

Thesis for Psychotherapeutic Training in Biosynthesis

Use of Meditation in Biosynthetic Psychotherapy

Author: Ing. Martin Mrázek, MSc. (martin.mrazek@gmail.com)

Version: v05 sent on 20-01-19

Last update: 19-Jan-2020 in Prague



Contents

CONTENTS.....	2
INTRODUCTION.....	3
STRUCTURE OF THIS ARTICLE	3
MEDITATION – DEFINITION, TYPES AND POSTURES	3
WHAT IS MEANT BY “MEDITATION” IN THIS ARTICLE	3
PREPARATORY WORK FOR MEDITATION.....	4
CONCENTRATION MEDITATION.....	4
INSIGHT MEDITATION	5
POSTURES OF THE MEDITATION.....	5
LIMITS OF THE DEFINITION.....	6
BIOSYNTHETIC PSYCHOTHERAPY AND ITS RELATION TO MEDITATION.....	6
MISSION OF BIOSYNTHETIC PSYCHOTHERAPY	6
THE INTRODUCTION TO THE LIFE-FIELDS MODEL.....	6
<i>Meditation and movements to inner parts of life-fields</i>	8
APPLICATIONS TO PSYCHOTHERAPEUTIC CLIENTS	9
PREPARATORY TECHNIQUES FOR MEDITATION	10
<i>Contraindications</i>	10
<i>Expected results</i>	11
<i>Progress of the preparatory techniques</i>	11
<i>Case report: Client practicing regular relaxation</i>	11
<i>Preparatory techniques and changes in the life-fields model</i>	12
WALKING AS THE OTHER WAY	12
<i>Traditional instruction</i>	12
<i>Application for therapeutic clients</i>	13
<i>Case report: Walking client</i>	13
<i>Walking and changes in Life-field model</i>	13
APPLICATIONS OF MEDITATION TECHNIQUES	14
LABELING TECHNIQUE	15
<i>Labeling technique and changes in life-fields</i>	16
MEDITATION ON BODY	16
<i>Meditation on body and life-fields</i>	17
REPEATING MANTRAS	18
<i>Repeating mantras and life-fields</i>	19
MEDITATION ON MENTAL OBJECTS.....	19
<i>Meditation on mental objects and life-fields</i>	20
MEDITATION DEVELOPING SPIRITUALITY AND MEDITATION AS THERAPEUTIC TOOL.....	20
RESTRICTIONS.....	20
SKEPTICAL DOUBTS - MISSING ASPECT OF FAITH	20
TRANSITION TO SPIRITUAL SCHOOLS	21
CONCLUSIONS	21
WORKS CITED.....	21

Introduction

I practice Vipassana meditation since the year 2001. I attended quite a few meditation retreats – usually couple of weeks lasting silent retreats lead by Buddhist monks teaching the classic vipassana technique¹.

Back in year 2012 I met biosynthetic psychotherapy for the first time. To overcome a stumbling blocks in my meditation progress I started to attend regular psychotherapy with a therapist who attend a meditation retreat with me and who trained in biosynthesis. After couple of months of my own psychotherapy I was so fascinated by the biosynthetic method that I enrolled into psychotherapeutic training of biosynthesis.

I use biosynthesis a lot with my therapeutic clients and I realized that the meditation techniques could speed up the progress of the therapy. I like the method of biosynthesis because it integrates these techniques so smoothly.

So far I am prevaillingly working for the commercial sphere (management, management consulting). I decided to write this work more in an creative way to inspire future focus on relation of meditation and psychotherapy, because I do not have such a long and rich record of clients to elaborate a scientific article.

Structure of this article

I start this work by clarifying what I mean by meditation. I also summarize usual types and postures of meditation. Then I explain the mission of the psychotherapy as understood by biosynthetic method. I go on with a short description of the life-fields model which is one the most important building blocks in the biosynthesis. Then I integrate the above mentioned chapters and describe how meditation techniques could be applied and what is their impact on life-fields, i.e. how the client can get closer to her essence in the life-fields mode with use of meditation techniques. At the end I also briefly write about usual feedback on meditation from therapeutic clients and about differences in meditation practice when practiced within a spiritual path and when applied as a tool supporting psychotherapy.

Meditation – definition, types and postures

This chapter briefly outlines what is meant by meditation in this article and what are the main types and forms of the meditation which I use with clients.

What is meant by “meditation” in this article

The term meditation became overloaded in recent decades by many meanings which are rather unsimilar to the traditional understanding provided in religious practices². For the purposes of this work I call by *meditation* the practice of Theravada described in (Sujiva, 2000) and (Sujiva B. , 1998)

- Practice of insight meditation

¹ Mainly I engaged with Burmese vipassana schools of Sayadaw U Pandita and U Tejaniya

² See (Goleman, 2012) who describes and compares Hindu Bhakti, Jewish and Christian meditation, Sufism and meditation schools labeled as Buddhist (Theravada, Tibetan, Zen).

- Practice of concentration meditation
- Preparatory techniques for these meditation types

My choice to focus only on Theravadan practice referenced above stems from my personal background only. I know these techniques (or rather their beginner's parts) practically after years of training. So my choice has nothing to do with my opinion about other religious practices and their techniques – I do not think they are worse or better, I just do not know them enough (or at all) to write about them or use them with my clients³.

I also write about preparatory practice for meditation rather extensively in this work. That is because the experience with my psychotherapeutic clients shows that usually it would be too premature and sometimes even not safe to go directly to meditation techniques. Usually a slow start with simple preparatory techniques is a safe and understandable start for clients.

The following subsections outline a bit more what I mean by each type of meditation or by the preparation for it.

Preparatory work for meditation

When I speak about “meditation” techniques in this article I mean preparatory techniques too. The preparatory techniques include mainly the mindful relaxation which lead the practitioner to reconnect with her body and refocus attention from the external reality more to the inner world. The first experience of a psychotherapeutic client with the mindful relaxation is hugely important landmark for further use of meditation techniques in the client's psychotherapy. Clients who are post-traumatic or psychotic could react in an opposite way than expected to these techniques. They could be not safe for them (leading to retraumatization or development of psychosis)⁴. Always the therapist should be careful how the client reacts on these techniques and should tailor any further recommendation accordingly.

