

HEART-FOCUSED PRINCIPLES AND TECHNIQUES

Walter H. Schmitt, Jr., D.C., D.I.B.A.K., D.A.B.C.N.

INTRODUCTION

Why do we have so many terms and phrases in our language that relate to the heart? Why is the heart considered by many to be the most important organ of the body? Is the heart nothing more than just a muscular pump or does it have neurological and energetic significance as well? The answers to these and many other questions are beginning to be understood as research conducted by the Institute of HeartMath in Boulder Creek, California continues to be performed and published.

In early June, 1998 I attended the ICAK-USA conference in San Diego where there was a presentation by Jerry Kaiser, the director of the Health Services Division of the Institute of HeartMath. The HeartMath research team, many of whom are M.D.s and Ph.D.s, have researched the math of the heart, or more particularly, the math of the electrocardiograph: (EKG). The results of their research have been recently published in cardiology and stress medicine journals.

Their findings show that the shifting feelings or emotions to the heart can have profound effects on the heart. But in addition to the heart, the entire autonomic nervous system is affected.

The heart produces 2.5 watts of power – this is 40 to 60 times more than the brain. In fact, electrically speaking, the heart is the most powerful organ in the body. (Some skeletal muscles are more powerful than the heart, but only when they are active. When the muscles are at rest, the heart creates the most power of any organ.) The reason our language contains terms like “heartfelt gratitude” or “heartfelt sympathy” or “take it to heart” or any of a myriad of other similar expressions may be because the language reflects the population’s intuitive knowledge of how powerful the heart actually is.

OSCILLATORS IN NATURE

In nature oscillators tend to entrain themselves to each other. That is, if you swing two pendulums side by side, in time, they will swing in identical cycles. It is common knowledge that many women who are roommates soon begin having their menstrual periods at the same time. Any cyclical pattern tends to entrain with other cyclical patterns. It is commonly known that the heart and respiration will entrain to each other in a certain relationship if all is well, such as often occurs at rest or sleep.

It appears that the heart is the drill sergeant who is calling out the beat for all of the other oscillators, that is all the other organs, in the body. When the heart is functioning optimally, all other organs function better. This means that the heart is responsive to the various stresses in life and adapts to them appropriately. When the heart is not properly responding and adapting to stress, other organs are likely to function improperly.

The heart beat responsiveness to stress and changing conditions in the body is called the heart rate variability (HRV). In over 30 years of study, the best indicator of disease, any disease in any organ, is the HRV. This is a better predictor than cholesterol, smoking, obesity, poor diet, or any of the other variables that have been studied! This is most likely because all organs take their direction from the heart.

HEART RATE VARIABILITY

HeartMath researchers measure HRV based on EKG analysis. If your heart is beating 70 beats per minute, each beat is probably not exactly one seventieth of a minute. There is often a slight variation from one beat to the next. Over the whole minute, the average is 70 beats, but any one beat may not be exactly the same length as the next. This variability between beats, measured and calculated by high-powered computers for minutes or hours is the HRV. The greater the HRV, the greater the adaptability of the heart. This correlates with a lessened chance for disease developing, in the heart, or anywhere else in the body.

HeartMath studies have shown that several factors decrease HRV and others increase HRV. Stress, anger, or other negative emotions create a decreased HRV. Positive emotions have a positive effect on increasing HRV. But there are a few tricks to making the positive emotions have their positive effects. This paper will present a method of identifying and directing positive energy to and through your heart based on principles learned from HeartMath techniques. These heart-focused techniques may be performed at home, or anytime.

HeartMath research has shown that their techniques (listed below), performed for just minutes, have good effects on the HRV, respiration, adrenal hormone secretion, and even improves the immune system of the gastrointestinal tract. Certain HeartMath techniques have been shown to help these things for at least six hours if performed just once!

HEART-FOCUSED TECHNIQUES

HeartMath techniques include Freeze-Frame™, Heart Lock-In™, and Cut-Thru™ as stress reduction techniques. Note that these are trademarked techniques. The reader is encouraged to explore and study all of the HeartMath materials. The Institute of HeartMath has books, tapes, and classes available on many subjects and they may be reached at (408) 338-8700. Their e-mail address is www.heartmath.com. The publisher of their materials is Planetary Publications, 14700 West Park Avenue, Boulder Creek, California 95006, (800) 372-3100. The readers are strongly encouraged to avail themselves of these materials as this paper is based on only limited aspects of HeartMath principles.

