

LECTURE 4¹

BIOENERGETICS & CLINICALLY-INFORMED BIBLICAL COUNSELING: A COMPARATIVE STUDY

What is Bioenergetics?

- “Bioenergetics is an adventure in self-discovery. It differs from similar explorations into the nature of the self by attempting to understand the human personality in terms of the human body. Most previous explorations focused their investigations on the mind. Much valuable information was gained through these inquiries, but it seems to me they left untouched the most important domain of personality—namely, its base in bodily processes. We would readily acknowledge that what goes on in the body necessarily affects the mind, but that is not new. My position is that the energetic processes of the body determine what goes on in the mind just as they determine what goes on in the body.”²
- “Bioenergetics is, as I have emphasized, the study of the human personality in terms of the energetic processes of the body.”³

What is Clinically-Informed Biblical Counseling?

- “CIBC sits within the biblical counseling tradition, while also acknowledging the helpfulness of methods and skills derived from clinical counseling. The term “redemptive counseling” emphasizes how Christ is our redemption, both for salvation and for help in the midst of all the troubles that befall us. The term also captures the emphasis on “redeeming psychology” (to reference David Powlison). Redemptive counseling as a term therefore speaks to the redemption of the person and the redemption of common grace tools that may be used to aid in that redemption.”⁴
- “RC/CIBC [Redemptive Counseling/Clinically-Informed Biblical Counseling] occupies a space between these two approaches [Integrationism and Nouthetic Counseling]. As such, it shares similarities with both while also manifesting differences that demarcate it as a distinct manner of doing counseling... We are neither integrationists nor nouthetic counselors.”⁵
- “The Bible is sufficient to give us the wisdom necessary to live godly lives that represent God’s character and lead to human flourishing. RC/CIBCers therefore have everything necessary to

¹ The following notes were compiled by Omri Miles, Lead Pastor of Grace Bible Church (New Orleans, LA) and ACBC certified biblical counselor.

² Alexander Lowen, *Bioenergetics* (New York: Penguin Books, 1976), 44. For a more in-depth understanding of Alexander Lowen, Bioenergetics, and the history of therapeutic grounding, see notes for “Lecture 3 | Historical Dissociation”, and Truth in Love episode 566 – “The History of Therapeutic Grounding”.

³ *Ibid.*, 45.

⁴ Nate Brooks, Tate Crockwell, Brad Hambrick, Kristin Kellen, and Sam Williams, “What is Redemptive Counseling / Clinically Informed Biblical Counseling?”, 1. The complete paper can be found at <https://www.sebts.edu/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/What-is-RCCIBC.pdf>.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 3.

evaluate common grace tools from every arena of life and establish their congruity or incongruity with God's truth."⁶

- "RC/CIBCers are committed to receiving God's manifold grace given through his Word, through natural revelation, and through common grace. All of these channels are ways that God is equipping humanity to follow him. They are complementary and not competitive, and as counselors called to holistically care for human beings, ignoring any of them will lead to less helpful, and possibly harmful, counseling."⁷

Outline of Similarities

1. The person is his body. 3
2. Emotional/psychological difficulties parallel physical trauma. 4
3. Personality problems are stored and manifested in the body's physical members. 4
4. Bodily changes occur in order to survive emotional trauma. 5
5. Verbal counsel is insufficient for comprehensive change. 6
6. Treating the body is a necessary precursor to treating the mind. 8
7. Altering the body is part of personality change. 9
8. Counseling methods. 10

⁶ Ibid., 4. Although CIBCers wrongly include therapeutic grounding in the category of common grace, they are correct in saying that the Bible is sufficient to evaluate if it is correctly deemed such. Therefore, Scripture holds the final word on whether their categorization of therapeutic grounding as common grace is faithful to the truth.

⁷ Ibid., 4. Careful readers should notice how "manifold grace" (a term, to my knowledge, only used in Scripture to refer to God's unearned kindness in connection with salvation, cf. 1 Peter 4:10) is here used to describe a general or common kindness of God. Also, they claim that God is equipping humanity to follow him through these various common means alongside His use of His word. But both God's "equipping" and affecting man to "follow Him" are also matters of special revelation accomplished by the truth of God's word within the sphere of salvation (cf. Eph. 4:4-16; Matt. 11:25-30), not commonly revealed truth. In other words, being equipped by God and following God are accomplished and aided by special revelation, not general revelation. Incautious readers of CIBC literature, however, might easily overlook such details, assuming that the use of their clear biblical language also supports a biblical point being made. But, in fact, the exact opposite is occurring as biblical, doctrinally astute language is being used to substantiate a patently unbiblical claim. Though CIBC brother may not maliciously intend it, this is nevertheless the case.