Concentration meditation

The concept of this type of meditation dwells in focusing attention on a chosen meditation object, being careful of the mind wandering away and when this happens - refocusing back to the object. Different spiritual schools have a plentitude of recommendations what a good meditation object could be:

- For the Theravadan practice are typical objects described in The four Brahma Viharas (Realms of Brahma) as elaborated in (Sujiva B. , 1998) – these are lovingkindness, compassion, sympathetic rejoice and equanimity
- Yogic schools close to Hinduism or Sikhism recommend mantras and prayers
- The typical concentration object is breathing and related sensations or other bodily sensations

³ See (Goleman, 2012) where the author also compares different religious practices and analyses whether they use concentration or insight type of meditation.

⁴ There are also other types of clients with a specific diagnosis or anamnesis where the meditation techniques or the preparation for them could be dangerous.

- External objects and their inner reflection - e.g. watching flame of a candle or colored disc (Kasina discs – see (Wiki Kasina, 2019)) and then after closing eyes focusing on its imprint in mind

The concentration techniques could be tricky because they do not accent the factor of mindfulness so much as insight meditation. This could be an issue with psychotherapeutic clients, because many types of diagnoses have tendency to unhealthy concentration. To name a few these could be clients who are

- strongly neurotic
- with tendency to psychosis
- with OCD
- with PTSD

The unhealthy concentration is the way of focus where there is not the eased and relaxed attention staying naturally with the meditation object, but stronger and stronger struggle with distraction which leads to frustration, tension in mind and body, bad breathing or even more serious issues like hallucinations or psychosis.

Insight meditation

Insight meditation (vipassana) could be simply described as the mind focusing on itself. So if there is attention just being in the present moment, noticing mind and body processes and states it is the flow of insight meditation. Traditionally the Theravadan Buddhism describes four basis of insight meditation:

- Attention to body
- Attention to feelings
- Attention to consciousness
- Attention to mental objects

The traditional meditation centers in Asia (e.g. U Pandita Rama in Burma) teach these bases of meditation in the order as listed above. Surprisingly this does not work well for therapeutic clients, because they are often rather disconnected from their bodies so it is rather challenging to achieve a progress in mindfulness of body.

Postures of the meditation

The types of meditation described above can be practiced in the following postures:

- sitting
- standing
- laying down
- walking

The first three types can be done with eyes closed or opened while the walking meditation is always with eyes opened.

Limits of the definition

I do not claim that only techniques and forms listed above are proper enough to be called “meditation”. I am just defining the term for purposes of this article. So my analysis here does not relate to the following activities which are sometimes also considered as meditation:

- Guided meditation sessions or sessions with music
- Visualisation
- Contemplations
- Dance (i.e. trance dance, transpersonal dance etc.)
- Ceremonies with psychedelics / intoxicants
- Autogenous training

Biosynthetic psychotherapy and its relation to meditation

„Biosynthesis is a particular form of Somatic Psychotherapy. Somatic psychotherapy works with the principle of mens sana in corpore sano as developed by Pythagoras and Hippocrates ... Biosynthesis means integration of life and refers to specific processes of self-formation, which guide organic growth, personal development and spiritual emergence. Biosynthesis was founded by David Boadella in the early seventies. Biosynthesis" stands for the goal of our therapeutic work:

the connection of the three fundamental areas of our humanness:

***our bodily, somatic existence,
our psychological experience,
our fundamental essence.“***

– see (Boadella, 2019)

Mission of biosynthetic psychotherapy

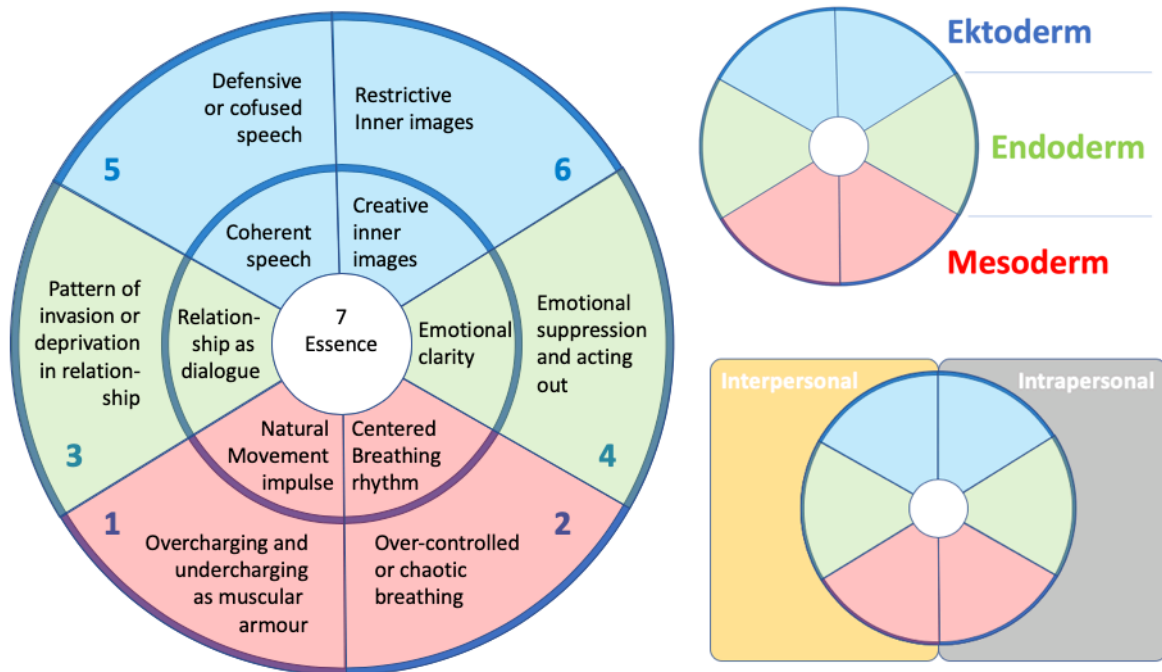
The mission of biosynthetic psychotherapy could be found in (Kolektiv ČIB, 2017) and could be outlined as follows:

