

CranioSacral Therapy – A Conversation Between Therapist and Client

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Effective communication involves active listening on both parts of the conversation. In a CranioSacral Therapy session, listening may be the most important tool for both the client and the therapist. The conversation begins with spoken words between therapist and client, but then the experienced hands of the CranioSacral Therapist “listen” through layers of tissue and tension. That’s when the story unfolds.

To fully understand why communication is essential in CranioSacral Therapy, let’s look at the craniosacral system in the body and its impact on the body.

Cranio- *the cranium or head.*

Sacral- *related to the sacrum or tailbone.*

Though named after bones, the cranium and the sacrum, the craniosacral system consists of the membrane around the brain and spinal cord, and the fluid that nourishes and protects them.

The membrane (known as the dura) attaches inside the skull, around the opening at the base of the skull and continues to the tailbone. The cerebral spinal fluid within the dura is produced and reabsorbed through the system creating a “pulse” or craniosacral rhythm of 6-12 cycles per minute. The craniosacral rhythm is distinct from the cardiac pulse or respiratory rhythm and can be felt throughout the body.

Assessing the strength of the craniosacral rhythm, and how it feels from one side of the body to the other, enables a CranioSacral Therapist to pinpoint restrictions in the body. Using this evaluation tool, which is really the craniosacral rhythm “communicating,” allows the therapist to address the core of an issue, rather than focus only on the symptoms.

The Birth of CranioSacral Therapy

The principles and techniques in CranioSacral Therapy (CST) are based on the discoveries of Andrew Taylor Still in the late 1800s, and William Sutherland in the early 1930s. Dr. John Upledger built upon the work of these early pioneers with his work at Michigan State University in the 1970s. Later, Dr. Upledger coined the term “CranioSacral Therapy” and co-founded a teaching institution that bears his name. The Upledger Institute is dedicated to the natural enhancement of health, and is recognized worldwide for its groundbreaking continuing-education programs, clinical research, and therapeutic services.

Upledger CST begins with releasing physical restrictions and balancing the membranes at the core of the craniosacral system that may impair the function of the central nervous system. Since the physical body does not exist separately from emotional and energetic states, CST techniques can also help clear energetic and emotional effects of trauma.

CST may seem somewhat mystical. The therapist may notice a restriction in the hips after placing hands lightly on a client’s ankles. You might ask: “How can they tell?” The answer lies in fascia.

Fascia- The Communication Network of the Body

Fascia is the web of connective tissue that surrounds all the bones, muscles, nerves, organs and blood vessels. When something shifts anywhere in the body, the change is telegraphed through this connective tissue. Sometimes there is a subtle change in fluid or temperature, and the alignment of tissues may shift to compensate. It is through the fascia that the therapist is able to feel the craniosacral rhythm, which may become erratic in response to the tension pattern, unbalanced from one side to the other, or barely palpable. This is the fascia “talking to” the therapist.

A Light Touch

CST is performed with the client fully clothed and lying on a comfortable massage table. Using touch that is usually about the weight of a nickel, the therapist evaluates or “listens to” the body for tension patterns and imbalances.

The craniosacral system is accessed and treated using the bones and connective tissue. Skilled CST Therapists can enhance fluid flow and balance membrane tension, helping to bring increased vitality to the system. Releasing chronic tension patterns and enhancing fluid motility allows the body’s healing mechanisms to operate more effectively, imparting greater balance and ease.

CST offers a safe and effective way to address a wide range of conditions. It can help alleviate migraines, TMJ syndrome, and traumas to the head and spine. Since the craniosacral system provides the environment for our central nervous system, CST can have profound effects on other common disorders, such as anxiety, asthma, fibromyalgia, and more.

As you can see, listening and effective communication is a big part of CST. Not only is there a conversation between therapist and client, but the craniosacral system is willing to talk too. As long as there’s a therapist willing to listen and respond, it is a conversation that may help put you on a path to physical, energetic, emotional and spiritual well-being.

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