

**"The Hakomi Principles"**  
**written by Ron Kurtz**

*"The purpose of life is to see God in everything and everyone."*

-- Swami Premananda

These guiding principles inform the entire method, from the healing relationship to each technique. They function on a moment-to-moment basis, guiding the entire process. In experienced therapists, they are habitual attitudes. As embodied beliefs, they are a spiritual practice and a base of support for all one does.

## **1. Unity**

As a spiritual concept, the unity principle states that everything is an expression of the dimension and energy we call God. We are all parts of this; we are in that sense, all one. This is holism on a grand scale. And it is reflected in the work by our recognition that the other is nothing less than a spiritual brother or sister, to be respected, protected, nurtured and loved. Alignment with this principle imbues the therapist with compassion and invites his or her vision to embrace the vast web of connections that create the client's world.

As a systems concept, the unity principle states that all the elements of any system are interconnected and any attempt to isolate one single cause-effect sequence is bound to be less than the whole truth. All actions are multiply determined. This interconnectedness also leads to what is called, emerging properties in complex systems.

As an influence on the method, unity allows us to assume that there is a force acting upon the process that "intends" to hold it together. It's one way to invest one's faith in the process.

## 2. Mindfulness

*I use my memory. I don't let my memory use me.*

-- Vedic saying.

*"What mindfulness disrupts is mindlessness..."*

-- Francisco Varella

Mindfulness is a way of being conscious, a special kind of consciousness. It is marked by several key elements: one is the distancing of one's intention from one's experience. That is... one is following one's experience, without trying to control what happens next. In this way, we begin to recognize and understand how our beliefs and habits organize our experiences. When that happens, we have a chance to challenge and change them. The entire Hakomi method falls apart without mindfulness. Hakomi is the method of evoked experience in mindfulness. No mindfulness; no Hakomi. A second aspect of mindfulness is its sensitivity and vulnerability. By quieting the mind and dropping one's management behavior (sometimes called defenses), one makes oneself deliberately vulnerable.

From a systems perspective, true mindfulness is a courageous act. It is also a lowering of the noise, a suspension of activity, it is non-doing. Now anyone who has tried to focus on his or her breath without controlling it knows how damn hard doing nothing is. Luckily, for our purposes, the client only needs to sustain mindfulness for a half minute or so. By evoking experiences while the client is in mindfulness, beliefs, sub selves and management habits come into consciousness. To repeat, mindfulness is present centered, willfully passive (i.e. a conscious decision is made to observe present experience without interfering with it), and (usually) attention is turned inward.

## 3. Non-Violence

This principle is simply the rejection of any force that does harm to another sentient being. Since we often do things without knowing that they will cause harm, we must think of violence as the persistence of actions which we know are causing harm.

In terms of the method, we must make every effort to avoid controlling the client. Of course what we do and say is bound to influence the client's process. We can't

help that. But we can avoid overriding the client's needs with our own agendas. This is the most common problem Hakomi therapists have. They do not always know when to wait and let the client unfold his or her own process. They are too full of the desire to help, to do a good job, to make something happen. Something is already happening! Just learn to dance with it! Non-violence is an honoring of life's innate intelligence. It's an appeal to operate from the highest values.

From a very modern medical perspective (thanks to Vern Rogers) pain is a pathogen. That is, pain is bad for you. Not just cause it feels terrible, but also because it is bad for your health. It suppresses your immune system. On the other hand, pleasure enhances your immune system. It's good for your health. (As long as these pleasures do not in themselves damage your health (as smoking and alcohol do).

*Let us read and let us dance - two amusements  
that will never do any harm to the world.  
- Voltaire*

Non-violence means being ready and willing to abandon a momentary agenda if it goes against the grain of the client's process. It means having a higher agenda to serve the client and to honor the client's freedom to choose what he or she will do and what direction he or she will take.

Technically, it requires that the therapist learn how to sense which way the client wants to go and what the client's unconscious needs might be. Further, it means non-violence towards yourself. Therapists, respect your own boundaries and know your own limits. Know when the person is triggering your issues; acknowledge that process; don't give yourself a hard time about it. Be non-violent with yourself. Respect your own defenses. Don't fight yourself, split yourself or the client into warring camps.

We support the client's management (defense) system by seeing what is underneath, what is being protected, and helping to protect.

#### **4. Organicity**

Another phase for this might be: evolved complexity. Life has existed on this planet (and who knows where else) for over a billion years. It has been evolving a long time. It has had many "experiments" in survival. And most have failed. (Only one out of a hundred species that have ever lived is still around. Each plant and creature you see is in the top one percent of its survival school class. We're working with the best there is. Complexity is a quality of all living things. The cells in the brain of the cockroach has the same complement of organic chemicals that make up our own brain. It is complex. Not as complex as ours but more complex than the computer this is being written on, by several orders of magnitude.

Organic systems have sequences, routines that can be initiated from several places within the system. It is not a simple linear connection. Action is multiply determined and, due to its complexity, can become cyclical, as in positive and negative reinforcement cycles.

Organic also means living beings, as contrasted with machines. The habit of thinking of ourselves as machines poses many problems for the therapist. For a while, it has pitted scientists against "tree huggers" and the like. But, it won't be long before the generation of scientists that refuse to see beyond the mechanical will have passed away and a new breed with interests in the spiritual and higher dimensions will emerge. Count on it!

As part of the method, organicity allows us to realize that the process can be organic, the client's unfolding can be based upon the client's organic wisdom, that what happens in therapy is supported by this billion plus year evolution. So that we as therapists need not feel solely responsible for what takes place in a session. We can be supported, if we let ourselves, by all that has come before.

#### **5. Body/Mind Holism**

This one is tricky. For example: what shall we call body? Does it include emotions? I think it does. Well then, surely the mind reflects the body and ones beliefs influence ones physiology. The belief that everyone is against you results in real anxiety and/or rage. These emotions include all the ways the body changes under their influence.

Consider:

*"The greatest force in the human body is the natural drive of the body to heal itself - but that force is not independent of the belief system, which can translate expectations into psychological change. Nothing is more wondrous about the fifteen billion neurons in the human brain than their ability to convert thoughts, hopes, ideas, and attitudes into chemical substances. Everything begins, therefore, with belief." -- Norman Cousins*

What then is mind? A lot of people have sounded off on this question. For me, there are levels of mind, up to and including many levels of subtle energies or higher dimensions. In the extreme, mind exists outside of the physical, transcending it while including it (Thanks here, to Ken Wilber!). In spiritual traditions, the basic technology is designed to bring one into alignment with these higher dimensions and included the realization that you are not the body or in any way a separate self. But they also teach that the body must be purified in order to realize these higher states. So, there is much to show that the body indeed (in us ordinary people) influences the mind. The cycles of action and reaction, the underlying beliefs that shape the body also return that influence upon the mind, as mental attitudes, emotional dispositions and all kinds of ideas about ourselves and our lives.

As a practical matter, in Hakomi, we use this mind-body relationship to create experiments which cross the "mind-body interface". We use touch and other physical interventions and ask what images, memories, thoughts were evoked. We also offer statements and ideas and ask what bodily experience was evoked. It is knowing that there is a connection between mind and body that allows this method to use the body as part of the search for organizing beliefs.

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