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# Trager<sup>®</sup> — 2: hooking up: the power of presence in bodywork

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### KEYWORDS

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**Abstract** This paper is the second in a series on the Trager Approach from the perspective of an experienced practitioner. The fact that Milton Trager put such emphasis upon hook-up makes it a worthy, if difficult, subject for exploration in these pages. Hook-up, or presence, is challenging to describe since it is by definition an internal state of awareness. The interested reader who wants to understand Trager's contributions to the fields of manual therapy needs to try to feel the effects of hook-up in his/her own body. For that reason the paper offers some simple exercises to try out on one's own or with colleagues or clients. We do not really know how Trager discovered hook-up and its efficacy in his work. Many forms of therapy require abilities that involve great sensitivity and concentration. In many the practitioner listens to bodily responses in order to support implicit change from within the client. What is probably most unique about Trager<sup>®</sup> is the commitment to maintain and share presence as the goal of the session, rather than a particular technique or outcome. Many spiritual traditions have striven for methods that attempt to help persons feel the effects of moment-to-moment awareness. Trager discovered some very simple body-centered methods to do just that. The author draws upon his experience with various forms of spiritual discipline and some of the leading edges of scientific and philosophical inquiry in order to explore some of the consequences of incorporating this state of awareness in all manual therapies. And underneath this presentation lies a subtle controversy: whether hook-up or presence is an altered state of awareness or whether our ordinary state of awareness is the altered one.

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<sup>1</sup>There are strong similarities between Milton Trager's approach to manual therapy and Eugene Gendlin's approach to psychotherapy. Gendlin's emphasis on the "felt sense" of the client and attention to the sensations that accompany vague thoughts and feelings are based upon well-researched findings that by paying close attention to those sensations, an implicit or deeper level of understanding will surface in the client (Gendlin, 1982, 1996). Trager also placed great emphasis upon the felt experiences of the client and practitioner. In both cases the practitioner is trained to maintain a continuous focus upon present phenomena rather than an agenda of treatment or diagnosis. Both Trager and Gendlin perceive an implicit wholeness, accessible to client and practitioner through presence, which produces healing changes, referred to as "psychophysical integration or felt shifts" correspondingly.

## Hooking-up

One of the major differences between the Trager Approach and other forms of manual therapy is the emphasis Milton Trager put on the maintenance of a certain state of mind in the practitioner.<sup>1</sup> He discovered that this state of mind could markedly influence the results of treatment sessions. He called this state of mind, "hook-up", meaning that the practitioner was linking up with a "life regulating force," that also connected him/her with the client, mentally as well as physically.

1 Trager taught practitioners simple but profound  
2 ways to attain and return to this state of aware-  
3 ness. He had various ways of describing this state of  
4 mind as: “deeper than relaxation,” “It’s like Zen”,  
5 he would say, “it’s like the feeling of... well...  
6 nothingness.” “Recall how you feel when you are  
7 looking into the face of a baby, or when you are  
8 overwhelmed by a sunset” (Trager and Guadagno,  
9 1987).

10 Like Abraham Maslow’s description of “peak  
11 experiences,” once you feel hook-up consciously,  
12 that feeling links you to many such experiences in  
13 your past, forming a new and transformative way of  
14 perceiving life (Maslow, 1962). The practitioner  
15 who is in hook-up feels a sense of unity, time-  
16 lessness, openness, freshness, and surprise. Read-  
17 ers may recall those sessions with clients when time  
18 seemed to stop and everything felt connected, and  
19 there was a feeling that the client was participating  
20 in the same feeling, and that just the right things  
21 were happening. Imagine what it would be like to  
22 have a way to bring that kind of connection into  
23 every session. Trager loved to share this state of  
24 awareness with others, whether through his hands,  
25 his words, or his presence. He would do his best to  
26 infect students, clients, and patients with this  
27 feeling and teach them to recreate the feeling for  
28 themselves. “Hook-up” is like the measles... you  
29 catch it from someone who has got it” (Juhan,  
30 1993). In the last years of his life, he would say  
31 repeatedly “hook-up is the work—it is every-  
32 thing!”

