

THE MANY BENEFITS WE CAN RECEIVE FROM STRUCTURAL INTEGRATION BODYWORK AND, HOW I DO IT - Part 1 of 2 - The Benefits

AN OVERALL BODY APPROACH

- * Increases Performance.**
- * Removes Pain, Tightness & Stress.**
- * Reduces chance of Injury.**
- * Improves benefits from other therapies.**

by Lou Gross

**School Certified Master Postural Integrator since 1983
20 years successful track record**

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WHAT IT IS: Structural Integration Bodywork is a spreading and re-lengthening of the body's soft connective tissue, called fascia (fah-sha), which goes around and through all our muscles. The fascia is fluidy, putty with a lot of little protein fibers in it that give us our shape. Within this shape, we can move ourselves around when our nerves tell the long, thin muscle fibers to contract and release.

WHY IT'S NEEDED: But through athletics, tense daily activities, injuries and stress, these protein fibers get pushed closer and closer together in the fluid of the fascia. The fascia "bunches up." So, over time, we develop a lot of shortness in our muscles.

WHAT IT DOES: Structural Integration removes months, years and even decades of this accumulated shortness in just hours, and a lot starts being corrected in the first minutes of the very first session. A key point is that, compared to other body loosening methods, Structural Integration makes very large improvements very rapidly.

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The muscle fibers are lying in bundles, inside and surrounded by those fascial wrappings. So how long they can be, and how much of them we can use with our nerve instructions, is dependent on how long that fascial putty shape is.

We feel this bunching up of the fascial connective tissue as "muscle" tightness, lack of flexibility, and eventually, pain. This is especially true of back pains. The great majority of back and other problems I have seen in the past 20 years of professional experience have been caused by this chronic, accumulating tightness in the fascia of our whole bodies.
Back Fix Bodywork Book - lots of articles on site

This special kind of "connective tissue, or fascia manipulation" is done all over the body. And it lengthens and loosens lots of muscular tightness very quickly, much more than massage. This is not hype nor is it meant to demean another therapy. This treatment is not meant to substitute for the physiological benefits of massage. Those strokes are designed to move blood and lymph through the muscles and promote better circulation and tissue healing. But they aren't designed to change the length of the big, soft connective tissue element so significantly.

Yet, after the body is improved with **Structural Integration, massages, reflexology, acupuncture and shiatsu treatments can actually do more of what they're designed to do, because the body's tissues can be worked on more effectively, and the massage can reach a lot deeper than it could before. Most people say the deep massage even feels better.**

Difference Between & Benefits to Massage – details

One great benefit of this treatment is that it makes the body much better structurally, and physiologically as well. It makes this long term, overall improvement at the same time it is removing the accumulated tightness that has been causing pains.

Rather than the medical approach of just trying to heal damaged tissue or cut away bone that is rubbing on a nerve, this method was designed by a PhD Physiologist-Biochemist to

treat the whole body so that it functions better. The tightness that caused the problem in the first place is corrected, so we are less prone to have a tightness caused problem in the future. **In fact, years of accumulated shortness are routinely corrected in minutes and hours.**

Complementary & Beneficial to necessary Orthopedic Treatments - details

Structural Integration Bodywork **also improves** a lot of **back pain more effectively than chiropractic** because the "cause" of *that* kind of back pain was tightness. **It was pulling from the legs, pelvis, abdomen, chest and arms.**

Low back pain, spinal misalignment, lordosis, swayback, herniated disks, pinched nerves and sciatica have all been caused by a lot of leg muscle, abdominal muscle and pelvic muscle tightness. That tightness has also pulled vertebrae out of alignment and made it harder to put them back in.

The "peripheral" muscle problem needed to be lengthened as well as the tightness in the back itself

The treatment actually helps chiropractic adjustments do more because it re-lengthens much more tightness than hot packs or preparatory massage. It's repeatedly helped **chiropractors to get more vertebrae in, easier, and they tend to stay in longer**, because the systemic re-lengthening corrects the shortness and twisting that's been causing the vertebrae to get misaligned in the first place.

Complementary & Beneficial to Chiropractic - details

Besides spreading out the fascia, **we separate one glued, or "glommed on" muscle's fascial wrapping from another.** That gluing kept all the muscles in an area, like the thigh, bunched up in a big "chunk." So they each couldn't move back and forth independently from the others.

Separating the muscles, so they can all operate in coordination, allows us to move our bodies more articulately. This way, they'll do what we want them to do more precisely, and even with greater strength. At the same time, this release from the tightness of all the other muscles, enables each muscle to better go to its at rest position.

So the **muscle activity we just had all over the body "turns off" better** when we stop moving or go into another movement. Our bodies can also relax better when we want to relax. **And athletes even find that many of their muscles stay better relaxed while they're running and moving around.**

In Structural Integration, **we are actually changing the shape of the body by restoring the proper lengths of the muscles so they work the best with the length of our bones. The body is anatomically re-organized back to where it's supposed to be**, because we have erased much of that built-up tightness we've accumulated in the soft connective tissue since childhood. This is a better, more ideal "organization." So it really does enable our bodies to move, and feel, much closer to our designed, optimum level of performance.

