

INTRODUCTION

What is Structural Integration? What are the Benefits?

“There is a pattern, an order, in human bodies...

When the body gets working appropriately, the force of gravity can flow through. Then spontaneously, the body heals itself.”

~Ida P. Rolf, PhD

Dr. Ida P. Rolf developed the process of Structural Integration as a holistic system combining soft tissue manipulation and movement education to restore the body to its natural state of alignment and balance - by lengthening, restoring, and reorganizing the FASCIA, the connective tissue matrix of the body.

Fascia surrounds and supports all of the muscles, bones and organs in your body in continuous web-like layers. This fascial net, or connective tissue matrix, is the body's internal system of flexible support - giving it strength and shape. The fascial system responds to injury, chronic tension and habitual movement patterns by shortening from both the forces of gravity and the mechanical forces of habitual movement patterns.

When your fascia shortens, thickens and becomes glue-like, it locks in less-than optimal patterns of strain and pulls your body out of alignment. Dr. Rolf's work is based on the insight that your body is more at ease and functions most effectively when its structure is balanced along the vertical line of gravity. In this place, gravity gently lifts and supports your body rather than pulling it down. By systematically restoring the integrity of your

fascial system, your body becomes aligned and the entire system can be a smoothly functioning and coordinated whole.

Dr. Rolf believed form determines function. Structural Integration can create a more adaptable and supportive form that can function more optimally in the field of gravity.

The field of gravity is an unseen force consistently interacting with the human body. Structural Integration re-educates the person and the human body to live and move in harmony with the field of gravity instead of being in conflict with it.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS?

Structural Integration dramatically alters your structure and posture and can resolve discomfort, release tension and alleviate pain. It can also restore and enhance flexibility, revitalize energy and have you feeling more comfortable in your body.

Structural Integration facilitates more efficient use of muscles, allowing your body to conserve energy, and create more refined patterns of movement with less effort. This reduces chronic stress and enhances neurological functioning.

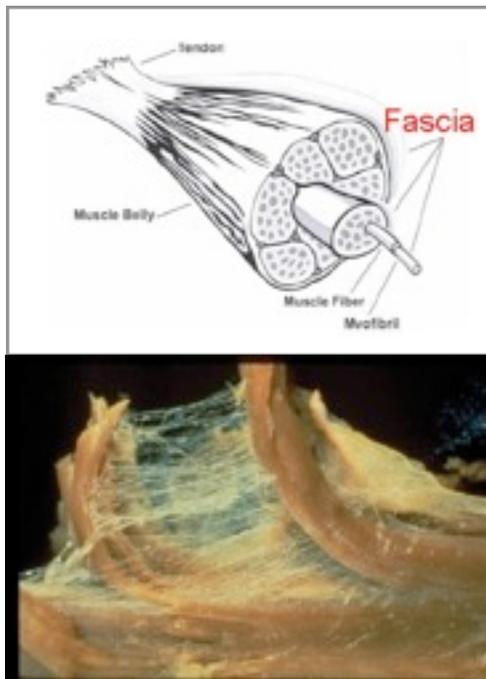


Benefits of the Structural Integration Series:

- Increase flexibility and ease of movement
- Increase energy and vitality
- Improve balance
- Release chronic pain, tension and stress
- Enhance physical performance
- Improve posture
- Improve athletic performance
- Enhance body awareness
- Reduce effort in activity
- Look and feel younger
- Expand your sense of well being

A Look at Fascia and Tensegrity

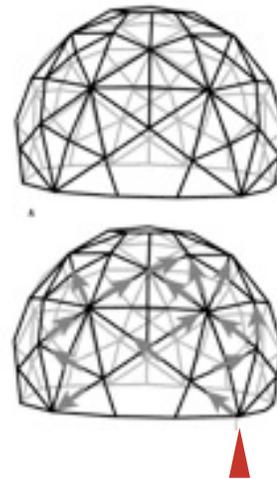
The Human Body is a Tensegrity Structure



Fascia is a seamless web of connective tissue found throughout your body. It wraps around every muscle, bone, organ, nerve and blood vessel and holds the body together. It creates a three-dimensional web of support that facilitates - or inhibits - your ability to function and move. Thickened areas of fascia transmit strain in many directions and make their influence felt at distant points, much like a snag in a sweater distorts the entire sweater.

