



“I’m so much more comfortable. Baby and I are enjoying the best pregnancy ever.”

—CST client “Tracy”

This is How CranioSacral Therapy Contributes to a Conscious Pregnancy

By Carol McLellan, CMT, CST-D, CD

Mom-to-be “Tracy” was experiencing anxiety attacks during her pregnancy and did not want to be on high doses of medication while carrying her baby. She said she felt that the baby’s energy was “too strong” and that made her anxious.

After receiving CranioSacral Therapy (CST), Tracey said, “CST as part of my prenatal care has immediately resolved a variety of discomforts. While this is my first pregnancy, my relief has been sustained with no recurrence of symptoms. I’m so much more comfortable. Baby and I are enjoying the best pregnancy ever.”

The application of CST throughout

the miraculous journey and blossoming of pregnancy and childbirth can facilitate a positive birth experience, empowering the mother to feel more confident and less fearful, while facilitating communication between mother and baby. CST can help create, as Tracy noted, the best pregnancy ever.

To be conscious is to be more aware and sensitive to one’s surroundings,

empowering the mom-to-be to be more aware and in touch with her body throughout her pregnancy.

All of the amazing changes that take place in an expectant mother’s anatomy show the beautiful design of her body and how prepared her body is to conceive and nurture a baby through the gestation period. Her body knows how to create life. This change is a wonderful example of the body’s intelligence and why we should follow its lead.

Because of the noninvasive, client-directed nature of CST, its principles can be used to empower the mom-to-be to go deeper, getting more in touch with her body’s changing needs on physical and emotional levels throughout gestation in order to trust and prepare her in the most optimum way for labor and birth.

Having had the privilege of treating many pregnant mothers-to-be with

CST in hospital settings, I can say it is a wonderful compliment to pre-natal care. When a woman feels more aware with her pregnancy, it helps her feel more confident and better able to make choices toward her optimal pregnancy and birth.

Physical Benefits

During pregnancy, there are tremendous changes that occur in the maternal biology. If the expecting mother has not been treated before pregnancy to eliminate previous injuries or strain patterns, these strains can be amplified during pregnancy. CST works with the inner wisdom to help the body realign and alleviate challenges and discomfort from previous injuries and strain patterns as well as help the mother-to-be better accommodate the changes of pregnancy.

The uterus changes drastically in size during pregnancy to accommodate the growing baby. At full term, the uterus will be bigger than five times its original size and it will be 15 times heavier than normal (not counting the weight of the baby and the placenta).

As the uterus grows, it pushes the intestines and stomach up and to the side, which can change the angle that the esophagus enters the stomach and can lead to heartburn, indigestion and constipation. The diaphragm is pushed up, which can cause minor alterations in the position of the heart and lungs. This change is compensated by the expansion of the ribcage to allow the lungs to become more efficient to bring in extra air to oxygenate the additional blood volume.

The client will have about one-and-a-half to two times more blood volume, take in 39 percent more air, and store up to 7 quarts of water through her body and the fetus. She will store fat for the baby's development as well as for future milk production.

The uterus grows above the bony pelvis and is no longer supported by the strong pelvic ligaments. To counterbalance, she leans back, which exaggerates the curve in her lower back.

This along with the natural softening of the joints and ligaments from hormone

changes can add increased strain and potential discomfort and aches in the lower back. If the uterus is incorrectly aligned, the normal flow of blood and lymph are constricted and can disrupt nerve conduction.

There is also the added pressure the growing uterus puts on the surrounding organs and ligaments. CST can help the uterus be in the proper, centered position and help the body balance the many changes necessary for the optimum health and development of the baby.

CST alleviates physical discomfort, low backache, ligament pain and headache; increases circulation to the mother and baby; diminishes morning sickness; lessens heartburn, constipation and fatigue; supports breathing; and facilitates hormone movement.

CST for Emotional Stress

Along with the physical tension from old injuries or the added physical stress during pregnancy, it is not uncommon for the mother-to-be to have emotional stress.

Hormonal changes during pregnancy can create emotional mood swings. If there is imbalance in the physical body or emotional issues stored in the body, they can be stirred up during pregnancy.

