

Editor's note: Two Rolfers – Karin Edwards, Certified Rolfer™, and Chuck Carpenter, Certified Advanced Rolfer™ – give us the benefit of their Rolfing® experience working with children. Karin's article details how to set up a children's clinic, and Chuck's gives important insights on how to work with children.

Creating a Children's Clinic in Your Town

By Karin Edwards, Certified Rolfer

While I am an organizer-extraordinaire and can certainly set up a children's clinic, I'm still rather a novice at working on children. Although I find it difficult to "see" what needs to be worked on, if another Rolfer points out the pattern, I can see it and find a way to work with it. Fortunately, I am naturally comfortable with children and can often invent a way to use play to accomplish the work. You can't expect them to lie still; instead you use their movement as a resource for getting the work done. The biggest challenge and limitation for anyone is not being able to see what to work on!

That said, I'd like to share what I've learned from organizing four annual clinics in Portland, Oregon. Hosting a children's clinic in your area can be a rewarding experience, and it can also be a good business practice. So I decided to host a children's clinic as a way to receive mentoring on how to see what needs to change for the best overall effect on a child's developing structure.

WHY DO IT?

- A small amount of input can help a child grow up with greater comfort, body awareness, and structural balance. The resulting adult will be self-reliant yet will see Rolfing as a resource for lifelong body care.
- Mentoring is a natural part of a children's clinic. Since few classes are taught on working with kids, most learning on this topic happens from Rolfer to Rolfer.
- Promoting the children's clinic spreads the word about Rolfing. A not-for-profit community event gives you access to free advertising that is normally not open to

health practitioners, such as community calendars. Every exposure to Rolfing helps increase public awareness, which leads to future clients.

GETTING STARTED

Survey the interest among your local Rolfers and possibly the other structural integration practitioners. Between two and six practitioners would be ideal for the first clinic. Ideally, half of them have Rolfing experience with children. If the clinic organizer is inexperienced with children, it is helpful to have the most seasoned practitioner serve as "clinical director." That person is ultimately responsible for dealing with difficult therapeutic situations and deciding whether to treat.

Select a location with a large enough room to set up bodywork tables and also have some room for families to wait. The best location is a place that your potential clients frequent. (In Portland, we have used the community room at our natural foods store.) They are then more likely to bring their children to your clinic.

Set a date at least two months in advance. Consider school and holiday schedules. Having the clinic in the morning, perhaps 9 am – 12 noon, avoids the afternoon naptime of small children.

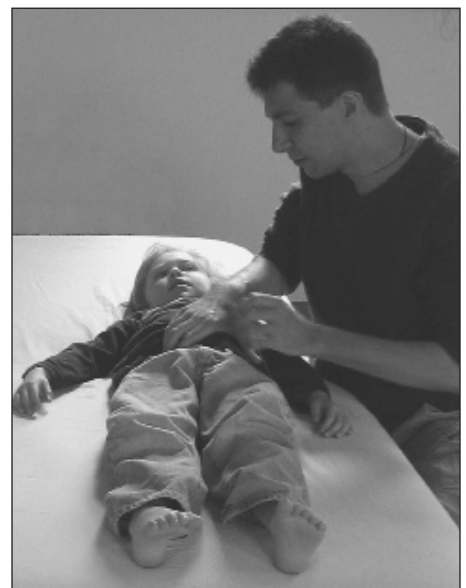
Decide on an age range. In Portland, we treated from babies up to age ten. We had experienced Rolfers who were comfortable working with infants. We wanted to target children who were still small and easy to work with; hence, the upper limit of ten.

Decide whether the clinic will be by appointment or walk-in. Having tried both methods, I now encourage parents to sign-up with an approximate time. It is difficult to offer precise appointments because the timing with children is unpredictable. I try to get three children per hour per practitioner. It is helpful to overbook slightly. In my experience, some children were ill or otherwise unable to make it, and there are usually only a few unexpected walk-ins.

