

ARTICLE

SOUND NAMING

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(Extract from a chapter on sounds)

The building elements of the life body are the resonances of the sounds of human speech, the consonants and vowels, as underlying dynamics that we cannot hear. While consonants are the sculptors, vowels are the painters of speech. The consonants live in the connection between the life body and the physical body, while the vowels are active in the connection between the life body and the sensory dynamics that underlie experience, which Steiner calls the sentient body.

Because of this, sounds have the capacity to resonate within the realms of the subtle bodies and, through this, are able to directly access all of the unconscious, stored memories and experiences residing there. By using human speech sounds, every human experience, once expressed in a gesture, can find its precise counterpart in particular combinations of the sounds of speech.

In a Psychophonetics session, the sounds give a range of tools for exploration, expression and communication. They can facilitate change and improvement in a person's inner life, while giving respect to the freedom and uniqueness of each person's individual experiences.

The capacity of sounds to resonate with specific imprints of experience makes them a powerful therapeutic tool. Sounds can echo experiences of invasion, inner and outer pressures, impositions, abuse and criticism, as well as experiences of protection, pain, release, nurturing and inner strength.¹ Psychophonetics sound-therapy is effective also in the practice of creating personal and relational space, in expressing inner power and presence, as well as in speaking and in the many different ways of finding personal expression.

The correlation between the imprints of sound experiences and the imprints of human experiences in the body enables the Psychophonetics method of **Sound-Naming** to take place, in which every human

experience can be accessed, expressed and become available for change, using the following process:

- a) Sensing the experience, directly or through activated memory.
- b) Spontaneously expressing the sensed experience in a gesture.
- c) Matching the specific, expressed experience with a sound or sound-combination.

Every sound of speech has a typical gesture that arises organically when the effort to sound it is accompanied with an embodied hand gesture that extends it further. eg. 't' is expressed in a pointing gesture; 'k' tends to chop the air with the side of the palm; 'ah' is expressed with hands opening and arms widening.

Sound-naming, consists of matching a spontaneous gesture expressing a person's sensed experience with a sound that produces a similar gesture. When the match is made, the ability to express the experience in focus is enhanced, enabling a powerful release of an undesirable experience, which becomes an empowerment process. It can also take place as a connection with a missed, longed for or desired need, becoming a Resourcefulness process.

A client reflects on her counselling session:

Using the body makes a big difference, because it's not just conversation...I'm participating; I'm not told how to do it. It's just what comes out of me in each situation. It's invigorating & once I've released the block & set up a boundary, I do find I come back within myself.²

Another client describes the process of nurturing her heart during a session:

The sound (I sounded) was a warm high vibrating energy MMMMMM sound...a warm gentle feeling sound...I could see the colour yellow with that sound and it's dancing...I could feel my heart being healed. The sounds made a big change for me.³

² Robin Steele (2004:56)

³ Robin Steele (2005:292). R. Steele (2005). *A hermeneutic phenomenological study of/in transformation: An embodied & creative exploration of therapeutic change through Psychophonetics psychotherapy*. PhD Thesis, ECU, WA.

¹ Robin Steele (2004:69). *The theory and practical application of sounds in therapy*. Psychotherapy in Australia Journal, Vol.11(1)

For instance, qualities of resistance, denseness, solidity, holding, enclosing and an ability to break through, suggest using *earth* element sounds, such as, 'dddd, bbb or kkkk' or variations thereof. As expressions of inner experience, earth sounds can evoke a sense of frustration, anger, unresolved struggle and effort, as well as solid foundations. They can effectively express all that is blocked and held back and can also be used to release inner blocks. By exploding the sound to express such an inner block, we can experience a corresponding release of energy; from sounding a blocked HUG/ or HUD/ into a releasing GAAH or DAH. The release is more effective when embodied by the whole body in corresponding physical gestures and movements.

Sounds are most effective when they arise organically from breathing into the gesture of a particular experience and are sounded aloud while moving the whole body. Particular sounds applicable for each person emerge as unique expressions of their soul experience in that time and place & are not pre-determined or prescribed, but with counsellor & client working as a team can be fine-tuned.

The sounds can mean different things to different people according to their own experiences, as the variety of sound possibilities is limitless. Each sound can be spoken with at least 7 different intonations or speech gestures: Effective, thoughtful, tentative, giving vent to antipathy, expressing sympathy, withdrawal, and desperate/despair.⁴ Each sound intonation can also be experienced in at least 5 different ways: Speaking it, Sensing it, Reacting to it, Feeling or Visualizing/Beholding it.⁵ Each one can be expressed in a gesture and, when adding the diversity of pitch, strength and space directions, the possibilities increase exponentially.

The whole range of human experience can be expressed in gesture and matched with various combinations and intonations of sounds. Although there can be a commonality of experience with each

⁴ R. Steiner. *Speech and Drama*. Chpt 2: The 6 revelations of speech, 1924 Lects, with *desperate/despair* added as a modern addition in speech & drama training.

⁵ Psychophonetics methodology: Aspects of experience-awareness

sound, there are also individual differences in the experience of the sounds and in sound combinations.

Through specific experiences of sound-naming, we can access & enable consciously chosen changes to processes in the subtle bodily physiology: in the various forms of bodily embedded experience & in the myriad interconnections between body & psyche.

Psychophonetics research and case studies, as well as other research on sound-therapy, show how gesture and the sounds are effective with a wide range of issues, including anxiety, stress and pain management.⁶ By accepting, joining and breathing into the pain: sounding 'om'... 'ahhh' and other fluid, open sounds, pain can be reduced and transcended as in the following comment from a client:

I was meeting each moment with sound, by the time I had sounded out the sound fully, the pain had passed.⁷

Many issues today are concerned with difficulties relating to consciousness soul, to individual development and choices. Psychophonetics offers insight and guidance into a person's experiences, between body and soul, and a Psychophonetics practitioner develops rapport to enable conditions to emerge in which others can be encouraged to become more consciously present in their *I am* and in their life; for healing, growth and transformation.

We trust that the magic of sound, scientifically applied, will contribute in ever greater measure to the relief of human suffering, to a higher development and a richer integration of the human personality.⁸

Sound can be experienced as a medicine. Through Psychophonetics the sounds of the universal alphabet become a practical psychology of freedom.



⁶ (a) K. Train (2012). *Development of an intervention to coach carers in resilience to compassion fatigue & burnout with psychophonetics methodology for self care & empathy*. Masters' Thesis, Uni of Wstn Cape.
(b) R. Steele (2005). PhD Thesis, ECU, WA.

⁷ Robin Steele (2004:56)

⁸ Roberto Assagioli (1975:260). *Psychosynthesis: A manual of principles & techniques*. Turnstone Press