

It is the goal of structural rebalancing to help return a person to a more comfortable, fluid, balanced, painfree, active lifestyle. By gently reshaping and aligning tight, constricted muscles and connective tissue/fascia (see below), and allowing them to regain their more normal, flexible form and function, the constricted and rigid patterns of thinking and feeling in us also have a tendency to relax and open up. Greater ease, relaxation and reduced pain levels can unfold on all levels.

### **How do we get out of alignment?**

It is felt that each time we experience an injury, undergo a trauma (physical, mental, emotional), experience an inflammatory process, have surgery or other necessary but traumatizing procedures, suffer from poor posture, that our muscular/connective tissue/fascial structural system becomes compromised and tightens down in response.

This is a natural, protective mechanism to prevent further injury to those areas.

Over time, if left untreated, these layers of restriction gradually pull the body three dimensionally out of alignment with gravity (see diagram). We slowly tighten, layer upon layer, as we lose our flexibility, fluid motion, balance, and the natural ability of the structure to self-correct and adapt.

### **What is fascia?**

Fascia permeates and supports every structure in our bodies. If we were to magically remove every physical structure in the body except the fascia you would still see the body shape comprised of the three dimensional, interconnected web-like 'stocking' of the fascial system.

Fascia wraps around every organ, infuses every cell, helps layers of tissue glide over one another, every nerve is wrapped in fascia. Cartilage, ligaments, tendons and bones are comprised of fascia.

In its normal healthy state, fascia has a generally fluid, flexible quality, with an ability to glide and allow movement, as well as providing support. When compressed, injured, cut into (as in surgery), or contracted due to poor posture, overuse or inflammation, fascia tightens and becomes dense and rigid, compressing nerves, restricting lymph flow and blood vessels. It is important to note that prolonged and repeated stress (again, whether physical, mental, emotion: the body reacts to it all the same) causes the fascia to tighten and become rigid.

Fascial restrictions affect our flexibility and stability, and are a determining factor in our ability to withstand stress and perform daily activities. These restrictions do not show up on any standard medical tests, such as x-rays or CAT scans.



*Fascial restrictions create malalignment of the structure.*

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\*Illustration used with kind permission of John F. Barnes, P.T.

## **How do we regain structural balance?**

A Myofascial Release Therapist is trained to observe postural and functional imbalances with clients standing (see photo), as well as to sensitively feel for restrictions in the fascial system. **The areas of pain and or symptoms are noted, but often those areas are actually distant from where the significant restrictions are occurring.** A trained craniosacral therapist also ‘listens’ with her hands to notice the overall rate, strength, and symmetry of the subtle cranial rhythms, thus adding additional information on the relative vitality of the client’s innate healing system.

**Using sustained, respectful therapeutic pressure in these restricted areas,** the therapist begins to gently lengthen tight fascia, which responds over time with a softening like taffy stretching as it warms. As the fascia and muscles become more supple with this sustained stretching, the nerves, blood vessels, and lymph formerly trapped in those compressed tissues become freer, and circulation to those areas improves. Pressure on nerves is lessened.

A gentle rocking motion, called ‘rebounding’ may also be used, to help soften rigidly held structures, increase circulation and release the body’s instinctual bracing mechanism in those injured areas.

Each session addresses the next layers of restriction, so that over time and consistent softening the body can come back into a greater sense of fluid balance, ease and reducing pain levels.

**It’s important to note that these modalities are all intended to be relatively comfortable to the client, allowing their nervous systems to begin to settle into a more relaxed state.** This also helps reduce overall tension in the body.

**For more information, please read articles on Myofascial Release in the Resources section**