

THE BASIC TREATMENT "RECIPE" HOW IT WAS DEVELOPED AND *EXACTLY* WHAT IT CONSISTS OF

By Lou Gross, School Certified Master Postural Integrator
Call 1-888-299-5973 for further information, sessions, consultations, classes & tutorials
louisryoshin@yahoo.com www.backfixbodywork.com

How it was developed and the principles behind its development. Ida P. Rolf had a PhD in Chemical Physiology and studied yoga for many years. Indeed, yoga was the first method she used in trying to help people.

Later, she studied the work of Andrew Stills MD whose practice, in the 1890's was to improve circulation by manipulating the soft connective tissue. And thus he improved physiological as well as structural ailments. Somewhere along the line, his successors' practice became more of a manipulation of the bones, instead of the fascia, and it got named after the bones, "osteop." Dr. Rolf started using this soft tissue manipulation method, combined with her knowledge of yoga, biochemistry, physiology, homeopathy and many other techniques of the human potential movement. She spent many years trying to find out which ways to push the tissue to make a person look and feel better.

In the beginning she tried fixing particular ailments. Her experience led her to realize that you have to lengthen, open, organize and balance the whole body in order to fix the many specifics. She discovered that the different parts of the body are interconnected and a local fix in one place would shift the strain to other places, causing pain or tightness someplace else. She also saw that a body out of alignment with the force of gravity repeatedly tightens just to hold itself up, so releasing tightness in only one area may just be temporary. In addition, she saw that tightness in one area is often caused by tightness someplace else. It's therefore necessary to release the interconnected pulls so that the rest of the structure is not retightened by some unseen tension.

The major principle of her work is to use manipulation of the soft tissue, the fascia, to align the various segments of the body so that their centers of gravity line up, one on top of the other. These segments are the feet and lower legs, the thighs, the pelvis, the abdomen and lower back, the chest and upper back, the shoulders, and the neck and head. You will note that each of these segments, or building blocks, is divided from its neighbors by a large, significant joint. So the body is not a single unified entity, but rather an entity comprised of an aggregate of segments that can be organized to function independently from one another and, at the same time, to function together in a very integrated manner. When this is done, and even when it is partly done, all the other benefits of the treatment occur at the same time because lengthening, organizing and balancing is inherent in those changes. While soft tissue manipulation was known before, it is this alignment with the field of gravity that makes Structural Integration so unique, and so powerful. Dr. Rolf emphasized that in her treatment, gravity was being used as a tool. And as I have described in my books, vertical alignment with gravity adds a dimension to one's state of being that just looseness and length does not embody.

Dr. Rolf often stated that while humans are the most erect creatures yet evolved, we do not grow up with the degree of erectness we are biologically capable of. By structurally integrating someone, this erectness appears, and with it, the function of that body is significantly improved, physiologically as well as in movement. It is important to realize that we are not just loosening tightness that's accumulated along the way, simply fixing aches, pains

or stiffness. We are doing much more than bringing a person back to a condition that he or she used to experience. Adults have a much different body structure and operation from small children. And when we organize their bodies, whether or not we are removing acute or chronic discomfort, we are creating a much "better" functioning individual than the person has been in his entire life. Rolf emphasized that this was a way to educate the body, to teach it how to work better than it has ever worked before, and that this education represented a significant step for humankind in its evolution toward full erectness. Structural Integration makes humans work a lot better while living on the surface of the earth.

So Structural Integration is both a therapy to correct physical problems and a system to create an evolutionary improvement in a person's whole being. We fix ailments at the same time we radically alter the state of physical being in relation to the energy field of the earth. And in the following explanation of the Basic Recipe's steps, I have described how the ailments get better with the same manipulations that are gradually and steadily organizing and aligning the person's structure.

Rolf was encouraged to teach her work, lest it die with her. And she realized that in order to do so, she would need a procedure, a system, with which to teach people about structure and how to integrate it. She developed the process you are now going to investigate more closely. This process is quite extraordinary in its organization and thoroughness, and it shows how well she understood the way bodies are put together and how they should work. Remember, nobody told her this part about aligning the body segments with gravity. She discovered it after many years of pushing tissue. And in so doing, she learned how bodies work the best, how joints are the most comfortable, and so on.