### 33 34 35 **What is hook-up?**

36  
37 What is this state of awareness that Trager  
38 described? What does it feel like? How does a  
39 practitioner learn to hook-up? What does the client  
40 experience when the practitioner is hooked-up?  
41 What are the results of a session where the  
42 practitioner is hooked-up? What physiological and  
43 mental changes occur in the practitioner? Can  
44 hook-up be practiced no matter what technique is  
45 used? What about sessions in which both client and  
46 practitioner are hooked-up?

47 The following are some of the answers, based on  
48 the personal experience and views of the author:

- 49  
50  
51 • Hook-up is a state of expanded mental, physical  
52 and spiritual awareness. One becomes aware of  
53 a connection between inner and outer experi-  
54 ences, between one person and another, and a  
55 gnosis or inner knowing connection to universal  
being. Some would call it a state of communion.

- Hook-up feels deeply pleasurable and peaceful. 57  
One perceives dimensions that are usually in the 59  
background of our sensibilities, such as: time- 59  
lessness, silence, stillness, emptiness, and unity. 61  
One feels spacious and loving, light and vibrant, 61  
awe-filled and expectant. Body and mind feel 63  
tingly or shimmering. 63
- One can hook-up by monitoring, moment-to- 65  
moment, the body’s sensory responses from any 65  
phenomena and then apprehending the effects 67  
of this process. 67
- When the practitioner is hooked-up the client 69  
feels gently held, respected and guided into a 69  
state of deep peacefulness, trust, and non- 71  
pressured letting go. 71
- The results of such a session affirm the client’s 73  
own inner resources: a fundamental participa- 73  
tive process for self-healing that may continue 75  
long after the session is over. 75
- The practitioner becomes aware of heightened 77  
physical sensitivity that includes soft hands, and 77  
a mental focus that is continuously listening, 79  
assessing, affirming, and adjusting to tissue 79  
change, rather than removing symptoms. 81
- Since hook-up is primarily the apprehension of 81  
what is implicit in each moment; there is no 83  
reason why this state would not compliment any 83  
modality. It is a matter of shifting other agendas 85  
like: fixing, mending, comparing, or protocol, 85  
into the background. Each session becomes 87  
unique and latent with possibility, as does each 87  
client. 87
- When practitioner and client are fully aware and 89  
conversant about what is occurring in the 89  
present moment, there is an interpersonal and 91  
reciprocal sharing of sensitivities; and change 91  
and transformation are multiplied. 93

### 94 95 96 **A healing hypothesis**

97 Trager believed that the mind was the foremost 99  
channel for healing. “You have to reach the 99  
unconscious mind of the client if you want to 101  
produce change that lasts (Trager, 1982).” 101

102 He believed that all pathology, all limitation is 103  
perpetuated because we unintentionally move the 103  
sensory memories of negative incidents into our 105  
unconscious mind. For example, we experience a 105  
negative incident, let us say we are trying to reach 107  
the top of a mountain and have to give up... 107  
exhausted, unsuccessful. The feelings of fatigue in 109  
our body are associated with the failure to reach 109  
our goal. Those feelings and associations are stored 111  
away in our unconscious mind because we have to



**Figure 1** Cartoon of climbing a mountain where the client is looking at the ground, withdrawn into his/her memories of past travails and the practitioner/guide teaches the client/climber to take in the beauty around him e.g. the panorama, the colors, the smells, the plants and animals etc. so that the client/climber can enjoy those parts and not obsess about the physical strain. It does not matter if we attain the goal as long as we can be observant and appreciative. The rewards of the moment far surpass the attainment of the goal.

go on with other activities. We may not consciously remember the failure to reach the summit of the mountain. But, every time we start to undertake a goal that seems difficult, feelings of frustration and hopelessness and sensations of fatigue, shortness of breath, pain and heaviness in the legs may start to resurface in our bodies.

