

## **Spirit-Energy and NTU Psychotherapy**

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### ***Spirit and Energy***

Spirituality is the core distinguishing principal in an African-centered philosophy of life and is the fundamental concept of healing in the NTU psychotherapy approach (Phillips, 1988; Nobles, 1986). With a keen acknowledgment that, at some level, the concept of spirituality becomes indefinable, I will nonetheless offer a working definition: Spirituality is a measure of the quality of one's relationship to the ultimate vitalizing life force. We will look more closely at this definition throughout this section of the paper.

The life force is a concept that is central to the world view of many cultures and known by many names throughout the world. It is called "Prana" by the ancient Indians where it is seen as the basic constituent and source of all life (Brennan, 1988). Prana, the breath of life, moves through all forms and provides life; Yogis practice manipulating this energy through breathing techniques, meditation and physical exercise to maintain altered states of consciousness.

The Chinese in the 3<sup>rd</sup> millennium B.C., painted the existence of vital energy which they called Ch'i. All matter, animate and inanimate, is composed and pervaded with this universal energy. Thus Ch'i contains two polar forces the yin and the yang. When the yin and yang are balanced, the living system exhibits physical health; when they are unbalanced, a diseased state results. Overly powerful yang results in excessive organic activity. Predominant yin makes for insufficient functioning. Either unbalance results in

physical illness. The ancient art of acupuncture therefore focuses on balancing the yin and the yang.

Brennan has described this force as simply the Human Energy Field that exists around each of us (Brennan1988). Each life form has an energy field or aura that surrounds and interpenetrates the physical body and this energy field is ultimately associated with health. There are numerous variant procedures that involve rebalancing the energy field such as: laying on of hands, faith healing, and spiritual healing. Brennan further described the Human Energy Field as the manifestation of universal energy that is ultimately a representation of human life. It can be described as a luminous body that surrounds and interpenetrates the physical body, emits its own characteristic radiation and is usually called the “aura”.

Within the African context, we will review the concept of the life force from the perspective of the Bantu peoples who principally reside in the central regions of Africa. For the Bantus, the life force is called NTU (pronounced “in-to”) which is the universal force that makes everything. The Bantu cannot conceive of anything separate and apart from its NTU. NTU is the force (energy) which sustains everything. Equally important to Bantu (and all African) philosophy is that everything that there is, is considered a force, not substance. Viewing reality as a force rather than substance is a critical distinction in the framework of healing as force suggests dynamism and interaction as opposed to passivity and objectification. This ancient and indigenous world view has present day Western cultural parallels in modern physics in which all matter can be conceived as either a particle (substance) or a wave (force) depending on the object’s interaction with the observer (Copra, 1984). For the traditionally trained western mind a brief review of the “new physics” is appropriate here before returning to the Bantu concept of NTU.

The quintessential physicist Albert Einstein, initiated two revolutionary trends of thought within western science which allowed western culture to better grasp ancient African philosophy. One thought was his special theory of relativity; the other was a new way of looking at electromagnetic radiation which was to become characteristic of quantum theory, the theory of atomic phenomena. Einstein strongly believed in nature's inherent harmony and, according to his concept of relativity theory, space is not three-dimensional and time is not a separate entity. Both are intimately connected and form a four dimensional continuum, "space - time". The most important consequence of Einstein's theory for our purposes herein is the realization that mass is nothing but a form of energy. Even an object at rest has energy stored in its mass and the relation between the two is given by the famous equation  $E=MC^2$ , C being the speed of light (Copra, 1983). As was stated earlier, all matter can be described as either a particle (matter) or a wave (force) depending on how we look at them (the interaction of the energy/force to the observer). To the traditional Western mind, this was a contradiction that gave rise to the koan-like paradox which formally led to the formulation of quantum theory. Most important to our discussion here is that quantum theory reveals a basic oneness of the universe. It shows that we cannot decompose the world into independently existing smallest units. As we penetrate into matter nature does not show us any isolated "basic building blocks" but rather appears as a complicated web of relations between the various parts of the whole. All of life is interconnected through the universal life force and life is dynamic so that reality as we have come to understand it in the popular culture does not really exist in a precise manner. The observer always has an influence on the observed; the therapist/healer has an influence on the client.

The quantum theory revelation of the oneness of the universe is the western science lens on the African conceptualization of the

harmony of life. The African philosophy of mutual compatibility and world harmony is best described by Adibayo Adensya, a Yoruba writer who is quoted by Janheinz Jahn in his book, *Muntu, the new African culture* (Jahn, 1961). “An African concept of harmony is not simply a coherence of fact and faith, nor of reason and traditional beliefs, nor of reason and contingent facts, but a coherence or compatibility among all the disciplines. A medical theory, e.g., which contradicted a theological conclusion was rejected as absurd and vice versa. This demand of mutual compatibility among all the disciplines considered as a system was the main weapon of Yoruba thinking. God might be banished from Greek thought without any harm being done to the logical architecture of it, but this cannot be done in the case of the Yoruba. In medieval thought, science could be dismissed at pleasure, but this is impossible in the case of Yoruba thought, since faith and reason are mutually dependent. In modern times, God even has no place in scientific thinking. This was impossible to the Yoruba since from the Olodumare an architectonic of knowledge was built in which the finger of God is manifest in the most rudimentary elements of nature. Philosophy, theology, politics, social theory, land law, medicine, psychology, birth and burial, all find themselves logically concatenated in a system so tight that to subtract one item from the whole is to paralyze the structure of the whole”.