Heart-focused or heart-directed techniques involve sending positive emotion to the area of the heart, anatomically speaking. An awareness of the location of the heart in the middle of the chest, slightly to the left, is important for performing heart-focused activities.

Here is a simple heart-focused technique that most anyone can perform. Send a feeling of appreciation (or other positive emotion) to your heart. This should be the feeling you feel toward someone or something that you appreciate. Feel the appreciation in your chest, in the area of the heart. Or send the feeling of appreciation to from your brain to your heart.

This is something that you can do on your own. It is one of several tools that you may employ using your heart as an amplifier to help all of the rest of the body's organs. Use the feeling of appreciation in your heart whenever you need an immediate reduction in the stress of the moment. This technique acts like a stress arrestor or a stress buster. If you can find five minutes to do this, the effects will last six hours or longer according to research conducted by The Institute of HeartMath. If you can only do it for 10 seconds or 30 seconds, it will still help.

AK FINDINGS RELATED TO HEART-FOCUSED ACTIVITY

In an attempt to observe for any effects of heart-focused techniques on muscle testing outcomes, this author began investigating various heart-focused procedures with before and after manual muscle testing used as functional neurological assessment. Anything that changes autonomic activity will be reflected in changes in somatic activity since the autonomic nervous system is hard-wired to the somatic nervous system. These somatic changes can be observed by manual muscle testing. Since it is clear from HeartMath research that these techniques have a direct effect on the autonomic nervous system, they should cause changes in muscle testing outcomes as well. The results of these investigations were presented and published at recent ICAK meetings in Orlando (January, 1998) and Washington, D.C. (June, 1998). (Schmitt, W. H. "Applied Kinesiological Implementation of Heart-Focused Techniques Based on HeartMath Principles" *Proceedings of the ICAK-USA Annual Meeting Volume I*, 1998-1999. pp. 191-198. Published by ICAK-USA, 6405 Metcalf Ave., Suite 503, Shawnee Mission, KS 66202-3929.)

The findings presented in this paper show that conditionally inhibited ("weak") muscles become conditionally facilitated ("strong") during the conditions of various heart-focused activity. In other words, sending a sense of appreciation to the heart area is accompanied by a profound strengthening response in conditionally inhibited muscles. Simply thinking (in the head only) about a sense of appreciation rarely affects the strength response of the weak-testing muscle. (See below.) Significant range of motion changes also occur during heart-focused activity, often with effects which persist after the heart-focused activity is ceased. This is an excellent tool to demonstrate to people the importance and power of heart-focused activity.

One exception to the muscle testing findings of heart-focused activity has been identified. In a person with small intestine problems (food allergies, poor quality dietary fat ingestion such as trans fats, excess saturated fats, dysbiosis etc.) the effects on autonomic nervous system function sometimes interfere with the normal value of heart-focused techniques. This author has even seen several severe

emotional reactions to performing heart-focused activity in patients whose small intestine problems were not corrected prior to instituting the procedures. This is the only thing to be wary of regarding heart-focused techniques, and it is quite rare actually.

An extremely valuable addition to heart-focused techniques has been developed by John R. Schmitt, D.C., the author's brother. ("HeartMath: Is This The Answer to Placebo Effect." *Proceedings of the ICAK-USA Annual Meeting Volume I*, 1998-1999. pp. 149-151. Published by ICAK-USA, 6405 Metcalf Ave., Suite 503, Shawnee Mission, KS 66202-3929.) It involves identifying the most powerful sense of appreciation using manual muscle testing procedures for functional neurological assessment. A weak muscle is identified. It is then tested again while the person thinks (in the head only) of various feelings of appreciation until one causes strengthening. The specific strengthening appreciation thought is used for heart-focused activity. The responses using this specific strengthening appreciation though appears to greatly amplify the effects of heart-focused techniques. In fact, using the strengthening appreciative thought as described below has had many positive effects such as dampening the effects of allergies and neutralizing positive emotional recall (muscle weakening) responses.

