint” for living systems. Alternative medicine practitioners use knowledge of subtle energies to diagnose and to heal the person. Learning how to work with subtle energies, OD practitioners gain tools for diagnosing and healing individual and group problems. Knowledge of energetics allows practitioners to conceptualize interventions that work at a more primary, subtle energy level.

Background

Years ago, one of the authors, who was trained in energetics and energy healing, met a skilled doctor with training in traditional medicine and who made an interesting observation of his numerous patients. The doctor found that although the symptoms of disease were eliminated from the physical body and the patients seemed cured, some time later the same patients would come back with the same or different problem. It appeared that, regardless of his passionate attempt to cure the patient, in long term he was not successful. He made an assumption that the real cause of disease was not in the physical body.

What he tried to treat as a physical body problem was just a symptom of a problem that nested beyond the physical level. His assumptions resonated with the findings of Gerber (2001) who wrote that many illnesses begin first in the energetic plane. If the disease is not discerned and eliminated at this stage, it later manifests

as organ pathology in the physical body. The human body and its subtle energy bodies are one entity that shapes the total functioning of each human being. In fact, a physical body cannot exist without energetic bodies (or fields) that are in dynamic equilibrium and form the energy plane of an individual. Thus, by reading the energy plane the trained practitioner gains insights in the processes and problems within a patient, in some cases before the problem has manifested itself as illness on a physical level.

The author and the doctor combined their healing efforts, first providing an energetic intervention and then a traditional physical treatment. The results of these treatments were much more lasting. The patients were monitored by the doctor, but fewer patients came for repetitive visits. The simple energetic intervention included balancing the energy flow through the body, cleansing chakras and meridians, and restoring patients’ auras. Sometimes these procedures were enough to cure the patient. Sometimes these procedures were insufficient, and deeper exploration of the energetic bodies led to further energetic treatment to remove the root cause of the problem.

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to OD consulting. We concluded that a successful OD intervention, one with a long lasting positive effect, would be more likely if it is preceded by an energetic intervention. Groups and organizations, like individuals, also have a subtle energy plane which is formed by combining individuals’ energy planes and also by the energy and information exchange among people during their interactions, as well as between people and their environment.

Applying Energetics to OD: Self as Instrument

Self-as-instrument is a core concept in OD. As Robert Tannenbaum wrote,

As you interact with each client system, you must engage your awareness of self as well as all your integrated knowledge relevant to the consulting task. Both are critical to your effectiveness in practice. If you primarily bring with you cognitive knowledge, or primarily your sense of self, you will be sorely limited as a practitioner (as cited in Sullivan & Rothwell ed., 2005, p.585-586).

We concur, and add that energetics gives a practitioner more ability to understand self. For instance, it is common knowledge that in some ancient traditions a human being is seen as a multi-dimensional organism made of physical, or cellular, systems which are in dynamic interconnection with complex energy fields. Physical and energetic bodies of a human have different frequencies and coexist in the same space. Energy moves in a human body through the acupuncture meridian system and chakras. The chakras are energy centers in the subtle bodies, and each chakra is associated with a major nerve and glandular center in the physical body. The chakras act as transformers to step down subtle energy and translate this energy into hormonal, nerve and cellular activity in the physical body. Meridians are micro-tubular channels that carry a nutritive subtle energy to the various organs, nerves, and blood vessels of the body. Energy disturbance in a meridian system or in the

chakras leads to the physical manifestation of illness (Gerber, 2001).

If the flow of subtle energy is distorted or blocked, then the person is not functioning at full potential. In order to be able to work with subtle energy fields, one has to know how to understand oneself in terms of energy and how to maintain one's own energetic health. Indeed, we are convinced that not knowing self as energetic being leads to incomplete knowledge of self and incomplete ability to work with or relate to people, other energetic beings. Knowledge of one's energetic self results in (a) improved personal health and (b) increased energetic sensitivity which helps in work with groups and individuals. An OD practitioner who learns to assess and to balance the flow of energy within her or himself has more self-knowledge available than one who cannot do this.

Applying Energetics to OD: Diagnosing the Client

When one can discern the movement of subtle energy within one's own self, one also becomes able to discern subtle energies in others. The ability to see energy patterns in others allows practitioners to gather information that they might not otherwise have, and or to confirm other observations.

Once we were invited by the leader of a non-profit organization to intervene to create a more harmonious and collaborative culture. On the surface, the leader really was interested in an OD intervention and the employees seemed to be willing to engage in the change process, so the outward physical signs indicated a good potential for change work. When scanning the energetic plane of the organization, we realized that the energy state of the organization was quite distorted: The misbalanced energy flows indicated that the organization was seriously unhealthy. For an OD intervention to be successful, the energetic work of balancing the energy flows of the whole organization was needed. Further energetic scanning indicated that neither employees nor the organization as a whole

were ready to change at that particular time. The message to us was that, in spite of the outward appearance of readiness, the organization was not ready to change and the intervention would have been neither successful nor cost-effective. We decided to decline the offer and tried to schedule a conference call with the leader to tell him our assumptions. The leader never called us back and finally emailed saying that he apologized for taking our time and that his organization currently was not ready for any intervention. His behavior and eventual conclusion was a physical

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manifestation of what we previously read off the energy plane. This example shows that by knowing how to read the energy plane, OD practitioners can save clients' time and resources by not doing an intervention that is doomed to fail.