The practitioner is like the experienced guide who accompanies us up the mountain. He/she can enthusiastically inspire us to complete the ascent and also commiserate with us when anticipation of defeat arises. The practitioner in hook-up is like the guide who has discovered the pleasure that arises from full appreciation of the moment; every step along the trail can be experienced fully, deliciously. The mind of the practitioner communicates this feeling of appreciation of the moment to the client from his/her own felt sense (Fig. 1).

Trager held that long after the body has healed itself, traumatic memories are retained in the unconscious, a vast body-mind filing system of patterned reflexes that limit our ability to respond freely to any situation. Hook-up links the mind and senses of the practitioner to an intrinsic wholeness that he/she shares with the client. This wholeness or, what Trager sometimes called universal mind, guides the practitioner's actions and provides a deeply respectful holding space, and a feeling of joining with the experience of the client. The soft, full-handed contact; the gently supportive rhythmical rocking motions of the Trager Approach reflect an inner state of peacefulness and wholeness that exists a priori in the client.<sup>2</sup> In other words, the practitioner is reawakening body mem-

<sup>2</sup>Juhan (1993) says that the practitioner has to feel this state to be able to communicate it to the client... the author's inclination is to say that it already exists in the client as a latent state, once the client has a taste of that state the body-mind is reminded of what it already knows.

ory files that are more appealing than the traumatically linked reactive patterns, and teaching the client how to open them for him/herself (Juhan, 1993). It is as if the body is like an instrument with its own unique characteristics and layerings of tone, timbre, harmonics and rhythms, the practitioner the musician and the melodies are colorful blendings of new and resurfaced material. Trager said,

We hold that the attributes of the body and mind are holistically interrelated in the whole electro-magnetic force field that is living matter. Thus mental and emotional patterns are intimately related to movement and expressive patterns in the physical body. Old limiting mental images of the self and one's capacities maintain and reinforce tension patterns and rigidities in the body that result in restriction, pain and loss or impairment of function. These physical manifestations in turn reinforce the self-limiting mental images in a vicious feedback loop. (Trager, 1982)

"We don't replace the memories but we give clients a new feeling, a new memory to choose" (Trager and Guadagno, 1987). Thus healing could be defined as free and easy access to those unconscious files, and the addition of new, positive, freeing information.

### Presence, mindfulness, and hook-up

A parallel terminology may help in understanding what hook-up is. In Buddhist and Christian meditative practices there are terms that mirror the state of hook-up. These terms will be used interchangeably throughout the rest of this article. *Mindfulness* in Buddhism is a state of awareness, which embraces all of reality and non-reality, form and emptiness (Thera, 1979). Continuous *presence* or

1 *nunc stans* in Christianity (Wilber, 1981) is the same  
 3 sort of awareness—it is a matching or merging of  
 5 our subjective state with objective reality, includ-  
 7 ing the felt sense of a connective principle or  
 9 Christ.<sup>3</sup> The practice of mindfulness and presence  
 11 are central to the attainment of Buddha-mind and  
 13 Christ-consciousness. The meditator in both sys-  
 15 tems uses various bodily mediated devices to  
 17 overcome mental and emotional distractions and  
 19 maintain alert and steadfast concentration on the  
 21 present moment. In almost all mystical traditions,  
 23 continuous observation of the present moment  
 25 provides a doorway to the eternal, the source of  
 27 all reality.

Trager describes similar openings in himself and  
 his patients.

