

...The Heart of Stillness...

A Biodynamic View of Structural Integration

by **Carol Agnessens, Certified Advanced Rolfer**

Sometime in late 1982, I began studying the cranium as a way to further my understanding of the Seventh Hour. At the time, I purchased Dr. Upledger's first book and began working privately with one of his students. I was taught the ten-step protocol and although my tutor was highly skilled, I felt uncomfortable following a recipe for the manipulation of cranial bones. I was looking for "something" but was unsure of where or how to find it. I continued to pursue study with other cranial specialists, and always appreciated their skill but I was unable to find a methodology that would support the depth of contact I wanted for working within the cranium.

In 1998, I was introduced to a fluid approach to cranial sacral therapy. My body eased as I was guided into the "well" of fluidity that floated the bones. This approach made sense to my hands and my heart. The depth of contact with "a fluid body" inspired me to pursue my inquiry into a Biodynamic approach to craniocervical therapy. Biodynamic perception removes the veil of template perception and thus informs every aspect of the structural and movement integration sessions that I do. In addition, my understanding of health and healing has dramatically shifted. In the writing that follows, I will present an overview of BDCST, and the scientific ground behind various biodynamic phenomena. I will also explore how this approach might become a resource for a practitioner of structural or movement integration.

BIODYNAMIC

The origin of this word comes from embryology and the pioneering vision of Erich Blechschmidt. Biodynamic refers to the dynamic metabolic forces that arise and affect the growth and development of the individual from its origin as a single fertilized cell.

Blechschmidt saw the human body arising from wholeness. It is the perfection within wholeness that is its underlying ground and functioning force. He was a skilled research scientist who was fascinated with embryos. He held a curiosity and awe about the biodynamics and biokinetics of human development. He questioned how life came into being. What happens? Although he never arrived at an answer, he wrote that the "cause of the beginning of human life is held within the consciousness of the embryo itself." He also sensed that there was a secret, a mystery, that needed to be recognized and not dissected. This mystery of life, he would soon realize, is at the center of the Healing process. Blechschmidt was fascinated by the fact that there was a force inside the fluids of the body that was not coming from the genetic field. He felt that this force within the fluid actually contained the idea of the form of the human body, whether it's a kidney or vertebra or eye, and brought it into manifestation. At about six weeks of embryonic life, the genes begin to modify this original form. In other words, growth emerges via metabolic fields and the influence of something he called a *fluid force*.

What is needed is to learn afresh, to observe and discover for ourselves the meaning of wholeness. - David Bohm

Biodynamic Craniosacral Therapy has its roots in the writing and study of the early osteopaths, and most directly, William Sutherland, D.O. (the founder of cranial osteopathy). From 1948 on, Dr. Sutherland devoted himself exclusively to a biodynamic approach. He referred to the Breath of Life as an unerring Intelligence or potency infusing the cerebral spinal fluid. He said it was "the Breath of Life" which carries out the correction, not the therapist. The manifestation of the Breath of Life within the body is called Primary Respiration. The potency within this movement is not

limited to the cranium or the cerebrospinal fluid but moves through a fluid body, which is intimately connected with the soma. Eric Blechschmidt described six different ways in which fluids will interact with each other inside the body. William Sutherland, perceived forces within the fluids. Yet, the two men had never met or read each other's work. Both of these scientists were describing the same phenomena within a fluid medium.

Within the cerebrospinal fluid is an invisible element that I refer to as the Breath of Life. I want you to visualize this as a fluid within a fluid, something that does not mix, something that has Potency as the thing that makes it move...that is more intelligent than your own human mentality. - William Sutherland, D.O.

BIOPHOTONS: LIGHT WITHIN THE FLUIDS

Both the potency that Dr. Sutherland contacted within the fluids of an individual's system, and the force within the fluids that Dr. Blechschmidt sensed was directing embryonic formation, find a scientific ground in the pioneering research of Mae Won Ho, Ph.D., biochemist, geneticist and researcher.

In her exciting book, *The Rainbow and the Worm*, (World Scientific, 1993) Mae Won Ho, describes the physics of living processes. She initiates the reader into the "poetry that is the soul of nature" and which is intimately experienced through our own experience in the natural world. She writes that "life is a process of being an organizing whole...and therefore must reside in the pattern of dynamic flow of matter and energy that somehow makes the organisms alive..."(p. 5) The characteristics of life processes which she cites include: an extreme sensitivity to specific cues from the environment, dynamic order and coherence, their extraordinary efficiency and rapidity of energy transduction, and their wholeness and individuality (p. 6). All of the characteristics that she describes can be easily translated into a description of the biochemical underpinnings of biodynamic principles.

