

# Getting More From Your rolfing

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I have just been through the ten sessions of rolfing! The experience has been an interesting and exhilarating one: it's been a time of rebirth and rediscovery for myself. As a person who had always lived much more in my head than in my body, I would like to share with any readers who are planning to get rolfed some suggestions for approaching the rolfing process. They represent a combination of my own discoveries and experiences, and things my rolfer (Megan Gilchrist of Berkeley) has pointed out to me.

1) Park your car several blocks from your rolfer's house or office. The several block walk immediately after rolfing will give your body a very nice chance to feel some of the changes it's just experienced. Also your head may want a little space to work out any emotions or just to experience the wonder of what's happening before you get down to the business of driving.

2) Your body will want you to use it more — you will feel more energy (sometimes restlessness) and a desire to move. Go with it: dance (it's an excellent way for letting your body discover itself) or do whatever it seems to want, stretches or whatnot. Break up long sitting still periods with a little movement. Your body will invent things; it knows what it wants, so listen to it and give in to its cravings. You'll probably be pleasantly surprised to feel how good it feels to move, and how graceful and fluid your movements have become. (By the way if you think you "can't dance", try again: you may have a surprise!)

3) It's often nice to take a warm bath on the evenings after a rolfing session.

4) You may sometimes feel some odd emotions for a day or two after the sessions. Just accept them and let them happen; it's a normal part of the process of having things released.

5) Don't impose a "head trip", a mental image of what your body should be like. As you go through changes and have old chronic postures and ways of moving released, there may be a temptation to try to hold yourself in accord with your ideas of "good posture". This will only create new strains. Instead just let your body be its new way — it has a wisdom all its own, obeying the laws of its physical nature; it doesn't need your head to tell it what to do. My rolfer has often pointed this out to me; it's been a very nice discovery and has allowed me to see my body in an entirely new light.

6) But do remain sensitive to what your body is feeling and doing. If you find yourself holding-tightening your shoulders, pelvis, etc. (you'll recognize these tightenings easily after they've been released by rolfing), just allow them to drop back into the position that seems most natural and comfortable now. Your body may still be used to holding itself in the old habits, so be gently aware of it. What you'll find is that you now have a new alternative way of carrying yourself, and that this alternative, even though it may sometimes feel a little strange at first, is also the more comfortable, natural, and easy way to be.

This also goes for more complex movements. One example with myself comes from a session in which my legs were rolfed. Several hours after this session, I was walking along when I suddenly became aware of my walking. I realized I was holding something in my walking movements, my leg muscles. So I just let my legs feel the new changes that were in them and move in the way that

rolfing had just made possible. There was no intellectual analysis at all — I hardly knew what was different — I just let my body do it (*it* knew) and I was walking completely differently. Generally I have found myself going back and forth between the old and the new, but now the new is much more habitual.

Of course there will be some changes that just happen automatically and stay there without any attention or awareness on your part, and others that are so subtle that while you will be aware that you can “let something go”, you’ll hardly be aware, on the articulate level, of what it is. It’s good to remember that all of these changes will still be there in the fascial structure of your body, even if you don’t always let go into them.

Another kind of message your body will give you now that rolfing has made you more sensitive and in tune with it, and you’re not shutting off its signals, is when you’re using it in a way that’s not comfortable. Sometimes this will communicate itself to you quietly, like a desire to straighten up instead of bending over the sink. Other times it will come in the form of a pulled muscle that hadn’t bothered you before (no, rolfing’s not making you worse, your body’s just going through adjustments and /or giving you a message to stop using it in a way that has actually never been too good for it). If it’s the latter, watch yourself — are you twisting as you reach for something on a shelf? etc., and be creative in making adjustments in your movements or your environment.

Structural Patterning lessons will be important in your process as you are rolfed. If you decide to do this, ask a patterner when is the best time to begin lessons — rolfing and patterning work well together.

7) You may expect that the changes which you felt so aware of during the first few days after a session will often seem to grow less pronounced towards the end of the week. They’re still there! It’s just that your body has become more used to them and integrated them. The ten sessions are very carefully worked out in a sequence that is designed to prevent you from regressing. Actually your body will continue to make positive changes in the direction of the rolfing ideal for at least a year after the last session; six months after the tenth session you’ll look different than you do immediately after. I’ve found that after getting deeply relaxed, or when dancing or doing other exercises, or even getting into a radically different environment such as a vacation in the mountains, I become aware again of changes — new fluidities and possibilities for movements — that I had taken for granted during my more regular activities. I stress this point because it is a common experience for people who have been rolfed to go through periods of thinking nothing’s happening and they’ve wasted their time. Ain’t so!

more progress by “letting him in”. It is common for people to react to pain by tightening against it, or by “running away” — putting the mind and attention someplace else. Your rolfers will probably make it clear that he/she won’t do anything that is more than you can handle. They can tell by the way your body reacts, and besides you can always tell them how you’re feeling — the feedback’s good for both of you. So you are in control of the situation and safe. Essentially it’s a cooperative effort.

People have different ways of opening up the part of the body that’s being worked on. It’s voluntary but subtle — again, it’s letting your body’s wisdom work for you. Basically you are keeping your attention in that area, and accepting the rolfers’ pressure. I like to think of the rolfers’ hand as a trusted

friend who I am welcoming in to help me. Sometimes I just focus on the area and relax. At times when the pain's been intense, I've sometimes found some sort of a visual image, like a flower opening (that one occurred to me spontaneously once) or a field of color that's conducive to relaxing or softening to be helpful. Others have imagined breathing into an area, or lighting it up with a flashlight; the point is that somehow just bringing your attention to that place instead of leaving the scene allows the work to go better.

9) And finally, look in the mirror a lot. Be narcissistic! You'll like the changes!