



Method Identification (METID)

Aquatic Bodywork

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1 Method description

Aquatic Bodywork

2 Brief description of the method

Aquatic Bodywork, which was founded around 1980, combines the natural effects of warm water on the body, mind and emotions with gentle therapeutic manipulation and movement. Its roots lie in traditional Eastern forms of treatment such as Zen Shiatsu. It is influenced by a western understanding of health.

In Aquatic Bodywork, clients are treated in water that is around 35°C and at a depth of approximately chest-height. In a preliminary conversation, held either prior to immersion or in the water, the ailments and concerns of the client are discussed and a comprehensive assessment is made, taking into account their inner potential for resilience (in the following also referred to as “inner resources”). The client is prepared for the therapy in the water and is made aware of specific features of the treatment such as the change in buoyancy and its effect on movements of the chest during breathing. The complementary therapist strives to make the client feel safe in the water and encourages them to communicate any physical and mental changes that they become aware of.

The warm water usually has a tension-reducing and relaxation-promoting effect on clients. The therapist places the client in their arms and performs slow rocking, undulating and spiralling movements. The attention of the client is directed towards their inner self. Often the absence of external stimuli with alternate periods of movement and stillness creates an impression of floating, weightlessness and deep relaxation. Aquatic Bodywork can bring clients into contact with their deepest inner potential for resilience such as the ability to let go, to experience inner peace, to feel security, attachment and basic trust.

In Aquatic Bodywork the complementary therapist offers impulses to the client by means of gentle mobilisation and massage as well as targeted stretching and acupressure treatment in the area of the meridians¹. These can allow enhanced mobilisation on a physical level and help clients to rediscover movements that in the context of everyday habits remain partially or completely unused. At the same time, organs can be strengthened reflexively, meaning indirectly. Repetitive movement sequences and rotations in space are used in a targeted manner, taking into account spiral dynamic principles for individual posture and movement coordination.

The passivity allows the client to achieve a considerably increased perception and self-awareness in the physical, emotional and mental spheres. In addition to physical aspects, memories, feelings or inner images can become more accessible. The framework of Aquatic Bodywork enables the body to remember, especially prenatal states. The complementary therapist in Aquatic Bodywork consciously gives space to these perceptions and states and uses Utilisation² to deepen the therapeutic process interactively. Connections between the emotional condition, physical ailments and thoughts/beliefs can therefore become conscious.

¹ **Meridians** are channels through which the life energy Qi, 氣 flows according to the understanding of Traditional Chinese Medicine TCM.

² The term **Utilisation** was coined by the American psychiatrist Milton Erickson. It describes a basic therapeutic attitude that strives to use everything a client brings to the treatment for the success of the therapy.

By combining warmth, a calm environment, gentle therapeutic touch and slow movements while floating in water, the physical condition (including muscle tone, flexibility, breathing) and the psychological experience of the client (perception, emotion) can change. Deep-lying tensions can be released in a self-regulating way in this therapeutic process and bring about a reduction in pain and stress; the physical and emotional repertoire of movement can be expanded in the process. The unusual context in Aquatic Bodywork facilitates experiencing one's life force consciously and perceiving one's potential, which can contribute to an improvement in the quality of life.

A "grounding" sequence at the edge of the pool or on land completes the treatment.

Aquatic Bodywork comprises two elements:

- WATSU/WaterShiatsu: The client is moved at the surface of the water, with their mouth and nose never coming into contact with the water. By means of local stretching, joint mobilisation, massage and stimulation of acupuncture points myofascial structures are mobilised and the activity in the meridians is balanced (Dull, 1993).
- WATA/WasserTanzen: The complementary therapist accompanies the client, who wears a nose clip, carefully in the rhythm of their breathing, even underwater and instigates movements to encourage them to slow their breathing during increasingly longer immersions.

The therapeutic interaction is mainly characterised by the non-verbal contact between the therapist and the client, which is constantly maintained by touch and allows continual adjustment in quality and intensity.

A follow-up discussion and awareness exercises may enable the client to transfer and effectively implement the effects of the treatment into everyday life. The aim is to promote the ability to consciously shape and change states of consciousness, physical signals and social relationships. Clients are assisted through guidance to feel more competent, to contribute actively to their own recovery and to cope with changing life situations.

3 History, philosophy and dissemination

3.1 History

3.1.1 WATSU/WaterShiatsu

In the early 1980s, Shiatsu therapist Harold Dull taught at the School of Shiatsu and Massage in Harbin Hot Springs, California, which also has a thermal bath. He experimented with breathing patterns, meditative presence and meridian stretches in warm water and began to adapt Zen Shiatsu for water. He called this new form of bodywork WATSU, a neologism of water and Shiatsu (Schoedinger, 2011).

Dull developed WATSU as a meditative and nurturing practice. He emphasised the “heart connection” and observed that WATSU induced deep relaxation with physical and emotional effects. In the early 1990s, physical therapists and other health care professionals began using WATSU for a variety of orthopaedic and neurological conditions. More and more therapists from various disciplines subsequently included WATSU in their treatment programs and WATSU gained increasing acceptance as a form of water therapy (Dull, 1993).

In German-speaking countries (DE-AT-CH), the method was influenced by various other sources from 1994 on:

- Dr. med. Christian Larsen enriched the method with the concept of Spiraldynamik®. As a result, traditional WATSU movement sequences were optimised and partially supplemented or reduced in accordance with a more comprehensive anatomical understanding, taking into account findings from research on movement pedagogy.
- In contrast to the original American concept, the accompaniment of emotional processes was declared an essential part of the method in Germany, Austria and Switzerland at an early stage. In particular, content from Integrative Body Psychotherapy (IBP), founded by Jack L. Rosenberg, was taken up and integrated.

3.1.2 WATA/WasserTanzen

In 1980, the psychologist Peter Schröter was inspired to study the psychological effects of warm water at a course in Gentle Dance with John Graham through passive movement exercises at the surface of the water. It seemed to him a predestined medium for strengthening basic trust. During his playful exploration of the possibilities in the water, he began to experiment with a nose clip. This made it possible for the person being treated to be moved not only at, but also under the surface of the water. From then on, he also conducted sessions in body-oriented psychotherapy in the water.

From 1987 on Schröter developed together with Arjana C. Brunschwiler WATA (a word created from water and dancing in German), an underwater therapy form (Schröter & Brunschwiler, 1996). They developed movements, grips and positions to move people freely in three dimensions underwater and to use this scope for therapeutic work. WATA has been taught since 1993.

Because physical and psychological exceptionalities (such as activation of the diving reflex or regression) were frequently observed during the use of WATA, WATA has since been and continues to be used particularly in the treatment of psychological trauma that occurred around the pre-, peri-, and postnatal periods.

3.1.3 Aquatic Bodywork

While searching for suitable movements on the surface of the water to prepare clients for underwater therapy, the founders of WATA came across WATSU. Brunschwiler, who completed WATSU training in the USA with Dull and taught both WATA and WATSU in Switzerland, combined these two forms of therapy.

After WATSU (from America) and WATA (from Switzerland) were merged into a single method, the name Aquatic Bodywork was coined in German-speaking countries.

Aquatic Bodywork has been taken up and used by professionals from different therapeutic disciplines, for example in inpatient programmes for people with depressive symptomatology (Maczkowiak, Hölter, & Otten, 2007), after accidents (Scaer, 2001; Schitter & Fleckenstein, 2018), war deployment (Smeeding, et al. 2010) or stroke (Chon, 2009), during pregnancy (Schitter et al., 2015), and in extremely protracted pain conditions such as fibromyalgia (Faull, 2005; Gimenes, Santos & Silva, 2006; Navarro Neto, & Benossi, 2006).

3.2 Philosophy

Aquatic Bodywork combines early forms of traditional Eastern body treatments and elements of Western health development and lifestyle. Water is the primordial element of life. Man originates from water and consists to a large extent of it (Lukaski et al., 1985). During Aquatic Bodywork, clients are embedded in this element. Aquatic Bodywork is an invitation to consciously perceive the connection to the water and to the other person, to remember physically the embryonic period and to take this trusting state into everyday life after the treatment.

Every human being is a spiritual, mental and physical entity, which is shaped by the family, culture and society in which they live. A person's own life story also has a decisive influence. In addition to nurturing experiences, people are also shaped by emotional and physical burdens such as stress, fear, injuries or illnesses. Experiences from early childhood have the potential to influence our own lives as well as those of our children (Gapp et al., 2014; Entringer et al., 2009).

Aquatic Bodywork is aimed at the person as a whole. The basic attitude in this work is empathy, appreciation and respect towards the person, regardless of their life history, cultural, religious and social background.

