



New PERSPECTIVES

A Bulletin about Rolfing and Somatic Awareness

Spring/Summer 1993

Dear Readers,

Yes, *New Perspectives* is back. Thanks to all who gave me such positive feedback and said how much they enjoyed receiving this newsletter over the years. I am pleased that I can again offer *New Perspectives*.

For this issue I have chosen a brief excerpt from the book *Rolfing, Stories of Personal Empowerment*, by Briah Anson, a Rolfer working in Kansas City. This book is a compilation of personal experiences of Rolfing written



"Yeah, Clem, I hurt. But y'know, it's a GOOD kind of hurt."

by Briah's clients at her request. Some categories are: "Rolfing and Chronic Pain," "Rolfing and Recovery," "Performing Artists and Creative People," "Enhancing Athletic Performance," "The Mind-Body Connection," "Rolfing Children and the Elderly." I have chosen two stories from "The Search for Wholeness." If you would like to order this book, a beautiful paperback, it is available from Heartland Personal Growth Press, 4901 Main Street, Kansas City, MO 64112.

—David Laden, Editor

Rolfing: Stories of Personal Empowerment

N e c e B.

I had been in therapy for seven or eight months and was starting to feel totally disconnected from my body. As I dealt with my emotional problems, allowing them to surface so that I could deal with them, I noticed the different ways my body would react to certain situations. I realized that in order to release the emotional energy needed to solve my problems, I would need to find the means to release some of that physical energy that was blocked.

I believed that Rolfing was the way to accomplish this and decided to try it. After my first two sessions I began to loosen up. By the third and fourth sessions, I found that I was having vivid dreams and was able to write them down in the journal I was keeping. This was really interesting because I had never actually remembered my dreams before. It was a big deal for me.

The most powerful experience I had while being Rolfed occurred in the fifth session, which dealt with my chest. My whole body suddenly went into paralysis. What I felt like and the image that kept coming to me was that of an old Indian woman. For almost an hour,

I felt old and I talked and was unable to move. It frightened me at first because I wasn't sure what it was all about, but even though I was crying, I tried to pay attention to what this old woman wanted to say to me. And I realized that she was telling me about my own rigidity and inflexibility, the parts of me that are probably very old and stuck.

I believe this was the beginning of a physical freedom. In my therapy I'm continuing on an inner journey and going back to find the child within myself. Whenever I've been able to return to painful places, I feel an emptiness in my chest. That's my

dark spot. The parts of me that have been wounded the most are in that area, the heart chakra.

Physically and emotionally it all ties in together. Understanding that, my biggest benefit has come from being able to be more open in my chest area. Now as I work in therapy, I can actually physically feel my chest expanding.

I think being Rolfed was the first time my body ever had a sense of being rigid and stuck in that area and also being able to be more open in that area. It was the most powerful, physical experience I have ever had in terms of seeing my body in a whole new way, seeing that my body really does carry things like rigidity, flexibility and fear. At the end of the session, I had to get on all fours and crawl across the floor to get my feeling back, to have the numbness go away.

After my experience during the fifth session of Rolfing, I really looked forward to the next session. I thought, "What else is going to happen? What else am I going to discover?"

The biggest area of change I've noticed has been the expansion of my chest and shoulders. I used to be round-shouldered. I still struggle with that. But it's easier to hold my shoulders back now. I feel more aligned, less closed in.

I noticed in the pictures Bria took before she began the Rolfing that I have a fighter's stance. I can see it in my right arm, where I've always carried out my anger. That's the part of me that wants to strike out when I feel someone is going to hurt me. As I've worked in therapy, I've noticed a release of pain through my arm, and my arm has gotten longer. It's not as tight or bound up.

Someone pointed out to me that we connect with people through our arms. I've always tried to keep people at a distance. Now that I've let go of some of that tension, I've been able to allow people to get closer.

