

2014

# A Phenomenological Study about Transformational Learning That Takes Place in Energetics Students

Robert J. Randall

*University of St. Thomas, Minnesota*

Follow this and additional works at: [http://ir.stthomas.edu/caps\\_ed\\_orgdev\\_docdiss](http://ir.stthomas.edu/caps_ed_orgdev_docdiss)



Part of the [Education Commons](#), and the [Organizational Behavior and Theory Commons](#)

---

## Recommended Citation

Randall, Robert J., "A Phenomenological Study about Transformational Learning That Takes Place in Energetics Students" (2014).  
*Education Doctoral Dissertations in Organization Development*. 41.  
[http://ir.stthomas.edu/caps\\_ed\\_orgdev\\_docdiss/41](http://ir.stthomas.edu/caps_ed_orgdev_docdiss/41)

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the School of Education at UST Research Online. It has been accepted for inclusion in Education Doctoral Dissertations in Organization Development by an authorized administrator of UST Research Online. For more information, please contact [libroadmin@stthomas.edu](mailto:libroadmin@stthomas.edu).

A Phenomenological Study about Transformational Learning That Takes Place in  
Energetics Students

A DISSERTATION

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF THE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

OF THE UNIVERSITY OF ST. THOMAS

MINNEAPOLIS, MN (USA)

By

Robert J. Randall

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS

FOR THE DEGREE OF

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

November, 2014

Copyright 2014, Robert J. Randall

This document is copyrighted material. Under copyright law, no parts of this document may be reproduced without the expressed permission of the author.

UNIVERSITY OF ST THOMAS

We certify that we have read this dissertation and approved it as adequate in scope and quality. We have found that it is complete and satisfactory in all respects, and that any and all revisions required by the final examining committee have been made.

Dissertation Committee

---

Alla Heorhiadi, PhD, EdD, Committee Chair

---

John Conbere, EdD, Committee Member

---

Eleni Roulis, PhD, Committee Member

November, 2014

---

## Acknowledgements

This study was less a homework assignment or begrudging requirement to complete my doctorate and instead developed into a work of joy for me. I was continually inspired by the stories of incredible growth and transformation that occurred in the participants I interviewed. So first of all, I would like to thank the participants who took time to share their stories, sometimes diving deeply into personal accounts of transformational learning they experienced. In the end, I learned so much from all of you!

Second, I would like to thank my family and friends for their on-going support and understanding. Yes, I would often go into hibernation at my favorite coffee shop for days at a time, but when I came up for air, you were all there supporting me and helping me re-acclimate to “normal” life. A special thanks to my parents, Arlee and Betty, for their unconditional love and unwavering support in whatever I do. I would also like to pay special tribute to my doctoral cohort; who knew five years ago you would all become lifelong friends and such important people in my life. Thanks for your encouragement and support.

Finally, I would like to thank my dissertation committee for their guidance and attention to this study. Your input made the final dissertation much better. In particular, I would like to thank Alla Heorhiadi. You courageously started the Energetics Institute and introduced countless people to the subject of energetics, helping them find purpose and happiness in life. You were also my dissertation committee chair and provided the space, yet devoted support for this study to take shape and bring out the voices of the participants. You are special and amazing Alla! Thank you for your generosity and friendship.

### **Abstract**

Students who graduated from the Energetics Institute at the University of St. Thomas indicated that they experienced transformational learning as a result of taking energetics courses, but they were unable to specify or articulate the essence and a deeper meaning of this experience. The purpose of this study was to understand and describe the essence of their transformational learning, using a phenomenological research methodology. Seven energetic students were interviewed in depth about their transformational experience.

The findings of the study showed that participants were transformed as they learned to: (a) liberate themselves from a victimhood mentality and take responsibility for their own happiness; (b) re-discover their purpose in life as they listened to and learned from an interconnected universe; and (c) trust their inner voice.

The transformational learning experienced by participants was enabled by several factors, including: trust in the instructor, innate curiosity about energetics and willingness to stretch their mind, an experiential learning method and feelings of joy during the learning process.

## Table of Contents

Acknowledgements.....	i
Abstract.....	ii
Table of Contents.....	iii
List of Tables and Figures.....	iv
Chapter 1: Introduction.....	1
Background Of The Study And Researcher’s Interest.....	1
Problem Statement.....	3
Purpose of the Study and Research Question.....	4
Research Design.....	4
Significance.....	5
Definition of Terms.....	5
Energetics.....	5
Essential Themes.....	6
Incidental Themes.....	6
Interconnected Universe.....	6
Transformative Learning.....	6
Chapter 2: Literature Review.....	7
Energetics.....	7
Transformative Learning.....	9
Summary.....	12
Chapter 3: Methodology.....	13
Phenomenological Study.....	13
Participant Selection.....	15
Data Collection.....	16
Data Analysis.....	19
Bracketing.....	21

Ethical Issues .....	22
Chapter 4: Findings.....	23
Participant Profiles.....	23
Nancy .....	23
Anne.....	23
Betsy .....	23
Irene .....	24
Nicole.....	24
Lucy .....	24
Henry.....	24
Contextual Themes .....	25
Trusting the Energetics Instructor.....	25
Participant Curiosity in Uncovering the Mystery around Energetics and the Desire to Stretch Their Knowledge.....	26
Experiential Learning Method .....	28
Feelings of Joy During the Learning Process Makes Energetics Sustainable for Participants.....	30
Summary.....	32
Essential Themes .....	33
Liberating Oneself from a Victimhood Mentality, Finding Personal Power and Taking Responsibility for One’s Own Happiness .....	33
Listening to and Learning from an Interconnected Universe Helped Participants Grow and Find Purpose.....	44
Trusting One’s Inner Voice .....	67
Summary.....	81
Chapter 5: Discussion .....	85
Ridding Oneself of a Victimhood Mentality and Taking Responsibility for One’s Own Happiness .....	91
Mindfulness .....	91

Learning from an Interconnected Universe Prompted Participants to View Life as a Personal Growth Experience Rather than One that Feeds the Ego and Insecurities .....	95
Authenticity.....	95
Listening to the Inner Voice Helped Participants Live More Harmoniously .....	97
Intuitive Intelligence.....	98
Analysis Paralysis.....	101
OD and Intuition.....	103
Developing Intuition.....	104
Summary .....	106
Implications.....	107
Implications for Higher Education Institutions .....	107
Implications for the Field of Authenticity and Authentic Leadership.....	109
Implications for the Field of Intuitive Intelligence .....	111
Implications for the Field of OD .....	111
Self as Instrument.....	112
Summary .....	114
Limitations .....	115
Further Research.....	116
Final Thoughts .....	117
List of References .....	119
Appendices.....	
Appendix A: Email Recruitment Letter to Energetic Graduates .....	127
Appendix B: Informed Consent Form .....	128



**List of Tables and Figures**

Table 1.0 Summary of Contextual Themes.....	82
Table 2.0 Summary of Essential Themes.....	83
Table 3.0 Course Readings.....	86
Figure 1.0 Illustration of Energetic Transformation.....	89
Table 4.0 Author’s Interpretation of Chopra’s “Look and Listen” Process.....	105

## **Chapter I: Introduction**

### **Background of the Study and Researcher's Interest**

During my OD doctoral program at the University of St. Thomas, I became exposed to a field of study called energetics, through the University of St. Thomas Energetics Institute. I was intrigued by energetics because I believed I subconsciously knew that my own personal energy fluctuated depending on my environment and my state of mind. In addition, I witnessed a simulation in a doctoral class that brought energetics to life for me. The simulation was called "Alligator River" and involved reading a story about four characters who had to make a number of morally questionable choices. A small group of cohort members then sat in the middle of the room, debating their rankings of characters in the story they disliked the most to the character they disliked the least. This debate took place in front of the larger cohort group. The group dynamic among the debaters was interesting because the person who spoke the least persuaded the group to agree to his point of view. One of the instructors pointed out that this person was able to harness the energy of the group non-verbally. In other words, the instructor was able to explain what happened before our eyes through an energetic lens. This subject matter created great intrigue with me and generated animated discussion among class members about the group process from a completely new point of view.

This experience, as well as very positive recommendations from energetics students, prompted me to enroll in a course in the Energetics Institute at the University of St. Thomas. I eventually completed three courses and received my certificate in Energetics and Organization Development from University of St. Thomas. The

Energetics Institute developed three courses of curricula that attempt to help people engage more effectively as OD practitioners (Energetics Institute, 2013). The level one course introduced students to energetics and helped them sense subtle energies in themselves. The level two course focused on skills that allowed students to engage with individuals and small groups energetically. Finally, the level three course provided students with the skills to engage whole systems energetically. Each course consisted of approximately 35-40 hours of classwork, along with reading assignments, practical assignments and reflection. If students successfully completed all three levels of coursework, they received a Certificate in Energetics and Organization Development from the Energetics Institute. Following completion of coursework, graduates of the program were able to participate in a monthly Energetics Club, a voluntary activity that would bring energetic learners together to share experiences and support each other in their continuing energetic development.

According to the Energetics Institute, “Energetics is an interdisciplinary practice that involves the application of the knowledge of subtle energies to promote individual and organizational healing” (University of St. Thomas, 2011, p. 1). During my classroom experience, I learned that energetics is a wide-ranging subject and covers many realms. Some energetics experts focused on the scientific aspect of energetics and integrated quantum physics into the topic (Braden, 2007; Capra, 1999; McTaggart, 2002). Some focused on ancient traditions (Epstein, 1998; Sherwood, 1989). Others focused on the physical healing aspects of energetics (Eden, 1998; Gerber, 2007; Hay, 1999; Myss, 1996). And others focused on the self-help aspects of energetics (Das, 2005; Fontana, 1999; George, 2000; Levey & Levey, 1998). The Energetics Institute at the University of

St. Thomas introduced students to all of these aspects of energetics, but also applied energetics to the topic of organization development. According to the course syllabus, students were prepared to approach organization development with a holistic understanding of individual spirituality and organizational change (University of St. Thomas, 2011).

Ultimately, learning about energetics transformed the way I thought about myself and the way I interacted with others. Fellow class members also described their experience in these courses as transformative. Students of energetics routinely talked about the positive results they received from their learning, from improved relationships in their personal and professional lives to improved health. One fellow classmate claimed his sleep vastly improved. Another talked about a vastly improved relationship with her boss. Many others talked about specific fears they were able to overcome, enabling them to more effectively interact with others. A positivistic case study completed by a graduate of the Energetics Institute found that people who completed energetics training at the Energetics Institute generally improved their ability to: a) critically reflect on their own behaviors, b) identify their own underlying beliefs that contribute to their behaviors, c) change their underlying beliefs and d) change behaviors that lead to problems (La Venture, 2013).

### **Problem Statement**

People I encountered who completed courses from the Energetics Institute seemed to have completed a transformative journey, yet often had a difficult time explaining their experience and how the transformation really took place. Mezirow (1991, 1997, 2000) explained transformative learning as a process of reflection and reframing one's point of

view. Following my energetics learning, I knew that my view of the world changed, which in turn led to improved relationships, health and personal happiness, but I had a hard time articulating how I got there. In discussions with fellow energetics students, I found that the lack of understanding about the learning experience was common.

### **Purpose of the Study and Research Question**

In this study, I set out to understand how learning about energetics at the University of St. Thomas Energetics Institute was a transformative experience for people. I attempted to answer the question, “What is the essence of transformational learning as the result of studying energetics?” I focused the study on the experience of people who received Certificates in Energetics and Organization Development from the University of St. Thomas’s Energetics Institute.

### **Research Design**

I decided to discover the experience of people’s transformation that resulted from their energetic learning through a phenomenological study. Phenomenological research is the study of the lived experience and aims to discover the essence of that experience, according to van Manen (1990). I followed van Manen’s interpretation of phenomenological research in this study, which involves gathering data through interviews with people who shared a common experience, analysis of interview data through coding transcripts, as well as reflection by the researcher during the process of data gathering and analysis. Further description of the phenomenological methodology I used in this study is explained in chapter 3.

## **Significance**

I believe this study was important because energetics remains out of the mainstream in academic and practical circles. There are very few energetic learning opportunities in American universities. At the same time, students who experienced energetics learning at the University of St. Thomas generally indicated that something positive and transformative occurred to them in the process. I believe shedding light on this experience will allow academic institutions to better prioritize learning programs on the subject of energetics.

I also believe this study can be helpful for energetics teachers. Better understanding the experience of students may help energetics instructors tailor their teaching to best serve their students.

Finally, I am hopeful that this study will help energetics students better understand their own experience. As mentioned earlier, I know the results following my energetics learning experience were positive. At the same time, I was not exactly sure how this transformation took place and prior to this study I had not adequately reflected on the experience. I believe that a deep dive into the experience of people learning about energetics helped me along with others who shared the experience make sense of their transformation, thereby further increasing their own self awareness.

## **Definition of Terms**

**Energetics.** Heorhiadi and Conbere (2008) described energetics as the “...application of the knowledge of the universe supplied by quantum physics and some ancient traditions, to promote individual and organizational healing” (p. 36).

**Essential Themes.** These are themes that are core to the experience according to Van Manen (2007). Essential themes go to the core of what participants experienced. The essential experience is identified, making clear what the participants took away from the experience.

**Incidental or Contextual Themes.** Incidental themes are contextual to the experience according to Van Manen (2007). In other words, incidental themes help enable the experience, explaining what ingredients are necessary to help the experience take place.

**Interconnected Universe.** The participants in this study all viewed the term “universe” to be synonymous with God, or a deity. For purposes of this study, I generally use the term “universe”, but the reader may substitute God in its place. An interconnected universe is one that is connected potentially on several levels. From a quantum physics point of view, the universe is connected by sub-atomic matter. These particles communicate with each other and can jump through space and time, quite contrary to traditional scientific understanding (Zohar, 1990). From a spiritual point of view, the universe is connected through the power of thought, prayer, connection to nature and/or the hand of God (Braden, 2009). In other words, people might feel connected to God/universe and each other through prayer, viewing the stars at night or breathing in fresh air during a nature hike.

**Transformative Learning.** According to Mezirow (1991, 1997, 2000), a process of changing one’s point of view based on action-oriented learning as well as self-reflection represents transformative learning.

## Chapter II: Literature Review

As mentioned in chapter 1, this study was initially informed by my own personal experience. A review of scholarly research concerning the field of energetics and transformative learning will be reviewed in this chapter. I further review scholarly research in the discussion section of this study in chapter 5.

### **Energetics**

Energetics is a broad topic that spans many spheres. Braden (2007) discussed energetics in terms of quantum physics, through the mystical voice of a Native American, through the lens of the Christian Bible, as well as through Buddhist teachings, and through examples found in nature. In all cases, energetics was acknowledged as something different than traditional physical science. According to the Energetics Institute (2013), the topic of energetics was often defined as a different dimension of energy that exists in our world, supported by the emerging field of quantum physics, beliefs about the universe and ancient traditions (Energetics Institute, 2013).

**Energetic healing.** The Mayo Clinic acknowledged the field of energetic healing on its website, calling energetics a supplemental and alternative form of healing (Mayo Clinic, 2013). The Mayo Clinic website stated, “Some complementary and alternative medicine practitioners believe an invisible energy force flows through your body, and when this energy flow is blocked or unbalanced you can become sick. Different traditions call this energy by different names, such as chi, prana and life force. The goal of these therapies is to unblock or re-balance your energy force” (Mayo Clinic, 2013). While energetic healing is not a mainstream practice, it can be deployed to complement traditional medical care (Warber, Cornelio, Straughn, & Kile, 2004).



**Energetics and OD.** Tiller (1993) wrote about the existence of subtle energies in the world through the emerging field of quantum physics. He also pointed out that scientific instrumentation is not yet able to detect subtle energies as keenly as some desire. Nevertheless Tiller suggested that, when numerous scientific experiments over the past forty years are considered, the evidence is mounting that a field of subtle energies is likely to exist from a scientific point of view. For example, he discussed scientific observation surrounding an individual's ability to use deep meditation and concentration to control skin temperature, pain and physical healing. He cited numerous other studies that point to the existence of energy fields that cannot yet be explained by traditional physical science. Tiller (1993) believed subtle energies are real and explain phenomena previously not understood.

Spoth (2006) discussed a means for organization development (OD) practitioners to use energetics in their interventions to address another dimension of organizational change. She believed there is a way for OD practitioners to diagnose the energy of organizations and to use that knowledge in OD interventions. For example, she believed an energetic cluster of an organization can be so large that it can overpower the needs of individuals. In other words, an employee may remain attached to an organization in spite of a hegemonic relationship with it because the energetic attraction is so great. Some may identify this as an over-attachment to the culture of the organization or simply an irrational attachment. Looking at it through an energetic lens may help an OD practitioner make sense of the situation. Many other examples are given by Spoth to help OD practitioners view organizational issues through the lens of energetics, thereby providing

new dimensions to look at situations and potentially a deeper understanding of what is happening in an organization.

Heorhiadi and Conbere (2008) tied the OD concept of self-as-instrument to energetics. They wrote about how understanding subtle energies in oneself can help better prepare an OD practitioner for an intervention with a client. For instance, an unhealthy OD practitioner might lack energy in one of their chakras and therefore have a hard time harnessing their intuition when engaging a client. People schooled in energetics are more likely to be aware of the blockage of their chakras and therefore restore their energy before working with the client. In other words, the knowledge and practice of energetics improves the capabilities of OD practitioners and therefore their use of self in an OD intervention.

**Summary.** To summarize, energetics is an emerging field in healing, self-development and organization development. Energetics is often taught as a complementary practice to traditional medicine, self-development and organization development. The Energetics Institute at the University of St. Thomas developed curriculum to support students who are interested in expanding their view of the universe and enhancing their organization development skills.

### **Transformative Learning**

Mezirow (1991, 1997, 2000) defined transformative learning as something that changes one's frame of reference. According to Mezirow (1991, 1997, 2000), one's frame of reference is influenced by two key components; 1) habits of mind and 2) points of view. Peoples' habits of mind are shaped by the context in which they live, such as the historical period in which they live, the culture that surrounds them and other people who

influence their lives. Habits of mind become codified in one's subconscious. Changing one's habits of mind requires deep reflection and awareness. Since habits of mind are so ingrained, they typically do not change easily or quickly (Mezirow, 2000). Meanwhile, points of view are shaped by reflection of one's experiences. Mezirow (2000) indicated points of view are therefore more pliable, since people are more likely to reflect on a specific situation and question what happened when things do not go their way.

The process of reframing requires critical reflection and may occur in an objective or subjective way (Mezirow, 2000). Objective reframing involves critical reflection of someone else's assumptions in the task of problem solving. Subjective reframing involves critical reflection of one's own assumptions. Argyris (2000) described the reframing of one's assumptions as double-loop learning. Single-loop learning focuses only on behaviors without diving deeper into the double-loop learning process through a resetting of one's values, beliefs and assumptions.

Brookfield (2000) described transformative learning as an act of critical self-reflection. Brookfield (2000) suggested critical self-reflection ought to involve a deep review of one's assumptions, especially those assumptions that are causing one harm. In other words, challenging one's own assumptions critically can lead to transformative learning, especially when one realizes their own assumptions are hegemonic.

Kegan (2000) wrote that changing what one knows is informative learning while changing how one knows something is transformative learning. Informative learning might be something factual one learns. Meanwhile, changing how one knows something delves into one's epistemology. Keegan (2000) indicated becoming aware of epistemology by itself can be a transformative learning experience because one begins to

see how people form their points of view. Going beyond awareness and changing one's own epistemology is also a transformative learning experience because then a person demonstrates the ability to change how they know what they know.

In any case, one's point of view or habits of mind must change in order for a change in reference and transformative learning to take place. Transformative learning is a process of problem solving according to Mezirow (2000). People aim to improve their lives and are informed through their experiences. An event might create what Mezirow (2000) described as a "disorienting dilemma". In these cases, the event or issue moves a person to change.

Changing one's frame of reference also requires an open mind. Mezirow (2000) described mindful openness as reflective discourse, a mental discipline that requires one to withhold judgment for a period of time. So while the desire to solve a problem is the impetus for transformative learning, general open mindedness must be present to change one's frame of reference. Mezirow (2000) described the conditions for openness as emotional maturity. This means that one must avoid the need to be argumentative and right, or what Argyris (2000) called Model One behavior. If one does not possess openness to change, then transformational learning will not occur. In other words, some people simply do not want to change, so they will not likely expose themselves to experiences that challenge their deeply held beliefs.

Mezirow (2000) indicated that changing one's frame of reference is often an emotional experience. When people are open to changing deeply held beliefs, emotions are often triggered because people are discovering old beliefs; things they thought were givens, may no longer be true for them. This is why Mezirow (1997) described a trusting

environment as an important element in transformative learning. When people are undergoing transformative change, they must feel the environment is safe, so they are allowed to express vulnerabilities. This is also what Mezirow (2000) called the communicative form of learning, whereby people sometimes find the need to share their experience with others in order to complete the cycle of transformative learning. Put another way, while people need to perform an element of personal reflection during the process of learning, they also sometimes need to discuss their changing frame of reference with others to complete the transformation.

### **Summary**

So while changing one's frame of reference begins with openness, the change must ultimately occur to one's habits of mind or point of view in order to be considered transformative. A trusting, open and non-coercive environment is necessary to allow for changing habits of mind or points of view. Finally, while personal reflection is typically needed to complete the change, discussing the change with others is also often needed for transformative change to occur.

### **Chapter III: Methodology**

In chapter 3, I rationalize my research methodology and describe how the study was conducted. I used a phenomenological methodology for this study and this chapter describes a detailed process of data collection and analysis. Finally, I discuss ethical issues and my own bias relative to this study at the end of this chapter.

