

## **ROLFING FAQ**

### **Can you fix the pain in my body?**

Dr Ida Rolf once said to her students, "look, if you are interested in fixing things and focusing on symptoms, leave here, go to medical school. We are after a larger game." In Rolfing we look at the body as an integrated, holistic system. The pain is a reflection of what is going on in one or more area of the body (usually the latter). It is through helping the body organized itself as a whole that the symptoms subside, as a result of changing the structure and movement education. Therefore, our work does not focus on getting rid of the pain, but looking at how we can make a body functions better in relation to the gravity.

### **What is the difference between Rolfing and massage?**

The goals for massage and Rolfing are often very different. Massage is usually about relaxation; Rolfing is about aligning structure and improving long-term function. Both modalities are valuable and one does not exclude the other. One of the most common misconceptions about Rolfing is that it is a type of very deep tissue massage. In order to work effectively with the body, it is first necessary to work with surface structures. "Deep" work is only a part of what may be necessary. To create balance in the whole body all layers must be addressed in a logical and ordered way. Our goals are different even though at times the work may look the same. The purpose of Rolfing is to change your structure so that it works more efficiently. When this happens, circulation is improved, tension is relieved, and there is relaxation – as well as improved range of motion, increased flexibility and energy, and ease of movement. Because your body has changed and nagging patterns are gone, these benefits last and don't need to be addressed continually. Massage therapy can help you in feeling more relax and relieve your symptoms. Our purpose is to have you feel relaxed with efficient posture and movement while you are standing and functioning in your life.

### **Why should I consider Rolfing?**

People come to Rolfing for many reasons. Many chronic pain sufferers turn to Rolfing as an alternative to surgery. Some to rehabilitate from an injury or resolve problems from scar tissue. Others use Rolfing to change their posture and to feel better. Many athletes and artists also use Rolfing to improve performance and extend their careers. Many people sense a need for change in their lives and in their bodies. They see Rolfing as a way to reconnect with their bodies—emotionally, physically, and spiritually—and ultimately achieve greater confidence, ease and joy.

### **How can I tell if Rolfing is for me?**

Talk to your Rolfer. If you are still not sure, try one session. This will give you a pretty good idea of

what the work is about, what it feels like and whether or not you connect with your practitioner. In general, most people know whether Rolfing will benefit them by the third session. This session provides a good stopping point for people who decide that Rolfing/the practitioner is not appropriate for them.

### **Does it hurt?**

A skilled Rolfer knows that if the client is in pain during the treatment, an unfavorable result will be expected. Much of the reputation for pain came from the early days when Rolfing was first gaining public recognition. Since that time, the process has greatly evolved. As far as the actual experience is concerned, the area being worked will vary in sensation and feeling depending upon the severity of chronic stress, injuries, and other factors specific to your body. The work proceeds at your level and pace. Nothing is forced, and skillful Rolfing never feels sharply painful or invasive. When discomfort occurs, many clients describe it as a "good hurt" that the body wants and needs. Rolfing is a participatory process. You may be asked to "breathe" into tissue to help it release or to make small movements under the practitioner's hands. Participating in the movement feels very different than having work "done to you." Additionally, Rolfing proceeds slowly and deliberately and there is ample time to relax into the pressure. The Rolfer also always check in with the client on the pressure that is being applied onto the body.

### **Why do our bodies become misaligned(less resilient)?**

Physical, mental and emotional events from our lives are stored in our bodies via the system of fascia. This creates physical pattern of holding that affects our posture and how we move. One seemingly small imbalance (like one hip being held higher than the other) starts a cycle of our posture affecting our movement which reinforces a pattern in our entire body. Over time, we experience the result of these patterns in the form of chronic pain, stress, limited range of movement, and a general sense of discomfort in our bodies. Rolfing enables a person to become aware of their postural and movement patterns and change them. This usually results in a feeling of freedom in the body and an overall sense of well-being.

### **Why do you do 10-Series sessions? What is the process?**

Rolfing is done over a series of ten sessions(sometimes a few more depending on individual's need),with each session having a specific goal and region of the body to accomplish. Each session builds upon the last and prepares the body for the next. At the beginning of the next session, we will observe what is changing and use this information to refine our strategy. The reasoning behind the ten series is this—the body organizes itself in relationships. When one region of the body is misaligned or is under strain, this strain is communicated through the rest of the body through the fascia. If the shoulder is out of alignment, the rest of your body has to adjust in order to compensate for the

misaligned shoulder. In order to bring your shoulder into a healthier position, the shoulder and the rest of your body need to be adjusted. Treating the shoulder without addressing the rest of your body will bring results, but they will probably be temporary. When the body is given time to let go of old patterns and adapt to new possibilities, the changes are more profound and longer lasting. The session is not over when the client gets off the table; it is a continuous process of opening, shifting, unfolding and organizing into an increased sense of wholeness. The time in between sessions is just as powerful as it allows the body to integrate the new information and changes. During this time, the body experiments with unfamiliar movements and awareness and builds new neurological pathways. As Dr Ida Rolf used to say, "Gravity is the therapist."