- Via the life field model as enter the inner ring of life-fields (see the next subsection and the picture within it)
- Connecting our experience at somatic and psychological level with our essence

The introduction to the life-fields model

As described in (Boadella, 2019) - *„Biosynthesis is a process therapy, which recognizes the uniqueness of the individual and the variety of developmental paths that underlie our self-formation. The human being is understood to be multi-dimensional, and the distinct levels of impression and expression are understood to be interconnected life-fields of experience (e.g. physical, vital, emotional, mental, spiritual). These life-fields occur in two forms, which we can see as forming a choice between closed and open systems within the person. The closed system represents character traps, bodily blockages, and spiritual contractions. The open*

system reflects psychic contact, energetic liveliness and a contact to the qualities of the heart. The life-fields disclose seven key therapeutic modalities, which we use, and which are illustrated in the diagram below.“



A more detailed explanation is also provided in (Boadella, 2019) – „In each of the six outer segments of the diagram a different life-field is expressed. The closed position is shown in the outer circle; the open position is seen in the intermediate circle, which is connected to the essential self of the person at the centre of the diagram. The art of biosynthesis therapy is to enter the intermediate circle where all the segments are more connected, by overcoming the blockages in the most accessible segment of the outer circle. This yields seven possible areas of work in total: motoric work on muscle tone and movement expression; energetic work on vital and subtle rhythms of breathing; work on the resonances and interferences in the bi-personal field of the relationship; work on the spectrum of containment and release in regard to the expression of emotion; transformative work on the restrictive images that limit our vision; and work to clean and clarify our language from its communicative distortions. In the central area of the diagram lies work to connect us, through somatic meditations, with the voice of the heart.

The diagram can also be seen horizontally as having three zones: a lower zone of connection (somatic-energetic bridges); a central zone of contact (channels of relationship and emotional expression); and an upper zone of context (symbolic and imaginal matrices of experience). Looking at the diagram vertically we can differentiate between more interpersonal segments on the left and more intrapersonal segments on the right, each affecting the other, surrounding a transpersonal core-self.“

Meditation and movements to inner parts of life-fields

Usually the client comes to the therapy because he encounters difficulties which could be associated with topics of the outside ring of the life-fields scheme. When the therapy progresses successfully she gets more and more to the inner ring, closer to her essence.

I briefly describe in this chapter how the meditation can help clients to get from outer parts of 1 to 6 on the picture to the inner parts – thus support the progress of biosynthetic therapy.

From **Overcharging and undercharging as muscular armour** to **Natural movement impulse**: Actually I do not have a strong evidence based on the work with my clients that this part of life-fields could be improved by meditation techniques. There are a few indirect effects which I can mention:

- The preparatory techniques for meditation could support other more direct methods of work with muscular armour
- Mindfulness of body is helpful to notice that there is too much or too little tonus which leads to seeking help (e.g. massage, dance, body therapy, rolfing etc.)
- **Typical challenges**: long meditation retreats can increase bodily stiffness, can cause severe pain in back, knees and elsewhere

From **over-controlled or chaotic breathing** to **Centered breathing rhythm**: As shown later on in this work the breathing patterns can be affected hugely by meditation techniques:

- Development of abdominal and chest breathing leads to psychosomatic harmonization. Instructions for such breathing are key part of most of relaxation & meditation techniques
- Letting go of breathing while observing it is crucial technique to get rid of over-controlled breathing or in stabilizing the chaotic breathing. Such a technique is the core part of vipassana instruction
- **Typical challenges**: effort to breathe into abdomen could increase bodily tension if there is too strong muscle armor (i.e. from a former trauma)

From **suppressing emotions and acting out** to **emotional clarity**:

- All meditation techniques as described in this work have the development of mindfulness as its inherent part. Being more and more mindful of processes and states of one's inner world leads to higher awareness of emotions and thus to emotional clarity.
- The vipassana experience often reveals what repetitive thoughts the client has and what are her patterns of associations. Such experience goes directly against suppressing emotions or against acting out.
- There are sophisticated techniques as Focusing see - (T.Gendlin, 2010) which is in fact very similar to mindfulness of feelings combined with the labeling technique (see below in this article)
- **Typical challenges**: Those people who practice meditation as a part of their spiritual path tend to end up in some kind of Spiritual bypass – see (Augustus, 2010). Basically they deny to themselves that they still have emotions like anger or jealousy, because they need to believe that they have already overcome such emotions.

From **patterns of invasion or deprivation in relationship** to the **relationship as encounter and dialogue**:

- One client of mine described that after a period of time when he practiced vipassana labeling technique he was able to apply in interpersonal situations which directly lead to decrease of deprivation in his relationship
- Obviously the mindfulness of emotions as developed in vipassana helps in interpersonal interactions too
- The meditation on Four Brahma's realms (lovingkindness, equanimity, compassion and sympathetic rejoice) are rather direct tool which decreases one's tendency to be invasive in relationships. They also lead to a balanced perception of self-value (I am neither less nor more than others) which (apart from not being invasive) leads also to refusal to accept a depriving relationship
- **Typical challenges:** As in the preceding point – here is huge space for spiritual bypass. People who reflect their interpersonal patterns in their meditation practice often tend to create a Buddha's mask – calm, accepting, reasonable, tolerant demeanor which contradict their real feelings.

