

# Bringing CranioSacral Therapy into Your Massage Practice



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## CranioSacral Therapy and Massage

CranioSacral Therapy (CST) employs a gentle, light touch technique that helps to release restrictions in the body that may be impeding the efficiency of the craniosacral system and central nervous system. With just 5 grams of pressure, or less, significant changes can result throughout the body, resulting in a decrease in pain and dysfunction. Additionally, the body is encouraged into deep relaxation and self-healing. Clients often leave a session feeling deeply relaxed, renewed, and at peace.

Typically, CranioSacral Therapy is requested by clients who have received CST in the past, or have been referred for a specific issue which has not improved with traditional therapies or treatments. Occasionally, the client has heard about the therapy and simply wants to know more about it. Whatever the reason, we welcome our CranioSacral Therapy clients with open arms!

## Benefits to Clients and Therapists

CranioSacral Therapy techniques provide significant benefits for our clients:

- **Just one minute of light touch to the sacrum and occiput can enhance the cranial rhythm through the Rock and Glide Technique.**
- **Gentle Cranial Pumping during a scalp massage will improve the production and movement of the cerebral spinal fluid.**

Incorporating these simple techniques can enhance relaxation and feelings of well being before a massage even begins. Clients who may be too ill or weak to receive deeper touch can reap the benefits of massage (both physically and emotionally) by incorporating the gentle techniques of CranioSacral Therapy.

On the other hand, we have clients who are accustomed to Therapeutic Massage, Deep Tissue Massage, Myofascial Release, Trigger Point Therapy, etc. These clients are often of the 'no pain/no gain' mindset and are not looking for 'fluffy' treatments. They have limited time and need their therapist to 'fix' their issues until they can return for another session. These are the same clients who can greatly benefit from the effects of CranioSacral Therapy. They tend to be 'go getters' and 'hard workers' who maintain busy schedules and have many responsibilities. Their sympathetic nervous systems run non-stop, thus causing the parasympathetic nervous systems to be left behind.

These clients characteristically experience trouble sleeping at night, can't stop thinking and planning, eat on the go, have no time to exercise, etc.... As a result, they are tired, experience digestive disorders, stiff joints, back and neck pain, decreased flexibility, headaches and high blood pressure. Heart palpitations and other symptoms can even occur. These clients need to experience deep relaxation of the entire body to allow healing from the inside out.

CranioSacral Therapy isn't just for clients though! As manual therapists, we are very aware of the physical demands and stress to which our bodies are subjected. The typical 'lifespan' of the average massage therapist is limited due

to mental burn out, physical injury, and fatigue. Therapists work part time to avoid the shortened lifespan, approximately 6 years, however, physical strain remains a factor. Incorporating less-demanding techniques such as CranioSacral Therapy, can enhance the career, lifestyle, and general well being of a therapist. CranioSacral Therapy gives the therapist the means to experience deep relaxation and rejuvenation, thus creating more positive energy (both physically and mentally), allowing them to maintain a more productive lifestyle and career. This benefits the therapist and the clients.

Convincing clients to experience CST for the first time can be a challenge. Over the past two years I've converted my 100 percent Therapeutic Massage practice to a 75 percent CranioSacral Therapy and 25 percent Therapeutic Massage practice. How did this dramatic shift occur? By means of promotional materials: CST brochures explaining its benefits, a website, and business cards with a brief description about CST on the back. However, the best marketing tool was incorporating CST techniques into the massage sessions. You might call it 'sneaky' CST!

Clients still experience trigger point releases and deep tissue massage where or when necessary. They are also introduced to subtle CST techniques throughout their massage sessions. Occipital Cranial Base Releases, Cranial Pumping, Release of Cranial Suture Restrictions, Dural Tube Rock and Glide, and Stillpoints – are just a few of the techniques that can be incorporated without interrupting a therapeutic massage, while providing deep and lasting effects to the body.



## Introducing CST into a Massage

Introducing CranioSacral Therapy to clients should be simple and non-threatening or disruptive during the massage. Some forethought and considerations are necessary. I've found that when I "just know" CranioSacral is perfect for someone and I try to encourage them to schedule a session, they resist even more. The better option is to continue with their regular routine, and slowly add one or two CST techniques into the massage. At the end of the session I ask how they feel and how they liked a particular technique... then I tell them that it was a CranioSacral Technique. This gives me the opportunity to acquaint them with CST and its many benefits.

