

The Continuum of Engagement: A Tantric Approach to Working Therapeutically

Spanda® Yoga Movement Therapy is grounded in the Samaya Sri Vidya Tradition. This is a Tantric perspective that rests in the knowledge that each individual person has an inner guidance system; and innate intelligence shared by all life, as seen even in a plant that turns toward the sun.

The many branches of the yoga tradition share in the practice of witnessing, or objectively observing the flow of activities appearing on the screen of the mind through the senses and other faculties. This ability to step back and observe the arising of impulses to thought, emotion, and action is at the heart of the therapeutic process as well.

Another main feature of this point of view is a belief in the agency of each individual. In this sense, this school of Tantra is humanistic; asserting that everyone has a vast reservoir of inner resources and an innate desire and capacity for growth, wellness and positive development.

In working with individuals in a therapeutic context, we can view engagement on a continuum that spans interactive choices ranging from silent witnessing, in the way one might watch one's own thoughts, to acting with the authority to determine what is best and this fully directing a client in a session. Within these two polarities are opportunities to pose gentle suggestions, make inquiries, and otherwise engage in ways that are respectful of the individual's autonomy and developing abilities.

In group instruction, the setting may be such that a certain level of sensitivity and non-directing behavior is inconvenient and time-consuming; it may at times be contrary to the adequate flow of the needs of an entire class. However, in private work, or even in work with small specialized groups, it is of great therapeutic value to allow self-reflective and self-directive faculties to mature, as this opens the doors of perception of the inner guidance always available and very much at the center of the yoga tradition. It also acknowledges the personal power potential of the individual client, and diffuses to a large degree the power differential that can impede the development of self-awareness and self-responsibility.