The basic treatment "recipe" consists of three phases divided into 10 steps, where each step works a particular area of the body. This is followed by "advanced" sessions either right away and/or over the next year or two. These continuing treatments lengthen and integrate deeper structures which become available to be worked as the body segments integrate in the field of gravity. And in addition, routine "tune ups" to get rid of recently created tightness also add to the organization and erectness after gravity has done some of its work.

After each step of the process, a person will be more integrated and organized than at the end of the last step. And by using this process, can be brought closer and closer toward that alignment with gravity and into that whole body integrated movement.

There are a few notable features of the Basic Recipe. The releases and organizations come in layers, from the surface toward the deeper structures and from the periphery toward the center. Sections are improved in a sequence that follows the natural way the body itself wants to open. So each step along the way creates some looseness and un-stuckness in the next area to be worked. It's as if we go through a building unlocking one door after another as we proceed from room to room. The first two phases open up all the body segments and do a certain amount of organization. In the last phase, the practitioner uses body reading and hands-on manipulations to move this more malleable structure into a more overall top to bottom organization. In these ways, applying the recipe on client after client is in itself, a teaching mechanism, so that the student, on his or her own, learns more and more about structure by applying the treatment.

Dr. Rolf originally talked about one hour per step, but in reality, to do a thorough job on most people, each step usually takes one and a half to two hours and some often take longer, particularly when a person is very large and/or very tight. When helping someone who has been in pain for a long time, the entire treatment takes longer for a few reasons. First, the structure is invariably very tight and hard, and there is often poor tissue physiology because of inadequate nutrition. This can make the experience somewhat painful if a lot of tissue is moved quickly. Finally, some of the areas have to be done a few times as a pain removal, stress removal and "symptom loosening" therapy. But for most people, eventually the overall structure is sufficiently lengthened and much more organized. However, serious athletes such as

professionals and Olympians tend to be in better physiological condition than the average person in chronic pain. So even those who get the treatment for pain or injury find it a satisfying experience. In sports tune-up or first aid, a full "recipe" application is not necessary. But in order to do this approach intelligently, having a practitioner who understands the mechanics of the recipe *is* necessary.

Steps 1, 2 and 3 comprise Phase I of the treatment which loosen and lengthen the "shell" or "sleeve" of the body, comprising many of the outer muscles and fascia. From this phase alone, people have felt much improvement that has lasted for months.

Step 1 works the thoracic, or rib, cage on the front and between the shoulder blades in the back. Then it loosens the arms and hands, which actually feel and look longer. And then it releases the whole outside of the pelvis including the ilio-tibial tract down the outside of the thighs and the biceps femoris hamstrings on the back of the thighs. We also free the tissue on the outer surface of the ischium, or sitting bones, on the bottom of the pelvis, and then some of the sacro-iliac area at the base of the spine and top of the pelvis.

This first step deals with creating "inspiration," the inhalation of deeper, fuller breaths with the whole torso, including some movement of the spine and pelvis. It removes a layer of general tension in the body and removes a certain amount of restriction in the movement of the hip joints and pelvis. Lengthening and separating the arm muscles also improves dexterity and it actually releases tension in the chest and back, and even somewhat all the way down to the feet.

This step also somewhat frees the muscles of the lower back and part of the hamstrings. It makes lifting the legs, running and general movement better and easier. And it diminishes the chance of hamstring injury a little bit. Since six acupuncture meridians, or energy channels of the body are in the arms, this work helps strengthen and balance the body's organ energy system.

The opening and loosening of the rib cage allows the back and spine to "let go" and this relaxes tension in the pelvis and hip joints. That makes lengthening of these areas with the next strokes easier. Releasing the pelvis on the outside, and lengthening the outside of the thighs, releases their pull, or tension, that goes down to the feet and lower legs, so Step 2 in those areas will be able to be done a little easier. Releasing the rib cage also allows the upper back to lie flatter with less tension, and it also releases the neck from some strain.

With each step of the "recipe," we are removing the tight constriction a "body suit" that has been held too small. When we free the rib cage and pelvis, we give "more room" to the inner muscle and bone structures of these two big bony "containers." And in general, the lengthening proceeds from the center out. This "opens up" the areas. In line with another principle of body structure, we loosen the more lateral, or side muscles before loosening the more medial areas, those nearer the middle of the body. This allows each part of the structure to open into more "space."

