

BIOFIELD SCIENCE POCKET GUIDE

Biofield Therapies for Mental Health & Wellbeing

What the Clinical Evidence Shows

Fast facts

- **Biofield therapies**, (also known as energy healing, often considered to include spiritual healing) have been practiced for thousands of years to address various health conditions and enhance well-being.¹
- Common biofield therapy practices include Reiki, Healing Touch, Therapeutic Touch, External Qigong, and spiritual/faith healing.
- Biofield therapies have become more popular, but the research around these practices and whether they are effective is still developing, and is not well understood.
- Researchers commissioned by the [The Subtle Energy Funders Collective \(SEFC\)](#) conducted and published a Scoping Review in 2024, updated again in January 2026, to better understand existing research on biofield therapies.¹
- Of the mental health studies examined, most found evidence either partially or fully supporting the use of biofield therapies for mental health outcomes.
- Reiki was the most commonly used biofield intervention across the full review, and among the Reiki studies focused on mental health, all but one reported positive results.

What is the current landscape of evidence?

Scoping Review researchers searched multiple databases for studies involving human participants receiving biofield therapy.¹ They identified and examined **They identified and examined 418 clinical trials published through 2025, 64 of which focused on different mental health populations** such as people with anxiety (n=13), depression (n=12), and other psychological symptoms (n=41).

- Refer to the [published Scoping Review](#) to learn more about the Scoping Review process and how studies were identified.
- View the [interactive evidence map](#) to see more information about each clinical trial included in the scoping review. Filter by various categories (e.g., intervention, health condition, outcomes, study results) of interest and utilize the search bar for customized searches. The map will be updated annually and is a freely accessible, online resource.

What are biofield therapies?

Currently, there is no standard definition of biofield therapy (sometimes referred to as energy healing or energy medicine). This concept continues to evolve, and researchers and practitioners often modify the definition to align with their specific needs or practices.²⁻⁵ An overview of modalities evaluated in the Scoping Review can be found on page 5.

The SEFC utilizes the following definitions in this pocket guide:

Biofield

A massless field, not necessarily electromagnetic, that surrounds and permeates living bodies and affects the body.^{3,4}

Biofield Therapy

A nonphysically invasive and noninstrumental type of Consciousness-Based Healing Modality in which a practitioner explicitly works locally or remotely with another living system's (e.g., person, plant, animal, cell) biofield to facilitate a healing response.⁶



Consciousness-Based Healing Modalities (CBHM)

Practices and modalities that are thought to facilitate healing through shifts in consciousness or energy movement (whether perceived or not). Examples include energy healing, psychedelics, and meditation, among others.

What is the best clinical evidence?

Below is a summary of select recently published articles with promising evidence for mental health populations.

Healing Touch improved symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder

Study details: Healing Touch (6 x 60-minute sessions over 3 weeks) and guided imagery were given to active-duty military service members who were exposed to combat and had significant post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) symptoms. Two Healing Touch-certified nurses provided the intervention locally, hands-on. Results showed that Healing Touch combined with guided imagery did a better job of improving PTSD, depression, mental quality of life, and cynicism than treatment as usual.⁷



Reiki helped depression

Study details: An intervention that included Reiki, acupuncture, and mindfulness meditation (8 x 65-minute sessions over 8 weeks) was given to individuals with depression. A practitioner provided the Reiki component locally for 10 minutes. Study findings showed the multi-modal intervention reduced depression.⁸

This was a pilot study (n=25).



Reiki reduced anxiety and stress

Study details: Reiki (2 x 30-minute sessions over 2 weeks) was provided to individuals who were experiencing stress and anxiety related to the COVID-19 pandemic. A certified Reiki practitioner administered the intervention at a distance. Results showed improved stress and anxiety.⁹

This was a pilot study (n=25).



Reiki improved anxiety, stress, and well-being

Study details: Reiki (4 x 20-minute sessions over 4 days) was given to frontline healthcare workers during the COVID-19 pandemic. Eight Reiki practitioners provided Reiki from a distance. Findings showed significant improvement in stress, anxiety, well-being, and sleep quality.¹⁰



Spiritist passé reduced anxiety and stress

Study details: Spiritist passé (single 5-minute session) was given to people with stress and/or anxiety. The intervention was provided locally, either hands-on or hands-off. Results showed improvement in anxiety, stress, depression, as well as other indicators of stress (e.g., heart rate variability).¹¹



Intercessory prayer improved spiritual distress

Study details: Intercessory prayer (20 x 60-minute sessions over 4 weeks) was provided for breast cancer patients undergoing radiotherapy. Six Christians prayed at a distance. Results showed intercessory prayer improved spiritual distress and overall spiritual coping.¹²

This was a pilot study (n=31).



