What is Rolfing? [1]

Dear Alice,

My wife is interested in a massage method known as rolfing. Do you have or do you know where I may find information about it?

Answer

Dear Bodywork,

Rolfing, also known as Structural Integration, is considered deep-tissue bodywork and movement education. It is used to increase a person's range of motion, enhance lightness and freedom in the body, elevate energy, and reduce pain. The Rolfing movement began approximately 40 years ago in America by Ida Rolf, Ph.D., and it reached the popular culture in the late 1960s through the Human Potential Movement that was active in California at the time.

Actually, Rolfing does not fall into the category of massage. Massage serves to remove metabolic waste from muscle tissue, while Rolfing focuses on restructuring poor posture by lengthening and realigning connective tissue that wraps around muscles. Most people who seek Rolfing therapy are motivated either by pain, or by a sense of tightness and restriction in their body.

Rolfers, or people who are trained in Structural Integration, view the connective tissue as the fabric net supporting the body. They concentrate on how the connective tissues in the body are aligned and where imbalances lie. These imbalances result as soft tissues become shortened following injury or trauma to the area, through repetitive use of certain muscles, or by always using certain postures. By loosening and lengthening chronically shortened connective tissue, Rolfers are able to bring the body into better balance and alignment. This improves a client's posture and reduces or eliminates discomfort or pain.

Not every person needs the same type or amount of Rolfing therapy. Advocates say, however, that some form of Rolfing can potentially benefit anyone. For more information about Rolfing or to find a nearby certified Rolfer, you can visit the Rolf Institute of Structural Integration website [2]. For further reading, you can check out Rosemary Feitus's book, Ida Rolf Talks, which discusses the technique.

Alice!

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