When Dr. Sutherland writes of "a fluid within a fluid", perhaps he was referring to the phenomena involving the emittance of light, which occurs as a living system gains greater and greater coherence. Perhaps, Sutherland in his treatments was touching the liquid crystalline matrix which Ho

describes in her research with *Drosophila* larvae (p. 118) and which Sutherland later referred to as the "fluency" within the body. The biochemical underpinnings of the fluid body will be addressed later in this paper. Let's return to the phenomena of light within matter that is the Health or potency that sustains living processes.

Einstein realized that light and matter were made of the same substance. (Matter moving at the speed of light changes its nature.) Gautama Buddha realized that: form is none other than emptiness, and emptiness is none other than form. This is the basis of the Heart Sutra. The phenomenon of one substance changing into another is called, trans-substantiation. In quantum physics, light and matter may exist as either a wave or a particle. Mae Wan Ho suggests that light and living matter have a very special relationship and that *all organisms emit light at a steady rate*. The emitted light is called a *biophoton*. "This emission is correlated with the cell cycle and other functional states of the organism and responds to external stimuli and stresses. Biophoton emission is universal to all living organisms." (Ho, *Rainbow and the Worm*, p. 123)."

According to the biophoton theory developed on the basis of these discoveries the biophoton light is stored in the cells of the organism - more precisely, in the DNA molecules of their nuclei - and a dynamic web of light constantly released and absorbed by the DNA may connect cell organelles, cells, tissues, and organs within the body and serve as the organism's main communication network and as the principal regulating instance for all life processes. The processes of morphogenesis, growth, differentiation and regeneration are also explained by the structuring and regulating activity of the coherent biophoton field. The holographic biophoton field of the brain and the nervous system, and maybe even that of the whole organism, may serve as the basis of memory and other phenomena of consciousness. The consciousness-like coherence properties of the biophoton field indicate its possible role as an interface to the non-physical realms of mind, psyche and consciousness. (excerpt from Biophoton: the Light in Our Cells, by Marco Bischof. 1995, Zweitausendeins, Frankfurt)

William Sutherland experienced a kind of kinesthetic/visual synesthesia when he sensed/observed a light source moving within and through the fluids of an individual's body. He called this liquid light "potency", which I believe is the "fluid

within the fluid" which communicates the Health sustaining Intelligence of life processes. In treating the many who sought his care, he realized that as potency increased and was sustained within a system, clients reported feelings of greater well-being. The liquid light of potency and the nature of biophotons can be woven together in the role of regulating the biochemistry and biology of life.

A Case Study

A career pilot working for a commercial airline recently came to me for treatment. He exhibited many symptoms of chronic fatigue syndrome: low grade fever, aches and pains that moved throughout his body, low energy, bouts of depression and an early history of childhood physical and emotional abuse. He had also suffered a number of whiplash injuries. In working, I would "drop" my awareness beneath the trauma and activation that was apparent in his system. As I settled into my own sense of ground, his system followed me. As I energetically "sank", he "rested" further into my treatment table. I touched the various places in his body that his system "expressed" to me. I waited at each site until I felt the discharge of a "buzzy" electric like energy often referred to as "hard" potency, which is held within the trauma event. I would WAIT until the buzzy discharge shifted into a softer, and warmer energy. As the release of "soft potency" became more palpable there was a distinct change in the nature of the bone or tissue that I was contacting. The sacrum (for example) became more porous, more permeable and began to "breathe". There was no longer a distinction between the porous quality of his sacrum and my hand. The inherent motility (inner movement) within the sacrum itself seemed to increase and I could sense a reorganization from the sacrum to the lower lumbar spine and then within the entire structure. The system itself "knew" how to reorganize; I did not have to "make" it happen. I understand this as the inherent Intelligence of potency rising within his system. With each consecutive session, the Health sustaining Intelligence flourishes and he reports less and less of his initial symptoms.

A FOCUS ON HEALTH

Biodynamic Craniosacral Therapy is a wholistic process designed to come into relationship with a fundamental and therapeutic force, which moves within the body and through the bioelectric field that

surrounds and permeates the body. Incorporating the vision of Dr. Blechschmidt, it is an approach to seeing the totality of the individual in Spirit, Soul, and Body, thereby acknowledging the underlying wholeness and depth of the mystery that is functioning life. Health is the underlying wholeness within every body. True health is the embodied fullness of these dimensional aspects.