Be prepared to spend five to 10 minutes explaining the CranioSacral System, how it works, why it's important, and how the system can be improved and encouraged to function most effectively and efficiently through CST treatments. Some clients won't ask questions the first time. Incorporate the same techniques during the next session and see how the body and the mind progress.

## General Sequence

For me, a typical massage session always begins with the client lying prone on the table. After the usual comfort adjustments and hot packs on the neck and back, the session begins with grounding myself at the end of the table. When incorporating CST, I ground and then gently hold the client's heels and dorsa and feel for the CranioSacral Rhythm, which quickly melds me to the client and their needs. A gentle fascial glide can also be included at this time.

The session continues with compressions, up to the shoulders and down the other side, then returning to the shoulders, where I gently place one hand on the sacrum and one hand on the occiput.... allowing a moment to again tune in to the CranioSacral Rhythm and move into the Rock and Glide of the dural tube. This is such a calming and relaxing feeling to the clients, that a full 30 seconds to a minute could be spent here without any disruption to the flow of their 'typical' massage. It's amazing to feel the change in the body tensions from this simple, gentle technique, which encourages both physical and mental tension to begin melting away. This starts the relaxation of the neck, back, and shoulders... benefiting the client while additionally requiring less physical effort from the therapist.

When the client moves to a supine position, I momentarily place a hand under the cervical spine to re-establish the normal curve. While there I do a Thoracic Inlet Release to open the path for fluids to flow away from the head. When incorporating CranioSacral Therapy

## Case Study

### Personal Details

DD is a client who was referred to me by a local Massage Therapist and a local Chiropractor.

DD has a very restricted range of motion in his shoulders, neck, middle back, and hips. The Massage Therapist referred DD to me because she was having limited success in maintaining range of motion and softening of the tissues/muscles of the back, shoulders, and neck. Her primary modality is deep tissue massage and she felt that the incorporation of CranioSacral Therapy might assist to increase range of motion and softening, as well as to help the body to "hold" the treatment longer. The Chiropractor referred DD to me to help with softening and relaxing tissues in an effort to make the adjustments easier and more effective. DD now has a session with me immediately before each Chiropractic Adjustment.

DD is a 68 year old man, approximately 190# and 5'9" tall. He spent over 40 years in a career that was physically demanding, assembling bicycles and grills, six days a week, ten hours a day. He has never received any type of therapy or treatment throughout those years.

### Condition

His presenting problems included mid-back pain, neck pain with limited range of motion, and bilateral shoulder pain with limited range of motion. Visual assessment demonstrated both shoulders rolling anteriorly and superiorly, compression of the cervical spine, and little movement in the arms/shoulders when walking. He complained of limited range of motion and pain in his shoulders, pain in his mid back, and limited rotation in his neck.

### Treatment

Treatment consisted of a 60 minute Therapeutic Massage. CranioSacral Therapy was incorporated at various stages throughout the massage to enhance the parasympathetic system, mental and physical relaxation, and to enhance the CranioSacral system and flow. While DD was prone I evaluated his CranioSacral Rhythm from the feet and again at the shoulders. A Dural Tube Rock and Glide was incorporated to assist the dural tube, neck, back, and shoulders to relax and "stretch." When DD moved to a supine position I placed a hand under the cervical spine to re-establish the normal curve and then completed an Occipital Cranial Base Release to soften and relax the sub-occipital muscles, scalene muscles, and upper trapezius muscles, while also applying traction to the dural tube. The scalp massage was followed by about 30 seconds of Cranial Pumping to enhance CSF flow through the brain and system, and I ended the session by inducing a CV4 Stillpoint.

### After-Care Advice

At the completion of the treatment we discussed using a Stillpoint Inducer at home, anytime of the day, to enhance relaxation. Additionally I recommended sipping water throughout the day to keep the body hydrated, and demonstrated a few simple stretches to assist the shoulders and back to increase and maintain flexibility and increased range of motion. Following warm showers he completes a simple forward bend to stretch the spine, dural tube, and muscles of the back and legs, completes simple head neck rotation stretches, and uses a towel to stretch the shoulders.

### Conclusion

DD visits monthly to maintain the progress made via CranioSacral Therapy and Therapeutic Massage. The improved range of motion and ease of movement is visible. He continues to receive Chiropractic adjustments following the CST/Massage sessions, and the Chiropractor indicates that his adjustments are easier and holding longer. He indicates that his back pain has decreased and he feels he has increased range of motion in his neck and shoulders.



techniques, the scalp massage is slightly shortened to allow time for Cranial Pumping and an Occipital Cranial Base Release (OCBR). Depending on the client, tension, timing, etc., this may not result in a full release but it is enough to begin to soften tissues and introduce the body to the technique. This is the technique the client is going to remember after the session!

