

“More Enjoyable Rolfing® – with Hanna Somatics®”

by Lawrence Gold

Rolfing (Structural Integration) is a system of tissue manipulation designed to free restrictions in the soft tissue that interfere with free and balanced movement. The intention of the method is to develop more grace and efficiency in human functioning – both physically and developmentally. Hanna Somatics is a powerful system of brain-body training designed to end involuntary muscular tension and chronic pain. Its intention is also to develop more grace and efficiency in human functioning. Both methods are accelerated growth processes that enhance the results achieved by the other.

It’s an oddity that if you ask someone who has heard of Rolfing but not experienced it, they are likely to say “the five famous words”: “Oh, I hear it’s painful”. It is a true oddity that so many people come out with *the same* five words! It’s as if someone passed a script around the world, and people learned the line. They hear the cue, “Rolfing,” and out come the words: “Oh, I hear it’s painful.” It’s funny how predictable it is. I’ve heard it so often that now if I hear someone mention the word, Rolfing, I pause and wait for the line. “Oh, I hear it’s painful.”

However, ask someone who *has* experienced Rolfing, and they are likely to talk not about the pain, but about how much they got from the experience.

Why is this?

I would like to speculate. It might be that people who have had Rolfing and talked to their friends have mentioned that there were moments when the work was painful. Their friends, *not* having experienced the work, and having experienced pain at some time in their lives, could *not* know what experiencing the work was actually like, but *could* identify with feeling pain! And that’s what stuck.

Or it could be that in the early days of Rolfing, when its reputation was first being formed, practitioners were a bit heavy-handed, and it *was* painful. And that’s what stuck.

Or it could be that Rolfing just plain *is* painful and people who have been through it are just being brave, while their friends are chicken.

But I don’t think so.

Having been through Rolfing, myself, I have felt the benefits far outweigh the momentary pain that was involved. And people who haven’t had Rolfing can’t know this.

Now, this reputation of Rolfing as being painful is very painful to rolfers and other practitioners of structural integration. Number one, they don’t want to cause pain in their clients, and number two, it scares potential clients away. Rolfers just want to help people, and they’ve gotten a bad rap.

So, in the interest of reducing pain all-around, I would like to offer a solution. What if there is a way to make Rolfing both *less painful* and *more potent*?

How can this be?

Simple. Eliminate the muscular tensions that make parts of the body sore to the touch.

People have areas of muscular tension that they cannot relax, and those areas tend to be both sore and resistant to change. People resist the rolfer’s touch on sore areas by tightening up.

Now, the rolfer has three options: (s)he can either work harder (and possibly cause more

pain), work more slowly, or leave the area alone (and get less done).

There’s better option. How about a process that prepares clients for Rolfing by ending involuntary muscular tensions ahead of time?

Muscular control starts in your brain. It’s learned. Habitual muscular tension is a brain-controlled condition formed either in reaction to the pain of injury or to stressful life conditions. To end muscular tension, you must *unlearn* your tension habits and improve your muscular control. After all, it’s *you* who adopt and maintain your posture and movement patterns.

Hanna Somatics can help. Hanna Somatics is a movement-based learning process that uses a neurological relaxation response I call “the Whole Body yawn” to improve muscular control, freedom of movement, *and ability to relax*. It’s a comfortable, short-term process that produces long-term changes.

That means you’re more relaxed to start with and you can *work with* your rolfer, instead of just being *worked on* by him or her. Less pain, more control of the movements you are asked to do during sessions, and a more satisfying experience of the work.

For those who have already experienced Rolfing, there is good news: You can increase the benefits you got from your Rolfing sessions by eliminating residual

muscular tensions. The effects of the sessions you have already had will increase.

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