

CRANIOSACRAL THERAPY

A DESCRIPTION OF THE BIODYNAMIC MODEL.

The Craniosacral System was discovered around the turn of the century by an American Osteopath named William Garner Sutherland. Studying the sutures of the cranium (the joints where the bones of the skull connect to each other), he could not escape the conclusion that they were designed to accommodate movement. Yet, just as conventional anatomy stated that the sutures of the cranium were immovable, so conventional physiology recognized no movement that would account for the engineering of the sutures in this fashion. Further investigation revealed that underlying the more obvious body rhythms such as respiration, peristalsis and the beating of the heart, lay a more subtle pulsation. This pulsation was expressed primarily by certain structures and processes at the core of our being, which functioned coherently in such a way as to warrant being defined as a system in their own right.

Anatomically, the Craniosacral System consists of the central nervous system, cerebrospinal fluid, dural membranes, and the bones of the cranium, spine, and sacrum. The Craniosacral System seems to function primarily as an ordering principle within the body, underlying the integrity of all the other systems of the body. Restrictions, either within the Craniosacral System itself, or elsewhere in the body, disturb the Craniosacral motion (or Cranial Rhythmic Impulse) diminishing our sense of well being and eventually leading to ill health. Sutherland saw the Craniosacral System (or Primary Respiratory Mechanism as he called it) as containing our primary life force, which he called the 'Breath of Life'. The fluctuation of the cerebrospinal fluid within the dural membranes, which surround the brain and spinal cord, takes up the vital energy or potency of the Breath of Life, distributing it throughout the rest of the body. As such, the Craniosacral System represents a bridge between conventional anatomy and physiology and pure energy medicine. We are not normally aware of Craniosacral motion, as it is so subtle, but during treatment, clients sometimes become aware of it for the first time as they become more and more relaxed and still.

A common misconception is that Craniosacral Therapists work only with the head. In fact, treatment may include working anywhere on the body. By detecting disturbances in the Craniosacral motion the trained therapist is able to form an image of underlying trauma patterns and facilitate their release. This is all done using a gentle touch, which does not so much manipulate or massage the body, as stimulate into action our inherent expression of health contained within us by reflecting the body's patterns of holding or

interference. This is rather like a counselor bringing awareness to their client by verbally reflecting behavioral or emotional patterns. The process of release of these patterns may be accompanied by the expression of associated emotions, such as anger or sadness. Memories connected with original trauma or injury may also arise or the body itself may spontaneously draw itself into the position it was in when a trauma occurred. This allows the kinetic and emotional energy of the event, which has become inert and held by the tissues, to discharge along the same route that it entered the body. Great care is taken to create a reasonable pacing and safe and secure therapeutic environment so that the release process does not become traumatizing in its own right. Craniosacral Therapy encourages the body mind to tell its own story, rather than focusing on that day's symptom presentation with a pre-ordained treatment regime.

Craniosacral Therapy has its roots in Osteopathy, but, in the past twenty years or so, has developed into a modality in its own right. The emphasis, in that time, has shifted from correcting structural lesions, to include energetic and emotional dimensions that give Craniosacral Therapy an important role to play in the emerging paradigm of mind/body medicine. Using Craniosacral Therapy we may approach the problem of etiology in a different way from conventional medicine. We can approach the living process directly and, respecting its wisdom, ask for the answers we seek and facilitate our inherent health to express itself fully.

This article was adapted from "Listening to the Living Process" (2000) by Matthew Appleton, a Craniosacral Therapist living in England.