

Rosen Method Bodywork

In Rosen Method bodywork, the practitioner follows the process of the client. It is done with and not to, the client. There is no agenda. The practitioner locates the muscular tension in the body through touch and by watching the natural movement of the breath. We follow the process of relaxation and breathing with our hands and often with words as well, reporting to the client what we see and what we feel in a way that helps the client connect with what is happening in the mind.

Chronic tension or "holding" is seen as a barrier between the client's inner experience and his expression of it. As the holding relaxes, something surfaces... in the moment or later, and sometimes not at all. Through relaxation the body finds its own natural posture and the muscles that were used for holding become available for movement. This is gentle and subtle work. Many small "awarenesses" over time add up to big changes in one's life.

Rosen Method is primarily for well people who want to know themselves better. It is also for people who are willing to consider that they are unconsciously contributing to a physical ailment or problem that isn't responding to traditional treatment. For example, low back pain, headaches, or stiff neck.

Many people receive Rosen Work in conjunction with psychotherapy. They begin to sense that there is something beneath their conscious awareness, beneath the story that they've been revealing to their therapist. Having someone's hands on your body, on the muscles that are holding something down or in, invites what's being held to surface. Then it can be examined in psychotherapy.

The work is very subtle. When musculature begins to relax through touch, through the words we say, then whatever is being repressed begins to surface. And sometimes it surfaces in the moment, right there on the table, and the person expresses intense emotions.

Other times it might surface during a dream or while doing some mundane task. Sometimes it doesn't surface at all. We may never know what it was we were holding; all we know is that now we have more freedom of movement and more spontaneous expression of our feelings. So in this work, the context of what was held is not as important as the fact that it had to be held, and that we couldn't express it at the time it happened.

A lot of our growing up, our socialization, involves learning to negotiate our behavior so others will love and approve of us. "I'll give up my tears because they make you unhappy." "My love is too much for you so I'll hold it back." Part of the process of Rosen Method is that you reclaim those parts of yourself that you gave up...your own possibilities.

I've been doing this work since 1979 and I've received weekly sessions for most of that time. I've never had a drama unfold when I've been on the table. I've had tiny little experiences that have

showed me how I set the tone of my life. Little deals that I've made. During one session a very subtle image came up-I had no words to describe it. But suddenly I knew what had happened--at about age seven I had decided that I was second best. Once I became aware of that, it was no longer an issue for me whether I was best or second best.

As practitioners, we have our hands on the body and are listening, watching, and feeling for a response from it. We pay more attention to the body than to the words that are being spoken. We know that when a person says what is true or when they have connected with their own inner experience, there is a response in the body. There is a change in the musculature; there is a movement in the breath. When a person lets go of some holding, there is more inner space, and what comes into that space is breath. That's what we watch. We might say, "What's happening?" If something is coming into the client's awareness, the client can report it. We keep our hands there, allowing the client to integrate it. As practitioners, we say what we see and feel in as neutral a way as possible. One of the paradoxes of the work is that the practitioner is both fully present and at the same time out of the way of the client's process. The art of it is to remain neutral. To be connected with the client, to have a deep level of intimacy, and to be aware of what is the client's experience and what is yours--because the practitioner's own issues are activated by what happens for the client. We all have similar issues; it's a matter of keeping our boundaries clear.

It is hard, and at the same time, it's easy. That's the artistry of it. This is not a hard science. This is an art. There are skills to be mastered; the training takes more than three years. Usually when a person is very emotional about something, that's not what is being held. What we're reaching for is underneath the emotion being acted out. It may be a very small thing that happened, but when it surfaces there is an awareness, an opening, and there is no drama about it. It is simply the truth, and that is what we watch for.

Recently, I have come to think that one's truth and one's spirit are the same. I believe that in speaking our own truth, in revealing our inner nature, in daring to show and be who we are, it is our spirit we are expressing. Rosen Method is about finding the place in yourself from which you can say "Yes" to our own life and to the lives of others, and "Yes" to all that is. Instead of the barriers, which are saying "No," there is acceptance and unconditional love. Unconditional love for yourself and others. It's acceptance. It's peace. It's grace. When that happens, the diaphragm relaxes, the breath moves freely throughout the body, and there's greater possibility for freedom of movement and self-expression. So we're also going for freedom. This is beautiful work.

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This article is derived from an interview with Elaine Mayland, PhD, conducted by Caroline Goodell a certified Rosen Method practitioner in private practice in Seattle.