#### **Phenomenological Study**

A phenomenological research methodology is rooted in a socially constructed ontology and interpretive epistemology (Cresswell, 2007). A socially constructed ontology means societies create their reality while an interpretive epistemology means people's way of knowing emanates from their experiences (Conbere & Heorhiadi, 2010; Crotty, 1998). Methodologies based on an interpretive epistemology are sometimes referred to as interpretive research or qualitative research (Gall, Gall & Borg, 2007; McMillan, 2004). In any case, a phenomenological methodology is based on interpretive research principles that purport multiple meanings exist depending on the experiences people have with a phenomenon (Cresswell, 2007; McMillan, 2004; Gall, et al., 2007). Because my research was based on searching for meaning in people's learning experience about the subject of energetics, it was therefore appropriate to base the study on an interpretive research methodology.

The research question is driving the use of phenomenological methodology in this study. As mentioned in chapter 1, my research question was, "How do people experience transformational learning as a result of their energetics training?" According to van Mannen (1997), phenomenological research is the study of the lived experience. He explained that phenomenology helps shed light on the common experiences of people. In

this study, I intended to gain an understanding about the transformational learning that people experienced when they studied energetics at the Energetics Institute at the University of St. Thomas.

Smith, Flowers and Larkin (2009) described phenomenological research as a process for making sense of important experiences. Crotty (1998) indicated phenomenological research searches for what is unique and meaningful in peoples' experiences. Crotty (1998) went on to say that phenomenological research provides a framework for participants to have a fresh look at an important experience. In other words, phenomenological research methodology facilitates deep reflection of something that occurred in peoples' lives.

Both Van Manen (1997) and McMillan (2004) wrote that phenomenological research is the search for meaning of the lived experience from the point of view of the person who experienced it. According to my own experience and conversations with those that went through energetics training at the Energetics Institute, something important seems to have happened to people. Therefore, I thought looking into the meaning of that important experience from the point of view of the people who experienced it would be the most effective approach in researching this topic.

Phenomenological research is also a look back at an experience. Van Manen (1997) acknowledged, "A person cannot reflect on lived experience while living through the experience" (p. 10). Husserl, who is considered the founder of phenomenological research, believed that meaningful experiences are best understood when one has the opportunity to reflect on the experience some time after it happened (Craig, 1998). Marton (1986) indicated, "It is the task of phenomenology...to make us conscious of

what the world was like before we learned how to see it” (p. 40). So using phenomenology to study the experience of people who completed their energetics training, and making them look back at their experience was the most suitable approach for my research.

### **Participant Selection**

The primary form of data collection in phenomenological research is interviewing people who are in a position to help answer the research question. According to Creswell (2007) and Smith et al. (2009), up to ten participants may be reasonable to complete a phenomenological research study. Van Manen (1997), Creswell (2007) and Smith et al. (2009) all suggest that a higher number of participants is not the goal of phenomenological research because the objective is to dive deep into the essence of the experience, rather than bolster the research with generalities from a high number of participants. Creswell (2007) and Smith et al. (2009) both suggested between three and ten participants typically constitute a robust phenomenological study. In this study, I found that the essence of the experience was becoming apparent after five interviews. So as described later in this chapter, I conducted extensive data analysis after five interviews. I then conducted two additional interviews to validate the data I had collected. The additional two interviews were structured as the first five with a twist. I dove into each participant’s transformational energetics experience as I had done in the initial five interviews, but then concluded each interview with a set of validation questions centered around the themes I had developed from the first five interviews. The final two interviews were very helpful in helping me validate the deeper meaning of this experience. This process is further described under the discussion of data analysis below.



Creswell (2007) suggested utilizing purposeful sampling criteria when selecting participants for a phenomenological study. This means the participants should have a shared experience. Therefore, in consultation with the Director of the Energetics Institute at the University of St. Thomas, I collected email addresses from Energetics Club attendees, a group of approximately 40 people who received their certificate in Energetics and Organization Development from the Energetics Institute and meet once a month to discuss energetics and meditate together. I then sent the candidates for this study an email asking them to consider participating in this study if they experienced transformational learning as a result of studying energetics (see Appendix A). I received approximately ten positive responses and started scheduling interviews with people. Prior to interviewing candidates, I asked them to sign a consent form in compliance with the Institutional Review Board at the University of St. Thomas (see Appendix B).

To ensure participant confidentiality, the candidates who expressed interest in participating in this study were kept on a password-protected spreadsheet on my personal computer. I was the only one who had access to the computer and its password. None of the actual names of the participants were revealed in this study to protect confidentiality.

### **Data Collection**

Interviews were conducted as the primary data collection tool in this study. Smith et al. (2009) described interviews as “a conversation with a purpose” (p. 57). Interviews were conducted in an open-ended way so the participant’s experience drove the discussion. In some cases, I had to re-center interviews back on the research question when the participant strayed from the topic at hand. For example, one participant talked about phenomenological research versus case study research. Another participant talked

about her own dissertation, instead of her energetics experience. Again, it was necessary in some cases to re-center the conversation back on the energetics experience.

Because phenomenological interviews are interactive in the attempt to find deep meaning in a participant's experience, van Manen (1997) and Smith et al. (2007) suggested it is necessary to establish rapport with the participant. To help gain the participant's trust, I began interviews by reviewing the purpose of the study, the confidentiality of the participants involved and ensuring the participant was comfortable.

Van Manen (1997) and Smith et al. (2009) advised having a set of initial questions to help focus the discussion on the research question. The primary inquiry in the interviews related back to the research question, "How did you experience transformative learning as a result of your energetics training?" While the goal of phenomenological research is not to survey participants with a series of questions, van Manen (1997) and Smith et al. (2009) suggested having some potential topical questions on hand to explore the participant's experience. Therefore, I used the following set of topical questions in my interviews to help explore the deeper meaning of the experience.

1. What initially intrigued you about the subject of energetics?
2. Describe the stages of learning you experienced.
3. Please describe how learning about energetics changed you?
4. Describe the most impactful "aha" moments you experienced in your energetics learning? How did you feel during those moments?
5. How has your viewpoint changed since learning about energetics?

The interview is an exploration of the experience, so as the interviewer, I prompted the participant to explore their thoughts on the experience. As suggested by

Van Manen (1997), sometimes I found that silence or repeating statements participants made prompted more reflective or deeper responses during the interviews. I also found the suggestion by Smith et al. (2009) to ask probing follow-up questions helped the participants explain the experience more deeply during the interviews, such as:

- “Why?”
- “How?”
- “Can you tell me more about that?”
- “Tell me what you were thinking about that?”
- “How did you feel?”

I believe these follow-up questions helped the participants become more specific about their experience.

The interviews ranged in length from 49 minutes to 85 minutes. All interviews took place in a private location agreed to by the participant and me. I recorded the interviews, but also took a few notes. The notes were always less than a page long and were mainly jotted down to prompt me to follow up on a statement a participant made previously to explore it further. In a few cases, I made notes about the participant’s body language or how they appeared. Mostly during the interviews, I was actively listening and concentrating on the participant’s words and body language.

Within a week of conducting the face-to-face interview, I wrote a reflection of the experience. This allowed me to record my initial thoughts about what I heard in the interview. I then sent the recordings to a transcriber to be typed into a Word document.

## **Data Analysis**

After I received the transcription from an interview, I employed data analysis described by van Manen (1997) and Moustakas (1994). First, I took what van Manen (1997) called a holistic approach, which means I read the entire transcript, reflected on it after my first full reading, and tried to summarize what I read in a few paragraphs. As I referred to my initial reflection and summary thoughts after the first reading, I was able to gain a holistic sense of a participant's experience, similar to what van Manen (1997) described.

Next, I went back to the transcription from the interview and began highlighting significant statements in the text. This step helped me begin breaking the interview down into bite size pieces. I was also able to begin comparing potential themes among the various interviews I conducted. However, I found this step was ultimately inadequate for discovering the deeper essence of the experience. I believed that my initial highlighting and data coding identified common phrases, but not common meanings necessary in phenomenological research. In other words, I was categorizing statements on the surface, but was not putting more significant statements into what Moustakas (1994) called 'meaning units' and what van Manen (1997) called 'structures of experience'.

After consulting with my dissertation chair, I decided that it would be good to go back through the data and focus on the stories that participants told in the interviews. The deeper experience seemed to reside in the stories and experiences of the participants rather than in individual phrases. Once I re-read each interview two more times, I pulled the most meaningful stories from the first five interview transcriptions, I printed them out onto individual pieces of paper and spread them out on my kitchen table. I attempted to

group them into categories to see if I could identify some common themes among the stories. I separated the common themes into what Moustakas (1998) called a textural description of the experience and a structural description of the experience. A textural experience explains *what* the participants experienced while a structural description explains *how* the experience happened, or in other words the context of the experience. Similarly, van Manen (1997) talked about the difference between essential themes and incidental themes. An essential theme strips away the context of the situation and asks the question; if this theme were eliminated, would the phenomenon exist? An incidental theme on the other hand is more contextual and enabling to the phenomenon rather than essential to its existence. During the exercise of moving around excerpts of various participant stories on my kitchen table, I came up with incidental themes and essential themes. I then used these stories as a basis for writing a 40 page rough draft of the findings, (a.k.a. chapter 4). I rewrote this draft two more times and shuffled the themes around somewhat in the process. When I felt satisfied that I had categorized the stories into proper incidental and essential themes, I sent the submission to my dissertation committee chair. She read my submission and called me to discuss her concern that I was not really finding the essence of the experience. In other words, she did not think I was digging deep enough into the data.

I took a week off and reflected deeply on what I knew about each interview and what I had written. I was frustrated because I felt I knew each interview inside and out, yet I was not able to find the deeper meaning that my dissertation committee chair said was necessary for this study. During my sixth interview, which was intended to be a validation interview, I began understanding a deeper meaning of the experience with the

participant. Because of all the analysis and reflection done to this point with the five previous interview participants, I was able to probe more deeply with the sixth interview participant. This deeper meaning breakthrough allowed me to summarize the experience in a paragraph as well as visually with a mind-mapping diagram (Figure 1, which can be found in chapter 5). The mind map and paragraph connected very well to the five previous interview transcripts I had been poring over for a couple of months. I reviewed the map and paragraph with my sixth participant and she validated the deeper meaning of the experience I was depicting. I then sent the paragraph and mind map to my dissertation committee chair and she agreed that I had uncovered the deeper meaning of the experience she was pushing me to discover. I subsequently sent the paragraph to the first five participants I interviewed as a validation step and they all said what I had written resonated with them as well. I then conducted one final validation interview and explored my findings deeply with the final participant and again received very positive feedback that the deeper meaning was now apparent.

Once complete, I rewrote chapter 4, incorporating many of the stories initially pulled from the first five participants and adding stories from the final two participants; all stories seemed to connect very well to the essential themes, I had just validated with the participants.

### **Bracketing**

Bracketing is a method that Husserl suggested to phenomenological researchers to help them set aside their preconceived notions, thereby allowing them to take a clean and clear view of the phenomenon (Creswell, 2007). Bracketing is an acknowledgement by

researchers of their own experience with a phenomenon, spurred by reflection and journaling (van Manen, 1997).

As mentioned in chapter 1, I initially became interested in conducting this research after I completed my own energetics learning experience at the Energetics Institute at the University of St. Thomas. Therefore, I was fully aware that my own experience was both helpful and potentially harmful as I conducted this research. I found that my experience was helpful because I was able to relate to the experience of the participants I studied. However, I had to be careful to bracket my own experience so that the data from the participants shaped the direction of the study, rather than my own experience. I therefore reflected on my own energetics learning experience as I conducted this study, thereby gaining more awareness of my own presumptions, and allowing me to more fully put them to the side as I collected and analyzed the data in this study. I maintained a diary during this research to help me personally reflect on the interviews I conducted, thereby making the bracketing exercise a continuous process throughout the data collection and analysis phases of this study.

### **Ethical Issues**

The first priority of this study was to do no harm. First of all, I believed energetics was an emotional topic for those who experience it, and several participants shared deeply personal stories with me. Further, energetics is not a mainstream topic, nor it is widely understood by the general public. For these reasons, I have been particularly sensitive to the confidentiality of participants. Therefore, only I know the identity of participants in the study. I have maintained this study in accordance with Institutional Review Board policies at the University of St. Thomas.

## Chapter IV: Findings

In this chapter, I describe the transformational experience of the participants I interviewed. I start by providing a brief profile of each participant and then describing the themes of the participants' experiences that were developed utilizing the methodologies described in chapter 3.

### Participant Profiles

As mentioned in chapter 3, the identity of each participant is confidential, so I assigned a random pseudonym to each person who participated in this study. I am providing brief participant background information below to add context for the reader as themes are revealed in this chapter.

**Nancy.** This participant is an OD practitioner. She is married with a primary school aged child. She took energetics courses to fulfill elective credits in her doctoral program. She is a highly empathic person and naturally curious. She was very open to the topic of energetics when she first realized the program existed.

**Anne.** This participant works in the government sector. She is married with two adult children. She took energetics to fulfill elective credits in her graduate studies program. She was highly skeptical of energetics but took the first course due to her natural curiosity about a class that was so different from others that were offered in the program.

**Betsy.** This participant works for a non-profit organization. She is single and took energetics to fulfill elective credits in her doctoral program. She comes from a very religious background and was apprehensive about taking energetics. But she took the first



course nonetheless because she wanted to stretch her thinking and expand her knowledge on a topic that intrigued her.

**Irene.** This participant is an OD practitioner. She is married with children. She was brought up in a poor, yet strict and religious family. She took the course to fulfill elective credits for her doctoral program. She was told that energetics could be very helpful to her and signed up for the first course because she had a high degree of respect for the instructor.

**Nicole.** This participant is a school administrator. She is married with two adult aged children. She is Catholic and took energetics to fulfill elective credits for her doctoral program. While she was nervous about taking the course initially, she signed up primarily on the recommendations of friends who had taken the course previously.

**Lucy.** This participant is an OD practitioner and successful business owner. She is married with school-aged children. She is very spiritual but not highly religious. She took energetics to fulfill elective credits for her doctoral program. Prior to energetics courses, she regularly meditated and was very excited to take energetics.

**Henry.** This participant works as a manager for a corporation. He is single and does not have any children. He took energetics to fulfill elective credits for his doctoral program and was encouraged to consider the class by the instructor, whom he highly respected.

Below are the core and common experiences shared by the participants in this study. The themes are revealed primarily through the voices of the participants. While not every participant voice is heard in each theme, omitting a voice does not mean a particular participant did not share the experience described. In fact, all participants

shared these thematic experiences in their own way and to varying degrees. So I chose participant stories that I thought best explained each theme to help the reader better understand the transformational learning that occurred. I have categorized the experiences into contextual themes and essential themes.

### **Contextual Themes**

Van Manen (1997) called contextual themes “incidental” to the experience. These are themes that help enable the experience. There were a number of contextual themes that emerged in this study. The primary contextual themes were: 1) trusting the energetics instructor, 2) participant curiosity in uncovering the mystery around energetics and desiring to stretch their knowledge, 3) the experiential learning method, and 4) feelings of joy during the learning process made energetics sustainable for participants.

**Trusting the Energetics Instructor.** Participants talked about how their trust in the instructor was a primary driver when they initially considered taking energetics classes. Initially, most participants were somewhat apprehensive to take energetics courses for various reasons. But each participant talked about how their trust in the instructor was very important in overcoming the doubts they had about the subject matter. For instance, Irene had come to respect the instructor through her other doctoral courses and she decided to give energetics a try when the instructor recommended energetics to her. Irene explained, “Alla (the instructor) said she thought it would be helpful. I trusted her...and I knew to take it serious when Alla said it.” So in spite of her apprehensions, Irene decided to enter energetics courses on the advice of the instructor, whom she respected and trusted.

Betsy felt honored to be taught energetics by the Director of the Energetics Institute because she viewed the instructor as an expert in the field. She said, “I feel very fortunate that I had the opportunity to work with Alla, specifically because she is a master in energetics. Here is a scholar and...she’s a master in energetics.” Like other participants, Betsy viewed the instructor with great respect and felt honored to be taught by an expert in the field.

In the end, all participants cited respect and trust in the instructor as very important when they were contemplating taking energetics courses. Whether it was a personal relationship with the instructor that formed through previous interactions or a respect they had for the instructor’s mastery of the field, or a combination thereof, each participant cited the instructor as a primary driver for them taking energetics courses in the first place.

**Participant Curiosity in Uncovering the Mystery around Energetics and Desiring to Stretch Their Knowledge.** Participants discussed a curiosity they had about energetics and a desire to stretch their knowledge into an entirely new field. Some talked about how energetics seemed mysterious. For example, Nicole said that she talked to others who had taken energetics and she was very intrigued by the topic. Some of Nicole’s friends and colleagues talked about how transformative energetics classes were and while Nicole was a bit nervous about it, she wanted to know more. Her nerves and interest were simultaneously piqued, similar to when someone experiences a haunted house or watches a horror movie. She was a bit scared, but she also wanted to know more. Nicole was nervous that energetics might be “...messing with forces that we shouldn’t be messing with.” At the same time, Nicole said other graduates of the

Energetics Institute sparked her interest in the topic, because these graduates spoke about energetics as a great experience. Yet it was difficult for these students to really explain what energetics really entailed, further exacerbating the mystery surrounding the topic. When a fellow doctoral cohort member who had already taken energetics courses told Nicole that she might be “too Catholic” to handle energetics, Nicole felt personally challenged and was even more interested in learning about this totally new and mysterious subject. In the end, Nicole wanted to prove to herself and others that she was open minded and capable of learning about a subject that might make her uncomfortable.

Betsy recognized that opening herself up to energetics was a stretch for her personally. She had a strong desire to learn and even though she thought energetics was a big unknown to her initially and the little she knew about it made her nervous, she knew that she needed to overcome some initial fears in order to stretch her knowledge. More specifically, Betsy was concerned energetics might run contrary to her spiritual beliefs. As mentioned, Betsy grew up in a Christian household and continued to maintain a strong sense of spirituality. Nevertheless, she decided to stretch her knowledge and signed up for energetics. She said,

I don't swim, but once I went whitewater rafting. If I did not go whitewater rafting, then I wouldn't have understood this is a wonderful experience. Had I let my fear hold me back for all the different reasons, whatever reasons, then I wouldn't have known about energetics and (now) that is a part of who I am.

Betsy was grateful and proud that she let her thirst for knowledge overcome her apprehensions about an unknown and mysterious subject.

Prior to taking courses on energetics, Irene talked about how she thought energetics was "...kind of weird or out there." Irene said she, "...went into it just kind of with curiosity and not knowing that it would be life changing." She was a little worried that energetics had an odd religious aspect to it prior to taking energetics, but she became more comfortable as she learned that some principles in energetics are rooted in quantum physics and science. She also had a natural curiosity for "things unseen" and talked about how that curiosity was consistent with her OD practice. She said she needed to understand things beyond the surface when she was practicing OD and she thought that energetics might help her better understand OD-related situations through a new lens.

For all participants, energetics had an element of intrigue and mystery. Participants' friends and classmates who had already taken energetics courses talked glowingly about energetics, yet they were vague in their descriptions about it. Unlike other courses that could sometimes be summarized in a few sentences, people had a hard time clearly describing energetics and would routinely tell potential students it was not a topic that could be described, so the only way they would understand it would be through taking the course.

**Experiential Learning Method.** Participants discussed the importance of experiencing energetics through hands-on exercises. For example, Irene discussed how the experiential part of energetics was completely different than any other class she took. She thought the experiential aspect of energetics learning was highly impactful for her and helped validate her learning along the way. Irene made a point of saying that she thought mainstream society and academic-minded people in particular think experiential learning is less valid than traditional book and lecture learning. Because of energetics,

she now passionately believes that experiential learning is just as valid as traditional learning. The experiential aspect of energetics was a very important aspect of Irene's transformation.

Meanwhile, Anne initially thought energetics was "bullshit" so the experiential aspect of the energetics learning process was paramount in earning her buy-in to the subject. Anne talked about how she was able to heal chronic shoulder pain through energetics during the first course; an experience that initially opened her eyes to the power of energetics and increased her desire to learn more about the subject. She also became healthier in other ways, such as losing weight, when she continued practicing energetics. These experiential exercises and the positive results took Anne from thinking about energetics as a farce to a transformational experience.

Nicole was similarly skeptical of energetics, but it was the experiential aspect of the subject that created important "aha" moments in her learning process. For example, she talked about her second class;

And then when I went back the next day I felt totally different, because some things were working. And I specifically remember Alla handing out these two pieces of paper and they were turned over. They were newspaper articles and one was this gardener with this beautiful picture of a garden and the other one was a war story. I put my hands over them and I could definitely feel the difference. I put (my hand) over the garden and it just felt really light and I put (my hand) over the war (story) and it just felt heavy. For the first time, I thought, oh my gosh, this is working for me.

This experiential learning moment was very important for Nicole and made her feel excited about learning more about energetics.

Looking back on her energetics courses, Betsy was grateful that the instructor combined both theory and application into the courses. She said, “But you know, she (the instructor) transcends the theoretical aspects to the application and she’s able to teach us about energetics.” Ultimately, Betsy found the experiential aspect of energetics learning “phenomenal”. Similar to Nicole, she described exercises in her first energetics course whereby she could sense words or colors on piece of paper with only her hands. Experiencing this newfound capability was energizing for Betsy. She felt a newfound power in herself she did not know existed. She was excited to learn more.

All participants said they needed to experience energetics to enable their transformation. Whether it was sensing new things, seeing new things or feeling new things, the participants all said the experiential aspect of their energetics courses were very powerful in opening themselves up to new learning.

