

The missing link

Core Energetics for Vanishing Twin Syndrome



Dedicated to Iris,

my twin sister who resides in the land between the gods and men

Postgraduate Thesis Core Energetics

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Introduction

The subject of this thesis is the schizoid wound, in particular prenatal loss of a twin sibling. For my graduation project I have researched and used Core Energetics techniques that help clients deal with this great loss and the energetic openness they had been struggling with as a consequence.

This thesis is the end result of my graduation project for the postgraduate year of the professional training in Core Energetics at the Netherlands Institute of Core Energetics (NICE).

Motivation and Research Question

My graduation project arose from issues that my clients were dealing with. In a short period of time, several clients mentioned the same complaint: they were energetically too open. They felt other people's energy very strongly and lost touch with their own energy. They absorbed the issues of others as if they were their own and were unable to prevent this from happening. Furthermore, they often felt energetically overwhelmed when they were in the company of others, especially in groups, and needed a lot of time and distance to feel themselves again. No matter how much they tried, it seemed almost impossible to protect themselves.

I was able to help my clients to release other people's energy and come back into their own energy space (aura). This gave some short-term relief, but it did not provide a structural solution to their problem. The research question with which my fifth-year project began was: How could Core Energetics be applied to clients who were energetically too open, so that they could protect themselves better?

I was interested in finding out if there were any causes. Why is it that some people are so open energetically?

Colleagues put forward several plausible causes: the mother's stress during pregnancy, birth trauma, an unsafe social environment during the first year, unsuccessful separation process or parentification.

The problem was not unknown to me either. Although I had been very experienced with energy work, I remained energetically too open, which bothered me. I did not know what was causing this openness so I wanted to gain more insight.

At that time, my supervisor Anna Timmermans connected with a deep longing, a sadness and an emotional freeze that I carry within. There was an early traumatic experience in my life for which there were no words, and it is still at the core of my being. During the first supervision sessions, I did not know what this experience was about. However, after a few sessions I remembered that a colleague who can read energy, once told me that I had been in the womb together with a twin sister. But my sister departed soon, which had a big impact on me. I did not feel much when she told me that, but now it came up as a possible cause of my sadness. During the supervision sessions and later in therapy it became increasingly real. I could feel in my body again how wonderful this early life with my sister had been and how immense the shock was afterwards. So I started studying Vanishing Twin Syndrome.

After I had dived into the subject, I was surprised to notice how a number of clients had been dealing with the same subject. Those were indeed clients who could not protect themselves energetically. It was a magical discovery: could one of the possible causes of energetic openness be early loss of a twin? And could this energetic openness be addressed through processing early trauma? If so, that would be a concrete starting point.

The topic of my thesis started out broad but became much narrower with this discovery. I chose to focus initially on Core Energetics for Alone born twins. What is the impact on the foetus that lived on? What is needed for the therapeutic process? What Core Energetics techniques can be used and what will be the result? In particular, I hoped to gain more insight into how Alone born twins became so energetically open and how they could be helped. Perhaps the Core Energetics techniques I would apply could also be useful for clients who are energetically open for other reasons.

Sources and Experiential Research

For this study I was able to draw on my own experience of losing my twin sister. I also researched literature on the subject and I interviewed two colleagues who knew they were Alone born twins. Moreover, plenty of opportunities came my way to apply my insights to my practice. Last year I had seven clients who had lost their twin before birth. Four of them had known this before they came to me, and three discovered it during our therapy sessions but had never had any clues about it before.

Therapy for Alone Born Twins

Losing a twin in utero is a major life event, even for a tiny foetus that can already feel and hear after about eight weeks. First there is divine togetherness with another, next there is a lifeless body next to you. During therapy sessions, I saw how my clients longed to merge with another person and how many frozen emotions and mortal fear they felt when, for example, they firmly pressed a pillow to their body.

I did not want to talk my clients into having had a twin brother or sister, so I tried to stay as close as possible to their experience and truth. Surprisingly, every time I mentioned the possibility that a client could have started out as a twin, it had a huge impact on them. There were many tears or their bodies started to shake. And after that, the clients became intrigued with the subject. In subsequent sessions we were able to go deeper and go back to early sensations.

Step by step I guided my clients on this path. It was nourishing and grounding for them to experience this oneness again in therapy. The body has stored the memory and it is remembered in feelings, in energy—in one's entire being.

The loss of a twin in the womb is incomprehensible and unbearable. Therefore emotional defence is set up from very early on. In therapy, there must be space for mourning and unfreezing the life energy that had become frozen. Having had to bear this loss alone was incredibly painful, so when this grief is acknowledged, healing is a natural result.

There is also a spiritual component. It is life-changing to know that you had a twin brother or sister. Indeed, most Alone born twins feel that their twin is still near them.

Losing a twin comes with specific life challenges, such as learning to embrace yourself now that the other is no longer there, and finding balance on a symbiosis-autonomy continuum.

Thesis Structure

This thesis is structured as follows: chapter 1 describes my personal process. Chapter 2 contains an overview of the researched literature and my findings. In Chapter 3 I outline the impact on the foetus that lived on. I based this on my own experience and that of my clients, on the interviews I conducted and on the literature. In this chapter you will also find characteristics of Alone born twins.

The second part of this thesis (chapters 4 to 6) deals with the therapeutic process, techniques for energetic protection, and provides tools to work with 'No' and the spiritual dimension.

This thesis ends with a conclusion, summarising the main findings and looking ahead. This thesis is just a starting point and it would be wonderful if colleagues joined me on this path.

A Challenging Topic

Losing a twin is a subject that is difficult to 'prove'. In Chapter 3 I mention that even the clients who are directly affected regularly have doubts about whether they had really had a twin sibling and how they can know for sure. Hence this topic requires deep trust in our physical and emotional memory, from both therapists and clients.

For us as therapists, it is an interesting question whether a client experienced having lost a twin. You do not want to overlook anything important in therapy, but neither do you want to talk anyone into anything. In Chapter 3 you will read about the complaints and symptoms that Alone born twins may have. In Chapter 4 I describe what indications may lead to diagnosing Vanishing Twin Syndrome based on the energy field of your client or on the nature of the feelings that your client struggles with. I cannot yet confidently state that a client is an Alone born twin or whether the client has similar complaints which have arisen from different causes. The Romans already said: In *dubio abstine*, or: When in doubt, do nothing. All things considered though, if everything points in the direction of Vanishing Twin Syndrome, this may very well be the missing link in your clients' lives.

Some Final Remarks

I have written this thesis for my fellow therapists in Core Energetics. Therefore, I have chosen not to explain any jargon. However, overall this thesis should be comprehensible for anyone interested in the subject.

I have narrowed this thesis down to prenatal vanishing twins, hence the term in the title. I have also limited myself to twins specifically, although loss of multiple siblings also occurs and may cause even deeper trauma.

This thesis contains the experiences of my clients. After their therapy sessions they sent me their notes. In several places in this thesis I added photos of stones and gemstones that one of my clients used to illustrate her process. My clients gave me permission to publish their texts and photos. For the sake of privacy, I have not used their real names.

When I write about Alone born twins, I will use the feminine gender for ease of reference.

Chapter 1: My Personal Process

In this chapter I will describe my own process. I will explain how I discovered the existence of my lost twin and how I processed this in therapy and supervision sessions. Understanding of and living through my early experiences has brought me much. I feel happier and more fulfilled since I have my twin sister back in my life.

My younger years

As a small child, I was open and sensitive. I also always felt a sadness that I kept to myself. It was a feeling of being lost, which I could not define. It often felt like I was walking around in a fog, that I could not see things clearly and that I did not understand what was going on with me. Of course, I did not have any words for what I felt. In terms of behaviour, I was a cheerful yet adapted and compliant child.

During my teenage years, my feelings were all over the place. I sometimes experienced deep fear. I had concluded that nobody seemed to understand me. I was able to adapt and 'play along', but inside I felt lost.

Energy work

When I was about twenty years of age, I learned about energy work. It opened the door to much more joy in my life and as a result I felt I was truly myself for the first time ever. Energy work felt like home to me. It felt light and easy to do. I also learned how to distinguish my energy from someone else's for the first time in my life. Apparently I had absorbed a great deal of other people's energy, because every time I let go of their energy and filled myself with my own 'colour', I felt a sense of relief.

Core Energetics

After ten years of training with energy work, I enrolled in the Core Energetics Professional Training. I immediately felt at home here and was grateful for all the nurturing and enriching experiences throughout the programme.

We learned about character structures; I felt closely related to the schizoid structure. I recognised that I had problems with 'being here on earth' and that I often felt distant, that I was more connected with 'the other side'. Moreover, I felt I was sensitive in contact with others, vulnerable and easily overwhelmed, as if I was still little inside. In other words, I was not protected enough.

In the second year of the programme, we did a Rebirthing exercise. We went back to the time in the womb, which was a profound experience. I started off feeling harmonious, which lasted for a little while. Then everything became dark. It looked like I was in a war situation: everything was gone. I ended up in a freeze response and stayed there—I did not feel like moving anymore. When it was time to be delivered, I did not want to and underwent the experience with great resistance. I ended up in the arms of the person who played the role of being my mother. I noticed that she did not understand where I was coming from and did not see how numb I was. This felt so unpleasant and unsafe that I did not want to connect with her. I felt wise but also very lonely. I closed myself off from my surroundings.

It was a full-on experience. I had no idea what had happened during pregnancy. When I asked my mother, she told me that her pregnancy and the delivery had gone smoothly on a physical level.

