

Myofascial Release for the Whole Person

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Special to PT Today

Myofascial release is considered to be the highest order of therapeutic artistry. In addition to it being effective in the resolution of pain and headaches and the restoration of movement, it is also a very effective tool which allows the individual to greatly enhance his or her personal growth and awareness potential.

THE BODY REMEMBERS

To ask how the mind communicates to the body or how the body communicates with the mind assumes that the two are separate entities. My experience has shown me that they are a single unit. The body is not just a reflection of the personality; it is the personality.

Therefore, mind/body awareness are two sides of the same coin, different aspects of the same spectrum, immutably joined, inseparable, connected, influencing and communicating constantly. Myofascial release techniques and myofascial unwinding allow for the complete communication necessary for healing and true growth. I believe that the body remembers everything that ever happened to it.

The link between mind/body awareness and healing is the concept of state-dependent memory, learning and behavior (also called *deja vu*). For example, we all have experienced this when a certain smell, or the sound of a particular piece of music creates a flashback phenomenon, producing a visual, sensorimotor replay of a past event or important episode in our lives with a vividness as if it were happening at that moment. I would like to expand this theory to include position-dependent memory, learning and behavior, where the structural position of the body in space is the missing component in the state-dependent theory and treatment.

Studies have shown that during periods of trauma, people make indelible imprints of experience that have high levels of emotional content the body can hold information below the conscious level, as a protective mechanism, so that memories tend to become dissociated or a reversible amnesia. The memories are state- or position-dependent and can therefore be retrieved when the person is in a particular state or position. The information is not available in the normal conscious state, and the body's protective mechanisms keep us away from the positions that our mind-body awareness construes as painful or traumatic.

It has been demonstrated consistently that when a myofascial release technique takes the tissue to a significant position, or when myofascial unwinding allows a body part to assume a significant position threedimensionally in space, the tissue not only changes and improves, but memories, associated emotional states and belief systems also rise to the conscious level. This awareness allows the individual to grasp the previously hidden information that may be creating or maintaining symptoms of behavior which deter improvement. With the information now at the conscious level, the individual is in a position to learn what holding or bracing patterns have been impeding progress. This release of the tissue, emotions and hidden information create an environment for change that is both conscious and effective.

The therapist using the myofascial unwinding process acts as a facilitator, following the body's inherent motions. When a significant position is attained, the craniosacral rhythm will shut down into a still point. During this still point a reversible amnesia surfaces, replaying all the physiologic responses, memories and emotional states that occurred during a past traumatic event. This dissociation or reversible amnesia is a "doubleconscious state" *. In other words, what is learned or remembered at the time of trauma is dependent on the psychophysiologic state of the individual at the time of the experience. This dissociation or block between the conscious and subconscious minds is the source of many poor or temporary therapy results. Myofascial release and myofascial unwinding bring the tissue or body part into a position to allow the individual to be fully aware of this divided consciousness. Reactivating the conditions and the resultant physiologic responses during which they were acquired by this flashback phenomenon allows for conscious awareness and then provides the choice to change.

Myofascial release and myofascial unwinding techniques, when coupled with appropriate modalities, mobilization and muscle energy techniques, and exercise and flexibility programs allow us to expand our abilities in helping others.

References:

1. Rossi El. From mins to molecule: a state-dependent memory, learning and behavior theory of mind-body healing. *Advances* 1987;4(2):46-60. @. John F. Barnes Myofascial Release the Search for Excellence, MFR Seminars, Paoli, PA 1990

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