Structure, Function, Integration.

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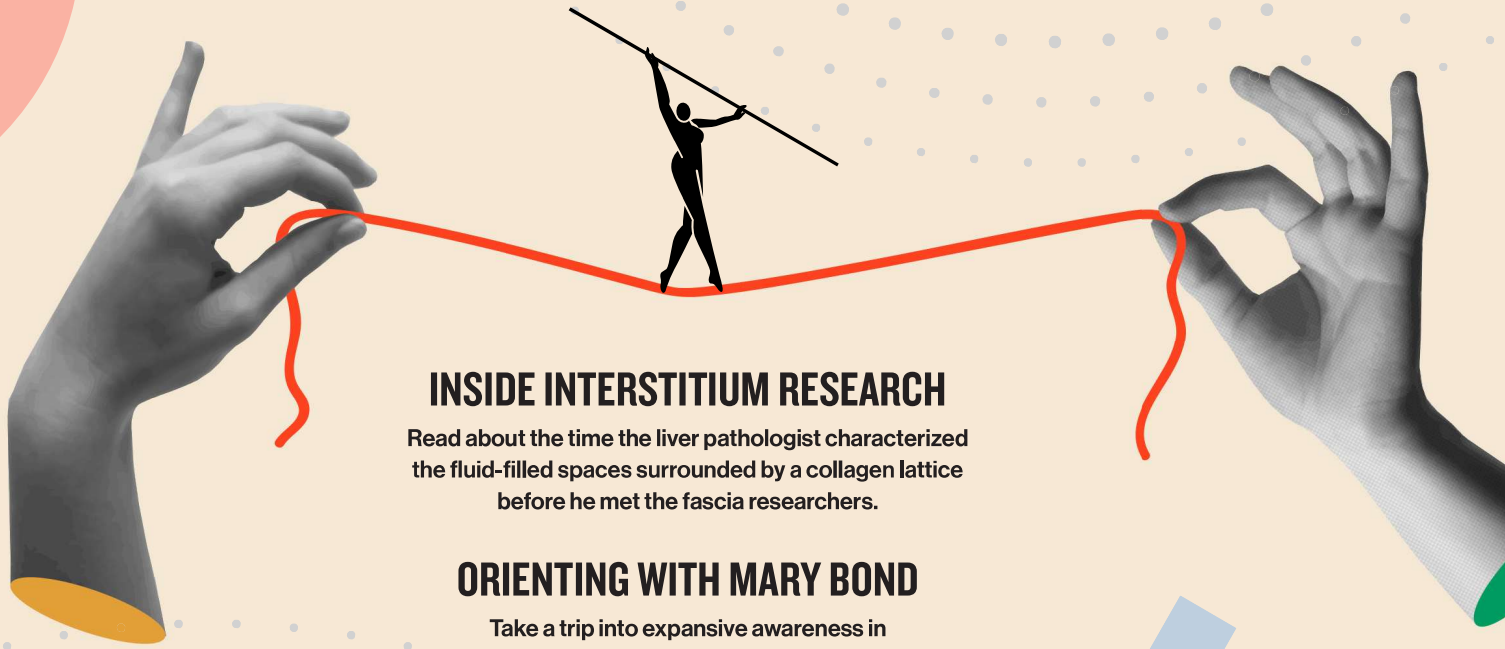
ON BALANCE

Being in relationship with gravity, the body brings the heart and the nervous system into equilibrium.



INSIDE INTERSTITIUM RESEARCH

Read about the time the liver pathologist characterized the fluid-filled spaces surrounded by a collagen lattice before he met the fascia researchers.

ORIENTING WITH MARY BOND

Take a trip into expansive awareness in your body mandala.

Also in this issue

Clinical Psychologist, Dr. Heather L. Corwin, gives the gift of witnessing.

Rolfing® Structural Integration and the Felt Sense of Being

Alan Richardson

By Alan Richardson, Certified Advanced Rolfer™

ABSTRACT *Rolfer™ and author Alan Richardson explores the intersection between the felt sense of being and Rolfing® Structural Integration, where the work of structural integration promotes embodied presence through hands-on manipulation of the body's structures and integration of the client's sensory experience. His observations of people over the last few decades have led him to wonder if technology has shifted not only people's social engagement styles, but also their bodily awareness, leading to a culture where people feel disconnected from both their bodies and their relationships. Western culture has long considered the mind and body separate, with bodily awareness often resulting in a lack of awareness regarding the nuances of pain, the physical experiences associated with emotions, and a missed opportunity to appreciate the joys of pleasant sensations. Richardson discusses three relationships of embodiment: the relationship a person has with their body, their environment, and gravity. A key element in feeling our body in space is sensing our relationship with gravity.*

"We have learned much about the world by reducing it to its constituent parts. But in the process, we have separated ourselves from our world and, most tragically, from our own bodies as part of that world. As a consequence, we may know what we are made of, but we do not know who we are. We are quite literally knowledgeable, yet out of touch; and we suffer from being out of touch."

