

Ask the Faculty

Excitement and Our Work

ABSTRACT *The field of Rolfing® Structural Integration (SI) and Rolf Movement® is diverse and our thought processes and our work stimulated by many varied interests. Here some of our faculty share what currently excites them in their practices and their teaching.*

Q: A simple question: What excites you these days in your practice and teaching?

Rita Geirola
Rolfing and Rolf Movement Instructor

When I read the question “What excites you these days?”, my first answer was “curiosity.” And, in fact, this is true. How is this human being - who for some reason has decided to come to my office - experiencing his/her life? How has this body system learned to organize in his/her own special way in order to survive and move in relation to gravity and in the cultural and social context in which he/she lives? And finally, how can I find a way to communicate with this special person I meet now for the first time? How can I establish a dialogue through my presence, my words, my touch, so that we can develop the Rolfing process? I sense all of this questioning as a challenge, triggering my curiosity and keeping my attention alive.

But this is only one side of the story. If I really ask myself what excites me about

giving sessions and teaching, I sense that the main element is that I never get bored. The people I meet in my office are so different from each other, and different from me. They come with their own needs and requests. They come with their experience of life, their wishes, their belief system, their body organization. So there is no way to simply apply a given protocol; every session needs to be tailored to the specific client in the here and now of the process.

Rolfing SI has provided me with a vision about how a body organizes in gravity. It has made me understand how gravity influences all aspects of life, shaping not only the physical structure but also the way people perceive and organize themselves, even their way of thinking and their connection with emotions. It has made clear to me how much the familiar social and historical context in which a person has grown up also deeply impacts the way his/her system responds to gravity and adapts more or less efficiently to life stimulus.

Being a Rolfer, I am aware that the subjective experience of any individual client will affect the result of the process,

and I need to be clear and work with it. Even if I refer to models in finding the thread between all the information I collect, I cannot just apply a protocol to work with individual people. I need to be with them, use my senses, my competence, my empathy to connect and build each time an event that - at least in my intention - matches the need of that specific person in that specific moment of his/her life.

Because of this need for presence and awareness, because my creativity is activated, giving sessions and teaching are great opportunities for me to be centered and grow as a human being as well as professionally. This makes me so passionate about Rolfing SI - no boredom, even after so many years of practice.

Jörg Ahrend-Löns
Rolfing Instructor

The most fascinating track I am following right now is the phenomenon of ‘space’ - how space and/or the perception of space changes under certain conditions. If we consider structure in a physical sense, we can assume space depends, for instance, on contraction of muscles or diminished elasticity of fascial structures. But there is

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something that goes beyond the physical structure or even the coordinative one. Sometimes it seems that the body is not 'willing' to 'let go' even under - let's say - the best conditions.

I observe in my practice working with clients and in teaching students that one of the most important prerequisites for the ability to 'open up' is adaptability in social engagement between client and Rolfer or student and teacher. The theoretical foundation that explains this phenomenon comes from Stephen Porges and his polyvagal theory.

I'm very convinced that whatever we do or teach as Rolfers or as Rolfing instructors, the inclusion of and considerations of the autonomic nervous system (ANS) can be very useful. It casts a specific light on the Rolfing Principles of Intervention - support, adaptability, palintonicity, and closure can be seen and understood in a much deeper sense when we include ANS phenomena in our work. I can say that, for instance, the quality of my touch and my understanding of some clients' and students' responses improves significantly.

My five cents.

Sally Klemm

Basic and Advanced Rolfing Instructor

I still enjoy the day-to-day mystery of who will show up in my office and what kind of work we'll do together. Rolfing SI provides for a rich and unique human interaction - in fact, a very privileged one. Both teaching and private practice allow me to engage with people from all walks of life in a rather immediate way. I marvel at the language of SI and the ability to reach out and connect with a particular issue a client is experiencing; it's a true partnership as I ask someone to shift his/her focus to release a specific area to a more body-wide awareness. Supporting and empowering an individual to realign with ease and pleasure is a 'renewable energy' for us both - and a great satisfaction.

Participating in a classroom of beginning students getting their first taste of structural and functional techniques, and witnessing the deepening that unfolds with intermediate trainings, is a certain reminder of why this has been a fulfilling profession for me these many years. Returning to private practice after a teaching stint in Boulder, I find that the vitality and collective energy of the class ignites my own work.

It's gratifying too, after more than three decades in the field, to see some clients continue on to become colleagues, and to have these younger, enthusiastic professionals supporting the work - organizing, networking, and creating openings for continuing education here on Oahu as outreach to Asian and Pacific practitioners - allowing me opportunities for regional supervision, mentoring, and residential workshops here at home.

