

Discussion of Hakomi Therapy

(Italicized text indicates the authors comments.)

Dear Reader,

It is with a great deal of concern and caution that we post the information in this study. The referenced links are sites that a Christian should not investigate without first placing themselves in the hands of God through fervent prayer and appeal for His protection and ruling as they study this material. Many of these sites are extremely deceptive and could lead a person to develop a fascination with occult teachings. We are cautioning that only those who are currently involved in CST, Hakomi, or issues related to them -- should read this. Pray that God will give you wisdom and discernment and ask for godly friends to intercede in your behalf as you honestly investigate this topic.

"I am instructed to say to you that it is not best to dwell upon the spiritualistic sentiments, the strange, misleading theories, which have for years been coming in among us. . . . If you try to handle these subjects, you will be led to repeat the sophistries of Satan, and thus you will help Satan to present his false theories to the people. . . . If our ministers and teachers give themselves to the study of these erroneous theories, some will depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils. It is not the work of the gospel minister to voice Satan's theories." Ev 623, 624

Most of the information in the following study was taken directly from the Hakomi Institute's web site: <http://www.hakomiinstitute.com/>. Directions are provided throughout this document as to which page is being referenced.

WHAT IS HAKOMI THERAPY? (Main home page, "Welcome")

"Hakomi is a body-centered, somatic psychotherapy. The body's structures and habitual patterns become a powerful doorway to unconscious core material." (Somatic is referring to "body")

"The Hakomi method quickly accesses this core material, allowing it to emerge safely into consciousness."

WHO DOES IT BENEFIT AND WHAT ARE ITS PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS?

Hakomi is a psychotherapy that is used in a variety of settings. It directly benefits Bodyworkers, such as CranioSacral Therapists. It is also a "philosophy" and can benefit one in many aspects of their life. I personally called the Hakomi Institute and asked them if it was something you use only in individual or group sessions, or if it was a philosophy that becomes a part of you and can be used in many areas of your life. The answer I received was "It is both". The person I spoke with at the Hakomi Institute just happened to be a Hakomi and CranioSacral Therapist (CST); they became certified specifically because of how Hakomi benefits them in the verbal and nonverbal dialogue used in CST.

The last paragraph on the link to "About Hakomi", "Introduction" states:

"Applications

Hakomi is effective and appropriate in most therapeutic situations, including work with individuals, couples, families, groups, movement, and bodywork. It is suitable for crisis work and psychological maintenance, but it finds its full potential in the processes of growth, both personal and transpersonal, when we are committed to moving beyond our limits. Hakomi has been effectively applied to a wide variety of everyday activities: athletics, theater, parenting, business.... Because Hakomi attends to the very nature of being human, it is easily adapted to support whatever tasks and adventures people pursue."

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So it appears that Hakomi is something that is not relegated only to personal or group therapy. Is it possible that the concepts and principles it teaches can be assimilated into ones self and become part of one's overall philosophy and approach to communication? The Institute seems to think it is used this way.

ABOUT HAKOMI THERAPY

In Hakomi Experiential Therapy:

“We work with special States of Consciousness, especially ‘mindfulness’, the meditative practice of studying your present moment experience without judgment or effort.”

“We build a therapist-client relationship which maximized safety and partnership and works directly with the unconscious in cooperation with the conscious mind.”

Under “Resources”, “About Hakomi Therapy” by Ron Kurtz, it's founder:

“Hakomi Therapy facilitates dramatically increased self-awareness and the senses of expansion and empowerment which come from creating new choices at the subconscious core belief level.”

“Some of the origins of Hakomi stem from Buddhism and Taoism, especially concepts like gentleness, compassion, mindfulness, and going with the grain.”

“Hakomi also draws from modern body-centered psychotherapies such as Reichian work, Bioenergetics, Gestalt, Psychomotor, Feldenkrais, Structural Bodywork, Ericksonian Hypnosis, Focusing and Neurolinguistic Programming.”

Ron Kurtz, says in his talk: “Foundations of Hakomi Therapy”(See Professional Journal, Issue #2 – Winter 1985):

“I want to discuss the theoretical and spiritual foundations of the work.”