This fibrous web of tissue is located under your skin - collagen and elastin fibers give fascia its shape and structure. The fibers line up based on lines of force in the body. Repetitive motion, overuse, and injury cause the fibers to become disorganized, which prevents smooth movement. For example, if your hamstrings are tight, it might not be because they are over contracted - it might be because the fascial fibers are lined up at odd angles instead of lined up in a way that allows the muscle to move smoothly. This can cause tightness and restriction in movement. The condition of your fascia is important because its communications coordinate muscular actions. There is more efficiency and ease of motion when your fascia is healthy and the fibers are aligned.

Tensegrity structures evenly absorb shock and compression. Dr. Rolf proposed that the human body is a tensegrity structure that can adapt and distribute movement, trauma and shock throughout the whole system. In Structural Integration the tensegrity view of the body helps us understand how the body works and how it compensates.



A geodesic dome is a tensegrity structure. Any external force will be transmitted omnidirectionally to all parts of the structure.

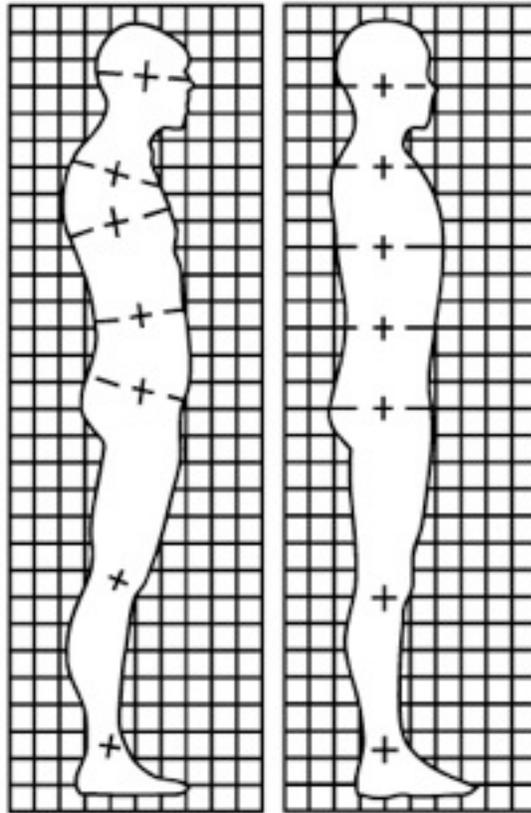


In a tensegrity structure, the beams (compression) are floating in wire (tension). In the human body, the bones (compression) are floating in the fascia (tension).

“Fascia is the organ of posture. The body is a web of fascia. A spiderweb is in a plane. This web is in a sphere. We can trace the lines of that web to get an understanding of how what we see in a body works.” Ida P. Rolf, PhD

By combining her knowledge of fascia with the principles of tensegrity, Dr. Ida P Rolf created the Ten Series of Structural Integration. All of the sessions served her purpose of visibly transforming each body in its relation to gravity. Each session is tailored to the structural needs of each individual person.

THE STRUCTURE OF THE SERIES



before

after



Structural Integration is a system used to align and balance the physical body within its gravitational field by freeing and reorganizing the myofascia, or connective tissue that surrounds the muscles. Dr. Rolf discovered that the body is organized in layers and that in order to create lasting change, the Structural Integration Series must create length and space in the outermost layers before working with deeper, more core layers in the body. Structural Integration is a 'system' of ten sessions. The first three sessions are called "The Sleeve" and cover the superficial fascia, the middle four sessions are called "The Core" and cover the deeper myofascial structures, and the last three sessions are called "Integrative" and create structural and functional adaptability within the whole body.