At another point during the programme, we did an exercise with our eyes. We made a shape of the number eight with eye movements. That went well for a little while, but moments later I must have sensed something which was hard to acknowledge. My sight became blurry, I started shaking, my legs gave way and I collapsed. The teacher said that I had seen something which was hard to process, but at the same time I did not know what it was about.

There were more exercises during which we went back to the time in the womb and I cried out loud. Sometimes out of despair and sadness, sometimes because of the all-encompassing connection I felt with All That Is.

My twin sister

A few years after completing the programme, I again participated in supervision sessions with Anna Timmermans. Both my clients and I were dealing with the theme of 'not quite being present'. Anna shed light on the avoidance behaviour I had and which I was only half aware of. I felt inexplicable grief. I realised that I just played along with the game here on earth, but that I did not want to be around really. It was confronting to face this, but also hopeful to start working with it.

After a number of supervision sessions on this theme, I remembered that my peer and energy worker Jeanette had said that I had started out with a twin sister in utero, but that she had left early on. Now that I was launched back into my schizoid wound, I could let the truth about my sister sink in.

In the months that followed, I thought about this in all kinds of ways. During the supervision sessions, in therapy, in conversations with colleagues and by reading literature on the subject. At first I carefully considered the thought that I may have had a twin sister in utero. Soon after that, I after I had let it sink in and started to allow myself to feel the magnitude of it, I became more and more sure that indeed I had had a twin sister in the womb. It was a process; I was never going to ignore or deny this truth anymore and I finally felt ready to fully embrace it. A marvellous piece of the puzzle finally fell into place.

Whenever I went back to my earliest days in therapy, I could sense my sister's company. My heart was filled with joy. In being together, I could feel myself. I was with her and everyone else was far away. It felt infinite. I also noticed that I looked up to my strong sister a little.

During therapy sessions I also experienced mortal fear—a deep panic in my body, something nauseating, something that grabbed me by the throat. This was probably the moment that my sister's body stopped functioning. I think I was about the size of half a finger at the time. The panic turned into a frozen feeling that lasted the entire pregnancy. I did not want to feel anything anymore; I had become numb. During the sessions I saw myself 'checking in and out'. I was constantly moving to 'the other side', although I did not feel happy there either. I also felt how energetically open I was and how my father's depression entered my system. Sadly, all my lust for life was gone.

After having read relevant literature, I decided to organise a family constellations session with friends and colleagues as representatives. Here, the strong connection between my twin sister and I became visible. She was inside my aura on the right side and stayed there. Her presence made me feel doubly strong and grounded. This is how it was supposed to be.

I became more and more happy with my twin sister. I never felt alone anymore. I got more self-confidence, I was happier and felt grateful for my life. I knew who my bridge to the other side is, why I feel energy so easily and why I feel so connected with the spirit world. I felt less anxious and I gained more trust. I felt calmer, was more in the present moment and in a state of flow. Since I was more present in my body, I was also more able to protect myself from unwanted energy. And finally, I stayed true to myself much more easily.

I now understood why I had always lived with the idea that everything could suddenly be over tomorrow. And why so often I felt disappointed with intimate relationships because there was much less intimacy than what I held possible. And also why I always feel so connected with pets and other animals. A part of me has remained very young because of the early experience with my twin sister. I can intimately relate to animals and feel them the way little children feel them.

I also started to understand the impact the early twin loss had made on my body and in my energy field. There are splits in my throat and groin and my spine is twisted. I may freeze emotionally and physically for no explicable reason. My heart feels vulnerable and needs protection. But now I understood how these symptoms could all be traced back to having lost my twin sister. I had subconsciously created the splits so I would not have to feel the fear. And when I turned away from her deceased body in the womb, the twist in my spine occurred. I defended myself against death by curling up and tensing my muscles. By having a freeze response, I was loyal to her because she had died. But my heart was saddened and shocked because of this immense loss.

Thankfully, this life experience with my twin sister has also brought me much. I feel that my energetic and emotional sensitivity has come from being with her and also from having lost her. My sensitivity is who I am.

I do not know what kind of personality my twin sister has. I do feel where in my aura I am open to her though, which is in front of my torso, a little to the right, both close to my body on a physical level and about a meter away from my body on an energetic level. I feel happy when I think of being together with her. I do not know where she is or what she is doing now but that is not important, because it feels peaceful. It is nourishing for the both of us that we are connected.

The relationship with my mother

The relationship with my mother has never been easy. The discovery of my twin sister gave me insight into how the relationship between my mother and I had begun. I came into this life with emotional pain. My mother did not know about this and did not intuit it either. As a result, our communication was off from the very beginning. Even after I had just been born, it was impossible for me fully open up to her emotionally, so I switched off a part of myself to avoid feeling my pain and vulnerability.

Several months ago, when I felt confident enough about the existence of my twin sister, I was ready to tell my mother about it. It was an anxious step for me to take, because I was afraid that again she would not understand and accept me, like she could not do after I had

been born. Indeed, this was how it went. My mother said it could not be true that I had started off with a twin sister because she had not noticed anything during her pregnancy. This was very painful for me to hear. Furthermore, she was not open to the emotional meaning it had for me. However, no matter how painful, it was not as unbearable as it was the first time around, because now I was grown up I could stay true to myself. Instead of freezing, I was able to really stick to what felt true to me and hold myself in this process.

When I asked my mother what name a twin sister would have been given if there had been one, she came up with the beautiful name of Iris. I later discovered that in Greek mythology, Iris was the messenger of the gods. Iris travelled through the land between the gods and the people. When she brought a message from heaven to earth, a rainbow appeared as a bridge. This beautiful image fills my heart and it wonderfully establishes a connection with my mother.

On my own two feet

After almost a year of being very close to my twin sister, the time has come to emotionally untangle our connection. I was loyal to her passing by freezing my feelings and life energy. However, I no longer have to do this. I am alive and I am embracing my life. My energy field is closing and becomes more distinct. I had been one of two but from now on I am the one who is at the center of my life. As a being of light I feel my sister very close to me, which fills my heart with joy.

Chapter 2: Literature Overview

Literature on early loss of a twin has only been published for several decades. Before that, in the West it was assumed that fetuses had no feelings and would later not remember anything about their time in the womb. Today, more is known about the impact of prenatal experiences on the fetus.

This chapter starts with an overview of the sources I used. Then I describe the medical context of Vanishing Twin Syndrome. I also pay some attention to psychological research on the bond between twins and the impact of postnatal loss of a twin, as this has been extensively researched in psychology.

Other insights from the literature are discussed in chapter 3 and 4, which I have illustrated with my personal experiences and those of my clients. As a side note: early loss of a twin is referred to with a number of terms; the most commonly used are: Alone born twin, VTS (Vanishing Twin Syndrome), Womb Twin Survivor (WTS) and early twin loss. In this thesis I have used them interchangeably.

Sources

The most informative publication for our profession was written by German authors: *Das Drama im Mutterleib - Die verlorene Zwillings* (2006)¹, written by the married couple Alfred Austermann and Bettina Austermann. They have had years of experience as body-oriented therapists and in their book they describe some medical backgrounds to early twin loss. What is more, they write about the deep connection between twins from a body-oriented and systemic perspective. They mention the symptoms and difficulties that Alone born twins experience, and they provide therapeutic techniques that may be used.

The first Dutch-language publication on this topic that I read is a book by Aranka Reeuwijk-Willems. Her book *Ik wou dat ik twee hondjes was, dan kon ik samen spelen* (2014)² offers personal stories, medical backgrounds, characteristics of Alone born twins and therapeutic directions. Reeuwijk-Willems founded *Stichting Alleengeboren Tweelingen Nederland* (ATN)³ and in the last quarter of 2021 she organised an online symposium on this theme.

A thorough and extensive scientific publication was written by Nancy Greenfield. She obtained her doctorate in 2007 with the thesis *An Exploration into the Vanishing Twin Syndrome and its Possible Psychological Influence on the Surviving Twin*. Here, she provides an extensive overview of medical and psychological literature; she specialises in Prenatal and Perinatal (PPN) Psychology.

Furthermore, I found about fifteen scientific publications on the consequences of early twin loss in the GGZ kenniscentrum⁴ database. In 1988, Joan Woodward published the first major psychological study on the consequences of postnatal twin loss. She interviewed over 200 people who had lost their sibling at or after birth. In 2004, Carolyn May Dawn completed

¹ English translation: *Drama in the Womb – The Surviving Twin Syndrome* (2019)

² Translated as: *If Only I Were Two I Could Play with You*

³ Translated as: *Alone born twins Foundation The Netherlands*

⁴ Translated as: GGZ Knowledge Centre Database, which is a combination of the APA PsycInfo, Embase, MEDLINE/PubMed, Cochrane, COTAN and NAZ databases.

her doctoral dissertation *The Surviving Twin: Exploring the Psychological, Emotional, and Spiritual Impacts of Having Experienced a Death Before or at Birth*. It examines the psychological problems and characteristics of people who lost their twin prenatally or at birth.

Medical Context

Medically, it is difficult to estimate how often prenatal loss of a twin occurs. The early stages of pregnancy are difficult to monitor visually. It is difficult to tell by ultrasound whether or not there is a twin, as the embryos are so small in the early stages. Moreover, if examined at a later stage, the deceased twin may already have been absorbed and therefore not seen on an ultrasound scan.

Reeuwijk-Willems (2019, p. 112) states that research has shown that one in ten pregnancies starts with twins or multiples. In 90% of these cases, one dies in the early stages of pregnancy. This is confirmed by Austermann & Austermann (2021, pp. 21-47). These percentages apply to embryos and fetuses that have implanted in the uterine wall and whose sensory organs are developing. However, the percentages could be much higher if younger twins are included, before the heart starts beating. Greenfield's dissertation (2007) cites many medical sources, in which the occurrence of early twin loss is estimated at 3-70%. Indeed, the exact number is a matter of guesswork, but the existence and loss of a twin is much more common than most people would assume.

