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## **Elimination of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and Other Psychiatric Symptoms in a Disabled Vietnam Veteran with Traumatic Brain Injuries (TBI) in Just Six Sessions Using Healing from the Body Level Up Methodology, an Energy Psychology Approach**

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### **Abstract**

Increasing numbers of returning veterans and veterans of previous conflicts are being diagnosed with depression, anxiety, post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and other psychological problems caused by military service. It is important to develop brief and effective treatment methods to facilitate reentry into civilian life. Energy psychology techniques have been found effective for rapidly treating trauma. This case study describes the results of treatment of a Vietnam Veteran for PTSD and other psychiatric symptoms with Healing from the Body Level Up (HBLU™) methodology, an approach from the field of Energy Psychology. The patient, a Navy Seal, sustained a bullet wound to the skull in Vietnam, and later sustained separate, severe injuries to the brain requiring four rounds of surgery 1990 - 1994. The Veteran's administration diagnosed him 100% disabled. His symptoms were assessed using the SA-45, a well-validated instrument for measuring anxiety, depression, obsessive-compulsive behavior, phobic anxiety, hostility, interpersonal sensitivity, paranoia, psychosis, and somatization; and the PCL-M, the military assessment for PTSD. Testing was done just prior to treatment and 2 months post-treatment. After three double sessions over a period of three months, he demonstrated complete recovery from PTSD and a return to normalcy in all nine areas of formal psychological test evaluation.

**Key Words:** Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, PTSD, Vietnam Veteran, Traumatic Brain Injury, TBI, Healing from the Body Level Up, HBLU, Energy Psychology

### **Introduction**

Increasing numbers of returning veterans and veterans of previous conflicts are being diagnosed with depression, anxiety, PTSD, and other psychological problems caused by military service. The Defense Health Board Task Force on Mental Health (2007) states that "the system is being challenged by emergence of two 'signature injuries'... post traumatic stress disorder and traumatic brain injury. These two injuries often coincide requiring integrated and interdisciplinary treatment and methods." Clearly, it is important to develop brief and effective treatment methods to deal with these psychological and physical effects of military service and to facilitate reentry into civilian life. Energy psychology techniques have been found effective for rapidly treating trauma (Church, Geronilla, et al, 2009; Craig, 2009) and for relieving symptoms of traumatic brain injury (TBI – Craig, et al. 2009).

This case study describes the results of treatment of 'Gene,' a Vietnam Veteran, for PTSD and other psychiatric and physical symptoms using Healing from the Body Level Up (HBLU™) methodology, an approach from the field of Energy Psychology (Swack, 2001).

*Medical History:* Gene, a Navy Seal, sustained a bullet wound to the skull in Vietnam in 1973, and later sustained severe injury to the brain requiring four rounds of surgery between 1990 and 1994 as follows:

- Brain surgery 1990 – removal of tumor the size of an egg – right frontal meningioma (estimated to have been growing for 16 years)
- Brain surgery 1991 - clubbed in the head with a cinder block on a construction site resulting in subdural hematoma
- Brain surgery 1992 - tumor – small in size – attached to brain stem
- Brain surgery 1993/4 to repair aneurisms

In 1997 Gene underwent unsuccessful interferon treatment for hepatitis C. He then underwent successful combination therapy of interferon and ribavirin.

Gene had a history of alcoholism. He drank heavily from age 13 till, in December 2004, he suffered an 8-day alcohol induced coma. He then joined Alcoholics Anonymous and has been sober since that time. In 2005, Gene suffered a stroke. Over his lifetime Gene reported having “broken every bone in my body at least once.”