Step 2 works the lower legs and feet and the interconnections of the back of the lower legs into the hamstrings on the back of the thighs, and then up through the buttocks into the lower back. It gives people a better "stance" in the world, so to speak. And by loosening from the lower back down to the heels and arches, it "connects" the pelvis and lower back all the way to the ground. This muscular loosening allows the sensory nerves to give our brains more feeling about what's happening in those areas. This sensory improvement together with the actual muscular lengthening gives people more of a feeling of groundedness. There's also a feeling of more "aliveness" in the legs, and they have more flexibility and neuro-muscular power. The legs also feel noticeably lighter, and at the same time they're giving the body more support. Sometimes fallen arches are improved a bit, although a large correction of that misalignment often requires the deeper lengthening of Steps 4 and 6.

Runners notice they can push off better with their toes. With all steps, needed recovery time from athletics becomes shorter. And so, each time the legs are done, recovery time from running gets better and there's less soreness that also goes away sooner. Because some of the tightness and hardness has been lengthened and softened, there's less chance of hamstring, tendon and knee joint injury. And since the hamstring and buttock muscles directly integrate with those in the lower back, lengthening them makes the lower back somewhat freer and sometimes more pain free. Deep hamstring and buttock lengthening and loosening (especially after step 6 is also done) releases tension all the way up the back into the neck. Since there are six other acupuncture energy meridians in the legs, this step adds to the organ energy improvement.

When we can get a good lengthening, Step 2 gives a sense of support to the lower back, from the length we made in the lower legs, hamstrings and buttocks, and from the organization we created in the feet. It's important to do Step 2 and create this support before we do Step 3 because we don't want to loosen the shoulders while the lower parts of the body are still very bunched up and misaligned. This would cause the very top parts to fall into the requirement of holding up the upper back. This can cause pain, especially in people who are already in pain in the upper back. The legs and lower torso should provide that support.

Step 3 works the sides of the torso. It starts by going deeper into the sides of the pelvis, because lengthening those muscles removes a pull of the sides of the waist and rib cage. Then we lengthen the waist and lower back, so the pelvis is freer to rock back and forth. This will also help as a preparation to "horizontalizing" the pelvis that we'll work on in steps 4, 5 and 6. We want the pelvis to be able to go back to its proper non-tilted position when we lengthen the tensions on it from the legs belly and long back muscles.

Working the sides of the pelvis also removes more pull from the legs and removes pelvic tension that pulls into the legs. This all allows people to stand easier with their legs closer together and takes some strain off the knees and ankles. Technically, this further reduces chronic shortness in the abductors of the hip joints, those muscles on the outsides of the pelvis that pull the legs apart. It makes strides longer, frees tightness from long and triple jumping and makes standing more relaxed.

This part of the step also separates the bottom of the rib cage from the pelvis. The Structural Integration process enables each part of the body to move freely under volitional or automatic control without dragging along other muscles and bones that shouldn't be part of the most efficient and articulate action. This is a primary way it creates economy of effort.

Next, step 3 opens the sides of the rib cage and then the whole shoulder girdle. Here again, we do the sides of the body and then work more of the middle area, including the muscles on the surface of the shoulder blades, those on top of them, those between them that connect them to the spine, and even those underneath them that connect them to the rib cage. These and other manipulations separate the rib cage from the shoulder girdle and from the spine at the neck. In this way the shoulder girdle can act like a free yoke, moving around freely on top of the torso's rib cage and separate from the spine.

We also lengthen the broad muscles of the back, creating more general relaxation and more movement in the torso. And this lengthening helps better interconnect the movement of the arms with the movement of the pelvis and legs. At the same time, it further frees the arms and shoulders from being stuck to the top of the pelvis by shortened lower back muscles. This process includes lengthening the quadratus lumborum deep muscles and the more superficial broad band of thick fascia, both of which connect the bottom of the rib cage to the top rim of the pelvis.

When we combine what we've done in steps 1 and 3, we can envision our upper bodies as rib cages with a set of muscles and bones on top of them that act like a vest over the rib cage, with tails down to the waist (the latissimus) and a high collar to the back of the head (the trapezius), and with arms extending out to the sides. And it now moves very freely.

Step 3 improves our ability to "reach out," which includes all sports activities that use the arms. It also gives "span," the feeling of length and greater moveability in the waist. This work improves breathing, making it deeper and "rounder," and enables breathing to move more of the spine, abdominal organs and shoulders. It removes more back pain and discomfort, allowing us to lie flatter on our backs and twist better from side to side. And it creates some of the most relaxing change in the whole process.