**Feelings of Joy During the Learning Process Makes Energetics Learning Sustainable for Participants.** Participants described the process of learning about energetics as “joyful”, “exciting”, “awesome” and “fun”. The experience was exhilarating for the participants as they discovered new things about themselves and the world through energetics. While their other academic courses helped shape their thinking in certain ways, energetics had a unique exhilarating feeling and opened up a window to a new world for participants; something they wanted to continue to learn about beyond academic requirements. Each participant talked about how the benefits and joy they received from increasing their knowledge about energetics led them to continue

practicing and learning about the topic in ways that are not typical with other courses they completed. Energetics was particularly joyful to them and resonates strongly with them to this day.

During courses, the group experience of going through the learning process and transformation was exciting for participants. For instance, Nancy discussed how she received a lot of positive energy during class; she felt personally inspired by her classmates and always walked out of class feeling good. After she finished formal energetics courses, Nancy continued to attend a monthly energetics club, a voluntary group gathering that allows energetics course participants to continue learning in a group setting, similar to the classes that were conducted.

Betsy found energetics classes and the experience to be “phenomenal”. Discovering something new and experiencing it with a group created unique and positive feelings for her. As Betsy described the classroom experience, she said,

We had our opening meditation and then we had the meditation afterwards. There was always...very high positive energy. The fact that I was with a group of peers that we all had that experience, it's almost like being able to touch something.

There was a lightness about it.

The transformational experience was exciting and remains with her today. She continues to read about and practice energetics well after her formal classes ended. She attends energetics club meetings on her own time now and is continuing her energetic journey.

Henry said he is very thankful for the opportunity to learn about energetics as he looks back on the transformative experience. He said, “I love what it does for me. I love how it feeds into my whole feeling of living my life the way I want to live it.” Henry said



while he felt grateful for his learning experience, he did not want to over-analyze it either. He said, “Maybe it’s a placebo, you know? But it works for me so I’m going to keep taking the placebo and I don’t care what other people think.” Henry has come to love practicing energetics because it became a positive force in his life.

When describing her feelings as she went through the energetics experience, Lucy said she had, “Feelings of joy. Feelings of love for myself. It’s been so amazing that I have these feelings of joy.” She described her energetics courses as a gift and expressed how grateful she was for the opportunity. Lucy said, “It’s fun to talk about this. Even talking about it....reinforces it.” Lucy described the experience of learning about energetics as one of the most important things in her life, comparing it to meeting her husband in terms of a life-changing event.

Anne talked about the joy and power energetics brought her while she was undergoing her transformation and how she continues practicing energetics today. She practices in solitude but also leads meditations with her co-workers during work breaks. She said energetics is “awesome” and it is a big part of her everyday life.

Each participant said their energetics learning continues, in part to maintain the joy of growing as a human being. Some attend a monthly energetics club meeting, some practice more informally with other like-minded people and some practice energetics independently. But all said that energetics brings them joy and inspires them to continue practicing.

**Summary.** Contextual themes are the ingredients needed to make the transformation possible. They are important factors that enabled the transformation. The participants in this study described varying degrees of apprehension about the topic of

energetics, mainly because it was such an unknown subject to them. They were initially drawn to the subject because they trusted and respected the instructor. They also were innately intrigued to know more about this mysterious subject. The topic clicked with them in part because the energetic exercises they conducted in class and on their own worked. In other words, they could sense new things or they were able to feel healthier physically after practicing energetics. Finally, all of the participants continued to practice and study the topic because it brought them joy and continued to improve their lives.

### **Essential Themes**

Essential themes are transformational lessons participants took away from the experience. In other words, the context of the situation is taken out of the equation and the essence of the experience is uncovered (Van Manen, 1997). First of all, participants liberated themselves from a victimhood mentality, thereby enabling them to discover their personal power and take responsibility for their own happiness. Second, participants found purpose by listening to and learning from an interconnected universe, rather than trying to feed their ego and control specific outcomes. Finally, participants found their inner voice through energetics and the confidence to be true to their gut. These themes are all connected and will overlap in the forthcoming participant stories, but each participant story is meant to convey the essential point of the theme noted. Throughout all of the essential themes, participants became more self-aware in very deep and profound ways, allowing them to connect to their authentic selves. These essential themes will be explored through the following participant stories.

**Liberating Oneself from a Victimhood Mentality, Finding Personal Power and Taking Responsibility for One's Own Happiness.** Each participant brought unique

circumstances and issues with them to their energetics learning experience. Participants talked about how energetics made them realize they were living with anger, they were living in fear or they did not realize their own power. Participants indicated energetics helped them begin taking responsibility for their own happiness. Rather than shrinking from situations due to fear or blaming others for their own unhappiness, participants became more confident and confronted their issues.

Participants in this study became more self-aware of their fears and situations where they played the victim role. The following deeper dive into Anne's experience about moving away from a victimhood mentality and Irene's experience about overcoming fear in her life illustrate how participants in this study experienced a transformation that liberated them from a mentality of victimhood and fear; a mental shift which ultimately inspired confidence and enabled them to take charge of their own happiness.

*Anne: shedding a victimhood mentality and taking charge of her own happiness.* Anne's transformation started in a different place than others I interviewed. Because she blamed the world for her own unhappiness and was very skeptical of energetics initially, her journey was longer than other participants, but the transformation was ultimately as profound and liberating as it was for all the participants in this study. Anne's story starts at the beginning of her energetics experience, revealing how unhappy she was in her life at the outset, so the reader can appreciate the breadth of her transformation.

Anne was highly skeptical of energetics and took the first course only because she heard it was fun and wanted to understand what these crazy people actually learned in

this mysterious class. After the first weekend of classes, Anne was convinced that the instructor was conducting an experiment with her students. She said,

I thought, I'm going to go to class the second weekend and I am going to find out what she (the instructor) was talking about...that she really didn't mean it. She made that up. I thought I would find out that she made it up as an experiment to show how work place cultures happen. How somebody can change people's thinking. How religious movements will get people to believe outlandish things and how companies can really get people to drink the Kool Aide. So I thought that I would find out in the second weekend how everything that she said was just really a set up for us to think in different ways. So I was really intrigued. And then when I found out that she wasn't kidding about energy and about its potential, I had some learning to do and some accepting to do when I went the second time.

Even though Anne initially had a chip on her shoulder when it came to energetics, Anne thought she would try some of the class exercises to see what would happen. The first thing that began changing her view of energetics was a self-healing exercise that had her focusing energy on a trouble spot in her body that she had been suffering through for years.

I had chronic neck-shoulder pain and I also had a host of other chronic conditions that have since been alleviated. I would take ibuprofen because I worked 40 hours a week, I'm attached to the computer, I get repetitive stress in my shoulder, so I have chronic shoulder pain. I followed the energetic lessons laid out...the most elementary ones, to alleviate pain, and they worked. So, even though I didn't

really accept the broader teachings, when I practiced on a daily basis, did I take ibuprofen today? No. Gee, I guess it must have worked. And then I started applying those lessons with more dedication and more enthusiasm and so seeing the personal wellbeing that came about really engaged me to learn everything that I could learn about it. That's how I became transformed. I really love it, yeah.

Some of the deeper energetic teachings that Anne initially rejected were later accepted. Her transformational learning came in steps. As she continued to feel the benefits of energetics in her life, and as her life continued to improve, she would go back to some of the lessons she initially rejected and revisit them. She continued to chip away at energetics, consume it in bite size pieces, validate that the next level of energetics produced good results for her and then go back for more. While in class, Anne would think,

That does not make any sense to me. I won't challenge it in class. You all just go right ahead and believe that, but I don't. And then I would come back later, I would get what she (the instructor) meant on a certain theory, or apply theory to my personal things. Alla (the instructor) talks about peeling the layers of the onion, so oftentimes I would peel the layers back and discover something about myself that helped me understand how I am, accept that it is true and then the learning would kick in.

Anne was on a path to discovery and her self-awareness grew with time as she accepted a deeper understanding of energetics.

Anne focused on ridding herself of fear and anger as well as addressing the lack of love in her life as she underwent her healing process. Initially Anne was in denial about the anger that festered inside her. Anne said,

I told Alla early on I didn't have anger. That is so hilariously ridiculous to me now that I never saw the anger that was simmering inside of me. I would say repeatedly that anger's not really my issue. Maybe lack of love, lack of self-confidence or...no. My biggest issue is anger and you want to know why? It's because of my worldview that if something doesn't line up then I will go to the victim role. That's not fair, that's not right, that sucks that I have to deal with this. So it's the anger that other people are screwing up the world the way I want it. I shouldn't have to deal with this again. So it's the anger.

There were specific exercises in energetics classes that helped Anne begin recognizing the negative energy that was such a pervasive part of her life. As she became more in tune with her feelings through energetics exercises and meditations, she was able to see the anger inside herself more clearly. Only then could Anne begin ridding herself of the victim mentality and the anger that it produced in her.

Anne experienced feelings of empowerment and responsibility as she went through the healing process. She said that while energetics was an amazing transformative experience, she also had a thought that "this (energetics) sucks." Anne was struck by a very heavy sense of responsibility for her own happiness. She realized during her transformative learning experience that she could no longer blame others when things did not go her way. She summed it up by saying, "That's the 'this really does suck stage,' because now I am responsible for everything." So Anne matured greatly during

the healing process. She ultimately took responsibility for her own happiness and her life was transformed in the process.

One positive result from Anne's transformation has been an improved relationship with her husband. It also allowed her to love herself and stop blaming her husband for her unhappiness. She was able to work energetically to heal the past, which in turn allowed her to reset the relationship she had with her husband. Anne's story is best told in her own words:

I've been married to my husband for almost 30 years and we have children (in their twenties). So when I started energetics I was really opening a new chapter of my life to take care of myself. My life's plan...was to do something for myself, get a master's degree, get a better job and all were steps toward divorce. So, at the time (I entered energetics), my husband was drinking to the point of...there's no ifs, ands or buts about it, he's an alcoholic. So just shortly before I started energetics, he had a personal crisis and chose to quit drinking, so that was the first step that maybe I could stay with him...that and energetics, when my whole world changed. And everything that sucked about my life wasn't his fault. And that was an eye opener. And my happiness didn't depend on him and that was an eye opener. And, in healing, I feel like that happened...as a result of some very specific exercises I did in energetics. They influenced previous patterns in my relationship. The healing in the past and my transformation influenced the past. So that happened that way and then I applied energetics over and over and over again, and when I healed myself, I liked him better. Who knew? Right? That's common sense but it wasn't common sense to my worldview, that if I healed

myself, that if I accept myself, I like you better. So all of a sudden I liked him better. All of a sudden, I didn't fight about the same things because there's nothing to fight about because there was either a lesson for myself or something I needed to deal with and then all of a sudden, I have a great relationship with my husband now. Now I don't consider divorcing him at all. At all. It's totally amazing. Amazing for me to think that really changed. Who changed? I did. I've been waiting 20 years for him to change and I changed and made myself happy.

Anne found that one of the most important relationships in her life, one that was on the brink of breaking up, was transformed because she transformed herself through energetics classes. She sounded somewhat surprised that this outcome occurred. She did not expect energetics to transform a marriage she thought was doomed. Nevertheless, Anne became very happy to find out that the relationship with her husband could be transformed after she took responsibility for her life and changed how she viewed herself. Through a series of energetics exercises, Anne began loving herself, healing past wounds and finding happiness. She did this by taking responsibility for her own happiness, rather than becoming frustrated and angry about what others and the world were doing to her.

Anne also talked about how energetics has helped her improve relationships with her siblings. She described a situation when she was with three of her sisters. One of the sisters was picking fights with the others. Anne said her other sister told her, "You're next you know (to be the target of the sister picking fights). And I'm totally in the moment aware of energetics and I said no, I'm not because I'm taking measures not to be next." Anne went on to say that she consciously decided that she would not judge her sister who was picking fights with her siblings. She also decided that she was responsible



for the vibrations flowing through her body and ultimately for her own happiness and would not subjugate her happiness to others. In other words, Anne took the relationship with her sister into her own hands and decided that she would not be sucked in to a situation that caused a fight. Anne took control and shielded herself from the energy attack that she knew was coming from her sister. In the moment, Anne was able to avoid a negative situation with her sister because she was empowered through energetics to choose a different path.

Anne's experience may have been somewhat different from others because she was suffering in ways other participants in this study were not. She indicated that while she initially struggled to accept energetics as something real, once she realized it could help heal her both physically and emotionally, she was able to begin her transformational journey. When asked if she had to leave things behind as her transformation took place, Anne said it was such a huge change that it seemed difficult initially, but looking back she was grateful for her learning. "It's not hard to leave pain, anger and sadness behind. That's very easy to leave those things behind." Because Anne had such a strong physical and emotional need for improvement in her life, energetics seems to have been the healing ointment she needed and it transformed her life. Once Anne liberated herself of a victim-mentality and started taking responsibility for her own happiness, she found new personal power in herself and was able to open herself up to a life-changing transformation.

***Irene: overcoming fear, embracing her power and taking responsibility for her life***. Irene never recognized that the source of the general anxiety in her life was fear until she began learning about energetics. Irene's fear would sometimes manifest itself

when she would shrink from an uncomfortable situation, when she allowed her anger to bubble over, or when she beat herself up because she feared failure or embarrassment. As Irene learned to deal with fear through a change in thinking and through her newfound energetic skills, she began taking responsibility for her life in new ways.

To understand Irene's transformation, it is important to know that she had always been a high achiever. She came from modest means growing up and worked very hard to achieve external success in life. However, when things would not go her way, she would sometimes blame others or God, oftentimes thinking people were possibly out to get her or the universe was somehow punishing her for a sin she committed.

Irene learned new skills in her energetics courses that helped her become more self-aware in the moment; she gained the ability to sense an energy imbalance when fear started to creep in to her thoughts and emotions. "I've become aware that when I have fear, I am imbalanced and need to ask myself what's happening and so I step back from the situation." This skill helped Irene in her everyday interactions and allowed her to take control of situations in her life, rather than letting fear control her emotions and behaviors.

One time when Irene was on a business trip in another city, she had a stranger randomly blow up at her verbally on a public transit bus. She immediately employed her energetic tools to shield herself from this attack and the stranger ended up backing down and leaving her alone. In the past, Irene indicated that she would have been incredibly frightened and would not know what to do. As a result of her energetic training, she was able to cope with the situation effectively.

I wasn't afraid and that was the key. I wasn't afraid and I'm so happy that I thought to do it (energetically protect herself) in the heat of the moment. So then I knew that energetics had really taken hold with me to be able to respond in that quick of a situation. This (energetics) has changed my life.

Prior to energetics, Irene would have played the victim role. She may have shrunk from the situation in fear and taken pity on herself for having endured such a scary situation. Instead, Irene felt armed with new power because she was able to employ energetic tools to ward off a threatening situation. Irene took responsibility for her situation and did not cower in fear.

The example on the bus became a metaphor for Irene's life; she began living her life as a powerful woman, rather than worrying about the bad things that might happen to her if she made a mistake. For example, Irene is a self-proclaimed perfectionist and prior to energetics was very fearful about making mistakes. She recognized that much of her decision-making prior to energetics was driven by fear. She might make job decisions based on the least fearful path or she might obsess about one of her children and bad things that could happen to them. Mostly though, Irene was afraid of making mistakes. In some instances, Irene would allow her emotions and anxiety to boil over when she was operating outside of her comfort zone. Irene talked about a situation where she blew up at her professor because she was not understanding the expectations of an assignment. She was fearful of failure and her emotions bubbled up when she blew up at her professor. Through energetics, Irene learned to recognize anxiety as an energy imbalance and to correct the imbalance on the spot, thereby exercising her power and reducing the number of blow-ups that she has in her life.

Because of her strict religious upbringing, Irene was trained to think about things in terms of right and wrong, good and evil. Fear of God was pervasive in her thinking. When something bad would happen to her, Irene would sometimes think, “what has God done to me? I’m a bad person because this happened to me. I’m always beating myself up, that sort of thing.” Irene was very hard on herself because she was brought up to believe God punishes sinners. Prior to energetics, when things would not go her way, Irene’s self-esteem would suffer as she would rhetorically ask herself what she did to deserve an unfavorable outcome. She said, “...when I’ve lost things or broken things, then I kind of got down on myself about being stupid about it or how did I lose that.” Irene was so afraid of making mistakes, she was living a life full of anxiety and fear. When bad things happened to her, she wondered what she had done to warrant her punishment. Irene was a victim and fixated on the negative things that were thrown her way. Irene learned through energetics that positive intentions could influence situations in positive ways. In other words, Irene realized her fear was attracting the very things she did not want to experience. As she began employing her energetic skills and changing her thinking, Irene began feeling more empowered to attract positive things into her life. Instead of fearing mistakes and punishment for sins, Irene focused on attracting the things she wanted to attract in her life rather than those things she feared might happen. This transformation in Irene’s thinking was very liberating and empowering for her.

In short, energetics helped Irene confront her fears, empowering her to deal with frightful situations in the moment or to make decisions from a positive energetic state, rather than from a place of fear. Irene is much more aware of fear in her life and this has reduced anxiety and given her confidence to take responsibility for her happiness.

*Summary.* In order to feel empowered and to take responsibility for their happiness, the participants in this study all had to do some self-healing. For Anne, she had to rid herself of a victim-mentality and anger. For Irene, she had to overcome fear. Others in this study also talked about overcoming various fears and phobias through energetics. Participants began replacing negative thoughts with positive thoughts and attracting the things they desired in their lives. As this transformation in thinking occurred, participants in this study realized the power existed within each of them to positively impact their own happiness.

**Listening to and Learning from an Interconnected Universe Helped Participants Grow and Find Purpose.** Prior to energetics, participants felt like they had to achieve certain outcomes and were living lives based on accumulation, recognition, conformity and achievement. Living this way often caused frustration when things did not go their way, such as missing a financial goal or having a child rebel against a parent's control. Energetics students learned that the universe does not punish people, but it does sometimes throw challenging situations people's way to allow them to grow. Growth of one's authentic self became the purpose of the participants' lives rather than being focused on control, accumulation and conformity.

As participants learned about this aspect of energetics, their thinking shifted from trying to control the universe to one that looked for messages in situations the universe sent them. Messages were thought to be ways to grow and know oneself more authentically. Messages from the universe could come to people in the form of a health issue, through relationships or certain experiences. In the end, people started thinking about their lives not as a race to accumulate things by controlling all aspects of their

lives, but as a growth experience, with the purpose of becoming more whole. People began thinking differently about God, religion and death as they experienced this transformation. In short, the following stories illustrate how people transformed their thinking about how they approached life as they began to grow in self-awareness when they learned to trust and listen to the universe, rather than trying to control it.

*Nicole: letting go of control and trusting the universe.* Nicole's view on the world changed as a result of energetics. Rather than becoming upset with things she could not control, Nicole began to look for messages in situations the universe sent her way. Nicole was moved by a particular event that took place while she was taking energetics courses. She shared a story about two young men in their late teens who died a day apart from one another. One young man was the grandson of a co-worker. The other young man was a student whose situation required Nicole's attention as a school administrator. Even though the two young men did not know each other, Nicole and her co-worker (another energetics student) felt the two young deceased men had connected with one another. Both Nicole and her co-worker felt the connection and were profoundly moved by the situation as they discussed these deaths immediately after they took place.

When Nicole attended the funeral of the student who died, the young man's family repeatedly said that they felt their son was not alone. In other words, the family felt their dead young family member was with someone and would be ok. After Nicole left the funeral, she realized she forgot her scarf and drove back to the Church to retrieve it. She first looked in the cloakroom and did not see it there and then checked the Church and did not see it there. When she returned to the cloakroom to put on her coat, the scarf was laid across the doorway to the cloakroom minutes after Nicole had just been there.

Nicole felt the presence of the dead young man and a very strong sense that he had connected to her co-worker's grandson. At that moment, she felt like the two young men were together, and were therefore not alone as they moved into the next realm. This powerful experience confirmed for Nicole that the universe was at work and that all was ok not only with these two young men who had died a day apart, but with all things in the universe. Nicole took this experience as a message from the universe that she need not worry so much about things she could not control and that things will work out the way they are meant to work out. She said,

More than any of the classes that I took, (energetics) was probably the most transformational. Some of it is about just kind of what's going to happen is going to happen...this is the universe, this is meant to be, you don't have as much control as you think you do.

Nicole realized she had an increasing sense of comfort that even in times of great sadness, such as the death of the two young men, the universe was at work and things would work out the way they are meant to work out.

Nicole also talked about her husband's job loss after telling the story about the two young men who had died. On the surface, these situations might seem unrelated, but Nicole connected them by talking about how we do not have as much control as we think we do. At the same time, she talked about how the universe has a way of making things work out. Regarding her husband's job loss, Nicole said, "It is going to be okay and something is going to work out but I think before (energetics) I would have gone off the deep end and honestly the stress of him not working..." So instead of stressing out about a death, a job loss, or a difficult situation, Nicole now knows that she does not control

outcomes because the world is very complex with many dimensions, but in the end everyone has their purpose to serve and things will ultimately work out.

The feeling that all is ok carries forward in Nicole's work life as well. When she has to expel a student from school, she has much less anxiety around the feeling that she is somehow causing the student harm. She said energetics helped her to:

...think about things totally different and just the thought of whatever will be, will be. This is what the universe is asking of you. It just kind of takes a lot of pressure off in general. There were some times when I remember talking to Alla about different student situations and she was really helpful because she said to me that's that person's destiny and don't mess with it.