1. The person is his body.

Scripture references to the contrary: 1Sam. 28:11-14; Pro. 27:19; Mk. 12:26-27; 1Pet. 3:18

AL

- "Bioenergetics rests on the simple proposition that each person is his body. No person exists apart from the living body in which he has his existence and through which he expresses himself and relates to the world around him. It would be foolish to argue against this proposition because one could be challenged to name a part of himself that is not a part of his body. Mind, spirit and soul are aspects of every living body. A dead body has no mind, it has lost its spirit, and its soul has departed."⁸
- "I have worked with patients for more than twenty-seven years. Working, thinking, and writing about my personal experiences and those of my patients have led me to one conclusion: *The life of an individual is the life of his body*. Since the living body includes the mind, the spirit and the soul, to live the life of the body fully is to be mindful, spiritual and soulful. If we are deficient in these aspects of our being, it is because we are not fully in or with our bodies."⁹

CIBC

- "I do not simply *have* a body. I *am* a body. And the circumstances that I experience I experience as both an immaterial soul (mind, will, emotions) and as a physical body with a brain that processes, encodes, and remembers events. Those who ignore the interplay between the whole self (soul and body), while trying to be helpful, will ultimately struggle to bring wholeness to the very people they seek to serve. We are reactive bodies."¹⁰
– Eliza Huie
- Citing the Reformed theologian John Murray, Mike Emlet writes, "You don't just *have* a body; you *are* a body. Your body is not an appendage. It is part of the essential you."¹¹ – Mike Emlet

⁸ Lowen, *Bioenergetics*, 54. Readers should not confuse what Lowen is teaching about the mind, soul, and spirit with the biblical concepts. When Lowen says that "Mind, spirit and soul are aspects of every living body," what he means is that these are not separable from a person's physical/material self. In fact, in Lowen's worldview, the body is the source from which these other human faculties arise, and without the body, the spiritual self does not exist. "Perception is a function of the mind, which is an aspect of the body. The living body has a mind, possesses a spirit and contains a soul," and "Does the living body have a soul? That depends on how one defines the term 'soul.' ... I regard soul as the sense or feeling in a person of being part of a larger or universal order. Such a feeling must arise from the actual experience of being part of or connected in some vital or spiritual way to the universe. I use the word 'spiritual,' not in its abstract or mental connotation, but as spirit, pneuma or energy. I believe the energy in our bodies is in contact and interacts with the energy around us in the world and in the universe." (*Bioenergetics*, page 61, 66-67).

⁹ *Ibid.*, 42-43.

¹⁰ Eliza Huie, *Trauma Aware: A Christian's Guide to Providing Help and Care* (Eugene, Oregon: Harvest House Publishers, 2025), 12.

¹¹ Michael Emlet, "A Biblical Rationale for Embodied Spiritual Practices," *Journal of Biblical Soul Care* 9, no. 1 (2025): 46-47, <https://acbcdigitalresources.s3.us-west-2.amazonaws.com/resources/JBSC/Spring+2025/S25+Emlet.pdf>. To my knowledge, Mike Emlet does not claim the clinically-informed label; however, readers should note that many who share and articulate aspects of the clinically-informed position also practice or support the practice of clinically-informed therapeutic methods.

2. Emotional/psychological difficulties parallel physical trauma.

Scripture references to the contrary: Pro. 18:14

AL

- "I had one other experience during this time which I believe played a role in the resolution of the problem. At the conclusion of a professional workshop two of the participants, themselves trained Bioenergetics therapists, said I deserved a turn and offered to work with me. This is not a practice I normally follow, but on this occasion I let myself go. One worked with some tension in my throat. The other was working on my feet. Suddenly I felt a sharp pain as if someone had taken a knife and cut my throat. I had the immediate feeling that this was something my mother had done, psychologically, not literally. I realized the effect was to stop me from speaking out or crying out. I have always had some difficulties in voicing my feelings, although that problem had steadily diminished over the years. In some situations the failure to do so had resulted in my developing a sore throat, especially when I was tired. When I felt the pain, I threw the therapists off me and cried out in anger. Then I experienced a deep relief."¹²

