

The Feeling Field: A New Path to Emotional Freedom

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Introduction: The Ghost in the Machine

Have you ever felt an emotion so powerful it seemed to have a life of its own? A wave of anxiety that knots your stomach before you've even had a conscious thought? A pang of old grief that aches in your chest on an otherwise beautiful day? For most of us, the answer is "Yes." We live in a world that is, for the first time, openly discussing the importance of mental health. Yet, paradoxically, we are also in the midst of a global mental health crisis. Nearly a billion people were living with a mental disorder before the global pandemic, a number that has since surged dramatically.¹ More than 70% of those who need help cannot get it, and for those who can, the solutions often feel incomplete.

The prevailing medical model tells us that our emotions are the product of brain chemistry—a cascade of neurotransmitters and electrical signals generated inside our skulls. Our feelings, from this perspective, are secondary effects, symptoms of a biological machine that is either running smoothly or in need of a chemical adjustment. But what if this model, which has dominated our approach to wellness for over a century, has it backward? What if our emotions are not the *result* of our cerebral biology, but the *cause*?

This is the revolutionary proposition put forth by the life's work of American scientist Richard R. Pavek. Through decades of clinical observation, Pavek developed a new framework for understanding our inner lives—one that honors our lived experience of feeling emotions not in our heads, but in our bodies. He argued that emotions are primary, causal forces that dictate our thoughts and shape our physical health. This report will explore Pavek's paradigm-shifting work, revealing how forgotten emotional events from our past remain actively trapped in our bodies, how this trapped energy can lead to chronic physical illness, and how a new understanding of the NIH (National Institutes of Health)-validated human energy field—the biofield—offers a powerful and direct path to releasing this baggage and reclaiming our emotional freedom.

The Unfinished Business That Runs Our Lives

Modern psychology and medicine, for all their advances, struggle to explain the sheer tenacity of our emotions. Why do we overreact? Why do we find ourselves stuck in the same self-sabotaging patterns, even when we “know better”? Pavek’s answer lies in a concept he termed the **“Incomplete Emotional Episode (IEE).”**

He observed that significant life events, particularly traumatic ones, trigger a complex set of feelings that rarely end when the event is over. Instead, they become frozen in time, creating an “incomplete episode” that continues to run silently in the background of our lives.⁴ This isn't just a memory; it's an active, potent emotional charge that shapes our perceptions, judgments, and behaviors for decades.

In this, Pavek’s work aligns perfectly with that of Fritz Perls, the founder of Gestalt therapy, who asserted that all emotions have a natural life cycle. If this cycle is interrupted—if we are unable or unwilling to fully experience the emotion at the time—it remains as “unfinished business,” constantly seeking completion.

Have you ever responded to a minor frustration with a level of anger that shocked even you? Or felt a disproportionate sense of fear in a relatively safe situation? According to Pavek, in those moments, you are not just reacting to the present. You are unconsciously being controlled by the powerful, pent-up emotion from a past incomplete episode. The old pain, triggered by a similar circumstance, has burst forth, and you are, in effect, trying to resolve a long-forgotten battle in a new arena. Until that original emotional cycle is allowed to complete, we remain its prisoner, destined to repeat the patterns of the past.

How Feelings Become Sickness: The Body’s Pain Reflex

The most critical and groundbreaking piece of Pavek’s work is the mechanism that explains how this non-physical emotional pain translates into very real, physical illness. He identified a fundamental survival mechanism in the body he called the **Auto-Contractile Pain Reflex (ACPR).**

The ACPR is the body’s instinctual “splinting reflex.” If you break a bone, the muscles and soft tissues around it immediately and involuntarily spasm to immobilize the area, preventing the sharp bone fragments from causing more damage. It’s a brilliant, short-term protective measure.

Pavek's profound insight was this: the body's cells cannot tell the difference between the pain of a physical injury and the intense pain of certain emotions. Deep grief, searing shame, or paralyzing fear trigger the exact same involuntary contractive reflex. When you feel a "heavy heart" from loss, that is the ACPR contracting the tissues in the mid-chest area of your heart and lungs. The "knot in your stomach" from anxiety is the ACPR clenching the muscles and organs in your solar plexus.