From **restrictive inner images to creative inner images**:

- Mindfulness of thoughts developed in vipassana plays the key role in noticing the restrictive inner images and detaching from them.
- A sub-part of the mindfulness of thoughts developed in vipassana is mindfulness of association patterns – the practitioner start to be aware about causes and their effects in her mental processes, e.g. thinking about plan to do exam leads to restrictive image of “you are not good enough”
- The meditation on Four Brahma's Realms could support the path to creative inner images
- **Typical challenges:** currently I am not much aware of any

From **defensive or confused speaking to coherent speech**: I do not have experience of this part of life-fields being affected by meditation techniques in a direct way. Naturally when the inner voice doing the labelling technique (see below) is gentle and compassionate it could manifest in person's speech, but I have now evidence of that with my clients.

Applications to psychotherapeutic clients

I believe and always strongly respect that psychotherapeutic sessions should not switch to meditation sessions, neither it should be filled with extensive reports on client's meditation progress. If such a change occurred it would be a deviation from the contract with the client and from the purpose as outlined in section Mission of biosynthetic psychotherapy and I believe it would be very confusing for the client.

So any technique mentioned in this article should only support the structure and method of the therapy:

- There should always be a clear contract with the client
- The therapist should always explain why she introduces the technique to her client and how the technique supports the therapeutic process

- The therapist should recommend such techniques which are specifically suitable for the client, her anamnesis and current situation
- The therapy should reflect and integrate the experience from these technique
- These techniques should always be considered as auxiliary tool thus if the client does not feel like using them now or at all there should be no push from the therapist's side. Also when the client feels like speaking about other topics during the session the therapist should be welcoming this

Within limits described above this chapter gives an overview how to introduce a few meditation techniques to the biosynthetic therapeutic process. The following chapter then provides a few tips how to support the client trying the meditation techniques more seriously.

Preparatory techniques for meditation

My clients are typically people with an intellectually oriented profession, using their knowledge from academic education to do their work. This often makes them rather "thoughts-focus" or being "in their head" thus disconnected from the body and its feelings. It also makes them less physically active than it would be healthy for them to get rid of the stress they keep experiencing. Usually such clients are also chronically tired because of the stress, bodily tensions and insufficiency of physical activity.

Recommended preparatory techniques:

- I start typically with inspiring such clients to do relaxation techniques to relax the body and reconnect with it, calming down brain waves and get a simple rest. Ideal are simple kinds of yogic sleep when the client sweeps attention throughout the body (just it should be much slower than a typical yogic sleep session – see below)
- The preceding point can bring more activation/relaxation when we instruct the client to tighten the part of the body where she focuses
- Often I recommend simple breathing techniques – couple of deep (but not too forced) breaths and then observation of normal breathing.
- The preceding point can connected to the client's inner world by ideating that she is breathing out all difficult moments of the day
- A good preparatory technique is also avoidance of the multitasking during daily activities and a simple focusing on the present moment – typically I recommend to enjoy at least one meal a day with full attention – no reading or watching during the eating, choosing something tasty to eat and really giving attention to the taste

The motto is "shortly but more frequently - create habit, create routine". Initially the goal is to provide something easy so everybody without any experience can do, e.g. a minute of attention to breathing or driving attention to flow through the body or other techniques.

Contraindications

The traumatized clients could end up with re-traumatizing memories resulting in panic, disorientation and deterioration of their psychological state if the relaxation is too long or goes too deeply.

Thus with new clients it is safer to

- Do all these techniques with open eyes
- Concerning the bodily posture the sitting can be better than lying
- The length of the practice should not exceed 3 minutes (could be even shorter)

Proper integration of the experience with the therapist is crucial to do a reflection of what thoughts, emotions and bodily feelings arose during the practice and how the client feels after it.

It is necessary to change these techniques or stop doing them at all, if the client speaks more about their negative impact than about achieving results described in the following section.

Expected results

The intended results and their manifestation in the reflection with the therapist:

- Relaxed body manifested by less apparent stiffness or tension (unnaturally upright bodily postures, visible tensions of face muscles or jaws), self-protecting bodily postures (i.e. crossed legs or hands, “hiding” behind
- Calmer state of mind manifested by calmer and clearer speech
- Clearer perception of emotions manifested by a good ability to describe them and connect them their causes
- Less of fatigue or non-agitated but energized state of mind (often perceived as relief) reported by the client to the therapist

Progress of the preparatory techniques

Good signals I recognize with my clients:

- Everyday routine created - a form of the relaxation technique is applied regularly on everyday basis in a specific external context – e.g. doing relaxation always when returning home from the work, doing it always when moving up on the escalator etc.
- Triggered application of techniques – client starts to be sensitive of specific states of mind and reacts by relaxation on them, i.e. I was exhausted or grumpy so I took my time to do relaxation
- Client speaks about clearly felt benefits of the techniques, she clearly feels how it helps and speaks about evidence of it, i.e. less argument with wife or less shouting to children after short relaxation done when returned from work

The client can proceed to further meditation techniques when these signals are encountered during the therapy.

Case report: Client practicing regular relaxation

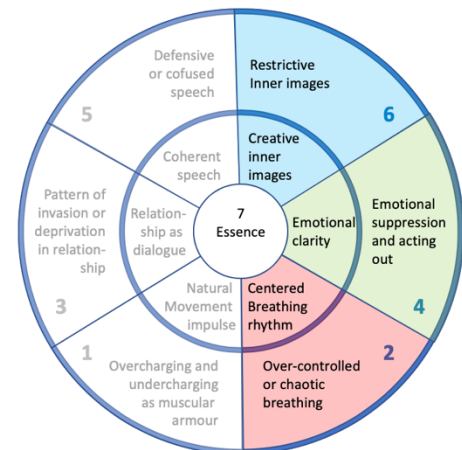
The client came with symptoms of mild but chronic anxieties. There was an addiction to pornography, actually the escapes to pornography binges occurred when he felt anxiety. He lives alone. The most problematic moment in his day was the evening return to home. There was immediate temptation to relax with pornography which affected badly his sexual life and took much more time than he could afford. Initially this client started with short relaxation sessions which were prolonged to usually 15 minutes. The technique applied was a basic yoga-nidra – see (Maheshwarananda, 2005). The addiction to pornography did not

went away completely but the binges were less often and triggered rather by stressful events and not simply by returning home.