CIBC

- After describing two separate falls in which she injured the same elbow, Eliza Huie compares emotional trauma to her literal reinjuring of her elbow saying, "This can happen with emotional trauma. If we don't seek to understand a person's story of trauma, we may unintentionally make less of their pain or retraumatize them as we unknowingly *touch* areas of their life that are tender," adding, "Understanding how trauma changes or affects the brain has led those in the psychotherapy world to approach people differently. Instead of asking, 'What is wrong?,' the question has now become 'What happened?' This needed shift alone is an advancement in our understanding, but we (specifically the church) still have a long way to go. What is most encouraging is that these methods of viewing the brain (fMRI and TPEF) are expanding our comprehension of how trauma's impact on the brain can be repaired through care, treatment, and therapy."¹³ – Eliza Huie

3. Personality problems are stored and manifested in the body's physical members.

Scripture references to the contrary: Gen. 6:5; Ps. 119:11; Pro. 2:10; 3:1, 3; Lk. 16:22-31

AL

- "A person is the sum total of his life experiences, each of which is registered in his personality and structured in his body. Just as a woodsman can read the life history of a tree from a cross section of the trunk showing its annual growth rings, so it is possible for a Bioenergetics therapist to read a person's life history from his body."¹⁴
- "We in bioenergetics have always believed that the feet of a person tell us as much about his personality as his head. Before I make a diagnosis of a personality problem, I like to see how a person stands. To do this, I look at his feet."¹⁵

¹² Lowen, *Bioenergetics*, 110.

¹³ Huie, *Trauma Aware*, 49-50.

¹⁴ Lowen, *Bioenergetics*, 57.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 97.

- “The body doesn’t lie. Even when a person tries to hide his true feelings by some artificial postural attitude, his body betrays the pose in the state of tension that is created. No one is fully the master of his own body, which is why a lie detector can be used effectively to distinguish truth from falsehood... If each aspect of bodily expression is revealing of who we are, then, certainly, our whole body must tell our story¹⁶ more fully and more clearly.”¹⁷

CIBC

- “As the result of trauma, something happens in your brain that affects the way you process information. It affects how you interpret and store the event you experienced... Trauma has the power to disrupt how you process information... The psychological symptoms include the distortion of time (time shrinks or expands), fixation of attention, a phenomenon called negative hallucination (not seeing or hearing what’s going on right in front of them), a distortion of sensory experiences, and age regression.”¹⁸ – H. Norman Wright

4. Bodily changes occur in order to survive emotional trauma.

Scripture references to the contrary: II Cor. 4:7-18

AL

- “True, these restrictions on living are not voluntarily self-imposed. They develop as a means of survival in a home environment and culture that denies body values in favor of power, prestige, and possessions.”¹⁹
- “In all cases [of patients of a schizoid character type] there is clear evidence that there was an early rejection by the mother which the patient experienced as a threat to his existence... Given this history, the child had no choice but to dissociate himself from reality (intense fantasy life) and from his body (abstract intelligence) in order to survive.”²⁰
- “To remain hung up creates a real threat to one’s existence because of the energetic processes of the body.”²¹

¹⁶ The idea that “the body must tell our story” is philosophically and even nearly verbally equivalent to the view espoused by Bessel van der Kolk in his book, *The Body Keeps the Score*. Eliza Huie virtually echoes both these psychologists in her book, *Trauma Aware*, even titling one section, “The Body Tells the Story”. Huie begins that section with these words: “The body will tell the story through sensations and reactions” (p. 85).

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 100.

¹⁸ H. Norman Wright, *The Complete Guide to Crisis & Trauma Counseling: What to Do and Say When It Matters Most* (Bloomington, MN: Bethany House Publishers, 2011), 192-193. Dr. Wright (1937-2023) may or may not have identified himself as a clinically-informed biblical counselor. Nevertheless, his attempt to integrate modern trauma theory and Scripture parallels current CIBC.

¹⁹ Lowen, *Bioenergetics*, 43.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 155.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 210.