Aquatic Bodywork activates the life force and potential in people. This in turn promotes the recovery, health, general well-being and quality of life of the client (Faull, 2005).

4 Basic theoretical model

Aquatic Bodywork is based on several theoretical bases:

- Physical properties of the medium water
- Temperature of water and surroundings
- Passivity as a gateway to the inner person
- Changed external stimuli and alpha state
- Physical contact – by the therapist and the water
- Use of the therapeutic relationship for healing
- Activation of the diving reflex
- Energetic models
- Spiraldynamik®
- Repetitive motion sequences and rotations in space
- Effect from the combination of all interventions

4.1 Physical properties of water

Aquatic Bodywork is a method that makes use of the medium of water.

Hydrostatic pressure causes fluid volumes in the body to shift (removal of oedema, increased excretion of fluid through bath diuresis) and the pulse to slow down (Weston et al., 1987, Bonde et al., 1992). Having to breathe against resistance can be experienced by clients as oppressive or as pressure on the chest but is usually hardly noticed and acts as unconscious muscle training.

The buoyancy in the water changes the activation of the anti-gravity muscles and the neuronal stimulus transmission – two factors that convey a feeling of weightlessness and reduce feelings of tiredness (Wilcock et al., 2006). The buoyancy relieves the spine and enables the client to be positioned without a support surface. Depending on the speed of movement, the water resistance or inertia also contributes to this effect. Thanks to the buoyancy, the clients receive extensive support and often feel as if they were being carried.

At the same time, the client is deprived of their usual possibilities of orientation. There is a reversal of punctum fixum and punctum mobile in space: While people usually experience the greatest support in everyday life with the soles of their feet (when standing and walking) or the buttocks (when sitting), in Aquatic Bodywork, for example, the head and hollow of the knee can assume the function of stable contact with the world. Often the whole body moves around a contact point the size of the tip of the thumb. As a result, the central nervous system is confronted with highly unfamiliar information from the periphery. This leads to attentive listening to movement patterns and contributes to receptive movement learning.

4.2 Temperature of water and surroundings

In warm water, which is thermo-neutral³, the body can keep the core temperature constant for hours (Craig & Dvorak, 1966). At the same time, the sensation of pleasant water temperature is significantly influenced by the surrounding air temperature and humidity. A water temperature of

³ The temperature range in which the body temperature can be kept constant without adaptation reactions is called the **thermo-neutral zone**.

approx. 35-35.5° C⁴ with an ambient air of 35° C and 45% humidity is generally perceived as ideal.

Higher water temperatures can lead to overheating in the long term (Becker et al., 2009), while cooler temperatures can provoke physiological reactions that are associated with fear as goose bumps, muscular tension/tremors and rushed breathing (Craig & Dvorak, 1966). Heat and cold are interpreted by the organism as “enemies” which it has to fend off, therefore it reacts accordingly with stress (*fight-or-flight response*).

Thus, the water temperature is of great importance in order to achieve the relaxation response aimed at in Aquatic Bodywork, a comprehensive physiological change that is associated with the activation of the parasympathetic nervous system (Esch et al., 2003). Water therefore serves the goal of Aquatic Bodywork to reduce external stress factors as much as possible.

4.3 Passivity as a gateway to the inner person

When clients are asked to do “nothing” during the course of the treatment, to allow themselves to be moved passively, to listen to their perceptions and feelings, perhaps at times to loosen and open their large joints consciously (shoulders, elbows, hips, knees) and to pay attention to their breathing, an inactivity is stimulated in which they can neither distract themselves nor protect themselves from their own sensitivity. In this situation of surrender and defencelessness, the information stored in the body, especially in the muscles, is shown particularly clearly.

Not having to do anything and trustingly surrendering to the movements, the flow of water and what is happening enables clients to let go of the daily density of control. This results in a reduction in stress and often an intense feeling of “freedom”. There can also be an intense experience of being content, security and the feeling of simply being able to “be” for once.

4.4 Changed external stimuli and alpha state

During the treatment, the ears of the client are usually under water and the eyes are usually closed. The lack of everyday external stimuli creates a meditative state, which can facilitate access to oneself (Sakata et al., 1995; Schulz & Kaspar, 1994). At the request of the client, verbal accompaniment is offered during the treatment in the water.

Wakeful relaxation with closed eyes is reflected in the brain as an alpha state, which is characterised by EEG activity of 8 to 12 Hz and increased activity in the thalamus and insula brain regions (Goldman et al., 2002). In the alpha state, many clients experience a calming of the stream of thoughts. Their focus is directed inwards and thereby promotes self-awareness. Clients can perceive their body and their feelings in an unusually clear and focused manner. The ability to verbalise with regard to this perception often increases significantly between the beginning and the end of a session. Physical, emotional and mental states can become conscious, as can the interconnectedness of body, mind and soul as well as the constant interaction between internal and external social experience. Such knowledge can promote personality development and the resulting change in favour of a meaningful way of life for oneself and in the social environment.

⁴ These values apply to our latitudes. In tropical surroundings, Aquatic Bodywork is often used at water temperatures of 33° C (this temperature is described in Brazilian studies on WATSU, for example dos Santos Nascimento et al., 2012 or Navarro et al., 2006), in cool ambient air such as in outdoor pools in our latitudes, this effect needs about 37° C.

4.5 Physical contact – by the therapist and of the water

In Aquatic Bodywork, there is permanent physical contact between the therapist and client during the treatment. At the same time, the clients are moved almost continuously in the water and their entire skin surface is constantly stimulated by the water flowing past them. Compared to this stimulation, the contact area between therapist and client becomes comparatively small.

The flowing water corresponds to a touch that can best be described as “caressing” and is perceived through its own type of receptor (c-tactile fibres) (Walker, 2013). This information, transmitted by c-tactile fibres, is directed to areas in the brain which are used to process life-saving homeostasis information (such as thirst, body temperature, oxygen balance, etc.) (Olausson et al., 2008). A lack of activation of c-tactile fibres can therefore be perceived as an existential danger.

4.6 Using the therapeutic relationship to heal

Through the combination of passivity and continuous touch, Aquatic Bodywork can bring about feelings of being carried, of security and of deep trust. Being able to experience a deep state of security in the presence of another person, in this specific case the therapist, can be healing. Many ailments have their origin in interpersonal relationships (such as in the case of insufficient bonding as a baby, when someone was or is exposed to great emotional pressure, or when unspoken expectations make people very insecure in everyday life). Such causes of stress can emerge into conscious awareness in Aquatic Bodywork. In such cases, therapeutic support can be used to address the underlying issues. By consciously incorporating physical, emotional and intellectual perceptions, clients have the opportunity to learn how they can actively influence the development of a supportive, benevolent relationship. Since the best medicine for a person is a healthy relationship with another person and particularly their loving care and support, Aquatic Bodywork can have a convalescent effect on experiencing and shaping relationships in addition to its benefits on the client as an individual.⁵

4.7 Activation of the diving reflex

With WATA, another physiological phenomenon is activated: the diving reflex. Repeated contact of the cheeks with water leads to a strong reduction in metabolic rate, which is expressed in a slower pulse and the reduced need to breathe. Humans share this phenomenon with seabirds as well as with other mammals. It makes it possible to get by with very little oxygen for a long time without being harmed (Alboni et al., 2011). This reflex is activated within the context of WATA. The increasingly longer dives take about 4-30 sec. The experience of being able to spend what feels like a very long time deeply relaxed and undemanding under water is described as unusual and can evoke kinesthetic memories (e.g. of early childhood or even prenatal experiences) (Schröter & Brunschwiler, 1996).

⁵ Stress research suggests that relaxation has regenerative effects (such as strengthening the immune system) which unfolds especially when persistent stress has not yet led to serious pathological changes in the organism (Esch et al., 2003).

4.8 Energetic models

Aquatic Bodywork actively and consciously works with the meridian system to balance out imbalances and disturbances in the flow of energy and strengthen self-regulation. The principles used refer to the legacy of Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) (Ni, 2011), from which Japanese Shiatsu also grew (van den Berg, 2005). Due to its development by the Shiatsu therapist Harold Dull, WATSU is anchored in the philosophy of the Line of Shizuto Masunaga, which was also known in the West as Zen Shiatsu and in particular uses stretches to harmonise the meridians (Masunaga & Ohashi, 2004; Masunaga, 2000). Other energetic explanatory models such as the Chakra theory also found their way into the world view of Aquatic Bodywork (Dale, 2009).

