## THE NEXT STEP IN THE EVOLUTION OF MIND-BODY THERAPY

# Body Memory Recall

Body Memory Recall is a mind-body approach that helps clients transform memory patterns of pain and stress into vital states of health and creative living.

#### by Jonathan A. Tripodi

The therapeutic world discovered evidence of body memory long before science but science has recently experienced breakthrough discoveries that are redefining human anatomy and its function. As it turns out, the body is not a combination of bones, nerves, muscles and organs existing separately and functioning independently. On the contrary, it is a highly advanced communication system, completely interconnected and functioning as one.

The brain was once thought to be the source of intelligence and communication in the body. Science has now discovered that every cell is like a mini brain capable of receiving and transmitting information that forms consciousness—a complex integration of thought, emotion and sensation that forms human experience.

When you perceive an experience as overwhelming or threatening, the intelligence of every system in your body, every cell, participates in storing these thoughts, emotions and sensations until a later date when you are able to fully experience it. The storing of experience in the body is commonly referred to as body memory.

Body Memory Recall integrates more than 100 years of pioneering techniques in the field of therapeutic bodywork, psychology and science and evolves them into one refined approach that directly supports the transformation of body memory and the patterning of past experiences.

#### Exploring the technique

Body Memory Recall incorporates therapeutic bodywork, dialogue, movement, breath work, essential oils and exercise. It is an integration of myofascial release, CranioSacral Therapy, visceral myofascial release, unwinding, energy work and massage. The approach provides a full spectrum of touch, from off-body to light touch to deep tissue that directly supports the release of body memory from all systems of the body.

The technique is founded on the building blocks of therapeutic modalities dating back to the early 1900s. (See sidebar, page 60, "A

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Timeline of Mind-Body Techniques.") These modalities and their forefathers share a common understanding: The body suppresses stressful experiences not only in the mind, but also in the body—and the body is innately designed to release stored experiences as a means to achieve increasing states of balance, function and vitality.

At age 80, psychotherapist Alexander Lowen concluded, "You have to take care of your body. You can't do it all in your head. Talking therapy alone is limited." In his book *Breathing, Movement and Feeling*, he stated, "[T]he personality is expressed through the body as much as through the mind. An individual cannot be divided into a mind and a body. Yet our studies of personality have concentrated on the mind to the relative neglect of the body."

Many symptoms and patterns are related to body memory that has accumulated for years.

#### body responds to traumatic experiences and stress."

Initial contact is light to establish trust and therapeutic connection, whereby the energy systems of the therapist and client merge. This merging creates a heightened state of awareness in which the therapist and client can feel where body memory is stored and release it. Sensitivity, patience and finesse are used rather than force. This communicates safety to the client and encourages him to release the protective tensions that keep body memory stored.

A light touch also allows the therapist to feel for the activity of the freeze response, a state of muscular tension that keeps past stress stored in the body. As the freeze response begins to release, muscles soften,

#### The technique in action

"Whether the practitioner wants to create a full session or only add one or two of the techniques offered, Body Memory Recall is very easy to incorporate what is taught into one's massage practice," said massage therapist John W. Davidson, who uses Body Memory Recall in sessions. "The approach encourages the therapist to utilize all of his or her skills, while presenting a foundation that allows the therapist to expand therapeutic presence, palpatory skills and knowledge of how the and the therapist increases pressure and stretch to the body three-dimensionally, a process called unwinding.

Unwinding refers to the movement of the body in all directions as it relaxes, lengthens and transmits stored energy through its cells and tissues. As muscles relax and lengthen, connective-tissue restrictions are encountered. To release restrictions, the therapist maintains pressure and stretch for at least three minutes.

