

ROLFING

by Genelle Pepple

Revised 8-22-16

The following information is a quick overview of an alternative healing technique called “Rolfing.” Other than being a somewhat aggressive massage technique it would appear quite benign, at first glance. It is found under the label of “energy medicine,” which raised my flag for a deeper look and understanding as to the active principles behind how it works. Please find a summary below of what I learned.

Rolfing® seems to be a kind of myofascial massage, but Rolfers prefer to call it "movement education." Rolfing is also known as “Structural Integration.” It involves touching the skin, finding "imbalances" in tissue texture, and separating "fascial layers that adhere and muscles that have been pulled out of position by strain or injury." It is said to be a holistic system of bodywork that uses deep manipulation of the body's soft tissue to realign and balance the body's myofascial structure, improve posture, relieve chronic pain, and reduce stress.

It is also known as Rolfing Structural Integration. Rolfing works with energy inside and outside of the body. One of the most common misconceptions about Rolfing Structural Integration is that it is a nothing more than a type of very deep massage. There are many varieties of massage, which can be particularly effective for loosening tissues, reducing stress, detoxing the body, and causing an increased feeling of relaxation and well-being. The difference with Rolfing, and why it is classed in the field of “energy medicine” is because Rolfing includes *more* than regular massage techniques. Rolfing is a mind-body system of connective tissue manipulation that rebalances and realigns the body.

Ida Rolf, its founder, studied various approaches for alternative healing, including osteopathy, homeopathy, yoga, chiropractic, the Alexander Technique, and Korzybski's work on states of consciousness. She eventually synthesized what she learned from these various healing arts into her own modality which she named Structural Integration.

Rolfers **integrate** the body, relating its segments in an improved relationship, bringing physical balance in the gravitational field. Other soft-tissue manipulation methods, including massage, are quite good at the first two, but do not balance the body in gravity.

Rolfers consider their unique contribution to be— "to balance the body in gravity." People that are involved in Rolfing believe that the versatility and harmony of the body has to do with how the body deals with the field of **gravity**. The idea is that as the body approaches balance, it is more comfortable in the gravitational field...that gravity is the most powerful force that affects the human body. The goal is to balance the body, and the main objective is to be in harmony with the body.

From an energetic perspective, Rolfing accepts: “the energy level of the patient's body increases proportionately to the body's well being. If the body has no pain and is in symmetry with gravity, then the person will have more energy because of the energy the person is not exerting to fight gravity.” (www.biznet.com.blacksburg.va.us/~rolfer/rolf10.ht)

Unlike some forms of chiropractic, more than just the spine must be aligned. To be healthy, according to Rolfers, you must align your head, ankles, hips, thorax, pelvis, knees, shoulders, ears, etc., in just the right way or else the negative effects of gravity will be felt. By being properly aligned, gravity enhances personal energy and leads to a healthy body and a positive emotional state. According to Dr. Rolf: "Rolfers make a life study of relating bodies and their (energy) fields to the earth and its gravity field, and we so organize the body that the gravity field can reinforce the body's **energy field**."

This aligning and “reinforcement” of the body's energy field is the aspect that puts Rolfing under the microscope for the Christian. Rolfing integrates the body, mind and soul—in a way that is a *working with the body's energy fields*, not just musculoskeletal and tissue release. This is a metaphysical claim because it is talking about energy that is *within & outside* the body. It is talking about universal energy.

This is a key point to understand. On the one hand, Rolfing takes an approach that is in-line with known laws of physics, which people can readily identify with and accept as “okay.” But, on the other hand, it goes beyond this into the metaphysical realm. According to one source, “Rolfing is a holistic modality that is also seen as a means to align the emotional as well as physical, **opening up barriers to self-actualization and the experience of life.**”

Do you understand what this is actually saying? The concept of self-actualization is an Eastern concept, a Hindu concept, a spiritualistic concept, whose goal is to realize your own divinity and unite your immortal soul with Divine Consciousness.