From the Bantu philosophy, all being, all essence, in whatever form it is conceived, can be subsumed under one of four categories which are :

- I Muntu = “human being” (plural; Bantu);
- II Kintu = “thing” (plural; Bintu)

III Hantu = “place and time”;

IV Kuntu = “modality”

The hope and love (emotions as energy) of the parent are conveyed to the child in a sustained verbal and non-verbal manner.

If we return to our initial “definition” of spirituality we find the word “vitalizing”. This is so stated since, in an African-centered context, the spiritual dimension is the energetic basis of all life. Spirit needs form and it is the energy of the spirit (NTU) which animates the physical framework. Energy, of course, never “dies”; it transforms into other forms and thus the African belief of human death as a transition of the spirit-energy which takes form as Orishas, ancestors etc. These spirit energies are therefore available to the “living” and can be contacted, communicated with, and brought to bear in the present space time. We, for instance, all can gain real strength from the recall of an anchoring family ancestor into our consciousness. Though the “strength” may come into us through the emotional, or spiritual level, it is available to us on the physical and mental levels also. We feel better, stronger, clearer and more empowered!

Consciousness, itself, can be viewed as a kind of energy that is integrally related to the cellular expression of the physical body (Gerber, 1988). This is a profound statement of the mind-body connection and of the African principle of consubstantiation

which states that “I am because We are” (Nobles, 1986 ). Viewing the link between consciousness as energy and the physical plane allows us to grasp the relationship between self-esteem, identity, and health for example. We are each from our own consciousness participating in the continuous creation of either health or illness. We are who we think we are in great part. We influence our reality and are influenced by the thoughts that we allow inside our consciousness. This view of consciousness suggests that “mind” is not just in the brain but throughout the body, within every cell. We are a holistic organism, body, mind and spirit where energy is interchangeable and interconnectible.

Because humans are elements of the divine we are a microcosm within a macrocosm. Throughout the macro-micro universe there are patterns of order that repeat themselves. This truth is aptly captured in the folk saying “as above, so below” which is a recognition of the patterns of nature and the existence of a natural order and natural laws. Within an African-centered context, one can focus attention on the unique manifestation of spirit-energy that appears throughout nature whether that aspect is a tree, an eagle, or a rock since the spiritual person becomes increasingly able to see beyond the visible manifestation and into the very essence behind that form. By guiding your client to immerse himself in the essence of an eagle, he can gain the power to use the eagle’s clarity of perspective (a manifestation of God’s insight) to solve problems in his life that require profound awareness. In this example of spirit as transcendent and immanent, a client can learn to relate to the NTU spirit-energy in small comprehensible steps when each piece of creation is understood to manifest some separate quality of God and may be embraced

as awareness in the client's own space-time.

An important component of the energy/spirit discussion is the understanding of the human senses and their contribution to awareness and health/illness. If we just take the traditional five senses that are generally accepted by Western society i.e. sight, sound, taste, touch, and smell we notice that they are receptors of energy that connect to the external environmental and that connection is experienced as a "sensation". Remembering that matter is energy, the bodymind "sees" light waves, "hears" sound waves etc. and transforms the energy into conscious images, experiences, and communication. The senses are the bodymind's way of assessing the environment and is an energy exchange. From an African-centered perspective, the most important of the senses, the so-called "6<sup>th</sup> sense" is undervalued by western culture and western approaches to healing.

The "6<sup>th</sup> Sense" is commonly referred to as intuition but also carries other names, some with positive connotation such as the "Mother's wit" and other names with either negative, or at least, guarded meaning such as clairvoyance, extrasensory perception, telepathy and the like. Intuition is defined in a western context as a direct perception of truth, fact, etc. independent of any reasoning process. Africentrically, intuition is the bodymind sensation of spirit-energy in a more direct manner, less filtered by the cultural or learned information that becomes woven into the five senses and the senses' connection to the brain. Intuition is revelation, more spiritual and wholistic in its awareness. An intuitive experience is a sharpened awareness of the ongoing energy

of consciousness and internal and external energy exchange. Adolescents and others, for instance, refer to this plane of knowing as “vibes” or “feeling the vibrations”, What, of course, is being depicted is a process of connecting to, and becoming aware of the frequency of the energy in the person’s immediate environment. Intuition is also referred to as a “gut feeling” whereby the answer comes to us directly through our body part and not first in our brain. Our western language limits our appreciation of the vibrational reality and we would generally describe the “vibes” as good or bad. Imagine, if you will, the increased human capability that would accompany the culture firmly accepting the reality of “vibes” and intuition, creating more definitive language to interpret those experiences, and training people to access and utilize their intuitive power. Youth for example, could be taught to access their intuitive awareness when in the midst of a developing negative situation and provided with behavioral skills of disengagement for example. Intuition is a byway to the spiritual dimension (NTU) and its affirmation and utilization would assist in preventive health and can be used in innumerable ways in the therapeutic encounter.

Central to our understanding of energy and its utilization from a psychotherapeutic perspective is knowing that energy emanates from the spiritual plane of existence and moves through the mental plane, then emotional, and lastly the physical (Stein, 1990). When the dis-ease has symptomatically arisen on the physical level, we have had previous inner communication to alert us to a developing problem. Relevant questions are: Were we listening? What and how did we respond to the information presented? From an African-centered world view, human beings are multidimensional beings; we are more than flesh and bones,

cells and proteins, we are in dynamic equilibrium with a universe of energy and light and we are composed of the “stuff” of the universe. It is this “stuff”, or the spirit-energy/NTU, that provides both the power and the direction for healing.

