

Eliminating Stress with Subtle Body Balance by the Goethert Method

Activating the Vagus Nerve via the Subtle Body and Strengthening the Autonomic Nervous System

The modern world has us firmly in its grip: increasing demands – from outside as well as from ourselves – threaten to get out of control. Constant stress or even burnout are almost part of everyday life. Many people are looking for a way out of this situation, searching for inner peace, regeneration and a connection to themselves.

It turns out that there is a part of us that may play a key role in this process, but its existence, and even more so its importance for our health, has been largely unknown. Research in this area is still in its infancy – but the results of a recent study show that this path could lead to a breakthrough in human well-being. We are talking about the human subtle body.

Activating the Subtle Body

Our subtle body is a fine, field-like layer that permeates our body and surrounds it by about six inches in a healthy state. In the 5,000-year-old Vedic scriptures that form the basis of yoga and Ayurveda, it is referred to as the “pranamaya kosha” or “energy sheath” that animates the physical matter of our body and provides our vitality. Although science cannot yet say exactly what this subtle body is made of, it can be felt with the hand and examined closely. However, since most people are no longer aware of their subtle bodies, they need the guidance of therapists trained to work with the subtle body.

Subtle Body Balance (SBB) is taught and practiced according to the Goethert Method. The method is based on Ronald Goethert's 30 years of research into the human subtle body and his experience in applying this knowledge to the various techniques and therapies he has developed over the years.

Subtle Body Balance (SBB)

Subtle Body Balance is a simple yet highly effective method for activating the healing power of the subtle body: It consists of a treatment on the treatment table and exercises designed for self-application. A sequence of three 40-minute sessions over seven to ten days is recommended, followed by a second sequence after two to three weeks if necessary. Subtle Body Balance can be learned by practitioners of many disciplines and integrated into their therapies.

When trained therapists examine their patients' subtle bodies, they find that most of them are in a kind of “Sleeping Beauty sleep”. Like a muscle that has never been exercised, a neglected subtle body falls into an inactive state and loses its beneficial and even healing functions. Illness, surgery, and harmful external influences can also have a detrimental effect on it.

For most people, the experience of Subtle Body Balance brings about a restoration of their subtle body. This happens quickly because, just like our physical body, the subtle body responds immediately to touch. We don't need a technical device to activate it. Instead, the first step in SBB is to guide the patient to feel their subtle body with their hand. The therapist's hand then palpates the patient's entire subtle body without touching the physical body. During this process, the therapist's subtle body sends a signal to the

patient's subtle body at a frequency that stimulates healthy activity. The patient's subtle body responds and becomes active again on its own.

Subtle Matter Work is Not the Same as Energy Work

At this point, it is worth mentioning that subtle body work according to the Goethert method is very different from the various forms of energy work. When working with the subtle body, there is no exchange of energy – no energy is given to or taken from the patient's system. The treatment does not take place on a mental level or with a conscious intention. Instead, activation occurs through the meeting of the two subtle bodies.

What effects does the perception of one's own subtle body have?

For many patients, stress disappears as if at the flick of a switch. They come to themselves, to their palpable “inner center”, feeling safe and buffered against external stressors. Some people need a little time to register the new feeling; many are amazed that this warm, vibrant, vitalizing layer that surrounds their body like a protective shell really belongs to them. They feel deeply relaxed and at the same time wide awake and ready to perform.

Medical Measurement of Treatment Effect

Many years of recorded practical experience and patient feedback document the many positive effects that an activated subtle body can have. But now there is more concrete evidence of its importance for our health and well-being: A new observational study using Heart Rate Variability (HRV) measurements has now examined what happens in the body during the implementation of Subtle Body Balance from a medical perspective.

HRV measurements are considered a reliable method of assessing the effectiveness of a treatment because, as Dr. Alfred Lohninger, HRV expert and director of the Autonom Health Institute, who supervised the study, likes to say: “The autonomic nervous system can't lie.” The test subjects underwent 24-hour measurements with an ECG chest strap over a period of about two months, during which they received three or six Subtle Body Balance treatments and performed the exercises at home. Because the treatment is performed solely by hand on the subtle body, without touching the physical body, these measurements provide direct insight into the interaction between the subtle body, heartbeat, breathing and the autonomic nervous system.

The results so far have been astounding: by applying Subtle Body Balance, therapists are able to reduce a patient's heart rate and produce increases in heart rate variability to an unprecedented degree – in short, to reduce a person's stress level and improve their performance.

The Subtle Body – a Key to Inner Balance

Our health depends on a harmonious interplay between the sympathetic nervous system, which drives us to perform, and the parasympathetic nervous system, which allows us to regenerate.

In burnout patients, both parts of the autonomic nervous system are barely functioning. They can neither perform nor regenerate.

The heart beats fast and with little variability, the body can hardly adapt to external circumstances.

HRV measurements are therefore often used to determine the state of a person's physical and mental health. It can be used to determine a person's biological age, their current stress level, and their total power, the amount of energy they have available at any given time.

The Vagus Nerve and Stress

The vagus nerve, which makes up the largest part of the parasympathetic nervous system and is referred to as the “health nerve”, is particularly important because all autoregulation and healing processes take place while this nerve is activated. A large number of diseases are associated with a vegetative imbalance. Chronic stress has a particularly negative effect: As a first consequence, our ability to recover via the vagus nerve is limited. If the vagus nerve is activated, it can counteract stress and prevent burnout.

The optimal state for an active life and the opposite of burnout can be described as “flow”: This is when both parts of the autonomic nervous system are “switched on” and working in balance. While the sympathetic nervous system is calling up energy and draining our battery”, it is being recharged at the same time by the vagus nerve. The heart beats slowly, the body works economically, without wasting energy. The mind is present and alert, inner balance is experienced, and pleasure can be taken in the current activity. Interestingly, the experience of “flow” seems to be exactly the state we enter when the subtle body is activated.

