

INNER CIRCLE INSIGHTS

Trauma - Physical or Psychological

When a person suffers a traumatic event, may it be physical or psychological; it is thought that hormones responsible for memory retention are released. These hormones are used to remember information about the state and position the body was in during the traumatic event. This includes emotions, beliefs and postures associated with the situation. This information is then encoded in our brain through a complex cellular memory system, and stored in our subconscious. This system forms a connection between the mind and body which fosters constant communication. In doing so, the body will use the "mind-body" awareness to keep us from what it perceives as a harmful position; protecting itself from fear, trauma, or painful memories. In other words, the body adapts or develops certain subconscious "holding patterns" or postures as a protective mechanism. However, these "holding patterns" form increased muscular tone and tensions surrounding the muscles and connective tissues in the parts of the body associated with the traumatic event. This leads to "habitual positions of strain" combined with emotional and psychological stress, resulting in "tense, contracted, bunched and fatigued fibrous tissue."

One of the connective tissues involved in the physical changes after a trauma, is the fascia. The fascia is a strong connective tissue that encompasses the body in a continuous "3 dimensional web" from head to toe. It is analogous to plastic wrap that surrounds all of the body's structures; underneath the skin, connecting to the muscles, bones, nerves and organs. It is very strong, able to exert up to 2000 lbs. of force, and functions to hold the body's shape and maintain the vital organs in their anatomical positions. It also functions to resist internal and external mechanical stresses. However, trauma of a physical or emotional kind, affecting the fascia causes it to bind and place abnormal pressure on any, and all of the body's structures. This physical change, in the form of the previously mentioned "holding patterns", produces chronic pain, stress, joint restriction and fatigue.



Physical therapist, John Barnes, created a treatment strategy of myofascial release based on the mind-body connection. Myofascial release is a hands-on technique that addresses the restrictions in the fascial system of the body. After evaluating the patient for myofascial restriction, the physical therapist then applies a gentle pressure with their hands opposite the direction of the restriction. This gentle pressure is held for several minutes and acts to change the length and viscosity of the tissue, thus rearranging the fascial components and releasing the restriction. It is at this point, when the restrictions are released, that memories, emotions, and beliefs from the subconscious level associated with the restricted tissue are brought to the conscious level. This awareness allows the patient to realize information about a past event or trauma that "may be creating or maintaining symptoms or behaviors that deter improvement." This release of tissue and emotions, creates an environment for positive change, and is the basis of a "whole person" approach to healing.

Physical therapists at Inner Circle use these hands on techniques to create this positive change and achieve long-term change. For those patients currently trying to change themselves, it is important to open your mind, trust and let go of control of those deep-seated "holding patterns." For those avoiding those feelings of uncomfortableness or increasingly debilitating aches and pains remember, "change only happens when you attempt to change." So stop talking about making your life better. Its only getting worse avoiding it!

Professionally yours,
Jim Mulholland M.S.P.T.

Source: Myofascial Release: The Search for Excellence, John F. Barnes 1990

*For an appointment please call (215) 860-3623
"The Natural Force Within Each of Us
is the Greatest Healer of Disease" – Hippocrates*