Write a brief description of your event. This is how I describe the clinic: "Free Rolfing Clinic for Children. Rolfing provides: (1) gentle bodywork to insure



Children's clinic client, Sophia and Certified Rolfer Karin Edwards



Client, Lucas and Rolfing Clinical Director Juan David Velez

healthy growth and movement patterns; (2) structural check-up for preventative care; (3) treatment for concerns such as scoliosis, growing pains, pigeon toes, etc. Free 10-30 minute Rolfing session for children 0-10. To make a reservation, call 000-000-0000 or email xxxxxxx@xxxxx.net. To learn more about Rolfing or to find a Certified Rolfer near you, check out www.rolf.org."

Day, time, and location follow that summary.

Advertise your event. Email your event announcement to any clients who might be interested, health practitioners such as chiropractors and midwives, teachers, and so forth. Encourage your local colleagues to do the same, even if they are not participating in the clinic. Post the event on online calendars such as www.craigslist.org and other sites specific to your area. Email the description to local newspapers, targeting their event calendar, health section, and family/child section. Send it to local magazines for parents and families, requesting a "free calendar listing."

Create a flyer (see Appendix) and post it on bulletin boards in coffee shops, toy stores, preschools, day care centers, and so on. Always ask permission before posting. This improves the chance of the flyer remaining posted. Talking to the employee about the event also helps spread the word more directly. Face-to-face contacts are your most likely attendees, and it gives them a chance to ask questions and get comfortable with the idea of bringing their child to receive Rolfing. If you are outgoing, hand out flyers at the farmer's market or other

public events. Most of the time and effort of the clinic is the advertising. However, this advertising also benefits your own business, and so it is a worthwhile investment to maximize the press for the clinic.

Preparing for the Day of the Clinic. Confirm all volunteers, including who is bringing a table, and confirm the location. You will want about thirty intake forms, pens, clipboards, sheets, exercise balls, and children's books and toys for various ages. Giving out stickers is very popular with children.

Day of the Clinic. Parents fill out intake forms (see Appendix), and children are assigned to practitioners. Novice practitioners can work on older children, perhaps ages seven and up. When the clinic is slow enough, experienced Rolfers can mentor the newer Rolfers. In particular, a mentor can help identify what needs to be addressed. My experience is that learning to assess children is more difficult than learning how to do the hands-on treatment. Another challenge is learning child-oriented strategies, i.e., how to get the work done using toys, positions, and movement that the child is willing to do! This process of learning and inventing how to work with children makes the clinic truly enjoyable.

If you'd like to capture your clinic with photographs, be sure to have parents sign a release form (see Appendix). Photos can be used to advertise future clinics.

After the Clinic. Relax and debrief. What worked and what didn't? How was the

flow of kids and parents? Were there any bottlenecks, like paperwork or availability of a table? Did the Rolfers have time to take photos showing the kids receiving work, or do we need a photographer on duty at future clinics? What was interesting or fun? What learning experiences can be shared?

Future. Keep a spreadsheet of families that attended the clinic so they can be invited again next year.

Here are a couple gems from children who had Rolfing sessions:

Abbey, age eight, after her session: "Wow, my neck feels totally different!" How special to help a child have her first experience of how relaxed and tall her neck can be.

Sophia, age two, is the niece of Hellerworker Nick Spangler. She had had an acute episode of "nursemaid's elbow" (subluxation of the head of the radius) that was painful for her, and Uncle Nick had fixed it. The fix is very painful but quick. When it happened again, she said "Uncle Nick" and indicated her elbow. It was heartwarming to hear about a child so young asking for help so clearly.

Editor's note: The clinic flyer, intake form, and photo-release form are available to practitioners online in the Member's Only section at www.rolf.org.



Two brothers, Bodhi and Eli with their mom, Grace Beber and Certified Rolfer Karin Edwards