### **Do I have to commit to the whole series?**

Of course not. Try the first session and see how you respond to the work. Most people notice results by session three. This session is the last of the "superficial" sessions and a good place to stop if you don't feel you are getting what you need. If, like many of us, you get hooked and plan to continue, session three is where the beginning of more positive changes, refined goals and expectations takes place. If you do plan to continue, it makes sense to commit to completing the series.

### **How long does the session last?**

A typical Rolfing session last about an hour.

### **How far apart should the sessions be?**

About a week to two weeks apart. We recommend no more than 2 weeks interval in between sessions. Sessions 1-3, 4-7, and 8-10 are like little series within the ten-series. If, for some reasons, you have to take a longer break between sessions, it is beneficial to do it after sessions three and seven. We strongly recommend that you continue to do your homework during break.

### **How does a typical session go?**

After a thorough intake, the session begins with the practitioner evaluating your structure and movement patterns while standing and walking. While you are on the massage table, the Rolfer applies slow, specific pressure to different parts of your body to begin easing restrictions in the connective tissue and realign the body. You may be asked to make small, synchronized movements or to "breathe into the area" being worked. Sessions often close with some form of movement education, such as developing supported sitting posture, refining the walking gait, or working on specific stretches.

### **Will I feel good after sessions? What other sensations could arise?**

A lot of clients feel "renewed" and great after session. However, there are clients who completely feel the opposite. You may sense "different" in your body, balance and coordination. You may also feel discomfort in area where you have never experienced, or more discomfort than usual in your sore area. Fortunately these are only temporary and please do not be discouraged. It is because when fascia system in our bodies is being manipulated, they affect each other. The area that is being affected will have to take time to receive the information and make changes accordingly. Our bodies are long for higher order and given enough patient and time, they will sort things out internally without any further intervention.

### **I have completed a few sessions but so far I do not feel any different, why is that? Should I finish the series?**

Dramatic changes may not happen overnight as we already know, but subtle shifts in our structure will definitely happen during the series. Clients who are highly tune in to their bodies will notice and appreciate these small shifts(which will lead to a bigger change). They may notice for example, the way the breath flow through the structure, the increase in volume in the ribcage, the change in their voice when they are speaking and singing etc. Others who are not as sensitive may not notice even if their feet have more contact with the ground. So, if you are in doubt, discuss with your Rolfer and ask for assistance in seeing/feeling those changes.

### **What to expect after completing the series?**

There are many variations of results that clients experience after completing ten sessions. Generally, clients can expect to experience a greater sense of freedom. Better posture, coordination, improved flexibility and improved movement can be expected. An enhanced understanding of how the body operates in harmony with gravity will be developed through the sessions. This new comprehension of the 'self' can then be taken forward by the client and further experienced as a process of lifelong learning. In addition to improvements in the physical functioning of the body, Rolfing can promote an increase in one's emotional sense of well being.

### **Do I need any more sessions after the 10-Series?**

Most often the benefits of Rolfing remain for years after the initial series. Some clients continue to improve without any further work. Some may tend to slip back toward their old patterns but never regress back to where they were before being Rolfed. Some clients choose to continue receiving one session per month for several months while others may want to do an advanced series of 3-5 sessions once or twice a year. The human structure continually seeks resilient and order. It will use the freedom, information and range of motion acquired during the initial Rolfing work to develop more functionally efficient patterns.

### **Do the benefits of Rolfing last?**

Yes. The changes catalysed by Rolfing are not only permanent, they are ongoing and progressive. The body continues to integrate the work long after the series is complete. We work to change patterns in an orderly sequence with each session progressively brings more order and support to the body—more inherent and comfortable patterns begin to replace the old inefficient ones. When this happens, you will consciously begin to select those more natural pattern. Our bodies also, are always seeking a higher level of order. When the body begins to experience this new order it will tend to maintain it because of its efficiency. Rolfing creates the potential for new patterns of movement which reinforces further integration. Photographs taken years after clients have completed the basic ten series show that the changes were still present and the structure had improved further. Keep in mind however, as life changes, bodies change in response. Any injuries, accidents, lengthy illnesses and emotional stress may necessitate additional tune up or advanced work.

