

ome time ago my teenage son flippantly described my work as "massaging people's brains"! His observation, which was based on first-hand experience of treatment, gave us something to chuckle over together while I pondered the possibility that I would be defining how I work as a CST practitioner for many years to come. Today, what has become clear to me is that the range of people asking for CST is widening. This brings with it various interpretations of how treatment is received and therefore how we might think about defining CST.

Reflecting back to another occasion in clinic, I recall a new client who confessed he had not heard of CST, and had only booked in on the suggestion of the receptionist. He only hoped that I could ease the pain in his shoulder. At the end of a subsequent session, he rhetorically revealed, "Well, this is magic – don't you think, what else can it be – the pain in my arm has gone!" He would go on to book more sessions as he recognised that the consultation involved his emotional wellbeing

well as tidal aspects of CST work. Equally, some therapists prefer a more spiritual approach to communicate the CST process, assisting a client's self-awareness and path to healing.

However, if we consider CST through the eyes of our clients, we could start by exploring CST from what they experience. As therapists, we often witness a client's sense of wonderment over what went on in the session to make them feel the way they do. We may be trained to hold the space, take the case history and carry out treatment in order to facilitate relief – but how much time do we allow to connect with a client wanting to understand their feelings? Increasingly I am spending time looking at the possibility that these clients are actually asking the question:

WHY they feel this way after a treatment, rather than HOW it happened.

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too, which he realised he wanted to explore as well as being treated for his shoulder pain. Does this sound familiar?

This reminds me of a line in Hugh Milne's book Heart Of Listening in which rolfer Richard Stratman says that following treatment, clients may want: "more of that. They may not be sure what 'it' is, they just know they want to do it again."

As a CST practitioner, I am often called upon to explain to clients this profound, yet seemingly simple form of therapy – whether it's for someone displaying anxiety, trauma or hormonal imbalances. Some of us may choose to focus on explanations of patterns we find in a client's central nervous system, cranial bones and depth of breathing. Alternatively we may find it more appropriate to explain the fluids and focus of their physical, mental and emotional presentation as

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As Liz Kalinowska and Daška Hatton stress in their book *Every Body Tells A Story*, we may explain CST through a neat structural model of the central nervous system, cranium, sacrum, and surrounding membranes and cerebrospinal fluids. However, they highlight the difficulties even experienced practitioners have when defining exactly HOW it works. They offer the thought that it is a self-listening and healing within the client that helps to bring about change, but how can we best explore this with our clients, many of whom may have little or no experience of therapy work at all?

Like many CST practitioners, this layered form of work came to me as a second career, following a long and happy path in public relations. I had been trained to value the importance of writing copy that communicates a company's point of difference. This is essential to demonstrate relevant benefits to potential customers. This fine-tuning, or 'USP' (Unique Selling Point) of what it is that makes something special, helps it to stand out from its competitors within the marketplace. Such training taught me that bland words including "nice" and "unique" hold little meaning when the focus is to appeal to particular demographic groups.

These days I find myself immersed in a world in which many natural therapies are described as 'energy medicine', nearly all of which promote a 'holistic approach' that 'treats the whole person'. However, I sense these descriptions remain inadequate for CST. I am mindful that the true benefits exclusive to CST may not be conveyed to those yet to sample this therapy, as while it can indeed be called 'holistic' in its approach – we also know that it is so much more than this.

I am sensitive to the possibility that the use of these generic terms may dilute the exclusive benefits that each of these individual therapies can offer clients. So, I find myself returning to the question, "what is it about CST that gives it a potency unlike any other?"

Again, I look to Richard Stratman, who opens Hugh Milne's *Heart Of Listening* with, "Many people can hold the parts, many people can hold the whole, but very few people can hold the parts and the whole". To me, this provides a hint towards my search to define why a client feels the way they feel after a CST treatment. It is a profound way to connect a person with the Self, especially during extreme emotionally challenging times.

In the beautifully illustrated book *Craniosacral Therapy For Babies And Small Children*, co-author Etienne Peirsman speaks of the craniosacral system, nestled within the nervous system from conception, as the oldest, deepest and most primitive system in the body. This also helps to build a picture explaining WHY a client feels

the way they do after treatment. Perhaps we all have a need to find a different type of space away from our incredibly sophisticated way of existing, one that meets the many layers of our complexity. In CST, we have a system that touches on our many levels of 'stuckness' which are released layer upon layer.

Another hint that conveys WHY treatment evokes such profound change may be found, again, in *Every Body Tells A Story*. The authors highlight that the key to facilitate change is to connect successfully with our clients. Once this is established, then we can reflect to our clients where they may be holding tension or where there are restrictions, either physical or emotional. Their insightful and practical advice that we may find helpful to share with clients is that CST is very much counselling of the body. For me this helps to communicate to clients the "holistic" focus of CST where the entire body is heard.

Finally, I'd like to share an experience from earlier this year, when I got a taxi with two people I hadn't met before. Among other subjects, we chatted about our work. When they heard of my involvement in CST, they both smiled and revealed with a warm glow on their cheeks, "Ah..... we so love Craniosacral Therapy!"

This is the "MAGIC" of CST. 🛕

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