Gene was diagnosed with the following illnesses:

1. Cancer (meningioma)
2. Dementia
3. Diverticulitis
4. Seizures
5. Epilepsy
6. Psoriasis

*Medication:* At the time of his first HBLU session Gene was taking 4 X 100 mg/day Dilantin for seizures, reduced from 10 pills/day after his stroke 2005; 2 X 20 mg piroxicam (Feldene) since 1997 for arthritis; 1 X 1000 mcg/day Vitamin B 12 since interferon treatment 1997; 1 X 20 mg/day Citalopram (Celexa), which had been switched from Zoloft 8/2007 for depression; and 1 X 20 mg/day Hydrochlorothiazide for high blood pressure, started 1/2009. The Veteran's administration diagnosed him as 40% disabled due to the head wound in 1973, and 100% disabled after his fourth brain surgery in 1993/4.

Gene was treated pro-bono by the author at the office of Healing from the Body Level Up, Inc. in Needham, MA. At each session Gene was accompanied by 'Cheryl,' a trusted friend of his for more than twenty years who convinced him to try something new. Because Gene's memory was impaired, Cheryl helped him write his biography, to get to our appointments and to fill in information about his past. Gene had come seeking help for a variety of issues, including:

- multiple daily episodes of “whole body shakes,” (i.e., involuntary tremors) that started in 1994 immediately following surgery to repair aneurisms in the brain
- symptoms of PTSD, including: a fear of “dealing with things my own way (i.e., violently) because I'd go to jail for the rest of my life;” a recurring nightmare of “lying down, can't move, rats eating my feet;” and inability to sleep
- a 35-year addiction to smoking cigars (5-6/day on average)

- pain in the lower back below his ribcage and above his waist in an area he associates with the kidneys

## Methods

Gene's symptoms were assessed prior to the therapeutic interventions detailed below using the SA-45, a well-validated instrument for measuring anxiety, depression, obsessive-compulsive behavior, phobic anxiety, hostility, interpersonal sensitivity, paranoia, psychosis, and somatization (Maruish, 1999), and the PCL-M, the military psychological test for PTSD (Weathers, Litz et al, 1993). Testing was done just prior to treatment and two months post-treatment.

Gene was taught to access information from the unconscious mind, body and soul using the NLP technique of 'going inside and talking to that part of you.' He was also taught to access information from his unconscious mind, body, and soul using the applied kinesiology technique of muscle testing in which the body answers questions as 'true' or 'false' through differences in muscle strength. In HBLU, most muscle testing questions are directed to the client's deepest wisdom to lead the healing. The client's deepest wisdom selects the priority goal, indicates the priority patterns interfering with the goal (from a menu of patterns), and chooses the priority technique for clearing that pattern (from a menu of techniques).

The HBLU method specifically designed for treating trauma involves muscle testing (MT) the person through an outline of standard negative emotions and limiting beliefs, naming and locating the traumatic emotion(s) in the body, and then clearing the issue(s) using an appropriate technique, chosen by muscle testing from a menu of techniques (Swack, 1994). This menu includes Emotional Freedom Techniques (EFT), Jaffee-Mellor Technique (JMT), Thought Field Therapy (TFT), Tapas Accupressure Technique (TAT), other Energy Psychology and Applied Kinesiology Techniques, and Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP) techniques. (See Web references for the above techniques.)

A typical round of trauma treatment (excerpted from the HBLU I training manual) is performed in the following way:

1. MT and ask the client, "From your deepest wisdom (FYDW), do you have any \_\_\_\_\_ (shock, fear, sadness, hurt, etc.) from this trauma?"
2. MT and ask, "FYDW, now, do you understand what this issue is about well enough to proceed directly to the intervention?" If no, continue to discuss until the answer is yes.
3. MT: "FYDW, the priority technique to clear this \_\_\_\_\_ feeling/belief is \_\_\_\_\_." MT through the menu of techniques.
4. Ask verbally, "Where in the body do you feel the phobic emotion?" MT the answers.
5. Do the technique while having the client focus his attention on the area of his body where he feels the emotional sensation/symptom.
6. Test Results. Ask verbally, "How do you feel now in your \_\_\_\_\_ (body location)?" The negative feeling should be gone or transformed into something pleasant.  
MT: "FYDW, is this being now 100% cleared of this \_\_\_\_\_ (feeling/belief) at the body, unconscious, conscious, and soul levels?" If no, treat again from step 1.