### **NTU Approach to Healing**

Let us first look at how the Akan people of West Africa approach healing in the larger world of medicine and health. Unlike Western technological medicine, which considers disease to be the result of outside agents such as microbes or impersonal biological processes, Akan medicine considers disease a state of disharmony in the whole body and even in the whole society. The Akan’s recognition of the multiple factors causing disease is an asset in the treatment by traditional means. Etiological factors identified in the somatic, psychic, constitutional, and genetic makeup, as well as in the social and cultural environment, argue very strongly for the comprehensive approach, traditionally implored. Modern medicine’s tendency is to isolate the patient. Since in the Akan view illness is derived from a sick or broken society, the community becomes the point of departure for individual diagnosis and treatment. To gain total health, participation of the family, clan group, or even the whole community is required. The healing sanctuaries and shrines of traditional Akan medical practitioners provide adequate room for the kin group to participate-in diagnosis, prognosis, and treatment. The healer, patient, and the patient’s family make a unanimous decision for the healing of the patient. The group is involved at every stage. From the Akan culture springs the emphasis an wholism, family, community, and spirituality as anchoring principles of health and healing. These principles are integral to NTU psychotherapy,

which revitalizes African cultural symbols, images, beliefs and values into a modern spiritual-intuitive philosophy and therapeutic approach. The spiritual-intuitive approach of NTU does not discard the rational-logical scientific world view but rather seeks to reintegrate the spiritual into consciousness and health, and establish harmony and balance with the rational-logical scientific world.

NTU psychotherapy, further, accepts and responds to the challenge of African-centered theorists such as Dr. John Bolling, Dr. Naim Akbar, Dr. Wade Nobles, and Dr. Linda Jones Meyer to “return to the Center” and have respect for the role of the Soul in the health/healing process. In this new era of reintegration, therapists/healers of African decent must become more aware of the role of the Soul as a vehicle of ethics, morals, and values in the therapeutic process (Bolling, 1986). Understanding of this influence on the outcome of the healing process is critical as we must opt to resist non-congruent Western cultural images, symbols, ethics, morals and aesthetic considerations. NTU therapy looks to create a healing model that arises from the cultural being and essence of persons of African decent.

NTU therapy is consistent with the African belief that the soul or inner self is the primary energy and ultimate healer. Healing comes from within and provides direction for mental and physical healing. When there is alignment of the inner spiritual law with the mind/body, the person/organism is engaged in the healing process. The more and more each of us is impelled by that which is intuitive, or relying upon the soul force within, the greater and deeper and more constructive may be the outcome. As Dr.

Bolling states “a heightening of awareness of the correct values and ethical considerations are necessary first to wake the healing energies of the inner self”. NTU therapy facilitates this process through the exposure of clients to the Nguzo Saba principals and to the principals of Maat (Truth, Justice, Balance, Harmony, Order, and Righteousness).

The inner self is also represented as a composite of the concepts of unconscious, preconscious and paraconscious and its energy is ever available to us. At all times the inner self, or soul, is connected to, informed by, and given great assistance and guidance from the invisible spirit world of the ancestors and Orishas (Orishas are forces of the soul, similar to the archetypes of Carl Jung and serve as the bridges between the human and non-human worlds and between the invisible and the visible world (Bolling, 1986). The ever presence of the ancestral energy is made conscious through the African ritual of libation among other processes. Libation, briefly, is conducted through the pouring of liquid into the earth for circular connectedness and accompanied by the calling fourth of the names of family and historical ancestors. The libation ritual is prominently used in NTU Psychotherapy within groups processes for centering, empowering, and healing purposes. NTU Psychotherapy organizes its approach to healing around four basic principles that incorporate the African centered philosophy of health, life, spirituality and energy. (Phillips 1990; Foster & Phillips 1993; V. Cherry et al 1994). The four principles are: Harmony, Balance, Authenticity, and Interconnectedness. These principles are essentially the dimensions of how a person, or a family’s life energy should manifest for optimal health. That is, a measure of the quality of ones relationships to the ultimate vitalizing life force is the assessment of

the direction and quality of their energy along the four principles of NTU. For example, is one's energy in harmony? Is the energy balanced? Is the person's energy clear and authentically flowing from their essence? We will explain each of these principles of healing and their assessment and therapeutic implications in the following paragraphs. On your review these principles, you are encouraged to acknowledge them as circular rather than from a linear logic perspective. The NTU principles are tantamount to viewing the energy from a different vantage point as opposed to seeing a different energy; therefore, there is significant overlap in the context of each principle with the other.