CIBC

- “As we explore the brain’s role in understanding trauma, we will delve into three crucial components: the brainstem, the limbic system, and the prefrontal cortex. Each of the integral regions will shed light on what happens in our brains when we are exposed to traumatic circumstances and how what happens is meant to keep us alive.”²² – Eliza Huie
- “Trauma is not merely an emotional or psychological experience; it deeply affects the body by altering the systems that regulate stress, digestion, motor function, and even immune responses... When we’re overwhelmed or harmed, this isn’t just something we *think* about, or feel emotionally; our bodies also experience it and express our reactions. Trauma leaves a lingering physical imprint on many victims long after it takes place. God designed our bodies with incredible resilience that helps us survive. When danger arises, our bodies respond automatically by preparing us to fight, flee, or freeze: Adrenaline floods our bodies, our muscles tighten, and our hearts race. These are essential survival mechanisms during moments of threat. However, when a traumatic event occurs—and especially when such trauma is prolonged or ongoing, such as through wartime, domestic violence, or sexual abuse—our bodies struggle to return to rest and instead stay on high alert as if the danger hasn’t passed.”²³ – Darby A. Strickland

5. Verbal counsel is insufficient for comprehensive change.²⁴

Scripture references to the contrary: Ps. 19:7-11; Pro. 2:1-11; Eph. 4:15; 2Tim. 3:16-17

²² Huie, *Trauma Aware*, 67.

²³ Darby A. Strickland, *When It’s Trauma: A Biblical Guide to Understanding Trauma and Walking Faithfully with Sufferers* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2025), 78 and 85.

²⁴ On this point, it should be noted that clinically-informed brothers may not choose to articulate their conviction about counseling in this way. However, to claim as some have that physiological interventions or embodied spiritual practices are necessary to counseling, or that some kind of bodily work ought to be incorporated, merely implies that more is needed than verbal instruction alone.

One final question is worth adding to frame this issue of the sufficiency of counseling without physiological interventions. It is this: *If clinically-informed biblical counselors are right about the necessity or wisdom of utilizing physiological interventions/embodied spiritual practices in counseling to regulate the body, then where are all the disregulated people suffering in churches who embrace historic biblical counseling?* In other words, if these physiological interventions are God’s common grace wisdom to us in this age, then shouldn’t we witness greater suffering among those groups who reject them? If those churches who walk in step with historic biblical counseling convictions lived as if God’s Word was sufficient to cure cancer, then we would witness the members of these churches dying of cancer in droves. Rejecting wise medical treatment would do irreparable physical harm regardless what one believed about the Bible. Therefore, if clinically-informed interventions are similar to common grace medical discoveries, why does the rejection of them not bring about similar disaster? From my perspective, this question demands a thoughtful and thorough explanation from our clinically-informed brothers.

AL

- “The failure of verbal therapies to produce significant changes in personality is responsible for an increasing interest in nonverbal and body approaches. The tendency in many of these new therapeutic techniques is to evoke and release the suppressed feelings.”²⁵
- “I don’t believe we overemphasize bodily expression. It is emphasized here because in most other therapies it is ignored. Words cannot replace body movement, but by the same token body movement is not equivalent to language. Each has its place in therapy as in life.”²⁶

CIBC

- “Cupping an ice cube in one’s palm is an embodied-soul physiological intervention. It is used to slow down and ground a person in the present moment... Some might retort, ‘Don’t hold an ice cube! Hold and read your Bible!’ Why not both? Why not the Bible *and* ice cubes? Why. Not feasting on the Word of God *and* breathing deeply in dependence on the Spirit of God? Both are spiritual.”²⁷ – Bob Kellemen
- “Bodily interventions—interventions designed to address the fact that God created us as embodied-souls—are sacred interventions. Deep breathing exercises (and ice cubes) are only secular if we make them secular... Might it be accurate to say that a holistic sanctification—a full-orbed process of maturing as wholly developed Christians that includes making progress as embodied believers—is too rarely envisioned and pursued *in our actual ministry, interventions, and methods* as biblical counselors?”²⁸ – Bob Kellemen

