

A Lecture from the April 2008 Advanced Rolwing® Training

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Editor's Note: The following is a transcription of a morning lecture by Michael Salveson during the April 2008 Advanced Rolwing Training in Berkeley, California. Several recurrent themes from the training are covered in this talk, giving the reader an idea of what is currently being addressed in the training. Thanks to Michael for his permission to publish this text. In a few instances, minor changes were made to improve readability. Transcribed and edited by Craig Ellis, Certified Rolfer™ with additional editing by Georgette Delvaux D.C., Certified Advanced Rolfer™.

In this class we're trying to create a level of confidence about palpating at the ligamentous/articular level so that you get comfortable being at that level, so it feels natural to you. This is just an extension of what you started working with in the basic class. If you just keep following the depth of palpation down the different layers, this is where you will end up. This is the deepest layer of the myofascial structures, this ligamentous/articular level.

I want palpation to become an absolutely effortless continuum, that ultimately, when you are working, the flow between surface and deep is an easy continuum. Strain that goes from the ligamentous/osseous level up to the myofascial, and from the myofascial down to the ligamentous/osseous, is a unified field. It is a unified field of strain. All the strain patterns are going to be reflected in there, and there are going to be expressions of those strain patterns at all of those levels. It's a little bit of an artificial distinction, in the beginning, to say "Well we're just going to work with the myofascial structures." It was done, as I said, to protect you from the complexities that occur when you start taking the work down to the ligamentous level.

So that's the idea, to give you a basic view of normal motion – both a cognitive appreciation and a palpatory appreciation of it, show you a few techniques, and then turn you loose. You will discover that as you try some of the techniques you have learned here, you'll say "It doesn't feel right to me," and you'll start modifying some

of them, and you'll come up with your own ways. You'll read a book, you'll take another workshop, learn another technique; these are all just ways to get leverage into the system.

The important thing is that you be confident at this level, and that you have a sense of what is normal motion. Once you have a sense of what normal motion is, all disturbances, all strain patterns, all restrictions are just interferences with normal motion. All you have to do is re-establish normal motion.

When we look at the spine, we're going to review some of the basic strategies in this new context. There are essentially two fundamental approaches. One is an indirect approach, one is a direct approach. Ultimately what we are doing is a combination of the two. In an indirect approach you simply move with the direction of the existing displacement. It's not that you decide to go in the direction of the displacement. It's that when you are in a listening mode with your touch, and you touch the body, there will be inherent motion in the direction of the existing compensation. The body will go looking for neutral. And neutral, at this point, has been displaced slightly. So, your hand will be drawn to the displaced neutral. Neutral is your friend. Neutral is your resource. Because it is by virtue of working from neutral that you are able to contact the larger forces of inherent motion in the body. It is our ability to enlist these forces of inherent motion in the body that

empower and potentize our touch when we are making corrections. We are not just pushing things around. We are to some extent surfing on a wave that is not of our making. So, this is crucial. This is the quality of touch we are cultivating.

Rolwing® structural integration errs in the beginning, a little bit. There is huge power in our capacity to push tissue around, and we can do that effectively. But if tissue is pushed around without embracing the inherent motion that potentizes the body, in the realm of the energetic, of the nervous system and the spirit, a slight disconnect can occur. You start moving the body, and the spirit doesn't come along, the spirit doesn't cooperate, the spirit gets dissociated. And in a lot of people, that is already the case. Part of the power of this work is like repairing an old Persian carpet. You are reweaving the strands in order to restore the elegance and beauty of the original pattern, of the deep pattern. So we're not just moving a bone to solve a mobility problem and relieve pain. To some extent, we are reintegrating people, we are knitting them back together, we are trying to get them to become more unified. We are taking parts that have become broken away from the main and restoring them back into their place in the community.

Power comes from the presence of the whole. It is when a quality of completion, which is always there, starts to express itself, that you begin to see a capacity of expansion emerge in the organism. The breath expands; the spirit begins to express itself. It is not just about standing up straight. We are putting people back together. And, ultimately, we cannot do that on our own. All we can do, really, is open the door that has kept the forces that are normally employed to empower wholeness outside of the community, of the self. There is some way in which the central community has lost some of its potency because part of what is normally igniting the community has been locked out. The door has been shut. People complain "There's no light in this room," "There is no air." Trust me, there's no shortage of light or air. People complain, and they don't know how to open the window. All you have to do is open the window and the light comes in. There are inherent forces at work here that we are simply in service of, and that somehow have to be expressed and acknowledged in your touch. Only to the extent that that's there, are you really

capable of constellating, or calling up, evoking these forces that are at the heart of all healing, and all potency.

