Rehabilitation of Scoliosis Conditions

This is the second installment of our article on Scoliosis inspired in response to a mother seeking help for her 7 year old daughter who was recently diagnosed with mild scoliosis. She wished to check on the safety, validity, and efficacy of using large doses of undiluted essential oils on the spine to correct scoliosis due to it being caused by a "virus harboring in the spine" (a.k.a. Rain Drop Technique, or Therapy, RDT). Part 1 attempted to cover what scoliosis is based on current medical community definitions regarding currently known causes, and possible cures; and it addressed why a massive dose of essential oils may not be the best treatment. We introduced Structural Energetic Therapy® (SET), founded by Don McCann, which defines and treats scoliosis based on a structural core distortion of the pelvis and spine that forms as the fetus develops. (See Note 1). Four case studies previously published by Don McCann were presented as well including one dealing with a child.

In this installment Sylla shares the benefits of having had the therapy herself, and will show how adding Structural Energetic Therapy® to her aromatherapy massage practice has refined her skills so she can address acute and chronic pain. In addition Don will also describe how the Structural Energetic Therapy® techniques will effectively resolve scoliosis problems for each of the cases that were described in the first installment. Let us review our scoliosis cases from the last issue.

Shirley, a 35-year-old mother of three children, was referred to me for low back pain that developed after the delivery of her third child. She reported that she had been doing a lot of lifting of all three of her children ages 5 years, 3 years, and 6 months, and that her back was getting worse. In addition, she had complications during the last month of her pregnancy, so the doctor had insisted that she stay in bed and off her feet as much as possible. She brought her chiropractic x-rays that showed a narrowing of the disc space in the lumbar region with some arthritic spurring already developing, a scoliotic curvature of her entire spine and significant rotation of her iliums, one anterior, one posterior resulting in a tipped sacrum. It was obvious that Shirley could not stop lifting her children, but she needed relief from her back pain as soon as possible.

Jason, a 49-year-old accountant, had been rear-ended in an auto accident two years ago while sitting at a stop light. He had been receiving chiropractic care ever since the accident until his insurance was depleted. His diagnosis was a flexion/extension injury of the cervical spine with a slight herniation between C3-C4 and a bulging disc between C7-T1. In addition, his x-rays showed a significant degree of scoliosis of his entire spine with the rotation of the iliums and tippage of the sacrum. The chiropractic notes indicated treatment of the flexion/extension injuries of the neck only, and no mention or diagnosis of the scoliosis in the thoracic and lumbar spine. The discs that were injured were at the greatest degree of the scoliotic curvature. Jason came to me because a friend of his had insisted that Don could help him, and since his PIP had run out insurance no longer covered chiropractic care. The sad part is that, even though he had two years of treatment, he only had minimal improvement and was now also experiencing severe headaches. He needed some effective therapy.
Carol, aged 13, was brought to me by her mother after she had been picked out of a school scoliosis screening and was referred to a neurosurgeon for possible surgical intervention. The parents were scared when they saw that Harrington rods were part of the surgical intervention suggested for their daughter’s scoliosis. The x-rays and MRI’s that confirmed the scoliosis showed a more than 40 degree scoliotic curvature. The neurosurgeon had told them that since she was in a growth spurt this would probably progress to somewhere around 50-60 degrees by the end of her normal growth and would leave her incapable of bearing children. Carol was reasonably athletic and really wanted to join the high school girls’ volleyball team as she was already 5’10” and played very well. She only occasionally complained of back pain or any discomfort. However, she shared her parent’s concern about the prognosis of dire pain, disc degeneration and inability to carry a child due to the scoliosis.

Anita, a 63-year-old massage therapist who had been practicing for 20 years, came for sessions because of a sizeable dowagers hump and inability to stand up straight. After a bone density test she was told by her doctor that she had osteoporosis and was collapsing into a scoliotic curvature of her spine. Other than reinforcing her bone mass with medication and exercises, there was little else she could do. In addition, they informed her that the scoliotic collapse was irreversible, and that chiropractic manipulations might cause fractures of her weakening spine. They also told her that she would have to quit doing massage because the scoliotic collapse and fractures of the spine would worsen almost immediately. Having been a massage therapist for 20 years, Anita had heard of the soft tissue work that Don does and wanted to know if the scoliotic curvature of her spine could be rehabilitated so she could continue doing the massage she loved.