²⁵ Lowen, *Bioenergetics*, 120. Here, Lowen is supporting people’s dissatisfaction with talk therapy. He clearly believes this is justified and lends credibility to his own work with the body in bioenergetic therapy. But Lowen’s sentiments are at odds with Psalm 19:7-11, Proverbs 15:4, and 15:23, which declare the powerful, life-changing capability of the communication of divine wisdom. While his conclusion that verbal counsel is insufficient to produce comprehensive change is wrong, Lowen did make a keen observation to which we would do well to pay attention. He observed that people who go in search for physiological interventions in counseling only do so after they have become disenchanting with word-only counsel. To say it differently, it is only after people begin believing the inefficacy of the word that they launch out in search of bodily therapeutic methods in counseling. This is a remarkable realization from an unbelieving psychotherapist! Heath Lambert has received no shortage of ridicule for making the same observation. “What fascinates healthy priests is the truth that changes lives found in God’s Word. Infected priests are fascinated with the wilderness and frustrated with the garden. The resources for real and lasting care found in the gospel of grace and the words of Scripture seem old, quaint, trite, and boring. This explains their constant longing for the wilderness. Bitten by the zombie bug of the secular and therapeutic, they long for the wilderness and are bored within the safe walls of the garden.” Heath Lambert, ed., *A Call for Clarity: Critical Issues in Contemporary Biblical Counseling*, (Jacksonville, FL: First Baptist Church Jacksonville, 2024), 12-13.

²⁶ Lowen, *Bioenergetics*, 259.

²⁷ Bob Kellemen, “Of Spirituality and Ice Cubes: A Psalm and a Palm” <https://rpmministries.org/2023/12/of-spirituality-and-ice-cubes-a-psalm-and-a-palm/> (accessed March 21, 2026). I am aware that Dr. Kellemen does not personally prefer the clinically-informed moniker for his own brand of counseling. Nevertheless, since he has embraced, promoted, and zealously defended the same teachings being critiqued in this study, allowing him to represent himself here in his own words seems fair game. Readers can discern for themselves if he has been accurately represented under the aforementioned headings.

²⁸ Bob Kellemen, “I’m Never More Christ-Dependent Than When I’m Doing Deep Breathing Exercises” <https://rpmministries.org/2023/11/christ-dependent-breathing-exercises/> (accessed March 21, 2026).

6. Treating the body is a necessary precursor to treating the mind.²⁹

Scripture references to the contrary: Pss. 3, 16, 22, 42, 43, 46, 73, 119, etc.³⁰

AL

- “The relation of energy to personality is most clearly manifested in a depressed individual. Although the depressive reaction and the depressive tendency result from the interplay of complicated psychological and physical factors, one thing is abundantly clear. The depressed individual is energetically depressed... The depression of his level of energy is seen in the decrease of all energetic functions. His breathing is depressed, his appetite is depressed, and his sexual drive is depressed. In this state he could not possibly respond to our exhortations that he interest himself in some pursuit; he literally *doesn't have the energy to develop an interest.*”³¹
- “It makes no sense to proffer principles to bodies in pain... Before we talk of principles, we must be sure the young feel good in their bodies and about themselves. Principles make it easier for them to protect their good feelings.”³²

CIBC

- “I’ll add a thought briefly, though, and that is the *necessity* of understanding common grace truths/realities in order to properly understand special revelation truth. Common grace gives richness, clarity, and dimension to what God has revealed in his word.”³³
– Kristin Kellen
- “Our Christian anthropology appreciates the reality that breathing exercises can reduce the production of stress hormones, stabilize the heart rate, and balance the levels of carbon dioxide and oxygen in the blood stream. These play a significant role in bringing the body and soul back into balance. The bodily mechanism of breathing can be purposefully leveraged to reestablish equilibrium. Regaining balance physically can help us draw upon our faith and God’s principles, promises, and counsel.”³⁴ – Todd Stryd
- “In clinical settings, therapeutic approaches like cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT), exposure therapy, and eye-movement desensitization and reprocessing (EMDR) have been shown to be effective in helping some behaviors associated with trauma. These methods can often provide needed symptom relief and enhance memory tolerance, which can lead

²⁹ This principle includes the presupposition that mental/spiritual/personality problems must be addressed using physical (material) and spiritual (immaterial) means, thus justifying the use of bodily and verbal methods in counseling.

³⁰ Every psalm in which the writer finds solace and is cured of his anxious, fretful, fearful, or melancholy condition prior to (or apart from, see point #7) any change in his external circumstances or physical body demonstrates the folly of the aforementioned claim. And there are many such psalms.

³¹ Lowen, *Bioenergetics*, 47.

³² *Ibid.*, 341.

³³ Kristin Kellen, “SEBTS Counseling Professors Roundtable,” *Southeastern Theological Review* 15, no. 1(2024): 80, <https://www.sebts.edu/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/STR-15.1.5-Professor-Roundtable.pdf>.

