

# STRUCTURAL INTEGRATION

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*Rolfing [SI] is not primarily a psychotherapeutic approach . . . but [its] effect on the human psyche has been so noteworthy that many people insist on so regarding it. Rolfing [SI] is an approach to the personality through the myofascial collagen components of the physical body. It integrates and balances the so-called "other bodies" of man . . . modernly designated as the psychological emotional, mental, and spiritual aspects.*

Ida Rolf

In the quote above, from her introduction to the *Psychotherapy Handbook* (quoted in Rolf 1978, 26), Ida Rolf speaks to the interface of Rolfing® Structural Integration (SI) with psyche and consciousness, our theme for this issue of *Structural Integration: The Journal of the Rolf Institute*®. What is it that allows our work to address more than physicality, that makes it different from other modalities with more mechanically correlated results? My belief is that we must look to Rolf as a person, her lived knowledge and experience.

Rolf's interest in body structure/function was just one domain in her overarching interest in the human being. Her explorations were intellectual and practical, but also personal and experiential, ranging from her doctoral work in biochemistry to General Semantics to homeopathy to classical tantric yoga to osteopathy to the Gurdjieffian work of J.G. Bennett. Perhaps as a result, the system she developed is holistic in nature and effect. Its entry point is the fascial matrix, and the organization of that biotensegrity structure in relation to the gravity field has the potential to activate / engage / integrate the holism of mind-body-spirit.

Rolf's first students were primarily chiropractors and osteopaths. According to Rosemary Feitis, they "tried to take bits and pieces of her work, not understanding that it was an organic whole" (Rolf 1978, 13). It took the right time and place – Esalen® Institute in the mid-1960s – for Rolf to find students who wanted to learn Rolfing SI as a holistic system. Her work flourished in this crucible of the human potential movement, and it became commonplace to see it elicit change in other layers of consciousness. Again and again it revealed how the body holds traumatic memories, unresolved childhood issues, and the underpinnings of familiar identity. Consider these quotes from Rolf's teaching (all from Rolf 1978):

What we do to a body physically starts to release it emotionally . . . We take a person along . . . opening him a little and a little, and all of a sudden he is stuck with something which was an arrested problem or a childhood problem, an early problem (156).

We can see where [people's] bodies are literally offering blocks to the gravitational forces. The gravitational force is immense, and their resistance isn't much good except to close the body down, compress it. Sometimes the block has been put into the physical picture by a traumatic episode . . . [and] is in the actual structure, in the flesh of the body. Then there is the kind of block that is basically emotional. Little Jimmy loves Papa. Papa goes along bent over, so Jimmy goes along like that because this allows him to be Papa in his mind. And by and by Jimmy gets a set into his muscular body which he cannot let go of (77).

A child may grow bigger, but as long as he's still stuck in the same child form is it surprising that he should be stuck in his same emotional child thing? It's worked for him for a long, long time. How does he know that anything else is going to work any better? . . . And then changes happen through Rolfing [SI], and it begins to be possible for a body to take on what we consider appropriate adult form. Then the person continues on psychologically, and develops (99).

The exploration of how the body relates to psychology, and to consciousness in general, remains deeply relevant even though the human potential movement of the 1960s-1970s waned. The questions are still in the culture, whether related to the specificity of something like trauma or to the generality of what it is to be human and to feel fulfilled. Not surprisingly, many Rolfers™ actively explore the domains of psyche and consciousness, so we have numerous contributors to this theme, spanning the global Rolfing community and including practitioners whose tenure goes back to Dr. Rolf; faculty from the Rolf Institute; Rolfers cross-trained as psychotherapists; and others deeply involved in energetic and spiritual explorations of consciousness.

We follow our theme of Rolfing SI, Psyche, and Consciousness with our Perspectives section. There Noel Poff discusses his initial concern about Wikipedia's representation of Rolfing SI, and how he reconciled himself to the amount of research and the efforts it will take for our work to get a certain type of recognition. Next we have Naomi Vincent-Wynter's interview with Peter Legård Nielsen, a Danish Rolfer who is also an accomplished novelist and literary figure. To accompany the interview, he translated an excerpt from his forthcoming novel, influenced by his life and by Rolfing SI. We close the issue with Szaja Gottlieb's review of two books concerning gravity: *Gravity and the Creation of Self: An Exploration of Self Representations Using Spatial Concepts* by Elizabeth Burford and *Artificial Gravity* edited by Giles Clement and Angie Bukley.

**Anne F. Hoff**  
Editor-in-Chief

## Bibliography

Rolf, I.P. 1978. *Ida Rolf Talks About Rolfing and Physical Reality*. R. Feitis, ed. Boulder, Colorado: Rolf Institute®. [Later republished as *Rolfing and Physical Reality* by Healing Arts Press (Rochester, Vermont).]



# ANNOUNCING AN UPGRADE TO THE JOURNAL

Next edition out in November

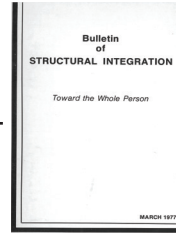
Our Journal has evolved over the years, in both look and content, from the *Bulletin of Structural Integration* to *Rolf Lines*® to its current format. In each iteration, we've upgraded our content and professional profile, and we plan to continue this progress. The November issue will debut a new design, and we have in the works plans to include new features. At a time when fascia is increasingly on the map in both academia and the public consciousness, we aim to enhance the global profile of Rolfing® Structural Integration while providing our members with content that will benefit their practices.

Have an idea for the Journal?  
We always welcome member input.  
Email us at: [journal@rolf.org](mailto:journal@rolf.org)

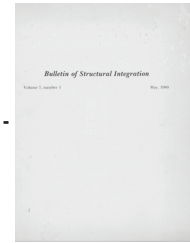


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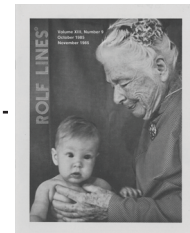
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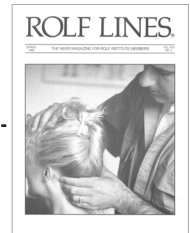
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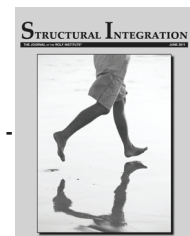
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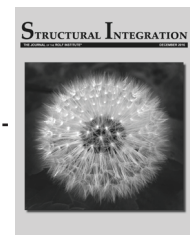
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# Ask the Faculty

## *Rolfing® SI, Psyche, and Consciousness*

**Q:** *Rolfing® Structural Integration (SI) found an early audience in the human potential movement of the 1960s, at the intersection of mind-body-spirit. The culture has changed a lot since then, yet our work continues to have a relationship to psyche and consciousness. Please share what you find interesting about this interplay, whether an experience, a story from your practice, ways you consider your own consciousness when working, ways you open a student's or client's perspective, etc.*

**A:** It is a fact, we all, as human beings, are not in this interplay, we are this interplay: body-psyche-consciousness-energy-body-spirit. The culture has changed a lot since the 1960s. Social, political, family, and work relationships have changed. The way people live has changed. The way Rolfers™ and people in general talk about what Rolfing SI is has changed. What brings students to Rolfing SI trainings (at ABR in Brazil, at least) has changed.

*But how and why and the way we get to be human beings are things that have not changed (although too much technology and pure rational/logical perspectives can reduce our consciousness, psyche, ourselves, our lives). How can I back up such a statement? Well, has your way of knowing you are alive changed? I doubt it! Or has the way you would be aware of stepping on a small rock changed? Consider, when we step on something we didn't see, we immediately become aware of whether we stepped on a small rock or on a small insect! We feel-sense if it is something alive or not alive.*

For me, it is not possible to *not have* this interplay of body-psyche-consciousness-energy-body-spirit in our practice of Rolfing SI. If it is not there, we are not practicing Rolfing SI. In order to open the perspective of a client or a student, first we need to develop the ability to be an open presence to the client/student, to inhabit our own body. We can't go to, or invite someone else into, places we didn't go before ourselves, or places we don't know through experience.

In our current times, bombarded by technology and an exclusively rational and logical perspective, the tendency is that we become objects. For example, we commonly see people walking around who don't seem to consciously inhabit their bodies in the way we describe as 'embodiment' in

Rolfing SI. Our presence in the relationship with clients and students, our presence in our own bodies in relating to others, our refusing to put our words onto the other's experience – these are the context that creates the possibility for the student or client to inhabit the full dimensionality of being human. He/she is not just a physical body with pain. A painful body is also a painful psyche, a painful spirit.

The relationship may not be obvious at first (mainly for the client and sometimes for the Rolfer also), but since the process is based on the principles, theory, method, and techniques of Rolfing SI, as the client becomes a more integrated person – much more or just a little bit more, it does not matter how much – the relationship exists and sooner or later will be visible.

For example, I once worked with a client who loved the whole process but didn't feel that his goals had been reached (he wanted more body flexibility). And so, there he was, at the interview after the fifteenth session (we did structural and movement sessions), telling me that the work had been good to receive but hadn't made a difference in his life. I wasn't expecting this and was surprised! I thanked him for his honesty and told him that although his main goal of much greater flexibility wasn't yet in place, something very important had happened, even if he could not see it or consciously know what had happened. I continued, noting that we both could see postural changes in the before and after pictures, and stated that as posture changes, other things are changing. I finished by saying that he could come back for a body of work in the future, and maybe then he would attain the body flexibility that was his main goal. Well, three months later he phoned me. He was very happy and once more said he was grateful for the process we did together. He was really happy! I asked him

whether he had gotten the body flexibility he wanted, and he said not yet, but that everybody who knew him was saying, and he was also feeling, that now he was a light and happy person. He was surprised, and really happy.

This example is interesting because it has various levels we can elucidate. First, we can speculate that his consciousness and psyche developed after the process 'ended', as frequently happens. Second, we can imagine that the client's single-minded focus on flexibility kept him from seeing/feeling other things. There's the old adage that says "If you only have a hammer, all you see are nails." So what happens when there are no nails? Nothing is there. For Rolfers, this example shows us that if we are focused on visible body changes (sometimes to prove to ourselves that we are good Rolfers), we can become blind to other dimensions of changes.

Sometimes either practitioner or client may not be able to see the relationship between body-mind-psyche-spirit, as seeing it requires an ability/skill we may need to develop. As human beings we evolve our human potential as we develop the ability to be present in our own body, to hold any experience in a significant and personal way, in a creative way or personal gesture. It is easy to say the words 'presence' and 'embodiment', easier to say them than to experience them.

How can we facilitate the development of consciousness? Say that after a first session, the client says she feels taller. You could end it at that, "Good! It worked!" Or you can take it further: "Is that a good or bad experience?" Take care to not assume it is a good experience, because the experience is not yours, but the client's. Let's say the client replies that it is a good experience. You can support that being enhanced by saying, "Great! And as you walk around the room feeling you are taller, what is your good experience like?" Or, "Now, when you walk around the room feeling you are taller, is there something else you can feel or become aware of?" One client in this situation said she was seeing the whole room in a different way: she could meet the space with a feeling of peace, breathing easily. So a simple dialogue can open the client's experience to a new embodied experience and bring her to other levels of consciousness.

Self-perception, self, psyche, and consciousness are human dimensions created and developed through body experiences lived in presence and in relationship with other human beings. We invite clients and students to inhabit their bodies by living experiences, a process that never ends. The skills we need for this depend upon our own personal evolution. It is not something we can learn or teach in the way that we learn and teach techniques. The principle of holism, the first important skill for the practitioner, must be embodied in ourselves in the nature of our own relationship with ourselves, with the environment, with the theory and practice of Rolfing SI, and with clients.

To finish, I would like to remember one of Dr. Rolf's statements from *Rolfing and Physical Reality* that I read in Therapeutic Relationship classes: "What I am trying to do is to create a group who can work back and forth from ideas to substance and understand why and how this is done." Wouldn't it be good if we included more time in the trainings for the second part – understanding "why and how this is done"?

### Hulda Bretones Rolfing Instructor

**A:** I really appreciate this question, as it relates directly to what keeps the work interesting and fresh for me. Our global culture shifts increasingly to one of technologies, and an interest in discerning the causality of events. Our work is not immune to this, and while these are natural outgrowths of wanting to understand, I find the field of exploration of values, like consciousness and embodiment, to be the most invigorating activity. For me, Rolfing SI is literally a re-creational activity for which I am compensated in real world terms. Aside from the financial livelihood that Rolfing SI and Rolf Movement® Integration provide for me, it is the opportunity to create meaning and value for myself, and to facilitate the same for others, that drives me.

It is the simple act of attending to the sensation of my body in the context of my present environment, what we might call orientation, that generates meaning. This is a multiple-step process. First we must quiet ourselves, then tune into our feeling internal sensation, while keeping awareness of our external environment.

The act of observing is a first step, but incomplete. Einstein noted that simple observation is meaningless, "as if you described a Beethoven symphony as a variation of wave pressure" (R.W. Clark, *Einstein: the Life and Times*. London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1973, pp. 227-228). In order to generate meaning or value, we need to experience our perception in a context, or a relationship. In my own work, I orient to the room or the horizon, or to the contact I have with the floor, or some other element of my current situation. So, we have layers of awareness, the sensation layer, perhaps pleasant or perhaps unpleasant, perhaps neither, in the context of the current time and space. When contextualized in this way, often a shift occurs in the intensity or quality or locus of sensation. When I become aware of this shift, I may shift my cognitive construct about it. It may bring forward a cognitive construct, a label, an image, or a memory. When I become aware of the relationship between the construct and the sensation, I have an opportunity, through the light of awareness, to bring that construct present in time.

For example, if through this process I perceive a sensation, let's say tightness, which evokes a memory from another time, let's say fear, and I stay oriented to my present context, let's say my office, then I have an opportunity to allow my current self to just accompany those perceptions and to watch what happens. Perhaps the sensation of tightness dissipates, perhaps it shifts to another quality or location. Perhaps it disappears. There is no guarantee that this process will resolve into an unmitigated pleasantness, however it is an opportunity to recognize that it is there. This process of recognizing patterns of association is essential for me in order to be clear about what I am bringing into my relationships, and in particular, to the therapeutic relationship with clients.

Once I have some familiarity about what it feels like to be myself, by myself, then I can begin to notice how different contexts or therapeutic environments affect me. When I begin to anticipate the arrival of a particular client, what happens in me? Do I feel light or alert? Or do I feel tired or heavy? Do I feel anxious or lose volume somewhere, etc.? If I notice that, and allow it to be there, then I can begin to do my own work (somatic-based therapy, meditation, rest, or other supervision) to begin to be able to be more fully present, e.g., neutral,

able to experience the fullness of my being, in the future.

When I am with my clients, I can help them to reference these same hallmarks of presence and embodiment, the feeling of increased adaptability or volume or support or filled-in-ness. At the same time, I have to recognize that they are also negotiating their presence in the presence of another person, myself. The layers of complexity of the therapeutic container cannot be underestimated. In science, when we begin to explore an area that falls outside the bounds of objective knowing we call it 'transcomputational', which means that the situation is so complex that it defies algorithm. Bryan Appleyard (*Understanding the Present: Science and the Soul of the Modern Man*. New York: Doubleday, 1993, pg. 153) puts it very succinctly: "Complexity is real, it is not just an excess of simplicities."

When I reflect that the therapeutic container of the session is complex beyond our capacity to parse, and then I add in the additional layers that touch and touch within the context of a Rolfing structural or movement session include, then I begin to understand why this field does not lend itself to reductionist study. As Dr Rolf said, Rolfing SI is not defined by its technology. While we can explore particular elements within the session, or technologies (what we might call 'techniques'), what continues to remain untouched by them is the value of the work for both the practitioner and the client. Yes, I need to develop strategies for hands-on intervention, which the series provides for us, and at the same time, I need to be open to whatever happens next in my self and my client. Or, as Jeff Maitland (personal communication, 6/16/2017) so succinctly states, "Work like hell and meditate."

### Duffy Allen Rolfing Instructor

**A:** For me this is the most fundamental premise of our work: the unity of being and several dimensions of the experience. I start my teaching there, and remind students that the choice of addressing the human being from the bodily perspective is just an entryway. Dr. Rolf said this in a very clear statement in the very first chapter of her book.

Fascia connects and makes possible the interplay of all of these dimensions. Any joint is in a moving system that is a person. Different systems come to play



like a beautiful symphony. Explorations regarding human being and integration reinforce this premise daily, so this topic is still very contemporary.

To fully embody this premise of mind-body-spirit integration is not simple. Our culture does not currently trend this way, meaning that we must make it – instructor and students, practitioner and clients – a continuous exercise and exploration. Here are some useful lines of inquiry:

- How does any change resonates in other levels of one's experience?
- How am I emotionally touched by this physical pattern?
- What does it *mean* to me to move in a certain way or in different way?
- What can be expressed with this new structural arrangement?
- Who am I and how do I like myself coming from this set of sensations?
- What's the interplay between all the dimensions, physical, emotional, cognitive, spiritual?

Consciousness plays a big role in this exploration, and we deal with the whole spectrum of consciousness in our work – from unconscious to conscious. Many times the client's unconscious can be affected by somatic work, with the impact wobbling through layers until language and consciousness gradually come into play. Here the practitioner (or instructor) can play a vital role by finding the layer of availability in the client (student), as well as himself/herself. Being conscious in this way will help affect whether the process moves towards greater consciousness or not.

It is also possible to work from the other direction, to use consciousness to help access more reflexive somatic layers, such as starting with pattern recognition, the search for the meaning of a behavior or a pattern. In any case, client and student interactions are enhanced by acknowledging emerging changes in a conscious way.

I have written a number of times for this journal about my research into the psychobiological domain of Rolfing SI using reports from NAPER (the São Paulo Rolfing ambulatory project). Even in comments on the initial interview, both Rolfers and clients were speaking to body/mind unity, for example in:

*Client goals for the process:*

- Body awareness
- Harmony and balance between body and mind
- Align emotions
- Improvement in pain by getting to know the body better
- Getting rid of a depression felt in the body
- More body awareness and dealing with anxiety

*Rolfer goals for the client's process:*

- Higher level of structural support so that he may have more emotional support
- More emotional stability
- More stability through more body awareness
- More support to improve client's sense of trust in herself

*Results of process on client's perception:*

- Now, everything feels more integrated
- I experience a higher sense of trust
- I'm happier
- I have more attitude in my walking
- I believe I made a clear connection between my physical and emotional aspects
- I'm much more balanced, more centered, not anticipating problems as I used to
- It was an experience that taught me a lot about dealing with my emotional side
- Way more balanced
- Safer . . .
- Emotions are more easily perceived

**Pedro Prado  
Basic & Advanced Rolfing Instructor,  
Rolf Movement Instructor**

**A:** Rolfing SI burst into awareness in the context of the human potential movement.

In 1962, on a stunning stretch of land bordering the Pacific Ocean in Big Sur, California, two Stanford graduates named Michael Murphy and Dick Price founded a small

retreat and workshop center called The Esalen Institute, otherwise known simply as Esalen. Their goal was to create a space where people could explore and practice what Aldous Huxley called "human potentialities" – or various holistic approaches to wellness and personal transformation that involved the body, mind, and spirit (D. Ollivier, "The Esalen Institute and the Human Potential Movement Turn 50." *Huffington Post* 5/25/12).

Esalen was the epicenter of the human potential movement, and its message of transformation radiated out from the California coast. It was at Esalen that Fritz Perls, founder of Gestalt Therapy, invited Dr. Ida Rolf to begin teaching her work of Structural Processing – later known as Rolfing SI. Rolfing SI quickly became an integral part of the human potential movement. The *body* – not only mental attitudes and beliefs – could be changed. As Dr. Rolf stated, "the body is plastic"! Don Johnson's *The Protean Body*, as well as Kurtz/ Prester's *The Body Reveals*, Ken Dychtwald's *Bodymind*, and Huxley's *The Doors of Perception* soon became cherished dog-eared pages on my nightstand.

A key phrase in the movement was self-actualization and 'the body' became an essential portal to that realization. Dr. Rolf's emphasis on the 'Line' and upright alignment gained traction within this movement.

I first heard the term 'Rolfing' SI from my beloved high-school teacher Sr. Donna Nickel. Donna, who left the convent in the early 1970s, wrote me about an incredibly expansive process that changed her life. For me, Rolfing SI became synonymous with transformation – intensity – psycho-emotional growth. Those words described everything I was looking for at that time. However, it took seven years for me to find a Rolfer. In 1969, Detroit libraries had no knowledge of it in their reference sections.

I continued moving west. Once in Seattle, in the mid-1970s, I discovered two of Dr. Rolf's students, Ron McComb and Jack Donnelly. I had the great pleasure of getting Rolfing sessions from them. It was on their tables that the seeding of Rolfing SI, transmitted through their hands and hearts, initiated the unfolding and calling to study Dr. Rolf's work.

In those early days, trainings were held at 302 Pearl St. in Boulder, Colorado, in the Annex and Skylight rooms. What a generative time it was! Auditors and practitioners sold cars, homes, collected pre-paid Ten-Series sessions, etc. to finance their study. *The Rolf Institute®* was – and I believe continues to possess the potential of being – the ‘mystery school’ for anyone wishing to study the multiple dimensions of the body as the integral ingredient in the realm of human development and evolution.

As Dr. Rolf fondly stated: “The body is what you can get your hands on.”

**Carol A. Agneessens**  
**Rolfing & Rolf Movement Instructor**

### Further Resources

*Because consciousness is so deeply interwoven with the work of Rolfing SI and Rolf Movement Integration, the topic is often addressed by our faculty in their writings and interviews in this journal. While there are many examples, we particularly refer readers to the following (in alphabetical order):*

**Rolfing and Rolf Movement Instructor Carol Agneessens:** “‘The Map Is Not the Territory’ – ‘The Word Is Not the Thing’” (July 2015 issue), “Flowing Wholeness: The Vibratory Resonance Beneath Perceivable Form” (December 2013 issue), “The Female Pelvis: Igniting a Transcendent Portal” (December 2017 issue), among others.

**Rolfing and Rolf Movement Instructor Monica Caspari:** “Self, Other: New Considerations in Rolf Movement Integration” (June 2014 issue).

**Rolf Movement Instructor Kevin Frank:** “What Is the Role of Language When We Integrate Structure?” (July 2015 issue); and “Energy Work: Re-conceptualizing an Inclusive Spectrum of Interventions within an Informational Model of SI” (June 2017), among others.

**Basic and Advanced Rolfing Instructor and Rolf Movement Instructor Lael Katharine Keen:** “Rolfing SI, Trauma, Orientation, and the Autonomic Nervous System” (July 2015 issue).

**Basic and Advanced Rolfing Instructor Sally Klemm:** “Explorations of Earth and Sky: An Interview with Sally Klemm” (June 2017 issue) and “Presence, Perception, and Embodiment” (this issue).

**Advanced Rolfing Instructor Jeffrey Maitland:** the books *Embodied Being: The Philosophical Roots of Manual Therapy* (excerpted in our March 2016 issue), *Spacious Body: Explorations in Somatic Ontology*, and *Mind-Body Zen: Waking Up to Your Life*; also from this journal “The Being of Rolfing SI” (June 2014 issue), “Seeing” (December 2014 issue), “The Felt Capacity to Do Work: Working with Energy” (June 2017 issue), “Letting ‘What Is’ Show Itself: Jeffrey Maitland on Mind, Zen, and Energy Work” (June 2017 issue), and “The Mystery of Consciousness Is the Mystery of the Body” (September 2017 issue), among others.

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**Rolfing and Rolf Movement Instructor Lucia Merlino:** “Metaphors of the Body” (July 2015 issue).

**Basic and Advanced Rolfing Instructor and Rolf Movement Instructor Pedro Prado:** “An Ongoing Inquiry into Mind and Body: An Interview with Pedro Prado” (March 2016 issue) and “The Role of Consciousness in Transformational Rolfing” (written with Heidi Massa; July 2015 issue), among others.

**Advanced Rolfing Instructor Michael Salvesson:** “Burning Man: An Interview with Michael Salvesson, Part 1” (March 2016 Issue) and “Burning Man, Part 2: Continuing the Interview with Michael Salvesson” (September 2016 issue).

**Advanced Rolfing Instructor Peter Schwind:** “Navigating Between Technical Refinement and the Vast Dimensions of the Soul: An Interview with Peter Schwind” (March 2018 issue).

**Basic and Advanced Rolfing Instructor Russell Stolzoff:** “Therapeutic Use of Self in Rolfing® SI and the Bodydynamic System: An Interview with Russell Stolzoff” (July 2015 issue)

**Rolf Movement Instructor Hiroyoshi Tahata:** “Working with Ma: Further Refinement of the Yielding Approach through Time, Space, and Intersubjectivity” (March 2018 issue).

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# Awareness-Oriented Structural Integration and Higher Consciousness

By Edward Maupin, Rolf Practitioner

*Imagine someone has asked "how are you?" and he means it. You engage in a moment of nonverbal scanning – of your body, your feelings, your thoughts, your environment. That nonverbal scanning, expanded to a more sustained observation – that is meditation.*

Hubert Benoit, paraphrased

When I read these words, I was walking away from the Detroit Public Library where I had just borrowed Hubert Benoit's *The Supreme Doctrine* (1955), which described the use of Zen meditation in his psychoanalytic practice. It was 1959, and I was a doctoral student in clinical psychology.

Suddenly, I had a 'beginner's enlightenment': I discovered 'The Witness'. I could step behind my field of awareness and observe everything with detachment. My fears, anxieties, and embarrassments faded in the light of objective observation in the present moment. I could return to The Witness easily for the next few months, making profound discoveries that transformed my life.

At one point, I stepped beyond the witness state and entered an astonishing, nonconceptual realization of the body in the present moment – a *body epiphany*. I experienced the nonverbal existence of myself as body, an *intelligent* body that seemed antecedent to, and more fundamental than, my ordinary mind. At that point, I decided I wanted to find a method of body-oriented psychotherapy.

After I wrote my dissertation (on Zen Buddhism) and got my degree, I continued to look for body-oriented methods of psychotherapy. When I was invited to become a resident at Esalen Institute in Big Sur, I had plenty of opportunity to examine what methods existed at the time. Esalen was very body-centered. My own workshops were entitled, "Body Awareness and the Sense of Being."

Ida Rolf came to Esalen in the summer of 1967, and I undertook a ten-session series. When she reached the inner-thigh work of session four, it was so painful I had to go into The Witness to deal with it. That was it! I had found my way back into witness consciousness which had not been accessible for a long time. I asked her to train me, and thus began my life as a Rolf practitioner in 1968.

Dr. Rolf was a material scientist; she approached the body as a surgeon might. Her work was precise, accurate, and sometimes it hurt like hell. She considered that the pain was an important part of the learning; but her goal was core alignment in gravity; and her hands were somewhat coercive in pursuit of that goal. She was respectful of emotional reactions, but she was not a psychologist. Core alignment produces a dramatic experience of integration (I remember feeling the integration of my legs during the standing foot work in session eight), but there was not much two-way communication with the body's own awareness.

As a fledgling Rolf Practitioner I had much to learn about the organization of the body in gravity, and I found my clients and I were producing big alterations in body awareness. Don Johnson describes some of his experience in our sessions in the introduction to his anthology *The Body in Psychotherapy*. Other clients who had been out of touch with the body were having body epiphanies as a result of our work.

Gradually it became apparent that the focus on communicating with the body awareness was resulting in less painful, more easily integrated structural results. Not that I was alone in developing a more awareness-oriented approach – many others were moving in the same direction. My own steps included more articulation of the process of touch itself, which in turn led to an examination of my fundamental theoretical assumptions.

## What Do I Think I Am Touching?

There are two levels of assumptions that need to be examined. One is the question of whether the body is a subjective being or merely an object to be manipulated. This suggests the need for an adequate psychology of the body, which will be discussed later.

The second is the age-old debate (in Western civilization) as to the nature of a human being: is it 'good' or 'bad'? This is fundamentally a moral question, but it is one that dominates even our politics. One political scientist has suggested that American political debate takes place between two positions: the liberal position holds that human beings are basically good and deserving of nurturing support while the conservative position holds that human beings need force and restraint to function positively. The question emerges, in part, because of the Christian belief in original sin and the more recent (since the Renaissance) optimistic estimates of the innate goodness of human nature.

This may seem outside the subject matter of manual therapy, but there are many consequences. In raising children, the positive assumption leads to education (the root word *educere* means 'to lead out') that fosters the innate abilities of the child, while the other leads to more coercive 'molding'. In structural integration (SI), the difference is between calling out the body's own sense of organization or 'fixing what is wrong' by force. When I find myself becoming determined to break through some resistant tension by force, I have probably moved back into some form of moral coercion.

## A Psychology of the Body

Dr. Rolf had an inner-outer model. She distinguished between the 'sleeve' and the 'core' – the extrinsic level and the intrinsic. The outer layer involves voluntary muscles that carry out the ego's will by contracting. The inner, intrinsic muscles maintain an expansional relationship with gravity. This layer we must 'let' rather than 'do'. In her view, when the sleeve is released and the core is able to balance on a vertical 'Line', there were changes in psychological feeling and behavior.

I think we can distinguish between two minds: the relative, conceptual mind of the ego and the nonconceptual mind of the body and deep psyche. We can infer awareness



whenever there is reactivity. Thus we can say the body is aware on many levels, not all of which are accessible to conscious attention. What is nonconceptual is inaccessible to thought. Nevertheless, the body is aware.

There are two levels of the body-mind's functioning of which one can become aware – the sensory experience and movement. These are where the ego can experience the body-mind. If the body therapist can assist the client to pay attention to the sensory experience, especially of touch, and also be aware of movement, then the work can bring the ego awareness into relation with the body-mind. It then becomes more possible for the client to be present in the body in the present moment – which is my primary goal in body-oriented psychotherapy.

Sensory awareness is fairly obvious, but movement awareness is a little more complex. If the client simply receives the work passively, this aspect is mostly lost. In SI, we ask the client to move in structurally accurate ways in order to produce changes in alignment. Dr. Rolf (1968) said, "Hold things where they are supposed to be and ask for movement. This is the law and the gospel of the method."

But there is another aspect of movement: the 'urge' to move. In my search for body-oriented psychotherapy, I studied with Mary Whitehouse, one of the originators of what is now called Authentic Movement. In her classes, we learned to feel how our bodies wanted to move. No performance, no planning, this was simply following the body's movement. It was a huge discovery, a sense of inhabiting the body and going along with, rather than forcing, its movement.

All of us have learned to 'sit still and be quiet'. Years of school have taught us to curb the urge to move. Our clients may be inclined to lie passively and receive the work. But if they can learn to include the urge, the *pleasure*, of moving, it will engage the body-mind in a whole new way. This part of training the client will be discussed later.

## Touch Communication

Touch communication is a two-way process. The practitioner needs to be receptive to what he is touching. The client needs to pay attention and let the body respond.

### Touching to Know

The practitioner has three tools for getting to know the body – touch, pressure, and movement. Touch alone can be very powerful. Add pressure and one

approaches the deeper muscular barrier. Adding movement, gently rocking the bones, for example, uncovers patterns of skeletal tension – how the bones are held. Touching the body in this way – receptively (rather than trying to make something happen) – engages the client and promotes body awareness.

Wherever one touches, there is a sort of barrier: go deeper than that, it hurts; don't go that deep, and the contact can seem uninteresting, irrelevant. (I am not discounting the power of subtle touch in another context). At the barrier one can pause and wait to feel for the body's response. As the barrier melts, the hands are guided to additional contacts. It is not that the practitioner has no goals: the theory of structure in gravity (the ten-session 'Recipe') guides us where to touch in the first place. Once there, though, the hands are exploring, feeling, listening for how to proceed.

## Training the Client

Naturally it is necessary to guide the client into this kind of communication. I use the following four steps:

1. **Pay attention to my hands:** We do not want the client to drift off entirely. Reminding the client to pay attention keeps him/her in touch with the sensory experience even if it is accompanied by a rich reverie tinged with dreams, memories, and associations.
2. **Draw me in:** It is an amazing phenomenon that we can mentally influence the flow of energy in our bodies. It is with this step that the client chooses to receive the work. Most clients can find an ability to direct the sensation of touch, rather like a sponge draws water. Women tend to find this receptivity quickly. Some men take more coaching.
3. **Pay attention to pleasure:** At this point, we engage the body-mind. The ego awareness can pay attention and decide to be receptive, but pleasure is something that has to be experienced in the body. By pleasure, I mean any qualitative sense that evaluates the touch as positive – like an itch wanting to be scratched, or a movement that feels good. Pleasure, of course, is an ambiguous topic in our original-sin culture. Here we don't mean sexual pleasure, but the multidimensioned richness of corporal sensation. Thomas Hanna called it 'sarcal pleasure'.

4. **Use my hands to organize your body:** This is the invitation to participate in the work and to help guide it. Again, it can only be done by the body awareness, not the ego mind. We assume the body has its own sense of organization that can lead the process.

These four steps engage the client in a full-scale participation in the project of reorganizing the body structure.

## Awareness vs. Consciousness: Levels of Consciousness

Up until this point I have used the term 'awareness' for this kind of work. The term 'consciousness' is more complicated and deserves further comment.

The philosopher John Locke (1632-1704) was the first to use the word 'consciousness'. His definition included reflexive awareness, awareness of being aware. But Locke was describing his own subjective awareness, which in a larger sense is only a level of consciousness. From the standpoint of higher levels, he was entirely in illusion; because, ultimately, the ego is an illusion.

In many spiritual traditions, there are descriptions of states of consciousness that transcend personal awareness. People have been experiencing and describing these states since the beginning of time. There is a fair amount of agreement about these levels. For example the terms *samadhi* in Hinduism and *unio mystica* or 'mystical union' in Christianity refer to an experience of the 'Ground of Being' in which the ego is suspended as a tiny drop in the presence of a vast ocean of Being. This can also be called 'Divine Contemplation' because the 'Ocean of Being' clearly feels divine. Whatever God is, it is a human experience, ineffable, indescribable, but divine. From this standpoint, 'consciousness' does not appear to be a personal faculty, but something divine that inhabits human existence.

Oscar Ichazo of the Arica School has offered a map of levels of consciousness. The map is consistent with other spiritual traditions. The upper levels he calls

- Divine Unity
- Divine Contemplation
- Divine Love
- Divine Life
- Empty Mind (entering the subjective mind)

These levels are quite recognizable when they occur. Divine Unity and Divine Contemplation are the experience of the Ground of Being described above. Divine Love is a heart-opening perception of the Love underlying everything. Divine Life is experiencing the present moment in the body without conceptual thought.

## Consciousness and the Body

Below these upper levels of consciousness are deeper and deeper levels of subjectivity, more and more clouded by personal conditioning, cultural beliefs, and conflict.

It is my opinion that our work, and most psychotherapy in general, works to release tension in these lower states so that the client has increasingly greater access to the Empty Mind from which the higher states can sometimes occur.

Empty Mind - The Witness. When Ida Rolf leaned on my inner thigh, I felt so much pain I went into the witness state. At that point, I could release the tension. With that I had also arrived at a point of insight into my holding pattern.

Ichazo describes Divine Life as a pure awareness in the body with "no thoughts in the head." I suspect this is the same as what Zen Buddhism calls *satori*. What I have called a 'body epiphany' is, I think, an instance of this level of consciousness. What I remembered from my own body epiphany, I expressed this way:

My body is me: I am my body. My body is intelligent, responding in the present moment to the world it imagines it lives in (which can be distorted by conditioning). Where I center in my body determines my experience (Maupin 2001).

The experience itself was nonverbal, nonconceptual, and life-changing.

Once in a while, often in the aftermath of the first Rolf session, a client will have such a radical discovery. I have the impression that it is people like myself – intellectual, intuitive, not sensory-aware – who have it most dramatically.

I have not seen the levels of Divine Love, Divine Contemplation, or Divine Unity emerge directly as a result of SI, although they are real, discriminable experiences. They are said to be gifts of Grace beyond our control.

Meanwhile, in session after session, the touch communication leads our clients

to release physical tensions and the psychological experiences they express; to become aware of the body in the present moment; and to reside more and more in the quiet of the empty, witnessing mind.

*Edward Maupin is the earliest trained (1968) Rolf Method practitioner still in practice. A clinical psychologist (PhD, University of Michigan 1962), he is the author of a two-volume manual of Structural Integration, A Dynamic Relation to Gravity – Vol. 1: Elements of Structural Integration; Vol. 2: The Ten Sessions of Structural*

*Integration – both published by Dawn Even Press (San Diego, California, 2005).*

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# The Earthbound Metaphysic

## The Art of Rolfing® SI and the Art of Sculpture, Part 2

By Szaja Gottlieb, Certified Advanced Rolfer™

*Author's Note: This article is the second part of "The Art of Rolfing SI and The Art of Sculpture" which appeared in the March 2017 issue. In 1978, when I was thirty years old, I was in therapy (art therapy) and received the Ten Series. Almost immediately, my orientation changed from being an intellectual and a scholar to being a physical laborer, doing construction and furniture moving but also art and sculpture. In light of the theme of this issue, "Rolfing SI, Psyche, and Consciousness," I decided to reduce my personal viewpoint from this article so that elements of transformation that I underwent might be understood more analytically and objectively. My personal aim is to understand what happened to me almost forty years ago and my hope is that this approach will illuminate for the reader the fascinating and mysterious relationship between SI and psychological growth. The artwork included is meant not to illustrate any of the ideas discussed but simply to record a personal journey and to evoke a feeling.*

*Then the Lord God formed the man from the dust of the ground.*

The Book of Genesis 2:7

*So that is what I'm talking about, the gravity field, the earth field, the great field of the earth always wins . . . What can we do about it? We can change the field of the man, the small field, even though we cannot change the large field.*

Ida Rolf (1978a)

*All this metaphysics is fine, but be mighty sure you've got physics under the metaphysics.*

Ida Rolf (1978b, 206)

Psychology has always played the doppelganger to structural integration (SI). Famed Gestalt psychologist Fritz Perls helped launch Dr. Rolf and Rolfing SI at Esalen, but even previously, in England where she hosted workshops, Rolf favored having psychological work with a client done at the same time as somatic

work. The psychological effects of SI were perhaps unexpected but too obvious not to be noticed, and by the time the human potential movement in the 1960s was unfolding, Rolf delightfully accepted it.

