

Releaf Massage Therapy

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Member, Associated Bodywork & Massage Professionals

Balancing The Body

Rebecca Jones

For a child wobbling atop a two-wheel bicycle for the first time, getting it to remain upright is a scary challenge. But once that child has mastered the art of balancing on the bike, the body just remembers what to do. That's the way it is with balance. Our body has lots of tools at its disposal to help us control our upright posture, and these tools function largely at the subconscious level.

However, when one of those tools fails to work properly, our system of balance can get out of whack. Problems with our feet and neurological conditions, such as Parkinson's disease, can throw off our balance. Eye conditions can rob us of stereoscopic vision, which helps us

Bodywork can help. Certain modalities can improve and restore balance, particularly through reeducating the body in the most efficient ways to move. Just like our bodies once learned the best way to stabilize atop a bicycle, they can also learn new, better ways to stabilize aging feet and legs. Here's a look at how two bodywork modalities--structural integration and the Feldenkrais Method--may help.

Structural Integration

Jane Elmore, MD, is a champion dressage rider, which means she spends much of her day perched atop a 1,200-pound prancing horse. Her safety absolutely depends on keeping her



Reeducate your body and bring balance.

properly locate ourselves in space. And, of course, inner ear problems can greatly affect our balance.

Many of these balance-affecting conditions are related to aging. In fact, it's estimated that one of every three people older than 65 will suffer some kind of fall this year. And half those people will fall again within 12 months.

balance. She's been doing dressage for more than 10 years, but she's found the greatest success in her sport most recently. She credits her improvement to structural integration sessions.

"I just feel so much more secure in the saddle now," says Elmore, who owns a

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"You are your home."

-Erin Hanson

Office Hours and Contact

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ranch in Denison, Texas. "They talk about the rider being a dance partner with the horse in dressage. Well, I was never a dancer. I was always overweight. But what I find now, in order to have this horse be able to respond to you, you have to be subtle in being able to shift weight from a left seat bone to a right seat bone, to both seat bones, to rotate in the seat so your shoulders follow the horse's shoulders. All this is much easier for me now, simply because I'm much freer in my movements."

Structural integration is based on the work of Dr. Ida Rolf, a biochemist who founded the modality called Rolfing, as well as the Rolf Institute in Boulder, Colorado, in 1971. Structural integration involves manipulating the body's connective tissue--the fascia--to rebalance the body and bring about pain relief from stress and injury.

"Most people come to structural integration because they've got something that hurts and can't make it better," says Marilyn Beech, past executive director and president of the board of the International Association of Structural Integrators. "But structural integration isn't really so much about getting rid of the pain as it is about getting the body lined up again. A lot of times your body is so misaligned you can't get your center of gravity over your foot. A lot of structural integrators work with athletes. It's common that afterward, they'll feel more coordinated, more efficient in their movements, and they'll have better balance."

Feldenkrais

Like structural integration, the Feldenkrais Method improves balance by teaching individuals to be more aware of proper movement. Developed by Ukrainian-born physicist Moshe Feldenkrais, the method stems from Feldenkrais' study of judo and its emphasis on perfect balance. Promoters say the method can help people experiencing pain in the back, neck, shoulders, hips, legs, or knees, but is also useful for healthy individuals, particularly athletes, who want to move more freely.

"Unlike physical therapy or occupational therapy, Feldenkrais is an educational process," says Denver practitioner Sissel Rhyme. "It works with the central

nervous system. It's bones to brain." Rhyme typically leads students through a sequence of precise movements, either sitting or lying on the floor, standing, or sitting in a chair. Throughout the process, she asks students to think about how various positions feel.

"This is intelligent exercise," she says. "You have to be a part of it mentally. It's not like being on the treadmill for 30 minutes where it doesn't matter what you think about." By increasing the awareness of how it feels to move properly, with everything structurally balanced, students can learn to let go of old patterns of movement and develop new ones that result in improved flexibility and coordination.

There are literally hundreds of such movement lessons, which vary in difficulty and complexity. Lessons can be 30-60 minutes long and can be done

in groups or privately with an instructor. The instructor will touch the students, but only gently and noninvasively. It's not at all painful or strenuous, though Rhyme reports students may find themselves exhausted after an hour. Studies have shown that 10 weeks worth of Feldenkrais lessons leads to notable improvements not just in balance, but also in the participants' sense of confidence in their ability to balance.