“There are three main foundations of the work. The first is the body-centered therapies of the twentieth century, like Gestalt, Bioenergetics, Reichian work, Rolfing and Feldenkrais. I also include Carl Rogers and Psychomotor therapy too. So that's the first root.

The second is eastern philosophy and religion, particularly Taoism and Buddhism, with a little Chinese/Japanese medicine thrown in. And the third branch is General Systems Theory and the twentieth century paradigm shift. I'll discuss all three of these.”

I'm not sure what General Systems Theory is, but he says the best book he's read on it is “The Self-Organizing Universe by Erich Jantsch”. As he explains it in this talk, it seems to be a newer explanation for evolution.

What is Gestalt?

Fritz Perls coined the term “Gestalt Therapy”. He was a doctor who gravitated to psychiatry and the work of Freud and the early Wilhelm Reich. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fritz_Perls

--Perls is considered one of the Neurolinguistic Programming Predecessors. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Category:Neuro-Linguistic_Programming_predecessors

--“Gestalt has been one of the fields which has donated the most techniques to modern hypnotherapy” <http://www.tranceworks.com/psych.htm>

--“In its own way, Gestalt Therapy as practiced by Fritz Perls and those who carried on his work employs a form of hypnosis on its patients.” <http://www.primaltherapy.com/GrandDelusions/GD12.htm>

What is Bioenergetics?

“Supporters of bioenergetics believe the body "records" negative emotional reactions and stores them in the form of muscle tension and stiffness, poor posture, and low energy levels. To release these trapped emotions and return the body and mind to a balanced, healthy, peaceful state, patients must first release muscle tension and correct physical imbalances.”

“Bioenergetics was developed by psychiatrist Alexander Lowen, MD, in the 1950s. He based his work on Reichian therapy, which theorized that a person's repressed emotions are transformed into muscle tension and rigidity, which Wilhelm Reich, MD called "body armor." Dr. Lowen, who first earned a law degree in New York, became a therapist under Dr. Reich's training and then completed medical school at the University of Geneva in Switzerland. In 1956, Dr. Lowen created the Institute for Bioenergetic Analysis.”

http://www.cancer.org/docroot/ETO/content/ETO_5_3X_Bioenergetics.asp?sitearea=ETO

Ron Kurtz says in his article “Foundations of Hakomi Therapy”:

“Bio-energetics... is really energy with consciousness.”

What is Feldenkrais?

In Ron Kurtz's on-line book titled: “Hakomi Method of Mindfulness Based Body Psychotherapy - Readings August 2004”, on page 75:

“Mindfulness, which involves the relaxation of management and effort and quieting the mind, lowers the noise...When the noise is lowered, whatever signal is being masked will emerge....Here is one of the connections to Taoism and the Feldenkrais work and the Gestalt notion of figure and ground: awareness itself lowers the noise. When you turn your awareness toward something, you automatically lower the noise.”

“If you draw attention to movements in slow motion, as Feldenkrais does, you will start to notice things that you did not notice before... in mindfulness, attention is concentrated. The pace is slower. Ones usual concerns are set aside. **The focus is on the present experience, as it is in Taoism, Feldenkrais, Gestalt, and other consciousness disciplines.”**

What is Ericksonian Hypnosis? http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Milton_H._Erickson

“Erickson believed that the unconscious mind was always listening, and that, **whether or not the patient was in trance, suggestions could be made which would have a hypnotic influence, as long as those suggestions found some resonance at the unconscious level. You can be aware of this, or you can be completely oblivious that something is happening.**” (Wikipedia’s emphasis supplied)

“Where 'classical' hypnosis is authoritative and direct, and often encounters resistance in the subject, Erickson's approach is accommodating and indirect.”

“Effective hypnotic suggestion, then, should be 'artfully vague', leaving space for the subject to fill in the gaps with their own unconscious understandings - even if they do not consciously grasp what is happening.”