Drama in the Womb by Austermann & Austermann contains an interview with a Belgian specialist in prenatal medicine, Jean-Guy Sartenaer. He states that twins can feel and hear each other before their own hearts start beating, which is after seven to nine weeks. The membranes are so thin and flexible that they can move together (Austermann & Austermann, 2021, pp. 21-47, 78-82).

Sartenaer says that the mother usually does not notice the loss of one of the twins. In rare cases, there are smaller or larger intermittent bleedings. However, if one twin dies, the surviving twin is certainly aware of it. The movements of the dying twin become weaker and the heart stops beating. Furthermore, the composition and taste of the amniotic fluid changes (2021, p. 23, 24).

A dead embryo is usually absorbed by the placenta or the endometrium. Very little can be detected on an ultrasound scan anymore. However, if the deceased twin is older than twenty weeks, it becomes a *foetus papyraceus*; a mummified foetus which is flattened between the membranes of the living foetus and the uterine wall. In some cases, the surviving twin merges with the deceased foetus. This may cause deformities and physical problems later in life. In extreme cases, hair or tooth tissue from the deceased twin may be found in the Alone born twin's body—often in the genitals or lower back. Genetic material of the deceased twin is often found in the survivor's blood (Austermann & Austermann, 2021, pp. 21-47).

Two thirds of twins are fraternal and a third are identical. Fraternal twins each have their own placenta and bag of waters. This may also be the case with identical twins, but not always (Austermann & Austermann, 2021, pp. 35-37).

From the moment of conception until it reaches the size of 2.5 cm, so usually at six to eight weeks after conception, the baby is called an embryo. When the 2.5 cm mark is passed,

the baby is called a foetus. In this thesis, I will use the term foetus for readability, because in practice it is often unclear whether the deceased twin died in the embryonic or foetal stage.

A Scientific View on Foetal Experience

In the 1950s, it was believed that an unborn child was a blank page, without any feelings or sensations (Austermann & Austermann, 2021, pp. 70, 71). Later on, it was scientifically proven that foetuses react to events in the womb and have memories of them later on. For instance, ultrasound scans have shown that amniocentesis may lead to a freeze response in foetuses. They no longer move and their heartbeat becomes weaker.

The Bond between Twins

Much scientific research has been done on the relationship between twins. Almost without exception, twins have an intimate relationship with each other, which is more intimate than the one with other siblings. What is more, twins have a stronger relationship with each other than with their parents (Austermann & Austermann, 2021, p. 100; Greenfield, 2007, p. 7). Macdonald states that *'twins have a symbiotic relationship with each other from which they must emerge in order to become individuals'* (Macdonald, 1994, in: Greenfield, 2007, p. 17).

Consequences of Losing a Twin during or after Birth

Until recently, the consequences of prenatal loss of a twin received little attention in traditional psychology. However, in the 1980s the consequences of later twin loss, namely during or (long) after birth, became a point of interest for researchers. Woodward published the first major study in this field in 1988. Her research shows that *'twin loss can be devastating, debilitating, and deeply wounding. It can affect one's identity, self esteem, capacity to form future meaningful relationships, and ability to trust and fully engage with life. Further, it can cause propensities toward depression, isolation, loneliness, guilt, anguish and fear'* (Woodward, 1988, in: Greenfield, 2007, p. 19). And Greenfield states: *'Research indicates that twin loss bereavement has the potential to exceed, both in degree and intensity, the grief that is experienced from losing a parent, a relative, a spouse, a sibling and even a child'* (2007, p. 21).

Chapter 3: Impact on the Survivor

In this chapter I describe the impact on the tiny being, who was first together with their twin and then all alone. I have based this description on my own experience, that of my clients and interviewees and on reports from the literature (Austermann & Austermann, 2021; Reeuwijk-Willems, 2019; Greenfield, 2007). We do not consciously remember these early experiences; we have to make do with the memories that are in our bodies and in our feelings. My clients explored and relived these early experiences, and were able to make sense of them in therapy.

I also had a private channelling session about the impact that losing a twin in utero has on the survivor. The Core Energetics Guide was channelled by Lea Hütter-Quaas and provided me with more information about the desires and challenges of an Alone born twin.

My personal experiences, those of my clients and reports from the literature are very similar, so I have used them all to create one story. When reading, please bear in mind that other types of experiences may very well be possible too. For instance, losing a twin may not have had a great impact on everyone. If a twin vanishes the first few weeks of pregnancy, the other twin may not yet be aware of their twin, or they may not have bonded yet.

Divine Connection

Early contact with a twin feels like heaven on earth. It is an experience beyond words. Being together with your twin in your common bubble feels completely natural and safe. You are your own little person and at the same time your twin is always at your side. Life flows as it was always meant to. There is joy and there is light. Your twin is your anchor, your everything, and your heart overflows with love for your twin and for life. You are fulfilled. This is eternity; time is of no significance when you are together with your twin. To experience this connection is the most beautiful thing ever, and it will be a blueprint throughout your life.

When the Twin Deceases

According to literature, the death of the other twin may happen in different ways—slowly or quickly, with more or less physical impact for the one left behind (Reeuwijk-Willems, 2019, p. 115, 116). Sometimes my clients say that they had already sensed that their twin was not doing well before he or she actually died. They had noticed that the other had less energy or that he or she was lagging behind in growth, which made them restless.

The other's mortal struggle is an event with an enormous impact. My clients showed me how traumatic it had been: they felt nauseous and lost contact with their body and feelings.

After death, silence follows. No more movements, no heartbeat, and sometimes a motionless lump against their body.

Realisation of Loss

In therapy using a pillow, my clients hold on to the dead body for a long time. They hope it will come back to life. They are just as open towards the twin's dead body as they once had been towards their living twin. Consequently, the death of their twin leaves a devastating impact. However, the realisation of the loss is slow. There is mostly denial, numbness and

despair. My clients stop breathing and moving, they no longer feel their body and feelings and it is as if they have died themselves.

In Austermann & Austermann, 2013, reference is made to the book *Wisdom is Constantly on The Move* by Bert Hellinger. He writes about a medical couple who were expecting twins and who followed their development closely by means of ultrasound. When one of the twins died prenatally, they saw on the screen that the other twin put his/her arm around the dying twin. When the brother had died, the other twin moved away from him as far away as possible. He/she did not grow for a few months.

Expressing emotions is virtually impossible for a foetus. There is no help when going through this kind of experience. Screaming and crying is not yet possible and no one would hear or understand anyway. The loneliness is huge. There is no greater contrast imaginable to the original situation of safe, joyful and communicative togetherness.

Relationship with the Mother

After pregnancy, the baby is born and mother and child meet for the first time. Mothers, however, often do not know that originally there had been a twin, so they cannot fathom the traumatic consequences for the Alone born twin. They are often unaware of feelings of loss, sadness or freezing in their newborn because they cannot sense what is going on energetically. Consequently, it is impossible for the Alone born twin to completely relax, feel safe and held, and therefore to fully attach to the mother. If this is indeed what happens, right from the start the relationship between mother and child is affected by the immense loss the child experienced, which the mother unfortunately had not been aware of.

Moreover, unlike with singletons, the mother is not the first person the baby attaches to because that was their twin. After having lost their twin, it may be hard for Alone born twins to trust another person again. The mother has to be incredibly nurturing to establish the baby's attachment to her.

Some psychologists say that the baby's attachment to the mother may already have been disrupted during pregnancy. LaGoy: *'A consequence of twin loss can include an anxious gestational attachment to the uterus, to the umbilicus, and to the mother. This anxious attachment can continue after birth and can cause nursing and digestion difficulties'* (LaGoy, 1993, in: Greenfield, 2007, p. 55). Furthermore, Reeuwijk states: *'Many alone-born twins do not have an optimal relationship with their mother. (...) This relationship is often especially tense for an alone-born twin because of the ambiguous experience in the womb. In a place where there should only be life, both life and death took place simultaneously'* (2019, p. 159, 160). Thus the womb could not be trusted as a safe space.

Guilt, Self-Image and Connection with Life

Early twin loss often leads to feelings of guilt. In their book, Austermann & Austermann describe a variety of feelings of guilt which their clients were dealing with. They felt guilty because they were alive and their twin was not; because they had left no room for the other to live; because they thought they had somehow devoured the other. And they felt guilty because they could not help their twin and could not keep them alive (2013, pp. 128-133).

Prenatal loss of a twin leads to a negative self-image. Alone born twins often think: 'It must have been my fault that something this terrible happened. I must be a bad person, I have failed. I am not worthy and I am not allowed to be here'. This may be followed by:

'From now on, I have to adapt to make up for it; I have to take care of others to make up for it; I have to forget about myself; I cannot take up any space', etcetera. In essence, the Alone born twin's connection to life is deeply affected by this experience, because being alive does not feel like their birth right. Their twin had deceased but they stayed alive, and at the same time it felt that life was over. This contradiction is essentially confusing and causes split energy in the Alone born twin: 'I am alive and life goes on. Yet, like my twin, it feels I have died as well'.

When my clients start therapy, they show me the coping mechanisms they use to switch off their feelings and leave their body. And if they do not 'check out', they look for ways to escape their suffering. For instance, they engage in extreme spiritual practices or they try to distract and sedate themselves with anything that alleviates their suffering.

Yet losing a twin at such an early stage in life also makes one wise. Alone born twins know what life is worth because they had once lost it.

