

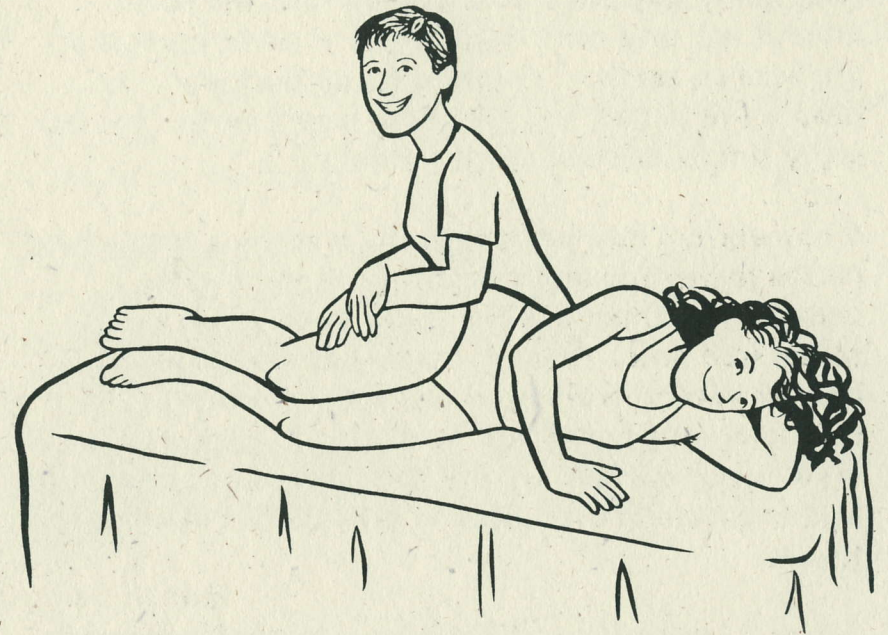
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CLIENT HANDBOOK for
Dr. Ida P. Rolf's Method of
STRUCTURAL INTEGRATION



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A FEW WORDS TO BEGIN

I'd like to start by saying a few words about exactly why I'm in this profession, what draws me to body-work.

When I was out of high school for a bit, I set about on a mental search for something I could do. I was looking for some unrecognized talent that I may possess, something that could possibly improve the world around me, and contribute to the positive aspects of life here on earth. I sought a trade that would help people live better, or at the very least counter the rigors of simply existing on this planet.

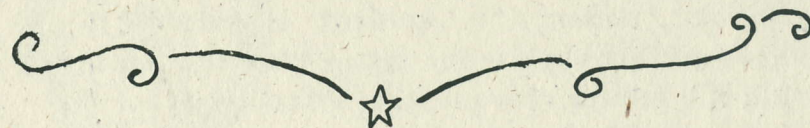
Meanwhile, I had been casually reading a book about massage therapy and practicing on my friends because it seemed like the thing to do, a fun way to spend free time. Finally, I saw that my hobby could be a wonderful profession. Massage therapy is a fabulous way to nurture yourself, to instantly improve your outlook on life, to soothe aches and pains and to accelerate the healing process for traumatized tissue.

When I learned about Structural Integration and its possibilities, it seemed like the next logical step to me. This work really changes people. It opens them up, frees them from past traumas, and allows them to grow and thrive.

Structural Integration is an educational process. This booklet is meant to help you understand what the work is, why you might want to try it, how you can get the most out of it, and what to expect when you show up for a session. Please take it home and read, study and think about these ideas in relation to your own

goals for your body.

Feel free to ask me to explain or elaborate, and I will try my hardest not to confuse you with my answer.



IN BRIEF

In one sentence, Structural Integration is a ten-session series of deep manipulation of the connective tissue (fascia) of the body.

The general goal of the work is to achieve balance around and through an energetic core in the body, allowing gravity to support the structure, rather than drag it down.

In equipoise, the body is able to conform more nearly to its inherent pattern of joyous radiance, health and vitality.



To understand what this means, we'll have to wade through some technical stuff together, so bear with me.

FASCIA

Structural Integration practitioners see the body as being vitally supported by an incredibly intricate web of connective tissue, fascia. Fascia determines our shape, it encases each muscle, each visceral organ, each bone, tendon, and ligament. If you were to remove everything but the fascia from the body, you would still have a recognizably intact model of the human body, guts and all.

Healthy fascia is malleable and resilient, it allows adjacent structures to glide smoothly over one another, each taking on its own individual task.

With trauma or dis-ease, afflicted fascial layers become adhered to one another, they lose elasticity and flow. Individual structures become glued together, causing adjacent structures to tug on one another, contributing to general weariness, tension, and pain.

