Self-care with Elementary Health Care
(Elementare Gesundheitspflege®)

Managing stress and strengthening the immune system are of current importance. There are effective original forms of nursing therapy from human cultural traditions. In the following text you will find easy-to-use self-care applications.

Elementary Health Care (EHC) (Elementare Gesundheitspflege®) was developed in the mid-1980s by Erna Weerts, a health and nursing teacher, to maintain and promote health for all people. The original basic forms of care are used:

Meeting, perceiving, touching, warming, moving.

The following intentions are pursued with the self-care applications: stimulation of individual self-regulatory talents, promotion of relaxation and well-being, relief from complaints, strengthening of the immune system.



All applications are carried out using the shell-shaped hands as a resonance chamber to stimulate the body's own warmth and minimal movement.



Fig.1: Heat stimulation via solar plexus, sternum and both combined.

Figure 1 shows simple forms of heat stimulation for self-application over the solar plexus, the sternum and both combined. Each position is held loosely for at least 3 minutes with the hands cupped in the shape of a shell. The applications can be carried out one after the other or at intervals. They can also be done sitting or standing. You can also carry out the applications at night while you sleep in order to keep your hands with you for as long as possible. You can place a pillow under your knees to ensure a physiologically sensible position for the whole body. The pleasant effects can be understood as increased heat generation under the shell-shaped curved edges.

According to hormone researcher Prof. Kerstin Uvnäs-Moberg, a touch that is experienced as pleasant increases the body's production of oxytocin. The increased release of this “happiness hormone” in turn has a positive influence on the parasympathetic nervous system, which is associated with relaxation, well-being, regeneration, pain relief and healing [1].

According to the preventive medicine specialist Prof. Gerd Schnack, targeted external applications can have a calming influence on the entire body and soul and are related to what he calls the “great calm nerve” [2].

The haptics researcher Prof. Martin Grunwald writes about the effects of relaxation-promoting touch, here carried out by other people: "Measurable changes can also be seen at the level of immunological markers that can be detected in the blood. Numerous studies have been able to prove that the immune system improves after intensive touch stimuli are stabilized and anti-inflammatory processes are accelerated [3]."



Abb.2: heat stimulation over sternum-/7th cervical vertebra, larynx and ears

Figure 2 shows heat stimulation over the sternum in combination with the 7th cervical vertebra, as well as over the larynx and ears. All applications shown in Figures 1 and 2 stimulate sites also connected to the vagus nerve. The thymus gland, which has a central influence on the immune system, is also located under the breastbone. Regulative heat stimulation can of course also be carried out in many other places. Applications over the costal arches promote blood circulation in the lungs and experience has shown that they can help relieve breathing difficulties.

The pioneer in the development of nursing science in Germany, Prof. Ruth Schröck, has accompanied and promoted the EHC approach from the beginning. She specifically recommends these regulatory applications for self-care [4].

[1] Uvnäs-Moberg, K. (2016). In U. Streit & F. Jansen (Hrsg.), Oxytocin, das Hormon der Nähe. Gesundheit – Wohlbefinden – Beziehung (S. 50-55). Berlin/ Heidelberg: Springer Spektrum.

[2] Schnack, G. (2016). Der Große Ruhe-Nerv (S. 54-59). Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder.

[3] Grunwald, M. (2017). Homo Hapticus. Warum wir ohne Tastsinn nicht leben können (S. 159). München: Droemer.

[4] Schröck, R. (2016). Geleitwort. In: Erna Weerts (2. Aufl. 2017): Dynamisierende Selbstregulation (S.16f). Nidda: hpsmedia.