Now let’s look at the way that Structural Energetic Therapy® techniques effectively address the rehabilitation of each of these cases.

Shirley had lost a great deal of the tonus in her intrinsic muscles that had previously counter balanced her scoliosis after having a month’s bed rest. In addition, the spreading of her pelvis during the birth process had further rotated the iliums and weakened the ilium/sacrum relationship causing her left ilium to move even further into anterior rotation and the tippage of the sacrum to increase. The Structural Energetic Therapy® techniques, which included the Cranial/Structural Core Distortion Releases and the pelvic balancing protocol, were applied. These techniques addressed the anterior/posterior rotation of the iliums and the tippage of the sacrum that were exaggerated during pregnancy and birth, along with the musculature of her hips, legs and abdomen. This unwound and released some of the lumbar curvature of the scoliosis resulting in a significant decrease in the scoliotic curvature and low back pain.

Jason was experiencing most of his pain in his neck and shoulders due to his auto accident that had increased his scoliosis putting pressure on his cervical and lumbar discs. Structural evaluation revealed an acute head forward posture, head tipped to the right, right shoulder medially rotated and dropped, left shoulder higher at the superior angle of the scapula, and a shortening of the back of his neck. This time the Structural Energetic Therapy® Cranial/Structural Core Distortion techniques were applied integrated with the soft tissue Head, Neck and Shoulders protocol to address the neck and shoulder pain. The pectoralis muscles and the anterior neck muscles were treated first to move the head and shoulders back out of the head forward collapse. This was followed by treating...
the shoulders and posterior neck. After several sessions the scoliosis in the rest of his spine became the limiting factor and needed to be addressed by balancing his pelvis with the pelvic balancing protocol as in Shirley’s case. Following that same sequence the anterior/posterior rotation of the iliums and tippage of the sacrum were addressed along with the hips, legs and abdomen which took the pressure off the curvatures in the spine and allowed his lumbar discs to heal.

Carol, the 13-year-old, was in excellent shape being an athlete, but was facing a growth spurt that could increase the developing scoliosis. She also had a major anterior/posterior ilium rotation with a substantial tippage in her sacrum, and her head was significantly in front of her shoulders resulting in a shortening of the back of her neck. Since Carol was constantly jumping up and down playing volleyball, balancing the iliums to support a balanced sacrum was the focus of the initial treatments. Without this support the curvature in her spine would have rapidly increased. As in the previous cases, Cranial/Structural Core Distortion techniques and pelvic balancing protocol of Structural Energetic Therapy® were applied to release the anterior/posterior rotation of the iliums and tippage of the sacrum, and to treat the hips, legs and abdomen. After several sessions, the ilium rotation was decreased, her sacrum was leveling out, and the curvature of her lumbar and thoracic spine was rapidly improving. It was now time to treat the neck and shoulders using the Structural Energetic Therapy® head, neck and shoulder protocol to move her head and shoulders back and into balance with the pelvis. For the next four weeks the treatment alternated between the neck and shoulders and the low back. When Carol was re-evaluated, her scoliosis was in the 20 degree range and her parents were extremely pleased. Due to the fact that she was in a growth spurt, and actively jumping and jamming the sacrum, the treatment continued on a monthly basis for the next five years. Her scoliotic curvature remained stable and she was able to have a college career in volleyball.

Anita was aggravating her scoliotic condition by doing massage. Her structural evaluation showed her head was far in front of her shoulders and the back of her neck had become very shortened. She had a very exaggerated dowager’s hump from using her arms and locking her shoulders down while doing massage. This area was also where she experienced the most pain and difficulty while doing massage. Therefore, initial treatments focused on releasing her internally rotated shoulders and anterior neck allowing her head to move back, then releasing the tops of her shoulders and back of the neck allowing her to straighten up and her shoulders to drop using the head, neck and shoulder protocol after the initial application of the Cranial/Structural Core Distortion Releases. This also had a dramatic effect on reducing the size of her dowager’s hump. It was then necessary to build support in her low back by balancing the iliums and reducing the tippage of her sacrum using the same sequences within the pelvic balancing protocol as in the other three cases. Another important detail for Anita was to change the height of her massage table so that her shoulders were not hiked up and her head was not thrust forward when she was doing her massages. Once this was accomplished she was able to maintain correct posture, and continued working even though the osteoporosis was still in a degenerative state and she was losing bone mass. With the scoliotic curvature greatly reduced, the pressure was now distributed evenly across the vertebral surfaces and no longer on the edges of her vertebrae which prevented the compression fractures. She was now able to enjoy giving massages again.