Here is the crucial difference. With a broken bone, the reflex lets go once the bone heals and the pain signal stops. But with an Incomplete Emotional Episode, the pain is *internal* to the contraction itself. The unresolved grief is trapped *inside* the spasm *it created*. Because the old emotion is still "alive" and unfinished, the pain signal never turns off. The contraction never gets the message to release. It becomes chronic.

This sustained, often decades-long squeezing of our internal organs has devastating consequences. It severely restricts the flow of blood, lymph, and other vital fluids, starving cells of oxygen and nutrients while trapping metabolic waste. Over time, this state of chronic cellular distress can lead directly to inflammation, degenerative conditions, and organ dysfunction. The unresolved grief from a childhood loss can, through the direct mechanical action of the ACPR, become a contributing factor to heart disease forty years later. The ACPR is the missing link in the mind-body connection, providing a clear, biophysical explanation for how our emotional baggage makes us sick.

The Biofield: Giving a New Name to Ancient Wisdom

If trapped emotions are the problem, where exactly are they trapped? Pavek's work points to a reality that ancient cultures understood intuitively but that modern science is only just beginning to acknowledge: the human biofield.

For millennia, wisdom traditions have described a vital life force that animates the body.

- It is the **Qi** of Chinese Taoism, the vital energy that flows through meridians to sustain health.
- It is the **Prana** of Hindu Vedanta, the life-force that animates the "subtle body" of chakras and nadis (channels or pathways in the body through which prana flows).

- It is the **Pneuma** of the ancient Greek Stoics, the "breath of life" that provides cohesion and vitality to the body.
- It is the **Ankh** of the ancient Egyptians, the "Life Force" so central to their understanding of health and consciousness.
- It is the **Ruh** of the Sufi mystics, the pure, divine spirit or "breath of God" that is our "immaculate essence."
- It is the **Chi** of Africa's Igbo people, one's personal spirit influencing life and destiny.¹¹
- It is the **Ase** of West Africa's Yoruba people, spiritual energy facilitating manifestation and change.
- It is the **Mana** of Polynesia, a sacred, life-giving force that resides in all living things.

This universal concept remained outside the Western scientific lexicon until 1992. In that year, a special ad hoc committee was convened by the U.S. National Institutes of Health (NIH) to explore promising alternative healing modalities. Richard Pavek was a key member of this committee. Tasked with finding a unifying, scientific term for the vital energy that healers across cultures work with, the committee crafted the term "**biofield**," defining it as "a massless field, not necessarily electromagnetic, that surrounds and permeates living bodies and affects the body."

This was a landmark moment. The NIH, the bastion of the biomedical model, formally acknowledged a concept that transcends a purely chemical view of life. The biofield was officially accepted as a medical term, giving scientists a legitimate framework to study the physics of life itself.

Pavek, however, was already putting these principles into practice. Three years earlier, in 1989, he presented a paper at the First World Conference for Academic Exchange of Medical Qigong in Beijing. In it, he described his therapeutic modality, SHEN Therapy, as a specific form of Qigong, explicitly linking his modern, physics-based approach to one of the world's oldest and most respected systems of biofield healing. He reported significant success in treating psychosomatic conditions like IBS and migraines by working directly with the body's *Qi* to release the underlying emotional causes.

The Ultimate Paradigm Shift: The Field Comes First

The existence of the biofield, combined with the mechanism of the ACPR, leads to a conclusion that completely inverts the conventional understanding of both mental health and biology. Pavek begins his foundational 2001 treatise “The Nuts & Bolts of Emotion” with this paradigm-shifting observation:

“Our lives are made up of a long series of responses to emotional stimuli. Every response to a life-event starts with a primary emotional reaction; this reaction always precedes any secondary physical response to the life-event.”

