

## Post Surgical Pain and CranioSacral Therapy

**By: Phil Robison**

**Personal Information:** Cheryl, Female, Age 42

**History:** At age 12 Cheryl had twelve teeth pulled all at once, including four permanent teeth (the first bicuspids). The experience was more emotionally traumatic than physically painful. She has no history of broken bones or automobile accidents. At age 30 she developed a painful neuroma at the ball of her left foot. She went to several top-flight orthopedic doctors and did a number of acupuncture sessions, without any improvement. She had surgery on her left foot in 1995. In 1998 she developed a neuroma in her right foot as well. She has been a dental hygienist for the last 10 years. In 1999 she began EMDR psychotherapy sessions and continued for 14 months.

Cheryl came with three distinct sets of symptoms: (A) She initially came to try CranioSacral Therapy for relief from the pain in both feet and her low back. She tried one session in August 2000. (B) She had a sledding accident in early February 2001 and came down with great force on her tailbone (while in a sitting position) and suffered compression fractures at L3 and T9. She came for CranioSacral sessions over the next four months (10 sessions). At my suggestion, she began taking yoga classes in March 2001. (C) Seven months later (January 2002) she called to say she had had abdominal surgery for stage 3 lymphoma in mid December and was in the middle of a chemotherapy regime. I worked with her on a weekly or semiweekly basis for an additional four months (10 sessions). Cheryl had first noticed a lump on the back of her head in April 2001 and noticed two more lumps by summertime. The doctors she went to said not to worry. In July 2001 she found a larger lump over her left side pubic bone. The doctors still thought the lumps were probably benign cysts. She had the tumor removed at the Mayo Clinic on December 12 and got the diagnosis of non-Hodgkin's lymphoma on December 24. On December 27 she went in for her first chemotherapy treatment.

**Evaluation & Treatment:** Initial arcing in the first session showed a lot of compression in the sacrum/SI area, a pelvic tilt pedad on the right side with the same tilt in the shoulder girdle, and compression at the atlas/occiput. Vault holds indicated the left tentorium was quite tight and the left occipitomastoid suture compressed. The feet seemed to have "stagnant" energy with little energy moving through the meridian systems.

Treatment during the first session (90 minutes) included most of the 10-step protocol with extra work on the feet and kidney meridians. The sacrum/L5, the occiput/atlas, and the sphenoid were all very compressed initially but released well. I worked the left foot with gentle Regional Tissue Release and found a modest improvement in the range of motion at the ankle.

The series of ten treatments after the sledding accident (60 minutes each - sessions 2 through 11) began with her exclusively in a sidelying position with very gentle stretching of the dural tube to release compression in the sacrum/L5 area and gentle work with the sacroiliac joints. Beginning in the third session, Cheryl was able to spend part of the treatment in a supine position and I worked the iliopsoas insertions and inner groin muscles of both legs. Cheryl could stay supine the entire time by the fourth session. The emphasis for many sessions was primarily decompression through the low back and pelvis with secondary attention to the neck. By the seventh session in this series I was able to target the head and worked the skull bones, including all the sphenoid and palate techniques. The next session included work with the teeth and along the mandible. Cheryl's TMJ tension was considerable and that led us to a therapeutic dialogue with the jaw in session nine and an SER release of the throat in session ten. The throat was attempting to protect Cheryl by silencing her and thus guarding old family secrets - including sexual assault and other

predatory behavior by her father when she was sixteen (with her mother's knowledge). We worked out a new job description for the throat as a communicator and bridge, rather than a silencer. Most of session eleven was devoted to an SER that began with a pelvic diaphragm release and led to an intense birthing experience. Cheryl had had an abortion as a young adult and used this opportunity to both meet and say goodbye to her baby. She later told me the intensity of the experience amazed her and made her somewhat reluctant to come back. She also moved into a new house and was very busy throughout the summer.

The most recent series of treatments (sessions 12 through 21) were concurrent with chemotherapy. Cheryl's overall energy levels and white blood cell counts were often very low. Many of the sessions included Zen Shiatsu hara support (energetic boosting of the body's core energy). I gave her Reiki attunements in the thirteenth and fourteenth sessions so that she could work on herself and she did so every day, along with restorative yoga. We also included therapeutic dialogue work with her inner wisdom and the lymphoma in the thirteenth and fourteenth sessions. The lymphoma said it wanted to help her and that she was better off dead than holding onto the pain, guilt, shame, and confusion she carried. It agreed to shrink and observe how she handled herself. We also released an energy cyst in the abdomen that tied in with sexuality issues and was blocking her second chakra. Some sessions were strictly working at the physical level - releasing low back and/or neck tension, working the iliopsoas and inner groin muscles, working the skull bones, releasing the TMJ areas, etc. Two other sessions included SER segments: in one she exorcised her father from controlling her -- literally pulling his presence out of her --- and reclaimed her voice, and in the other she opened herself to help &om God and had a profound sense of forgiving and reclaiming herself.

### **Results:**

**First session:** Cheryl remembers feeling good after our first session in August 2000. She waked home and felt lighter and more relaxed. Her feet felt somewhat better. She reports being amazed at some of the positions that her left foot moved into without discomfort. She was favorably impressed but did not follow up with more sessions as she got busier in the fall.

**Second series:** Cheryl came to see me one week after the sledding accident. She was in a lot of pain and had difficulty walking, sitting, lying down, rolling over, etc. She reported feeling better after each session and credits CranioSacral Therapy with speeding her recovery immensely. She was able to go back to work after one month, when she had been told to expect a two to three month recovery time. At my suggestion she began taking yoga classes in March 2001. Yoga has proved to be very helpful in lots of ways for Cheryl. It has both strengthened and increased flexibility in her back and neck. She credits the yoga, in combination with the CranioSacral sessions, for relieving her neuroma pain. She hasn't felt any pain in the right foot since April 2002, and the left foot has been steadily improving as well.

The last few sessions in this series involved SER work and she reported being amazed out how accurately CranioSacral Therapy would pinpoint the areas that were challenging for her. She appreciated that she felt she was given a choice about whether or not to pursue deeper emotional work. The last session that included a very real-feeling birthing of her baby was emotionally overwhelming. She is profoundly grateful for the experience, while also saying it was more than a little scary. She remembers coming home from work, climbing onto her yoga mat and cradling her baby for several days after that session. She began the process of moving into a new house soon after that session and became busy with many activities.

**Third series:** Cheryl found that the CranioSacral sessions, in combination with restorative yoga, helped her handle the debilitating effects of the chemotherapy. The Zen Shiatsu

helped aid her digestion and kept the nausea down. She was grateful also for the Reiki attunements that allowed her to do energy work on herself. She reported that after our third session she was doing yoga when she felt her third eye opening and saw a dark shape exiting her body from that area. She had the sense that the shape was the toxic lymphoma, and it was gone. She was convinced that she was cancer-free after her third chemotherapy treatment, although she reluctantly agreed to follow the doctor's advice to continue through the prescribed five treatments. Recently she told me that the cancer was one of the best things that had ever happened to her, because it led to such profound changes in her life. She has let go of so much past trauma, due in large part, to the SER sessions we had together. She now looks at the cancer as a physical release of a lifetime of accumulated toxins - both physical and emotional. The SER sessions helped her to process the long lasting effects of her father's violation of her body and her sense of self, as deal with a lifetime of shame, guilt and confusion. She commented that the SER sessions felt different than the EMDR psychotherapy she did. They seemed to go deeper and work more efficiently with her body based emotional blocks.

**Summary:**

**Length of Sessions:** 60 minutes

**Number of Sessions:** 21