Step 3 actually integrates the work done in steps 1 and 2 with each other, as it lengthens more of the middle of the body and interconnects it with the top and the bottom. And it's important to do the shoulder area in the same session as the waist and side areas, otherwise tension released from the lower areas tends to "rise up" and get caught and accumulate in the shoulders.

Once you finish steps 1, 2 and 3, you'll feel more relaxed and the outer parts of your body will feel freer. These steps loosen, lengthen and broaden large sections of muscle and fascia that cover the whole skeleton. People find that even though Polaroid photos show their zig-zags aren't straightened out yet, and a lot of the muscle bodies are still bunched up deeper down, their joints feel freer and their agility and range of motion has improved. Running, jumping, skating, skiing, swimming, throwing, swinging and hitting are usually all better and broad areas of pain are usually diminished in size and intensity. Often, people find that their chronic pains may have "moved" a bit, but they only re-occur when the people now increase their joints' range of movement and put their bodies into positions they could not get into before.

However, long term back or leg pain and shoulder tension rarely go away for good at this point in the treatment. And some people with significant, long-term lower back and leg tightness, will still feel a lot of their specific problems. Groin muscles and deep leg work have not yet been done. You need the next phase, where we loosen and lengthen the fascia of the deeper muscles that actually control the positions of the bones. These next steps of 4, 5, 6 and 7 in Phase II will also align the body into a more tensionless and better integrated system. At this next depth you will experience how lengthening the legs and abdomen releases tensions in the back and neck that are caused by interconnected tightness from these other areas..

Step 4 begins the "core," where we try to make the pelvis horizontal to the ground. It works what is called the "pelvic floor," which extends down from the groin and bottom of the pelvic bones, through the inner leg muscles, to the medial, or inner, arches of the feet. The work starts at those arches, lengthens the deep muscles along the inside of the calf and then loosens and lengthens the adductors and quadriceps on the inside and front of the thigh. We also free the attachments of these thigh muscles on the bottom bones of the pelvis and loosen and lengthen some of the deeper bunch-up in the groin. Typically, the surface areas of the adductors loosen first, then eventually, we can get to the fascia between the muscles and finally to lengthen the deeper parts of the long muscle bodies themselves.

Step 4 significantly lengthens the front of the legs and puts the legs under the torso. So instead of leaning out forward with the legs and backward with the back, people notice that they are standing more vertically, with their legs "underneath them." Their zig-zags have been somewhat ironed out. This is a major key to eliminating chronic lower back problems and preventing their return.

The results of the Bodywork are simple physics. When the adductors and quadriceps on the front and inner parts of the legs are lengthened, the legs swing out forward less, so the lower back has to tilt backward less and its swayback arch can be seen to have straightened out better.

In addition, lengthening the adductor thigh muscles releases tension on the psoas inside the abdomen. The adductors and psoas can be thought of as one long rope between the front inside of the knee joint and the inside of the lower back. Making the adductor part longer releases the lower end's pulling on the psoas part, and therefore that releases the pull on the lower

back coming from the lower legs. This part of the body has become longer, so the person can stand up straighter, without making a lot of strain; it just stands that way all by itself. Both my clients and I can feel their lower back tension let go as my hands are lengthening their adductors. And when the person stands up, this shows as less tension across the whole lower back.

In 19 years of practice, I have never met a person with chronic low back problems who did not also have very tight adductor and groin muscles. So it is my opinion that without correcting this zig-zag, at least to some degree, all treatments for lower back problems, including chiropractic, nutrition, psychotherapy and surgery, yield only temporary and partial results.

In Step 4 we also lengthen the medial side of the soleus calf muscles that lie underneath the outer gastrocnemius muscles. This releases deep tension between the foot and knee. Lengthening this entire “vertical network” that starts at the inner arch side of the legs, makes the leg stance longer and more upright. And even more than in step 2, it gives us a feeling of greater support at the same time the legs feel lighter (especially when those deeper adductors are freed up). It also helps to make the arches better.

Not only does this step of the recipe significantly reduce the chance of a groin pull, but it also releases tension at the very base of the torso, improving energy flow in the reproductive and eliminative organs and adding another level of relaxation to the whole body. (It also helps meditators get into the cross-legged position easier.)