– Advanced Rolfing® Instructor Michael Salveson (Maitland 1995, xi).

"We have so little of each other these days, so far from tribe and fire."

– Poet Laureate emeritus Danusha Laméris, in poem *Small Kindnesses* (2019)

The monk Gelong Thubten, author of *The Monk's Guide to Happiness* (2019), did a four-year silent retreat in Scotland between 2005 to 2009, where he received no news about the world outside the monastery. At the end of the retreat he revisited London, United Kingdom, and had the impression of being in an unfamiliar world. Before 2005, Thubten knew only a few people who used BlackBerry devices. By 2009, however, smartphones had become mainstream (McCall 2024).

For many years I have walked from Whole Foods Market in Piccadilly, United Kingdom, to my clinic in Harley Street, and can recall the gradual change in the experience over the years. It used to

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be enjoyable to see the faces of fellow pedestrians walking in the opposite direction along the bustling Carnaby Street, their heads up, making eye contact. Now, however, almost everyone is so absorbed in their phone, staring at those little screens, that they don't see me. I frequently have to side-step to avoid a collision. In many situations, human connection has been replaced by compulsive, dopamine-driven engagement with our electronic devices.

The digital age began in the 1970s with personal computers like the Altair 8800 designed in 1974, the Apple II computer was produced from 1977 to 1993, and the IBC PC that was first released on the market in 1981, making computing accessible beyond large institutions. It accelerated significantly after 1995 with the widespread adoption of the internet and has profoundly reshaped human behavior since the introduction of the iPhone in 2007, the iPad in 2010, and the subsequent rise of social media. The ubiquitous use of screens as a means to connect with each other has largely replaced face-to-face interactions, once the cornerstone of human connection. The rise of asynchronous communication through messaging and email, along with the formation of online communities and virtual relationships, has further displaced social engagement based on physical proximity.

Our compulsion to interact with our phones hijacks the neurological self-regulation we naturally receive from human-to-human social engagement through facial expressions, the nuanced timing of conversation, the unconscious reading of body language, and the entrainment of nervous systems. Instead, we sit for hours while our minds engage in digital dialogue, or else repeatedly break contact with the people around us by obsessively checking our phones or Apple watches. Indeed, many people now seem more comfortable expressing themselves through text messages and images rather than face-to-face interactions. The comparison culture of Instagram and TikTok has given rise to new forms of social anxiety. On a physical level, constant device use also leads to neck and shoulder tension from prolonged hunching and wrist pain from scrolling.

Additionally, modern capitalist societies prioritize intellectual achievements and abstract reasoning over physical labor, a tendency reflected in the school system's focus on career preparedness at the expense of bodily awareness and emotional intelligence. This reinforces a cultural disconnection from the body, where the mind is seen as the primary tool for success, and the body is relegated to a passive or secondary role. I see many people when I am out walking, and also including my clients, who remind me of myself before I experienced Rolfing® Structural Integration – primarily identifying with their minds and largely unaware of the nuances of sensory experience. It is as if they are using their rational intelligence to suppress their emotional and kinesthetic intelligence.

It seems that we are easily distracted from feeling connected to our physical being. Is it inevitable that we human beings, with our highly developed neocortex, have a conflict between mind and body? Is this primarily due to the internet and smartphones? Or is the digital age just the latest iteration of humanity's ongoing struggle to remain in touch with the felt sense of being?

We know that Rolfing Structural Integration delivers on its promise – enhancing the integration of the human structure by improving the adaptability and mutual support of the myofascial system. But can it also help people achieve greater mind-body integration, fostering a deeper sense of embodiment? What exactly is embodiment? And what are its benefits?

Embodiment

"One of the clearest lessons from neuroscience is that our sense of ourselves is anchored in a vital connection with our bodies."

– Boston-based psychiatrist, Bessel van der Kolk, MD (2014, 326).

