

ARTICLE FROM "THE INDIGO CHILDREN"

LIE CARROLL
JAN TOBETZ

Health Issues

Neuromuscular Integration

How about a system that deals with the brain just as neuro-feedback did, but also integrates the body structure into a system of healing? Karen Bolesky, M.A., C.M.H.C., L.M.P., is a certified medical health counselor. She has been trained in psychotherapy, and is a practitioner and teacher for the Soma Institute of Neuromuscular Integration.⁸⁵ She is also its co-director.

This system, like the others, is currently being used with ADD and ADHD children successfully. Soma Neuromuscular Integration is a type of bodymind therapy that changes people physically and psychologically. This change is a result of structurally balancing the body while simultaneously working with the nervous system. The technique consists of ten basic sessions that use deep tissue manipulation, movement training, dialogue between client and practitioner, journaling, and other learning tools to progressively realign the entire body and recondition the nervous system.

Sounds like a tall order! The Soma system is similar to other systems available, but it is one of the few we have seen that combines myofascial work with neurological therapy. For general healing, both Jan and I have experienced the work of our friend Dr. Sid Wolf⁸⁶ (who works with a contributor in this book, Dr. Melanie Melvin). He focuses purely on myofascial release, and gets very positive and immediate results! That's one of the reasons we decided to look into Soma for you—it seemed to extend Dr. Wolf's very successful work.

The Soma system was developed by Bill Williams, Ph.D. His team calls the system a "three-brain model," which is simply a metaphor that describes how it works. According to Karen Bolesky, "The Soma goal in working with a client using the three-brain model is to create an environment in which the client begins to experience and have volition over which 'brain' is more effec-

tive in the present moment or present task." She explains that it may be more effective to access another "brain" besides the more dominant left hemisphere. Soma, in theory as well as in practical application, is designed to reintegrate the three brains so that one can function more optimally, and experience greater wellness, wholeness, and aliveness, according to Karen.

Regarding ADD and ADHD in particular, she reports:

All clients diagnosed with ADD or ADHD . . . show left hemisphere dominance to such a degree that it becomes aberrated into overdominance. This keeps the client in the survival mode of the left hemisphere. In survival mode people are fearful of letting go of the left hemisphere; therefore they feel great overwhelm of the concentration span, which is limited to sixteen bits per second. Stated in Soma terms: their sixteen bits are full! Soma works with each client to find ways to access all three "brains," thus allowing more personal ease and expansion. I consider ADD and ADHD more of a state of "fixation in the left hemisphere dominance" than a condition. The Soma bodywork is very effective in expanding the internal experience of the person to a more integrated state. Integration allows greater energy exchange between body and mind, which releases the state of overwhelm.



Soma Work: A Case Study *by Karen Bolesky*

A very bright eight-year-old boy, referred by his primary physician, had a full psychological profile and was diagnosed as having ADD. The child had been seen by school counselors and private counselors. His family brought him to me, stressed by his behavior at home and school. They were at wit's end and felt Soma was "a last resort." He would not follow directions, work quietly, demonstrate good manners, complete his homework, maintain neatness, or accept responsibility for his behavior. Most difficult was his aggressive behavior at school and constant arguing with siblings at home.

He played lots of Nintendo™ and computer games, which are very results-oriented, left-hemisphere actions. He hated to be wrong and liked to be alone when nervous. In school, most of his aggression was over the use of the computer. He told me that when he felt stressed, he wanted to play on the computer. He had good mental awareness of his body but felt uncomfortable in it most of the time. He stated that his "brain is nervous, stomach mixed up, hands angry, knees nervous, eyes nervous, and spine mixed up." This informed me that he had a keen inner awareness of his body, and it wasn't difficult to see why he didn't want to continually be conscious of those feelings.

I did four weekly sessions on him with progressive results. The first session was difficult to perform or achieve results from, due to his short attention span. However, he immediately and positively responded to the Soma work. It was difficult to bring his awareness into his body. He wanted to giggle, resist, and distract himself in any way from his "feeling self." I let him guide me. Due to his short attention span, I had to work efficiently. I asked him to

stop me if the work was too invasive. This demanded that he pay attention and allow himself a sense of control. After just one session, he proudly announced that he'd had "no fights that week."

After the fourth session, he informed me that he didn't want to do any more bodywork. He said "I've gotten so much better since I've started that I don't need any more. I'll get better by myself now." I believed him. He has never demonstrated aggressive behavior since session one. He is doing well in school and at home and has even become an avid soccer player.

My assessment is that when he surrendered control of the left hemisphere and felt his corebrain (the part of the three-brain model that governs where we experience bodily sensation and energy), he was reminded that this body was a safe place. In the corebrain, he felt his body's energy, which reduced his feeling of being overwhelmed. He then began the process of integration, allowing him a greater expanse of energy with less effort. Health returned when he reclaimed his core. It has been 19 months since his sessions ended.

In summary: If my theory is correct and ADD and ADHD result from a fixed dominance in the left hemisphere, then greater integration will allow a more expanded attention span with greater ease. Most children diagnosed with ADD or ADHD who have gone through the Soma sessions have improved somewhat, usually showing noticeable behavior changes. They are able to cope more effortlessly and show greater ease in focusing their attention.

