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CranioSacral Therapy assists body’s healing process

STACY SMITH SEDOVA
The Leaf-Chronicle

When acceptable medical treatments include sawing a person’s bloodstream in half, or filling their bloodstream with toxic cancer-killing chemicals, it’s hard to fathom that something benign and non-invasive can have profound healing effects. But that’s just what CranioSacral Therapy aims to do.

The technique places very gentle pressure along the pathways between a person’s skull (cranium) and the tailbone (sacrum), where the body’s cerebrospinal fluid circulates.

“Like the pulse of the cardiovascular system, the cranio-sacral system has a rhythm that can be felt throughout the body,” according to the International Alliance of Healthcare Educators. “Using a touch generally no heavier than the weight of a nickel, skilled practitioners can monitor this rhythm at key body points to pinpoint the source of an obstruction or stress. Once a source has been determined, they can assist the natural movement of the fluid and related soft tissue to help the body self-correct.”

Massage therapist Miyoko Kachi and holistic nurse Vicki Slater recently completed two days of training in a specialized form of CranioSacral Therapy, called Chinese CranioSacral Therapy. Taught by Wolfgang Lackmann, the technique integrates knowledge of the body’s meridians and acupressure points with the gentle release of CranioSacral Therapy.

Debra Welch, who has had lower back pain and shoulder problems for years, is delighted with the results of an hour-long Chinese CranioSacral treatment Slater gave her.

“It seems to relieve the tension and stress in my spine,” she says. “I could stand up better. My sinuses opened up and I could breathe. It was a unique feeling. It was a very freeing treatment.”

Welch says two weeks later, she still feels the effects of the treatment.

“The low back pain is very much reduced,” she says. “I’m not having headaches like I was.”

Welch says she did not feel any discomfort or pressure after a massage table in a fetal position, clothing, while Slater touched various points along her spine.

“There’s no pain whatsoever — no pulling, no twisting,” she says about the treatment.

Treatment for many disorders

Slater says the treatment is as much about clearing emotional trauma as physical trauma.

“For years, I’ve heard that we store our hurt in our spine,” she says.

The developer of CranioSacral Therapy, Dr. John E. Upledger, studied the technique for 20 years. He recently presented concrete evidence of CranioSacral Therapy’s effectiveness.

Using scientific protocol co-designed with the West Palm Beach, Fla., Veterans Administration Medical Center, the Up-ledger Foundation treated 22 Vietnam veterans, all of whom were significantly handicapped by post-traumatic stress disorder.

“At the program’s conclusion, an independent report confirmed that the veterans’ experience fewer symptoms most notably those related to obsessive-compulsive thoughts and

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behaviors, depression, lack of motivation, feelings of alienation, and withdrawal, and in the total number and severity of physical symptoms," says the International Alliance of Healthcare Educators' Web site, www.ihe.com.

The technique also has demonstrated measurable benefits for children with aggressive behaviors and autism.

"It's really interesting for people with fibromyalgia," Kachi says. "There's something unusual about their electrical system. They're electrically different."

Fibromyalgia causes pain that can make traditional massage therapy impossible. This makes the ultra light touch of CranioSacral Therapy a well-suited alternative.

"It's a very gentle kind of work," says Kachi, whose Wellspring Therapeutic Bodywork integrates her seven years of experience as a massage therapist with other energy and healing touch techniques. "It's less intrusive than deeper work. It's easier to take. It's more respectful of the body's healing system."

Try it for free
Although Kachi and Slater are both fully trained in Chinese CranioSacral Therapy, they are interested in intensively working with the new technique to hone their skills and observe the treatment's results with various patients and conditions. For that reason, both are offering free Chinese CranioSacral treatments for the month of August. A treatment would ordinarily cost $80 or more.

Slater says not every form of therapy will work for every patient. The introduction of this new technique is an opportunity for people to see, for free, if CranioSacral Therapy is helpful for them. Welch says it's an opportunity you shouldn't pass up.

"It's amazing what this can do for you," Welch says. "It's a very different experience from anything else (Slater) has done. It definitely helped."

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