### **Harmony**

The African concept of natural order implies that our life energy should be characteristically purposeful, orderly and “in tune” within our internal and external environment. As our energy comes more attuned with natural order spirit-energy, healing and health become more of a natural process. Within the African principles of the extended family and community it is vitally important to sustain right relationships with our family and our community since relationships are the vessels of spirit-energy. Harmony is both cooperative and integrative. It is cooperative in that harmony is reciprocal in energy exchange and the bodymind must adjust itself to appropriately and positively connect to the ongoing environment (Note: the other NTU principles provide “balance” to this concept as previously stated). Harmony is integrative in that a healthy bodymind seeks to become one with the environment and integrates the ongoing experience inside its being and essence. When the bodymind is in optimum harmony, the

energy flows in, among, and between the environment peacefully and energetically. The individual, group, family, or community is increasingly empowered since the energy available is maximized. When the organism/client is in disharmony, then there is a disconnect between and among internal and external systems and the energy is thwarted, misdirected and unstable. There is a need to restore wholeness and integrity to the bodymind to receive healthy balance. The right relationship of a person to the environment is one of synchronous rhythms in which the integrity of the relationship is whole yet free flowing. When an organism is in functional, if not optimal, harmony there is a confluence and congruence of energy that allows for peak attunement of the bodymind capacity to access information from, and be responsive to, the environment. One “sees” better both physically and psychologically. That is, a person is better able to see the whole picture and experience the connections and togetherness of the ongoing experience whether that “seeing” is of an athlete “seeing the whole court,” a business person “seeing the whole deal,” or a therapist “seeing the whole system”. Seeing makes a person happiest as the experience of things together is wholesome and joyful. Witness the experience of positive, harmonious family time during holiday periods or the experience of communities that come together to manage a natural or human disaster. Being at one accord is rhythmic and has a particular energy frequency not unlike the experience of listening to a singing group, a band, or an orchestra which achieves musical harmony. The experience of harmony is also the felt experience of being in love. Studies have demonstrated, for instance, that when two people are in love, there is more synchronism between the rhythm of their heart beats. The emotional and physical state of love has a spiritual quality and a heightened exchange of positive energy which is both cause and effect of the deepening harmony. The perspective of the

direction and degree of energy and harmony within and among the bodymind provides clear and fruitful clinical assessment information as well as opportunity for insightful intervention. This idea is expanded upon in the section on NTU therapeutic processes.

## **Balance**

The NTU principle of balance is essentially the equilibrium of opposites from an African-centered perspective, that is, there are no absolute realities and everything is, to some degree, a matter of perspective. Similarly, balance illustrates that the polarities of life are not absolute, detached existences but rather are relative. Inherently connected positions that are dependent on each other for meaning and also represent points on a circular continuum. For example, the opposite ends of a magnet need each other for their power or electrical charge; the concept of day needs the concept of night; good needs evil, etc. Clinically, balance is a concept that suggests that we had a continuous need to mediate the seemingly conflicting or opposing forces of life. Balance suggests a centering of the spirit and energy in the manner that Chinese healers use acupuncture to balance the positive and negative energy in the body. As Chopra has stated, “when you quietly acknowledge the exquisite coexistence of opposites, you align yourself with the world of energy --- the non-material non-stuff that is the source of the material world. This world of energy is fluid, dynamic, resilient, changing, forever in motion. And yet it is also non-changing, still quiet, eternal and silent.”

When an organism is not in balance, it oscillates at a different or less-harmonic frequency. Since we each have a biofield (energy field) which surrounds and penetrates the physical body, a person, particularly a NTU therapist skilled in energy work, can knowingly and directly experience the unstable energy of another person (client) which provides invaluable assessment information. Since energy is not bounded by the physical skin we are always in contact with the biofield or “vibrations” of others. The questions become: to what extent are we aware of the influence of this energy on us; and, what do we do when we have become aware? NTU therapy encourages awareness of one’s energy qualitatively and facilitates an inner search for processes that are contributing to the energy imbalance. The next step, of course, is a healthy rebalancing of the energy. This step is called Realignment in the NTU therapeutic process.

## **Interconnectedness**

Human beings are more than flesh and bones, cells and protein; rather, we are composed of the same stuff of the universe and are in dynamic equilibrium with a universe of energy. We are connected to all life and from an African-world view, connected across time and space in the spirit world. This interconnectedness and healing are sustained through the vessels of healthy relationships, relationships that are congruent with the principals of MAAT (Truth, Justice, Order, Righteous, and Balance). Relationships are the part of the axiology of the African culture and truth is entrusted to relationships as exemplified

by the emphasis on oral history in the African tradition. Further, good mental health in the African community is enhanced or diminished through the quality of one's relationship with the community. Relationships allow us to experience interconnectedness as a mutual dependency, a unity or oneness. It allows and facilitates sensitivity to others and to the larger environment. When interconnectedness is experienced more intensely it is called love. Love has regenerative powers and sustains and enhances spirit-energy. When the concept is used more generically, love can also represent the connectedness between all of life.

In the clinical relationship, there is critical bond between the clinician/healer and the person that reveals themselves to you. This bond becomes increasingly sacred as the relationship generates the spirit-energy necessary for healing. Understanding this sacredness provides the mutual protection that both the therapist/healer and the client needs for harmony, balance, and integration. Appreciating the sacredness of the relationship allows the therapist to maximize their connection to client energy, but also will serve as a internal guide for therapeutic direction and boundaries.

## ***Authenticity***

Authenticity corresponds to the MAAT principle of truth in the sense of a genuineness of a person's spirit-energy. For similar reasons already stated, relationships are the vessels of spirit-energy and truth and necessitates the authentic representation of the bodymind spirit-energy for harmony, balance, and interconnectedness. It is the relationship that we build within the larger family/community that define, the quality of our being and projecting ourselves in truth is a key component of that task. When we are authentic, the spirit-energy is clear and crisp. We are aware of our needs and wants and have increased ability to communicate those needs and wants without psychological interference. We are more creative and spontaneous when we exist and project from an authentic inner core. The organism functions from a place of integrity since it is sharing and receiving honestly and openly. The bodymind is trusting the spirit-energy for guidance and protection and not sustaining dysfunctional barriers to health and optimal living.