"'Embodiment' is a personal-evolutionary solution to the tyranny of the yapping 'monkey mind'. One that paradoxically allows instinct and reason to be held together, fused in joyful participation and flow."

– Developer of Somatic Experiencing®, Peter Levine, PhD (2010, 287).

In mindfulness, movement studies, and philosophy, embodiment carries a meaning that goes beyond a standard

By enhancing embodiment, Rolfing® Structural Integration not only improves posture and movement but also nurtures a profound sense of connection to oneself and the world.

Alan Richardson

dictionary definition of one that *embodies* something, that is, to represent in human form (Merriam-Webster.com 2025). Karden Rabin's definition from the Trauma Research Foundation provides a more nuanced perspective (2022, online): *"The act of expanding one's self awareness to include the felt experience of the body, such as sensory, sensational, emotional and physical experiences, and incorporating that information into one's overall conception and conduct of themselves, their identity, beliefs, behaviors, and ways of being."*

Rabin's definition was inspired by a few others, like this quote by Ann Saffi Biasetti (Rabin 2022, online): *"Embodiment can be simply defined as living informed through the sense of experience of the body."*

When was the last time you enjoyed the sensations in your feet as you walk, felt the weight of your body relaxing into a chair, noticed your breath change with an emotion, or paid attention to how your muscles respond to stress? Has our present bodily awareness been diminished by the allure of the virtual world? We humans have the tendency to suppress emotions against our better interests, especially in order to conform to social expectations. Peter Levine has shown how autonomic discharge in the form of shaking, moving, or emotional expression, such as crying, is a healthy response immediately after coming out of the immobility phase of a trauma (2010). Animals do this naturally; they reorient themselves to the environment, shake off the undischarged energy pent up in the traumatic event, and return to a normal breathing pattern. Yet the adolescent boy who misjudges the timing of his rugby tackle and receives a bone-crunching impact through his shoulder and spine is not going to lie down and cry until his breathing returns to normal. He is motivated by peer pressure to get up and keep participating in the rugby game for fear of being judged as weak. His choice may come at the cost of a physical unease that may persist for years after the traumatic event.

Ultimately, we all have a choice in how much value and attention we give to the somatic aspect of our being. In order to fully appreciate the value of doing this, it first helps to understand the philosophical and cultural roots that have contributed to the modern trend of being primarily mind-identified.

Our Cartesian Inheritance

Western culture's tendency to prioritize the mind over the body has deep philosophical roots. The ancient Greek philosopher, Plato (427-348 BCE), had the notion of *soma sema* (the body as a tomb for the soul), and his belief that bodily desires obstruct wisdom laid the groundwork for a lasting dualism. Plato elaborates on this concept in *Phaedo*, a widely read dialogue between Plato and his teacher, Socrates (469-399 BCE) (Connolly 2025). The dialogue is a dramatization of the day Socrates was executed, where Socrates transforms death itself into a philosophical demonstration of soma sema. The body is seen as a hindrance in the soul's aspiration for truth and wisdom:

" . . . the body fills us with passions and desires and fears, and all sorts of fancies and foolishness, so that, as they say, it really and truly makes it impossible for us to think at all." (Plato Translated by Harold North Fowler 1966, online).

Early Christian thinkers, including Paul and Augustine, reinforced this hierarchy, associating the body with temptation and the soul with moral enlightenment. Medieval ascetic practices, such as fasting and self-denial, which emphasized detachment from the world and physical hardship as a path to spiritual purification, further deepened this divide.[1]

The foundational insight of Descartes – *I think, therefore I am* – is often referred to as 'the cogito'. It first appeared in French as – *Je pense, donc je suis* – in *Discours de la Méthode Pour Bien Conduire sa Raison, et Chercher la Vérité dans les Sciences* (1637), and later in *Principia Philosophiae* (1644) in its Latin form – *cogito, ergo sum*. The cogito emerged from Descartes' method of radical skepticism, where he systematically doubted everything that could be questioned: sensory perceptions, the physical world, and even mathematical truths. Ultimately, he realized that the one thing he could not doubt was his act of thinking. From this, he concluded that thinking itself was undeniable proof of his existence.

Descartes conceptualized the mind as *res cogitans*, the thinking substance, immaterial and focused on reason. In contrast with the body being material, spatial, and governed by mechanical laws, the *res extensa*, the extended substance. This was a pivotal moment in Western thought, reinforcing psychological detachment from the body by elevating reason and cognition as the essence of selfhood while relegating bodily experience to a secondary role.