We are surrounded by a force;  
 A life-giving, life-regulating force.  
 It might be electro-chemical; electro-magnetic.  
 Whatever. We know that this force exists.  
 We don't have to go a fraction of an inch  
 Away from our body to get it. (Trager, 1982)

29 The main difference between the spiritual prac-  
 31 tices described above, and that of hook-up, is that  
 33 of intent. The Trager practitioner does not profess  
 35 a goal of spiritual conversion; only a *sharing* of the  
 37 experience of presence and sensation. This sharing  
 results in shifts in awareness of the client, the  
 practitioner and their mutual being. Psychophysical  
 integration, Trager's term for these shifts, can thus  
 be described as multi-dimensional.

<sup>3</sup>"This now, the *nunc stans*, is a no-boundary moment. It has  
 no boundaries because the past as memory and the future as  
 expectations are in, not around it. Because there is no past and  
 no future outside this now-moment, there are no boundaries to  
 this moment—nothing came before it, nothing comes after it  
 (Wilber, 1981)". This is quite different from what is called *nunc  
 fluens* in which the present is experienced as a fleeting moment  
 sandwiched in between past and future. In *nunc fluens* we  
 experience time as subjective and variable, or objective, or  
 measured (Bentov, 1977). Subjective time is one byproduct of  
 entrancement or hypnogogic states. TS Elliot reveals the  
 consciousness that arises when we bring presence or *nunc stans*  
 into time (Elliot, 1968).

Time past and time future  
 Allow but little consciousness.  
 To be conscious is not to be in time  
 But only in time can the moment in the rose garden,  
 The moment in the arbor when the rain beat,  
 The moment in the draughty church at smokefall  
 Be remembered; involved with past and future  
 Only through time is time conquered.

## Hook-up feels like ...?

What does the state of hook-up or presence or  
 mindfulness feel like to the practitioner? There is a  
 deep sense of peace and assurance and connection  
 with the client and the surrounding environment.  
 The practitioner's hands become soft, warm and  
 spacious. Starting with the hands, the whole body  
 feels like it's filled with a subtle effervescence.  
 Movements produce pleasant shimmering sensa-  
 tions. The mind is clear and perceptive, able to  
 discern very small increments of information. Like  
 a rock climber in a dangerous ascent, all of the  
 sensory channels both mental and physical are  
 open, alert and very receptive but with parasym-  
 pathetic and liminal responses, and no adrenaline  
 rush. And there is also a strong sense of playfulness,  
 expansiveness and spontaneity. Trager described it  
 as "swimming in a vast ocean of pleasantness"  
 (Trager and Guadagno, 1987). Deanne Juhan de-  
 scribes the feeling of hook-up as "a neuropeptide  
 cocktail (Juhan, 1993)".

**Exercise 1:** Inside and outside are the same (allow  
 about 1 h).

Start by palpating or exploring an external object  
 such as a flower or a sculpture or person's body.  
 Notice the kinds of information you obtain through  
 that experience. And notice what your mind does  
 with that information. Continue that exploration  
 until you feel satisfied that you have gathered as  
 much information as you can... Then seat yourself.  
 Get comfortable. Close your eyes. Take some time  
 to recall what you just experienced and notice any  
 visceral sensations still remaining in your body...  
 Pause. Take some deep breaths down into your  
 body. Notice the contact of your body parts that are  
 being supported by other surfaces. Notice the  
 downward pull of gravity in those places and sense  
 the upward push of those supports. Notice how you  
 assess the qualities of those supportive surfaces as  
 experienced through your body. Next, feel the  
 surface of your body; the weight, texture and  
 constriction or looseness of your clothing. Then,  
 feel the surfaces that are open to the surrounding  
 air. Feel the temperature, the relative humidity,  
 the movement of air around your body, and the  
 ambience of the space. Next, go inside and focus  
 into a part of your body that feels uncomfortable,  
 pleasurable or perhaps empty or numb. Carefully  
 map out that area, notice the dimensions and  
 layers of sensations or their lack... their intensity,  
 rhythm, and direction. Notice how different types  
 of sensation seem to arise and fade away. Notice  
 that a part of your mind is able to keep track of any