Preparatory techniques and changes in the life-fields model

The above described preparatory techniques – relaxation in the yogic-sleep style, breathing, enjoying a nice present moment with food – have direct influence on the intrapersonal parts of the life-field model – see the colored parts of the picture below.

- **Breathing** is positively affected by relaxation techniques and by the deepening of breath together with ability to go back to observation of normal breathing without controlling it any more.
- **Emotional states** are also greatly impacted by simple relaxation of body which leads to calming down of brain-waves. Regular relaxation sessions can bring the client to Alpha rhythm of the brain which leads to higher production of acetylcholine and dopamine and thus brings a better emotional state.
- The alpha rhythm of the brain also enables much better and deeper self-reflection and thus the **restrictive inner images** are easier to notice without feeling identified with them



Walking as the other way

When I attended a silent meditation retreat in Theravadan tradition for the first time, I was really surprised that there is the technique of walking meditation. The typical structure of such retreat is 1 hour of sitting meditation alternated with 1 hour of walking, starting at 5am (earlier in Asian meditation centers) and ending at 10pm with a pause for meals and (sometimes) a lecture by a leader of the retreat.

Key benefits of the walking meditation during retreats:

- Provide a physical activity to the body typically stiffed by a long sitting
- Create a stable mindfulness of bodily sensations, thoughts and feelings in a less restricted context than sitting silently with closed eyes

Traditional instruction

There are traditional instructions how the walking meditation should be practiced – see (Sujiva, 2000): the meditator is required to go back and forth on a 5-10 meters long straight path, initially in normal speed and then to slow down to achieve a better perception of sensations from feet. There could be also a brisk walk initially if the practitioner feels agitated or with too much physical energy, but usually after a while the walking meditation ends up with very slow or even extremely slow movement when a step could last more than 10 seconds so the meditator has time enough to notice more and more sensations occurring during the walk.

The meditator practicing under the traditional instruction for the walking meditation has advantage of environment without much of distraction which helps to get deeper in the mindfulness of on the chosen meditation object. That is the goal during a retreat but not necessarily with therapeutic clients as explained in the chapter Contraindications.

Application for therapeutic clients

What I take from the practice of walking meditation for my therapeutic clients are the following facts:

- A person can develop mindfulness and insight during walking
- Such a development could be done by focusing attention on bodily sensations mainly in feet
- The practitioner (client) can change the speed of walking according to other factors (i.e. current level of energy, emotional agitation etc.)

There are studies like (Neumann, 2015) showing that walking or a regular physical activity can remedy psychological problems like a (mild) depression. These findings combined with conclusions about the walking meditations can lead to a simple instruction for the therapeutic clients:

- Do regular walking – every day at least one long walk (20 minutes or more)
- Develop mindfulness to body and thoughts during the walk – thus do not listen to music or audiobook all the time you walk, have there at least 20 minutes when you work with your attention, i.e. switching attention from left to right foot as they step on the ground during walking, perceive sensations in feet,
- be careful of thinking – when thoughts come label them (see the section Labeling technique) and get back to perceiving sensations in feet
- change the speed of the walk as you feel appropriate

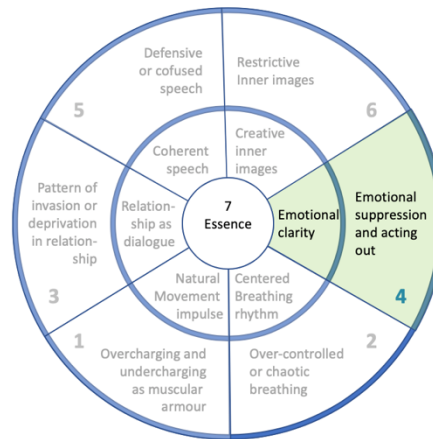
Case report: Walking client

The client uses medium dose of anti-depressants. He works intellectually and does not have much of physical activity. He started to do regular walking each day with elements of walking meditation as described above. He reported that such a practice helped him considerably. Typically he prefers brisk walk without listening to anything. After couple of weeks of trying he established a routine with this technique and started to like focusing attention to feet. He reported that it helps him to overcome his obsessive thoughts, because the technique helps to refocus elsewhere and gives a relief.

Walking and changes in Life-field model

The walking meditation technique could have a profound impact on a practitioner during the meditation retreat. Traditional Theravadan texts describe many cases when monks achieved enlightenment during the walking meditation. However, these profound changes in one's mind are attained only by a very slow walking in a rather restricted environment as described above in the subsection Traditional instruction.

When we speak about the “light-weight” version of walking for purposes of psychotherapy the improvement I experienced with my clients was only in the emotional part of the life-fields model as shown on the picture.



Walking alleviates symptoms of depression as described in many studies – see for example (Neumann, 2015). Intellectually working people who prevail among my clients are more physically active which naturally releases stress, improve sleeping and thus removes difficult emotions related to chronic fatigue.

My original expectation that the walking could also affect breathing patterns and restrictive images was not confirmed by my clients.

Short case report: I had a client with a strong muscle armor in abdominal parts. She was almost unable of abdominal breathing, but she enjoyed almost everyday long brisk walks throughout her life. Motorically she was very much in field of canalization – very linear, tensed movements, unnaturally upright and often defensive body posture. Dancing and massages were suitable for her to relieve these symptoms but walking was apparently not efficient enough. She even described a few episodes when she was picked up by ambulance during her brisk walks – she tried to fight her anxiety by a brisk walk but as she was not able of abdominal breathing she lacked enough air and ended up with symptoms of choking so people around called ambulance because they falsely thought she has an asthmatic attack.

On the other hand I keep recommending walking because it is a good activity for creation of daily routine and when combined with other techniques described here, mainly labeling technique, it can lead to improvements of other parts of life-fields.

Applications of meditation techniques

I always avoid jumping in quickly to meditation techniques and prefer a slow and safe approach as explained in the section Contraindications. When the client has created a routine with regular relaxation or walking meditation and reports a progress as outlined in the section Progress of the preparatory techniques more meditation techniques could be safe and beneficial.