Osteopathy in its conception contained a philosophy as well as a science. Osteopaths were asked to consider questions of the soul, death, transcendence, and use only their hands in healing. The background in which life occurs has meaning. ...Any healing art needs to help individuals find the way to a deeper reality than a biomolecular model of health. - James Jealous, D.O.

The core of this work is perceptual. It is about learning to sense the whole of an individual and to relate to the HEALTH that is predominant.

In this context, to be "in health" is to perceive wholeness, or a sense of connection between the many facets of self: emotional, physical, spiritual, relational, etc. Health is not merely the absence of illness or pain, which might be relieved by taking an herbal formula or receiving a deep massage.

As a structural practitioner, we are taught to look at what is not working in an individual's structure/movement patterns, with the intention of "correcting" it. What would it feel like if our first intention were to contact an individual's health/underlying wholeness the resource and then relate to "the problem" within the context of their essential Health? (The word resource is used in this context as the embodied sense of connectivity to life, and "core" essence. An individual's felt-sense of wholeness is the primary resource.)

For example: Imagine a large three-dimensional satin sheet with a number of "historical mementos" scattered upon it and embedded into the many layers of fabric. These mementos are the past events that continue to affect the system and which often drive an individual to seek our services. These histories could be accidents, injuries, traumas, both physical and emotional, chronic feelings of isolation or overwhelming chaos, all of which are triggered by an event in time. As a practitioner, if I focus on the particulate (the past event resonating in present time), the spinal misalignment, the distraught heart, or the sprained ankle,

etc. I might not perceive the underlying ground of wholeness that is everybody's fundamental resource. In a biodynamic context, the sense of interconnectedness, with all aspects of human-beingness, is the singular and most true resource. How would your kinesthetic sense shift if as a practitioner your focus were the "sheet" in which the specific event was held, rather than the individual event? The "sheet" in a somatic context is the connective tissue continuum, the matrix of wholeness. This comprises the fabric of the physical body, which is contacted every time we place our hands on someone's body.

Somatic Exploration: Connecting With The Fabric Of Wholeness, The Underlying Health

With a partner...

Settle into your seat. Expand your perception to include a sense of your weight through your pelvis, contact with the floor, and a sense of your skin boundary. Next allow yourself a sense of the room around you (especially behind you).

Place your hands on your partner's lower leg or thigh (without having an intention of "doing something" just make contact with your partner). Imagine contacting the health within your partner. Settle for a few minutes with a relaxed purpose of contacting health.

Next, shift your intention and contact your partner with the goal of fixing something.

What is your experience as you contact the underlying health within your partner? Do you notice any difference as you contact what you imagine needs to be "fixed"? What does your partner experience?

Rollin Becker, D.O., a student of Dr. Sutherland, frequently spoke to the manifestation of health within every living system even in the face of terminal illness. He referred to the living physician within us, which is always manifesting health.

From the time you were conceived until the time you kick the bucket, it is constantly manifesting health for you. For every decade of your life, you have a pattern of life that is right for you. If you're in your twenties, you've got a health pattern that literally is an expression of that decade. It matures as each of us does and gradually changes gears but it is constantly manifesting health. - Rollin Becker, D.O.

A Case Study

For over a year, I have been working with a woman (83 years old) who suffers the degenerative nerve symptoms of neuropathy. She has been dealing with painful bouts of sciatic and neuropathy for many years before beginning biodynamic craniosacral therapy. Her symptoms have improved in the time I have been seeing her, but it is clear this is a degenerative process.

Over the time we have worked, she has gained a strong and deep grounding in her experience that she is not her dis-ease, but a whole person who can access her deepest resources and sense of self despite her growing loss of function. I think this is going to be increasingly important as she becomes less mobile, needing to use a walker for security in the event that her knees "give out". As she becomes more grounded in her body and has compassion for it, she is developing an amazingly strong witness state.

She often comes to her sessions feeling somewhat crippled and often fragmented. Her system tends to dive into EV3 (expansion of the third ventricle) or another stillpoint and I can sense the shift in her being able to come back into the body even while she acknowledges the difficulties and frustrations of her body's limitations.

I hold the question of, "what is trying to ignite in her system through this illness?" I ardently practice staying "out of the way", so I can be most receptive to what arises for us in each session. While it never seems to be about physical healing, she is certainly moving into a clearer relationship with Health as it lies deep within her.