Energetic Openness

It is not surprising that Alone born twins are very open energetically due to having lost a twin early in life. That first contact as a twin was completely open; together you were one. It was also a very pleasant contact. The fact that the other twin left, does not mean that the desire for such deep contact has gone too.

Bettina Austermann is co-author of the book *Drama in the Womb* (2019). I emailed her, asking if energetic openness in Alone born twins is common. Her response was⁵:

'In our practice, we have found this openness to the energy and emotions of others a lot in people who had lost a twin. The beginning of life was shared with someone else. There was a deep non-verbal exchange, an understanding beyond words between the tiny beings. Such a pure energetic connection and exchange shapes your life forever.

Furthermore, we have seen that not only people who lost had their twin in utero, but also people who had a shock or a traumatic experience at a certain age, remain partly 'frozen' at that age. An example is when the parents divorce.

In essence, many people who had lost a twin are at the core still connected to prenatal life.

To heal the impact of this early experience, reaching out and creating a loving and nurturing connection with your inner child is needed. It is important to feel and understand the pain, grief and shock your inner child had gone through. Your inner child needs healing, so that she can be here now and move on in life.'

Where Do You End and Does the Other Begin?

Reeuwijk-Willems refers to a study by psychiatrist George Engel, who had also lost a twin brother himself (2019, pp. 120-122). I have quoted several parts from a larger piece of text: 'He discovered three factors that distinguish the loss of a twin from other kinds of loss: (...)

⁵ The original email was in German but for clarity's sake I have provided the English translation here.

- **Vague personal boundaries.** *Twins experience themselves and the other much less distinctly.*
- **Loss of identity.** *Many will find themselves in an identity crisis after losing their twin; some feel they have lost a part of themselves.*
- **Fusion of identities.** *The surviving twin subconsciously takes on behaviour, habits and characteristics of the deceased twin.'*

Yvette, a colleague of mine who had prenatally lost a twin, told me in an interview: *'If I am not together with someone who is close to me, with whom I can share an experience or share my experience with, who completely acknowledges me for who I am, I somehow feel I am not fully present with life as it is. I feel emotionally detached and lost, as if I am not capable of experiencing life without someone else's presence. Consequently, because I had started off as a twin and my earliest life experience had been to share everything with someone so close to me, I am always focussed on the other: how they are doing, how they are feeling, if they are okay. I basically want to share everything with others because only then I feel I am alive, acknowledged—that I have the right to exist'.*

Attachment and Relationships

For a child, attachment primarily happens through physical proximity. For twins, the twin is physically closer than anyone else. Therefore, losing a twin inevitably leads to attachment disorder. LaGoy states: *'Twin loss disrupts the attachment process. (...) Losing a twin is losing a soul-partner and a very deep soul attachment is broken. Understandably, this trauma damages the survivor's ability (and willingness) to attach later in life'* (In: Greenfield, 2007, p. 52).

Attachment problems early in life may have far-reaching consequences for one's ability to build relationships with other people. For example, it may lead to a deep longing and searching for boundless intimacy in relationships, for a specific closeness that remains elusive and unattainable. The Core Energetics Guide, channelled in a private session by Lea Hütter-Quaas, states: *'People who have lost a twin are more open and receptive to find their soul mate; they long much more for that connection. At the same time, there is much danger in losing a sense of self or losing a sense of reality'*. Attachment problems may also lead to avoiding contact altogether (Austermann & Austermann, 2021; Dawn, 2003, in: Greenfield, 2007).

Overview of Early Twin Loss Symptoms

Below is a list of characteristics and symptoms that often occur after having lost a twin. Again, I have based them on my own experiences, those of my clients and on the literature when I considered it relevant (Austermann & Austermann, 2021; Reeuwijk-Willems, 2019; Greenfield, 2007).

Traces in the body: splits in the body and especially in the throat and groin, tightness in the chest and nausea or dizziness, problems with hearing, spinal deformity, tumours with atypical tissue (e.g. hair and tooth tissue in the abdomen), permanent change in chest wall due to protection of heart area (e.g. sleeping with arms crossed in front of the heart).

Feelings: feeling lost, loneliness, confusion, despair, deep fear, not feeling safe, disappointment, anger, guilt, depression, inner turmoil, symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder.

Inability to feel: feeling detached, unable to experience feelings deeply, unable to inhabit the body, feeling not fully present on earth, apathy, dissociation, little life energy.

Energetic: open to the social environment, strong focus on another person and not feeling oneself anymore, taking over another person's energy, a void in the aura.

Self-image: insecurity, negative self-image, unworthy, being too much, serving others to 'earn' a place in life, being very responsible, little trust in one's strength.

Expression: used to showing little of the inner world, disbelief that anyone can understand and receive what is, emotional withdrawal.

In contact with others: easy to sympathise with another person, longing for a very intimate connection with another person, looking for real connection and unity, tendency to melt together, large dependency on another person, touch starved; or on the contrary extreme avoidance of contact, lack of trust in relationships, becoming extremely autonomous and self-reliant or always having to take care of another person.

Love relationships: seeking boundless intimacy in a love relationship, great fear of loss or rejection, avoiding deep contact with the partner, fear of attachment.

Difficulty taking your place

Fear of loss: belief that all good things may suddenly disappear, fear of loss, not being able to say goodbye.

Early wisdom: no interest in appearances, feeling different from others, a deep understanding that everything in life is temporary and therefore a deep appreciation for what is here and now.

Looking for the lost twin: having an invisible friend, being fascinated by twins, fascination with death and the world of the dead, always travelling and seeking.

Compensation: very close and equal relationships with pets, expression in art, ...

No therapy helps and feelings of loneliness, loss and fear remain as long as the Vanishing Twin Syndrome has not been established.

Qualities of Higher Self: gentleness towards other people, empathy, openness, knowing of oneness, wisdom, spiritual sensitivity, responsible, inspired, talent for energy work, deep connection with nature and animals in particular, talent for both the arts and sciences.

In the mother, blood loss or an unusually large uterus or placenta during pregnancy may point to the existence of twins, as well as Foetal Growth Restriction.

Both (Austermann & Austermann, 2021) and (Reeuwijk-Willems, 2019) describe that the psychological state of Alone born twins is greatly affected by whether or not the twins had shared an amniotic sac and placenta, and how far away they had been from their twin in the womb. Someone who had lost an identical twin suffers from different symptoms than someone who had lost a non-identical twin.

Lack of Support and Recognition

All publications state that Alone born twins lack acknowledgement and support from their social environment. Carolyn May Dawn describes it as follows: *'They strongly felt information*

about their twinship should have been given freely and talked about early in life; and they thrived on emotional support for their loss and suffered from the lack of it' (May, 2004).

Spiritual Wealth

Spiritually, it is a great gift to have had a twin in utero. I will elaborate on this in Chapter 4, 'Techniques to Experience Oneness Again', and in the final paragraphs of both Chapter 5 and Chapter 6.

Chapter 4: The Therapeutic Process and Core Energetics Techniques

This chapter is about Core Energetics Therapy for Alone born twins. It deals with diagnostics, Core Energetics techniques and the course of the therapeutic process.

Recently I have had seven clients who had lost their twin before birth. Four of them had known about this before they came to me and two of them were referred to me by colleagues. Three clients discovered it during our sessions and had never had any indication about it before. With several clients I have had many sessions on this subject in the meantime.

In two clients' cases, their mother had a haemorrhage around the eighth or tenth week of pregnancy. The mother of a third client had also had a severe haemorrhage and was admitted to hospital after four months of pregnancy. In the other clients' cases, there was no indication of early twin loss during their mother's pregnancy. Their loss had probably occurred at an earlier stage.

Presumptions

Sometimes clients enter my practice with the information that during or after their time in the womb it became clear that they had been part of a twin. Alternatively, they tell me that they had an energy reading, where they were told that they had started off as a twin. I then ask how the client feels about this subject and whether it has been dealt with in previous therapies.

Many people have heard of Vanishing Twin Syndrome, but they do not relate it to themselves. As a therapist, how can you infer that this topic might be relevant for a client? In my practice, the main complaint of the Alone born twin was that they reacted too strongly to the energy of others, or the environment. They could not create energetic boundaries and therefore lost themselves. This is a strong indicator. Furthermore, a client may also possess many other characteristics of an Alone born twin (see Chapter 3 for an overview).

In therapy, you may see a dynamic unfold that may point at early twin loss. For instance, it could go like this: you ask the client⁶ to lie down on a mattress, you allow her time and space to settle, and you ask her how she is feeling. After a while, she becomes nauseous and finds it hard to breathe. She does not want to see, she starts squirming or has a freeze response. She feels lost in the experience. You could ask her what she is going through but she probably does not know. Next, you ask her if she would like to hold a large pillow; she is still lying down. Then the process continues. The client does not know what to do with this pillow. She does not know whether the pillow is a comfort or not, whether it is her own or not. She holds the pillow tight and then pushes it away, or vice versa.

As a therapist, you may also find indications for the existence of a twin if you and the client explore the client's energy field (aura). You stand or sit in different places in relation to your client and together you feel what is happening. A certain place, usually front right or front left, feels soft. The aura has no boundaries. In that place you become the best of buddies. If you stay there for a little while, a strong energy flow will start. If the client is a

⁶ From now on I refer to clients with the feminine pronoun 'her' for readability.

twin, it will evoke strong sensations in her. For example, she may suddenly feel grounded, or sad, or experience a togetherness. The experience is not subtle but grand.

How Do You Communicate Your Presumptions?

