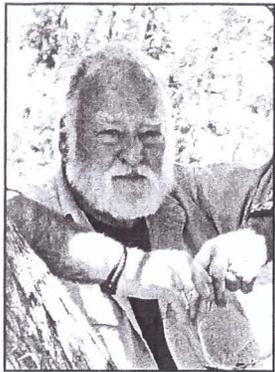


MIND & Body

by John F. Barnes, PT

Mastery — A New Era



Therapists incorporating “hands-on” therapy into their repertoire greatly enhance their ability to help others. Myofascial Release respects the wisdom of the mind/body and its capacity to self-correct.

It is important for those providing “hands-on” treatment to realize that the mind/body is a repository of information. The mind/body can be used as a biofeedback system for the

master therapist’s finely trained, sensitive hands. It can then be used as a handle or lever to provide access to emotions and belief systems and allow for structural and biochemical change.

The master therapist recognizes the importance of therapeutic pain, and instead of masking it, enables the patient to go into and through the pain, fear, or lesion. As the patient does this, awareness occurs and function will improve spontaneously.

Therapists will be concerned with releasing the body’s fascial restrictions mechanically and reorganizing the neuromuscular system. This reorganization occurs by supplying the central nervous system with new information (awareness) that allows for change and improved movement potential and consciousness.

Mastery means not only achieving a certain level of skill but is also an attitude. Masters are fully aware of what they are doing. They understand the importance of touch as an expression of acceptance, nourishment, and a form of biofeedback to glean information from patients’ mind/body awareness. Their touch should be applied with focused awareness and conscious purpose. The focus should be fluid, moving from tight and narrow (logical, analytical thought) to open, feeling everything at once without thought or effort (intuition, insight).

Ron Kurtz described ordinary consciousness (basic, working consciousness) as “goal-directed, focused, externally oriented bounded by an awareness of space and time.”* Ordinary consciousness operates out of habit, barely paying attention, in hot pursuit of goals, ignoring the possibility of information

available in the present moment. People who constantly function in ordinary consciousness are on automatic, unaware, and “in kind of a trance.”* To experience deeply and wisely, one must be balanced, fully aware, using the analytical, logical, narrow focus, and gleaning the insights available from a creative feeling, open focus (focused awareness). This is a vital way of functioning and a goal we should have for our patients.

The compulsive, narrow-focused therapist has difficulty easing back. Frustration surfaces quickly and in an effort to try to make something happen, he or she used mere technique or force. Effort is a function of the ego creating either/or situations, thereby setting up resistance. Effortlessness (ease) allows ego to let go and create the environment for the spontaneous to occur. Quality therapy feels easy and right.* It has a spontaneous flow that leads to discovery. Then the logical, analytical mind has relevant information with which to make purposeful decisions and treatment choices.

The alert therapist looks for patterns in patients, the mechanical or automatic in movement, experiences, and words. Increased tone in the musculature during movement, posture, or expression is a response to one’s emotional state or thought and is not part of conscious awareness. The therapist should focus the patient’s awareness on any motion with which the breathing is not easy, where there is a sense of resistance, and where effort or a difficulty with reversibility is involved. This awareness will allow the patient to reorganize, for understanding follows, rather than precedes, experiences.

Another hallmark of a master is flexibility and courage. Recognize the importance of the status quo as long as it does no harm and as long as it works. Always be open to new and better ways. Just because things have always been done a certain way does not mean that way has any value. Think for yourself and through your personal experience, decided if it has value for you or your patients.

One of the laws of nature is the path of least resistance, which is fine as long as it is taking you where you want to go. Being stuck in the left-brained, automatic trance is mindlessly following the goals and ways of others. Choose your own path by the creative use of your insight and willpower, and then have the courage to stick to it.

In making your decision always ask, “What is in the best

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