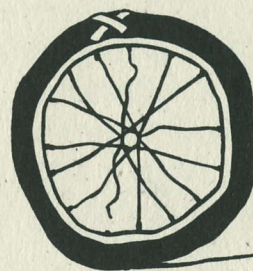
THE PHYSIOLOGICAL BODY

Fascia is our organ of compensation and repair. Consider this:

The body is set up Kind of like a bicycle wheel. The balanced tension of the spokes (our muscles and fascial web) allows energy to flow through evenly and with the help of gravity we can roll merrily on down the road. Inevitably, we hit a bump or a pothole that knocks our wheel out of "true", loosens a spoke or two, and sends us



wobbling on our way. One small injury affects the integrity of the whole machine. If the wheel is



thup... thup... thup...

not fixed, time increases the damage ~ the rim of the wheel is gradually worn away by the rub of the brake

pad and needs to be retired sooner than a well-maintained wheel. (Not to mention the wasted energy the bicycle rider spent pushing against his or her own brakes.)

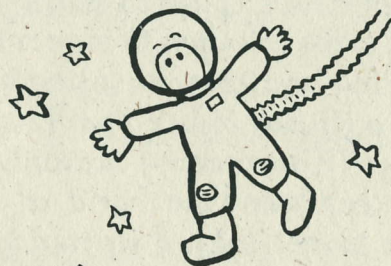
A wheel, unfortunately, cannot repair itself, but our ever-amazing bodies can. To correct and/or stabilize our own wobble, our own loose spoke, (sprained ankle, broken heart, crushed hand) the fascial system will lay down extra collagen to support a weakened area, splinting and compensating by using other structures to do a job our injured part is temporarily incapable of doing. This amazing capability allows us to stay on our feet, keep using our hand, or jump back into action much sooner than if we had to wait for full recovery.

The downside of this is that the patterns of splinting and compensation remain well after their intended use, stretching out into the far regions of the body for support and sometimes becoming a greater challenge than the original injury. We get bogged down in old wounds ~ physical and emotional ~ and our bodies have to work with a depleted energy source on a day-to-day basis, making life just a little harder than it has to be, and complicating the healing process of brand new wounds.

FUNCTION FOLLOWS FORM, FORM REFLECTS FUNCTION

This basic concept is the root of Dr. Rolf's theory of Structural Integration. Impaired form, such as an injured wrist, will impair the function of the wrist. Very simple. Her idea was to turn that equation around and improve the structure, the form of the body as a whole, and thus, improve the functioning of the whole living being.

As an example of this, consider the fact that astronauts begin losing calcium in their bones within 24 hours of leaving the influence of gravity. Their joints decompress, and upon returning to the earth's gravitational pull, it takes months and sometimes years for their systems to regain their former integrity. Having left the functional demands of gravity, their bodies discard unnecessary form.



THE EMOTIONAL BODY

I'd like to elaborate a little bit about how our bodies reflect our emotional selves. Too often in this culture we consider our brains (our emotional and psychological selves) and our bodies (our anatomical and physiological selves) to be separate entities. Please disregard that notion entirely.

The fact is, the body is the interface between the individual spirit and the rest of the world, and it mirrors our emotional selves openly.

The ^{*}myofascial system is sensitive to our needs. It will attempt to bolster whatever posture we embrace for an extended period of time. If, as a teenager, you sprouted up to be a foot taller than anyone else and slouched to escape attention, your body will adjust



myofascially to that insecure posture and it becomes difficult to break out of it on your own. Indeed, this posture becomes "normal", an unconscious reflection of a shy adolescent you thought you had long ago liberated. Can you see how this simple formula can dramatically reflect any number of different possibilities? Chronic anger, depression, fear... manifested in the tissues of the body, literally trapping a spirit that yearns for room to exist fully.

*muscular + fascial = myofascial

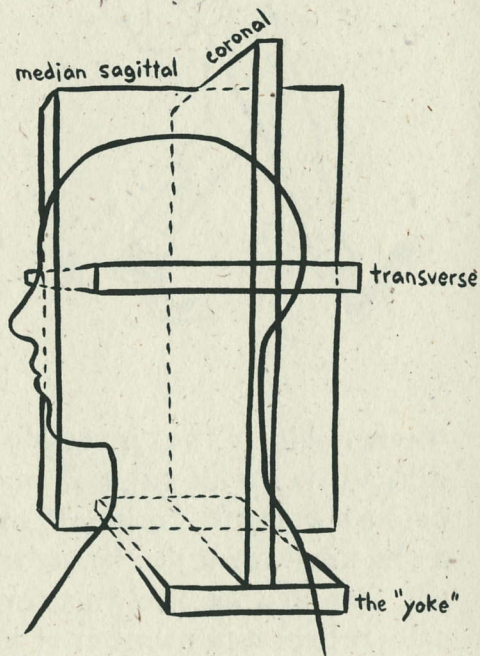
BALANCE

What is meant by balance is this: your head balanced over your neck and shoulders, your shoulders balanced over your waist and hips, your hips balanced over your knees, your knees balanced over your ankles, and your weight balanced into your feet evenly.

