

The Science, Art and Ethics of Muscle Testing

by Arlene Green



Muscle testing as an assessment tool can guide the practitioner to determine the nature of imbalances and the therapeutic priority. The art and skill of muscle testing is important in having consistent, accurate and replicable results. Being a skill that underlies all the energy kinesiology methods, learning precision muscle testing is an essential ingredient in having successful results. This workshop will teach not only the basics, but will also fine tune the art of muscle testing with

hands on instruction of the physical skill and the art of communicating the process. We will also explore some of the key factors in assuring a high level of quality, consistency and accuracy in muscle testing.

Background

Muscle testing is a kind of body biofeedback that can be used to evaluate changes in the body's subtle energy field. Manual muscle testing has been used for over 50 years by doctors and physical therapists to evaluate muscle function. In the 1960s, Dr. George Goodheart utilized muscle testing as a diagnostic tool to assess muscle, nerve and meridian energy connections. More than just a diagnostic procedure his discoveries led to the creation of a new system of healing that we now know as Applied Kinesiology.

In addition to assessing the strength of an individual muscle's response, muscle testing can be used to assess the body's energetic response to specific stimuli. All types of stress (biochemical, electromagnetic, physical, emotional, mental) impact on the body's energy field and subsequently register on the nervous system, creating a change in muscle response, which we can monitor through muscle testing. That can be useful information when one wants to personalize a session to show someone their individualized response to stress or potential corrective technique.

The technique of muscle testing involves applying slow, gradual pressure against the body. Specific muscles are tested starting in contraction and pushed towards extension; that is the opposite direction of how they normally function. The degree or amount of pressure applied is not as critical as the gradualness and consistency of the pressure. Smooth, gentle pressure will give one the greatest clarity of results. The amount of time applying pressure is approximately 2-3 seconds. This seems to be the optimal amount of time to see if the muscle is able to hold that position or whether it "gives", without fatiguing the muscle. The purpose in muscle testing is to be able to see the difference in muscle strength and performance. It is often used as a measure of feedback on how the body is responding to a specific stimuli.

Communication

After one understands the purpose of muscle testing and how to do it, it's important to be able to successfully communicate that to others. Using kinesiology is like speaking a new language which many students may not discover until they get outside of the classroom when they try to explain it to their friends and family. Explaining

the process and how you want the other person to respond when being tested is as much an art as the actual physical technique.

When one muscle tests someone for the first time, in addition to explaining the purpose of muscle testing and how it is done, it is also important to let that person know what is expected of them. Letting them know that it's their job to "hold" the position as the muscle receives pressure against it, but that if the muscle "gives" that "it's ok to let it go." Personally, I never use the word "resist" unless you intend to engage in a contest of strength. Showing them what the muscle will feel like when it unlocks by pushing together the spindle cell in the belly of the muscle is a useful way to help them sense the difference in muscle response ahead of time.

You can also teach someone how to muscle test you. One of the most important things to remember when coaching someone, especially if it is their first time, is to always give positive feedback. Instead of "don't push so hard" say "push more gently and smoothly." Be sure to reframe what they're not doing right, into what or how they could do it better. Always keep your feedback supportive, as that will help to engender confidence and enthusiasm.

In the early stages of learning muscle testing it is quite helpful to get hands on supervision by an experienced kinesiology teacher. Not all kinesiologists practice the same nor do they test the same, so be aware of that. Look at their background and skill level if you are looking to learn from them. Those who have mastery with the skill will test with smooth, consistent pressure and show a refinement in their skill. Taking some classes where muscle testing is taught, not just used, is important if you are serious to learn the skill well. Repetition and getting feedback in the early stages will help one learn the basics without having to unlearn any bad habits later. My personal recommendation would be to take a class in Touch for Health Kinesiology that focuses considerable time on the actual skill of muscle testing as a part of its basic curriculum.

Testing Procedure

The following is a procedure that can be used when muscle testing to help assure a greater level of accuracy and consistency.

