

Rolfers who so choose to be equally well trained in pain management, to give clients hope that something significant can be done to reduce their pain and suffering and to enhance the quality of their daily lives.

Toward this end, I would like the RISI to offer two types of advanced training: one in SI, like it offers currently, and another a certification in pain management. I believe that Dr. Rolf's dictum is appropriate – Rolfers should first learn how to practice Rolfing SI. Her idea, I understand, was for newly certified practitioner to do nothing but Rolfing SI for five years. (Jan Sultan told me this many times.) After that, practitioners would have a better idea of what Rolfing SI was and the potential for change that was inherent in the process. And after five years, enough questions have come up in your practice to make you very curious. In satisfying that curiosity, some practitioners may lean toward finding a higher level of order in structure and learning how to establish that in their clients, while others may lean toward focusing on intentionally reducing pain in suffering in a way that no other discipline can possibly approach, for what sets us apart from the rest is our understanding of order and function and singularly – our ability to establish that order out of chaos as only Rolfers can do.

Endnotes

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Clay Cox Bibliography

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Mentoring for Rolfers™

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Mentoring, in professions like Rolfing® Structural Integration (SI), can play a significant role. What we Rolfers do is very much an art – a creative process. Yes, there are aspects that are very logical and linear, such as knowledge of anatomy; but there are other aspects that are nonlinear, very "right brained" and intuitive. These are skills that, for most people, are developed over time. These aspects are difficult to teach in depth during the initial training because there is so much basic information to be covered. In my view, this is an area where more senior Rolfers can contribute by sharing their skills and insights developed over years of doing this work.

For about ten years, I have been mentoring Rolfers and graduates of other SI schools. I first began in Washington state when a student going through training at the Rolf Institute® (RISI) asked me to mentor her doing the ten-session series on a client. There were a multitude of discoveries that both of us made during this process. Contrary to what I had heard (and much to my relief and delight), the classes at the RISI still teach the essential basic Ten Series! I also discovered an exciting new way to contribute to my profession and thoroughly enjoyed the mentoring/teaching process. I continued mentoring sessions with newer graduates of the RISI, the Guild for Structural Integration, and Hellerwork schools. In general, these mentoring sessions were with two practitioners, and they were in a series of sessions with the practitioners trading work on each other.

After moving my practice to Phoenix, I initially did mentoring sessions with two Rolfers here at their request. These Rolfers were established and were out of training at least ten years. They had met me at

workshops I sponsored in Phoenix and felt I could offer them new insights and assistance with some problems they were experiencing. We met once a month over an eight-month period and the Rolfers would trade session work on each other. These Rolfers were so pleased with the experience that they encouraged me to offer mentoring to smaller groups of Rolfers and other SI practitioners here. These have happened about every two to three months and have provided a wonderful way of sharing skills and encouraging a sense of community.

My style of mentoring is very involved with the less linear aspects of what we do. To become a "master Rolfar," it is necessary to:

1. See what needs to be changed.
2. Know what you have to do to change it.
3. Use skilled touch to carry out the change.

To provide the opportunity for Rolfers to grow into mastery, these are some of the areas I address in mentoring:



Phoenix mentoring workshop participants: (back row L to R) Donna Jo Cross, Shonnie Carson (mentor), Bill Kamer; (front row L to R) Deanna Melnychuk, Patti Selleck.

Seeing

In general, when we begin a session I spend time listening to how the practitioner “sees” the structure we are evaluating. I feel that developing your ability to “see” is essential to becoming a master Rolfer. Most commonly, the practitioners I have observed in workshops and those I have mentored tend to discuss structures in terms of muscular anatomy. Viewing structures in terms of muscular anatomy is fine, but there are other ways of perceiving structures that can often add depth to the practitioner’s sense of the client’s structure. I encourage and facilitate perceiving the structure in terms of shapes: shapes of inside spaces; how the organs relate to these shapes or imbalances; how these shapes relate to each other; and how they may assist or hinder the structure in gravity. Then we discuss strategies for effecting change. I also encourage more conscious awareness of things like perceptions of the client’s general energy and emotional tone, coloring (especially of tissues), what parts of the structure seem not to match the general structure, tissue texture, etc.

