2014 ACEP PRESENTATION HANDOUT


PRESENTER INFORMATION
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Drawing on Interpersonal Neurobiology (IPNB) and Tibetan Bön Buddhism, this presentation examines the mind/body connection in transforming suffering and promoting well-being. The principle of neural integration and energy pathways will be discussed. Through awareness, breath and sound practices, participants will learn to purify energy pathways, transform negative emotions and mental patterns.

PRESENTATION CONTENT OUTLINE
I. The Two Views of Mind: east/west approach to healing. (30 minutes).
   A. Interpersonal Neurobiology: definition of mind, neural integration, and well-being.
   B. Tibetan Bön Buddhism: its history and view of mind, causes of suffering, and its transformation.

II. Pathways of Transformation. (45 minutes).
   A. The channels, chakras and their connection to emotional/mental disturbances.
   B. The Three Doors Practices of Stillness, Silence and Spaciousness.

III. Awakening the Luminous Mind. (30 minutes).
   A. Cultivate Inner Refuge.
   B. Awareness, breath and sound meditation to transform the suffering mind.
   C. Integrate with Energy Psychology.

IV. Questions and answers (15 minutes).

OBJECTIVES
Upon completion of this presentation, the participant will be able to:
1. Explain the concept of mind and the 8 domains of neural integration.
2. Describe the principle of energy pathways in Tibetan Buddhism.
3. Apply the practice of awareness, breath, and sound with Energy Psychology protocol.

3). EVALUATION
1. What is the definition of mind based on Interpersonal Neurobiology?
2. What is a principle of Tibetan Buddhist Psychology?
3. What are the three doorways to Inner Refuge?

Answers:
1. Mind is an embodied and relational process that regulates the flow of energy and information.
2. All phenomena is energy, and the intention is to transform the dense to the purest level of consciousness

PRINCIPLES OF INTERPERSONAL NEUROBIOLOGY:

1. *Mind* is an embodied and relational process that regulates the flow of information and energy, i.e. how information and energy interface with neural firing and how neural firing produce mind. *What determines this flow is where we focus our attention.*

2. *Mind* emerges from patterns in the flow of energy and information within the brain and between brains. “Patterns” refers to neural firing patterns, which are formed by energy (synaptic firing) and information (the mental representations that are the content of the firing. It emerges from transactions of neurobiological processes and the interpersonal world, which include personal relationships and the environment.

3. Mind develops as the genetically programmed maturation of the nervous system is shaped by ongoing experience.

4. A healthy mind comes from an integrated mind. An integrated mind is flexible, adaptive, coherent, energized and stable (FACES).

5. The triangle of well-being: coherent mind, empathic relationships and neural integration.

6. There are eight domains of neural integration:
   - vertical
   - horizontal
   - memory
   - narrative
   - state
   - temporal
   - interpersonal
   - transpirational

**IPNB and Energy Psychology**
As early as in the womb, our genes are influenced by our experiences, and repeated neural firing. Patterns are formed as a result of neural firing. What fires together are
wired together (Hebb’s axiom). Changes in synaptic connection alter memory and creation of mental models.

Emotions are central organizing process within the brain. The more value laden emotions are encoded, which increase synaptic firing and link various systems together to form states of mind. Emotions on their own will not affect our states of mind if they are not linked and solidified by our mental thoughts. With repeated pairing and firing, our cycle of emotions and beliefs form mental models which shape our self-identity. *When we change the firing of these patterns, we can change the wiring.* What changes the firing is monitoring and modifying our automatic reactions. IPNB notes that meditation practices activate the neural circuits responsible for integration and well-being.

These principles are similar in energy psychology, where the focus is on changing energy pathways together with the distorted belief embedded in the energy of the emotions. As we tap on certain emotions and thought, we begin to monitor and modify the automatic reactions. In order to deepen integration, meditation practices are powerful additions to the transformational process.

**MEDITATION:**

Meditation is defined as “a family of self-regulating practices that focus on training attention and awareness to enhance mental well-being and foster mental capacity of calmness”. (Walsch, 2005) It is a rigorous system of mind training and observation of mental processes. As we now know, the brain is capable of being trained and physically modified (neural plasticity).

Research indicates meditation practices can change inner workings and circuitries of the brain:

1. In trained minds of monks: gamma waves in prefrontal cortex are better organized and coordinated (Davidson, 2005). These waves are high frequency, 30-50cps, fast moving and most important electrical impulses. They are associated with *connecting separate brain circuits*, which results in higher cognitive ability, heightened awareness, and greater focus. This gamma wave activity is essential for integration and synchrony.

