

Somatic Movement Therapy – The Body-Mind Link to a Healthy Immune System

by Mary Francis Hoffman, RSMT, HTP



Somatic Movement Therapy (SMT) is an umbrella term for several distinct disciplines. The foundation for this field was developed by such well-known practitioners as F. Mathias Alexander, Moshe Feldenkrais, Ida Rolf, Rudolph von Laban, and Joseph Pilates, who developed their own individual techniques. Somatics became the recognized term for techniques and approaches which focus on the individual developing and deepening a sense of the self within the body.

Somatic Movement Therapy assists in rebuilding one's immune system and can increase flexibility and a sense of well-being. SMT is different from traditional massage therapy. It uses "energetic touch," a gentle hands-on manipulation technique, rather than traditional massage. It achieves relief of joint pains in the neck, back, hip and elsewhere. It promotes Lymphatic Drainage and support of the Adrenal System. It can aid in physical and emotional detoxification.

Somatic Movement Therapy simultaneously includes simple exercises that recipients of the therapy can continue on their own. Clients begin to deepen their daily awareness of how they move their body, resulting in increasing ease and range of motion. At the same time, they experience a greater sense of relaxation. This therapy also encourages increased circulation through breath work.

Promoting Lymphatic Drainage and support of the Adrenal system is a key aspect of SMT. The lymphatic system plays a vital role in the body's ability to fight off toxins and maintain homeostasis. Effective lymphatic drainage, the movement of lymph throughout the lymph system, is critical for good health. The movement sequences and specifically focused soft tissue methods mimic the compressive forces of natural movements and respiration, helping facilitate lymphatic flow.

A quick example will help illustrate the benefits of Somatic Movement Therapy. An 83-year-old woman came to me with swelling in her right ankle, discomfort in her hip area when walking, and walking with a slight limp. Somatic Movement Therapy was used as follows: 1) energetic touch was used on her lymphatic system; 2) gentle touch was also used for "shoulder repatterning" for skeletal-muscular connection; 3) simple hip flexion exercises were shown to her that she could do during the course of the session and afterward; 4) small balls were used to work with her hands and feet; 5) simple movement exercises were used in a standing position; and 6) a "rebounder" (a small trampoline) was used to build cell strength and movement of lymph throughout her body and especially in her feet, ankles and legs.

Three months later after three treatments her swelling was gone, she was walking without a limp, and she reports that her discomfort in her hip is gone as long as she maintains her simple regimen every day.

Mary Francis Hoffman holds a BA in Psychology and Sociology. She is Nationally Certified as both a Registered Somatic Movement Therapist and Somatic Movement Educator. The Associated Body Works and Massage Professionals recognize her as a certified Somatic Therapist. She is trained in the art of Contemplative Dance (Authentic Movement). Mary Francis has recently completed Healing Touch Level 5 and Level I in Touch for Health. She is recognized by the Colorado Center for Healing Touch Inc. as a Healing Touch Practitioner. Mary Francis is currently working on certification in

Healing Touch. She has 30 years experience in Health and Wellness, Addiction and Recovery, and Creative Play with individuals, businesses and civic groups.

Mary Francis Hoffman is associated with Prevention and Healing, Inc., Dr. Simon Yu, M.D. For more information on Somatic Movement Therapy, visit her web site at www.body-mindlife.com and call her at Prevention and Healing at 314-432-7802. For more information on Prevention and Healing and Alternative Medicine, please ask our staff or visit www.preventionandhealing.com.



Simon Yu, M.D.
Prevention and Healing, Inc.
St. Louis, MO 63141
314-432-7802
www.preventionandhealing.com

*Weaving Internal
Medicine with
Alternative Medicine
to Use the Best Each
Has to Offer*