The Health in the patient cannot become diseased or die. You can't kill it. It's transcendent. All we need to do is listen, use our hands in a skilled fashion, be patient, have the time and follow the Health. Then, the natural laws, not "framed by human hands" will reveal to us our role in the moment. The intellect remains in check. It's really none of my business how the process of healing is occurring.... All I can do is help life come into balance in the way it intends to. - James Jealous, D.O.

THE MOVEMENT OF THE TIDES

Life is movement. Every living system is in perpetual motion from the intercellular activity of protein formation, to the more palpable rhythms of circulatory pulsation,

thoracic respiration, and cranial rhythmic impulses.

All of these rhythms function within the global membrane of our skin. There are also much slower rhythms, which move through the body either from the surrounding environment or from a center of stillness within the midline of the body. These are the subtle and slow rhythms known as the potency tide of the fluid body and the long tide of primary respiration. "The potency tide expresses the biodynamic force within the fluid system as a unified tensile field at a rate of 2.5 cycles/minute of inspir and expir. The long tide can be felt at an even slower rate of one cycle per 100 seconds." (Franklyn Sills, *Craniosacral Biodynamics*, vol.1, North Atlantic, 2001, p. 107)

These rhythms are not unlike the ocean currents and tides permeating the natural world and moving through the enveloping field. The rhythms of the sea, and the rhythms of life are constant and present. These natural rhythms are sometimes veiled to our sensing by the limitations of our perception and the often overwhelming pace of the world around us. This environmental chaos when coupled with the "state" of our own nervous system in ease or activation influences each person's perceptual sensitivity. Biodynamic Craniosacral Therapy is an approach that senses the whole of an individual in relationship to the field. This field is not static but is in motion, as if "it" was breathing around and through the physical body. The felt-sense of connection to something greater than oneself arises from the perception of, and a relationship to the whole of life in all of its processes, forms and densities. A biodynamic approach develops an awareness of an Intelligence that infuses every nook and cranny of a living system.

The tides can be sensed moving through the soma (tissues, fluids, bones) as well as through the fluid body of potency and the tidal body of primary respiration. Just as the embryo arises from a still center, the tides arise from a depth of stillness, which is at the heart of the biodynamic work.

Somatic Exploration: "Every drop knows the tide." (Sutherland)

Find a comfortable sitting position. Follow your thoracic inhalation and exhalation as your breathing becomes deeper, slower and easier. Imagine that you are a teardrop of fluid (not water but thick vibrating

fluid)... Become this singular medium of pulsating fluid. Sit with this awareness for five or more minutes. What do you notice? Is the fluid body breathing you? (Adapted from J. Jealous, D.O. transcript: *The Fluid Body*)

DIMENSIONS OF THE BODY

We are more than our physical body, yet as Dr. Rolf pointed out, it is the body that we are able to "get our hands on".

The physical body or soma includes the connective tissue, bones, organs, nervous system, interstitial fluids, everything found within the skin boundary excluding the germ cells. In our work, we touch all of this either directly or indirectly. Dr. Rolf pioneered the understanding of fascia, as the organ of form, and the key element in structural integration. Dr. Andrew Still, the "father of osteopathy" also brought attention to the fascia.

The fascia gives one of, if not the greatest problems to solve as to the part it takes in life and death. It belts each muscle, vein, nerve, and all organs of the body. It is almost a network of nerves, cells and tubes, running to and from it; it is crossed and filled with, no doubt, millions of nerve centers and fibers to carry on the work of secreting and excreting fluid vital and destructive. By its action we live, and by its failure we shrink, or swell or die ... when you deal with the fascia, you deal with the branch offices of the brain... - Dr. A.T. Still, D.O.

The interconnectedness of the physical body is viewed through what James Oschman, Ph.D., calls the Living Matrix. He describes a continuum of communication comprised of the cell's cytoskeleton and connective tissue that form a structural, functional and energetic matrix extending throughout the body and into the nuclei of every cell.

Structure does not merely exist as a substrate for communication; structure exists because it communicates. - James Oschman, Ph.D.

It is the living matrix that practitioners touch and interact with in all body-centered therapies. The living matrix is a network of connectivity that reaches into every nook and cranny of the body. When you place your hand on the surface of someone's skin it is this living, vibrating web of life that you are contacting. This matrix of communication and connectivity is a resource of Health. The intention (or goal) that we hold

as practitioners shapes the "message" that we communicate to an individual's system. If we imagine a client's body tissues to be static, or if I imagine that it is my job to infuse their system with vitality, that is exactly the goal my hands will work to achieve. Overtime, this approach is exhausting. However, if I can take the time to connect with the underlying health, and contact the "living presence" within the tissues, the outcome will be different. Communication with the connective tissue matrix is always a two-way exchange. The key factor is the ability to listen to the system from a neutral place within myself, before I "roll up my sleeves and get to work".