1 changes even as another part just monitors what is  
 2 happening. Pause... Notice how you are now  
 3 relating to this part of your body. What has  
 4 changed? Take some time to feel any overall  
 5 changes that have occurred in your body and  
 6 mind... Keeping your eyes closed, expand your  
 7 attention to monitor what is happening outside  
 8 your body: what do you hear, smell, or feel. Notice  
 9 that what is occurring around you is mirrored by  
 10 sensations you can feel inside... Next open your  
 11 eyes softly and notice what you feel inside as you  
 12 observe spatial relationships and patterns and rest  
 13 your eyes on the objects around you... Then start  
 14 to re-explore the object or person's body you were  
 15 exploring before. Ask yourself some basic ques-  
 16 tions: What do I feel inside myself as I explore it?  
 17 What can I feel from its surface? What kind of  
 18 internal relationships can I feel in it? How is it  
 19 affected by my exploration? After you have done  
 20 this for sufficient time to feel complete, take a  
 21 little time to sense inside your body and ask  
 22 yourself "How have I been affected by this  
 23 experience?"

## 25 Present or not?

27 Since changing the mind of the client was the  
 28 primary objective of his approach, Trager wanted  
 29 the practitioner to remain awake and aware and  
 30 receptive. He was less definitive about the mental  
 31 state of the client. In the author's opinion, hook-up  
 32 should not be confused with hypnogogic or trance  
 33 states in which part of the client's mind is lulled  
 34 into reduced alertness or torpor. The mindfulness of  
 35 hook-up should also not be confused with concen-  
 36 tration on a particular therapeutic outcome. The  
 37 practitioner who commits to remaining present and  
 38 sharing presence is thus establishing the primary  
 39 agenda of the session: drawing forth and reinforc-  
 40 ing changes directly from the client's implicit  
 41 wholeness.<sup>4</sup> Every place the practitioner client  
 42 team focuses, even places loaded with uncomfort-  
 43 able symptoms, can become filled with pleasur-  
 44 able sensations. Like reinforcement in  
 45 biofeedback, the client can experience a corre-  
 46 spondence between his/her own directed attention  
 47 and these additional sensations. The client now has  
 48 a tool to use, the felt sense of hook-up, to relate

51 <sup>4</sup>Like most authors who investigate energy work, James  
 52 Oschman does not talk about presence directly. He suggests  
 53 that healers can induce a receptive state of awareness he calls  
 54 "free-runs" that "entrains" and their clients and themselves to  
 55 the biomagnetic field of the earth and beyond. It should be clear  
 56 that "free-runs" are comparable with presence (Oschman,  
 2000).

57 differently with his/her symptoms even when the  
 58 practitioner's hands are removed.

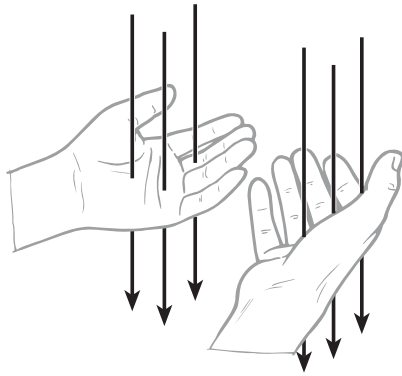
59 The practitioner is monitoring information that  
 60 only occurs in the present to feel the connection of  
 61 inner and outer, observer and observed; the "I  
 62 Thou" of experiencing. (Buber, 1986). Psychologist  
 63 Jeremy Horner describes the effects of "resonant  
 64 causation" when touch is involved as an entry into  
 65 timelessness. He goes on to say

67 Touch has great affective flexibility. It can shift from  
 68 the timeless now to the moving now, and from feeling  
 69 to emotion, because of its mobility, range of move-  
 70 ment and differential pressure. In a second it can  
 71 move from resonant to mechanical causation, from  
 72 causal synchronicity to causal efficacy, from I-Thou to  
 73 I-it (Heron, 1992).

