

INTEGRATING KARMIC MATERIAL INTO CORE ENERGETIC THERAPY THROUGH THE USE OF PAST LIFE THERAPY

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Psychotherapy within the core energetic model focuses on working to mobilize blocked energy at all levels of being—physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual. The process often tacitly assumes (or at least is open to) the idea of karmic input or content in the etiology of the problem being presented or processed by our clients. However, aside from the guide lecture material, it does not provide a framework or instruction for identifying or actively working with this more tangible material. Through the use of case studies, this article will describe how karmic material, as it presents in experiences which are here defined as “past or other life experiences” and using techniques here defined as “past life therapy,” can be effectively used to free up blocked energy and feeling, thereby bringing about greater understanding and consciousness for both the client and the practitioner.

While our work as core therapists involved working both physically and at the auric level with energy blocks, one of the great contributions that core energetic work has made to the field of experiential body work is to integrate an awareness of the human spirit, or “core,” into the therapeutic healing process. It is at this level of core to core connection that the therapist can support a client’s awareness of her deeper or spiritual intentionality. This is often termed getting in touch with the life plan or soul purpose and exploring how this “plan” has created situations like blocks, negative experiences, beliefs, disease processes or physical challenges. The guide lecture material, for example in the lecture on “Preparation for Reincarnation,” refers explicitly to other lifetimes and lessons created or learned through many different incarnations, while the lecture series on

“Images” explains that unconscious negative images are seldom started in this lifetime but are carried over from lifetime to lifetime.²

At this often more advanced stage of therapy, our clients are posing and answering deeper spiritual questions about their present life as well as working through issues of taking responsibility for the creation of various negative situations. In *Core Energetics: Developing the Capacity to Love and Heal*, Dr. John Pier- rakos, Founder of the Core Energetic process, says: “The operative agency in the formation of distortions is therefore the person’s own perceptions rather than the reality that the self acts upon. Parents participate in fixing a neurosis....but the key to whether a life will advance in relative freedom or bondage is held by the organism itself.”³

It has been my experience as a core therapist that we are constantly implicitly working with the presence of karmic material, but not often explicitly identifying and understanding either the causative trauma or the resulting energetic block. Karma thus plays a role in some of our sessions, but we don’t clearly identify what that role is or make use of the information energetically.

The majority of clients and sessions are well served by the usual core connection and energetic work, but for some clients under certain circumstances (to be outlined later in this article), the added use of past life therapy is helpful, if not crucial. Following my training in past life therapy, I began to appreciate how material gained through the use of these techniques could add both information for me as the therapist and insight for the client as well as assist in the release of the blocks. I now assume that my client’s issues, character structure, and patterns of defending are a composite of the present life history and selected other life experience, or stories—as they are often termed—with which the client’s tissue and soul in the present incarnation is still choosing to resonate. In some cases, I choose to work only with the present life material, but for those clients who are appropriate candidates and who are open to this type of work, I follow the same general rules of energetic work: starting with the present and moving back to root causes. The only difference in adding past life therapy as a technique is that we go back further in search of

causality to emotionally charged stories which appear to be reincarnational material from this particular soul's other life times.

Unlike some forms of past life work, which encourage the client to remain disengaged and at arm's length from the material, this method is very embodied and highly experiential. It involves an induction into a state in which the client bringing up or remembering material from the unconscious actually reexperiences the story material responsible for the block. As with core energetics, I then work in an energetic bodywork mode to release these patterns of holding at physical as well as emotional and spiritual levels. This approach has the potential for a tremendous amount of release during the session. Clients invariably bring up or are deliberately directed to a story which is related to the issue at hand in their therapy. There is an extremely high level of congruence between present life issues and past life story material; thus, it is not a question of finding new material to work on but rather of bringing a broader perspective and deeper understanding to the etiology of the crisis in which the client presently finds himself.