The Sleeve Sessions: 1-3

These are the superficial sessions. The "sleeve" of your body is the outer fascial layer. This is the part of your body that does the "doing", the fast movements. You can think of it as the sleeve or thin wet-suit just underneath your skin. The goal for these sessions is to open, lengthen, and organize these extrinsic layers. This will create space for the deeper layers to unwind and release.

Session 1 - Opening the sleeve.

You will get a sense of lift in your body. Your breathing pattern will be addressed by releasing the superficial fascia of the ribs and thorax.

Session 3 - Lateral line.

You will experience the dimension of depth (front to back balance) and freedom of the arms and shoulder girdle from the spine.

Session 2 - Support for the body.

You will get a sense of grounding in your body. Your feet will be more fluid and adaptable as they support the vertical dimension in your body.

The Core Sessions: 4-7

These are also referred to as the 'deep' sessions. The "core" of your body is the inner fascial layer. This part of your body is your "beingness", the area of slow, postural movements. The goal of these sessions is to open, lengthen, and organize these intrinsic layers.

Session 4 - Medial Line.

You will build up core support and strength from your feet through your legs to the bottom of your core. You will experience more lift in your body and start to get a sense of "the Line."

Session 5 - Anterior Line.

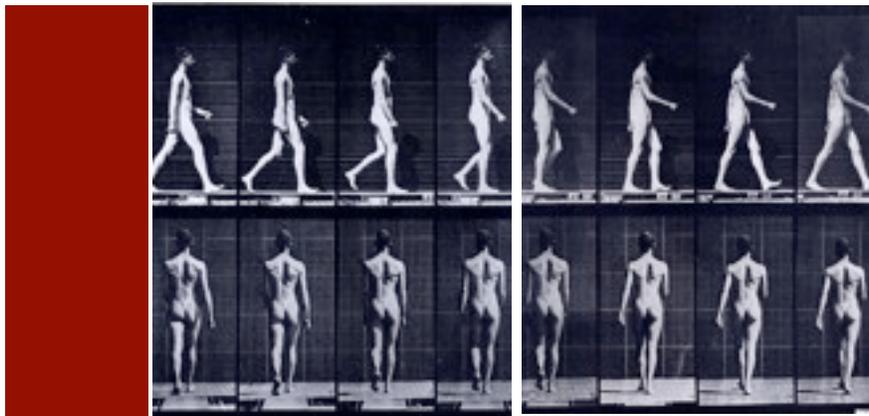
You will extend your line of support up to the head along the front of the spine. This will further your sense of front-to-back balance in your body. You will also get a sense of leg movement from the core, rather than from the hips.

Session 6 - Posterior Line.

You will feel a sense of length in the front and the back of the core. You will experience movement from your legs to your undulating spine.

Session 7 - Adaptability.

You will feel the relationship of your head and neck as a fluid extension of your spine.



The Integrative Sessions: 8-10

The first seven sessions are about taking the body apart to get the individual parts working better. The last cycle of sessions is about putting the individual parts back together into a better functioning whole. This is the place where the sleeve and the core meet and interact. You will begin to experience motion, initiated by your core layer, smoothly and efficiently transmit out through the sleeve layer of your body.

Session 8 - Structural Integration.

You will experience a secure foundation in the pelvis and legs for the upper body, neck and head to be supported. This creates a sense of stability and adaptability in your body.

Session 9 - Functional Integration.

You will experience contralateral movement in your body. You will feel the transfer of motion and energy from the core to the sleeve. All movement will start to initiate from the

lumbodorsal hinge-the area in front of the vertebral column at the mid to lower back.

Session 10 - Integration.

You will have a sense of "the Line" and of everything being connected. You will have a full sense of your body in 3 dimensions and moving in any direction with equal ease.