The ROLF Method of Structural Integration

What is the Rolf Method of Structural Integration (SI)?

The Rolf Method of Structural Integration is a process of body re-education through the use of movement and touch. SI systematically releases patterns of stress and impaired function by sequential release of the connective tissue (fascia). The primary focus of Structural Integration is facilitating the relationship between gravity and the human body such that gravity is an UPLIFTING force and not a destructive one.

Gravity and Structural Integration.

Gravity is the single most prevalent force in our lives: it either supports us or pulls us down. Poor posture develops as a result of gravity interacting with injuries, trauma, stress, & habitual patterns in our work and play. Proper posture improves sports performance, alleviates chronic pain, reduces structural stressors, and supports long term health.

What does

Structural Integration is an effective method of connective tissue manipulation utilizing movement cues to re-educate the neuromuscular patterns in the body. SI provides relief from movement dysfunctions and chronic pain due to injuries, habitual work and exercise postures, traumas and the accumulated stress of daily living. Structural Integration systematically balances the structure and function of the body both internally and also in relation to the world you live in.

Integration of the structure is achieved through lengthening and loosening of the entire myofascial (muscle and connective tissue) network. Fascia, a connective tissue, is the packing material of the body. It envelopes the muscles, bones and joints and holds us together supporting the body structure and giving us our shape. Fascia organizes and separates: it provides protection and autonomy for the individual muscles and viscera. It joins and bonds these separate entities and establishes spatial relationships. Since it also gives the body its distinctive contours and posture and has been called the organ of
Chemically it is the collagen in the fascia that enables it to change. Collagen is a colloid that is capable of changing from relatively fluid to relatively solid, and vice versa in response to the forces acting upon it. With chronic tension collagen tends to shorten and harden. S.I. rehydrates and restores elasticity to the fascia.

As your body becomes better aligned through a ten-series of SI you will experience greater flexibility and ease of movement, an easier posture that is better aligned in gravity, decreased pain, increased energy, and a profound awareness of being in your body.

**An outline of the Recipe**

The recipe is a ten-session sequence of structural, fascial, and educational goals that establishes order in human structures. GSI The traditional method of teaching by the Guild for Structural Integration is to ensure that the Recipe does not lose its potency of intention, its expression as art, nor its comprehension as process.

**Ten Sessions of Rolfing**

Session 1: The main goal is to restrain the connective tissue and skin to enhance breathing capacity and create the feeling of lift.

Session 2: The goal is to create functional arches in the feet so that the body has a stable base of support and to provide length through the back of the body.

Session 3: The goal is to create length through the sides of the body by establishing a line of separation between the tissues on the front and back of the body.

Session 4: The goal is to create length through the midline of the body from the level of the feet to the pelvis along the inner leg.

Session 5: This is a continuation of the fourth session by continuing to lengthen the midline from the pelvis through the ribcage.

Session 6: The goal is to lengthen up the back of the body from the feet to the midback and allow for a breathing sacrum.

Session 7: Focus is on aligning the head and neck on the body in a horizontal plane. This creates functional and mobile hinges in the neck, head, and jaw. Work is done in the mouth & nose to allow space for the cranial bones. The goal of establishing a breathing cranium is also achieved.
Session 8: This session integrates the lower body (pelvic girdle) with the low back so that movements of the pelvis and legs will be initiated from core structures of the body.

Session 9: This session integrates the upper body (shoulder girdle) with the low back so that movements of the shoulder girdle and arms will be initiated from core structures of the body.

Session 10: Often called the icing the cake session. Time is spent briefly revisiting each area of the body to fine tune tissue alignment and function so that body movement reflects the length achieved in the past nine sessions.

Picture a blade of grass how delicately it responds to the slightest breeze and how it bends low before the hurricane, surviving when the mightiest trees have fallen. A structure that is rigid and poorly balanced lacks resilience. A structure that is flexible and in dynamic relationship with its surroundings only bends with stress and then springs back.

Benefits of Structural Integration:

SI benefits anybody and is utilized by those with diverse backgrounds and interests. Many people seek SI as relief from chronic tension and pain or as an alternative to use of medication or surgery. Others feel the effects of their increasingly poor posture and want to improve their appearance and energy level. Athletes and musicians of all levels utilize SI to improve their flexibility, strength, and performance. Reported results following SI sessions include: heightened sense of body awareness, increased energy, insight of how certain life stressors affect their body posture and movement, relief from chronic tension and pain, and greater flexibility and ease of movement.

Digital imaging taken before and after the SI ten-series show that changes achieved are still present years after the series is complete. Additional work may be useful as our bodies continue to change after the initial SI session due to injuries, accidents, and stressful times.

Since no two people experience body work the same, SI is a personal process.
Potential benefits include:

- Alleviation of pain symptoms
- Increase in height
- Increased flexibility & strength
- Appearance of being slimmer & longer
- Increased breathing ability
- Feeling of fluidity, lightness, & balance
- Increased energy level
- Greater self-confidence & body awareness
- Improved postural alignment
- Improved athletic/theatrical performance

How does Structural Integration feel?

Does it hurt?!! This is probably the number one question I get asked. Interestingly, most people who claim that SI is painful have never experienced the work. Much of this reputation for pain came from the early days when SI first gained public recognition. Since that time the process has evolved. Most individual find that the actual experience varies in sensation and feeling depending on the area being worked. This is often dependent upon past or present injuries, holding patterns of chronic stress, as well as overall health status. Feelings can range from a pleasurable release to momentary discomfort.

Other ways SI can enhance your life experience

SI enhances...

Workout programs: Proper structural alignment is essential for a healthy, effective exercise program. Physical exercise should improve structure rather than damage it. Physical therapy: SI is especially beneficial after wearing a cast or while recovering from surgery. Adhesions (unhealthy binding of tissues) are released; flexibility and balance are regained.
Chiropractic treatments: SI increases the effectiveness of chiropractic adjustments by allowing support of the spine, without the connective tissue tension that pulls the bony structures out of place.

Massage treatments: Better alignment and flexibility as well as the decrease of tension gained in SI enhances the relaxation effects of massage and other body work.

Psychotherapy: SI promotes emotional understanding of one’s physical holding patterns. Direct correlations exist between tension in the body and feeling “down,” “held back,” “uptight,” or “unsupported.” Changing old, unconscious, physical habits facilitates movement toward a more congruent.

About Dr. Ida P. Rolf

Dr. Rolf was a biochemist who studied connective tissue not only as an organ of support, but also as a medium of energy. Her premise was that if gravity could flow effectively through the body, the body could heal itself. Through her study of chemistry, physics, and yoga, she developed a theory stating that it was possible to change the structure of the body so that it would improve the body’s function.

Her continual work with physically challenged individuals allowed her to create a method of enhancing length in the body whereby the body could find balance in gravity.

The legacy of her work continues as practitioners worldwide are devoted to her work in the integration of human structure.

This is the gospel of SI: When the body gets working appropriately, the force of gravity can flow through. Then, spontaneously, the body heals itself.”

Ida P. Rolf (1896-1979)