In addition to this broader perspective, it has been my experience that the past life story material frequently contains more energy or "charge" than the history in the present life. While the current life history, as presented, will usually to some extent (but as in the case of phobias not always) contain experience(s) explaining the creation of a certain block, it often does not adequately explain the degree of holding and the subsequent usual basic bodywork often does not resolve the block. In other words, the blocking, while somewhat reflective of the present life, seems nonetheless out of proportion to the client's history. The principle here is that we are working with the experience responsible for the original creation of the block and simply not the present life echo. Once the past life history material related to a particular block is accessed, it is obvious how the defense was created and what needs to happen in terms of resolution. Details from some case studies will illustrate these points.

Following a number of years of bodywork therapy, Marion came to me requesting core energetic sessions. Marion, it seemed, had already done some very deep and profound work and a lot

of blocks had been resolved over the course of several years of therapy. She complained of tightness in the rib cage area and, despite much bodywork and effort on her part, it was still not easy for her to breathe fully and deeply. The physical symptoms were accompanied by an ongoing non-specific sense of terror which, to the best of her recollection, had been triggered by a childhood school history class. She was subject to panic attacks and irrational reactions to “normal” daily events and places, and while the usual grounding and other therapeutic coping mechanisms helped, these particular symptoms had not improved over the course of her therapy.

Marion’s body, a mixture of rigid and oral structure, showed signs of inhibited breathing in the form of a somewhat oral chest, very tight intercostal muscles, and a blocked respiratory diaphragm. Exercises to increase respiration and release the diaphragm elicited fear and greater holding in the tissue. She had also experienced recurring images and dreams, fragments of what she suspected was past life story material, and asked to undertake some work with past life therapy. What transpired in a series of sessions transformed both Marion’s physical body and emotional well-being. It also enlarged my view of the potential of these techniques for working with physical blocks.

Marion found herself reexperiencing a lifetime as a young Jewish woman, a wife and mother, who, along with her husband and daughter, was sent to a Nazi concentration camp. In the ensuing nightmare, she loses her daughter in a crowded railway station, is painfully separated from her husband at the camp entrance, subjected to medical experiments, and four months later gives birth to a child who is immediately removed; she is then sent into the gas chamber. During the final moments of that life, in the terror of dying by gas, she reported she could actually feel her lungs and throat shutting down and the tremendous blocking setting in. As the gas began to flow, her last thought was: “Maybe if I close my throat and don’t breathe, I won’t die.”

As we worked through that death, her respiratory diaphragm released and she began to breathe more freely. Marion commented that this felt like the first time in her life that she had been able to take a really deep, full breath. For the first time, she felt at a tissue level an understanding of why her body had never

responded with enthusiasm to the instructions to breathe deeply in life. Her unconscious mind and her body had been remembering this experience and had been innately terrified to breathe. Her psyche and body had equated breathing more deeply with dying.

In her terror in those last months in the camp she had understandably gone into shock and not felt or dealt with her feelings of rage, fear or grief. In reexperiencing the story, she was able to deal with and, over a period of time, release all of these feelings. Finally, feeling and expressing grief at the loss of her family gave rise to deep sobbing. This powerful emotional release, combined with the bodywork above, began to release the tightness in Marion's chest and diaphragm. With the unblocking of this old grief came a new and more profound willingness to experience and work through issues of grief in her present life.

Many of Marion's triggers for panic attacks and irrational fears—including a great terror of medical doctors and procedures—began to make sense and abate once we understood what had happened during the last year of that lifetime. The nightmares and flashback images ceased and she reported relief of these symptoms for the first time in therapy. These first powerful sessions were followed by a longer term process of healing and resolution. As a bodywork therapist, what impressed me most was that the openness in Marion's chest and heart, experienced in the initial release, held up over time and further expanded as more material surfaced and was worked through in the ensuing months. Subsequent story material fragments would often surface in present life core sessions simply as a result of energizing a block and remaining conscious of the feelings coming up.

What I saw so graphically again in this work with Marion was that stubborn blocks can be identified, energized, and worked with very effectively using past life therapy techniques. Once the story has been brought out of the realm of the unconscious and into the client's conscious mind in a regression session, subsequent core sessions involving bodywork with energy derived from the story can be undertaken.