The images that we hold shape the therapeutic intention and influence our successes or a less than successful outcome.

Intentions are not trivial because they give rise to specific patterns of electrical and magnetic activity in the nervous system of the therapist that can spread through their body and into the body of a patient. - James Oschman, Ph.D. Energy Medicine, The Scientific Basis, p. 48, Churchill Livingstone, 2000.

Somatic Exploration: The Intention in Your Touch

With a partner...

Part 1. Settle into yourself, feel your feet on the floor and widen your perceptual field to include a sense of the space to the sides and behind you. Notice your breath. Follow your own breathing cycle for the next minute or two. Notice the impulse to begin to work. Notice where the impulse takes you...to your partner's shoulders, or pelvis etc. Do not follow these impulses, just wait and return to a sense of your own breathing cycle. Notice how many times you are drawn to jump into "doing something". Just wait. There will be a moment when everything settles, both within your own system and within your partner's system. Wait for the settling to happen. This is neutral. Notice the "place" in your partner's system that comes into your awareness as you listen and wait in this neutral space. Make contact.

Part 2. As you contact this place in your partner, maintain a sense of the space around you. Each time you might begin to narrow your vision to the part of the person you are touching, widen your view to include their body and the space around it.

Is there tension in your hands wanting to "do" or to "fix" something? Notice the activity in your hands. What is the intention your hands convey?

Take a moment and just let your hands relax. Let them rest into contact. Do not "do" anything, intend anything, or begin to manipulate the tissues. Notice if there is movement beneath your hands or stillness. Meet whatever tissue quality is there without the intention of changing anything. Contact the tissue, in its present state. Notice what is there without trying to change anything. Wait with a sense of presence in your touch.

With a receptive and listening hand, move to other parts of your partner's body. Contact tissues, bones, and fluids as you let your hand listen for those structures without "diving into" the body of your partner. Meet the quality within the tissue with your presence.

We communicate with a client's body as their body communicates with us. I am touched as I am touching. How well do we listen and invite a client's system to reveal the therapeutic intervention that is needed at that moment in time? How readily do I step back and wait in the gap of "not knowing" until "something arises" which informs my therapeutic intervention? The therapeutic intervention may be to work with the biomechanics of a spinal fixation to relieve pain, but if that is my only course of action then my intervention may rob the system itself of its own creative labyrinth for healing.

THE FLUID BODY

The fluid body is more than a sum of the fluid systems contained within the body (i.e., lymph, interstitial, blood, cerebral spinal fluid, synovial fluids, etc.). The fluid body is the bioelectrical continuum arising from the primal mesenchyme and ground substance of the embryo. It can be measured and palpated both within and around the body due the bioelectric properties of its fluidic nature. The potency within the fluids is not limited to the cranium or cerebral spinal fluid but moves through this fluid body and is intimately connected with the soma.

My initial introduction to the fluidity of the body came from the writing of Samy Frenk and Francisco Varela. Years ago, they published an article called, *The Organ of Form*. (1987 Academic Press, Inc.) Their research

explored the interrelationship between space (the extra cellular matrix, ECM) and form (the denser tissue structures). Varela and Frenk made the case for the intercommunication between "space" and "form". They saw the ECM as a global structure because it is continuous throughout the body. The fluid body is a global function of biochemical/bioelectrical intelligence that permeates the physical body. The fluid body is continuous with the extracellular matrix and is responsive to the surrounding environment.

Mae Won Ho, Ph.D., speaks of a liquid crystalline matrix that describes a system that is open to the environment, that organizes itself (and its environment) by simultaneously "enfolding" the external environment and spontaneously "unfolding" its potential from within (*The Rainbow and the Worm*, p. 175). There appears to be an equivalency between Ho's description of a liquid crystalline matrix, Oschman's living matrix, and Sutherland's many references to the liquid light moving within the fluid body. Dr. James Jealous carries this understanding further when he speaks of a primordial body as a living continuum of fluidity with a living and palpable Intelligence.

We must have fluency in our perception and we must be able to move from the center of the soma to the center of the fluid body to the center of the potency.