Because Nicole came to believe there was a complex universe at work, she was able to focus on her tasks with less guilt and stress. She came to believe people all have tasks, struggles and joys to experience in this life so their souls can grow before passing on. She was therefore much less likely to feel sorry for someone and instead sends people love energy to help them when they are struggling.

Nicole found a huge weight lifted off her shoulders when she cut a pathological bond with her daughter. A pathological bond can form between any two individuals; in Nicole's case she realized through energetics she had formed this unhealthy bond with her daughter. While a bond can begin when a parent wants the best for their child, the bond becomes pathological when the parent begins obsessing over their child's well-being and tries imposing their own wishes on the child. This causes an energy drain because the parent spends energy worrying about their child while the child spends energy dealing with their parent imposing their will on them. The bond can become toxic



when the child and parent begin resenting each other as the child tries to live their life authentically while the parent tries to subconsciously control the life of his or her child. Even though the intentions of the parent are often good, the parent's actions become energetically incompatible with the universe and his or her child. When Nicole cut this bond with her daughter, she described it as a liberating moment, one where she felt "free". She also noticed a difference in her daughter. Since the moment when she cut the pathological bond, Nicole said her daughter has flourished and excelled as an adult. Nicole described this experience as immensely meaningful. She did not discuss this with her daughter because her daughter does not fully understand or appreciate energetics at this point in her life, but she believed her daughter would agree that something is different in their relationship. For Nicole, this experience has been very positive. She experienced less stress in her life, now knowing that her daughter has her own life to live and Nicole will only hinder her development if she continues to obsess over the decisions her daughter makes. Nicole became much more aware of how her motherly instincts can smother the development of her daughter, hindering her growth as a person. Instead, Nicole sent her daughter love energy and prayed she was able to grow and develop, but was careful not to obsess over her daughter or impose her will on her daughter. Nicole's relationship with her daughter was one of the most important in her life and it changed profoundly as a result of energetics.

Because of her energetics transformation, Nicole began to worry less about saving students as well as her daughter and trying to control the outcomes of their lives. Her view on her role in the world has shifted significantly to the understanding that the universe is shaping events outside her control. She also believed that while in the past she

may have judged a situation as incredibly bad, such as when she had to expel a student, she came to believe that the universe has a different plan for people that was beyond her understanding. Nicole looked at her life as a way to grow through her experiences with others and she is now more comfortable knowing the universe is at work and everything will be ok in the end.

***Henry: learning from the universe makes him feel more whole and makes his purpose in life more clear.*** Henry is a hardworking, high achiever who does what he can to get the most out of life. He said energetics gave him pause to think about the purpose in his life. Henry said, “We’re all here to learn a lesson or to experience something.” As a result of energetics, Henry believed he was much more in tune with doing things that helped him grow and learn. He was also much more aware of learning from the experiences the universe sent him, rather than being frustrated or unsatisfied with situations that came his way. When it comes to situations the universe sends him, Henry said, “I just kind of let it happen. Don’t try to steer it. Don’t try to control it.” In the past, Henry said he might have tried to force a certain outcome or have created specific expectations. For example, if he bet \$20 on a football game, Henry would expect to win and would become very upset with the universe if he did not. Due to his energetics courses, Henry realized the universe is interconnected and very complex. He found it foolish to expect to win and while he still may bet on a game and become upset when he loses the bet, it is different now. He bets for entertainment and no longer believes the universe is out to get him if his team loses.

Henry said that due to his energetics transformation, he began to view life as a learning experience. Rather than feeding his ego or thinking about getting into heaven by

completing a checklist filled with requirements, Henry has come to realize he is on earth to learn and grow through his experiences. Henry became less anxious about his spirituality because energetics helped reshape his understanding of the universe and God from one of judgment to one of interconnectedness and learning. In Henry's own words,

Before energetics, I thought I've got to pay homage to God, because God is going to judge me. Now I see it as give and take. God does want to provide good things to me but I need to provide good things to him so it's not just fearful anymore. It's more about a partnership than it is a one way paying homage and respect.

Energetics has taught me that. I believe in the transformation of people's souls through different lives, which is obviously different than what the Catholic Church believes. Eventually after so many lives, you're able to resonate with God or the high-energy power. And that's the ultimate goal. It (energetics) has helped me come to terms with death, with grief; it's helped me understand everybody's not perfect. So religion is accepting of people's sins, the ability to forgive yourself or forgive others. And energetics says you're going to make mistakes because that's learning. Or not necessarily mistakes; there are things you're going to learn. I understand my spirituality more because of energetics. Energetics has helped me feel like there's a lot of things I don't understand, but that's okay. If we were supposed to understand it, we would. And we're just a human mind in a very complex energetic system and we're probably not capable of understanding everything. I feel much more at peace with my spirituality. I feel much more at peace with who I am and why I'm here. Now I feel God is the universe. God is our interaction with the universe. I'll say paying reverence or respecting the

universe has kind of changed my...not necessarily my belief, but the way in which I serve God. It's more about my relationship with the universe. I've kind of pulled God and the universe together. We're all connected to the same energy source. My life is going to be more harmonious, not only internally but with other people, and with the universe itself.

Henry felt more connected to God and the universe as a result of his energetics transformation. He suspended judgment and instead viewed life as a way to learn and grow, rather than meeting expectations he has put upon himself, or he allowed society to put on him. Henry felt his soul would grow as a result of the situations the universe sends his way. He referred to these situations as karmic lessons and he believed energetics created awareness for him to recognize those opportunities. Henry's spiritual transformation ultimately made him feel more whole and purposeful.

Henry also changed his view of life and death as a result of energetics. He began to believe life was not necessarily one single event. Through reincarnation, Henry thought his current life was one chapter for his soul to experience. In other words, Henry looked at death as not the end of a life, but the passing of a soul out of the physical world and into another state, only to likely return again for more learning at some other time. He talked about three close relationships in his life that died shortly after taking Energetics courses. Henry said,

I accept that these things are going to happen. I'm much more accepting of my own death, my own physical body's death and I might be straying a little bit here, but when we talked about how we choose a certain karma or we choose a certain lesson that we're going to learn, that was very eye-opening for me. I (currently)

have a friend who's got a pretty serious cancer and I feel badly for him, but this is what he chose.

Henry did not want his friend to have cancer or to die. But he also knew that the universe may have another plan for his friend. He also knew that the suffering may be part of his friend's learning and growth on this planet. He would continue to send positive thoughts and energy to his friend, but he will not pity his friend for his condition, instead praying for his friend's comfort and the strength to grow from his situation. To be clear, Henry hoped all learning could take place without suffering, but sometimes people encounter suffering for reasons he does not understand. The primary objective was to grow from experiences, whether it entailed suffering or happiness. This change in viewpoint has big implications. Instead of striving for perfection with his one chance at life, he had a much broader view on his current situation and looked at it as a learning and growth experience.

Henry's change in thinking about reincarnation and karma also made him more accepting of others. He said, "I'm much less judgmental of other people because I know they're learning their karmic lesson." As mentioned, Henry knew he had his own karmic lessons to learn; things others would not understand. So in turn, Henry did not feel like he could possibly understand someone else's situation, so he suspended judgment of others more readily as a result of energetics.

Henry had a profound transformation when it came to the way he saw himself in the world. He began accepting situations the universe sent him and tried to seek out messages from the universe to foster his own growth. Henry's view of God became more relationship-based, rather than one viewed as a ruler and a subject. He also began seeing

the guiding hand of an interconnected universe in his life, sometimes seeing messages in situations and other times accepting the fact that the universe may not intend for him to understand everything 100% of the time. He takes life as it comes now, rather than trying to force outcomes. As a result of energetics, Henry became more comfortable with his place in life and therefore he harbored fewer insecurities. His purpose in life became clearer; his life was about personal growth and his ability to seek his higher self, one that resonated more closely with God.

***Lucy: letting go of control and listening to the universe feeds her soul.*** Lucy was living in the fast lane, running a successful business, raising a family, and married to a successful businessman. She had created what from the outside looked like the perfect life. However, she often felt a high degree of anxiety and felt she was missing something in her life. During energetics, Lucy realized that while she was so focused on making sure everything in her family and business life went as perfectly as possible, she spent most of her energy trying to control relationships and situations, rather than accepting what the universe sent her and learning from those messages. For example, when Lucy's business revenues dipped or her daughter did not wear the right clothes to school that day, Lucy would become upset and anxiety would fester.

Lucy's journey has been a long one. She had to start to let go of control to allow her transformation to take place. Energetics also taught Lucy to slow down and live in the present, something that helped her be more in touch with the universe. "I think before energetics, I was a doer, an accomplisher, get it done, be a mom etc. And then post-energetics, you just be. A part of me is a mom. A part of me is this business owner. But I just am. I'm all of it." By living in the present, Lucy started to let go of the expectations

she was putting on herself and instead focused on how she could make the most of the moment she was in at the time. For example, when talking about her business in a pre-energetics mindset she said she would create a lot of anxiety in herself by setting false goals. “I would want to hit this revenue with work. I have to hit this revenue!” Now she said, “Who gives a shit?” Lucy talked about an energetics exercise whereby people put an intention into the universe. During class, Lucy said she wanted her intention to be hitting a certain revenue target. The energetics instructor asked her, “Why that number?” Lucy said she did not know why she chose that particular number and the instructor said maybe you should not focus on a particular number because it could be much higher than that. Lucy said, “So energetics has taught me about abundance and abundance isn’t a definite thing. Abundance could be anything. Why have a limit? So yeah, pre-energetics I would have felt I’m doing something wrong if my business stays flat.” Lucy went on to say her revenues have been flat, but things are improving. She said the business was flat but “now we’re getting out of it. But what happened needed to happen. And there were lessons in there and we will be fine.” Lucy’s transformation began as she stopped thinking about living life as a frantic race to the finish line and began living in the present and recognizing all of the messages the universe was sending to her.

In energetics, Lucy was able to get in touch with her soul and her authentic self. She realized that her soul was beyond this world and started thinking about reincarnation. In this process, Lucy began overcoming a very pervasive fear of death. She feared abandoning her children if she were to die. The fear of death was an anxiety bottled up in her that came out during an OD class she took on spirituality and death. During class, she began sobbing so much when she talked about what she would regret if she died, that

another classmate had to read her list of regrets to the class. Energetics helped Lucy realize that death is not the end, but her soul passes through lives so she can continue to grow and develop. She said,

Energetically it was this idea of the universe, of no time continuum, of backwards, forwards, future, past, souls in a big soup, and the idea that I could come in my next life form as someone in India or somewhere else...and I would have the same needs to be loved, fight for connection, like all of those things. The transformation is that there's no good and bad; it just is.

In this example, Lucy was clearly ridding herself of fear and of course experienced the transformation described earlier when participants talked about reducing fears and taking responsibility for their lives. In addition to the transformation about reducing fears, Lucy was talking about the transformation regarding her view on life itself and how it is interconnected to the universe and not a one-time event. As her thinking about her place in the universe changed, Lucy thought about how everyone has a task and lesson to learn in life. It helped her think differently about trying to control her situations and the experience of others.

Lucy realized her children are on this journey of development and growth as well and that the death of their mother would not be the end of the world for them. Lucy said, I do not have fear of death anymore. I am much more confident of my path in the universe, this life that I lead. Energetics and meditation made this transferrable shift in how I behave and see myself in the world.



As Lucy thought about life as more than having a few years on earth, she was able to stop thinking about life as a race; life as a very short time to accomplish as many earthly things as possible.

Lucy also stopped worrying about whether other people would do things her way because she started thinking about people passing through life with different tasks to accomplish and learning to experience. She realized that as she was trying to control situations, she would become frustrated, upset and often judgmental of others. She found that this behavior was rooted in a lack of love for herself. Lucy said,

I was forcing my love, forcing my solutions, forcing my ideas and if people didn't take it, I was taking offense to it. 'You don't want to take my...I'm going to make you homemade soup. You're not going to take it? What the hell?' I have this idea that if you are not going to accept it? I can't believe it! I think you should and it was a high judgment of others because it was a lack of self-love.

Lucy said her lack of self-love often came out in her desire to impress others. In a very clever way, Lucy would try to show others how loving and giving she was, but deep down she was really trying to impress others because she lacked love for herself. Lucy said she had a revelation during energetics and in class,

I told that story about how I like to give my (first class) seat up to service people on an airplane. (One time), there was a guy that said 'no thank you' and I was completely offended for the whole flight. I went back and (asked him again)...and he was like 'no, really'. I said they get free drinks and things like that and he (said) 'no thank you, I'm okay'. And then I walked away and I'm like I can't believe it. Why would he...he's just embarrassed...and it was so silly. And I think

I was giving him the seat out of a place of love but I probably was like, ‘look at me, look at the nice person I am giving him my seat.’ If I didn’t care it was a service person, why don’t I give it away to anybody? So, I’m (now) in a loving place of service...not forced. And not making assumptions about it...that they need it.

Lucy stopped judging others since she realized everyone comes into the world with karmic tasks to accomplish and is on their own soulful journey. She said,

I do have more empathy for people that are hard on other people. It’s because they really don’t love themselves. Like ‘what a bitch’ or ‘I can’t believe you said that’, but then at the core (I think) that’s sad. So I have less judgment of others. I’m less hard on other people. It makes sense. I’m less hard on other people because I’m less hard on myself.

As mentioned, Lucy’s examples of and comments around loving herself and ridding herself of fear relate to the first essential theme examined. At the same time, she was being transformed by a shift in thinking about the universe and development of a new purpose in her life; increased self-awareness and the development of her own soul. As this transformation took place, Lucy worried less about controlling outcomes and judging others.

Recently Lucy had to deal with a very personal message from the universe; she was told that she had a growth on her breast that could be cancer. Ultimately Lucy’s tests came back negative, but she learned important lessons about herself in the process. Prior to energetics, Lucy said she would have pitied herself and would have cried all the time, wondering what she might have done to deserve this ailment. She said, “pre-energetics, if

I had this breast issue, which I've had for the last month, I would have been like, why me? I'm such a good person. I can't believe this is happening." Post-energetics, Lucy said,

Okay, here's a lesson coming your way. And I didn't shy away. I went on-line to learn more about it. (Previously) I would have cried. I would have told everybody to get sympathy. (But) I didn't need to do any of that. I was going to find out (the results of her test) the week I got back from vacation. And I had a joyous present. I'd meditate every morning on the beach. My husband and I couldn't have been more close and loving (on vacation). Lots of laughter. I went in for my biopsy the day I got back from my vacation the next day. And I met loving people. I was just so in the moment. And the people I met, the woman I met in the waiting room was so lovely and funny. And funny things kept happening. Like they said go out in the waiting room and we'll be right in and I had this robe on and I took some deep breaths and centered and then I stood up to do some yoga stretches and I totally flashed her and I yelled and she yelled and we were like aaaaaahhhh! And it was funny. That's post-energetics and that's post meditation. I knew I wasn't going to die from this thing. I knew that much. But here's the thing I didn't say (to my husband) because I don't think he would have been okay if I said it. It would have been ok if I did die from it. There is nothing that has happened in my life that I have a regret about. There's nothing that I've not done to show love. I really am an example of showing love. I wonder what my funeral would be like. We've maybe all thought that. My funeral would be amazingly loving because people would say, oh (Lucy) was...I just never, never would have talked this way

before the journey of Gainey, moral, spiritual, death thing (a class she took in her OD doctorate program), energetics and meditation. Never. I would have been sobbing right now.

Lucy went on to say she has reflected on the lesson the universe sent her as she dealt with her medical issue. She no longer fears death, she lives more in the moment and she feels like she is living her purpose and developing her soul. Lucy talked about making two lists prior to finding out the results of her biopsy; one to-do list if her test came back positive and one to-do list if her test came back negative. She said,

Here was the lesson. I wrote 'if yes' and there were a few things like keep meditating, keep loving myself...it was all keep. There were no drastic changes. 'If no', it was the same as 'if yes'. 'If no' was the same. Pre-energetics I would have been like crap, 'I need to' and 'you're not doing enough' and 'you...' my list would have been so long!

Prior to her transformation, Lucy would have been obsessed with death and regretted all of the things she was not able to accomplish in life, since prior to energetics she thought this life was the end. However, one overarching lesson in the experience was overcoming her fear of death. She said, "That's what this little breast cancer scare was. What's the worst that can happen, (Lucy)? You will die. If I were to die tomorrow, I'd be okay." Because of energetics, Lucy found the cancer episode to be more instructive than entirely stressful. She said while the stress of waiting to find out whether she had cancer was present, she was able to reflect more deeply on her life and its meaning because the universe sent her that experience. Ultimately Lucy found out that she was cancer-free, but it was an important learning challenge the universe sent her to prove to herself that she

had overcome her fear of death and the experience reinforced the belief that she should stop trying to control certain outcomes and just live her life in the present.

***Irene: letting go of control and attracting positive things from the universe.***

Irene's view on the world was judgmental prior to energetics; as Irene grew up, she was taught that things were black and white, good and bad. Through her energetics learning, she now views things differently. Instead of viewing things judgmentally, she views them with gratitude.

I decided that I really needed to focus that everything in life is energy. The other day when I was out running, there were flowers and I thought, oh, those are brown flowers, those aren't colorful flowers. But they are energy. They are just different energy than the colorful ones, so I appreciated it.

While the flowers may be metaphoric, Irene now views things in the world with less judgment and with more gratitude. This brings less negative energy into her life and makes her a happier person overall.

Irene also grew up poor and she has been very fixated on money as a result. Through energetics, she reshaped her view of money and what role it plays in her life and in this world. Irene said,

I had a tendency to be very careful about trying to really think about how to get money or things in life to make life better. When I think of having to spend money on cars or repairs now in my life, I've been really conscious to say it is just energy. It comes, it goes, let it flow.

She called this being more open to information and energy, rather than obsessing on it or creating anxiety around forcing an outcome around the issue of money. She believed the

anxiety that she created by obsessing on how things ought to occur was actually blocking energy that was meant to come her way. Today Irene has become more mindful about the messages the universe sends her and is less focused on the things she cannot control.

Irene saw a strong parallel between this approach to life and what OD gurus Charlie and Edie Seashore said about feedback. According to Irene, the Seashores indicated that feedback tells you more about the sender than the receiver. In a similar sense, Irene came to believe that what she sends out to the universe is more important than what she is getting from the universe. In other words, Irene could not control the outcomes in her life, but she would have the power to attract positive things from the universe by being more mindful and to grow from what she encounters in the world.

***Nancy: letting go of control while creating positive energy in the universe.***

Nancy found that she engages with OD clients more effectively when she is balanced energetically and lets situations emerge, rather than trying to force certain outcomes. Nancy also found through energetics that she had more effective client meetings when she harmonized the meeting room. To harmonize a room, Nancy energetically visualized the room and sent love into it prior to a meeting. She talked about an instance where she gathered managers and employees together to discuss a culture assessment she conducted for them. Nancy was concerned ahead of time about this meeting because there was the possibility the employees might become disrespectful or the managers might become defensive. Prior to the meeting, she decided to harmonize the room energetically. She said,

I went in fully prepared to facilitate this meeting and within five minutes, they took it over, the employees. And they basically self-organized their own meeting

and I was the observer and note taker, which was exactly what I would have wanted. Everybody was really cordial towards one another. They were very respectful about hearing different perspectives and ideas. They, the whole group, were on board and very enthusiastic about coming up with solutions on how to address things moving forward. I used to be pretty uptight as a facilitator in terms of wanting everything to be planned and wanting to have a really clear idea of what my role would be, so I would feel prepared. It was really cool to see that happen there. And I think the way that I set it up energetically both for the room, for the people as well as for myself to just be calm and let things happen, you know, instead of trying to control them, that's a huge learning for me.

Discovering new energetic tools, such as harmonizing a room, and seeing the tangible results was very eye-opening for Nancy and affirmed her confidence in energetics. Rather than exerting control toward a specific outcome, Nancy set the stage energetically for good things to happen; and they did. In addition, Nancy balanced her own energetic flow and the experience was positive for her personally as well. She felt she became a much more effective OD practitioner and facilitator as a result of her newfound energetic perspective and knowledge.

Nancy also found that her personal relationships could improve if she stopped trying to control them so much and instead focused on remaining energetically balanced. Nancy adopted a child at some point during her energetic journey. She began recognizing that she was forming a pathological bond with her daughter.

You need to cut the pathological bond and then you need to share love. So you can have bonds of love but the pathological ones are the ones that are counter-

productive. It's like the mother bear part of me I never even knew existed has definitely risen over the past few years and it's like there are certain times when it's come up again where I start to get really fearful for no apparent reason.

As Nancy learned about pathological bonds in energetics, she was surprised to find out that she had established a pathological bond with her daughter. Cutting the bond was not easy for Nancy, but she said that she knows that she and her daughter will have a much better relationship based on love rather than obsession. Nancy's daughter will be able to grow as she was meant to, unencumbered by an obsessive mother. In other words, Nancy's daughter will more easily be able to be authentic, knowing her mother loves her no matter what path emerges for her life. Meanwhile, Nancy realized she can focus on her own authentic growth, rather than spending precious energy smothering her daughter's growth and trying to direct her daughter down specific paths.

Nancy found that her ability to facilitate OD meetings and her personal relationships would be better off if she stopped trying to control them and instead focused on putting positive energy out in to the universe. She found that if she focused on the thing she could control, her own energy, then everything would take care of itself and she would be more effective as an OD practitioner and mother as she focused on her own growth.

