

Muscle Testing

(Applied Kinesiology (AK), Touch for Health (TH), Behavioral Kinesiology (BK))

(excerpted from *The Encyclopedia of New Age Beliefs*, Harvest House, 1997)

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INFO AT A GLANCE

Description. Muscle testing is often a combination of chiropractic and Chinese acupuncture theory plus “muscle-testing” practices. It involves physical diagnosis, e.g., testing the supposed “strength” or “weakness” of muscles which are believed to be related to organ systems. And it may employ treatment or healing by acupressure, meridian tracing, “cosmic energies,” or other dubious methods.

Founder. George Goodheart (AK), John Thie (TH), John Diamond (BK).

How does it claim to work? Muscle testing claims that disease can be evaluated, at least in part, through specific patterns of muscle weakness. It also claims to manipulate alleged body energies to produce and maintain healing. By supposedly “unblocking” congested energy along meridian pathways, or by infusing energy into deficient organs or bodily areas, practitioners believe that physical health can be maintained.

Scientific evaluation. Discredited.

Examples of occult potential. Manipulating invisible energies can easily become an occult practice, e.g., a form of psychic healing. In addition, many muscle testers employ pendulums, dowsing instruments, and other radionics devices.

Major problems. Muscle testing rejects the known facts of human anatomy by accepting undemonstrated connections between muscles and specific organs and diseases; it also claims to regulate bodily energies whose existence has never been proven.

Biblical/Christian evaluation. Muscle testing is often based, in part, upon Taoist philosophy or other Eastern metaphysics, is scientifically discredited and potentially occult. It should be avoided on this basis.

Potential dangers. The attendant hazards of misdiagnosis and occult influences.

Note: This material is general and introductory. Modern “New Age” muscle testing methods must be distinguished from the scientific discipline of kinesiology proper.

Webster’s Third New International Dictionary and the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* both define formal kinesiology as “[the] study of the principles of mechanics and anatomy in relation to human movement.” *Webster’s New Twentieth Century Dictionary* defines it as “the science or study of human muscular movements, especially as applied in physical education.”

While New Age muscle testing may or may not employ some of the methods of formal kinesiology, scientific kinesiology never employs the methods of New Age muscle testing. The two disciplines are based on an entirely different approach to physiology and health.

INTRODUCTION AND INFLUENCE

On a windswept Sunday morning in Los Angeles, an articulate young Chinese woman surveys an audience of 2500 and asks for three volunteers. She has just concluded a message on the energy systems of the universe and their application to classical Chinese acupuncture. In return for braving the elements and leaving behind the *Sunday Times*, the audience now will be treated to a most unusual demonstration.

Two young women and an older man stand somewhat nervously onstage as the Chinese woman explains how applied kinesiology, or muscle testing, can demonstrate changes in one's life energy. With arms stretched forward and hands clasped, the first volunteer easily resists the speaker's efforts to pull her arms downward. Quickly, the speaker touches a few points around the head, and the startled volunteer's arms are pulled down without resistance. More points are touched, and strength returns as before.

The second woman is tested for arm strength. The speaker then places her hands in front of and behind the volunteer's head. Suddenly she passes her hands downward to the floor, like an illusionist making a magic pass over a box whose contents are about to disappear. After this is done, the second volunteer's arms drop with an apparently effortless pull. Then with a quick upward sweep of her hands, the Chinese woman restores the volunteer's strength as easily as she apparently drained it.

The third volunteer easily resists the arm pull, then waits as the woman walks behind him. Twice she gives a thumbs-up gesture behind him for the audience to see, followed by unchanged tests of strength. After a thumbs-down gesture, the surprised volunteer's arms drop with an easy pull. Another thumbs-up signal, and complete resistance returns. The woman ends her presentation with an admonition to use such abilities for good. Later she informs a small group of bystanders that she did indeed lower the third volunteer's energy level simply by willing it to be done. "Is this magic?" one bystander asks.

"Only if you call it that," she answers.

The Chinese woman is Effie Poy Yew Chow, Ph.D., who has served as president of the East-West Academy of Healing Arts, as an appointed member of the former National Advisory Council to the Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare, and as organizer of a major conference on holistic health and public policy in Washington, D.C.

The previous paragraphs began coauthor John Weldon's book with Dr. Paul and Teri Reisser, *New Age Medicine*, as an illustration of the "muscle testing" technique of holistic medicine. In its most basic form, "muscle testing" is one of the simplest to learn and most popular of all New Age health practices. Three kinds of muscle testing dominate the marketplace—applied kinesiology (AK), "Touch for Health" (TH), and behavioral kinesiology (BK).

AK was developed for health professionals by chiropractor George Goodheart in the 1950s. According to at least one source, Goodheart allegedly received some of his data on AK by psychic means, although we have also been told that he denies this. In the early 1970s, AK was popularized and made available to laymen by New Age chiropractor, John Thie, through his "Touch for Health" method. The third form, behavioral kinesiology, is an extended, if bizarre, application of AK, developed in the late 1970s by psychiatrist John Diamond.