...I recommend you go to the center of the fluid body and feel it breathe. Don't try to feel the fluid body by surrounding it with your consciousness. If it's fluent in its expression, it means the psyche is without will. Its fulcrum is not in one's individuality but in the life of the SEA as a whole... - James Jealous, D.O.

Whether it is a reference to the "living matrix" and its crystalline nature or the living Intelligence within the fluid body, the scientific ground for the communicative properties of the matrix can be linked to the primeval functioning of the perineural system.

"Peri" is a prefix meaning around, surrounding or near. In this instance perineural refers to the cells that encircle "each neuron in the brain and follow every peripheral nerve to its termination" (p. 223, *Energy Medicine*.)

Robert O. Becker pioneered research that explored the functioning of the perineural system and its relationship to the semi-conducting (communicating) matrix that

envelops it. This semi-conducting matrix is the connective tissue. He recognized a "dual nervous system" consisting of the classical nervous system that operates in a sequential fashion transmitting electrical impulses from a commanding brain to axon and dendrite. He also highlighted an additional informational system that is made up of more than half the cells of the brain and transmits information via "slow moving waves of direct current throughout the organism, affecting every part" (*Energy Medicine*, p. 224). On an evolutionary scale, this system is much older, sending information in a global manner, and spreading systemic regulation throughout the body for injury repair.

We contact this system every time our hands are in contact with an individual's body.

Somatic Exploration: Contacting The Intelligent Web (Part 1)

With a partner...

Settle into yourself, feel your feet on the floor and widen your perceptual field to include a sense of the space to the sides and behind you. Notice your breath. Settle into neutral.

From a neutral space, place your hands on your partner's thigh. With more attention/intention on the back of your hand (rather than on the palmer surface) "ask" their system to show you

the superficial fascial web beneath the skin surface. Next, "invite" their thigh muscles with their fascial wrappings rise into your awareness. Next, hold the intention of their femur making its shape known to your kinesthetic and perhaps even visual sense.

How does your sense of contact change if you "go after" this anatomy? What does your partner experience?

Now...hold all of these systems in your awareness...the fascial web, the muscle, the bone.

What happens?

What do you experience if you "invite" the perineural system to make itself known?

Each time we touch someone's body we have the opportunity to contact finer and finer aspects of the inherent Intelligence. The sense of presence and receptivity that we bring to each therapeutic contact, will

determine what is revealed.

...finer nerves dwell within then lymphatics than even with the eye. The eye is an organized effect, the lymphatics the cause, in them the spirit of life more abundantly dwells ... Can you find the 40,000 finer nerves that go between the hypothalamus and the pituitary body? - Andrew Taylor Still, D.O.

WAVES, PARTICLES, AND THERAPEUTIC TOUCH

If the fluid body is viewed through a quantum lens, our perception may be of "particles" or "waves" within the individual's system. If I expand the inquiry to include the function of biophotons, "it is possible that light stimulates the flow of solitons, which are waves of energy and information that travel rapidly through the protein fabric of the body. The flow of solitons opens gates and switches and organizes dynamic living matrix pathways. On a microscopic level the cells communicate and orchestrate the repair of traumas of all kinds." (Oschman quoted in *Acupuncture Today*. 2003)

Current research validates the existence of these interconnected systems, which transmit the intelligence of the whole. The perineural connective tissue system is an essential function of this global and life sustaining movement.

Somatic Exploration: Particles and Waves, Surfing the Intelligent Web (Part 2)

With a partner...

Settle into yourself, feel your feet on the floor and widen your perceptual field to include a sense of the space to the sides and behind you. Notice your breath. Settle into neutral.

Sit comfortably at your partner's feet, with your hands contacting the dorsal surface of their lower leg, above the ankle. Contact the perineural system connective tissue system (apply the skills from part 1 of this exercise).

Let your perception include not only the front surface of your partner's body, which you can see, but also the entire back of your partner's body. Sense their body as a waveform of inherent motion. Hold the "all of their body" in your perception. Include an awareness of the space around you, behind you and to the corners of your workspace. What do you notice? What

does your partner report about their experience of your contact?

Narrow your view to their ankles. What do you experience? What does your partner report?

When we extend our perception to experience the body as a waveform, or reduce our attention to hold the stasis of a particle; or if we widen our perception to include the environmental space, while simultaneously holding the "micro" view, the therapeutic intervention will have a different outcome. All of these perceptual shifts are not merely entertaining concepts but palpable realities which resonate throughout the whole of the practitioner and client.