<http://www.isiscentre.co.uk/hypnotherapy>

The website above states: “There are many myths about hypnosis which give a misleading impression. The reality is a lot different. **You don’t lose awareness of who you are, where you are and what you’re doing. You don’t lose control. You don’t ‘go under’ in the sense that you fall asleep or unconscious; most people remain aware right throughout the session.** In fact, being hypnotized is invariably a relaxing, enjoyable experience. Afterwards, you feel exceptionally calm and relaxed.”

In the FAQ section of this website: “You are not unconscious. **You are in an alternative state of consciousness**, like day-dreaming, which can be very relaxing. You can hear everything that is being said. Nothing happens without your consent. You never lose control.”

What is Neurolinguistic Programming? <http://www.isiscentre.co.uk/what-is-nlp/>

“Neuro linguistic programming, or **NLP is both a philosophy and an education.** It teaches you how to think and communicate in more effective ways. It has been described as “The art and science of communication”.”

Who benefits from NLP?

“The answer is: everyone! People from all walks of life can benefit from NLP from Parents to Prime Ministers. We train therapists, who use the skills to help others overcome blocks to living a happier life, to executives who use the skills to create better more effective communication in the workplace. **The techniques can be applied to almost any situation.**”

“NLP is like the ‘how to’ manual for the brain.”

So to summarize, Hakomi therapy draws from Buddhism and Taoism’s eastern philosophies as well as several hypnosis-based techniques that are recognized as being techniques that are easily integrated into a person’s general communication skills. “Cut away from yourselves everything that savors of hypnotism, the science by which satanic agencies work.” 2SM 350

The foundations of Hakomi directly involve hypnosis and meditation techniques. Eastern philosophy, specifically Buddhism and Taoism also form the basis of it. While I am sure there are other positive things it also teaches, these roots are disturbing.

MORE HAKOMI HISTORY & ORIGINS

Under “About Hakomi”, “Origins of the Method by Ron Kurtz”, he says:

“In 1987, eight years after Hakomi began, I had a meeting with Swami Rama. He told me that I had a mission. Nervous and surprised, I was still together enough to ask him, ‘What mission is that?’ He responded, ‘to create a new method of psychotherapy.’ When I think about Hakomi, I think about it in those terms.”

Is Swami Rama’s comment to Ron Kurtz about creating a new method of psychotherapy as being his “mission” something Christian’s, specifically SDA Christians, should pursue?

As Ron Kurtz goes on in the same article he give more history. Here are a few excerpts:

“There are two more tracks that influenced me. The first was eastern philosophy and practice. I had been practicing yoga since 1959. In graduate school I got interested in Taoism and Buddhism. **Awareness practices became part of my life...** Eastern thought was also the root of my interest in Feldenkrais’ work.”

“The last track is my life-long interest in science... My passion has been systems theory, the branch that **studies living systems.**”

“So, these threads: eastern philosophy, psychotherapeutic technique, and systems theory are the foundations of Hakomi.”

“**So, when I think about what’s new about the Hakomi method, I think this is one of the main things: Hakomi is the evocation of experience in mindfulness... We evoke experiences while the client is in a particular state of consciousness.**”

“The state of mindfulness is a deliberate choice on the part of the client to be vulnerable and sensitive. Clients drop their defenses when they become mindful.”

“**Hakomi has been called applied Buddhism.** It had built into it, from the beginning, this spiritual direction.”

“Outside of therapy, there are many, many sources of spiritual nourishment. But in the present moment of a therapy process, the source I use is the client. I search for and find the non-egocentric nourishment in some aspect of the client. This is very close to the Buddhist practice of searching for the seed of Buddha in every person. Or as Swami Premananda says, ‘The purpose of life is to see God in everyone and everything.’ When he was asked how this was done, he replied, ‘In the silence.’ The idea is to drop the ‘noise of self’ and to see the other as spirit. **With this as a habit**, with this as a base, therapy becomes a deeply heartfelt journey shared.”

WHAT DOES HAKOMI & YOGA HAVE IN COMMON?

In an article titled “Yoga And Hakomi: Two Friends Meet” by Dyrian Benz, found under Professional Journal, Issue 5:

“The whole point of Yoga is to achieve a still, clear mind.”

