

The Burnham Review

Benefits of Touch and Neurofascial Process (NFP)

Manual Therapy and CAM Complement Your Health Care Program

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Neurofascial Process—Why You Should Try It?

From the field of Integrative Manual Therapy comes a remarkable self-care program that can alleviate pain, increase range of motion and improve function. Anyone who has used Neurofascial Process, knows the effectiveness of this hands-on technique.

There are plenty of testimonials on the benefits of Neurofascial Process (NFP)¹ (Weiselfish-Giammatteo, 2002) and case studies with before and after tests showing improvements following a few hours of NFP. For many clients these suffice to motivate them to try Neurofascial Process for themselves.

Others want to know more about how it works, before they spend the time and effort using it on themselves and their family members.

So, is it reasonable to believe that a simple hands-on technique will decrease pain and increase function?

Lets start with a look at some of the components of the NFP is thought to work on and then look at

the medical literature that supports those theories.

First, NFP is a process of connecting certain areas of the body, called Process Centers (PC), for example, the ureters

and the liver to improve the neural connection between the two areas, to improve the fascial relationships and fluid flow in the body and to normalize emotions content of the two areas. Sometimes it is referred to as the “one hand here and one hand there” self-care. Touch or contact with the two areas is all that is needed to make a shift.

“The experience of being touched, new research shows, has direct and crucial effects on the growth of the body as well as the mind.”² (Goleman, 1988). The New York Times article goes on to say, “Touch is a means of communication so critical that its absence retards growth in infants, according to researchers who are for the first time determining the neurochemical effects of skin-to-skin contact. The new work focuses on the importance of touch itself, not merely as part of,

say, a parent's loving presence. The findings may help explain the long-noted syndrome in which infants deprived of direct human contact grow slowly and even die.”

Hands-on contact can shift brain chemistry, which certainly affects how we feel and function. “New research suggests that certain brain chemicals released by touch, or others released in its absence, may account for these infants' failure to thrive. The studies on the physiology of touch come against a backdrop of continuing research on the psychological benefits of touch for emotional development.”² (Goleman, 1988)

One study looked at the influence of touch on the ability to feel that area. Researchers explain, “the mature mammalian nervous system alters its functional organization in a use-dependent manner.” This means the more you touch an area the better the sensation in that location. Continuing they said, “enhanced

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stimulation of a body part enlarges its cortical representational zones and may change its topographic order”³ (Steer, 1998)

The brain is more tuned into an area that is touched. Researchers concluded that touch can be associated with changes in an individual’s sensations and behavior.

Touch therapies can save money as shown in studies involving weight gain in babies. "The massaged infants did not eat more than the others," said Tiffany Field, a psychologist at the University of Miami Medical School, who did the study. "Their weight gain seems due to the effect of contact on their metabolism." The infants who were massaged were discharged from the hospital an average of six days earlier than premature infants who were not massaged, saving about \$3,000 each in hospital costs, Dr. Field said.² (Goleman, 1988).

Testimonial

Mother of a baby boy with colic. (2002). "My husband and I adopted our son, J. on 2/13/02 when he was 2 days old. Our time with him has been the most rewarding, joyful thing we have ever done and our friends constantly ask "How did you get such a happy baby? He's sleeping through the night already? You mean he doesn't cry for hours at a time? I give the same answer each time - it's the Neurofascial Processing!!

“The primacy of touch in infancy, experts say, is tied to touch's being the most mature sensory system for the first several months of life. "It's the first way an infant learns about the environment," said Kathryn

Barnard, a professor of nursing at the University of Washington. "About 80 percent of a baby's communication is through its body movement. It's easier to read a baby's communication with skin-to-skin contact."² (Goleman, 1988).

“N” as in Neural

The first part of Neurofascial Process, indicates that this technique affects the nervous system. Can hands-on contact change neural conductivity or fascial dysfunction?

Certainly, touch can cause pain as in the case of someone with dysreflexia, a dysfunction in which even a slight touch causes pain. This makes it reasonable to believe that touch influences the nervous system and can influence it in a positive or negative way.