As a therapist, you have some indications that there may have been a twin, but how do you proceed? First of all, make sure that your client is fully present in the experience itself. Make sure she is connected to her body and to the truth it communicates. Higher cerebral functions such as thinking only distract. Ask your client what she is feeling. What is this experience about? If she has no idea, you may ask her if she would appreciate it if you made an interpretation. Say that it is of the utmost importance that she checks if this interpretation resonates with her or not. If the client says that indeed she will stick to her truth regardless of your interpretation, you can tell her that she may have started out in the womb with a twin sibling. And that perhaps the twin had left early. Then you remain quiet and see what happens.

During those moments, my clients had very strong reactions. They were crying, had goose bumps and their body was shaking, which lasted the entire session. I did not resume talking about the lost twin after that, because I wanted my clients to feel their own truth.

Most of the clients then surfed the Internet at home. The subject intrigued them. I sometimes gave them book recommendations and mentioned the website www.alleengeborentweelingen.nl.

Here are some emails I received after my clients had felt their twin sister for the first time during a session.

Roos: 'It makes me cry again, because it felt so nice and beautiful and true. It goes really deep, this feeling of being understood. Now I know what it feels like to be together. At first I thought I was dying, but this was actually happening to my sister and I could feel it too. It is wonderful not to be alone anymore with this scary and unpleasant feeling. It feels more complete now, as if I can see and feel more of what was/is.'

And Jeanine: 'I feel different; I am mourning. There is so much recognition. But I have to choose my moments and not get overwhelmed by them, because I still feel the moment I was with her so intensely and my body remembers it and feels the pain. In the mirror I look for her, as I have always done. I feel love, so different from how I had felt it before; I actually dare to feel now. She is there and I miss her. When I close my eyes I can feel how we tumbled in surrender together.'

As a therapist, you might presume your client may have lost a twin, but she might not be ready to work with it yet. If a client has just started therapy or is inexperienced in allowing her emotions to flow, it is best to refrain from further exploration or interpretation. However, you may support your client by occasionally standing on the place of the twin without mentioning it. The client then remembers the energy of the twin in her energy field and she feels the effect: she becomes more grounded and calm inside. You mirror her as if you were her twin and therefore she will be able to feel herself more easily.

Withholding Interpretation

As a therapist, you do not want to talk your clients into having lost a twin when this may not have been the case. Therefore, it is important to initially withhold your interpretation when interpreting complaints and experience. I will illustrate this with an example of a client in my practice. I was not sure whether her complaints were due to early loss of a twin. This client had suffered from loneliness all of her life. She longed for someone to share everything with and had been looking for this someone for years. At the same time, she was afraid of losing another person as soon as she committed. It was usually hard for her to connect with her feelings and she was quite withdrawn. However, in therapy it became clear that she would relax, start to laugh and become much more vibrant when I stood to her left. She would then become much more self-confident and would allow the feelings in her body to flow. When I stood or sat in a different place, however, there was little change. So I regularly stood to her left and asked her what she became aware of. She told me that she had been longing for this feeling of togetherness and that it meant she was looking for a man in her life. Yet I thought there was probably more to it. I waited to see if the signs would become clearer. And during our therapy sessions I invited her to explore how she had felt as a child.

There is no point in waiting until clients themselves come up with the idea of possibly having lost a twin. I have not yet met anyone who consciously remembered this. If, as a therapist, you continue to presume that your client may be an Alone born twin but the indications are weak, you may consider organising a family constellations session. There the existence of a twin sibling will come to light because there will only be peace in the constellation when everyone has been acknowledged, including the deceased twin.

Techniques for Recreating Early Experience in Therapy

If it is clear that there may have been a twin and your client has become interested in the subject, you may proceed. It is important at this stage that the client lets the probable existence of a twin sink in. For some clients this is easy, as they trust the strong feelings they had when they 'met' their twin. Others, however, start to doubt whether it is true when they have left the therapeutic space. In such cases, together you may decide to give it a chance. Even though they are not sure if it is true and will never know for sure, they could explore what effect the possibility of having had a twin in utero has on them.

As a therapist, you can recreate the prenatal experience by starting with aura exploration or by asking your client to lie down. Mention that you are going to explore contact with their twin. The advantage of aura exploration is that you can easily find the connection with the lost twin. It is also easy to do because it can be done standing up or sitting down. However, during aura exploration unpleasant areas that are related to having lost their twin may surface. In chapter 5 I will describe how to deal with this.

When you ask your client to lie down, mention the intention and then allow the energy to do the work. If the client can easily access her feelings, anything can happen: happiness, mortal fear, freezing. You can ask your client to hold a large pillow and ask her to follow her impulses. Try to immerse your client in the experience and refer to her twin brother or sister so she can strongly feel her twin in that moment.

There are other techniques to help clients recreate prenatal experiences, for example rebirthing breathing techniques. Furthermore, the memory of the time in the womb may be evoked by having your client lie down, with her feet placed flat against a wall at 30

centimetres height. Put pressure on the top of her head with your hands and intensify the pressure with every breath your client takes. This technique brings her back to her prenatal experience, specifically the second part of pregnancy when as a baby she felt pressure on her head. However, it does not take her to the time when she was still moving around freely as a fetus.

Sometimes clients know immediately whether their twin was a brother or a sister but sometimes it remains unclear. It may seem of little importance, but language-wise it is more helpful if they know the gender. For instance, talking about someone's 'lost twin' is much more distant than talking about 'your brother' or 'your sister'. If clients have no idea about their twin's gender, I would ask them again at a later time. Sometimes it becomes clear during a family constellations session at a later stage.

Techniques for Mourning

Losing a twin is a shocking experience. As a small being, you suffered immense loss and no one was there to hold you. Even after birth, in most cases there was no understanding. In therapy, acknowledging this sadness and inviting it is the most wonderful gift there is for the client. She must be given ample space for expression, which was impossible at the time of the trauma. However, the therapist must bear in mind not to comfort the client.

In therapy you can explore the experience of loss by having the client lie down and hold a large pillow. You tell her that this is her twin sister or brother and invite her to follow her feelings; this may take some time. At some point, however, the client will no longer want to hold the pillow. Then the experience of losing her twin is near.

A small constellations session may also open the client up to the experience of loss. Here follows an example from my practice, where a client represented himself and I represented his twin brother. During the session I felt myself shrinking in the place his twin brother had been, which I told him aloud. My client confirmed that he felt he became bigger than me. Then I acted on the impulse to drop to the floor, as if my life was over. I lay there completely motionless. This realisation hit my client hard and he started to cry deeply.

With another client, we created a ritual to connect to her deceased twin sister, who was represented by a pillow. We lit candles, added flowers and put them around her sister.

At home, on their own initiative, my clients wrote letters to their twin, made small sculptures, painted pictures and lit candles.

Austermann & Austermann say: 'In order to become whole again, it is essential to be aware of and recognise to the fullest that a great drama took place at the beginning of your life. You lost the one thing you loved the most. This must be re-experienced and felt deeply with body and soul. The desolation, longing and pain have to find a place in your heart' (2021, p. 239).



My client Jeanine: 'I came across these stones and saw my sister and I growing together in our mother's womb. Our beginning together is represented by the big stone in the middle, and the little stones to the side represent our growing apart, where I had more space and my sister became foggy.'

Techniques for Reconnecting with One's Body

At the moment of the twin's passing, there was a life-threatening situation in the womb. One's life was not literally threatened, but the strong identification with one's twin made it seem this way. The nervous system reacted to this on a fundamental level; it went into a freeze response. What is more, the loss of contact and connection may have been so unbearable and traumatic, that the Alone born twin went into a state of shock.

My client Roos said after a session: 'The feeling of dying I felt in the session was the worst I had ever felt. It felt like I was completely trapped in myself, until I took a breath, then I could feel myself again and knew that I was not dying. I am so happy that you were with me during this dreadful experience.'

This stress may last a lifetime. Austermann & Austermann write that *'some Alone born twins are in a permanent state of shock (...). Part of the personality is switched off. This may result in apathy and partial numbness, which is a survival mechanism'* (2021, p. 243). As a therapist, you need to be here-and-now when a client is so far away. Touch may be crucial in inviting the client to feel her body again, as well as understanding, patience and reassurance. It also helps to voice what is happening: 'It seems like you have died too, emotionally'. And sometimes it helps to ask: 'Are you really dead now?'.

Technique to Experience Oneness Again

Having lost a twin is very sad, but being part of a twin is potentially a great source of strength too. Once there had been oneness, which brought great happiness. This unity can still be felt and it is the key to healing the trauma.

Once a client was lying on a rug and I asked her to invite her twin sister. I saw an image of her and her twin sister in a safe and secluded space. I started recreating the 'womb' around

them. I took plants and vases with flowers and placed them in a wide circle around my client. Below is a photo of what it looked like. My client then entered a state of great peace.



Roos: 'I felt so much love, strength, peace. It was so beautiful and I am proud I could have this experience. The moment when it started was like magic. It became quiet and I thought: there were go again, into the womb experience, that had been so scary so far in the sessions. But this time it was different. Very beautiful, empowering, relaxing. I think I will never forget this moment.'

There is another type of oneness as well: spiritual oneness. All my Alone born twin clients feel that their twin is still present, supporting and helping them. In the literature you find that people experience more life energy when they feel and acknowledge their twin. In therapy you may therefore help your clients to spiritually contact their twin. And you may encourage your clients to invite their twin into their daily lives. Tell them how much positive change people have experienced since they have acknowledged their twin.

In *Drama in the Womb* (2021, p. 97), Austermann & Austermann state: *'We have seen that in order to become whole, the surviving twin must make contact with the lost twin. It is not so important whether this contact happens through an inner image in the heart, or through the soul of the other twin, which exists somewhere outside oneself'*.