If the client seems interested in such a direction of her psychotherapy I typically recommend practice of Labeling technique (see below) and sometimes also offer one or more from the following list:

- **meditation on body** (usually in sitting posture) with focus on raising and falling of the abdomen with labeling of thoughts and feelings as described in (Sujiva, 2000)
- **repeating mantras** – either traditional mantras or prayers from religions or self-constructed “mantras”

- **meditation on mental objects** – usually focus on sensations during different daily activities with development of labeling by inner voice

Labeling technique

Before jumping into details of the techniques listed above I would like to mention a strong technique of mental labeling which is extensively used in Vipassana but can be applied everywhere else. Actually it is rather simple technique of using inner voice to label thoughts, feelings and other inner phenomena when they are noted by mindfulness (e.g. when thinking comes – the inner voice says “it is thinking”, when a sad feeling comes – “it is sadness” etc.)⁵.

Advantages of labeling are rather strong:

- it is a good criterion of presence of mindfulness - “if I am labeling I am mindful”. Thus if the client feels like drowning in a stream of difficult thoughts and feelings, the easy way how to call back mindfulness can be the active labeling of phenomena occurring in the inner world
- After a time (usually weeks) of practice this technique becomes a routine. This helps a lot to the clients to become more and more conscious of the states and processes of their inner worlds. This is a huge support of the therapeutic process as these states and processes can be reflected during therapeutic sessions

Disadvantages are more related to meditation retreats than to psychotherapy:

- The tone of the inner voice doing the labeling can be negative and lead to tension and frustration. Often the practitioner on a retreat aspires to have the mind pure of any defilements (anger, lust, thinking etc.) and succumbs to a more and more reproachful tone of labeling showing her growing frustration or anger with her own mind that it is not so pure and focused. When the client reflects on his meditation experience during a therapeutic session the question on tone of the inner voice is definitely very relevant one.
- The labeling can be practiced too much by certain types of people. A tendency to label always and everything could lead to tension and paralyze the practitioner in normal life. I have not yet experienced this with any of my clients, but it happens sometimes on meditation retreats.
- If there is very sharp and steady mindfulness the inner voice could be too rough or clumsy and using it just derails the meditator from the strong Vipassana stream. So far I have not yet experienced this with any of clients.

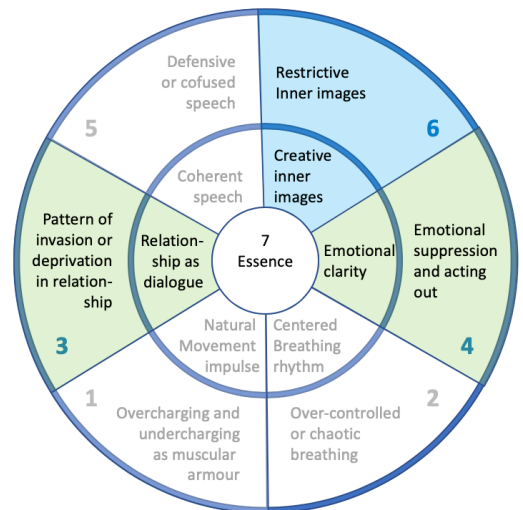
Contraindications: The labeling technique could be rather tricky when applied in psychotherapy. Clients with obsessive-compulsive patterns could fall into over-use of labeling leading to paralysis in simple activities. Clients with self-value issues can often use very reproachful inner voice when labeling distractions from the meditation object. Such an approach can exacerbate the self-value issues and lead to frustration and other unwholesome emotions.

⁵ The form of labeling should not be personalized like “I am thinking” or “I am sad” as it would increase identification of the practitioner with her inner processes instead of just watching them as individual observer

Labeling technique and changes in life-fields

Labeling from the biosynthetic point of view is the way how ectoderm is invited on the scene of client's inner life. It is simple but powerful method how to connect ectoderm with endoderm and mesoderm, because the inner voice doing the labeling is part of ectoderm.

The key point with the labeling technique is the quality of the inner voice doing the labeling. It has to be clear and energetic but gentle without any negativity or reproachful aspects mentioned in the paragraph Contraindications above. All the process of vipassana labeling needs to occur in equanimous and factual way. To achieve such quality of inner voice doing the labeling is usually a longer process in the psychotherapy. It opens topics of self-acceptance and self-value. Often it directly leads to sources of restrictive inner images.



That means that the quality of inner labeling voice could become a topic of therapeutic sessions which leads again and again to work on parts 4 and 6 on the picture here. When progress is achieved the client

- becomes less identified with her restrictive inner images and is much better aware of them
- has better awareness of emotions and thus the suppression of emotions or acting out gradually decreases
- (after a time of training) applies labeling even in social interaction which again bring more clarity to her relationships and so less deprivation or invasion

I do not highlight on the picture the mesodermal parts of life-fields. Obviously the movement and breathing can be observed and labeled but I do not think the impact is as direct as with the other colored parts of the picture.

Meditation on body

The work with body is crucial for many psychotherapeutic schools. When the client develops mindfulness on body it helps a lot to the therapeutic process, because the experience with the body work during the therapy is easier to integrate (the client easily notes what happened and can work with the therapist to understand it).

Even in the Theravadan Buddhism there are quite a few schools giving different instructions how to develop mindfulness of the body. I tend to recommend focus on raising and falling of the abdomen as described in (Sujiva B. , 1998) mainly because I practiced this technique in many retreats so I am able to react better on a feedback from a client trying this technique. So I do not think that this particular instruction is the best, I just have not practiced other techniques to be aware of their advantages, shortfalls and contraindications.