2. The left prefrontal cortex, associated with happiness and positive thoughts and emotions, are especially activated in these trained monks.

3. At the peak of meditative states, there is a reduction in activity level in the OAA (Orientation association area in the posterior parietal lobe). This suggests that meditation may be linked to a decrease in the self/other boundary, and definition of self. (Newberg, 2001).

4. Important thickening of grey matter in meditators who meditate for 40 minutes a day. This suggests that meditation can slow natural thinning of that section of cortex which
occurs with aging. It exercises that part of the brain that helps us pay attention, which is key to learning and changing neural pathways. (Lazar, 2005).

5. Meditation produces more alpha waves (8-12cps), which are calming. Persistent attention and intentional shifting of attention facilitates alpha waves.

6. Meditation also increases rhythmic theta pattern (4-7cps) in frontal and parietal regions, which can result in a decrease in cognition and sensory processes. (Austin, 1999).

7. Mindfulness meditation develops the observer or hub of the mind in the mid-prefrontal region, (orbitofrontal cortex, medial prefrontal cortex, insula and anterior cingulate), regions responsible for body and emotional regulation, enhanced relationships, a sense of well-being and mindsight (empathy and insight). (Siegel, 2007). It links input from limbic circuits, body cortex and interpersonal worlds.

8. Focus on the breath is primary in meditation. This act produces changes in the brain. In yogic and Tibetan Buddhist tradition, breath is the vehicle for energy (prana). If mind wants to affect the body, the breath is regulated, as the flow of breath helps shape pathways of energy flow. Remember the core principle of IPNB: The flow of energy shapes our mind.

9. Brain cells that prompt rhythms of breathing is found in the brain stem (medulla and pons). Breathing out quiets the brain by decreasing neural firing in the nerve cells of the brain stem. Advanced meditators are found to breathe 6 breaths a minute versus 12-18 in normal population (Goleman & Thurman ed., 1991). This promotes balance in the Autonomic Nervous System.

BÖN AND TIBETAN BUDDHISM

1. Tibetan Buddhism, which is also known as Tantric or Vajrayana, is part of Mahajana, the Universal or Greater Vehicle. Tantric, a Sanskrit word, which means ‘thread’ or ‘continuity’, refers to experiencing the interwovenness of all phenomena. There are five sects, with Bön the oldest and the indigenous religion of Tibet. Its oral tradition dates back 18,000 years.

2. HH Dalai Lama writes: “In addition to meditative practices for enhancing one’s realization of emptiness and bodhichitta, this system [Tibetan Buddhism] also includes certain advanced techniques for utilizing various elements of the physical body….that principally involves mentally penetrating essential points within the body where the cakras (chakras), or energy centers, are located” (1995).

3. Tibetan Buddhism views everything as energy. Its goal is “to penetrate into, harness and transform the dynamic forces of the universe, which are no different from the psychological and archetypal constellations of our own psyche” (Moacanin, 1987:17)
4. *View of Mind:* There are two views. One is the small dualistic mind, similar to western concept of ego. The capital Mind is the empty, primordially present condition. Dalai Lama states “Mind is a dynamic, ever-present process [that] is very intimately connected to and related with the physiological states of the body” (Golman & Thurman, 1991:34). Note the similarities to IPNB’s definition, both addresses the process of the mind and energy.

5. TB’s mystical foundation points to the five sheaths of human consciousness. (These sheaths are closely related to Energy Psychology). The densest is the physical body. Next is the subtle or ethereal body, sustained by breath and penetrates the physical body. Third, is the finer thought body, or personality formed by our thoughts or perception, known as aggregates. Fourth, is the body of our potential consciousness. Fifth is the body of highest consciousness, nourished by exalted joy, and only experienced in highest states of meditation (Govinda, 1969). These sheaths are not separate, but are penetrating forms of energy, from the purest, all pervading consciousness to the densest form of materialized consciousness, manifested as our human body.

6. Thoughts and emotions, like the physical body, are dense energy in varying degrees. The aim of the meditation practices is to penetrate and dissolve the dense energy. The meditation practice of Inner Refuge utilizes breath, awareness and connection to the embodied mind to transform pain body, pain speech and pain mind.

**BIBLIOGRAPHY**

