

Introduction to Craniosacral therapy

Our living bodies have an amazing ability to maintain and restore health. There are lots of obvious examples of this: We can usually shake off infections, bones mend when they have been broken, wounds heal.

But our self-healing system can be overwhelmed by too many traumatic events in a short space of time or experiences that the body doesn't have the opportunity to recover from. We are often our own worst enemies, driving ourselves on despite the fact that the body is crying out for time to heal.

In the end something happens that tips the balance and we start to experience illness or pain that we can't shake off.

Craniosacral therapy offers the body a chance to rebalance and regain the health that is always there. It is a gentle exploration of the body's story and a chance for healing to take place.

What happens in a session?

After an initial conversation my client usually lies on a treatment couch (if human, horses generally stay standing.) and I rest my hand somewhere on their body, often cradling the head, or with my hand under the lower back. And we wait.

Gradually things slow down and the client's body system is able to start telling its story. In much the same way as we might put a difficult thought away when in the midst of demanding activity to review it at a calmer moment, the body too seems to store potentially overwhelming experiences until there are adequate resources to deal with them. Although this facility is life saving, it can also result in an overloaded system so that some apparently minor event becomes the last straw that brings on pain or illness. As therapist, part of my job is to make sure that the pace at which the story is explored is right so the body systems are restored and revitalised rather than becoming overwhelmed or trying to tackle too much at once.

And things happen: Long-standing pains stop being painful, headaches become less frequent or disappear. Habitual patterns of fear and anxiety change and come under control. Disturbed sleep patterns get more peaceful. Digestion improves.

Many of my clients make a regular session part of their ongoing health care because it maintains a feeling of well being and peace of mind.

It is always a pleasure to work with riders. You can't ride a horse for long without becoming aware of where your body is and how it is behaving. It seems to be easy for riders to feel what is happening in a session and notice the changes their bodies want to make.

I have worked with riders who have had falls or injuries that are causing problems, but clients can also work with the long term postural habits that limit our ability to respond as we want to the challenges of having the balance and suppleness that create an independent seat.

Horses too are wonderfully responsive to craniosacral therapy, often moving to put the part of their body that needs attention under my hand, or using the pressure to ease out an area of tension. One horse client who responded remarkably had fallen on a stake, which had run along the outside of the ribs from an entry wound just behind the shoulder. The wound had long healed but the scar tissue formed a ridge along her side with restricted movement of skin and muscle over the ribs. It was hard for her to use her body evenly and you could see the compensation when she tried to bend.

I did one session with her, very gently holding the scarred area and feeling the adhesions releasing. She was warm from the exercise she had been doing while we were assessing her movement. After a few minutes her owner did some more turns and circles to let the muscles know that the area was free and we called it a day. A week or so later I saw her standing in the field and noticed that the familiar scar wasn't visible. At first I just assumed that I was looking at the wrong side. (Never very good at left and right as anyone who has tried to share a school with me will know.) But the other side looked just the same. I was amazed that such a long-standing problem could be cleared up in what was little more than a quick treatment as part of a conversation.

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Visit the Craniosacral Therapy association website:

www.craniosacral.co.uk