

**GETTING AT YOUR BELIEFS**  
**ABOUT YOURSELF AND YOUR WORK**

**A WORKBOOK FOR**  
**HOLISTIC THERAPEUTIC FACILITATORS**  
**(A.K.A. HEALERS)**

**by**  
**JIM GILKESON**  
**author of *Energy Healing: A Pathway to Inner Growth***  
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*"The quality of what you do depends on the story  
you are telling yourself while you are busy doing it,  
especially if you don't think you're telling yourself a  
story."*

*Bermuda Schwarz*

# Workbook for Holistic Therapeutic Facilitators (a.k.a. Healers)

## *Beliefs*

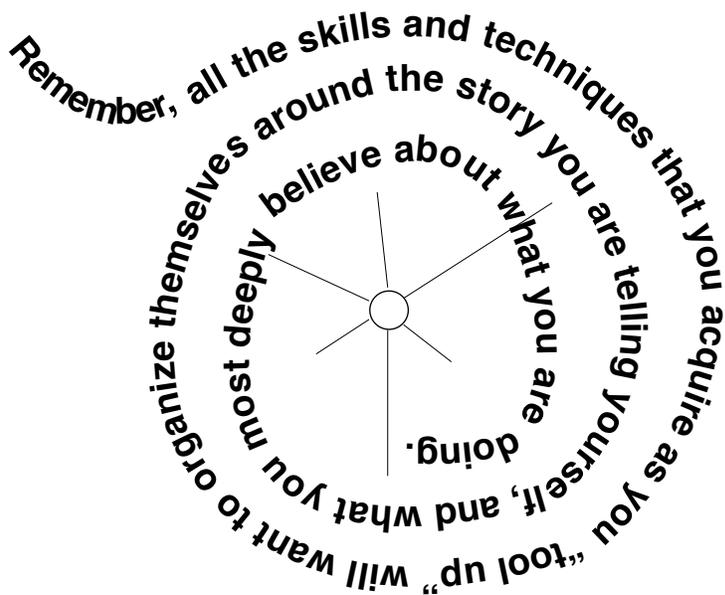
As a practitioner, you have probably had bodywork and energywork from quite a number of people. A casual observer walking in on those sessions would see more or less the same basic scenario: variations on the themes of hands-on, hands-off, manipulation, movement etc., stuff that can be described on a technical level. What they would not see so easily is the wild variety of ways in which we practitioners see ourselves, what we believe about what we are doing, as well as the particular frameworks, stories, paradigms, beliefs and models we are maintaining, consciously or unconsciously, as we do our work. While one healer might see her job as that of restoring healthy bloodflow to a set

of muscles so her client can get back to normal, another healer, using more or less the same external forms and techniques, believes she is reprogramming her client's DNA, channeling energy from the Pleiades, or charging her client's light body with color and sound.

Your skills and techniques will tend to organize themselves around how you see yourself, and what you most deeply believe about what you are doing. It seems that we have an ethical responsibility as bodyworkers to be aware of our beliefs about ourselves and what we do, and about our role in the healing process, because they affect others pretty directly.

Your beliefs have the contours of what is real and unreal . . . for you. They will organize the way you use your healing tools.

Beliefs play a huge role in sensing, for example. A classic example is the way conventionally trained doctors tend to have a hard time palpating craniosacral movement, while many novices in craniosacral work learn to feel the "cranial wave," as it is called, in the first ten minutes of their first class. Doctors are conventionally taught that cranial bones are fused, and therefore supposedly don't move with the filling and emptying of cerebrospinal fluid in the head. As a result, they don't feel the movement. Cranial flexion and extension is only about 40 microns, half the thickness of a piece of paper, but, as any craniosacral therapist will tell you, down in Nerverland, that is a big deal.



### ***Bumper-Stickers***

Our belief structures, especially our strongly held beliefs, and most especially our *unconscious* strongly held beliefs are among the biggest organizers of our experience. Here are some clichés that show up in approaches to bodywork, energywork, therapeutic and consciousness work. Like bumper-stickers, statements or slogans of this kind are loaded with unspoken beliefs and assumptions. What underlying assumptions do you detect with these statements?

- \* "Relieve all pain."
- \* "No pain, no gain."
- \* "Let's get back to normal a.s.a.p."
- \* "Eliminate all toxins."
- \* "Transcend all dualities."
- \* "Go into every past trauma, and relive it."
- \* "Get rid of all negative energy."

There are lots more, of course. Many are unspoken and, again, the more unconscious they are, the more they influence us. How would you formulate some of the other assumptions that bodyworkers operate with? How 'bout the ones concerning these keywords:

"Resistance"

Emotional Release

Sex

## ***Exercise***

There are practitioners who will tell you, in effect, "I have no story." But behind even that simple statement there is a belief structure. If you listen more deeply, you can hear a basic level of a story they tell themselves when they work.

I knew a healer named Jerome. He looked a lot like Sai Baba, a tall, good-looking man with dark skin and a generous bushy Afro. Jerome got quite a reputation as a layer-on of hands. His sessions took the time they took because he would usually fall asleep. Thirty minutes later (or longer), Jerome would wake up and the person would feel better, *much* better. When you asked Jerome how he worked, this is what he would say,

"I put my hands on,  
an' start to pray,  
then I fall asleep,  
an' get out the way."

