

Aligning the Spine

KELLY RAE EXPLORES
NEUROSKELETAL THERAPY

"You're a mess," he said. "Happy to help," I replied.

Robert Dehn is a quietly spoken and gentle character who moves around his clinic with a certain grace that suggests his body is a lot better aligned than mine. He asks me what happened. Yet there has been no car accident or no major event that has preceded my "lopsidedness", save chronic jaw grinding. Apparently, I am at the right place for the total overhaul my body clearly needs.

As an ex-massage therapist myself, I am surprisingly jumpy when the tables are turned and I find myself lying face down on one. But, I soon realise I need have no concerns with Neuroskeletal Therapy. You remain fully clothed while the therapist, thankfully, avoids any sudden movements and, even better, any disconcerting crunching noises. There is also a very good chance you will drift off to sleep, like I did.

Neuroskeletal Therapy (NST) is a young Australian modality, only discovered about 25 years ago. Put simply, pressure is applied to the body via small pressing movements up and down the spine (the "root" of the body). This alerts the nerve endings, located just under the skin, to send messages to the brain telling the body to correct itself. Too simple?

Well, put anatomically, NST can be considered a spinal alignment based on the activation of a series of key "neurological transmission points" or "skin receptors" - tiny nerve endings just under the surface of the skin - via light pressure and stimulation. These points are located at the intersection of the nerves and lymphatic system all over the skeletal system. The therapist's aim is to trigger a signal or an "electrical feedback" to the brain from each relevant point, which helps the corresponding muscle groups to contract and expand, providing the necessary adjustment to allow correct alignment of the joint or area being treated.

How does NST stand out in a crowded market of Natural Therapies? "It's non-manipulative, non-invasive, safe and, most of all, effective," explains Dehn. He came to NST after studying Chinese Medicine and other bodywork modalities and very gradually began finding that his best successes were with those clients he had treated with NST. One such person remains so convinced

in NST that he flies out regularly from Rhode Island in the States for his treatments.

As for me, I enjoyed the process very much and left feeling I had benefited but with no obvious change. It was only the next day, and during the following two weeks, that I noticed my body "auto correcting" in a way that I had never experienced before. Like many other Westerners, my head and neck tilts forward, a legacy of too much deskwork, too much "forward thinking" and not enough living in the present. After my NST treatment, I find that, several times a day, my body draws itself up, my chest expands, and my head pulls up towards the heavens. And this is coming to me as unconsciously as breath.

Shortly afterwards, my mother experiences a migraine. It's the day I have my second visit with Dehn, so I insist she takes my appointment. Mum returns not only feeling better, but wanting to know how he could diagnose her sleeping and recent memory difficulties by simply looking at her body stance. "It's not age!" she says delightedly (and with a distinct sound of relief in her voice) "It's lack of blood flow to my head!" Needless to say, Mum has since returned and is experiencing encouraging results.

I also returned, today in fact, and as I write, I experience distinctly more rotation in my neck than has been possible in a long time.

I report both Mother and daughter's progress to Dehn. He just nods and says, rather Zen-like, "I have many success stories."

Like many natural therapists, he sees many people after they have become disillusioned with ongoing and costly medical treatment often involving taking a lot of drugs. And some of his best results have been with individuals who've been told nothing more can be done for their chronic pain - pain that can be alleviated or disappear completely after Neuroskeletal Therapy. Most treatment programs range from five to 10 sessions. And if the client never has to return at the end of their program, that, says Robert Dehn, is the greatest satisfaction.

Note: NST is currently undergoing clinical trials at Adelaide University in South Australia. PhD student and NST-Therapist, Kylie Tucker, is completing this research under the guidance of Dr Kemal Türker of the university's Department of Physiology.