Because the craniosacral system surrounds the autonomic nervous system, it works well to help create more balance in the hormones as well as better communication throughout the body.

"Mindy" was the picture of the ideal pregnant mom. She taught prenatal yoga and was in good shape. Yet as her uterus grew, there was a tightness and restriction across her abdomen that was visible as if she had an invisible belt on. It became more restricted and noticeable as her belly grew.

When we treated her, we discovered that the tension was from an old injury. She also held a lot of fear from that injury and the pain she had been through. When she was treated with CST, she was able to release the physical tension. Within a week her abdomen had completely changed shape.

The restriction was gone and her fundus had the room to expand upward,

giving the baby more room. She also released the fear associated with the injury, thus helping alleviate her fear of birth.

"The gentle work of CST during pregnancy relieved my physical complaints, helped me prepare mentally and emotionally for childbirth, and allowed me to connect more deeply with my baby," she said. "I am so thankful to have discovered this treatment during my pregnancy, as it helped me tremendously."

SomatoEmotional Release is a wonderful aspect of CST that can help the client get in touch with their inner wisdom to resolve the issues surrounding the emotion and to release it or transform it, even down to the cellular level. This can also bring up beliefs or family patterns that have been passed down through generations. Those ancestral beliefs can cause symptoms in the client that are not from their own issues, physically and emotionally. This information is according to John E. Upledger, DO, OMM, the developer of CST. (For more information, read *Cell Talk: Transmitting Mind into DNA*, North Atlantic Books, 2010.)

Research has indicated that when a woman has a baby, some of her stem cells stay in the baby and some of the baby's stem cells stay in her. (One such study is "Male microchimerism in the human female brain" on journals.plos.org.) This reality might be one of the reasons for the similar issues passed down through generations, and it might be the cause of idiopathic fear or anxiety in the client.

It is very beneficial for the pregnant mom to be able to release any of these cellular memories that are impeding her health in any way. CST does this in a positive way. Mom is baby's role model or blueprint from the beginning. What happens to Mom during pregnancy impacts the baby.

Mother-Child Communication

CST is ideal for holding the therapeutic presence that supports the inner wisdom of the emerging baby, as well as the mother. The CST can sense the physical,

emotional and energetic connection between mother and child, and can facilitate a more optimal pregnancy for mother and fetus. CST can also be applied to rewrite cellular outcomes and possibly change disrupted development.

This has been taught by Dr. Upledger from the beginning of his research. “The Inner Wisdom of the Fetus is every bit as intelligent as that of an adult Inner Wisdom,” he wrote. “It knows what its body needs. It has a softer voice than an adult inner wisdom; therefore the CranioSacral therapist must learn to listen more carefully. Once the connection is made, all of the information you need will be forthcoming.”

A skilled CST practitioner can palpate craniosacral rhythms of both mother and baby in order to facilitate and assist the mother in communicating with her baby. This practice empowers the mom to tune in and “listen” to her baby at a deeper level. It also enables mom and baby to work together through pregnancy.

Research has indicated that the baby is aware of what happens in utero, and psychologist David Chamberlain has written about this awareness extensively in his books, *The Mind of Your Newborn Baby* and *Windows to the Womb: Revealing the Conscious Baby from Conception to Birth*. (Both, North Atlantic Books, 1998 and 2013, respectively.) The mother’s emotional and physical state during pregnancy has a large impact on the baby (fetus). Chamberlain calls this prenatal parenting. This starts the bonding long before birth.

Many moms-to-be aren’t quite sure how to communicate with baby in this way. A CST practitioner can facilitate this communication without getting in the way of the mother-child connection.

Adding CST to the prenatal routine can create a more positive birth experience for mom and baby, thus allowing mom to truly glow and radiate the miraculous gift growing within. Including fathers, partners and siblings

in the CST session can help the whole family bond and feel more connected to baby and one another. **M**

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Read “Does CranioSacral Therapy Contribute to a Better Birth?” by Carol McLellan, Carol McLellan, CMT, CST-D, CD, at massagemag.com/CSTbirth.com.

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