The following technique is adapted from the paper by Dr. John Schmitt described above. It is this author's version of applying John Schmitt's ideas.

When the strengthening appreciation thought has been found, use this appreciation to fill the area of the heart. Send the appreciation to the heart as if the heart is a glass, a cup, or a bowl, filling it up as if you are pouring the appreciation into the heart. When the heart is full, allow the sense of appreciation to spill over and flow out to the rest of the body. Feel the appreciation emanating from the heart, and flowing throughout the entire chest and abdomen, down the legs to the toes, down the arms to the finger tips, and to the top of the head. Continue sensing this metaphor until the entire body is filled with appreciation emanating from the heart. This may take seconds or it may take minutes. The important thing is to continue the flow of appreciation from the heart until it is felt throughout the body.

If we assume that this technique has similar effects to those techniques researched by the Institute of HeartMath, then the positive effects may last up to six hours. Therefore, using this technique three or four times a day should cover a normal day. However, the positive effects may be interrupted by the intrusion of some other stress. To keep the stresses of daily life from accumulating and depleting your physical and mental efficiency, perform heart-focused activity whenever you become aware that a stressor is having a negative impact. Some of the techniques developed by the Institute of HeartMath are specifically designed for distinct types of stressful situations. As mentioned previously, the reader should contact the Institute of HeartMath for information, books, tapes, and other training in these procedures.

HEART-FOCUSING AND VISUALIZATION TECHNIQUES

Another area in which heart-focused techniques can play an important role is in conjunction with visualization techniques for pain control, range of motion, and other physiological changes.

A time-honored visualization technique for someone with a localized area of pain is to have the person relate the pain to a color and a shape. The color and shape of the pain is then mentally changed. This sometimes results in a decrease in the pain. Using this or other visualization techniques can be greatly enhanced by directing the visualization through the heart.

For example, a person describes a pain in the foot as red and pointy, like a star. If the person is asked to mentally make the red star into a blue round ball, sometimes there will be a decrease in the pain. But if the person then sends the same image of the red star changing to the blue ball through the heart to the foot, this usually amplifies the pain reduction effect noticeably.

Similarly, in limited ranges of motion, ask the person to perform the impaired range of motion. Then have the person visualize a normal range of motion and perform the movement again. Note any changes. Finally, have the person once again visualize the normal range of motion, but this time have the person send the message of increased range of motion to the problem area through the heart. Or another method is to have the person see the normal range of motion in the heart. Then recheck the motion and compare.

Several dramatic changes have been observed by this author in low back flexion, knee flexion, and shoulder elevation in chronic patients with long term limitations simply by adding the above techniques. One woman with rheumatoid-type arthritis in the knees was able to do a complete knee bend for the first time in five or six years. Another man with chronic low back problems was able to bend at the waist and come within six inches of the floor compared with never going below the knees for many years. It appears that, for maximum effectiveness, the pathways through the heart should be cleared by the technique presented above or by some of the trademarked HeartMath techniques prior to the visualization through the heart.

HEALING, THE HEALER, AND HEART FOCUSED EFFORTS

Many caregivers have intuitively learned to amplify their efforts by using versions of heart-focused or heart-directed techniques. Many others have not. It appears that both the impact of care as well as the caregiver's own health may be benefited by employing heart-focused principles.

Two lay people who participated in healing circles were treated by this author on successive days. These two women were unaware of each other, but each had been praying and meditating with her respective group for a number of years and for a number of different sick individuals.

The first woman was asked to put herself in the mental mode of the healing circle and a previously weak (conditionally inhibited) muscle was tested. Nothing

changed. She was then asked to experience the same healing mode, but to sense the healing energy going through her heart. The weak muscle responded immediately with extreme strength.

When the second woman came into the office the next day, she was asked to put herself in the healing circle mode. A weak muscle immediately strengthened. I said out loud, "That's funny. Usually you must send the message through the heart for the muscle to strengthen like that."

"Oh," She replied, "we are trained in our healing circle to send our healing energy to the sick person through our hearts. I do that instinctively now."

