

Advanced Work-The Difference

Lori Leitzel Rice, LMT, CST-D

We are taught to palpate the cranial rhythm and given protocols and techniques. Dr. Upledger designed the 10-step protocol to assure a practitioner with these basic skills would be able to give an effective, balanced session. Going through all the steps thoroughly and competently can provide great ease and fluid movement. But then there is more. We learn to assess for fascial restrictions outside of those core 10-steps. We gain the ability to “Arc” into the client’s system for active areas of distress or “Energy Cysts”. Using this information we begin to craft a session unique to that client’s needs.

What are the makings of an advanced CranioSacral Therapist? Is it time, experience, mastery of techniques, anatomical knowledge, advanced classes, certifications? Truly effective advanced CST relies on presence and the ability to blend and meld with the client’s system. Reaching beyond protocols to choose from all the evaluation and treatment tools in the CST toolbox requires knowledge of the tools and the flexibility to use them in crafting a unique session.

- We listen to the client’s words without judgment.
- Draw from all of our evaluation tools; Arc, assess the craniosacral rhythm for Symmetry, Quality, Amplitude and Rate (SQAR), check for fascial restrictions, notice visual cues.
- Be present in our own system so we may blend and meld with the client’s system and their inner wisdom.
- Develop a sense and a map of the restriction patterns presented in this particular moment.
- Have a strong felt sense of a cranial rhythm stop or “Significance Detector”.
- Discern a beginning area for treatment, an energy cyst or other active lesion or restriction.
- Listen to this specific area and get to know it better. Blend and meld very specifically here. “Ping” in to the tissue, fluid and energy here. What does it need?
- Choose our tools. Does this need direction of energy? Traction? Dialog?
- Be able to follow tissue movement, at the same time we are aware of the “Significance Detector” and listen for release signs.
- Have the patience to Wait.
- Ask the system, with our hands or our voices, before we proceed. Is there anything else needed here? Is there anything else associated with this area? What is required to maintain this balance and openness?
- Bring awareness and desire to listen more closely, specifically.

The nexus of presence, knowledge, skill and profound listening is advanced CranioSacral Therapy. This is a multidimensional practice that requires competence with our techniques, anatomical knowledge and listening skills. When we operate at this level our system speaks eloquently with the client's non-conscious. Our work is at the behest of the client's inner wisdom, all-knowing or "inner physician". When we are beginners we are preoccupied with ourselves, whether we have our hand position correct, can we remember the lecture about the sphenoid, what our top hand and bottom hand are doing. Listening and offering our skills and knowledge, at the level they exist in the present moment, allows the client's inner wisdom to choose the information and skills from our library without our conscious editing.

Neutral

Listening and treating from 'neutral' does not mean disinterested, detached, unremarkable or impersonal as some synonyms from the dictionary may suggest. Neutral, in CranioSacral Therapy is an active listening skill. We do not come to the table with a preconceived notion of what healing may look like for the individual. The only bias we may hold is the one that the client's inner wisdom knows what it needs. Listening with our presence, offering all our tools and knowledge in whatever combination this system requires. Neutral listening may lead us into quite active engagement with structure; a frontal lift, OCB release, lumbar/sacral decompression, or it may need direction of energy, dialog or simply bearing witness.

Comfort with not knowing

One of the things we most desire when acquiring a skill is competency. That moment when we first really feel the cranial rhythm, when we remember all the possible restriction patterns of the sphenoid, we have mastered the protocol! Now here is this neutral idea. It is as if we have learned how to bake a cake and then walk through the kitchen door with utensils, cookbooks and a pantry full of ingredients and asked the cake how it wants to be baked. Neutrality requires us to listen without bias, it does not matter that I love chocolate; today it may be apple spice.

I must trust the client's deepest wisdom will choose from the skills that I possess. I trust my hands to respond to their request. I do not know what this person needs today. I must be comfortable not knowing in order to be most useful. Not knowing may run contrary to my need to feel competent. This slight discomfort challenges me to be curious and explore what I do not yet know rather than settling into the comfort of what I do know.

Sometimes when we do not know we like to skip over the discomfort of not knowing. It seems easier to revert to something that feels and sounds like we know. Isn't the client paying us to know? How can we continuously sit with not knowing? We bring our curiosity, awareness and trust (C.A.T.) that the system knows. Embrace our C.A.T., the client's inner wisdom will signal what it needs for healing.