

CranioSacral Therapy

A gentle,
yet powerful,
form of healing

by Linda Sechrist

David Tomlinson is a licensed massage therapist who teaches the first and second levels of CranioSacral Therapy (CST) at The Upledger Institute, founded in 1985 in Palm Beach Gardens, Florida, specifically to teach this innovative approach to health. He believes that given the escalating costs of health insurance, CST can provide an excellent path of preventative maintenance.

Of course, it's best to have the treatment done on a consistent basis. "It's the equivalent of regularly maintaining a car," advises Tomlinson, whose teaching is in demand throughout the world.

"CST works because it empowers people to take their health back into their own hands," he says. "We are tapping into the body's internal wisdom, the inherent resource that allows the body to heal itself."

Osteopathic physician John E. Upledger created this gentle, hands-on therapy based on his research studies at Michigan State University between 1975 and 1983. Intrigued by the slow, pulsating movements within the membranes covering the brain and spinal cord that he first observed while assisting a neurosurgeon with a surgical procedure on the neck, Upledger went on to dedicate his years as a professor

of biomechanics at the university to exploring the head, the spine and the body's fascial tissue.

Upledger worked in concert with a team of anatomists, physiologists, biophysicists and bioengineers and wound up with breakthrough insights into the function of the craniosacral system by focusing his studies on the dural membrane that covers the inside of the cranium and spinal canal. Today, CST practitioners use Upledger's method to evaluate and treat malfunctions of the brain and spinal cord that generally are poorly understood. More recently, CST has been opened up for those with no medical training because its gentle manipulations do not pose a threat to the body.

Karen Madison, CMT in Richmond, explains that CST practitioners listen with their hands to the slow pulsations of the craniosacral system. With a soft touch, equivalent to the weight of a nickel, they explore any fascial restrictions throughout the body of their client, who rests, fully-clothed, in a supine position. Effects of the treatment can be wide-ranging, affecting the musculoskeletal, nervous, cardiovascular and immune systems, as well as the body's organs, connective tissues and energy systems. It works to release

deeply-held physical and psychological patterns held within the body, balancing and restoring the autonomic nervous system. Most sessions last about an hour.

Tomlinson reasons that CST can address virtually any problem because, in the body, everything is connected. "We don't approach the therapy with an agenda," he notes, "because everyone stores their traumas in the body in different locations, and individuals heal differently."

According to Michele Garrigan, NCTMB in Richmond, there are actually three models of craniosacral therapy: mechanical, functional and biodynamic. These models range from direct manipulation in mechanical and functional to the more subtle Biodynamic CranioSacral Therapy (BCST), which focuses more on listening to the palpable tempo that is even slower than the cranial rhythm.

William Sutherland, who created cranial osteopathy, referred to this as *The Breath of Life*. The practitioner's attention is on the innate health of the mind-body, based on the belief that health is never really lost, but has become entangled in some type of dysfunction.

"Blending CST models based on client need and receptivity, and using bioenergy work, lymphatic drainage and massage has proven most effective in my practice," says Garrigan. "Clients with TMJ, migraines or low back pain are often pain free or experience a reduction in pain during treatment. Clients undergoing chemotherapy or radiation treatments benefit the most from BCST, energy therapy and lymphatic drainage to help reduce side effects, allowing them to continue in their normal daily activities."

To connect with Madison, Garrigan and others who use CST or BCST, see page 36, CranioSacral category.

For in-depth information on CranioSacral Therapy, visit Upledger.com.