

# Making contact, being connected

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Making contact, being connected: we often talk about it. However, for many of us it is not always easy to make contact or true connection. Feelings of loneliness, pulling the short straw, discontent and insecurity might show up as a consequence; confusion about what it actually is that we miss.

## Basic drives

In the Bodydynamic System we presume that the search for mutual connection is a basic human drive. Equally we believe this is true about the search for inner dignity. They are two drives that complement each other and partly are dependent on each other.

You can experience inner dignity if you manage to realise your potential, or what you are in essence capable of. Striving towards this will initiate impulses for development and growth. The way a small sunflower seed will, in the right environment, develop into the fully grown sunflower it has the potential to be, a drive lives in us to grow to our fullest potential.

Mutual connection means to be in contact with another human being (or with something else like nature or an animal) whilst staying in touch with yourself. This too, you could say, functions as a generator of growth. You experience something in such contact that can be integrated in your sense of self, thus you change.

## Ego Functions

As a human child we are actually all born prematurely. We have a set of automatic reaction patterns, our reflexes, through which we manage to survive. Furthermore we are at first still entirely dependent on the care of other people in our environment. We can only develop further if food, warmth, and contact are given to us.

We need food, warmth and care to grow physically. Contact we need to get to know ourselves. Reflected in the eyes of our caretakers we learn to experience ourselves and we start to develop our personalities.

Thus over time we build up a repertoire that should aid us to lead an independent life as an adult. In the Bodydynamic System we distinguish eleven qualities, each with their own sub categories, that we are to develop. This is what we call the Ego Function model. Some examples of ego functions are: the ability to connect, the ability to have boundaries, having a centre and cognitive skills.

## Character structures

During each developmental stage a central theme is evident. Here you develop various levels of ego functions. Connected to this and at the same time motor development takes place. Motor development means that your reflexes are interchanged with conscious muscle activity. This requires enhancement of your muscle mass and of your nerve system, which should motor the muscles.

The central themes that we ascribe to the various developmental stages are: 1. experiencing the right to exist, 2. the right to fulfill your needs 3. the right to have autonomy 4. the right to use your willpower in order to reach a goal 5. development of a gender role and identity 6. development of opinions and 7. the ability to be part of a group whilst experiencing the right to excel.

These central themes encompass emotional, social, cognitive and therefore also motor development. The experiences that found this development are essentially impossible to separate. When you learn to crawl, for example, this empowers you to have autonomy. If your mother constantly stops you in your action, because she is scared, it will affect your motor development. Additionally you will develop an insecurity in your experience of having a right to have autonomy.

In the Bodynamic System we distinguish seven developmental stages, based on these themes. We observe that adults can develop a variety of responses to outer or inner stimuli, based on contact they experienced between them and their environment during the development of these themes.

Giving up, holding back or free choice are generally seen as possible responses. This means that we identify 21 response patterns in adults.

In the above example it is possible that the responses of the mother are so anxious or cautious every time the little crawler moves away from her, that his appeal to crawling is blocked. He gives up on his impulse to be curious, to go into the world, and feeling enthusiasm by what he discovers.

As a result he cannot fill himself up with these experiences. Apart from consequences for the muscles that are used to crawl, an internal emptiness will arise and difficulty to handle excitement. As an adult, this child will probably have a hypotone Psoas muscle. [This muscle is situated deep in the abdomen and aids bending the upper leg in the hip joint.] To learn to experience a separate self, a personal centre, it is necessary to have more life in this muscle. Activity in this muscle will enhance physical sensations of a centre.

## **Contact**

Take some time to think about what contact is for you.....

The first thing that comes to my mind: at least two separate elements are needed that can touch each other. Let's say two people.

Those people have to be separate entities, that can exist independently, in order to be able to touch. It is essential they have boundaries.

The physical border of a human being is their skin.

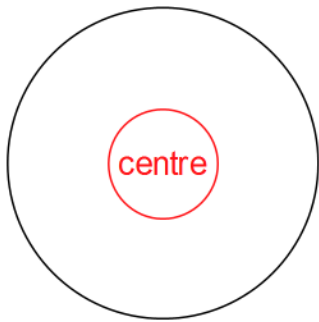
Consequently does contact only exist when skin touches?

No, contact can exist in a look, in talking or in being silent together.