In essence, applied kinesiology and "Touch for Health" are very similar. Behavioral kinesiology is a related but separate discipline that has greatly expanded the application of applied kinesiology while incorporating additional strange theories of diagnosis.

Muscle testing is often employed in conjunction with other New Age treatments. Be-

cause it is easily integrated with a wide variety of New Age health practices, it is frequently combined with other techniques as part of a “comprehensive” health treatment program. For example, naturopaths, chiropractors, reflexologists, iridologists, psychic healers, acupuncturists, and those using various forms of yoga and body-work techniques may all incorporate muscle testing in their treatment programs. And the “muscle testers” themselves often employ one or more additional methods of New Age health practice.

Like most New Age therapies, muscle testing is used for both diagnosis and treatment and stresses its “natural” approach to health by assisting the body’s “innate” ability to heal itself through the “proper” regulation and maintenance of mystical life energies.

NATURE AND USE

In part, muscle testing assumes that physical illness and disease result from a blockage or deficiency of psychic energy within the body. Thus, muscle testing claims to work by manipulating this mystical life energy (called *chi*, *prana*, the life force, and so on), which is supposedly circulating within the body. The purpose of manipulating these alleged energies is to cure illness and maintain health.

Muscle testing is also based on certain beliefs of chiropractic (including, in some forms, D.D. Palmer’s theory of “Innate Intelligence”), and on ancient Taoism, in particular the meridian structures of classical Chinese acupuncture. It teaches that, if left untreated, blockages or imbalances of the body’s “energies” (the “life force,” or *chi*) eventually result in physical illness or aberrations.

One way to examine the condition of the “life energy” it is said, is through the body’s muscles. Because specific organs are allegedly “connected” to specific muscles through the Chinese acupuncture meridian system, when these muscles are “tested” and discovered to be in a “weakened” condition, this is said to indicate that the muscle and its corresponding organ are deficient of *chi*. Thus, various methods of physical, intuitive, or even psychic manipulation are used to “test” muscle strength and to treat alleged energy imbalances.

Muscle testing is used in two basic ways: for prevention of illness and for treatment of existing problems. For example, muscle testing may be used to treat current specific symptoms. A patient may complain of back trouble or a stomach pain. By applying pressure against the corresponding muscle(s) thought to be related to the illness, the muscles may test “weak,” indicating the underlying deficiency, or blockage, of cosmic energy. Treatment would employ acupressure methods (finger pressure applied to acupuncture points), or “hand passes” above the skin along specific acupuncture meridian lines related to the problem, which supposedly “unblocks” or “realigns” the energy imbalance and so restores health (see below). Muscle testers also claim that their methods can detect food allergies, dietary deficiencies, structural problems, and other physical maladies.

Muscle testing also purports to be used preventively to detect preclinical problems. In this case patients are encouraged to have a general diagnostic checkup, even when they feel fine. Here the therapist tests all major muscles to discover which ones are “weak.” Proper treatment is then applied *before* the underlying “problem” has a chance to manifest outward illness on the physical level. Because it is believed that months, or even years, may pass before the blocked energy causes an illness, disease, or other problems, muscle testers encourage regular checkups.

PSYCHIC CONNECTION

Some aspects of muscle testing may be indistinguishable from psychic diagnosis and healing. In applied kinesiology, chiropractor George Goodheart recommends a method called "therapy localization." Here, the hand is placed on the body over an alleged point of energy imbalance so that the practitioner can diagnostically "test" an area for a suspected problem. The hand is thought to become a sort of psychic "conduit," able to locate the point of impaired function, allowing the practitioner to successfully "treat" the symptom. Some practitioners claim that they use their hands to "sense" various energy imbalances in different organs, much in the manner used by practitioners of psychic healing. Goodheart calls "therapy localization" the "most astounding concept in applied kinesiology" because it "is capable of identifying virtually all faults and dysfunctions that have an effect on the nervous system. These encompass everything from [chiropractic] subluxations of the spine to imbalances in the body's energy fields."

Chiropractor John Thie teaches that "Touch for Health" can be performed in virtually the same manner as psychic healing. For example, in so-called meridian tracing, one can apparently regulate mystical energy flows by mental power alone. "In fact, you do not even have to make contact with the body. You can simply follow the meridians in your mind's eye, through concentration, and produce much the same effect." He further teaches a common New Age belief that "we are all one with the universe, the universal energy.... Our bodies are literally this universal energy in some of its various forms."

Most muscle testing, therefore, is simply a combination of or variation upon classical chiropractic/acupuncture theory and the ancient Chinese practice of acupressure, plus the novel approaches to muscle "weakness" developed by George Goodheart or John Diamond.

(to be continued)

(Documentation for quotes found in *The Encyclopedia of New Age Beliefs*, Harvest House, 1997, pp. 399-407)