*Anne: learning from the universe creates a spiritual awakening.* Prior to energetics, Anne's spirituality was dormant. Organized religion was a big turn-off for Anne, and remains so today, but religion had soured Anne's view of God and she did not nurture spirituality in her life because of it. As a result of her energetics transformation,



Anne had a spiritual awakening that fundamentally changed the way she viewed herself in the world. Anne said,

The hardest thing to leave behind is to accept that everything is connected to everything else. And that if there are no coincidences and, vibrationally, things are tied to each other, that's just a difficult thing for me to (accept). I was purposefully and decidedly non-religious, completely rejecting the notion of God, finding that to be just too quaint and ridiculous. So now I think of the universe and I think of divinity in a different way, but certainly it's a spiritual transformation. I still don't espouse any organized religion's idea of God. But this was very much like being born again. I mean, I understand born again Christians better than I did before. I have a new respect, I guess, for being born again.

Anne described herself as “jaded” prior to energetics. As discussed previously, she had a victim mentality about her life prior to energetics and thought the cards in life were stacked against her. She would become angry and upset when things would not go her way prior to energetics. Because Anne began trying to live her life in harmony with the energetic laws she learned in her classes, she began transforming her view on the world and her place in it. Anne began thinking more positively about her life, losing the victim mentality and by creating specific intentions and an overall vision of what she wanted her life to be. Because she began to see the universe as interconnected and sometimes beyond her understanding, she accepted it as it is and did not become upset when she failed at trying to control it. And while she came to believe through energetics that she could influence what came to her through her thoughts and intentions, she could not control specific outcomes because there are so many complexities at play in the

universe. In other words, if her share of mind was occupied by positive thoughts, she was more likely to attract those things into her life and vice versa. In short, Anne had an awakening in her spiritual life with energetics and flipped from a jaded view on life to one of positive thought and gratitude.

Anne began applying this new worldview to specific situations in her life. For example, when Anne talked about not achieving her goal of finding a new job, she said she would have been upset and stressed out prior to her energetics transformation. She came to view the situation as a learning experience. She believed the universe has her continuing in her current position for a reason and that the right position has not yet opened up for her. She was also open to the possibility that part of herself subconsciously may not want to truly leave her current position. Even though she outwardly says she wants a new job, she believes she has some learning to do regarding her true, deeply held desires below the surface. This is an issue she was working on energetically as she meditates and thinks about her life. So instead of becoming frustrated and feeling like a victim that the universe will not give her a new job, Anne was trying to be as impactful in her current position as she can. She is also learning more about herself as she works through what she might be doing subconsciously to prevent herself from finding a new job. In short, instead of becoming frustrated about not finding a new job, Anne is searching for messages in her situation and trying to learn more about herself in the process.

***Betsy: an interconnected universe enhances spirituality and reduces stress.***

Betsy was brought up in a very religious family. Her father was a Christian minister and she maintains a strong Christian faith today. Because of this, Betsy was concerned that

energetics courses might be blasphemous. She said, "I'm a person of faith, and I did not want it (energetics) to negate what I believe and actually it's (energetics) enhanced my spirituality." Betsy said that energetics enhanced her spirituality by opening up her eyes to the interconnectedness of the universe. She was able to see God in places she did not see before she took energetics. Even when things go wrong, she now sees the hand of God sending her a message and an opportunity to grow.

Another way Betsy's spirituality was enhanced was through the study of reincarnation in her energetics courses. One of the lessons on reincarnation that really resonated with Betsy was the ability to go back to a current or past life and heal a painful experience. Through deep meditations, Betsy has been able to forgive herself and others for past transgressions. This enhancement to her spirituality opened up new opportunities to take care of guilt and pain that may have been carrying over from past circumstances. Deep meditations about past pain has helped Betsy become more mindful about her present and future behavior.

As a result of energetics, Betsy felt less stress and more confident in life because she realized the universe was sending her situations as opportunities to grow, rather than as punishments. Betsy has a bigger picture perspective on her everyday situations. She realized that situations that do not go according to plan are relatively insignificant in the larger picture. For example, during a recent trip out of state she said, "I had to deal with this (rental) car, but I knew it was going to all come together so anxiousness was not there." She went on to say that she now views these situations in a much larger context and rather than becoming upset with what the universe is throwing her way, she is thankful for the gifts in her life and appreciates the opportunity to grow even when things

do not go according to plan. So even when renting a car presented unexpected challenges, she found the situation to be a learning opportunity and remained confident that everything would work out as intended by the universe.

**Summary.** Creating specific expectations, often those that fed the ego, and then trying to control them produced a high degree of stress and anxiety in participants. Once people started letting go of control and began looking for messages from an interconnected universe, their worldview began changing and they started feeling a sense of comfort that everything would work out the way it was meant to work out. People particularly found this change in thinking improved important personal relationships. Participants also started focusing their energy more on themselves, in an effort to stay balanced energetically and send positive intentions out the universe, rather than anxiety and worry. Finally, the idea of reincarnation profoundly changed the perspective people had on life. The concept of reincarnation gave participants the opportunity to heal emotional wounds and to think about their lives as a personal growth experience, rather than an anxious and short-term existence focused on control and accumulation. In the end, seeing the universe as interconnected expanded participant's view of the world, enhanced their spirituality and helped them feel more whole and purposeful in their lives.

**Trusting One's Inner Voice.** Participants credited energetics with helping them not only recognize, but trust their inner voice. As participants became more self-aware and connected to their intuition, they described a much higher level of confidence when it came to making decisions. Some discussed how they would often make decisions to please others or to feed their egos prior to energetics, rather than listening to their inner

voice. In the end, energetics helped participants trust their gut and make decisions that are more in harmony with their authentic selves.

***Nancy: finding one's inner voice leads to new confidence.*** Nancy's core energetics transformation consisted of becoming more self-aware of an empathic energy drain and finding her inner voice through deep meditations. As a result of energetics, Nancy gained more self-confidence in following her instincts when she makes decisions and began feeling more in harmony with her authentic self.

Nancy's first step in her transformation was becoming more aware of an energy drain. Nancy said a big discovery in energetics was "...that thing on empathy. That one continues to be a big aha for me, so that one was mind blowing." Prior to energetics, Nancy would often absorb the emotions of others, while losing control of her own emotions and draining her own energy in the process.

Nancy found out that she "soaked up everybody's emotions" and that would often lead to emotional outbursts, oftentimes tears, at inopportune times. Nancy talked about, ...a death in the family and somebody I didn't really know well but it was my husband's brother. He's of a different nationality and they were very reserved in their showing of emotions and me being the person that they didn't really know all that well and is in a different country and didn't really know the guy that well, I was crying all the time. And I'm like, well I get that it's sad, but why was I crying all the time? I've seen that so many times in myself and never really understood it.

Through energetics, Nancy began understanding this part of herself and realized that it could be an energy drain. She learned how to manage this highly empathic part of herself. She said,

So now I'm at this place where I'm looking at how can I be intentional with how I share that empathic ability? I spread my hands out because it's almost like I was disbursed, and now I'm learning how to bring that back and contain it. I'm trying to practice a way of looking at those things without being in their shoes all the time and kind of pulling in those barriers and boundaries in a way that I had never done before. I fully credit energetics with starting me on that path and I think it's a really important path for me to follow. I think it's something that's helpful.

Now that Nancy knows this deeper part of herself, she can relate to others in more healthy ways so that she does not become drained or lost in the process.

Nancy found deep visualizations and meditation enabled the discovery of her inner voice. Nancy was able to visualize herself in a happy, peaceful place. She said,

So we've done visualizations and I'll go to the ocean (in her meditation), which is my favorite place, and I can feel the sand and I can smell the sea air. Being able to smell sea air is kind of, to me, an amazing ability. This is when I get passionate.

During the interview, Nancy became visibly emotional when she discussed her ability to actively meditate and visualize herself at the ocean. She expressed a tremendous amount of gratitude for this ability and viewed it as a special gift.

Nancy said this state of tranquility also created an environment for her whereby incredibly poignant ideas come to her, and that is a power that she was surprised to learn

existed in her. She described the experience as something different than intellectual thought and reflection. In Nancy's own words;

So I'll be talking to my friend. She'll be saying something. Something comes in here (Nancy points to her head) and it's like have you ever thought this and oh, that's amazing. And (my friend) gives me all kinds of credit for being some, you know, uber genius and it's not me. I so didn't come up with that idea. Yeah, it's like it popped into my head. I could feel it. I've always had some of that ability but I never paid that much attention to it. Now it's almost a physical experience where it never used to be. I mean it really has changed who I am.

As Nancy gets into an enlightened state and visits a tranquil place, such as the beach, she became more in touch with her inner self. Opening this side up to information from the universe through her visualization exercises reverberated throughout Nancy's life and opened up a corridor of newfound information to her. She said,

Recognizing the different planes and levels of consciousness that we live within and can influence in some ways or adjust or play within...it's changed the way I see things, even if it's always been a part of my belief system to begin with, not to the level of detail that we've learned in energetics. It's been huge.

Through energetics, Nancy was able to more clearly sense her inner voice. In her deeper meditations, she received unfettered information from the universe. As Nancy stripped away distractions from the outside world, her inner voice resonated more clearly for her.

Some tangible experiences Nancy confronted since taking energetics reinforced the transformation that took place in her. She became more confident in knowing what she wants. For example, Nancy did a few things that might seem irrational to the outside

world. She quit her job and then she severed the relationship with her business partner, all while in her doctorate program and in the midst of adopting a baby. Nancy said she is not exactly sure where she is going, but she will no longer settle for relationships or situations that do not feel right to her.

Nancy's husband is her "mirror". He provides some stability to Nancy but also some tension. He accepted that energetics became a big part of Nancy's life, but he has not subscribed to it. He pushed Nancy a bit when it came to the practical things in her life, such as maintaining a steady income and reaching tangible goals. Nancy accepted this, but she was no longer willing to compromise and put up with situations when they do not feel right to her. Studying energetics allowed Nancy to be more in tune with her intuition, so when something did not 'feel right', she gained the confidence to stand up to her husband's desire for her to put an income above feeling good about her work environment. She said, "...I'm usually a pretty flexible person but there are certain things I'm just no longer willing to accommodate." For example, she had to put her foot down with her husband who was upset with her when she quit her job and was taking on debt. Nancy said her husband backed down when she said she had to quit for her own energetic wellbeing.

Similarly, Nancy felt like she was being pushed by her dissertation committee and her husband to get her dissertation done. She felt people were asking her to make compromises on her research question and just get the project completed. In other words, some committee members and her husband told her to get moving on her research project even though she was not entirely comfortable with her research question. Nancy knew this did not feel right and she waited until she felt very good about her research question



before she embarked on the project. This decision served her very well; Nancy indicated the research flowed nicely once she felt good about her research question.

Some people call this “going with their gut”. Nancy needed to validate big decisions based on how she felt and her energetic exercises helped her know and interpret her feelings better. Taking time to understand how she feels about something was more important than moving quickly, even when the answers were supposedly evident to others, such as her dissertation committee or husband. Nancy’s decision-making therefore became one that was unforced and came to her in due time based on how she felt; “...the difficult part is being okay with it, taking time and recognizing that at least if the pattern fulfills itself, it’s well worth the wait to let things emerge because once it does, things will take off.”

Nancy’s transformation started with becoming more self-aware and then finding and trusting her inner voice. Over time, she became more confident and authentic in the process. Describing her transformation, Nancy said,

...I sure do accommodate everybody else and not so much myself. I like to sing the tune of others and so now it’s time to sing my own song. So stepping out on my own. What does that mean? Well I have to be really aware of who I am and what I want and that is new. So facing my truth or looking at my truth is recognizing somewhere down the road I got lost, meaning me, that I’ve gotten lost and I’ve just been shuffling around. So before it was a learning experience and I was really enjoying it, most of it, but then it turned into this should, the world of should. I’m doing this because I should and that because I should...I stepped out of the picture in a way. It’s just me as a shell walking through

zombie-like in a sense. Finding my truth has been a...pretty difficult experience and also a really rewarding one.

For Nancy, energetics was the vehicle for finding her authentic self and living a more whole life. Through new and deeper meditations, she was able to become more in tune with her intuition and soul. She began recognizing more consciously when decisions “felt right” to her. She stopped putting others’ needs ahead of her own and that has transformed her life.

***Betsy: finding confidence in one’s intuition.*** Betsy believed energetics put her more acutely in touch with her intuition. She trusted her gut instinct much more after taking energetics courses. She was able to filter through her feelings and be in touch with those that are authentic so when she made decisions, she felt more confident. This was an empowering transformation for Betsy since she experienced less doubt as she moved through life.

Some of the exercises that helped Betsy practice being in touch with her intuition were very important in her transformation. As mentioned previously, she talked about being able to sense positive energy and negative energy by hovering her hand over two newspaper articles laid face down in front of her. As Betsy maintained her hand above each article, she felt different sensations in her hand. This exercise was very powerful for Betsy as she connected in a new way to her intuition. She began recognizing energy and a feeling in her body that she did not know was there previously. As a result of this exercise and other meditations, Betsy was able to interpret her feelings and sense her intuition when she was in the process of making decisions, especially when she did not

have access to the full array of the facts. Betsy said her new ability to trust intuition allowed her to move through life with more confidence.

Meditation also allowed Betsy to feel like decisions she is making are in line with her authentic self. Prior to energetics courses, Betsy had been meditating for many years. She would meditate to calm herself and reflect on various topics. During her energetics coursework, Betsy found a new level of meditation; an experience that was much more active and helpful for her. She described energetics as meditative engagement, meaning the energetic meditative experience was more focused and could become a problem-solving exercise. She said, “What I was doing before was calming, relaxing...So with energetics it’s the capability to really be engaged.” For example, in some of the classwork exercises, the instructor would walk the students through a guided meditation that would allow each individual to energetically test whether a particular decision felt right energetically. Feeling right energetically meant for Betsy that she was more in tune to what her gut was telling her. So today when she faces questions in life, she can employ this new form of meditation and connection to her intuition to better understand if her course of action is in harmony with her authentic and energetic self.

***Lucy: trusting her inner voice created more comfort and confidence in decisions.*** As mentioned, Lucy was often focused on impressing others prior to energetics; she therefore frequently ignored her inner voice. By her own admission, Lucy would routinely seek attention in her desire to impress others. She said, “My internal voice is much clearer post-energetics. You might not know it from the interview but I’m much quieter. I don’t have to talk all the time.” Lucy said she can be more reflective in the moment and more confident in listening to her inner voice even when it conflicts with

her desire to impress others. For example, she talked about taking time to finish her dissertation. She said pre-energetics, she would have stressed herself out to get the dissertation done quickly so she could be one of the first in her cohort to graduate. But her inner voice is telling her to take her time and enjoy the journey. Lucy said, “Why am I comparing? No one has my life experience right now.” So Lucy is much more comfortable doing things in a way that is right for her, rather than doing things in a way that impresses others. This comes from lending her ear to her inner voice and trusting it.

Lucy talked about having to break a study date with one of her cohort members recently. She said it was difficult to break the study date because she did not want her friend to think less of her or to feel like she was letting her friend down. But Lucy’s inner voice told her that she needed to spend time with her family instead of time studying with her cohort member. This might seem like a small episode where Lucy listened to her inner voice over her desire to impress others, but it is instructive because she would have stressed out about the situation prior to energetics. Now Lucy said she can make simple decisions without stressing out because she is able to trust her inner voice and make decisions that keep her in balance energetically.

***Henry: finding and trusting his inner voice helped him live a more authentic life.*** Henry believed energetics and his OD doctorate program triggered the process of finding and trusting his inner voice. He thought the two learning experiences complemented each other quite well because the doctoral program helped him realize how influential culture was on the way he thought and behaved. Meanwhile, energetics helped him dig deep inside to help him discover his authentic self. Henry said,

When we're born, we have society telling us exactly what we need to say, do think, act and feel. We take this young mind who just wants to learn and doesn't know anything and we shape and we do this to people and we shape them into this little mold and this little box and it could be as far as you know how family inflicts their religion on children. You know, we're going to teach you this is the right way to do things. This is the way our culture does things. This is the way our society does things. And I think up until the point where kids go to college and now they start getting all these ideas and experiences from other people that aren't in their community and aren't in their same friend group or parent's friend group or in the family, now things get conflicted a little bit. I'm set up this way but yet this person is set up this other way and maybe we have some conflict about it or maybe we are learning about it. And so I kind of feel like the next 20 years of our life we're undoing all this shit that we've been taught for the first 20 years and I think that's a process of not only shedding a lot of the things that have been beaten into us but also understanding and learning more about who we are. And I think energetics accelerates that. It opens doors. It allows people to think more critically about their own situation and gives them permission...this is something I learned...it gives me permission to say I don't have to accept X, Y and Z just because I'm an American that lives in Minnesota and goes to a Catholic church. I don't have to accept all these things that I'm supposed to accept because I can still be me and I can pick and choose kind of what it is I feel strongly about. I think one of the most perfect examples of that was when we talked about patriotism (in his doctorate class), and you know what, if you don't stand and take off your hat

and put your hand on the heart when the Star Spangled Banner, the National Anthem, is being played, you're not American. It's very disrespectful. Bullshit! You know, that has nothing to do with it...that's an outward sign of what other people say you need to do. Now, when the National Anthem plays, do I stand up and take off my hat? Yeah, I do. But I feel now it's more of a choice that I'm supposed to do or have to do to not be criticized or ostracized. So I think that critical thinking class (in his doctorate program) was very related to what we did in energetics as far as understanding self. I think the biggest difference is critical thinking is not only about understanding self but help liberating others and helping others who are oppressed or can't see things, to help give them tools, education and knowledge in moving away from that oppression, if they choose to. Energetics is more inward-focused. It's more just about yourself. I think it's not surprising that so many people aren't in touch with what's really inside because they have had all these outward forces on them and they're told what to think and what to believe. So we don't learn how to think for ourselves, the way that we could or we should. So I think energetics opens those doors.

So Henry's path toward finding his inner voice started with the awareness that he was already programmed to think a certain way. His doctoral program helped him think about how he was habitually behaving and thinking in ways others wanted. Energetics helped him begin the process of clearing the way to find his authentic self. Following energetics courses, he continued to deprogram what culture drilled into him and increasingly listened to his inner voice.

As Henry's transformation continued, he began recognizing an internal conflict that would occur on occasion between his desire to please others and his internal voice. For example, when Henry would make decisions in the workplace, he felt conflicted when his desire to impress his boss conflicted with what his inner voice told him was the right thing to do. He talked about not following some protocols at work because they were not an effective use of his time. He said that finding his inner voice through energetics made him trust himself more and made him more confident. Prior to energetics, Henry said he would have been more inclined to go with the flow and make his boss happy, even though that would have created an internal conflict for him. He went on to say,

I would have been anxious about it. It would have bothered me. And now I give myself permission to use my instinct. I give myself permission to feel confident, not that I didn't feel confident but maybe I didn't express or act on my confidence that I can do it this way. And I think maybe too I don't have the anxiety thinking, oh my gosh, I'm going to do something a little bit different. What if it doesn't work out and I look bad or then it's... am I putting my job or myself in jeopardy or what now? As I think a little deeper about this some of the things that resonated with me, especially coming out of the third energetics course, was the ability to be okay with living my life differently than how either I think other people will expect me to live my life or how I think I should live my life, if that makes sense. I've kind of taken the 'should' out of it. It's more how do you want to live your life? People will say why aren't you married, why aren't you this, what's wrong kind of thing. And I almost feel now like hey, I acknowledge my situation and it

fits me the best but I feel like I've got it better than anybody else. I'm so okay with it. I'm so okay with myself and that really came out of Energetics 2 and 3. Feeling it's okay to live your own life. You're the only one that can really understand what path is going to make you happy.

So Henry began trusting his inner voice more as he went through energetics courses. He became more conscious of outside voices that were pushing him to stray from his authentic self.

Henry talked about a particular exercise in energetics that helped him get in touch with his inner voice and begin trusting it more. He said,

The exercise that really, really has always kind of stood out for me was when Alla had us go back and find a time when we were a little kid and I remember so vividly how this really came to me and I was playing in the street or in the neighbor's yard across the street. We were always playing and so when I went back there, I was playing with my neighbor kid and I called myself over and talked to myself and really just said, you know, you're going to have doubts, you're going to have worries, you're going to have things that happen to you. I just want you to know that you're going to be okay. Things are going to be okay. Just trust yourself. Things might not make sense to you. You might think that people might question you, but you're a smart kid and just go with what you think is right and you'll feel better about it at the end. That was a very strong breakthrough for me that I gave myself that confidence at such a young age. So I think I went back and I kind of buried that in my own mind and now it's coming out. So that was one of the exercises that was very, very meaningful to me.



Henry was transformed when he went back to his childhood and empowered his inner voice. He gave himself the confidence he needed to listen to his inner voice. For instance, Henry talked about moving out of his hometown and how people questioned the wisdom in that. He said he may have made the same decision pre-energetics, but he would have questioned himself and felt a high degree of anxiety over the decision. Now he is enjoying his life outside of his hometown and the comments he gets from others do not bother him. He said that others are on their own journey and he is on his. He said, “I trust myself. And that’s energetics for me. That’s transformational for me. I’ve always followed my gut, but now I have the confidence in my gut.”

Henry’s transformation took place as he became more in touch with his inner voice. Trusting his inner voice was a process that started with becoming reacquainted with his authentic self. He was able to go back to his childhood and see himself as an innocent young boy. In that moment, he saw himself not yet influenced by the voices of others. Instead, he saw himself, perhaps for the first time, as who he really was; a soul just starting his journey in this life. This transformational experience helped him chart his course in life as he listened to his intuition and trusted it. Henry began recognizing when others contradicted his inner voice, enabling him to sort through situations such as when he is making a career decision or one as large as moving out of his hometown. Following energetics, Henry felt more comfortable with his decisions and had a new air of confidence that he was living the life he was meant to live.