Step 5 continues the work of step 4 up into the torso. We are trying to lengthen the whole front of the body, from the bottom up. Step 5 works the outside and inside muscles of the abdomen including the psoas. This abdominal lengthening lifts up the chest and actually lengthens and loosens the lower back, from the inside. It releases the diaphragm muscle across the midsection and back of the rib cage and it removes the “forward and down” pull on the neck and head caused by bunched up psoas and abdominals.

Step 5 also releases tension in the pectoralis *minor* muscles of the upper chest, which connect some of the upper ribs to a part of the shoulder blades that stick out *in front* of the collar bone. This release enables the upper part of the chest to lift up even more, and the whole lengthening, starting down by the pelvis, allows the shoulders to “sit back” instead of being pulled down and in. So this helps improve rounded shoulders. Of course, this additional torso lengthening improves breathing some more, it loosens more of the rib cage, and it lets the head and neck lift up further, too.

It’s important to remember that this deeper lengthening in the front of the torso is an extension of the lengthening in the front of the legs we did in step 4. And *all* of it is allowing this uplift and looseness in the very upper torso and neck to occur. We have made the body longer in front, starting right at the ground.

The work in step 5 also loosens and releases the legs from “transmitted” tension, because loosening the psoas releases the legs from some of the tension in the torso. So we’re going back and forth, and round and round, to release one layer of interconnected tightness after another.

Since the front of the torso is now more erect, the back has to pull less to compensate. Thus, steps 1, 2 and 3 loosen the outer muscles of the back and steps 4 and 5 release the pressures and pulls on the inner muscles of the back. So step 5 removes more back tightness and pain. Then we’re ready for step 6.

At the end of Step 5, the body looks longer in front than in back; there’s a backward bow in the side view. But instead of this bow indicating we have tight hamstrings added as compensation on top of tight adductors, we are actually longer all around. This bow shows how much longer we have made the deep muscles in the front of the body, as compared to the back. And this is even when we consider that the back of the body was already lengthened somewhat in steps 1,2 and 3. Even further, there has been a significant loosening of the muscular structure of our very stable yet very flexible ball and socket hip joints, which are located at the bottom of the pelvis where the thigh bones connect to the pelvis.

The pressure is now off from the adductors, outer glutes, psoas and abdominals, and we can proceed with the next step of lengthening the hip rotator muscles that are located deep in the pelvis, underneath the gluteus maximus. Step 6 will also lengthen the back of the legs and the back of the torso.

Two additional acupuncture meridians make a loop around the longer axis of the torso, neck and head. Steps 5, 6 and 7 release obstructions to these flows as well as to all the other 12.

Step 6 works deeply into the back of the body, lengthening the old shortness that no longer needs to tightly compensate, since the front is now no longer as short as it was. The manipulations of step 6 work deeper through the calves, in-between the tendons in the back of the knees, and more deeply and thoroughly into and in-between the hamstrings. Then we work deep inside the buttocks, lengthening the hip rotators that connect the outside top of the thighbones to the sacrum and inside pelvic bones. And we finish by lengthening the long extensor muscles of the back. This back lengthening, in itself, makes a person feel more erect and removes a lot of deep back tension.

After lengthening just the back of the legs to this degree, the pelvis is lifted up in back and balances some of the length in the front of the legs, that we created in Step 4. So the pelvis often looks a lot more horizontal than after Step 4 or Step 5. Yet, sometimes, after just this leg part in Step 6 the pelvis looks tilted down in front. But we have not shortened anything. It's just that the back of the torso is still short between the top of the pelvis and the head. When we lengthen the back of the torso, it brings the pelvis back toward horizontal. Seeing this significant change in the angle of the pelvis can give you a good idea just how short these deeper muscles in the legs and back have been, even after years of athletic stretching, physical therapy and massage.

Step 6 is designed to complete much of the process of making the pelvis horizontal with the ground, which is the key structural reorganization that puts us in harmony with gravity. After each of steps 4, 5 and 6 people feel taller, and after step 6 they feel even more grounded than they did after step 2. Not only is deep back tension removed, but much of the structural reason for retightening it so much is gone.