Advantages of meditation on the raising and falling of abdomen:

- it is relatively safe: the meditation object is big and rough so the concentration builds up slowly and mainly mindfulness plays the key part here⁶. With the wide attention on such a big object as is the raising falling of the abdomen the client remains aware what is going on and notices easily other phenomena as tensions, feelings etc.
- focus on abdominal breathing is relaxing for most of the people and it provides good grounding

Disadvantages: The people who are too distracted (with too many thoughts) could have troubles to achieve progress with this technique because they cannot build the sufficient level of concentration to stay with the meditation object. This could be a frustrating trouble during a retreat but hardly for a therapeutic client practicing short meditation sessions. The clients simply remain long time in the process of observing the raising-falling for a moment, drifting away to thoughts and refocusing back, which could be helpful for them to practice if they have enough patience to do so. Moreover, when there is so much distraction it should be a topic for the client's psychotherapy⁷.

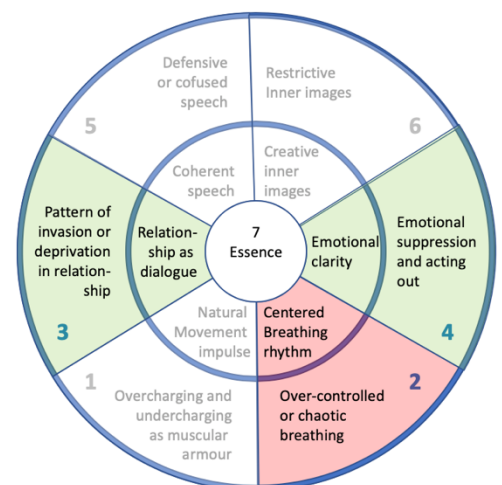
Contraindications: The technique could be difficult or impossible when a strong muscular armor is present in the client's abdomen. Such armor makes the abdominal breathing too shallow to follow it easily, which could lead to tension or frustration of the client, unnatural breathing (over-controlled or chaotic)

Meditation on body and life-fields

Traditionally the meditation on body (typically the raising and falling of abdomen caused by breathing) is the gate to meditation on bodily feelings and emotions. It gives a great grounding for the attention: when observing feeling and nothing is happening and boredom comes or – vice-versa – there is too much of emotions, driving the attention back to body can efficiently stabilize the meditation again. Thanks to that I see the meditation on body as (Dotz, 2013)key factor of any further progress.

Being that said I realize fully that for most of clients it can be challenging as they are too much "in their head" or it can be boring. As I wrote above – the therapist should respect that, so I never push client to continue when there is not enough enthusiasm to meditate this way.

Short case report: On the other hand, I experienced one client who achieved an initial progress in meditation on body (clear awareness of his breathing and related spontaneous movements of the body together with clear but deeply relaxed attention). The client spoke then during the therapeutic session about unprecedented clarity of emotions and thoughts, described very new quality of his



⁶ That provides more safety to clients because if a strong concentration occurs quickly it could lead to an altered state of consciousness which could be difficult to handle for clients.

⁷ Similarly I strongly believe that those meditation practitioners on the meditation retreats who have chronic trouble with being too much distracted should attend psychotherapy.

breathing (deep but unforced) and later on he also started to feel more confident in his relationship due to this emotional clarity. That is why I colored 2,3,4 of the life-fields model.

Repeating mantras

Mantras and prayers are common for many religions. It seems useless for the purpose of this article to elaborate the difference between mantras and prayers. I also understand the term mantra in wider sense, as any statement a person created or adopted to achieve higher harmony with herself or with her surroundings.

Examples of such mantras in the wider sense could

- A simple word or phrase, i.e. a client of mine remembered during our sessions that he attended a personal growth course where a technique of simply repeating the word “Release” was introduced. This client started to use and develop this technique. He started to use mala (the prayer beads) and for a period of time he had a well working daily routine. The practice lead to relaxation, harmonizing thoughts and higher mindfulness of thoughts and emotions
- More complex statements addressing person’s inner world and its mental states or processes or her psychic capacity. A friend of mine attending his own psychotherapy shared with me that he is using mantra “I am equanimous, I have capacity to handle well all things that are coming”. Surprisingly, repeating this statement helped him a lot during couple of months of personal crisis he went through.

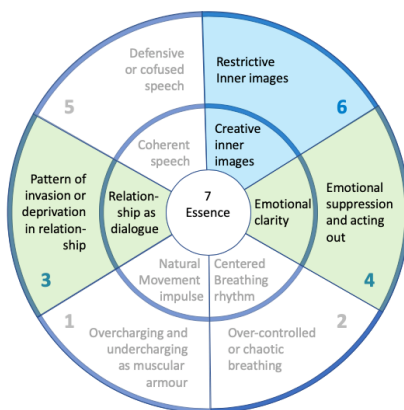
Limits: I just see a dividing line between mantras and those affirmations which are too narrowed and focused on achieving specific personal goals (i.e. the famous affirmation from the movie American Beauty “I can sell this house, I can sell this house, ...” illustrates the category of affirmations I do not consider as mantras even in the wider sense, because surely it is disputable and it does not deal with person’s inner world and its mental states and processes).

Advantages of mantras repeating technique: the technique could be very strong for people who fall into the auditive category – see for example (Dotz, 2013). It is relatively easy to do when a suitable mantra is found. The technique is good for composing the mind and focusing the stream of attention.

Disadvantages: The technique is not so strong in developing mindfulness of any type which is a considerable weakness as the mindfulness is crucial factor to support the psychotherapy.

Contraindications: I would not recommend the technique to the clients with unhealthy ways of concentration (typically the concentration which is tensed rather than relaxed) or to the psychotic clients.

