

# Keeping a Good Recipe

## Deepening with the Ten-Series ‘Recipe’ Thirty-One Years Later

By Valerie Berg, Rolfing® Instructor, Rolfing Movement® Practioner



Valerie Berg

**ABSTRACT** *Dr. Rolf gave us the Ten-Series ‘Recipe’ to guide us through an understanding of the structural organization, disorganization, and integration of the human body that we call Rolfing Structural Integration (SI). This article describes and expounds on the richness and endless interest and variety there is in continuing to do the Ten Series with our clients long after we think it has taught us all there is to learn.*

*Rolfing is a ten hour cycle.*

Rosemary Feitis

Watching Peter Melchior demonstrate the Ten Series was like watching someone pray. Something unspoken seemed to be happening that we were not privy to but were required to watch and absorb in the hope we would emulate this ‘magic’ on our own.

Lectures were given on the meaning, the history, and the order of the Recipe. We heard two versions, one from the instructor and the other from the assistant. One thing was very clear from both – we were to follow the steps of each session no matter if we understood what was going on or not. The Recipe was the only security in the completely new and unknown world we were all entering. We stumbled and fumbled with our hands and verbalized what we pretended to know. In between the auditing and practicing phases of training, we were told *not* to do the work on anyone, but we all did anyway, chomping at the bit to ‘do’ the Recipe.

Everyone comes to the training with his or her own talents, enthusiastic passions and interests. So accordingly, they leave and begin to insert, take out, and add their personal flavors to the learned progression of ordering the Series that Ida Rolf taught her teachers and they taught us.

Over the years, I have heard various comments that the Recipe was only a ‘teaching tool’ and that once you were ‘advanced’ – whatever perception one has of that – you would do client-based non-formulistic and non-Recipe Rolfing sessions. I have other thoughts on that assumption. The Recipe continues to this day to deepen and teach me more about structure and organizing it than any other system I have learned. The ‘teaching tool’ continues to teach me, and I challenge those who say they have ‘moved on’ to return to the beauty and genius of the Ten Series territory and explore it more deeply. I have still found depth, interest, and infinite teachings in this process of ten sessions.

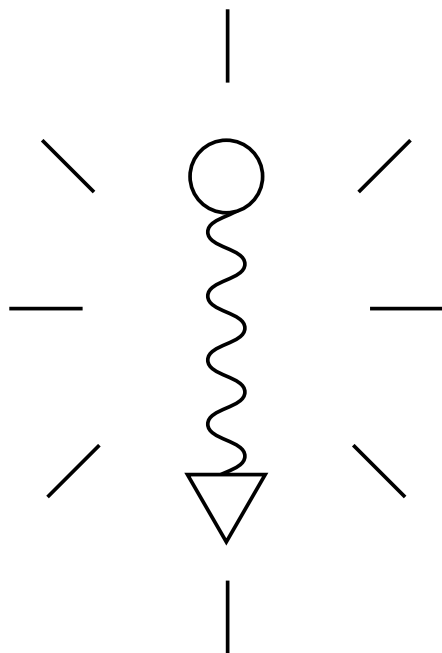


Figure 1: A schematic for the tenth-session goal of 'uniform brilliance'.

The reason one is able to do creative, improvisational sessions based on each unique client is from delving repeatedly into the reasoning of the order, the various ways of positioning the client and the resulting outcomes, and the apparent systematic ordering that creates the relationships and holism we are building. It has helped immensely to be a faculty member: by having to teach basic Rolfing SI over and over, I am required each time to describe and inspire new students on the beauty and reasoning to do these ten sessions again and again. Remembering the first steps when teaching always reveals the genius of the work.

I get to approach each tiny step of what each session contains and requires in terms of the history and our thinking, also the art of touch of each session and how it changes with each session. I have to think about the particular goals so that my focus stays with the linking of the next session and the one before. The best part is that each session is intimately linked to the tenth session that we call 'uniform brilliance', illustrated by the drawing in Figure 1.

