

To Palliate, Michael J Shea, PhD, 2020

*To palliate:*

1. *To reduce in violence; to lessen or abate; to mitigate; to ease without curing; as, to palliate a disease.*
2. *To moderate; to cloak; to shelter; to hide.*

*To mitigate:*

1. *To render to become mild or milder; to moderate, become less severe or painful; to soften, diminish or lessen.*

If I say biodynamics is about embodiment, then that is only half of biodynamics. The other half is disembodiment. This means death. Inside each of us is a death instinct, a death metabolism and a mind of death. We all periodically have thoughts and contemplate our death or suicide or even killing others (I just wish so and so was dead!). This is natural to have a mind of death. It is the instinct of ending and dissolution. As sure as one thought, one emotion ends, another begins. Birth and death right there 24/7. These two are linked: the death instinct and our thoughts and their cessation.

We are constantly being primed for death in the simplicity of the Buddhist teaching of impermanence. Sitting meditation is a death meditation. We can sing the praises of mindfulness and compassion but really what guides us is the fear of death and we avoid it at all costs even if we support Hospice and shop in their resale stores. We are afraid of death because we accumulate so many things to make our life and our bodies seem solid, but they are not. Life is very fluid. It's a flow that goes on and merges with the ocean of death. Thus, the infallibility of impermanence. Nobody gets out alive.

Biodynamic practice must integrate a type of palliative care to reduce a person's fear of death that is deeply instinctual. We simply help patients relax their mind and body as one thing. This is the gift of Primary Respiration and the stillness. It allows nature to take its course. They are self-directing. So, we include the elements as described in Eastern traditions and the dharma practice of sitting meditation to make biodynamics a complete practice of embodiment and disembodiment. The yin and the yang. This is the way of the natural world and a source of healing - to acknowledge these realities inwardly and outwardly. Thus, embodiment includes disembodiment. It's one thing. So, I am declaring that correct biodynamic practice is a death practice.

It's fishy that biodynamic practice has focused so much on conception, pregnancy and birth. But that is not all of life. To hold our clients as if they are a newborn baby as Dr. Jealous suggests, begs to be balanced with equally holding each client as if they are dying or dead already. This is not some morbid zombie fantasy or romantic view but having a clear sense of gentleness, kindness and delicateness necessary to hold someone with our hands, our body and mind who is both a baby and a corpse at the same time. This is biodynamic wholeness. This is correct biodynamic practice. This is why your mind is located in your heart and it beats 70 times a minute. This is the simplest practice to create balance in our biodynamic practice. Feel your heart beat and center your attention there at death or do it now all the time.

It is incomplete biodynamic practice if we only consider the client from a cosmological perspective or as an embryo or fetus or a newborn baby. Yes, traditional healing must touch one's origins. Origin implies death. What starts as life will die. Now the balance scales have tipped in this new era of metabolic body health and ill health. The emergence of a complete biodynamic practice integrates an attitude of end-of-life care, palliative care and compassionate care for the contemporary client. We are not limited to exploring this with only those with a terminal diagnosis but rather we synchronize with the priorities of Primary Respiration and

stillness in the client's totality - spiritually. When we hold both the beginning and end of life for ourselves and our clients, this is complete biodynamic practice.

In Buddhism it is understood that there is no self. This is called emptiness. It is not nothing which is a mistake to think of it this way. We meditate to achieve non-thought however briefly, in order to be fearless and watch the self-dissolve, element by element, thought by thought and emotion by emotion. It is the dissolving of our attachments and solidity. Why not start now rather than waiting for death? We've all heard the stories of Yogis and Yogini's sitting and meditating at the charnel grounds! Our mind is a charnel ground of compulsive thinking that blocks our deepest knowledge. No self simply means wholeness in its fullest sense. We all intellectually know that we are interconnected to all things or as Thich Nhat Hahn says: "We inter-are." But do we feel this viscerally, elementally?

This means in biodynamic practice that we are merged with the client automatically. We know this from the research in interpersonal neurobiology. But at the same time, we maintain contact with our metabolism of autonomy, a form of spaciousness and explore a larger boundary and container for all of reality in order to reduce our collective fear to zero. This is correct attunement in biodynamic practice because each of us constructs a solid self differently and thus the deconstruction must be gentle and palliative both for our own discovery and facilitating the discovery of such for the client. So, in biodynamic practice we can focus on our own non-self through sensing the transparency of our fluid body, calming our mind and letting Primary Respiration and stillness establish the priorities for the client dissolving their self with non-fright. This is considered transcendental patience or simply waiting.

I am including three additional handouts traditionally given in Buddhism regarding the contemplation of death. The Sutra of the Heart of Transcendent Knowledge, a commentary I made on the five skandhas from Nagarjuna which is how the self becomes solid and finally the Four Reminders. So, you can contemplate these teachings and what we are actually holding with our hands in biodynamic practice.

Good luck!