Effects on the Autonomic Nervous System

Just as there is a recognizable pattern in HRV with yoga or meditation, SBB also shows an independent, repeatable pattern of effect on the autonomic nervous system – only the effect seems to be even more immediate and pronounced. An effect that also surprised Dr. Alfred Lohninger: “With SBB, we not only see physical relaxation and a higher degree of regeneration than in deep sleep – there is also no decrease in sympathetic activity, but rather an activation of the entire system with simultaneous maximum economy in the sense of low heart rate and high vagus levels. An HRV constellation that, to the best of my knowledge, has never been observed in such a pronounced form with any other exercise, technique or therapy”.

The effect occurs as soon as the patient's or therapist's hand touches the subtle body. The following can be observed:

- A significant reduction in heart rate of up to 40 percent. When working on the treatment table, the heart rate is usually significantly lower than the average heart rate during sleep – even though the treatment is performed while the patient is awake.
- A strong increase in vagus nerve activity (PNN50), also higher than during sleep.
- In addition to the significant increase in parasympathetic HF (High Frequency) values, which represent relaxation and regeneration, LF (Low Frequency) values, which indicate mental activation, and VLF (Very Low Frequency) values, which represent muscular reserves, also increase in parallel.
- Overall, total power values are produced at a level that is not reached by the subject at any other time.
- Coherence of heartbeat and breathing in a rhythm of 4:1

Inner Order is Restored

According to Dr. Lohninger, the extremely high heart rate variability that is generated when the subtle body is activated is evidence of a high degree of order that Subtle Body Balance is able to restore in our body.

It is important to note that our entire body is rhythmically organized down to the cellular level.

Stress and illness cause chaos, and during sleep the body tries to restore order. Subtle Body Balance apparently activates these organizing forces. Measurements show a high degree of coherence between heartbeat and breath in a ratio of 4:1, synchronizing these rhythms in the body.

The effect on breathing is particularly important for coping with stress. This is because when we are under a lot of stress, we breathe too shallow and too fast, which in turn promotes the body's stress reactions. When the subtle body is touched and activated, the person's breathing is automatically deep and relaxed; heart-breath coherence is created. This has an effect on the unconscious breathing pattern up to sleep, which is shown in the HRV measurement by the increase in RSA and PNN50. The better the condition of our subtle body, the freer we can breathe.

Since SBB creates an ideal state that lasts for a certain period of time and can be recalled through exercises at home, the treatment can be considered an effective training for the autonomic nervous system.

Case Studies: The Subtle Body and Stress

Patient case study

The 51-year-old female subject in the study works as a self-employed communication trainer and, according to her own assessment at the beginning of the measurement period, suffers from acute stress. She feels exhausted and her nights are not very restful. The HRV measurement confirms that her body is working at its limit and can hardly regenerate. In particular, the vagus nerve is barely active – both during the day and at night, the PNN50 value is in the critical range of less than two percent.

The subject matter of the “subtle body” is completely new to her. During the first exercise instructions, she says she is not quite sure if she feels anything. However, the autonomic nervous system responds immediately to contact with her subtle body: HRV increases at all frequencies. By the second session, she is able to provide detailed descriptions of her subtle body; on the treatment table, she reports tingling, waves of goosebumps, and surges of strength. The HRV measurement shows a state of flow: The sympathetic and parasympathetic nervous systems are activated simultaneously, and total power triples. The activity of the vagus nerve reaches a healthy normal level (PNN50 of 20 percent), which lasts longer after each treatment. Measurements show a deepened level of relaxation and regeneration during her sleep.

The subject herself found the treatments and exercises to be an extremely beneficial counterbalance to her stressful working life. After three sessions, she was already much more relaxed and able to maintain an overview from her inner center. Every time she touches her subtle body, she feels inner peace, a positive burst of energy and an intense feeling of joy.

Case study of a training course participant

A 51-year-old man suffers from chronic stress, exhaustion and high blood pressure. He enrolled in the Subtle Body Balance training course to enhance his therapeutic work. However, a few weeks before the course begins, he almost cancels because of his poor health. After being told that the course usually has a regenerative effect on the therapist as well, and could very well increase his vitality, he finally decides to attend. He is also motivated by the ability to monitor his health during the course using the chest strap sensor and the Autonom Health HRV app.

Initially, the data reflected his poor condition: his Total Power was 68 percent below that of his peers. But just two months later, after the second attendance phase of the training, significant changes have occurred: his total power is now 56 percent above average, his vagus activity has doubled, and his biological age has been reduced by ten years. His average daily heart rate has dropped by 12.5 beats per minute, a clear sign that he is less stressed and breathing better. He reports that his blood pressure medication has been reduced to a quarter.

He himself says that he feels completely renewed and now has enough energy for sports and leisure, despite his heavy workload. After every Subtle Body Balance treatment he gives, he feels rebalanced and ready for new challenges.

Conclusion

Even in challenging times with high stress levels, it is possible to maintain inner balance and vitality. A scientific study with long-term HRV measurements shows this: The Subtle Body Balance treatment has found a reliable way to activate the vagus nerve and positively influence the autonomic nervous system by working on the subtle body.

While the autonomic nervous system was previously considered almost impossible to influence in the long term, the subtle body has proven to be a key to reducing the body's stress response and restoring inner balance.

The Author:

Ronald Goethert, author and developer of the Goethert Method, is a recognized expert in the field of subtle body health. His groundbreaking research, in-depth knowledge and 25 years of practical experience form the basis for seminars, subtle body therapies and the Subtle Body Balance training for therapists.