

Stillness Touch: Developing a Relationship with Primary Respiration

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Biodynamic Cranial Touch (BCT) or Stillness Touch, is a bodywork training that is designed for practitioner development. The work itself is a process of sensing from within, simply being with what is, as it is, without trying to change anything. It is an evolution of craniosacral work, but it is not a symptom-treatment model of working with the craniosacral system. We do not focus on craniosacral anatomy, nor do we spend time sensing into cranial wave. We sense more globally, within ourselves at the back of our heart, as well as into the atmosphere that surrounds us. We do not sense into our client looking for specific rhythms or motions, yet we *include* that which we perceive within our client. It is a more all-encompassing instinctive nature of sensing, and it requires letting go of all notions or ideas of “treatment”.

As a bodyworker, providing relief from pain and eliminating the physical factors that contribute to it have been a main focus of my massage practice for the last 27 years. How then can I let go of the symptom-treatment model when using BCT / Stillness Touch?

Where I put my attention matters. It has been very difficult to navigate the territory of meeting a client’s desire to feel better with my own desire to help when the BCT work is so subtle and not outwardly obvious that I am even “doing” anything. But what I have found over the years is this: *the more I am in a state of present-sensing awareness, the more I recognize the many faces of the therapeutic indwelling forces in sessions.*

Known as Primary Respiration, these subtle indwelling forces manifest as a natural rhythm that is more subtle & more fundamental to that of our respiratory diaphragm or heart rate. And as practitioners we connect with Primary Respiration within ourselves in this present-centered-awareness-sensing-state. As my familiarity with this state has grown, so has my comfort with just “being” with sensing – I don’t feel the pressure to “fix” because I recognize the subtle, yet very real essence of Primary Respiration, and I am better able to trust the process.

“Many of my teachers... made the statement, ‘all you do is begin a treatment, then the indwelling therapeutic forces finish it.’ ...The goal of engaging an indwelling therapeutic process is the hallmark of our tradition. ...This is not an ideology, but a directly perceived reality that one begins to appreciate by following the therapeutic forces and accepting the wisdom behind the amount and direction of treatment.”

--Jim Jealous, Osteopathic Physician

When a practitioner sits in present awareness in stillness and places their hands on a client, all manner of subtle yet powerful sensations are palpable. However, the practitioner's focus or orientation influences what can be perceived. Research in Quantum Physics has shown a phenomenon known as the "observer effect" — observation affects whether or not electrons behave as particles or waves.

A similar observer effect happens in craniosacral work — when a therapist holds a client's head and senses into the client's system looking for something specific, the act of sensing in this way influences what can be perceived. A very primitive part of the client's system recognizes it is being observed, being made into a separate observable entity, and the system goes on "alert". When a practitioner is looking for cranial wave (or the craniosacral rhythm -- CSR), this is when cranial wave is found.

But when a practitioner orients to wholeness with unwavering presence, sensing into what IS without trying to fix anything, the client's system can rest back, and the work deepens into other tides and depths of stillness. Without looking for anything in particular, sensing into our midlines and the SA Node in the back of our hearts, sensing into our bodies, we orient to wholeness which is where the health is. This is where our attention goes — to wholeness and health.

As I practice Biodynamic Cranial Touch more and more, a wider palette of sensation is showing up in sessions. Primary Respiration is becoming more known, and more new at the same time. Cranial Wave doesn't show up, and the longer tides are frequent companions — Fluid Tide and Long Tide and their familiar wave-like excursions. But the more I let go and drop into bodily sensing, and the more I trust that which is unknown to me, the more I recognize something else... Movements, qualities, essences are showing up that I cannot identify. I cannot label them or put them in a box of any kind. Some of them are on the periphery of my awareness, almost out of reach, and yet are distinctly palpable. Whether or not my hands or heart can identify what I'm feeling, a familiar aliveness is present in the atmosphere. The more I orient to my innerness AND all that surrounds me, the more I recognize **bodily** the familiar presence of Primary Respiration.

More clients, from diverse backgrounds, and with different conditions are coming for "craniosacral" work — because their doctor, or friend, or family member has told them it might help. People who have a hard time being still are laying on my table, and in a very short period of time I am sensing Primary Respiration. Within minutes I can feel a familiar "essence" — like an old friend that I've known for a long time who dresses differently for each visit. I cannot see them, but I recognize them, and I remain in presence, sensing and simply being with "what is".

It's challenging to write about the new perceptual capacities that are arising because talking about "them" makes them seem like something outside of myself — an "other" to which I connect. In this depth there is no "other." It is a nonverbal, nondescript essence, and "being with it" is like connecting with nature, an animal, or a baby: without running towards it or standing by aloof, we slowly sit with one another until a connection/understanding is established.

Encountering Another Being: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q3hQrac_oFM

If you are interested in reconnecting with this instinctive nature within yourself and your clients, Giorgia Milne is returning to Gainesville this year to offer Biodynamic Cranial Touch / Stillness Touch courses at Casa Micanopy. She will be teaching an Initiatory Course, beginning a new year-long Mentor Course, and offering her newest course entitled "Fulcrum of Being". For more information on any of these courses, go to www.touchofpresence.com, or contact Mary Reis at 352-246-6280 or maryreis@me.com