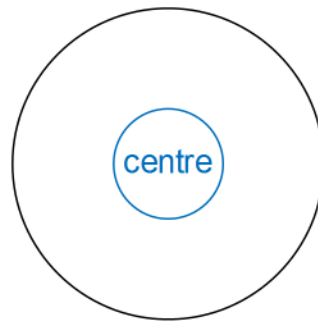
So, what other boundaries do we have? Directly surrounding our bodies there is an area that we experience as ours, it contains our energy. Where this area ends should be our energetic boundary.

Is that it? If our skin or our energetic boundaries touch each other are we thus in contact? Possibly...do we therefore experience it as such? Not necessarily. Think about socially shaking hands. How often do you actually experience this to be true contact?

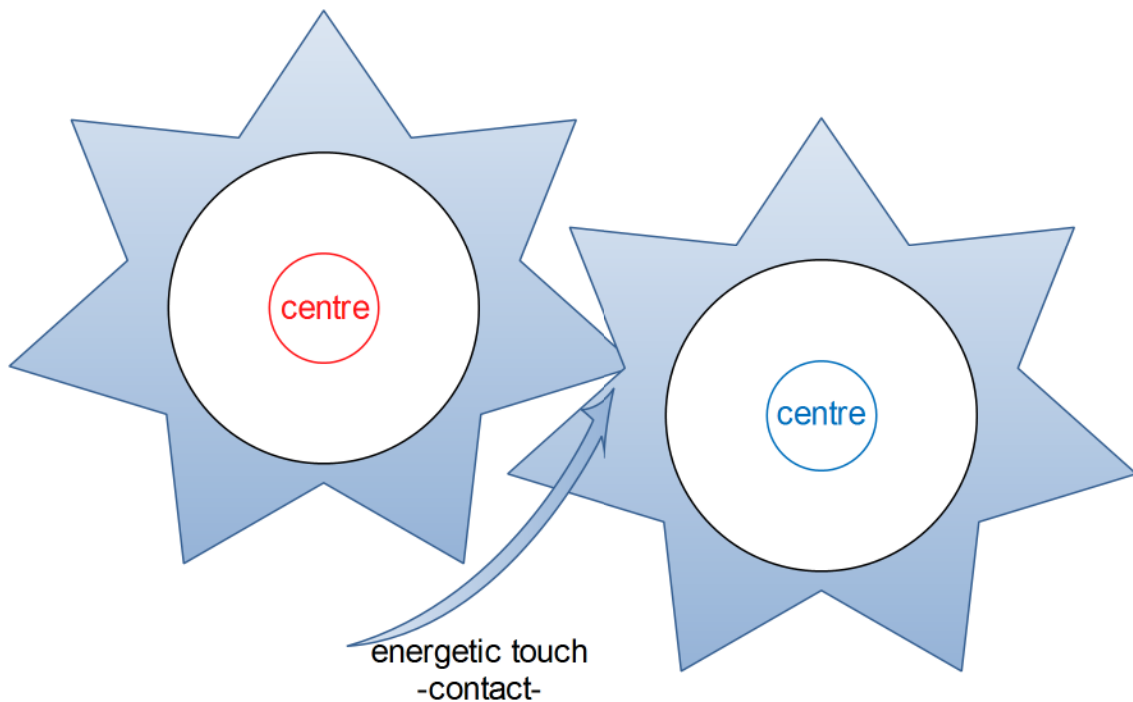
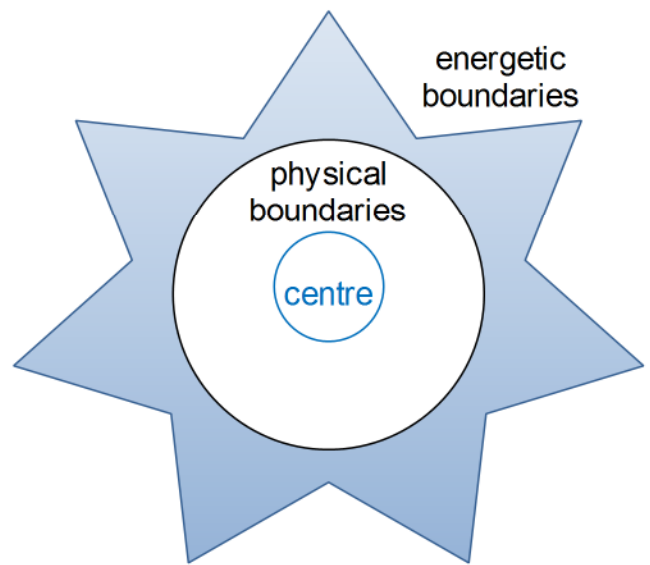
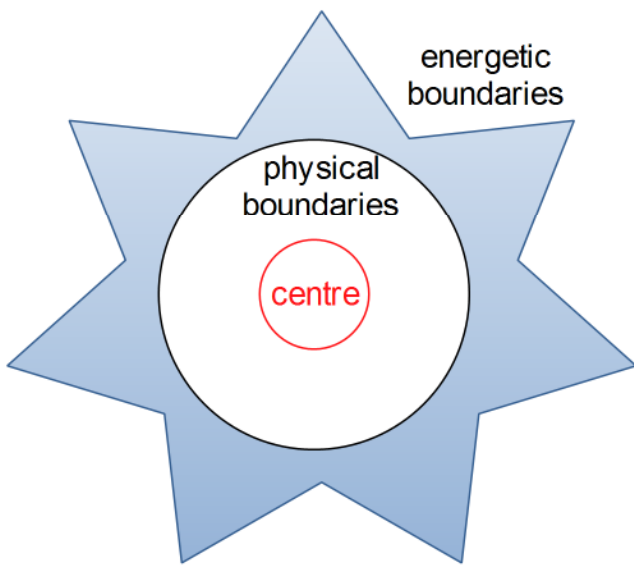
I think that you experience contact if you are conscious of something changing in your personal awareness due to the presence of another.

