

What is Craniosacral Therapy?

Craniosacral Therapy (CST) is a term increasingly heard in both the mainstream and alternative medical and healing circles, yet many people still don't know what it is, or, that it may hold some of the keys to their health problems. I am a Craniosacral Therapist and I absolutely love my work because it truly helps my clients to improve their health. I wish for more people to find out about this gentle, safe, and effective therapy - this is why I'm writing this article. I hope to give you an introduction to this therapy here that would inspire you to give it a try. Let's begin with this: CST is a way of connecting with the very core of our system. The therapist's gentle and highly attuned touch allows the body to release deeply held stress and tension, therefore allowing the naturally present healing ability of the human body to begin to do its work.

Sounds hard to believe? This is only because in modern times we have lost touch with the subtle, more energetic ways of connecting with the body. And while modern Craniosacral therapy was founded as a treatment modality by an Osteopath, its roots can be traced thousands of years back. Its remarkable success in addressing a wide range of health problems is increasingly gaining it a respectable reputation in the western medical field. It's worth to have a closer look.

Lets explore some of the physiological structures that CST works with directly. At the very core of us is the system that is most important to our overall functioning: the central nervous system, made up of the brain and the spinal cord. Not surprisingly this system is intricately protected by layers of soft tissue, lubricated with the cerebrospinal fluid, and then further incased in the sturdy bony structures that are the cranium, the spinal column, and the sacrum. This is the Craniosacral system. The flow of the cerebrospinal fluid has a particular pulse to it as it is sent through the system, - this is the Craniosacral rhythm. This rhythm can be felt by the therapist through the body, and is one of the main tool we use in assessment. The cranium itself is composed of several individual bones. These bones are supposed to subtly move in relation to one another, and in sync with the Craniosacral rhythm, in a healthy individual. The sacrum, connected to the cranium by the spinal complex, also exhibits its own corresponding movement.

Since this system is so vital, it isn't surprising that tensions, blockages, and traumas absorbed there would be significantly affecting our health. And, since no other treatment specifically addresses the Craniosacral system, it also isn't surprising that Craniosacral therapy often has dramatically positive effects on health.

How does the Craniosacral system get impacted? There are countless ways, I will discuss a few of the most common ones. Trauma, whether physiological, such as a car accident or a fall, or emotional, leaves an imprint on the whole person, and the one area where it often goes unaddressed is the Craniosacral system. A hit to the head in a car accident can disrupt the natural movement of the bones of the skull, and even jam a bone into another, stopping that essential movement altogether. Since this delicate movement is what helps the brain 'breathe' - ensuring the vital cerebrospinal fluid gets circulated properly, this type of traumatic event can create mild to serious dysfunction, such as headaches, fatigue, problems with vision, hearing, endocrine problems, and depression. Emotional trauma, similarly, can cause our whole system to constrict in recoil. When that process is prolonged and/or severe, the deeper layers of us, such as the Craniosacral system, can have a hard time returning to a healthy, relaxed state.

However, even if you haven't endured trauma, chances are you can benefit from a series of Craniosacral therapy sessions. This is because we live in a demanding, modern, fast paced world. Stress is an epidemic in our society. Most of our systems are overloaded with input, and do not get enough quiet, deep relaxation. Over time, we absorb the effects of this prolonged stress into our system. And eventually... our health suffers. At this time, as many of you know, many chronic and serious health problems are considered to be stress related. There are many methods for stress relief, but I personally don't know of anything that helps the very center of our system release the accumulated tension as effectively as Craniosacral therapy. Many of us have gotten so used to constant stress, mediocre health, and chronic pain and fatigue, that we don't realize there is anything wrong, until a health crisis comes into our lives. That is usually when people seek help (though luckily, people are increasingly recognizing the importance of preventive care as well - and CST is an excellent way to stay healthy). Though something like an accident or a serious diagnosis may seem like an isolated event, it is actually a sign that our bodies have been overloaded - we cannot absorb anymore. Those health breakdown events are best seen as

opportunities - to stop, to rest deeply, to release tension accumulated over years, and to restore harmony between our body, emotions, mind, and soul.

You may be wondering why I am mentioning the emotions, the mind, and the soul in an article on manual therapy. That will be the subject of my next article. To conclude this introduction, I would like to give you an idea of what to expect if you decide to try CST. Sessions take place in a quiet environment, often as part of a wellness center. After a brief discussion with the therapist, you would lay down fully clothed on a comfortable massage table. The Craniosacral therapist will treat you by placing their hands on various areas of your body, based on what they manually read from your system. Often, the therapists work a lot with the head, spine, and sacrum, but all areas of the body could be included. With patience, deeply tuned-in presence, and highly sensitive manual skills, the therapist helps the system to release deeply held tensions. As this is happening you may feel very deep relaxation resembling a meditative state, some sensations of heat, tingling, and shifting. It is not uncommon for people to go into a dream state - this is supportive of the harmonization taking place when experiencing this work. These sessions usually last about an hour. Of course, the problems people come to address have usually taken years to accumulate, so a series of 5, 10, or more weekly sessions will likely be recommended by your therapist. But it won't be hard to return - for most people the deeply healing effects are evident after the first session.

Dear readers, thank you so much for taking the time to read this article. I hope that it has enriched your understanding of this manual therapy, and planted hope and inspiration for a possible way to help return the human system to harmony. If you have any questions or comments, please don't hesitate to contact me. I will make an effort to answer your questions either in personal writing or in my next article here. You can also contact me to see if CST may be right for you. I practice at Dao Wellness Center, 6055 Meridian ave, ste 30, San Jose, CA, where we also offer acupuncture and herbal therapy services.

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