Phrases like uniform brilliance, 'free the sacrum', 'free the fibula,' and other bumper-sticker goals were not explained when I was trained. It was a mysterious follow-the-dots manual with theory and philosophy about the 'Line', 'vertical evolution', and 'being at war or at ease

with gravity'. Seeing these mystical realities did not come quickly. Seeing and hearing from the client about the changes that repeatedly occurred at the end of the first three sessions, or even after the first session alone, were constant *aha* moments of "Oh, that is what she meant." Inquiring nonstop into why one session comes before the next keeps us honest to how the human being organizes or disorganizes itself, and it even helps my ego and my desire to be the one who 'cures' to get out of the way.

### Tenth Hour and Layers

In deepening the Ten Series, one has to go backwards to remember the point of doing all this in a particular order. Ideally, what does a person who has received the Ten Series manifest? The Tenth Hour is about the hinges, the horizontals. There is that uniform brilliance again. We are told to work with larger fascial sheaths after spending seven solid hours digging into specific structures, joint membranes, and layers of fascia. This has to imply that I did something before in order to even understand what horizontals and verticals have to do with fascial sheaths. Each session is laying down the possibilities of the Tenth Hour. Ideas such as 'dynamic horizontals' that are not necessarily symmetrical and yet essential for the vertical can keep my mind, my eyes, and my hands working for a long, long time.

In the Tenth Hour the 'middle layer' is spoken of. Teaching how to touch and work this middle layer is challenging to the new student of Rolfing SI. This requires that layers are taught before getting to the Tenth Hour. Giving the Ten Series means knowing what layer of fascia to work with, and when to move in and when to move out, and what 'middle' actually means. That command of "Don't start anything new in the Tenth Hour" is important. Closure and coming to terms with what has been done directs our hands to a layer and a very intentional integration. Sessions leading up to the Tenth Hour speak of superficial and deep layers. With each new client, these layers reveal new requirements of our touch.

The Tenth Hour is where we really have to own up to the relationship of the vertical to the horizontal in standing and moving so that the planes of motion and spirals are free to express themselves without inhibition or structural obstacles. Quite a

lofty goal! But it is there in every session. It can be the guiding light of every session. Integration brings horizontal and vertical into possible expression. Local interventions are moved out to the edges of the being and the structure of the client.

### Front/Back Balance and Positions

Shapes, volume, space, fullness, or lack thereof can show up in any session as a theme. But there it is in the Third Hour, placed strategically after the first two sessions that can be seen as the *x*-axis and *y*-axis, the up/down, the space/ground, the one- to two-dimensional work. And then, there we are with the client in sidelying position, repeating the position from the First Hour. But what is different here? How is a Third-Hour position different from a First-Hour position? Positions mean something. They determine my focus and the movement that I ask of the client.

How is one thinking differently of the territory in the Third Hour vis-à-vis that of the First Hour? And what can keep you from doing a Third Hour in a first session? These are questions that are all worth asking and thinking about. Every session has questions to ponder. During a Ten Series we approach the rib cage numerous times, the trochanter and pelvis numerous times, in different positions and in a particular order. Are the arms worked differently in a Third Hour than a First Hour? Why or why not?

The territories overlap over and over again but something is different in each session. We may do a first session that is similar in territory to the fifth session, but we do that first session way before the fifth. What is this teaching us about order, about integration, about holism? What is it that develops by working with this human structure in such an orderly fashion?

Infinite questions are created from thinking and learning to see over and over with each new client, to see the sessions via a new story, the new structural challenges and a new integrating puzzle to solve. The Ten Series keeps us honest to the maxim of 'don't chase the symptoms'. It takes courage not to be lured by the need to please the client's demand for relief by focusing on the pain. Ordering the structural elements within the principles and taxonomies has enough variables to keep us interested for

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many years in reorganizing the structural disorganizations that develop over a lifetime lived in gravity.