³⁴ Todd Stryd, “Take a Deep Breath’—How Counseling Ministry Addresses the Body,” *Journal of Biblical Counseling* 32, no. 3 (2018): 66, <https://www.ccef.org/jbc-article/take-a-deep-breath-how-counseling-ministry-addresses-the-body/>.

to an openness toward processing and reframing the memory in light of God's character and promises."³⁵ – Eliza Huie

7. Altering the body is part of personality change.

Scripture references to the contrary: Ps. 32; 51:10-17

AL

- "The weakness of psychoanalytic technique is that it ignores the body in its attempt to help the patient work through his emotional conflicts. Since it fails to provide any significant body experience, the ideas that emerge in the course of treatment remain impotent to produce any major changes in personality."³⁶
- "Through therapy I was able to reach and open up my feelings and so regain some of the life of my body. Both Reichian and Bioenergetics therapy aim at this goal. But a problem remained. How does one keep the life of the body flowing and vibrant after the therapy ceases? ... My personal solution was to use the Bioenergetics exercises, developed to promote the therapy, as a regular routine at home. I have now been doing them for about twenty years. Now only have they enabled me to keep in touch with my body and maintain its life, but they have also furthered the growth that therapy instituted. I found them so helpful that I encouraged my patients to do them at home as a supplement to the therapy. Their value has been confirmed by all who do them. And we have now instituted regular Bioenergetics exercise classes for patients and others who are committed to the life of the body. Since the commitment to the body is lifelong, we expect that a person will make a similar commitment to the exercises."³⁷

CIBC

- "Are common grace observations, sometimes articulated in terms of 'scientific observations,' necessary to understand people and their problems, to which we then apply Scripture? I'd argue 'yes,' though we must be clear in what we mean by 'scientific observations.'... Many years ago, when I was being trained in biblical counseling, we didn't use words like 'grounding techniques' or 'deep breathing,' as secular psychology would now label it. However, I've found it incredibly helpful to follow the 'instructions' gleaned from observations and science to help my counselees calm their bodies. I'm not sure it ultimately

³⁵ Huie, *Trauma Aware*, 129.

³⁶ Lowen, *Bioenergetics*, 62.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 71. Alexander Lowen found the solution to his personality problems, in part, in bodily therapy. Not only was this the beginning of his transformation, but it was also the ongoing means of personal change. In biblical terms, one could say that he found his salvation and sanctification in bodily therapies. Every counseling system works this way. Whatever begins one's initial transformation, rescuing him from his problem (salvation), is also the means by which ongoing transformation (sanctification) occurs. Biblically, it is believing the truth that both saves and sanctifies. In various ways, Jesus, Solomon, Paul, Peter, James, and other biblical writers all communicate the saving and sanctifying effects of receiving the truth (see John 3:16 and 17:17, Proverbs 1:7, 9:10 and 15:33, Romans 1:16 and 12:2, First Peter 1:23-2:3, and James 1:18-25, respectively). Therefore, one critical question that our clinically-informed brothers must answer is this, *If bodily interventions are some part of God's appointed means of sanctification, why are they not also useful in salvation?* To my knowledge, no one has suggested that breathing exercises or grounding techniques are useful evangelism strategies for saving lost sinners. (Even the suggestion sounds absurd, I know.) So, if they are not powerful or even useful to help save, then how can they be useful to help sanctify?

matters what we call it, but cleaning information from scientific observation can be incredibly helpful.”³⁸ – Kristin Kellen

8. Counseling methods.

a. Breathing techniques

AL

- “Breathing plays an important role in bioenergetics, because only through breathing deeply and fully can one summon the energy for a more spirited and spiritual life.”³⁹
- “I have treated many depressed patients, since that is one of the most common problems that brings people to therapy. After listening to a person’s story, reviewing his history and evaluating his condition, I try to help him build up his energy. The most immediate way to do this is to increase his oxygen intake—that is, to get him to breathe more deeply and fully... It may not take more than twenty minutes to accomplish this change and for the patient to feel ‘lifted up.’ He *has* been lifted out of his depressive state temporarily.”⁴⁰

CIBC

- “Another excellent way to activate the parasympathetic nervous system is through breathing... Breathing activates the body’s relaxation response. Slow, deep breaths signal the brain that all is well by causing the blood to become more oxygenated and inhibits the production of stress hormones, promoting a sense of calm throughout the body. This happens naturally every time you yawn. The next time you yawn and someone asks you if you are tired, you can tell them, ‘No, I’m regulating my nervous system.’”⁴¹ – Eliza Huie
- “The act of breathing in a strategic, attentive manner can be practically embedded into the way we help people live out their goals of love, virtue, and righteousness. We can use every resource at our disposal to achieve the goal of our faith.”⁴² – Todd Stryd

³⁸ Kristin Kellen, “SEBTS Counseling Professors Roundtable,” 80.