4.9 Spiraldynamik®

Spiraldynamik® is an essential source of inspiration for Aquatic Bodywork. This anatomically based movement and therapy concept that was developed from the fields of medicine, physiotherapy, sport, dance and yoga. Visual diagnostic criteria lead to the recognition of individual strengths or weaknesses in posture and movement coordination. The concept enables anatomical knowledge to be practically experienced and can therefore have a lasting effect on the relationship of the client to their exercise habits (Larsen, 1995; Hüter-Becker & Betz, 2006).

4.10 Repetitive motion sequences and rotations in space

Flowing three-dimensional movements, which are not possible on land, bring new impulses into body awareness and invite to let go of old posture patterns. Both the personal repertoire of movements and the individual range of motion are expanded as a result. Tension and blockages can be released on a physical, emotional and mental level (Schoedinger, 2011; Schröter & Brunschweiler, 1996).

The movement sequences in WATSU are repetitive, which leads to adaptation in the organism and to mobilisation of the tissue structures involved (neurogenic, myofascial, etc.) (Niemier & Seidel, 2011). Recurring rotations in space (rocking) stimulate the inner ear and cause relaxation and networking of the halves of the brain (Bayer et al., 2011).

4.11 Effect from the combination of all active factors

As shown in Chapters 4.1 to 4.10, Aquatic Bodywork can affect clients on multiple levels both physical and emotional. The therapy requires adapting to the extraordinary therapy situation in warm water, leaving everyday habits behind and at the same time processing many unfamiliar stimuli. While stored physical and emotional experiences may come to the surface and can be processed in therapy, new experiences often arise on a physical, emotional, mental and spiritual level, which can lead to a deep feeling of basic trust. This new state of consciousness is used in Aquatic Bodywork as a starting point to work out with the client how they can actively influence their physical and emotional health. The client learns consciously to reproduce the effects observed in therapy on physical symptoms, emotional stress or mental blocks in everyday life. This promotes the awareness that they can influence their own internal and external balance. The clients become aware of being able to shape and control their own fate (in the sense of self-empowerment).

5 Forms of assessment

5.1 Telephone preliminary clarification

During an initial telephone consultation, the complementary therapist uses a specific set of questions to assess any restrictions/contraindications (e.g. diseases of the cardiovascular system, ear problems, infections) the client may have that could make therapy in the water impossible or make special precautions necessary. They also use this opportunity to clearly explain the general setup and to answer any questions and enquire about any ideas, wishes or needs that the client may have and in so doing establish a trusting relationship.

5.2 Assessment before the start of the first treatment

Before the first treatment session the complementary therapist

- fills out a questionnaire with the client about their physical and emotional well-being,
- asks about the inner potential for resilience of the client,
- explores the social environment,
- enquires about their personal experiences and encounters as well as any fears with regard to the upcoming treatment in the water,
- informs about the current state of health of the client, any conventional medical issues, diagnoses, therapies and medications (as well as their effectiveness),
- records previous illnesses and accidents,
- takes note of the concerns and problems of the client,
- enquires about physical or psychological dispositions that could be limiting in the course of the treatment and encourages the client to influence the treatment at any time (changing the position of the neck, etc.),
- makes a visual examination (including posture, development of the muscles, blood circulation in the skin, quality of movement),
- consistently pays attention to body language, breathing and vocal expression of the client,
- records indications that allow conclusions to be drawn about the level of activation of the autonomic nervous system.

The therapist approaches the client with an open, neutral attitude that encourages self-expression. The assessment phase is used to build a relationship of trust that has to be established before the joint treatment in the water can begin.

5.3 Assessment during treatment sessions

During the WATSU treatments, the non-verbal aspects of the interaction are of particular importance. Significant parts of the assessment are therefore not completed at the beginning of a treatment, but rather take place throughout.

The complementary therapist

- pays attention to physical reactions in muscle tone, balance and breathing at the beginning of the treatment (already at the start while standing),
- reflects on how the client helps shape the transition from actively standing with direct eye contact to lying in the water with eyes closed,

- adopts an interactive attitude in relation to the client's own movements, changes in muscle tone, reactions of the autonomic nervous system (e.g. eye movements, changes in skin colour, breathing),
- observes the client's handling of muscular tension, tightening etc. and reacts immediately and appropriately,
- performs repeated tactile assessments during treatment to determine the elasticity and resilience of the tissue,
- collects therapeutically useful information on the basis of the five phases of change (Ko cycle / Shen cycle).

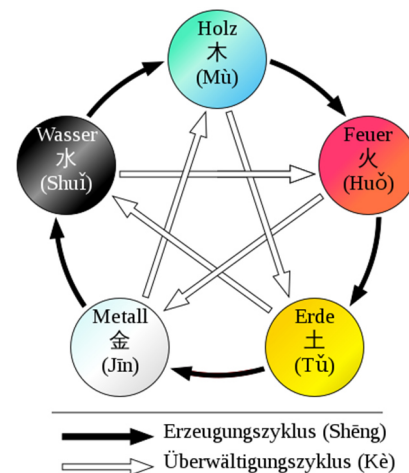


Figure 1: The visual representation clarifies the direction of the various phases of transformation.

5.4 Assessment after treatments

After each treatment, the complementary therapist of the Aquatic Bodywork method conducts a follow-up discussion in order to compare the perceptions during the treatment and to explore the changes that the client has observed in themselves. In doing so, the therapist considers the client in their entirety and includes non-verbal information in the observations. This is recorded in a process log.

5.5 Assessment in subsequent treatments

The complementary therapist

- creates a space of trust and respect,
- enquires about the current physical and emotional state of health,
- asks about the effects of the last treatment on the client and their environment,
- assesses and communicates their perceptions of the concerns of the client,
- discusses with the client in several sessions, if indicated, their personal family development history ("primary scenario").

5.6 Information

The complementary therapist

- informs the client about their treatment method,
- informs about the treatment process of the session and its conditions,
- gives an outlook on the possible course of treatment in terms of salutogenesis,
- indicates their possibilities and limits,
- explains the limits of the method (contraindications),
- offers information about themselves to an appropriate extent,
- does a joint follow-up with the client, based on e.g. Pictorial Representation of Illness and Self Measure (PRISM, Kassardjian et al., 2008),
- refers to appropriate specialists if medical or psychological problems occur,
- informs about whom to contact if problems arise.

5.7 Planning

The complementary therapist

- plans the treatments together with the client on the basis of the assessments,
- respects and recognises the possibilities and limits of the client and adapts the treatment accordingly,
- knows their own limits and acts appropriately,
- reflects on the treatments and adapts the further procedure to the course of therapy.

6 Therapy concept of Aquatic Bodywork

6.1 General information

6.1.1 Spatial requirements

Aquatic Bodywork requires a sufficiently large, undisturbed room in which room temperature, humidity and water temperature can be regulated.

There must also be facilities for changing clothes for clients.

The therapy room allows for conversation outside the water and includes a pool that is sufficiently large and allows the therapist and client to move freely.

6.1.2 Therapeutic framework

In Aquatic Bodywork, work is carried out exclusively in individual settings. The treatment takes place in bathing costumes. Sufficient towels are available in the treatment room so that each client can cover and warm themselves according to their needs.

An Aquatic Bodywork treatment session takes about an hour. In addition, it takes time to change clothes before and after the treatment.

The number and frequency of the sessions are mutually determined by the therapist and the client.

6.1.3 Basic therapeutic understanding

Aquatic Bodywork is based on the conviction that every person can cope with their life, current challenges and demanding situations if they are in touch with their perceptions and their sources of strength.

In everyday life, the inner balance can occasionally be lost. Despite the enormous abilities of body and mind to self-regulate, physical and emotional discomfort can arise from sudden or prolonged overload.

Aquatic Bodywork assumes that states of consciousness are of a temporary nature and therefore also changeable. The therapist regards it as their task to offer the client's organism a safe framework, space for relaxation and impulses to strengthen self-regulatory powers.

Aquatic Bodywork has a holistic effect: It can change states of tension in the body, open up possibilities for movement, support emerging movement impulses, strengthen body and self-perception, enable access to emotions, calm the flow of thoughts and instigate a feeling of basic trust.

6.1.4 Therapeutic orientation

Supported by the framework of the treatment (warm water, silence, focus on the inner self), the means of therapy (touch, movement) as well as the rhythm and silence of the treatment, Aquatic Bodywork strengthens the body- and self-perception of the client. In consultation between the client and the therapist, the focus can be on physical aspects or on emotional sensitivities. This

perception process is supported by the complementary therapist in Aquatic Bodywork and is developed according to the wishes and limits of the client.

Depending on the individual needs of the client the therapist provides time and space (either during the treatment, while still in the water or afterwards) for the client to express and process what they have experienced.