Techniques for a Restorative Experience

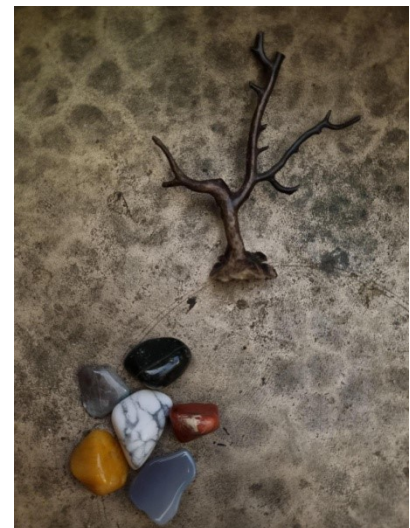
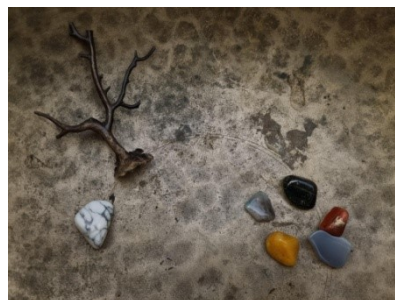
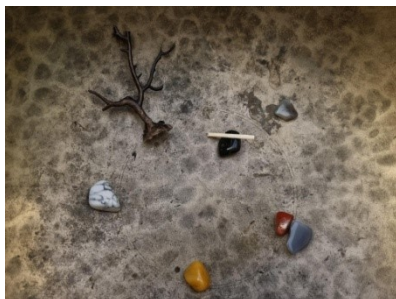
During several sessions one of my clients had re-experienced her total freeze response to the prenatal loss of her twin sister. Each time she went into a kind of shock when she lay down. When she lay down again in the next session, I sat down next to her and put my hand on her arm. I talked to her as if she were a foetus and explained the things to her that life itself had not explained. I did this very slowly. I told her that she was afraid and that she did not understand what was going on. I told her she had first had a twin sister and that she had had a wonderful time with her. I said her sister was not there anymore and that this caused the shock she was in.

Then I invited her to feel the spiritual connection with her sister. She felt it and the connection became very strong. I asked her to talk to her sister and to tell her what was in her mind. I invited her to check what her sister's reaction was to her feelings of guilt. She strongly felt her sister did not want her to feel guilty. Her sister's love and support for her were nurturing at that moment.

Then I talked her through the rest of the pregnancy. I told her that birth was approaching and what it would be like—large pressure on your head and on your body, then light, touch, towels, clothes and so on. I told her that she was going to meet her mother and how happy her mother would be and that she would take good care of her. But I also said that she would not have the same connection with her mother as she had had with her sister. I helped her to close her energy field in that moment. I guided her through this process until the moment she lay on her mother for the first time. All of this had a soothing effect on my client. She came into her body, felt good about herself and was very grateful afterwards.

Family Constellations

A family constellations session can be very valuable, according to the literature. Therefore I organised and guided constellations for my clients. These constellations started with the representatives of first the client and then her twin. When the dynamics between them were played out, the other family members joined in. It was very healing when the entire family saw and acknowledged the twin.



My client Jeanine: 'This is the family constellations session we did with my twin sister. First she stood outside our family and at the end we stood around her.'

You can integrate parts of family constellations therapy into Core Energetics therapy. For example, you could ask your client to assume the role of her twin, or you can take the role of the twin or one of the parents.

Telling One's Parents?

Should the therapist recommend their client to inform her biological parents of the discovery, since the family members' acknowledgement has such a positive effect? The

experiences of my clients are mixed; some parents are open to it but others are not. It is a sensitive subject and it should be treated with caution.

If parents are not open to it, it can still be helpful for a client to tell them the message within the therapy setting. This can be done, for example, by putting a chair in the room and asking the client to imagine that her mother is sitting there. Telling others, in particular parents, is a process in itself which can evoke all kinds of feelings and reactions.

Doubt

At some point in the process, your client may wonder if it is all true. Does she really have a twin? It could be almost impossible to believe and comprehend; your client did not know about this up until then, and doubts how anyone can know this for sure.

These are doubts that everyone has, so it is important to acknowledge them. You could suggest exploring the memories that are stored in her body again, with an open mind and heart.

It also happens a lot that a client strongly feels that there was a twin during the therapy sessions, but keeps forgetting this in daily life. In that case, as a therapist you can encourage the client to pay attention to it on a regular basis. It also helps if clients develop their sensitivity more. The more they are connected to themselves, the more easily they recall their early memories. This subject calls for daring to trust one's feelings and intuition.

The social environment, however, will not always be understanding. It is important that clients protect themselves from scepticism and judgement, for example by choosing with whom they want to share their experiences.

Various Stages of the Therapeutic Process

In summary, the therapeutic process consists of several stages:

- Confrontation with the possible existence of a twin;
- The first emotional reactions;
- Exploring the early period: what memories are stored in the body, in the emotions, in the energy field;
- Mourning the loss and coming out of the freeze response;
- Celebrating the unity that had been and still is;
- Optional: allowing the twin a place in the family system, show him/her to the parents;
- Optional: saying goodbye on an energetic level (see also chapter 5).

Most clients find a name for their twin at some point; either a name comes to mind, or they ask their parents. You must not force this process but you can encourage it. The twin becomes much more human once he/she has a name, which gives peace of mind.

The therapeutic process needs continuation. With some clients I have been working on this subject for half a year and during each session we peel yet another layer. Energetically, there is always something ready to be felt and seen.

In the literature we read that some clients are helped with just one session, because that is when the pieces of the puzzle fall into place. Others, however, go through a long process. And there are very few people who remain burdened with feelings of grief or stress for life. The attachment that the parents were able to promote is an important factor here.

Austermann & Austermann write: *'A person with compassionate parents can more easily compensate for the drama in the womb and loss of the beloved twin'* (2021, pp. 242, 243).

Reference

Clients might ask for literature on the subject. There are books, articles and websites that provide information on Vanishing Twin Syndrome. I have listed reliable sources in the bibliography.

As a Core Energetics therapist, there are plenty of techniques at your disposal to work with Alone born twins. If you are less familiar with subtle energy work, you could ask a colleague or an energy healer for help. You may do a session together, or have the other do a few sessions with the client to awaken the body memory. You may also consider referring the client to a family constellations guide or therapist, or you can organize a session yourself.

Chapter 5: Therapeutic Techniques for More Energetic Protection

This chapter is about energetic openness and about techniques that can help clients improve their energetic protection. These techniques can be used for all energetically open clients, whether they are Alone born twins or not. The last part of this chapter is about Alone born twins specifically.

Energetic Openness

As therapists, we attune to our clients. We feel with them. We are in the same resonance field with them. Sometimes we cry with them. We feel their tension in our own body. Our openness to their energy is a great gift for our clients.

However, we must not take over our clients' emotions, energy and issues. We have to find the right emotional distance. We practiced this a lot in the training.

Still, it is not always easy. Taking over issues from clients can happen on a subconscious level. This happened to me in my exam session at the end of the professional training. I attuned to my client and soon after that, I lost my grounding and I felt confused. During the whole session I felt like this. In the discussion after the session we spoke about it in the group. I still was not grounded. Then my client told about a period in her life when she had felt mentally confused. At the moment she said that, I immediately felt myself again. I felt grounded again and I was very happy I was back. So I concluded that in the attunement I had absorbed this confused energy of my client. I had felt her confusion that still was somewhere hidden in her energy. When this confusion came into her consciousness again, the energy of it flew back to her. I was not my confusion, it was hers. Only during the session I had not been aware it was hers.

This is how it goes for some of our clients too. They are too open to the energy of others. They feel overwhelmed, 'full', blurry or depleted. They feel stuck in this. Last year I had many clients in my practice with this complaint.

Some of my client who were energetically open were fully aware of what happened to them when they interacted with another person. They told me they easily took over emotions from their mother for example. Or they told me they could not feel themselves anymore when their partner was not connected with his/her feelings. They asked for my help, because they noticed that this happened but they were unable to change it.

Some clients had no idea what was going on with them. They did not know they might also carry the burdens of others.

A curious thing about absorbing other people's energy is that it only happens as long as the other person is not in touch with his/her feelings. So, for example, you might feel someone's sadness, while the other actually suppresses their sadness. The problem becomes bigger when the other person does not take ownership of their issues. But if the other gets in touch with their emotions, no matter how intense they may be, this problem does not exist.

Part 1: General techniques

Grounding

The best energetic protection is to be fully in the here-and-now, to fully inhabit your body and to feel yourself. So in therapy you work with techniques that enhance that. In other words, you help your client become more grounded. That is also the basic principle in Core Energetics. As therapists, we are also a role model. Sensitive clients clearly sense our grounding and this can inspire them to ground themselves as well.

Some clients are not fully present. You can explore with your client where her energy is: she might feel part of her energy is with her body and part of her energy is floating. Generally sensitive clients are able to describe this feeling very precisely. Awareness of their energy already brings a change.

My client Stefanie wrote to me: 'In the session I found out I was only half present. It helped me a lot when you touched my head. Then I could feel my body. That was a great feeling. Since the session I am much more aware in daily life whether I am present or not. Mostly not. I have no idea where I am, somewhere 'in between'.'

Closing One's Energy Field

In therapy you can help your client close her open energy system by verbally and energetically guiding her to do this. Ask her to visualise an egg-shaped aura around her with a rim around it, and to visualise grounding. You can also put plants around her which energetically protect her, or give her a rug to sit on which represents her personal space.