Spiritual healing improved depression symptoms when added to standard care

Study details: Spiritual healing (10 x 45–60-minute sessions over 16 weeks) was provided to adults with moderate depression alongside their usual care. An experienced healer provided the intervention locally, hands-on, positioning her hands over various areas of the body to adjust energy flow. Participants who received spiritual healing showed a meaningful reduction in depression scores over 16 weeks, while those receiving usual care alone worsened.¹³

This was a pilot study (n=28).



What are some next steps for researchers?

Research on biofield therapies continues to expand, but the evidence is still inconsistent. While this can mean that certain biofield therapies may be ineffective, it also can be a result of not enough research on a specific topic, or existing research that is not conducted or reported well. Inadequate reporting can make it difficult to understand or replicate results, which is important to build confidence in what the results are reporting.

Future recommendations for research include:

- Exploring how specific biofield therapies work.
- Conducting randomized controlled trials, with a large number of participants, on specific conditions and populations to better understand which biofield therapies are effective and for what conditions and symptoms.
- Following recently developed [reporting guidelines for biofield therapies](#)¹⁴ to ensure biofield therapies are properly described to better understand the intervention and help with replicating trials.

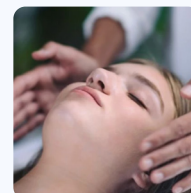
Want to dive deeper into the latest research and future directions? Check out the [published scoping review](#) and explore our [interactive evidence map](#) for an engaging, easy-to-navigate overview of the research!

What are the different types of biofield therapies?

There are many types of biofield therapies ranging from more established to bespoke interventions. Below are some of the most common practices.

Reiki

Reiki is a form of energy healing originating in Japan in which a Reiki practitioner channels “universal life energy” to a recipient by lightly placing his or her hands either on or above a recipient’s body using a series of hand positions.¹⁵



Healing Touch

Healing Touch is a form of complementary and alternative medicine based on the idea that vital energy flows through the human body and can be balanced or strengthened by practitioners who pass their hands over or gently touch a patient's body.¹⁶



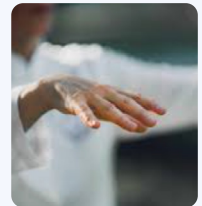
Therapeutic Touch

Therapeutic Touch is a form of energy healing that incorporates the intentional and compassionate use of universal energy to promote balance and well-being. Specifically, a healer will place his or her hands on or near a patient's body to detect and manipulate the healee's energy.¹⁷



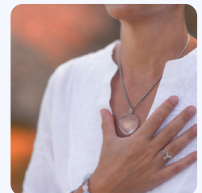
External Qigong

External Qigong is an energy healing practice in which qigong practitioners direct their qi, or life force energy, to a recipient to assist in clearing and balancing qi and relieving pain and/or other illnesses.¹⁸



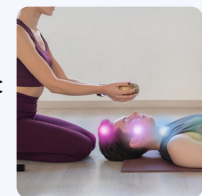
Brennan Healing Science

Brennan Healing Science is a specialized, non-invasive form of energy healing developed by Dr. Barbara Brennan that combines hands-on techniques with spiritual and psychological processes to balance, charge, clear, and repair the chakras and human energy field. It is grounded in the living dynamics of the Human Energy-Consciousness System and its relationship to health and disease.¹⁹



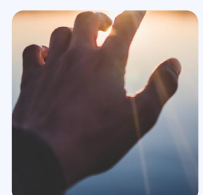
Integrative Energy Therapy

Integrative Energy Therapy is a holistic healing practice that combines multiple energy-based modalities. Such as Reiki, Healing Touch, and other biofield techniques within a single therapeutic session or treatment framework. A practitioner draws on several approaches simultaneously, tailoring the combination of techniques to the individual's needs to facilitate a comprehensive healing response across physical, emotional, and energetic dimensions.²⁰



Laying-on-of-hands/spiritual faith healing/spiritist passé

Laying-on-of-hands is a spiritual practice appearing in Christian, Jewish, Muslim, and other faith traditions that involves the placement of hands on an individual in conjunction with prayer to provide healing or blessings.²¹



How do Biofield therapies work?

How biofield therapies exactly “work” is still largely unknown. Current theories of mechanism include quantum mechanisms, biophotons, intention and suggestion, placebo, as well as unmeasured or unknown energy fields.²²

In general, many biofield therapy practitioners report they move, unblock, or act as conduits for “energy” (also often referred to as consciousness, spirit, qi, prana, mana, or ki in different traditions) to facilitate a healing process for or within the recipient. This can be done in a variety of different ways based on the following:

- **Hand placement:** on, off, or near a recipient
- **Practitioner location:** being in the same room as a recipient or in different physical area
- **Healing relationship:** self-led, pairs of individuals, or groups

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