The therapist supports the client so that they can use their perceptions and their expression as a starting point to increase their ability to self-regulate. With the support of the therapist, the client should have the opportunity to integrate the experiences made in the therapy into their understanding of life and therefore achieve a feeling that they are a self-determined creator of their well-being. If possible, the client can experience themselves as being influential in terms of how they perceive their ailments and develop the awareness that they can influence illness and health, i.e. experience themselves as being self-effective. In a holistic understanding of health, this should lead to a strengthening of resilience / recovery skills.

6.2 The preliminary conversation

In addition to the comprehensive recording of assessments, as described in Chapter 5, the complementary therapist in Aquatic Bodywork places special emphasis on observing and shaping the relationship between themselves and their client. The therapist observes their ability to communicate, their verbal and non-verbal openness and the trust they build up. The therapist also reflects on their own state of mind.

In the preliminary conversation before the first treatment, the treatment process is discussed verbally. Each treatment is resource-oriented, process-centred and oriented towards a solution.

The respectful cooperation and the development of objectives as a partnership characterise Aquatic Bodywork. The treatment goal in Aquatic Bodywork can range from the reduction of general stress symptoms to the alleviation of physical and psychological ailments. The first partial goals of the treatment are defined together.

The therapist and client jointly design the treatment process according to the agreed objectives as well as the needs and limits of the client.

In the preliminary conversation, the complementary therapist in Aquatic Bodywork pays particular attention to the fact that

- the client is given sufficient room to describe their ailments and concerns,
- the main topic and secondary issues are differentiated,
- the personal history and the social situation are related to the main topic,
- patterns and roles are highlighted in relation to the main topic,
- the client can view their overall situation from the meta level,
- the client can also remain present in their emotions,
- the client can define at least one inner resource (e.g. self-love, basic trust, courage, clarity) through which they feel supported and that they can connect with this resource internally and experience it as real in the moment.

With regard to the therapeutic process, it is clarified that the complementary therapist in Aquatic Bodywork sees themselves as a companion and facilitator who creates a safe framework and provides supportive impulses.

The therapist takes into account the relationship of the client with water, knowing that water can be a resource for some, while the element in itself poses a challenge for others.

The client and therapist jointly decide whether the respective treatment will take place exclusively at the surface of the water (WATSU) or also under the surface of the water (WATA). If WATA is included, the client is informed about the specific conditions (handover of the nose clip, signal for immersion, etc.).

6.3 Preparing for the treatment in water

After the necessary hygienic measures, the client and the complementary therapist go into the approx. 35° C warm water in bathing costumes. They evaluate whether and which buoyancy aids are needed for optimum positioning and get ready, for example by observing their breathing / diaphragmatic excursions.

During the adaptation, the client is asked to do “nothing” in the course of the treatment, to allow themselves to be moved passively, to listen to their own perceptions and feelings and perhaps at times to consciously loosen and open their large joints (shoulders, elbows, hips, knees) and to pay attention to their breathing.

Then the complementary therapist offers the client their shoulder as a support surface for the neck and guides them from the standing position to floating at or beneath the surface of the water. If a WATA treatment is planned for the first time, the therapist and client practice the process of submersion signal and submersing.

6.4 Treatment in the water

As explained in the theoretical basics, Aquatic Bodywork has several elements that enable changes in the state of tension of the client. Among them are the physical properties of water, the temperature of the water and the surrounding environment, the passivity as a gateway to the inner person, the change of external stimuli and the alpha state as well as permanent contact by the therapist and the water.

Self-regulation is triggered and strengthened again and again by therapeutic impulses, be it by activating the diving reflex, treating the meridian system, or by using techniques based on the fundamentals of Spiraldynamik® or repetitive movement sequences and rotations in space.

During the treatment, the client lies in the water and is carefully held and moved by the complementary therapist. Usually there is no speaking during the treatment. The clients are asked to express themselves whenever they feel it is necessary.

The clients are invited to focus their attention on the water flowing past their body and on their own breathing. They are encouraged to follow the movement impulses that arise within themselves at all times. It is conveyed to the clients that they can actively help shape the treatment in a self-determined manner.

The complementary therapist in Aquatic Bodywork creates a space of closeness and security. During the treatment, the client's head is typically supported by the elbow, forearm, hand or shoulder of the therapist. The clients are invited to close their eyes and turn their attention to the increasingly differentiated body perception.

6.4.1 Inner potential for resilience (= inner resources)

Most clients experience a feeling of floating, weightlessness and deep relaxation through being in warm water, the absence of external stimuli and the alternation between movement and stillness. Aquatic Bodywork can bring clients into contact with their deepest resources such as the experience of letting go, inner peace, security, attachment and basic trust.

During the therapeutic process complementary therapists in Aquatic Bodywork pay attention to when and how there are signs that a particular resource has been addressed by the client. In the accompanying conversation the client is encouraged to process and vocalise their experience, this makes it easier for the client to access the experience at a later time outside of the treatment.

6.4.2 Physical contact

Complementary therapists in Aquatic Bodywork use the water resistance to bring the body into movement or stretching positions in a targeted manner without provoking protective tension. They provide a safe space in which, depending on the process, the treatment can be more passive for the client or complex three-dimensional movements can arise.

The complementary therapist pays attention to the quality of their touch and to any changes in energy. When emotional and physical processes occur, the therapist intercepts them by conveying security, allowing the client space and – if necessary – beyond non-verbal dialogue in an accompanying conversation.

By means of gentle stretching and meridian treatments, organs are reflexively strengthened, the energy balance is balanced and compensations that show up as movement restrictions in the body are processed.

Even if hypotheses are formed at the beginning of the treatment, the spectrum of interaction options remains open and diverse. There is no fixed response from the therapist to symptom complexes (with the exception of any contraindications). Interventions are continuously adapted to the developing process and to the needs of the clients.

The targeted avoidance of painful movements combined with overstimulation (inside and outside the body, e.g. through temperature and light stimuli, balance and movement information, noises and silence) can enable unexpected experiences.

In Aquatic Bodywork, the therapeutic process and therefore recovery takes place in the interaction of therapist and client. The therapeutic interaction is mainly characterised by the non-verbal contact between therapist and client, which is permanently maintained through touch and allows constant adjustment in quality and intensity.

The complex process of three-dimensional movement and perception arises from the constant interaction between the therapist and the client. Subtle changes in body tension and in the flow of movement as well as non-verbal and, if necessary, verbal expression by the client is picked up, supported and further developed together with the client (in terms of the use of resonance phenomena). The therapist and client are therefore equally and jointly shapers of the process.

Moving, stretching and massage cause a change in physical tension. Joints may develop more freedom of movement and therefore mobility. The experience that tension can be released through gentle touch and movement supports the treatment without activating pain and stress. By changing states of tension, buried trauma and causes of physical and mental conditions can surface and be addressed and treated. Under these extraordinary conditions, the experiences from

Aquatic Bodywork can lead to a new understanding of a persons' state of being and their own health or illness. This deeper understanding can initiate rethinking and relearning in terms of creating a source of inner strength that they can tap into._____

6.4.3 Spontaneous discharges/unwinding

While static elements predominate at the beginning of the treatment (increased states of tension, fixed postures), during the therapeutic process there may be spontaneous movements on the part of the client, so-called "unwindings", an unravelling of structures in their functional context. Parallel to the movements offered by the therapist from outside, movement impulses are formed in the client in such moments; these are picked up by the therapist, gently supported and, if necessary, reinforced in the sense of going along with the movement.

The complementary therapist in Aquatic Bodywork attentively accompanies this expression of the body of the client.

After anatomical structures can "free" themselves from tension or blockages in such moments, deeper relaxation usually follows. Such "unwinding" movements can be perceived intensely by clients or, if subtle, they can hardly become evident, since there is less feedback in the water in form of reactions of contact surfaces (due to the reduction of gravity and the lack of contact surfaces and friction).

In this "unwinding" the body corrects bad posture or compensation in the sense of self-regulation.

6.4.4 Regression states and deep confidence

In the passive security of Aquatic Bodywork, differently pronounced regression states can occur (Schröter & Brunschwiler, 1996; Rosenberg, 1996).

In Aquatic Bodywork, a connection to prenatal and early childhood phases is often created, which can be made evident during treatment under optimum conditions (awareness, mindfulness, adequate closeness and distance). In such processes, therapists also frequently represent an "ideal parent figure".

Clients can come into a state of consciousness that is stored in their body, in their feelings and in their mind, which is similar to an embryonic experience, especially promoted by the effect of the water and the feeling of security. In such a situation, one of the objectives is to use Aquatic Bodywork as "nurturing", which is suitable for reactivating buried potentials of trust (Petzold, 2012).