"Rolfing is not primarily a psychotherapeutic approach to the problems of humans, but the effect it has had on the human psyche has been so noteworthy that many people insist on so regarding it. Rolfing is an approach to the personality through the myofascial collagen components of the physical body. It integrates and balances the so-called "other bodies" of man, metaphysically described as astral and etheric, now more modernly designated as the psychological, emotional, mental and spiritual aspects."

— IDA ROLF

Ida Rolf Talks About Rolfing and Physical Reality

Edited by Rosemary Feitis

I'm aware of being more vulnerable and trusting and seem to be taking more risks. At the same time, I can see that I have fears about making those changes. I think it's that awareness that allows me to take risks that I might not have taken before. Another issue that came up as I was being Rolfed was that of letting go. I was fighting that in order to keep my control. When Bria was working with the tissues in my arms and finding so much resistance, she would say, "Let go." And I would say, "What do you want me to do? I don't know what that means I don't know what you want me to do."

Our bodies truly carry messages that dictate the way we react. I don't think I would have believed that before, but after Rolfing, I'm much more aware of it.

I know I'm ready for some changes. That scares me because I've become used to being stuck and I don't like to think about other possibilities. I think Rolfing will help me recognize the areas I'm stuck in. It certainly isn't something that takes place in a verbal way. My experiencing of paralysis wasn't something that someone could have told me about. I had to experience it with my body before I could start to make choices. "Do I want to stay stuck? Do I like being rigid? What are things I can do to change?"

One of the things I've continued to do since being Rolfed is to get a massage regularly, twice a month. I needed a physical release for my issues. I feel as if I don't have to carry things with me as much as I used to. I never used to know that I could let go of them because I didn't know how to do that physically. Now I have opportunities to do that. I have pain or tension, but I also know that I have options to relieve them. Suddenly I found out that it doesn't have to be there. Rolfing isn't band-aid treatment. It's being able to open up to new possibilities and then integrate and use them in your daily life. ■

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Rolfing is one step of the process I have been going through to get more in touch with myself, with my personal power, my personality, who I am and what I am. Having completed my sessions, I feel better and project a difference. It has been a continuing process and a great experience for me because it has opened up my body, and I am more aware and more in touch with myself.

I started Rolfing when I turned forty and completed the sessions earlier this year. I had been having some problem with pain in my left leg. For years I had been walking with my left foot out at an angle, but I hadn't realized this would be corrected during Rolfing. I didn't know I was in pain, yet I was hoping to seek some relief. I still have a minor amount of pain, but it's nowhere near as intense or as frequent as before. My left leg and hip have become more adjusted, and my foot no longer angles. Because my left leg is a little shorter than the right, there is a real tilt to my hip. I used to have a tendency to look down at the ground. That tilt is still there although it is not as pronounced. I've heard comments that I look better.

Over the years my chest caved in a little. My left shoulder came forward and my chest was somewhat constricted. After the first two sessions it opened up, I was breathing better, and my lung capacity was greater. At the end of the Rolfing, there was a significant difference in my shoulder. It was more squared off.

I felt more energized. There is more energy to tap, and I believe the reason is because the muscles are being placed back in their proper positions, so it takes less energy to run the body.

I was afraid Rolfing would overwhelm me at first. I discussed this with Briah, and she said in

essence that we could handle whatever came up. Nothing that happened proved overwhelming. I had heard about muscle memory and things of that nature that some people experience from Rolfing. I had a rather traumatic childhood. I was emotionally beat up and was scared that some dark, long-buried trauma would come out and knock me flat. I was expecting to be assaulted with ten thousand forgotten traumas.

It didn't occur. I'd have some old trauma come forward, but it didn't swamp me. It was more, "Oh, I'd forgotten about that." As a matter of fact, it was easier to handle these traumas because I was feeling more open, breathing better and walking better.