So, inherent motion is an expression. The reason it's so powerful is that inherent motion is linked to the expression of aspects of the self. A touch without contact to inherent motion is a touch to some extent divorced from spirit, divorced from the very forces that are restoring the self every day. The expression of health is infinite. We are simply working in the workshop. We don't own the workshop; we're just there carrying out our little task in service of the larger goal. So, when we're moving bones and moving tissue we need to be pretty clear we're catalyzing, we're working in a much larger field in which we are not totally the boss. The issue here is one of alignment. If you get lined up with the larger forces, then you look like you're the boss; it looks like you're making it happen, but you know you're not. Wisdom is understanding this relationship: you know there are big powers here. And yes, it looks like I'm magic, but I know it's just a matter of me getting lined up with what's bigger than me. I couldn't do it on my own.

Once you get that, you see it expressed everywhere in the body when you're touching it. You're always feeling this thing that wants out, that wants in, that wants to expand, that wants to contract. These impulses want to express themselves. And that is the ultimate feeling at a distance. I'm saying this to you now, because hopefully when you go back to your practice, something in your touch will have been ignited, and you'll be working along and suddenly you go "whoa, what was that?"

I'll never forget the first day when I felt inherent motion. There were times when Ida had me lengthening hamstrings through somebody's blue jeans. I was practically peeling the skin off my knuckles. I didn't know why she had me doing that, but I learned to move tissue. That was really my original training. And there is tremendous power in it. But there are lots of problems; you can override all kinds of expressive aspects in the self. And a lot of what happened in the early days of Rolfing was an attempt to account for the override, and to compensate for it. And to do something that allowed the other aspects of the self that got affected by moving tissue around to express themselves.

There's a lot of tissue that attaches to the back of the skull, for example, the top of all the extensors. For a while I was working with a technique that I used to call "spaghetti on a fork." I would take my knuckle and I would start working the back of the skull. When people come in with a lot of chronic neck extension, there will be a pad of tissue piled up on the back of the occiput. So I would get behind the skull and start wrapping this tissue up, grab it and pull on it, lift it up off the back of the skull, and usually it would have a good effect. One day I was sitting there doing this, and I had stopped, and I put my hand there, and I felt the occiput move. I practically fell off my bench. It was the first time I had ever felt the body move toward me, spontaneously. That changed everything right there at that moment, when I realized that it was capable of moving on its own. Because I was pushing in and it released and expanded out on its own. That started this whole inquiry.

So look for how inherent motion is expressing itself under your hands when you're touching. I'd say the edge in this class now, in general, is that you are getting comfortable reaching in. You are contacting the ligamentous/articular level and it is normal for you. Now the issue will be being able to reach in, to contact at a deep level at the same time that you are perceiving – it's a two-way circuit here – some quality of inherent motion. Inherent motion is a quality. It doesn't always mean that you're going to feel big things moving. Sometimes you will, but it's mostly a quality.

Even when you have a very directional, highly vectored touch, your touch is receiving information and it should allow spontaneous motion under your hand. You'll see that there will be times when you are touching something, you're going to be reaching in, contacting a bone, trying to make it move, and it's going to start to move, and you're going to push on it, and you're going to feel it shut down. You're going to realize "I just overrode a spontaneous correction that was occurring under my fingers. I just shut down the very force that's going to do this work for me." You really want to notice that moment. You're going to see the implications of it. As soon as you back off a little and reconnect, you realize that a tiny little motion, a tiny little reconnection occurred as you backed off and that it brought back the inherent motion, which automatically connects you

to a web of inherent motion that moves all the way through the body and all the way through the space in the world around you. At this moment, now, you're connected, and now it moves. When you're working, whether it's with an arm or a lung or whatever, there is a quality to your touch that has infinite possibility for response. Don't shut down the response. Inherent motion is simply the capacity of the organism to express itself. So, that's what we're trying to evoke here. Be careful that you're not overriding it. Look for it, cajole it, pray to it, bribe it, hypnotize it, intimidate it, whatever it takes. Get it present, and you'll see that it's going to become very interesting at that point.

All of the learning occurs in the quality of touch. That's what we do, we work by touching. It's all happening in your touch. There is a large field of inquiry here, what it means to touch. Why are some people capable of putting their hands on and it looks like magic, and others are over there sweating? What's the difference? There's a tangible thing here, this is something we can inquire about. All of the learning occurs in this field. All of the real learning occurs in the growth and potency of your touch. In your ability to put your hand on, there should be a quality in your touch that leaves nothing out. And, it's not aimless, it's not passive. It's active in the field in which it's not the main actor. If there's not a vectorized touch, it's not Rolfing, in my opinion. If it's just following, it's not Rolfing. We have an intention. We're trained; we know what we're looking for.

