

How Do We Know?

The Magic to See and to Hear in Order to Do

By Theresa Zordan, Certified Rolfer™, SourcePoint® Therapist

How do we know what we know? Well, there are the things we are taught: $2 + 2 = 4$. There are the things we learn by living, by observing. *If I run up this hill as fast as I can, my breathing will speed up.* But then there are the things we just *know* somehow. *This is the right city for me to live in.* Sure, maybe there's an element of subtle, not quite conscious, pattern recognition to it. Maybe I know this is the right city for me because I thrive in cities of this size, with this climate, with this architectural style, with this median income, and my best friend lives here. But maybe not. Maybe there are things we just *know* without being taught, without learning through experience, without any pattern recognition. In short, there are things that we know that are not products of what we have learned.

Once, I worked with a shaman who was also an engineer, and when I asked how she knew where to start or which spots on my body would hurt when she pressed, she responded, "My toes told me." As an engineer first and shaman second, she'd initially struggled with the lack of logic associated with why she was drawn to work one way and not another. Why she started on a left knee instead of a right shoulder blade. And eventually, she got to the conclusion that it didn't matter. She started where she started because her toes told her to, and that was good enough for her.

The first time I set foot in the Rolf Institute®, for orientation as a model in a Unit 3 class, I heard my soon-to-be hero, Ray McCall, speak about Rolwing® Structural Integration (SI) in a way that lit me up. "This is it!" I thought, "I've finally found *the thing* I've been looking for all these years." Eight and a half years later, I know that was true, even though at the time, I'd never had a single Rolwing session in my life. Call it intuition. Call it pattern recognition. I don't really care. My toes told me.

When I started studying at the Rolf Institute myself, I wanted to learn how to do what I'd seen Ray doing in that Unit 3. Even as a model, I could tell there was something special there. It wasn't just manipulating fascia; it was magic. But in my Unit 1, we learned anatomy, physiology, therapeutic relationships, and skillful touch, but no

magic. I knew all of these were requirements for that special something. I knew I needed to study and understand all this stuff in order to provide a safe place for the magic to show up. But I also knew this wasn't the magic.

In Unit 2, I got to study with Ray, and again, I got to witness the magic, but that was all. I could see it happening in every demo he did, but I could not, for the life of me, figure out where he kept his wand. Learning about the Ten Series was still not me doing the magic, I knew this was still preparing a place to welcome the magic.

At one point, a student asked Ray, "How do you know how to work?" And his answer, "I listen very, very carefully to my client," was maddening, while honest. It drove me nuts because I was trying *so hard* to listen to my client/classmate in that Unit 2. I listened to what he said with his words, and what he didn't say. I listened to what his body communicated while he stood, while he sat, while he walked. I listened to his posture while he ate his lunch. I listened to his tissues when I contacted in one place versus another or with a different speed or direction. And I still wasn't able to hear the way Ray could hear, I was no closer to being a magician. I knew that much. I was taking my first, halting steps toward being a Rolfer.

I never met Dr. Ida Rolf, as she died before I was born. But I know that Ida was special since she created this incredible body of work that brings abundance to thousands of us. She was extraordinary. She had magic of her own. From everything I've read and watched and heard of Ida, she had the uncanny ability to see someone, notice his shoulder pain, and realize the exact spot it was originating from, be it a third toe, or a restriction in the tongue.

It seems like Ida was able to see her clients really, really well, in the same way that Ray can listen to his clients really, really well. To me, it seems as if Ida had a special magnifying glass, while Ray had a special stethoscope. Sure, she was 'just' seeing. And sure, he is 'just' listening. But there was something that allowed them to see and hear in ways that the average person

could not. Call it intuition. Call it pattern recognition. My toes told me.

When I finished Unit 3 and was sent out into the world as a Rolfer, I knew I was ready, for Roling SI at least. I understood the Ten Series. I knew all about fascia and how to manipulate it. I knew my anatomy and physiology and how to say, “Sad, huh?” But I didn’t know any magic. And I didn’t have a special magnifying glass or stethoscope to help me see or hear in a way that would help me understand better what to do. Luckily, due to my hero-worship of Ray, I signed up for my first SourcePoint class a mere ten days later.

I was terrified of that SourcePoint Therapy class. To be honest, I was pretty skeptical of energy work. Yes, I’d been to see shamans. Yes, I’d had *qi* healing sessions with a Chinese five-element healer. Yes, I’d tried acupuncture. And I really *wanted* to believe in energy work. However, I’m pretty hands-on. I’m pretty grounded. I majored in physics, not in art. I wanted proof. I wanted real. And energy work seemed a little fluffy and woo-woo and hippy-dippy.

Most terrifying of all, I thought I would be bad at it. I thought I wouldn’t be able to feel anything. I thought the rest of the class would be happily setting points and waving their magic wands while I sat in the corner with my dunce hat on because I was just not cut out for energy work. But I really, really, really wanted to learn how to do that magic that Ray (and Ida) could do. So I figured I’d give it a try.

And three days into that SourcePoint class, I felt like I’d gotten my own magic wand. I felt like I’d gotten my own stethoscope so I could finally really, really listen to my clients. I still couldn’t see, not the way Ida could. But I could listen. And I could do (a tiny little bit of) magic. Suddenly the line of communication between what my toes were saying and what my hands were doing was open, even if it wasn’t yet clean and clear. I don’t know why or how SourcePoint Therapy opened that communication channel in me, but I’m grateful it did.

This way of knowing informs my work at every turn. Sure, I look at my client’s body. Of course I think about the goals of the session if I’m working within the context of the Ten Series. Once in a while, I even ask my clients to walk or do a knee-bend for me. But there’s so much more to my work than just knowing there’s an imbalance between the rhomboids and the psoas. The juicy part

of Roling SI for me is in knowing *how* to bring about that balance

What works for one client one day is almost guaranteed not to work for a different client on a different day. This is where intuition or divine knowing or ‘source’ or pattern recognition or my toes come in. I’ve found in my practice that the more closely I listen to my toes, the faster balance comes to my client’s body. I’ve found that the better I get at listening to my intuition, the more efficient my work is. The fact that my clients think I’m a magician is just gravy.

Seven years later, I still use SourcePoint in every session I do. And seven years later, I think I’m starting to see. Or maybe my internal translation software is just getting so good at pattern recognition that when I

‘hear’ something it’s immediately registered by my eyes. Or my blood. Or my toes. I still don’t know how I know what I know. I just like doing magic.

As Ida Rolf (1978, 178) said, “Somewhere along the line you are going to have to fight both in yourself and in the world for recognition of the fact that you know how to handle the situation.”

Theresa Zordan is a goofball and a Rolfer who lives and works in Denver, Colorado. When she is not mashing fascia, you might find her in the kitchen ignoring any recipe anyone tries to put in front of her, or out on the trails where she is an ultra runner.

Rolf, I. 1978. *Ida Rolf Talks About Roling and Physical Reality*. R. Feitis, Ed. Boulder, Colorado: Rolf Institute®.