

SET TALK

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SUCCESSFULLY TREATING THE PHYSICAL SYMPTOMS OF DEPRESSION AND ANXIETY

Gina, a 50 year old client who usually had several sessions a year for neck and shoulder tension, came for treatment very hunched over with low energy. While updating her health history since her last session Gina disclosed that she was on antidepressants and the doctor was still looking for the right dosage and the right antidepressant. This was surprising since Gina had not had a long history of depression. Gina then mentioned that her 80 year old mother was dying of cancer and because her father had Alzheimer's he was unable to help with any of her mother's care. Gina had been seeing a psychiatrist ever since her mother's cancer had been pronounced terminal. She knew she needed help with her depression since she was not able to sleep. She noticed that she felt weighted down and heavy, and as this feeling increased the more bent forward she became. Structural evaluation revealed that Gina's diaphragmatic arch was dramatically contracted pulling her rib cage down and forward. In addition both of Gina's shoulders were medially rotated and her head and neck were pulled forward. It was obvious that Gina's breathing was severely restricted.

Mark, a 35 year old accountant was going through a breakup of his marriage right in the middle of tax season. Mark set up some sessions to help him with headaches that were becoming chronic. On Mark's intake form he listed Xanax under medications which is an anti-anxiety drug. Questioning Mark further about his physical stress levels he revealed that at the beginning of his divorce when he and his wife had been fighting he had awakened several nights with severe chest pain and went to the emergency room thinking he was having a heart attack. After a thorough workup the doctors told him there was no sign of heart trouble and suggested he go on medication for anxiety.

Things had gotten worse when Mark's wife moved out and he woke up hyperventilating having an anxiety attack. At the emergency room he was told that his hyperventilation was caused by anxiety and his Xanax (anti-anxiety medication) was increased. While taking the Xanax Mark was having difficulty concentrating at work and was still having hyperventilation and anxiety attacks both during the day and at night. Mark's mental health counselor had suggested that he see me to help release the tension and anxiety response that was taking place in his body. Structural evaluation revealed that

Mark's body had a significant twist with his left ilium rotated forward and down and right ilium rotated posteriorly. His ribcage was pulled down and forward on both sides but more pronounced on the right. His right shoulder was medially rotated and lower than his left. His sternum appeared sunken with very little movement with restricted breathing.

These two clients both had a medical diagnosis, one for depression and the other for anxiety disorder. Both of them had recognizable structural changes and observable significant areas of tension in their bodies. Being a massage therapist and working within the scope of massage therapy it was important that I be very clear that I was treating their physical bodies not their minds. What is known about the mind is that stress and psychological problems can manifest physically in the body. Both of these clients had physical manifestations from their psychological conditions. As a licensed massage therapist my window of opportunity for treatment centered entirely on the physical, energetic and structural, not the psychological.

Treatment for Gina started with the Quick Release Technique (QRT) to release stress, mobilize energy and increase the cranial motion. This was followed with Cranial/Structural therapy to start the release of the structural collapse of the chest, head, neck and shoulders. At this point Gina was more relaxed and able to breathe more comfortably. Specialized soft tissue myofascial protocols were applied to the muscles governing her breathing – chest, head, neck and shoulders. During the soft tissue release Gina had several emotional releases where the emotional energy of sadness and grief were expressed. Gina left standing straighter, more relaxed and with more energy. She was scheduled weekly for five weeks.

Each successive treatment followed the same sequence of the QRT followed by Cranial/Structural therapy and specialized deep tissue myofascial releases. The Structural goals were to release the diaphragm, raise the chest, open the pectoralis major to release the shoulders back, and release the head and neck back into structural balance. The energetic goals with the QRT were to release the accumulated stress, open the breathing process so that Gina's energy could build back up, increase energy flow through acupuncture meridians and cranial function, and release the energies of trapped emotions that were causing her body to tighten and collapse structurally.

After five sessions Gina was more relaxed, standing straighter with her shoulders back, ribcage up, and head/neck and shoulders in alignment. Gina reported she was sleeping the full night, had more energy and was

handling the details of her mother's treatments. In addition she had settled on a lower dose anti-depressant and was hoping that she would only have to take it for a short time. Gina continued treatment once every two weeks through her mother's demise and for three months afterwards. When Gina decided to stop treatments she was off anti-depressants, structurally aligned and able to breathe easily.

The QRT was the first treatment used with Mark to release the energetic tension throughout his upper body. This prepared his body for the Cranial/Structural Core Distortion Releases to release the structural twist and provide physical support. This was followed with specialized myofascial deep tissue therapy to further release the twist in the pelvis, balance the leg length, and open energy flows down the legs into the feet (grounding).

Mark's second session again started with the QRT to open energy flows and release tension. Cranial/Structural therapy was applied to bring further balance and support by releasing more of the twist of the core distortion. Specialized soft tissue myofascial therapy was applied from Mark's pelvis through his shoulders to release the twist in the ribcage, open the breathing process, and release the tension in his intercostals and over his sternum. While treating the sternum and intercostals Mark started hyperventilating and was encouraged to breathe through the hyperventilation to release the emotional energy causing the anxiety. Mark reported that he felt relaxed for the first time since his divorce had started.

Mark was seen weekly with the application of the QRT, the Cranial/Structural therapy, and specialized soft tissue myofascial work addressing the pelvis through the legs or pelvis through the shoulders. During approximately 10 sessions Mark hyperventilated three times and was encouraged to breathe through the process to release the fear and anxiety. These were triggered by the release of the tension in the soft tissue surrounding his breathing. Mark also had other emotional energy releases of anger and sadness around his divorce.

After the 10 sessions Mark was no longer having panic attacks or chest pains. In addition Mark was structurally supported and could feel the support in his body down through his feet. Mark could also breathe and relax whenever tension or fear started to arise so he wouldn't hyperventilate. He was now only taking Xanax at times of emotional crisis which were few and far between. Mark spread his sessions out to once a month and then only as needed once or twice a year on a maintenance program.

It is important to note that outside of taking a history about the onset of the depression or anxiety for Mark and Gina no processing or discussing depression or anxiety was used in the therapy. Instead, the QRT, Cranial/Structural therapy and breathing were used as energetic releases. Cranial/Structural therapy and myofascial deep tissue work were applied to release soft tissue and achieve structural balance. This combination resulted in significant physical changes that led to long term relief in the physical manifestation of depression and anxiety. It is important to note that both Mark and Gina continued to seek professional mental health therapy during the time they were receiving the physical treatment. However, both Mark and Gina reported more positive changes from the approach to the body. As their bodies changed they felt their depression and anxiety lessen.

There are techniques that were applied here which are not normal massage techniques that helped make these treatments successful. As a massage therapist these tools are within your scope of practice and can dramatically affect the results you can achieve with your clients. I hope when clients like Mark and Gina present at your office you will either have developed the skills to work with them or know to refer them to a therapist who has. Massage therapy does and will make a significant difference working with the physical manifestations that are associated with psychological issues.

Please visit our website for more information – www.StructuralEnergeticTherapy.com. You may also contact me through that site with any questions you may have.