Moving into Alignment

An Interview with Author Jennifer Hayes and Book Excerpt (Session Two: Ground)

By Jennifer Hayes, Certified Advanced Rolfer®, Rolf Movement® Practitioner with Anne Hoff, Certified Advanced Rolfer

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ABSTRACT *This article excerpts the material on session two of the Ten Series from* Moving into Alignment*, a book to accompany the Ten Series by Rolfer and Rolf Movement practitioner Jennifer Hayes. We precede the excerpt with a brief interview with Jennifer.*

INTERVIEW WITH JENNIFER HAYES

Anne Hoff: Tell us a bit about the genesis of this book, *Moving into Alignment: Your Practical Guide to Improve Posture, Reduce Pain and Move with Ease* (2019; self-published).

Jennifer Hayes: Celebrating twenty-five years as a Rolfer and Rolf Movement practitioner was part of the impetus of me writing the book. I wrote the book because there is a void in self-care at-home direction for folks to maintain and revitalize the positive changes they achieve in their Ten Series of Rolfing® Structural Integration. As a movement practitioner, I find empowering folks with embodiment ideas inspires them to be in charge of their well-being and explore their self-care.

AH: Say a bit about the content. Do you go through self-care or homework exercises for each session of the Series?

JH: I've chosen the best movements, from many modalities, that are a companion to the Ten Series. Each chapter has five movements and one neck stretch that mirror the goals of that Rolfing session. They can be done after the session to deepen and maintain the objectives of the session, or after the Ten Series as tune-ups, revitalizing a chosen session that speaks to the client. The book is beautifully photographed with easy-to-follow descriptions.

AH: Were the elements used for each session things that came together for you in your practice organically over the years, or did it more come about as you brainstormed the book?

JH: Mostly, the movements are ones that I have shared with clients over the years. I wanted to have them all in one place and easy to reference. While writing the book, it was a bonus to be able to fill in movements that are applicable to the goals of that Rolfing session.

AH: What about sessions eight, nine, and ten? The goals for those are less specific to certain body parts and more about integration and holism. Say a bit about how you formulated those chapters.

JH: I went with the classical principle of session eight being a lower body session, so that chapter is called "Stability." Session nine, called "Integration," is an upper body focus, and the material for session ten is about finding your own way in gravity and closure. These chapters have deeper layers of fascia in mind. They will be for the more experienced somatic folks. The material for session nine includes a gem – an easy-to-follow description of Ida Rolf's arm rotation sequence. This was passed on as oral tradition in my 1993 Rolf Movement certification class. Some Rolfers may have come across it in their training, but to my knowledge it has never been formally documented. I have entitled the movement "Dr Ida Rolf Arm Rotations" and am excited that this helpful, unique movement sequence is now accessible to Rolfers and their clients!

AH: It sounds like you wrote the book with your clients in mind, but I imagine practitioners could also use it as a reference in giving clients specific homework, or to support their own embodiment.

JH: Agreed, for Rolfers who have yet to embark on their Rolf Movement Certification, the entire book is particularly valuable. They will understand the principle of the goal that is being addressed and see how the movement applies. And self-care is a must for Rolfers new and old!

AH: How can our readers or their clients get the book?

JH: It is a limited-edition run of 900 copies. It's available through my website, https://rolfingstudiotoronto.com/product/moving-into-alignment/.

Jennifer Hayes is a graduate of the Rolf Institute®. She did her Basic Training in 1990, her Rolf Movement certification in1993, and her Advanced Training in 1998. She also certified as a craniosacral practitioner in 2010 and a Somatic Experiencing® practitioner in 2012. Jennifer is a founding member of The Rolfing Association of Canada and holds a BA in dance and theatre from the University of Guelph (Canada). Her practice is in Toronto.

Anne Hoff is a Certified Advanced Rolfer in Seattle, Washington and the Editor-in-Chief of this Journal.

BOOK EXCERPT – SESSION TWO: GROUND

AIMS:

- Create increased flexibility and adaptability in the feet knees and hips, so whole body can feel supported.
- Release fascial restrictions from feet to knees and knees to hips.
- Improve alignment in feet, ankles, knees and hips.
- Re-arch the foot.