Almost a third of the entries in *Rolfing and Physical Reality* (Rolf 1978b) deal with some aspect of psychological or personality development. But she was very definite that the aim of Rolfing SI was not psychological transformation. In the introduction to Rolfing SI written for the *Psychology Handbook*, Rolf wrote, "Rolfing [SI] is not primarily a psychotherapeutic approach to the problems of humans, but the effect it has had on the human psyche has been so noteworthy that people insist on so regarding it" (Rolf 1978b, 26; quoted in Rosemary Feitis's introduction). Her explanation of the psychological effects, which were referred to by Feitis as "succinct and cagy," focused on the spillover effect of the myofascial reorganization of the human body on the various other "bodies": psychological, emotional, mental, and

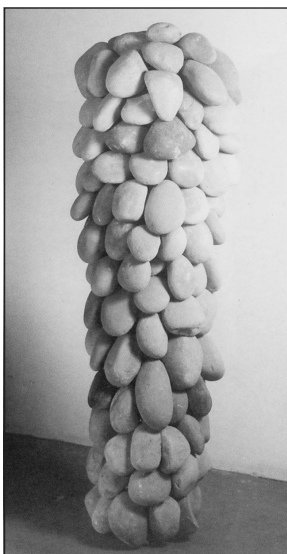
spiritual. A more fully balanced and integrated body allows a greater efficiency and greater energy.

When discussing the psychological effects of SI, most practitioners point to the emotional episodes that they themselves or their clients have experienced during SI sessions. David Lesondak, in his recent book *Fascia: What It Is and Why It Matters*, refers to these episodes as somatoemotional releases (SERs), which he describes as a change or release of mechanical tension in the body coinciding with emotional response, often in cases of PTSD (Lesondak 2017, 89). Explained from a Reichian point of view, the rationale is that once the emotional 'body armor' is removed, a release of heretofore restricted energies results. Significantly, Rolf cast aspersions on the importance of such emotional releases:

People think that just because they get tremendous release of emotion they're getting help. This is so much a part of the current ideas of the culture. You'll get people who are working with a therapist who say, "I can't really get that scream out." Make it clear that you are doing work to bring that person to a greater spatial integration; emotional release is like a pebble on the path. Respect it but don't spend a lot of time analyzing it (1978b, 151).

## A Pebble on the Path: 'Spatial Integration' and Emotional Transformation

The relationship between psychological development and spatial relationships



"Tower" 1991. Sandstone, wood, wire, nails (8'x2'x2').

is well explored in twentieth century psychology, specifically in childhood development by Swiss psychologist Jean Piaget (1896-1960). He introduced the idea that developmental stages of children, particularly in early childhood, are directly connected to the physical world by sensorimotor engagement, and that thinking and feeling are not differentiated as separate functions until the later stages of childhood, usually after seven years of age, when intellectual capacities such as mathematics and language are developed (Wikipedia). Until then, thinking and feeling are not differentiated; this is sometimes thought of as a magical period where a child's thoughts, desires, and feelings are merged, as, for example, by Joseph Chilton Pearce (1977) in his book *Magical Child*.

Built upon Piaget's insight, the contemporary field of childhood psychology was born. In the 1930s psychotherapist Margaret Lowenfeld (1890-1973) developed innovative therapy techniques of play, such as sandbox games and drawing to discern a child's emotional landscape, reminiscent of those used today in art therapy. One of Lowenfeld's disciples, Elizabeth Burford, wrote a little-known book, published in 1998 with the intriguing title, *Gravity and the Creation of Self: An Exploration of Self Representations Using Spatial Concepts*. In the book, the author focuses on the emotional life of children in early development and her remarks concerning the spatial interactions in the gravity field resound, as if written by Rolf herself.

We live in a three-dimensional world, subject to the force of gravity which grounds us. This force has been one of the main determinants of our physical shape during the evolution of mankind. Spatial concepts are developed as we learn to maneuver ourselves around in the real world attempting to satisfy our basic needs. These spatial ideas, reflecting a world dominated by the energy force of gravity, are used to place objects, including ourselves, in our version of the concrete world. These positions are then used to indicate emotional states (Burford 1998, 8).

And this quote as well:

The erect living object on earth uses energy from within itself to defy the downward pull of gravity.

Gravity is a little understood source of energy which shapes the whole universe . . . From the experiential point of view it is of all-pervasive importance. Though we are barely aware of this unseen force working its effect upon us, all our experiences have the imprint of the structure that it imposes. The attainment of erect posture accrues emotional significance and comes in itself to symbolize individuality, integrity, and power (Burford 1998, 24).

Simply put, early interaction with the physical environment in childhood creates the future personality in all aspects.

Two spatial dimensions, according to Burford, are of particular importance. The first is the up/down axis as a result of the need to resist gravity, which she identifies as an assertion of self. The second dimension relates to objects outside the child, especially sources of nurturance such as parents. In her view, these two spatial conditions, when optimally met, lead to a healthy individual, independent but also integrated with the outside world.

While 'up' is usually a positive and 'down' is a negative in Burford's cosmology, the psychotherapist points out there is one area in relation to 'down' that expresses a positive, and that is the feeling of being close to the earth:

But there is one spatial idea involving lowness which goes against this generalization, feeling 'close to the earth' is understood to be a good, satisfying experience probably associated with continuity of loving care in infancy . . . (Burford 1998, 29).

One cannot help but note that this idea is reminiscent of the 'grounding' concepts associated with Bioenergetic Analysis developed by Alexander Lowen in the 1930s and intended to rebalance the upper-pole orientation by reaffirming the 'lower' energies, especially the sexual ones.

From a mechanical point of view, the concept of support in the gravitational field is physical; our bodies hold us up. But there is also the psychological concept of support, usually related to issues of the emotions and nurturance. Traditionally, in psychoanalysis, this emotional component focuses on an individual's relationship with the mother. The close relationship



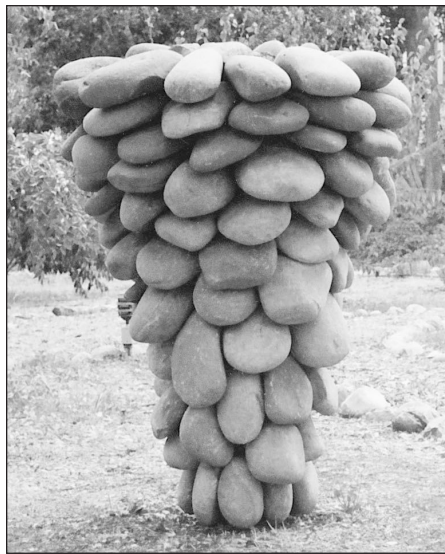
between these two concepts of support, the mechanical in terms of the earth and the psychological in terms of the mother, is borne out in our vocabulary. The origins of the words matter, mother, matrix are associated with, if not derived from, the Latin word, *mater*, or 'mother' (Online Etymology Dictionary). While it is commonly accepted that in psychoanalysis the therapeutic process focuses a great deal on the relationship of the client to the mother, the notion, however, that an emotional relationship is established with the earth similar to and related to the relationship with the mother as part of living in the gravitational field is startling and mind-bending, and, I believe, an important consideration in the SI process.

The well-known psychoanalyst, C.F. Rycroft, in discussing vertigo, for example, uses this theme in explaining the relationship between vertical alignment and neurosis. He is quoted by Burford saying:

Vertigo is a sensation which occurs when one's sense of equilibrium is threatened. To an adult it is a sensation which is usually, though by no means always, associated with the maintenance of the erect posture, and there is, therefore, a tendency to think of giddiness exclusively in terms of such relatively mature anxieties as fear of falling over or the fear of heights and to forget that infants, long before they can stand, experience threats to their equilibrium and that some of their earliest activities such as grasping and clinging represents attempts to maintain the security of being supported by the mother. As the infant learns to crawl and later to walk, the supporting function of the mother is increasingly taken over by the ground; this must be one of the main reasons why the earth is unconsciously thought of as the mother and why neurotic disturbances of equilibrium can so frequently be traced back to conflicts about the dependence on the mother (Burford 1998, 35).

The implications here are twofold. First, psychological development of the individual from infancy through adulthood is expressed by the vibrancy and vitality of vertical alignment. Second, the correct relationship in the gravitational field to the earth or ground potentially provides

a pathway to healing, wholeness, and integration on a psychological level, even if an individual has suffered "neurotic disturbance" in childhood.



"Cone" 1994. Sandstone, wood, wires, nails (5'x3'x3').

Though uprightiness in evolution is usually associated with the animal kingdom and then humans, the response to challenges of gravity was first taken up on land by plants. A remarkable article published in 2016 by two scientists, Tabir Najrana and Juan Sanchez-Esteban, "Mechanotransduction as an Adaptation to Gravity," describes the evolutionary process of life first appearing in the sea thirty million years ago and then moving on land four million years ago. Whereas gravity was easily neutralized in the oceans by buoyancy, once life forms moved from an aquatic to a terrestrial environment, a new set of responses needed to develop. These responses began at a cellular level as certain cells specialized and developed biochemical signals in response to changes in gravitational forces.

In spite of the more or less constant gravitational force on Earth, mechanical load of organisms on land is approximately 1,000 times larger than in water. About 4 million years ago, the first terrestrial organisms, plants appeared on the land from the sea. The terrestrial plants have adapted to and evolved on the land environment, so that they can extend their roots downward in the soil and their shoots upward against  $1 \times g$  (Najrana and Sanchez-Esteban 2016).

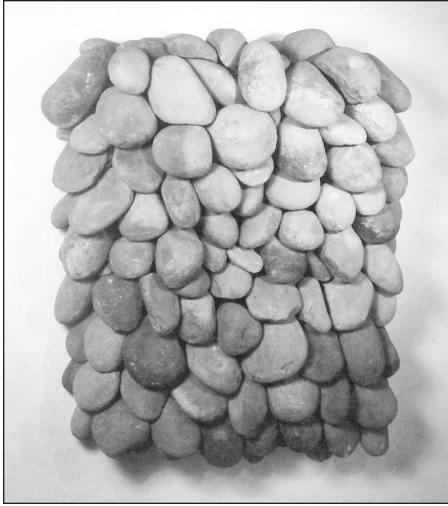
Being the first responders to terrestrial gravitational forces, it was plants who first engaged the problem of maintaining equilibrium in the gravitational field by using specialized cells to orient simultaneously in two directions – upwards and downwards using roots and shoots, which a Rolfer might call palintonicity. It is thus to the vegetative kingdom, rather than the animal kingdom, that we owe gratitude for our evolution to uprightiness.

Though a great deal of attention has been paid to fascia by researchers in the past twenty years, Rolf's original insight into the role of mechanical forces, specifically gravity, in shaping life aligns with the recent developments of contemporary science. The study and research of mechanotransduction – biochemical responses at a cellular level to mechanical influences – is a staple in the modern laboratory. As the title of her book *Rolfing and Physical Reality* indicates, Rolf understood the primacy of mechanical forces in shaping the human response to the gravitational field to create a greater efficiency. She also declared that this same restructuring of a human's body in the gravitational field plays a vital role in psychological transformation. At the root of this declaration was her unproven assertion that psychological maturity accompanies physical maturity when there is a movement away from use of the extrinsic muscles and to intrinsic muscles for postural stability.

The business of living in extrinsics is characteristic of the very young; it is characteristic of the immature. I do not know, it may be that as long as you preeminently use extrinsic muscles you are immature. Perhaps maturity occurs as you begin to get intrinsics into the picture and bring both to a balance (Rolf 1978b, 125).

As a result of the SI process and more efficient use of intrinsic muscles, the physical transformation also has a psychological effect:

If a Rolfer aligns a person appropriately, his behavior will be more what we label mature. That goes whether the kid is five or fifteen or twenty-five or fifty-five. At fifty-five we don't call him immature; we call him neurotic. But it is the same problem; he's stuck in an early place. As you align his body in accordance with the structure that is



“Off the Wall” 1990. Sandstone, wood, wires, nails (4’x4’x18’).

written into the tissue itself, you get evidence of more mature behavior (Rolf 1978, 100).

## Psychology and Rolf Movement® Integration

To understand more completely Rolf’s intent and the psychological import of SI, we have to turn to another Rolfer, Hubert Godard, a movement teacher and member of the Rolf Institute® faculty known for developing the Tonic Function Model, which has been elucidated by Rolfers Kevin Frank and Aline Newton. I do not know his present viewpoint, but in 1992, when interviewed by Aline Newton, psychology and Rolfing SI were for Godard integral with one another. Significantly, similar to Rolf he differentiates between the emotional and the psychological. “But to talk about the line,” commented Godard, “I need to be really open to [the] emotional around that and to use my skillfulness in psychological stuff, but the aim is not to have an emotional release” (Newton 1992, 44).

He further explained that his goal is not to deal with “neo-Reichian armor” but to work directly on the ‘Line’ so that the armor simply falls away. Once the client’s inner line is reinforced and greater access to the core is attained, often the problems psychoanalysis was intended to solve will either drop away or be more easily handled in therapy. “I have often seen people in a psychoanalytic process,” remarks Godard, “who, with Rolfing [SI] giving supporting effect in the gravity system, make a very quick end to many years of psychoanalysis” (Newton 1992, 46). This is the explanation

of Rolf’s thinking when she said that emotional episodes are merely pebbles on the path. This differentiation between the psychological and the emotional is important to be noted by many practitioners who tend to identify the two as identical.

But if the up/down polarity is so endemic and a natural part of evolution as presented in “Mechanotransduction as an Adaptation to Gravity”, why do clients walk into our office misaligned and completely unaware of the gravitational field?

### Spatial Bias

A relatively unexplored issue in the field of somatics is the problem of what I call spatial bias. Godard himself comments on directional *spatial bias*. “If you ask a person to point to the sky, you can see that there are two different ways to point to the sky: one comes from the ground and the other comes from the upper body” (Newton 1992, 48). Godard comments further, “To have the capacity for fight and flight, the two . . . if you are only ‘up’ you have no grounding. If you are a pusher, you have a tendency to be stuck in the structure, on the ground, and to change the stuff around you” (Newton 1992, 46).

This is expressed not only in our attitudes but also in our language. Individuals want to be ‘up’ and not ‘down’. We want to ‘walk on air’ and not be ‘put down’. After death we hope to go to ‘up to heaven’ rather than go ‘down to hell’. Anthropologist Edward T. Hall (1914-2009) wrote a number of books such as *The Hidden Dimension* (1990) exposing the differences in perception and behavior in relation to space embedded in various cultures and manifested in language.

Additionally, in our technological society with its emphasis on the cerebral and using tools such as cell phones, computers, automobiles, etc., there is also a heavy bias to the ‘upper pole’ and loss of connection to the ‘lower pole’. In 1985, Joshua Meyrowitz wrote the book *No Sense of Place: The Impact of Electronic Media on Social Behavior* where he explored the displacing effect of television on social space, i.e., the elimination of face-to-face conversations. He could have just as easily included a chapter on the disembodiment effect of media on physical space, a theme that, if anything, has amplified since the introduction of cell phones and computers.

And then there is the simple morphological bias due to the design of our bodies, which

orients to the space in front of our bodies which we can see, work with our hands, and walk toward. The overall neutrality in gravity is easily lost in deference to the many tasks that lay in front and ahead of us – simply, form adapting to function. Evolution guarantees functioning adaptive structures to the overall challenges in our environment, not necessarily the best one suited to gravity.

Thus, despite the protests about the constancy and objectivity of the gravitational field, space turns out to be anything but – our interaction with space is perceptual and this is why Godard referred to it as the symbolic. This is why SI, at its *highest* point of delivery, begins with understanding, insight, awareness, and sometimes even a change in consciousness. Rolf (1978b, 87) recognized the difficulty of the task when she said, “There is something about the fact that we live in the gravitational field which makes us insensitive to the recognition of that field. So we always have to keep pulling it in intellectually.”

The client who walks across the threshold of our office or studio has an opportunity to cleanse the spatial doors of perception and to rediscover himself as a singular body in relation to space as well as a singular body of space within space. The perceptual shift that SI requires then has the potential of reconnecting the person with what might be called the *intrinsic self* or the *adamantine self*. Proprioception gives us a clue to this potential. The Latin root of the word proprioception is a combination of two words, *proprius*, or ‘one’s own’, and *capio* or *capere*, ‘to take or grasp’ (Wikipedia). Thus, the literal meaning of proprioception is to grasp one’s self.

The Rolfing Ten Series can be viewed and presented as proprioceptive scaffolding, reorganizing not only the client’s body in relation to space but also the client’s spatial awareness. I have referred to this schematic in my previous article (Gottlieb 2017, 30): “The ten-session series thus can be presented as a series of sessions to reorganize the client’s directional awareness of space: the first session, up or north pole; the second session, down or south pole; the third session, sides; the fourth, fifth, sixth, and seventh sessions, center (lower), center, center, center (upper), respectively.”

Spatial reorganization of the body and perceptual shifts in relation to space shift the psyche and have the potential to initiate a spiritual journey. Existentialist



psychologist Karlfried Graf Dürckheim in his classic *The Way of Transformation: Daily Life as Spiritual Exercise* explored posture as a manifestation of personality and commented on the effect of embodying this center of gravity, which in Rolfing SI we refer to as the Line:

This effort to attain the correct centre of gravity is the fundamental mental practice by means of which we are enabled to live in the world in the right way. Thus resting in the basic centre, we are relaxed and free and at the same time feel ourselves supported (Dürckheim 1971, 38).

And:

Understood in the personal sense “centre of gravity” does not refer to any specific area, but to what we call the root of personal or existential life. Nevertheless, it is possible to perceive whether or not a person is properly rooted in his physical body. When a man has found this correct centre of gravity in his body he can open himself to the forces that lie at the essential core of life and anchor himself therein (Dürckheim 1971, 67).

## Psychological Transformation

If spatial relationships become a field of play cleared of bias, what Dürckheim viewed as ego attachment, the potential for meaningful healing and psychological transformation now are introduced. Interestingly and perhaps significantly, this same process takes place in art as well. Otto Rank, Freud’s disciple, modeled his therapy as a tension between neurosis and creativity with the goal of removing obstacles and restrictions to the development of the personality which might then manifest in works of art. From his point of view these works of art were a record of the artist’s transformation. Many biographies charting the voyage of the artist by analyzing his work echo this point of view.

This psychoanalytic model of neurosis, in fact, is a mirror image of the SI process and its potential for supporting transformation. Removal of restrictions and fixations is akin to reducing neurotic attachment with the aim of returning what might be referred to as *flow* on a somatic and psychic level. It is perhaps overly simplistic to think of body fixations and restrictions

as similar to neurotic patterns that block, but it is a pleasing idea nonetheless. Hubert Godard, a Rolfer who was also accomplished as a dancer and dance teacher, demonstrates this point of view in discussing the shoulder girdle, theoretically, as a psychological point of freedom of the body that often takes on psychosomatic restrictions. “Because the arm, if free from gravity, it is full of emotion . . . The glenohumeral joint will reveal a lot about where a person is psychologically. And it makes sense, because the arm is so free, it becomes a psychological issue” (Newton 1992, 48). Removal of restrictions to the shoulder girdle thus can have a corresponding liberating effect on psychological restrictions in the individual.



“Polymonolith I” 1990. Sandstone, wood, wire, nails (10’x8’x2’).

## Conclusion

To be clear, as Rolf stated, psychological transformation in and of itself was never the goal of Rolfing SI; but transformation, such as is experienced in various disciplines like yoga, meditation, and practices such as art, was. In her remarkable address, entitled “Structure: A New Factor in Understanding the Human Condition” in 1978 at the Explorers of Humankind Conference in Los Angeles, Rolf declared her truth: “structure determines behavior.”

As far as I am concerned, this is the message of structure, that structure even within human beings can be

modified. And that in modifying it, you make available to the human being the energy field of the Earth which surrounds him. And that even though we be unconscious of the fact that we are working with the energy field of the Earth, that this is truly what is giving us the ability to change the situations of the man, and of his feelings, and of his abilities, and of his acceptance, and of his general behavior to the world around him. I think I am sorry to say, this is all of my message. But if you take it to heart, you’ll find you have quite something to think (Rolf 1978a).

While psychology is obviously included, my view is that the concept of ‘consciousness’ would better serve in describing behavioral changes stimulated by SI. That change in consciousness begins with an awareness of one’s body within space and in relation to the gravitational field, again the ‘embodied self’. A term in vogue, nowadays, is planetary consciousness. I would assert, in the spirit of getting the physics under the metaphysics, that the idea of *planetary consciousness* begins with the individual’s physical relationship with the planet as a physical entity, what Dr. Rolf might describe as aligning the smaller gravitational field that is man with the larger gravitational field that is earth. It is the Rolfer’s job to help do just that.

*Author’s Note: I would like to add a note of thanks to Rolf Movement® Instructor and Certified Advanced Rolfer Kevin Frank for correspondence and conversation about Hubert Godard, saving me from entering the ‘extrinsic/ intrinsic muscle’ morass.*

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# The Co-emergence of Mind-Body-Spirit

## Considerations for Practitioner, Client, and the Potential for Change

By Anne Hoff, Certified Advanced Rolfer™, Teacher of the Diamond Approach®

*In the province of the mind, what is believed to be true is true or becomes true, within limits to be found experientially and experimentally. These limits are further beliefs to be transcended. In the province of the mind there are no limits.*

John Lilly, MD (Lilly 1972, xv-xvi)

### Introduction

I first learned about Rolfing® Structural Integration (SI) reading *The Center of the Cyclone: An Autobiography of Inner Space*, John Lilly's account of his explorations with dolphins, LSD, isolation tanks, Esalen, Rolfing SI, Arica, etc. For me, Rolfing SI has always been part of a larger context of mind-body-spirit integration – or what I'm coming to recognize as mind-body-spirit *coemergence*. In this article I will share some of the tools and understandings that have been most beneficial to my understanding of the interplay of Rolfing SI and consciousness, both for my own growth and when working with clients.

### A Discussion of Rolfing SI and Consciousness

We will begin with some broad strokes looking at Rolfing SI as a holistic, transformational process that fosters embodiment, at the implications of the 'Line', at Rolfing history, and at how Rolfing SI is a good opener of consciousness but not in itself a path with a map and a methodology to explore consciousness.

### Embodiment

I didn't come to Rolfing SI as a client because of pain. I had poor posture, but that wasn't really in my awareness until I saw the comparison of my 'before' and 'after' photos. Rather, I sensed that my body was in some way disconnected, undeveloped. My mind was sharp, and I had begun opening more to my emotions, as well as pursuing longstanding interests in spirituality. But my body had not found its place in this journey, was not partaking of it and developing in the

same way. To use a word common to Rolfing SI and also known in spiritual work, I wasn't *embodied* despite being young, healthy, uninjured, and relatively fit.

Experiencing the Ten Series in 1987, I was fortunate to have a Rolfer, Richard Podolny, who was deeply cognizant of the mind-body-spirit connection and knew that he was in the business of transformation. None of this was particularly explicit – he was taking me through a classic Ten Series – but it was an underlying thread. With the Ten Series, I landed in my body in a new way – and that was a crucial element to other significant growth processes in my life.

A core premise of many spiritual paths is to be 'present', to be in the 'now'. As Ram Dass famously said, 'Be here now'. What is that directive but a set of coordinates on axes of time and space? *We can only grow and develop if we first locate ourselves in both the current moment (time) and in the body (space)*. This means freeing ourselves of ways that we live in the past, and ways we try to project ourselves into an idealized future.

On a mental level we can cling to the past by, for example, clinging to an old identity, like the role we had in our family as a child. We go to the future if our goals and ideals have implicit in them a rejection of where we are in the moment: we are not okay until we reach that idealized place. On an emotional level we can, for example, cling to old relationships, or again negate our present experience by feeling that we can't be happy unless certain things come to pass. Even if we are not projecting into the future, we can use fantasy and daydreaming in the present moment as a way to be other-than-present.

Being 'present' means being in the body. This supports being in the now if one is in touch with sensation. Yet there are many ways the past is held in the body. How often do you see a client whose structure (or part of it) looks childish? Or have a client tell you, "I have my father's feet"? And old

injuries, of course, are the imprints of past events; the physical deficit from the injury may be current, but there's often other layers of content from the past that overlay that objective limitation. So when we come into the body what we are often present to first are imprints from our past (and these may underpin a familiar sense of self, as will be discussed later). Note John Lilly's experience of Peter Melchior working on his foot, cut deeply by an axe in an old injury:

Suddenly I realized that I had blocked the pain in the original experience. This scar had held the potential of that pain ever since. It also had a basic traumatic memory... I had favored that foot, favored that region of the foot, and had not completed the hole that was left in my body image there. The Rolfing [SI] allowed this hole to fill in, allowed my posture to improve in respect to that foot and the realization of the pain passed away (Lilly 1972, 107).

As we explore the body of our history, we begin to unwind the old impressions and find that we can be *here* in a body of *now*. If this exploration is open to and aware of shifts in consciousness, another level of transformation opens, what I describe as *body as portal* – the possibility of experiencing with immediacy that the body is a vehicle of human consciousness, a doorway to other realms.

## A Different Culture

Although Rolfing SI can open consciousness through the body, the client does not always run with this. This may be for any number of reasons to do with either practitioner or client, but I believe there is also a cultural factor at play. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, when Ida Rolf was at Esalen and establishing the Rolf Institute®, clients came to Rolfing SI wanting holistic transformation, and they were often engaged in other forms of transformational work such as therapy, encounter groups, meditation, etc. It was a grand experiment on all levels, with openness and curiosity and passion. In that environment, it was not strange for Rolf to be talking about the potential of her work to contribute to the evolution of a new human being.

Now? Not so much. A client comes to mind, a tech guy busy with work, family; not a 'seeker'. He did fix-it work with me, and the Ten Series. Throughout, his overriding

goal was to resolve an old ankle injury that periodically caused foot pain. He once said to me something along the lines of, "I wish I could put my foot in a box, send it to you to be worked on, and have you send it back." The *process* of receiving bodywork did not engage his curiosity. His motivation was 'second paradigm' (see the schema developed by Jeff Maitland; 1993).

I find that a large proportion of Rolfing clients are oriented primarily to the physical. Sometimes the intake interview reveals other layers, but there's often a reticence unless the person is engaged in other mental, emotional, or spiritual work (e.g., trauma therapy). It is important to meet the client where s/he is, and also to be open to seeing where the work goes as s/he is impacted by it.

## What Rolfing SI Can and Cannot Do

What can open when we engage the fascia, or align the body in gravity? In my Unit 2, as Pedro Prado led an exercise on sensing the 'Line' while standing, I began to experience my body as an effulgence of energy; it was a bit frightening, and made me slightly nauseous. Moving slightly off the Line returned me to familiar experience. Rolf Will Johnson, who regularly speaks to and voluminously writes about Rolfing SI and consciousness, spoke to the power of the Line in his article "The Line As a Mudra of Transformation":

... The embodiment of the Line creates a mudra (a bodily gesture or posture) of transformation capable of generating a radical and profound shift in embodied consciousness... The shift in consciousness that I am referring to here takes one from an exclusive and isolated awareness of egoic self that experiences itself as separate from everything it perceives to exist outside of the body to an inclusive and palpable awareness of self that is profoundly embedded in, and deeply connected to, what has traditionally been referred to as the "ground of being." All the spiritual traditions speak of this dimension of experience (Johnson 1999, 33).

So Rolfing SI and Rolf Movement® work can elicit radical shifts in body experience related to consciousness. Rolf created a potent methodology, but she did not create a map for traversing the shifts in consciousness Johnson describes, where one

begins to enter nondual and nonconceptual terrain that challenges the egoic self. Thus, I do not believe that Rolfing SI alone is an adequate vehicle for consciousness work. An opener, yes. A path, no.

We know some things about psychology from our training (e.g., concepts of transference and countertransference), and we know about consciousness, particularly as it relates to the psychobiological and energetic taxonomies, so we are able to help our clients metabolize many of the shifts engendered by our work. But our Rolfing training does not give us the knowledge to effectively and ethically become spiritual teachers or consciousness guides any more than it prepares us to be psychologists. For either, specialized training – and personal experience of the terrain – is required.

## Paths of Consciousness Work

In the past, many teachings on consciousness occurred in mystery schools, or required the full surrender of one's personal life to become a monastic. These days we live in a veritable spiritual supermarket – you can try on many teachings to find what suits you. And it can also lead you astray, as the 'seeker' can go from teaching to teaching, tasting but never deeply engaging inner work. It is the rare individual who finds realization without a path – the ego will always attempt to appropriate the spiritual journey for its own goals. Part of the function of a teacher and a path is help expose this 'spiritual materialism' (Trungpa 2002).

I was fortunate that openings of consciousness led me to find a spiritual teaching that I could 'harness myself to'. This may seem like a strange expression, but it expresses a level of engagement that allows one to effectively do inner work. As I've discussed elsewhere (Hoff and Knight 2017), my twenty-plus years engaged in Rolfing SI as a student and practitioner has overlapped almost exactly with my time in the Diamond Approach, again as a student and later a teacher. Each discipline has fed insight and development to the other, supporting my personal development and my work. Interestingly, Rolf also used this term 'harness' in a similar way: speaking about the need to study to attain a mastery of 'form' that would make the practice of Rolfing [SI] easy, she quoted Robert Frost's line "You have freedom when you're easy in your harness" (Rolf 1978, 182).

The Diamond Approach is particularly suited to those with an interest in the body and in psychology. It is a path of developing

presence that includes active exploration of the body through inner sensing and breath work, and the work of students and teachers over the decades has brought forth a detailed ‘map’ of how different states of consciousness typically bring forth certain types of issues or challenges for the psyche. In this sense, it deeply interrelates body mind-spirit.

Fortunately, there is a trend in other spiritual schools too to be more body-inclusive (rather than body-transcendent), with some Buddhist teachers bringing in body-based practices or, in the case of Johnson, bringing bodywork into meditation retreats (Johnson et al. 2013; Hoff 2015).

### Three Gatekeepers to Consciousness

Now let’s look at three elements that I consider ‘gatekeepers’ to consciousness and how they can affect our consciousness as a practitioner, the client’s consciousness, and the potential for change in a Rolfing session. These are: 1) *body armor* as a manifestation of ego and self-image; 2) the *inner critic* as an inertial and repressive force; and 3) *not-knowing*.

Underlying all of these, and weaving between them, is the question of openness (receptivity). Nothing – body, mind (including emotions), or spirit – will change easily if we are not open. The epigraph that opens this article speaks to this. I’ll repeat it here with one adjustment, changing ‘mind’ to ‘individual consciousness’ to cover our broader and co-emergent territory of body-mind-spirit:

In the province of the [individual consciousness], what is believed to be true is true or becomes true, within limits to be found experientially and experimentally. These limits are further beliefs to be transcended. In the province of the [individual consciousness] there are no limits (Lilly 1972, xv-xvi).

### Body Armor

Wilhelm Reich (1945/1972) developed the concepts of *character armor* and *body armor*. Reich was initially a student of Freud, but diverged to follow his own path that became much more body-based and was concerned with liberating life energy.

Reich called our habitual demeanor, stance and attitude character armor. Our dominant, submissive,

pleasing, withdrawn, petulant, stubborn styles, for example, become a uniform we wear in relationships – our suit of armor . . . As Reich’s work progressed scientifically, his focus turned to the body and the way it mirrors the character in all systems. He found that our bodies embody the template of our personalities and conform to those dictates . . . When we are armored . . . the energy flow throughout our body is impeded. We may experience this as a lack of sensation, aliveness, a stiffness or tension. Armor can develop into painful sensation if places in our body have chronic holding or are under-charged. So our physicality speaks as well as our voice. Our armoring reduces our creative capacity, our natural expression of our unique Self (Frisch 2013).

The structuring of mind (character) and body creates an ‘armor’ that maintains a bound body shape and the familiar defenses of our personality (Figure 1). We know from Rolf that fascia is the organ of structure; our familiar tensions and shape are part of how we know ourselves and each other, as noted by Heather Starsong (2009, 6), describing an experience with her husband during her Rolfing series:

. . . Each session was a difficult and extraordinary initiation. My sixth was particularly hard: I had one of those tight high butts, that are considered cute and sexy, but are very painful to live with . . . [My husband] was out of town when I had my sixth. We had a bedtime ritual of going to sleep on our bellies side by side; as we were settling, he would reach over and pat me on the bottom and say “Good night, honey.” The first night that he was home after my sixth session, he reached over to pat me as usual. Then the light went on, and Sam was sitting up in bed, throwing back the covers, exclaiming, “What happened to your ass?”

Similarly, our sense of identity is also based on an inner body-image and self-representations. As noted by A.H. Almaas, founder of the Diamond Approach: “According to psychoanalytic object relations theory, body-image actually forms the core of the self-image. The self-image forms as self-representations are gradually built around the experience of the body image” (Almaas 1986, 28). In Diamond Approach private sessions, the student explores any self-representations brought forth by the work. These may be images of oneself at a certain age (accurate or distorted); images or the felt sense of

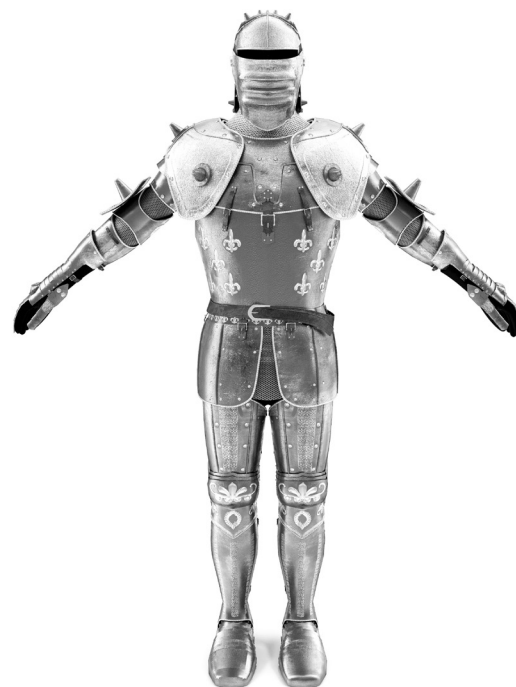


Figure 1: Body/character armor is akin to medieval armor. It defines our shape and self-image; limits sensation and mobility; restricts perception and energy; and is defensive in nature.



objects in the body (e.g., a metal shield over the heart, a robotic apparatus in the ocular segment; a sense of holes or wounds in areas of the body; a sense of various materials in the body or body segments (plastic, metal, wood, glass . . . ); or a sense of colors or energies in the body or body segments. It is also possible for such material to arise when working with the body through Rolfing SI or another bodywork modality. I once was doing bodywork on a client's abdomen and asked her what she felt under my hands. I expected her to describe bodily sensation, such as 'tight' or 'sore', but she said 'there's a spikey machine in there'.

When body images and self images are dissolved at the level of the psyche or soul, a common experience is the arising of *space*:

“ . . . The more the rigid boundaries of the self are made porous and dissolved . . . the experience of one's self and one's mind as open, pure spaciousness, an empty clear space, becomes increasingly available . . . In the experience of spaciousness and openness, one experiences the absence of emotional heaviness and a release of the sense of burden. There is mental clarity and a lucidity of perception. All the senses become sharper, as if cleansed and rejuvenated. The body feels light, relaxed, agile, and buoyant. It is similar to the experience of being in a clear open space with fresh and crisp air – as if on the top of a high mountain on a clear day, or on a broad beach – but it is experienced inside. And *ultimately it becomes clear that we are not a subject experiencing this spaciousness – we are the spaciousness* (Almaas 1986, 22-23; italics added for emphasis).

Thus, working with either physical body boundaries (fascia, tension patterns) or self-images can dramatically shift both felt sense and identity. Touching fascia, we are directly engaging body armor, and therefore character armor. Going further, Johnson (1993, 41) believes we are engaging the ego itself: “Ego . . . is simply a function of bodily holding, of the particular pattern of chronic muscular tensing through which our bodies most familiarly resist gravity.”

Why do some clients experience more transformation – of structure, as well as of other elements of being – than others during Rolfing work? Perhaps it's a question of

what you are open to, how many layers of body-mind-spirit you are willing to be present with. I remember watching Liz Gaggini do visceral work with a client who had a long and medically challenging history with asthma, including emergency hospitalizations. As Liz worked with the pleura, the client, balked: “Oh, it's dark in there.” [Liz is a master at working many layers; there is much to be gleaned from my interview with her: “*SI on All Cylinders: An Interview with Liz Gaggini*” (Hoff and Gaggini 2015).]

Almaas (1986, 104) notes: “Inner change must involve a change in self-image. Otherwise the change is either temporary or it is no change at all, hidden behind a new form of the old.” A client resistant to a shift in identity will most likely resist change to the tension patterns that are part of the shaping of identity, or else will quickly reconstitute them. According to Rolf, “There comes a time . . . when you see that your [client] is able to align himself, but he doesn't want to do it . . . There is always a physical factor in him which doesn't want to do it; there is often a psychological factor involved as well. There is the problem of a self-image – the image that he is trying to project in the world . . . He will revert and try to project that image, even when he is able to project another image, until he sees a light and gets into his realization that there are other images that might be more desirable . . . Some people say that the minute you get the idea that another image might be more desirable you are changing 'karma'” (Rolf 1978, 85). Individuals with weak ego structures will also often need their tension patterns: they are challenged by a sense of inner fragmentation, so body tension may be important for their sense of coherence.

### The Inner Critic

Our next gatekeeper to consciousness is the inner critic (what Freud called the 'superego'). The inner critic is a mental structure that forms in childhood from the edicts and messages of parents, teachers, and other authority figures. It served a role in childhood (we all had to learn not to run into the street, not to touch the hot stove, etc.), but it remains operative past childhood – until / unless you learn a way to disengage from it.