This new hierarchy of cause-and-effect is perfectly captured in a postulate by long-serving SHEN Therapy Instructor and Therapist Russell Fox:

“Field physics fluctuations precede and dictate all biological, electrochemical, mental and psychological responses, adjustments and/or changes.”

This single sentence is a revolution. The old model says our brains produce chemicals that make us feel emotions. This new model says a change happens *first* in our physics-based biofield—a fluctuation in its frequency and information. Our body and brain then *respond* to that field fluctuation.

The feeling of anxiety doesn't start with a thought or a chemical. It starts with a frequency signature of 'fear' vibrating in your biofield, perhaps triggered by an incomplete emotional episode. Your brain, acting as an exquisitely sensitive receiver, detects this disruptive frequency shift, and within mere nanoseconds receives a parasympathetic confirmation of a spasmodic clenching in the gut, solar plexus and/or mid-chest. Now, in its ever-present 'survival first' posture, your brain initiates an immediate release of neurotransmitters and stress hormones, activating multiple biological responses and a cascade of thoughts, justifications and supportive memories. The brain isn't the generator of the emotion; it is the transponder, processing a signal that originates in the field.

SHEN Therapy: A Practical Path to Emotional Release

Understanding this new paradigm is empowering, but its true value lies in its practical application. Richard Pavek spent decades developing and refining **SHEN Therapy**, a gentle, hands-on physio-emotional release therapy designed to work directly with the biofield to resolve the root cause of our suffering.

A certified SHEN practitioner is trained to use the *Qi*, or biofield energy, that flows between their hands to interact with a client's field. During a session, the client lies fully clothed on a comfortable table while the therapist places their hands in precise configurations around the areas of the torso where painful emotions are physically held by the ACPR—the heart center for grief, the solar plexus for fear, the lower abdomen for shame.

The polarized field created between the practitioner's hands works according to the laws of 'field physics' to gently coax the chronic, involuntary contractions of the Auto-Contractile Pain Reflex to release. As the physical tension unwinds, the trapped emotional energy and its associated memories are finally allowed to surface and dissipate, at last completing the emotional episode that may have been stuck for a lifetime. Clients often report feeling a profound sense of lightness and peace, as decades of emotional weight are lifted not by talking, but by releasing the physical anchor of the pain.

A Collaborative Future for Health and Healing

The biofield paradigm does not seek to invalidate the important work of conventional medicine and psychotherapy. Rather, it offers a crucial missing piece of the puzzle. Current approaches that focus only on brain chemistry or cognitive reframing are intervening downstream from the primary problem. They are trying to manage the symptoms of the brain's reaction, not correct the original disruptive signal from the biofield.

This explains why medications often stop working or why relapse is common—the underlying energetic disturbance remains. It is why we can talk about a trauma for years without ever resolving the visceral, somatic feeling of it in our bodies.

The most promising path forward is one of collaboration. Imagine a system where a client first works with a SHEN therapist to clear the deep, somatic holdings of their emotional pain. By calming the constant alarm signals being broadcast from their

biofield and ACPR-affected physicality, they become far more receptive to the valuable insights and strategies offered by a psychotherapist. This integrated approach—addressing the field, the body, and the mind—moves beyond mere symptom management toward genuine, lasting recovery.

To achieve this, we need more rigorous clinical research to validate and explore the principles of biofield science, building on the foundation the NIH established in 1992, and on nearly fifty years of clinical SHEN Therapy client observations from California to Maine and Canada, and from Kenya and Cameroon to England, Scotland, New Zealand and Australia. We don't have to wait for the full validation of the medical establishment to begin our own healing. The wisdom of the biofield has been with humanity for millennia, and thanks to the pioneering work of Richard Pavek, it is now accessible through a safe, systematic, and profoundly effective therapy. If you feel weighed down by emotional baggage, if you suffer from physical ailments that medicine can't fully explain, or if you simply feel that there must be more to healing than what you've been offered, the answers may lie in the 'feeling field' – your own biofield. It may be time to seek out a certified SHEN therapist and begin the journey of releasing the past to finally live fully in the present.

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