Ida Rolf’s concept of reinforcing the body’s energy field is also an Eastern concept. Eastern healing arts teach that the body has an energy field that needs to be balanced, controlled, guided, and/or regulated, so that healing can occur. The energy field being referred to, specifically, is “universal energy”— the life force that flows in everything that exists; an *intelligent*, primordial energy that permeates all living things. It is a pantheistic concept. It is NOT the scientific energy that is within a cell, which makes our bodies work via glycolysis, the adenosine 5-triphosphate (ATP cycle), etc.

Rolfing, like many other alternative healing techniques, deals with “*realignment of the body’s energy field as a means of bringing about healing.*” The Rolfing practitioner is the vehicle for helping this happen. They are helping regulate/balance this energy...thereby bringing about a more complete healing, which involves body, mind, and spirit. This is a *non-physiologic type of healing* that goes beyond how God created our body’s to heal.

Do you see the danger here? Christians must stay away from universal energy, in all it’s forms, because it is a gateway to shifting one’s philosophy about healing. Universal energy is the same as universal intelligence, which is the same as chiropractics “innate intelligence.” They all refer to the same principle, which the pantheistic view that a universal life force or “energy” permeates all living things. When applied to the healing arts, this concept *always* involves healing in a non-physiologic way. Once accepted, opens you to all manner of deception in the healing arts, which utilize this “energy.” There are literally hundreds, maybe thousands of approaches that tap into this. Please be on guard. I have learned through my own experiences that many things are not what they appear to be on the surface and taking a little time to research the foundations of various healing techniques is usually worth the time.

One additional note in regard to Ida Rolf and her philosophical bent and background.

1. She studied Alfred Korzybski’s philosophy of altered states of consciousness. He is considered the primary thinker and greatest contributor to Frederick (Fritz) Perls and Paul Goodman who originally articulated Gestalt therapy, whose techniques are incorporated into modern day hypnotherapy.
2. She also studied the Alexander Technique, which is “a re-education of the mind and body to discover a new balance in the body”. It uses mindfulness to achieve these goals. “It is a way of moving mindfully through life.” Mindfulness has its roots in Buddhist meditation and is very important for the path to enlightenment. Mindfulness is now “proven” to work, just like hypnosis works, but does that mean we should use it? It is very different from Christian meditation, in its purpose and practice.
3. Ida Rolf also studied osteopathy, homeopathy, yoga, and chiropractic. Rolfing is her synthesis of the concepts she learned from all the healing arts she studied.

QUOTES BY IDA ROLF:

“As in all matter organized into biological units, there is a pattern, an order, in human bodies... Rolfers make a life study of relating bodies and their fields to the earth and its gravity field, and we so organize the body that the gravity field can reinforce the body’s energy field.” —Dr. Ida P. Rolf

“The wonders are occurring only because of gravity and only because **we know how to use gravity** to create wonders. It is gravity that is the tool; it is gravity that is the therapist. All we (as a Rolfer) are doing **is directing the flow of gravity by virtue of organizing the body as though it were an electric wire** so that gravity can flow through it.” - Dr. Ida P. Rolf

Because of the energetic component of Rolfing and its integration of Eastern philosophies and healing methods, I would propose that Christians should steer clear of it. It is either biblically based, or it is not. Truly, there is not a gray area. You’re either working off God’s principles or a counterfeit.

How can there be a blend of both? Does God share His healing power and natural laws with occult power? I would answer: “No!” One cannot integrate God’s healing processes with metaphysical beliefs about intangible (universal) energy. In the end, trying to justify these concepts and utilize universal energy for healing only leads to confusion and worse, it opens the door to the occult.

Sources:

<http://www.rolf.org/visitors.php>

<http://rolfing.org>

<http://www.therolfer.com/about-rolfing/>

<http://www.somaticworks.com/rolfing.html>

http://www.healthandhealingny.org/complement/rolfing_history.asp

<http://medical-dictionary.thefreedictionary.com/Rolfing>

<http://www.gestalt.org/alfred.htm>

<http://www.structuralintegration.com/quotes/quotes.html>

http://www.azquotes.com/author/28200-Ida_Rolf

<http://www.rolfusa.com/rolfing.html>

<http://innersource.net/em/107-resources/publishedarticles/283-sixpillarsofem-dp1.html>