The inner critic shows up in all realms of life, including Rolfing sessions. As long as it's present – whether for Rolfer or client –



Figure 2: The inner critic limits the scope of our consciousness through its carrot-and-stick approach of (seemingly) positive and negative directives.

there will be a limitation on the openness, and therefore the transformative potential of the work. This limitation arises because the inner critic is the guardian of whatever status quo solidified out of the childhood relationship with the parents. In a sense, you as a child were like a wild horse that your parents had to domesticate. In doing that, they built a corral to contain you, and the bars of the corral are your parents' values and prohibitions. The inner critic's job is to keep you in that corral. Anything that questions its limits, that seeks to expand it, is threatening to the inner critic.

There are many ways a client's inner critic can show up, both (seemingly) positive and negative (see Figure 2). One vivid appearance was when I asked a client to feel into her body pattern of hunching forward. That posture could have come from computer work, or from holding young children, we didn't know. When I asked her to describe it, she said, “My father is behind me with a big stick and he's going to hit me.” More commonly, the inner critic shows up as the client's critique of his/her body (too fat, legs too short, etc.). (As taught in Rolfing and Rolf Movement training, it's important to speak to the client in ways that do not reinforce these messages, otherwise we are a stand-in for the inner critic.) The inner critic can also show up in blanket self-judgment: “I hate my body.” (No child is born feeling self-hatred (rejection of the self); it is learned behavior, an internalization of the inner critic.) Or the critic may show up as the client being overly skeptical of the Rolfing process

before giving it a chance, or critical of the results if they don't meet some very high bar.

On the Rolfer's side, your inner critic may give a running commentary in your head evaluating your work. The messages will be unique to you and your vulnerabilities (based on childhood themes), but for most people there will be messages around competency, knowledge, results, being a fake, etc. There are also manifestations of the critic that may seem positive; maybe it praises you when you've done something it considers good – but there's usually the implicit caveat of "you'd better keep up that behavior." Or it shows up in ideals – often unattainable – that you have to meet to be okay.

When the inner critic is in the Rolfing room, openness is stifled. Your inner critic (or the client's critic directed at you) is going to limit the potential for you to do your best work; on the client's side, the critic will limit his/her potential to be receptive and open to receiving the full benefits of the work and letting them ripple through his/her mind-body-spirit. Thus, we encourage positivity and ease during the body reading (prime time for the client's inner critic to arise), and speak and touch at all times in ways that "evoke" rather than "demand" (Rolf 1978, 94).

Defending against and disengaging from the inner critic is a big topic, beyond

the scope of this article. Ultimately, it is experiential work. For more guidance, please see the list of Inner Critic Resources at the end of this article.

## Not-Knowing

Rolfing training has been described as a mystery school. There's so much to learn, with the paradox being that you have to do it to learn to do it. One of the greatest gifts of my Rolfing training was when the Unit 3 assistant said something like, "I didn't know what I was doing for the first nine years I was in practice. It still worked, and then I gradually came to understand why it worked."

Most people are challenged by not-knowing (Figure 3), which is our third gatekeeper. *But before we can know something, we have to not-know.* Not-knowing creates receptivity to learning, to direct knowing, and to guidance. Yet our culture places great value on knowing. Most of us have had some experience of being put on the spot about what we know – called on by the teacher when we weren't prepared, a pop quiz, etc.; such experiences leave a sense of deficiency or shame about not-knowing.

Once we are in practice, there's plenty of opportunity for more not-knowing. Clients walk through the door with all sorts of things we've never seen or heard about. Do we cling to rote application of the 'Recipe', do we stress over our anatomy books, do

we succumb to fear and inner-critic attack, or do we find the place that is curious and says, "hmmm, I'll put my hands on the body and see what I find"?

Taking payment ups the ante, as you may feel that you need to know definitively how to help someone if money is going to be exchanged. Rather, as with any wellness or healthcare activity, the payment is for your time (and the efforts you have put into training and practice). Your obligation, at its most basic, is to be present with all of yourself with all of the client, and to see what comes through based on both your learned and 'stored' knowledge and your in-the-moment experience through the trained palpatory instruments of your hands. Rolf said, "[The client] and I form one for at least the time that I'm working. Look and feel. A guy walks in displaying all kinds of things that talk to you. You don't need feedback – you need to look at what's there" (Rolf 1978, 96).

There is value to all that we have learned ('stored' knowledge), and all that we can learn ('future' knowledge) through research, consultation with peers, and continuing education, but when you are with the client the primary demand is to the *now* as that is the only place anything can happen. You want access to your knowledge of anatomy, but that map can rest in the background of your consciousness while you allow an open spaciousness in the forefront. That spaciousness will draw in any stored knowledge that is needed; it will give you guidance about what to study later; but, most importantly, it will put you in living contact with the client's being and allow an immediacy that will direct your work far more effectively than your conventional mind. In this immediacy there can be a direct knowing unmediated by our stored knowledge.

Not-knowing invokes guidance. Have you ever been working on one part of a client's body and had a thought arise, "I need to go to the left knee." Do you take heed? If you don't, what happens? And when you follow that guidance, what occurs? My most magical sessions tend to occur when I first consider all that I know about what the client brings in, and then go to work holding that lightly in an open field of waiting to discover what *this particular client* needs. That balance of knowing and not-knowing, allowing both, tends to create the space for both immediate knowing and guidance.



Figure 3: Before knowing, there is not-knowing. Allowing not-knowing creates the space for immediate knowing and guidance to arise, as well as the relaxation that allows access to 'stored' knowledge.

Ultimately, the body is a mystery. New information will come to be known through research and science, and we will also learn through our own experience. The unfolding of the mystery is greatly compounded when we open to the domain of 'body as portal' and begin to explore inner phenomena and spiritual mind-body states. What happens to your experience of your own body if you allow that you truly don't know what a body is? What happens in your Rolfing practice? This openness leads to an incredible journey.

## Reprise on Openness

The theme of openness interweaves through these elements under discussion – body armor, inner critic, not-knowing – and how the three play into each other. To make that more explicit, here's a few examples:

- Body armor as fixed identity will help hold the inner critic in place, as ego is closely intertwined with inner critic (superego).
- Body armor creates a familiar sense of self, which includes a familiar mind and familiar ways of thinking. Body armor will resist opening and letting go into not-knowing, the doorway to new and immediate knowing.
- The inner critic is the guardian of the status quo, so its agenda is to keep body armor and identity in place, or else to set unattainable goals for transformation that effectively keep you stuck as you are.
- The inner critic is based on the values and thinking of your parents, so it only wants you to know what they knew, what they valued, and the lines in inquiry they endorsed. The inner critic will attack you or shame you when you do not know, so it will resist the space of not-knowing that opens new thoughts and guidance. Further, the inner critic does not want its role in guiding you to be supplanted by true guidance.
- Until one is comfortable with not-knowing and with opening (relaxing) into it, the experience may trigger body-armor tension patterns.
- Likewise, not-knowing may trigger an inner-critic attack.

## Conclusion

Can your body be open and permeable to experience? Can areas of arrested

development (body, emotion, mind, spirit) become freed up? Can you be free of outside agenda and open to your own potential? Can you allow knowledge/guidance to arise independent of your conditioned mind? We are involved in a wonderful body of work that has the potential to ignite this exploration and guide us into transformative inner space.

In the Diamond Approach we use the expression 'open and open-ended'. That means that there's a fundamental posture of openness, and that we don't posit any particular goal. This view allows the inner journey to open to unexpected vistas. The same view can inform our Rolfing practices to open our work to increasing awareness of co-emergent mind-body-spirit.

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*Author's note: Thanks to Szaja Gottlieb for reading an earlier version of this article and pointing me to Ida Rolf's parallel use of the word 'harness'.*

## Inner Critic Resources

- *Soul Without Shame* by Byron Brown (1999) goes deeply into the Diamond Approach understanding of and methodology for defense against the inner critic.
- I've written a number of posts on different aspects of the inner critic and successful defense on my Facebook page ([www.facebook.com/AnneHoffDiamondApproach/](http://www.facebook.com/AnneHoffDiamondApproach/)).
- I teach a weekend workshop called "Free Yourself from the Inner Critic" that is a learning incubator for understanding and disengaging from the inner critic. Classes are always announced on my Facebook page.
- I and other Diamond Approach teachers work with students in person and by Skype. See [www.diamondapproach.org/](http://www.diamondapproach.org/) teacher for a list of teachers.

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# The Dialogue of Touch

## *Inspirations from Psychotherapy after Forty-Five Years of Rolfing® Structural Integration*

By David Kirk-Campbell, BA, MFA, Certified Advanced Rolfer™, European Certificate of Psychotherapy

This article has four interrelated subjects:

1. Insights, precautions, and strategies from psychotherapy that I use in my Rolfing Structural Integration (SI) practice.
2. How the unconscious and/or cell membranes of the client control when and if connective tissue and emotional change will take place.
3. Invitation for all Rolfers and Rolfers-in-training to seek out psychotherapy for increased self-awareness.
4. A film I have made, which gives Rolfers tools to use when clients re-experience traumas from their childhood.

This article is based on my experience, discoveries, and findings working as both a Rolfer and a psychotherapist. I had two years of psychoanalysis before becoming a Rolfer. Soon after becoming a Rolfer, I felt a need to be more comfortable with the emotional releases of my clients so I completed my training as a psychotherapist. For sixteen of the twenty years after becoming a Rolfer, I was a client with three different psychotherapy modalities: Gestalt, Jungian, and transactional analysis.

It was only after moving to Denmark in 1991 that I began working as a Gestalt psychotherapist. From 1992 to 2008, I co-owned and co-led Gestalt Terapeutisk Institut. My private practice with Rolfing SI and psychotherapy has been a wonderful ride of satisfaction as the clarity of my awareness and consciousness has created more safety for my Rolfing clients to make profound connective-tissue and life changes.

I have experienced that Rolfing SI and Gestalt psychotherapy supplement and benefit each other as long as there is a clear contract with a client as to what s/he wants during any particular session.

### **Insights, Precautions, and Strategies from Psychotherapy**

Early in a first meeting with a client I say, "One purpose of this first meeting is to

decide if we meet again." The psychotherapy model values making explicit that which is implicit in the practitioner and client relationship. It is easier for the client to say s/he wants to find another Rolfer in the first session if the client is given the opportunity to express expectations for the session. It makes it easier for me to stop after the first meeting if I think s/he will benefit more from another Rolfer who has more specificity for the client's presenting topics.

Psychotherapy emphasizes the need for a contract which clarifies the motivations of the client and gives the Rolfer an opportunity to build a therapeutic relationship around meeting the client's stated needs. I have received Rolfing SI from twenty Rolfers and most of them looked at me front, side, and back, then told me where they will work. In this context, the Rolfer takes most of the responsibility and it is more chance if the result meets the *real reason* that motivates the client to come. A contract creates a relationship for shared responsibility and often reveals the client's *real* motivation in coming. These two factors stack the deck in favor of satisfaction, success, and referrals.

To set the stage for building a contract with a client, the Rolfer needs to ask a question. I have experimented with many initial questions and have settled on: "How do you want to change with your Rolfing session?" or "How do you want to benefit from your Rolfing sessions?" These questions are open. The client may respond with how s/he wants to change physically and/or with a narrative that focuses on his/her life story.

Most of my clients reveal a motivation beyond the 'home-page' description of Rolfing SI. Here are five examples of clients that came to me for Rolfing SI and received Rolfing SI without any psychotherapy:

1. An elderly woman from Munich, wanted to lift her teacup to her lips without shaking so much that she spilled the tea.
2. A man wanted more openness in his meditation. Some thoughts distracted

him about thirty minutes into his meditation.

3. A woman who was going for artificial insemination wanted her body and mind to be more receptive so she could get pregnant.
4. A fifteen-year-old girl who was active with multiple sexual partners wanted to have one partner.
5. A writer wanted more flow, more acceptance of creative ideas when he sat down to write.

In these examples it was better for me to know their real motivation. Knowing their real motivation allowed me to both give more work to certain areas of the body and to focus my intention to invite them to integrate more permission to get what they really want. Drinking without spilling tea led me to include work with the arms in every session. With more openness to meditation I simply worked with 'no mind', no expectations. When he came for his third session, he said, "This is my last as those thoughts that distracted me have disappeared." Getting pregnant with artificial insemination cued me to give extra work in a supportive way with her abdomen and solar plexus, hoping to release some of her ambivalence about getting pregnant. Wanting to have only one sexual partner was helpful information. I treated her with the utmost respect, for example, asking her permission each time I touched her in a new place and often asking her if she wanted more pressure or less pressure. And the client who wanted his writing to flow needed to find ease in his body, so I gave extra time to his sacrum / fifth lumbar and his atlas / occiput. These elements were the real measure for their satisfaction and gave me direction to meet their real needs.

Requirements for a good contract are:

1. To be intrinsic – meaning that the client wants the change him/herself and not because a lover threatened to leave if he or she didn't do Rolfing SI.
2. Positive language – encourage the client to name something s/he wants rather than something s/he wants to get rid of.
3. Make it measurable – so the client has a way of evaluating if change is taking place.

A good contract makes it easier to identify success or disappointment. Success leads

to referrals. If the session has a trend of disappointment I refer to the contract and either make a new contract or stop the session.

A contract is two sided and the Rolfer needs to verbally accept the contract. It is helpful to refer to the contract when evaluating the success of the work. Examples of when I do not accept a contract are usually because a partner or a parent is telling the client s/he needs the Rolfing SI session. When I decide to stop after the first session, I do not charge for the session. Often the client returns in a few months under his/her own motivation.

Sometimes one client's experience influences my procedure with subsequent clients. An example is a client who had orgasms when I touched her sacrum. She said, "Oh, don't worry, I should have told you that in the beginning." From this experience, I began to ask the question, before beginning the table work, "Is there anything else I should know about you?" This question often creates an opening for the client to tell something from his/her family or personal background that affects how I orchestrate where and how much time I spend working in different parts of the body.

A number of research studies conclude that the primary criterion for success of psychotherapy is the quality of the contact between the therapist and client, including the motivation of the client. Success is not linked to the modality of the therapy. A psychotherapy client can choose Gestalt, behavioral, Jungian, cognitive, transactional analysis, or psychoanalysis. Success is correlated with the quality of the contact between therapist and client, plus the client's degree of motivation.

I am convinced that the same is true for Rolfing SI. If the Rolfer does not meet the client with full attention, undistracted awareness, and warm, unconditional acceptance building toward a relationship in which the client feels safe, then the client will not release his/her inner control mechanisms (sometimes called defense mechanisms), which reduces the potential connective-tissue change.

A Jungian psychiatrist from Toronto invited me to work with some of his clients. A woman about twenty-eight years old had intrinsic motivation for change. She presented a clear contract that she wanted better sex with her partner. Just before suggesting moving to the table work, I have

learned to ask the question: "Now we have talked for some minutes, do you feel safe and ready for me to touch you?" There was an extended pause. She said, "I am not sure. I do not really feel safe for a man to touch me and yet I believe you can help me."

This was the therapeutic moment. I encouraged her to listen to her "no" feeling and instead of touch work we talked about her ambivalence and her touch history with men for the rest of the first session. The next time I came to Toronto, I saw that her name was again on the schedule. She said "My saying 'no' to you was so profound. I have talked about this with my psychiatrist and now I feel ready for you to touch me." I assert that if I had proceeded with the Rolfing work in the first session, her ambivalence and emotional resistance would have greatly reduced the connective-tissue change.

There are many paths for Rolfers to develop their capacity for quality contact with clients. For example, it can be of value to try an extended process of meditation, journal writing, tai chi, or psychotherapy. For me, the most cost-effective way has been psychotherapy. I have benefitted from being with a therapist who would support me when I was vulnerable and confront me when I had more ego strength for insight and transformation.

## The Role of the Unconscious and Cell Membranes

In the mid-1980s while doing Rolfing SI work in New York City, I noticed that many clients after a series of sessions were satisfied with their body changes, and were fulfilled with improved awareness of how their decisions could be grounded in their body sensations and emotions. They expressed being fulfilled with their improved communication with colleagues and partners, yet they longed for more *closeness* with their partners. They told me they wanted more peace with their own *being* and more strength of self during moments of solitude. Their dissatisfaction provoked me to experiment during sessions as to the way I touched and talked. I scheduled time between sessions to reflect and write about what seemed to work and what was a waste of time.

My psychotherapy experience often has me reflecting on the five basic permissions of early childhood described by Robert and Mary Goulding (1997) in *Changing Lives Through Redecision Therapy*. I thought

and experimented as to how these five basic permissions of early child development interfaced with Rolfing SI. The five permissions are: to be, to be close, to do, to play, and to succeed. My feedback from clients told me that Rolfing SI was interfacing well with the permissions to do, to play, and to succeed. My group of clients longed to integrate more permission *to be* and permission *to be close* than I was offering them. Their dissatisfaction puzzled and provoked me.

My thinking went like this: the first six months after birth are the primary window of time to receive the permission *to be*, the first twelve months of life are the time to receive the permission *to be close*. During these months, the skin is the primary sensory organ of communication. Ashley Montagu (1986, 3) writes in *Touching: The Human Significance of the Skin*, "The skin . . . is the oldest and most sensitive of our organs, our first medium of communication, and our most efficient protector." For the infant the skin is constantly registering and signaling to the brain whether the social environment is safe or dangerous, and whether s/he is wanted or not wanted. For the infant, the more touch the skin experiences as a communication of *safety* and *being wanted*, the more permission that individual has *to be* and *to be close*. This is carried into the nervous-system architecture of adulthood.

The opposite of permission is an injunction. When the infant does not receive enough positive touch communicating safety and being wanted, the child carries the injunction of don't be and/or don't be close. Subsequently the adult also has these injunctions. From this information I made a leap in logic that these permissions and/or injunctions are carried into the adult through the unconscious mind and/or the cellular membranes of the tissue. Back in the 1980s I did not know if memory from childhood was conveyed to the adult through the unconscious or the cell membranes. Now we have more evidence to consider it is both.

Back in my treatment room, I was more focused on results. I wanted to change the injunctions to permissions. I wanted to change *don't be* to *okay to be*, and *don't be close* to *be close*. I followed the path of my experiments and findings to develop a touch sensitive enough to reprogram the infant experience.

My first touch experiments in which I imagined different ways to touch were a waste of time. I realized my touch had to be a response to the client. It had to be a dialogue. I focused my touch sensitivity to distinguish when the tissue signals from the client were *danger* or *unwanted*, and then I responded with a touch that communicated *safety* and *wanted*. The touch dialogue between myself and my clients gradually became more gentle and minimal. The touch communicating *safety* and *wanted* was a movement that they could register and perceive.

The results were profound and consistent with this style of touch dialogue, which responded to the client's remembered longing for safety and feeling wanted. At this point, I did not care if the source of change was the unconscious mind or the cellular membranes. Instead of either/or thinking I was thinking both/and: my clients' responses convinced me that a deep motivational matrix was changing from negative to positive. I realized that the positive energy needed to focus, it needed a harness by which the rider of this energy could direct it. This realization influenced me to give even more attention to the contracting process during the first session so that the client could use the increased permission to be and to be close to fulfill the goals in his/her contract.

After three years of experimenting and discovering, my book *Touching Dialogue: A Somatic Psychotherapy* was born (Campbell 1989). It is a description of body-centered psychotherapy that changes a client's permission system from caution to potential, from stress to calm, from fear to courage. I also produced a film demonstrating this work (Campbell 2010).

Bruce Lipton wrote a definitive summary of the new biology linking cellular biology with the workings of the mind in *The Biology of Belief: Unleashing the Power of Consciousness, Matter, and Miracles* (2008). It scientifically validates that the cell membranes function as a brain, deciding when to open for osmosis and when to close to reduce osmosis. Lipton writes that the cellular membranes make this ongoing decision based on their sensing of safety or danger, in both their immediate physical social environment and also their past experiences as a type of memory. Lipton's book confirmed my thinking and findings of tissue response during the late 1980s. I recommend this book, it will change

the way you think while you work, and it explains why it is difficult to collect empirical evidence about how Rolfing SI gets the results that it does. Just to give you a taste, here are some excerpts from Chapter Three:

The true secret of life lies in understanding the elegantly simple biological mechanisms of the magical membrane – the mechanisms by which your body translates environmental signals into behavior (45).

Cells possess a uniquely 'tuned' receptor protein for every environmental signal that needs to be read (53).

Receptors can read energy fields, the notion that only molecules can impact cell physiology is outmoded. Biological behavior can be controlled by invisible forces, including thoughts (53).

Together, the receptor-effector complex acts as a switch, translating environmental signals into cellular behavior (54).

What is the relevance of all this to Rolfing SI? The touch of Rolfing SI focuses on the connective tissue; that cannot avoid having an effect on the cell membranes. If the Rolfing SI touch causes pain or discomfort to the degree that the client tightens tissue in resistance, then the cellular membranes are sensing danger and close down. If the Rolfing SI touch conveys a quality of safety, being wanted, and accepted, then the client will take in more permission *to be* and *to be close*.

How does a Rolfer acquire a touch that conveys a quality of safety, and being wanted and accepted to the client? I think that the way to do this is for a Rolfer to develop more permission *to be* and *to be close* within herself or himself. I believe that as a Rolfer embodies more permission to be and to be close, then clients absorb it through the invisible human bio-field to the degree that the client is longing for these permissions.

Looking back, I do not think it was by chance that four of my first six Rolfing clients had strong, sometimes extended, emotional releases during their ten sessions. These clients expressed crying, laughing, shaking, and quivering. I think they gave themselves permission to express this affect because I became more comfortable with

my own emotions and feelings during the years leading up to those moments. For two years I had done my own personal work with progressive psychoanalysis before beginning the Rolfing SI training. After that, I was more comfortable with my emotions and the invisible field between Rolfer and client, and I believe this allowed the clients to feel safe enough to release deep-seated emotions and gestures.

I think my Rolfing SI practice in New York, Frankfurt, Berlin, and Copenhagen attracted the network of referrals it has because I continued as a client with psychotherapy: Gestalt, Jungian, and transactional analysis. I found psychotherapy the most interesting and rewarding way to spend money on my development.

Rolfing clients adapt to the inner comfort zone of their Rolfer unless they have done personal work to free themselves from their child adaptive patterns. If the Rolfer is not comfortable with his/her own emotions, if the Rolfer is not at peace with his/her own being, the client will consciously or unconsciously inhibit or restrict his/her emotional flow to match the Rolfer's comfort zone. The Rolfer's inner comfort zone affects whether clients have a more open or restricted experience with their Rolfing SI work.

## Invitation to Seek Out Psychotherapy

My recommendation for all Rolfers to improve their professional work and for Rolfers-in-training to start their practice with the best efficacy is for all to have at least twenty sessions of psychotherapy with the therapist of their choice. Such an experience is likely to result in a Rolfer who is more in touch with his/her own feelings, with more awareness of him/herself and an increased comfort with his/her unconscious mind. This increased awareness will automatically transfer to the work as more safety in the Rolfer-client relationship. The Rolfer's increased self-awareness and comfort with his/her unconscious will increase the likelihood that:

1. The client will disclose his/her *real* motivation for coming to Rolfing SI sessions.
2. The quality of the contact between Rolfer and client will increase.
3. The client will assimilate the permission *to be* and *to be close* to the degree s/he is longing for these permissions.



4. The clients' emotional needs will become part of his/her Rolfing SI experience.
5. The Rolfer will have the inner peace to be comfortable inviting connective-tissue change without the need to force.

I co-owned and co-led a four-year Gestalt psychotherapy training institute in Denmark for sixteen years. In my opinion, the most profound, transformational part of that training was not the classroom experiential learning, but the required individual psychotherapy with a therapist of the students' choice.

## A Film Resource to Use with Clients

I made a short animated film, *A Letter to Your Inner Child from a Good Father* (Campbell 2017), to celebrate the sunset but not the sundown of my career. Sometimes, when my clients were re-experiencing a childhood trauma, I made an agreement with them for me to say what an ideal parent or nurturing parent would have said to them in a similar situation. This film sequences these sayings into a story of what a good father would say at the time of conception, birth, infancy, and early childhood. These sayings give Rolfers ways to respond when your clients re-experience childhood traumas.

Here is what others have written about the film, to give you a sense of what impact it may have:

*A Letter to Your Inner Child from a Good Father*, as the film is called, offers a good father's voice; an ideal father, that puts words on what people have a need to hear from their earliest beginning. The film's soundtrack guides the inner child to a place where they are safe and wanted; where they experience unconditional love and have all their needs met.

Agnete Dybro Stoffregren,  
Journalist

I've just watched your film and want to tell you that it has a very, very calming, relaxing and peaceful effect on my mind and body. Like a very deep meditation. The 'head' knows that childhood was not like that, like the idealized film, but the body feels totally different, almost as if courage and confidence can still be achieved, independently

of what actually happened – now that one knows how it should have been. Even though I, as a Gestalt therapist, am familiar with these things, your film has impressed me on a deeper level and I think I'll be forever carrying your film around in my 'system'. In this fast world the slow pace and beautiful sound and pictures were very healing.

Charlotte Carlin,  
Gestalt colleague

It is one of many pieces for me to better understand my history with my father and the story with me as a father to my daughters.

Claus Fardal,  
a father

*After living and working in New York City, Frankfurt, and Berlin, David Kirk-Campbell has settled in Copenhagen for the past twenty-six years. He likes to work with artists. He recharges his batteries by reading the poetry of Rumi, Antonio Machado, Pablo Neruda, and Juan Ramon Jimenez.*

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## Some Psychological and Spiritual Dimensions of the Rolfing® Ten Series

By Jim Gates, Certified Advanced Rolfer™

In our effort to grow in the practice and understanding of Rolfing Structural Integration (SI) we may often ask ourselves the questions: where am I, who am I, and where am I going? These questions can expand to include SI in general and our teaching institutions. Speaking and thinking about our work in terms of anatomy is simpler and more easily agreed upon than its psychological and spiritual dimensions, the latter being a more intangible field. They were important to Dr. Rolf, as she was both a scientist and a mystic. Even as a young woman she studied yoga, a path of spiritual transformation, when it was almost unknown in the West (Love 2010). As these fields are very close to my heart and have been important to me most of my life – as they are to many of us – I want to explore and stake out some landmarks in that vast

territory, as others have done, to expand our conversations about our work. Ultimately, a big part of who we are to ourselves and to others is the story we tell about who we are.

Dr. Rolf developed her system and shared it with osteopaths and chiropractors for many years with little traction until she went to Esalen where people saw its potential for personal transformation. I use the term 'transformation' interchangeably with 'evolution', 'growth', and 'consciousness-raising', as they mean the same in my vocabulary. Werner Erhard, creator of EST® and a very influential pioneer in personal transformation, promoted it for that purpose and recommended it to all his students. I heard that in the early days of Rolfing SI you could go to a city and tell the local est office that you were a Rolfer in town and you would immediately have a full schedule.

J.G. Bennett invited Dr. Rolf to England in the 1950s to teach her work. He was a brilliant thinker and dedicated much of his life to personal evolution and to the evolution of humanity. Like Dr. Rolf, he was a scientist and a mystic. His autobiography *Witness* (1962/1983) is a very interesting book. The two of them must have had some great conversations. He founded a school in the US at Claymont, West Virginia, where the Rolf Institute® now gives classes. The first owners and builders on the land were in the family of George Washington (the current mansion was built by his grand-nephew), so I like to think there is some connection here between our lineage and the ideals of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness with which this nation was created.

Personal transformation is an important part of Dr. Rolf's SI. Without it we have less to differentiate ourselves from massage therapists, physical therapists, chiropractors, and osteopaths, and the differences between them and us could become minimized over time. Dr. Rolf saw her work as a contribution to the evolution of humanity. In the last chapter of her book *Rolfing: The Integration of Human Structures* she summed up her work and wrote:

Our personal evolutionary potential lies with us. Originally, this was the message of mystics and occultists. At this point, it is being documented in the changes brought about by Structural Integration. The practitioner of Structural Integration separates the confusion of random fascial structure and re-relates it around a vertical line with new appropriateness. The result is a spectrum of subjective experiences that throw light on conceptual formulations of earlier cultural ideas. The latter, in turn, offer additional keys to understanding our results (Rolf 1978, 285).

This kind of evolution of the material body, accessible to anyone, is a start on the road. There may be other evolutions possible of man – of the “finer body” of the occultists, of the group body, of others yet unsuspected (Rolf 1977, 292).

She saw her work as moving humanity forward in our evolution, both individually and as a species – that our work was on the whole human being, at all levels including physical, emotional, mental,

and energy fields. In the book *Ida Rolf Talks About Rolfing and Physical Reality* she is quoted:

Rolfing [SI] is not primarily a psychotherapeutic approach to the problems of humans, but the effect it has had on the human psyche has been so noteworthy that many people insist on so regarding it. Rolfing [SI] is an approach to the personality through the myofascial collagen components of the physical body. It integrates and balances the so-called “other bodies” of man, metaphysically described as astral and etheric, now more modernly designated as the psychological, emotional, mental, and spiritual aspects. The amazing psychological changes that appeared in Rolfed individuals were completely unexpected. They inevitably suggest that behavior on any level reflects directly the physical energy level of the initiating physical structure . . . Rolfing [SI] postulates on the basis of observation that a human is basically an energy field operating in the greater energy of the earth; particularly significant is that energy known as the gravitational field. (Rolf 1978, 26-27).

At this moment, we have perhaps wider and more sophisticated resources to think and express understandings in the arenas she was interested in. We can make more distinctions and have a more expanded world to play in than she did in the middle of the 1900s.

## Integrating Ideas of Evolution into Our Work

There is the concept of a mission statement that each business should have. It clarifies what its aims are. In Rolfing SI, it is much like our concept of the ‘Line’. It is the center of who we are on many levels upon which we build and orient ourselves; the Line can be a profound concept. Perhaps if she had written one, Dr. Rolf's mission statement might have been: *I am contributing to human evolution, both personal and cultural, by organizing people's physical, emotional, and energetic bodies around a central line in relationship to gravity. And I am creating a system to teach others how to make that contribution.*

As for my own personal mission statement, it is evolving. A question comes up as to

how big do I dare make it? We can keep it to ourselves, but I think it is good to lean toward grander and express it to reveal all of it or at least an aspect of it to the public. I can at least say that part of my mission statement is that my clients experience the joy, healing, and well-being that comes from experiencing the flow of their life energy more strongly as their structure becomes more integrated around their Line, and around who they are. As I have clarified that in myself, I have brought that focus more intentionally into my work. A mission statement describes: where am I, who am I, where am I going? It tells the world that, but even more importantly it tells our own self that. In *Rolfing: The Integration of Human Structures* Dr. Rolf writes:

Structural Integration involves fascial change. The pain of fascial change is transitory; the minute the pressure is removed, the “pain” is gone. In a majority of people, the quality of the drama changes abruptly and surprisingly into a feeling of physical lightness and joyousness. This is entirely different from the residual “pain” following hurt or damage of some sort . . . The sensation following fascial intervention . . . is a “high”, a sense of great well-being enveloping the individual totally (Rolf 1977, 283).

I am giving more importance to the feeling of well-being and joy because I have come to believe that these qualities are of great significance; that they are indications of our natural, ideal state, where our bodies are organized around our Line and experiencing that integration. Well-being and joy is the experience of that alignment and is the energetic and emotional nourishment guiding us in the direction of healing.

Later in this article I describe the Ten Series session by session as seen from a psychological and spiritual perspective, or transformative perspective as hinted at in the saying: “The first three sessions are about ‘Where am I?’, the next four, ‘Who am I?’, and the last three, ‘Where am I going?’” First I will go through session one in detail and show how I work in alignment from this perspective. The first session is opening the door to a new sense of who we are and to new possibilities.

We start with the intake. I work with the client's goals for the work – to be expressed

positively such as changing the wording from 'less pain' into 'feel good'. Instead of running from something negative, we are moving toward a positive feeling or potential. We may evolve the goal into 'feel wonderful', 'enjoy my life', or 'be able to enjoy specific things I want to do' – creating a positive vision is a key step towards empowerment and healing. Our work is to keep the client moving toward that vision, step by step.

Rather than just wanting the client's pain to go away, we want to move forward toward new possibilities. People tend to focus on their pain and malfunctions, which is often why they come to us. I have come to see that shifting towards positive goals as mentioned above, and noticing the accomplishment of steps forward, is more empowering and healing. Paying attention to what is seemingly wrong with them, even if they believe something is, or other people have told them there is, even if they want me to tell them what is, is something I see as disempowering and not contributing to a positive vision of possibilities. It shifts the power to me as the practitioner rather than to them. Healing is about reclaiming our power and self-worth and I want to have everything I do support that.

I begin with an arm and shoulder as a small and contained area for clients to experience the effects of the work, and it is a great place for our bodies, energy fields, and touch to meet. They can compare arms after one is done and I will ask what they notice; after their response, I will point out things that I would hope they notice, and to see how far they can take their awareness – noticing new perceptions is an important part of the work. I may ask: if a difference is noticed between the arms, whether one feels warmer, has better circulation, more energy flow, a sense of lightness, more presence and aliveness, more possibility of self-expression, a sense of well-being? When we feel good our body feels like its composed of energy rather than that we are dragging around 100-plus pounds of flesh. I may say that this energy, lightness, aliveness, or wellness is our natural state that we are trying to restore through this work. We are removing the restrictions that have accumulated and were hindering this natural state.

Understanding that well-being is natural is more empowering to them than that it is something I did. In this state of well-being, healing is possible and likely. Without our awareness of the life energy and well-

being flowing, we just shift around our symptoms from one condition to another and do not get to the source of healing. It is our connection to the restorative life energy that heals our condition. Without it we tend to slowly degenerate and may blame it on aging or other things. It can lead to feelings of discouragement and lack of hope. Experiencing this new sense of aliveness on an arm is opening a hole in the proverbial dam of stuckness, which is a longtime habit of disconnection from our natural wellness. By re-experiencing our well-being, life energy and freedom can begin to flow. Expanding the size of this break in the dam is an important part of future work.

I then move on to work with the other arm, shoulder, then the chest. After doing one side I ask clients if they notice more space to breathe there. After work with the hips, legs, and some seated back work, I then ask if it feels different and if they are finding it easier to sit. If so, and if they feel a 'lift' – which may include an upward or expanded flow of energy, lightness, ease of sitting erect (most clients do notice such lift) – we expand that sensation as I work with more of the back, neck, and shoulders. Near the end most are feeling the lift quite strongly and a significant reduction in discomfort, pain, or tightness. Expanding their awareness to include noticing further qualities of that lift with words such as 'buoyancy', 'freedom', 'lightness', and 'joy', it is explained that these qualities are our natural state that we are working to recover; that young children often feel these things.

At times, I add an additional perception by asking whether they feel an expansion in their chest along with the sensations felt elsewhere. If they do, I explain that these feelings and 'lift' are just their own energy, and they can do whatever they choose with it. No one else has any say over it. I ask them to expand the feeling out in front of them and then to fill the whole room with it, that they can expand it as far as they want or bring it in; they have complete freedom with it. This buoyant, free, joyful, expansive energy is who we really are; we have mistakenly come to think that we are the thoughts in our head. This first experience is reinforced in every succeeding session.

I feel that to get clients to some experience of their natural well-being, energy, and joy is a good first session and foundation for the rest of the series. As a yoga teacher said at the end of this session: "I have been teaching about this energy for years, but this is the first time

I have actually clearly experienced it". Some clients do not get much of what I am hoping for, and many exceed my expectations. I feel that healing must come from well-being, and being able to have clients experience this new sense of lightness and a relief from pain and restrictions gives them a great boost toward a new sense of possibility of that. A client wrote in a testimonial: "I would like to express my gratitude for all the good Rolfing work you did for my body and spirit. After each of your great Rolfing bodywork treatments, I have felt re-energized. Hours and even days after the Rolfing [session], the sheer joy of well-being would make me stop what I was doing (in my quite busy life) to ponder why I was feeling so good (and well), when I would realize that it was my body rebounding to a state of inner energy that I used to feel quite often. It is a wonderful feeling and I can only imagine the many beneficial ramifications that will continue to ripple through my life. So very many thanks for your wonderful work."

One client, a healer and shaman, is an unofficial representative of the Brazilian spiritual healer John of God, who people from all over the world visit, both in Brazil and at the Omega Center in New York. Several times a year she takes people to him in Brazil for healing. During her Ten Series with me she exclaimed: "This work is right up there with John of God."

Many clients cannot retain the experience, perhaps even as a memory, but we can reinforce it and renew it each session. As that has become more clearly my goal, I can more clearly hold that in my sessions. The search for well-being gets more and more individualized as the Ten Series, and client, unfolds and progresses.

I am contributing some of my understanding that has arisen in the practice of Dr. Rolf's work from where I am, with my unique perspective. Other people are contributing theirs, based on what we have been given and what we can understand. Dr. Rolf's legacy is growing and expanding, flourishing in this time and place. I am not suggesting that my viewpoint should be copied; I only want to open the conversation a bit and hope that more people will feel free to contribute. As our culture and we evolve, we need to keep our conversation, context, and space expanding so that our work can always be new and vital.

Thank you, Dr. Rolf, for your brilliant, creative gift to humanity.



## The Ten Series

**Session One** is opening the door to a new sense of who we are and to new possibilities. I start with the arms, a place where people first connect and reach out to each other and the world. It is a mutual place. Here we open a hole in the dam of 'stuckness' so that life energy and freedom can begin to flow. Future work is about expanding the size of this break in that dam. Clients get a first experience of the truth that we are buoyant and self-directed energy, consciousness, and/or beingness that is creative and self-expressive. They experience the difference of this place from where they have previously stood, and get a glimpse of what is possible from once experiencing the self as a lump of flesh animated by thoughts, to then having the experience of their self as this self-expressive energy and consciousness.

