

Reviews

A Manual Approach to the Brain – Part 1
with Jean-Pierre Barral

Reviewed by Allan Kaplan, Certified Advanced Rolfer™

Viewing this latest offering of DVDs from Jean-Pierre Barral, DO, was a poignant experience for me: I attended Barral's brain class a year ago, just as COVID-19 was breaking around the world, and returned to the US directly into a fourteen-day quarantine. Having been taking several classes with Jean-Pierre every year for a long time, watching the discs after nearly a year-long hiatus transported me right back into the classroom with J-P's familiar self – his accent, his mannerisms, his depth of knowledge, and his surety of skill. Truly, his DVDs and the excellent job Munich Group Media has done with their production are the next best thing to being in an actual classroom with Barral himself. As I watched and reviewed my class notes, I realized how closely the discs emulated our class, despite being three and a half hours of material, versus three full days in class, and I was able to review with the advantage of being able to replay bits and pieces as often as needed to grasp their content.

The DVD set is comprised of three discs, each packed with material. The first serves to present the lay of the land, with review of basic concepts Barral has developed over many years of pursuing his approach to body dysfunction whether with treatment of the visceral, nervous, venous, or articular systems of the body. The initial approach to the brain is no different. It's essential to check the body for fixations so that the environment of the brain is as balanced as possible. Barral uses his own diagrams, notes, and demos to present a thorough overview of the anatomy and landmarks of the organ itself, as well as influences and relationships with the rest of the body. A highlight of the disc is the inclusion of an actual treatment with a guest client. Having seen many of these

in classes, it's always humbling to watch Barral proceed with little to no background information about the person's ailment, watch his process and treatment, and then witness the results, accompanied with a 'reveal' interview and presentation of the issues the client has brought.

The second disc devotes a lot of its content to treatment of vascular and nerve relationships with the brain, ensuring that the organ is getting the nutrition and instructions it needs for optimal function. Again, step-by-step lectures and demos clearly outline Barral's techniques for the treatments. He uses direct techniques to the eyeballs to release the eye musculature and improve vascular flow to the brain.

For me, the most fascinating aspect of the entire class was monitoring brain processes and treating the brain utilizing Barral's tool of listening. Barral developed listening in his initial studies of visceral manipulation, and has utilized it in his further treatments of other systems of the body. In the practitioner's listening of the brain, there may be an internal attraction or pull that someone trained can palpate. The practitioner, then introducing stimuli, can track the responses and use induction techniques for treatment.

Remembering back to my class experience of this material, one of the clearest examples of this was having a model inhale, through one nostril only, the scent of an oil, and feeling that the attraction of my hand to a spot inside their brain would shift like a compass needle. Repeating the procedure with the model breathing through the other nostril would elicit a different result. Using induction in conjunction with this listening process, I could balance the brain. This sort of process can be used with smelling, eye motions, tasting, finger motions – any sensory stimulus. Fascinating!!

Disc Three rounded out the DVD set with treating the sphenoid bone, and then focusing on the limbic system. The sphenoid is a crossroads of many vascular and neural connections to the brain, and is influenced by twenty-eight muscles; having it as unrestricted as possible, to keep these channels optimally functional, is important. Barral describes and demonstrates a number of techniques toward this end. He then devotes the rest of the disc to a

discussion of the limbic system, and how it is possible to treat it and the emotional system with his listening techniques. Through an interactive use of guided imagery, Barral uses listening to track the shifting of the attraction detected within the brain, and then works with induction to achieve a balance in how the limbic system responds. The general procedure in these techniques is very similar; it's really only the context that differs.

As usual, Barral is succinct, precise, and confident in his instruction throughout *The Brain*. The DVD set a wealth of information. Being a bit weak in my neuroanatomy, I found a great website, www.neuroscientificallychallenged.com, that was helpful in filling in the gaps in my knowledge. Having missed Barral's Brain II class in Munich because of COVID-19 travel bans, I look forward to that future installment of DVDs from Munich Group Media as an intro until I have a new opportunity to take the class.

