

Often there is fulcrum of unusual quiet within an individual's body – as if the tissues are organizing or holding a previous insult and wrapping around it as a way to contain the insult. Osteopaths say, “The body wraps around its lesions.” These fulcrums seem to be doing just that. When recognized and released, there is a concurrent flow and release through the system.

I notice an energetic shift at the end of a session as a client sits and then stands and walks. For my eyes, there is the lift of integration and a ‘glow’ of remembered uprightiness. Movement is more graceful and fluid. The body is whole... a ‘new being’ stands who is more than the sum of his or her anatomy or structure. The unity of body-mind-spirit seems to be realized and refreshed when I as practitioner engage the energetic qualities of our work.

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A: I notice a perennial problem in discussions about ‘energetic work’ within SI; that problem stems from trying to parse one dimension of the SI work as fundamentally different, but without really defining how it’s different. My opinion is that this issue plagued the Rolf Movement work, but, at the same time, many people have now worked to remedy that situation – better defining how Rolf Movement is different from Rolfing SI and, at the same time, how and why it fits naturally into a more comprehensive model of the work. The mystery is always there – we don’t have to fear losing our friend, the mystery, by taking the trouble to ground the work in contemporary science.

The value of so-called ‘energetic work’ is real. The word energetic is disappointing; and it obfuscates. The word ‘energetic’ begs for specificity. Worse, SI suffers from another puzzle for people to struggle with; useful work gets put in a context that insures the least chance of being appreciated as an important dimension of SI. How to move forward? Good to start with the basic premises and questions:

What is the nature of what we do? – Structural integrators restore normal capacities to stand, sit, and perform all the vital actions of life. How do we evoke these outcomes? We touch fascia, deeply or subtly. We inspire people to feel a more differentiated sense of their bodies. We bring awareness to the manner in which movement is initiated. We offer challenge and reassurance. In short, we touch

the minds and hearts of our clients in numerous ways. We communicate – we listen and we inform. We communicate the essence of Rolf’s vision, via physical touch, skillful presence, words, guidance, inquiry, and – most important of all – the clarity of our own heart and mind. We communicate things that may not, as yet, be fully explainable. But communication itself is the nugget of what we do.

Communication is a two-way activity. We can only communicate meaningfully with someone with whom we have developed some degree of rapport, with whom a portal of interpersonal availability has opened up. Communication deepens as rapport deepens. Once there is rapport, communication enters another level. This ‘other level’ is the domain of what Daniel Siegel calls ‘interpersonal neurobiology’. This level reveals itself – something both profound and, at the same time, not completely mapped. We know it’s scientifically real. Researchers can see, for example, brain changes, endocrine changes, and so on, as two individuals communicate invisibly.

We don’t know exactly how all this works, although we know how to build skills to do so. But the phenomenon of communication that shifts physiology at the most subtle levels demands words and phrases more thoughtfully determined than ‘energetic’. We need words that point to what changes, what our intervention is intended to shift at a behavioral level. For example, are we intending to facilitate support, and if so, how do we determine and demonstrate that a person’s system has more support?

The word ‘energetic’ doesn’t tell us anything about what is particular to the intervention in terms of the Principles of Intervention, the putative basis of our work. To put this another way, what about all of our work lies outside the domain of energetics? Energy means the power to do work, physically. It’s the power to think and feel and imagine. Energetics is the activity of our metabolism. It’s the electromagnetic fields of our muscles, our organs, and our brains. These dimensions of ourselves never turn off so long as we draw breath. Energetic dimensions of our being and our work are omnipresent and ubiquitous to all that we do. What then is useful about the descriptor ‘energetic’ for which we have no distinguishing feature?

It’s practical to back up and ask, “Why does one wish to use this term, energetic?” “What are we pointing to?” There’s maybe something itching to be expressed. We hear and feel passion from those who use the term, there’s passion to hold a container for something very important. The work itself is important.

Do we need to indicate that some or much of

our work is invisible? As a Rolf Movement Instructor, the challenge of teaching things that are mostly invisible is familiar. It requires digging a bit deeper than the ‘body as anatomy’, for example. What capacities that change coordination can be taught, can be evoked? You can’t dissect coordination. Coordination is not ‘stuff’. But many invisible things no longer strike intelligent, thinking persons as odd or needing of camouflage. Much of what occurs in SI is at the level of mind. And what occurs at the level of mind doesn’t have to be kept in the closet. We can measure and prove the repeatability of outcomes in which, somehow, the brain demonstrates that something new has registered. We can objectively observe that integration of new information has occurred: information that human beings typically hunger for – information about belonging/not being alone; information about location via weight and the matrix of space; information about safety; information about body differentiation and articulation, about permeability to the life all around us, that we literally cannot lose touch with but, from which, we often feel isolated.

And bodies typically hunger for better proprioceptive, interoceptive, exteroceptive information, for example – but all of these forms of information are, to the naked eye, invisible. What’s more, these flows of information often cannot be traced in measurable ways, even with advanced technology. As relational organisms, we fortunately have other, better, ways to determine the presence or absence of vital information. We have inherent capacity for whether vital information ‘lands’ in a system or not. We observe a person’s behavior and ask about the person’s

experience. In a place of rapport, we see/feel what the system wants us to see. Relational communication transcends traditional physics. We can ground what we observe in terms that can be agreed upon.

Rolf’s SI proposal is about delivering better information. Define those dimensions of information, ones that are missing for an individual, and that does a lot to define the work. We step out of the ‘material versus nonmaterial argument’ and move towards a model of the work congruent with the modern world. One can acknowledge all the complex ways we swim in an ocean of interpersonal communication.

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