When a person is authentic they are “for ic they are-2(.00195(a)4(8g (.0012(i)-2(c)4( 195(ne)4(s)-1(s-130(of)s)-1(e3.1l)-2(ve)4(s)-1(c)4( t)-2(e)-

through the balancing mechanism of continuous self awareness and openness to feedback from others. It is achieved through a process of self-knowledge, self-acceptance, and self-actualization. Authenticity is the process of being real through accessing your inner self and following through with integrity. It is the process of being true to your self. Things (life) can often go wrong when we do violence to ourselves by not being either self-aware or true to self.

### ***Role of the NTU Therapist***

The goal of NTU psychotherapy is to restore harmony, balance, interconnectedness, and authenticity to the bodymind in order to facilitate the internal healing spirit-energy. Succinctly, the role of the NTU therapist in this process is that of a spiritual guide assisting the organism or collective to become aware of, and stimulate, their self-healing mechanism. In order to accomplish this task the therapist must:

1. Be in harmony with the spirit-energy of the client system;
2. Be aware of their own energy and balance;
3. Stay centered in the interconnected time and space of the healing relationship; and
4. Experience authentic love for the client system.

To the extent that the therapist/healer is in harmonious relation to the spirit-energy of the client system, they become able to access and experience the imbalanced energy in a manner deeper than the verbal communications. The healer is able to perceive the inconsistency or unauthentic quality of the client's bodymind and with emphatic technique, intervene toward bringing the client into awareness of their own blocks to health. The healer, in the African tradition, heals through inspiration, creating the healing medicine through their own authentic energy. The healer inspires and energizes the client system through the infusion of positive healing energy within the framework of authentic human love. Inspiration stands in contrast to manipulation which is the use of negative energy. Manipulation is a most potent poison and potentially destroys people, plants and all life. Therapy is a search for the true self, the natural self, and the therapist/healer empowers the true self of the client bodymind to reveal itself and follow its natural course. It is imperative to avoid force, deception, and manipulation in the healing relationship. Instead, the NTU therapist relies on inspiration to do the work of the spirit. The therapist engages the client with rituals of cooperation (inspiration) not rituals of competition (manipulation).

Again, in the African tradition, the NTU therapist/healer counters the despair of the client by giving them hope which liberates the soul. The therapist works to purge the falsehoods out of the abused self of the client bodymind, flushing out the poisons from the body and soul. This process allows for the client to regain contact with the true self and to rediscover their authentic self. It allows for the unfolding of the NTU healing spirit-energy.

The NTU therapist understands that evil exist only with your consent; that dis-eases need a receptive host to thrive and that unity creates and division destroys. It is further understood that evil (dis-ease) borrows on a person's strength and that the client system can deny it strength through awareness and positive energy. The healer assists the client system to synthesize all their scattered energies thereby empowering the bodymind. The therapists work, then, is one of seeing, hearing, and knowing the spirit-energy of the client system bodymind and helping with the awareness, realignment, and integration process. The spiritual and healthy functioning therapist develops a shadow i.e., when the therapist develops their spiritual abilities to see and hear the energy around them, that knowledge follows them. In order to do this work, the NTU healer must be prepared to see and hear at the spirit-energy level and this mandates authenticity and a continuous process of self-awareness, rebalancing, and personal growth.

### **NTU Phases and Techniques**

The phases of the NTU Psychotherapy have been more robustly articulated in a previous article (see Phillips, 1990) and will only be summarized herein. In addition, the reader is directed to a matrix of NTU phases and techniques developed by Dr. Pamela Foster and Dr. Frederick Phillips at the Progressive Life Center in Washington, D.C. that appears on the following pages.

The initial phase of NTU therapy is Harmony, defined as the developing coherence or compatibility between therapist/healer and client system such that the therapist is experienced as a positive extension of the client system. In this phase, the major task of the healer is to experience the spirit-energy of the client system and to develop a healing anchor for the troubled energy of the client biosphere. From the client's perspective, they would want to "feel good" while being in the therapist's energy. The client should feel an increasing comfort and personal security that would allow them to deepen their sharing of barriers to healing. This phase, (harmony) although being the primary focus of the initial component of NTU therapy, is manifested throughout the entire healing relationship albeit at lesser intense levels. Since the therapist, at this point, knows little about the client system in terms of information, it is the therapist heightened ability to "see" with his/hers spirit-energy eyes that will guide the therapist to a successful conclusion of this phase. As a matter of fact, in some ways it is disadvantageous for the healer to have "information" on the client system because those "facts" tend to orient the therapist's perception in a particular manner thereby placing the harmony phase within a prescribed contact. While soliciting information is certainly indicated it is more a function of the needs of a information driven society than it is by the need to achieve harmony. Within a traditional African healing context, for example, the healer has the mentally ill person spend the day with him for the expressed purpose of observing his spirit as the patient interacts with others. Harmony, and diagnosis, can be achieved with little reliance on information as such. Rather the healer/therapist utilizes their spiritual sense, their intuitive sense, to access and connect to the energy field of the client and develops an initial hypothesis. During this phase the therapist's flexibility is key since the patterns of the client's needs are unknown to them and the particular expression of the

client's need may require an unplanned deviation from their agenda. At this point, the client system is attempting to "feel" the authenticity of the healer energy so that they can determine the expected quality of the developing healing relationship. How much can we trust? Is this going to be real experience? Are the primary underlying client questions of the harmony phase.