“However, the basic aim of all the (*yoga*) practices, which is easily forgotten by the diversity of the practices, is to achieve a clear and unconditioned mind. It is in this area that the Hakomi Method of Psychotherapy and Yoga meet.”

The clear mind, “mindfulness”, “stillness”, this whole eastern concept of opening your mind and accessing your higher state of consciousness-- is at the very heart and core of Hakomi. The spiritual direction of Buddhism is built right into it. You simply cannot do Hakomi if you don't employ mindfulness and if you don't have the ability to be still within yourself and then to evoke mindfulness in your client. Does one see how this is a danger? To become a certified Hakomi therapist, you receive training over a three- year period. The training teaches you how to be able to achieve a still mind, enter mindfulness, and assist others to enter mindfulness. In this author's opinion, allowing Buddhist philosophy, practice, and other eastern influences to be trained into your brain cannot be innocuous. Given the entire foundation of this therapy, how can one weed out what's good and/or bad and only learn or apply certain things one deems useful? If you study and really understand what Hakomi teaches, all these eastern principles are the basis of it. There's not much else left to glean, from what this reader has studied.

MINDFULNESS

According to Wikipedia on-line encyclopedia: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mindfulness>

“Right mindfulness is also known as Right Meditation.”

“Mindfulness is an activity that can be done at any time. It does not require sitting, or even focusing on the breath, but rather is done by bringing the mind to focus on what is happening in the present moment, while simply noticing the mind's usual ‘commentary’.”

“In addition to various forms of meditation, there are mindfulness training exercises that develop awareness throughout the day using designated environmental cues. Individuals are encouraged to select cues that then become triggers for awareness of the present moment, **essentially making mindfulness a habit.**”

This is concerning. Awareness practices became a part of Ron Kurtz's life. Dropping the noise of self becomes a habit. Essentially making mindfulness a habit is encouraged and taught in the program.

WHAT IS MINDFULNESS?

Below, please find excerpts taken directly from the on-line book, “Hakomi Method of Mindfulness Based Body Psychotherapy” by Ron Kurtz

The Use of Mindfulness (All bullets are from page 4)

- “Mindfulness is undefended consciousness. It has been defined (by Nayanaponika) as “the clear and single-minded awareness of what actually happens to us and in us at the successive moments of perception.”
- “It’s a skill; it improves with practice. It is a traditional form of meditation, especially for beginners.”
- “In mindfulness, there is no intention to control what happens next. It is a deliberate relinquishing of control. That’s why the first focus in traditional practice is often on the breath. To pay attention to the breath and not control it is more difficult than one might imagine, especially when we think about how little attention we ordinarily pay to breath and how well it works outside of our conscious control. Mindfulness is a way to practice surrendering. It’s a deliberate vulnerability, a chosen sensitivity.”
- “In mindfulness, one attempts to calm the mind, to silence thoughts.”
- “One focuses inward on the flow of one’s experience.”
- “In Hakomi, we use it in small doses (30 seconds to a minute).”
- “We use it especially in the evocation of experiences.”

(Page 9)

“Productive use of elicited reactions in the service of self-discovery is the essential framework for the Hakomi Body-Centered Psychotherapy. By using mindfulness, we enhance the effects of the reactions we elicit. In doing little experiments, we are making guesses as to what will elicit significant reactions. Through mindfulness and little experiments, we are attempting to facilitate discovery for the client primarily, but for ourselves, too!”

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“Without mindfulness, it’s possible nothing much would be evoked.” *Wow!*

(Page 38)

“Mindfulness practice is a spiritual discipline.”

(Page 67)

“...to the evocation of experience in mindfulness used in Hakomi, they are all attempts to use experiential methods to access the unconscious.”

“Mindfulness is a way of noticing the moment-to-moment flow of one’s experience. With practice, one begins to realize how experiences are put together. Mindfulness is a calm state of mind, in which attention is focused on present experience, noticing it without controlling anything but the noticing. In this state, one simply follows the changing contents of the mind without the intention to control what happens. It is a kind of voluntary vulnerability. For us, the important thing is that mindfulness offers the possibility that core beliefs can be made conscious. Advanced meditators can stay in mindfulness for extended periods of time, several hours or more, and in doing so can reach states of mind where silence and peace pervade one’s whole being. That level of mindfulness takes years of practice.”