The medical literature also discusses the connection between the nervous system and the fascia or connective tissue of the body. In one case they describe a blood flow problem due to "a stenosis [narrowing of the blood vessel] immediately distal to a transverse neurofascial band formed by the hypoglossal nerve"⁴ (Ranval, 1994). This quote illustrates the effect of a dysfunction in the nervous system and the fascial system (neurofascial band). They noted, turbulence or flow problems in the blood vessel can result from restrictions of the neural or myofascial bands.

Touch, Energy & Nervous System

A Reiki study measured the effect of an energy medicine based treatment on “autonomic nervous system function such as heart rate, cardiac vagal tone, blood pressure, cardiac sensitivity to baroreflex, and breathing activity.” The results showed, “heart rate and diastolic blood pressure decreased

significantly in the Reiki group compared to both placebo and control groups.” Researchers concluded, “the study indicates that Reiki has some effect on the autonomic nervous system.”⁵ (Mackay, 2004). Here we see a change in blood pressure with touch designed to have a positive influence.

Fascial System Connected To The.....Everything

Another journal article talks about the connections between different systems and describes the “neural and fat tissue-fascial formations of the kidneys and pancreas.” They note, “the greatest concentration of the neural elements [nerve cells] is noted in fat tissue at the level of the posterior surface of the pancreatic head [right side of the abdomen], as well as in the facial-fat tissue formations of the inferior pole and the hilus renalis [kidney].”⁶ (Maiborda, 1982).

“P” as in Process

Process, the way we process emotional energies and sensory information from our environment and pain, is the third part of Neurofascial Process.

Just the effect of touching an area and bringing one’s attention to it can change what is going on. “Emotions have been shown to alter pain perception, but the underlying mechanism is unclear since emotions also affect attention, which itself changes nociceptive [painful] transmission. Shifts in attention between the thermal [heat/temperature] and olfactory [pleasant and unpleasant smells] modalities did not alter mood or anxiety. Results show that emotion and attention differentially alter pain perception and thus invoke at least

partially separable neural modulatory circuits.”⁷(Villemure, 2003)

NFP and Pain Reduction

Another study compared the sensation of pain to the sensation of temperature, itch, hunger and thirst. “Pain is conventionally viewed as a pattern of convergent activity within the somatosensory system that represents the exteroceptive sense of touch. These findings indicate that the human feeling of pain is both a distinct sensation and a motivation - that is, a specific emotion that reflects homeostatic behavioral drive, similar to temperature, itch, hunger and thirst.”⁸ (Craig, 2003).

It is common for a person doing Neurofascial Process to notice changes in the temperature in the area of their hand contact, or a feeling of pulsation indicative of changes in the fascial tissue under their hands.

Experience of Touch: Research Points to a Critical Role

“The experience of being touched, new research shows, has direct and crucial effects on the growth of the body as well as the mind. Touch is a means of communication so critical that its absence retards growth in infants, according to researchers who are for the first time determining the neurochemical effects of skin-to-skin contact. “

Goleman, D. (1988). "The Experience of Touch: Research Points to a Critical Role." New York Times February 2. from:

<http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?sec=health&res=940DE0D91F3EF931A35751C0A96E948260>

Emotions and Organs

Just how important to overall health and recovery is it to balance

emotional states? One researcher put it this way, “negative emotional states are the single most influential factor in determining quality of life after a successful kidney transplant”⁹ (Baines, 2002).

Another study describes, “with the aid of auditory or visual stimuli etc., the influence of emotional state upon parotid secretion [a gland near the mouth] was investigated in 12 subjects. It was found that the flow rate decreased significantly from an intense, passionate state to a relaxed, pleasant state, to a tense or uneasy state and was lowest in a passive, indifferent state, being almost the same as that during sleep. These findings suggest that secretion of parotid saliva depends more on emotional state than circadian rhythm.”¹⁰ (Gemba, 1996).

Recognizing Emotions

Is it reasonable to believe that a person can palpate or feel areas of emotional “stuckness”? Many people can recognize how someone is feeling by their facial expression. In a study on schizophrenia and the recognition of facial expressions, researchers looked at emotion recognition from moving and static images. They concluded, “people with schizophrenia are sensitive to the motion patterns which underlie individual expressions of emotion and can use this information to accurately recognize emotions.”¹¹

(Tomlinson, 2006). In this study people were able to read emotions from images of facial expressions, in other words from visual information.