These days, I'm most excited by a new, three-part format for Advanced Rolfing certification. The beauty of a three-part format is that it allows students to be away from their practices for only a week at a time. The initial offering of this three-part training was completed at the Dr. Ida Rolf Institute® (DIRI) in Boulder this past June. The feedback from all fourteen participants was so unanimously positive in this regard that I'm inspired to offer it again next year. Ellen Freed and I are excited to team up for Part 1 starting October 24 in a residential setting close to nature on the North Shore of Oahu. (Affordable off-season airfares and a schedule that allows for a day off for tourism promise to make the three trips more reasonable for interested students from further afield than the islands.) Details are below:

Three-Part Advanced Training Coming Soon to Oahu in Hawaii:

Part One – Laying the foundation for non-formalistic strategy-making (October 24 - November 1, 2020)

Part Two – An exploration of embodiment (January 16-24, 2021)

Part Three – Clinical application (April 17-25, 2021)

Duffy Allen

Rolfing Instructor

DIRI is positioning itself to present a structural benchmark of the work - our view of the Ten Series and of the relationships of the structural taxonomy. These are presented in the Basic Training, reinforced in the required CE, and then re-presented in the Advanced Training alongside a laundry list of biomechanical relationships and techniques as well as a small allotment for an individual instructor's perspective on the work. My work rests on an armature that contains this information and also emanates from it. It is one dimension of the omnidirectional manifestation and experience that I hope to evoke each day. It is not constrained to it; it merely includes it as an inevitable ingredient of living. But this is not the aspect of the work that is currently enlivening my self and my practice.

What's exciting for me happens at the levels of the other taxons, in particular the geometric and the energetic. My practice rests on the ground of the Series and of the Principles of Intervention as an orientation to restrain the interaction of the session to the realm of Rolfing SI and Rolf Movement Integration. But increasingly, I feel the taxons point to our attempt to describe the transpersonal aspects of the work, and this is the realm that keeps the work fresh for me. The transpersonal aspects of the work are the least-defined, least-discussed elements in the curriculum and during class hours, but certainly the juiciest for me.

The geometric taxonomy of forms quickly transitions to one of proportional relationships and then fractals within and beyond the physical body. When I work from this orientation, the larger cycles of

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life; of stillness and flow, of expansion and compression, become an interactive experience for the client and myself and lead to a greater satisfaction with the work for both of us, an outcome that surpasses any that my personal repertoire of techniques, tactics, or strategies can attain.

This sense of satisfaction leads to a more personal experience that makes my job fun. Simple moments in which the eyes of another person light up when he/she realizes the potential and the deep meaning of embodied experience keep me energized.

When I am mentoring or teaching, I have tried to honor this element of my work and my practice by being transparent that this is what I'm doing, and not passing an event from the transpersonal realm off as technique. This creates a new challenge in conveying the work, but for those who are interested and motivated, it seems to bring them some joy as well.

Pedro Prado

Basic and Advanced Rolfing

Instructor, Rolf Movement Instructor

I am currently exploring the role of the autonomic nervous system (ANS) in human structure, function and behavior; and the application of the polyvagal theory to Rolfing SI. With inspiration from the work of Peter Levine and Stephen Porges, I have been observing how the ANS - in both its normal and adaptive functions - influences both structural patterns in the myofascial web and the functional patterns that Hubert Godard describes as anticipatory postural activity (pre-movement) and the characterological knot.

While the psychobiological taxon has always attracted me, to recognize the influence of the ANS on body schema and body image, the experience of emotion, and the formation of one's worldview has made the work feel more complete to me. This is because the ANS is an objective physiological manifestation of

and correlate to the client's subjective experience that enhances our ability to track client processes.

Pierpaola Volpones

Rolfing and Rolf Movement Instructor

A few years ago, when I was about to turn sixty - the age where people in my country consider ending their professional lives - some friends, and relatives, asked me, "When are you going to retire?" My response was, "Retire from what? From enjoying my work? From doing what I love?" What excites me in my practice and teaching of Rolfing SI is that I am never bored; instead my persistent curiosity is nourished.

I have been working for thirty-three years now, and still every client who I see for the first time is a challenging and interesting experience. In Rolfing SI we have guidelines, but no protocols. In these years, what I have learned is that no back pain is the same: there are similarities, but each person is unique in his/her own way of feeling, expressing, compensating, holding, relating to gravity.

I don't consider the 'Recipe' a protocol, even if it might seem so from a very superficial glance. We have goals and territories for each session of the basic Ten Series that I consider guidelines. Korzybski's "*The map is not the territory*" is one of our most cited quotes and the territory is what each client inhabits, ready to be explored. A non-formulistic approach gives us even more freedom, as long as we stay client- and process-oriented.

Recently I attended a four-day dissection class. It took me thirty years to decide to attend such a class: even though I always felt very interested and curious to see what is under the skin, I never felt I had the guts to cut a body, so I had only watched Gil Hedley's and Acland's videos. Together with a girlfriend, I went and cut. It was very tough, emotionally, and so interesting! I see that my way of touching has changed since then; I have

a different sense of fascial layers, but also a deeper sense of respect for the physical body where I can put my hands. To quote Dr. Rolf, "*The body is not the only thing going on, but it's where I can put my hands.*"

Teaching Rolfing SI is another immense field for exploration to constantly understand the mystery, magic, and the art and science of Rolfing SI. The complexity of our work is fascinating. I find myself contemplating and reflecting, every time I have a class to teach, on how I can bring forward the complexity of Rolfing SI with the simplest approach, to reach as many students I can and instill in them curiosity to learn more.

Just as every client is different even when they have similar symptoms, so students are different in their attitude in class with each other and with the teachers; for example they apply to the training with wishes and expectations that vary a lot and their 'personal space' varies - some need more space and time than others. Transmitting the skills and knowledge of the Ten Series is always a bit of a challenge for each new class I teach, and it is always a journey inside myself, discovering shadows and light, resources and area to investigate. Definitely never boring!