Repeating mantras and life-fields



Meditation on mental objects

The title could sound sophisticated and actually even in the traditional approach there are two different interpretations of what are the mental objects (Dhammanupassana as discussed in (Sujiva B. , 1998)). For the purposes of this article I just use a simplified approach – mindfulness of objects in the inner world which arise in contact with outer world. Thus it is

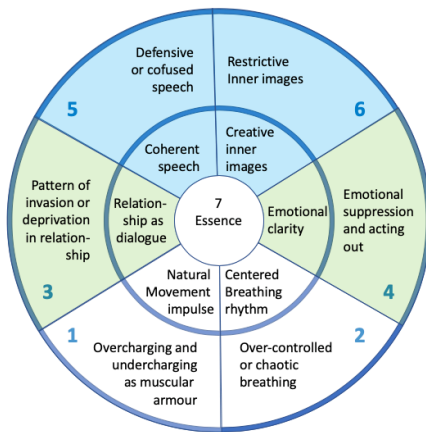
- mindfulness of tastes, smells and tactile sensations, mindfulness of their consequences (i.e. what feelings or inner images they lead to).
- Similarly here belongs also the mindfulness of inner objects arising during daily activities and mindfulness of inner images and feelings they bring
- Mindfulness of meditation hindrances (sensory desire, ill-will, restlessness, sloth and torpor, skeptical doubts) – see (Wikipedia - Five Hindrances, 2019)

Advantages: The client trains noticing how her mind works in variety of situations, which could be a great source to reflect later during the therapy. Often the client notices important patterns how she reacts.

Disadvantages: Usually a practice of other meditation techniques is necessary to accompany this one to achieve a progress of the meditation. Traditionally this technique is recommended only to those who already practiced a lot the mindfulness of body and feelings and became profound in them. However, if we use the technique only as auxiliary tool for the psychotherapy it could work well also alone. The client just needs to build a routine and discipline typically in labeling of thoughts and feelings during her daily activities.

Contraindication: I am not aware of real contraindications

Meditation on mental objects and life-fields



Meditation developing spirituality and meditation as therapeutic tool

There is rather huge difference between meditation as a tool helping to develop spirituality and as a tool to support the psychotherapy.

Restrictions

Religious schools tend to be rather restrictive as regards to what techniques the practitioner can apply – in some yogic schools everybody has to practice hatha-yoga asanas, in other yogic schools everybody has to practice mantras. This is rather regardless of personality and body type of the practitioner. Similarly in Theravadan practice each school has rather strict definition of the path of practice and the customizations according to specific needs of the practitioner are exceptions or impossible at all (often the practitioner is expelled from the school if she cannot follow the path exactly).

This is more typical for traditional Asian spiritual centers than for schools operating in the western world, but the tendency to **adjust the person to the technique** rather than vice-versa is still very clear.

As I explained above the psychotherapeutic sessions should be about psychotherapy. If the therapist decides to recommend meditation techniques to the client there has to be strong acknowledgement of client's specifics in both – in the selection of the technique and in the way it is adjusted or changed according to the client's feedback.

Skeptical doubts - missing aspect of faith

The lack of faith is the key issue with psychotherapeutic clients trying the meditation. In those countries where the meditation is a part of cultural heritage people have strong faith that techniques recommended by their spiritual leaders are valuable to practice. Often there is an issue with faith exceeding the reasonable level which could lead to unskillful application of these techniques. The western countries have the opposite issue – people try meditation as something fancy and exotic. When they find out that it requires effort and discipline and could be sometimes tedious or painful, they just give up, because there is not faith to keep them on the path. That could happen also to therapeutic clients applying the meditation.

Transition to spiritual schools

Meditation practiced as a part of spiritual development has an outlook for life-time progress (or – if we take some religions literally – there is outlook of progress in many lives). Nothing like that is valid when the meditation is applied as a tool supporting psychotherapy.

Psychotherapy usually needs only basic techniques to support the healing process. Later on the client could easily miss more advanced instruction to achieve further progress. This way the meditation does not bring anything new and could be abandoned unless the client seeks further progress in an adopted spiritual path. However, the adoption of spirituality with all its moral and ethical restrictions could lead to a plentitude of new psychological topics.

Conclusions

Biosynthetic method of psychotherapy could be supported by meditation techniques – some of them are described in this article. Their effect could be illustrated on the biosynthetic life-fields model. The therapeutic sessions should always follow the contract between the client and her therapist, they should not have the meditation as the primary focus topic. When meditation techniques are applied the safety of the client should be the paramount concern of the therapist. That means that the recommendation of a meditation technique must be always considered based on client's specifics and the experienced well reflected with the client to avoid possible negative effects. When such an approach is applied the meditation techniques could help substantially to expedite the therapeutic process and reinforce it.

Works Cited

- Lesný, V. (1996). *Buddhismus*. Olomouc, Czech Republic: Votobia.
- Goleman, D. (2012). *The Meditative Mind: The Varieties of Meditative Experience*. More Than Sound via Amazon Kindle.
- Sujiva, B. (1998). *Divine Abodes: Meditation on Loving Kindness and Other Sublime States*. Sukhi Hotu.
- Kolektiv ČIB. (2017). *Studijní texty k výcviku v biosyntéze*. Prague, Czech Republic: ČIB.
- T.Gendlin, E. (2010). *Focusing*. Ebury Digital via Amazon Kindle.
- Augustus, R. (2010). *Spiritual Bypassing: When Spirituality Disconnects Us from What Really Matters*. North Atlantic Books via Amazon Kindle.
- Sujiva. (2000). *Essentials of Insight Meditation Practice: A Pragmatic Approach to Vipassana*. Malaysia: Buddhist Wisdom Center.
- Buddha. (nedatováno). *Satipatthana Sutta*.
- Neumann, J. (30. January 2015). *Regular Walking Can Help Ease Depression*. Načteno z scientificamerican.com: <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/regular-walking-can-help-ease-depression/>
- Maheshwarananda, S. (2005). *Yoga in Daily Life : The System*. Ibero; Second Edition edition.
- Wikipedia - Five Hindrances. (2019). *Five Hindrances*. Načteno z wikipedia.org: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Five_hindrances
- Wiki Kasina. (2019). *wikipedia.org*. Načteno z Kasina: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kasina>
- Dotz, T. (2013). *NLP: The Essential Guide to Neuro-Linguistic Programming*. William Morrow Paperbacks via Amazon Kindle.

Boadella, D. (2019). *Common Ground and Different Approaches in Psychotherapy*
Biosynthesis: a Somatic Psychotherapy. Načteno z Biosynthesis institute :
http://www.biosynthesis-institute.com/article_1.htm