(Page 81)

“Another very important thing about Hakomi: the beginnings of a basic spiritual practice are built right into it. If you’re a client in Hakomi long enough, you get a lot of practice using mindfulness...That’s spiritual practice.”

(Page 124) A SAMPLE MINDFULNESS EXPERIMENT

“There are three essential parts of the set-up. The first is: (1) you have to describe the experiment clearly to the client. You have to give the client clear instructions. You say something like, “I would like to do an experiment where...blah, blah, blah. If it’s going to be a probe, you might say something like, “In this experiment, you’ll become mindful and when you’re ready, give me a signal and I’ll make a statement and we’ll notice what happens. Okay?” It helps clients relax a little when they have an idea about what the experiment is going to be like. You don’t tell them what your statement is going to be—though you could and I have. But, you give them a clear idea of what’s expected of them and what you’re going to do. After that, (2) you get permission. “Is that okay to do?” And track for whether it really seems alright to the client. Clients may say okay when they’re really not okay with it. And if you get clear, sincere permission, then (3) you ask for and *wait* for mindfulness. You have to track for when the client actually gets into a mindful state. You say, “Give me a nod, when you’re ready!” Then you watch for the signs and wait for the nod. The signs are: one, the client becomes very still and two, his or **her eyelids flutter up and down over closed eyes. This movement of the eyelids is almost always an accurate sign that the client is in mindfulness.** I use it all the time.”

(Page 23) ANOTHER THING ABOUT EXPERIMENTS IN MINDFULNESS

“**Another special thing that happens when you do experiments** is many people experience a state of consciousness that we can call a ‘child state.’ **When the client goes into that state, you can hear a change in the voice**, the voice sounds younger the client’s use of words and sentence structure is more childlike. **The client’s face also looks younger.** These are emotional memories that were created when the client was a child. Somehow, as they arise and flood the system, they bring with them a sense of the child who had the original experiences. **When the child appears, you want to contact it.** Name the transition. (‘It looks like you feel younger.’). This childlike state is a very fruitful state to work with. The client is, in a sense, innocent and open, ready to be helped by an adult. I like to engage a client’s adult self in the process of working with her child. I want the adult to help me understand what’s going on with the child. I want to help the client’s adult self engage with her child in a nourishing way, more nourishing than the child experienced in her formative relationships.”

Well, this gives a pretty good idea about mindfulness and how it works. According to the early levels of the Bynum Scale of Hypnotic Susceptibility, which is shown below, mindfulness is within the early stages of hypnosis:

The Bynum Scale of Hypnotic Susceptibility

Levels of Hypnoidal Trance

1 No Objective Change

2 Relaxation

3 Fluttering of Eyelids

<http://www.hypnosisforyou.com/bynum1.html>

TWO GENERAL SKILLS (Page 85)

“There are two major divisions of skills: one is the *gathering of information* within each session...The second set is composed of all those skills necessary for *managing the process* which includes *loving presence* and building a healing relationship.”

WHAT IS LOVING PRESENCE? (Page 6)

“Loving presence is a state of being...Loving presence is emotional support and it is an important part of relating to others.”

“Loving presence is first of all about being in the present, showing up. It’s about being focused on what is happening in the moment on both your own experience and the experiences of the one

you're with. It is an opening and an exchange. It is not grounded in ideas or even words. It is an emotional connection made between the nervous system of two people that asks us to surrender."

HOW THE (LOVING PRESENCE) PROCESS UNFOLDS (Page 18)

"Let's talk about how the process unfolds over time."

"Whatever the client is doing, you give that some of your attention. But not all. You've got four other things to pay attention to. So, while you're giving some attention to the conversation and the client's present experience, you're also bringing yourself into a calm, compassionate, loving state."

"It is a deliberate act of making this search a priority. In Buddhism, it's the recognition of our mutual connectedness, our interdependence that evokes compassion."