Another study used brain imaging equipment to find evidence that “the human brain contains facial expression recognition detectors specialized for specific discrete emotions.”¹² (Susskind, 2006).

In an earlier study, researchers found that emotional states could be reliably read using assessment tools that look at brain waves and how the autonomic nervous system responds.

Most manual therapists don’t have access to the equipment used in this study, including an Electroencephalogram (EEG), Electrocardiogram (ECG), Galvanic Skin Response (GSR), Skin Temperature (SKT), and Respiration (RSP) monitors, but they can feel the quality of the tissue, the heat or sweatiness of the skin, and feel breathing patterns as well as other motilities or rhythms in the body that give information about brain waves and the autonomic nervous system.

Angry Liver, Anxious Heart, Melancholy Spleen

“Numerous examples from traditional Chinese medicine, based on research in China, illustrate a wealth of symptoms, sensations, and their relation to the world of emotions. These examples provide arguments for collapsing the strict distinction between somatic changes and emotions as based in the dichotomized view of mind and body, subject and object.”

Ots, T. (1990). "The angry liver, the anxious heart and the melancholy spleen. The phenomenology of perceptions in Chinese culture." Cult Med Psychiatry 14(1): 21-58.

Balancing Pain and Emotions

Neurofascial Process helps to balance emotional states and this helps to decrease pain and improve function. Pain and emotions are processed in similar areas of the brain. One study noted, “acute pain and emotion are processed in two forebrain networks, and the cingulate

cortex is involved in both.”¹³ (Vogt, 2005). Another study noted the similarity in how we process emotions and how we process pain, saying, “due to similarities between emotion and pain, it is thought that emotional models can be applied to pain.”¹⁴ (Mollet, 2006).

Intestines Boiling

“People from cultures around the world report embodied feelings of emotions. Although their exact feelings may vary, this variation is bounded by universal aspects of emotional experience; there are limits to the cultural definition of emotion. Anger will always be a “hotter” emotion than fear, whether this is felt in blood rushing to the head or in intestines boiling.”

*Breugelmans, S. M., Y. H. Poortinga, et al. (2005). "Body sensations associated with emotions in Raramuri Indians, rural Javanese, and three student samples." *Emotion* 5(2): 166-74 from www.ecsa.ucl.ac.be/personnel/p hilippot/Article-%20BodySensation.pdf.*

Which Comes First: Smiling or That Happy Feeling

One theory of emotional expression, dates back to 1906 and “holds that facial muscles act as ligatures on facial blood vessels and thereby regulate cerebral blood flow, which, in turn, influences subjective feeling.” The theory, developed by Israel Waynbaum, a French physician, hypothesizes the subjective experience of emotions as following facial expression rather than preceding it.¹⁵ (Zajonc, 1985)

Perhaps this explains why laughter

is such a positive influence on health. It begs the question, “do we laugh because we are happy or do we laugh so our brains will get better blood flow and then we will feel happy?”

Touch and the Medical System

Touch is used in several medical areas, “touch can cause positive or negative neurophysiological responses. In the Operating Room, nurses do a great deal of touching, and they need to be aware of the appropriateness of their touch. Touch can be an alternative mode of conveying empathy and caring for certain patients when it is difficult for the nurse to communicate verbal empathy. Touch assessments and interventions need to be included in perioperative nursing care plans to promote the patient's comfort and avoid unwanted physiological responses from the patient.”¹⁶ (Tovar, 1989).

TCM and Touch Diagnosis

Traditional Chinese Medicine also uses touch to assess and treat many dysfunctions. In 1985 a study validated the hypothesis “that a disturbance in blood flow at one place can be detected in the arterial pulse waves at a distant site. This hypothesis was motivated by the traditional Chinese medicine which uses arterial pulse waves as a principal means of diagnosis.”¹⁷ (Dai, 1985).

Given the frequently reported benefits of touch and Neurofascial Process, it also warrants further investigation and wide spread use as a self-care tool for healing.

NFP First Aid

You can treat any newly injured area immediately with NFP. A powerful first aid treatment for

virtually any problem would be holding one hand on the problem area or injury and the other hand placed across the low back or ureters. The contact or connection is held for 20 minutes or more. This will often reduce toxicity or eliminate symptoms.