Techniques for Returning Energy

In therapy, you can help your clients distinguish which feelings are theirs and which feelings have been absorbed from other people. You can help them consciously release the energy they have picked up.

One of my clients came to my practice feeling off. She did not know why. She told me she felt like hiding. It was obvious that she barely inhabited her own energy field and body. I knew that her father was seriously ill at that time. Thus, I took a roller and told her that it represented her father. I placed that roller a few metres away from her. This had an immediate effect. She breathed a sigh of relief, she felt herself again and she was in the here-and-now. She then also recognised her father's sadness and fear, which she had subconsciously absorbed as her own. So energetically bringing her father into the therapy room made it possible for her to immediately release the energy she had absorbed.

She wrote me: 'I am still flabbergasted. Everything changed when my father came into the room. I got my own space again. Unbelievable how much difference this made. I saw it was all his pain. The feelings I had were not mine. I really had no idea about that. I really want to learn what to do so that this will not happen again.'

So it can happen that absorbed energy immediately flows away when the client becomes conscious that it is not her energy. Sometimes there is more to be done. It can be helpful to do a small ritual in which the client gives the energy back to whom it belonged. Then you can

ask your client to say to this person: 'This is yours. I have carried this for you because I love you. But now I give it back to you'.

The more I work with this phenomenon, the more I see it. During a session it sometimes happens that a client is completely stuck in something. The energy does not move at all. Or a client seems to disappear. Then I might suddenly realize there is more to it. I ask my client: 'Is this feeling yours or someone else's?' We explore together whose energy she might have absorbed.

Exploring Triggers

Clients who are energetically open are sometimes more sensitive to certain types of energy. Everyone has triggers which have the most impact on them. In therapy, it is useful to explore these triggers. Often they are subconscious.

For example one of my clients is over-responsible. She takes care of others a lot. She easily takes on energy, because she wants to help or 'rescue' the other. We explore together what makes her do this, what pain is behind it.

If you always take care of others, or if you are always checking to see if you are safe, then you are not fully centred in your own energy.

Awareness of One's Energy Behaviour

One of my clients had a strong tendency to focus on other people's energetic space. She would examine another person with much interest. She would also do this with me when she was in my practice. I felt her entering my energetic space, which made it difficult to feel myself. She said she had always done it and it happened subconsciously. When it bothered me, I asked her where her attention was focussed. The moment she was aware of her energy behaviour, it no longer bothered me. We also explored what she was looking for when she was energetically focussing on others. I helped her to visualise a colourful aura and grounding. This made her calmer.

Turning Sensitivity into Strength

Energetic sensitivity is a wonderful gift because it allows someone to feel the greatest joy in life: to deeply enjoy the connection with other living beings, to experience direct spiritual support, to feel connected with All That Is. These beneficial aspects of energetic sensitivity should also be paid attention to in therapy. As a therapist you can empower your client by telling her these are her Higher Self Qualities.

There is another quality that energetically open people have: they can mirror other people. By sensing emotions and issues that the other one is not yet aware of and by naming them, they can give the other more awareness. This also applies to therapists who are energetically open. It is a gift that they can sense their clients and give them information about themselves that they were previously not aware of.

Part 2: Improving Energetic Protection for Alone Born Twins

The second part of this chapter was written specifically with Alone born twins in mind. Most twins are as one on the energetic level. Together they are solid. Their deep connection protects them energetically from their environment. So when one of them passes away, there is a huge void.

In therapy you can guide your clients to remember their early time in the womb. In the previous chapter you find therapeutic techniques to do this, so your clients feel true togetherness with their twin. They feel like being in a thick cocoon together with their twin and the energetic protection that it provides. This is a nurturing experience for clients who are energetically open. This experience helps them to be more connected to themselves and they might feel grounded and more embodied like never before.

In therapy your clients also feel their reaction to the loss of their twin. On the energetic level they feel that there is a hole in their aura. You help your clients connect with this void and explore the feelings that come up. There might be grief or there might be deep longing. I believe the void in the aura is one of the reasons why Alone born twins are energetically too open. When one's aura is not completely filled with their own energy, the void is easily filled up with energies that are not theirs.

Energy Exchange with the Lost Twin

My client Roos described in an email what she felt during a session: 'I was lying and I felt myself in a complete freeze. I was totally powerless. It felt like this would never end. You asked me to move, but this was really impossible. Then you asked whether this freeze was mine. It touched me, I felt tears in my eyes. Then I could let go: this was the freeze of my twin sister. Then I could lie down with her next to me and see her suffering, maybe dying. I was there too, not taking over any more but seeing it. That was totally new.'

Roos relived her womb memories in therapy and had a restorative experience when she did not merge with her dying sister anymore. More generally, unprocessed energy from the deceased twin may be present in the Alone born twin's energy field. This can feel like a confusing lump in the aura. One of my clients experienced the following: she felt an unpleasant sensation to her front right. Her aura had no boundary there. To me it felt like some leftover energy/emotion from her twin sister. I expressed this and then she became emotional. I guided her in giving it back to her sister, after which she felt relieved and present. I also guided her in cutting the energy cords with her twin sister. The effect was that she felt her own energy space for the first time in her life. This was so new to her that she did not know if it was okay to feel this.

The literature states that genetic material from the deceased twin is usually found in the Alone born twin's body. It may even be the case that the body is completely absorbed by the Alone born twin, which could lead to deformities and physical complaints later in life. So this is a residual phenomenon on the physical level. On an emotional and energetic level, however, something may also have been left behind.



My client Jeanine: 'I came across this sculpture in a shop. Connected and loving, but also entwined.'

In therapy you can help your clients to separate their energy from that of their twin, to let go of loyalty and guilt and to stand on their own two feet. After a profound energy exchange, their energetic space transforms. The boundaries around their aura close and become thicker. They will then retain and feel their own energy more. The mourning process becomes more peaceful and the energetic wound heals.

Spiritual Connection with the Twin

There is one level where the connection with the twin remains forever, which is the spiritual level. In the family constellation sessions I organised for my clients I saw they were much stronger and more vibrant when their twin was at their side.

Chapter 6: Working with 'No' and the Spiritual Dimension

This chapter is about transforming the 'No' into a 'Yes', about the Alone born twins' mission in life and about the spiritual dimension in therapy. For Alone born twins, engagement with the spiritual world is a prerequisite for deep healing.

Working with 'No' in Therapy

Transforming the inner 'No' to life to a 'Yes' is the goal of Core Energetics therapy. Alone born twins have been very familiar with 'No' from the moment they lost their twin. They experienced the death of their twin up close. As a result, death has become a part of them. The goal of therapy is to unfreeze frozen and lifeless parts of themselves, and to focus on themselves as living beings and not on their deceased twin.

The early loss of your best buddy is unbearable and all the more reason for a big 'No' to life: 'No, I will not go on like this. I do not want to be alive if life is like this. No, just let me go to be with my twin. No, I do not want to feel anymore. No, I am never going to show what I feel anymore, because there is nobody there for me anyway. No, I am not going to bond with anyone anymore. No God, please say this is not true, and I do not want you either if you do this to me'.

Actually, an Alone born twin wants nothing more than to experience that deep feeling of oneness and happiness again with the other and to relax in it. But since that is not possible, she rejects her desires out of emotional self-preservation.

In Core Energetics therapy, we invite our clients to feel and express their 'No'. Most clients are not aware of saying 'No' to life. They notice that they have a hard time connecting to themselves or feel emotionally frozen, but they do not know what their part in this is. In therapy, explore your client's reaction to having lost her twin. You help your client to express her 'No' and to discover what exactly she is saying 'No' to. It is important that you provide safety and are emotionally present, because this is a large and lonely trauma. In the schizoid period there were no words yet, so the client needs to be guided to express herself.

Transforming 'No' into a 'Yes'

When clients become aware of their 'No', they see that they have been sabotaging themselves. This insight is the starting point for change. Clients often say: 'Yes, that is how I do it, I disappear/freeze/refuse'. As a therapist, you help your clients to fully feel and express their 'No'. The more energy clients put into this, the more this energy could be transformed. Just being aware of their 'No' is not enough to fully transform this energy.

Transforming 'No' into 'Yes' is one of the main Core Energetics therapy goals. It is a rather lengthy process because victim energy is persistent. It seems that you cannot change your feelings and reactions. Sometimes transforming 'No' happens spontaneously during a session. The energy that is released through expressing 'No' transforms into life energy. As a result, your client relaxes and feels that new possibilities are within reach.

The transformation from 'No' to 'Yes' does not always happen spontaneously. In that case, as a therapist you may guide your client to a new experience. One of my clients was lying on the floor as if she was frozen and said she felt guilty and would rather disappear. She had already been kicking, as I suggested, expressing her 'No'. Then she did not know what to do any more. I asked her to kick, saying 'I am here' and 'This is me'. She found it

hard to do but she did it anyway. She then stepped into her power, which was a new experience for her. She felt bigger and stronger than ever before and at the same time she felt how she had always tried to make herself small and adapt to the people around her.

Mission in Life

Alone born twins briefly experienced what heaven on earth was like. Together with their twin, they had once burst with life energy—full of trust, joy and lightness. However, when they lost their twin, these wonderful feelings disappeared but the memory and the longing remained. They know that it is possible to be happy. Here lies the mission of Alone born twins: to allow themselves to bask into the light and make themselves happy.

Building a solid relationship with oneself is a life task and at the same time a great challenge. There is guilt, misunderstood emotions, fear, an energy field which is too open. First there was the other, who embraced you completely. Later, you have to learn to embrace yourself, to be at peace with yourself, to forgive yourself and take responsibility for your healing process.