There's a vector in our touch, but if that vector is divorced from inherent motion, then it's disconnected from the source. And then, in my opinion, you are, on a deep level, lost. Things will happen, people will get better, but to some extent the job of reconnection isn't really going to get done. It's the reconnection that connects you to the forces that are going to truly integrate the person under your hands. At that point, you are not just fixing their knee. You are fixing their knee, but you are reweaving the carpet, you are actually integrating them, and it's going to show up as shifts in the spirit, ultimately. It's going to reverberate through the self. That's why it's not just physical therapy. We're not just poking the flesh, we're not just moving a bone, it's not just biomechanics. We're learning biomechanics so that we're not stupid when we put our hands on people. We're

not oblivious to what we're touching. We're just simply paying homage to the body underneath our hands. We're saying: "I'm so devoted to you that I'm going to learn all the ways in which you are constructed, so that I don't work with an image that's too small." And even then, no matter how much you study, how much you conceptualize, you are not capable of forming an image that is big enough to contain what you have under your hands. Ultimately, you have to let go. You have to find some way to be in contact with something that expresses itself from the organism with which you can align. Because only then do you have a big enough space for space to emerge. Otherwise, everything is an imposition. You don't know what's really supposed to happen. Yes, I know the knee is supposed to go there, I know the talus... What the hell? The talus may be like that because something happened, who knows when for what reasons, but unless that talus is allowed to be connected to who knows what for what reasons, there is no reweaving going on here. You're just moving the talus.

What's so incredible is that there is a palpatory, sensory-based phenomenon that connects us to these large events. This is not prayer, or wishing, or incantation, or feather dusting; it's an actual sensation, repeatable, everyone can feel it. That's mind-boggling to me, that it's accessible to us. And I'm saying, also, to some extent, you catalyze it from your connection inside yourself to that same event, to your own domain of experience. Your touch is basically an expression of your fundamental embodied nature, which is why this is so interesting, and so hellatiously tyrannizing.

When I first became a Certified Rolfer, I had a series of dreams. I said "I really don't want to do this. I just want a normal life." I didn't want to deal with the weirdness. I wanted to have a life, make money...a regular life. There were very strong dreams. They said: "You don't have a clue about what a normal life is. We're going to show you what a normal life is like." It scared me. In the beginning, you will see it in your clients sometimes. You go into a bigger space, you contact these inherent forces, and you realize I've got agoraphobia here. So you titrate it, in yourself and in others, but it's really the only interesting thing. And it's what makes our touch powerful. This is setting the stage for when you go back to your practice, this is what we wanted

to underline.

There are three things here; we're teaching touch, we're teaching analysis, and we're teaching biomechanics. All of the work with tonic function feeds into touch, feeds into analysis. We will get to see what normal structure looks like – and interestingly enough, normal structure and function only emerge when tonic function is catalyzed, and tonic function is an expression of the nervous system activity that is not driven by the higher centers of the brain where most of us operate our control. So, normal is only accessible if you have a capacity to let go of a certain sort of control. Interesting. Remember, the neurotic's problem is usually over-control, lack of trust. "If I let go, will it be OK?" So part of what we can do, while we are working, is opening something up and something emerges, and we say "Wow, look at that, let go to that, trust that, let that emerge, let that happen."

When you are connected to inherent motion, and you start to notice there is an absence of vectors, an absence of direction, an absence of intention, then you are not really unwinding. You're floating, you're recycling, you're drifting, recapitulating, you're not really going anywhere. When inherent motion expresses itself, it expresses itself in the direction of wholeness. It's not just a wandering around. In the early classical cultures, they had words for things that have completely dropped out of our language. There were some big notions of destiny, as if we were here to fulfill some purpose. It's not a wandering. There is a direction.

It's the same in the body. When we are working, we can orient with our intention, and the organism also has an intention, and we line up with that. There are times when I'm working, I'm following, and I go to compensatory neutral. I contact it, I have inherent motion, at a certain point, and, because of my studies, I know that it's the lateral side of the knee that doesn't glide posteriorly on the condyle, so when the opportunity presents itself, I take it there. If it starts to recycle, if you really pay attention, you realize that it's bouncing off a barrier and you have not been aware of the barrier. You have to become aware of the barrier, because it's your intention that's going to help them go through the barrier. They won't always go through it on their own. You have to do something.