DANCER WARM UP ANKLE ROTATIONS:

While standing turn to be parallel to the wall (you can have one hand on the wall or a chair for balance).

Rotate ankle of right leg. Turn fully 10 times to right and then fully rotate to the left.

Change sides and rotate left ankle through 10 full, slow rotations.

This begins to decompress the ankle joint – where the heavens meet the earth.

The fascial sheath of the calf and foot are like one long connected sock. This movement alone can help with the condition of plantar fasciitis.

DELUXE TOE HINGE STRETCH:

Face the wall, put toes on wall, leaving heel on ground. Hands can come up and place on wall for support.

Take five deep breaths. With every breath make a tiny lengthening movement in your splayed toes. Return foot to ground beside other foot, notice if the back of your body feels longer or different on the side you had toes up.

Feel the difference between the feet in terms of contact on the ground. Repeat with other toes up against the wall.

This is an opportunity to notice the ground supporting you and create new synapses in your brain affirming that you are supported by gravity.

GRAB TOWEL (FOR RE-ARCHING YOUR FOOT):

Place a towel or textured cloth on the ground. Don't use something slippery like silk.

While standing, place one foot over the cloth. With your toes, grab the towel and lift it a few inches off the ground. Hold for a few seconds then place it back down. Repeat four times. Try to use all of your toes when lifting!

When done, compare the contact on the ground of your feet. Take a minute to notice the sensation in the foot that you did the movement with. Repeat with other foot. Over time you can hold the towel up longer and repeat a few more times.

In our daily lives, wearing shoes, and often walking on concrete, can dull the many neuroreceptors and small, necessary muscles at the bottom of our feet. This exercise revives them and allows the fascial membranes to move in their multi-directional capacity.

TREE POSE:

Standing close to a wall or chair if needed for balance, bring one foot up, knee out to the side, rest sole of foot on calf or thigh of standing leg. Bring hands together in prayer position. Lift up and out of the standing leg hip. Find a focal point that is not moving.

Remain for three full breaths or longer, looking straight ahead at your focal point.

Slowly bring foot down, repeat on other side.

There are a few options for arms, as shown.

Choose one and remain in position for three breaths.

Feel how this is strengthening your structures of support. Notice how you can find gravity holding you up.

SITTING ON TOP OF YOUR FEET:

Come to sitting on top of your feet, knees bent and somewhat together, hips resting back on your heels. Feel the front of your feet stretching.

If this is too intense, take some weight off by lifting yourself up with your hands or placing a rolled towel under your ankles.

The fascia and muscles of the toes rarely get to be mobile in this direction. A flexible toe hinge is an important part of pain free walking.

More advanced version: While hips are resting on heels, go up onto toe hinge. Only your toes are on the ground with heels on your pelvis.

SHIATSU CALF STRETCH:

Roll up a towel and in similar position to "sitting on top of your feet", place the towel between calf and thigh. Sit on this and allow your weight to sink and yield on the towel for approximately five breaths.

Then move the towel, higher or lower. Try it closer to your feet. Rest for a few breaths then move it closer to your knees. This has the effect of "rolling out" your calf muscles.

Listen to your body. Everyone is different and will feel this more intensely in one area than another. Go at your own pace.

NECK STRETCH– THREAD THE NEEDLE:

On all fours, allow hips to sink back towards your heels, into Child's Pose. Reach your arms out along the ground in front of you. Bring your forehead to the floor between your arms and rest for 10 seconds or so.

Lift your right arm out to the side, up high. Let it come down with gravity and momentum to thread through, under your left arm. Let your cheek come to the floor, then the ear, then the shoulder. Take three full breaths.

Notice how the fascia of your neck and trapezius is continuous with your shoulder, scapula and upper back. Here you are increasing the gliding capacity so there is an ability for one structure to differentiate from the adjacent structures.

Slowly, rotate back to centre and let your left arm reach under your straight right arm, looking under right armpit with cheek, ear and shoulder on the ground, the same as the first side. Take three inhales and exhales.

Return arm to straight in front of you.

PERCEPTIONS:

- Joints feel more aligned, better range of motion and improved walking pattern.
- Ability to feel the ground is enhanced, balance is improved.