

Exploratory research on therapeutic ritual healing: Applying scientific protocol to conduct experimental study of spiritual hands-on-healing

Marie Grace Brook, PhD

Spiritual Hands-on Healing Workshop
Annual Conference for Association of Transpersonal Psychology
Salvador, Brazil September 5, 2015

The presentation involved facilitation of a healing group for people who wanted to learn spiritual hands-on-healing and practice it as they learn it.

The workshop was based upon previous clinical trials research: (1) first phase--an exploratory study to examine the phenomenological experience and beneficial results that participants with a variety of religious orientations reported from hands-on healing sessions they received, and (2) second phase to discover whether a spiritual non-religious healing protocol could be taught.

1. The first part of the study was a qualitative study using thematic content analysis to describe the phenomenological experience of 11 participants who received spiritual hands-on healing. Common themes of phenomenological experience while receiving spiritual hands-on healing were, in order of prevalence, awareness of deeper level, improvement/change, feeling/sensing, listening/communicating, movement/energy, spiritual/heart, and pleasant/peaceful. Modes of perception commonly reported were physical, subtle energetic, mental, emotional, altered state, and spiritual.

After carrying out this phenomenological study of spiritual hands-on-healing based upon ecumenical principals, the results were so dramatically beneficial, that I was curious to see if I could teach this to others. I had performed the healing rituals only as an experiment--with no background of knowledge or experience in spiritual hands-on-healing, so I developed a very simple curriculum and taught it to others for the purpose of researching whether an untrained person could do it.

2. The second phase of the study was a quasi-quantitative study to analyze reports from 31 recipients of hands-on healing , including 20 given by individuals being trained in the protocol. Benefits reported by recipients on a 1-10 scale for improvement in chronic conditions after the sessions and follow-up longitudinal reports six weeks later were analyzed. Of 31 total recipients, 28 reported improvements in chronic symptoms in categories of physical, emotional, spiritual, subtle energetic and behavioral conditions, with more than 50% reporting improvement in physical symptoms and in more than one category. Six-week follow-up showed no statistical difference than the reports immediately after the sessions.

Conclusions of the study were that specific phenomenological experiences may be common across a variety of spiritual hands-on healing sessions, regardless of religious orientation and experience/skill levels of givers and recipients. Evidence shows that benefits of spiritual hands-on healing can be documented, and may be prevalent and significant for chronic physical, mental, emotional, behavioral, and perceptual conditions. The study also suggests that an effective non-religious spiritual hands-on healing protocol may be taught.

For the workshop, the first hour consisted of these research studies presented both verbally (with English-Portuguese translator) and with display of research posters of the research studies and accompanying study of interrelationship between ritual healing, biofield and placebo effect. The second hour was participatory. Fourteen people volunteered to receive healing. Two rounds of healing were done (1/2 hour each). 60 participants were divided into approximately 7 groups and coached through the healing sessions, with each group working on one volunteer lying on a table. At the conclusion of the workshop, several people who received healing took the microphone to share their experience, followed by several of the people who gave healing..