When working with all four of these clients, the most effective method of working with the soft tissue was the three-step approach which is the basis of all the soft tissue protocols of Structural Energetic Therapy®. This involves 1) releasing the fluids and toxins to reduce inflammation and clear the trigger points, 2) applying directed myofascial unwinding strokes to release the myofascial holding patterns within the
fascia that held the distortion of the structure, and 3) releasing individual fibers, scar tissue and adhesions. This approach enabled each of the clients to be treated within their pain thresholds, in spite of the acuteness of the condition, and to have deep structural balancing work that might have been impossible without working slowly into the tissue in this manner.

How can we add aromatherapy to this approach? There are several ways in which aromatherapy can be used in these treatments. Aromatherapy has the ability to help clear toxins and trigger points. The essential oils can also be used on the pain, soreness, and swelling that occurs for the cases previously mentioned. Since these are resolved cases, it is obvious that Structural Energetic Therapy® (SET) stands alone just fine on its own. So, adding aromatherapy is an extra bonus. Having a pleasant smelling office and therapy room can put people at ease and make a good first impression as well as keeping the air clean and fresh. This is most easily accomplished with an ultrasonic diffuser that adds a mist to the air, rather than a heated or air dispersal machine. Essential oils diffused in the air can also help clear any energy that may be released during a session since the body work can release deep emotional energies that have been stored in the body.

With some clients I can muscle test them using Robbi Zeck’s Blossoming Heart book and chart for the essential oil they need. This is a simple method discussed later on in this paper, to identify what someone may need, using the body and applied kinesiology. Once I get their particular oil and give them a sniff on a tissue I read out loud to them about the oil, and what it could mean for them. I may also intuit what it may mean and share if appropriate. Perhaps I may use that essential oil in their blend below as well, or give them some to work with later.

During the actual SET therapy we use a thicker cream or butter to prevent sliding on the tissue as the movements are very slow and deep. I previously used fractionated coconut oil for typical massage, but now I prefer organic shea butter for this bodywork. Sometimes I will warm it up, or mix in coconut (raw) oil to make a thinner butter- either way it melts at body temperature and absorbs quickly into the body. Since I use a separate container for each treatment, I can easily add an essential oil or blend to use during the treatment, just as in any massage session. If there is any left, I give it to the client to use at home.

Specific blends can be used either to address immediate pain or swelling along with the bodywork, or just for a pleasant scent while working. Sometimes clients will come in wishing to work on an issue such as clarity or compassion. Together we can choose the oil that speaks to them and use that in the session to facilitate the work on those issues. The blend or oil can be sent home with the client for later use, including sore areas of the body where the SET therapist worked, or anywhere there may still be some pain. Essential oils I have found useful for pain are: helichrysum and lavender, lavandin, rosemary camphor, peppermint. For inflammation a combination of blue tansy and helichrysum work wonders along with German Chamomile, yarrow and others. Anti spasm oils like Roman chamomile, petitgrain, sweet marjoram, and lemon eucalyptus would be good on any acute spasm. All of these would be properly diluted of course! (10% or less is sufficient if working a small area).

The muscle testing or kinesiology is part of the twelve class program of the SET training. This is how we confirm what we see structurally in the body in the initial body reading. This single tool has taken the guesswork out of my treatments. This was not new to me as I learned Touch for Health in the 1980’s. I have had it used on me during chiropractic treatments in the past, and more recently I re-learned it in Robbie Zeck’s awesome Aromatic Kinesiology class several years ago. This changed the way I decide what essential oils to use on people- (barring an emergency of course, or when treating a physical illness, acute pain, wound, etc.) After that class I am now able to use the chart in the book to muscle test and ask the body to determine which category: Emotional, Mental, Spiritual, or Physical, and then to narrow down to one oil. I then use an Energetic Oil kit Marge Clark (naturesgift.com) put together to give a sample of the diluted oil on a tissue while we read what the oil is saying to them. They always say it is right on! That method really cut my work in half. It also showed me that what I may think they need is one thing and what their body tests for is something else! This simple method works very well at health fairs and trade shows to give someone a quick reading on an essential oil they may need and an insight on a personal issue.