**Summary.** Energetics helped participants find their inner voice. Through meditation and class exercises, participants were able to sense their intuition more effectively. Some participants talked about how increased self-awareness helped them

begin recognizing how their desire to impress others could conflict with their inner voice. Some participants began peeling away pervasive cultural influences that conflicted with their inner voice. Others talked about how being energetically balanced helped them sense their intuition better and as a result, they were able to receive new insights. Participants began living less stressful lives and exuded more confidence in their decisions as a result of knowing and trusting their intuition. As people came to know themselves better, they trusted their instincts and lived more harmony with their authentic selves.

### **Summary**

The transformational learning process was enabled by several key factors outlined in this chapter. Participants were generally curious about the topic of energetics because it was a fertile new field of learning for them. At the same time, participants were a bit apprehensive generally about the topic, perhaps because they innately knew the topic may challenge some of their existing beliefs. Yet, their trust in the instructor was an important factor in initially opening their mind to the topic. Propelled by an experiential learning process, participants were able to validate the positive effects of energetics along their transformational journey. Finally, participants felt an abundance of joy during the experience, catalyzing energetics into their lives well beyond the occurrence of formal classes.

The table below summarizes the contextual themes that enabled this experience. The sub-themes were experienced by participants to varying degrees and funnel up to the primary contextual themes. Both the sub-themes and primary themes can be found in the participant stories illustrated earlier in this chapter.

Table 1

*Summary of Contextual Themes*

Contextual Sub Themes	Contextual Primary Themes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Personal relationship with instructor</li> <li>- Respect for instructor's expertise in the field</li> </ul>	Trusting the instructor
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Personal challenge to learn about something very different</li> <li>- Openness to learning about things unseen</li> </ul>	Curiosity in uncovering the mystery around energetics and a desire to stretch one's knowledge
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Experiencing energetics was validating</li> <li>- Immediate application of energetics to one's life</li> <li>- Creation of "aha" moments</li> </ul>	Experiential learning method
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Topic of energetics elicited unique feelings</li> <li>- Classes are energy-giving experiences</li> <li>- Break-through learning was exciting</li> </ul>	Feelings of joy make energetics sustainable and on-going

*Note.* Participants had a personal relationship with the instructor and respected her mastery of the field, leading them to trust the instructor. Participants felt personally challenged to learn about a new topic and had an openness to learn about things unseen, creating curiosity in them to uncover the mystery surrounding energetics and a desire to stretch their knowledge. Participants were able to validate their learning, apply energetics positively to their lives as classes progressed and experience "aha" moments through the experiential learning method. Participants found energetics elicited unique feelings in them, they found themselves energized after class and they were excited by new, breakthrough learning, which led to joy and an impetus for ongoing self-learning.

Participants also made some profound changes in their behavior as they learned about energetics. First, participants began taking a higher degree of responsibility for their own happiness. Shedding fear and anger was a liberating experience and helped empower participants to take responsibility for their own happiness. Second, participants took on a new purpose in life, one of growth and learning through their interactions with a multi-dimensional universe rather than one aimed at impressing others, achieving a

certain status in society and attempting to control specific outcomes. Finally, participants were able to hear and trust their inner voice, allowing them to live more confidently and harmoniously.

The table below summarizes the transformational learning that participants took away from this experience. These essential themes go to the core of the experience for participants. Again the sub-themes are core to the transformational learning that occurred and funnel up to the primary themes that participants took away from this experience. Both the sub-themes and primary themes can be found in the participant stories illustrated earlier in this chapter.

Table 2

*Summary of Essential Themes*

Essential Sub Themes	Essential Primary Themes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Leaving fear and anger behind</li> <li>- Stop blaming others or the universe for one’s unhappiness</li> </ul>	Ridding oneself of a victimhood mentality, while taking responsibility for one’s own happiness
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Life is one chapter in a long journey</li> <li>- Stop trying to control relationships and expecting specific outcomes</li> <li>- All people grow in their own ways, so there is no need to judge ourselves or others</li> </ul>	Listening to and learning from an interconnected universe helped participants grow and find purpose
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Meditation and maintaining an energy balance make inner voice more vivid</li> <li>- Noticing signs coming from one’s body when inner voice is activated</li> <li>- Recognizing how culture and others can create internal conflict with inner voice</li> </ul>	Trusting one’s inner voice

*Note.* Leaving fear and anger behind, while ceasing to lay blame for unhappiness with others or the universe, led participants to rid themselves of a victimhood mentality and liberated them to take responsibility for their own lives and happiness. Viewing life as one chapter in their soul’s development, ceasing to obsess over specific outcomes or relationships, and realizing every soul is on earth to learn different things helped participants realize that listening to and learning from an interconnected universe would

help people grow and find their purpose in life. Meditating and maintaining an energy balance, noticing signs from one's own body and recognizing how culture and other people can create conflict in one's thought process helped participants find and trust their inner voice.

## Chapter V: Discussion

In this chapter, I discuss the themes described in chapter 4 from a broader perspective, discuss implications of this study, review limitations of the study, and suggest additional research to be conducted.

While this study focused on the transformational learning experience of energetics students, it is interesting to note that the topic of energetics is wide-ranging. As explained in chapter 1, the subject of energetics touches on quantum physics, ancient traditions, holistic healing, self-help and organization development. The Energetics Institute at the University of St. Thomas introduced each of these aspects of energetics to students through reading assignments, discussion, journaling assignments, exercises in class and practice outside of class. This study did not try to find out exactly what was taught or learned, but it did discover what enabled transformational learning to occur and what students took away from the experience. In any case, the reader may further research this topic through the course readings (see Table 3), which helped ignite the transformational learning that occurred in students.

Table 3

*Course Readings*

Author	Title
Algeo, J.	Reincarnation Explored
Braden, G.	The Divine Matrix
Capra, F.	The Tao of Physics: An Exploration of the Parallels between Modern Physics and Eastern Mysticism
Hay, L.	You Can Heal Your Life
Heorhiadi, A. & Conbere, J.	Energetics and OD
Myss, C.	Anatomy of the Spirit
Spoth, J.	Working with Energy in Organizations
Tiller, W.A.	What Are Subtle Energies

Participants in this study were exposed to the same basic learning material, but ultimately began forming their own beliefs about energetics as they studied the topic. For example, Irene was very attracted to the quantum physics aspects of energetics and likely viewed an interconnected universe as something that connected people on the molecular level. Meanwhile, Nicole talked about an interconnected universe in terms of her spirituality and how God binds people together. These two points of view are not mutually exclusive and it is likely some students are open to both possibilities simultaneously. I did not specifically try to find out exactly how each student defined various aspects of energetics because in the end both students were transformed by believing in an interconnected universe as they began looking at their lives and what the universe sent their way as life-learning opportunities. Energetics was taught in a way that presented information and various points of views to students, allowing them to

ultimately walk away from the experience with their own thoughts and ideas about the topic. And in talking to seven students at length in this study, I realized that each student walked away with a more open mind about energetics and continued to form their thoughts and ideas about the topic even after formal classes ended.

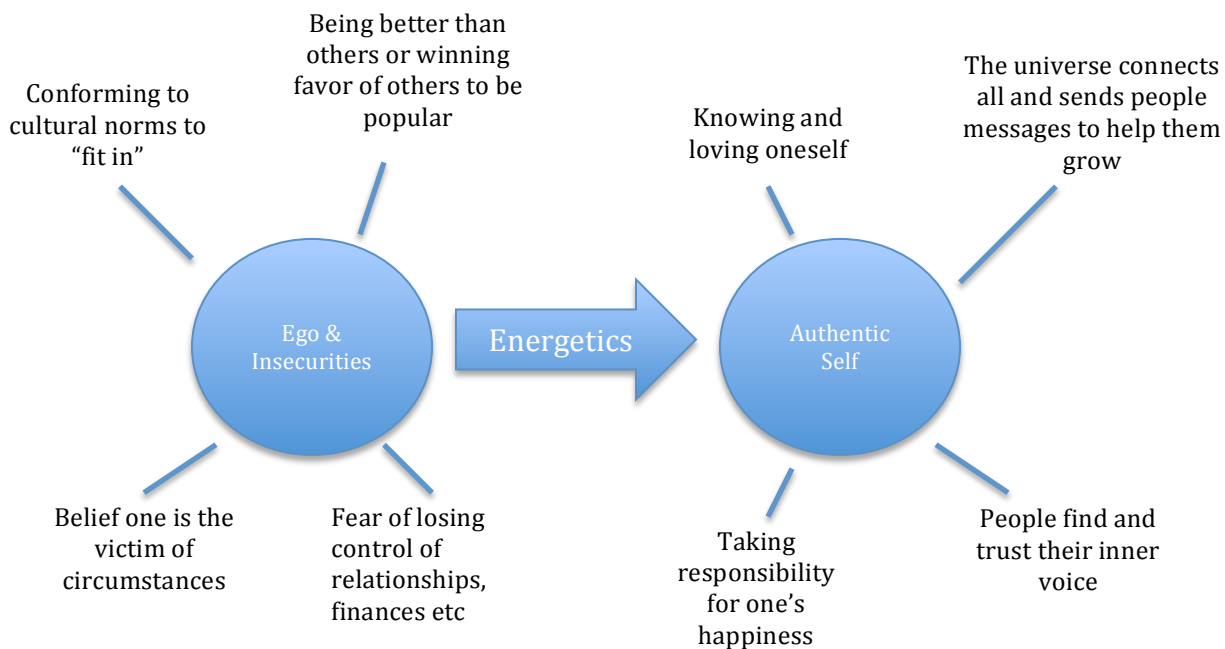
Ultimately, what I found in this study is that energetics helped the participants experience transformational learning to become more confident, authentic and purposeful people. The learning that occurred was transformational because people changed their frame of reference about their role in the world and their underlying beliefs about themselves (Mezirow, 1991, 1997, 2000; Argyris, 2000). The essence of the experience empowered the participants to take responsibility for their own happiness, shed ego-based expectations, relate to an interconnected universe as a personal development experience and trust their inner voice. In chapter 4, I also described contextual themes to help explain what enabled the transformation to take place. However, in the discussion I will focus on the three essential themes discussed in chapter 4 since the essential themes answer the research question, “What is the essence of transformational learning as the result of studying energetics?” As discussed in chapter 4, the transformations that occurred as a result of studying energetics are: 1) ridding oneself of a victimhood mentality, while taking responsibility for one’s own happiness, 2) listening to and learning from an interconnected universe, thereby helping one grow and find purpose, and 3) trusting one’s inner voice.

As I thought about and discovered the essence of the energetics transformation that occurred, I realized that the energetics transformation was a journey toward deep self-awareness. In other words, for the participants in this study energetics became the



catalyst for knowing themselves in a much deeper way. In fact, as participants began taking responsibility for their lives, thought about themselves as part of an interconnected universe and trusted their inner voice, they began knowing their authentic selves in a much deeper way. As described in chapter 4, participants discussed how they unlearned things they were taught throughout their lives by others and society as they reconnected with their core selves. Some participants talked about how they stopped worrying about what others thought, such as when they left a job or moved away. When faced with decisions that either pleased others or stayed true to their gut, participants talked about how making decisions harmonious with their authentic selves was a liberating experience and one that “felt right”. In short, the participants found a way to move away from a life centered on their ego and insecurities, and toward one that was in line with their authentic self. I drew the following diagram as I analyzed the data gathered from participants and thought about the transformation that occurred in people as they learned about energetics.

Figure 1

*Illustration of Energetics Transformation*

*Note.* Lives driven by the ego and insecurities are characterized by a belief one is the victim of circumstances, fear of losing control of relationships and/or finances etc, a desire to fit in to cultural norms, and a need to be better than others. Energetics moved people away from the life driven by the ego and insecurities and toward one in touch with the authentic self. The life in touch with the authentic self is characterized by love and acceptance of oneself, realization that the universe is complex and interconnected and therefore sends messages to people to help them grow, a sense of empowerment and responsibility for one's own happiness, and trusting one's inner voice.

The participants in this study told stories about how they moved from lives governed by their ego and insecurities to living in harmony with their authentic selves. They made this shift as they took responsibility for their happiness, learned from an

interconnected universe and listened to their inner voice. Life prior to energetics was often characterized by feelings of anxiety, in part because living up to societal expectations was either impossible or incongruent with their souls. Each participant experienced the three essential transformations described above, which ultimately helped them shift away from a life centered on ego and insecurities, and toward one of authenticity. For example, Lucy talked about how she felt like a failure if her business did not achieve certain financial goals or how she felt resentful when someone would reject her charity. In other words, when she was not impressing others with her business acumen or someone declined her offer of a first class seat on an airplane, she felt like a failure or took the rejection as a personal attack. In short, Lucy lived her life externally, looking for approval or trying to win favor from others. When Lucy took energetics courses, she began to look inwardly, deeper than she had ever looked before. In the process, Lucy realized that she could learn from the universe, rather than trying to control it. She could learn from her inner authentic voice, rather than listening to her ego or masking her insecurities. Lucy was empowered to take responsibility for her own happiness when she began knowing and loving herself instead of fixating on her fears. While each participant had varying degrees of growth and learning occur since the context of their situations were unique, Lucy experienced the same transformation other participants experienced. In short, the participants in this study shifted from lives driven by the ego and insecurities and began connecting to their authentic selves as the following transformations occurred:

- 1) Reducing fear and anger helped rid participants of a victimhood mentality and empowered them to take responsibility for their lives,

- 2) Learning from an interconnected universe prompted participants to view life as a personal growth experience, rather than one that feeds the ego or insecurities,
- 3) Listening to the inner voice helped participants live more harmoniously.

I will now discuss these transformations from a broader context in the following discussion.

### **Ridding Oneself of a Victimhood Mentality, while Taking Responsibility for One's Own Happiness.**

The participants in this study told several stories about how energetics helped them overcome fear and anger. Participants talked about how this experience was liberating, yet sobering, as they realized responsibility for their happiness was their own, rather than blaming others and playing victim to their situation. As participants began understanding what was causing feelings of fear and anger, they started having an epiphany about themselves. For example, Anne talked about how the lack of love for herself manifested itself in anger and a life of victimhood. She was not able to see this in herself until she started meditating, balancing energetic flow and seeing herself through an energetic lens. Anne's experience in ridding herself of a victimhood mentality was perhaps more vivid than other participants, but others also talked about how balancing themselves energetically helped them overcome fear, feel more empowered in the moment and less anxious in general.

**Mindfulness.** Participants did not use the term "mindful" to describe their situation, but in my research I found that the participants in this study were more aware of themselves in the moment and felt empowered to influence their situations, similar to how scholars described mindfulness. Mindfulness parallels energetics in that it helps

people know themselves more deeply by making people aware of their energy and the power of their thoughts. For example, in his keynote address to the Annual Harvard Medical School Symposium on *Meditation in Psychotherapy*, Siegel (2009) talked about how mindfulness "...leads to the flexible, adaptive, and coherent flow of energy and information in the brain, the mind and relationships" (p. 137). Siegel also talked about how people need to overcome their fears and get in touch with an unvarnished sense of self in order to become more mindful. Siegel added,

Mindful awareness expands our sense of self by dissolving the prison of repeating patterns of thought and response. We become freed to sense the world more from the 'bottom up,' rather than being constrained by prior learning and habit in the form of 'top-down' constraints on how we live. (p. 146)

Siegel went on to discuss how meditating, being present and balance of breath helped people be more self-aware and ultimately more at ease with themselves. Reflecting on the transformational learning from the participants in this study, I believe energetics paralleled Siegel's approach to mindfulness. Similar to Siegel, participants in this study often talked about how overcoming fears, being balanced energetically and more present in their everyday lives helped them feel more empowered and responsible for their own happiness.

Gunn (1999b) talked about how the power of thought and mindfulness can create a wide spectrum of realities. He said,

If we are thinking peaceful thoughts, life looks tranquil. If we are thinking about how we look to others, life seems like a race we cannot win, for how can we

measure up to the expectations of the world? If our thoughts are worried, life presents an unending stream of worrisome things. (p. 14)

The participants in this study often talked about how they could calm themselves in tense and otherwise fearful situations. Participants discussed how the power of their thoughts attracted things into their lives. In other words, if anxiety and fear crowded the mind, then that would become reality for people. On the other hand, if they focused on positive thoughts, then positive things would happen in their lives. Participants also talked about how letting go of ego-based expectations, especially those incongruent with their authentic selves, made them feel less anxious and more energized. In other words, the feelings of calm confidence cited by participants in this study seemed to be in line with what Gunn (1999b) is describing. Gunn (1999a) also suggested people project their energy to those around them. He said people who are authentic and at peace with themselves will create a sense of calm with a team that needs to deal with pressing and often stressful issues. So a mindful and energetically balanced person will create a sense of calm around them, similar to how Irene calmed a tense situation on the bus described in chapter 4.

In terms of how people become more mindful in the moment, Brusman (2014) said,

Mindfulness meditation is when an individual takes time to sit still for 20 minutes or longer to observe her thoughts without judgment and slowly dismisses them, then focuses on breathing. Becoming a mindful and emotionally intelligent leader requires an individual to explore the intimacy of sitting still and learning how such a simple act can transform her complicated, demanding workplace.

Meditation and mindfulness are invitations to become a more inspiring leader. (p. 71)

Participants in this study often talked about how meditation and balancing energy flows are key components of their learning. They talked about taking time during the day to meditate or to calm themselves in the moment.

Finally, Gunn and Raskin Gullickson (2005) said personal development and mindfulness is a journey in knowing the inner self and cited the increasing popularity of yoga and meditation as indicators that people yearn for new ways to develop and grow. They said people are more open to change and self-improvement when they are mindful. More specifically,

Calmly accessing that innate capacity, you can make optimal use of your earned capabilities to exercise management and leadership that burn brightly without burning out. You can find the confidence to step up boldly, to experience thrill in the face of risk. (Gunn & Raskin Gullickson, 2005, p. 10)

So, today several personal development experts are promoting the idea of mindfulness to help people navigate fast changing and increasingly chaotic workplaces as well as to deal with burn-out that is so common in today's environment. Meditating, being present and balancing flow were all cited as key components of mindfulness and were likewise often cited as helpful in the energetics transformation discussed by participants in this study.

As participants became more mindful; that is more energetically balanced, present and strident in their ability to deal with their own fear and anger, they began building the confidence to take responsibility for their own happiness. Even in stressful situations, such as Irene's story about experiencing a verbal attack on a bus, participants talked

about how balancing their energy in the moment helped them gain new confidence to overcome fears and harness power within themselves they did not know existed prior to taking energetics courses.

**Learning from an Interconnected Universe Prompted Participants to View Life as a Personal Growth Experience, Rather Than One that Feeds the Ego and Insecurities.**

The participants in this study felt the purpose in their lives changed from one of seeking status and wealth to one of personal development and growth as they thought more deeply about how their lives fit in to an interconnected universe. The participants in this study began thinking about how the universe was sending them messages to help know themselves more deeply and to grow into more wholesome beings. In other words, the universe was their pathway toward knowing their authentic self more deeply. Knowing and growing authentically became the purpose in participants' lives. In essence, participants began moving away from their insecurities and egos, toward an authentic life.

**Authenticity.** The link between living a less ego-centric life and becoming more authentic is supported by a growing number of psychologists (Brown et al., 2007; Heppner & Kernis, 2007). Ego is what drives dysfunctional behavior as a result of unresolved insecurities. For example, when someone feels the need to be better than others, they are feeding their insecurities. This can come out in what Argyris (2000) called Model One behavior, such as talking over people, always feeling the need to be right or an overwhelming need to always win. As people become more in touch with their authentic selves, they feel less insecure and therefore seeking the truth becomes more important than feeding the ego (Heppner & Kernis, 2007). So instead of exhibiting Model



One behavior, I believe the authentic person finds that respectful behavior toward others helps them learn and grow.

Knowing one's self and being mindful are frequently linked to authenticity (Brown, Ryan & Creswell, 2007). I often hear people talk about being "real" or "authentic", but what does it mean? Heppner and Kernis (2007) conducted extensive psychological research on the topic of what it means to be authentic. They said,

...we conceive authentic functioning as involving four distinct, yet interrelated components: awareness and knowledge of one's self-aspects, unbiased processing of evaluative information, behavior that is aligned with one's true self, and a relational orientation with close others that fosters openness and connectivity. (p. 249)

I believe as participants in this study listened to an interconnected universe and began shedding insecurities and an ego-centric life, they began getting more in touch with their authentic selves. For example, the participants in this study talked extensively about how they possessed much more self awareness as a result of energetics. They also talked a lot about how they were making decisions and living more in line with their own core, rather than being influenced by what others think. And finally, they talked a lot about how their personal relationships changed for the better as a result of energetics, in some cases because they stopped trying to please others at the expense of their own wellbeing or stopped obsessing over others they loved dearly. This change in thinking and change in behavior dovetails closely with the definition of authenticity provided by Heppner and Kernis (2007) illustrated above.

The journey toward finding the authentic self is a never-ending one. In fact, as people gain the ability to make a positive difference in themselves and in the world, they often find the search for authentic self to be their purpose in life (Eriksen, 2012). For me, I continue to learn about my authentic self through energetics as I meditate and continue to be increasingly aware of my feelings in the moment. While in a prayerful and meditative state, I try to strip away all things worldly and thereby become more in touch with my soul. At the same time, I learn about myself every day in the moment since I am more mindful of my feelings when I interact with others. And the wonderful thing about knowing one's authentic self is there is always another layer to peel back; there is always more to know. This has become one of my purposes in life; to increasingly know myself and learn from my experiences. The participants in this study indicated they continue to practice energetics well past the offering of formal classes, so there is evidence that the class became something larger than an academic or fleeting personal development exercise and perhaps a more purposeful and sustainable personal growth experience for the participants in this study.