Descartes' separation of the mind and body, known as the Cartesian split, led to a cultural shift in which the body was treated as an object to be controlled rather than an integral part of selfhood. This division fueled mechanistic reductionism, framing human experience in purely

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physical terms. In *The Concept of Mind* (1949), Gilbert Ryle critiqued this view as the 'ghost in the machine', arguing that it fragmented selfhood by isolating the mind from the body. The Cartesian perspective shaped the biomedical model of health, which treats the body as a machine to be repaired through medical interventions, often neglecting the psychosocial dimensions of healing (Richardson 2024).

The Downside of Disembodiment

"He lived a little distance from his body, regarding his own acts with doubtful side glances."

– Irish novelist and poet, James Joyce (1882-1941), in *Dubliners* (2019, 61).

The consequences of mind-body disconnection are numerous. Failing to notice early signs of physical discomfort or stress can lead to chronic pain, tension, repetitive strain injury, or postural issues, especially for those who spend long hours sitting at a computer.

Lack of somatic awareness also makes it harder to recognize how emotions manifest physically, such as chest tightness during sadness or a fluttering stomach when excited. This disconnect can lead to emotional suppression or overwhelm, as unprocessed feelings linger outside conscious awareness, heightening stress and making emotional regulation more difficult.

Furthermore, because trauma is often stored in the body, somatic disconnection can hinder the ability to process emotions and heal, reinforcing cycles of tension and dysregulation. As Bessel van der Kolk notes, "Physical self-awareness is the first step in releasing the tyranny of the past" (2014, 119). Over time, ignoring bodily signals may contribute to chronic stress and emotional exhaustion.

Disembodiment also leads to overthinking, rumination, and distraction while dulling the ability to fully appreciate sensory pleasures – such as the scent of flowers, the taste of food, or birdsong – key sources of joy and presence. Additionally, it can shift focus toward external appearances and societal standards, reinforcing negative self-image and a sense of inadequacy, a trend intensified by social media's culture of comparison.

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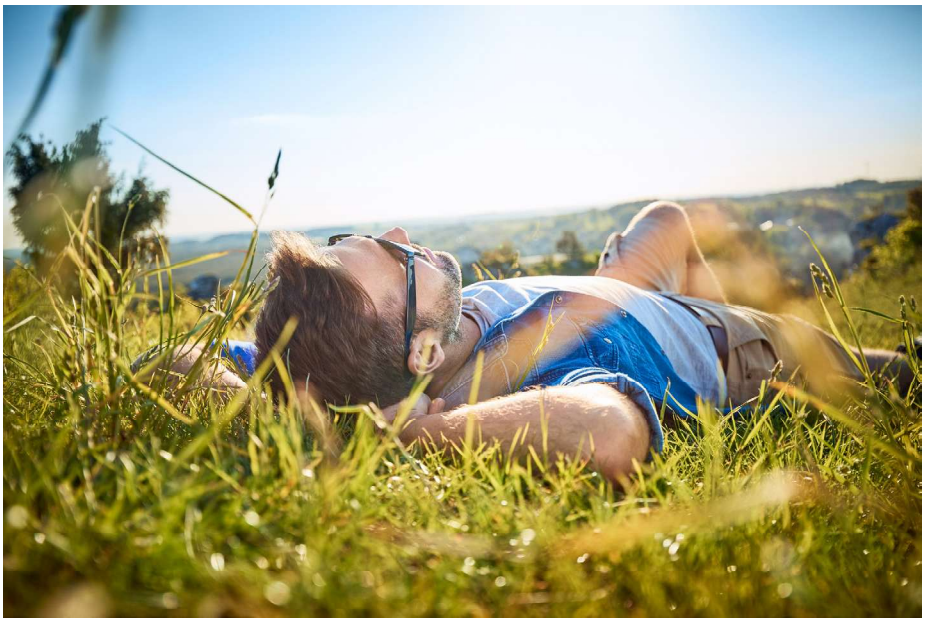

It is helpful to consider three aspects of embodiment that can be viewed as three relationships: the relationship between the person and their body, the person and their surrounding environment, and the person and gravity. (Image by BartekSzewczyk on istockphoto.com.)

Rolfing Embodiment and the Three Relationships

"Caminante, no hay camino, se hace camino al andar."

(Traveler, there is no road; you make your own path as you walk.)