A. Preparation

1. Rub K-27 point- The 27th point on the kidney meridian is located on the underneath side of the collarbone at the junction of the breastbone. It is involved with neurological disorganization problems, sometimes referred to as 'switching'. Rub with medium pressure for about 5 seconds while holding the other hand over the navel. Also, rub above and below the lips (end points of the central and governing meridian which can affect neurological organization).
2. Check for water. A tug on the hair or skin will assess whether the hydration level of the person is optimal in the moment. If the indicator muscle unlocks after tugging it indicates the

person may be somewhat dehydrated which can potentially affect consistency in results. Invite them to drink water and retest

B. Testing

1. To keep it simple one can check the arm held in two positions.
 - a. Hold the arm at 45° angle in front of the body keeping your elbows straight. Testing is to push it straight back towards the body.
 - b. The second position is with the arm held straight out in front of the body palm down, shoulder level, elbow straight, arm parallel to the floor.
2. Tester places his or her hand above the wrist and applies slow, steady, gradual downward pressure against the forearm. Gentle to medium pressure works as well, if not better, than heavier pressure. The key is in the smoothness of the pressure, not necessarily the amount of pressure.
 - a. Using a cue word like 'hold' or having the subject say 'push' helps to synchronize the testing. Using the word 'resist' is not advisable, as it will make it harder to assess if the muscle is letting go.
 - b. Keep eyes in one position when testing and breathe normally.
3. We are looking for the muscle to give a 'locked' or strong response (to be able to maintain steady position against pressure being applied to it.)
4. Let the person being tested know that what we are looking for are differences in muscle strength and performance. Tell them, that "It's ok to let the muscle go or relax" if they feel it give or are struggling to hold it in that position.
5. If the muscles lock easily then go to step C. If the muscles give or feel spongy then:
 - a. Rub firmly the spaces between the ribs, next to the breastbone (rib spaces 3-4-5) and on the back (T 3-4) for about 10 - 20 seconds with medium to firm pressure. The person being tested can rub their own front points.
 - b. Retest the muscle. The muscle should now 'lock' when tested.

C. Check for a Clear Muscle Circuit

After assessing that the muscle can give a locked or strong response, you want to make sure that the muscle can also give an unlocked response. Occasionally, a muscle has a blocked circuit that does not allow a feedback response from the nervous system. If this occurs, then the muscle will stay strong all the time regardless of what you are testing. Therefore, it's necessary to determine before you do any testing with it that it has a clear muscle circuit. To check for a clear muscle circuit:

1. Test the muscle. It should be strong.
2. Push your thumbs, or thumb and index finger, together towards the belly (bulging part near

the center) of the muscle going with the length of the fibers. On retesting, this should now turn the muscle OFF. To strengthen the muscle, pull apart from the belly toward the ends.

3. If the muscle does not turn off (weaken) then put the muscle in the testing position. Push up firmly against resistance and then push down against resistance (like an isometric exercise) for just 2-4 seconds.
4. Recheck step 2. The muscle should now turn off.

Note: Different systems of kinesiology will probably have some variations in their muscle testing protocols. There is no one standard way of setting up the testing procedures. This way works well for me and for the most part is what is taught in Touch for Health Kinesiology and the PKP (Professional Kinesiology Practitioner) trainings. It helps assess some of the variables, like dehydration and switching, which can affect accuracy and consistency. It also addresses what to do if a muscle does not respond to a stressor (i.e. checking for clear circuit).

Again, my recommendation for learning the art of muscle testing is find an experienced kinesiology teacher who takes time to teach all these refinements and can give you 'first-hand' feedback. This is a subtle skill that requires lots of hands on training and supervision in the early stages of learning.

Variables that can affect Muscle Testing

1. Skill
2. Intention
3. Confidence
4. Dehydration
5. Drugs and Alcohol
6. Blood sugar
7. Neurological disorganization (i.e. switching)
8. Severe emotional stress
9. Fatigue
10. Blocked circuits (see procedure step C.)
11. Inappropriate use of muscle testing
12. Having a bias to the results or expectation
13. Polarity imbalance

Intention and Ethics

Once a person has taken a class or classes and has gained knowledge of techniques, communication skills, and even a level of confidence, perhaps one of the most important and yet subtle keys to success in accurate muscle testing is intention.