When our body is in its natural state, like that of a young child, we experience ourselves as energy, beingness, and joy. Healing is possible and probable for this place and our health condition will continue to improve. Further, that expansive energy is beyond the body and beyond our thoughts. This possibility of seeing ourselves as that, rather than as the thoughts going through our head, or just our body, is an important experience. This first experience is reinforced in every succeeding session. This understanding is an experiential one and cannot be fully described or explained through words. Also of great importance is to experience that this well-being is natural to us. Stress is a disconnection from that, and we can continue to develop the ability to choose that well-being over stress. We free the breath, the life force; experience expansion and our natural lift and lightness. We begin connecting those possibilities into our legs and hips and opening to a new sense of freedom in movement.

**Session Two:** Here we connect deeply into our feet and through our legs. Length and organization arise out of having the up and down direction realized simultaneously. We experience the pleasure of the life-energy flowing through us, especially from the feet, and allowing it to fill our whole body-mind experience. This life energy is the source of healing for our body, mind, emotions, and soul. It is a dimension of how love expresses itself in this physical experience. Pleasure, delight, joy, and harmony colors our experience of what it means to be alive, and of what healing

is. Anything else is just shifting around the burden of pain. The feet can be a great reservoir for this delight and pleasure because they can connect to it so easily.

**Session Three** is where we let the freedom and well-being of the first two sessions fully into our whole body. We begin to experience our true size, length, volume, and fullness. We feel new levels of expansion and appreciation for our physical form. We have new levels of presence and joy at being in the physical.

**Sessions Four and Five:** We become aware of and start building our center, our Line, and awareness of our own uniqueness and beauty. We are coming to appreciate and experience our personal power and creative center; the center where our body, mind, heart, and soul can be integrated into a powerful, unhindered unity of our self as a unique creative being.

**Session Six** works on opening the back, where much of our being and resources are, apart from the social self of the front of our body. This social self is where we live in our social world and it tends to consume our awareness, yet our social persona is only a small part of the wonder and magnificence of what we truly are. This session helps us to experience and bring into awareness more of the fullness of who we are and to feel some of the power of what lies within us. The back is in part associated with a lot of struggles to stand upright and adjust to our world. There are many patterns connected with survival that are deeply held there. As we release these patterns a new level of confidence, support, ease, and sense of power can arise. We can more fully rest in our wholeness.

**Session Seven** is about the head. We tend to live in our head and face, our social identity. In this session we work at clearing away a lifetime of stuck patterns built around maintaining our social persona. The understanding and experience from the previous sessions of the energetic, conscious, and profound nature of who we are provide a potential to experience the world from this new expanded place. The universe itself now can be seen from this new perspective to be a vast multilevel energetic experience. In the language of yoga, we are opening our sixth and seventh chakras.

In session seven we expand our sense of presence into a new connection with creation, the universe, and the vastness of life. In the past, we have tended to identify

ourselves with our social persona and with the thoughts in our head. Now we can see more clearly our energetic connection with creation. We can understand that, as is said in Buddhism, our thinking mind is not who we are, but only a sensory organ that perceives thoughts. Some thoughts come from what we have learned or are generated by processes within us, some come from other people outside of us, while some thoughts are perhaps inspirations from higher energies or levels of integration. Yet our thinking mind is only one aspect of our awareness and consciousness. To experience that clearly is a great awakening. We can begin to stand as an energetic being in communication and resonance with an energetic universe.

**Sessions Eight and Nine:** Now that we have opened to an expanded sense of what we are with many facets and dimensions and experience, these two sessions reintegrate all these aspects into a coherent whole sense of ourselves integrated around a central line or sense of self and in harmonic flow with our environment, so that we can live a joyful, loving, creative life in an amazing universe.

**Session Ten** is the completion of our journey of discovery and integration at a higher level. The completion of one cycle is the beginning of a new cycle. We are born anew into a new world. As Abraham Hicks said:

The basis of life is freedom.

The purpose of life is joy.

The result of joy is transformation.

## Further Thoughts

Stress is a major factor in our lives and a major cause or contributor to any dysfunction. If we were to consider what is the opposite of stress, we might answer something like, it is relaxation or peace – the way modern medicine defines health as being the absence of disease. When we try to diminish stress we usually look at how we can change our environment in order to remove stressors. This is good to do, but stress is not coming from the environment so much as it is our own reaction to it. To give external factors all the cause is to disempower us. To realize that stress is our reaction, that we have the ultimate power over our beliefs and over where we direct our attention – the two things which cause our reaction – is to give the power to our own self. I would say that the opposite of stress is a feeling of well-being, happiness,

or joy, the same qualities that Dr. Rolf attributed to SI in a quote about Rolfing SI given above. It is connection to our natural energy, self-healing abilities, alignment, lift, well-being, and joy, and from that comes the sense of self, the appreciation of self, our place in the world, and our creativity. Access to these qualities often becomes tenuous and difficult when we have lived a life full of stress. Simply knowing we can access them, and having a way to do so, is a large part of healing. SI can make a significant contribution by connecting people to their well-being. Just knowing that this reconnection is possible is powerful and special. Not knowing we have a choice is almost the same as not having a choice. Experiencing our well-being as the alternative to stress offers a direction to further well-being. Especially if we teach clients that this is our natural state and SI is one way to clear some of the restrictions that get in the way.

Each series is different depending on the goals of the client and practitioner and what is available to them at that time. It is always a transformational process for both of us. Yet, I think these spiritual dimensions are always present consciously or unconsciously as part of Dr. Rolf's inspiration and creation. How much, if at all, one may choose to emphasize these aspects of the work is up to the individual practitioner. I relate to each of my client's understanding and beliefs to decide which aspects of the work I discuss. In general, a significant percentage relate well to ideas of transformation and well-being as goals. We generally attract those with whom we share a commonality. We each need to find a way that suits our self.

Another important question is what is healing at a basic spiritual level? The basis of healing is giving up fear for love. It is choosing love over fear. I believe that love is our basic nature and the basis of creation. Fear is that which disconnects us from that basic nature. This does not mean that fear is bad, because like yin and yang, the interplay of these two is the dance of creation. Losing touch with love and then finding it again gives us the chance to understand and appreciate it. This process of losing it and finding it, and then losing it again and finding it again, is the expansion and growth of the universe and consciousness and the driving force of evolution.

Healing is the process of coming back to love. We have a choice between our natural well-being on one hand and the stress which

comes from our disconnection with that well-being on the other. In the Rolfing SI process, we put our hands on those areas where fear shows up, whether due to trauma, the struggle to survive, stress, or other pains that cause these patterns to form in the body-mind. We touch them with our hands trained in the right way and give the client the support to let go of those patterns of fear. Whatever can be let go of allows the natural love and well-being of the truth of who we are to manifest more clearly.

We could view our work as repairing a biological machine and that would be okay. I prefer to have the view that we are working with a profoundly intelligent, sensitive, and complex, conscious being existing on many physical and energetic levels and linked to the entire universe and universes we may know little about. We stand at the doorway of infinite possibility and we must do so with love and respect and humility as if we were standing at a sacred altar, temple, or in front of God, in front of the great Mystery.

Dr. Rolf said that we are educating our clients. One major thing we are teaching them is about relationship; relationship to their body, the parts of their body to each other, to gravity, to their environment, to their inner world, and to other people. We can teach what we have learned, so the more we have, the more we can teach. Hopefully we can teach that the basis of any relationship is love and respect. From that basis a relationship can expand and flourish.

Dr. Rolf was ahead of her time (and still is in my opinion) in her understanding of the wholeness of what we are and the importance of getting our entire structure integrated into a functioning whole as the basis for healing. Most everyone else focuses on fixing a dysfunction. We do not fully understand why her system works so well, but the room is there for each of us to do the work as we see it, and together her work can continue. We attain and retain clients that resonate to the way we see and approach the work. Her creation is a great container for human growth and evolution in many ways. Let us not make it too small in order to fit our own limitations.

I will conclude with an excerpt of Dr. Rolf's address to the 1974 Annual Meeting (Rolf 2003):

I am saying to you that as individual Rolfers you need to preach to your clients, your students, your

individual people – the recognition of the fact that fundamentally you are not relieving their backache, you are not trying to mitigate that “bellyache” – you are on a bigger job. You are trying to make it possible for that nervous system which distinguishes them as humans, rather than as two-legged animals (of which there are other), to function more appropriately and more economically. . . .

To me, this is a basic and extremely important idea. Some of you, I hope, will someday develop it further than I have. This is our function as Rolfers. When you say it in those terms, the task we have to accomplish becomes more and more apparent. Our job becomes to instigate personal evolution in humans, to further individual differentiations (psychological as well as physical) in mankind. Structural Integration is the tool by which this can be implemented. . . .

To go on this trip, you need to stretch your imagination. This is an important prerequisite. There is no limit to the infinite territory into which this leads. . . .

We must find out what it is that changes spirits as well as bodies, that gives direction and purpose to the man himself, as well as to his body. We don't know. We can talk at it, we can talk about it, but at this time we can realistically point only to the fact that it happens, that the man himself seems to change. . . .

You have all heard me talk about “relations” and “relating.” I don't doubt that in our early acquaintance it was a source of confusion. Today I feel that the basic units which are related are less units of flesh than energy fields; these fields are enhanced or minimized in terms of their relation to the larger gravitational fields within which they exist. These lesser energies must first relate appropriately, then the improved physiology really takes over. . . .

Today I hope that among you there are the kind of fish that will go out and bring in another school of fish . . . not to get their aches and

pains taken out, not to have their symptoms removed, but that they may contribute to the understanding of energy in the human universe. . . .

You, as Rolfers, are dealing not only with the physical levels, the flesh, but with the finer energy levels – the psychic, perhaps the spiritual (I do not consider myself to be an expert in differentiation of these latter two.) This kind of progression is the reality of energy; it is the manifestation of human energies on their way to a more conscious world. As Rolfers we travel a fascinating road. I thank you for the privilege of accompanying you.

*Author's note: Special thanks to Bob Schrei for posting Dr. Rolf's 1974 address onto the Rolfer's Facebook group.*

*Jim Gates began practicing Zen in 1967 and before long realized how important the body is in that endeavor and in personal growth. After ten years of Zen he worked with J.G. Bennett's followers and spent some wonderful time with them at Claymont, in West Virginia, in the late 1970s. After that he studied with the great guru Swami Muktananda for a number of years, in the US and in India. He realized a longstanding dream in 2003 when he became a Rolfer, and at present he lives only a short drive from the place where Dr. Rolf studied yoga (Love 2010) and took some of the first steps toward her creation of SI almost a hundred years ago. For more information about Jim visit [www.TheConsciousBody.com](http://www.TheConsciousBody.com).*

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# Rolfing® SI, Consciousness, Energy, and Awareness

By Stanley Rosenberg, Certified Rolfer™, Craniosacral Therapist and Teacher, Author

## Introduction

What is your own response to the question, "Is the work that you do as Rolfer physical or energetic?" I think that most of us would say that it is both.

What do you mean by 'physical' and what do you mean by 'energetic'? Why is this important to you when you work? I think that the idea that you have about what a body is will determine how you approach the body of your client, how you work on his/her body, and how you bring about desirable changes.

## Learning About the Physical

When I started out as a Rolfer, I found it reassuring that Ida Rolf had a PhD and was a researcher at the Rockefeller Institute, one of the leading scientific research institutions in the U.S. at the time. Ida's background in science seemed to give more credence to the work that I was doing.

I had come to Rolfing Structural Integration (SI) after a short but intensive education in Esalen Massage – a form of full-body massage with oil, long strokes pushing into the body to find and loosen places of hardness and tightness in the muscles. Rolfing SI opened the playing field of where I worked in the body to include working in the fascia. My Basic Training was at least three decades ago. In class we worked from the 'Recipe', and notes were gathered and passed down from one class to the next, telling where we should go first and then where to proceed until we had gone on to loosen the important points in the session.

My first six-day continuing-education seminar was with Jan Sultan and he opened my eyes to a new challenge. He asked us a question. "If you have only one place to work, where will you choose to work on this person next?" There was no handful of written notes. Suddenly, we had to look, to evaluate, and to think. No more painting by numbers. (In the Ten Series, we had a goal for each of the sessions. The strategy we created to help the client get there was up to us.)

We had anatomy study with Louis Shultz, but that class was separate from the hands-on demonstrations. Watching the demonstrations in the class, I was not that strong in my anatomy, and my teachers did not always name the structures that they were working on as they were working.

The teachers worked relatively softly. By contrast, when it became our turn to work on our clients, my classmates and I worked as hard as we could pushing into the models' bodies with as much force as we could muster. We wanted to make sure that we got positive changes and our unspoken idea was that the more force we used, the better.

Where did we get this idea? I remember hearing in my Rolfing classes that Ida had said that the practitioner should plow their fingers, fist, or elbow slowly and firmly through the tissue creating friction. This was supposed to warm up the ground substance of the connective tissue, turning gel to sol and thereby melting it. Observing the work, the angle of the application of force, in the old days, was into the body at a 45- or 90-degree angle. (Most body therapists – not just Rolfers – still work this way, pushing into the body with a fair amount of pressure. Those who describe their work as "deep-tissue release" seem to believe that the harder they push, the deeper they get into the body and the more effective their treatment is.) We may have also gotten our idea of how to work from hearing that Ida preferred to have students who were men and who had good, strong physical structures. They could handle working hard pushing and pulling their hands firmly into their clients' bodies.

## Becoming 'Softer'

On this point of how to work, Peter Schwind was the first teacher I had who tried to communicate how we should work with our hands in the client's connective tissue. My earlier teachers focused on helping us to decide where to work, but Peter put into words how to work, and he showed me that extreme force was not necessary. He had us sensing into the clients body while we



were working, and said we should place our fingertips lightly on the surface of the body and let them float down through the tissue until we hit a resistance that felt a little bit like grains of sand. Then we should work at that depth and release the tension there.

This was very far removed from kneading muscles as I had learned in classes in Esalen Massage, or plowing through the tissue with my elbows in my first attempts at Rolfing SI. It changed how I worked. After I completed my training as a Rolfer, I took some courses in energy medicine with Jim Oschman (who had co-taught with Ida in her last Advanced Training). He was intent on passing on a picture of the qualities of connective tissue and how to affect it. Jim had watched many Rolfers over the years. I prided myself when he said in class that I was one of the “softest” that he had observed.

## Sliding Layers

Robert Schleip and Tom Myers taught a model of connective tissue that the body was made up of “bags within bags within bags.” For me, this model developed into an approach of sliding adjacent structures in relationship to each other. The structures were the bones, the muscles, the tendons, and the visceral organs. Releasing tensions between two adjacent structures and getting them to slide in relationship to each other gives a good result in terms of aligning the body in the field of gravity and in terms of improving the client’s movement. ‘Sliding layers’ and not ‘pushing into the body’ became the essence of my approach to the work. I’ll explain more about how to do this in the ‘application’ section of this article. For now, let’s look at what aspect of connective tissue it works with.

The kind of connective tissue between adjacent structures is loose connective tissue. *Strolling Under the Skin*, the video taken by French hand surgeon Jean-Claude Guimberteau, brilliantly captures this, showing that the loose connective tissue is finer than the finest lace imaginable. Part of the reason the film is so important is that while we have lots of anatomical drawings, very few of them show loose connective tissue – it’s hard to draw because it is amorphous and dries out very quickly; it is not solid like the Achilles tendon of the fascia lata, and at the molecular level it is more like water and ever-changing. (If you do not know the video, you can watch parts of it on YouTube.)

The legacy of that lack of imagery of the loose connective tissue is that therapists who learned anatomy and physiology before (or in present time, without) Guimberteau’s film usually do not have much of an idea about it, and, as a result, they often do not work in it. Guimberteau’s film gives us a whole new world to consider, and new implications for how we work. It becomes unthinkable to me that there is any need to push hard into this stuff to get it to change. Guimberteau’s film shows this loose connective tissue under the skin, and some body therapists work just getting the skin to slide with great results. However, there is also loose connective tissue between adjacent ‘bags’. I find it very effective to work there, and I get a lot of improvement in both structure and the movement.

## Hard Movements vs Soft Movements

I learned karate to the level of brown belt when I was in graduate school at the University of Hawaii. Karate is an example of generating a force to overcome another force – meeting force with force. The idea is to develop speed and momentum greater than your opponent. Most people think of developing a greater force when they want to do something to another person, whether it is martial arts or bodywork.

After graduate school, I moved to New York and one day bumped into John, a guy I knew from Hawaii, at the coffee shop in Greenwich Village where he worked washing dishes. He told me that he had started to learn tai chi, which translated as ‘universal energy’, and everything that he told me about it sounded wrong. I was proud that the karate teacher I had found in New York was a fourth *dan* – an advanced level black belt. John’s teacher did not even have a colored belt. I prided myself on having learned to move fast with my karate movements, and I was in fact starting to learn how to focus the force of my blows to break boards. John said that he did his tai chi movements in slow motion and went on to claim that tai chi was an effective martial art. That sounded absurd. How could something slow and soft stand up to my hard and fast movements?

We went out back and John gave me a demonstration of his tai chi form. John’s character was a bit flakey, totally unconcentrated, and he had a hard time getting his life to hang together, yet as he stood there relaxing into his stance with his

arms along his side, getting ready for his movements, his whole demeanor changed. He ‘came into his body’. As he started to make his movements, he suddenly had great presence and concentration. This made me curious, and I asked to meet his teacher, Ed Young, who was himself a student of Cheng Man-Ch’ing, one of the greatest teachers of tai chi in the world.

Meeting Ed and seeing him move blew me away. He was so poised, simple, and quietly graceful. I saw power and focus in his movements. I decided to study with him and over a few months I learned the Yang Style short form. Eventually I went to see Ed’s teacher, Professor Cheng, and he blew me away even more. Walking through the door of his studio in a loft in Chinatown, I saw some people learning and practicing the tai chi form that I was learning. Professor Cheng was seated at a long table with his fingers on patients’ wrists reading their pulses and prescribing Chinese herbal medicine. At one end of the big room, other people were doing ‘push hands’ – where two people stand with their arms up making light contact at the wrists, then move back and forth slowly, shifting their weight from one foot to the other, until all of a sudden one of the two seemingly tenses up in his whole body only to be lifted vertically into the air and thrown horizontally backwards. As I watched, sometimes people would fly three to four feet through the air before being ‘caught’ by the wall behind them. Strangely enough, when you are thrown with a tai chi push, you relax rather than tense up, so people were never hurt when they hit the wall – but so many people had been thrown against the wall so many times that the plaster and the bricks had crumbled little by little, leaving a hollow indentation the height of a man and several inches deep.

You can see Professor Cheng in the video, “ChengManChing-Pushhandsplay” ([www.youtube.com/watch?v=fSYPOhSgiis](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fSYPOhSgiis)), and my teacher, Ed, is the student wearing a vest in the second to the last clip. The tai chi push is as an example of how a force of four ounces can overcome a thousand pounds. It is hard to put this into words for people not familiar with push hands. Since our work as body therapists for most of us has often been a question of pushing into the client’s body, it is interesting to see the power that Professor Cheng generates from his postural alignment and his sensitivity.

I did not understand how these tai chi practitioners 'did it'. When another of my tai chi teachers, John Chung Li, would push someone and the person would be lifted a few inches off the ground and fly away, Mr Li would laugh and say, "I didn't do it, the chi came out." Tai chi is a form of *wu wei*, which means to do without doing. Push hands creates an automatic response in the body. Rather than wanting to do something the way that we usually use our bodies, the body responds immediately and automatically when you sense tension in the other person. The tai chi writings do not offer an intellectual explanation on how this works to satisfy the curiosity of a scientific mind. They give you a picture, and then they suggest a way of doing something, which you try and practice.

## Savoir Faire

When I started to do tai chi seriously, I stopped using using my body the way that I had out of my understanding of karate. I stopped trying to use my physical force to overcome resistance in the client's body. Instead, I switched to trying to push into the client's body according to the principles that I was learning from tai chi.

*Chi* is the Chinese word for energy. When you want to make a movement with chi, the first step is to send *yi*. As I understand it, *yi* is the idea, a form of visualization. Next you send the chi, which is a form of energy, the emotional desire of wanting to do something. And then you send the body, which results in a movement. Every time that you do anything with a process involving *yi* and chi and followed by a physical movement, you are moving 'consciously' – 'with an intention'. It has a different quality and a different force. In tai chi, we can practice moving consciously with an intention. Professor Cheng said that your chi is like water. When you practice using the combination of *yi*, chi, and the physical body, you build up your chi one drop at a time. One drop of water is not very much, but one drop again and again can have a lot of power – think of how accumulated water movement carved the Grand Canyon. (I'll return to this in the application section.)

My craniosacral therapy teacher, Alain Gehin, said that working with osteopathy was not something that you could learn and know intellectually, but it was a 'savoir faire', a 'know-how' – a knowing how to do with your hands. Similar to Professor

Cheng's view of the accumulated drops of water, Gehin said that a practitioner started to have *savoir faire* when s/he had given 10,000 sessions.

## Rolf and J.G. Bennett

The way tai chi led me to working with intention was part of what got me into Rolfing SI. I had first heard about Rolfing SI from Ann Parks, my teacher in Esalen Massage. What she told me sounded interesting so I decided to find out more about it. At the time, there were no Rolfers in Denmark, where I was living, so I went to Berlin and met with Sigfried Libich, a Rolfer from southern Germany. We had a good long talk about many things. I told him of my interest in working with intention from my practice of tai chi. He said that Ida Rolf had also been very interested in intention and often talked about it in her classes. I was sold.

Some years later, I was asked to teach tai chi to an experimental theatre group in Copenhagen. The director of the group was Horacio Munoz from Chile. He had been studying spiritual development with John G. Bennett (originally a student of Gurdjieff) and was taking his actors with him to study for a week at Bennett's center at Sherborne House near Oxford in England. He invited me to join them.

Years later, I found out that Ida Rolf had a deep connection to Bennett and had several times come to Sherborne House for a few months at a time to be with him. Bennett had a publishing house for his own books, and published one of Ida's early writings, "Structural Integration: Gravity, An Unexplored Factor in a More Human Use of Human Beings" (available at <https://tinyurl.com/Bennett-Rolf>). The connection of Rolf and Bennett was confirmed for me some years after that when I took a course in craniosacral therapy with Jim Asher, one of the original Rolfing teachers. He told me that he often gave sessions to Ida, and that during these she relaxed and talked about many things. He confirmed that she often spoke about her experiences with Bennett.

I don't know what Ida learned from Bennett, but I'll share what I've learned from my week at Sherborne and from my readings of his work, tying that into what I learned from tai chi and how both have informed how I now work with my clients.

## Consciousness

In his teachings, Bennett explained that the energy of consciousness is a heightened state of awareness that everyone experiences sometimes. One of the goals of his work was to increase the amount of time that one was in this state of consciousness.

He said that consciousness can be explained in a metaphor: it is like someone watching television; you have the show on the screen and there is someone watching the show. Consciousness has to do with witnessing – with not only watching what is on the screen, but at the same time being aware that you are watching.

## Directed Awareness Is a Form of Mental Energy

The idea of putting our attention into different part of the body comes up many places; for example, yoga nidra, where you scan through the body slowly, one part at a time. Many body therapists use a form of this directed awareness, for themselves as a practice, or guiding clients.

My first day at Sherborne I was given their first level of meditation. Sitting with my eyes closed, I was directed to move my awareness through the parts of my body. But this meditation was a little different than anything I had done before and anything that I have done other places since then. There was a unique addition in Bennett's version of body sensing. I learned to ask, "Where is the last digit of the little finger on my right hand?" Then, when I sensed it, I should say to myself. "There is the last digit of the little finger on my right hand," followed by "I am sensing the last digit of my little finger on my right hand." In other words, I was sensing my body parts one at a time, but also *recognizing* that I was sensing.

The meditation then moved awareness to the other digits of the little finger one at a time, then to each of the other fingers, then to thumb, then to the palm, then to the back of my hand. From there, awareness was moved to the front of my wrist, the back of my wrist, forearm, elbow, and shoulder. And every time I moved my awareness, I would also called my attention to the fact that I was sensing that part of my body. Directing my mind in my body had an effect on my physical body. After I had 'done' my right hand, I looked at it and compared it to my left hand. Directing my awareness into my body had a big effect: my right hand

was filled with more blood than it had at the start; it looked bigger than the my left hand and it had more color.

## Application in Rolfing Sessions

You can apply these ideas based on intention and directed attention in your sessions. First, applying the idea, from Bennett's meditation, of sensing and being aware of your sensing, when you finish a stroke, take a pause on the physical level. Stop moving. Hold your body still. Sense what is going on in the client. Sense what is going on in you. The Ten Series opens pathways of awareness in the client's body, which is why Rolfing SI allows us to be more fully embodied.

Now let's go back to the discussion of the connective tissue of the body being organized as bags within bags within bags. How we push into the body depends on our idea of the body. I mentioned earlier that many therapists push into the body at a 45- or 90-degree angle, but if working with the 'bags', this would push onto the surface of the bags and compress them. I thus work at a 180-degree angle.

I hook the tissue with my fingertips and then I slide it parallel to deeper layers. As I am sliding the tissue, I am sensing/searching for the very first sign of resistance to the sliding. Then I slide that bag in different directions in order to find out the direction of greatest resistance. When I find that resistance, I stop the movement of my hands and I do nothing. I keep my hands in exactly the same position and feeling the same level of resistance; that is, I do not back off. As I wait, the connective tissue 'melts' and the client's autonomic nervous system (ANS) shifts – which you may recognize by the client sighing or swallowing. Gehin called this a 'release'. The client's release comes at the same exact instance that the resistance I was pushing against melts. This is a good way to achieve the changes that I want in my Rolfing sessions.

As an exploration of 'bags' and resistance that bridges between Rolfing SI and traditional Chinese medicine (TCM), here's an exercise where we use the groove between adjacent muscles ('bags') in the big muscles of the thigh. These grooves, which are the territory of the loose connective tissue, are often the pathway of acupuncture meridians. Pick one of these grooves and lightly run your fingertips in it. You will hit points of resistance and get

'stuck'. In TCM, these areas of resistance are 'congested' acupuncture points. When an acupuncturist inserts needles into these points and then twirls them, first in one direction and then back in the opposite direction, the needles 'grab' tissue. There is more resistance in one direction and less in the other. Helene Langevin's research discusses the anatomy of these acupuncture meridians and the relationship to fascia.

When you can recognize tissue resistance, you can add in the principle of yi from tai chi. As I wrote, yi is the idea, then you add chi, the energy of intention, and bring in the body. Here's how I do it. I put my fingertips lightly on the client's body and move my hands around to find the direction of resistance. This is working with directional energy. When I find it, I hold my fingers in the direction of resistance. I then send my thoughts, yi, in that direction. I add my desire sending the chi in that direction until I feel the very first sign of resistance. Then I stop and do absolutely nothing, but the tissue is already under resistance so I have the body component present. From this, I will feel the client's tissue release and slide freely.

## Closing Thoughts on Energy

I want to close leaving you with some brief thoughts on energy. Bennett wrote a book called *Energies – Material, Vital, Cosmic* that classifies different types of energy. He lists physical energies that we use when we work 'hands on' such as thermal energy, coherent energy, elastic energy. He also goes into emotional energies, kinds of mental energies, and levels of consciousness such as awareness and intention. There are implications for our Rolfing work. I will point to a few and leave you more to ponder.

Bennett starts by describing the mechanical energies. The first of the mechanical energies is a *dispersed energy*. It has no organization. Heat is the lowest, least-organized, and most insensitive form of mechanical energy. Everything that exists contains some heat – the air, the water, our bodies, the planets, and the stars. Heat just flows from where there is more heat to where there is less heat. The intensity of heat is measured as temperature.

Some forms of energy are *directed energies*. Directed energy occurs everywhere where there is an attraction between two things. Everything on Earth has a certain amount of energy that

comes from the fact that we are existing together in the gravitational field of the Earth. In addition to gravity, directed energies include magnetism, electricity, and light.

In our body therapy, we can also talk about the level of structural organization. When one person works on another person with his or her hands, there is a difference in the level of structural organization from one person to the other. We can observe or postulate that there is a flow of energy from the person with the higher level of structural organization to the other one with a lower level of energy.

Now we'll look at cohesive, plastic, and colloidal energy, two forms of mechanical energy that are relevant to Rolfing SI.

*Cohesive energy* is the energy of connectedness. Things are held together in a particular pattern because there are energies that bind them, for example chemical bonds. When things are bound together with a cohesive energy, they always have some things that they share. Cohesive energy is the source of the persistence of all kinds of bodies. It is much more highly organized than directed energy.

*Plastic energy* is the quality of changing shape without losing coherence. People can still recognize us by our shape after thirty years even though we have gradually succumbed to the ever-present pull of gravity. People generally develop a more forward-head position and an increasingly constricted thoracic cavity as time goes on. The fantastic thing that Rolfing SI does is that we are able to restore our shape to some extent and to turn back the clock.

The quality of these plastic energies in the human body is due to a combination of hormonal levels and which one of the three circuits of the ANS is in play. In the story of "Goldilocks and the Three Bears," Goldilocks, in the cabin of the three bears, has just eaten a bowl of porridge. She is tired and wants to lie down to sleep. She sees three beds. She tries the first and it is too hard, then she tries the second and it is too soft, but when she tries the third, it is just right.

We can use the metaphor of the three beds as a description of states of the connective tissue under our fingers when we do our techniques. If the connective tissue is too soft, it is often from a depressive state, which we call the dorsal vagal circuit. If it is too hard, it comes from the spinal sympathetic chain.



If the texture of the connective tissue is just right, then we can say that it is coming from the ventral vagal circuit.

In terms of plastic energy, we have desirable qualities of elasticity and resilience. Without these, people would be rigid. Rolfing SI is possible because we have these energies, including the plastic energy. Increasing resilience and elasticity are the positive outcomes of Rolfing SI for most people, especially those who are rigid at the start of their Ten Series. Without elasticity and without resilience, people have the undesirable opposite quality of rigidity. This often goes together with a state of stress. On the opposite pole people can be without sufficient elasticity, and have a body that is too soft and that can hardly resist being pushed out of shape. Good old-fashioned Rolfing techniques do not work as well on soft bodies. If you work hard into the person's tissue, it is often painful. These people often suffer from fibromyalgia. We might look for a different way to work with our hands. Here it might help to put your hands on the person and ask him to "come to your hands" with his awareness.

With *colloidal energy* the change is not in shape, but rather the actual consistency of the ground substance of the connective tissue itself. The colloids are like jello, which when poured into a mold and cooled in the refrigerator takes the shape of the mold. If the jello is warmed, it becomes fluid and loses its shape. Ida talked about the firmer state as gel and the more fluid state as sol. She said that we could use friction from our hands to put heat into the tissue and get the gel to melt into sol. This works and is the reason that Rolfers plowed firmly through the tissue.

However, there is another energy that turns gel to sol in the human body. This is awareness, which affects the colloids in the connective tissue. As the practitioner, if I become aware of the resistance to my very light push into my client's body, then I get the positive change without the hard work and without causing discomfort to the client. My client's awareness comes up to meet mine.

Another category is *emotional energy*, a big topic. On this I would suggest that you read my book, *Accessing the Healing Power of the Vagus Nerve* (North Atlantic Books 2017), which goes into the new understanding of the ANS based on Stephen Porges's Polyvagal Theory. One form of

emotional energy is Love. You can open yourself to receive it, Love can come from your heart and be directed towards one person, to several people, or to everyone in the entire world.

There is also the category of the *mental energies* such as yi and chi, visualization, and consciousness.

One last element from Bennett, related to consciousness and with application to our work. In another of his books, *How We Do Things*, he talks about the 'third force', an idea he traces back to Babylonia. We usually think of cause and effect, but Bennett's Third Force is a missing the third element, which is consciousness (which he terms the 'passive' in this model). According to Bennett, in order to create anything or to change things, three elements have to be present: the active, the receptive, and the passive. To bring about change, assess which of the two elements are present and what is the third element that is not present. If the person wanting to facilitate a change adds the missing element, s/he can be successful.

In the usual ways of thinking about hands-on work, there are only two elements: the active – the practitioner – and the receptive – the person receiving the work. "I do something to your body and you change." That is the way that we have been conditioned to think, but it does not work. When the therapist stops doing and becomes passive, he can create the conditions for real change. In becoming passive and witnessing, we make room for the third force to enter the equation.

*Stanley Rosenberg has been a Rolfer since 1983. He studied various areas of osteopathy with Alain Gehin, his teacher for thirty years: craniocervical and visceral as well as working on the joints. Rosenberg founded a school in Denmark that had thirteen teachers and taught these subjects. At the time, it was the largest craniocervical school in Europe. In December 2017, North Atlantic Books released his book Accessing the Healing Power of the Vagus Nerve, which is based on his work for the past twelve years with Stephen Porges's Polyvagal Theory.*

## The Power of Words

### *Borrowing Psychology for Bodywork*

By Heather L. Corwin, PhD, Certified Rolfer™

*In the end, we will remember not the words of our enemies, but the silence of our friends.*

Martin Luther King, Jr.

Words have power. Words incite nations, entice people to action, calm people when heated, and so much more. When we as healers approach our clients, mindful communication will not only support healing, the therapeutic relationship can help redefine a client's relationship with his or her self, inside and out (Corwin 2015 Jul). When I went through my training as a Rolfer over ten years ago, I found my teachers borrowing many words and ideas from psychology. This adoption of language from a field that focuses on the mind, when we work explicitly with the body, acknowledges we are always working with the 'bodymind', also known as somatic work. This infusion of psychology is useful to create healthy elements within relationships as well as to understand

how relationships form and evolve. One such element is boundaries. Webb (1993, 1997) defines "boundaries in relationships as establishing cultural, physical, emotional, intellectual and spiritual limits." Many of us as Rolfing® Structural Integration (SI) practitioners may have found ourselves in relationships with clients through which we intuitively felt that a client was in need of psychological help alongside our work. We do not replace psychologists or talk therapy. Some of our clients will need more than just our help to make the life changes they desire beyond SI. Notwithstanding, our work can always benefit from clear communication, mindful intention, and understanding of how some therapeutic relationships operate. This article will explore some useful tools defined and used in psychological application that can support a healthy relationship with our clients including intake process, transference and countertransference, forming clear boundaries, dual relationships, and how touch is complicated.

## First Contact

The foundation of each relationship with our clients begins at our first contact. Each of us has a way in which we like to vet our clients prior to the first session. This investigation is crucial to discover if any red flags exist when moving forward to hands-on work. Technology has offered us some options in how we communicate and book our clients, which may also pose distinct challenges in vetting clients. For example, many of us allow or encourage clients to reserve sessions online versus establishing a relationship through a phone call. Through your scheduling form or during that first communication, you might include questions about why the client is seeking the work, the anticipated goals and outcomes, and any limiting factors such as health challenges (e.g., diabetic, autoimmune, psychological diagnosis) to understand how to best support the client. This investigative background gathering not only informs how we work together and suggests the client's tolerance level for the intensity of work, but also builds the foundation for emotional attunement.

*Emotional attunement* occurs when one person is able to accurately sense and respond to another's experience. The results of emotional attunement are often feeling heard and seen, which is the cornerstone of a healing and healthy relationship. The trust that is inspired from listening allows the work we do in our sessions to flourish and potentially increase the rate at which clients are able to integrate the physical work. Ways to engage, informed by emotional attunement, include open-ended questions that allow the client to express what he/she/z feels is pertinent to the work done together. I often ask, "What brings you to Rolfing work?" and "What hopes do you have for our work together?" and, my favorite, "If I could wave a magic wand, what would happen through our work today?" Throughout the client's response, I practice *active listening*. Smith and Fitt (1982, 247) define active listening as, "the listener (receiver) of the message attempts to confirm what the message is, by putting his understanding of the message into a tentative statement in his own words, and feeding it back for the sender's verification." Dr. Carl Rogers is the psychologist who codified active listening when he discovered the profound impacts of this therapeutic technique. By combining emotional attunement and

active listening, I have found that I gain a better understanding of the layers of the hopes and challenges that are in the work we embark on daily with our clients. At the same time, I enjoy a deep connection with my clients. A note of caution: for clients who are less secure or nervous, slowing your tempo and being mindful to serve the needs of the client through checking in with the person, rather than intimidate through active listening, is important. What I mean by this is, since active listening involves a form of repetition, there exists a risk of patronizing or overwhelming the client. Overall, I have consistently found the benefits of active listening and emotional attunement outweigh what might be an extra five minutes of my time; most notably because clients who *feel heard* will return again and again.

## Transference and Countertransference

Over time, we build relationships with our clients based in trust and communication. Because of the depth of our relationships with clients, feelings can come out on both sides of the relationship that surprise us. Sometimes, our clients will have reactions to our work that we do not see coming, which can fall into the category of *transference*. Freud (1924) coined this term and defined it as the patient displacing feelings from the patient/self to the therapist. (For our discussion, I will now use the term 'practitioner' rather than 'therapist' since we are speaking of this in the context of the Rolfing therapeutic relationship.) This concept has evolved to clients' feelings about a significant person in their lives being projected onto the therapist/practitioner, as if the therapist is that significant person. This process is *not* a conscious one. As such, identifying the problem as transference can be tricky.

Some elements would need to be in place for both the client and practitioner to be able to detect if transference is occurring. For example, in order to identify the origin of the feelings, awareness is required. Most people just feel the feeling and do not stop to think, "This reaction may be out of proportion with the current relationship and situation." Transference is *not* occurring if the feelings are of an appropriate intensity based on events and interactions that have taken place within the client/Rolfer relationship. In contrast, transference commonly feels disproportionately fierce in regards to the power of the feelings being displayed by

the client. If a client is honest, and shame or embarrassment does not override the ability to examine what feelings are presenting and why, on rare occasions a client is able to realize that unresolved feelings about a mother, sister, brother, ex, etc., have somehow come into this relationship now. I would not encourage any person who is not trained in psychotherapy to name an event as transference to a client, even if you think that is what is happening. As Rolfers, we can attempt to name what is happening in any given moment from our perspective. This might sound like, "I'm feeling some big feelings in this room and want to acknowledge that." If you feel like the client is trying to make you feel a certain way, you might name that as well if you feel doing so would be valuable because you don't understand how your behavior merited this reaction. Although attempting to address this issue might be tempting, this is an ideal opportunity to remind yourself and your client that people are available to help address interpersonal styles of communication, such as talk therapy or a somatic psychologist. Lifelong relationships and ways of communicating require time and support to make any conscious changes in ways of being.