### **Listening to the Inner Voice Helped Participants Live More Harmoniously.**

Part of the energetics transformation was becoming more in touch with one's intuition and ultimately trusting one's gut. As mentioned in chapter 4, participants talked about how they listened to and trusted their inner voice much more as a result of their energetics transformation. The inner voice and intuition are often used interchangeably since people often talked about how a decision "feels right" when they know the decision is made in synch with their inner voice or intuition (Hayashi, 2001). Some called intuition

a sixth sense or one's gut instinct; something informed by one's experiences and often heightened in people more in touch with who they are (Burke & Miller, 1999).

**Intuitive intelligence.** Some experts were studying how intuition is applied in the workplace. For example, Bacon (2013) founded the Oxford Leadership Academy in 2005 and has been studying and training people in intuitive intelligence for several years (Oxford Leadership Academy, 2014). In addition, Hayashi (2001) talked about how intuition becomes increasingly important for higher-level leaders who deal with a lot of uncertainty and bigger picture matters. Some social scientists admitted the field of intuition was ripe for more study, but they said the field appeared to be growing as people realize how big a role intuition plays in the general decision-making process (Hodgkinson, Langan-Fox, & Sadler-Smith, 2008). Meanwhile, Weaver, Reynolds and Brown (2014) claimed the social sciences are booming with new studies around intuition and how it influences ethical decision-making. In essence, the field of intuitive intelligence appears to be one that is gaining interest from a neurological and leadership perspective as people come to understand how large a role intuition plays in important decisions in the workplace and beyond. Since energetics helped people become more aware and trusting of their intuition, I thought it would be interesting to see how neurologists and social scientists believe intuition influences the decision-making process, or what is commonly referred to as intuitive intelligence.

Neuroscientists are learning how intuition helps the brain process information (Gordon, 2003). Dr. Barry Gordon is a neuroscientist at Johns Hopkins and has studied the brain and memory (2003). He talked about how our sensory intelligence picks up information and deposits it in the brain, similar to packages of information being

collected and stored in a warehouse. He said that intuition is our ability to connect data, ultimately resulting in new thoughts. In other words, the packages of information that are stored in our brain do not really become useful to us until we are able to connect them to each other. Since intuition is our ability to connect the data stored in our brain, as we heighten our intuition, our intuitive intelligence increases (Gordon, 2003). In this way, people experience more “aha” moments when their intuition is heightened (Bacon, 2013). In one study, some CEO’s said they knew their inner voice was speaking to them because they had physical reactions, such as a sensation in their stomach, throat or on their skin (Hayashi, 1999). I know when I have an “aha” moment, I often feel very good about myself and sometimes I experience a physical sensation along my spine. The participants in this study also talked about feelings of joy that sometimes manifested themselves in physical ways, such as through a feeling of “exhilaration” or “lightness”. Perhaps some of these sensations and feelings are similar to those described by leaders who made decisions in tune with their gut.

Heightened intuition has proven to help people see the bigger picture more clearly, communicate more effectively, be more resilient in the face of challenges and employ their values more consistently (Bacon, 2013; Hayashi, 2001). Often times, intuition is vital in the face of a crisis. Hayashi (2001) talked about the experience of Bob Lutz at Chrysler in the 1990’s when the car company was in steep decline. Lutz talked about how he used his intuition to support innovative new product decisions, which ultimately helped the company develop the Dodge Viper, changing the image of the company into an innovator and spurring additional new product launches. He did not have data telling him to embark on developing the Viper, but he listened to his gut and it

paid off. Many experts said leaders and organizations that want to stay ahead of the curve need to deploy their intuition to make effective decisions in a confusing and fast-paced environment (Burke & Miller, 1999; Tesolin, 2000).

Burke and Miller (1999) also talked about how intuition is important in personnel decisions. When interviewing someone or dealing with a personnel issue, the decision is often ambiguous. In other words, intuition can help people predict whether a job candidate will fit in with an existing team and how genuinely motivated the candidate is to do the work. In my experience as a hiring manager, as much as empirical data is pushed to help make a hiring decision, I now mostly rely on my gut to make a hiring decision. One time I had to make a critical hiring decision when selecting a human resource manager. The data and recommendations were all positive on the candidate except my gut was not comfortable with hiring the person. However, I went with recommendations from the headquarters office and hired the person anyway. It was a mistake. Ever since, I have never contradicted my gut when it came to hiring decisions and it has served me well.

Other benefits of heightened intuition include higher levels of energy, clarity of thinking and improved listening skills (Tesolin, 2000). Several participants talked about experiencing higher levels of energy when they left energetics classes. They also indicated that they did not feel the need to dominate conversations like they may have in the past, as they tried to be more present and better listeners. Gordon (1995) talked about the benefits of intuition in terms of improving memory recall. He said as people are able to associate things in their life to meaning and purpose, they will have better recall of the things important to them. Since intuition allows people to delineate what's important to

one's authentic self, versus what's important to the ego, people are able to allocate share of mind to things most important to them and therefore experience better recall of important information.

While I did not focus this study on the benefits of improved intuition through energetics training, several participants talked about situations where they trusted their gut and felt like they made better life choices due to energetics. Personally, I think energetics and a keener sense of intuition has helped me slow down, sharpen my perspective on situations and ultimately make better decisions. I feel much more capable of working through complex situations because my concentration has improved. For example, I recently started taking brain sharpening tests online through the website, [lumosity.com](http://lumosity.com). I have noticed that my scores improve when I balance myself energetically prior to taking the daily tests and I think this is related to a sharper intuition.

Participants in this study sharpened their intuition as they began listening to and trusting their inner voice. They often talked about how they felt more present and how living the moment helped them see the world more clearly. Participants expressed much more confidence in their decision-making as a result of listening to their inner voice. They also talked about making better decisions, such as moving to a new city or a job change, because their decisions were in harmony with their inner self. Many of these experiences paralleled the benefits of intuitive intelligence described by scholars.

**Analysis paralysis.** Many experts talked about how a complex, fast-paced world makes using intuition increasingly more necessary for good decision-making (Bacon, 2013). I have noticed leaders who achieved their position through more qualitative disciplines, such as engineering or finance, often become paralyzed when making

decisions in less structured fields. For example, I once tried working with a leadership team that was unable to make decisions about innovative new products because they were unable to trust their gut regarding market trends. Instead, they routinely demanded more data analysis, while at the same time falling behind competitors who relentlessly launched new products. This was an example of analysis paralysis by the organization and the inability for management to trust its intuition ultimately led to a competitive disadvantage for the business and erosion of morale among the sales team on the front lines as market share withered.

The prevalence of analysis paralysis is not uncommon in organizations, according to some journal articles (Langley, 1995; Preventing analysis paralysis, 2011). Langley (1995) talked about cultural factors that can lead an organization to a state of analysis paralysis, such as an ivory tower mentality that often becomes prevalent when decision-makers fall out of touch with their organizations, when decision-makers are in conflict and focus on selling their idea to the organization rather than developing the best solution, and where decision-makers are afraid to say yes or no to a proposal so they continue to ask for more analysis. Langley went on to emphasize the need for a balance between analysis and intuition in the decision-making process.

Participants discussed seeming confusion around decisions prior to their energetics transformation. For example, Nancy talked about uncertainty surrounding her dissertation research question when her husband and committee members pushed her to move forward and not fret about the wording of her question. She said her dissertation did not flow until she listened to her inner voice and personally felt comfortable with her research question. So instead of being persuaded by others, Nancy had to trust her gut

and it served her well. She experienced a mild form of analysis paralysis before she finally decided to follow her intuition. Henry also talked about having moments of uncertainty prior to energetics when he would make a decision that others would question. He said energetics helped him trust his intuition when it came time to making decisions and it has helped him live with less anxiety and more confidence.

**OD and intuition.** Some OD experts talked about how energetics may be employed intuitively by OD practitioners. Heorhiadi and Conbere (2008) said,

We suspect that some may intuit the energy of a group, and based on this, have insights into how best to work with a group. We suggest that such practitioners use energetic skills unconsciously. Years of experience, a variety of techniques and use of self as instrument taught them to listen and to trust their intuition. (p. 39)

I believe heightening this sense of intuition through energetics courses helps OD practitioners engage clients. Diagnosing a client's environment and developing creative solutions can only be helped when the OD practitioner is able to hear and trust their inner voice.

Seashore, et al. (2004) talked about how, "The complexities of working with the unconscious or out of the awareness parts of the Self are often bothersome and in fact are intolerable for those who prefer to stick to more rational models of human behavior" (p. 59). I experienced this phenomenon at a former employer whereby quantitative data was the only valid form of data. I noticed that it took a lot of extra energy to exist and contribute in this environment. I believe this is why it is important for OD practitioners to recognize the environment where they operate. Some of the participants in this study



talked about how energetics helped them diagnose people and organizations much more clearly. As mentioned in chapter 4, people said energetics helped them learn to trust their inner voice, even in the most resistant environments. So with a heightened intuition, people can diagnose and employ intuitive intelligence in more resistant cultures.

**Developing intuition.** Similar to the participants in this study, Bacon (2013) indicated that intuition can be developed in people by helping them get rid of their fears and focusing on positive intentions. Burke and Miller (1999) talked about sharpening intuition through meditation and journaling. All of these recommended methods were taught to energetics students at the Energetics Institute.

Other respected thought-leaders talked about a more in-depth process for nurturing one's intuition. Linking intuition to authentic self, Deepak Chopra (2013) talked about helping people develop intuition congruent with their souls. He suggested using a four-step process of "look and listen". I have summarized this process below:

Table 4

*Author's Interpretation of Chopra's "Look and Listen" Process*

<b>My Notes: Practical</b>		
<b>Process Step</b>	<b>Feeling</b>	<b>Application</b>
Impartial Observation	Look and listen with SENSES	Using all senses to take in data from experiences
Analysis	Look and listen with MIND	Analyze the situation intellectually
Feeling	Look and listen with HEART	Meditate to test whether a decision feels right
Incubation	Look and listen with SOUL	Deep meditation and connect to the soul to see if the decision is in harmony with authentic self

*Note.* To ensure the inner voice is consistent with the authentic self, the following steps are my interpretation of what Chopra is suggesting. First, be present and in the moment, taking in information utilizing all senses. Then using one's mind, analyze the data intellectually. Third, reflect on the experience and think about how it makes you feel. Finally, in deep meditation, stripping away the mind, emotions, and physical elements, be totally open and listen to what your soul is telling you about the situation.

The process above is similar to what energetics students learned at the Energetics Institute. In my experience, going with one's gut yields good results when the gut is in harmony with the soul. Sometimes however, people follow a voice in their head that is poisoned by the ego or insecurities, and in these cases the results are often negative. For example, when I hired the human resource manager who did not work out, I was trying to

please my headquarters by following their recommendations. The hiring decision required clear judgment and I had competing voices in my head creating a conflict, one voice came from my soul as Chopra explained above and the other voice came from my insecurities. In that particular case, my insecurities unfortunately won out. In energetics courses, we were given several tools and exercises that I now employ to test out when my intuition is compatible with my soul. Also, as Bacon (2013) mentioned, ridding oneself of fears and anxiety can help a person more clearly hear their inner voice – and as mentioned in chapter 4, many participants discussed how energetics helped them overcome various fears.

**Summary.** Finding and trusting the inner voice was transformative for participants in this study, I was pleased to find out in my research that the field of intuitive intelligence is gaining more attention. Researchers and experts appear to recognize the importance of intuition in the decision-making process and are learning scientifically about how intuitive intelligence works. The experience of participants in this study points to interesting potential for intuitive intelligence in the field of OD, as people discussed an improved ability to diagnose organizations and leaders before trying to help them improve their work environments. It seems like energetics and intuitive intelligence overlap in many ways as experts begin studying how people can raise their level of intuitive intelligence through a reduction of fears, connection to one's heart and soul, and being more present in every day life.

## **Implications**

At the outset of this study a cloud of mystery surrounded what people took away from the study of energetics. Hopefully explaining the essence of the experience for how people take responsibility for their own happiness, how they become more purposeful as they learn from an interconnected universe and how they begin trusting their inner voice will help lift the veil on how people experienced transformative learning at the Energetics Institute. In addition, because of the personal development and transformation that occurred, there are many potential implications for higher education institutions, the field of authentic and personal development, the field of intuitive intelligence and the field of OD.

**Implications for Higher Education Institutions.** Higher education has drifted away from providing students self-discovery and personal development opportunities, similar to the transformative development energetics courses at the University of St. Thomas provided to participants in this study. Brooks (2014) wrote about how elite universities have become focused on helping their students become commercially viable instruments upon graduation at the expense of helping them become growing, more wholesome souls. This imbalance fosters the growth of the ego rather than the growth of one's soul. He said,

Everybody knows the meritocratic system has lost its mind. Everybody – administrators, admissions officers, faculty and students – knows that the pressures of the resume race are out of control. But people in authority no longer feel compelled to define how they think moral, emotional and spiritual growth happens, beyond a few pabulum words that no one could disagree with and a few

vague references to community service. They don't think it's their place...or they don't think they know. The result is that the elite universities are strong at delivering their commercial mission. They are pretty strong at delivering their cognitive mission. But when it comes to delivering (human) growth, everyone is on their own. (p. A27)

Brooks (2014) went on to say that the mission of universities used to be balanced and focused more on helping develop people's souls, but that focus began eroding 100 years ago.

Deresiewicz (2014, July) spent his career teaching at Yale and upon reflection said elite higher education institutions lost their way due to the heavy focus on resume-building, rather than soul development. Deresiewicz said about his students,

Look beneath the façade of seamless well-adjustment, and what you often find are toxic levels of fear, anxiety, and depression, of emptiness and aimlessness and isolation. A large-scale survey of college freshmen recently found that self-reports of emotional well-being have fallen to their lowest level in the study's 25-year history. (para. 10)

Deresiewicz (2014) talked about the lack of guidance universities provide to students in their quest to know themselves in a deep way. He argued that the education system has skewed too far toward preparing people for entering the race for high paying jobs post-graduation, rather than spending a modicum of a student's time on self-reflection and the discovery of one's soul. Perhaps a movement is afoot to help educators find ways for students to spend time knowing themselves better. Again, the unique opportunity for a deep self-awareness experience occurred in the energetics students who participated in

this study and could perhaps fulfill the growing gap for soul development in higher education settings described by Deresiewicz (2014).

Perhaps this recent wake-up call in higher education will send some universities searching for ways to help students better connect to who they are as they prepare for adulthood. It is possible universities may begin balancing their missions among their student's commercial readiness, cognitive requirements and soul developing skills if they take the advice of thought leaders like Brooks (2014) and Deresiewicz (2014, July; 2014). So perhaps knowing that transformational learning and self-discovery can occur in students who study energetics will help institutions become more supportive of the field.

**Implications for the Field of Authenticity and Authentic Leadership.** Through energetics learning, participants forged a connection to their authentic selves. This journey of self-discovery has implications for people who are in leadership positions or might find themselves in leadership positions in the future. For instance, in management and leadership development circles, many experts claimed that developing self-awareness is a primary competency in effective leaders. For example, George and Sims (2007) said that nearly every leader they asked indicated knowing oneself was the most important leadership skill. Goleman (1995) called "knowing thyself" a cornerstone of emotional intelligence. Cashman (2008) said knowing one's authentic self was paramount for effective leadership. Collins (2001) talked about how Level 5 leaders are most effective because they are comfortable enough in their own skin that their ego remains in check. Von Krosigk (2007) studied ten effective leaders over a seven-year timeframe, interviewing them numerous times to try to find out how they developed their skills. His study revealed that all ten leaders felt they had high awareness of themselves and those

around them and this largely led to their success. Self-awareness also led to a high degree of integrity, according to those interviewed (von Krosigk, 2007). These leadership and personal development experts indicated people need to know themselves deeply and roundly in order to demonstrate personal integrity in times of stress and to most effectively connect with their teams.

As I conducted research on this topic, I found a plethora of studies conducted as well as books and articles written on authentic self and authentic leadership. I found one program that claims to help people become more authentic followed Kolb's adult learning model (Eriksen, 2012). More specifically, students were asked to deeply reflect on an experience, create a vision of their ideal self in the situation, and then test new behaviors. Eriksen (2012) said this exercise helped his students become more purposeful in their lives and move closer to their ideal self. Nevertheless, even though the field of authentic self appears to continue to gain momentum as several thought leaders like George, Goleman and Cashman continue to explore what it means to be authentic, very few provide a means for people to become more authentic. Scholars talked about knowing self and displaying good behaviors, but few led people down a path on how to know the deeper self and to connect with one's core.

While experts are able to identify and then proclaim the benefits of authenticity and authentic leadership, they do not yet help people find out how to become more authentic. So as participants in this study experienced a much deeper connection to their authentic selves, perhaps energetics can play a role for experts and institutions trying to help people be more authentic leaders.

**Implications for the Field of Intuitive Intelligence.** One of the transformations that occurred for energetics students in this study was helping people hear and trust their inner voice. People talked about how listening to their intuition helped them make better decisions. The emerging field of intuitive intelligence is beginning to understand the importance of intuition in the decision-making process, but there are very few suggestions for how one knows when to trust their gut, especially when one is trying to decipher the difference between the inner ego and the inner soul. Perhaps energetics is a pathway for some people to improve their intuitive intelligence.

**Implications for the Field of OD.** OD is a field of study and practice that promotes values-based learning for organizations. From a very high level perspective, I believe energetics is to people what OD is to organizations. In other words, energetics was transformational for the participants in this study, similar to how the practice of OD sometimes tries to help organizations change in deep and meaningful ways. Energetics was an empowering experience, one which helped participants find their truth. Similarly, OD sometimes aims to give organizations the tools to discover their *raison d'être*. Perhaps the energetics transformation is instructive to the OD practitioner; the participants in this study now intimately know what it is like to experience the type of change they sometimes try to help their clients experience.

One of the most important steps in the OD change process is diagnosing the organization. Knowing whether an organization is ripe for change is important before an OD practitioner takes on a client. Some experts discussed the difference between a mindless organization and a mindful organization. While a mindless organization is said to be on auto-pilot, a mindful organization tries to pay more attention to their internal



health as well as the environment in which they operate (Levinthal & Rerup, 2006; Ray, Baker, & Plowman, 2011). A mindful organization is more prepared to change, is more self-aware and innately seeks truth and betterment, similar to a more mindful person (Ray et al., 2011). So because the idea of a mindful organization mirrors the concept of a more mindful person, it stands to reason that an authentic and mindful OD practitioner should be in a strong position to identify mindful organizations and help them improve and reach their potential. To illustrate, Heorhiadi and Conbere (2008) talked about an instance whereby on the surface, a client said they wanted to lead change in their organization. However, because the OD practitioners were trained in energetics, they could see that under the surface, the client was in fact not mindful. In other words, the client was not ready to learn; the client was not ready to face the truth and was not ready to make difficult changes. So identifying a mindful client, one ready to change, required the ability to see beneath the surface; seeing the client through an energetic lens was necessary. In the end, it appears that seeing clients through an energetic lens is helpful in the change process, particularly at the outset when the OD practitioner is seeking a mindful client open to change.

**Self as Instrument.** Several OD experts talked about how self as instrument is a way to employ all of one's talents in pursuit of organizational change. For example, Cheung-Judge (2012) indicated that an OD practitioner's self-awareness helped create a strong and trustful relationship with their client and thereby enabled the change process to be more effective and useful to the client. She went on to say that a highly self-aware and ever-growing OD practitioner was inherently a model and example for change in the eyes of their client. Other OD experts talked about the how knowing one's self is an

important and guiding force in the tumultuous change process (Seashore, Shawver, Thompson, & Mattare, 2004).

The idea of self as instrument is an important aspect of OD because the OD practitioner is often the catalyst for successful change. As much as a robust change process is needed for organizational improvement, the people instigating the change are often more important. Jamieson, Auron and Schechtman (2011) indicated that, “Successful facilitators have an ‘intangible’ that makes them master of themselves and thus masters of the situation” (p. 59). As OD practitioners, how we show up often influences the change process. As mentioned, Heorhiadi and Conbere (2008) described how an energetically trained and balanced OD practitioner can be an effective instrument of change. In my research, several participants in this study indicated how they utilized energetics in their OD practice. For example, Nancy talked about how she is able to harmonize a room to create a more balanced and positive environment for change. I was also able to talk to an Energetics Institute graduate not part of this study who discussed how she brought energetics into the workplace. This person is a senior executive at a large company and indicated how she now openly shared her daily affirmations and energetic growth experience with her executive team. In her own way, she became an instrument of change when she created an environment of openness, vulnerability and authenticity with those around her in the work environment. Meanwhile, Anne in this study talked about how she leads noon-hour meditations with her co-workers. She is an instrument of change as she tries to enable others to live energetically balanced lives and has created an environment of learning and personal development.

In my own work environment, I am able to better manage tension and anxiety during a change process. For example, I was recently conducting interviews as part of an OD intervention and encountered an outwardly belligerent employee in the client's office. I balanced my energy flow and quickly harmonized the room. The employee calmed down and departed. I believe my energetics training helped diffuse a potentially difficult situation. I routinely sense energetic imbalances in my self and co-workers in less dramatic ways during the workday. When emotions begin to bubble up, I employ energetic tools to produce better outcomes. In the end, as people become more authentic and self-aware through energetics, they become more confident in sharing their truth and becoming a beacon of change to those around them.