75 Deanne Juhan (1993) and Jack Liskin (1996), in  
 76 writing about hook-up, both allude to a hypnogogic  
 77 or trance state that is induced in the client through  
 78 rhythmic movement and entrainment with the  
 79 mind of the practitioner. Relying on Ernest Rossi's  
 80 (1993) work with Erickson on therapeutic hypnosis,  
 81 both aver that it is this trance state that allows the  
 82 client to accept new patterns. Trager himself often  
 83 talked about "fooling the (resistant or empat-  
 84 terned) mind." The emphasis upon *client* "pre-  
 85 sence" in this article is an attempt to correct a  
 86 contradiction that Trager did not deal with. If the  
 87 agenda is defined by presence, than any other  
 88 approach, such as lulling or fooling the client's  
 89 mind is entrancement and an abandonment of  
 90 presence.

## 93 Weighing—relating to gravity

95 Trager students learn to practice specific methods  
 96 for remaining in hook-up. The first method is called  
 97 "feeling the weight." The student is taught to  
 98 weigh parts of his/her own body, with and without  
 99 movement, and to experience the effects of hook-  
 100 up. Then she/he learns to apply weighing and  
 101 movement in producing and assessing responses in  
 102 the client. As a Trager practitioner works with  
 103 different parts of the client's body, he/she is  
 104 always asking: "How much does it weigh?" "How  
 105 does it move?" "How does it (the tissue) respond to  
 106 my weight and movement?" Passage through the  
 107 linear rays of gravity triggers neurological re-  
 108 sponses that contribute towards proprioception.  
 109 This interactive device is deceptively simple... to  
 110 apply it continually and with great specificity  
 111 requires years of practice. What is happening here?



**Figure 2** Gravity forces passing through hands, offering a sense of weight.

Measuring gravitational effects is a form of communion with this universal force of attraction and cohesiveness.<sup>5</sup> The practitioner tracks the client's bodily response to increasing/decreasing weight and movement. Continuous weighing opens the door of presence because weight can only be felt in the moment. Opening the door of the continuous now, gives us access to the gifts of presence mentioned above (Fig. 2).

#### **Exercise 2: Feeling the weight (allow about 1 h).**

Sit or stand comfortably and close your eyes. Now, keeping your upper arms comfortably close to your torso, raise your hands and forearms just enough so that you can feel the weight of your hands. Notice that as soon as you think of weight you will start to move your hands and forearms. That is because weight is a relationship between mass and gravity. You must move something through the lines of force of gravity in order to feel the weight. Notice the amount of effort you are experiencing in your upper arms and shoulders. Notice also that as you focus into your palms and move them you feel a sense of warmth, tingling and puffiness in your hands. If you do not at first feel

<sup>5</sup>Gravity offers us a perfect example of a continuum of attraction that is omnipresent and influences all phenomena at all levels of organization. It is a force we have to factor in to every plan, every structure, and every action and yet we do not understand what it is. The greatest philosophers, mathematicians, scientists and anatomists have grappled with the problem of gravity. We are left with ever more sophisticated description of its effects but little or no understanding of its essence. It is interesting that some theoretical physicists are now positing that in order to grasp the real nature of gravity, we have to factor out time and consider the ontology of the universe as a collection of Nows or states of timelessness (Barbour, 2000). Trager felt that conscious interaction with gravity was conscious interaction with universal mind. He devoted much of his attention to exploring this interaction through his own body and those of his patients. His method was inductive, not deductive. His understanding was experiential, not intellectual.

