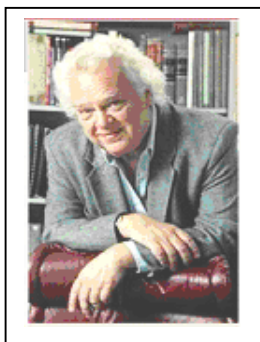


What is CST? – a brief description

Where did CST come from?

Craniosacral Therapy (CST) originated in research carried out by Dr John Upledger¹ in the USA during 1970's. He combined key elements from many complementary therapies including Osteopathy, Cranial Osteopathy, Spiritual Healing, Acupressure, Hypnotherapy, Gestalt and Psychosynthesis into his own practice. John Upledger found that a particular way of viewing the human body came out of this combination of skills which allowed a highly flexible approach to treatment, and a treatment protocol which was both extremely effective and extremely safe.



The guiding philosophy behind all CST treatment sessions is that the body knows how to heal itself, and should be encouraged to find its own way of doing this. Rather than being someone who "does things" to "cure" a problem, the "therapist" is a facilitator who respects this inner **body wisdom** and works in cooperation with it. All CST techniques are designed to either work directly with self-healing systems of the body in a way which is respectful and non-invasive. CST is an approach which seeks to find health rather than dealing directly with illness. This is not an empty statement – but rather a profound departure from most ways of dealing with the human body. There are self-organising forces in the body which express themselves in several ways – these are encouraged, assisted, strengthened, and "re-membered" – so that the body is operating as an efficient whole unit rather than separate islands of activity.



Probably the main influence for CST is Cranial Osteopathy² as devised by William Garner Sutherland in the USA during 1920's-1950's and expanded by pioneers such as Rollin Becker. John Upledger has gone on to expand CST into areas such as Somato-Emotional Release™ – a method of dialoguing with the inner body wisdom – and I am

currently studying Somatosensory bodywork, another dialoguing technique devised specifically for PTSD. Meanwhile, the "Biodynamic" CST schools have followed the path taken by Sutherland in his later life, seeking longer and longer physiological rhythms to access more fundamental (embryological) formative patterns of health. I use both Upledger and Biodynamic approaches in my practice.

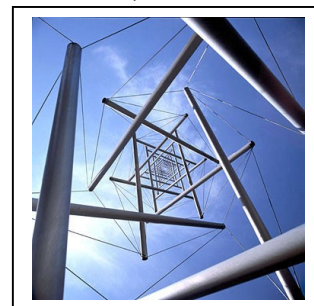
CST is a young discipline, and so the background theory and techniques are still rapidly evolving, and whilst there are common elements between all practitioners, there is an enormous diversity of approach and application of technique.

Mot massage or manipulation, but "something else"...

In the practice of CST there is an ideal type of contact – this often roughly translates into "hand pressure", but can also have other meanings, and this contact varies over time. Too much pressure, and the defence systems of the body treat the contact as an external force and resist it; too little contact and the techniques become less efficient in many ways. There is an ideal balance point, and holding this exact point of pressure/tension allows the body to make its own adjustments – in exactly the order and manner which it "wants" to repair itself.

Of the physiological systems being contacted, the two easiest to describe are the "tensegrity" structures consisting of connective tissue; and the long rhythmic "tides" which appear to organise the body's total pattern of health and mobilise the self-healing forces available in the body.

Tensegrity structures were devised by Ken Snelson³ while he was apprenticed to the famous architect Buckminster Fuller. Snelson separated the usual components of compression and tension in engineering structures, and made free-standing dynamic sculptures which appear to hang in mid air with no apparent means of support. Subsequent research by Ingber⁴ has shown that all living things - from a cellular level up to complex musculoskeletal systems – are mechanically structured around elastic membranes and compressive elements, which act together as intelligent tensegrity structures. This elastic system is self-organising and stable whilst being simultaneously very mobile and sensitive to very small forces. Just a few grams of force is often enough to change the balance of elastic tension in the entire tensegrity structure.



Evolution, Health and Rhythms

As we developed into human beings over millions of years, the pressures of evolution have endowed our bodies with a large spare range of adaptation. This adaptation capacity can be used for anything – surviving in extremes of temperature, fighting off illness, being pushed beyond the normal limits of endurance – and many other pressures which we rarely face in the modern world. The experience of CST practitioners is that the strength of this adaptive capacity is reflected in the presence of certain long rhythms in body tissues – lasting some 10 to 100 seconds. All CST practitioners work to improve the strength, symmetry and coherence of these rhythmic tides, based on the experience that this technique has a huge impact on the self-regenerative capacity of the body. Often, it is not necessary to address a specific "problem" directly. Instead, simply increasing the coherence of long tidal physiological rhythms can jump-start a healing process – and the body does naturally what it was "designed" to do – it heals itself.

¹ <http://www.upledger.com/home.htm>

² <http://www.cranial.org.uk/>

(Feb 2005)

³ <http://www.grunch.net/snelson/>

⁴ <http://web1.tch.harvard.edu/research/ingber/publications.html>