Body Wisdom Book

Weiselfish-Giammatteo, S. and T. Giammatteo (2002). Body wisdom: light touch for optimal health. Berkeley, Calif., North Atlantic Books.

Consult this book for details

Case Study

"The purpose of this case study is to show the changes in Range of Motion in all joints after performing Neurofascial Process." Potter, B. (2002). Changes in Range of Motion After Neurofascial Process, from: www.centerimt.com/e-journal/articles/ej0001.html.

Headaches are a common complaints of people all over the world. This study is about a 38 year old female who has suffered from headaches since childhood, approximately 25 days out of every month. The study shows the great benefit of IMT and Neurofascial Process in treating this common complaint of headaches." Gil'ad, R. (2002). Treating Chronic Headaches with Basic Techniques of Integrative Manual Therapy, www.centerimt.com/e-journal/articles/ej170.asp.

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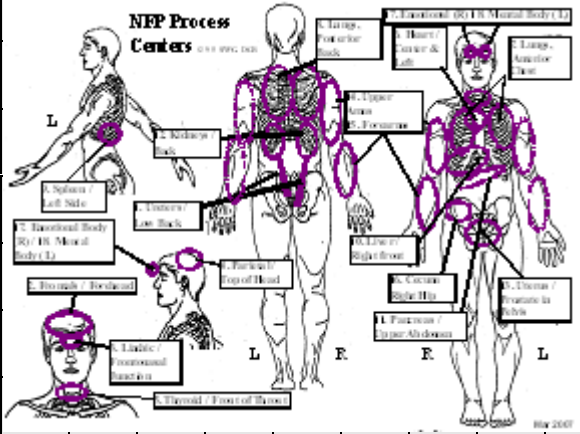
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NFP Centers Primary	1. Ureters	2. Frontals	3. Limbic	4. Parietals	5. Thyroid	6. Heart	7. Lungs, Ant	8. Lungs, Pos	9. Spleen	10. Liver	11. Pancreas	12. Kidneys	13. Uterus / Prostate	14. Upper Arms	15. Forearms	16. Cecum	
Start with Ureters to all Process Centers																	
1. Ureters / Low Back	■													R	L	R	L
2. Frontals / Forehead		■															
3. Limbic / Frontonasal			■														
4. Parietals/ Motor				■													
5. Thyroid / Front of					■												
6. Heart / Center and						■											
7. Lungs, Anterior /																	
8. Lungs, Posterior /								■									
9. Spleen / Left side									■								
10. Liver / Right front										■							
11. Pancreas											■						
12. Kidneys												■					
13. Uterus/Prostate													■				
14. Upper Arms R														■	■		
Right and Left L														■	■		
15. Forearms R															■	■	
Right and Left L															■	■	
16. Cecum																	■
Other as Assigned	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
A.																	
B.																	
C.																	