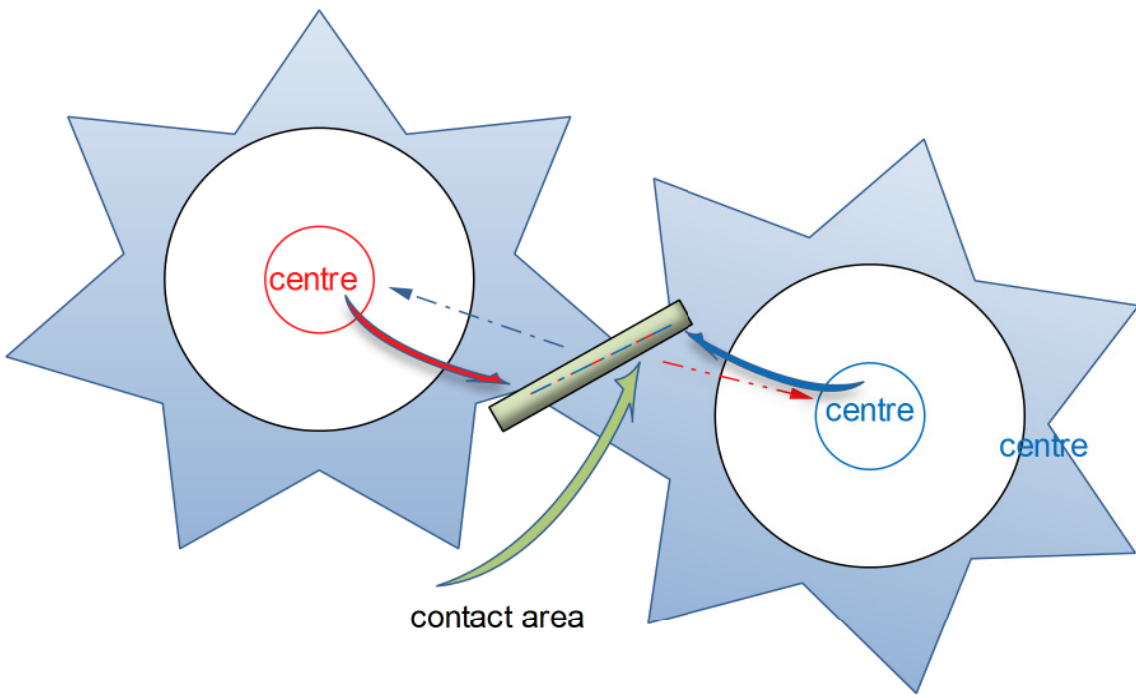
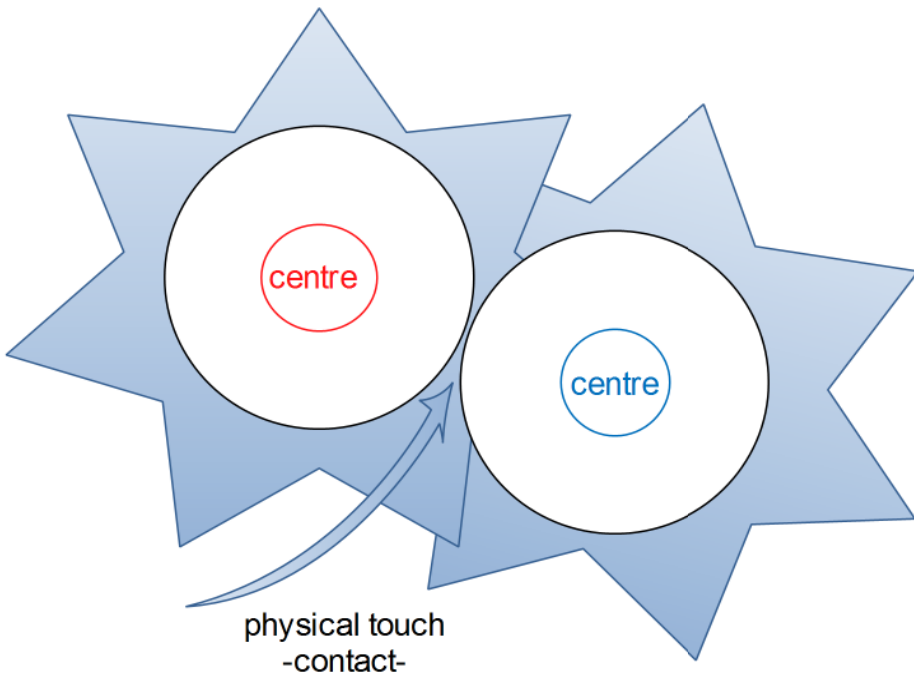