### **Are there psychological effects from Rolfing?**

While Rolfing is primarily concerned with structural modifications, any change in the physical body affects the whole person. A shift in structure alters the way you relate to the space/world. When your head moves up over your body, for example, may change your line of sight and you "see" the world. Sometimes the changes are less physical, you might feel you have "let go of something" and can work with an old fear in a new way. Rolfing helps people access patterns of holding that are emotional as well as physical. Therefore, Rolfing is an excellent complement to psychotherapy and other personal development work.

### **What is Rolf Movement Integration?**

The way you use your body affects its structure. Rolf Movement Integration supports and advances the goals of the work done in Rolfing sessions. While the Rolfing sessions affect change through fascial manipulation, movement work does that through movement education, shifting coordination and posture in your day-to-day activities. Rolfing work is great for making large steps forward in structural shift towards better posture; Rolf Movement helps to maintain and enhance the effectiveness those structural gains.

### **Is Rolfing suitable for children?**

Yes. Rolfing can be very effective with children due to the rapid rate at which their bodies break down and rebuild, therefore, profound structural changes can occur with minimal intervention. Rolfing can assist children and adolescents with growing pains, scoliosis, poor posture, leg imbalances such as knock-knees or pigeon-toes, and headaches, among others. Work on children is gentle, and always within the comfort level of the child and parents. Rolfing can also help children

who have had accidents, or seem to be unusually detached from others and their surroundings. Many of the chronic aches and pains that adults have started as children. Addressing the effects of injuries early in life will diminish their effects on adult bodies. When children are injured from falls or minor accidents, they may seem to be fine on the outside since the cut or bruise healed. However, as Dr. Rolf pointed out, they are not really the same. Minor changes have taken place in the connective tissue, in their joints and in the muscles that were injured. Small tears or pulls cause the tissue to thicken. Soon, muscles begin to adhere to each other and are less able to function as discrete entities. These changes may express themselves as a slight limp, lower energy, a decrease in strength or range of motion. Early intervention by a Rolfer aware of the unique needs of children can make a profound difference in a child's awareness, comfort level and self-esteem. Rolfing adolescents during and after puberty, besides the obvious structural benefits, frequently has a profound effect the developing child's awareness and comfort in his or her rapidly changing body and mind.

### **What does conventional medicine think of Rolfing?**

Rolfing is based on Western ideas of anatomy and physiology that are familiar to and accepted by Western trained physicians. When Rolfing is understood by these practitioners, it is generally quite well received. Many physical therapists readily embrace Rolfing because they view fascial manipulation (the cornerstone of Rolfing) as a significant factor in joint mobilization. More and more MDs are referring patients to Rolfers and are, themselves, being Rolfed.

### **Does Rolfing go hand in hand with chiropractic?**

Definitely. Rolfing and chiropractic can be mutually beneficial. Chiropractic moves bones back to their proper place to restore joint function. Rolfing improves alignment by manipulating the tissues that hold bones and everything else in place. If adjustments don't seem to be holding as long as you'd like, there's a good chance that connective tissue is the culprit. With your approval, we can work directly with your health care team to provide work that supports and promotes current treatment plans. Additionally, a Rolfer can contribute how fascial organisation may be affecting your condition, a factor that is often overlooked.

### **Can I exercise in between Rolfing sessions?**

Regular exercise is great, just pay attention to your body. Balance and coordination can be temporarily affected as your structure changes, and time is needed to integrate changes. Although you should avoid intense workouts the day of a session, movement is key to get the most out of Rolfing. Walking, with the awareness of the changes and new patterns that are taking place, is particularly good at assisting integration.

**What should I wear?**

We suggest bras and panties for women and shorts for men. It is important for the practitioner to be able to see your physical structure and the changes that occur to it during the session, but is also important for you to feel comfortable during the session. Please wear what you feel is appropriate.

**How can I get the most from Rolfing?**

Movement. We are made for motion. The health of all of our systems- respiratory, circulatory, digestive etc- depends on movement. In addition, activity allows the body to take unfamiliar movement options introduced by Rolfing and make them it's own. We introduce Rolfing Movement Integration throughout the Ten-Series and to get the most out of Rolfing, do your movement homework every day. And walk, walk, walk.

**How are Rolfers trained?**

Rolfers are trained and certified by the Rolf Institute® of Structural Integration in Boulder, Colorado- the only school accredited to teach Rolfing. Successful applicants complete a training program that usually requires 18 months to two years of study. Following certification, ongoing continuing education is required to maintain active status in the institute. Training covers anatomy, physiology, and kinesiology; Rolfing theory and structural analysis; soft tissue manipulation, spinal mechanics, and joint mobilization methods; Rolfing Movement Integration techniques; individual research and written essays; and extensive supervised clinical sessions. After a period of usually 3-7 years of practice and meeting continuing education requirements, certified Rolfers can do additional training to become Advanced certified Rolfers. Practitioner may also pursue an additional certification in Rolf Movement.

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