This experience can help to let go of limiting patterns and to redesign the current life situation.

6.4.5 Training in mindfulness and awareness

It is inherent in Aquatic Bodywork that mindfulness and perception are constantly trained – on a physical, emotional, mental and spiritual level. In the calm and quiet of Aquatic Bodywork, not only can physical processes develop, but emotions can also become conscious and thoughts can be organised.

6.5 Definition of WATSU/WaterShiatsu

At WATSU, the complementary therapist accompanies the client in liberal, slow movements through the water.

Depending on the physical constitution of the client, aids such as floats can be used to enable a balanced and comfortable state of suspension as possible.

The complementary therapist in Aquatic Bodywork supports the client with their forearms, hands and shoulders. Muscular and fascial structures are mobilised and the activity in the meridians (channels through which the life energy Qi, 氣, flows in the understanding of Traditional Chinese Medicine TCM) is balanced (Dull, 1993).

6.5.1 Treatment positions with WATSU⁶

Basic position: The therapist stands in a stable position with legs apart and holds the client with the crook of the elbow at the back of the head and with the forearm in the hollows of the knees. The following movements are carried out in this position: Knee or pelvic lift, water-breathing-dance, breathing cradle to and fro, breathing cradle forwards/backwards, head arm plays, pelvic arm plays, freeing the spine “snake”, under both knees, open arms, accordion with near/far knee/both knees, coffee grinder with near/far knee/both knees, embryo position, bell, spiral twist inner hip/outer hip, arm liberation, flying, spinal snake, inner pelvic crest – outer shoulder, heart wave facing/facing away, Hara wave facing/facing away, snake over water (horizontal), stretching near/distant side, spine snake, turning/twist.

Head cradle: The therapist stands in a stable position with legs apart, the client’s head rests on the shoulder, one hand holds the knee, the other hand works on the body. The following movements are carried out in this position: Arm and leg cradle, chest opening, shoulder circles, arm and hand massage, arm stretching, cleaning wings, neck and shoulder girdle massage, bladder meridian, sacrum massage, knee cradle, twist hip joint/ballet, twist in motion, outside knee and head swing.

Head in hands: The therapist stands upright in the pool and holds the head of the client in both hands, the ears are not touched. For some of the movement sequences, the therapist walks backwards through the pool. The following movements are carried out in this position: Stillness, free movements, from side to side, matador, breathing support in seagrass position.

Seagrass position: The therapist stands deep in the water, the client’s head rests on the shoulder, the therapist’s hands are free. The following movements are carried out in this position: Seagrass, with side stroke, with back stroke, accompany breathing, Hara-heart-journey, figure of eight, whale tail flip, exit with back move, hip figure of eight, shaking apples, hip wave, pelvis figure of eight, rib figure of eight, cleaning wings, thoracic spine stretch, loosen shoulders, whale tail flip right/left, tail flip right/left in the crook of the elbow, tail flip with arm pull, tail flip parallel pull, LU-DI stretch, tail flip with crossing and heart hug, heart hug and dissolution, spring, Cosmic Baby, active pushing off the wall, standing behind the head, shoulder sandwich.

⁶ The names of the static positions and dynamic figures in Aquatic Bodywork were created associatively, partly translated from or to English and correspondingly colourful. Ultimately, it is a subject-specific terminology that is used by all complementary therapists in Aquatic Bodywork as well as by all other practitioners of WATSU and WATA worldwide.

Figure 4: The therapist stands with legs apart in the water, the client's head in the crook of the elbow, the lower leg across the abdomen of the therapist. The following movements are carried out in this position: Entrance in Figure 4, inner leg, leg play, shoulder-arm-hand, arm pull, Shiatsu on the face, foot massages, calf to thigh, back stroke, bladder meridian, sacrum/gluteus massage.

Below the hip: The therapist stands next to the client, their head in one hand, the other hand on the knee or pelvis. The following movements are carried out in this position: Crossbowman, pelvic wave, stillness, frog's leg.

Saddle: The client sits on the therapist's thighs with their legs open or closed, their head in the therapist's hands or arms. The following movements are carried out in this position: Entrance with inside knee, leg play, open saddle, head in both hands, mobilising the cervical spine, water circles, Shiatsu on the face, neck to hand, bladder meridian, buttocks, leg.

Additional free-flow movements: There are no fixed positions for this.

In addition to basic positions and processes, there are also free improvisations in the water in Aquatic Bodywork.

6.6 Definition of WATA/WasserTanzen

WATA is the underwater form of Aquatic Bodywork.

In WATA/WasserTanzen, the complementary therapist accompanies the client, who wears a nose clip, carefully to the rhythm of their breathing underwater and, through impulses, offers the client to slow down their breathing during increasingly longer immersions.

If agreed, a nose clip is offered after a phase of getting used to the water on the water surface. The therapist guides the client into the submersion according to a ritual defined in the preliminary conversation and, if necessary, practiced while standing at the beginning of the treatment (submersion signal, agreed time to submerge).

The therapist guides the client, who is wearing a nose clip, partially under the surface of the water. At the beginning these submersions are very short, as the client gets used to them, they become longer and the client is lowered deeper and deeper into the water.

Since the client's head does not have to be placed at the surface of the water with WATA, the freedom of movement and design is increased. As a result, the client is freer than in WATSU to explore their inherent movement patterns.

As a rule, during this process, the client's breathing deepens and deep-seated tensions can be released.

In WATA verbal accompaniment cannot be continuously maintained, thus therapist and the client agree before the start of the treatment on how to indicate the wish to interrupt for conversation or to express a perception, if needed.

At the end of the submersion phase, the nose clip is removed again and the session ends with movement sequences at the water surface.

6.6.1 Treatment positions with WATA

Like WATSU, WATA also has a defined repertoire of movements. The amount of physical contact can vary from a lot to very little or even none at all.

Contrary to the holding positions described so far, the head is only held/guided for surfacing. By holding, for example, on the pelvis and knees, a wide variety of leverage effects are possible, which can only be used under the surface of the water.

On the surface of the water: Water-breathing-dance, snake over water, hip stretch on near side, stretch on far side, twist, spinal snake, accordion, rotating accordion, near leg rotation, far leg rotation, mermaid, head rotation, second side, near leg rotation, rocking with far thigh.

Underwater

- **Short form:** Immersing and arising, rotation with the near knee, release of the arm, free movement, jellyfish, knee aikido, leg aikido, knee over the shoulders, second side, snake, waltz, somersault, embryo, fade out.
- **Extended form:** Knee snake (facing/facing away, both sides), knees over one shoulder, wheel forward and backward, suspended, variation jumping jack, low down, arm aikido, shoulder snake face down, waltz from above, shoulder aikido (with side change), foot snake (face up, face down), double snake, somersault backwards, dolphin roll, head snake, underwater massage, flag with crab (both sides), leg semi-circle aikido (with side change), back surf, carousel with vortex (both sides), stomach to back embryo, massages.

6.7 Completion of the treatment in the water

Towards the end of the treatment, the client is carefully led by the therapist to the edge of the pool and positioned there in such a way that the therapist can help ground the client by contact on the client's feet and by treating acupuncture points on the head, neck and arms.

The client is given time and space to orientate themselves. The therapist supports the client by observing physical signals and verbal accompaniment.

The client is invited to direct their perception to their body, its posture and its tension. As a result of the effects of water and stretching, clients often perceive changes in this regard.

In this phase, complementary therapists also pay particular attention to whether there are any signs of the client being overwhelmed. The considerable changes in the physical sphere and the intensity of the emotions produced are often unusual for the client and therefore take some getting used to. In order for them to be able to relax in these moments, an "inner witness" is developed within them with the intention that this observing mechanism can help to keep sufficient distance from the emotionality and therefore facilitate the clients' ability to handle their feelings.

6.8 Integration / Follow-up discussion

In the first part of the follow-up discussion, which takes place in the water, the therapist first picks up the client's current perceptions regarding their physical and emotional state and allows space so that the client can retrospectively describe their process experience from their own perspective. It is taken into account that after a long time in the water and in another state of consciousness, their reactions may be slowed down.

At a time that is right for the client, the therapist and client get out of the pool and continue the follow-up discussion as soon as the client is prepared according to their individual needs (bathrobe, warmth). The therapist reacts and responds verbally to the described perceptions, feelings and images and deepens them through open questions. A connection is made between the assessment, the jointly agreed goals and the resources experienced in the treatment.

In the follow-up discussion, the emotional level is specifically addressed. Experience shows that clients often perceive the aspect of trust in the foreground. In this context, joy, love and confidence can be expressed, the notion "I am entitled to be the way I am", or the experience of a state in which they can accept, respect and love themselves.

