

## YOUR BODY AND PSYCHE ARE ONE AND THE SAME

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When some people hear the term 'psycho-somatic', they understand it to mean 'your problem is in your head'. This is not actually the case though. In Merriam-Webster dictionary, it says about psycho-somatic: **1** : of, relating to, concerned with, or involving both mind *and* body **2** : of, relating to, involving, or concerned with bodily symptoms caused by mental or emotional disturbance.

So, 'psycho' (psyche: Greek, meaning mind) and 'somatic' (soma: Latin, meaning body) relate to the *interaction* of the body and the mind. Our mind and body form a unity that cannot be separated, except intellectually. Whatever happens in the body is immediately reflected emotionally and mentally. Whatever happens emotionally is immediately reflected physically and mentally, and so on. We are a unitary organism where anything happening in any system, physical, emotional, or mental, will cause all other systems to be affected.

Since as far back as we can go into recorded history, man has been using either drugs or some form of hands-on body manipulation to help him deal with suffering. The Ancient Greeks, the Chinese, the Japanese, the Egyptians, the Tibetans, whatever culture we look at, we see that there was at least an intuitive understanding that the body and mind are somehow linked in a biological feedback loop. Pain and disorder are not just physical processes but also in some way simultaneously translating as emotional and mental events as well.

It is only in our modern Western time that we have separated these unitary systems and produced a duality between body and mind. Dr. Ida Rolf, the founder of the Rolfing method of Structural Integration, had a great passion for understanding the interaction of body and

mind and because of personal circumstances, sought help for problems with herself and her children which the conventional medical establishment of the day could not help her with.

Her system of hands-on manipulation was designed to reorganize the myo-fascial tissue of the body, or in simple terms, the connective tissue. She first realized that connective tissue went through a state change from gel to sol (biology terms) when an energy source was added to it, even a human hand.

Her system of manipulation had an effect on the metabolism of the organism, since injury, illness, accidents, trauma, emotional habits all cause metabolic changes in our bodies and eventually can cause physical changes in the relationship of the major body segments. She showed that when the major body segments lose their appropriate relationship to each other, energy and well being is affected. She taught that the human body was a plastic medium which could be re-organized back toward a vertical relationship. Today researchers are discovering about the plasticity of the brain; somehow she understood plasticity when it was not fashionable and was one of the individuals who brought that idea into our culture.

I recall my 6<sup>th</sup> session of Rolfing back in 1980, when Patrick Clough, an Advanced Certified Rolfer in New York City, was working on my right calf. I was suddenly feeling angry and bewildered as if I wanted to flee. He continued working the fascia in the area of my calf when suddenly I began to cry. This was not from the amount of pressure, which he was using, but some energy, which had been pent up in me, suddenly freed up. Along with the crying I was recalling the time I had broken my right leg when skiing and of being in the hospital and my Mom being pregnant and me trying to be a good son. However, the truth was I was lonely and scared, and frightened.

All of this came up within the space of a minute; I knew exactly what had happened, on an intuitive level. I felt the trauma and its effects in my life releasing on the Rolfing table there in his Rolfing office on West 76<sup>th</sup> Street in Manhattan. Suddenly I 'understood' in an embodied way what psychosomatic actually meant. The physical break of the right leg in three places had imprisoned emotional and mental aspects of me that did not release until the energy block of the physical trauma released. Think frozen river thawing and you get the analogy.

This is what research is demonstrating. Because we are a unitary organism, anything that happens in any aspect of our psyche has repercussions throughout our *entire* system. Any stress or trauma that freezes our physical body (trauma: an emotional or psychological event, usually resulting from an extremely stressful or life-threatening situation) will also similarly affect all other systems.

If we have sprained our ankle and that trauma does not spontaneously discharge itself (this does happen) then that part of the brain which is connected to that part body area will become anesthetized. In other words, it will become disassociated from that pain as a survival tactic and all the repercussions from that event. This means that, for instance, the Autonomic Nervous System will be on alert until the event is resolved. The heart will be pumping faster, the hormonal system will be responding to flight-flight even though that event is supposedly over.

We actually end up walking around carrying trauma in our psychosoma. This is clear to me when I people watch. I was recently in Las Vegas and had the chance to walk on The Strip. It is so evident that people are carrying the affects of multiple traumatic experiences around with them. You can see the signs of it in how people behave, if

you know what you are looking for. However, because the doctor told us that he could not find 'anything', we assumed that it was over and went about our business. Yet, our system is often on alert, spending large amounts of energy in fight-flight mode, when in truth the normal state for us is a relaxed state of mind and body which science is very clear about today.

Today, there are many forms of psycho-somatic therapeutic interventions to assist individuals in improving their experience in life from massage to Rolfing Structural Integration to acupuncture to somatic psychotherapy and so on. Dr. Rolf was leader in this field and because she was a scientist utilizing a scientific approach, made a strong impact on the Western world in helping us understand the result of stress on our body-psyche.

Today there are Certified Rolfers and Advanced Rolfers in every State in the U.S., Canada, South America, Europe, Japan, Israel, and Australia. To find someone near you, go the [www.rolf.org](http://www.rolf.org) for a worldwide directory of Certified Practitioners.

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