

The DFA Movement

by Jill Ableson, Certified Rolfer and Martha Hope

Some people will remember Annie Duggan and Janie French teaching at the Rolf Institute® as Movement Instructors in the 1980's. The movement work of that time was designed to help the clients take advantage of, inhabit, and fully utilize their newly "Rolfed" bodies. Annie and Janie explored movement patterns with their clients by helping them differentiate between old and new structural choices. They also refined a method of physical accessing nicknamed "Joffling" or "Shake and Bake". It was driven by the need to have a fluid way of supporting a client in staying in sensation. This complex elliptical motion, which accesses the Golgi tendon response, is still known as Joffling.

During this period of time Annie and Janie became curious about the correlation between belief systems and their structural counterparts or "patterns" they noticed that in Rolfering sessions the client was so focused on the immediacy of the profound physical changes that it was difficult to make the connection to how they organize their beliefs. Annie and Janie felt that if the client had awareness of when and how their belief systems were created while simultaneously experiencing its physical consequence, the ease offered by Rolfering® would have a greater opportunity of being integrated and maintained.

In 1989, Annie and Janie left the Rolf Institute with the desire to integrate movement education, Joffling or the elliptical motion, with a specific technique to gain access and explore the origin and creation of a client's belief systems.

The Duggan French Approach, (DFA) is a method of simultaneously working with the interwoven fields of physical, emotional, and cognitive systems, producing deep lasting client-driven change. Each session is like a hologram of the whole integrating process. Material the client brings to a particular session holds elements of

how they organize in the world. Clients often come to a somatic practitioner with symptoms of stress experienced as tension. The word "stress" is overused and it doesn't give enough information about a client's individual organization of experience. The process helps the client to discover that the umbrella experience of stress is made up of many possible individual feelings, such as frustration, disappointment, anxiety, etc. We support the client in renegotiating a more empathic and specific response rather than general tension.

As a simple illustration, a client arrives late for a session. The client's expression upon arrival is a window into their self-organization. They may feel fearful that they have upset the practitioner and make up a series of negative consequences that remain unspoken.

In the DFA process we would help the client identify the physical tension pattern of the upset during the initial conversation. As the client is supported in noticing the familiarity of the physical tension, they may have insight into a patterned reaction and recognize it by saying, "I always feel this way when I'm late." This begins the process of relating cognition with sensation. To support the client in getting more information through sensation, the session continues with the client fully clothed on the practitioner's table. How each session unfolds is dependent on their individual process.

As somatic practitioners, we are aware that the Golgi tendon organs are always registering the tug of objects from the outside environment and influence of emotions from the internal environment. The intrinsic wisdom of the proprioceptive system keeps us from damaging ourselves. However, habituated tensions can damage our systems when they are unconscious or when we are unable to choose differently. Referring back to our "late" client's upset:

the client may have awareness of jaw pain and its relationship with managing fear of negative consequences, but still not have the ability to soften the jaw. The elliptical motion or Joffling allows us to recreate the tension for the client. In essence we get under the radar of the muscle spindle reflex arc or contraction so that we can meet the habituated holding in a joint or body segment. The motion locates the "eye" of the tension so that the practitioner can relieve the client from the job of holding it themselves. This process mirrors the Golgi's sense of "normal" and sets the conditions for the neuromuscular proprioceptive system to reset itself. This procedure gives the client the opportunity to become conscious of how much "normal" tension they assert in a specific location, and reassess what is actually needed or desired.

While keeping the client in sensation by Joffling, the practitioner helps the client access the belief systems or emotional patterns that correlate to the physical qualities being discovered. During this process, our previously mentioned client may have discovered how to recognize a patterned response that had manifested as jaw tension. The client may gain the possibility to release the tension in the moment and the option to choose a different behavior. It might be as simple as inquiring if their lateness has actually upset someone instead of assuming that it has.

It is necessary - and of immense value - to re-examine such belief systems and their corresponding unconscious physical patterns to determine whether they are supportive or restrictive. The final determination is always the client's, because the DFA practitioner's responsibility lies not in shaping you, but in nurturing your inborn urge to live fully. Thus whatever the goals of any particular session may be, the continuing objectives of the work include:

Freeing the body of deep tension

Evoking awareness, through which more physical ease and efficiency is acquired.

Reorganizing of the structure for function at the highest potential.

Integration of emotional and physical presence

Assisting the client in learning how to support themselves in their ongoing process of growth and individuation.

In DFA Practitioner Training, a commitment to growth and introspection is required. The integration of intellectual learning and the kind of personal insight and knowledge that is the great gift of individuation is needed to successfully work with clients.

DFA Practitioner Trainings are held in Barcelona, Spain, and in Seattle, Washington. Currently a training is ongoing in Seattle and a new one is planned for the fall of 2003. For more information about workshops, trainings, and individual sessions please call: The Center for DFA at 206-361-7554.

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