element A



element B





separation

Thus the principle is that you can experience yourself through sensations, emotions, mood, feelings and thoughts. You could call this a function of your 'self' or your 'I'. This is true, assuming that you have a core that can know itself.

This core is contained in your body with your skin as the physical boundary. Your body is charged with energy that often still feels part of you in the area surrounding your body; your energetic field. Ideally there is also a clear boundary separating your energetic field from the outside world. Altogether these elements create your field of inner perception.

If you and another person, each with your own separate inner perceptions, approach each other close enough, a field of contact will arise, there, where you are touching each other. Precisely at this point, your and the other person's information touch. Subsequently, if you want, at this point you can take information from the other person into your system. Here it is important to recognise what it is that you perceive from the other person and what information is already yours. You can perceive the other person through your senses.

Subsequently something will change in your inner perception. When separating, you will assimilate these changes and your core, your 'I', your 'self' will have changed.

Just an easy, concrete example:

'I' perceive my hand: cold, tingly in the palm, bones a little stiff.

I put my hand up and the other person puts her palm up to mine. I perceive the other person's hand: warm, firm and self contained. I feel change in my hand: temperature rises, movement inside becomes fluid, my bones seem to melt and I start to become aware of the connection to my wrists.

So this is contact: we touched each other, information has been transferred and I am not the same as I was before, my 'I' has grown with a new experience.

This is how contact contributes to growth. This growth aids me to realise my potential. It is in a way a dialectic process, showing similarities with metabolism. New information gets taken in and adapted, old, unusable information is released from your system.

### **Requirements for contact and connection**

To conclude, requirements for contact are: a. having boundaries, b. awareness of separation between 'I' and the other, c. the ability to perceive myself, d. the ability to perceive the other, e. understanding the difference between both types of observation.

It is essential for the dialectic process of growth, by making contact and staying connected, that you can face what you feel. Moreover you have to be able to stay with that feeling long enough to become aware of it and make decisions about how you respond.

A second essential ability is to have the freedom of choice to separate and thus end the contact. This creates the opportunity to process the contact and to sustain the feeling of individual unity. After a short while we will then be ready for new contact.

Feelings of loneliness, pulling the short straw, discontent and insecurity are the result of a lack of mutual connection and dignity. These are intrinsic factors in life that generate growth. It should be possible for new information to be taken in, adapted and integrated in who you are.

The way a lack of food leads to starvation, a lack of contact and connection leads to shrivelling of the 'I'. In contact with other people, nature and things we receive new input that generates growth and therefore dignity.

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