At Gene's first session on 11/24/08, the author taught Gene the Natural Bio-Destressing Technique, a variation of EFT, and explained that it was one of the most common techniques that people muscle tested to use for clearing traumatic emotions. Gene expressed concern that EFT, which involves

tapping on acupressure points around the eyes, wouldn't work because "everything behind the skin was plastic" due to repeated brain surgeries, with plastic replacements for bones of his skull that had been destroyed. The author explained that the HBLU menu contained a variety of techniques including JMT, which involves the facilitator using fists or a percussive instrument to tap down both sides of a client's spine from occiput to sacrum while the client performs a series of breathing exercises. Gene in fact muscle tested to use JMT as the priority technique for clearing most of his traumatic emotions.

**12/3/08 Session I Treatment:** The author postulated that PTSD could be caused by a series of traumas that built up in the body as accumulated stress, referred to as 'stacked traumas.' At some point, the person experiences one too many traumas (the straw that breaks the camel's back), putting the body's nervous system over its trauma threshold. After that, anything that reminds the person of that type of trauma would trigger symptoms of PTSD. In addition, the person would be too traumatized to even think about that stretch of history and would demonstrate a phobic avoidance of the subject. The author named the traumatic reaction to thinking about a particular aspect of a person's history, 'history trauma.'

During our first session the author muscle tested Gene to establish clear 'yes' and 'no' signals by asking, "Show me a body yes" and "Show me a body no." Gene demonstrated the expected strong muscle response for 'yes' and weak muscle response for 'no.' The author muscle tested the next question, "From your deepest wisdom, does this being have history trauma." Gene's body immediately started trembling violently ('the shakes') while Gene complained that he hated and was embarrassed by the shakes (which he had experienced several times a day since 1994). The author treated Gene for the shock and fear he experienced "when thinking about his history" with the JMT technique (which takes 2 minutes). The trembling ceased. The author then treated him for a grudge he had against a woman who had sold her house to him in August 2007, but continued to live there without paying rent. We also used JMT technique to clear the rat nightmare.

**Session I Results:** At his next session he reported a complete cessation of involuntary tremors, elimination of the rat nightmare, and disappearance of kidney area pain. He also evicted the woman who had been living in his house.

**12/3/08 Session II Treatment:** Muscle testing revealed that Gene had six specific categories of history trauma:

1. Medical History Trauma
2. Early Childhood Abuse History Trauma
3. Military History Trauma
4. Relationship History Trauma
5. Intimate History Trauma
6. Employment History Trauma

Gene was treated for history traumas (1) and (2).

**Session II Results:** He quit smoking spontaneously. He lost weight. His psychiatrist and social worker at the VA hospital exclaimed that he was a "completely different person" and wanted to know about the HBLU therapy he'd been pursuing.

**12/23/08 Session III Treatment:** Gene muscle tested that the priority treatment issues were to clear Military History Trauma, Relationship History Trauma and Employment History Trauma. Gene's personality is a type 7 in the Enneagram system. He muscle tested that the best method for clearing the remaining history traumas was to transform two layers of wounded personality as described by the Enneagram model of personality. These particular limiting identities were interfering with his ability to process emotion. The first layer contained the theme that he must dodge anything that is

emotionally painful because he is oversensitive to pain. The second layer contained the theme that he can't process negative emotion through his heart center because the machinery is broken. We used the Essence Process to transform personality, and all three remaining history traumas cleared. (For a more detailed explanation of the Enneagram system of personality, the HBLU description of the Enneagram Operating System and the Essence process for transforming personality see Swack, 2006.)