Both patients later reported that they had shared the information about heart-focused activity with their healing circles. All who participated had experienced heightened awareness of healing energy when everyone in the group consciously focused their healing energies through their hearts.

Since that experience, it has been noted that any type of caregiver will almost always show dramatic strengthening responses of weak muscles when the attempts to promote healing are sent through the heart. Maybe the benefits to the care receiver may be enhanced if the caregiver amplifies his or her healing efforts through the heart, but it appears that the caregiver himself or herself will be empowered by the heart-focused caring experience!

HeartMath Bibliography

D.L. Childre, Freeze Frame Fast Action Stress Relief. (Boulder Creek, CA: Planetary publications, 1994)

D.L Childre, Cut-Thru Total Security and Maximum Energy. (Boulder Creek, CA: Planetary publications, 1995)

G. Rein, R. McCraty. Long Term Effects of Compassion on Salivary IgA. Psychosomatic Medicine, 1994:56: 2, 171-72, abst.

R. McCraty, M. Atkinson, W. A. Tiller, and G. Rein. New Electrophysiological Correlates Associated With Intentional Heart Focus. Subtle Energies, 1995:4(3):251-262.

D. Rozman, R. Whitaker, T. Beckman, and D. Jones. Initial Use of a New Intervention Program for Significantly Reducing Psychological Symptomatology in HIV-Seropositive Individuals. Psychosomatics, 1995:36(2):207, abst.

R. McCraty, M. Atkinson, W. A. Tiller, and G. Rein. Autonomic Assessment Using Power Spectral Analysis of Heart Rate Variability in Emotional States. Psychosomatic Medicine, 1995:57(1):84-85, abst.

R. McCraty, D. L. Childre. Efficient Communication with Anyone, Anywhere, Any Time - Freeze-Frame: A One-Minute, Scientifically Validated Stress Reduction Technique. 1994 Proceedings: Armed Forces Communication and Electronics Assoc., Budapest, Hungary.

G. Rein, R. McCraty, M. Atkinson. The Physiological and Psychological Effects of Compassion and Anger. *Journal of Advancement in Medicine*, 1995;8(2):87-105.

R. McCraty, W.A. Tiller, M. Atkinson. Head-Heart Entrainment: A Preliminary Survey. Published in the Proceedings of the International Society for the Study of Subtle Energies and Energy Medicine, Boulder CO, 1995.

R. McCraty, M. Atkinson, W. A. Tiller, G. Rein, and A. Watkins. The Effects of Emotions on Short Term Power Spectrum Analysis of Heart Rate Variability. *American Journal of Cardiology*, 1995;76(14):1089-1093

R. McCraty, W. A. Tiller, M. Atkinson. Cardiac Coherence: A New Noninvasive Measure of Autonomic Nervous System Order. *Alternative Therapies in Health and Medicine*. 1996;2(1):52-65.

R. McCraty, M. Atkinson. The Electricity of Touch. Published in the Proceedings of the Appalachian Conference on Neurobehavioral Dynamics: Brain and Values, Radford, VA, 1997. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.

R. McCraty, M. Atkinson, G. Rein, and A. Watkins. Music Enhances the Effect of Positive Emotional States on Salivary IgA. *Stress Medicine*, 1996;12(3):167-175.

D. Rozman, R. Whitaker, T. Beckman, and D. Jones. A Pilot Intervention Program that Reduces Psychological Symptomatology in Individuals with Human Immunodeficiency Virus. *Complementary Therapies in Medicine*, 1996;4(4):226-232.

R. McCraty, A. Watkins. Autonomic Assessment Report – A Comprehensive Heart Rate Variability Analysis: Interpretation Guide and Instructions. Boulder Creek, CA: Institute of HeartMath; 1996.

B. Barrios-Choplin, R. McCraty, B. Cryer. A new approach to reducing stress and improving physical and emotional well-being at work. *Stress Medicine*, 1997;13:193-201.

R. McCraty, B. Barrios-Choplin, D. Rozman, M. Atkinson, A.D. Watkins. New Stress Management Program Increases DHEA and Reduces Cortisol Levels. In preparation.