

Introduction to Biodynamic Craniosacral Therapy

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Life and motion

Life expresses itself as motion. At a deep level of our physiological functioning all healthy, living tissues subtly "breathe" with the motion of life – a phenomenon that produces rhythmic impulses which can be palpated by sensitive hands. The presence of these subtle rhythms in the body was discovered by osteopath Dr William Sutherland over 100 years ago, after he had a remarkable insight while examining the specialized articulations of cranial bones. Contrary to popular belief Dr Sutherland realized that cranial sutures were, in fact, designed to express small degrees of motion. He undertook many years of research during which he demonstrated the existence of this motion and eventually concluded it is essentially produced by the body's inherent life force, which he referred to as the "Breath of Life." Furthermore, Dr Sutherland discovered that the motion of cranial bones he first discovered is closely connected to subtle movements that involve a network of interrelated tissues and fluids at the core of the body; including cerebrospinal fluid (the 'sap in the tree'), the central nervous system, the membranes that surround the central nervous system and the sacrum.

The "Breath of Life"

The Breath of Life produces a series of subtle rhythms that may be palpated in the body and which make up an integrated physiological system. At least three subtle rhythms have been identified in this "primary respiratory system", each having a different rate and producing rhythms within rhythms. These three "tides" are referred to as:

- * the cranial rhythmic impulse; a more superficial rhythm expressed at an average rate of 8–12 cycles per minute,
- * the mid-tide; a tidal rhythm that carries ordering forces into the body expressed at a slower rate of approximately 2.5 cycles per minute and

* the long tide; a deep and slow rhythmic impulse expressed about once every 100 seconds. The long tide is considered to be the first stirring of life and motion as the Breath of Life emerges from a deeper ground of stillness at the center of our being.

Essential ordering principle

In the biodynamic approach of craniosacral work the subtle rhythms produced by the Breath of Life are regarded as expressions of health that carry an essential ordering principle for both body and mind. Dr Sutherland realized the important role played by the fluids in the body (particularly cerebrospinal fluid) in helping to disseminate these ordering forces throughout the body.

The essential ordering principle carried in the rhythms of the Breath of Life acts as a blueprint for health which is present from the time of our early embryological development and is the fundamental factor that maintains balance in our form and function. Thus, the ability of cells and tissues to express their primary respiratory motion is a critical factor in determining our state of health – when these rhythms are expressed in fullness and balance, health and well-being naturally follow.

Inertial patterning

During the course of our lives our bodies become patterned, shaped and conditioned according to how we're able to deal with any stresses or traumas. If stresses or traumas are overwhelming, they become locked in the body as sites of inertia – until such a time as we are able to access resources that allow them to be processed and released. These sites of inertia effect the natural rhythmical movements of the Breath of Life and so hinder the ability of our essential blueprint for health to manifest at a cellular level.

Common causes of inertia are physical injuries, emotional and psychological stresses, birth trauma and toxicity. Due to an accumulation of these stresses, tissues can become imprinted with the memory of unresolved experiences and so act like video tape which may keep replaying whenever stimulated.

A gentle facilitation

The emphasis in Biodynamic Craniosacral Therapy is to help resolve the trapped forces that underlie and govern patterns of disease and fragmentation in both body and mind. This involves the practitioner "listening through the hands" to the body's subtle rhythms and any patterns of inertia or congestion. Through the development of subtle palpatory skills the practitioner can read the story of the body, identify places where issues are held and then follow the natural priorities for healing as directed by the patient's own physiology.

The intention of treatment is to facilitate the expression of the Breath of Life and so enhance the body's own self-healing and self-regulating capabilities. This is done in a non-invasive way as the practitioner subtly and gently encourages the conditions that allow for the reemergence of primary respiratory motion. Furthermore, the practitioner's deep and clear quality of presence can become a reflective mirror for the patient and an invaluable cue for their potential for change.

A holistic approach

Biodynamic Craniosacral Therapy takes a whole-person approach to healing and the inter-connections of mind, body and spirit are deeply acknowledged. It is an effective form of treatment for a wide range of illnesses helping to create the optimal conditions for health, encouraging vitality and facilitating a sense of well-being. It is suitable for people of all ages including babies, children and the elderly, and can be effective in acute or chronic cases.

"Worms will not eat living wood where the vital sap is flowing; rust will not hinder the opening of a gate when the hinges are used each day. Movement gives health and life. Stagnation brings disease and death."

- proverb in traditional Chinese Medicine