The second phase of NTU therapy/healing is awareness whereby the focus is on developing self knowledge and knowledge of the self in relation to others. The self knowledge is ultimately a developing awareness of the blocks or barriers that the client system has created and sustained that is preventing the natural healing process from becoming operative. What are the thoughts and feelings that we are generating that are in conflict with the natural rhythm of our healing energy is the predominate quest of the awareness phase. Another way to view the same objective is assisting the client system to take responsibility for the production of their thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. What, for example, is the psychological gain that the client derives from thinking a certain thought, feeling a certain emotion, performing a certain behavior. These, and other interventions, have as their primary objective facilitating the client's awareness of their own energy patterns and the impact of their energy on others and vice versa. Is the client's energy congruent with their verbal statements? If not, why not? Or if not, is the client aware of the inconsistency. Through various techniques, and a focus on the spirit-energy of the client system, the healer therapist can effectively guide the client system through deepening levels of self awareness of their blocks to healing.

The Alignment phase is the reintegration process of healthy thoughts and feelings that impels the healing NTU force throughout the bodymind experience. It is the phase where the psychological impasses are "worked through" so that available energy is released

within the client system. It is the phase of cleansing, self renewal, and regeneration. We have walked through the darkness and into the light; we have faced the psychological fears/anxieties that have immobilized us and integrated their energy into our being. We are more whole as we have reincorporated our previously disparate parts. We are empowered.

Normally, the major task of the alignment phase is the reconciliat

colleagues, or others may react in various ways along the continuum of healthy (supportive) through unhealthy (manipulative) behaviors, it is the healing client system that needs to remain centered and anchored in their unfolding new alignment. New awareness may, and often does, occur during this phase since the client energy system has shifted thereby allowing the client to see their environment and relationships from a different and hopefully, healthier perspective.

The final NTU phase of healing is Synthesis which is a more advanced and complete reintegration of the client's spiritual and psychic energy. The key outcome of this phase is that the person or client system has an overall healthier process that will enable them to reconcile their future life stresses into opportunities for personal growth. Assuring that the client system has a healthy process to rebalance their energy or keep themselves communicating authentically are areas of inquiry during this phase. The client system not only has resolved the initial presenting problems but also has a process and direction for healthy living.

Of critical importance is the admonition that we understand the NTU phases of therapy/healing from a circular logic framework rather than a linear. Logic Perspective - The phases are interconnected and not uniformly exercised in every case. A client system may need more space/time in a particular phase and also the bodymind might be, and usually is, functioning from multiple phases simultaneously. The therapist however, is encouraged to "go with the flow" and remain centered in their own life sustaining spirit-energy as they harmonize in a healing relationship with the client system.

*NTU PSYCHOTHERAPY PHASES AND TECHNIQUES*

<i>PHASE</i>	<i>DEFINITION</i>	<i>MANIFESTATION</i>	<i>OUTCOMES</i>	<i>TECHNIQUES</i>
Harmony	A developing coherence or compatibility between therapist and client system such that the therapist is experienced as a positive extension of client system.	Shared essence, belonging, nurturance, love, interdependence, developing trust, relation.	Shared consciousness, therapist “joins” with system, “Therapeutic Bridge”.	Being real/authenticity, Self-disclosure, Use of Rituals, Acceptance of Where client is, Therapist composure and relaxation, Accentuation of the positive in all components of the client system.
Awareness	Having or showing realization, perception or knowledge of self and of self in relation to others. <u>Cognitive awareness</u> of issues allows a sensitivity to the “facts” and the definable aspects of a situation, and makes available a process for defining or knowing reality. <u>Affective awareness</u> of issues allows a sensitivity to the subjective aspects or feeling generated by a situation or experience.	Differentiation between thoughts and feelings; process vs. Content focused, clarify discrepancy between reality and expectation, acknowledgment, ownership and respect for feelings. Developing feeling of NTU energy.	Identification and expression of thoughts and feelings. Clarification of significant factors which influence functioning.	Reframing, Relabeling, Visualization techniques, Use of “I” statements, Talking directly, Awareness wheel, Feedback of thoughts and feelings, Present centered, empty chair, self-awareness.

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Alignment	The synergism of beings and of beings; material and psychic forces toward a	The sharing of feelings and experiences, introspection, role, clarification, corrective	Restructured client system, reinforcement and emphasis of indigenous strengths. New	Peel the onion, Exploration of worse fear, own projections, Confront fear, Accept

	central point of existence. The adjustment or arrangement of people and/or things in relation to each other so that healing force (NTU) becomes operative.	recapitulation, catharsis, interconnectedness, restoration, and revitalization. The experience of NTU, appropriate responsibility for self and for system.	energy available to client system.	responsibility, share self; take risks.
Actualization	The materialization of potential. Utilization of new attitudes and behavior in a system's life space.	Identification of goals, tasks, roles, behaviors, process and resources. Behavior Change.	Increased confidence, re: problem-solving abilities.	Practice new behavior record new establish tasks/objectives, Homework assignment.

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Synthesis	The balancing integration and appropriate use of all functional resources available to the system; spiritual, psychic and material. The delineation and availability of a problem-solving process indigenous to the client system.	Realistic expectations and goal setting, personalization of the problem solving process, system stability and flexibility, proactive involvement and investment in systemic well-being.	Need fulfillment, empowerment, reciprocal nurturing, authentic, supportive relationship, a unified resilient and self-correcting system. The absorption of the NTU Force throughout the system.	How have you responded differently to life situations? Q. What do others say about you? Q. What is your process for psychological problem-solving?