these responses, try resting the weight of your hands and forearms on a comfortable surface like a pillow or massage table and then weigh your hands with the least possible effort. Next, weigh and explore three progressively smaller and lighter *imaginary* objects in your hands: a rock, a coin, and a small feather. Monitor the sensations your body-mind create as you explore these imaginary objects and measure such things as weight, shape, texture, temperature, hardness, heft. Notice that as you explore these objects your hands and mind become more and more linked and that you become more acutely aware of fine sensations and the space around you. Next return your hands to your lap and notice how you feel inside. Bring your awareness into different parts of your body and notice that if you move that part slowly, you also become aware of the subtle sensations of gravity in that body part. Awareness of the subtle sensations directly affects your perception of other sensations. Notice that if you move very slowly it intensifies the subtle sensations from a feeling of effervescence to sparkles. Notice also that you are able to perceive sensation anywhere you put your attention including the space around you. Pause... take time to feel any changes in your body and overall awareness. Remind yourself that the potential for this shift in feeling and awareness exists in all persons at all times and that it is communicable. You can pass this same kind of feeling on to your clients... pause during the session, remove your hands, step back and weigh them, shift into hook-up, and then resume the session.

#### **Taking out the slack, moving from the feet**

There are two parts to the weighing and moving that occur in Trager. First, the tissue of the client is engaged and held with soft hands so there is a direct slackless connection between the body of the practitioner and the body part of the client. This is called "taking out the slack". The practitioner feels the tonus as the tissue is engaged, and his/her mind also becomes alert and engaged. The second refinement of this form of mindfulness is for the practitioner to be aware of the sensations in his/her own body. The most efficient way to determine how the movement is affecting the client is for the practitioner to feel and perform the movement from his/her *whole* body. Adding this layer of awareness to the movement brings the practitioner to a sense of dancing the client's body. The practitioner's whole moving body becomes the