The role that intention plays in affecting results in muscle testing may not be as obvious as the techniques used, but it can be as profound. Both unconscious intention and conscious intention can effect muscle testing. An example of where one's unconscious intention could influence results would be in the relationship between consistency and accuracy, and the degree of confidence a tester has. Novice muscle testers often miss the subtle muscle imbalances when testing, and though that is partly due to lack of experience with the physical technique, confidence seems to play a

role too. New people are more likely to have a greater level of inconsistent and therefore inaccurate results. The more confident the practitioner, the more likely they are to stay focused on 'allowing' for the process to happen; and less distracted by their self doubts. Keeping in mind the adage "energy follows intention" one can see how a person who is having self doubts or confusion on an inner level might find their muscle testing results less than optimal. The more confident and skilled the practitioner can remain during the process, the more likely they are to get clear, consistent and accurate results with muscle testing.

There are numerous examples that show the effect that conscious intention has when using kinesiology. A person's thoughts create an energy pattern that can influence muscle response. We can see that very simply when we ask a person to think of something stressful and it turns off a muscle that was previously strong. Holding an intention or setting a goal, creates a specific energetic pattern in the body. That specific pattern can be assessed through muscle testing, or you can simply ask the person their sense of how they 'feel' about that issue or stressor. Doing some intervention can release that pattern quickly and easily. Reassessing that pattern through the person noticing any feeling change or muscle testing their body's response to that stress can evaluate how things have shifted. The intention calls up the pattern, the intervention releases that pattern.

In the same way that conscious intention on the part of the person being tested has an effect on the energy of the body, so too can the tester's intention cause an effect upon the person's energy response. Aside from people testing with an obvious extra push when they are trying to make a point, testers can potentially skew the results if they have an agenda to prove. If the tester has a strong bias to what they feel the results should be, whether its conscious or not, the muscle testing results will be less than optimal. Testers need to stay very neutral in their intention when testing subjects. The more that the tester can 'get out of the way,' the easier it is for them to access the body/mind wisdom and get consistent and accurate results. Staying neutral when muscle testing means not having any preconceived ideas about muscle responses. Letting go of any ideas of how we think the results of the testing should look and staying unattached to the outcome both in the muscle testing and in the intervention is very important. Keeping in mind that while we may have a specific goal or intention for the session, the ultimate goal in the process is to seek clarity and allow for that which is in their client's greatest good to unfold.

Muscle testing is a wonderful tool that can help in the assessment of imbalances and evaluation of therapeutic options. It can help one to determine an individualized program tailored to the needs of the person. It is an art that requires a certain amount of physical skill both in its application and interpretation. The real challenge is in the subtle areas of inner communication. Confidence and clarity as well as accuracy and consistency come with practice and experience.

Since muscle testing is used by different systems and people use it for a variety of reasons, the issue of ethics is something to consider. Some people have expressed the belief that one can muscle test anything. Muscle testing was first used in the context of assessing muscle imbalances of the actual muscle used. However, since we can assess energy imbalances through it, and everything is energy (physical substances, sounds, thoughts, emotions, etc.) then the assumption was made by some, that we can muscle test everything. While that may be true (though I've never had much luck balancing my car or computer), one also needs to consider whether it is appropriate to muscle test something. In my own experience, if I have any reservations about muscle testing something it usu-

ally ends up compromising my accuracy. Therefore, if I have any question whether it is an appropriate issue or question to be muscle testing I either first ask, 'Is this an appropriate question?' or I just choose not to muscle test, since I know my results will be less than best. I may even ask if it is useful or beneficial or in the person's highest good when testing. If its not, then why bother? If one muscle tests oneself with any emotional attachment or charge to the issue the results may be less than optimal. I think muscle testing or balancing someone without their consent, even with good intentions, is questionable ethically. These and other issues are certainly something to consider when using muscle testing. Muscle testing requires more than just skill. It also involves a conscious intention to leave one's ego out of the process and not have any agenda or bias on the outcome. Keeping one's intentions pure and for the highest good of all, brings a level of consciousness to the process that will lead toward more optimal results with this artful skill.

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