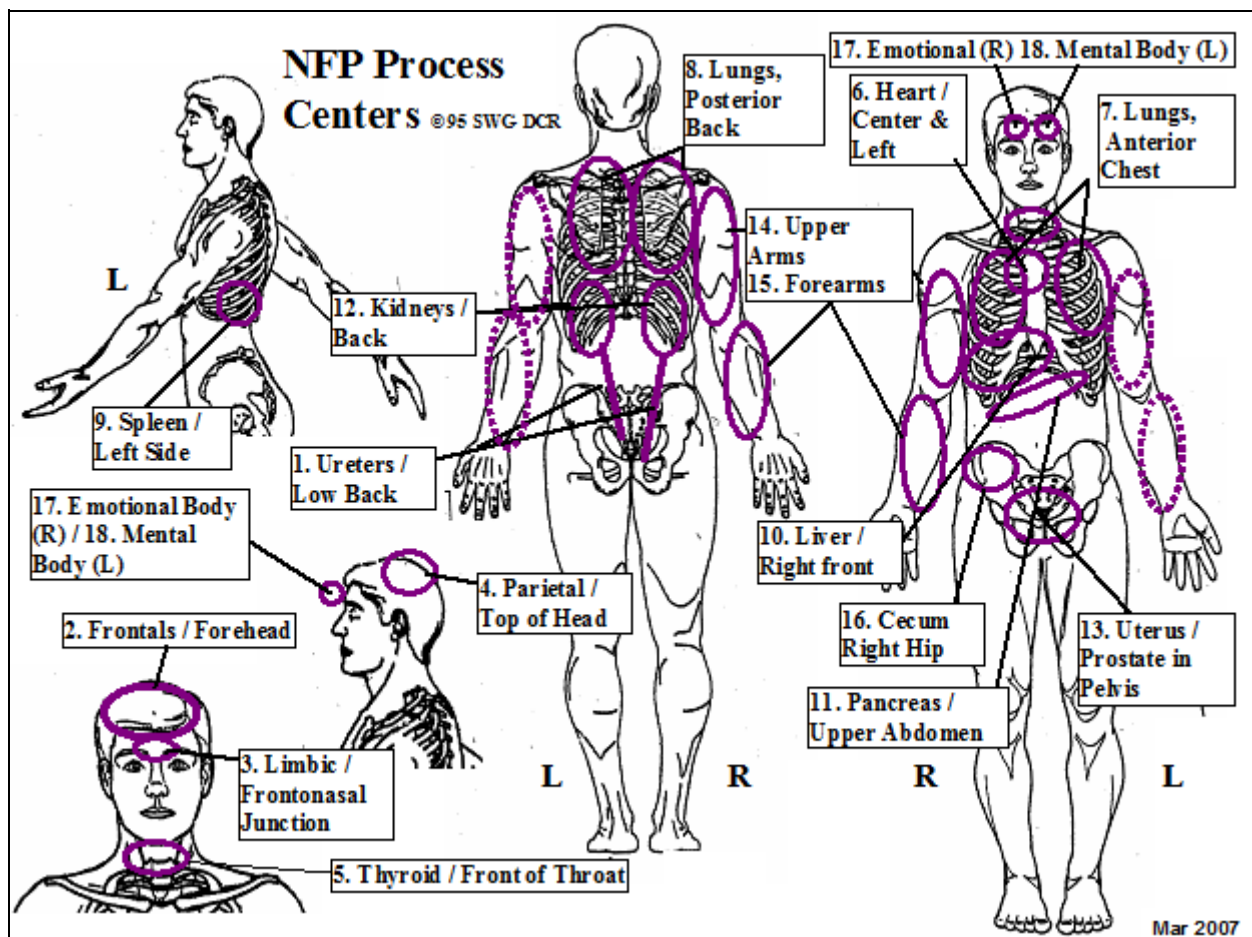
Neurofascial Process (NFP) General Direction and NFP Parties

1. Acute Pain – For A Specific Problem: Place one hand on A (assigned by therapist or based on symptoms) and the other hand on 1 for a minimum of 20 minutes. Next place one hand on A and the other hand on 2 for 20 minutes. Repeat until A has been connected to each number for 20 minutes and then repeat the sequence as needed. Then place a hand on B (if there is a second site) and one hand on 1, until the process is complete. For acute pain or injury, place one hand over A which is the area of headache, pain, injury and the other hand over the ureters for drainage. Connect for 20 min or until pain subsides.

2. NFP Party – All Process Centers to All Process Centers: The client lays on a table and eight friends or family members each put one hand on each of the process centers so that all 16 spots are covered. Hold the points for a minimum of 20 minutes. This process can be done for 1 - 5 hours as recommended by your therapist. The people can change their hand placement every 20 minutes, if they wish.

3. All Process Centers to each other with one or two people: Place one hand on 1 and the other hand on 2 for 20 minutes. Then place one hand on 1 and one hand on 3 for 20 minutes. Connect 1 to each other number and then place one hand on 2 and one hand on 3. Then one hand on 2 and one hand on 4, until 2 has been connected to each other number. Then one hand on 3 and one handuntil each number has been connected to every other number for 20 minutes. Then repeat as needed to a total of 1 - 5 hours.

NOTE: Animals, books, etc do not work. This process requires human contact. There is no need to press, just contact the area for the specified amount of time. Any number of peoples hands can be used and the clients position does not matter. They should be comfortable on their back, side, sitting, etc. This process makes the IMT and nutritional programs more efficient and can significantly change symptoms.