Articulating what is happening in the room sounds like an easy directive; it is not. This recognition that the client/Rolfer relationship is off balance can trigger the client into all sorts of behavior reminiscent of the significant relationship on which the transference is based. At the risk of repeating myself, I offer a word of caution: most of the time, I would not suggest introducing to your client the idea that transference might be happening. Instead, you can simply name that some of the relationship needs to be adjusted to accommodate *your* boundaries, which takes responsibility for your needs in the relationship. Psychological diagnosis is not in our purview or anyone's best interest. Nevertheless, knowing that transference exists and why is a useful tool when working with people to support healthy and lasting relationships.

Avoiding taking transference personally is hugely difficult. We can't read people's minds to determine the source of the outburst or behavior directed at us. Ultimately, when played out, transference can erupt into a personal attack that simply feels terrible. The ferocity of the attack is not congruent with the depth of actual personal connection

because the attack is born from a history with another human being, not you. Of course, an attack is not always inevitable, but some sort of reckoning is usual during transference, which is based on unresolved feelings that have nothing to do with you and everything to do with the significant person in the client's life. So how do you know if the problem in the relationship is transference or another cause? If you are able to discern that the reaction from the client seems to be disproportionate to the interaction (informed by history of your relationship together), transference is a likely cause. What can also make this process complicated is that we, the client and the practitioner, are unwittingly involved in roles in which we did not know we were cast. Sometimes people remind others of the significant people in their lives. Remember this if a client says, "You remind me of my mom" or whomever. This information could be informative if interpersonal relationship challenges occur later.

I am also reminded that emotions lay in wait in the body for a safe time to be expressed (Corwin 2015 Mar). Bodies can be a minefield of triggers, and as we are working directly with the body, various unexpected responses can be elicited.

Let us now look at an example to depict transference. A past client of mine, we will call her 'Jane', came to me with a long list of psychological diagnoses and trauma. I am not a licensed marriage and family therapist, even though I have a PhD in clinical psychology. However, the implied understanding of my knowledge often calms skittish clients and draws to me challenging clients. Jane wanted to work on trust through touch and to help align her body to feel better about herself. With her permission, I conferred with her psychotherapist to be involved in a support team for Jane. After a short amount of time, I became aware that Jane was treating me with kindness and generosity beyond what seemed to be appropriate for our relationship duration and scope. She was giving me expensive items at her insistence, offering to help with childcare, and many more generous, but disproportionate and inappropriate, suggestions. Because I am a human being, I was at first deeply touched by the generosity of these acts and offerings, but I began to recognize that these gifts could not be accepted when the little voice in me recognized that this was not a mutual relationship. What made this

relationship more complicated was that *countertransference* was also taking place. Countertransference is when the therapist's feelings regarding a significant person are superimposed onto a client. In the case of Jane, I was entangling emotions about my mother (who I had always wanted to be this generous and kind) with Jane. So, here we had Jane's feelings of transference layered on top of my feelings of my mother (countertransference), making a complicated and potentially volatile situation.

What makes transference and countertransference so problematic is the relationships we superimpose on people are commonly unhealthy and dysfunctional. So, when we endow people with these traits that may or may not actually exist in those people, the result is a recipe for disaster. I wish I could tell you that I knew from the beginning with Jane that I was engaging in transference and countertransference, but I cannot. Jane's therapist began asking me questions, because he was aware of potential transference on Jane's part. As soon as he began investigating my relationship with Jane, and I began naming events of gifts and offered time, I was utterly surprised at the revelation that I was engaging in countertransference. The psychotherapist reminded me that we all have ways of being that serve how we operate in the world. To recognize what is not helping us in any relationship gives us the opportunity to make choices. Knowing what I was doing helped me decide how to move forward in a healthy way, which is the best we can hope for in any circumstance. Here was my opportunity to advocate for the boundaries needed to maintain a healthy Rolfing/client relationship.

The next time I saw Jane, I was able to name some things happening for me with countertransference. I told her that she was treating me like the mom I wished I had, but that I could not continue with that behavior. I defined our roles together, underlining how much I enjoy her and our work together. Asking Jane about any transference would not have helped Jane, so I left that piece for her psychotherapist to address. For the work between Jane and I to be effective, we needed to stay in the roles of Rolfing and client. When transference or countertransference occurs with our clients, what serves us as Rolfers is taking responsibility for what we are putting into the relationship that does not belong in the relationship. In my case, naming my

mom issue with the client was helpful so she could clearly identify *why my behavior changed* and what I needed to acknowledge to move forward in our relationship. However, Jane was thrilled that I had cast her as my 'good mother' – so much so, that she wanted me to continue with that. When I explained that doing so would be hurtful to us both, she was disappointed. Ironically, I recognized that in her transference she had cast me as someone whom she wished would appreciate her generous nature, which complemented my countertransference: a perfect storm. These complicated relational dynamics are why having clear boundaries and roles is supportive of healthy relationships.

## Dual Relationships

Sometimes we push boundaries by having more than one relationship with our clients, also known as *dual relationships* or *multiple relationships*. Expanding a therapeutic relationship to a dual relationship requires thought and intent, as well as respect for any professional and legal codes involved and consideration of standard practice in one's profession. Particularly, one should never consider any romantic relationship because that type of relationship would breach ethical restrictions. With this in mind, let's look at dual relationships and when those might occur.

Through my Rolfing practice, I have had the great fortune of meeting inspiring, compassionate, and impressive people. Some rare clients inspire dual relationships where a therapeutic relationship might expand to include a friendship, a teaching relationship, etc., but doing so can open the door to blurred lines with false expectations of the dual relationship by either party, particularly in regard to boundaries. Forging a friendship beyond our professional alliance can be natural, but it requires deliberation and alignment with the guidance in the Rolf Institute® Code of Ethics. Specifically in the Code of Ethics (Rolf Institute 2006), we will not "induce [any client] to enter into other therapeutic, commercial, sexual or social relationships with us; nor do we engage in relationships with our clients that are likely to interfere with or be detrimental to the Rolfing Structural Integration process." If a client and I decide to explore a friendship, I always weigh the possibility of losing the client *and* the friend. Please note the likelihood of a relationship withstanding a dual relationship is far lower than a pure singular relationship, because the



layering of relationships exponentially opens up miscommunication possibilities *and* incongruent expectations in both people. This weighing of pros and cons when adding a personal relationship to an existing professional relationship is necessary.

For transparency, if I feel the professional relationship might withstand the expanse to include a personal relationship, discussing my reservations will always make me feel better and address some potential boundary challenges within the dual relationship. For example, my cancellation policy requires twenty-four hours' notice or the client pays the session fee in full. If 'Toni' and I are friends and have dinner now and then, does being friends presume a leniency on my policy if Toni forgets our appointment? I may not think that our friendship includes this shift of understanding professionally, but Toni might because that's how she treats friends. Again, expectations of a relationship drive communication and miscommunication. The key to a thriving and successful dual relationship is stating clear boundaries as needed, ideally prior to the challenge occurring so you both can have clear expectations about events. This communication will also help foster an understanding of how you both wish to be treated in the relationship moving forward while offering the opportunity to discuss the contract of friendship in light of the therapeutic relationship already established.

To be clear, the relationship that is already present is one-sided where you as the caretaker listen and give your expertise based on the client's needs. This uneven relationship does not offer the bedrock of a fair or balanced friendship. Consequently, growing this one-sided relationship into a friendship may not, in the end, appeal to the client because the inequity may have been what was appealing to the client to pursue a friendship. This assessment may sound cold and selfish, but it is accurate. This last point can also be challenging because when it is discovered that a one-sided position cannot occur in the friendship, the dual relationship is likely to deteriorate. If the friendship fails, shifting back to Rolfer/client is almost impossible.

Other complications can easily arise. The Rolfer is commonly viewed as the healthcare expert. If you both go drinking and one becomes inebriated, what happens then? This is one of many possible scenarios. Where do the boundary lines form? Where

does the intersection of being human and being the expert occur?

Some questions to ask yourself prior to entering a dual relationship include the following. (These questions are not comprehensive but might shed light on what is motivating you to layer your relationship with this client.)

- Will I financially be okay if this person is no longer my client? (The pressure to please the person so she/he/z remains a client can be tremendous and should not be underestimated.)
- Has this client been a client long enough for me to determine if we could be good friends?
- What do I enjoy about this person?
- Does this person ask about me in our sessions or is the relationship one-sided? (Note: one-sided with a client focus is not a negative for a professional relationship.)
- Will I remain an authority on healthful practices if we become friends?
- Is becoming friends trying to please the client or a relational shift I am genuinely interested in?

## Key Dynamics in the Therapeutic Relationship

### *Level of Dress*

We have not yet mentioned a power dynamic in the Rolfer-client relationship that does not exist in many relationships: that is that one person has clothes on, the other has clothes mostly off (as most Rolfing clients will be in underwear or else attire like a sports bra and sports shorts rather than full street clothes). When I was training to become a Rolfer, a suggested guideline was to encourage and follow the client's comfort level to thereby determine what the client wears in the sessions. This will be more or less significant for the relationship depending on considerations of gender, the client's level of modesty, the client's cultural background, and other factors.

### *Touch*

Yet the weightiest relational element is that the client receives touch. This is the most profound element of the Rolfer - client relationship. Touch is complex and spans many types of relationships, but in our work the Rolfer gives and the client receives touch. Touch is controversial in

the healthcare industry; most healthcare professions in our culture avoid the use of touch as much as possible, and medical practitioners are taught to avoid physical touch, even when counseling critically ill and terminal patients diagnosed with cancer (Armstrong 2015). In clinical psychology, touch is taboo; psychologists often suggest to patients to look for hands-on work outside of sessions (Harrison 2012). Touch can mean so many things to so many people that some psychotherapists do not wish to breach the gaping hole of mixed messages, triggers, and unintended consequences.

Thus, touch makes the relationship of bodyworker and client unusual from other healthcare relationships, and it is what we are paid for. Physical contact is usually the point of our work together – physical change through direct physical contact. As Rolfers, we hold the power of helping people engage in healthful, healing, and kind touch, which is particularly important when we consider that a significant percentage of people have been victims of physical aggression, violation, and misuse of touch. Yet there are challenges. Although Rolfing work is a direct form of manipulating tissue that is not often associated with sensual pleasure, it might unintentionally elicit a sexualized response from someone who does not differentiate sensual and sexual feelings. For some clients, touch in general evokes a sexualized engagement. I found this prevalent throughout my eighteen years as a massage therapist, but thankfully not during my time as a Rolfer. While massage therapists commonly work with a client unclothed under a sheet, Rolfers work with clients in underclothes or clothing, depending on the clients' preferences – this is a small but profound difference that perhaps simulates the relationship of a physician and patient.

### *Trauma and Body Armor*

Sadly, the power dynamic in the Rolfer-client therapeutic relationship can sometimes bring forth childhood trauma in the form of molestation, incest, or more. When someone comes for bodywork, the possibility that there is a trauma history that will be touched is in a sense an undeniable factor. William Reich, a protégé of Freud, was the first psychologist who deduced that the body builds 'armor' because of experiences united with psychological events. "Reich determined that the etiology of early childhood trauma had to be elucidated first through recognition, understanding,

and loosening of barriers that he named character armor – a protective psychological attitude and muscular tension reflecting the body component” (May 2018, 40). All trauma fosters armor in the body, and by touching the body, and particularly the fascial system that shapes the body, we are touching body armor.

Peter Levine’s book *In An Unspoken Voice* (2005) explores how the body wishes to let go of stored trauma through acknowledgement of impulses stifled at the time of the traumatic event to heal the holes in our souls. The age and severity of the trauma will have an impact on the pace and locations of the work you do together. When you feel a client ‘leave’ the room or ‘vacate’ his/her body, *dissociation* is occurring. Dissociation is when a person cannot tolerate the moment and disengages with it by separating from a sense of self, identity, and memory in the current moment. Dissociation is often seen as a coping skill for many children, and adults, who have survived traumatic events. However, when dissociation occurs in our sessions, pausing hands-on work to verbally check in with the client is necessary.

I recognize when dissociation happens in session with my clients because I feel alone in the room; I also get uncomfortable in my skin because the energy shifts. Whenever I have any feeling that raises a warning for me, I pause the session. I ask about the client’s experience, to describe what she/he/z is noticing. I ask if the client is having any sensations that would alert me to the nervous system being triggered (sweating, cold, trembling, shaky, etc.). If the client and I have already discussed past trauma, I might ask if she/he/z feels present or in another place (dissociated). Offering the client water or sitting up and placing feet on the floor can help a person come back to the present moment; this is also known as *grounding*. We can elaborate that grounding is when the practitioner supports a client to tolerate living in the present moment fully and wholly while feeling connected to the earth (or whichever element seems most centering to the client). As a Rolfer, a leading principle is to help foster health, tolerance, and alignment in the client’s body. Since the mind echoes the body, we are helping our clients evolve into better versions of themselves, which in turn facilitates health and well-being in their families and communities.

## Conclusion

When beginning my path as a Rolfer, I did not intend to change people’s lives through this work. The fact that we can and do every day is miraculous. By borrowing ideas and language from the field of psychology, we can better understand mechanisms of how people operate, define how we would like to interact with clients, and discover ways to support our clients without taking on any endeavors that remain out of our scope of practice. Knowing that the body reflects the mind (Hanna 1970), we can rest assured that we do not need words to help people make profound change in their lives. Knowing about, and engaging in, emotional attunement and active listening can help you engage in a healthy relationship and identify and maintain clear boundaries for you and your clients. Understanding that transference and countertransference can and do exist will allow you to better understand how a situation ignited so quickly into an event that you did not see coming. Trauma exists in all of us; being mindful of moving forward will help us identify if dissociation occurs so we can ground our clients in the present moment. Naming the parts of your experience can and does help you and your client orient to the situation, to best determine how to move forward.

We are ambassadors of health, working in the vast vulnerabilities of the human body, complicated by the complexities of the human mind. In closing, I leave you with the wisdom of Ida Rolf: “. . . no situation exists in a human which a psychologist would diagnose as a feeling of insecurity or inadequacy unless it is accompanied by a physical situation which bears witness to the fact that the gravitational support is inadequate.” Let us be the support we wish to witness in the world.

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# Consciousness

## Challenge Your Worldview

By Deborah Weidhaas, Certified Advanced Rolfer™,  
Rolf Movement® Practitioner

I have been blessed to recognize, and work from, a level of consciousness where what a client's structure needs, and in what order, is information that presents itself as I work. I believe this is because I drop agenda, become fully present, open myself to perceive what is, know and trust that a higher level of consciousness and truth is present in both the client and me, and know that the client's structure knows exactly its own right answers. Years ago I worked with a client where her Rolfing® Structural Integration (SI) sessions made no sense to me until two to three days after a session. I confessed to her, "I have always known I am not the conductor on this train, but until you, I hadn't realized I'm riding three cars back."

Recently, I did an event of mini-sessions. A lady came into my room for a session wearing a knit cap on top of scraggly hair, torn jeans, and a worn-out coat. I'll confess: I thought (rudely) to myself, "What am I going to do with this for fifteen minutes?" She took off her coat, sat cross-legged on top of my table, and looked at me. I asked her if she had any ache or pain places, and she said no. I asked her why she came for a mini-session, and she said because she was curious. Then, what came into my consciousness was a question I've never asked before. I said, "In the depths of the depths of who you are, what are you working on right now?"

As she pondered the answer to that question, more and more color came into her pale face. Her whole energy shifted and kept shifting, and I watched her, second by second, become beautiful. By the time she began to speak, she was amazingly beautiful. She said that she hides behind masks out of fear and disappointment and is trying to figure out how to be okay. Of course I told her of the transition I had just watched, and told her that she's beautiful (in a way so she could hear it). For me, it was a sight to behold: to see a body/person/structure shift like this in a matter of ten seconds. I didn't know this was possible. Then, I silently asked her structure where and how it needed me to engage, and we did our mini-session.

Someone recently asked if you need to get to this level before you have it. I said we all already have it (though many don't know this and/or have blockages to it). Just start from wherever you are.

### Consciousness, Simply Stated

Consciousness is the awareness of oneself and one's environment. That's it, plain and simple. However, there is a vast spectrum of levels and layers to one's awareness of self, others, experiences, and environment. Also, there are base levels of consciousness we get stuck in, and perhaps don't know we're stuck, so we continuously look for the answers there. They say consciousness is the ability to think and feel which, then, builds the framework to what one knows. I suspect those Rolfers who are skilled in the energetic taxonomy would be more comfortable saying higher consciousness is always available and is accessed through perceiving and sensing.

Consciousness determines what you pay attention to, your experiences, what you hold as true, what you think you know, life skills, professional skills, and your inner world. It influences who and how we get to be, the possibilities available to us, and defines the ways we engage with life. What's challenging is that much of this, that which limits our access to higher levels of consciousness, is held in our sub- or unconscious.

Those who have had NDEs (Near-Death Experiences) are hard pressed to find words to convey what they experienced and now know. They do, however, have a common opinion about how we live our human lives and what we've been thinking we know. They suggest we question all of it.

### Original Formation

The beginnings of our conscious awareness came through the development of our bodies and brains. As is known from practitioners of Brain Gym®, not all of us learned or evolved all the same patterns. For example, since I went straight from sitting to walking as an infant (i.e., never crawled), I don't have the

cross-crawl pattern in my systems. Patterns we developed, or didn't, through physical development, could be a severe dysfunction, a nuisance, or could be the basis of the uniquely special gift called you.

### Family Conditioning

Family conditioning is something we all got at a very early age and were indoctrinated in for years. It dramatically shapes our consciousness through who-you-are and how-you-are-to-be in order to survive and succeed (and sometimes succeeding is merely surviving). It includes norms, values, rewards, punishments, observations, and reactions. Some of these are spoken and much is unspoken, but everyone in the family knows them. Family conditioning can also be so subtle that, while we sense it, we can't put words to it, or it can be so ingrained that we don't know it's there, think it's normal, or have been conditioned to doubt our own sense/ knowing of what's happening.

An example of this subtle stuff, from my own family, is: the children's accomplishments were owned by the parents. As a kid I called it living vicariously. It was a sense that my accomplishment, pride, and excitement were being sucked off of me while I began to live this experience that the accomplishment had never been mine to begin with. My youngest brother, the youngest of five and ten years my junior, told me, when he was a teenager, that he never tells mom and dad what he's going to do, or has accomplished, so it won't get swallowed up. Over time, family conditioning is so ingrained that we enact the patterns/dynamics, unconsciously, on ourselves, and these can take decades to unlearn and un-embody. I believe family conditioning is how we pass dysfunctional patterns from one generation to another, and (for those whose worldview includes it) from one incarnation to another.

Sometimes, though, some aspects of our family conditioning can disturb us in a way that we begin to search out the message, recognize its falsehood, and choose to discard it. As an example, in my family there was a pattern of offering something to someone so that the other could thank you while repeatedly declining what you offered. In my twenties, I recognized this and decided I was done with it, no matter the consequences. I told myself if the family disowned me, so be it. Later, during one visit to my grandparent's home, my grandmother went on and on about how poor the crop of raspberries had been that year. (Mind you,



my grandmother's raspberry jam was to die for.) The crop had been so tiny that they had only gotten seven jars of raspberry jam. Only seven. She asked if I wanted one. Contrary to family conditioning, I immediately said yes. The look on her face, and the quality of the moment that hung in the air, was as if the planet had cracked in half for her. This is how potent family conditioning is, and it forms the foundation to our maps of how things work in life, in living, with others, and in the world.

Some of us live our whole lives at a level of consciousness that is ruled by family conditioning. With this, defense mechanisms (ego, masks, denial, hiding, etc.) become our way of coping with the disharmony between our true self, our conditioned self, and the inner and outer environments we constantly try to negotiate. All the dualities are prominent and dominant at this level. Luckily, we can grow, choose, and change.

## Other Conditioning

While our most primary foundation to early consciousness is the family, we also get conditioning from education, religion, community, locale/state, nation, etc. For those who have experienced trauma, abuse, injury, or loss/absence of a family member in the course of growing up, even more complexity shapes one's consciousness, who we are, and how we are trying to find our way.

It is crucial to realize that conditioning, maturation, and education affect our level of belief in, trust for, and knowing of self. It moves me nearly to tears to think of the ways we have learned to shut down, turn off, and inhibit our own inner knowing.

My favorite story of all time was published in *Reader's Digest*® many decades ago. A mother wrote it. The gist of the story is that one day the mother saw her toddler walking toward the bedroom of her newborn. She followed, quietly, to see what was up. The toddler walked in the room, pressed his face against the crib, and said to the sleeping infant, "Will you please tell me what God looks like because I'm beginning to forget." I relayed this story to one of my clients who just so happens to have a toddler and a newborn. The following week, he shared with me that when he asked his toddler what God looks like, she scowled at him and went back to playing. I told him perhaps she doesn't remember or perhaps she does but it is too special for her to talk about. A week or so later, he texted me that

he had asked again, and she didn't hesitate for a second before saying, "He looks like golden sunshine."

We have all been socialized about how we are 'supposed to' pay attention to ourselves, to others, and to our environment. In the course of this, at very early ages of growing up, we learn not to pay attention to, no less trust: our intuition; our inner sensing/perceiving (like animals use when they know a tsunami is coming or a predator is behind the next bush); the gift of imagining (which is really an incredible tool); and a direct relationship with, and the embodiment of, our bodies. And, yet, our bodies, because they sense and perceive, are one of the direct lines to higher levels of consciousness.

## He Said, She Said

Through socialization and education we acquire another level of consciousness where we learn to pay attention to our thoughts. From this, we become entangled in analyzing, and in our emotional reactivity to thoughts and experiences. I call this the 'he said, she said; he did, she did' level of consciousness. Many of us live our lives here, and there is absolutely no healing, no resolution, and no potential for change at this level. We simply spin endlessly around on whether what was said or done meets our expectations and beliefs or doesn't. When we talk to friends or associates, we focus on whether they agree or don't. If they don't, we're off spinning again about this apparently new 'he said, she said'. That word, 'apparently' is important here because it's not new at all. Our response is a common pattern, based on beliefs, that we have set up in order to survive, manage, and succeed in our lives. Shifting out of a 'he-said-she-said' level of consciousness starts with identifying one's beliefs.

## Beliefs

When I spoke with someone recently, he thought 'beliefs' meant religious beliefs. He hadn't yet realized that we formulate beliefs about everything. It's how we began to map out the way to make sense of, organize, self-protect, manage, and move forward in our lives.

We formulate beliefs about life, self, and others. Beliefs can be found by listening and hearing reactions, intensities, behaviors, thoughts, and the interpretations and judgments you form about self and others. These are indicators that can point you toward questioning what your experience

and perspectives have taught you to hold as true. Beliefs are not thoughts. Beliefs are embodied. Our thoughts and reactivity arise from the beliefs that we hold in our systems as true. People can hold onto these, and defend them, like they preserve the very pillars of truth and life when they are really only the pillars of our map/worldview. In some ways, beliefs could be compared to operating systems and application programs.

At an energy and energetic level, beliefs are resonances/vibrations that permeate the field in which we live and function. As resonances/vibrations, they have a direct hold on what we, and our physical body, can do. Beliefs are a tough nut to crack because they organize and affect our experience (mentally, emotionally, physically). So, from experiences we form beliefs. Those beliefs then inform and direct our experience. Then experience reinforces our beliefs, and beliefs reinforce our experience. Recurring experiences, emotions, and thoughts are indicators to our embodied beliefs.

To shift to a higher level of consciousness, one has to recognize, challenge, and discard many of one's beliefs. Some of our beliefs fall away in the course of doing Rolfing SI and Rolf Movement work, but many require great courage, persistence, and a ruthless commitment to picking apart one's own psyche in order to recognize patterns and find solutions or ways to transcend the belief.

There is value in challenging everything we think we know. We, and each one of our clients, are grappling with this kind of material, each in our own unique way and at our own pace and level. This material can be disturbing, confusing, frustrating, and most often not at all rooted in what we thought was the answer. So back to what the NDE folk say: question everything.

## Patterns

We have all been perplexed by circumstances that seem to happen to us repeatedly, or happen with the same outcome no matter what the circumstance or venue. Beliefs, and the ways we made sense of our world as we matured, formed patterns that most of us don't realize are there and yet these inform and determine our awareness, our consciousness.

The consciousness level of patterns is where the potential for change and healing happens. This is why our work is so valuable. Rather than fixing people's symptoms (which we all are incredibly

skilled at), we work at the structural pattern level, the level where real change is possible. Our work, and particularly Rolf Movement, allows people to expand their conscious awareness. I also hold it as a goal that this work can help people regain access to their intuition and, thereby, regain a sense of trust: in self; in their capability and possibilities; and in sensing their own truth.

Base levels of consciousness demand our respect because they encompass how a human being put himself together in order to mature and survive. At the same time, though, structure changes most easily when we connect into the true/innate self of the client as we work.

## There are Rewards

As practitioners, getting out of our heads, our techniques, and what we think we know, and finding ways to find, follow, and trust our inner knowing, sensing, and perceiving has tremendous rewards in how to do this work and also holds high value for our clients. One's inner voice, sensing, perceiving, and experiencing that feeling in the cells of your body of knowing, of "yes, that's true and accurate," are pathways to higher consciousness. Over time, we acquire enough experiences to realize we can trust ourselves, trust our inner knowing, and trust the information that arises into our conscious awareness.

I'm reminded of the young lady, age twenty-two, who called me early in my career. She had a rare bone disease that caused additional bone growth. As a result, she had had a surgery to remove bone every two years since her birth. Physical tissues had been reattached by the surgeons anywhere they could. By the time she came to me, she had half of each scapula, bone pieces had been cut out of lower legs and forearms, and each innominate was nothing more than an arc of pubic bone, hip joint, and SI joint. Everything else had been cut away. I contacted three Rolfers who were also MDs about this bone disease and this lady's desire to do Rolfing SI. All three of them said clearly and emphatically, "Don't touch her!" Meanwhile, my inner voice was screaming at me to work with her. I called her back with the only approach I know that works best: be straight up and honest about where you are. I told her I had no idea what to do for her or how to help. She said she never asked if I knew what to do or how to help. She said she was asking if I was willing to take the journey. Oh my God! Yes!

I have never had another client who accessed core/psoas as quickly, and used it as efficiently, as she did. She used it like a super highway and found her trust in self again. I was blessed to have worked with her through her basic Rolfing SI process. Then she went to Africa for two years on an educational mission.

## Clients and the Mind, Body, Spirit Relationship

Some clients come to us with an understanding that mind, body, and spirit are intertwined. Some may be sure of this and some may only suspect it. Some may feel they have plateaued in their personal journey because mental and emotional issues feel to them to be stuck in their bodies. These clients may be ready to begin to question or pick apart base levels of consciousness. Some clients come to us for specific physical reasons only to realize, at a deeper level, that they really arrived here in order to begin dismantling their mental, emotional, and spiritual blockages. There are also some clients who have many years of, and many skills for, healing their own mental, emotional, and spiritual self.

No matter where the client is, engaging the interplay of mind, body, and spirit begins with becoming familiar with where the client is, his or her worldview or map, and how his or her physicality is expressing itself. What is possible depends on what the client's true/innate self (meaning 'structure', which means physical *plus* all of who s/he is) is calling for.

I use the beginnings of the traditional Rolfing SI process to become more familiar with these aspects of a client and to let the client acquire some trust in my skills. I am an avid listener and an avid questioner. I have zero qualms about asking a 'dumb' question. I strive to have a huge worldview because it is then more likely that I will be able to comprehend whatever my client's worldview is. It is not the job of my clients to understand or accept my worldview. It is my job to understand theirs. This is the meaning of 'meet the client where the client is'.

In my ideal world, when a client comes to this work knowing there is an inseparableness and interdependence of mind, body, spirit, and 'God' (whatever God means for you), my hope is that the client would know this at an experiential level. Most don't. The experience is not 'thoughts about'; not hoping and asking; not doing or making it happen; not beyond one's grasp nor being

withheld. It is the very nature of being, and it evolves and unfolds for us within us. Rolfing SI and Rolf Movement are the most potent vehicle I've ever experienced to bring mind, body, spirit, and 'God' (whatever God means for you) into a reality that you experience and live.

I look at a client as a coherent inseparableness that knows exactly why s/he is in my office. My framework is that it's my job to listen to the inseparableness, to hear what it needs from me, from my work, and for my client. I would hope for clients, ideally, that this work becomes a discovery and reclaiming of their inner knowing, self-truth, trust in self, trust in intuition, and embodiment of body-with-spirit and spirit-with-body to the fullest of one's abilities at that moment. I know we're on the right road when they experience their body supporting them or connecting into parts they haven't been living in, or come to realize that their body is a partner, or realize that the aches and pains of the body are its only way (when we're not embodied) to signal that there is a distortion in the system that is keeping them from experiencing the amazing journey that is who they are. Do I say this to potential clients? No. Do I do the best I can for them to possibly discover on their own that this is happening for them? Yes.

## A Specific Client Example

I worked with a fellow who came to Rolfing SI because his wife told him he was slumping. He thought slumping was a structure issue, and then he heard from me that Rolfing SI works at the structural level. We made a lot of really good progress with his structure over about eight sessions, but he was unable to sustain it. In addition to working with his body, in one session he mentioned he thrives with analyzing and that he expects/wants only basic survival: to keep a job and provide for his family. A session or two later, he talked to me about his meditation practice and how he knows God is out there, and he's been trying to get out there and connect. I told him God is not "out there"; God is in you, it is here, inside, and you won't find what you're looking for by trying to get "out there." In the following session he said he'd been sitting with the idea that God is "in here" and likes it. To this, I said that the truth is that *God is out there AND in here*, and everywhere, all the time. My client liked this even better because he now realized that if he goes inside, he can then sense "out there" and still also be "in here" to sense what his truth is.

Our next session was 70% talking. He went back to the subject of analyzing. He talked about so many things he should and shouldn't be doing, that he is trying to follow these, has reasserted a new resolve, and is determined to find his purpose in life. I suggested he let go of the purpose question, that many times purpose is too big of a question to answer. I suggested instead that he look for those places where he can make a contribution and that, from this, over time, the purpose may become more clear to him. I told him a contribution doesn't have to be money or volunteering. Sometimes it can be as simple as slowing down and flagging a driver that you'll let him make his left-hand turn.

I also asked him if he realized that 'should', 'ought to', 'have to', and 'must' were rules we live by but didn't create. He kind of got this, but not really, so I said, "When we live based on 'should', we either get to do what we should, or do what we want as we get angry at ourselves for not doing what we should have done. I turned my body to the right for "do what you should," then turned to the left for "be angry that you didn't"; then turned right, left, right, and left, to demonstrate the craziness of living in a should world. He got it. I gave him the beginnings of the process to eradicate 'should' from one's life. (This process is explained at the end of this article.) During this session, I also taught him how to recognize what yes and no feel like in his physical body. I asked him if he could think of a simple activity in his life to begin noticing this physical experience of yes or no. He said he could use it to find out if he should eat one thing or another for lunch. I looked at him blankly and said nothing. He looked at me oddly for about three seconds and then burst out laughing when he realized he had said 'should'. I congratulated him on noticing.

In his next session, he reported he did only one day of noticing 'shoulds' and then completely forgot about it. He said, however, that he had found many ways every day to make contributions. He was practically beaming as he told me all the ways he'd applied this idea. As for the 'should' homework, I told him it is common to forget if the task is too big, or the issue is so ingrained in us, or when it's just not yet time. After this brief conversation, his session was 100% Rolfing SI with micromovements. We'll see what the-structure-of-who-he-is wants help with next.

These concepts are very common for me to use with clients who are beginning to get a connection between body, mind, and spirit or have been working on it and not making much progress. For others who come in with a lot of tools and skills already, I draw on all they know and listen to their structure for the directions on how I can contribute to move them forward.

## How to Eradicate 'Should'

'Shoulds' are really important when we are kids because they protect and teach us. You should hold hands and look both ways before crossing the street. You should stop at a red light. However, that rule no longer applies when the spotlight is broken and staying red for ten minutes. Every 'should' has at least one or dozens of exceptions in real life. Shoulds, ought tos, have tos, and musts are all rules, and you are not their creator. When we live by these, we live in an environment where we do what we should or berate ourselves for not doing what we should have done. We go back and forth between the two poles never realizing: it is running our lives; it is deciding our choices; and that we are stuck here. This pattern deserves eradication.

After hearing this, many decide to stop using these words, but this is only a decision. It is a thought. It has little power over the pattern/rules that are imbedded in who/how we are. Plus, we humans are far too quick to settle on limited data before we run out to fix something. If you go after changing 'shoulds' at this point, the task will be long, frustrating, and incomplete.

The first step in eradicating 'should' is data collection. For one to two weeks, the only job is to listen ruthlessly to everything you say and notice every time you speak the word 'should'. Do not change a thing except to start really hearing what you say. Once that is accomplished, the next task is to spend one to two weeks ruthlessly paying attention to when you think the word 'should'. You will need to pay even greater attention during this phase because our thoughts pop in and flash through our minds very quickly. I tell clients I know the solution to 'should' but, also, that I won't give them the answer until they do their data collection.

Once you have completed these two phases of data collection, you will have accomplished two things: 1) you'll have a good sense of how persistent you'll need to be with the rest of this task; and 2) you will have acquired the skill of immediately

identifying when you speak and think this word.

The final task: Change the 'sh' of 'should' to a 'c'. 'Should' is a rule; 'could' is a choice. If you're like me, you'll probably spend another week tripping over your words, like, "I sh- sh- sh- could have gone to the store." You are now on your way to eradicating should from your thoughts and spoken word.

As I said, there are always exceptions to a 'should'. A lawyer-client once challenged me on the premise that he's in the business of telling people what they should do. He's right. I suggested that he distinguish between the 'shoulds' that he needs for his profession and any predisposition for using 'should' that may be limiting his choices in his personal life.

## Conclusion

You never know, really, why people show up in your office and how this work is going to feed into the life they are going to live. What I do know is that the potency of Rolfing SI and Rolf Movement work can open a whole new world of possibility and ways of being. As a practitioner, it is a blessing to know how to be open and present in the moment, to perceive what is so for my clients, and perceive what is needed so they can get what they're after, even if they're not yet consciously aware of what that is at this moment. It is an honor to witness their consciousness, questioning, and experience unfold as they expand in ways they hadn't known were possible, and to see light and lift come into them as they experience the possibility of new possibilities. Being invited by clients to take this journey with them is a blessing.

*Deborah Weidhaas is a Certified Advanced Rolfer and Rolf Movement Practitioner. She has been in practice for over twenty-five years. She had over 110 Rolfing SI and Rolf Movement sessions in her body before she trained as a Rolfer. After a Rolfing SI and a Rolf Movement series, this large number of sessions was prompted by her inner voice, which told her to go back to Rolf Movement and it would tell her when she was done. For two years, she coupled weekly Rolf Movement sessions with guidance from her inner voice to clarify and pick apart her own psyche/consciousness levels. Deborah recognizes herself as highly adept in the organization and dynamics of the structure of being and in engaging her clients in ways that allow them to resolve consciousness issues that arise from receiving Rolfing SI. She recently relocated from Los Gatos, California to live and practice in Richmond, Virginia.*



# Presence, Perception, and Embodiment

## *Continuing a Conversation with Sally Klemm*

**By Anne Hoff, Certified Advanced Rolfer™ and Sally Klemm, Basic and Advanced Rolfing® Instructor and Rolf Movement® Practitioner**

*Note from Anne Hoff: This completes my interview with Sally Klemm. Earlier parts of the interview were published in the June 2017 issue ("Explorations of Earth and Sky") and the December 2017 issue ("Working Women").*

**Anne Hoff:** You had a long sabbatical from teaching Rolfing® Structural Integration (SI), from 2013 to 2016. Would you be willing to share what brought that about and how the experience changed and informs you?

**Sally Klemm:** Sure. I had a near death experience and everything changed for me. In 2012 I'd done workshops in Switzerland and then did a Basic Rolfing training in Malaysia. After the two months teaching in Kuala Lumpur, I needed to get out of the city and reconnect with nature. I planned a layover in Seoul at the Zen Dance Temple because of the nearby hiking trails. I'd been there before in the spring, but now the verdant blossoms had given way to hot, dry terrain. On the first day a jolt like a shock from an electric fence zapped me. I wheeled around to see a hornets' nest. Uh oh, I didn't have my EpiPen®! I was being stung again and again. I went into an altered state way beyond any meditation or drug experience I've ever had. Pure sensation. No thought, no feeling, and no sense of time. The venom coursed through my system with such exquisite sensation that my palms and soles lit up like neon. Somehow I stumbled back toward my room hardly aware that I was going into shock. My lurching gait alerted the dog and hostess of my return, but I was passing out by the time I reached the door. I do remember sliding down onto the floor as she managed to find, uncap, and hand me the EpiPen – although she balked at the task of injecting me. Swinging blindly, I landed the dose as I was fading into black. I felt like Uma Thurman's character in the overdose scene in Quentin Tarantino's *Pulp Fiction*. My blood pressure skyrocketed, my skin was covered in hot welts, hives, and my heart thumped like a jackhammer.

I'm still processing this experience five plus years later. I've always identified



Sally Klemm



Anne Hoff

myself as a robust, resilient person. The EpiPen brought me back from the brink and saved my life, but it also significantly de-regulated my nervous system in the process. Instead of a quick bounce back to what I considered 'normal', I began to contend with the disruption to my autonomic nervous system and to my immune system being compromised.