– Spanish poet Antonio Machado (1875-1939), from poem (translated title) *Proverbs and Songs* (2004, 345).

In order to explore how undergoing Rolfing sessions can deepen a sense of personal embodiment, it is helpful to consider three aspects of embodiment that can be viewed as three relationships: the relationship between the person and their body, the person and their surrounding environment, and the person and gravity.

By the end of the Ten Series, they not only appear more structurally integrated but also feel a deeper, more authentic connection to themselves – a hallmark of true embodiment, where the body becomes not just a mechanical entity, but a living, breathing expression of who they are.

Relationship Between the Person and Their Body

"To me, the most important thing is not a specific Rolfing hour; it's the progression from hour to hour. It's the way you prepare in the second hour for the third hour so that you can get the results of the third hour" (Rolf 1990, 159).

The legacy of the Cartesian split has led many to identify primarily with their minds, treating the body as a machine to be controlled rather than an integral part of selfhood. While any skilled touch can momentarily heighten bodily awareness, lasting change requires a deeper shift in one's relationship with the body. The structured sequence of the Rolfing® Ten Series facilitates this transformation, progressively enhancing sensory awareness and integration.

The first two sessions lay the foundation for embodiment by focusing on breath and the feet – two key aspects of bodily awareness. Many clients, unaware of their habitual breathing restrictions, are surprised by the newly experienced ease in their breath. Some are motivated to maintain a daily mindful breathing practice throughout the Ten Series and beyond. Likewise, attention to the feet strengthens a sense of connection to the ground, helping clients shift from a head-dominated focus to a more holistic sense of being.

As the Ten Series progresses, each session expands awareness of different body regions, allowing for the release of chronic tension and the discovery of a more fluid, connected way of moving. Clients often describe sensations of greater length, spaciousness, and ease, subtle yet profound shifts that redefine their relationship with their bodies. By the end of the Ten Series, they not only appear more structurally integrated but also feel a deeper, more authentic connection to themselves – a hallmark of true embodiment, where the body becomes not just a mechanical entity, but a living, breathing expression of who they are.

2. Relationship Between the Person and Their Surrounding Environment

"The world offers itself to your imagination,

calls to you like the wild geese, harsh and exciting –

over and over announcing your place in the family of things."

– American poet, Mary Oliver, in *Wild Geese* (1986, 1).

As the Rolfing Ten Series enhances internal body awareness, it simultaneously deepens one's connection with the surrounding space. A fuller breath expands spatial perception, while more responsive feet create a stronger sense of support from the ground. Over time, this heightened awareness transforms not just movement but the way one interacts with the environment.

French Rolfer™, movement expert, author, and scholar, Hubert Godard highlights this shift, noting, "When you change something in the body, the concrete body of somebody, you change his or her way of perceiving space" (McHose 2006, 31). Godard teaches the notion, *I am in the space and the space is in me*, reflecting the idea that our relationship with the world shapes how we perceive it.

Hubert Godard uses the words 'topos' and 'space' to refer to the environment surrounding an individual person (McHose 2009). *Topos* represents the object, the external environment that exists independently of perception. It is the measurable, geographical reality that all beings exist in, regardless of how they experience it. Godard uses the term *space* when he talks about "the imaginary building of our relationship to the world" (McHose 2009, 29). To illustrate Godard's concepts of topos and space, imagine two people walking through a busy London, UK street: a confident local and a first-time visitor. While the topos – pavement, buildings, and traffic – remains the same for both people, their perception of space differs. The Londoner moves fluidly, adjusting their pace and weaving effortlessly through the crowd. In contrast, the tourist feels disoriented, their sense of space fragmented, overwhelmed by the fast pace of the city.

Interestingly, the notions of topos and space are similar to the idea of *umwelt* and *umgebung* in the work of Baltic German-biologist Jakob von Uexküll (1864-1944). While umwelt refers to the subjective world as experienced by an organism – its unique perception and interaction with its environment – umgebung is the objective, external environment, akin to topos. The interplay between these concepts highlights the contrast between objective reality and our individual experience of it.

American neuroscientist, author, and science communicator David M. Eagleman, PhD, discusses umwelt and umgebung in *Incognito: The Secret Lives of the Brain* (2011), noting that, "Reality is far more subjective than is commonly supposed. Instead of reality being passively recorded by the brain, it is actively constructed by it" (82).