Seashore, Shawner, Thompson and Mattare (2004) talked about how knowing all aspects of oneself, even the shadow side of oneself, can create a new lens for OD practitioners, helping the intervener gain newfound insights into group dynamics, the leader's behavior and an organization's culture. The participants in this study talked about how they were able to connect with their souls, unvarnished aspects of their beings, warts and all. This level of self-clarity helps OD interveners enter organizational situations as agents of truth, partly because they experienced transformational change themselves. So I believe an OD practitioner who wants to help organizations change in authentic and meaningful ways, can be a strong and authentic instrument of change when they have undergone a personal transformation, similar to the participants in this study.

**Summary.** There are many potential implications in this study. Higher education institutions may be interested in developing energetics programs if they wish to help students connect with their authentic selves. The field of authenticity might want to take a

closer look at energetics as experts try to develop methods for people to get in touch with their authentic selves. The emerging field of intuitive intelligence may find energetics interesting as a means for people to find and trust their inner voice. Finally, the field of OD may find energetics a useful means for providing OD practitioners a new lens into the clients they are attempting to assist and change.

### **Limitations**

I was personally transformed by energetics in a positive way. So certainly my own bias is a limitation in this study. I did journal and try to bracket my own experience as I conducted the research for this study. However, it is possible that my own experience influenced the results.

My dissertation chair is the Director of the Energetics Institute, so bias from her direction also may have influenced the results of this study. At the outset of the study, I did discuss this potential conflict with all three of my dissertation committee members and agreed that I would quickly and openly talk to them if I felt my chair was pushing her own bias into my study. At no time did I consciously feel this occurred, but her direction to me may have at least partially been influenced by her experience with the Energetics Institute.

I selected only people who went through all three classes at the Energetics Institute in at the University of St. Thomas in Minneapolis for this study. Energetic programs that employ different curricula and those that exist in other parts of the world could have been considered. Also all participants in the Energetics Institute are either pursuing or have achieved post-graduate level educations in the fields of OD and HR. The participants in this study therefore came from a limited educational demographic.

### **Further Research**

I found energetics transformational learning fascinating and I think there are many opportunities for additional research. I believe studying how energetics helps people find their inner voice dovetails nicely with the emerging field of intuitive intelligence. I also think additional research surrounding how energetics helps OD practitioners diagnose organizations and how energetics learning helps people more effectively employ self as instrument is an area fertile for additional research.

In my research I found a dearth of information about how people come to know their authentic self and live their lives as mindful, whole beings. Of course, personality tests, such as Myers-Briggs, can be helpful tools for knowing certain personality traits, but they do not help people discover and develop a deeper meaning of themselves, nor do they provide insight into one's authentic self. One management coach in New Zealand indicated that he "...engages people with their body, their breathing and their dreams" (Nicol, 2007, p. E4). The Economist (2013) magazine talked about how some progressive organizations are now promoting meditation and mindfulness to their employees as a way to reduce stress, promote personal health and become more self-aware. The magazine cited this as a relatively new, yet growing phenomenon. For example, the article mentioned how Bill George pioneered the idea of authentic leadership and was "...introducing mindfulness at Harvard Business School in an attempt to develop leaders who are 'self-aware and self-compassionate'" (Economist, 2013). It seems that progressive organizations and leadership development programs are scratching the surface of mindful and authentic-enabling activities, but I was not able to find any programs that produced authentic transformation. I believe energetics can play a role in

this emerging field of study. The participants in this study were able to get in touch with their authentic selves and live more authentically as already chronicled. In addition, the field of mindfulness has many parallels with the way energetics was taught to graduates of the Energetics Institute at the University of St. Thomas. I believe further research into the link between energetics as an activity that helps people get in touch with their authentic selves is warranted along with further exploring how energetics helps people become more mindful in their every day lives.

On a more micro-level, I think this study could be bolstered by more positivistic research. As mentioned, La Venture (2013) conducted a positivistic case study on how energetics fosters double-loop learning. Additional quantitative research into how energetics students learn, what they learn and how they apply their learning would begin to round out the field of energetics. Further, I exclusively studied people who went through the Energetics Institute at the University of St. Thomas in Minneapolis. Other energetics programs exist and it would be interesting to find out how other programs compare to the Energetics Institute.

### **Final Thoughts**

As mentioned in chapter 1, one of my motivations for conducting this study was to lift the veil on what type of transformation occurred in energetics students, since it was difficult for students to articulate how they benefited from their energetics courses. This study helped me and hopefully the participants take time to reflect on what occurred. As Mezirow (1991, 1997, 2000) indicated, critical reflection is a key component of transformational learning. People knew subconsciously that something profound happened as a result of their energetics courses, but they could not consciously put their

finger on it. If nothing else, it will be much easier to explain to non-energetic students what people take away from the experience:

- 1) Reducing fear and anger helped rid people of a victimhood mentality and empowered them to take responsibility for their lives,
- 2) Learning from an interconnected universe prompted people to view life as a personal growth experience, rather than one that feeds the ego or insecurities,
- 3) Listening to the inner voice helped people live more harmoniously.

Hopefully this study will also foster further reflection by energetic students.

The study itself was personally beneficial to me as well. Learning from other energetic students helped me more deeply reflect on my own experience. At various points in the process, I felt spurts of personal growth as I began realizing how I have changed as a result of energetics. I also felt many moments of intense gratitude as I began realizing how energetics made me feel more happy and whole.

In another sense, I feel a bit disappointed that energetics is not more fully embraced by our larger society. Unfortunately, there are not many opportunities for people to enter an energetics course and potentially experience transformation and for that I am somewhat disillusioned. But hopefully this study may provide some impetus for further research and interest in the topic of energetics.

## References

- Algeo, J. (1987). *Reincarnation explored*. Wheaton, IL: The Theosophical Publishing House.
- Argyris, C. (2000). *Flawed advice and the management trap*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Bacon, B. (2013). Intuitive intelligence in leadership. *Management Services*, 57(3), 26-29.
- Braden, G. (2009). *The spontaneous healing of belief*. Carlsbad, CA: Hay House.
- Braden G. (2007). *The divine matrix: Bridging time, space, miracles and belief*. Carlsbad, CA: Hay House, Inc.
- Brookfield, S. D. (2000). Transformative learning as ideology critique. In J. Mezirow (Ed.), *Learning as transformation*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Brooks, A. K. (1989). *Critically reflective learning within a corporate context*. (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). Teacher's College, Columbia University, NY.
- Brooks, D. (2014). Becoming a real person. *New York Times*, 56(619), A27.
- Brown, K. W., Ryan, R. M., & Creswell, J. D. (2007). Mindfulness: theoretical foundations and evidence for its salutary effects. *Psychological Inquiry*, 18(4), 211-237.
- Browne, M. W. (1997). Far apart: 2 particles respond faster than light. *New York Times*. Retrieved from <http://www.nytimes.com/1997/07/22/science/far-apart-2-particles-respond-faster-than-light.html>



- Brusman, M. (2014). Leadership development through emotional intelligence and meditation. *T+D*, 68(9), 70-71.
- Burke, L. K., Miller, M. K. (1999). Taking the mystery out of intuitive decision making. *Academy of Management*, 13(4), 91-99.
- Capra, F. (1999). *The Tao of physics: An exploration of the parallels between modern physics and eastern mysticism*. Boston, MA: Shambhala Publications, Inc.
- Cashman, K. (2008). *Leadership from the inside out: becoming a leader for life*. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers Inc.
- Chang-Judge, M. Y. (2012). The self as an instrument – a cornerstone for the future of OD. *OD Practitioner*, (44)2, 42-47.
- Chopra, D. (2013). Soul of leadership. *Leadership Excellence*, 30(2), 17.
- Clark, C. M. (1991). *The restructuring of meaning: An analysis of the impact of context on transformational learning*. (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). Athens, GA: University of Georgia.
- Collins, J. (2001). *Good to great: why some companies make the leap and others don't*. New York, NY: Harper Collins.
- Conbere, J. P., & Heorhiadi, A. (2010). *An Introduction to epistemology*. Minneapolis, MN. University of St. Thomas.
- Craig, E. (Ed.). (1998). *Routledge encyclopedia of knowledge*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.
- Creswell, J. W. (2007). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Crotty, M. (1998). *The Foundations of social research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

- Das, L. S. (2005). *Natural radiance: Awakening to your great perfection*. Boulder, CO: Sounds True.
- Deresiewicz, W. (2014, July). Don't send your kids to the Ivy League. *New Republic*. Retrieved from <http://www.newrepublic.com/article/118747/ivy-league-schools-are-overrated-send-your-kids-elsewhere>
- Deresiewicz, W. (2014). *Excellent sheep*. New York, NY: Free Press.
- The mindfulness business. (2013, November 16). *The Economist*, 409(8862), 73.
- Eden, D. (1998). *Energy medicine: Balancing your body's energies for optimum health, joy and vitality*. New York, NY: Jeremy P. Tancher/Putnam.
- Energetics Institute. (2013). Retrieved June 21, 2013 from <http://energeticsinstitute.org/>
- Epstein, M. (2005). *Going to pieces without falling apart: A Buddhist perspective on wholeness*. New York, NY: Broadway Books.
- Eriksen, M. (2012). Facilitating authentic becoming. *Journal of Management Education*, 36(5), 698-736.
- Fontana, D. (1999). *Learning to meditate: A practical guide to self-discovery and fulfillment*. San Francisco, CA: Chronicle Books.
- Gall, M. D., Gall, J. P., & Borg, W. R. (2007). *Educational research: An introduction* (8<sup>th</sup> ed.). Boston, MA: Allyn-Bacon.
- George, B. (2011). Leadership skills. It starts with self-awareness. *Leadership Excellence*, 28(6), 13.
- George, B. (2010). Authentic leaders. What a difference they make! *Leadership Excellence*, 27(10), 16.
- George, B., & Sims, P. (2007). *True North*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

- George, M. (2000). *Discover inner peace: A guide to spiritual well-being*. San Francisco, CA: Chronicle Books.
- Gerber, R. (2001). *Vibrational medicine*. Rochester, VT: Bear and Company.
- Goleman, D. (1995). *Emotional Intelligence*. New York, NY: Bantam Books.
- Gordon, B. (1995). *Memory: Remembering and Forgetting in Everyday Life*. Baltimore, MD: Intelligence Amplification.
- Gordon, B. (2003). *Intelligent Memory*. New York, NY: Penguin Group.
- Gunn, B. (1999a). Leadership from within (part 1). *Strategic Finance*, 81(3), 14-16.
- Gunn, B. (1999b). Leadership from within (part 2). *Strategic Finance*, 81(4), 20-91.
- Gunn, B. (1999c). Letting go to get ahead. *Strategic Finance*, 85(8), 8-11.
- Gunn, B., & Raskin Gullickson, B. (2005). Welcome to the high wire. *Strategic Finance*, 86(9), 8-10.
- Habermas, J. (1984). *Knowledge of human interests*. Boston: Beacon.
- Hay, L. (1999). *You can heal your life*. Carlsbad, CA: Hay House, Inc.
- Hayashi, A. M. (2001). When to trust your gut. *Harvard Business Review*, 29(2), 59-65.
- Heorhiadi, A. (2010). *Energetics and OD: Self as instrument*. Course syllabus from the University of St. Thomas: Minneapolis, MN.
- Heorhiadi, A. (2013a). *Energetics 2 – work with groups and individuals*. Session one course syllabus from the University of St. Thomas: Minneapolis, MN.
- Heorhiadi, A. (2013b). *Energetics 2 – work with groups and individuals*. Session two course syllabus from the University of St. Thomas: Minneapolis, MN.
- Heorhiadi, A. (2013c). *Energetics 2 – work with groups and individuals*. Session three course syllabus from the University of St. Thomas: Minneapolis, MN.

- Heorhiadi, A. & Conbere, J. P. (2008). Energetics and OD. *OD Practitioner*, 40(1). 36-39.
- Heppner, W. L., & Kernis, M. H., (2007). Commentaries: “quiet ego” functioning: the complementary roles of mindfulness, authenticity, and secure high self-esteem. *Psychological Inquiry*, 18(4), 248-251.
- Hodgkinson, G. P., Langan-Fox, J., & Sadler-Smith, E. (2008). Intuition: A fundamental bridging construct in the behavioural sciences. *British Journal of Psychology*, 99(1), 1-27.
- Jamieson, D. W., Auron, M., & Shechtman, D. (2011). Managing ‘use of self’ for masterful facilitation. *T+D*, 65(7). 58-61.
- Keegan, R. (2000). What “form” transforms? A constructive-developmental approach to transformative learning. In J. Mezirow (Ed.), *Learning as transformation*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Kitchenham, A. (2008). The evolution of John Mezirow’s transformative learning theory. *Journal of Transformative Education*, 6(2). 104-123.
- Langley, A., (1995). Between ‘paralysis by analysis’ and ‘extinction by instinct’. *Sloan Management Review*, 36(3), 63-76.
- La Venture, K. (2013). *How the discipline of energetics fosters double-loop learning: lessons from multiple positivistic case studies* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). University of St. Thomas, Minneapolis, MN.
- Levey, J. & Levey, M. (1998). *Living in balance: A dynamic approach for creating harmony and wholeness in a chaotic world*. Berkeley, CA: Conari Press.

- Levinthal, D., & Rerup, C. (2006). Crossing an apparent chasm: bridging mindful and less mindful perspectives on organizational learning. *Organization Science*, 17(4), 502-503.
- Marton, F. (1986). Phenomenology: A research approach to investigating different understandings of reality. *Journal of Thought*, 21(3), 28-49.
- Mayo Clinic. (2013). Retrieved June 21, 2013 from <http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/alternative-medicine/PN00001>
- McEvoy, J.P. (1996). *Introducing Quantum Theory*. London, England; Icon.
- McMillan, J.H. (2004). *Educational research. Fundamentals for the consumer*. Boston, MA: Pearson Education.
- McTaggart, L. (2002). *The field*. New York, NY: Harper Collins.
- Mezirow, J. (1978). *Education for perspective transformation: Women's re-entry program in community colleges*. New York: Teacher's College, Columbia University.
- Mezirow, J. (1991). *Transformative dimensions of adult learning*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Mezirow, J. (1997). Transformative learning: theory to practice. *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education*, 74, 5-12.
- Mezirow, J. (1998). On critical reflection. *Adult Learning Quarterly*, 48(3), 185-198.
- Mezirow J. (2000). Learning to think like an adult: Core concepts of transformation theory. In J. Mezirow (Ed.), *Learning as transformation*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Mezirow, J. (2014). On critical reflection. *Adult Education Quarterly*, 48(3), 185-198.

- Moustakas, C. (1994). *Phenomenological research methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Myss, C. (1996). *Anatomy of the spirit: The seen stages of power and healing*. New York, NY: Three Rivers Press.
- Nicol, B. (2007, October 10). Finding the authentic self. *Dominion Post*, pp. E4.
- Oxford Leadership Academy. (2014). Retrieved August 17, 2014 from <http://www.oxfordleadership.com/>
- Preventing analysis paralysis. (2011). Bloomberg Businessweek, Retrieved from <http://www.businessweek.com/management/preventing-analysis-paralysis-12202011.html>
- Ray, J. L., Baker, L. T., & Plowman, D. A. (2011). Organizational mindfulness in business schools. *Academy of Management Learning & Education*, 10(2), 188-203.
- Reed, P. (2014). *Energetic Mastery*. Retrieved July 4, 2014 from <http://energetic-mastery.com/re-wire-your-ego/>
- Seashore, C. N., Shawver, M. N., Thompson, G., & Mattare, M. (2004). Doing good by knowing who you are: The instrumental self as an agent of change. *OD Practioner*, (34)3, 55-60.
- Sherwood, K. (1989). *Chakra therapy: For personal growth and healing*. St. Paul, MN: Llewellyn Publications.
- Siegel, D. J. (2009). Mindful awareness, mindsight, and neural integration. *The Humanistic Psychologist*, 37, 137-158.
- Smith, J. A., Flowers, P., & Larkin, M. (2009). *Interpretive phenomenological analysis*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.

- Spoth, J. (2006). Working with energy in organizations. In B. Jones & M. Brazzel (Ed), *The NTL handbook of organization development and change: Principles, practices, and perspectives*. (pp. 422-439). San Francisco, CA: Pfeiffer.
- Taylor, E. W. (1994). *Intercultural competency: A transformative learning process*. *Adult Education Quarterly*, 44, 154 – 174.
- Tesolin, A. L. (2000). How to develop the habit of intuition. *Training & Development*, 54(3), 76.
- Tiller, W.A. (1993). What are subtle energies. *Journal of Scientific Exploration*, 7(3). 293-304.
- University of St. Thomas. (2011). Energetics & OD: self as instrument. Energetics and OD, Course 1: Minneapolis, MN.
- Van Mannen, M. (1997). *Researching lived experience*. London, ON: Althouse Press.
- Von Krosigk, B. (2007). A holistic exploration of leadership development. *South African Journal of Business Management*, 38(2), 25-31.
- Warber, S. L., Cornelio, D., Straughn, J., & Kile, G. (2004). Biofield energy healing from the inside. *The Journal of Alternative and Complementary Medicine*, 10(6). 1107-1113.
- Weaver, G. R., Reynolds, S. J., & Brown, M. E. (2014). Moral intuition: Connecting current knowledge to future organizational research and practice. *Journal of Management*, 40(1), 100-129.
- Zohar, D. (1990). *The quantum self*. New York, NY: Harper-Collins Publishers.

*Appendix A*

## Email Recruitment Letter to Energetic Institute Graduates

Dear Energetics Institute Graduate,

My name is Bob Randall and I am a doctoral student at the University of St. Thomas. Research for my dissertation has begun, and I would like to invite you to participate in my study, entitled *What Is the Essence of Transformational Learning as the Result of Studying Energetics?*

This study will explore the experience of those that studied energetics at the Energetics Institute at the University of St. Thomas.

If you agree to be a participant in this study, you will be asked to participate in a 90-120 minute interview. Participation in the study is completely voluntary. There are no financial benefits. I would sincerely appreciate your consideration to participate.

The identity of all participants will be kept confidential and data gathered in this study will be used in a manner that protects your privacy and identity. In my dissertation and in any follow-up reports that I publish, I will not include information that will make it possible to identify you in any way.

If you feel your learning about energetics was transformative, please consider participating in this study. The next step is to simply contact me at [bobrandall2@gmail.com](mailto:bobrandall2@gmail.com). If you elect to participate in an interview, we will talk further by email or telephone about consent forms and setting up convenient times to meet.

Thank you for considering this request.

Regards,

Bob Randall  
Doctoral Candidate  
University of St. Thomas  
[bobrandall2@gmail.com](mailto:bobrandall2@gmail.com)



*Appendix B*

## INFORMED CONSENT FORM

## UNIVERSITY OF ST. THOMAS

A PHENOMENOLOGICAL RESEARCH STUDY ABOUT TRANSFORMATIONAL  
LEARNING THAT TAKES PLACE WHEN STUDENTS STUDY ENERGETICS

[(IRB# 494873-1)]

Dear Participant: You are invited to participate in a research study that will explore the transformational learning that takes place when students study energetics.

You are eligible to participate in this study because you are a graduate of the University of St. Thomas Energetics Institute in good standing. Your participation in this study is voluntary, so there is no obligation to become involved in this study.

The following information is provided in order to help you make an informed decision whether or not you would like to participate. I am conducting this study as part of my doctoral dissertation in Organization Development at the University of St. Thomas. My research advisor is Dr. Alla Heorhiadi, Professor in the College of Applied Professional Studies, University of St. Thomas.

**Project:** What Is the Essence of Transformational Learning as the Result of Studying Energetics?

**Purpose of the Project:** This study will explore the essence of the transformational learning experience of people that studied energetics.

**Procedures:** If you agree to be a participant in this study, you will be asked to do the following: (a) Participate in an interview lasting 90-120 minutes. (b) Allow the interview to be audio recorded. (c) Allow the researcher to take written notes during the interview.

**Risks and Benefits of Participating in the Study:** There are no known risks or benefits for participating in this study.

**Confidentiality:** Information will be gathered about your perspective regarding energetics. Your answers will be kept confidential and you will be given a pseudonym to protect your identity. All data will be kept confidential and secure in locked file cabinets or a password protected data file. In the event that a transcriber is employed, they will be asked to sign a confidentiality agreement. I will not share the information collected from you with anyone else. In any sort of report or article that I publish, I will not include

information that will make it possible to identify you in any way. Audiotapes or printed copies of transcriptions will be stored on my secure password protected personal computer. Voice recordings will be erased and/or destroyed within one year of the end of my study when my dissertation is approved for publication, which is anticipated to be April, 2014. Electronic copies of the transcription will not identify you in any way. Your identity will be protected by use of a code known only to myself.

**Compensation:** There is no financial compensation for participating in this study.

**Opportunity to Ask Questions:** You may ask questions concerning this research and have those questions answered before agreeing to participate or during the study. You may direct questions to me at [bobrandall2@gmail.com](mailto:bobrandall2@gmail.com). Questions may also be directed to Dr. Alla Heorhiadi at (651) 962-4457 or [aheorhiadi@stthomas.edu](mailto:aheorhiadi@stthomas.edu). If you have questions about your rights as a research participant that have not been answered by the investigator or report any concerns about the study, you may contact the University of St. Thomas Institutional Review Board.

**Freedom to Withdraw:** You are free to decide not to enroll in this study or to withdraw at any time without adversely affecting your relationship with the investigator or with the University of St. Thomas.

**Consent:** If you wish to participate in this study, you will be interviewed. You are voluntarily making a decision whether or not to participate in this research study. Your signature certifies that you have decided to participate having read and understood the information presented. You will be given a copy of this consent form to keep.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

I hereby give consent to audio record my interview.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

In my judgment I am voluntary and knowingly giving informed consent and possess the legal capacity to give informed consent to participate in this research study.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date