The therapist is aware that the setting in the warm water, accompanied by therapeutic touch, facilitates this experience. At the same time, the professional relationship between clients and therapists differs from everyday experience, in which acceptance and love are often linked to conditions and expectations. In the follow-up discussion, opportunity is given to put the experiences in therapy and those in everyday life into a whole picture, that is, to connect them with each other. This formation of differences⁷ helps clients to classify what they have experienced and to look for realistic strategies as to how this experience gained in therapy can be consolidated and transferred to other life situations in a self-competent manner.

Depending on the preference and basic type of the client, consciously performed, jointly developed physical exercises or visualisations can be helpful⁸. In this context, particular attention is paid to the consideration of as many sensory channels as possible. The process of developing such individually coherent strategies can give clients the feeling of freedom of choice, of a variety of options for action and therefore a feeling of self-efficacy.

The experience of being held and feeling included in something larger, often described in connection with Aquatic Bodywork, satisfies the basic human need to be accepted as part of a community. In advanced stages of a therapeutic process, the experience and application of specific social behaviour can be explored. Such a step can then form the basis for a self-image to be able to move freely and safely in community.

In preliminary and follow-up discussions, the therapist therefore always actively listens to what the client says about their self-perception and the self-care they implement in everyday life, how they talk about it, and whether there are indications of how this awareness affects their actively influencing their own health.

The complementary therapist carries out periodic evaluations and assessments during the course of the therapy, discusses and reviews the treatment process, the agreed treatment goals and keeps track of changes on a regular basis.

Supportive measures are also pointed out after a long stay in warm water (showering legs cold, drinking plenty of water, etc.). If necessary, kinesiological balancing exercises are carried out as described below.

⁷ Increasing complexity by means of questions that go in the direction of creating differences, liquefying characteristics and questioning paralysing certainties.

⁸ Visualisations are understood here as the ability to perceive inner images while awake and to work with them therapeutically.

Balance the left and right brain hemispheres

- The upper and lower lip are closed and massaged with the thumb and middle finger of one hand, and the coccyx is rubbed with the other hand. Then the position of the hands is changed by placing one hand on the lips on the stomach and the other going to the lips. The same massaging movements are performed again on the upper and lower lip and on the stomach or pubic bone.
- The right elbow is brought to the left knee, which is pulled up in the process. Then the left elbow is brought to the right knee, which is also pulled up. This is done alternately a few times.
- The arms are crossed in front of the chest, two loose fists are made and the hollow under the collarbones is rubbed with the folded fingers. Then the arms are crossed the other way around and the process is repeated.
- The fingers are crossed and the hands folded in this way are brought in front of the chest. At the same time, the legs and feet are crossed. The tongue is placed on the roof of the upper palate. If the clients are in the water, they move slightly in a spiral in the water. If out of the water, they stand crossed like this for a while. Then the fingers are crossed the other way around and the process is repeated.

Balance of the two main meridians

- The therapist stands next to the client and moves both hands in front and behind several times up and down the two main meridians from the coccyx to the upper lip and from the pubic bone to the lower lip. The hands keep a distance to the body. Finally, both hands meet in front of the client's lips.

6.9 Transfer to everyday life

Complementary therapists in Aquatic bodywork are aware that the framework conditions in everyday life often differ widely from those during treatment and that a consciously designed transfer of this new experience is therefore necessary.

Together, the therapist and client develop strategies for this transfer with the aim of expanding the ability to act in everyday life and strengthening creative and personal skills. For example, they can work with the setting of anchors (for example a new attitude in everyday activities) or with affirmations.

Particular attention is paid to easy-to-implement and sustainable strategies that support the client in being aware of themselves, their attitude and their behaviour. Every daily exercise that helps a client to become self-aware on a daily basis is an expression of self-respect – and every daily expression of self-love leads to physiologically verifiable health gains after just a few weeks (Fredrickson & Joiner, 2018).

The mindfulness trained in Aquatic Bodywork forms a fundamental resource for increased everyday competence and thereby makes a contribution to promoting the resilience of the client. The experience of self-efficacy can be strengthened through the experience of being able to cope with emotional moods, whether pleasant or uncomfortable, at will.

7 Limitations of the practice of the method / Contraindications

7.1 Limits of the method

Complementary therapists in Aquatic Bodywork are aware that their work supports conventional and alternative medical treatments but cannot replace them. They undertake:

- not to treat clients who have symptoms listed in the contraindications (7.2),
- to recommend that their clients consult appropriate specialists if they have symptoms that require specific treatment by other health professionals.

Complementary therapists in Aquatic Bodywork do not make diagnoses and do not modify or interrupt other treatments.

7.2 Medical contraindication

The most central contraindication for stays in warm water are inflammatory processes, be they accompanied by fever or not (e.g. urinary tract infection). Water is also not indicated for diseases that are contagious (e.g. fungal infections), fresh injuries or open wounds.

If a client describes illnesses or symptoms that their complementary therapist does not know, they discuss them with a specialist or have the client consult with the attending doctor. The same applies to fresh surgical interventions. If musculoskeletal surgery was performed several weeks ago, she asks about mobility (and permission to move).

In case of doubt, the affected client may be referred to a colleague specifically trained for the problem described (e.g. physiotherapist or midwife).

The list compiled below describes typical method-relevant circumstances that go beyond this and that require special attention, measures or clarifications or are to be regarded as absolute contraindication for Aquatic Bodywork.

Table 1: Absolute and relative contraindications for Aquatic Bodywork

Part of the body	Problem	Possible solution
Head area	Contact lenses	Take out before the WasserTanzen
	Hole or tear in the eardrum, sensitivity in the ears	Use of custom-made ear plugs
	Exceptional dizziness or other vestibular disorders	Slow work and frequent tolerance control with the client through by means of exchange
	Traumatic brain injury	Consultation with a doctor
	Epilepsy	Consultation with a doctor
	Acute psychosis, borderline syndrome	Treatment only with appropriate additional qualification (e.g. psychological or psychiatric training)

Spine	Whiplash	Consultation with a doctor
	Advanced polyarthritis or rheumatism	Consultation with a doctor
	Ailments (pain, displaced vertebrae, herniated disc, etc.)	Use of sufficient floats
Chest area	Habitual shoulder dislocation	Treatment only with additional qualification (e.g. physiotherapist)
	Reduced lung capacity	Consultation with a doctor
	Heart patients (angina pectoris, heart attack, pacemaker, heart failure)	Consultation with a doctor
	Circulatory diseases (e.g.: high blood pressure with limit values and treated with medication, low blood pressure under treatment, fainting spells)	Consultation with a doctor
Abdominal area	Pregnancy	Consultation with a doctor; Care when working with reflex zones and acupressure points
	High-risk pregnancy	For WATA: Instructions to exhale during the underwater phase; no respiratory stop (due to the risk of CO ₂ accumulation in the blood)
	After giving birth	Resume treatment in the water after 6 to 8 weeks at the earliest
Genital area	Menstruation	According to traditional Chinese medicine it is advisable not to get into warm water during menstruation.
Lower extremities	Strong and inflamed varicose veins	If possible, use of support stockings, instruction of cold shower after treatment
Skin	Open areas of skin and fresh scars	Cover with a waterproof bandage
	Communicable diseases, fungi, etc.	No treatment; absolute contraindication
General	HIV	No treatment during menstruation, acute flare-ups or open wounds

8 Method-specific differentiation of treatment competencies

Table 2: Overview of competencies according to the occupational profile of complementary therapies in Switzerland.