**AH:** Wow. I knew the sketch outline of this but not the whole story. How frightening. So in terms of integrating the experience,

was it a process of re-regulating your nervous system and sort of landing back in your body? Was that 'landing' different? Do you feel, in a sense, that you're a different person?

**SK:** I do feel, in a sense, that I'm a different person. Especially in terms of my autonomic nervous system. It's taken me a long time to bring down the sympathetic charge that was the aftermath of the norepinephrine. You know that quote "In theory, theory and practice are the same, but in practice they're quite different"? I think this is relevant to the portraying of the basic Ten Series to beginning Rolfers: there's the theory of Rolfing SI and a certain rhetoric that surrounds it, and then there are the people that come into the training more because they have had an actual lived experience of the work. And it's the personal experience of the work that is often awkward at best to put it into words.

Anne, this hearkens back to an aspect of the work that you brought up when we were talking about your idea for an issue of the Journal about consciousness, including the theme of presence – being present in the moment, for the experience, and how that differs from our *concepts* about time or life; what we believe to be so, what's actually lived. That goes a long way with my attraction to and appreciation for the phenomenal world.

It's been my experience over the years, both in terms of meditation and Rolfing experience, that embodiment is an ongoing project. It isn't a goal that we achieve or a destination where we arrive so much as an ongoing experience that continues to shift, change, and morph from moment to moment. It's one of those paradoxes that we talk about Rolfing SI as if we're about accomplishing this end: integration. And yet the ongoing experience of what that means, or what that entails, let's say, again changes from moment to moment. It seems we're juggling this moment in time and space with all of our technology and the emphasis on quickness and speed and results and how to retain our connections with gravity and ground.

**AH:** I've always noticed a quality of presence in your work.

**SK:** Presence and perception are big. I mean, I can only use my perception, but I encourage people to find out how they perceive things.

**AH:** How do you perceive things, Sally? For example, the session you did on me the other day – I’m still working with that piece you ended with. It’s actually quite profound right now. We worked with my feet and calves, but we ended with this tracking piece of really finding the space in front of my spine. That’s something I’ve ‘known’ for years, that we commonly talk about in Rolfing SI, and that I use it with my clients. But something about the way you brought it in, I’m relating to it and working with it in a whole different way. The time was right for it to land in a new way, be embodied differently. Perceptually, what led you there in that session, that you knew it was an important piece? We all do this all the time with our clients, make choices to bring in certain things, but we don’t often articulate the process of how we each do that, how we perceive what is needed. Do you see things? Do you feel things? Do you just know things? Do you have intuitive insights?

**SK:** Thank you for your expressions, Anne. My guess is the depth arises from our mutual participation. We were both in the session and present with the work; a little bit like jazz improvisation. We begin to work together and have this sense of where it could go. I don’t have any pat formula that I use.

If anything, I might take a moment to ground and center myself prior and subsequent to connecting with a client. I emphasize this in my trainings, as it’s palpable and perceivable when someone is *there*, present, and when someone is not. If not, it only takes a moment to bring that to awareness and to step back and say, “Okay let’s reconnect here,” and then go back into the session. To give people permission and space to do that at the beginning can soften the edge and allow us to ease into work we’re participating in rather than doing something on another or trying to get the tissue to bend to our will, so to speak.

The sense of presence has been important to me in my own learning process. Earlier in the interview (see “Explorations of Earth and Sky” in the June 2017 issue), you mentioned my work as an instructor at the tables. I may not be the top presenter in our field, however I am skilled at supervision of work at the tables on an individual hands-on basis. This skill has value for me and is one I particularly look for in the assistants that I work with.

**AH:** So when you’re teaching, sometimes a student will call you over and ask for assistance. How do you sense how to help that person, how to enter into the jazz improvisation with the student? There’s something so seamless in how you do it. It’s not, “Well, let me show you how to do this!” I’ve never experienced you that way. There’s some way that you ‘loop’ with a person, that you kind of find out where he or she is coming from, that seems to be done very nonverbally. Maybe there’s some words included, but it’s not a big head-centered thing of, “Well, what are you having trouble with?” Yet you hone in and then offer something very attuned to the person. Are you able to take the process apart at all and speak to what you’re doing?

**SK:** I think so. Here’s a piece of that: In Basic Training, when I’m with students over a seven-week period, I track the process through student feedback on a weekly basis. They articulate their process in terms of what works and what doesn’t work for them: the edge where they find it, how that comes up for them and where, so that they can begin to identify it for themselves. There’s a lot going on during the Basic Training; it’s difficult at the onset to distill and organize the experience. In my own life, participation in an ongoing discussion group for over ten years has helped me to track process like that. Tarthang Tulku’s text *Time, Space, and Knowledge* contains exercises designed to provide an experience of how we might perceive our world in a new and fresh way, different from our habitual bias and perspective.

To comment on experience can be edgy. As challenging as it may be to describe an experience, reading about it is not the same as having it. Experience happens in the present, moment to moment. There is also something to be said for articulating and describing the nature of one’s own experience in order to communicate, share it with others, to hear it within the group so that we can recognize and appreciate how different it is for every individual. I think that in terms of Rolfing SI each practitioner develops his or her own style according to how the person experiences the work of giving and receiving. Yeah. There’s something about that. Maybe I’m not articulating it well.

Once the work begins, it’s more of a level playing field. I kind of shy away from hierarchical relationship, “I’m going impose order on you” or “I’m going teach

you how to do it to someone else.” I always ask permission to enter in, and I think that’s helpful. You know, “May I make a suggestion?”

But in terms of learning itself and perception, it’s said that all learning begins with perception. It behooves us to know how we perceive our world and how we put it together. Because that’s much of how we form ourselves, right? And in terms of embodying the world that we perceive, it can have some great implications in how we embody or concretize ourselves. I highly value the attempt to see things from different perspectives. Otherwise the tendency to objectify is too great, and leads to projection. I don’t like it when other people do it to me, and I would like to do it less to others.

**AH:** It’s interesting what you bring up, the way perception is concretized. Effectively, from the psychobiological taxonomy, when we’re working with a client’s body, we’re really working with his or her whole worldview concretized into a body. How do we engage that in a way that respects that worldview? In a sense, if we are trying to change somebody’s body, we are trying to change his or her world. Clients come to us wanting change of some type, but sometimes they want to change their body but not the way they perceive the world or perceive their job or their boss or their relationship.

**SK:** Hmm, in retrospect ‘incorporate’ would be a less rigid word choice than ‘concretize’. Basically we have to get around ourselves and our yearning for certainty

**AH:** So it’s basically a conundrum?

**SK:** What your calling conundrum can also be considered paradox.

**AH:** So I want to go back to how I see you engage with clients. Another way of saying it is that it feels like you have a very skillful way of engaging the person’s body to also engage his or her worldview and give it a little more ‘breathing room’ rather than directly challenging it.

**SK:** That’s it! “Give it a little more breathing room.” I love that you said that! So much is happening moment to moment all around us; I like to ‘Keep It Sweetly Simple’ (my version of ‘KISS’) in order to not provoke overwhelm. I regard the client and consider what is being asked for: *more space* (i.e., what we call ‘gravity’) or *more support* (what we call ‘ground’). This gives me a place to start.



Something that I've come to appreciate more recently is how we are conditioned by the world that we occupy. It may not be a consensual reality, but it does influence us particularly in terms of the technology of the past thirty years that has a huge impact on how we are in our world – and how we learn. I've had the great good fortune to have wise teachers and mentors who don't ascribe to the notion that learning is arduous. There are so many pressures around education today, whether it's in public school, private school, the Rolf Institute®, etc. I think this stress negates something inherent in our being that enjoys – in fact, thrives on – learning. This fits with embodiment. There's a yearning, not necessarily for information, but for experience. An innate curiosity about what being alive in a body feels like rather than being degree- or certificate-oriented.

**AH:** Yes! It's making me think that there's a way that the world we've created, particularly the industrial world and even more the technological world, is in some ways shaping our bodies more than the world of the past. I remember learning in anthropology classes how each 'advance' in our physical reality, from being hunter-gatherers to being agriculturalists to being factory workers, has resulted in less free time – more hours per day required to work toward survival, rather than rest, play, just be. And I think we could extend that to say that each 'advance' has also imposed more limitations on how we use our bodies during that work time, more shaping of our bodies around particular activities. As a hunter-gatherer you'd have a certain range and freedom of movement that was diminished by settling and practicing agriculture, yet agricultural work (in the past at least) would involve more varied activity season to season, and probably also day to day, than would factory-line work. And now, with workers in the technology sector – or people whose recreation is computer-based – we see so many people shaped even more by what they do all day. There's a fixed shaping to checking our mobile phones, working on our laptops, and watching television, gaming, or surfing the web that is much more restricted than the multidimensional and varied shaping that would come from roaming through the forest picking berries or searching for game. Even our physical culture of how people exercise has become very shaped: the linearity of a treadmill or

elliptical machine, even a Pilates reformer. Most people don't question this.

There is beginning to be more recognition of this, particularly in the fitness and conditioning realm, the movement away from gym environments and into the natural world, using nature as our gym – uneven and dynamic surfaces to interact with. But then at work people are still very restricted; even if they have a sit-stand desk or a treadmill desk, it's still very patterned. So as I see it, our bodies are subject to the world we've created in a way that they never were before.

**SK:** We're influenced and shaped by the increasingly digital world we find ourselves in; there is also a hunger to be in the natural world. I know in my own life it's become increasingly important for me to do activities outside when I can. I've been practicing tai chi and chi gung on a weekly basis for a long time, and I've recently stepped it up from once or twice a week to a more daily basis. I'm fortunate to live in Hawaii, where I do these practices outdoors. I'm more inclined than ever to go do an hour of chi gung and tai chi in the park three or four times a week than to go inside a gym. I do recognize that we have to make more of a concerted effort to be in nature. Yeah, I think about that a lot in terms of our precious planet and the phenomenal world and how much our natural world has to inform us.

Anne, this brings me back to when you asked me about culture (see "Working Women" in the December 2017 issue). I've been a resident of Hawaii during my entire practice. Access to the Hawaiian culture over the past thirty-two years has greatly influenced and impacted my work. I've been fortunate to be able to study with different *kahuna* and *kapuna* and *kumus*.

**AH:** You're going to have to define those for our readers.

**SK:** Okay. Let's see. I've been fortunate enough to study with Hawaiian teachers of the Hawaiian healing arts. *Kahuna* means 'master', *kumu* means 'teacher', and *kapuna* means 'elder'. I've had access to all of those, and unfortunately many of them have passed now. Coincidentally, I was able to attend Emmett Hutchins's memorial on Kauai, and when I go back to Kauai I'll attend the memorial for a Hawaiian woman that I worked with closely for a number of years, probably close to thirty years, who just passed.

You had mentioned in that earlier part of our conversation how there's a feminine aspect to the Hawaiian Islands energy that is very soothing. I appreciate that I've been able to follow in the footsteps of a female practitioner and Rolfing instructor, Stacey Mills. That's been invaluable to me. Not that I am necessarily the embodiment of the feminine or anything, but I know I am in a woman's body. And from an early age I was drawn to other cultures. I was drawn to be in the world and of the world. I mentioned when we started our interview ("Explorations of Earth and Sky" in the June 2017 issue) that I was able to be an exchange student at seventeen and that was a first glimpse and taste for how other cultures see things differently.

**AH:** And therefore hold their bodies differently.

**SK:** Yes, even in our own country that's true. In general people from the West Coast carry themselves differently than those from the East Coast, the Third Coast (i.e., Midwest), and those from the South, etc.

**AH:** Thank you, Sally, I've loved this exploration with you.

*Advanced Rolfing Instructor Sally Klemm sought out her initial Ten Series as closure to a four-year stint crewing charter yachts around the world. Encouraged by her Rolfer Stacey Mills, Sally enrolled in the first Foundations course taught at the Rolf Institute® in 1985. That same year Jim Asher was her first craniosacral instructor and Jan H. Sultan her first Rolfing instructor. Since joining the Rolf Institute Faculty in 1995, Sally continues to teach both Rolfing and craniosacral work internationally. Her teaching style attempts to support each student in his or her unique ways of learning both the theoretical material and the development of personal experience. Her private practice is based in Honolulu (Oahu) and Kapa'a (Kauai) in the Hawaiian Islands.*

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# Do We Choose a Path, or Does It Choose Us?

## Considering Consciousness, Ida Rolf, and Rolfing® SI

By Nicholas French, PhD, Certified Advanced Rolfer™

When I first heard of Rolfing® Structural Integration (SI) I was not impressed. I was always skeptical, and it sounded like just one more ‘new-age’ trip. I was a psychotherapist at a well-regarded institute in Concord, Massachusetts, focused on more serious matters. But its devotees were enraptured and rather emphatic, so I couldn’t help hearing Dr. Rolf quoted.

The first of her statements I recall was, “The body is the personality exploded into three dimensions.” Hmm . . .

The next one I heard was more striking: “No psychotherapy, no matter how good, will be as deep, as effective, nor as *lasting* unless there is also deep, concomitant *physical* change.” That one really got my attention.

My training had been primarily Freudian with various modern ideas added, but I had already begun to feel that perhaps my schooling and preparation weren’t as excellent as I’d been led to believe. If they were, wouldn’t my patients be making more rapid progress?

I began to ask about Dr. Rolf’s background, which did sound impressive. The woman was a scientist with a PhD. So even though it might be a waste of time and money, I’d try one session of Rolfing SI if only so I could prove that it was just another silly idea. I located the one Rolfer in Boston in 1972 and booked a session a month off.

Two weeks later I was called in to Harvard Health for my annual physical exam, and after all the tests and poking and prodding I was pronounced to be “In perfect shape, healthy as a horse.” Obviously that poor Rolfer was in for a surprise, having to work on someone as perfect as I was.

Of course I was the one who was surprised. My body had recorded various sports injuries, cycling crashes, fights, falls, and other mishaps, but while some of his work was painful (though not nearly as much as people had warned), I could feel my body respond to his pressure by relaxing and letting go of long-term pain and stiffness.

When I left that session I felt extraordinarily different: excited, lighter, and more relaxed. I suddenly felt as though I’d been living in a suit of armor or a straitjacket, but now could move more freely and breathe deeper, and I felt more energetic. I wanted more of this amazing work.

By the time I completed the Ten Series I was even more astounded by what I was experiencing, and much more curious to know who Dr. Rolf was and what else she knew. Eventually I found out there was a Rolf Institute® and wrote for information on the work and training.

When I told my Rolfer friends that I was about to apply for training, the first thing they all told me was to avoid being placed in one of Dr. Rolf’s classes. What? *Why?*

“Because there are only two ways to be in a class with Dr. Rolf: you’ll either be scared to death of her all the time, or furious with her all the time.” And they were clearly quite serious.

But . . . but she’s the wellspring, the genius behind this work! “Hey, it’s your neck, and we’re just telling you — you’ve been warned.”

### Experiencing Ida Rolf

Perhaps she had changed, because I never knew that scary Ida Rolf. It was clear that she was there to offer her best information to us, and she had no patience at all with any goofing off: to do so was dangerous. To do it a second time was to risk being thrown out of class permanently. She was brilliant, tough, and demanding, but also compassionate and respectful. She had a great sense of humor. And she could be as calm and direct as a Zen master.

One day, following her lecture, during the time for us to ask questions about anatomy or process, a student suddenly asked her the kind of question one might ask one’s guru, a mushy question about how to handle a sensitive, uncomfortable, personal issue. We got very quiet as Dr. Rolf sat and looked down at the student in silence for what

felt like a *very* long time before she spoke: “Why are you asking me that question? . . . To do so implies that I can answer it but you cannot . . . And my answer might be perfect for me, but disastrous for you. What I suggest you do is to get up off your bottom and begin to work out the clearest answer you can come up with. Do your best to think through the issues you face and you may learn something important.” (General sigh of relief in the group.)

Halfway through the class I spent a weekend visiting a friend in Aspen, and when I left he gave me a couple of loaves of a local bread that he knew Dr. Rolf was very fond of. Back in Boulder I stopped at the house where she was staying and handed them to the woman who opened the door, planning to leave quickly so I wouldn’t have to face an intensive pop quiz by Herself, but I could hear Ida asking “Who is it?” and then saying she wanted me to come in and talk with her. So while she ate lunch (and griped about the food) we talked about the class, Rolfing SI in general, and the relative merits of mesomorphs and endomorphs as Rolfers. (She said she believed that endomorphs were more capable at the work than the mesomorphs.)

Then we both fell silent for a while, until suddenly she asked what was on my mind. I don’t know how to explain this, but something had changed and I knew I needed to speak frankly.

“Well, you’re getting pretty old,” I said.

“Yes, I am,” she replied.

I paused. “You aren’t going to live much longer,” I said.

“I think you’re right,” she said.

“Well,” I ventured, “there are stories that you know people with unusual capabilities, and you must know that there are a lot of us who’d be willing to donate a year of our lives to give to you so you can live longer and teach us more.”

She smiled. “I know, but I don’t want them. I’ve worked hard for a lot of years. I’m tired and I’m looking forward to a long rest.”

We talked a while longer, and when I got up to leave I simply wished her whatever she wanted for however long she wanted it. She replied, “Thank you, kind sir,” and though seated did a great imitation of a formal curtsy. That’s probably why after that I always tended to associate Dr. Rolf with Victorian royalty.

Dr. Rolf frequently spoke from a slightly elevated platform so she could see her students more clearly, and I liked to watch her eyes, which were large, luminous, deep, and very expressive. I didn't see her angry often, but when that happened it was quite impressive. More often, though, I saw light and humor in her eyes, and kindness, too.

One day I received a very important, but very painful, advanced session from two advanced Rolfers whom she used as her hands (saving her energy to work with children) as she directed them to work on me. Afterward, as everyone else was getting tea or coffee, I pulled my clothes on and, feeling deep fatigue, sank into a chair with my notebook, ready for her lecture. She looked down at me and said, "Why don't you go over to those mats and lie down?" Being a guy, I said, of course, that I was fine. She leaned forward for emphasis, pointed to the pile of mats, and raising her voice said, "*Go over there and lie down.*" I went, and in a few seconds was out like a light. Later, my friend Marten told me that a couple of times I snored a bit, and Ida stopped and looked around to locate the sound. Seeing it was me, she nodded and said, "He worked *really* hard – he deserves a rest," and then went on with her lecture. She could be fierce, but after all, she was also a mom and a grandma.

## Unique Capacities of Consciousness

I also began to notice the way she seemed to have uncanny awareness of what her students were thinking. She would sometimes come down the hill to class late, and her assistant, Charles Siemers, would have gotten us busy discussing some aspect of the work. When she arrived we sat quietly as she made herself comfortable, and then she'd pick up on the subject where we'd stopped and build her lecture on that point. But how? No one had told her what we'd been talking about.

On the first day of our combined Basic and Advanced class, Dr. Rolf asked us to define 'energy'. Many tried, and I thought some of the ideas put forth were rather brilliant, but Ida just kept shaking her head, and eventually said that we obviously didn't know what we were talking about. She chose to address her words to the last student who'd spoken (Marten Gyax, now Marten Gabriel), a very bright friend. She really seemed to be chewing him out, telling him he needed to look farther, think

deeper, because "the roadmap is not the territory." His face was flushed, but he took the rebuke bravely. Weeks later, on the last day of that class, she asked Marten to stand again. Reminding us of the first day's exchange, she thanked him for letting her use him to make an important point for the rest of us. It was suddenly obvious that she'd chosen someone she knew was logical and well-grounded, strong enough to use as a lightning rod to make that point, and somehow knew he wouldn't be wounded by her words. (For those who are curious about the combined Basic and Advanced class, we met together in the mornings for Dr. Rolf's lectures and demos, then our basic group went to another building for the afternoon of work with Peter Melchior while Dr. Rolf worked with the advanced group.)

And though she would occasionally complain that she didn't have any psychic gifts like some of her friends, students who'd been paying attention would often smile. We smiled because frequently, while working with one student, she would call to another student that he was missing the most important place to focus on in his session and would offer the solution – when she was in fact totally blocked from seeing him, his client, and his hands.

During one of the last days of our class, any skepticism I'd had about Dr. Rolf having paranormal gifts evaporated. That morning I was feeling very strange – mostly mentally. I'd received some very powerful work, so did feel a bit strange physically, but was also working on one of the most powerful dreams I'd ever had, and the fact was that I just plain felt weird – peculiar, alone in some new space. I chose to sit well off to her right side, going on the theory that if she couldn't see me, she wouldn't call on me. In fact, when she came in and took her seat I quietly pushed my chair backward a bit at a time until I was behind her line of sight. As she began her lecture – always oral, never written – I tried to focus on taking notes.

But soon I began to experience a phenomenon that had begun when I was twelve: I could hear what a person was saying, but also – at the same time – what he or she was going to say next. (Years later I found out that such strange phenomena are not uncommon during early puberty.) As a pubescent kid, when I got used to that, it was kind of funny, like a new skill. But when I told some friends about it, and they

backed away and looked at me strangely and said that I was "crazy," it wasn't funny any more; it apparently was dangerous – or evil. I worked hard to stop it, to shut down the inner voice. It took a while, but eventually it fell silent.

But suddenly here it was again: I was hearing what Ida was saying, but also what she was going to say next. That's confusing, like hearing dual soundtracks. And it was unnerving. I didn't know what to do about it and was frightened – I wondered if I were really cracking up.

Suddenly Ida stopped in mid-sentence, turned all the way around in her chair so she could look straight into my eyes, and asked "*Now* what's on your mind?" I felt I'd been caught eavesdropping. I was lost, disoriented, and had no idea what to say – "Uh . . . well, uh . . . uh . . ." But she just grinned and waved her hand at me. "Don't worry, it's just a quantum leap in your spiritual development. Nothing to be afraid of – you'll be fine!" And smiling, she turned back, picked up her lecture *in mid-sentence*, and went right on with it.

Now I was really dazed and confused, certain I was losing it – it was an hallucination, obviously – what was I to do? Finally the break came. I stumbled outside and began trying to clear the cobwebs from my mind. Then some of my classmates came up and asked, "What the hell was *that*?" Huh? Stalling for time, I asked what they meant and they went through the event word for word, just as I'd heard it. It hadn't been a bad dream after all. Not that I could figure out what had happened, but I seemed to be back on firm ground again. Whew, what a day! Another mind-blowing experience with the amazing Ida Pauline Rolf . . .

At the end of the final day of the class, alone for a few minutes with Dr. Rolf and wanting to thank her for what she'd given us, I had to admit I was unable to find the way to express my gratitude adequately, just couldn't come up with the right words. She looked in my eyes, smiled, and said, "Then go out there and get to work."

A few years later, I had the feeling that Ida's life was finally coming to an end, so I wrote a letter to thank her again and let her know how much I was enjoying sharing the work she'd given us, how busy I was, and how happy my clients were. A week or two later, as a client was changing in the bathroom to get ready for a session, Executive Director

Richard Stenstadvoid called from the Rolf Institute to let me know that Ida had just died, and asked me to pass the word to the other Texas Rolfers. As I hung up, my client came out into the Rolfing room, saw my face, and could tell there was bad news. When I told him, he was very sympathetic and offered to reschedule. That's all it took to wake me up. "Are you kidding? She'd kick my butt. Let's do what we're here to do." We both agreed that it was a really good session.

## Open Consciousness and Continued Learning

If you've read *Remembering Ida Rolf* (1996, Rolf Institute / North Atlantic Books) – the wonderful little book of students' remembrances that Rosemary Feitis and Louis Schultz put together for her centennial year in 1996 "... to give people who never met Ida Rolf a feeling for who she was and what she meant to her students" – you probably have a good sense of that remarkable woman. However, over the years I had begun to wonder if my memories of her were accurate. Could she really have been that exceptional? Or had I simply begun to exaggerate my memories of her? But reading *Remembering Ida Rolf* reassured me, because most of my colleagues' stories are just as astounding.

And lately, as I read them, new thoughts popped up. Some included questions she had asked me or others in class, or during our private conversations, and suggestions she'd offered. Now the familiar ideas seemed more complex – yet also more open. Clearly, different kinds of understanding are possible, and many questions have come to mind.

How should we understand the importance of Ida's continuous emphasis on finding the top of the head and letting it 'float'? (Not always as easy as it sounds.) I've been working with that idea/feeling for forty-two years, and it still feels mostly like a thought-provoking experiment. But as a psychoanalyst who's been studying and working for a lot of years to find ways to uncover thoughts, feelings, and experiences in clients' unconscious psyches, it suddenly struck me that when I let the *top* of my head come up, I experience a very different quality of thoughts and awareness than when I let the *front* of my head alone float higher. When the top of the head leads, I experience a heightened sense of internal presence – quieter, calmer – yet I'm also

aware of thoughts that are unfamiliar, more challenging than usual. I may also feel more alone or independent, not the person I'm used to being aware of, so I feel free to consider other possibilities in my world. At the same time, I generally have the sense that I am more aware of others who are nearby, and the ways in which they and I are both similar and different.

It's like engaging some strange new sensitivity. Fragments I could remember her mentioning, but were so new to me before that I couldn't retain them, came and went, while some stuck. What if I could I recall still more, and learn things I'd missed all those years ago?

After a lot of time working with the top of the head up, I began to notice that more and more images of my life were appearing that were not like dreams, but rather events from my life that are familiar, like snapshots and bits of home movies. They are not always pleasant, but seem quite real, as though I am being offered information that can help me to learn about myself and the world in new and different ways. It requires focus and can often be uncomfortable, but something tells me it's important – and useful. (And you can try it for yourself.)

On the other hand, letting the front of my cranium float up higher than the top offers very different sensations and results. It tends to happen easily when I'm with friends or in a group, and then I notice that my thoughts and feelings blend more easily with theirs. It's even more obvious if I'm listening to a speech or watching a film or play, probably because usually that's the normal posture in a theatre or auditorium, where the presentation or speaker is above audience members' eye level. And what suddenly struck me at the end of a Rolfing session, as I was helping a client to find the top of his head and let it float, was that it seems so easy and normal for us to lift the *front* of the cranium, but often quite challenging, even uncomfortable, to find the *top* and come up through it. Why should that be the case?

That's when it occurred to me: that's the natural reaction of a small child responding to an adult – looking upward to see what the big person's face indicates: warmth or amusement, or perhaps anger and coldness, life-supporting inclusion, or frightening detachment. In other words, normal animal watchfulness to decide whether to hug the big person or run like hell. At first it seemed funny, but not for long. It's too easy for

adults to take out their personal frustrations or anger on defenseless children, which often encourages them (us) to be little automatons who try to act nice or cute to fit in, and thus avoid punishment, scorn, or abandonment. No wonder autocrats and politicians make speeches from platforms above audience level. I think at such times there's a natural tendency to surrender our independent awareness. It's a simple way for politicians to infantilize their listeners, to reduce their maturity in age or experience and encourage childlike dependence.

## Rolfing Work and Consciousness

In psychoanalytic practice, one of the most fascinating and sensitive aspects of analytic work is to listen for and detect patterns of thoughts and vulnerability that are present in the background, though the analysand is often quite unaware of them. Patience is absolutely essential, because these are usually very sensitive connections to childhood events that have been suppressed due to frightening, painful, or traumatic content. Ideally, with adequate time it's possible to learn enough about the person and develop a working partnership that allows us to gradually, cautiously raise past traumas to awareness so we can explore them in ways that are emotionally acceptable, and therefore healing.

While a Rolfing Ten Series is vastly different from normal psychoanalytic work, if communication with clients is sufficiently honest and open, it is possible to learn enough about their pasts to help some of them develop a connection that may support them, too, in opening up to deal better with the imprints of past traumas, wounds and fears. [Please note: *it is essential not to minimize the complexity and power of deep, early trauma. Caution is important. I can testify that seven to ten years of analysis, continual study, and intensive training provide only a beginning platform for analysts. We quickly discover that we've just begun to scratch the surface, and that what might at first appear simple is actually extremely complex, unpredictable and even, possibly, dangerous. Lots of time and attention are required to know how to deal with helping a client confront such potential shocks.*]

When I first stumbled onto (or was found by) Rolfing SI all those years ago, it was still common to speak of body and mind as though they were separate and discrete



forms of life. There's an ecclesiastical argument many centuries old in which the Christian church makes quite clear its position that to focus on, or even talk about, most aspects of the physical body was to invite the worst kinds of perilous thoughts and temptations, thus opening the door to "... carnal lust, sexual peril and Satan's hideous punishments."

Some things have changed over the centuries, but that viewpoint still strikes fear in our nation. Frankly, I'm not sure that any of us are entirely free of it yet. Though we may think of ourselves as modern, well-educated Rolfers who are happily dedicated to serving our clients, it's important to remember that we also are creatures of the psyche, and as much as we might be aware of some layers of positive and negative issues in our lives, there are always elements we're not aware of that can activate us in ways that we might not expect, nor approve of. Recalling Ida's statement, "The body is the personality exploded into three dimensions," doesn't it make sense that those elements would be expressed in the physical body as well?

Once I was a Rolfer, I withdrew from my psychotherapy practice to focus on Rolfing SI, and soon realized that I had also been strongly influenced in other ways by my teachers, Dr. Rolf and Peter Melchior in particular, and also Emmett Hutchins, all of whom were very bright and had their own views of how to best integrate mind and body. While training was focused primarily on anatomy, physiology, and how to free the body to move and balance around the 'Line', there were also comments on psychic activity, astrology, metaphysics, shamanism, native American traditions, etc. All very interesting, though I was focused on the ten sessions.

A few days after I got home from training in Boulder, my very first client appeared. James said he had terrible back pain, and watching his severe limp, I wasn't surprised. But when he undressed to begin the session, I was stunned to see the source of the limp. Ten years before, he'd been in a fight and was knocked through a plate-glass window, the upper part of which came down like a guillotine blade and took his right lower leg off at the knee. Doctors were able to rejoin the blood vessels, tendons, etc., but told him the nerves couldn't be connected, so he'd have to live with a 'dead' leg. The leg wasn't actually necrotic, but it was shrunken, gray, and cold, as though lifeless. Oh boy. He lay

down on my table, I took a deep breath and began the first session.

He really liked how he felt from the session, so scheduled the next one. I began with the left leg to get a feel for his 'normal' one, and then did my best for the right leg and foot. When we were done he got up to walk around and suddenly looked shocked. As calmly as I could, I asked what was happening. He looked at me and then at that right leg. "That's the first time in ten years that I've felt carpet under my right foot." *What?* (I was stunned, too.)

By the time we completed the ten sessions, the right leg looked like its mate: it was warm and pink, approaching normal size and support, and he had increasing control of subtle movement and balance. Some medical friends said that was "impossible — it couldn't have been completely severed." But it had been, James sure remembered that: it rode separate from him in the ambulance. And not only was his back a lot better now, he smiled much more often. Over the years he came in for sessions when in the area, and not only was the right leg always more normal, he was a much happier, healthier man. What a gift for both us!

Over the past forty-two years as a Rolfer I have encountered so many other 'impossible' positive changes in my clients, in my students' models in class, and in colleagues' reports that I tend to assume that's simply what Rolfing SI does: miracles. Oh sure, I know that Rolfing SI is demanding physical and cerebral work, too. I just haven't figured out how to understand if the transformations are affected more through physical contact, the Rolfer's intention, the client's hopes and dreams, or some combination of those ideas — and more that is unimaginable.

Oddly enough, I just remembered that many years ago I learned that Dr. Rolf intended that one day there would be three Rolfing schools. As I recall, there was to be a scientific/anatomical school on the East Coast, a psychological school on the West Coast, and a metaphysical school in Boulder. I liked the idea because it emphasized that our brilliant founder knew that for our work to be most effective we had to learn to include and balance 1) a clear and active knowledge of human anatomy; 2) an understanding of the most important principles of psychology; and 3) a clear grasp of the most controversial domain, metaphysics — the branch of philosophy

that deals with the first principles of things, including concepts such as being, knowing, substance, cause, identity, time, and space. (Metaphysics is also concerned with whether what exists is inevitable or driven by chance, but as interesting as it is to ponder that question, it's rare to find clients who want to spend much time with it.)

In my years on the faculty, while it was clear that most of us were focused on what we'd learned from Dr. Rolf, it also became obvious that some members were restless with following her 'Recipe' and wanted to experiment with their favorite different ideas. A few years after I left the faculty to bury myself in psychoanalytic training, I was told that they had abandoned Ida's Ten Series and taught other principles, but after a year or two had decided to return to her concepts after all. Clearly, it's normal for a faculty of bright people to seek ways to change and grow, and then share them. Perhaps the challenge is to share and expand on the strongest ideas while pruning the ones that, over time, have not proved essential.

Rolfing SI has always seemed to attract people who are different from the norm. I think that's partly because we are amazed at how much the work improved our own lives, but also because something in us wants to help others as we have been helped. It's not surprising that Rolfers also like to experiment with the work. I think that's also a natural part of what attracted us. If you've read Betsy Sise's excellent book, *The Rolfing Experience: Integration in the Gravity Field* (2005, Hohm Press), with her interviews of Peter Melchior, Jan Sultan, and Emmett Hutchins, it's clear that each of them were soon following their own ways of building on the effectiveness of what Ida taught them. Investigating and expanding on what we've been taught by people we respect seems only natural. And because the effects of the Rolfing work with our clients can be so amazing, how can we not keep experimenting?

Finally, I'd like to offer something many of you may not have seen before: an image (Figure 1) with some words that was shown on one of the opening pages of the initial edition of Dr. Rolf's book, *Rolfing: The Integration of Human Structures* (1977, Dennis Landman Publishers), which she'd been working on for years. Clearly, it was important to Dr. Rolf, who chose to offer it to us. The picture shows a smiling Buddha flanked by two smaller figures, and

overlaid on the image, under the heading "Admonition for 1977," is this quote from the Buddha:

Do not believe in anything merely because it is said, nor in traditions because they have been handed down from antiquity: nor in rumors as such: nor in writings by sages because sages wrote them: nor in fancies that we may suspect to have been inspired in us by a deva: nor in inferences drawn from some haphazard assumption we may have made: nor in what seems to be an analogical necessity: nor in the mere authority of our teachers and masters.

Believe when the writing, doctrine, or saying is corroborated by reason and consciousness.

Gautama Buddha

[I've never found out why the title of Ida's magnum opus was changed when the publisher changed, from the direct *Rolfing: The Integration of Human Structures* to the odd *Reestablishing the Natural Alignment and Structural Integration of the Human Body for Vitality and Well-Being*, nor why Dr. Rolf's carefully chosen "Admonition for 1977" was removed.]

Because of my experience with Dr. Rolf, and my sense of how much she hoped we would continually work to expand our knowledge of what she gave us and of what it is worth to the world, I would like to offer another quote I still carry with me, in case it might serve you, too. This is from *Letters to a Young Poet* by Rainer Maria Rilke:

Be patient toward all that is unsolved in your heart. And try to love the questions themselves. Do not seek the answers that cannot be given you because you would not be able to live them and the point is to live everything. Live the questions now. Perhaps you will gradually, without noticing it, live along some distant day into the answer.

*Nicholas French has been a Certified Rolfer since 1976 and a Certified Advanced Rolfer since 1979. He was a Rolfing instructor for ten years in the US, Europe, South America, and Australia until he left the faculty to spend seven and a half years in psychoanalytic training at the Jung Institute. He now enjoys his Rolfing and psychoanalytic practices in Dallas, Texas.*

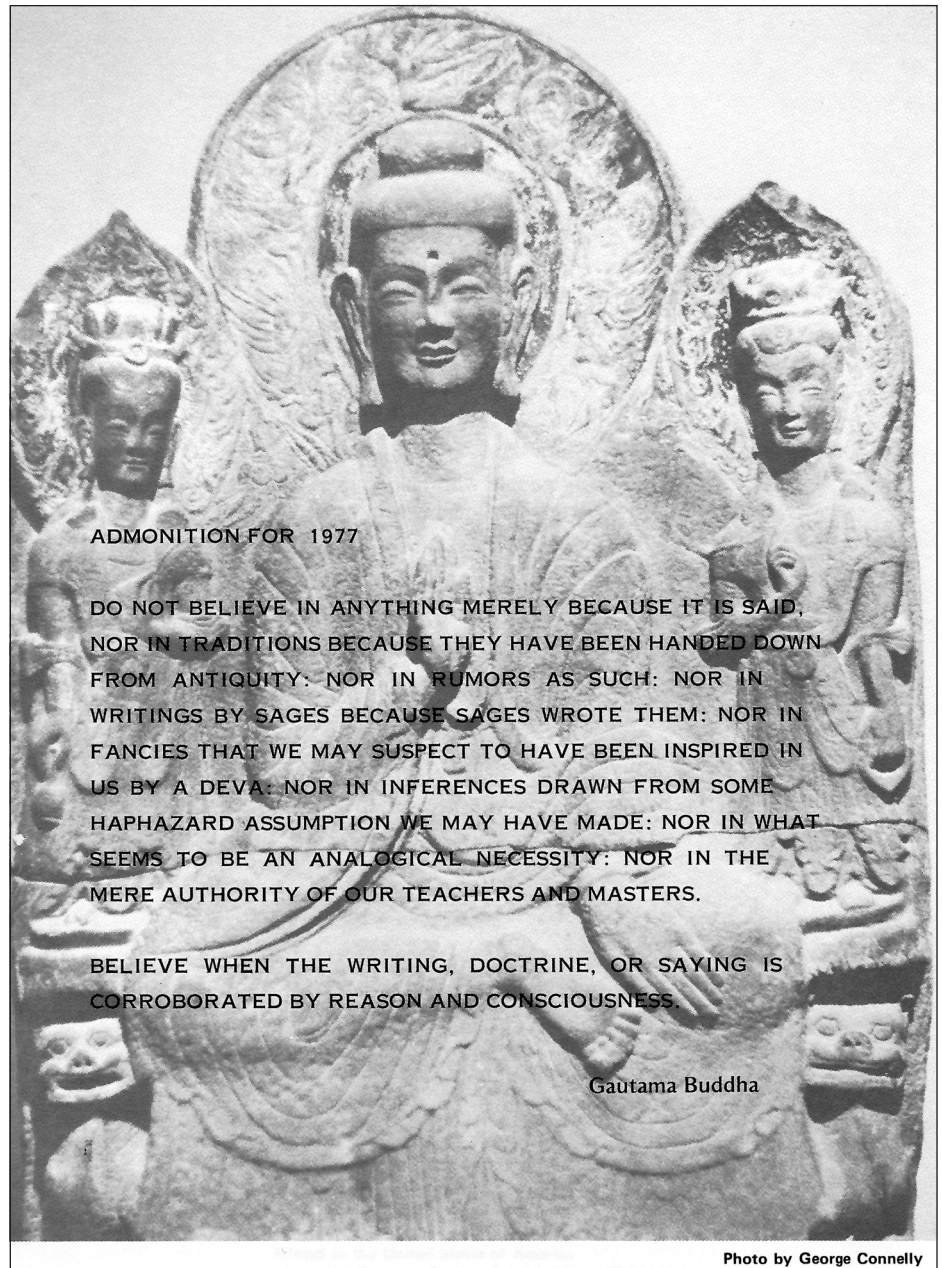


Photo by George Connelly

Figure 1: 'Admonition' from the first edition of Dr. Rolf's book.