Applying Energetics to OD: Intervening with a Client

On the energy plane, a person is seen as an energetic entity in a web of energy connections between family members, co-workers, even strangers, as well as non-living objects. Indeed, one of the basic principles of quantum physics states that everything is connected to everything else. Energy and information exchange between people happens continuously, and not only during the time of actual physical interaction. For example, during heated arguments people may feel angry, irritated at one another, insulted or unhappy. Some may carry grudges for a long time. When people who carry a grudge about an argument revisit the argument in their memories, they send an energy impulse to the unpleasant event or to the people who were involved in it. In energetic literature these subtle energy

impulses are called *thoughtforms*. When we send a thoughtform, we unconsciously create energy links between self and others. When people carry grudges or feel unhappy about somebody, over a period of time they create unhealthy energy links that we call pathological bonds.

Another example of unhealthy energy exchange occurs when some people are energetically weaker than others. Then they develop an unconscious habit of forcing other people to give them energy to satisfy their energy needs. This pathological energy exchange can be felt by the person

who loses energy as "draining", which indeed it is. Pathological energy bonds, that lead to unhealthy interpersonal relationships, may manifest themselves on a physical level as on-going feelings such as pity, anger, guilt or fear. Knowledge and training in reading energy-information exchange allows practitioners not only to discern and diagnose unhealthy patterns in groups, but also to be consciously in charge of the energy connections with and among others.

A team building session in a governmental agency provides an example of an energetic intervention with groups. In a team of 35 people, there were a few employees who other group members viewed as *difficult people*. At the beginning of the session, assessment of the energy plane of the group indicated that indeed the team was not cohesive. We discerned unhealthy patterns of energy exchange among individuals in the team. After balancing energy flows within the team and creating a homogeneous energy structure, we proceeded with team building. After the successful session, some people approached us and expressed their surprise that the session did not turn into disaster. They told us that some

of the difficult employees had said that they would challenge and spoil the team-building event. They were surprised when the difficult employees did not carry out their threats, as they had in previous team events. Discerning unhealthy energetic links and normalizing the energy state of the group allowed us to incorporate the difficult individuals into the group process without visible or verbal effort.

Learning about energetics in OD

Training in Energetics in OD comprises three major components: (a) applying energetics to oneself, (b) applying energetics to interactions between individuals, and (c) applying energetics to groups and organizations. Mastering energetics leads to a new set of skills, as well as to a new understanding of existence.

The first component involves learning how to sense, balance, and manage one's own energy state. This is consistent to the important OD concept of self as instrument. We are convinced that not knowing self as energetic being leads to incomplete knowledge of self and incomplete ability to work with or relate to people, other energetic beings. Training in this aspect of energetics can be found at courses and programs on energy healing, available throughout the nation. It is possible to earn a bachelors or masters degree in energy healing.

The second and third components of energetics are interconnected as they deal with the ability to read and work with the energy and information exchange between people and groups. While practitioners can learn about energy healing and make the connections to OD on their own, there are some risks in such unguided attempts. We believe that to guide practitioners in the use of energetics one must be trained in the practice of energetics. Obviously, energetics is another very helpful tool in knowing self, working with groups and conducting OD interventions. And as every tool, it can be destructive if not used wisely. One of the most important issues that we emphasize when training practitioners is the ethics of the use of energetics, which is

essential for the health of practitioners and their clients. We propose that schools that train OD practitioners would serve their students well by offering instruction on energetics and OD.

Conclusion

We do not want readers to think that using energetics is akin to reading crystal balls or tea leaves to predict the future. We know that seasoned OD practitioners can discern unhealthy patterns in organizations without having knowledge of energetics. We suspect that some may intuit the energy of a group, and based on this, have insights into how best to work with the group. We suggest that such practitioners use energetic skills unconsciously. Years of experience, a variety of techniques, and use of self as instrument taught them to listen to and trust their intuition. One very knowledgeable and experienced OD practitioner, when asked how she intervenes with groups so effectively, answered that she "just does them." We believe that she works with the group energy unconsciously, and over the years she has learned what energy states feel right to her.

As a discipline, energetics allows practitioners to deal consciously with the body of knowledge that the experienced practitioner may have taken years to sense, and still cannot describe in clear terms. Practitioners who are trained in energetics can be more flexible in shaping energetic events, and thus in helping organizations to sustain positive changes. Furthermore, use of energetics can save a client valuable time and resources by avoiding OD interventions that will not be a solution for their problems, or by maximizing the efficiency when interventions are made. These skills can be especially helpful to young or new practitioners who do not have years of experience to draw upon.

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