I: Informing: any information intake in connection with a task and its framework conditions

R: Realise: actual execution

	A1: Encounter – Initiation of the therapeutic process	Specific to Aquatic Bodywork
I:	Familiarizes with the ailment/stress profile mentioned in the telephone consultation and other information available; if necessary, examines reports from referring specialists.	At the first contact (telephone) clarifies whether there is a contraindication that makes therapy impossible; communicates possible solutions with the client in the case of problems (see Chapter 7).
R:	<p>Informs clients about the complementary therapy method, its possibilities and limitations; implements the method-based assessments in a body and process-centred way using empathetic observation, touch, movement and questioning; perceives the client's information in a mindful and empathic way at all levels; captures their ailments, fears, anxieties as well as their experiences of empowering resources and positive action and coping strategies; directs the client's perception towards understanding their situation and appreciating the path they have taken so far; determines therapy goals and procedures together with the client; takes medical and psychological investigations into account or, if necessary, requests them; determines, together with the client, how the success of the therapy can be recognised; refers the client to other specialists if the situation is not amenable to complementary therapy; recognises psychological and physical emergencies and acts in an empathic and professionally correct manner.</p>	<p>Is aware of the unusual setting (bathing costumes, physical contact); communicates transparently about the issue of closeness/distance; encourages clients to take responsibility for shaping the treatment situation; is informed about the emergency procedures of the pool operators; has specific knowledge of water rescue.</p>
	A2: Work – Acting in a body- and process-centred way	Specific to Aquatic Bodywork
R:	<p>Uses body-centred, method-based touch, movement, breathing and energy work to specifically stimulate the self-regulation of the organism; attentively perceives triggered processes and subtle changes and continuously integrates non-verbal and verbal reactions of the client into their actions; facilitates specific physical experiences and encourages clients to self-observation and self-awareness; develops the therapy process as comprehensible and influenceable for the clients; maintains self-awareness and self-organisation during their work.</p>	<p>Is aware of the special need for "grounding" measures after the Aquatic Bodywork treatment; pays special attention to how the client is discharged into everyday life</p>

	A3: Integration – Deepening the process	Specific to Aquatic Bodywork
R:	Relates the process to the therapy goals; encourages clients to develop new ways of seeing and acting that are recognisably related to and able to influence their health condition; encourages and supports clients in recognising and activating their resources and strengthening positively perceived action and coping skills; guides clients in complementary therapeutic means to support the recovery process (mindfulness and visualisation exercises, etc.).	Recognises hyperventilation and regression; verbally accompanies affected clients calmly in this state; guides affected clients out of their state if necessary and at their request.
	B1: Case-related cooperation with reference persons	Specific to Aquatic Bodywork
R:	Involves caregivers in the process within the agreed framework; informs them adequately so that they can understand and support the therapeutic work; uses the interaction between caregiver and client to support the desired process of change; gives the caregiver method-specific support (information, aids, observation tasks, etc.) which helps them to support and accompany the process between the therapy sessions and the transfer into everyday life; values their cooperation.	Seeks the presence of legal guardians during treatment of minors to ensure a safe and secure setting.
	C1: Professional development	Specific to Aquatic Bodywork
R:	Updates and deepens complementary therapy competences in further training courses, congresses, supervision, via specialist literature and in exchange with professional colleagues; evaluates professionally relevant information in a professional and practice-related manner; implements newly acquired knowledge, skills and attitudes in their practice.	Regularly attends water safety courses.
	F1: Practice management	Specific to Aquatic Bodywork
R:	Implements the necessary administrative and entrepreneurial measures; maintains client documentation and prepares reports for specialised bodies; ensures the safe storage of equipment and the archiving of data and documents; maintains and manages the practice resources; delegates and supervises the implementation of measures by third parties (employees, trustee office, etc.); designs the infrastructure according to professional, economic, ecological and aesthetic aspects, maintains it and ensures hygiene standards; implements marketing measures.	Is aware of working in an environment where machines and chemicals are used; immediately forwards unusual observations to the responsible operators.

9 Method-specific resources

9.1 Knowledge

General knowledge

- History of the creation and development of WATSU
- History of the creation and development of WATA
- Basic knowledge of the concept of Spiraldynamik®
- History of the origin of Aquatic Bodywork
- Philosophy of Aquatic Bodywork
- Situation and positioning of Aquatic Bodywork in Switzerland
- Spatial framework conditions for Aquatic Bodywork

Water-specific knowledge

- Physical properties of water, in particular
 - Water resistance, current and turbulence
 - Hydrostatic pressure
 - Temperature and thermal conductivity
 - Buoyancy
- Options of using the physical properties of water for therapeutic purposes

Effects of water on the human organism

- Altered metabolism, altered oxygen uptake (Vanadium oxide VO₂)
- Bath diuresis, dehydration, mineral loss
- Haemodynamic, cardiovascular adaptation (heart rate, blood pressure, Pulse rate, heart rate variability)
- Effects on the autonomic nervous system
- Changes in hormonal balance (catecholamines)
- Biomechanical and neuromuscular effects
- Lung function, underwater respiratory stop / diving reflex, hyperventilation
- Psychological effects (fear of water, dissociation, regression)

Tools in Aquatic Bodywork

- Types and possible uses of floats (floats, noodles, pillows)
- Function and use of nose clips

Theoretical basis

- Effect of a lack of external stimuli on people
- The alpha state and its effects
- Meaning and effect of touch
- Function of c-tactile fibres
- The utilisation of the therapeutic relationship
- The diving reflex and its therapeutically useful effect
- Function and effect of repetitive motion sequences in therapy
- Rotations in space and their effect on clients

Basics from Shiatsu

- Basic knowledge of Kyo and Jitsu
- Hara principle
- The concept of yin & yang
- The five phases of transformation (Ko cycle / Shen cycle)
- The elements of TCM and their essential assignments
- Energy flow
- Meridian courses of the 12 main meridians
- Localisation of the servant and guide vessels and acupuncture points with the help of books
- Localisation of Tsubos
- Function of the triple burner
- Localisation, energetic effect and indication of the most important points

WATSU-specific positions and movements⁹

- **Basic position**
Knee or pelvic lift, water-breathing-dance, breathing cradle to and fro, breathing cradle forwards/backwards, head arm plays, pelvic arm plays, freeing the spine “snake”, under both knees, open arms, accordion with near/far knee/both knees, coffee grinder with near/far knee/both knees, embryo position, bell, spiral twist inner hip/outer hip, arm liberation, flying, spinal snake, inner pelvic crest outer shoulder, heart wave facing/facing away, Hara wave facing/facing away, snake over water (horizontal), stretching near/distant side, spine snake, turning/twist.
- **Head cradle**
Arm and leg cradle, chest opening, shoulder circles, arm and hand massage, arm stretching, cleaning wings, neck and shoulder girdle massage, bladder meridian, sacrum massage, knee cradle, twist hip joint/ballet, twist in motion, outside knee and head swing.
- **Head in hands**
Stillness, free movements, from side to side, matador, breathing support in seagrass position.
- **Seagrass position**
Seagrass, with side stroke, with back stroke, accompany breathing, Hara-heart-journey, figure of eight, whale tail flip, exit with back move, hip figure of eight, shaking apples, hip wave, pelvis figure of eight, rib figure of eight, cleaning wings, thoracic spine stretch, loosen shoulders, whale tail flip right/left, tail flip right/left in the crook of the elbow, tail flip with arm pull, tail flip parallel pull, LU-DI stretch, tail flip with crossing and heart hug, heart hug and dissolution, spring, Cosmic Baby, active pushing off the wall, standing behind the head, shoulder sandwich.
- **Figure 4**
Entrance in Figure 4, inner leg, leg play, shoulder-arm-hand, arm pull, Shiatsu on the face, foot massages, calf to thigh, back stroke, bladder meridian, sacrum/gluteus massage.

⁹ The following positions and motion sequences are listed with the names that were specified by the founders of WATSU and WATA (Dull, 1993; Schröter & Brunschwiler, 1996).

- **Under the hip**
Crossbowman, pelvic wave, stillness, frog's leg.
- **Saddle**
Entrance with inside knee, leg play, open saddle, head in both hands, mobilising the cervical spine, water circles, Shiatsu on the face, neck to hand, bladder meridian, buttocks, leg.
- **Additional free-flow movements** (no fixed positions)

WATSU-specific positions and movements¹⁰

- **On the surface of the water**
Water-breathing-dance, snake over water, hip stretch on near side, stretch on far side, twist, spinal snake, accordion, rotating accordion, near leg rotation, far leg rotation, mermaid, head rotation, second side, near leg rotation, rocking with far thigh.
- **Underwater**
Short form: Immersing and arising, rotation with the near knee, release of the arm, free movement, jellyfish, knee aikido, leg aikido, knee over the shoulders, second side, snake, waltz, somersault, embryo, fade out.
Extended form: Knee snake (facing/facing away, both sides), knees over one shoulder, wheel forward and backward, suspended, variation jumping jack, low down, arm aikido, shoulder snake face down, waltz from above, shoulder aikido (with side change), foot snake (face up, face down), double snake, somersault backwards, dolphin roll, head snake, underwater massage, flag with crab (both sides), leg semi-circle aikido (with side change), back surf, carousel with vortex (both sides), stomach to back embryo, massages.

Anatomy/Physiology/Security

- The skin as a sensory organ (touch as nourishment / means of communication, contact limits)
- Musculoskeletal system and functional anatomy in the context of Spiraldynamik®
- Specific aspects of the cardiovascular system in water
- Specific aspects of the autonomic nervous system in water
- Specific aspects of respiratory physiology with regard to work in water
- Ways of detecting changes in core body temperature
- Contraindications for Aquatic Bodywork
- Water rescue
- Safe use of automatic external defibrillators (AED) near water
- Personal hygiene in the bathing area, preventive measures (against varicose veins and genital fungal infections)
- Bathing hygiene (basic knowledge of pool water treatment)

¹⁰ The following positions and motion sequences are listed with the names that were specified by the founders of WATSU and WATA (Dull, 1993; Schröter & Brunschwiler, 1996).

