



BALANCING THE BODY WITH STRUCTURAL INTEGRATION

by Diane Roth

When the body is functioning right, we know it by a sense of well-being. When it's not, we may know it as pain, tightness or fatigue. We may feel dragged down. Old injuries may spring up again with new symptoms. We feel out of balance in our bodies. One method of healing is called Structural Integration (SI), a system of bodywork that realigns, rebalances and re-educates the body so that we can get back to the job of living optimally.

SI practitioners work with the soft tissue of the body, called fascia. Fascia becomes glued, hard and dehydrated over time as it responds to misalignment and malfunction due to injury, trauma or everyday stress. As the body shortens and tightens, the sense of well-being diminishes, while pain and chronic discomfort increase. Through skilled application of pressure and movement, SI manually sculpts and "unglues" the fascia. As the body unwinds, pain decreases, while movement, flexibility and energy all increase.

Structural Integration is often initially practiced over a series of 10 sessions. These sessions unwind the connective tissue web, with each session building on the one before. As the sessions progress, the body unravels its stresses and compensations, allowing more efficient movement, alignment and balance. Although this 10-session format is a systematic approach to change, the principles of SI are easily applied to any physical complaint or problem that may arise in the human structure and can be practiced effectively to address specific concerns.

The theory behind Structural Integration was developed by Dr. Ida Rolf more than 50 years ago. Through her studies in osteopathy, chiropractic, yoga and homeopathy, she developed a system for working with connective tissue that restored order to out-of-balance bodies. This became known as Structural Integration, or Rolfing®. Today there are many schools of Structural Integration, including the Rolf Institute® in Boulder, Colorado. All practitioners who go through recognized programs of study in SI are structural integrators. Only practitioners who go to the institute use the term Rolfers™.

Dr. Rolf once explained that "when the body gets working appropriately, the forces of gravity can flow through. Then, spontaneously, the body heals itself."

Everyone experiences some discomfort in the body simply from the normal activity of living. Add in accidents, trauma or occupational hazards, and chances are we feel tight, sore and uncomfortable. Structural Integration works with the whole person to bring more freedom and comfort to our everyday lives, something each of us can use.

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