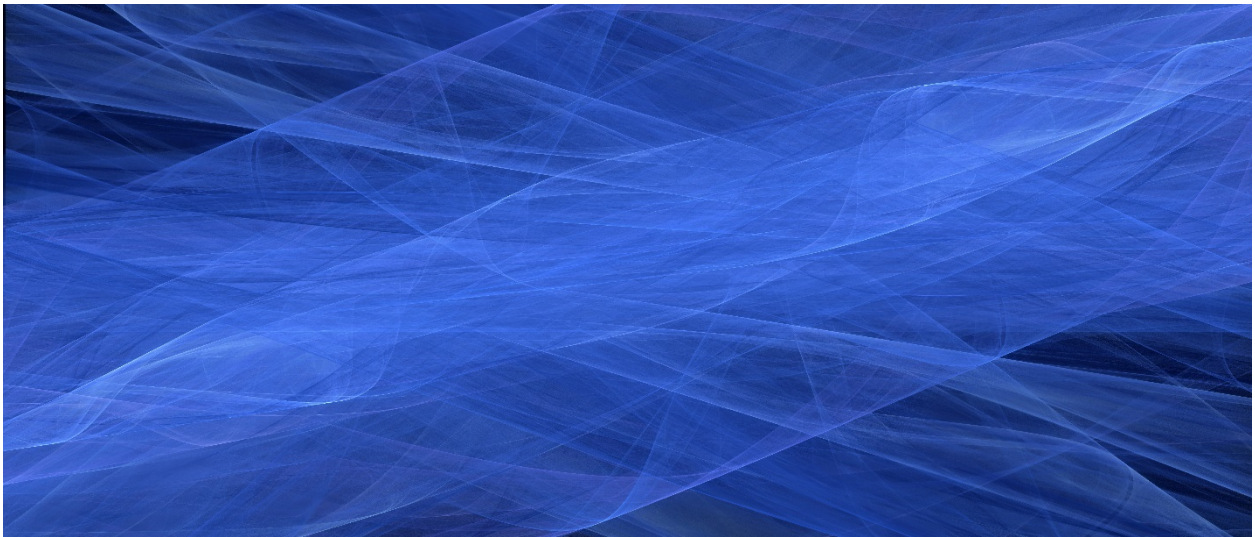


Within the Layers:
Healing the Depths of Body and Soul



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Introduction

Did you know that stuck emotional stress and unprocessed emotion takes up actual space in the physical body? I had been practicing Massage Therapy and Structural Integration for over 11 years, and had professionally touched and soothed hundreds of bodies, before this profound truth took root in my consciousness. This one new truth that energy - something I couldn't see with my physical eyes - could affect the consistency and tension of the muscles and tissue I was so familiar with, changed my entire world and professional practice forever.

From my own perspective, healing touch was surely born along with humankind, as mother, with love in her heart, reaches for her baby and snuggles and nurtures. According to Robert Noah Calvert, (2002), author of The History of Massage: An Illustrated Survey from Around The World, "The human element of connecting for the betterment of another is deeply ingrained in the practice of massage in all its forms. The virtue of human contact through the medium of massage is that its' benefits are automatically given. This is not to say that massage is an unconscious act. Quite the contrary - giving massage is a very conscious act that almost always includes intent to help and heal.... for that reason, evidence of massage can be found in all the cultures and ages."

My own first concrete memory of facilitating a healing happened sometime in my 20's when I worked for a veterinary clinic in Southern California. I have a great and inherent love for animals. As a veterinary technician, my clear and professional goal was to help heal, assist and comfort. My heart and brain were in sync in this work. I recall a moment of energy exchange between myself and a very small dog as it lay dying under my hands. My job at that moment was to snap a quick x-ray. I got the picture, but the dog's breathing was slowing and with my hands on this creature, and compassion and love in my heart, I prayed for help. He lived and that's all I remember about him.

It wasn't until years later that a Reiki Master validated the experience as a healing that I had facilitated with my intention. During my Massage and Structural integration training and practice, I started to suspect that I could direct energy, and I had always had access to an unseen world available in my mind's eye. In both trainings and especially my Structural Integration training, I was instructed to sense into the body. I would find myself holding a client's head in my hands, and with another kind of knowing, I would fall into the body and see different layers such as cells, organs and chakras depending on what the client seemed to need most. The information would come randomly, and I often didn't know how to respond to the imagery or feel confident that I would receive something other than images of my imagination. I didn't realize that I could focus the viewing and seek out specific information. It was a process of slowly and persistently becoming more conscious of what transpires in a healing session when touch and healing intent combine. Luckily my heart and soul led me to seek out more knowledge, depth and consciousness within the healing arts. I am so thankful, for it is in the healing arts that I joyfully and naturally experience one of my favorite dances.