THE ORGANIZING PRINCIPLE

Dr. Rolf brought to the fore an understanding of the midline of gravity and directed practitioners to organize structure in relationship to this line. A biological imperative exists and underlies the metaphor of the Rolf-line as an organizing principle in human structure.

The primitive streak foretells the emergence of the embryological midline around which development happens. If there is no midline, there is no development. This critical moment happens (or not) about three weeks after conception. The caudal-cranial axis is the blueprint for an uprising force within the embryonic disc, which begins during the phase of gastrulation, (formation of the three germ layers). From a biodynamic view, this "uprising" force forms the primitive streak and eventually the notochord that then informs the spatial organization of the embryo. When I am in contact with this primal midline, I am in relationship to the embryological forces that are continually organizing human form. Often times, it is an orientation to these embryological forces that promotes the realigning of both structure and function for an individual.

In this matrix of protoplasm, within this elastic fluid, something begins to vibrate in the center. ... we need to see here that we start out as this undifferentiated ground substance that can become anything. Inside of this encapsulated fluid field, something begins to vibrate. ... This midline is a dynamic stillness through which and into which there is an ignition, and out of that ignition comes the bioelectric field that is actually around the stillness of the midline. ... Without it (a midline) we would have no form, no function, and no point of orientation for our consciousness. -James Jealous, D.O.

At the very core of the midline is *dynamic stillness*. Around this core are sleeves of orientation and function. Every living thing has an orienting sleeve or "line". The notochordal midline is the primary line of orientation for structure and function. It is present from the tip of the coccyx all the way up through the vertebral column to the center of the basisphenoid and basiocciput. The bones of the spinal column develop from this and eventually the notochordal midline dissolves into the nucleus pulposus of the vertebral bodies. The notochordal midline is at the center of the neuromuscular skeletal system. In addition, there is the fluid midline containing the neural tube, brain and spinal cord; and the gravity midline.

These midlines organize and orient every body. The core midline of dynamic stillness is non-personal and non-dual. All of the additional midline sleeves function as part of our personal history, nourishing and developing our sense self. They provide an essential ordering principle for how we know and locate ourselves in time and space. In both structural and movement integration, we work toward supporting a three-dimensional awareness of an individual's structure (front/back, side, side, up/down and inside/outside) in its fullest expression. In movement, we are looking at the three-dimensional expression of contralateral movement. Working with midline awareness refines an individual's relationship to gravity. All of these midline sleeves are dynamically interrelated.

It is important to remember that within these functioning sleeves is the core of dynamic stillness. This core is the catalyst igniting life and through which life permeates the soma. The dynamic core of stillness is not personal. It is a phenomenon of a non-causal reality that connects us to the underlying unity of all living things.

During this investigation, I became familiar with certain limits of the rational gaze: It tends to fragment reality and to exclude complementarity and the association of contraries from its field of vision ... The rational approach tends to minimize what it does not understand. - James Narby, Ph.D.

Somatic Exploration: Midline Perceptions

With a partner...

PART 1: Settle into yourself, taking time to slow your breathing, quiet your mind

and relax. Take a few moments to become aware of your midline. You might place your attention on the bony midline of your spine, the fluid midline of your spinal cord and brain, or an energetic midline that flows in front of your spine, extending through your pelvic floor and out the top of your head.

Gently cradle your partner's lower legs, contacting the dorsal surface just above the ankle.

After making contact, ease into an awareness of one of the midline sleeves. From this midline, expand your perception to include the space around you, especially to the back and sides.

From an embodied sense of your midline, expand your perception to the horizon. Continue to sense your midline as you expand your perception to include the horizon. Breathe.

Notice what information comes into your hands from your clients system.

Next experiment with letting go of your midline awareness and let your gaze focus on your partner's ankle or knee. What do you notice, what does your partner experience?

Return to midline awareness and sense any shift in what you are perceiving.

PART 2: The Rhythm of Mid Tide

Find a comfortable position sitting and make contact. Be aware of your midline. Be aware of the fluid nature of your own system and let your hands float on your partner's tissue.

Let your mind be still and your breathing be relaxed. Sense the whole of your partner's body including the space around their body, perhaps even to the edges of your workspace.

Allow your mind to settle. At mid-tide you are interested in the whole. Sense the whole of their system including the bioelectric field within and around them. Wait and listen, the mid tide rhythm of 2.5 cycles/ minute will reveal itself to you as a longitudinal fluctuation along their vertical axis/core space.