Rebecca Jones is a Colorado-based freelancer. Contact her at killarneyrose@comcast.net.



Ida Rolf, the founder of Rolfing.

Keeping Your Back Healthy

Tips to Avoid Lasting Pain

Chances are good that, at some point in your life, you will have back pain. In fact, 70-85 percent of Americans will experience back pain at some point in their lives. But even with those odds, there are still several ways to minimize your risk and give yourself the best chance to live pain-free.

Several factors can cause back pain, including stress, poor posture, bad ergonomics, lack of exercise, arthritis, osteoporosis, a sedentary lifestyle, overexertion, pregnancy, kidney stones, fibromyalgia, excess weight, and more.

With all of these potential causes lurking, it's important to look at behaviors that can help you prevent and avoid back pain before it starts. Here are a few simple healthy back tips from the National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke:

- Stretch and warm tissues before exercise or other strenuous activities.
- Practice good posture. Avoid

slouching when sitting or standing.

--When standing, keep your weight balanced on both feet.

--Follow good ergonomics in the workplace. When sitting for long periods of time, rest your feet on a foot support. Make sure your chair and work surfaces are at the proper height. Get up and move around in between long sitting stints.

--Avoid high-heeled shoes.

--Watch your weight. Excess weight, especially around the waist, can put undue stress on lower back muscles.

--Exercise. Core strengthening moves, especially, will also benefit your back.

--Don't lift items that are heavier than you can handle. Remember to lift with your knees, not your back. Pull in your stomach muscles, keep your head down and in line with your straight back, and do not twist when lifting.

--Get a massage. Using therapeutic bodywork can melt pain-inducing stress away from your back and the rest of your body.



Massage is a great way to beat back pain.

MT Straight Talk

What Your Massage Therapist Needs to Know

Angela England

Most massage therapists guide first-time clients through an intake process that includes discussing health histories and other medical concerns. But talking with your therapist about these things should not end with your first massage. Before each session, take a minute to speak with your therapist about any new medical conditions or injuries, lasting aches and pains, or any other changes in your life. Here are some of the issues your massage therapist should know about.

Medical Changes

It's a good idea to regularly update your medical record with your therapist, especially if you've been diagnosed with an illness or medical condition--such as high blood pressure, heart disease, diabetes, a chronic autoimmune disease, or skin allergies--or are taking any new medications. Certain medical concerns

preclude you from receiving massage. Other conditions, such as pregnancy, simply change the way your practitioner approaches the session.

A New or Acute Injury

Maybe you spent hours driving to a destination getaway and your shoulders ache, or you stepped off the porch wrong and sprained your ankle. Any time you have a new ache, pain, sprain, twist, or pulled muscle, mention it to your therapist. Depending on the location and extent of your injury, the session may need to be postponed or the injury site avoided until more healing has occurred.

Personal Preferences

This category is less obvious, but equally important. Everyone has unique

preferences and sometimes there may be something you would like to change for your next massage. Whether you want to bring your own music, have the temperature adjusted, or be draped in an extra blanket, your therapist can easily adapt as long as you communicate your preferences.

Help your practitioner help you. Take a moment to check in with him or her before your next session.

Angela England enjoys doing massage, gardening, writing, and spending time with her three young children.

*"Every moment
is a fresh
beginning."*

-T.S. Eliot

Please help me welcome Jen Mills, LMT to the Releaf team. You may recognize her from another local spa or from the community.

Jen is available for appts this holiday weekend:

Sat, July 2 from 8:00-3:00pm and Mon, July 4 from 8:00-12:00pm (appts required).

We had a great response and amazing feedback from Richard's clients last month!

So with high demand, Richard LaRocco will be back for personal one on one mediumship readings on Thurs, July 21 and Thurs, Aug 25.

Appts are 1 hr-\$175 cash. Appts can be made online at www.releafmassagetherapy.com or directly with Andrea at 315-521-3794

Finally, as of June 1st all NEW client rates changed. Pre-existing client rates change on Aug 1, 2022 and are and looks as follows:

30 min- \$60

45 min- \$75

60 min- \$85

75 min- \$105

90 min- \$125

Thank you for your understanding and support!!!!!!

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