Posture gets better; people stand up straighter, "automatically," **without having to make that effort. In fact, most people's usual effort to hold themselves up has to be made by tensing their back muscles and accentuating the natural curves of their lower back and neck vertebrae. They do this to adjust to the downward pull of gravity when their leg and abdominal muscles are short.**

This shortness would cause the person to fall forward, or have to lean forward with their torso. So to "straighten up," they have to tense their back muscles and make their spines more curved than they're supposed to be. **This is a major, very common cause of low back pain, pinched nerves and protruding disks.**

When we apply the hands on manipulations, instead of being a local treatment that focuses only on the site of tension or pain, this "Structural Integration" method works throughout the whole structure. This approach is more effective in removing many problems due to tightness, because the original tension in the front, and the compensating tension in the back, actually cause muscles all over the body to stay tight. So even the common neck, back and shoulder pains and the tendency to have disk, joint or muscle-tendon injuries, are all part of a "system wide" pattern of staying tight.

Structural Integration is **even scientifically designed to correct our "systemic" accumulated shortness. It was figured out. And there are three major points that explain what it does. First**, it removes tightness in all the muscles by **re-lengthening the fascia significantly. Second**, it re-lengthens the overall muscle "system," so **interconnected pulling or gluing from one muscle to another is also removed. This releases tensions from one area that are holding other areas tight.**

And **third, our "recipe" of hands-on strokes is done in an anatomically correct order that follows the body's "interlocking system" of bones and muscles. In this approach, we get a much more thorough re-lengthening than if we tried to do it in a haphazard manner or tried to just do the areas that felt tightest. When we release these "interlocking pulls," or "knots," the muscles we then work on don't have to fight against that other tightness. So they actually release farther when we lengthen their fascia, and they stay released much longer.**

These three features take into account how the body is actually put together. That is why long-term back pain, neck pain and shoulder tightness really do get better, and the benefits often last a long time, especially if the person does maintenance stretching.

These kinds of problems are caused by the "systemic" shortening of the fascial system. They're caused by shortening of the fascia in large areas of the body, not just where it hurts.

Applying this interlocking, whole body re-lengthening is therefore why we can correct conditions like groin and pelvic tightness, too, that localized stretching and massage haven't improved that much. Similarly, in the case of Achilles tendon tightness and carpal tunnel syndrome, we can make those areas better because we lengthen the entire leg and arm networks that are pulling on these tendons.

Structural Integration lengthens hamstrings very well, and that releases pulls on calf muscles, ankles and even the feet. But just working only on the hamstrings, again as a local approach, doesn't release and re-organize all these other areas very thoroughly. But by re-lengthening all the muscles of the legs, feet and pelvis, every area in the legs can get much looser, stay much looser, longer, and even operate better for higher performance.
Benefits to Sports Medicine

At the risk of belaboring the point, athletes say we actually re-lengthen accumulated tightness that even a lot of stretching does not. So it's a way to increase athletic performance.

And of course, **at the same time, this greater length decreases the chance of pulling or tearing a muscle, or getting a joint injury. Yet stretching also now works easier and goes further because the muscles are made more malleable; they give way better. We've made our tissue softer, deeper down. And, we've**

made it so **a much longer length of tissue, over the whole body, will give way into the stretch of any one area.**

Improving Your Stretching

This technique **has helped breathing, for athletes, seniors, and smokers, too. People breath deeper and easier** because it lengthens the muscles of the chest, back, neck, and abdomen, all of which move while breathing. It also lengthens the arms, which can keep the chest, upper back, shoulders and neck tight, and it lengthens the legs and pelvis, which can keep the abdomen, lower back and even the internal chest muscles tight.

Even Olympic runners noticed their breathing was "fuller," and more parts of their bodies moved when they breathed.

The treatment can help internal physiological conditions because it loosens the tension in the area, increases blood and lymph circulation and removes pressure on the organs. So physical therapy can do more, because there's more of us it can reach and we respond better in our circulation as well as muscle movement.

This kind of manipulation softens the hardness that builds up in the fascia when it's tight, and that improves its fluidity and **our muscle tone**. Instead of being too tight or too flaccid, the various muscle groups all have a more even, "just right" tone.

Because the fascia contains the blood and lymph capillaries, improving its consistency **improves cell respiration, nutrition, and waste removal**. It also **improves the energy flow in our acupuncture meridians and chakra energy centers**.

In addition, the manipulations **break up hardened deposits of many fat cells**, also located in the fascia, thus **helping people** trying to **lose weight** and **remove cellulite**. **Olympic athletes say it breaks up scar tissue from old injuries, like hamstring tears.** See middle group of testimonials on **Benefits to Sports Medicine**

Economy of Effort increases. Movements work more fluidly, with less effort at having to control them because we've improved both the structure and physiology. **Endurance increases and even accomplished athletes say their recovery time decreases and is more comfortable**, often dramatically. **Many people have more energy at the end of the day.**

At the same time that we're creating length and better body operation, **Structural Integration Bodywork also removes emotional charge and emotional trauma that we've accumulated in our tissues, often for years.** The combination of Tightness Removal and Emotional Tension Removal **restores an aliveness and youthfulness even to seniors** in their 80's and 90's and from experience, we know it **also creates more of a confidence, maturity and centeredness for teenagers and children.**

[Seniors Testimonials](#)

[Psychological Benefits - details](#)

All of this physical improvement removes weeks, months, years and even decades of stress, and Stressful Behaviors are often greatly reduced by the improved condition of both the structure and physiology, along with improved energy flows and better emotional condition. In fact, **many people notice an improvement in their mental and interpersonal abilities as well.** [Stress Testimonials](#)