PERCEIVING LONG TIDE

There is an even wider and slower field to perceive, this is the field of the long tide. Dr. Sutherland realized that all life is in motion

and that without this inherent movement death soon occurs. He also understood that this motion was intelligent and supported the living system in its survival. He felt that this directing force came from outside of the physical body and yet was carried by a potency within the cerebrospinal fluid, which informs the fundamental physiology sustaining life. He called this Intelligence, the Breath of Life. In biodynamic craniosacral sessions, the Breath of Life is a felt presence. Its effect is Primary Respiration, which is the movement of a much slower and longer tidal rhythm moving through the surrounding field or emanating from within the individual.

In a biodynamic approach, the Breath of Life is the "primary healing factor". Primary Respiration is sensed both by the practitioner and the client at an even slower rate of 50sec./inspir and 50sec./expir. Within the long tide of primary respiration, tissue reorganization and the transmutation of densities occur.

In a biodynamic craniosacral session both the practitioner and client synchronize to Primary Respiration. When systems synchronize, they may also change state. A much slower rhythm cultivates the ability to kinesthetically know and feel the movement of these subtle forces and wholistic shifts within a client's system and within your own. In other words, it is the intention of the practitioner to initiate a receptivity within herself to a slow tempo. This generates a resonance that allows the client to match it neurologically³. Through our internal ability to drop into a quieted bodymind, the heart of this work emerges. Through working in the very slow rhythm of long tide and primary respiration, the heart of compassion is brought forth.

In opening to the perception of the long tide, I work with a mantra, which helps me attune through the deep ground of my body. From this supportive ground, I widen my perception to the horizon. The mantra goes like this: low-slow-pause---sink. Each time I say this to myself, before, or during a session, I settle into a pacing that supports resonance with this tidal flow. Usually, I will begin and end a session sitting at the side of my client, tuning first into my own felt sense of the long tide and then synchronizing with my client in this slower rhythm. I imagine synchronization to be like two friends meeting for a walk. After a while their rhythms are entrained and the friends walk in easy harmony with one another. I

experience the long tide as a slow movement coming from the outside space and moving into me. This motion would be inspir. I experience expir as primary respiration moving from the core of my body and into the space surrounding me. As I rest into the slow rhythm of inspir/expir, it is primary respiration which is breathing me. Thoracic respiration becomes the surface waves on the body of a breathing ocean.

THE HEART OF STILLNESS

At the heart of this work is a dynamic and vibrant stillness. It is a space of reverberating quiet and seamless wholeness from which all arises and to which all subsides. It is a place of unknowing.

The paradox of creation is contained in the stillness. Within this state, profound healing can occur. It is the space in which the Breath of Life makes itself known and the unity of all of life is revealed and can be touched.

Somatic Exploration: "Be still and know" (Sutherland)

In a comfortable and supported sitting position, relax and notice the easy movement of your breath, allow your thoracic inspiration and expiration to find a slow and balanced rhythm, without a conscious effort. Follow your exhale into your belly.... and then into the space below your belly..... then easily into the space below your seat.... and then into the ground. At each increment of your descending attention and exhalation.... you may notice a pause.

"Allow any physical, emotional, or mental effects which arise to do so without effort and without placing your attention upon them. Let them be as clouds drifting across a clear sky. Be the stillness. Be the silence."

Stay within the pause until your inspiration returns. You may notice a deepening quiet and stillness as you follow your exhalation down through your core midline. (Adapted from "I AM SILENCE", Rollin Becker, D.O. *The Stillness of Life*, p. 244)

The work of biodynamic craniosacral therapy has enhanced and ignited the development of more and more subtle perceptual skills propelling me through gateways of healing within myself and with my clients. Moreover, biodynamic perception has deepened and expanded my perceptual boundaries, opening a universe

within while simultaneously maintaining a scientific integrity that has expanded the parameters of what I originally imagined the body to be. Simply stated, biodynamic perception has deepened my ability to touch the heart of stillness that lies within us all.

Carol A. Agnessens, M.S. RCST, teaches both Roling and Roling Movement Integration. She is also a certified instructor of Biodynamic Craniosacral Therapy. She is the author of *The Fabric of Wholeness*. For inquiries regarding upcoming biodynamic craniosacral trainings or to learn more about this approach, please contact her: caRollina@aol.com or 831.662.3057.

This article is an excerpt from her forthcoming book, *The Heart Of Stillness: The Essence of Craniosacral Biodynamics*.