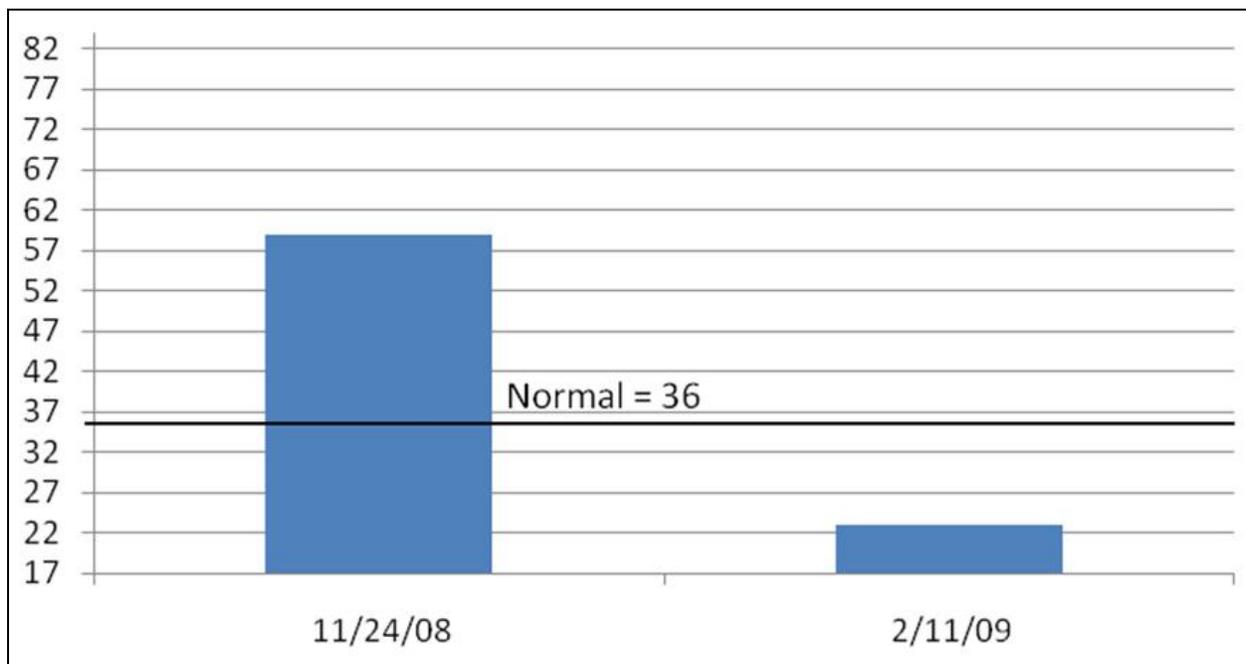
**Session III results:** During the session, Gene used his left hand to pick up his cup and take a drink of water, and then did it with his right hand. He teared up and reported that until that moment he hadn't been able to do anything with his left hand without trembling. He said, "Now both sides of my brain are in line and back in balance after 35 years."

**2/11/09 Results reported at time of retesting:**

1. Gene is now sleeping 6 ½ -7 hours/day instead of 4-5 hours/day. "I wake up and feel like I've slept in."
2. Although he had stopped drinking in 2004, he still had "occasional thoughts of having just one beer (with a shot of Jack Daniels, of course)." Now he has no thoughts of drinking.
3. He used to "space out," "go on vacation" even when people were talking directly to him, 10-15 times per week. Since our *first session* he had not zoned out again.
4. He feels so happy that his face hurts him from smiling all the time.