Once the hamstrings, deep buttocks muscles and extensors of the back are lengthened, athletes can lift their legs higher and easier, and they walk, jog and run faster, easier, smoother as an integrated unit, and with more power. There's a greater sense that the pelvis has a firmer contact with the ground and yet, there's more spring in the legs. This adds to the feeling from Step 4; we actually feel that our legs provide stronger support, yet they feel lighter and more open. Steps 4, 5 and 6 lengthen stride, increase speed and agility, and lessen the chance of leg injuries.

Two more specific pieces will add to the job of "horizontalizing" the pelvis: the head and neck, and the iliocostalis, which release tensions at the top and bottom ends of the whole spinal column. Remember that physiologist-biochemist-yoga practitioner Ida P. Rolf developed the treatment as a sequence. Lengthening the hamstrings and long back muscles in Step 6 actually takes tension away from the jaw and reduces the *need* for any excess neck arch. These releases allow us to get better results when we work the head and neck in Step 7.

Step 7 works the head and neck, including the inside of the mouth, the jaw and the connections inside the face. The head is not solid as many people think. It is a "Chinese puzzle" made up of 25-30 different bones and many, many muscles, ligaments and bands of fascia. It is easily tightened and distorted in shape. Most people don't realize how tight their heads get, and those who get this Bodywork enjoy how light the head feels after the years of accumulated tightness have been removed.

The idea, in the Structural Integration process, is to first align the legs and torso, and then put the head and neck properly on top of them. But the head and neck work also loosens tension accumulated from stress as well as from the general body imbalance, and it clears out trauma and

tightness in the deep recesses of the mouth and skull. Releasing the tension in the head releases the physical restrictions to the flow of the six acupuncture meridians that go up and down the body and the other six that come from the arms. This helps balance the whole energy flow, and sends relaxing, rejuvenating energy to the internal organs, arms, back, legs and feet.

The head muscles and fascia are "pre-vertebral." That means they connect to the front of the spine. Since the neck or "cervical" spine is an anatomical parallel to the lower back, or lumbar spine, releasing the head also, reciprocally, releases the lower back and helps "horizontalize" the pelvis. In fact, loosening the head and neck has a significant effect in loosening the *whole* spine. It's like releasing tension from one end of a clothesline; the whole line has a little more play in it.

All of the visceral organs in the chest and abdomen are suspended with ligaments that attach from bony processes inside the back of the head, near where the cervical spine connects to the skull. The long muscles of the back also "begin" at the same place. So we loosen the area both from where the neck joins the head, via the neck, mouth and face, and from the back, via the skull and the rest of the neck. This has a powerful effect on the torso and legs, and on body metabolism. It also releases some amount of gut emotional tension. Work on the whole head also loosens the chest, abdomen and lower back, through direct muscular inter-connections in the neck, and via neurological reflex points on the skull.

Step 7 can actually be divided into two parts, work on the outside of the head, and work on the inside of the head via the many structures inside the mouth and the nostrils and meatesses inside the nose (wearing a rubber glove for health reasons). Everyone's heads get constricted, from birth, from tension of the basic imbalance since the time they were very young, and from physical impacts growing up.

By pressing outward from the inside of the mouth and nose, we are able to move the many bones of the head into a larger and less tense sphere, and open up the verbal expression mechanism of speech and emotional communication. Typical structural improvements in the rest of the body include being able to turn the head further from side to side with greater ease and more articulation between cervical vertebrae, further relaxation of the chest and abdomen, easier ability to stretch, and to be able to do deeper Bodywork on the back with even "longer term" results. There is also more energy flow in the pelvis, legs and feet, sinuses tend to drain, the eyes are more relaxed, the mouth opens wider with less tension, and the physiology of the brain and glands of the head work better. (Psychic and intuitive awareness are increased, too.)

Deep work around the eyes can remove years of thinking stress in just a few hours. Eye socket structure connects directly to the muscles and bones at the top of the neck where it joins the skull. Releasing this area in back helps the forehead and eyes to let go and loosening the facial structures enables us to make an even greater length and looseness in the back of the head and neck. With the Bodywork, everyone's face looks like they've lost a lot of tension and people actually look younger. Emotional demeanor is improved, as is the ability to work without all that past stress being there. This can be seen and heard in peoples' voices immediately.

Bodywork on the head also increases mental alertness, which should be of special interest to athletes and performers.

