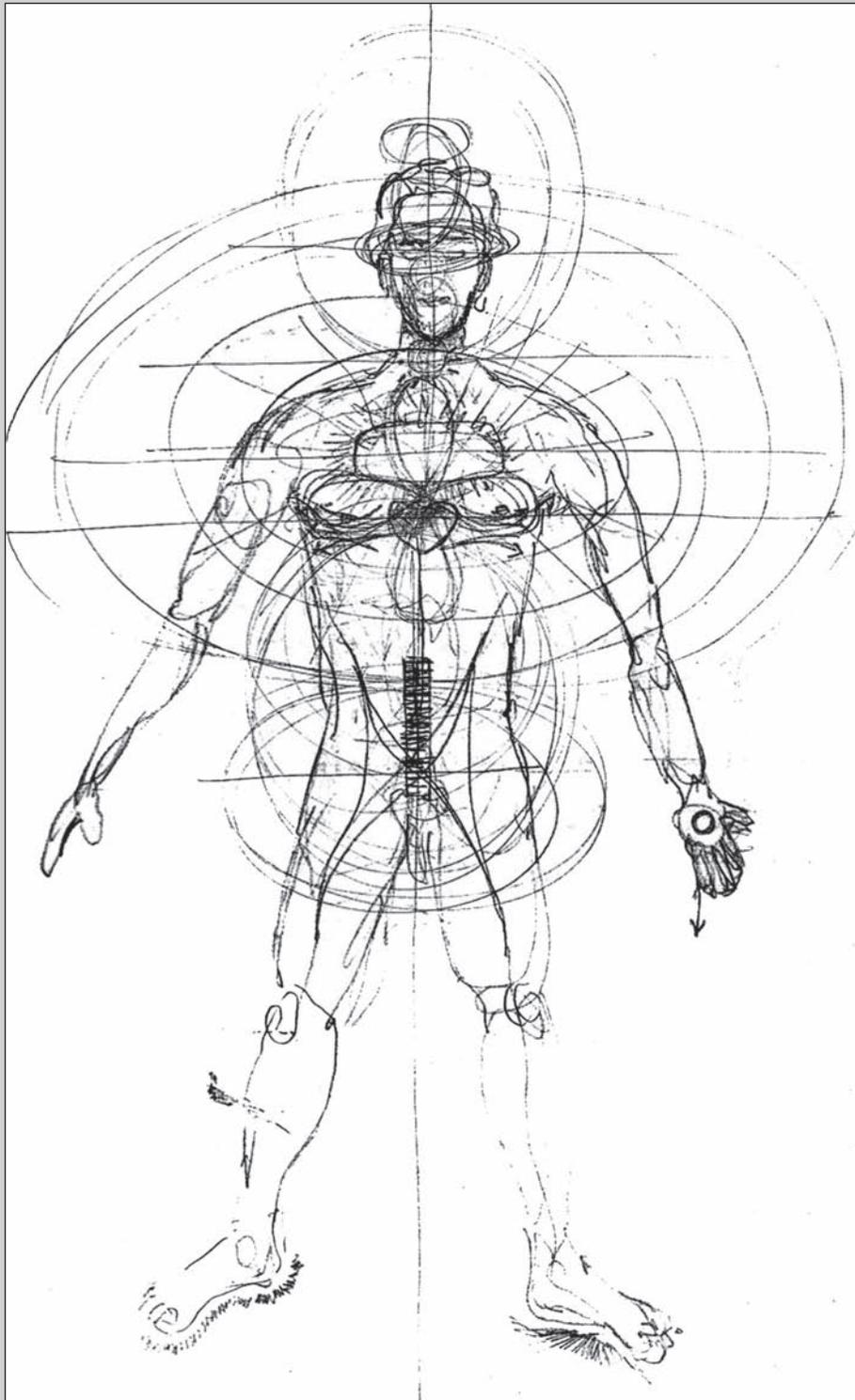


STRUCTURAL INTEGRATION

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Ask the Faculty

The Body-Mind Relationship

Q *What is something from your Rolfling® Structural Integration practice or another field of study that has struck you about the body-mind relationship? How has it affected your thinking, how you practice our work, or how you communicate with clients?*

