

# What is Hakomi Therapy

By Patricia Stepan

*“Hakomi is the absolute cutting edge of modern psychotherapy”  
John Bradshaw*

## What is Hakomi Therapy?

Hakomi Therapy is experiential, body-centered psychotherapy. Founded by Ron Kurtz in 1981 in Boulder Colorado, Hakomi has evolved into a refined, gentle and powerful therapeutic method that is now taught worldwide.

The origin of name Hakomi is Hopi: “How do you stand in relation to these many realms?” The Hakomi Method provides a safe, gentle means for clients to explore and shift “how they stand in relation to” unconscious, hidden beliefs that influence one’s life – relationships, self-image, behaviors, habitual patterns.

There are essential premises that constitute the basics of the Hakomi Method:

- We are creatures of habit. We respond to and organize our experiences in an effort to make sense of life. Most habits exist outside daily awareness, allowing us to live on autopilot: much of who we are is governed by what we don’t know about ourselves – by beliefs, emotions, memories and unresolved issues. As we shape our lives, our lives shape us.

- We possess the ability and innate intelligence to become conscious of how we organize our experience. The most hidden beliefs are capable of change once they become conscious. The ability to bring into knowing that which has been previously been unknown becomes a resource that calls forth new options for living life more fully and with more vitality.

- Focusing on direct experience in the current moment is a key to opening the door between the unconscious and the conscious. Once we become conscious of what we are doing, we have the freedom and power to alter what we are doing.

- The body is a precise expression of our character and beliefs. The body’s structure, habits and patterns are a direct route to unlocking and revealing what is essential, hidden and deeply influential to our beings.

## The Hakomi Principles:

Five essential principles create the context for this profound therapeutic method:

- **Mindfulness:** the art of turning one’s attention inward toward current experience - is a desired and necessary state of mind for the Hakomi process. It is a skill that is cultivated and that improves with practice. Mindfulness becomes the actual key to unlocking the ‘map room’ that holds limiting beliefs and unresolved experience such as trauma.

- **Non-violence:** the state of supporting change without force creates a setting of sensitivity and safety that allows a deep sense of connection to unfold. In the atmosphere of such safety, the unconscious finds respite and a field in which to come forward into consciousness. That which has been hidden, can now be safely expressed and known.

- **Unity:** We live in a world of relationship and it is through relationship that we heal. In the healing process we don’t ‘get rid of’; instead, we shift the nature or quality of our relationship to people, places and things.

We shift “how we stand in relation to these many realms.”

- **Organicity:** Life is a mystery. In Hakomi, there exists a reverence for that which cannot be known and can only be experienced. A Hakomi therapist is not there to solve a problem, but rather is present to support the truth of the experience unfolding.

- **Body-Mind-Spirit Wholism** – Where does the body end and the mind begin?

All experience is incorporated throughout the matrix of body-mind-spirit.

## **The Hakomi Process:**

With these principles as the framework, Hakomi therapists utilize exceptionally effective techniques for assisting clients in accessing, deepening and evaluating their experience. The Hakomi process gently supports the client in translating the language of the body through body gestures, posture, movement, verbal interaction, and the cultivation of internal awareness. Tensions, sensations, images and memories become access routes to limiting belief systems while developing empowering resources that support new options and positive change.

Hakomi is considered short-term, experiential therapy whose focus is self-study and self-understanding. Work with the body/mind often reveals information that has remained unconscious in conventional therapy, making it an excellent adjunct to more traditional therapeutic modalities.

## **The Effects of Hakomi Therapy:**

The experience of personal empowerment that results from such in depth work is profound and highly individual. Clients frequently experience a sense of renewal, possibility and confidence – an overall feeling of being more alive and aware.

Hakomi also addresses the physiological resolution of trauma by gently affording the body an opportunity to “defrost” from traumatic incidences that have been “frozen” in the body, resulting in a reduction of pain and post traumatic stress symptoms.

“Hakomi presents some astounding methods for getting to core material. It is well grounded in theory and revolutionary in its results.”

Assn. of Humanistic Psychology Newsletter

## **Rolfing® and Hakomi Together**

Rolfing and Hakomi together provide a powerful resource for personal transformation, growth and education, facilitating recovery from physical injury, aligning physical structure and exploring alternatives to limiting beliefs held in the body.