There is some evidence that it enables vision exercises to have more of an effect in correcting nearsightedness and astigmatism, probably because the lengthening of the myofascia in the area allows the neuro-muscular function to respond better. In at least the one study I read about, children were followed through the combination of both treatments, and were found to have better attention spans and improved grades in school. I have also heard two reports, from a Structural Integrator and from a Physical Therapist, that opening the structures of the head improves the outgoingness of children with autism. I, myself, have used this work to remove the disorientation that hospital patients get, especially older ones and those who are seriously ill and

moved through the hallways on gurneys. (The need for correcting this kind of tension in the head was also expressed to me by an intensive care nurse.)

Typical improvements for everyone include a clearer awareness of surroundings, greater intuitive sensing, an ability to see from deeper inside oneself and a greater calmness in the midst of activity.

Once you get to this point, your body will be significantly looser, lighter and more flexible. Now we can go deeper still and also work broader areas to connect everything to everything else and clean up anything left behind.

Step 8 works deeper into all of the lower half: the pelvis, buttocks, legs and feet, and adds the release of the iliacus, the companion muscles of the psoas. These connect the top of the thighbones in front to the inside of the pelvic bones in back. This step adds to all the other leg work and also releases more of the deep pulls in the lower back.

In Step 8 we work from the center of the body down to the feet and include deeper work on the abductor muscles on the outside of the pelvis, the gluteus medius and minimus. Every time we take a step, as well as when we balance on one leg, these abductor muscles contract, along with the gluteus maximus, tensor-fascia-lata and ilio-tibial tract. This normal contracting action stabilizes the hip joint for that part of the movement. But the trouble is, they also get bunched up, from this activity, and even somewhat from prolonged sitting and from bending forward. These muscles also get bunched up on long and triple jumpers because they absorb the shock of landings. Lengthening the medius and minimus improve hip joint and pelvic agility and make standing without back or leg tension much easier.

When we release the iliacus tension, it actually loosens the hamstrings some more. So we can lengthen them and a lot of the other leg muscles as well. Again, we are releasing interconnected pulls that have prevented muscles from releasing even when we were there in steps 2, 4 and 6. So, now, more of the muscles we're already lengthened can be lengthened better.

Step 9 works deeper into the whole upper half: part of the pelvis, the torso, the neck and the head, and it adds deeper work on the arms and hands, if we haven't done that in step 1..

In Step 9 we work from the center of the body up toward the chest and head. Steps 1, 3 and 5 work the different sections of the torso. But just that amount of Bodywork can't get it all, so we use this step to lengthen and open it better. In addition, now that we've removed even deeper leg and pelvic tightness that was holding things from releasing in the torso, we can open and lengthen it some more.

Step 10 goes over the whole body, correcting other tightnesses that we can now release because we've done steps 8 and 9, and we further organize the muscles into the systems they're designed to work best in. We call this organizing the "planes" of fascia. It makes everything work together better.

Each muscle should now be lengthened in a particular direction; in accord with the way its fibers run. In this step we "trim this up" and work in a number of areas on the places that didn't quite get lengthened or loosened enough in steps one through nine. Usually, the Step 4, 5 and 6 sequence has to be done in two or three "loops" of going round and round because the body opens in layers and these areas are pretty thick and always bunched up. Steps 8 and 9 get some of this, and more can be done in Step 10.

Typically it takes about 15 2-hr sessions to thoroughly align an average person, but in just 1, 2 and 3 sessions, many people experience a big change in the reduction of their pain, in the improvement of their flexibility and mobility, and in their feeling of relaxation.

There are some standard "touch-up" additions that practitioners do at the end of each session. These are strokes that work on the back, shoulders and neck, and even the head. One school teaches a stroke to lengthen the lower back. Another teaches to lengthen the neck and spread the shoulders. And a few add deep strokes to lengthen down all the erectors of the whole back. These strokes remove any tension from the back and neck that may have accumulated there during the session and also serve to do deeper and deeper bodywork on these two critical areas. Some schools also teach finishing loosening strokes on the face as well.

I, myself, do the neck, shoulder and back strokes, and a special pelvis, torso and leg twisting/stretching manipulation. This really makes people feel a lot better after each step and adds a general body loosening to the local area release I've just made. I also have people do some of my "Connective Tissue Structural Stretching," that I've developed from yoga positions and other body systems. But I teach people to do them in a way that lengthens the fascia, section by section over long interconnecting lengths of the body.