

### ***Case Study: Combining It All for the Best Results***

This case study demonstrates how all the information in this chapter fits together: you can gain powerful results, even when the challenges are multiple and complex, when you find the right therapists and treatment modalities, have the right frequency of sessions, and enhance traditional medical interventions with multihands therapy and comprehensive programs.

Over a period of four years, a group of colleagues and I worked with a young soldier, Mariela, who sustained a severe head injury and multiple injuries to her body. She was in the Army, and had done one tour in Iraq with her husband three months after their daughter had been born. She was on her second tour in December 2004 and had just made the grade of sergeant when she was critically injured. She was in a coma for more than six months, and after almost two years of being treated on the East Coast she was transferred to a VA hospital near her hometown of Livermore, California.

I was part of a team of craniosacral therapists that began providing CST to Mariela after she was transferred to back to California in August 2006. For someone with such a high level of trauma, it was best for Mariela to receive multihands work from experienced therapists, so we set up a weekly rotation so that at least two experienced craniosacral therapists could work with her in her hospital bed. At times, five therapists treated her at once.

When we began, Mariela was talking with a stutter, had significant memory loss, and required full assistance to get in and out of bed. She was very scared of being moved, as it caused her great pain, and the medical staff had to move her often during the day. Yet within a short period of time, Mariela began to remember our names, and looked forward to her sessions. Her memory improved, her speech began to clear, and she became more motivated to transfer herself out of bed.

During the first couple of years we worked together, Mariela's chief complaint was intense pain in her tailbone and pelvis. Her right arm was also painful and severely limited in its range of motion in the shoulder, elbow, wrist, and fingers. Yet after her second CST session she spontaneously used her right arm to eat her lunch.

Many of our sessions revolved around releasing the fascia where her breathing and feeding tubes had been. Both of these interventions were lifesaving for Mariela, but they also had a profoundly painful impact on her, making it difficult to heal. The feeding-tube site, in particular, has been a place that has consistently been worked on. Six years after the removal of the tube, the site is finally not leaking.

In 2007, with Mariela using a wheelchair and just beginning to take steps on her own, we started working in a hydrotherapy pool. At the end of her first session she was very relaxed and said that she felt like she had slept for two years, so we decided that the pool was the optimal place for her treatments to take place. The water has provided great freedom of movement, and Mariela now often spontaneously rolls over 360 degrees, when before rolling caused her a lot of anxiety and pain. She is able to work on her walking and postural alignment directly after the sessions, feeling into the changes that have occurred and helping integrate the new-found freedom in her body.

Mariela continues to surprise her VA medical team with her progress. When she was first injured they thought that she would not come out of her coma; later they predicted that she would require round-the-clock nursing care. It's unusual for them to see someone continuing to improve six years post-head injury, but it's clear to all who've known her that she continues to make progress in all aspects of her being. Now she's able to walk short distances with a quad cane, transfer in and out of bed as well as get in and out of the pool independently, paint amazing pictures, swim 25 laps, ride a horse and buggy, and play the piano. She's even learning to salsa dance.

In addition to her medical team at the VA, Mariela and her family have set up a team to provide her with an intensive program of CST, yoga, chiropractic work, therapeutic horse riding, acupuncture, and Vasper (a low-impact exercise routine). This integrative team communicates through Mariela's mother, who acts as team leader.

CST has been the most consistent part of Mariela's healing and recovery for several years in a row. She's making amazing progress primarily through her own determination and because her parents made it their mission to support her in getting all the therapy she requires to succeed. She's been able to identify and live from, as she described it, "a place of confidence in myself." Mariela is clear and determined that she will continue to improve.