Neurofascial Process (NFP) is easy to do, it just takes time.

Dr. Sharon W. Giammatteo developed NFP in the early 1980's. It is an approach to self-healing. NFP can be performed on yourself at home as homework. "It has been used in clinical practice for more than 30 years. It is the single most powerful tool an individual can use to assist their healing process." (Weiselfish-Giammatteo, S. and T. Giammatteo (2002). Body wisdom : light touch for optimal health. Berkeley, Calif., North Atlantic Books.

Consider reading Body Wisdom for more information, including illustrations and photographs.

NFP signifies: N for neural, F for fascial and P for process. The neural or nervous system transmits signals through the body. The fascial system is a thin layer of connective tissue that covers every organ, vessel and nerve in the body, like a body suit. NFP integrates the nervous system and the fascial system with sensory information and emotional health. This homework process makes the therapy at CenterIMT more efficient and can significantly change symptoms.

NFP involves placing your hands (no need to press) over specific parts of your body for extended periods of time, and simply "being with" what comes to consciousness while doing so. Perform NFP in a peaceful, relaxing environment. You can perform this process sitting up or lying down or in which ever position is most appealing to you. You can watch TV or listen to music. Drinking plenty of water is recommended.

Sharon discovered that emotions stored in the body can interfere with health and vitality. Emotions can actually impairs how well an organ can function. It can also cloud thinking and impair vision and hearing. It can influence how you experience the world and people around you. We begin the process of storing feelings and thoughts when we are overwhelmed with events.

NFP is simple. To use NFP hold a hand on the problem area and place a second hand on one of the process centers. The problem area is any location that is not functioning well. There may be many symptoms at the location, for example; pain, swelling, inflammation, rash, insect bite, headache, excess sensation or diminished sensation.

This may be a location that your therapist is treating or wants you to improve the function. Your therapist can give you a body diagram detailing your homework.

How to Perform NFP, An Example

When you "take the liver to all the Process Centers", you put one hand on the liver at the lower right rib cage in front and the other hand on the ureters at the low back for 20 or more minutes. Then you keep the hand on the liver and put the other hand on the forehead or frontals for 20 minutes. After finishing with the ureters and the frontals you move on to the limbic system at the bridge of the nose, then the liver with the top of the head / parietals and so on until you have had one hand on the liver and one hand on each of the other Process Centers for at least 20 minutes for each connection.

When To Do NFP

NFP can be done when you wake up in the morning. If you hit the snooze button you can keep track of how long it has been. You can do NFP while watching a movie or listening to books on tape, as a passenger on a long car ride, or before you go to sleep at night. Treating yourself before you go to bed at night will help ensure a more restful sleep.

NFP First Aid

You can also treat any newly injured area immediately with NFP. A powerful first aid treatment for virtually any problem would be holding one hand on the problem area or injury and the other hand placed across the low back or ureters. This will often reduce toxicity or eliminate symptoms.

The 20 Minute Rule

To be effective you must remain with your hands in place for a minimum of 20 minutes. The longer the hands remain in contact the more therapeutic the effect. Keep track on a chart. Record your times. Severe, acute or longstanding problems may need 3 to 5 hours of NFP treatment to each PC. Intermediate conditions will need 2 hours per PC. Mild problems may resolve in 1 hour per PC or less. NFP treatment can be done in any position. It should to be human contact. If you need to remove your hands briefly it is not a problem, for example to sneeze, cough, or change the TV channel.