Our perception of space is subjective, influenced by our history and life associations. Someone who has always felt compressed might suddenly experience a sense of openness, not only within their body but also in the space around them. Similarly, a person with habitually raised shoulders might feel greater ease when they are supported to allow them to rest down on the rib cage, alongside a shift in how they occupy space in social settings.

Rolf Movement® education reinforces this by exploring how posture and imagination shape spatial perception. Clients discover how shifting attention – such as engaging peripheral vision or sensing the space behind them – can transform their movement quality and overall presence. Attention has its own power, as British psychiatrist, philosopher, neuroscientist, and author Iain McGilchrist points out:

"*The kind of attention we bring to bear on the world changes the nature of the world we attend to . . . Attention changes what kind of thing comes into being for us. . . . Attention also changes who we are, we who are doing the attending*" (2009, 28).

Simple somatic explorations take on a phenomenological depth, with imaginative spatial cues offering powerful insights. For example, a client might explore movement as if passing through water or honey, or evoke the scent of pleasant aromas to alter their sensory experience. These metaphors aren't just poetic; they immediately reorganize coordinative patterns and create new possibilities for embodied expression.

Rolf Movement® Instructor, Kevin Frank, expands on these ideas by emphasizing that movement is not simply about posture or structure but about the relationship between *body schema* and *body image* (2008). Body schema refers to the unconscious, automatic coordination of movement, allowing the body to respond fluidly to external stimuli without conscious effort. Body schema is synonymous with what Frank calls the *movement brain*. When the body schema is allowed to function optimally, movement becomes more natural, adaptable, and responsive to the environment.

In contrast, body image refers to the conscious perception of one's body, shaped by personal history, emotions, and social influences. When overly dominant, body image can override body schema, leading to excessive conscious control, tension, and movement patterns that feel awkward or unnatural.[2]

Frank describes the body as a movement system, responding dynamically to gravitational forces, spatial orientation, and sensory input. Rather than seeing the body as something to be mechanically adjusted, Frank highlights the importance of working with the nervous system's innate intelligence to refine coordination and balance. His approach emphasizes that embodiment extends beyond internal awareness to encompass the dynamic interplay between perception, movement, and engagement with the external world.

Frank emphasizes that coordinative change is not achieved through rigid formulas but by refining the body's perception of itself in space. He outlines several ways to enhance this process, which he refers to as *portals to the movement brain*. These include sensing weight and spatial orientation, engaging with imagined vectors, and using peripheral gaze to enhance inter-sensorial awareness. Tuning into the articulation of bones, sensing micromovements in the joints, cultivating haptic awareness through the hands and feet, and shifting weight and spatial orientation through guided attention, all serve as powerful tools for reining body schema – allowing

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it to bypass the conscious control and tension imposed by body image.

Additionally, introducing subtle challenges, such as a new demand or a slight acceleration in movement, can elicit deeper integration. By incorporating these strategies, practitioners create conditions where the body schema can reorganize itself naturally, facilitating greater ease, stability, and adaptability.

Through this process, embodiment moves beyond internal focus. It becomes an active, dynamic relationship with the world, where movement is no longer effortful but fluid, responsive, and deeply integrated with the surrounding space.

3. Relationship Between the Person and Gravity

"[In] order for a living body to be at ease in its spatial environment on earth [sic] gravity must be able to deal positively with it" (Rolf 1990, 35).

"Lines in a body are not mystical structures; they are where forces balance" (Rolf 1990, 104).

Dr. Rolf was known for saying – *Gravity is the therapist* – emphasizing that when the body is well-organized, gravity becomes a supportive force rather than a compressive burden.

"*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. This is our primary concept*" (Rolf 1990, 86).

The myofascial system functions as a tensegrity structure, where balanced tension and compression allow for efficient movement. Instead of resisting gravity, an integrated body learns to work with it, creating a sensation of both grounding and lift. Rolfing Structural Integration enhances this relationship by reorganizing the body's structure so that gravitational force flows through it efficiently. As chronic holding patterns release, movement becomes more fluid and effortless. Mechanoreceptors in the fascia adjust muscle tone in response, refining posture and coordination. Dr. Rolf described this optimal state as "zero

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balance" – a sense of weightlessness and ease in movement (Rolf 1990, 54).

From a phenomenological perspective, emphasizing the lived experience of the individual, gravity is not just an external force but something we live through. Godard notes that habitual tension can create unnecessary resistance to gravity, distorting both movement and perception of space. By restoring efficient support, Rolfing Structural Integration transforms one's felt sense of being, allowing for a more natural, responsive, and embodied way of moving through the world.