A I am always amazed at how the body and mind work together. At times, the two seem to be arguing to find a spot to rest. At other times, the body-mind works effortlessly, with everything in balance. As I have worked with the mind-body connection, I have learned several lessons:

- **The mind can work too hard or not at all.** If a client's brain signals his body to constantly go from zero to sixty miles per hour, you must ask your client to use slower progressive movements, or even a thought of movement. This is especially true for the really 'fast-twitch' clients. At the other end of the scale, if someone comes in tired and ready to fall asleep on your table, see if he can become more engaged with movement. It really takes two to get the greatest benefit: the mind and body have to work together so that the muscles firing (or not firing) use the proper amount of energy to get the work done.
- **At times, signals from the mind get crossed going to the body.** I see this in three different types of people: 1) the clients who can take anything, wanting you to press harder, almost as if they need you to create a sensation; 2) others who have highly sensitive areas, where touch isn't possible because of pain; 3) lastly, there are people who feel nothing at all due to an injury or trauma. When the brain doesn't seem to be signaling a part of the body correctly, you must get touch or movement involved. If the client requires heavy pressure to feel, use a lighter touch. Work with his body to 'come out' to meet your pressure. To do this, you can start with a light pressure he can feel, and have him lightly engage his muscle to press out towards your touch. Helpful cues include, "Let your movement or pressure just touch my skin and nothing else." This helps re-sensitize the area with wider parameters. With areas of no feeling or hypersensitivity, you might try starting proximal or distal

to the problem area and working slowly into it. If the client is highly sensitive, do not invoke an autonomic nervous system response. If the client goes into 'fight or flight', your work is less effective and may very well be counterproductive.

- **Use past memories to enhance function.** Working with a client who had an arm in spasm due to Parkinson's disease, I found that asking her to recall a past memory (playing the piano) while we worked caused the spasms to disappear. Although the spasms would return when she stopped, simply recalling an arm activity from before the illness allowed the arm to relax. This gave her a tool to help her relax her arm during times of increased spasms.
- **The mind can label parts of the body.** You often see this in cases where clients refer to the less productive side of the body as 'stupid', 'dumb', or 'bad'. The body responds to this kind of naming. This can be detrimental when you use negative labels, or it can be positive when you use positive descriptors. Explain to clients that naming affects the healing process and can be used to their benefit. Describing areas as places that are 'getting better', 'working harder', or 'still learning' helps even with the most severe injury.
- **Beliefs can override the body.** A ninety-four-year-old client with a memory problem had fallen and injured his hip. Several weeks later he was still having difficulty walking, but medical professionals could find nothing wrong with him. He had completed a Ten Series in the past, so his wife brought him in. I did a full set of range-of-motion tests, palpating and checking in on his pain levels as we progressed. He indicated no pain in any direction. I told him that I couldn't find any restrictions or areas of pain and suggested that I thought his hip might be okay. He said, "It is?" I said, "I think so," and asked him if he would like to walk to see if the pain

returned. He did. No pain, no problems. He walked out to his wife without limping or pain. It had only taken a few minutes, so she was justifiably stunned. When she asked me what I had done, I told her the truth: nothing. I told them that his hip seemed fine but to call me if the limp or pain came back. He walked out and the pain never returned. I think, in his mind, he believed he was hurt so his body produced a commensurate experience. Our work was like pushing a reset button.

- **The brain and muscle memory will choose familiar over unfamiliar.** If a person has trained himself into a pattern of pain or poor movement, his body will have created a buildup of tissue in that area causing a restriction, so you must find a way to break the pattern. You need to do fascial work to remove the buildup of tissue, and enhance the resulting freedom with movement work to create new opportunities of how to move. Use gravity as a tool to help open fascial restrictions. This can be done by bolstering areas open, hanging part of the body off of the table, or working in gravity with the client sitting or standing. Use different movements as you work to make sure that the client is not going into his old pattern.
- **Use the mind-body schema to include the missing section or structurally solid section of the body.** Some clients have had areas of their bodies removed, amputated, mechanically repaired, or fused. When working with this situation, have clients extend their thoughts or movements to the affected area. If they are mechanically fused, work above and below that section. Or, in the case of one of my clients, while working with a leg where the lower leg had been amputated, I still continued the work and movement through that part of the body as if it were there. He reported that he could feel the work all the way to his toes, even though they were missing on that leg.
- **The sweet spot I've found is where the mind and the body are working together.** This happens when the client is lying quietly on the table, totally aware of everything you are touching and unwinding. It is as if the two of you are one and you are feeling every molecule of being under the skin, and the client's mind and body are supporting the process. The more the body can respond on a primal level, the better.

