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# The Structural Approach to Soft Tissue Manipulation

Structural Bodywork, the direct method of myofascial mobilization in the tradition of Dr. Ida P. Rolf's system of Structural Integration, is based on the Osteopathic Principle concerning the relationship between form and function. The premise states that should form [structure] be enhanced, physiologic function will change in response to the modifications. This is in agreement with the Universal Law of Cause and Effect.

Essentially, Structural Bodywork is a non-symptomatic approach to improving balanced states of health. Rather than address symptoms, it is concerned with promoting an upright, energy efficient posture that is in alignment with earth's gravitational forces. Physicians and Bodyworkers find that when the structure is shifted, function improves, and when function improves, symptoms generally will disappear over time. Structural Bodyworkers *create opportunities for change*. They lengthen and broaden tissues, allowing the body to choose new, more effective relationships in space. They manipulate myofascial planes, working progressively from superficial to deep, until even the most ingrained, intrinsic tension patterns are resolved and normalized.

Myofascial Spreading, the fundamental stroke of structural bodywork, has numerous effects on tissues that enhance athletic performance. Through pressure, friction, and incorporating various force vectors, myofascial spreading triggers enzymatic responses within the connective tissue matrix, which results in a thixothropic phase change from solid, gelatinous texture to a more soluble, fluid state. This soluble condition of the matrix is ideal for cellular exchange of nutrients, gasses, chemicals, as well as the removal of products of metabolic waste.

Skillfully applied strokes also contribute a peizo-electronic effect to tissues. This increases ionic bonding of hydrogen molecules (hydrophilic tendency), in essence attracting fluids to the manipulated tissues. This results in increased local hydration and in restoring critical fiber distance. This technique, for purposes of mechanics, engages a fascial layer, then drags it, stretching it first longitudinally [lengthens], then in a latitudinal [broadens] direction.

Thixothropy and peizo-electronics restore the body to its natural state of balance and fluidity, and also produce changes in tissues, joints, and the neuromuscular skeletal system which contribute to high performance athleticism. Myofascial Spreading promotes freedom and flexibility, and reduces restrictions and friction so that productivity can increase while decreasing energy consumption. That equals efficiency and translates to extra power and stamina.