Phenomenology and Gravity

As explained at the beginning of this article, the mind-body divide, exemplified by Descartes, has shaped Western thought throughout cultural history. Phenomenology arose as a direct challenge to this dualism, arguing that mind and body are not separate entities but deeply intertwined. The French phenomenological philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1908-1961) proposed that perception is always embodied; rather than simply *having* a body, we *are* our body, continuously engaging with and being shaped by our surroundings.

"*Truth does not 'inhabit' only 'the inner man', or more accurately, there is no inner man, man is in the world, and only in the world does he know himself*" (Merleau-Ponty 1962, xii).

This perspective resonates with Dr. Rolf's approach, which sees posture and movement not as isolated mechanical adjustments but as integral to how we experience both ourselves and the world.

"[A] man's emotional state may be seen as the projection of his structural imbalances" (Rolf 1989, 17).

When German philosopher Martin Heidegger (1889-1976), another key figure in phenomenology, speaks of 'thrownness' (*Geworfenheit* in German) in *Being and Time* (1927), he describes how human existence is situated within a world we did not choose, influenced by conditions that precede and define our experience. This concept can be understood not just existentially, but also quite literally, in terms of being 'thrown' into a gravitational field – a force that conditions our every action, movement, and way of being in space.

From a phenomenological perspective, gravity is not just an external force acting upon us; it is something we live through and experience in our posture, gait, and proprioception. Our relationship with gravity is deeply pre-reflective, meaning we do not consciously think about it, yet it profoundly shapes our kinesthetic sense, our felt relationship to space, and even our sense of self.

Tonic Function and Gravity

Dr. Rolf's work, structural integration, laid the foundation for understanding how the human body can be optimally aligned within the gravitational field. Building on this, Hubert Godard's tonic function model explores how postural and movement patterns, shaped by history and perception, either create unnecessary resistance to gravity or allow for effortless support.

Tonic function refers to the body's ability to maintain postural support and readiness for movement through the continuous, low-level activation of muscles. In the article, *Basic Concepts in the Theory of Hubert Godard* (Newton 1995), Rolf Movement Instructor Aline Newton describes it as the body's fundamental capacity to organize itself in relation to gravity – a process governed by the nervous system's ability to regulate muscle tone efficiently. This tonic function ensures stability and ease without excessive effort by selectively inhibiting muscles that do not need to be engaged.

"*Like the air around us, our relationship with gravity is so basic, so fundamental, that we rarely think of it. Yet it underlines – sets the tone for – every one of our actions and behaviors*" (Newton 1995, 34).

This balance allows for smooth, effortless movement and postural support without unnecessary tension. However, tonic function extends beyond mechanical postural control – it is deeply interconnected with psychological development, expression, and communication. As Newton explains, it involves an entire system that coordinates our interaction with gravity, including the brain, nerve pathways, fascia, muscle spindles, and tonic muscles. She emphasizes that tonic function cannot be understood purely through biomechanics, as it is shaped by subjective experience, perception, and early developmental patterns formed through infant-mother relationships. Operating below conscious awareness, this system underlies all movement and expression, fundamentally shaping how we engage with our environment.

When functioning optimally, the body responds to gravity with natural efficiency, distributing effort without unnecessary strain. However, stress, injury, or habitual misuse can lead to compensatory patterns where certain muscles remain chronically contracted while others become underactive, disrupting the self-regulating nature of tonic function. This misalignment causes the body to misinterpret its gravitational environment, creating unnecessary muscular effort to resist a force that could instead support it.

To restore optimal muscle tone, dysfunctional inhibition must first be released, freeing the body from excessive muscular tension that disrupts efficient movement. This process allows the nervous system to reset and restore proper postural support, enabling the body to rely on its intrinsic stabilizing systems rather than overusing movement-focused muscles.[3]

Dr. Rolf's Legacy

"*And those who were seen dancing were thought to be insane by those who could not hear the music."*

– unknown author, often attributed to Friedrich Nietzsche.

The genius of Dr. Rolf lies in her recognition that our relationship with gravity is not fixed, but can be fundamentally reorganized. This reorganization goes far deeper than simple postural adjustment. It transforms our basic mode of inhabiting space and relating to the ground beneath us.

