

Rolfing and Structural Integration

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Rolfing is named after Dr. Ida P. Rolf, who started this work over fifty years ago. Dr. Rolf eventually named her work Structural Integration. She discovered that she could achieve remarkable changes in posture and structure by manipulating the body's myofascial system. "Rolfing" is the nickname that many clients and practitioners gave this work, and is now a registered service mark in 27 countries. Rolfing and Structural Integration has the ability to dramatically alter a person's posture and structure.

Rolfing is a specific type of massage that differs significantly from other forms of bodywork. Rolfing emphasizes deep pressure on the tissue, called fascia, which covers muscles, internal organs and ligaments. One of the most common misconceptions about Rolfing is that it is nothing more than a type of very deep massage.

Rolfing is distinguished by 3 characteristics; **palpation** - touching the tissue, **discrimination** - or separating fascial layers that adhere and muscles that have been pulled out of position by strain or injury, and **integration**- relating segments of the body in an improved relationship. Other soft-tissue manipulation methods, including massage, are quite good at the first two, but do not balance the body in gravity. As Dr. Rolf used to say: "Anyone can take a body apart, very few know how to put it back together." The goal of Rolfing, which can be painful, is to align body sections so that they are in balance with each other and with gravity. Rolfing practitioners press the fascia with their fingers, knuckles, elbows and knees to loosen it and release its tight hold on muscle and bone. Patients are also encouraged to perform a series of exercises to help their bodies move more efficiently.

With aging or injury, the body's fascia becomes tightly attached to muscles and bones, making it difficult for the body to move smoothly and with a full range of motion. By releasing the fascia's hold, Rolfing can help patients move more smoothly, increase support for bones throughout the body, increase energy and improve posture, stamina and emotional health. Rolfing may release tension and stress resulting in improved performance of the immune system and heightened resistance to disease.

People seek Rolfing as a way to ease pain, chronic stress, and improve performance in their professional and daily activities. It's estimated that more than 1 million people have received Rolfing work. As Rolfers work with the deep myofascial structures, some people may experience the work as uncomfortable or possibly painful. Patients with some chronic inflammatory conditions should avoid Rolfing. Rolfing is a technique that can impact the whole person, physically, emotionally, and energetically.

Rolfing and yoga complement each other by improving structure, balance and flexibility. Dr. Ida Rolf used yoga to further our understanding of human structure.

Yoga was considered a bit far out at the time, and there were very few teachers available in the US. Rolfing works primarily in two ways, with hands-on manipulation and movement education. It physically changes the body's structure and energetically improves movement and function. Yoga and Rolfing both work subtly with energy inside and outside the body. The most common objectives that guide people to Rolfing and yoga are:

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1. To gain relief from chronic or acute tension or pain
2. To increase flexibility or coordination
3. To improve posture and alignment
4. To learn to relax and obtain more body awareness
5. To offset the deleterious effects of aging
6. To release emotional blocks stored in the body
7. To have more energy and stamina
8. To find relief from breathing difficulties

Patient's Guide:

How do I use Rolfing therapy?

The Rolf Institute has a list of Certified Rolfers on their website at www.Rolf.org. After you choose a practitioner, your first visit will determine approximately how many more visits you will need. These average from one or two up to more than ten. If your structural problem is old and "set in its ways" it will require more therapy to correct than a mild, new imbalance. Visits are scheduled anywhere from one week to a month apart. Emotional release responses may occur as well as physical, so the pace of restructuring is individually guided.