Shock, a natural reaction to severe physical and/or emotional trauma, is frequently seen in past life story material and is directly

related to formation and composition of energy held in blocks. I now believe that the typical blocking we work with in the character defenses goes back beyond the negative experiences and choices to the traumas of the present life. The body in the present life holds character defense blocks from whatever physical shock can be identified in a past life story. Likewise, working energetically to thaw shock in the past life stories frequently results in an amelioration of blocks and holding in the present body.

Unresolved issues in the past life story involving feelings such as guilt or forgiveness are often a major piece of this soul's work *in the present*. These issues are always identified and worked with in the story—often in the after death state when the soul is aware of having left the body but is still actively engaged in the thoughts and feelings associated with that particular life and the death process. For example, Marion had unconsciously been carrying a deep sense of guilt for losing track of her daughter in the crowded chaos of the railway station and for not being able to protect her son once he was born in the camp. Obviously, the guilt was not a rational response, but nonetheless it had played a powerful, if unconscious, role in her irrational present life feelings that she should not have children because she would not be able to protect them. The combined release of the grief, guilt, and self-forgiveness resulted, much to Marion's joy, in wonderful, soft, new feelings of wanting to be a mother. Much later, struggling with the larger issues of forgiveness around the creation of the concentration camp system, Marion reclaimed yet even more of her own soul and humanity—split off parts which she described as “having been left behind in that life.” This aspect of the process specifically assisted her with working on and healing a strong “victim” type of emotional framework which had pervaded her present life and was related to many of the oral aspects of her character structure.

In a second case, a client named Ellen presented with a strong phobia of water which prevented her from enjoying water sports, learning to swim or traveling by ship. Side issues, when we explored further, were a kind of poverty theme in her life which she felt prevented her from doing more than make ends meet financially, a chronic sore right hip which required frequent (sometimes twice monthly chiropractic adjustments) accom

panied by an acute sensitivity to cold when the dislocation and pain would occur. In addition, she had a fear of dogs. A number of regression sessions explained and resolved these various issues. Ellen went back to an experience as an impoverished Irish immigrant girl who perishes by drowning when the ship she is traveling on sinks. Steerage passengers are kept trapped below decks because there are not enough lifeboats and so, as the young women, Ellen died with bitter feelings that death was due to her poverty. However, before her death, she is pinned in ice cold water by a falling piece of furniture which also breaks her right hip. In a second story related to poverty, Ellen found herself experiencing a lifetime in England as a poverty stricken old beggar woman who, in the middle of a cold winter, is killed by a pack of wolves—the actual physical injury involved her right leg being dislocated from her hip in the attack by the wolves. Following the work on this story, her hip problem resolved to such an extent that she has been able to go for 18 months almost without symptoms or any medical treatment. She reports less sensitivity to cold and less fear of water and dogs. I notice that she is now working full-time and much more satisfied and functional at work, and that she and her husband recently purchased their first home.

Paige, a third case, arrived with severe pain and restriction in her left arm. It was a time in her therapy when she was working through issues of psychological separation from her family of origin and mobilizing her anger towards her mother. By the time we did the session, the restriction was so severe she could not pick up a teacup, nor could she raise her arm above horizontal shoulder level. Following a rapid onset of these symptoms, consultations with her family doctor, a referral to a sports medicine clinic and a chiropractor, she still did not have a diagnosis of any disease process and, as far as she knew, had not injured herself. She said she felt intense pain just above the elbow and that it felt like the expanse of her arm below the elbow was “gone.”

These intense physical symptoms led us back into a story in which as a young man living on the prairies during the depression in the 1920s, he had hopped on a freight train, defying his mother’s injunction not to go out in the world to seek his fortune. During this trip, due to an accidental misstep, he fell and his left

arm was run over by the train, nearly severing it. This led to his death shortly thereafter due to shock and loss of blood. As he lay beside the tracks alone, helpless and dying, the thought as the soul left the body was: "I should have listened to my mother. It's true that it was not safe to leave home and go out into the world."