(Page 44)

"A basic part of this method is learning and using this spiritually informed attitude. We call it, loving presence. There are training exercises and talks about it. We practice it every day of the trainings. There are definite skills that have to be learned. Certain habits of thinking and doing can get in the way. So, we study ourselves. That's our spiritual work." *(Doesn't God put an attitude of loving presence into our hearts through our connection with Him?) Is it a set of skills that need to be learned, practiced, and trained into us?)*

AN ODD STATEMENT & DELIBERATE PROCESS (Page 96)

"Conversation is a game with rules, which act like a trance. The habits we need to develop in order to do body-centered psychotherapy are, in many ways, in conflict with the conversational ones. **For example:**

In ordinary conversation:

- (1) We're not necessarily trying to bring the other person into awareness of his or her present experience.
- (2) We're also not trying to deepen into emotions, memories, and core beliefs"... *(etc, etc.)*

"What we try to do as psychotherapists is:

- (1) **Pay as much or more attention to nonverbal aspects of the other's behavior** as we do to the conversational ones.
- (2) **Look carefully at facial expression, gestures and body postures**, trying to get some ideas about what kind of core material is 'running' this person.
- (3) **Redirect the other's attention to things going on in the present and outside of the flow of the conversation...**
- (4) **Selectively allow quiet spaces in the conversation.** We want the other to know he or she has plenty of time to slow down and to think and feel.
- (5) Make contact statements, in order to summarize or acknowledge or redirect.
- (6) **Be extremely sympathetic**, but not necessarily polite.
- (7) Look at and listen to the whole person; **we're not focused only on the content of the conversation.** Follow the storyteller, not just the story.

So...we have to learn new habits of interaction. For that, we need to become conscious of our old habits and deliberately practice new ones. That's what the first part of this training session is all about."

This explains why Hakomi is concerning on a personal and general communication level. These techniques can be used with anyone, anywhere. They are psychotherapy techniques. They are rooted in foundations that draw from hypnosis, NLP, and eastern philosophy and practice. The more you practice, the better you get at it. You don't need to be in a therapy session to practice these communication techniques; although once you go through this training you learn how to effectively use them with groups.

When one is adept at them, it automatically puts a person who is not – at a disadvantage in the conversation.

EGW Quotes To Ponder:

“While it is believed that one human mind so wonderfully affects another, Satan, who is ready to press every advantage, insinuates himself and works on the right hand and on the left. And while those who are devoted to these sciences laud them to the heavens because of the great and good works which they affirm are wrought by them, they little know what a power for evil they are cherishing; but it is a power which will yet work with all signs and lying wonders--with all deceivableness of unrighteousness. Mark the influence of these sciences, dear reader, for the conflict between Christ and Satan is not yet ended....” {2MCP 711.3}

“In dealing with the science of mind cure, you have been eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, which God has forbidden you to touch. It is now high time for you to begin to look to Jesus, and by beholding His character become changed into the divine likeness. Cut away from yourselves everything that savors of hypnotism, the science by which satanic agencies work.”-- Letter 20, 1902 (2SM, p. 350).

“To advocate the science of mind cure is opening a door through which Satan will enter to take possession of mind and heart. Satan controls both the mind that is given up to be controlled by another and the mind that controls. May God help us to understand the true science of building on Christ, our Saviour and Redeemer.”--Lt 130, 1901. (HC 109.)

WHO CAN BENEFIT FROM HAKOMI THERAPIST TRAININGS?

(See Workshop/Trainings, Therapist Training, then go about ¾ of the way down the page)

- Many experience the Hakomi Training as the next step in their professional and personal development.
- Practicing therapists, social workers and health care professionals find a new range of skills and strategies, which increase both effectiveness and depth in working with clients.
- Bodyworkers find that Hakomi principles and skills can be powerfully integrated into their practice.
- Students with basic counseling skills and a strong background in psychotherapy find this thorough and in-depth program, offering both study of theory and training in the method.
- Counselors at all levels find their effectiveness and rapport with their clients or students enhanced.

Hakomi is not just for therapy sessions. It offers much more.