

<b>Toronto ABI Network Conference November 2004</b>
<b>Integrating Myofascial Release and Myofascial Unwinding into Brain Injury Rehabilitation: Clearing the Clutter</b>
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<b>Valuable Treatment in Neurology &amp; Pain Resolution</b>
The following is an article on Myofascial Release and Unwinding written for and published in the Inter-Action Rehabilitation Inc. Newsletter Spring 2003. It summarizes the basis of our presentation at the November conference.

At Inter-Action Rehabilitation Inc., myofascial release and unwinding are used in conjunction with other treatment in neurological and musculoskeletal conditions. We first introduced this treatment approach in 1988.

**Fascia** is a tough connective tissue covering all structures in our bodies. It is a continuous 3 dimensional web. It allows us to keep our shape and resist mechanical stress. It supports, envelops and protects and is part of our muscles, bones, nerves, organs, and blood vessels.

Emotional and physical trauma can cause the fascia to tighten along the lines of tension to protect us, support weak structures or assist us in maintaining positions, which minimize pain. When this happens, the body works less efficiently and is out of alignment, provoking adaptations in other areas in the body creating a vicious cycle. The tightness over time “spreads like a pull in a sweater”, causing reorganization and twisting. We become biomechanically and energetically inefficient.

**Myofascial Release** refers to the hands-on techniques used to release the fascial restrictions throughout the body.

**Myofascial Unwinding** refers to movement into “significant positions in space that represent positions of past trauma”. These positions are ‘still points’ and represent the freeze response experienced when a trauma is incurred. The fight/flight response is well documented and discussed in therapy; however the freeze response is largely ignored. The freeze response is a frequent reaction to trauma and is a key factor in the development and holding of pain and movement restrictions following trauma. During unwinding the person finds and assumes the positions of past trauma, is transported back to the moment of trauma and re-experiences all the sensations of that trauma. Instead of the freezing and repression of the event, the person is able to re-experience the trauma in a safe situation and work through it, letting go of the subconscious bracing patterns.

Myofascial unwinding can be “global” with the entire body moving or ‘focal’ (e.g. only involving one limb or part of the body).

Using myofascial release and unwinding to complement the sensory motor and postural control components of our programs allows us to get past blocks to progress in a shorter time than we previously could. Releasing tight structures, relieving compression on nerves and blood vessels, result in freer movement and better circulation.

As described by one patient before starting treatment, “I feel like my body is tightly wrapped in Saran.”...Not an easy way to function.

People with central nervous system problems, such as from a stroke or traumatic brain injury sometimes experience cognitive changes following this treatment such as an increased ability to pay attention. Increased energy, relief from headaches, improved sleep patterns and emotional release, for people with PTSD have been achieved, among other benefits.

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