As the body unwinds, the therapist's touch progressively deepens to encounter tensions and restrictions within organs, ligaments and bone. Off-body techniques

### A TIMELINE OF MIND-BODY TECHNIQUES

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#### 1920s

In the early 1920s, Dr. Ida Rolf, Ph.D., a biochemist at Columbia University, popularized the importance of treating connective tissue to eliminate pain and restore movement. Clients would often release suppressed emotion during Rolfing sessions.

#### 1930s

In 1934 Wilhelm Reich, an Austrian psychoanalyst and student of Sigmund Freud, combined psychoanalysis with breath, movement and bodywork to clear the suppressed memory of trauma stored in the body.

#### 1940s

In 1949 German engineer Moshe Feldenkrais published his first book, Body and Mature Behavior: A Study of Anxiety, Sex, Gravitation and Learning. "It is my contention," said Feldenkrais, "that the unity of mind and body is an objective reality, that they are not entities related to each other in one fashion or another, but an inseparable whole while functioning." 195

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are used to unwind the human energy field and related chakras that are the epicenters of stored body memory. Guided breathing into the chakra centers is used to support a release.

Dialogue is provided in the form of questions at opportune moments to help the client connect with his body and discover creative solutions to old patterns as they surface during the session.

Essential oils are applied to the spine, feet and chest before or after a session to support the release and integration phases of body-memory transformation.

Exercise is recommended to help the client re-educate his posture and strengthen weak muscles for optimal stability and alignment.

It has been discovered that many of the symptoms and behavioral patterns commonly experienced are related to body memory that has accumulated for years.<sup>1,2,3</sup>

"There is always a response from the client, which can range from subtle to dramatic," said massage therapist Paula M. Francis, who first took Body Memory Recall training in 2007. "I have found that many of my clients who had been stuck and repeating the same old patterns had wonderful results.

"Memories surfaced, fascial restrictions released and old patterns were broken," she added. "Others have simply reported that the unwinding they experienced gave them a greater sense of well-being or improvement on the way they carry themselves and hold their bodies."

#### Training in the technique

One hundred therapists have been trained in Body Memory Recall. The curriculum consists of 172 hours of training divided into nine seminars. Each seminar provides training in Body Memory Recall bodywork, functional medicine, subtle energy awareness and exercise. Mastery requires practice and experience providing and receiving Body Memory Recall sessions. Receiving provides an invaluable understanding of the approach and the transformational process.

#### Benefits to clients

In his book *Waking the Tiger*, psychologist Peter Levine, Ph.D., notes how nonhuman animals release the stress of an experience immediately after it's over, and how humans tend to hold stress in the body for years—even for a lifetime.

Body Memory Recall can improve flexibility, eliminate pain, improve nerve function and circulation, restore alignment, improve posture and decrease stress and anxiety. It also significantly increases energy and vitality. In his book *Why is this happening to me again?* Michael Ryce, Ph.D., stated as much as 90 percent of a person's energy is used to store body memory. Once body memory is released, a person gets that energy back and can use it to create in the present rather than protect from the past.

"I had three major surgeries when I was younger," said Body Memory Recall client Eve Painter. "If I had access to this type of treatment then, I would not have chosen to be operated on. Today I am free of pain in my legs, neck and shoulders, with no surgery."

Body Memory Recall can be the missing link needed to improve past difficult plateaus or challenging conditions that failed to resolve from other approaches. It complements massage therapy, chiropractic, physical and occupational therapy, acupuncture, yoga and counseling. Because of the time they have available for hands-on treat-

#### 1950s

In 1956 John Pierrakos, M.D., and William Walling, M.D., physicians who also trained in Reichian analysis, co-created, with psychotherapist Alexander Lowen, the Institute for Bioenergetics, which utilized touch and special exercises to help people become aware of places in their body where they unconsciously held suppressed energy from past experiences, and to release it.

#### 1960s

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, the treatment of body memory was catapulted into the health-care system by John Upledger, D.O., an osteopathic physician who developed CranioSacral Therapy (CST). Those who receive CST often released body memory, including suppressed emotion. Upledger viewed stressful or traumatic experience in part as "a combination of physical and emotional forces which if not released would become stored in the tissues of the body as an energy cyst."