Personally, having experienced Structural Energetic Therapy® and then learning the techniques has transformed my life in several ways. Since I was about 14 I have suffered on and off with low back pain, and
was diagnosed early on with a birth defect that allowed my vertebrae to shift, especially when lying down. During my work as massage therapist and aroma therapist I tried every therapy (chiropractic, neuromuscular, Rolfing, etc) and every essential oil to no avail. I was still in some pain most of the time. In 2005 I finally heard my daughter Nyssa’s voice saying I needed to try the SET therapy (she had seen it at massage school), but it was when I read a case study that could have been my story in one of Don McCann’s articles that I called to set an appointment. Thus began my un-winding from my own Core Distortion, old patterns, thoughts and beliefs, and stuffed emotions that I have held onto all these years.

After a year of receiving the therapy and realizing the potential to be pain free, I asked my daughter to take the training figuring she could take care of me. During her first year I realized I was referring my clients to her because I could not get them out of pain and she could. Thus, I signed up for the program to learn myself what I needed to progress, and to finish the bodywork I needed to be pain free! I also realized that sometimes it is not good for a family member to work on another, so I needed others to work on me. Now have a network of SET therapists who will trade with me.

It took some time for my body to respond, but today I can easily move, dance, and exercise without fear of something pulling and, more importantly, without pain!! I am the most balanced I have ever been in all areas because when you balance the structure, everything moves more readily into place. I’m no longer slightly irritated with a nagging ache. I can sit and meditate for an hour without pain. I am still in amazement that I can live the rest of my life with no discomfort, having previously thought I would always be in pain due to buying into the beliefs about being older and having arthritis, etc.

Going back to school at 58 years old was not easy, but I was committed. I am fascinated with this therapy and want to make it part of my work along with the essential oils. I continually learn about myself as I go through these classes, and feel I have a higher level of professionalism, much more self-confidence and finally the ability to help others out of acute and chronic pain. SET has transformed my business as well, gaining more clients because I can do more than just a relaxing aromatherapy massage now. I already have some good success cases of getting people out of pain quickly that refer me more business.

In the next installment and we will go more in depth into other areas of combining essential oils and Structural Energetic therapy® such as the autism work I have already begun, and how SET works to facilitate the feeling of well being on other levels with emotional energy release.

NOTE 1: Structural Energetic Therapy® or SET (www.structuralenergetictherapy.com). SET has been developed over 30 years by Don McCann and is constantly in a state of evolution. SET is a rehabilitative therapy which integrates Cranial/Structural Core Distortion Releases with specific deep soft tissue protocols designed to address and release the soft tissue holding patterns of the core distortion and structural sub-patterns that cause painful conditions and dysfunction. These soft tissue protocols include postural analysis, directed myofascial unwinding and individual fiber strokes, scar tissue and adhesion release, along with other Cranial/Structural releases specific to each structural pattern distortion. Emotional energy releases are also used to release the tensions within the body holding the distortions. The SET Therapist first addresses the primary area of discomfort using these protocols, and then releases any restrictions causing imbalances in the other areas of the body so the improved alignment is supported. When this is accomplished, the whole structure supports balance and function, and maximum rehabilitation is achieved. SET compliments standard medical treatments and chiropractic, both as a primary therapy and an adjunct therapy.
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Don McCann, MA, LMHC, LMT, CSETT developed Structural Energetic Therapy® over 30 years, and is a Structural Energetic Therapist, Certified Postural Integrator, Licensed Mental Health Counselor (MH0705), Licensed Massage Therapist (MA0003267), past FSMTA Executive President, Certified Reichian Release Therapist, has expertise in N.I.C.S. Craniosacral Therapy, Bioenergetic Therapy, Rebirthing, Gestalt Therapy, and Hypnosis. He has lectured and instructed at Universities, National and State Conventions, and Health Shows, teaches an intensive training in Structural Energetic Therapy® (SET), twelve workshops, produced three video tapes, authored A Treatment Manual for Structural Massage Therapy, Relief From Head, Neck, and Shoulder Pain - Quick Release Technique, Relief From, Neck, and Shoulder Pain, Relief from Carpal Tunnel Pain and Other Nerve Entrapment Syndromes, Relief from Back Pain & Associated Conditions of the Lower Extremities. He is a past staff therapist for Tampa Bay Rowdies. www.structuralenergetictherapy.com

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