## In Memoriam

*Structural Integration: The Journal of the Rolf Institute*® notes the passing of the following members of our community:

**Vivian Jaye,**  
Rolf Movement® Instructor,  
Rolfier™ Emeritus

**Ron McComb,**  
Certified Advanced Rolfer

**Solse Mara Sheran (aka Diane Sullivan),**  
Certified Advanced Rolfer

**Don Van Vleet,**  
Certified Advanced Rolfer



# Reclaiming ‘Pudeur’: A Counterpoint to Rolfing® Culture

By Naomi Wynter-Vincent, PhD, Certified Advanced Rolfer™

I start with the strange word, ‘pudeur’. It is, in truth, more a French word than an English one, and it is difficult to define. Nevertheless, and for personal reasons, I like it, and keep coming back to it. The *Oxford English Dictionary* gives the definition: “a sense of shame or embarrassment; bashfulness, modesty, or reticence.”

I encountered the word for the first time when I applied to university: it was a big deal to get an interview, but I really had no idea what university was, or how to prepare. A male professor asked me about Jane Austen (we had studied *Pride and Prejudice* in high school), and then asked me, pop-culturally, what I’d thought of the recent BBC adaptation that (infamously) featured a scene (<https://tinyurl.com/LakeScene>) where the then little-known British actor, Colin Firth, as Darcy, arriving back at his estate manfully sweaty after a horse ride, dives fully clothed into a lake to cool himself down. As he emerges, glistening, he locks eyes with Elizabeth, who previously turned down his offer of marriage. The sexual tension is palpable.

“What did I think of this rendition of Jane Austen’s world?”, the professor asked. Pretty good, I thought: I was seventeen years old and frankly besotted with Darcy and Elizabeth both. “But do you think it respects the *pudeur* of Jane Austen’s world?” The word danced in my brain: I thought I understood it (it sounds a little bit like *prudish*, after all), but really, I did not. There was a further strand to the conversation, a yet more personal one. I had been asked about my other achievements, hobbies, challenges. Gamefully, and honestly, I disclosed that I had been taking adult swimming lessons, which was challenging for two reasons: I was as terrified of being seen in a swimsuit as I was of the water. Professor Tony Tanner wondered whether my *pudeur* – modesty, discomfort (and unwillingness to be sexually rated: it was known that the male lifeguards at the pool rated women’s bodies on a scale from one to ten) – bore some relation to Jane Austen’s

*pudeur* in leaving out what the BBC adaptation had made (frankly enjoyably) explicit: that even in the early nineteenth century, people were naked beneath their clothes. I don’t know how I replied, but I didn’t get in (that year).

Nowadays I am still nervous of water and only a little more enthusiastic about being seen in a bikini or other swimsuit or my underwear. This difficulty has put me on a collision course with some Rolfing Structural Integration (SI) instructors on more than one occasion, and was a major source of hesitation in applying to do the Basic Training. I simply wasn’t sure that I could put myself through the exposure, the feelings of discomfort and shame, the dissociative horror of being looked at in my underwear, simultaneously over-exposed and socially vanishing: all the conceits of my social self (competent, attractive, stylish) undermined by my physical reality. One member of Rolfing faculty told me unpleasantly that if I was going to keep being this way, I shouldn’t train to be a Rolfer. Then, as now, I thought he was wrong, and for the same reasons I gave to him squarely on that occasion: if you systematically exclude people who are less comfortable with body exposure from the training, you do Rolfing SI – and its potential clients – a disservice. Rolfing SI can be life-changing for every body, and it can offer something very special to people who don’t always ‘feel good in their skin’, or who are less used to physical exposure. Knowing what that feels like helps me to be a better Rolfer.

There are some things I’ve observed around this topic. Firstly: gender (and the way that race intersects with gender), and the pressure that falls disproportionately on women to present as unchangingly slim and nubile across the lifespan and to minimize the cosmetic effects of pregnancy, childbirth, and menopause. I should add that I do not deny the reality of different bodily expectations placed on men, and especially young men. I used to say

laughingly that the Basic Training was like “Weight Watchers times ten” (that business used to trade heavily on the motivating factor of having to ‘weigh in’ – literally – every week in front of a group of one’s peers). I trained in Rolfing SI in a modular course, and I have never been so motivated to step up the exercise and lose weight. I remember the tall and lanky male student who offered unhelpfully that I might want to do some crunches to tone my abdomen; I remember the many, many visits to the beauty salon on the day before class, the waxing, shaving, the purchasing of ‘Rolfing underpants’. (It cannot just be me who has so many clients who talk about their special Rolfing-day underpants!) There is a rich seam of what I believe it would be ungenerous to describe only as ‘neurotic’ behavior among our Rolfing clients, and among many Rolfers. But we run counter, by and large, to a prevailing discourse within our community that takes for granted the normalcy of ‘casually being seen in one’s underwear’.

There is, of course, a practical dimension to this: we do need to see our clients’ physical structure, and we do (in a training context) learn from seeing the diversity of bodies and movement without the distractions of clothing and shoes; it is generally easier to work on bare skin than on clothed. Yet there is also a cultural, historical, and even a political dimension to the free-and-easy minimally clothed hegemon of our community. Rolfing SI grew up as an established body of work and as a profession in the context of the 1960s California counterculture, in a land of sea and sunshine that my cloud-bruised British eyes can barely imagine, with strong (and positive) values around the natural body and the countering of sexual repression advocated by Reich; around the cultures of yoga, dance, and outdoorsy exercise; and around notions of ‘freedom’ stamped first with an American tinge, and later (in the establishment of some of the major training institutes outside the US) with German and Brazilian accents: all three places, I’d argue, with strong cultures of naturism and body exposure.

As Rolfing SI grows in global public awareness, I argue that we may need to give more thought to what we, as Rolfers, can take for granted as the result of the prevailing discourse in our training culture. There are as many different reasons as there are people to feel challenged by bodily



exposure, and I'm keen to stress that not all of these reasons are pathological. What I like in the word *pudeur* is the way that it retains these multiple and intertwined senses in which preferring to keep one's clothes on – or feeling discomfited in contexts of greater exposure – partake both of aspects that one might rightly seek to address (questions of shame, questions of inadequacy), alongside aspects such as a personal, political, or cultural preference for modesty that is not necessarily to be wished away.

In my case I took up a strategy – but only after receiving my initial certification and gaining access to my chosen profession – of describing myself as *body dysmorphic*, but recognising that this tended to the further pathologization of something that is more complex, more cultural, more chosen – and actually more hopeful than the quasi-medical term of 'body dysmorphia' conveys. The UK National Health Service defines body dysmorphia as "a mental health condition where a person spends a lot of time worrying about flaws in their appearance. These flaws are often unnoticeable to others. . . . Having [body dysmorphia] does not mean you are vain or self-obsessed. It can be very upsetting and have a big impact on your life" ([www.nhs.uk/conditions/body-dysmorphia/](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/body-dysmorphia/)).

I have found 'body dysmorphia' a convenient shorthand to communicate something to my colleagues. It says, in part: "Please take seriously that this is not just me 'being difficult'; this is something lifelong; this is something *managed*." It also says: "This is not something that I haven't reflected on in depth or sought help with." Using a label allows me a degree of modesty too in the moment of self-disclosure, a reserve or *pudeur* that is not only a token of my Britishness: the implication that there's more to say, but I don't have to tell you everything right now. The phrase has been met, on occasion, with incomprehension or even the admonishment that I should be done with my 'personal issues' and not bring them to class. I tried to explain that this was precisely what I was trying to do: that I was desperately keen to avoid situations where my 'issues' – my *pudeur* – made class difficult for me or others around me. "Don't pick me for the walking-in-underwear exercise," I explain; "I'll show up for the arm-work practicum or even the nose work."

So far, so individual a problem: perhaps. There is a place for discussion here of the broader societal effects of specifically gendered beauty norms as well as a 'lookist' culture that affects both men and women (and those who identify as neither) and which predates our selfie-obsessed times by several hundred years (or several thousand). Trans people – and we might argue (I intend this non-glibly) that all Rolfing bodies are bodies in transition – might be more likely to find this question resonant, as indeed might many other people who have experienced their bodies as sites of difference, pain, objectification, or judgement: among them differently abled people, survivors of trauma, and people who have lost or gained significant weight.

I also wonder about cultures where 'modesty' is hegemonic (encouraged, sometimes mandated), sometimes for religious reasons, and where having men and women undressing together would create an absolute bar to training. These are not niche concerns: one can imagine large sections of the African continent, of the Indian subcontinent, and the Middle East being affected by this. I remember an occasion in my childhood where my aunt (who was born and grew up in colonial India) rushed to stop me seeing her in the *nanga-punga* (a Hindu colloquialism for being naked), even while being (to contemporary eyes) fairly decently clothed in a petticoat.

I live in a town with a large Muslim population, and occasionally have female clients who wear *hijab* and other forms of modest dress. I can imagine that they choose to see me over my local male colleague for reasons of modesty, and I send information to all my clients in advance about what they can expect in their first Rolfing session, including the traditional body reading. I have no doubt that many clients find the first occasion of changing down to their underwear and standing in front of me a challenging one, and I invite clients to let me know if they find it stressful. I believe that the intimacy and exposure of the Rolfing experience can be deeply valuable, reassuring, and healing, and that we can offer our clients containment and information not only through our touch, but in our looking and seeing the body from the modern Rolfing perspective of the client's resources, strengths, and objective 'normality' (how many clients fear that they are not 'normal'?). To that I might

add: their *beauty* – hesitating only out of the recognition that beauty is so laden with the baggage of 'good looks'. It is a cliché to say that beauty is more than skin (or fascia!) deep, but it is true: one of the gifts that Rolfers can give to their clients is a sense of their beauty, properly understood.

I want to end with the recognition that these issues are not unknown to Rolfers, and that I've met (and learned from) many sensitive and skillful practitioners who have discovered their own ways to meet their clients in their 'embarrassment, bashfulness, modesty, or reticence' around bodily exposure, be that for personal, societal, or cultural reasons. These include Rolfers who work primarily with clients wearing thin layers, or who recognize the value of blankets and sheets beyond the need to stay warm; they recognize also the role that may be played by lighting, window coverings, and the presence or absence of large mirrors in the treatment room. We might re-describe all of these as ways in which we respect and work with the client's nervous system to establish an environment of physical and emotional safety. In the busyness of the training practicum, I've found that we sometimes neglect these 'niceties', and this is, in part, an appeal for these questions to be taken more seriously, handled more sensitively, in the training context. As Rolfers, we aim to work transformatively with clients' habitual ways of being – and feeling safe – in their world. While we may disagree with what we consider to be their limiting self-beliefs, or lament the social contexts that lead to discomfort with body image or exposure, being just plain 'irritated' by clients who don't gladly strip down to their underwear is not a productive strategy toward building client trust and encouraging new ways of being. Over the years I have tentatively made friends with my *pudeur*, maintaining (as I told my interphase interviewers) that while I'd like to feel more comfortable in my body, I am unlikely to be converted to naturism any time soon.

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# Balancing Traditional and Spiritual Experience

## *States of Consciousness and the Logical Container*

By Linda Grace, Certified Advanced Rolfer™, Rolf Movement® Practitioner and Janet Castellini, LCSW, LCADC, NCPsyA

### Introduction

by Linda Grace

Our Northeast region's second meeting about spiritual experiences and our Rolfing® Structural Integration (SI) work was attended by twenty-one Rolfers and one person currently in the Rolf Institute® (RISI) training program. We met at the home of Joy Belluzzi and Alan Demmerle in Chevy Chase, Maryland, on March 11, 2018.

After the morning review of RISI business, including Board and Faculty reports, and a discussion of the Ethics Committee, we had lunch, and then reconvened for the afternoon session with Janet Castellini, a psychoanalyst, as our program presenter. She brought her rich experience of modern psychoanalytic training and practice as well as her pursuit of spiritual experience and healing through work with states of consciousness and being taught and trained by two Native American elders.

The outline of the meeting included her talk about the container of her work, some foundational discipline, as well as a basic speaking of some skills. These included how to ask a question that doesn't poke, how to assess from moment to moment, and how to identify and connect with the emotional thread the client presents.

We began with an exercise of placing ourselves on a spiritual continuum, and continued with Janet's introduction to some of her work as a Modern Psychoanalyst, and how she draws on her personal resources from her work with Native American indigenous healers. The discussion was lively, and revealed that (at least in our group) attention is paid to the spirit and consciousness in our work. Individual differences seemed to have a similar thread. I was reminded of a client's remark that "Once you have seen the light, you have seen all of the light."

To open, the presentation focused on the need for a 'container' in order to make sense of the myriad experiences that



Linda Grace



Janet Castellini

Rolfers – and psychoanalysts – have when working. The word container was used to signify the framework within which a practitioner works or the perspective the practitioner brings to the work. A container provides somewhere to plant your feet so no matter what else is going on, there is something to return to. So, for example, musicians need to know scales and arpeggios and master the technique of their instrument. If these basics are not mastered, they cannot let go into the music because they will always be distracted by making sure they do something right. So, too with psychotherapy in general: if a person does not have a foundational

approach and enough hours to practice, the psychotherapist will always be distracted checking his or her interventions and wondering if s/he is doing the right thing.

The same applies to Rolfing work. If a practitioner is not sufficiently practiced and is not grounded in basic technique, then when something unusual happens, when a different state of consciousness is experienced, that practitioner might get distracted or even lost from the opportunity for structural change that is available.

Some random reflections have come to Janet and to me since the group meeting.

### Dialogue

**Janet Castellini:** I'm struck by the idea that *touching* the client creates a way to enter another state of consciousness. After the meeting, I started thinking about what state of consciousness exists in the experience of merger, that is, loosening boundaries between people. Is it the same as working in a different state of consciousness without touching? Freud called it the "oceanic feeling" of being at one with someone else. In modern analysis, it would be thought of as being able to feel/experience what your patient feels/experiences and then return to yourself with the purpose of having that experience inform the emotional communication the analyst makes to the patient.

**Linda Grace:** Yes, and that was in the context you created, the idea that someone (the therapist) is in charge of the whole interaction, the discipline of the work itself, both for psychoanalysts and Rolfers. We Rolfers were already attuned to the idea of ethical practice, our therapeutic responsibility, from the meeting discussion we had before lunch. That was part of what drove several questions about overtly using spiritual matters in our practices.

**JC:** Yes, the idea that someone is in charge in a session is important. In my line of work, it is the analyst's job to be in charge. It's ironic because the patient leads the way, but the analyst is right there if there is any problem with emotions, resistances, and talking itself. It's the patient's job to say everything that comes to mind, and it's the analyst's job to figure out what's going on and provide the appropriate emotional feeding at the right time and in the right amount.

**LG:** Another thought that has come up for me since the meeting was the reiteration

by one of our members about Dr. Rolf's commitment to our work with children, and the idea that we are creating a better human being through our work. To me, there seemed a religiosity to the repeated comments along this line. I've long since given up on the idea of creating a better human being. I suppose at most I could hope for a better, more secure attachment (in the manner of Diane Poole Heller) so that the Golden Rule might have a better foundation. The secure attachment of client and therapist is a reminder of remedial working of the initial attachment of our lives, and seems a grounding place for our work to be sought.

**JC:** A modern analyst would agree with you about giving up the idea of creating a better human being. If the analyst is not okay with the person as the person is, then that person will not be able to relax enough to work on the defenses that keep [her/him] stuck in unhealthy patterns. If the analyst is not okay with the person, the analyst is, in effect, like the original adult who also was not okay with the person. Then the pattern just repeats. The idea of modern analysis is to create or improve inner strength, to strengthen a person's foundation so that even with human foibles, [s/he] can be well and maybe even happy.

The interaction is very complex, an idea that was brought out in the meeting. I thought about the powerful transference in my own experience of Rolfing work. When my body was more painful and less reliable, when I needed to see you, I felt so needy. There was a sort of desperation to have where I hurt be touched and mended. I think of that as a very primal experience – a wordless need that someone else can fix. (Change my diaper. Feed me.) That transference is not as present now because my body is more reliable and I have come to terms with the idea that I might have to be in pain sometimes. Transference is certainly a powerful state of consciousness. It has all the weight of history – both stored emotions and repetition. But I don't know what brainwave state that would be. I wonder if we're talking about states of consciousness that are more subtle. After all, states of consciousness are not discrete entities.

**LG:** And then there's the stages of transference, each with its own power, the development of relationship. One aspect of this might be how some clients just won't change for a particular Rolfer, through transference development perhaps – not

the 'right' talking, not the 'right' techniques of manual therapy or touching. Hoping to hit the right notes, in the first session it may take longer than an hour to establish how the client will assist in the goals set up. And the countertransference! I'm usually not thinking of that much, except as an adult to adult with goals in mind, unless I am blindsided by a certain countertransference, my nemesis – the idea that this is a hopeless situation, that I will not be able to have any effect whatsoever! Certainly one factor in this is the caretaking of my parents, who, like most parents, ultimately died.

My most uncomfortable countertransference state is a resounding gong when the client does not have any feedback for me of any positive change. In my best therapeutic fit with a client, the client is in a state of being able to agree with some things and disagree with some things, a telling of the good, the bad, and the indifferent. If there is all resistance and disagreement, a constant telling of what is wrong and sliding back into the experiences that produced the wrongness, a return to the movements, stances, and speaking of events that produced the wrongness, that is where I must be attentive, must say to myself, "I am in charge of this therapeutic event, what can happen in a positive sense?" I must be able to picture the better outcome, not be overwhelmed with the current client state. Sometimes I am better at that than other times.

**JC:** Me too. Sometimes I'm better at allowing my countertransference to exist as information about my patient, and sometimes I just get caught up in it. In my training we spend a lot of time learning to deal with countertransference. We also learn to differentiate between our own countertransference and feelings we might pick up from the patient. So that when we meet a patient or are in a session, we have some barometer of what's going on.

**LG:** The pickup of feelings and even pain from the client is important in our work as well. Some of us have become more skilled at discerning states of consciousness that are perhaps not even thoughts, more existent in the physiology, the blood pressure, the chemical state, and the relational attachment senses, and so on. I was interested in your exposition of the brainwave states and have done a bit of looking around at that.

**JC:** In addition, there is my initial thought from a member's contribution: the idea

that the (skilled) Rolfer is looking at and engaging the whole character – although how that's related to states of consciousness, I can't quite articulate. Maybe 'states of consciousness' might refer to ways of seeing/perceiving.

**LG:** In ways of seeing/perceiving, it was brought out at the meeting that one thing some people use is getting into a meditative, sort of hypnotic or prayer-like state, to get past the ego state of wanting to 'fix' someone and to perceive more fully.

**JC:** I remember my supervisor saying to me that the idea is to be able to keep my analytic brain going no matter what is happening between the patient and me. In developing this skill of keeping the analytic brain going, the idea of supervision and the importance of having somewhere to talk over one's experiences and think about them with others are crucial to us. In psychoanalysis, supervision also helps with the problem of catching the patient's problems and taking them home. Which loops back to the question of merger and separation.

**LG:** Yes, and I immediately went to two Rolfers (Audrey McCann and Rebecca Carli-Mills) right after the program and received some supervision on a sticky question I had about a client from the week before. They opened up my consciousness, which was stuck! (A quote: "Linda always thinks she has a hammer, but she doesn't.") So thanks for that supervision idea. We work alone so much of the time, and we often don't have much opportunity to share and parse our work with others. Thanks for coming to our event and sharing your skill and knowledge and fine collegial presence with us, and with me.

*Linda Grace has been practicing Rolfing work in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania since she was first certified in 1984 by the Rolf Institute. She continues to use Ida P. Rolf's conceptual organization of the body, including the goals of the Basic Ten Series conception, as well as the Advanced Series, with attention to movement work in each session. These working containers may include attention to details in the cranial, nerve, and visceral systems in creating the client's desired changes.*

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energy and environmental education for twenty-seven years before becoming a Licensed Clinical Social Worker. She served on the boards of the Energy Coordinating Agency and Green Woods Charter School, both in Philadelphia, and published a number of articles on energy

education. She received her bachelor's degree from The George Washington University in Washington, DC and her masters degree from Bryn Mawr College Graduate School of Social Work and Social Research. Through her interest in states of consciousness and spiritual

experience, she met two Native American medicine people (called doctors) from California and has been taught and trained by them for the past twenty-five years. She continues to work on the integration of unconventional methods into traditional containers.

## The Sensing of Ethics

### Our Inner Knowledge of Good and Evil

By Karl E. Humiston, MD, Certified Rolfer™

*The Hindu culture discovered many thousands of years ago that if you got a relatively good body, you had a reasonable, mild man. So the way a reasonably good body behaved became for them the touchstone for morality. When morals are built from the body's behavior you get moral structure and behavior which respects the rights and privileges of other individuals.*

Ida Rolf (1978, 71)

#### Introduction and Definition

It was June 1971, in a rented house on the cliffs above the ocean north of Big Sur, California. I was in my first ('auditing') half of my training with Ida Rolf. About to follow the other students out for lunch break, I noticed that Ida was talking with a young man who had shown up to request that she admit him to her training. They had talked only five or ten minutes when I heard her say, "I will not admit you to my training. You are an angry young man, and I will not turn an angry person loose on people's bodies." With a noticeable tone of irritation, he asked, "What makes you think I'm angry?" Quietly and simply, she said, "I can see." With that, the interview ended.

Notice that he framed the issue in terms of *thinking*, while she responded in terms of *seeing*. They spoke in two fundamentally different languages, one based in physical reality and one not so based. Here is a lesson on what I propose is a most important quality of ethics: fundamentally ethics is physical rather than mental knowledge, sensory rather than intellectual or psychological. It is most clearly experienced in our bodies, as are the principles of Rolfing® Structural Integration (SI). Our professional Code of Ethics is, more accurately, a set of rules for good behavior, based on the deeper truths that I am calling ethics.

#### Definition

We think in the language in which we speak, so we think more clearly when we are clear about the grammar of that language and the precise meanings of its words. Let's see what Webster's dictionary (the 1979 big book) says about the precise meaning of the word 'ethics': "ethics – the system or code of morals of a particular philosopher, religion, group, profession, etc." Morals! It's about morals. The dictionary further says: "morals – principles and practice in regard to right, wrong, and duty; ethics; general conduct or behavior, especially in sexual matters." So morals are about right and wrong. For the adjective, it says: "moral – 1. relating to, dealing with, or capable of making the distinction between, right and wrong. 2. relating to, serving to teach, or in accordance with, the principles of right and wrong. 3. good or right in conduct or character; often, specifically, virtuous in sexual conduct; opposed to *immoral*."

We see, then, that ethics and morals involve being "capable of making the distinction between right and wrong" in one's conduct or behavior. How we do that will be the main focus of this paper, which will explore it in various directions, in depth. Our experience of what is written on paper, as in the professional Code of Ethics of the Rolf Institute®, may be different from our experience of those ethics written in our bodies.

#### The Most Unethical People

We can learn much from studying criminals: the most unethical of people. Stanton Samenow, PhD (born 1941) is a clinical psychologist who studied criminals who were locked up in St. Elizabeth's Hospital, an immense federal psychiatric facility in Washington, DC. His first conclusion was that these criminals were not mentally ill

but were men who had used their criminal skills to manipulate their way there, to avoid the less pleasant prisons. His classic book *Inside the Criminal Mind* (1984) has contributed greatly to today's established methods of offender treatment and is well worth anyone's reading. In chapter 13, "To Change a Criminal," he describes a slow and arduous process of communicating patterns of ethical thinking from someone who has them to someone who does not – which we'll see has a parallel in the transfer we do with a Rolfing client.

Samenow (1984, 177) quotes an inmate as saying, "If rape were made legal, I'd do something else," barely touching on his profound observation, the full import of which he did not understand. He enlarged on this in a workshop I attended, when he said that it was typical of the criminal inmates that they preferred lying to telling the truth (even when it gained them nothing), stealing to honest work (even when it paid less), adultery to having sex with their wives, etc. To me, this was an exciting observation, as it gives us a way of accounting for rapists, etc. In my understanding, when people are so closed off, so disconnected from their bodies, so unable to feel everyday feelings, they are so empty they can hardly stand their inward nothingness. But *aha!* There is one feeling that can always break through the disconnectedness: the gut sense of *doing something wrong*. Never mind how yucky it feels – it can be pretty exciting. Most of us can recall, perhaps from childhood when we stole something from a store, that feeling – and most of us found it too yucky to want to feel it again. Dr. Samenow told us that these men became bored and depressed when there was no 'action' – conning, stealing, raping, or scheming to do so. Although he was a psychologist who excelled at observing the workings of a criminal mentality, he could not connect with my observation that, under all that, is those criminals' lack of physical sensing of the ethical knowledge that lives within everyone's body.

Let me share the report of my Rolfing work a decade and a half ago, with a child I'll call

"Joe" and his mother: When they came in together to see me in the out-of-state office where I was working, I was struck by the unsocial manner of this eleven-year-old boy, who gazed sullenly at the floor and responded to all my questions with "I don't know." His mother told me that, when unobserved, he sometimes snuck out of the house and vandalized the neighbors' homes (seriously, like cutting their wires) and sexually molested and probably tortured other children. The question flashed in my mind, "If he's like this at eleven, what will he be like when he's eighteen – if he's still alive?"

I said to him, calmly and firmly from the center of my being, "Joe, people who are connected to their bodies don't do things like that. You need to get your body back." He looked straight at me and said, "How do I get my body back?" "It's called Rolfing" [SI]. "I'll show you." And I did three of the Ten Series of sessions on him that week. Those sessions were technically ordinary, but after each one I felt beaten up, as if I had had a wrestle with the devil. It was not clear until later what had been accomplished, when after a month, I called to inquire about "Joe." The receptionist said, "Oh, he doesn't do those things any more. He always used to sit in the waiting room staring at the floor, wouldn't look at anyone, and there was a black cloud around him. Now he smiles at people and I can see white light around him!"

Within the year, I finished all ten of his Rolfing sessions, and several of his mother's. It was a pleasure to watch "Joe" and his mother on the waiting-room floor peacefully playing together, like two happy children. She did not finish her sessions; I believe she could not handle the energetic change of completing her series because of the damage done by her having lived in an intergenerational satanic ritual abuse family. After several years, I received the report that "Joe" was locked up in juvenile detention for his involvement with a group of youth stealing cars. I was sad to hear this, but considered it far better than where he had been when I first met him.

One further observation on the criminal body. In the early 1970s my wife Bonnie, working as a psychiatric nurse, had as a patient in her locked ward a cold-blooded killer whose latest victim was a mom-and-pop shopkeeper who had traded fire with him during an armed robbery. The old man's .22 caliber pistol was no match for the

robber's single 45mm bullet. This prisoner, under police guard in the hospital, did pushups to keep in shape for his next escape attempt in spite of his several chest wounds (much too painful for a normal person to do). When Bonnie tended the drainage tubes in his chest, she was astonished at the lifeless stony hardness of his whole body; he was literally a hardened criminal.

## Ethics Is In Your Body

Because it has been challenged in court innumerable times, from every conceivable perspective, and survived, the polygraph (so-called 'lie detector') is an important source of information regarding the nature of the ethical function in human beings. When I was born in 1930, the polygraph instrument and its current manner of use were taking shape in the hands of Leonarde Keeler, a psychologist and friend of my parents. I clearly recall the day in the mid-1930s when I was taken to the Chicago Police Crime Lab to become the first child ever tested on it, as Dr. Keeler wanted to know whether it worked on children as it did on adults. It did. Using the challenge still in use today, I was told to select a card, remember it, return it to the deck, and by no means reveal to my mother which card it was. When she asked me, one card at a time, "Is this your card?" I was to say "No" in every case, being careful not to give it away by facial expression, etc. I was sure I could fool her, but the machine went wild with my bodily reaction to lying: sweating, holding my breath, increased blood pressure.

This body-based approach to detecting lies is not novel in the recorded history of people of various cultures. An example from ancient India depended on the same autonomic nervous system response, but focused on the drying up of saliva that accompanies sweating. They had all of the accused chew dry rice and then spit it out. "While this was a simple task for the honest, those who were deceiving had difficulty in accomplishing it and were then judged to be guilty and punished accordingly. This practice recognized that fear slows the digestive processes, including salivation" (Abrams 1977, 11).

My reason for including these bits of lie-detection history is that they demonstrate that, for everyone, there's a basic bodily-function element to our ethical sense of right and wrong. Even severe sociopaths can be validly tested by these bodily methods. My thesis is that what appears

to us as their lack of conscience is, more accurately, their *lack of sensing, noticing, or consciously connecting with that knowledge of good and evil that lives deep within everyone's physical body.*

A sense of ethics simply comes with being grounded in one's senses. It is opposite from delusions, which come from lacking such a ground.

I'm going to go out on a limb and suggest that the Rolfing process contributes to a person's sense of ethics. My view is that a basic Ten Series of Rolfing SI connects the client with his own inner blueprint of perfection, which includes not only our creator's design for how we are to live with gravity, but also for how we are to live with each other – our sense of ethics.

## Learning, Healing, and the Language of Agency

My remarkable mentor, James Warrick ([www.takeflightcoaching.org](http://www.takeflightcoaching.org)), used to say, "Reality is a person." In my belief, truth (especially ethical truth) comes to us not just through our senses, but through our senses *from a person.* I see our built-in ethical sense as coming from the one who created (or built) us – God. But a sense of ethics is also transmitted to us, ideally, through our parents, who – from the child's perspective – are like gods. 'Mother love' is not taught in a college class, yet it is something we all recognize – its presence or the lack thereof. Individuals who were severely abused as children sometimes spend their lives in kind service to others, exceptionally devoted to providing to their own children and others what their parents did not.

## Sex Offenders

Two decades ago, I pursued a rare opportunity, gaining permission from the local Probation and Parole office to offer a weekly class to some seriously unethical men, a story I wrote up as "Internal Correlates of Relapse Prevention: Some Principles of Ida Rolf's Work Used in Healing of Convicted Sex Offenders" (Humiston 2004). I used verbal instructions based on my Rolfing skills to reach into their bodies and reconnect them with their innate sense of ethics. As in regular Rolfing SI, I communicated something I had in my body to the bodies of men who did not have it. In over two years of that work, I saw perhaps twenty men, but only those six who *chose* to continue with me for a year or more were 'healed'.

Let me now point out a significant parallel between Rolfing SI and that work I did with sex offenders – something that is basic to the nature of ethics: it is those who choose to finish the work that receive the full results. Those sex offenders, it is true, had been ordered by a judge to obtain treatment in the community from a professional who was approved by Probation and Parole. And seeing me cost less than seeing any of the others. Yet only about a third of the men who started with me chose to continue for the year or more that it took to fully restore their personal ethical sense. For the others, the energy that the work opened up was too much for them. And, as we know, there are Rolfing clients who swear they want the whole Ten Series but never come back after the first few sessions; in my view, some should be recognized as clients who should not finish Rolfing work, as they are not ready for the full opening of their energies.

## *The Most Basic Written Source I Could Find*

In 1986 I was asked to prepare a code of ethics for another professional group. Although its board did not choose to adopt my proposed code, my experience in preparing it was personally very meaningful. At first I studied existing codes of professional organizations like the American Medical Association, but found their official statements to be the philosophies of academic men, a mass of confusion that did not satisfy my hunger for real, simple, clear truth; I wanted to spit them out. On a Sunday afternoon I walked from our New York apartment to sit on a bench in Riverside Park, with blank paper on a clipboard, to ponder what might be a more basic source of ethical principles. When I reviewed the familiar Ten Commandments (which I had memorized), I found that they felt right and translated them. Some were easy and some were hard, but when I was done my body was filled with energy like electricity that lasted for almost a week. Although no one else said they noticed it, for a couple of days I had the distinct feeling that my face was shining with a bright light from the truth of that work.

Here is how that ancient source translated into a proposed modern code of ethics:

I. As in any dignified profession, the welfare and needs of the client must be foremost and above all other considerations in the practice of the Method. This is the purpose

for which the Method was created and all other purposes must remain secondary to it.

- II. A practitioner must be straightforward in clearly informing a client as to fees and conditions of the work, expected duration and results, etc. To be misleading, or even unclear, in this area may be grounds for a complaint.
- III. The Method should never be misrepresented as something that it is not. Practitioners should clearly inform clients as to when they are doing (this method's) work and when something else is being done.
- IV. Practitioners should set aside sufficient time and money to continue the pursuit of their own progression and growth. It is dishonest to represent that one can assist a client's growth when one is not doing so oneself.
- V. The name of (the founder) and his Method should be honored and its integrity protected so that the public may respect it as standing for professional excellence and ethical practitioners.
- VI. First, do no harm. A practitioner is to keep silent regarding a client's confidential information, and is to refrain from any actions that could be foreseen to be to a client's physical, mental, financial, or other detriment.
- VII. Sexual involvement of any kind with a client is unethical, either during the professional relationship or after it is terminated. Because focus on anything sexual always diverts energy and attention from other areas, it necessarily destroys the balance that is essential to the Method. To pretend otherwise is dishonest and exploitative, and it is the duty of every practitioner to scrupulously maintain a non-sexual focus of attention with clients.
- VIII. It is unethical to accept payment for any services that are not necessary, appropriate, or clearly in the client's best interests.
- IX. Practitioners must be honest in all their dealings, professionally and otherwise. Immorality, dishonesty, or unethical behavior in any aspect of one's life casts doubt on one's ethics as a practitioner.

- X. It is unethical to disparage other practitioners, professions, or methods. The Method stands on its own merits, and each practitioner should do likewise.

## *The Language of Agency*

Ethics seen as rules of *required* behavior may be hard to promulgate, in the sense that they are seen as demands upon us for self-denial. Ethics seen as rules of *chosen* behavior, which are guides for our self-fulfillment, are, however, generally harder to promote, for a little-understood reason: they are based on different mental grammars, or mental languages. The distinctive words "I don't want" reflect what we are born with, the default language. It is the source of everyone's first impulse to avoid pain and seek comfort, and supports living at a low level of intensity (and ethics). Using it requires no special skill and burdens one with no particular responsibility. In a sense, the default language is required; it comes with being born, with living; you can't get away from it.

Those things that mean living at a higher level of intensity – receiving greater light and knowledge, experiencing interpersonal intimacy and love, achieving things that are difficult, and truly living ethically – require the language of 'agency' to accomplish. They require, and are the result of, desiring, choosing, seeking and asking – which is what I am referring to as the *language of agency*. As a Rolfer, I know that I do my best work when I consciously move into deep longing within my own body for the desired changes in my client's body. I'm sure that the language of asking is acquired by infants and children when their parents (and others nearby) are likewise wishing and desiring good things for those children. This is high intensity and doesn't happen by default, but only from being sought and chosen.

In *For Freedom Destined*, Franz Winkler finds that these issues are central to the themes of Wagner's *Ring* cycle and *Parsifal* music dramas. For the desires of the gods of Germanic myth to be fulfilled, humans must take some difficult ethical actions *by their own choice*, not compelled by the gods. Seeing that such choosing requires a high level of conscious awareness (lost when the hero Siegfried is drugged), "Wagner rediscovers here the long-lost key to a deeper understanding of evil. Evil in its darkest form does not depend on wicked deeds, nor even on bad intentions. For



actions and aims can be corrected, atoned for, or at least repented. But when man permits his awareness to grow dim, when he takes a step backward on his path of moral evolution, he commits a sin against the meaning of existence, the sin against the Holy Ghost. Such failures bring suffering to the world, suffering far greater than any caused by intentional evil" (Winkler 1974, 68). Again drawing a parallel to Rolfing SI, I believe that the crucial awareness here is more in the body, where our sense of right and wrong lives, than in the mind.

## Conclusion

Ethics is a part of the larger issue of how any human being can best make room for self and other at the same time. This is dealt with voluminously in the writings of existential philosophers and psychologists, which is beyond the scope of this article. It is dealt with concisely as the second commandment: "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself" (Matthew 22:39), which to me means that we, ourselves and others, all count equally.

*Karl Humiston was for twelve years (2004-2016) the Chairman of the Rolf Institute's Ethics and Business Practices Committee. He is still actively practicing Rolfing SI in San Diego, California.*

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# Rolfing® SI and Recognition

## Keeping the Trust Amidst Skepticism

By Noel L. Poff, Certified Advanced Rolfer™

### A Call to Action

It wasn't long ago that I was in the middle of a twenty-two-week long training program where I had the first inkling to do a web search on the very thing I was spending so much time learning how to do. Before I thought to type "Rolfing" into a search engine, I was getting my information about the practice directly from Rolfers and the website of the Rolf Institute® (RISI). I hadn't thought before to do a more generalized search and see what the greater public understood about this widely unknown system of bodywork.