In essence, both Rolf's and Godard's approaches seek to transform our fundamental *thrownness* into gravity – not by resisting it – but by learning to move in harmony with it. That is to 'dance' with it, allowing the body to find greater freedom, adaptability, and responsiveness. The Rolfing Ten Series is not merely a biomechanical adjustment for our vertical alignment; it is a process

of reshaping how we inhabit our own embodiment within gravity's embrace. This refined partnership with gravity unlocks deeper relaxation, fluidity of movement, and a more expansive sense of presence in the world.

In our modern world, where mental activity dominates and technology increasingly disconnects us from our physical selves, Rolfing Structural Integration stands alongside many other valuable somatic practices that help restore our embodied awareness. Methods such as yoga, Tai Chi, and other mindful movement disciplines each offer effective pathways back to bodily presence and refined sensory awareness. These embodiment practices, though varied in approach, share a common emphasis on physical awareness and serve as essential bridges restoring our connection to the lived experience of our bodies. Through movement, breath, and conscious attention, they offer powerful counterbalances to the mind-body disconnect in today's world.

Whether through the systematic manual therapy of structural integration and movement re-education offered by Rolfing sessions, the mindful postures and breathwork of yoga, and the meditative fluidity of Tai Chi, these kinds of practices cultivate deeper self-awareness and flourishing. Flourishing – the state of thriving physically, mentally, and emotionally – emerges when we fully connect with our body, embracing embodiment through movement, awareness, and presence. By reconnecting with the body's innate intelligence, these practices encourage a sense of grounding, vitality, and harmony, allowing us to experience the weight of our bones, the rhythm of our breath, and the energy that animates us.

Through Rolfing Structural Integration, in particular, with its unique focus on fascial release and tonic organization in gravity, we refine our movement patterns, improve our capacity to adapt to ever-changing physical circumstances and challenges, release unnecessary tension, restore natural alignment, and improve contralateral spinal function in walking, enabling us to move with greater ease within the gravitational field (Haaland 2022). By enhancing embodiment, Rolfing Structural Integration not only improves posture and movement but also nurtures a profound sense of connection to oneself and the world.

By addressing both structural patterns and somatic awareness, Rolfing Structural Integration serves as a bridge between mechanical efficiency and lived experience, helping individuals rediscover the felt sense of being: their body's inherent wisdom and potential for integrated movement.

Endnotes

1. It's worth noting, however, that while these developments were influential in shaping a cultural tendency to privilege the mind and spirit over bodily experience in Western culture, Christianity also contains doctrines, such as the incarnation (the belief that God took on human flesh in the person of Jesus Christ) and resurrection, that affirm the intrinsic goodness and enduring value of the body. Nevertheless, these developments continue to shape Western thought, sustaining a dualistic framework that persists today.

2. A practical example of *body schema* in a golf swing is when you step up to the ball and take your shot. As you position yourself, your body automatically adjusts the angle of your feet, the alignment of your hips, and the grip on the club, all without conscious thought. Your arms and shoulders begin to move in sync with the rest of your body as you start the backswing. The muscles in your torso engage at just the right time, coordinating your posture and balance while your legs adjust to maintain stability. As you come down through the swing, your body automatically adjusts your follow-through, maintaining fluidity and balance throughout the movement. This seamless coordination happens because your body schema continuously processes spatial and sensory information, allowing for fluid, unconscious movement adaptation. On the other hand, if you take the swing with *body image* at the forefront of your mind, you might begin to overanalyze each part of the movement. You might consciously adjust your stance, double-check your grip, and focus on each muscle's engagement, which can disrupt the natural flow of your swing. As you start the backswing, you may tense up, worrying about whether your posture is correct or if you're using enough force. Your legs might feel stiff, and your arms may lack the fluidity they need, resulting in a clumsy or disjointed motion. Instead of feeling the natural rhythm of the swing, your attention is split, making your movements less coordinated and more forced, which can ultimately affect the quality of your shot.

3. Inhibiting the inhibition, in the lexicon of tonic function theory, refers to restoring natural postural support by releasing unnecessary muscle tension. In other words, inhibiting the dysfunctional inhibition to efficient, effortless posture and movement.

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Keywords

Rolfing Structural Integration; felt sense; embodiment; fascia; smartphones; social engagement; body awareness; embodiment; integration; self awareness; felt experience; philosophy; culture; mind; body; Plato; Descartes; Ida Rolf; Hubert Godard; Kevin Frank; body schema; body image; phenomenology; gravity. ■