Massage

In 2002 I was a senior at the University of Oregon; I would go on to graduate with honors and receive a Bachelor degree in Science, majoring in Psychology and minoring in Women's Studies. I had spent many years as a veterinary technician and had come across many dysfunctional pet owners and coworkers. I could sense their internal discomfort; I became passionate about studying psychology hoping that it would help me understand the human condition more, and planned to become a counselor. I wanted to help my fellow humanoids with their internal suffering. I wanted to learn - and help others to learn - how to communicate and discover their own authenticity and divinity. That year I was very focused on furthering my education in the counseling field, and I was applying to graduate schools and attempting high GRE scores. One of my best educational experiences during this time was as a volunteer with Sexual Support Services. They also gave me a gift certificate for a massage, which was a turning point in my career and my life. As I received a much needed massage for a very stressed me, the therapist mentioned a modality called Hakomi, which is a body-centered psychotherapy. It was upon that table on that day that my trajectory changed.

It has always seemed to be an inherent truth within my consciousness that the physical body holds past trauma and stress. In my psychology training I became aware and open to working with the unconscious mind through the body. I had already explored art therapy and sand tray therapy, two alternatives to talk therapy in counseling. Combining counseling and massage became my next passion and frontier for exploration. As fate would have it, I didn't get into the graduate program I had coveted. So I studied Massage Therapy at Lane Community

College and was licensed by November 2003. My massage career was born, and I loved every second of it. I worked with a chiropractor for a while and simultaneously built my own private practice, which is still successfully flowing to this day. In Oregon we renew our massage licenses every two years, and we are required to have completed 25 hours of continuing education. With this extra incentive to pursue more knowledge, I went on to study Structural Integration, Reiki, Emotional Freedom Technique, Body Talk, Theta, Non-violent Communication and finally, The McKay Method. The McKay Method is where I have found many answers to my many questions, and powerful healing techniques to work with what I sense and see.

Energy Work

My hands are one of my most trusted tools, and early in my Massage Therapy education I learned that I could find the painful and stuck areas in everybody I touched regardless of the information the client was sharing. In the beginning, I thought that my hands were sensing physical knots within the muscles, often considered trigger points. I would find and perceive tension in the muscle or whatever quadrant of the body I touched. I could locate a specific point of tension and go to work with my hands to bring blood and oxygen flow to that muscle or area. On my very first day of The McKay Method training my teacher, Bear McKay, taught me that the tension I could sense had an energetic quality to it. She showed me that while I became present and aligned with my own body and energy field, I could sense energy flow in areas related to the chakra system. Later, I discovered that I could also sense the Chinese Meridian system and other energetic channels. As it turns out, my hands could always physically sense and detect pools of energetic congestion. What I had thought to be a trigger

point or muscular knot was built up, non-flowing energy, which I now refer to as stuck stress or energetic congestion. This Ah Ha! moment of understanding the difference between physical and energetic tension transformed my professional massage and Structural Integration practice. It changed my clients' lives as well as mine.

Bear McKay went on to teach me so much more. I learned that not only could I sense and identify the stuck energy in the tissue with my hands, I could also assist in releasing the energy by simply becoming present and aligned energetically within my own body and holding my hand above the physical congestion. Yes, I said *above* the physical tissue - in other words without touching the physical body. In fact, in the case of energetic congestion, it is necessary to hold space above the tissue to allow the congestion to be released, and this cannot be done while the tissue is physically compressed. Since the energy is invisible to the physical eyes, this release of tension within the flesh ends up looking very much like a magic trick (much to my delight). One of my favorite activities is to stand a client in front of a mirror and then hold my hands about an inch above one shoulder at time. My clients watch their shoulders physically fall away from their ears. The visual they get is not subtle and it is magic. Magic inherent within the divinity of every human being and every soul. By being present with our divine selves and with each other, we can help our fellow human beings balance the layers within themselves.

My professional services and skills now include a deeper and more holistic perspective, which has transformed the way I conduct my sessions. In the past, during a massage session I would often begin at the feet to initiate blood, lymph and energy flow. Today, I'm able to visibly and intuitively see where in the body a client is energetically holding which informs me on where to start the healing process. I have learned that balancing the chakra system is an

essential part of a session as it actually releases tension in the physical muscular system. I noticed very quickly that when a muscle presents as tense or as painful to the client, the amount of energetic congestion plays a key role in how tight the muscle or quadrant of the body feels. Now I can decipher whether the specific quality of the tension is either energetic congestion or actual physical knots in the tissue. By balancing the chakra system early in the session, I can release much of the overall physical tension within the muscular system, and therapeutic massage becomes more enjoyable to the client. Countless times I have begun my sessions by holding the head and from that perspective, I can physically feel and sense different quadrants of the body release as I focus on the chakra system. I have many other McKay Method tools to use in my massage sessions as well. If I encounter a painful response in a very stiff joint or tight muscle, I can direct different and specific frequencies into the tissue to relieve tension, resistance and pain. When a client comes in with a wound of some sort, I can now soothe the wound and reduce inflammation with a cooling and healing frequency, or I can provide an energetic ice pack. A few other notable McKay Method tools that assist my massage treatments are Soul Dialogue (and other means to work with the Soul Dimension); working with the structured levels of the auric field; as well as techniques to address what I see in the skeletal alignment, discs, and cranial sacral fluid. I have learned techniques specific to the nervous, endocrine, digestive, cardiovascular and respiratory systems. These tools allow me to facilitate what I can only describe as holistic healing, because they allow me to see/sense the body from many perspectives and on many levels, allowing for old energetic patterns held within the physical body to be released. I help make room for fresh patterns to emerge,

offering my clients the possibility of less burdened physical, emotional and spiritual experiences.

