

Evaluating Energy Therapists

DOROTHEA HOVER-KRAMER

There are a wide variety of energy therapy methods to research and choose from, which can be both an intriguing and confusing process. To simplify that process, most of these methods can be categorized in one of three ways: meridian-based approaches that relieve trauma and anxiety, chakra-oriented methods that address long-standing lifestyle and core belief patterns, and the great many derivative techniques that rebalance the human energy field to restore well-being and vitality. Since most people don't know the educational or practice standards required for various energy therapies, a good place to start evaluating them is with the therapists themselves. Competent energy therapists will be fluid in many of the ways available for balancing the biofield (the human energy system) and thus able to tailor an approach to meet your specific needs. That is why choosing an ethical, knowledgeable practitioner is more important than choosing a particular energy therapy.



BARBARA BELLINGHAM/GETTY IMAGES

ASSESSING THE PROFESSIONAL AND THE PERSONAL

The skills required to be an effective energy therapist are accumulated through a training program, which can exceed two years, as well as through experiences that exceed the necessary coursework. Learning is further gained via mentorship with others in the field and the compilation of case management reports. Prospective practitioners should be willing to describe to you their background and learning path, as well as the theory base and research that support a particular therapy.

Because there are considerations within energy therapy that differ from other forms of therapy, pay careful attention to

not only the qualifications but also the caring ethic of a practitioner. The interaction of the energy fields of the practitioner and the client, for example, allows a therapeutic alliance to develop to a depth that would take many

months in more cognitively oriented approaches. Also, problems not held in the conscious mind—as well as non-ordinary states of consciousness such as the reliving of early childhood memories or a forgotten trauma—may surface during a session, requiring a compassionate response from your practitioner. Yet another consideration, though more difficult to discern: Can the therapist skillfully assess whether your needs exceed their ability or education? Facility in making referrals to more qualified professionals is essential. You'll also want the therapist to skillfully discern whether a particular intervention is appropriate for you, because not everyone benefits from the use of a specific energy therapy. The practitioner should be willing to discuss both the risks and the benefits of a method and to engage in a genuinely informed consent process that empowers you with full freedom of choice. Above all, an ethic of caring requires the careful building of a therapeutic alliance that honors the fiduciary relationship and the client's priorities.

It's also important to evaluate the personal qualities of a therapist you are considering, which is best done in an interview. Meet with several practitioners before making a decision. After all, who buys the first car they see? You are selecting someone who will be intimately interacting with your energetic essence, influencing your health and wellness. Not surprisingly, finding the right energy therapist can be a deeply personal process for both the client and the practitioner.

THE ACEP STEPS FORWARD

While there are numerous national organizations for therapists in specific energy disciplines, the Association for Comprehensive Energy Psychology (ACEP) is the only

one that is organized to support traditional psychotherapists who use energy modalities. More than two-thirds of its members are licensed clinicians, including psychologists, counselors, social workers, nurses, psychiatrists, and addictions specialists. These clinicians are located throughout the world and are listed on the ACEP Web site, www.energypsych.org, where a comprehensive overview of current available research in various energy modalities can also be found. Additionally, ACEP is developing a certification program for its members that acknowledges and validates their fundamental skill level. The best available practitioner for the general public

If you can answer to your satisfaction most of the questions in the following list, you've probably found

the best practitioner for your situation:

- What is the practitioner's educational level, including both basic academic preparation and years learning the specialty practice?
- What particular knowledge or skill does the therapist have that goes beyond foundational requirements?
- How much experience does the practitioner have?
- What are the therapist's areas of focus?
- What are some of the most likely outcomes of a session with a specific modality?
- What are the risks and benefits?
- What available research validates the practitioner's particular modality?
- What is the practitioner's experience in working with emotional issues such as anxiety, depression, addictions, or relationship issues?
- Would the therapist be willing to refer you elsewhere or to seek consultation if needed?
- Do you trust that the practitioner will keep confidences and respect client wishes?
- Is the therapist compassionate and willing to listen?
- What other professionals would recommend

would be an ACEP clinician who combines expertise in a psychotherapeutic discipline with energetic approaches. 🌐

DOROTHEA HOVER-KRAMER, EDD, RN, CNS, *cofounder and past president of ACEP, most recently coauthored with Midge Murphy, JD, PhD, Creating Right Relationships: A Practical Guide to Ethics in Energy Therapies. It can be ordered through Behavioral Health Consultants, P.O. Box 406, Cave Junction, OR 97523, or by emailing dorotheah@frontiernet.net.*