Method-specific basic psychological knowledge

- Handling of closeness and distance in the context of working in a bathing costume in the water
- Anchoring in the self, presence in the medium of water
- Protection styles, basic fears (fear of being abandoned, fear of inundation), origins and effects of the helper syndrome
- Energy flow and energy blockages in the water
- Regression

Quality assurance

- Follow-up monitoring instruments (e.g. Patient Specific Functional Scale (Chatman et al., 1997), Pictorial Representation of Illness and Self Measure, PRISM (Kassardjian et al., 2008), NAKA-internal survey instrument for follow-up monitoring)
- Tools for defining the therapeutic framework (including Schitter, 2007)

9.2 Skills

Skills in the process phase of “encounter”

Complementary therapists in Aquatic Bodywork

- ensure a spatial and therapeutic framework appropriate to the application of the method,
- inform clients about the method and treatment process in accordance with Chapter 5.5,
- purposefully enquire about any water-specific restrictions of their clients,
- record a comprehensive method-specific assessment in accordance with Chapter 5.1.1,
- evaluate the client's ability to make contact,
- use the assessment to build a solid, trusting relationship,
- reflect their own state of mind,
- pay attention to physical reactions in muscle tone, balance and breathing,
- support the client in forming the difference between the main topic and the secondary scenes,
- accompany the client so that they can relate their social situation to their ailments/topic,
- only use the meta level if the client is able to do so,
- develop at least one sustainable resource with the client,
- create an assessment on the basis of the Hara principle,
- consciously reflect on how the client helps shape the transition from actively standing with direct eye contact to lying in the water with eyes closed,
- adopt an interactive attitude in relation to own movements, changes in tone, reactions of the autonomous nervous system (e.g. eye movements, changes in skin colour, breathing),
- observe the client's muscular tolerances (tension, shortening, etc.) and respond promptly and appropriately,
- carry out repeated tactile assessments before and during the treatment to determine the elasticity and tension of the tissues,
- pay attention to the expression of body and self-perception of their clients,
- point out their possibilities and limitations,
- explain the limits and possibilities of the method,
- offer information about themselves to an appropriate extent,
- refer to appropriate specialists in the event of medical or psychological problems.

Skills in the process phase of “work”

Complementary therapists in Aquatic Bodywork

- observe all necessary hygienic measures,
- are aware of the extraordinary general conditions under which Aquatic Bodywork takes place,
- vary the positioning in the water and use aids for taring,
- prepare clients comprehensively for the change in breathing excursions in the water,
- guide the client carefully from the standing position to the position in the water,
- use the physical properties of water (buoyancy/specific weight, flow, resistance),
- adapt their working position and their use of force to the size and weight of the client and use the leverage effect,
- work ergonomically,
- use specific grip techniques in the water, taking into account that water is a moving medium and body surfaces in water are slippery,
- apply all positions and movements of Aquatic Bodywork (WATSU and WATA; as shown in Chapter 6.4),
- use techniques of flowing, continuous movement and contact in the water,
- vary their body use variants: Quadruped, Seiza, Seiza high, Kiza and standing,
- are familiar with the use of their own body weight,
- treat clients in different positions (prone and supine),
- harmonise meridians through stimulation (finger pressure massage and stretching),
- contribute to the synchronisation of breathing and movement,
- perceive changes in the body tension, breathing and movements of the client,
- use resonance phenomena in the interaction with clients therapeutically,
- are used to handle fear of water,
- identify dissociations, hyperventilation and regression and accompany clients in and, if necessary, out of these states,
- support clients so that they come into contact with their basic trust as far as possible,
- recognise unwinding processes in clients and support them carefully,
- complete the treatment in the water with a grounding sequence.

Skills in the process phase of “integration”

Complementary therapists in Aquatic Bodywork

- evaluate the state of consciousness of their clients,
- take into account that clients may be slowed down,
- conduct a follow-up discussion reflecting on the process,
- pay attention to the individual needs of clients in transition from the water,
- specifically address the emotional level,
- give space to the body- and self-awareness of their clients,
- use inner images and visualisation to deepen what has been experienced,
- direct their attention to reflecting together on self-regulatory experience,
- carry out regular evaluations and assessments with the client,
- instruct supportive measures after a long stay in the water,
- explain the function of the triple burner to their clients,
- explain and, if necessary, guide kinesiological balancing exercises.

Skills in the process phase of “transfer”

Complementary therapists in Aquatic Bodywork

- pay attention to the sometimes considerable differences between the therapy setting and everyday life in the perception of the client
- develop realistic strategies with their clients to implement what they have learned in therapy in everyday life
- develop the conscious use of anchors and affirmations with clients
- guide physical exercises and adapt them in interaction with the client to their needs and possibilities
- build on the already existing strategies for self-care of the client and expand them in the joint process
- reflect mindfulness as a fundamental resource and promote it sustainably.

General skills

Complementary therapists in Aquatic Bodywork

- can intervene efficiently in an emergency and in the immediate vicinity of warm water
- take care of their health

9.3 Attitudes

Complementary therapists in Aquatic Bodywork

- treat within the framework of the method and accept its limits
- are conscious and careful about the fact that Aquatic Bodywork takes place through intensive body contact with a minimum of clothing
- reflect that their personality and values influence their behaviour and relationships with others
- handle their physical and psychological powers carefully
- strive at all times to guarantee the quality of their therapeutic offer
- expand their knowledge, for example through further training, peer consulting, supervision
- respect the needs and limits of their clients with regard to their willingness or ability to participate in the therapeutic process, to allow contact or to accept recommendations
- encourage clients, where indicated, to undergo a medical check-up or to contact other specialists
- keep confidential information about the clients to themselves or only pass it on after consultation and express consent
- adopt a respectful, open-ended, supportive and transparent attitude as a matter of principle
- are aware that their personal health behaviour can influence that of other people
- contribute through their behaviour and their professional competence to creating and maintaining a climate of trust in those working in the healthcare sector

10 Positioning

10.1 Relation of the method to alternative and conventional medicine

Aquatic Bodywork can be used both exclusively and in addition to conventional and alternative medical measures. Complementary therapists in Aquatic Bodywork refer clients, if indicated, to conventional or alternative medical professional groups.

10.2 Differentiation of the method from other methods and professions

Shiatsu

Shiatsu was one of the sources of inspiration for the development of WATSU, which the name is reminiscent of. However, WATSU has little in common with the Shiatsu therapy method.

- WATSU is only one of the two possible forms of treatment for Aquatic Bodywork; the second, WATA, has nothing to do with Shiatsu.
- Within the framework of WATSU, the treatment of meridians is only one of numerous treatment options. WATA and the other treatment options of WATSU are not included in Shiatsu.

With regard to the small section of WATSU, in which meridian stretching is used, WATSU and Shiatsu differ as follows:

- While Shiatsu is usually practiced on a futon, WATSU always takes place in warm water.
- The main focus in WATSU is on a selection of stretches from Zen Shiatsu, which can be successfully implemented in water.
- In contrast to Shiatsu, in which the pressure on acupuncture points is carried out against the ground, in WATSU this pressure is carried out against the water resistance or against the force of gravity (i.e. upwards towards the surface of the water).

Spiraldynamik®

Elements of Spiraldynamik® were integrated into Aquatic Bodywork at a time when Spiraldynamik® was not yet a method, but rather was understood as a scientifically founded concept.

While elements of Spiraldynamik® can be recognised in Aquatic Bodywork, the two methods are fundamentally different in terms of their treatment approach. The most obvious difference is that Aquatic Bodywork always takes place in water.

Aquatic Bodywork is based on essential aspects on the understanding of Eastern medicine, which does not apply to Spiraldynamik®. While Spiraldynamik® focuses on posture and movement coordination, Aquatic Bodywork takes into account the person as a whole and works therapeutically with feelings, inner images and social relationships.

11 Structure and scope of the method-specific part of the training

The method-specific part of the training of this complementary therapy comprises 1 250 hours of learning, 500 of which are contact hours.

Table 3: Overview of the distribution of the training content

Training content	Contact hours
WATSU (WasserShiatsu)	150
WATA (WasserTanzen)	150
Shiatsu basics	100
Basic course	35
Functional anatomy in Aquatic Bodywork	30
Method-specific process guidance	35
Instruments for progress monitoring	5
Total	505