Structural Integration

Among some of my very favorite words and concepts are Depth and Freedom. Just writing the words makes my heart and soul light up. I imagine Ida P. Rolf felt the same way about depth and freedom because they are unavoidable concepts embedded in Structural Integration/Rolfing which is one of the most physically oriented energetic transformational modalities I have ever encountered. Ida P. Rolf birthed her healing modality of Structural Integration beginning her career as a biochemist in the late 1920's, when she was credited with identifying some of the biochemical properties of fascia.

My introduction to Structural Integration began in the first year of my massage career when I was involved in an auto accident. To heal from soft tissue injury in my neck and shoulders I sought out Lauren Baily, a local Structural Integrationist. She took me through the Rolfing series of ten sessions and I have been freer in my mind and body since. Lauren took me under her wing as her first student and through many hours of lessons, she transformed me into a Structural Integrationist in 2006. My massage therapy practice and my Structural Integration sessions have transformed by infusing The McKay Method within the Ten Series of my practice. I have received many Structural Integration sessions and experienced the discomfort of having the fascia system manually manipulated. Ouch. For years I apologized for causing a moment of discomfort to my clients, knowing that the result would greatly benefit them. In my Structural Integration education Lauren taught me to calm the nervous system at

the end of each session by physically holding the sacrum, accessing the nervous system in order to integrate the treatment. I now find that I don't cause as much discomfort while utilizing Structural Integration techniques; with The McKay Method I can release any resistance or pain in the tissue before manually using my hands to release the fascia. I can also ask guidance about the timing of the chelation within the session. For example, in foot sessions I have been guided consistently to do a chelation *after* the physical work. Often, as I touch tissue to sense the fascial restrictions or patterns I am also utilizing my energy hand. Now I more confidently process the many levels of information that I receive and heal accordingly. For example, I might see evidence of past life hurts or recognize an Energy Signature pattern, and I have tools to facilitate healing in those cases.

In Structural Integration, I have honed my skill at physically looking at the physical body to see fascial and energetic patterns. The McKay Method trainings gave me life changing insight about Energy Signatures which explains so many of the physical holding patterns I have seen in clients for years. In her book, Rolfing: Reestablishing the Natural Alignment and Structural Integration of the Human Body for Vitality and Well-Being, Ida Rolf writes: "Physical personality is reflected in psychological personality. So too, physical movement colors psychological behavior." Today when I assess the physical body, I am also given big clues into my client's personality – one aspect of their Energy Signature - as well as what quadrants of their bodies or chakras may need support. In her book Your Energy Signature Bear McKay writes: "The body is energy made visible. Areas of greater or lesser energy flow show up as differences in size, shape and density. Health is greatly affected by the main energy imbalance; where the energy flow is too high or too low in an area, or there is compaction, troubles are bound to arise. Early

development and beliefs also help shape the body's form (i.e. "there is not enough" produces a concavity in the chest area indicating lack; the "I need to be perfect" produces external symmetry and tension; the "not wanting to be seen" results in literal obscuration/padding of the torso." This knowledge absolutely assists me in guiding my clients to physical and psychological freedom. The Energy Signature model assists me in addressing an individual's psychological patterns. By assessing their energy signature I have insight into some of their greatest fears and stuck beliefs, which impact their mental and energetic habits and bodies. I begin each session with the clear goal of facilitating freedom, alignment, balance and evolution and this model is invaluable to my work; it helps me make the psychological connections to the physical body that I'm working with. These insights transform my Structural Integration sessions into even deeper and more holistic healing territory.

Developing my ability to see and sense energy in a more disciplined way during The McKay Method training has changed not only how I view clients, but how I see the world. I relate to the artist Alex Grey's anatomy masterpieces. I can appreciate the miraculous living web that is our fascia, the vast inter-dimensional web of fields and layers all around us, intertwining and connected. By combining the McKay Method techniques along with Structural integration, I am blessed to facilitate and watch individuals truly evolve into freer, more integrated and more organized versions of themselves. It's a beautiful process and a gorgeous sight every time.

Conclusion

As I look back at my career choices and goals it is clear to me that my overall and underlying intention has always been to be of service and to help living beings; it's just who I am in this lifetime. In the last 4-5 years I have been blessed to be able to combine The McKay Method along with my other skills of Massage Therapy and Structural Integration. The confidence and validation that I received, along with the camaraderie amongst the other healers in the McKay trainings, has enriched my life beyond measure. Along with my training I received many healing sessions from Bear herself and my awesome McKay Method healer peers. The grace those healers have brought to my life has been a fully tangible experience for me, and has greatly improved the lives of myself and my family members. The skills I have honed and obtained in my training has transformed my work with clients into holistic and profound healings, helping me to achieve some of my original career goals- "to help my fellow humanoids ease their internal suffering". Along the way I have found quality, depth and freedom within my own layers. Such Blessings!

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