Looking at the descriptions of the Ten Series as 'sleeve sessions' and 'core sessions' reveals how our particular language is a unique and fascinating setup to create the construct and format for reordering someone's way of being no matter the reason for his or her coming in for work. Even if the client is returning after the tenth session, the Recipe gives us a way to complete a process. It forcefully takes us out of differentiating and on to connecting bigger areas through function and ways of touching. It asks the client to cop to what has happened for them in a bigger way and to feel the totality of the work in that moment. Even the body reading, if one is using the Recipe, takes me out of the detailed focus of 'what is still left' to 'what is there in that moment' and 'how to leave it as it is'.

The Recipe is a structural, permeable boundary giving beginnings and endings; but more than that, it distinguishes our work as an integrating landscape rather than piecemeal rearrangement of unrelated segments. Relationship is never absent. It continues to teach us what can reliably happen when working in relationship to the entire constellation of function and structure, keeping our focus from being on only one part of the body. Each session has order that connects back and front and includes integration. I have seen many Rolfers abandon integrative work in certain sessions. The Recipe teaches and demands integration in every session. The goals and the territory require relationship. Change without balance can be destructive.

### **Integration Sessions Eight and Nine**

*We are integrating not restoring.*

Ida P. Rolf

Think for a moment of all the sessions that get you to eight and nine. If eight is a lower, two, four, and six have given you time and detail to understand how the leg and foot impact all the other segments of the body in their ability to respond to gravity in gait and movement. Then one, three, and five create the possibility for an upper Ninth Hour.

Positions for each session are specific and demand our seeing and working to relate differently from one position to another. They force the focus on relationship to spirals in the body and to all the planes of motion. They methodically lead us from the ground up across the pelvis to the spine. Knowing we need horizontals and verticals to appear by the Tenth Hour, and that the legs and pelvic girdle need to be free of the spine by eight, connects me in the Second, Fourth, and Sixth Hours to something greater and more expansive than the little joint I may be working on in these sessions. There is always relationship to the whole and the Recipe teaches the client to begin to understand that in his or her own body.

### **A Courageous First Session for Everyone**

I have always said it takes courage to be a Rolfer and to receive a Rolfing session. Why? It is a radical act to ask for deep change in all ways. However, our clients don't always know what they are about to receive. It takes courage to give the Ten Series and commit to our work as a

ten-session process when the person is asking for quick pain relief. It takes doing the Recipe over and over to predictably say what changes are possible with various sessions, but more than that, with partaking in the entire process. It is a treatment protocol we learn and we practice differently than any other therapy or system. We have to know how to talk about it and educate our clients as to the rationale and beauty of what we do.

When I was working in the jungles of Guatemala in the early 1990s, in the beginning unable to speak the language, a person would come to me with various pains, etc. Being a new Rolfer of five years, I did the first session (which I would still do). The first session can address every issue. Yes, it is about the breath. It is about first contact. It is about clients feeling themselves from the inside, maybe for the first time. It changes the rib cage position and resiliency, and it can affect the way a person stands on his/her legs. It changes the way a person occupies space in general. It creates lift or ease. It is truly a 'first' for many people to be touched in the way we touch. What a spectacular place in the territory to begin. Not speaking the language, I couldn't use any 'psychobabble' with them. I just did the work and they got the benefits that a client today still gets from a first session.

### **Time-Tested Wisdom**

I have spoken with practitioners who are new Rolfers, those five years out, and those thirty to thirty-two years out, and have collected their words about the Ten Series.

A new practitioner of two years shared the following insights into the value of the Ten Series:

The Ten Series, a map to guide my work.

Following the Recipe has given me a structure. I always feel that if I stick to the Recipe, something good comes out of it.

My own touch comes in the assessment. There, I feel I have the power to add to the session. If I detect a rotation, a shrinking or shortening, I can start making a notable difference for the client.

