

Selections from the Readings in The Hakomi Method

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From Experience to Insight

One of the ways Hakomi is body centered is that it uses experience as the doorway to insight. It uses the bodily experience to evoke meaning. If you're in mindfulness and I say, "Dogs are friendly" and you react with fear and disbelief, there's no question about what model you're holding. As soon as you're in touch with those beliefs and those emotions, clear memories are likely to follow. And when memories are present, explanations aren't needed. Even more important, when beliefs are conscious, doubt becomes possible. Change becomes possible. The key thing is to get the connection between the beliefs and the experiences.

Here is how Hakomi works: the practice of loving presence helps the client feel safe and understood. That makes mindfulness possible. The therapist then finds ways (little experiments) to evoke experiences in mindfulness. The meaning of the evoked bodily experiences are understood as direct expressions of core beliefs (models of self and the world that organize all experience). When these core beliefs are made conscious and understood, change becomes possible. Where core beliefs are limiting, destructive, unbalanced or painful, they can be challenged. New beliefs can be tried and new experiences evoked. I call these missing experiences. Safety, peace, freedom, aliveness are a few.

If there is conflict about the expression of certain emotions, we support the actions that manage that expression (but only if we have permission to do so). This usually results in a deeper, more complete and more satisfying release and, as is often the case when emotional expression goes beyond habitual boundaries, spontaneous insight and integration follow. The missing experience emerges and the process evolves into savoring and integrating.

Of course it's not all that linear. We often loop back to earlier steps, spending time building the relationship, trying new experiments, evoking new experiences and all that. But the general drift of each session and the therapy process tends to move in the direction I have described. As a therapy process unfolds, I support each stage and each new development. I never use force against "resistance". Trying to overcome resistance, usually creates more resistance. Force evokes counterforce. So, I back off when I see that the client doesn't want to go any faster or pursue a particular direction. I try to understand why and maybe explore with the client what he or she needs around that. I'm not in any rush and have no need to push. But neither am I passive.

As I have already said, I work with core beliefs and models. We get to those models through the methods I've already talked about. We call the process of uncovering basic models "going for meaning". We want to help people change their models. Again, this is not an intellectual process. It's mental, but it's not abstract. For the person holding the model, it is not theory at all. It is real. The deepest models are not even questioned. They are not in consciousness, but they



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are in use. They are old habits, organizing all experience, all the time.

It is as if you had been wearing colored glasses all your life. If they are orange-colored glasses, you have never really seen the color blue. You don't know what blue is, or that it even exists. All blue looks black to you. And if you don't know you are wearing orange glasses, you never will question the black you see. The deepest models you are using determine your perceptions and other behaviors. Those models are your truth. They determine what you think, what you do and what you feel.

One very significant thing about Hakomi is that it brings these core models into consciousness. It gets to the core beliefs and meanings that run your life. This gives you a chance to examine and to change them. Using mindfulness, people learn, through their immediate reactions, exactly how they habitually organize themselves and their world.