For Alone born twins, it is a challenge to find the right balance between keeping distance and the desire to be close with someone else. On the one hand, they want to merge with someone else. On the other hand, it feels safer to withdraw, because they are not comfortable in their own skin and are too easily overwhelmed. Their life task is to find the right balance between autonomy and connection. This becomes much easier when they become more grounded in themselves and less dependent on others.

In addition, learning to deal with sensitivity is a life task as well. Sensitivity is a huge talent and strength. But it is also difficult if Alone born twins are easily overwhelmed or if they do not realize that they absorb other people's energy. I dare say that everyone who is highly sensitive needs guidance and training in order to find their way in present-day society.

The Spiritual Dimension in Therapy

The Alone born twins I know are very much into spirituality. Without hesitation, they accept the existence of God, spirit guides, energy 'on the other side'. They are convinced that life continues after death, that life has a purpose and that there is higher guidance. Perhaps they have come here first and foremost to develop themselves spiritually in this life. It could even be that Alone born twins only find happiness when they develop themselves spiritually in life. Only when they start feeling the existence of their twin can they become whole again. Their twin exists in spirit and connects with them in spirit. The spiritual development of Alone born twins is accelerated when they embrace their twin.

Austermann & Austermann state: 'Many Alone born twins perceive their twin, once discovered, as being present. The twin is sensed as a being who is around them. Many people experience their twin as a guardian angel who gives them a sign in dangerous situations and warns them. For others, the presence of the deceased twin is a source of wisdom. Many people tell us that the deceased twin, after being rediscovered, was at some point very close to the Alone born twin, only to retreat into infinite sleep again after a while' (2021, p. 96).

Alone born twins are alive in a body on earth and their twin lives on in the spirit world. Because the two are so intimately connected, they live in both places at the same time, and messages 'from above' are perceived easily by the Alone born twin.

As I mentioned before, all of my clients are interested in the meaning of life and talk about it in therapy. They wonder why something happens to them, they give meaning to their experiences, they put into words what they have to learn in life, and they talk about their intuition or about signs they see. It is pleasant and meaningful to take the time when clients talk about the meaning of life, to feel what drives them deep down inside and how they look at life. I feel grateful that as a therapist I get to be so close to someone on all levels.

In an interview, my colleague Yvette said to me: 'My twin sister became my bridge from the spirit world to life on earth. I would never have crossed it if she had not accompanied me, and I was finally able to fully choose to live my life on earth. Looking back, I am grateful that I have done that.'

The relationship with Source, God, the Creator can also be disrupted by loss of the other. Greenfield writes: *'Twinship approximates the intimacy that one feels in one's relationship with Source. Twin loss approximates the deep yearning for reconnection that one might feel from one's disconnection from the Divine'*. And also: *'Twin loss is an exacerbation of divine loss, and often confused with it'* (2007, quoting PPN experts, p. 38). To illustrate this, a colleague of mine who had prenatally lost her twin brother told me that she had also lost her trust in God. She no longer felt safe to surrender to life and its natural flow. She was incredibly angry with God.

Conclusion

My original research question was how I could help energetically open clients with Core Energetics therapy. Gradually it became clear that prenatal loss of a twin is one of the causes of an open energy system. In this thesis I have focused mainly on this.

Prenatal Loss of a Twin

Prenatal loss of a twin happens more often than most people think. People often do not know that they started off as a twin.

Losing a twin leaves deep traces in the body, feelings, energy, self-image, relationships with others and the relationship with life itself. Often there are feelings of loss, sadness and fear. Alone born twin experienced heaven on earth in an intimate connection with another and they subconsciously want to recreate this unity again. At the same time, they are afraid of losing someone again and consequently of connecting deeply with another person. It is a challenge to find a healthy balance on the symbiosis-autonomy continuum. The early confrontation with death and the immense loss may lead to a prolonged freeze response and schizoid problems.

Core Energetics Therapy for Alone Born Twins

Recognising and acknowledging that Alone born twins started off as a twin is a deeply healing and life-changing experience. Further exploration and processing their early experiences brings a healing process.

Having a twin has great spiritual value. Clients still experience the presence and support of their twin. Indeed, their spiritual growth is accelerated by embracing their twin again.

Clients of mine who had been processing their early twin experience for a longer period of time, say they have benefited greatly from it. They understand themselves better and are more gentle with themselves. They feel more present in their daily lives and altogether experience more happiness and ease. What is more, they have become more energetically aware; they notice it much sooner when they take on other people's energy. Generally they feel clearer.

Roos: 'The fact that I have a twin makes an enormous difference to me. What is really wonderful is that I now see where my energetic openness comes from: I am still looking for a beautiful connection like I once had with my sister. Working with my twin in therapy empowers me. I am very grateful for it, it has changed my life. And I also know that I am not finished yet, that I still have so many pieces of the puzzle to complete and struggles to process. But if I feel my sister at my side, none of that matters in that moment. Then I dare to be there.'

Jeanine: 'Now I know that I prenatally had a twin, every day something falls into place that helps me understand and love myself more. I also feel less lonely, more understood and I can comfort myself better. Connecting with my body and with my sister during therapy sessions has awakened some sort of peace in me. Even years of pain could be relieved for a little while. As a result, I feel much more centred and grounded.'

Energetic Openness

Alone born twins are often very open energetically. There are several reasons for this; they started out in unity with another person, so not as an energetically separate individual. The departure of their twin is usually not processed and the prenatal wound is still open. Subconsciously, the desire for union is still there. In the aura of Alone born twins, there is often a hole where union easily takes place.

This energetic openness can be 'treated' by having the client work with their twin. Examples are: through exchanging energy, letting go of entanglements, spiritually connecting with their twin. The energetic openness can also be tackled with more general energy techniques and Core Energetics techniques.

There are also other possible causes of energetic openness. The techniques described in this thesis to promote energetic protection are not limited to Vanishing Twin Syndrome but can be applied to other cases as well.

More Insights

This project has provided much insight in the schizoid wound. How exactly a schizoid wound develops is often unclear. What is visible, however, is the deep impact this wound leaves: despair, sadness, saying 'No' to life, splits in the body, emotional freezing. We learned in the Professional Training Programme that clients with a schizoid wound need safety, softness, invitation, protection, a feeling of being welcome. We learned how to help them through grounding and expressing their 'No'. This graduation project has made it clear that a schizoid wound is caused by a specific life event. The pain and defence mechanisms are immediate and understandable reactions. It is all in the body.

This project shows that we are sentient and aware beings very early in our development already. Someone who loses their twin at ten weeks may have physical, emotional and energetic memories of this throughout their lives. This research has also shown that it is possible for clients to remember their prenatal experiences in therapy sessions. This research has also shown that as therapists we might see prenatal trauma before the client is aware of this.

Finally, this project has also shown that as therapists, we can make a real difference to our clients if we show that we understand them on a deep level. Let us continue to deepen our knowledge so that we can understand our clients more and more.

Follow-up Study

This thesis is a starting point. There are many aspects that are interesting for further exploration. For example:

- ***Energetic openness in general:*** How come that energetic openness is only a problem when the other is not aware of her own emotions or pain, and that the energetic interaction changes when the other becomes aware of it? Which Core Energetics techniques have a direct effect on the client's energy field and how does the energy field change through therapy? What can we learn from herd animals, that also feel and respond to each other's energy?
- ***Elaboration on the traces of twin loss in the body and in the energy field:*** Where do splits occur? How does the loss stop the flow of life energy? Insights into these questions would benefit diagnosis and therapy.

- ***Therapeutic techniques*** to deal with the consequences of twin loss, in particular problems with establishing and maintaining intimate relationships.
- ***A spiritual perspective on twin loss.*** Where is the deceased twin now and how can the twin siblings connect in a spiritual way? What is the spiritual task for the Alone born twin and how can the spiritual dimension be fully integrated in therapy?

Theories that may provide interesting insights include attachment theory, rebirthing theory, polyvagal theory and prenatal psychology. It could also be informative to look at other types of therapy that address the consequences of twin loss.

I would like to continue with this subject, because there is so much to experience and because it is very significant for clients. It would be interesting to combine and deepen the knowledge and cases of colleagues and myself.

Personal Gains

I thoroughly enjoyed writing this thesis. It made me happy to write every word of this thesis, to share my text with my supervisor Anna and my colleagues, and to celebrate the truth in it. There has been much personal growth for me during this postgraduate project and I am very happy for all that I have received.

In this project I found out that the experiences I had with my twin sister are at the root of who I am. This is something I had not known about before. I understand myself much better now and feel more grounded and fulfilled.

During this graduation project, I was in a state of flow. My personal experiences supported my clients' processes. There were many clients with whom I gained more experience. I did not communicate much about this subject and had not published it on my website either. It is often said that as a therapist you get the clients that are a match with you and, indeed, I am proof of that. Synchronicities like these and integrating spirituality in my research makes me enjoy my profession so very much. It feels like I was playing with magic all the time.

Writing this thesis came naturally. I now trust that life itself helps us heal old pain. I have become even happier with our profession, Core Energetics, because of the intuitive and spiritual component that is included. To me, this creates flow and abundance.

Early life with my twin sister awakened my sensitivity. I am energetically open but these days it does not affect me as much as it used to. My energetic sensitivity is also my greatest happiness. I can be close to others, I can sense my clients, I feel connected to nature and to the bigger picture. I can rely on spiritual help and my sister is always at my side.

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Contributions (in Dutch and English) can be viewed online for a fee.

Other sources

In March 2022 I had a channelling session from the Core Energetics Guide. This channelling was done by Lea Hütter-Quaas.

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