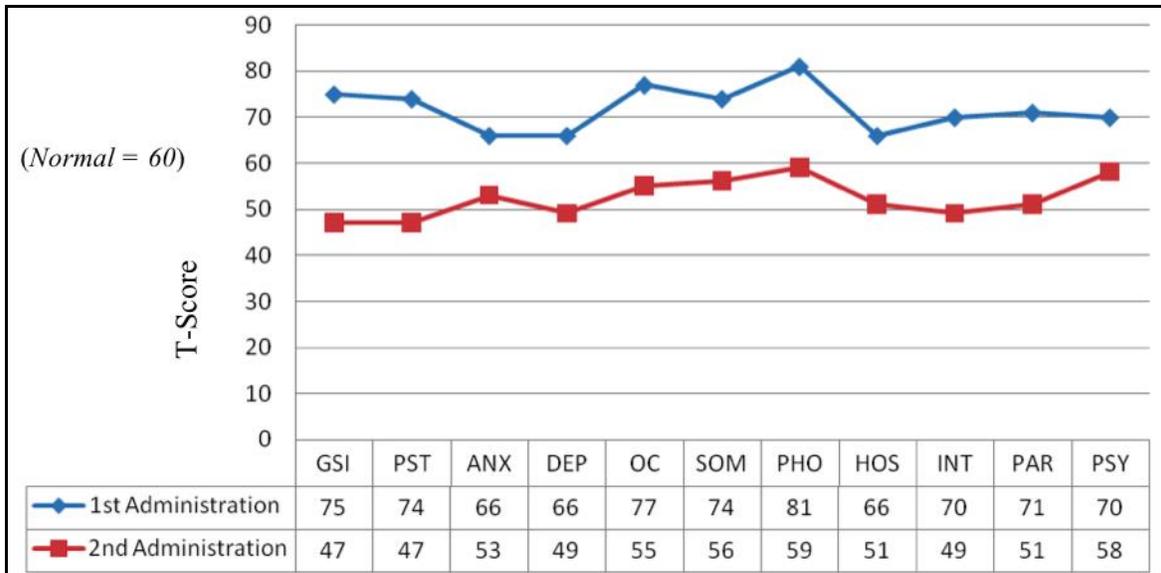
Initial psychological assessments showed PTSD and psychiatric abnormality in all nine tested areas on the SA-45. After three double sessions (a session is one hour twenty minutes, a double session is 2 hours forty minutes) over a period of three months, Gene was retested and demonstrated complete recovery from PTSD and a return to normalcy in all nine areas of psychiatric evaluation assessed by the SA-45. (See Figures 1 and 2.)

**Figure 1. PCLM Checklist for PTSD**



1<sup>ST</sup> administration 11/24/08 and 2<sup>ND</sup> administration 2/11/09

**Figure 2. SA-45 Evaluation**



1<sup>ST</sup> administration 11/24/08 and 2<sup>ND</sup> administration 2/11/09

## Discussion

This case study demonstrates the efficacy of an Energy Psychology approach for the elimination of psychiatric, PTSD, and neurological symptoms in a Vietnam Veteran with demonstrable brain injury. The findings are consistent with those of others (Church, Geronilla, et al, 2009) who showed significant decreases in symptom severity in a study of seven veterans treated with EFT, an energy psychology technique. Craig (2009) also used EFT to eliminate symptoms in five veterans whose treatment he documented on videotape.

In contrast to the Church, et al. and Craig studies, which focused on treating specific combat memories, this study took the novel approach of treating a person for “History Trauma,” the traumatic reaction he had to even thinking about his history. In effect, this approach treats the traumatized internal observer allowing him to release severely traumatic memories without needing to reassociate into them.

This is also the first report of the use of the JMT technique for the treatment of PTSD in veterans. It is also the first report of the use of the Essence Process, a technique that had previously been used primarily for personality transformation, to facilitate emotional processing of trauma.

## In Summary

This case study describes the results of treatment of a Vietnam Veteran for the two ‘signature injuries’ of post traumatic stress disorder and traumatic brain injury described in the Defense Health Board Task Force on Mental Health 2007 Report. After three double sessions of treatment with Healing from the Body Level Up (HBLU™) methodology over a period of three months, he demonstrated complete recovery from PTSD and a return to normalcy in all nine areas of psychological testing. These results suggest that Healing from the Body Level Up (HBLU™) methodology, an approach from the field of Energy Psychology, could be just the kind of integrated and interdisciplinary treatment recommended by the Task Force Report for helping combat veterans and their families heal.

The growing body of evidence supporting the efficacy and efficiency of Energy Psychology methods for the treatment of emotional trauma and symptoms of traumatic brain injuries suggests the need for further studies with larger populations. Future studies can be used to measure the effects of treatment on veterans' and their families' physical and mental health, the ability to facilitate reentry into civilian life, and the resulting reduction in treatment costs.

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