

YOGA AND COGNITIVE FUNCTIONING

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Yoga philosophy provides several important paradigms for helping to reframe ones understanding of experience, relationships and ones reactions to both. One that I find most useful when working with my psychotherapy patients is the Koshic Body Model.

The Koshic Body Model divides consciousness into 5 layers or bodies (gross and subtle) Each layer is known in yoga as a kosha or body

The five koshas are the physical body, the energy body, the mental-emotional body, the wisdom body and bliss body.

Each kosha represents one aspect of our existence or consciousness and can potentially be open and accessible to the individual or blocked. Blockage can vary from stagnation to complete separation from that aspect of ones consciousness. The impact of blockage or separation on one level, often results in an associated challenge or blockage on other levels of consciousness.

I often share the paradigm of the Koshas with patients to help them learn a very different way of looking at and understanding who they are, what is happening in their lives and how they can play an active role in their growth and healing.

I often integrate Cognitive Behavioral Theory with Koshic Theory. Once I learned about a patient's background, history and current life situation, we begin by looking at the beliefs and attitudes with which the patient has identified, explore how true they actually are and as we do, discuss the way in which their negative beliefs have eventually caused negative, thoughts, feelings and then behavior that often causes suffering.

With the Koshic Theory close at hand, a patient can actually see how their long-held entrenched negative beliefs are interfering with their creativity, intuition and accessing their own inner wisdom.

I have been astounded by the extent to which my insight-oriented patients who have been stuck were able to so readily embrace the concepts underlying Koshic Theory and gradually release long-standing, deep seated beliefs that, in the past, seemed intractable and unchanging.

The traditional medical model of "treatment" emphasizes identifying a patient's symptoms, talking about them and referred a patient to a psychiatrist to be medicated, if the symptoms are severe enough and interfering in the patient's life. Patients are diagnosed and the label given to them is one in which they and their psychiatrist will identify.

Using the Koshic model, I help my patients to explore the bodies in which there are separations or blockages and teach them ways to reframe what they see in order to release their identification from that aspect of their consciousness that's become closed off or stagnant. They are not their depression or anxiety. These emotional states are reactions that occur due to their negative beliefs and the associated blockage or stagnation in one or more areas of their consciousness.

With a different and more supportive method for understanding ones human beingness, patients often feel more hopeful about their ability to locate the associated separation or blockage and release the emotional pain and struggle that so in the past seemed insurmountable.