³⁹ Lowen, *Bioenergetics*, 66. In bioenergetic therapy, which was built on Wilhelm Reich’s orgone therapy, breathing, sexual potency, and the freedom of pleasure are indelibly connected to man’s mental wellbeing. “For Reich the goal of therapy was the development by the patient of the capacity to give in fully to the spontaneous and involuntary movements of the body that were part of the respiratory process. Thus the emphasis was on letting the breathing take place fully and deeply. If this was done, the respiratory wages produced an undulating movement of the body that Reich called the orgasm reflex. In the course of his earlier psychoanalytic work Reich had come to the conclusion that emotional health was related to the capacity for full surrender in the sexual at or what he called orgasmic potency. Reich had found that there was no neurotic individual who had this capacity. A neurosis not only blocked surrender, but by binding energy in chronic muscular tensions prevented that energy from being available for sexual release. Reich had also found that patients who gained the ability to achieve full orgasmic satisfaction in the sexual act became and remained free of any neurotic behavior or attitude” (*Bioenergetics*, 22).

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 47-48.

⁴¹ Huie, *Trauma Aware*, 88.

⁴² Stryd, “Take a Deep Breath,” 74.

- “I’m never more Christ-dependent than when I’m doing deep breathing exercises.”⁴³
– Bob Kellemen

b. Grounding⁴⁴

AL

- “A third major area of interaction is in a person’s relationship to the ground. Every position we take, every step we make involves this relationship. Unlike the birds or the fish, we are most at home on terra firma. And unlike the other mammals, we stand and move on two legs... We are interested here in the relations of the functions of the lower extremities to personality as they are reflected in our body language.”⁴⁵
- “I continued the Bioenergetics exercises working with breathing, with grounding and with hitting a sandbag to free my shoulders. Grounding refers to getting feeling into the feet.”⁴⁶
- “Being identified with one’s sexuality is an aspect of grounding. Any activity or exercise that increases the feeling of being grounded increases the charge in the eyes. We can affect the overall functioning of the eyes by strengthening a person’s contact with his legs and the ground. The various grounding exercises are helpful in this regard.”⁴⁷

CIBC

- “The most direct way to activate the PNS is through the senses. Engaging the senses is a means of grounding a person. Grounding involves helping them reconnect with the present moment and their surroundings. This is done to help someone feel less overwhelmed... Grounding aims to add a sense of stability and control, counteracting the effects of trauma and allowing a person to better process what happened.”⁴⁸ – Eliza Huie
- “Grounding helps a person who is experiencing anxiety or other bodily symptoms, such as dissociation, to focus on the here and now. How do you harness the body for good in that moment? Typical approaches have a person notice things around them that they can see, touch, hear, or smell. Sometimes it’s as simple as having someone concentrate on the wood or fabric of the chair they are sitting on, or the feel of their feet on the floor. Grounding can help bring a person who’s panicked or distracted into the present moment. We are grateful for this. But as Christians, we want to do even more in the moment. We want to assist in slowing down the person’s runaway body and orient them to the Lord’s presence.”⁴⁹ – Mike Emler

⁴³ Bob Kellemen, “I’m Never More Christ-Dependent Than When I’m Doing Deep Breathing Exercises,” <https://rpmministries.org/2023/11/christ-dependent-breathing-exercises/> (accessed April 27, 2026).

⁴⁴ For more in-depth critiques of therapeutic grounding from a biblical counseling perspective, see “Psalm 119:89-96 | Grounded by God’s Word” and Truth in Love episode 567 “Is Grounding Biblical?”.

⁴⁵ Lowen, *Bioenergetics*, 94.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 113.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 285.

⁴⁸ Huie, *Trauma Aware*, 86.

⁴⁹ Emler, “A Biblical Rationale for Embodied Spiritual Practices,” 69.