These are just a few of the things that keep me constantly amazed at how our bodies and minds are really the same thing. It is what keeps me passionate about this work and constantly learning.

Larry Koliha
Rolfing Instructor

A Years ago I came across the concept of body image and body schema. This idea is helpful to distinguish the physiology of structure and movement from how humans look at themselves – an example of how mind and body can interfere with and ‘shape’ each other.

The physical and coordinative structure describes the physiological base on which a human being moves in gravity. Fascia is the ‘organ of form’: it shapes the body and is interrelated with gravity. As a ‘sensorial organ’, it’s related to movement quality and coordination. All participating forces (including evolutionary processes) create a body schema, which ensures the best possible way of surviving.

If we could leave it on that level, moving in gravity might just happen – but there seems to be self-awareness! That makes the whole story more complex. We define ourselves as ‘I’ and start to create a body image. This image interferes with the physiology of the body schema – we are shaping our bodies along ideas and concepts, which are based on our experiences, trauma, culture, and many other factors. We do that because it has a certain meaning for us. It seems to be simply important. As long as there is a balanced relationship of mind (perception and psychobiology) and body (physical and coordinative), structures will work well accordingly.

It might be true that this concept separates and simplifies the entities of body and mind artificially, but looking more closely at the correlation helps to orient and navigate through this complexity. As a Rolfer™, I use this concept for my clients and myself to identify and become more aware of precisely how the physical reality of the body and its meaning are related in a client. The ability to connect those concepts provides consciousness, more options, and freedom of choices.

Jörg Ahrend-Löns
Rolfing Instructor

A I am supposing all of us have had the experience of a client looking at you as if the session you just finished struck him as flat or opaque and he is bored. But you didn’t give up, and in the next session you explained the work, and why you wanted to work with something particular that day. Maybe you also talked about how the expected results could influence his habitual experience of the world and other. Some time later you noticed that it was after that session that the client started opening up to the work.

Something similar may have happened to you yourself when you went to a museum and saw a piece of art that did not touch your soul. But when you learned about how it was made and the person who made it, what was flat and opaque revealed itself to you, and maybe even touched you deeply.

Or you found yourself having to take an elderly aunt to a classical music concert, and you are not used to listening to classical music and dislike it. You know it will be boring, but on the way to the concert hall, your aunt tells you about the composer, what his life was like, and what the music you will be listening to meant to him. Or, auntie recommends that you practice active listening to be able to follow one, then all of the instruments playing, and the dialogues between them. Suddenly the concert is no longer meaningless and boring.

What happened with the bored client, and with you at the museum and concert hall? The work you delivered, the piece of art, and the music did not change, but the client’s experience of your work and your experience of the art and music did – and in such a way that you both now perceive what was there all the time but not available to you. The transformation happened because of *understanding*.

Even though some of my colleagues warn against becoming intellectual or explaining theory when working, especially with movement, I have been playing with explaining to the client what I am going to do, and why. I experience that these clients can participate better and actively perceive that which they otherwise could not. I am very curious about the role that understanding and knowledge and skills embodiment play in opening the world for experience. How can understanding help me get and recruit the skills needed to make contact with the world and other?

How can understanding help me actively shift out of my habitual engagement with the world and other?

And why do I want to acquire these abilities? As humans we have an inherited animal presence, and a cultivated presence as well, which can be subject to criticism. Animals have lives that begin and end, while people have biographies that include acts that have the power to bring the world forth. Biographies have endings. I firmly believe that changing the way I contact/perceive other has the potential to change the way others contact/perceive me. And that can change something (hopefully for the better) in the world. It is as Carl Gustav Jung said: “Until you make the unconscious conscious, it will direct your life and you will call it fate.”