I cringed upon reading the rather dismissive review on Wikipedia. Though Wikipedia has its own notoriety for being a questionable source of information, it is often the first site listed when doing a search on anything from carrots to Henry VIII. I use it myself to look up quick facts about things I forgot from school. Immediately I felt both angered and nauseated by fact that if anyone did a general query on Rolfing Structural Integration (SI) through the web, the first thing found would include its description as 'quackery'.

By this time I was already \$20,000 deep in loans and other costs associated with my training. I moved myself across the country in order to attend the only available classes at RISI in Boulder, Colorado. Each semester took place over the course of a couple of months with classes eight hours a day, four to five days a week, and no amount of work I could do in the off time would earn me enough to balance out my attenuating resources. I brought these burdens on to myself because I believed in Ida Rolf's method and its effectiveness in creating positive changes. Suddenly, I realized my sentiments about Rolfing SI weren't shared and there was, and still is, a great divide between traditionally corrective forms of medicine and more holistic approaches.

I thought of editing the Wikipedia article myself but I figured my efforts would be in vain, seeing as there was already a strong academic bias lumping it into the broad category of pseudoscience. [Editor's note: see the box on page 57 to learn why such edit attempts

*are a bad idea, and what will have a beneficial impact.*] When I later heard faculty members addressed about this issue, their responses were either dismissive of Wikipedia's credibility or unconcerned. (I believe that faculty and RISI staff found other things more important – such as maintaining the operations of the organization and ensuring that would-be Rolfers were doing good work.) So, I shrugged my shoulders and went back to having Rolfing SI validated by the people directly affected by it, including myself. I took it for granted that the results of the many sessions I observed were undeniable based on what I saw and on what the clients reported. I went on to finish my training and open my own practice near my hometown in South Carolina.

### A Basis of Trust

As I wrote this, I was in the middle of yet another Rolfing program, the Advanced Training. I didn't have to move to do the training, but I still had to put twenty hours a month into just getting to and from the weekend classes in Charles Town, West Virginia. Again my debt accumulated, since I was spending for tuition, gas, room, and board. And of course being out of office for so many days.

Yet I remain committed to the work, and I find I'm able to make up the missed appointments because even in the conservative south I have just as much interest in my practice from people new to Rolfing SI as from people already familiar with it. Additionally, as I get more skills and experience from trainings, the effectiveness of my sessions improves and being more successful in helping clients with their ailments almost always improves business.

Even during the Basic Training, when my clientele was for massage, my clients noticed a clear difference between my work before and after I started Rolfing training. Those who wanted a relaxing massage started going to other massage therapists, while those who wanted deep and specific work requested me. Something was indeed different about my massages, sold as Integrative Massages where I was employed, because they weren't

just massage – they were ‘on-the-way-to-Rolfing-SI’ as my hands were already learning to affect fascia as a Rolfer does. I didn’t say anything about Rolfing SI, and often began and ended the sessions with a little more fluff and charm that gave the sessions a Swedish-massage shine. Oftentimes both clients and I saw noticeable differences in form and movement.

I couldn’t really explain in great detail how or why things worked the way that they

did. I trusted Ida Rolf’s ‘Recipe’ and the Principles of Intervention laid out during my Basic Training. With an accompanying faith everything worked out well most of the time. My clients were usually happy. They were happier than when I did a more traditional massage. Still I had my doubts. The word ‘quackery’ still burrowed in the recesses of my brain. I wasn’t sure if the majesty of Rolfing SI somehow charmed my clients, as well as myself, into thinking

that something was actually changing for the better.

## Something’s Happening Here

I’m the first to admit that I’m not a skeptic at heart. My willingness to be part of something bigger than myself makes me prone to give most of my energy and resources as an act of devotion without hesitation. RISI possessed a religious air.

## A Note from the Rolf Institute®

### About Wikipedia

The “Rolfing” article on Wikipedia has been a source of consternation for many years. While it is to be hoped that the article will be improved in the future, it is important to understand how Wikipedia works and what will be necessary to see the kinds of changes that Rolfers™ would like. Although, in theory, anyone can edit articles on Wikipedia, the reality is that Wikipedia has its own culture around editing, and a complex set of rules – even more so around health-related topics that are considered controversial. Every edit must be supported by quality sources, as well as by arguments crafted with Wikipedia policy in mind. For this reason, please don’t make edits to the “Rolfing” article. The fact is that even well-meaning edits will draw criticism from editors who are skeptical of alternative medicine and holistic modalities. They will most likely immediately revert the edits, and Wikipedia policy supports their view. Because of this, efforts to make constructive change to the article must be well-considered, and are best attempted through the efforts discussed below, rather than attempts to edit the Wikipedia article itself.

As an encyclopedia of established knowledge, Wikipedia does not give credence to what Rolfers and their clients say about Rolfing® Structural Integration (SI). What counts are sources that are considered objective and/or evidence-based. For this reason, the two primary ways to improve the Rolfing article are:

1. Support research on SI (see below).
2. Ensure that printed sources have correct information about Rolfing SI, as printed sources (from parties that are considered objective) are the raw ingredients for Wikipedia articles. We have a project to locate errors in printed sources and send emails or letters to authors and publishers, requesting corrections in future reprints. Already two major sources, *Gale Medical Encyclopedia* and *Segen’s Medical Dictionary*, have promised to make corrections based on our feedback. If you have writing skills and several hours of time to donate, please contact [marketing@rolf.org](mailto:marketing@rolf.org).

### How to Support SI Research

- Write a case report every year. A sufficient volume of case reports can direct future research in areas that have shown a high level of preliminary success with standardized methodology. Case reports can be submitted to the following journals: *Journal of Bodywork and Movement Therapies*; *Journal of Alternative and Complementary Medicine*; *Structural Integration: The Journal of the Rolf Institute®*; and IASI’s *Yearbook of Structural Integration*.
- Improve your science research literacy by reading scientific articles and imagining how SI could be studied in a similar way.
- Discuss SI with anyone you know who is involved in research, like graduate students, university professors, and statisticians. You never know when someone will be looking for an interesting research project.

For more information, or to take the online Research Fundamentals course, visit <https://rolfresearchfoundation.org>. Donations to the Ida P. Rolf Research Foundation can also be made at this site.

Every room had a portrait or some image of Dr. Rolf. Didactic sketches of lines and figures look like hieroglyphics. There were also an increasing number of coincidences. I became a John Denver fan before moving to Boulder and learning that he had experienced Roling SI. Dr. Rolf and I were born on the same day. By pure coincidence I rented a room in house on a street that shared my ex's last name, and equally coincidence, other rooms were rented by the two other Rolfers from Charleston, South Carolina who had introduced me to the work. I felt, and still feel, a certain cosmological connection to it all.

Training at RISI helped me break through personal barriers and the chains of past traumas. I attributed a lot of its effectiveness to the unpredictably radical class structure. One would find students and teachers gathered together holding hands, breathing silently, energetically holding space. Or walk into a room of adults rolling on the floor on top of each other moaning from their most primal forms of being. And then there was the class where each of eight practitioners put a pinky finger up his practice partner's nose. I chuckled a little bit to myself at how this would appear to the uninformed observer. In Boulder, a quirky town where RISI is one of the most unique and precious gems, a local would probably understand. Yet this all clashed with prior experiences studying traditional health sciences. In those classrooms I had felt connected to *symptoms*; at RISI I felt connected to *people*.

It's not all play and 'experimentals' at RISI, though. There are intelligent reasons for all of the activities, and they enhance our capacity to be human beings seeing, listening, and feeling in the present moment. As Rolfers we highly value detailed knowledge of the territory we cover – primarily fascia. The Rolfer's journey to know it becomes a lifelong endeavor. I've learned more anatomy and physiology in one day with Rolfers than I have in any college course. I think I could safely say that the people who teach Roling SI are ever so intrigued by the human body that they're almost always operating with a beginner's mind. In my experience, they often seem eager to discover something new in the people they contact.

One of the reasons I believe the wisdom of Roling SI is so profound is how quickly people can adapt it to their own experience. They aren't having a dialogue with a

dogmatic view of health. They are instead encouraged to explore their own relationship with their bodies in relation to gravity. Though gravity may be a limiting concept, it is nonetheless a universal physical law that all people experience the moment they begin moving towards their verticality.

### **Bumps on the Road to Recognition**

In bodywork our labs are a bit different from other health fields. In turn the research is a bit different, and the measurements of progress are mostly qualitative. Since scientific research is a factor used to distinguishing science from 'pseudoscience', it's challenging to validate Roling SI – and other holistic modalities – when double-blind research studies are the basis for public determination of sound practice. RISI doesn't ignore the value of scientific research, and its website does list a few studies in support of the benefits Roling SI has – for people suffering from chronic low back pain, children affected by cerebral palsy, and females experiencing symptoms of fibromyalgia – in order to demonstrate its effectiveness in relieving symptoms of these types of conditions. RISI also serves as a gateway to the growing amount of information presented at the Fascia Research Congress highlighting the benefits SI has for conditions associated with the fascial system.

The challenge of validating an entire system of bodywork through peer-reviewed research studies and analyses seem nearly insurmountable. Yet if questions about the validity of Roling SI are due to lack of a certain form of research, then more research should be done with that form in mind. There are other challenges, however. A lot of Rolfers seem to operate independently, and I understand why. Between getting a business started, meeting the needs of clients, and tending to my personal life, there's little time left to donate strictly to providing additional proof that what I do actually works. It's also difficult as an independent practitioner to gather enough data about a specific group for a certain amount of interventions – the way research is typically done – when a typical Roling practice instead tends to see a wide range of clients and issues. I'm thankful to read about the findings of others who make time for such endeavors, and appreciate that we have practitioners in or connected to educational institutions, which is often the required setup to conduct research. So

I still can't help but wonder what I as a solo Rolfer can do in support of giving Roling SI a better public profile.

It says a lot if Dr. Rolf's ideas found their way through the unrestrained environment of the human potential movement into the form of RISI, which students can now receive federal funding to attend. Being somewhat green to it, most of what I've learned about Roling SI's gestation has come from the anecdotes of instructors and Dr. Rolf's sagacious writings. The primary validation of the work so far is experience from the years of field-research performed by Dr. Rolf and her first generation of Rolfers. This data supported the publication of Dr. Rolf's book and the formation of RISI. There was a good enough public profile to lay a foundation at a time when the status quo in healthcare was even less receptive to non-traditional approaches. While there are a number of different reasons and people to thank for Roling SI's longevity, I think it receives a more positive public view now because it continues to meet the needs of clients wanting relief and is moving toward providing data to the critics who want evidence-based research. This should continue: as more people become interested in Roling SI and receiving the work, it should get easier to conduct measurable studies that meet the requirements of traditional scientific research.

### **What Can I Do?**

What that all says to me as a Rolfer wanting to validate Roling SI is that I need to consider myself a researcher working with thousands of others. With this mindset I automatically think of the word 'data', because collecting data is the bulk of the scientific method. It also makes me think about the language in which data is presented, and whether the method of collecting the data is repeatable by others. This inspires me to take more detailed notes in the hopes of sharing them with other Rolfers who may also aspire to make similar conclusions about what benefits Roling SI may have for people with specific needs.

In regards to 'quackery', quacks in the healthcare world behave in such a way that their words and actions are not genuine nor do they accurately reflect the experiences of their patients and clients. They'll often assume their methods are faultless and can cure many illnesses. They pretend to have a knowledge about things of which they know very little. Labeling as a quack is not



reserved to professions that lack scientific studies and meta-analyses; anyone with any degree can be ‘quacky’ if they don’t have humility about things of which they are unfamiliar or uninformed. They can also be quacky if they guarantee their therapies will cure certain illnesses and dysfunctions. In other words, it is my belief that quackery relates to the individual practitioner, not the mode of practice. Rolwing SI should not be considered quackery anymore than other health-promoting activities such as eating well and exercising. It’s only quackery if the practitioner makes illogical claims and false promises.

As a Rolfer I don’t promise people anything other than that I’m going to do the best I can to help based on my professional training, skills, and experience. I haven’t yet met a Rolfer who behaves as if his promises were much different than my own. We *do* often highlight the benefits Rolwing SI is thought to have based on what clients reported to us, but these claims aren’t false. They’re the testimonies of people who experienced

positive changes. The benefits of Rolwing SI relayed to the public are then informed primarily by field research. Our entire field, aimed at promoting an overall state of physical well-being, shouldn’t be ruled out due to lack of traditional scientific research, particularly when that’s also vulnerable to personal bias and interest. Perhaps we should think outside of tradition, broadening our scope, in order to recognize other types of research that would serve as validation. This is not to suggest that traditional research misses the point or is asking the wrong questions: as hinted towards earlier, there are a great number of people doing evidence-based research demonstrating parallels between SI and its positive effects on health.

As data accumulates in support of what Rolfers do, they continue to earn praise from clients – regardless of the quantity of studies able to survive a gauntlet of demands from skeptics. I myself am finding it easier to ignore the negative labels and associations, as well as the positive ones.

Claims and promises on either extreme ironically make me skeptical about the motivations and knowledge of the people behind them: they’re not doing the one thing I first felt as a child, studied as a philosophy student, and am refining as a Rolfer – they’re not assuming their own ignorance. Without that there’s no capacity to see what’s presently in front of them because it’s then painted over in beliefs about what’s right and wrong. In my ignorance I’m less swayed by the histories, secrecies, and exclusivities of different belief systems. In this particular case, I’m referring to the exclusivities of different health modalities. With the void of expectations I’m able to maintain my curious fascination with the person in front of me wanting to feel better.

*Noel L. Poff, Certified Advanced Rolfer, LMT, CPT is a licensed bodyworker at Charleston, South Carolina. To learn more about Noel’s practice, please visit [www.lowcountryrolfing.com](http://www.lowcountryrolfing.com).*

## “Sometimes I Feel the Dance of the Fingers”

*Peter Legård Nielsen’s Body of Work as Writer and Rolfer™*

**By Naomi Wynter-Vincent PhD, Certified Advanced Rolfer**

Rolfers have a peculiar and particular way of insulting each other, when we’re so minded to do so: you’re so *cortical*, goes the refrain; you’re too much ‘in your head’. Given that Rolwing® Structural Integration (SI) has a profound and progressive commitment to holism, there’s something inescapably ironic if we reinstate mind-body dualism by privileging body over mind. For Peter Legård Nielsen, Certified Advanced Rolfer, Rolf Movement® Practitioner, and critically acclaimed poet and novelist, the dichotomy rings especially false: for over a decade, he’s worked two successful careers in parallel and in concert, sustaining an embodied practice alongside a life of the mind. I met Peter in Copenhagen in 2017 to talk about how his dual careers support a fully integrated life.

Peter’s writing career is extensive and impressive: he is the author of two volumes

of poetry and eight novels, numerous short stories and critical essays, as well as editor of a number of anthologies (some of these are pictured in Figure 1). He was Chairman of the Danish Association of Fiction Writers over several years, and has received a number of prestigious grants along with recognition by the Danish Ministry of Culture.

I ask him how he first heard of Rolwing SI. “I was around seventeen when I read about it in a book, and it made me very curious.” It would be another twenty-eight years before he actually tried it. He recalls a memorable Fourth Hour when it felt that a layer of plastic wrap had been released from his spine. Later he was referred to Martine Longum and was amazed “that she knew so much more about my body than I did.” It made him so curious that he



Peter Legård Nielsen



Naomi Wynter-Vincent



Figure 1: Some of Peter Legård Nielsen's literary output.

decided to undertake the training, and it was also a good excuse to step away from his political work.

In 2007, Peter trained as a Rolfer in Munich, under Christoph Sommer, Peter Schwind, and Frances Hatt-Arnold. Coming to the training was a revelatory experience. Recalling his childhood in a small village in Denmark, Peter described an environment where “everyone knew everyone,” and where his natural sensitivities – to tone, emotion, people, and language – were actively discouraged and suppressed. In Roling SI, by contrast, he found a community in which the blunting effects of a small-town childhood could be undone.

Here, finally, was an environment in which his sensitivity was regarded as an asset, not a liability, and where precision, sensitivity, and observational acuity could be usefully cultivated.

Peter and I share an experience of being struck by Roling SI's rich use of language and ideas, of the dotted lines that connect the practice of Roling SI with the world of the imagination and the mind, with character and gesture. I reminded Peter of the scene in Milan Kundera's novel, *Immortality*, where the narrator-author describes candidly how a new character is born of a single gesture that he had

once observed by an elderly woman in a swimming pool: “The essence of her charm, independent of time, revealed itself for a second in that gesture and dazzled me,” Kundera writes; “I was strangely moved.” It is an example drawn from literature, but it could just as easily be from Roling SI.

If it seems improbable that a job as demanding as Roling SI should offer such an effective complement to his writing career, it's worth taking a detailed look at how Peter manages his time. “I work as a Rolfer from a clinic in Copenhagen Mondays to Wednesdays, from half nine to 8 pm,” he explains, matched by three (even longer) writing days (9 am to 9 pm) writing from home. Aside from financial considerations, Peter finds that Roling SI supports the work of writing: “We are blessed that we have a hard job: Roling [SI] is both physically and emotionally hard.”

I ask whether the rhythms and pressures of writing ever conflict with his work as a Rolfer, evoking the romantic cliché of the writer struck by untimely inspiration, writing into the small hours, fuelled by coffee and alcohol. Peter laughs, and offers a very different picture of the writing life in which discipline plays a more consistent role than inspiration. “You always get a full writing session in a day,” he comments wryly. Peter concedes that the pressures of the publishing industry have sometimes been hard to manage: “But I have never canceled on clients, or canceled my writing, either.” His last book, *De fremmede* (which translates as ‘the strangers’), is the fruit of this careful time management. It took fifteen years to write, he says, but was greatly improved by its extended maturation. Set in the sixteenth century, it tells the story of the Spanish conquest of Peru through the eyes of an unknown *cavallerist* from his deathbed, and can be read as an allegory of immigration, power, and religion.

Peter's careful working arrangements evince his commitment to sustain both careers over the long term. “I became a writer eighteen years before I became a Rolfer, but now they go hand in hand. It will continue for a long time.” Might the physical demands of Roling SI bring his therapeutic career to a close earlier than his writing? He is not scared of physical decline, he says, imagining that he will grow into a more subtle and precise practitioner as the years go by, exerting less physical strain. “I see myself being both a



Rolfer and a writer when I am eighty, unless I run out of books to write.”

Peter’s forthcoming book will bear the marks of his experiences as a Rolfer more directly, and includes some autobiographical elements. Titled *De kendte* in Danish (literally translated as ‘the famous ones’), Peter and I try out different possible translations of his title into English in order to draw out the word’s more negative connotations, settling for ‘celebs’, which works (in British English at least) to evoke modern-day celebrity in its more superficial and self-obsessed aspects. [Author’s note: Peter shares with us an extract from that novel in “The Art of Seeing,” below.] Peter’s instincts are against fame: he grew up in a small village where the balance between privacy and recognition was won by careful negotiation. He is becoming less interested in publication, he feels; is seeking less external validation over time. When his first book became a Danish bestseller, Peter cultivated discretion over celebrity. Later on, as Chairman of the Danish Association of Fiction Writers, he lamented the way that public and administrative duties encroached on time devoted to his writing practice.

Are his clients aware of his *alter ego*? “I never talk to clients about my writing projects; I keep the two worlds very divided,” although he has talked about Rolfiging SI to some of his writing friends and colleagues, and encountered both curiosity and scepticism among them.

Do you ever use your experiences with your clients as a direct resource for your writing? No, Peter replies, “Never.” But: “Rolfiging [SI] has taught me to build up a characterization at a very deep level. My characters have become more complex,” based on concise, closely-observed bodily descriptions. It’s a style that’s reflected in the writers he admires, such as Nabokov, Faulkner, and Dinesen: a use of language that is spare, rigorous; an orchestration of language that ‘plays the rests’ as much as the music. They are also each in their different ways markedly sensual writers. We return to the theme of ‘corticality’, and to our shared frustration that a love of words is sometimes misrecognized and misrepresented in the Rolfiging community. Language is also, after all, a profoundly *bodied* experience, whether vocally or in writing. Certainly, I’m reminded of this every time I struggle to articulate the sounds and rhythms of a second language, along with the aches and pains that accompany long periods of writing. “Sometimes I feel the dance of the fingers,” Peter says, evoking the physicality of writing, the way that language arrives through the body: fingers and hands, lips and tongue.

Rolfiging SI is not especially well-known in Denmark, where there are at present only fifteen Rolfers in a population of nearly six million. For Peter, this is not a concern, not least as he has a waiting list of four years to see new clients. A little incredulously, I ask whether they wait that long. Peter is sanguine. “Rolfiging [SI] is not necessarily the

kind of thing that should be well-known, if that would entail a watering-down of our work. There’s a serendipity to finding Rolfiging [SI] at a certain moment in one’s life. And it’s a participative process on the part of the client. I’m in the fortunate position where the clients who are willing to wait that long are the ones who are seeking to experience Rolfiging [SI] transformationally. The people who only want their knee fixed will go elsewhere, and that’s fine.”

He’s right, of course. Rolfiging SI has always been more than the sum of its parts, sustained more by its ideas than, narrowly, its techniques, which we have always shared with (and made available to) other disciplines. The world of “words, words, words” (as Shakespeare’s Danish prince reminds us) is home both to the Rolfer and the writer.

*Peter Legård Nielsen completed his Rolfiging training in 2007 in Munich, taught by Pierpaola Volpones and Peter Schwind in Phase 1, Frances Hatt-Arnold and Christoph Sommer in Phase 2, and Dorit Schatz and Gerhard Hesse in Phase 3. In 2012 he took the Advanced Training with Peter Schwind and Christoph Sommer. He has a clinic in the center of Copenhagen, Denmark (www.rolfer.dk www.peterlegardnielsen.dk).*

*Naomi Wynter-Vincent is a Certified Advanced Rolfer and holds a PhD in psychoanalysis and literature. Her first book, Wilfred Bion and Literary Criticism, is forthcoming from Routledge. Her websites are www.londonrolfiging.com and www.naomiwyntervincent.com.*

## The Art of Seeing

### An Extract from the Novel *De kendte* (‘Celebs’)

By Peter Legård Nielsen, Certified Advanced Rolfer™, Rolf Movement® Practitioner

*Translated from the Danish by Peter Legård Nielsen*

The light fell through the window. Though east-facing, the sun came in throughout the day. Actually the room was a little too small, but he had chosen it as the location was central. On top of that he liked the stucco of angels’ faces and the room’s high ceiling. The park where Alexander had been knocked down was just next door. He could see it through the sunlit window panes. The uncomfortable experience of that morning remained with him.

His first client of the day was on the table. He turned away from the window and sat on a stool.

Taking hold of her cranium, he lifted it with both hands, one under the back of her head while the other held her forehead, letting his index finger hover over her nose without touching.

She lay relaxed, covered by a thick, off-white plaid. Her blonde hair fanned across

the sheet like a wing. Her blue eyes were closed.

For a moment he sat there letting his impressions deepen. He was tired, having slept so little, but he hadn’t wanted to take the day off after the funeral, though both Sean and Therese had suggested it. There were too many clients waiting to see him, and it would be unmanageable to cancel any, as he wouldn’t have known how to fit them into an already crowded calendar.



He could see dreams circling the woman's head, both those of her previous night and those on the way towards her, which she would dream during the following days and weeks. As always, one dream from the night just passed was stronger than the others, located just above the top of her head. He gathered his attention around it.

He could still feel how the fear and the alertness from the visit at the hospital were present in him. The red scarf kept reappearing in front of him, like the cloth used by the bullfighter to taunt the bull.

It seemed to him that the commingling of predator and prey was an unavoidable and uncanny characteristic of man. He often wondered about it, sitting here in his office with his hands at work on a client's body, looking at the stucco of the angels' faces. As predators, we could hunt and kill in the most bestial ways. As prey, we could communicate, make sense of where we were, and keep an eye out for danger not yet manifested, reporting it to each other without words or signs. It happened on other levels, through the senses. It was the flock keeping watch and exchanging knowledge through invisible signals. He sensed the field created by the human animal as a web that might give or contract to his touch. He held this web in his hands.

Over time his hands had gone from being tools for grabbing to being tools for sensing. He had not known or heard that such a thing was possible. Quite often he dropped things by accident, partly, probably, because their function had found a new location in the brain. It was as though they sometimes had forgotten what they were originally intended to do.

To his surprise there were no limits to how subtly he could train their sensing. This discovery had come as a shock to him. Talking to colleagues, he would say that this sensitivity could undoubtedly be explained by neurotransmitters, mirror neurons, and the plasticity of the brain, but in this moment he didn't care, focused on the client as he was. None of those he had spoken to had recognized it. It gave him that weird feeling of being odd, like being back home with his father and Ida.

He sensed that an eroticization of his visual nerve had taken place. A deepening of sensing and perspective, it was as if colors themselves were clearer, vibrating.

Peter breathed almost imperceptibly.

He sensed that his client felt seen. He had never felt that his clients came to him with symptoms that were not real, for all that there seemed to be enough practitioners standing ready to tell them that they were hypochondriacs. It created great trust between him and his clients.

A momentary sense of sorrow rose within him. An image of his father's coffin, sliding into the ground, came to his vision. Then he turned his attention back to the woman on the table.

He often felt that empathy was the strongest guideline. For a moment it was as if a strong pillar of light, almost a lighthouse beam, shone from his chest.

Through his hands he could feel tension, a slight torsion of the neck, where his client's whiplash had locked it. It continued up into the skull, from the back of the head toward the sinus and the eye on the same side. He followed it the other way, down through the body. All the while he registered a parallel tension going into the heart, allowing the first to draw him to an area in the pelvis, close to the sit bone, where it attached, and from here farther into the leg, under the knee, through the lower leg to the ankle and foot, to a point that held between the big toe and the second toe. He held the line of his client's tension until slowly it started to let go, finally released. The woman breathed deeply.

Beneath the whiplash there was a further tension that seemed to him to originate fetally. Peter sensed it as a discrepancy with her mother. When a client had had an accident or traumatic experience, he often found that something had happened before at that same place, as if it had become weaker or less protected by the body.

It seemed as if something had happened during the pregnancy. The dream pulled him in that direction. He checked for the echo of her birthing cry. It was nestled close to the heart, a sign that her birth had progressed as it should. As always he was moved, almost in tears when he felt it.

– Were you conceived by artificial insemination?, he asked.

The woman opened her eyes and looked at him.

– Yes, why?

– It seems that you don't have a midline, he said.

He had seen it already, when she stood in front of him in her underwear, before laying down on the table.

It was nothing dangerous. The theory was that when the sperm penetrated the egg in a natural way, it did so through the midline. That didn't happen during an artificial insemination. It was arbitrary where the sperm was injected by the pipette. But the midline could be recreated.

– Is that why I always lose my way?, she asked.

Once again he sensed that she felt seen, and probably had done so, since she stood in front of him on the floor.

– It's very possible, he answered. But there could be other reasons.

In his mind he moved to the brain: listening for, observing tension in or around it.

– It will become clear when we have recreated your midline, he said. We don't have to guess.

There was tension in the left hemisphere of her skull. In his mind, Peter extended the reach of his hand, moved in to loosen it.

The woman began to weep, silently.

He returned to the feeling of nerve tension that ran along the spine and entered the heart. He followed it. She started to sob. He sensed her heart had contracted in pain. His hands perceived it as a shell, encircling a hard tension. At last he held it all between his hands. The heart shivered, trying to open and close, to release, but couldn't, not daring to let go.

Peter searches. He feels there is more in the heart, something not yet manifested, as the body is afraid to show it to the woman, perhaps because her everyday consciousness can't bear it.

He senses that the tension is very old. It feels fibrous, almost like rotten wood, moss-green inside the heart.

He waits. Something in the darkness between the chambers in the unknown seems to shiver, drifting, like clouds across the sky. It feels as though a tension like wool or cotton scuds lightly into his hands. It was not there before. He senses a connection: from the heart to the diaphragm, through the stomach to the navel.

As he brings his finger to the vagus nerve, through the skin at the neck and the diaphragm, the woman takes a deep

breath, bringing him with her, down under the surface of the sea. He glides down through muddied, brown water, all the time downwards. He's aware that they are in her subconscious, surrounded by a vast sea. The smaller sea of the woman's subconscious is shielded by mountains that rise from beneath the water, that connect through several valleys. He can sense that she feels an old fear. He sinks further down, mindful of her capacity to bear this. In front of him is a long rope that might be a steel wire. He moves along it. Touches it. The twisted fibers or strings of steel. At the end of the rope is an anchor buried deep within sand. He tries to lift it, but it is stuck. After considering it he slowly, carefully pushes it further into the sand, through a rusty metal ring. From here, he can collapse it and pull it out. Like a lure on a fishing line it races in front of him up through the water. As they reach the surface, he shifts his point of view; sees it glide from below, through her diaphragm, close to her solar plexus. It is the releasing of the vagus nerve. The woman lets out a weak gasp, as the anchor moves from unconsciousness into consciousness. It was ready, or else he would not have been allowed to free it and bring it up.

He can sense the woman as an infant and her anxiety of something that seems unlimited, and that she is trying to control. But what she is feeling may in reality be her parents' fear of her unboundedness and her ability to penetrate the surroundings.

He imagines that the growing egg even within its first weeks seeks the mother from the inside, in an infinite love for her, hard to endure, precisely because it has no limits.

After a moment he senses that they are far back in time; she is lying in her mother's womb as a fetus. The body remembers the details exactly. He feels her heart, the connection to the navel. From here the umbilical cord grows as a rolling twine that curves into the placenta and attaches itself to her mother's blood vessels. It pulls him into her imaginary body. In this moment it is real, felt, for all that it is such a long time ago. Both he and the woman have to perceive it like this, or the body won't respond. He glides through the arteries. She senses it. They are in the same dreamlike state.

They reach the mother's heart. A connection arises through time, through the woman. He holds the attachment or the tension until

a small, white object emerges in its deepest part. He sees a snake or a dragon, a creature that is, perhaps, her mother's embryonic resistance to the embryo, her body as yet unused to containing the shining little being. Suddenly the tension lets go, runs fast as lightening through her arteries, into the placenta, through the navel and up into the woman's heart, that also lets go.

She makes a jerking movement.

– Oh!, she exclaims.

Tears are streaming down her cheeks. He feels how the suffering disappears. It spreads to his own body. His nerves vibrate as tendons with hers. Her hurt feelings reverberate through him like an echo, and he lets it go.

A deep relaxation spreads within her.

She looks up at him.

– You saw it too, didn't you?

– Yes.

Shortly after, he gets up, and moves to work on her lower legs.

## Gravity in Inner Space; Gravity in Outer Space

### A Review of Two Books

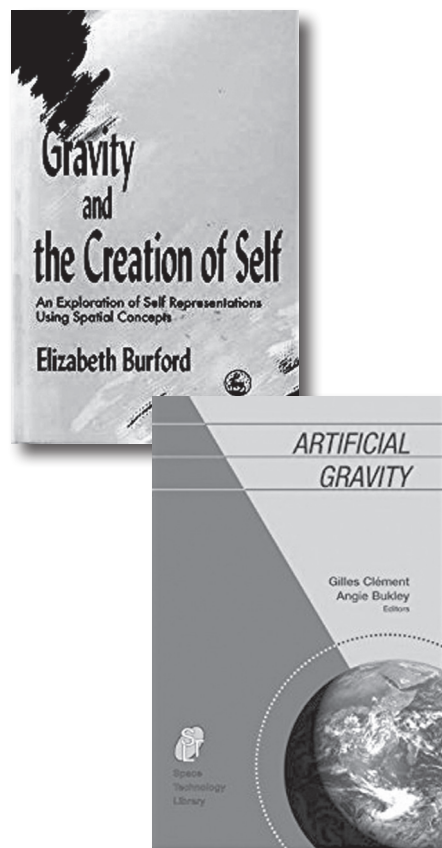
Reviewed by Szaja Charles Gottlieb, Certified Advanced Rolfer™

*Gravity and the Creation of Self: An Exploration of Self Representations Using Spatial Concepts* by Elizabeth Burford (Jessica Kingsley Publishers 1998)

*Artificial Gravity* edited by Giles Clement and Angie Buckley (Microcosm Press 2007)

These two books are not directly related to the practice of structural integration (SI), but they are about the subject of gravity, and they approach the subject from two different perspectives, which might be referred to as the phenomenological and the empirical. Elizabeth Burford, a British psychotherapist, discusses in her book *Gravity and the Creation of Self* the role gravity plays in childhood

development and explores how children project their emotional states in drawings and in other shape-creating activities such as sandbox play, in effect revealing their emotional landscape. (In my article on page 9 in this issue, "The Earthbound Metaphysic," I discuss the relevancy of Burford's ideas in relation to the transformative potential of Roling® SI.) *Artificial Gravity*, on the other hand, is a technical book, a collection of scientific papers by experts analyzing problems associated with space travel due to the lack of the normal gravitational force of 1g that we enjoy on the planet. No one will doubt the importance of our evolutionary inheritance, our adaptation to 1g gravity, after reading these books, particularly *Artificial Gravity*.



## Inner Space

Gravity and space are treated by Burford as psychological phenomena. In line with Piaget, one of the founders of the field of childhood psychology, Burford posits that mechanical forces imprint the external and internal patterning of the individual, particularly in the first seven years of life when cortical functions are not yet highly developed. First and foremost, according to Burford, is the upright position, an assertion by the child in relation to gravity. This spatial assertion is not simply physical but emotional and psychological as well. Using the techniques commonly known in the field of art therapy, Burford reveals the emotional content hidden within the drawings of her young clients. The analysis examines spatial placement of objects but also natural settings, such as mountains or valleys, holes or protuberances, tunnels, etc. The psychological narrative Burford musters from these drawings opens the symbolic dimension of space more familiar to the artist, dancer, or sculptor but actually ever-present in daily life.

That space and gravity are perceptual and have emotional content may not be a convenient truth for practitioners who want to practice the Ten Series as a physical process and disregard the client's psychosomatic processes. The perceptions of the client, however, in regards to his own body and the space around him play a large part in whether the SI process is successful. This is probably what Dr. Rolf meant when she said, "There comes a time in the course of Rolfing [SI], when you see that your Rolfee is able to align himself, but he doesn't want to do it. He just doesn't want to do it. There is always a physical factor in him which doesn't want to do it; there is often a psychological factor involved as well" (Rolf 1978, 85). That Rolf was familiar with the phenomenological aspects of space and gravity is obvious from her discussion of Gaston Bachelard's epistemological profile (Rolf 1978, 45). (Bachelard is the French philosopher and phenomenologist who wrote *The Poetics of Space*, in which he discusses the psychological import of familiar spatial entities such as house, nests, corners, and shells.) Similarly, Burford discusses the psychological import of space and even spatial language – words such as ascent, descent, buoyancy, sink, swim, hanging on, lifting up, lying down are all based on the all-important up/down axis.

*Gravity and the Creation of Self* seems to be a book largely ignored since its publication, yet for me it was a revelation, speaking directly to me as a structural integrator. I view it as a minor classic and think that any practitioner – particularly those who work with children and/or are interested in the perceptual aspects of our work – would immensely benefit from the experience of following the therapeutic process as achieved by Burford in her work with children. That experience will certainly spill over to working with adults as well.

Unfortunately, my excitement with the book became tempered when, after contacting the publisher, I was informed that Burford had died in 2013. Up to that point I had stockpiled a considerable number questions in relation to what would occur if, in cooperation with a psychotherapist, one could track how a child's spatial relation and emotional landscape would be affected by the SI process. Alas, it will remain a question, for now, that hangs in the air without answer.

## Outer Space

The problem of microgravity during space travel was first taken up in the 1950s. In 1952 *Collier's Magazine* (no longer in existence) published a visual conceptualization by then-famous scientist Werner von Braun of a spinning space station designed to counteract the effects of microgravity. The full extent of the problems the human structure undergoes when gravitational force disappears was not completely apparent, however, until human space flight began in 1961 and the much longer sojourns in space were experienced on the space station in the late twentieth century. In short, the human structure, a product of millions of years of evolution in 1g gravity, does not do well when this practically unnoticeable constant of our daily life on earth is missing.

The full range of problems is massive. Beginning with constant deterioration of bone and muscle, at an approximate rate of 1% per month, moving on to cardiovascular deconditioning as bodily fluids do not descend to the lower body; the interruption of sensorimotor skills as well as the vestibular senses; physiological deconditioning; and breakdowns in the body's homeostatic regulatory mechanisms, such as electrolyte balance, hormone synthesis, etc. The aforesaid issues do not include psychological problems from

isolation or the constant bombardment of cosmic rays. One can safely say that the trip to Mars, which will be over 900 days, will be vastly different than Columbus's voyage – Other World rather than New World in its challenges. The only solution to these problems, according to the editors of the book, is the creation of artificial gravity by rotation of the spacecraft sufficient to produce 1g gravity force, or at the very least a short-arm human centrifuge device aboard the spacecraft or planet to maintain physiologic conditioning.

As I mentioned previously, *Artificial Gravity* is not about SI, but it is about how the body acts in the gravitational field, and that makes the excursion through this book full of interesting observations that do relate to our field. Just how dependent on normal gravity our physiology is becomes painfully obvious in chapter after chapter detailing how almost every level of human functioning is affected. For example, it is well known that when astronauts return to earth after a stay in space, their stability is affected. The postural responses described in the subchapter "The Role of Gravity" are enlightening in terms of SI: "... all returning crewmembers have observable behavioral changes. Most adopt a wide stance and gait with their feet farther apart than normal. ... Many minimize head movements and some move their head-trunk segments *en bloc*, presumably to avoid disorientation, instability, and motion sickness."

The central nervous system and the related vestibular systems, note the writers, are inextricably related to the presence of gravity.

I must say that after reading *Artificial Gravity* I was totally in awe of just how much every one of our systems is dependent on 1g gravity to function efficiently. While it is no proof to the efficacy of SI, it sure made me feel as if we, as SI practitioners, are playing in the right ballpark.

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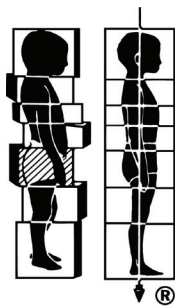
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