**CASE EXAMPLE:CASE EXAMPLE:CASE EXAMPLE:**

OT, 42 year old African male, was referred by his Employee Assistance officer. His presenting symptoms included a long history of compulsive and irresponsible behavior. OT would, for example stop off from work to visit friends, not call his girlfriend, and stay out late sometimes overnight. Both he and his fiancée agreed that there was no suspicion of infidelity just failure to communicate even though OT understood intellectually the need to communicate. Further, OT had mild to moderate problems with following through on commitments and decisions and at times, was untruthful. Related to the above behaviors was his tendency to spend large sums of money usually gambling. Otherwise, OT was viewed as friendly, intelligent, warm, and caring.

OT described his behavior as compulsive, sometimes, and irresponsible. He stated that he didn't "understand me" because this is not how he wanted to be and he "knew better". He was motivated to address these issues at present because he didn't want to lose his current relationship and stated that truthfulness and respectable behavior is what his fiancée demanded. OT stated he initially experienced symptoms in 1968 as a Vietnam era veteran. He was raised on a country farm; his parents separated at age 3; and he had an older sister that he never really knew. OT thought that, "I had a happy childhood", but he always carried with him the question of why his parents divorced. He further wondered why his mother kept him so close to her and away from his sister. His mother has since passed; his father was still alive but suffering from Alzheimer Disease: and he was suspicious that his sister was manipulating the father and the estate. OT had been married twice and was presently engaged. His first marriage ended with a spat of violence culminating with his wife stabbing

him in the throat while he was asleep. He has a 15 year old daughter from the second marriage and he describes the relationship with his daughter as good.

## ***DIAGNOSIS***

From an NTU therapy framework Mr. OT was perceived along the following dimensions. **Harmony** - OT was substantially disharmonious within himself and between his environment. His spirit energy was confused, conflicted and it was experienced as very disconnected by the therapist-healer. His sense of purpose, or NIA, was fragmented, diffused, and rather than providing a healthy anchor, was mostly a source of nagging frustration and anxiety. His energy was very agitated and did not flow freely; rather it was very disjointed. It was clear that OT was neither not at peace with himself nor did he feel a sense of wholeness. **Balance** - Mr. OT was extremely off-center and this was experienced as very unstable energy by the therapist. His behavioral pattern of engaging in sustained “play activities” such as visiting a friend and staying all night was a clear example of a life imbalance. Relative to his roles as husband, father, worker, friend, etc., OT was able to articulate, albeit just intellectually, his recognition of his spirit imbalance and was aware, further, that this signified a major problem. He also self described that he didn’t have sufficient control over his behaviors, thus his explanation (in reality, an excuse) for his imbalanced actions and decisions. **Interconnectness** - OT’s spirit energy was classically conflictual in that it would alternatively attract and repel. His energy was very engaging at the surface level and then his energy would function to thwart developing emotional closeness on the deeper level of authentic relationships. This unhealthy interactive pattern was

equally evident in both his male as well as his female relationship though it was more readily observable in his male-female relationships. For example, OT experienced significant difficulty in sharing negative feedback with male colleagues which contributed to his difficulty with extracting himself from unhealthy situations. OT's spirit-energy was experienced by the therapist-healer as an energy that was quietly desperate, intensely lonely, and as a spirit-energy that was seeking connectedness though fearful of finding it. **Authenticity** - Related to Mr. OT's global difficulty with personal relationships was his relative inauthenticity within those and other relationships. Though his energy was usually vibrant and engaging it would become forced and strained especially when he himself became the subject of inquiry. OT's diminished authenticity suggested a fundamental fear or avoidance as it usually does diagnostically. He was unable to access his true self and, behaviorally, always looked for convenient escape routes rather than risk movement toward being in tune with his genuine self.

The initial phase of NTU, **harmony**, was rapidly established in great part through the continuous reinforcement by the therapist of one, OT's inherent desire to address and correct his behavior and, two, his inner power that would guide him through the conflict that was blocking his healing energy. The therapist conveyed an authentic belief that OT ultimately wanted to change his behavior and that, perhaps more importantly, he had the power to do so. OT was told that the role of the therapist healer was to guide him through his own unique healing process and to provide verbal and emotional sustenance through the difficult points and times along his path. The challenges to establishing harmony included the widespread African American male protective attitude that guards against the vulnerability of personal sharing and emotional exposure and therefore interprets external assistance as intrusive. The therapist-healer

deepened the developing coherence by sharing his own Vietnam era military experiences, consequent moral and cultural conflict, and residual emotions. As the **awareness** phase of the NTU therapy process developed, O.T. became cognizant of his own emotional themes of alienation; insecurity; embarrassment; feelings of inadequacy; and anger feelings toward his father and sister. From the NTU paradigm, OT experienced the pain of his spiritual disconnectedness that had been prevalent since childhood. The therapeutic relationship between the healer and OT was itself used as the stage for the acknowledgment of and confirmation of OT's spirit-energy, and through the NTU process OT became increasingly cognizant of the quality of his spirit-energy and more authentic in his communication. The therapist, for instance, would ask OT at the beginning of each session, and also at appropriate intervals during a session, to reflect on the quality of his spirit energy by simply asking him; "How is your spirit today?" or "Describe your energy at this moment". The mere focus of the question encouraged and allowed OT to be within himself and to contact his inner self or inner voice. As he became more aware of his own energy he increased his ability to discriminate between authentic responses and fictitious responses and, perhaps even more importantly, he developed an increased disdain for the non-authentic responses. In other words, it felt better to OT to be truthful, honest and authentic within himself and in his communication to the healer and that positive feeling was labeled by the healer to be the NTU healing energy. Through the principle of authenticity and its healing powers, OT became increasingly aware of the connectedness of prior events in his early life and, thereupon, was able to uncover the meaning of those events as they related to his present spirit energy impasse. The synthesis of authenticity and connectedness provided him a real life platform in which to understand the essence of his troubled energy. Specifically, he was able to "see" the impact on him of his family house burning down at age 11; his