Balance in Structural Integration also means that your weight is distributed evenly from front to back, from left to right, and from inside to outside.

It's not about posture, it's about freedom; it's about allowing your head to rise, and your spine to lengthen, and your feet to embrace the earth.

Please keep in mind that this is a goal, not an expectation. Structural "perfection" is nearly impossible to maintain in a living, breathing, trauma-collecting human being. Significant progress, however, is well within our grasp, and you will notice that a step in the right direction can bring an incredible sense of lightness and relief.

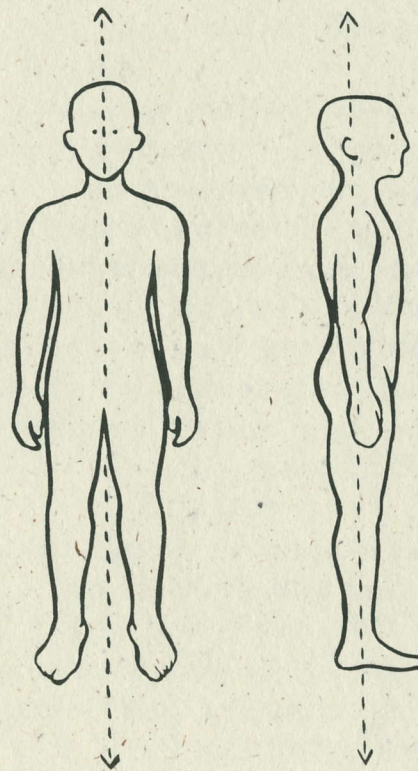


~ 3-D BALANCE ~

THE ROLF LINE

One of the tools we will use to introduce balance is known as the Rolf Line. The Line is an energetic core, a line of vertical intention that gives us our center of strength, reaching into the earth through the bottoms of our feet and out into the universe through the tops of our heads. When we are "on our line", we are allowed to feel gravity as a supporting source of energy instead of as a crushing weight.

In a war between gravity and man, gravity always wins. Since gravity is here to stay, we might as well be friends.



The Rolf Line is a useful tool to help you learn about and embody the work we are doing together.

Understand that the more you are willing to embrace and encourage the changes in your body, the farther we can go with them.

THE EMOTIONAL BODY, REVISITED

Many times, when people hear of this work, they hear that people will have amazing emotional releases. In some cases this is true.

Most of the time, when we are injured, either physically or psychologically, the protective response of the body is to clamp down, to contract and brace against pain or further injury. This is a natural reaction; it's part of the "fight or flight" response of our autonomic nervous system.

Emotions, whatever their source, are basically communicated biochemically throughout the body. They have a real, physical existence in your tissue.

If, as part of your "fight or flight" pattern, you clamp down on some emotional sludge as it is feeding its message to that particular tissue, that message will remain there until you let it go. Sometimes that doesn't happen until months and years have gone by and you've decided to participate in a series of Structural Integration sessions. Unfortunately, the emotions we release from these ensnared tissues are usually negative~When we're happy and joyful, there's not much need for the "fight or flight" response.

This kind of release doesn't happen for everybody. Also, it's generally agreed that your body will not release anything until you are ready to deal with it. Dr. Rolf did not originally intend her work to evoke emotional discharge; this aspect turned up as a soul-freeing side effect as the work progressed.

WHAT'S IT LIKE?

A typical session of Structural Integration lasts anywhere between 60 and 90 minutes. The client wears his or her underwear for this work, and in the beginning of each session, will participate in a postural evaluation, perhaps taking photographs as a seeing aid, or using a big full-length mirror.

The work itself is primarily a coaxing of awareness into structures in the body that may be half asleep or long forgotten, gently reminding them of their own unique function, and inviting them to perform that function again.

As I stated earlier, this is an educational process. Together we will attempt to guide your body into patterns that will more efficiently serve you as a living, moving being.

* wear undies you're comfortable
being seen in!