Monica Caspari
Rolfing Instructor,
Rolf Movement® Instructor

A While working at a pharmaceutical company before becoming a Rolfer, we collaborated on a project with two physicians, Drs. Omura and Shimotsuura, who are using a procedure they call the Bi-Digital O-Ring Test (BDORT). This method can locate each organ’s outline on the skin using the phenomenon of electromagnetic resonance through the human body. When the physician finds cancer in a patient, in most cases the location mapped by BDORT matches well with what is found through CT/MRI imaging.

The BDORT method can also be used to determine treatment. While at Dr. Shimotsuura’s hospital for a few months, I saw many kinds of carcinoma seemingly cured completely with supplements, Chinese herbs, or acupuncture, chosen and prescribed using the BDORT method based on what ‘canceled’ the electromagnetic level of the lesion. All results were backed up by MRI or sonographic analysis. It seemed that very subtle stimulation is enough to heal the organism.

Dr. Shimotsuura observed that when a patient failed to heal, he had often taken a higher or lower dosage than the BDORT results determined, or a supplement other than what was selected by the BDORT method. This suggests that appropriate subtle stimulation can stimulate healing, while excessive or uncalled-for stimulation may cancel the positive effects of a suitable

intervention. These experiences affected my perception of the human body, and may lend support to the concept of 'less is more' in our somatic work.

Hiroyoshi Tahata
Rolf Movement Instructor

A As a practitioner of Rolfing SI for more than thirty-three years, there are three endeavors that influence and complement my understanding of mind-body(-spirit) in practice, thinking, and communication: 1) the study of *biodynamic orientation to craniosacral therapy*, 2) a deepening understanding and application of embryological development, and 3) the sheer delight I experience *walking*. None of these pursuits have usurped my passion for Rolfing SI; instead they have expanded both my perception and ability to engage the multidimensionality of the physical body.

- Understanding the dynamics of embryology contributes to the possibility of engaging a 'system' through time, as well as the origins of foundational patterns.
- Walking and running the shores of Monterey Bay at twilight always clarifies the integration of body-mind-spirit after a long day of sessions. As the ocean's dynamism flows through my body, I explore the subtle adjustments of toes and feet, breath and body, as I move barefoot over the sand. In fleeting moments of ecstatic delight, the light of contralateral spinal fluidity emerges. I am home again!
- A biodynamic approach opens these portals to the *mystery* and palpable realization of our innate wholeness.

With each client, aspects of this triad of influence slip through, whether it is in conversation, an inquiry, or an exploration.

Just a few quotes to inspire:

"We are embryos through our lifetime."
(Rosemary Feitis, *The Endless Web*)

"Wholeness is the smallest division of life."
(unknown)

Carol Agneesens
Rolfing Instructor,
Rolf Movement Instructor

A I personally don't like to make this kind of distinction, as body and mind are two different but interrelated levels of our experience of being. I imagine them as two powerful entrance doors to interact with the system.

More and more in my practice I encourage my clients to take time every day to self-nourish their development. Providing, in Rolfing sessions, some freedom in the potential adaptation of the body structure and a better capacity to organize this freedom in the everyday movement of life is not enough. Clients really need to experience and practice consciously a tiny bit every day – build new synapses, create a new, different experience of being and moving, value their power to allow change to happen.

I emphasize more and more how important everyday practice is in order to change the 'setting' that has created the 'symptoms' for which they came to me asking for help. They can learn how to take care of themselves. I give them some information (knowledge helps), some homework for self-treatment, some guidelines for daily movement. Sometimes it's using the metaphor or the input we discovered to be effective during the session. Other times it involves some real exercises. Whatever the suggestion is, the main point is to be consciously present in the moment. There is never an intention to be correct, but rather to find ways to allow expression, freedom, and adaptability. It's a change in attitude I'm aiming for.

Rita Geirola
Rolfing Instructor,
Rolf Movement Instructor