Bear in mind, DVDs alone are not a class substitute, but they do serve to give a very good idea of what to expect in any Barral class, and are even more valuable as an in-depth review.

The DVDs are produced by Rolwing® Structural Integration Instructors Peter Schwind and Christoph Sommer through Munich Group Media. Readers in the US can buy the DVDs individually or as a set from <https://www.barralinstitute.com>. Those in Europe can order them at <https://www.munich-group-media.com/en/index.html>.

Conquering Concussion: Healing TBI Symptoms with Neurofeedback and Without Drugs by Mary Lee Esty and C.M. Shifflett

Reviewed by Lina Amy Hack, Certified Advanced Rolfer™

When I was originally suffering from the concussion that I describe in my article "In My Head" (see page 27 of this issue), my symptoms would have prevented me from being able to read a book about concussions. I do wish I had known about the practice of Mary Lee Esty, PhD, LCSW, founder of the Brain Wellness and Biofeedback Center, and her dedication to brain wellness. My understanding

is that she has helped many people suffering from complex post-concussive syndrome, even years after their injury. As a product of all that clinical experience, the book *Conquering Concussion: Healing TBI Symptoms with Neurofeedback and Without Drugs* by Esty and C.M. Shifflett (Round Earth Publishing, 2014), has a lot of information about mild traumatic brain injuries (mTBI) and treatment (past and present) of post-concussion syndrome.

It starts like any classic textbook, with a thorough overview of famous head injuries as case studies driving the knowledge about brain injury. It is only in recent years that it has become common knowledge that concussions are serious injuries, and *Conquering Concussion* helps fill the gap of knowledge about the consequences of mTBI, which is a serious brain and body injury. Concussions can lead to a long list of life-altering symptoms that disrupt the activities of daily life. Rolfers would benefit from reading the chapter about what happens to the body during a concussion, where the cranial and cervical anatomy relevant to mTBI events is reviewed. To paint the picture of the types of suffering concussions lead to, many case studies are presented, which feels like a journey through Esty's clinical learning to becoming the expert that she is today.

Esty's primary tool of intervention is neurofeedback, and it is through this lens that the book delineates a pathway to healing. People suffering from post-concussion syndrome have had remarkable recoveries from neurofeedback treatment and yet, like Rolfing® Structural Integration, it is not considered a mainstream health intervention because of the difficulty to research holistic health outcomes. Esty and Shifflett characterize the marginalization of biofeedback in general to be due to normative use of drug treatment, resistance from insurance companies to pay for this lesser-known treatment, and a general denial of people's autonomy to be able to heal themselves. It is an interesting chronicle of the barriers these clinicians have faced and one that Rolfers would identify with. Yet as I read the challenges the neurofeedback clinicians have faced in getting recognition, valid research, and peer-reviewed publication, I did a quick search and found there were quite a few recently published research articles

about neurofeedback and biofeedback. I hope that the next edition of this book will include a complete literature review of this ongoing trend.

The third part of the book has a lot of useful information about how to take care of the daily needs and challenges that a person suffering from a concussion may experience, this is valuable practical information. The authors acknowledge a role for manual therapists in facilitating ease in the fascial web after these types of injuries.

The book ends with a very important topic—prevention of injury. I was wearing a helmet when I experienced my serious mTBI, and although it did help lessen some of the impact, it was not enough prevention. The science of helmets, seatbelts, headrests in vehicles, and prevention in sports is an important topic that could probably be its own book. As an avid downhill skier, I very much enjoyed the section talking about how people who chose to do high-risk sports need to teach themselves how to fall – this is very much true in skiing. I encourage readers interested in concussion and neurofeedback to read *Conquering Concussion*; it will give a complete overview on the topic from the history, the medical politics, innovative neurofeedback treatment, and looking to the future where hopefully post-concussion syndrome information becomes more common knowledge.