

SOMA NEUROMUSCULAR INTEGRATION®

How We Define Ourselves.

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Forward: We are deeply thankful to Thomas W. Myers and to IASI for cracking open this can of worms and, in so doing, bringing greater unity between the schools of Structural Integration We are grateful for this defining process, as it creates ongoing expansion in the exploration of integrating structure, function and expression.

Soma follows IPR's classic progression with specific changes. The variations are significant in that they allow for the preparation and revisiting of areas needing further work as deeper fascial layers become available. We are still marveling at the power of Ida's observation of the body allowing the recipe to emerge. We maintain an awareness of where we are in relationship to the recipe, yet, the body is more sacred than the recipe. (See Addendum for updated recipe for Soma as compared to Rolf® Classic Protocol.)

Structural Integration (SI) evokes change.

Soma's approach to the change process is in the acknowledgement that people coming for SI are looking for change; in how they stand, move and experience their embodiment. Therefore, as practitioners, it is useful to us to explore what motivates people to move outside the confines of the familiar and to risk the unknown.

Pain, of course, is the great motivator. Nothing brings people to our door more than the desperation brought about by a painful, unrelenting chronic injury. Nothing is more rewarding than to "solve" an ongoing issue by providing the appropriate structural support and balance. If, however, our only goal as Structural Integrators is pain reduction, we are selling out the potential of the work.

The second motivation for change is an aspect of our developmental process which expresses itself in the innate human desire to seek, explore, experience. Here change is an aspect of growth. People seeking change for this reason have outgrown their way of being and are in search of what is next in their lives. Healthy aging, as per longevity studies, is associated with the ability to accept and embrace change (which is often in the form of loss). Inherent in the change process is the ability to let go.

Both motivations are valuable and yet not mutually exclusive. People seek SI to relieve their bad back and inadvertently discover new aspects of themselves. And, vice versa, people feeling well but stagnated in their lives often uncover amnesic areas that hold unconscious historical material that had been taking much energy to maintain. Having a way to communicate with clients about the

changes they are experiencing and what those changes mean to them personally is an important aspect of integration.

In Soma, the goal of the change process is for the client to experience, with the integration, an enhanced sense of self reliance. As the old preferred pathways in the body that were built by habit are freed, the possibility for change increases, and a renewed trust of self is realized. This allows the client greater creativity. Creativity must have an outlet. Rumination can tend to self absorption and isolation, which is contrary to developing self reliance. What separates some individuals from others is their ability to bring forth, their ability to put their thoughts into creative action. Producing is meaning-making in experience. Self reliance lays the groundwork for individual choice. The goal of self reliance is to open the avenue back to each client's creative source.

Soma facilitates the change process in several ways:

- The Three Brain Model is a tool used to describe changes in perception. For example, we realize the Left Hemisphere is the more dominant, perceptive state in our culture. It's the goal oriented, motor activity, language centered, "trying harder" brain or perceptive state. The Core brain is a perceptive state that senses the body moving around the center of gravity, the energy, and feeling state. The Right Hemisphere is the source of creativity, the place of reverie, and a more integrating brain. By delineating these specific, yet distinctively different areas, we have a model to discuss with clients changes in their perception, and most optimally, to integrate their experience.
- The Holographic Body Reading is a model used to assist in the body reading process, a global pattern in the body with compensatory patterns within that ground. Analyzing structure can become a very left-brain, intellectual exercise that can often block the practitioner's ability to perceive and produce results. The Holographic Body Reading encourages the intuitive and the analytical, facilitating a combined approach to seeing the body.
- The Somography is the identification of specific somatio-emotional regions of the body.

The primary structural goal of Soma is to rebalance and integrate the neuromyofascial system so that the body is supported from the deep core structures in the field of gravity. The original design of our upright body is such that certain muscles are most efficient for support, and others for movement. Structural dis-ease, meaning imbalances and disorganization comes about as muscles designed for movement (extrinsic) become employed for support of the body rather than the core (intrinsic). As the client proceeds through the Soma sessions and the core structures achieve greater clarity and efficiency in the task

of support, the extrinsics are available for more free, flowing movement and grace.

Movement Re-education

In Soma we follow a developmental approach for movement re-education. This follows how we learn to move as infants, through a stage-specific sequence of movement patterns that begins in utero and continues through the first year of life. Each pattern emerges as a reflex of flailing limbs and uncontrolled contortions. As the infant experiences these sensations, the reflex movement builds internal connections throughout the body, brain, and nervous system that eventually become organized movement and cognition. The question then becomes; how do we support the necessary change in movement patterns that are deeply woven into the fabric of our individual and collective history and self-perception? IPR's approach to movement re-education involved putting the joint in the proper position and asking the client to move. Soma's developmental approach to movement re-education uses sensation, feeling, imagery, and metaphor to re-establish the sense of global internal body connection. Focusing the client's intention to move, allows their body to naturally discover a more efficient pathway through which to move as a result of the releases in the session. This is fundamentally different than showing the client the "correct" way to move and having them attempt to copy that movement.

The Soma work is client centered.