After bringing this belief into Paige's conscious mind and working at separating what was nothing more than an accident from the feelings that it is not safe to leave home, we worked with her feelings about separation from her mother in this life. Following the emotional work on her mother in both the past and present life, the pain and restrictions in her arm were about 50 percent better (she could raise her arm above her head) and within 2-3 days all symptoms in the arm were gone and, to date, more than two years later, have not recurred. This is a case in which growing independence, confidence and anger with her mother in the present life had triggered an old belief (image) stored in the body that it's not safe to defy one's mother and go out into the world.

The above three cases represent different aspects of the work, some primarily physical, or emotional, or both intertwined, but are very representative of the type of sessions and issues presented by clients. In all three cases there was a marked improvement, if not remission, in presenting symptoms; and, the link between other life trauma and dying beliefs and present life issues was clear.

It is my belief that it is important for release to happen at many levels: physical, emotional, mental and spiritual. Part of the value of these techniques is that, as a therapist, it gives me a bigger picture of the client's process at all of those levels, as well as an expanded energetic road map to work with. This, combined with the diagnostic and bodywork techniques of core energetics, result in a set of very powerful tools. Past life therapy may be used as a primary modality or as an adjunct to core therapy.

The following are indications for and/or situations in which the use of past life therapy techniques may increase the effectiveness of core energetic therapy:

- With ongoing clients, initially I worked in a core framework, but with an ear open to what may be stories behind the present history. If the therapist is tuned into the quality of the client's

energy, sometimes it is possible to sense, hear, and feel that the energy of the block is not emanating from the present life body. Rather, it feels as if there are two people's energy systems present in the session. If this seems to be the case with the energy, I take this to be a possible indication that the "charge" is not principally related to the present life history and should be traced back to another life experience.

- When a powerful block or issue does not seem to be adequately explained in the client's history, this lack of proportionality between block and history is yet another indication to me that past life trauma may be more responsible for the holding than present life. While we assume that all past life blocks are usually echoed, however faintly, in the present life character structure dynamics, because the earlier experience is carrying a much greater energy charge (as was pointed out in the above case of Marion), it is easier to identify and release the holding working with the blocked energy of the past.

- Sometimes the client is conscious enough to be picking up, or reports being disturbed by past life story fragments in dreams, meditation, or in the context of fears or other strongly charged feelings. Often her reporting of such material is very charged and, if the client is appropriately supported, can lead quickly into a past life process experience.

- Yet another indication is the body itself. As in all three cases noted above, often clients present with physical issues—disease, pain, sexual dysfunction, muscular-skeletal problems—of a recent onset or chronic nature. In core energetics we assume that such physical symptoms reflect, or are in some way related to, underlying emotional issue. As in the case of Paige, there was no underlying emotional issues, rather simply an unconscious body memory of injury and death. Frequently, clients presenting with what seem to be only physical symptoms, if supported to describe in very graphic terms what it feels like, will use phrases which are indicators of past life story material. A chronic debilitating muscle cramp of a marathon runner which feels "like a steel band around my leg" turns out to be the steel teeth of a bear trap into which the client steps mid-story. Head and neck pains leading to migraine headaches that feel like "my skull is splitting" or like "a red-hot poker behind my left eye" move into other life experien

ces in which the client has sustained major—often mortal trauma—with just the same instruments or methods described in the cliché phrases. As in the case of core energetic work, frequently the resolution of the physical and emotional story-based trauma is followed by amelioration and sometimes complete remission of present life physical symptoms.

- Finally, presenting issues of phobic nature are also an indication for possible past life trauma. I have worked with a number of dog-phobic people who in present life terms have no history of negative experiences with dogs, but in other lives have been attacked and killed by wild animals, especially wolves. Fire phobias are often related to death by fire, persecution during the Middle Ages, or watching loved ones perish in fiery deaths. The book *Other Lives Other Selves* by Roger Woolger is full of cases illustrative of this point. Immediate remission of phobic symptoms is frequently seen after past life session facilitates processing of blocked feelings, thereby allowing the client's system to make sense out of the past and present experience by bringing the traumatic story material into the conscious mind.

However, past life therapy is not always indicated, particularly for clients with significant schizoid tendencies. A high level of groundedness and ego strength, combined with an ability and a willingness to “be in the body in the present” are important prerequisites to undertaking this type of work with a client on an outpatient basis.

