

What is Rolfing®/Structural Integration

By Patricia Stepan

“This is the gospel of Rolfing: When the body gets working appropriately, the force of gravity can flow through. Then, spontaneously, the body heals itself.” Dr. IP Rolf

What is Rolfing®?

Rolfing is a bodywork modality that calls forth true and lasting change through the human structure. Dr. Ida Rolf, a genius in the evolution of bodywork, pioneered this profound process, which she called Structural Integration. The goal of Rolfing/Structural Integration is to support the emergence of a more resilient, higher energy living system by establishing the body's balance in gravity.

Rolfing is a systematic form of hands-on manipulation and movement education based on the 'plastic', changeable nature of the human body and centered around the impact of the gravitational field on human structure.

About the Rolfing® Process

The goal of Rolfing is to invite length, tone and balance to the body around a vertical axis that is then easily suspended in gravity's field.

Rolfing/Structural Integration works toward this goal through a series of ten or more bodywork sessions, working and pacing in collaboration with the client. Much like sculpting, the Rolfer's hands utilize the natural malleability of the fascia, releasing restrictive patterns of tension and strains, toward more effective alignment and balance.

The Rolfer and client together work toward creating lift, length and balance through the body's vertical center, balance between front/back and left/right, working toward supporting a pelvis that is horizontal, a stable trunk whose weight is supported directly over the pelvis, supporting the head above, and easing the curves of the spine, and legs and feet that properly support the pelvis.

The Rolf Series is guided by specific principles, carefully developed throughout the 'Rolf Series' to systematically balance and integrate the body. When one has completed the 'Ten Series', one has "been Rolfed".

The Rolfing process may extend beyond the initial series. For most, Rolfing becomes a wellness resource for life in the form of "Post-10" sessions and an Advanced Series.

The Benefits of Rolfing®

“You can't get beyond the body unless you free the body itself”

Dr. IP Rolf

The goal of Rolfing is to allow the body to move naturally into good posture by eliminating the causes of skeletal misalignments and restoring the body's connective tissue to a healthy state. The results are progressive. Some of the results can be:

Enhanced performance because of:

- relief from posture-related pain
- improved mechanical efficiency
- improved coordination
- greater flexibility (range of motion)
- improved body awareness

Increased physiological efficiency because of:

- improved breathing
- improved circulation
- improved digestion
- improved elimination
- improved sleep patterns

Improved alignment and appearance through prevention of:

- pain and stiffness associated with aging
- stooping and compression associated with aging
- skin, muscles, and organs sagging from poor posture

Improved psychological efficiency:

- you feel good
- you learn to manage or avoid stress
- you may experience growth through self-insight

About Fascia

“Rolfing is like making your bed. . .thinking you’ll get by without pulling the bed apart, you pull one cover over the next. When you get it all pulled together, you find ridges running across the top of the bed. Now you’ve got to pull the top covers back and go to the deeper layer where the wrinkles are and organize it; then you make the bed. It’s the same with the body . . .you’ve got to organize those deeper layers.” Dr. IP Rolf

The key word in Rolfing is fascia, the connective tissue that defines the contour and shape of the body. In the body’s attempt to protect against the stress of distorted postural patterns and injuries, the elastic nature of fascia shortens and thickens, limiting mobility and flexibility of movement. As the body rotates and shortens, the result is a feeling of misalignment or general discomfort. The misaligned body is at the mercy of gravity’s downward pull, increasing the effects and risks of aging, injury, stress and trauma.

About Gravity

“Gravity is not just a nice idea. It is the Law”

Gravity is a dynamic, constant teacher. It is the unremitting determinant of uprightness or the lack of it, constantly shaping us, yet we remain largely unaware of its presence, until we have the rug pulled out from under us!

Dr. Rolf illuminated this dynamic relationship between gravity and the human structure. In gravity, we all are subject to the laws of mechanics: masses must be balanced in order to be stable.

In the human structure, bones determine our position in space, but bones are held by soft tissue. When the soft tissue is realigned and balanced, bones reorient and their positions stabilize; a sense of lightness is experienced throughout the body. The structure has less resistance. Gravity can then “flow through” the body, supporting lift rather than creating drag.

***“Rolfers make a life study of relating bodies and their fields to the earth and its gravity field, and we so organize the body that the gravity field can reinforce the body’s energy field. This is our primary concept”
Dr. IP Rolf***