This encourages the client to put what is happening in the process of changing habitual patterns into personal meaning. The steps we use to encourage this process are:

- Soma Client Notebook is a tool to encourage the broader involvement of the client from session to session. Provided in the notebook is an explanation of the goals of each session, specific movement explorations, and Autogenic Training, a body oriented meditation. Also included, is a Personal Log that promotes journaling and tracks the client's responses to each session. As changes occur in a person's relationship with gravity, creating ease and fluidity, there needs to be an opportunity to explore what those changes mean in the context of their life as a whole. The notebook is one of the avenues by which we address the relationship between movement and meaning.
- Providing equal footing for partnership, the client is instructed to say "stop" for any reason, to pause the session. This creates and respects a strong sense of personal boundaries.
- Photographs are taken before and after Session One, and after Session Ten.
- The client draws a spontaneous drawing (with specific instruction) before Session One and after Session Ten. The drawing is a symbolic and

often literal assessment of the person's internal self image. The Before and After drawings are used as part of the completion process. We accept what the client says about her drawing, and we may form questions that have relevance to the client with the drawing as the focus point. For example, many clients who have body issues can relate more readily to changes in the drawing, than to their photographs. This is another confirmation to the client of the internal experience of change.

Soma doesn't see the physiological as separate from the psychological. We advocate the simple, yet complex process of developing awareness of feeling, then having the personal choice letting go, and/or putting life into a new framework of productive action. Often the most productive action is to learn to regulate one's own physical and emotional arousal levels in order to release only small amounts of these emotions at a time, which renews a sense of body-mind balance. Integration is not complete until the client realizes the meaning of her body's new relationship to gravity. This meaning recognizes new levels of both physical grace and emotional agility.

The "one other piece"

Lastly, all the fundamentals, and the knowledge we need to be really good Structural Integrators are the foundation on which we develop our personal intuitive touch. And then there is that "one other piece". Bill Williams recounts a story about an interaction he had with Ida that touches on that "one other piece":

"It was a cold early December, 1973 and I was visiting my friend Michael Lowman who had written a book in which he described the 'rolfing' sessions I had done with him and what a change it made in his life. There was a cold weather front coming through San Francisco and Michael and I were bundled up in overcoats having just met his cousin at the bus station. He too was wrapped in a long black overcoat. All three of us were making our way down Market Street when who should we run into but Ida Rolf herself. Since having the body work one of Michael's great wishes was to personally meet Ida.

So we stopped Ida and I told Michael, 'someone is really looking out for you', as I was introducing him and his cousin to Ida. Surprising, Ida seemed a bit occupied and kept sort of starring at Michael's cousin. Then totally out of context she said, "How is your appendix healing?" Now realize that Michael's cousin had just arrived via the bus and neither Michael nor I had any idea he had recently had surgery. We had only been together perhaps 10 minutes or so, it just hadn't come up. Michael's cousin said, "it is doing well, thank you", his eyebrows about to reach his hairline and he said, "How did you know that?" And dear Ida said, "The man upstairs tells me..."

At that point I excused myself from Michael and his cousin and told Ida that I had an urgent issue that I must discuss with her now. We were walking past a

sandwich and salad bar restaurant and I suggested we get a table in the back where we could talk. She sat down and I said (this was probably the most forceful I had ever spoken to Ida...you just didn't do that) 'you are not getting up from this table until you tell me what just happened.' She said, "What in the world are you talking about?" "How did you know he had had an appendectomy recently?" And this was her answer..."Well, when I feel a good rapport with someone I oftentimes sorta sense how they are doing in their body and I felt a stretching and tightening around his lower right abdomen so the best guess was a recent appendectomy. What's so strange about that?"

It was so strange I had no idea what she was describing. Thankfully after so many years of doing body work, I, on occasion, have had the same type of feelings. I, however, rarely had the courage to share these feelings with strangers. I do know that when there is rapport, different channels open up for deep verbal and non-verbal communications."

As SI educators, that level of knowing is difficult to teach, but it is always our goal.

Addendum: How Soma Aligns with the Classic Recipe

From Thomas Myers, IASI Yearbook 2004

Session number	How Soma Differs
Session #1	Add: Intro to psoas Work greater trochanter, subscapularis
Session #2	Add: Work paravertebrals on table or bench Work psoas
Session #3	Add: work psoas no movement Entire lateral line to foot
Session #4	Review QL, greater trochanter, lateral leg & psoas Prep medial aspect of leg Add: hamstrings Add: Post. Knee & "breath in the knees"
Session #5	Work one side quads, femoral triangle, psoas then other side include insertion
Session #6	Add: peroneals and anterior crural compartment before working back line
Session #7	Review clavical, upper ribs, shoulder and psoas
Session #8	Anterior, posterior, lateral, medial of each leg. Seated psoas
Session #9	Add: psoas No arm work
Arm Session	Arm and shoulder session Include movement education
Session #10	Final balance session-AK all joints
Special Additions	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪Autogenic training▪Movement education each session▪Before/after drawing & photo interaction▪Arthrokinetics (AK)▪Approach to body - strokes spiral into body-- angle of approach less than 90°.▪Bring origin & insertion together.▪Position client on sideline for primary work - "easy position"