Thanks to the Recipe, I feel confident when I work. The more sessions I do, the easier the interpretation. I start noticing patterns, patterns related to age group, to gender, to mental disorders, slowly the map has more information for my interpretation.

Practitioners who are five years out, who say they will keep using the ten-session series, have shared the following:

I also often use the Ten Series as a framework for clients who have received a lot of Rolfing in the past, but from another practitioner. It always gives me context and grounds my work, makes me stay tuned in to what I'm trying to do for the person in front of me.

I believe it's the most systematic and logical way to both open and organize any body in gravity, and to educate those who are new to Rolfing about the interconnectivity of their bodies.

The Ten Series keeps me from being redundant, and encourages me to always view the body in front of me through the lens of relationships, not parts that hurt.

A thirty-year Rolfer shared why she still uses the Recipe:

The Ten Series is 'practice' as an ongoing meditation of relationship.

The Ten Series provides places to begin this inquiry and a way to speak in present time with our clients about their physical body.

I like that we don't always get what we want out of the Ten Series. Again, just like life.

Integration, our clients, ourselves – it only goes as far as the relationship allows/sees/believes.

Good Rolfing has to take place in present time, especially when dealing with patterns that have become

enmeshed in our client's day-to-day movement through the world.

Each session focusing on breath and support and then touching in and naming various physical relationships – lateral line, mid-line, head on top, motion through space, naming where, when, how we are in this moment or this week, or as a child – we speak and move all of these things in present time. The Ten Series demands present time, what is going on right now right here.

Finally, a Rolfer of thirty-two years had the following to share:

I continue to do the Ten Series because it's f\*\*\*ing fabulous! It's a permanent change in the structure. That person could go away with the Ten Series in them and never get any more Rolfing and have benefits that would last them a lifetime. Back work is essential to balancing the structure especially towards the end of a session. Everything runs through the spine. I'm not sure it would be Rolfing without back work.

## The Advanced Training and Final Thoughts

The Advanced Training teaches analysis of our work through the Principles of Intervention, order of events, and structural elements as ways to construct a session. Jan Sultan, Michael Salveson, and Jeff Maitland spent many hours analyzing our Ten Series and creating the Principles that we now teach in the Basic Training and the 'five structural elements', along with the beautiful 'order of events' that Jan wrote up. All of these are part of the Ten Series. It is not just a connect-the-dots mechanical way of working. Each session can be seen through many themes of a principle, of flexion/extension, of planes of motion, of functional and kinesthetic awakening and segmental relationship in gravity to relieve the pain of being in gravity. When one is really working at all these levels in each session, one is a chef.

In learning to cook one utilizes recipes and comes up with variations in the different ingredients and their quantities. The recipe is not thrown out as one gains proficiency. The chef begins to really understand the ingredients and how to use them creatively within the recipe.

Understanding the relationships of the elements of each session and the genius of the order allows the 'chef Rolfer' to continue being inspired by each client's response to the systematically ordered Ten Series that is our gift to the world. Don't throw it out. Be inspired once again.

*Valerie Berg has been a Certified Rolfer since 1988, Certified Advanced Rolfer since 2000, and a member of the Dr. Ida Rolf Institute® faculty since 2003. She is also a Rolf Movement practitioner and has been influenced by her history as a modern dancer, by Hubert Godard, and by yoga. She worked in Guatemala for five years doing Rolfing sessions during that country's civil war and, thus, pursued Peter Levine's Somatic Experiencing® trauma training afterward.*

*She has been practicing in New Mexico for thirty-one years and alternates that with working in San Diego, California. Tango, kayaking, sculling, and yoga keep her moving and interested in the vitality of our bodies continuing through the years. The joy of movement for the human body is what brought her to be a Rolfer and now continues to be what can be brought to anyone of any age through Rolfing SI. Valerie thinks the Ten Series is a profound life-changing process and she still uses it with new clients.*