### ***A Little Assignment: Get Into Jerome's Head***

What basic beliefs can you hear in Jerome's explanation of his healing work? After all, he is revealing something of how he sees himself in the process, and he is showing something of how healing works, according to him.

Use your imagination for a moment and ask Jerome a few questions about what he does. Grill him, pin him down. Take a few notes on your inner interview with Jerome the healer.

Jerome Notes:

## *Getting at Your Own Beliefs*

An effective way to become conscious of your own beliefs—not just the ones you could probably name off the top of your head, but the deeper, less conscious ones that in the background—is to try and articulate them to another person. Not so much in the spirit of trying to convince the other person of anything or get them to think like you, but simply reflecting on what it is that moves you and organizes what you do. If you have ever tried to write something like a "spiritual autobiography" (highly recommended), you know that once you get started, many surprising things start to happen. Somehow, in the act of articulating something as close to the bone as your actual beliefs and the personal experiences they are based on, your whole inner process starts to move. You run into things you probably hadn't counted on.

If we are only copying someone else's beliefs or imitating their style—beyond the time it takes to absorb a lesson and make that lesson our own—it will come back to haunt us in the form of insecurity when it comes time to move beyond it. When it comes to our own belief system, we have to, as the golfer Ben Hogan put it, "dig it out of the ground" ourselves. For a long time most of us have to braille our way through a maze of authorities and received beliefs before we find out what we ourselves believe. But no matter how much doctrine we sop up, our spiritual development is driven by impulses which will take us toward our own truths and beliefs if we are patient and give them a chance.

Before we go into talking about our beliefs about with someone else, let's look at a few very basic ideas about beliefs in general. These take on a great deal of significance in areas like consciousness expansion and energywork where we are venturing out over the edge of what most people believe.

### *A Few Key Questions for Personal Reflection*

#### **1. *Why do you believe what you believe?***

**Upon what stories is your inner experience of the world based? Where, specifically, do your beliefs come from? Not just religious or philosophical beliefs, but beliefs about everything. Beliefs about who you are, where you came from and where you are going. Beliefs about what is real and what isn't. Do your beliefs arrive in your DNA, hard-wired into your system? Are they codes, permanently chiseled into the bones of your personality?**

In order for the question "What do I believe?" to not simply call forward a list of personal articles of faith, it may need to be translated into a number of sub-questions like *"What is real for me? How do my beliefs function in my daily life? What is the carry-over from my beliefs into what I do?"*

## *2. Are your beliefs really yours?*

Once you have articulated some of the beliefs you hold, it's time to ask yourself the question: *Are my beliefs really my own?* This is always a good question to ask because beliefs can come to us from so many sources. An entire, comprehensive package of belief structures has come to each of us by virtue of having been born into our particular family and culture. We have an identity determined by our "tribe," that includes stories about who I and "my people" are, who "they" are, your friends and enemies, where I came from and where I am going. Do I and "my people" come from Alpha Centauri or from . . . Milwaukee?

## *3. Take a belief and trace it back as far as possible.*

Which parts of your belief structures came to you from your parents, from school, from your religious instruction, your guru or spiritual teacher? Contrast this with what you believe because it is part of *YOUR OWN EXPERIENCE*, perhaps an area that distinguishes you as different from your tribe. This could be as mundane as your choice or the car you drive or as fundamental as your religious or spiritual beliefs.

## *4. Which of your own first-hand, experientially-based beliefs have you acted on?*

Chances are, they have a lot of power. When a person begins to break out of tribal belief structures, disconnecting from its mindset and beliefs, it amounts to a significant rite of passage. You are no longer completely identical with your tribe, and its mass mind, once you enter into the mysteries of having your own personal inner life, and especially when you begin to act on it. In this sense, growing the skills of a healer often means leaving your tribe. You might return later, but your relationships will not be the same.

## *5. Are your beliefs progressive?*

That is to say, *do your beliefs change and grow as you change and grow?* This may be the best way to find out if a belief is truly your own, or one that you have accepted from an external source. One of the great problems associated with having other people's experiences (which is basically what we are doing when we accept uncritically an external belief structure) is that you have no means of progressing a belief which is not your own beyond a certain point. Trouble is, there are so many subtle inducements to do just that, even long after conquering some of our knee-jerk tendencies to try and be the nice boys and girls our parents wanted us to be.

## *Questions for Reflection*

(to write about and/or dialogue about in pairs)

1. What do you call yourself/your role in the work you do? Try to get at how you think of yourself as you work.
2. Describe your work. Try to get at what turns you on about what you do and what you feel is important in your work.
3. How did you come to this work? Is your work connected to your sense of a calling? Describe the path you have taken so far to come into the work you do. Was there a moment when you identified this as the work you want to do?
4. Talk about what has influenced you, turned you on, inspired you. Peak experiences, teachers, moments when you have seen your path.
5. What is "healing," according to you? How does healing work, according to you?

6. Who do you work best with? Who do you work least well with?

7. What are your doubts about your work?

8. What would you like to learn; what would you like to get better at?

10. Is bodywork a spiritual practice for you? Describe.

11. What is for you the source of your work? If you work with energy, how do you connect with the source of the energy you use?