Rolfing, along with the other steps in my life, brought my personal power, confidence and sincerity to the forefront. The Rolfing was a step, a mode of transportation into another area. The group therapy was also another mode of transportation. When I told my group I was going to be Rolfed, they were overjoyed. My individual therapist, who had also been Rolfed, said it was terrific to do it at this time in my process. It worked exceedingly well in conjunction with therapy. They complement each other.

It's surprising. I didn't even know that people in my support group, even my therapist, had been Rolfed. There was so much positive feedback. And it affects different people in different ways.

I found out through Rolfing where I store my anxiety and tension. When I am suppressing things, I have a tendency to put them in my shoulders and hip area. If I had a week that was particularly stressful, my storage area was tighter and more aggravating. This was a good experience for me because I realized that I'm holding things in. It kicks the hell out of denial, because now I have to deal actively with my problems. It feels really, really good. I can't say that Rolfing was entirely pain-free because it wasn't. If you have a sore muscle in

your arm and someone comes along and presses on the muscle, it's not always fun. That's how it was with my hip. But the soreness left, and the end result was wonderful.

I had spinal meningitis when I was a kid, which caused some trouble with my back over the years. At the end of each session, Briah would have me sit on the edge of the table while she ran her elbows up my back. There would always be a little catch there. That was the most traumatic part of the session for me. Also at the end of the session she would take a photograph. I thought, "What are you going to do? You're not going to show them to your grandchildren now are you? But the more I went into the sessions, the happier I was she was taking them. The changes are subtle but dramatic over time. The photographs didn't seem dramatic. They didn't seem to do justice to the way I felt because they couldn't show how much better I can breathe or how energized I feel. They do show that my shoulder is back in place, squared out, and they show the changes in my hip. I can see where I was and how far I've come.

I'm still continuing to improve because I've gotten everything freed. Things are still in the process of getting aligned properly. It feels like a readjusting, as if my body is getting back into proper position. The adjustment period after Rolfing can go on for six months to a year, I've been told.

I feel as though I live more in my body now rather than on an intellectual plane. I wasn't trusting my body and I didn't understand the signals it was giving me. I wasn't aware when my stomach was tightening. Now, with the therapy and Rolfing, I feel more aware of my body. I'm living in it more. I've moved out of the attic and into the house. And now when my stomach tightens or my muscles twinge, I can feel that I tighten up. I'm more aware now. ■

Rolfing: a Tool for Change, for a Lifetime

April 1, 1993 marks the tenth anniversary of my practice as a Rolfer. I find it interesting how the nature of my clientele has changed over the years. In the early years, almost everyone was coming for the basic 10-session series. Each subsequent year saw more people come back for advanced work. Now, my practice is about 50/50. Half of my clients are new and about half are returning. I like this trend for several reasons.

I enjoy seeing my clients again. I like having a sense of continuity with people. I also have the satisfaction of seeing such positive changes in people's lives due in part from their Rolfing experience. Doing advanced work also gives me the opportunity to work in a more subtle and refined way as clients open on a deeper level in an advanced series.



Hmmm . . . Normally, ten sessions is sufficient, but in your case . . .

Advanced Rolfing can be done in a number of ways. You can always come back, anytime, for a "tune-up" session. However, a 3-session or a 5-session series is what I recommend after the basic 10-session series is completed and after an integration period of at least six months. Both advanced series free the flow of energy in the core of the body,

allowing structural support to come from the intrinsic muscles, relieving the burden on overstressed extrinsic muscles. Implied is a profound shift in nervous system function.

Of course this Inner/Outer balance is the goal of all Rolfing, but because the major compressive forces have already been released in the basic series, the advanced work can focus on the most primary neuro-muscular patterning. The distinction between the 3-session and 5-session series is one of depth and refinement, not intention.

An advanced Rolfing series can be done as many times as desired. I have clients who come every year or so for work. Life is an ever-unfolding process of opening up and letting go. I hope you will continue to use Rolfing as a catalyst for change on your path towards greater health and wholeness. ■

— David Laden

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