The Process Centers Location, Significance and Emotions

1. Ureters, across the low back, 1 inch on either side of spine (at waist level). You can access the ureters with the back or front of your hand and forearm. The Ureters are the Center for toxic drainage. Take all the Process Centers to the ureters at least once for physical and emotional drainage. The ureters are great for first aid for physical trauma (ie) a sprained ankle, you put one hand over the ureters and the other hand over the ankles. This will decrease pain and swelling.
2. Frontals or Forehead: Thought, Judgement, Behavior. Great for ADD.
3. Limbic System at the bridge of nose or frontonasal and eyes are is your center for survival and has to do with rage responses. Think of a lion who has been attacked and wounded. This is not anger, it is pure rage. There is no rational thoughts associated with rage.
4. Parietals at Top of the Head: home of the sensory and motor cortex and associated with feelings and sensations (sight, sound, taste, smell, touch) as well as action and movement.
5. Thyroid or Front of the Neck / Throat Area is about expression or not expressing yourself (verbally, creatively, etc) because of fear or other emotions.
6. Heart (Center of the Chest a little to the Left): love, joy, hatred, loss of love (ie) abandonment.
7. Lungs at the front: grief and deep sadness, despair, oxygen and your will to live life.
8. Lungs at the back (same)
9. Spleen on the Left side of rib cage, between rib 8 and rib 10: disappointment in mankind (ie) Vietnam veteran, Israeli could have a lot of emotion locked in the spleen.
10. Liver (Lower Right Rib Cage): anger and detoxification.
11. Pancreas just below Center and Left side of rib cage, in the Abdomen: major issues of significance (life or death) consider your path and purpose in this life. "What am I supposed to do in life?"
12. Kidneys lower rib cage at the back. You can use your hand and forearm front or back.: fear, anxiety, depression, fluid regulation.
13. Prostate or Uterus just above pubic bone in the front of the pelvis: sexuality, gender, reproduction.
14. Upper Arms (both): Control over self, self control.
15. Lower Arms (both): belief systems
16. Cecum in front of the Right Hip:
17. Emotional Body: 2 to 3 in. above Right eye at the hairline (or where it used to be) slightly off the body ½ inch: Emotional health.
18. Mental Body: 2 to 3 inches above Left eye at the hairline, ½ an inch off the body: Thoughts, Perseveration.

What to Reflect On

Each Process Center has a meaning. If we are repressing and holding onto a specific emotion in our body, it tends to get stored in specific organs. For example, if we have a lot of anger in our body, we will tend to hold it in our liver. Often, you can see when someone is a really angry person, because they will tend to sink into the right side of the ribs. When we do NFP from the liver to all the other Process Centers, it is good to reflect on any anger we may have felt in childhood.

You never want to judge yourself on what you find (feelings and memories). Know that the anger or feeling that will surface is hardly ever current. It is almost always from when you were a child. Therapists will often give you ages to focus on.

For example, we may ask you to focus on the ages 13-19. When you are thinking of yourself at a certain age, it is good to try to think of what you looked like at that age, what grade you were in, the people that would have been in your life at the time, your family, friends, your environment, where you lived.

Consider looking at a photograph if you have one. You can say to yourself, "I am 13 years old and I am looking inside my body, in my liver" or "I am 15 years old and I am looking inside my pancreas" or any other place you are focused on. This focuses your attention, then you can relax and reflect on what comes up.

You can ask yourself, "When I was 13 years old, did I feel any anger? Did I feel any fear - was I afraid of anything?" You want to go through all of the ages with all of the Process Centers looking for all of the emotions.

How to Perform Reflection While Doing NFP

When you find the different emotions and experiences in your body during the specific ages, you want to find some kind of a visual image for letting go of the emotion. For example, when you are looking for any feeling of anger in your liver at age 13, once you find the feeling, find an image for letting go (ie) steam coming out of your body or hitting the anger out of your body like a home run baseball, or imaging healing light energy over it, making it disappear.

You can tell yourself, “ I am letting go of anger (or other emotion) and start to feel lighter and lighted.

This will help you let go of any old fears or emotions that are essentially holding you back from really experiencing life without any hang-ups. This will help you let go of any and all depression. This will help you enjoy life.

NFP Party: Using Your Hands and Others

NFP is an effective treatment to use on yourself. It can also be done with multiple hands simultaneously. With family and friends the project of accumulating 3 hours per Process Center will go more quickly.

It is often a fun project to gather friends and family and watch a movie while doing NFP. The time passes quickly. Multiple hands simultaneously have the added bonus of giving the healing process a powerful boost. It can often help to significantly change chronic or acute conditions.

While your hands are contacting specific points you may experience a variety of sensations, warmth or cold, tingling, or magnetic pull. It is possible the person being treated may have a brief increase of sensation in the area. Do not stop the contact. The sensations will dissipate.

Every client who uses NFP will recover more quickly reducing the number of hours of treatment required in the clinic.

General References

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