#### 1970s

In the early 1970s, Hellerwork, a form of bodywork that evolved from Rolfing, was developed by Joseph Heller, a former NASA aerospace engineer. Like Rolfing, Hellerwork utilized deep-tissue massage, but added exercise and dialogue as a method to help others access and release attitudes, feelings and past traumas that were stored in the body. Also in the early '70s, John F. Barnes, P.T., developed his myofascial release approach, which emphasizes the treatment of fascia, connective tissue that surrounds and interconnects every structure in the body. In an article called "The Body Remembers," Barnes stated, "I believe the body remembers everything that ever happened to it."

## A CASE STUDY: MARY

#### Subject: 45-year-old woman Chief complaint: Neck stiffness History: Multiple injuries, concussion, childbirth

I recently saw a 45-year-old woman with a history of multiple head, neck and shoulder trauma in a Body Memory Recall 1 class. I was demonstrating a cervical unwinding technique, and she volunteered.

A history and evaluation was done prior to the demonstration. The most significant trauma was a concussion at age 11 resulting in bed rest for 10 days. Also, she had delivered two babies naturally at home. Her labors lasted more than 20 hours each, and she pushed for four hours each time (30 minutes of the pushing phase is considered normal).

Notable evaluation findings included restricted cervical range of motion, forward-head carriage with rounded shoulders, moderate thoracic compression and hyperextension of the knees with forward pelvic carriage.

The session began with gentle cervical traction. Protective responses began to release around her neck and extended deep into the thoracic and pelvic tissues. After the demonstration, she reported feeling

ment, massage therapists, in particular, can integrate Body Memory Recall into their practices.

"My touch was more deliberate, intentional, slower, and I stayed longer at the barriers," recalled massage therapist and Body Memory Recall practitioner Paula Francis of her early days practicing Body Memory Recall. "I have noticed subtle changes, and my clients gave me some very positive feedback.

"One example is a client who has been coming to me for over a year. Since her car accident, she has had many challenges. She usually talks a lot during her treatments, but while doing a Body Memory Recall technique on her neck she quieted down," Francis continued. "She then told me she was experiencing panic and had a memory of a car accident. Her breathing changed, and she got quiet once again.

"She called me later in the day to tell me she noticed a big change in how she held her body and a major decrease in pain," she added. "I have found a renewed passion for my work, and I am on my way to my own personal healing." very relaxed and students noted a dramatic improvement in her cervical range of motion.

The next day in class, the client reported having a vivid awareness during her treatment of "how much my labors had hurt me," she said. Following that awareness, she experienced a sense of understanding and acceptance regarding that experience.

3 The second day following the session, she reported to the class that her urinary bladder incontinence she suffered since the birth of her second child 20 years ago had completely resolved.

I followed up with her two years later. She reported her incontinence remained resolved, and her exercise routine included jumping jacks and rebounding on a trampoline without leaking urine.

She said she doubted she ever would have connected her incontinence to the body memory of tensions in her neck and thoracic spine and the emotional suppression of injuries from her labor. After 20 years of incontinence, she did not believe it was something that would have ever resolved.

#### -Jonathan A. Tripudi

#### FOOTNOTES

1. Young, J.Z., 1975, The Life of Mammals: Their Anatomy and Physiology, Second Edition, Clarendon Press, Oxford.

**2**. Oschman, J.L., 1994, "Sensing solitons in soft tissues," *Guild News*, Guild for Structural Integration, Boulder, Colorado, vol.3, pp.22-25.

**3**. Hameroff, S.R., 1988, "Coherence in the cytoskeleton: Implications for biological information processing," in *Biological Coherence and Response to External Stimuli*, ed. Frohlich, H., Springer-Verlag, Berlin, pp.242-263.

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