Invariably, the question of how these techniques work and why is raised. As with other forms of emotionally expressive, experiential work, much of what happens in the process of transformation is part of that intangible, mysterious life and soul process we call healing. However, there is a significant body of material and belief extant in the world which, in fact, makes a lot of sense out of past life therapy experience. A majority of the world's ancient religious and spiritual belief systems—Hinduism, Buddhism, Shamanistic and Aboriginal traditions, the ancient Goddess earth centered beliefs which later evolved into the European pagan traditions, early and Gnostic Christianity, and certain mystical traditions of Judaism—to some extent report a reincarnational framework of beliefs.

Tibetan Buddhists, in particular, have for centuries worked

intensively with the dying and recently departed soul in order to bring awareness and resolution to present life time issues in order that negativity or trauma not be held or carried by the soul on into the next or other incarnations. *The Tibetan Book of Living and Dying* by Sogyal Rinpoche describes this tradition in great detail. Many of these traditional or reincarnational beliefs have not, at least until recently, been a part of the modern Western scientific paradigm and certainly not a part of the traditional medical model upon which many therapeutic systems have been based.

The mechanics for transmission of these blocks between or over lifetimes is still a topic of speculation. Numerous authors and belief systems now commonly refer to this process in a number of different ways. Among the Eastern religions, it is believed that the soul material, and especially trauma, is carried out of the body by the departing soul energy—in the form of *samskaras* or soul scars—and then back into the new incarnation by the returning soul. In the Pathwork guide lecture material, the guide specifically refers to images and traumatic imprints being carried in the auric field of the physical body.⁴ Before an incarnation, the subtle bodies are prepared so that the conflicts are arranged in such a way as to bring the problem to the surface. These images, particularly where they are still largely unconscious, are assumed to create negative behavior, often in spite of the client's conscious efforts to modify it. This spiritual explanation dovetails exactly with the way in which behavior being driven by past life trauma appears to operate.

In her book *Hands of Light*, Barbara Brennan also refers to the presence of past life material being carried in the aura. She describes her own method of healing such traumas, but also comments that healing must be accompanied by parallel emotional or cathartic process work for the healing to be complete. She says: "This work [of resolving past life trauma from the auric level] will then lead to the spiritual issue that the soul has incarnated to resolve in this first place. The object is not only to heal the physical body... the object is to heal the soul." In her view, past life material is carried in the auric layer(s) and it is not in the client's or the therapist's best healing interests to simply remove past life material from the aura without the psychodynamics also being attended to.

Thus, one framework in which to place this work is that in which the departing soul leaves the body carrying its soul scars and lessons or themes, and returns to another incarnation bearing some of this same material for further work, resolution, or completion in that present life. The life plan or template established in the choice of parents or family context, birth process and early developmental stages creates the optimum circumstances for additional resolution or healing for the soul. The dynamics of character structure and resulting defenses are thus based not solely on negative childhood experience but also contain karmic residues or themes with which the incoming soul wishes to resonate and work in the present incarnation. Clients thus come to us not only blocked and suffering as a result of their present life experiences, but also reflecting and resonating with the traumas of other lifetimes. The use of core energetic bodywork techniques in the context of both past and present life story material enhances the normal process of releasing blocks. For clients open to working at this level, the use of past life therapy is a highly effective means of bringing consciousness and energetic healing resolution to all levels of being—to restoring the flow of right energy from the core.

Susan Ram practices past life and core energetic therapy in Canada. Notes _____

1. Lecture #34, "Preparation for Reincarnation," Phoenicia Pathwork Center, Phoenicia, NY, 12464.
2. Lecture #38, "Images," p. 3.
3. Pierrakos, John L., *Core Energetics: Developing the Capacity to Love and heal*, Mendocino, CA: LifeRhythm Publications, 1987, p. 104.
4. Lecture #38.
5. Brennan, Barbara, *Hands of Light: A Guide to Healing Through the Human Energy Field*, New York: Bantam, 1988. p. 245.