I encourage practitioners to learn to relax their eyes, scan the whole person, and allow information to come to them. This is very different from the narrowed-eye “looking intently for something” behavior I usually see when practitioners are trying to figure out the part of the muscular structure on which to work. There are qualities of movement in tissues that are subtle but “seeing” them is invaluable in evaluation. I continually encourage “seeing” in non-anatomical terms during all the sessions and share techniques for keeping “seeing” ability fresh and sharp during the session.

Receiving and Giving Sensory Information

Having watched and mentored a fair number of practitioners in my thirty-year career, it is my observation that most have developed habits of sacrificing their own structures in the process of doing the work. I share more effective ways of using positioning, and of using their bodies, hands, and arms in an efficient, effective way that accomplishes the work with less effort on the practitioner’s part and more comfort for the client. I show how to perceive the appropriate layer to work on by “seeing” and by touch. I do a great deal of demonstrating and require the “client” to give feedback so that the practitioners get

a sense of when they discover the “sweet spot” in whatever we are doing. This is a very important process for both parties as it raises awareness of how it feels on both the working and receiving ends. Here is a communication I received from one of the Phoenix Rolfers involved in mentoring sessions with me that I feel makes this point clearly:

You asked about my comment that I felt I was able to learn for the first time while being worked on. There are several parts to it. I noticed in your class that it was very helpful to experience watching then doing then receiving from you, and then receiving from another person. Each aspect gave a different perspective and together they form a more 3D view. Also the way you work giving feedback regarding what you are feeling helped me to understand better what was happening as I received it. I have received feedback from other Rolfers, of course, but since I had not just been on the giving or watching side of things, it did not seem to be meaningful to my learning process. Also I think it is possible to give feedback in many different ways and the way you do it does allow the client to participate completely in the whole process.

Miscellaneous Topics

1. How to design a session and identify goals for that session specific to the client. This applies to basic Ten-Series, post-ten, and advanced work.
2. How to keep focus on that design and goals during the session so you do not end up just “wandering around in the tissue.”
3. The importance of awareness of energy curves within each session. Ending the session at or near the top of that curve rather than at the bottom allows both the practitioner and client to end the session feeling revitalized rather than depleted.
4. How to do “mini-reassessments” during the session to check in with your progress towards your initial design and goals.
5. Combining aspects of several basic Ten-Series sessions in one session for more effective results.
6. Assorted techniques for organizing the client at the end of the session.

7. Tailoring techniques for individual practitioners. (Offering options for working within their individual structural issues or problems so they do not keep “dis-integrating” their own structures.)

Summary

In summary, there are two points I specifically wish to state. First, it is probably not possible or even practical for much of this to be covered in the basic or even advanced trainings. Second, our senior Rolfers (a strategic RISI resource) and their expertise are not being utilized effectively. Therefore, I offer that a more formal post-graduate mentoring program for continuing education credits would be an invaluable addition to the RISI’s current curriculum.

Shonnie Carson’s earliest dream was to be a doctor, which eventually became a career in nursing. In 1968 in Los Angeles she became social friends with Dick Stenstadvold and Emmett Hutchins. In 1971 during a visit to their new home in Boulder, she began her Rolfing process with Emmett and knew she wanted to become a Rolfer. Because she was under the minimum weight requirement of 140 lbs., she was not able to enter training at that time. After the weight requirement was dropped, she entered training in 1981 with Tom Wing and Betsy Sise for the first (auditing) portion, then deliberately chose to do the final part of training (practitioning) with Stacey Mills (known for her subtle work), Rosemary Feitis, and Louis Schultz. For eighteen years Shonnie’s nursing and Rolfing work overlapped. She had a full-time practice for twenty-four years in Seattle, Washington and has had a practice in Phoenix, Arizona since 2004. She continually supports the profession of structural integration as a past member of IASI Board of Directors and in her present roles as vice-chair of the Certification Board for Structural Integration (CBSI) and member of the RISI Law and Legislation Committee.



Shonnie Carson demonstrates shoulder technique to Bill Kamer with Donna Jo Cross as model.