After completing the rest of the massage in the supine position I move to a first vault hold position, tune in to the cranial rhythm, and provide cranial pumping for a few seconds.....Then I listen to the craniosacral rhythm..... induce a Stillpoint..... and end the session.

### Discussing CranioSacral Therapy with your Client

Each client is different, but typically I find it best to ask my clients how they are feeling before I leave the room, while they are still on the table. At this point, they are aware of deep relaxation and peace, not chatter from a waiting room, or daily stress such as bills, etc. Often, they respond with a question or comment about the work on 'their head and neck' (Occipital Cranial Base Release) or 'when you stretched my spine' (Dural Tube Rock and Glide). These are the opportunities to say, 'I'm so happy you enjoyed that, it was very beneficial to your body. It's actually a CranioSacral Therapy technique that I incorporated into the massage. I'll meet you out front and get you a brochure about what I did.'

When my clients meet me at the front desk I greet them with a glass of water, my CranioSacral Therapy business card, and a CranioSacral Therapy brochure. A simple, 'I'm so happy you enjoyed your session. Here's some information about the CranioSacral Therapy that I incorporated. Our receptionist can schedule your next session at your convenience.'

### Conclusion

CranioSacral Therapy was developed in the early 1980s by osteopathic physician Dr. John E. Upledger. His extensive research and work, based on earlier research by Dr. William Sutherland, laid a foundation that continues throughout the world. At this time it is practiced by more than 100,000 healthcare practitioners. CST is beneficial in reducing or eliminating a wide range of medical problems and is increasingly used to boost the immune system and to enhance general wellbeing.

As a CranioSacral Therapist for the past five years, I've had many clients tell me how much a CST session helps them. They are calmer, have more energy, have decreased pain, decreased anxiety, improved sleep patterns, decreased digestive issues, decreased head and neck pain, and the list goes on.

I encourage you to share your CranioSacral Therapy training with your clients, allow them to reap the benefits, and see your practice grow!

## Glossary of Terms

### Central Nervous System

The part of the nervous system consisting of the brain and spinal cord.

### Parasympathetic System

One of the two divisions of the autonomic nervous system. It is responsible for stimulation of 'rest-and-digest' or 'feed and breed' activities that occur when the body is at rest.

### Sympathetic System

One of the two divisions of the autonomic nervous system. Its primary process is to stimulate the body's fight-or-flight response.

### Cerebral Spinal Fluid

A clear fluid found around the brain and spine. It is produced in the brain and acts as a cushion to the brain and spinal cord.

### CranioSacral System

The membranes and fluid that surround, protect, and nourish the brain and spinal cord.

### Cranial Pumping

A CST technique that enhances the production and movement (exchange) of CranioSacral Fluid.<sup>1</sup>

### CranioSacral Rhythm

A rhythm created by the rise and fall of the cerebrospinal fluid within the compartment of the dura mata.

### Fascial Glide

CST evaluation technique used to locate and find more information about restrictions within the body.

### Occipital Base Release

A CST technique which releases restrictions and facilitates relaxation in the soft tissues posterior to the atlas; disengages the atlas from the occiput; decompresses the occiput from the atlas; spreads the occipital condyles laterally and releases restrictions in the foramen magnum; and evaluates and releases dural tube restrictions and mobilizes the dural tube in a superior direction.<sup>2</sup>

### Rock and Glide

Rock: A CST technique which releases the transverse rings of the dural tube and enhances the rotational range of motion of the occiput and sacrum.<sup>3</sup> Glide: A CST technique which releases spinal nerve roots and dural sleeves and enhances longitudinal range of motion of the occiput and sacrum.<sup>4</sup>

### Stillpoint

A CST technique which brings the CranioSacral Rhythm to a therapeutic stop.<sup>5</sup>

### Thoracic Inlet Release

A CST techniques which releases restrictions in the tissues of the thoracic inlet.



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#### References

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- 3 CranioSacral Therapy 1 Study Guide, pages 105;
- 4 CranioSacral Therapy 1 Study Guide, pages 110
- 5 CranioSacral Therapy 1 Study Guide, pages 116