loss of all his material belongings; the significance of its occurrence on Christmas Eve; and his running out of the house into the snow only clad in his underwear. More meaningful than the “facts” of this event was the connection OT made to his spirit within those events so that through the experiencing of that dynamic process he was able to become more aware and reintegrate his splintered energy. With the developing awareness of his authentic spirit energy within each “event”, OT was able to integrate the available NTU energy into his being thereby becoming healthier and having more energy to more fully negotiate the next unresolved issue. In the house fire, for example, OT became more empowered through reorganizing and accepting that it was his unresolved anger energy at the manner in which his father responded to him after the fire, rather than the trauma of the fire itself that was the critical impasse. Similarly it was the acknowledgment of the reaction of his spirit-energy to his father’s “boring existence” rather than the denial of any feelings that allowed OT more energy for his own healing. The most impactful of a series of deepening awarenesses was when OT connected with his spirit energy’s “intuition” that there had been an incestuous relationship between his father and his sister and that the aftermath resulted in a fractured family of two dyad’s, the mother and OT being one pair and the father and OT’s sister being the other. An awareness technique of re-creating the past in the present experience by using verbs that are present centered (“I am saying to my dad...” rather than “I said to my dad...”) was used. This awareness technique utilized prominently in gestalt therapy manifests that time and consciousness is a continuous dynamic and we can easily connect to the so-called past because all experience is a present experience. When we acknowledge “past” experiences in the present as OT did, then we are able as he was to experience the critical moment fully with the richness of the emotions of the spirit energy: that existed within that “event”.

As the NTU healing process transitioned more into the **alignment** phase OT had indeed become increasingly and authentically aware of his spirit energy in relationship to his sister and father but had not, as yet, dissolved his impasses between them. He was therefore still operating from blocked or fragmented energy; he was not at peace. His anger energy toward his father had been identified and acknowledged but not reconciled nor in alignment. The primary technique that was used to facilitate re-alignment of OT's spirit energy was a visualization experience with an ancestor. OT was assisted to achieve a relaxed mental and physical state through a deep breathing method while listening to an African rhythm relaxation tape. As OT was experiencing the pleasantness of his relaxed state, he was guided into three images. First, he was assisted to connect to an image of himself as a younger child; second he was guided to see and feel the spirit energy of one of his ancestors coming into contact with his own energy; and third, it was suggested to OT that the ancestor knew of the source of his troubled energy and that they would share with OT what they wanted for him and also provide a path for him to seek peace. When OT returned from this spiritual experience, he was tearful yet relieved. He had experienced the spirit-energy of his grandmother with his mother behind her. According to OT, his grandmother in a calm and reassuring manner said to him, "Let it go, we'll take care of her". OT felt a tremendous relief and stated that it was a most powerful, real, and full experience". Through the incorporation of his grandmother's spirit-energy into his being, he became more enlightened, powerful, and healthy. The impasse was dissolved for him.

OT was presented with an immediate opportunity to **actualize** his realigned spirit energy as he interacted with a number of his family members over the next two weeks. He reported that now his relatives had “began to come over to his side” as they discussed both the immediacy of this father’s future and the relationship with OT’s sister. He reported that he began to have more substantive and healthy “talks” with his other family members and with his own daughter. Overall OT stated that he felt that “a burden has been lifted” after he made the decision to “let go” and he felt as though he was “on track”. OT demonstrated the **Synthesis** phase of NTU psychotherapy when, at a later time, a crisis developed within his part-time business, a business which he ruminated had excellent upside potential but one in which there was always nagging problems. The crisis (opportunity) occurred when his business partner stated to OT that he wanted to “drop it” whereupon OT was then faced with the critical decision of where he was going with the business, whether he was going to continue, or whether he was going to “drop out” also. OT engaged in a clean and healthy process of personal and business reevaluation, he communicated effectively with his ex-partner on the termination issues associated with his departure from the business; and he initiated a process to both refocus and restructure the business into a healthier operation.

## **Summary Summary Summary**

Traditional African philosophy is anchored by the concept of spirituality, herein defined as a measure of the quality of one's relationship to the ultimate vitalizing life force energy. This life force which is manifested as both energy and matter is known to the Bantu people of Central Africa as NTU and discussed by western scientist as both a particle (substance) or a wave (force) depending on the object's interaction with the observer. African philosophy has a singular appreciation of the harmony of life which also undergirds the NTU perspective of force and matter, body and mind, being an integrated whole. This force/matter, known in NTU as spirit-energy, becomes the operational framework through which the therapist-healer both understands and facilitates the healing process. The diagnostic constellations of NTU are: Harmony, Balance, Authenticity, and Interconnectedness. The major circular phases of NTU Therapy are: Harmony, Awareness, Alignment, Actualization, and Synthesis. The goal of NTU psychotherapy is to assist the client system in realignment of their spirit-energy toward a more authentic and healthier process of being within the principals of Nguzo Saba and MAAT.

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11`