- 1 instrument for interpreting the client's responses  
 2 and staying present. Correspondingly, the client  
 3 should feel the practitioner's body as a dynamic  
 4 connection to the ground. Trager placed tremen-  
 5 dous emphasis upon "footwork." "Bring the move-  
 6 ment up from your toes." His background as a  
 7 boxer and hooper (vaudeville dancer) contributed  
 8 to this easy way of staying present, "shift your  
 9 weight, feel the effects in your own body...bring  
 10 this feeling to your client."
- 11 **Exercise 3:** Incoming from the feet (allow about  
 12 20 min).
- 13 Have a colleague stand with his/her back to you  
 14 about 2 ft away, eyes closed. Put your hands on your  
 15 partner's back. Ask him/her to lean back just  
 16 enough so that if your hands were not there your  
 17 partner would fall backwards. Your partner then  
 18 monitors his/her feeling of trust and the quality of  
 19 contact from your hands. Now start to bring  
 20 movement to your partner's body by moving your  
 21 arms and shoulders. Be sure to keep your legs and  
 22 torso well planted. Notice the types of information  
 23 you are able to pick up from your client's body.  
 24 Pause... feel any kind of left over visceral  
 25 responses and have your partner do the same thing.  
 26 Now repeat the exercise except this time position  
 27 your body so that you bring all the movements from  
 28 your feet, so that you can feel the effects of the  
 29 movement and tissue tonus through your whole  
 30 body. Have your partner monitor feelings of trust  
 31 and quality of your hand contact as before.  
 32 Pause... feel any kind of left-over visceral re-  
 33 sponses and have your partner do the same thing.  
 34 Switch places and roles with your partner. Repeat  
 35 the process. When you finish compare notes with  
 36 one another.
- 37
- 38
- 39
- 40
- 41 **Measuring effort**
- 42
- 43 Another form of sensory information that can be  
 44 tracked is effort. "How much or how little effort  
 45 am I expending to perform this task?" Trager was  
 46 always asking, "how could this be easier...even  
 47 easier than that (Trager and Guadagno, 1987)?"  
 48 The implication is that what is less effortful is also  
 49 more effective (less is more). The practitioner who  
 50 asks these kind of questions not only remains  
 51 present, he/she works more efficiently, with more  
 52 relaxed hands, and is also bringing the awareness to  
 53 the client that it is pleasant and easy to let go. The  
 54 less the practitioner does, the more creative space  
 55 is opened for the client's experience. There is a  
 parallel once again with the Buddhist practice of  
 mindfulness. The process of staying mindful in-  
 volves what is called "bare attention" (Thera,  
 1979). By practicing in such a way the meditator as  
 well as the bodyworker keeps a channel of surprise  
 and improvisation open. Surely, lightly holding our  
 intentions and remaining present opens us to the  
 muses of manual therapy.
- Exercise 4:** In doing less—pausing (pausing break-  
 s—allow a few minutes each).
- Notice as you are giving a session those times  
 when you feel "stacked up" or limited in your  
 effectiveness because you cannot let go of a certain  
 protocol or goal of therapy. Break physical contact  
 with the client. Step back from the table and ask  
 the client to feel down into the part of his/her body  
 where your hands just were, noticing any residual  
 sensations. Pause... Close your own eyes and feel  
 down into your own visceral sensations. Feel any  
 leftovers from what has just transpired. As you do  
 so ask yourself "What needs to happen next?" Wait  
 until you feel a shift in your own body and feel a  
 sense of where and how to make a reconnection  
 with your client. By so doing you are creating a  
 space for your client to come fully into his/her  
 experience in the moment and opening yourself to  
 the possibility that there could be a whole new  
 level and direction to the session. The more you  
 pause and listen inside, the more you hold your  
 patterns lightly the more effective you can be and  
 the more space you create for your client to heal.
- Mentastics<sup>®</sup>**
- Between sessions and during breaks within sessions  
 the practitioner practices a series of movements  
 called Mentastics<sup>®</sup> (compound of mental and  
 gymnastics) on his/her own so that the interaction  
 with gravity can be pleasurable. Trager developed  
 these movements so that he could experience  
 movement with hook-up in his own body. The  
 student learns to use these movements to keep  
 him/herself supple and relaxed so that he/she can  
 impart those feelings to the client. Trager would  
 say, "You cannot give what you have not got."  
 These movements are taught to clients so that they  
 can continue to duplicate the benefits of the  
 tablework between sessions. Watching Trager doing  
 Mentastics, playing with gravity and presence was  
 like watching Fred Astair. "Keep it effortless," he  
 would say, "what could be lighter... lighter still...  
 even lighter than that" (Trager and Guadagno,  
 1987).

1 *Note:* The fourth in this series of papers on  
 2 Trager® will offer an in-depth exploration of  
 3 Mentastics.

5

7

## Summing up

9

11 Milton Trager opened a doorway in manual therapy  
 12 that can possibly alter the way we all work. Its his  
 13 emphasis upon maintaining and sharing this state of  
 14 awareness as the goal of therapy, and offering  
 15 simple body-centered devices to achieve hook-up  
 16 that were crucial contributions to his approach.  
 17 The practice of hook-up, or presence, in bodywork  
 18 can offer a wholly different way of perceiving our  
 19 relationships with our clients. In presence every-  
 20 thing is interrelated. There is no separation of  
 21 phenomenon from phenomenon, distance from  
 22 distance, or mind from mind. The end of separation  
 23 is unity consciousness in which all time, all thought,  
 24 all experiences, and all places, are one interrelated  
 25 continuum.

27 In this article we have looked at some of the ways  
 28 presence is worked with in Trager and have offered  
 29 some exercises for the interested reader to try. We  
 30 have attempted to describe hook-up as a feeling, a  
 31 tool and a connective principle. The various ways  
 32 that manual therapists have found to map and  
 33 understand and treat body dysfunction and suffer-  
 34 ing are complimented by focused awareness. What  
 35 may be a unique contribution from Trager is a sense  
 that healing is implicit when there is a sharing of  
 presence (Trager and Mentastics are registered  
 trademarks of the Trager Institute).

## Uncited reference

Pert, 1999.

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