

# How Structural Integration Differs from Massage

Structural Integration (SI) is the generic term for a specific practice. There are several 'brand names' including:

- Hellerwork
- Rolfing
- SOMA
- KMI

## Gravity

Structural Integration recognizes that gravity is the strongest physical force that acts on the body. When a body is vertically aligned, gravity is a positive influence. An imbalanced body feels gravity as stress. The goal of SI is to reorganize the body so that the forces of gravity create less wear and tear. This results in increased energy and better balance. Rather than treating pain or tension symptoms, SI focuses on rebalancing the entire body returning it to a more aligned and relaxed state.

## Connective Tissue

Stress in any area of the body has an effect on every other part through the connective tissue matrix. For instance, tension in the connective tissue of the leg pulls the tissue throughout the torso. SI practitioners consider the alignment and organization of the entire body, but each session works very specifically on the parts that are pulling the body out of line.

## Protocol

Ida Rolf invented a process of sequenced sessions, sometimes called the 'recipe' or 'series.' Depending on the brand of SI and the practitioner, the protocol is for 10 to 13 sessions. In all cases, the first sessions have goals of releasing the more surface connective tissue, the middle sessions release the core tissues, and the final sessions integrate the sleeve and core. The protocol creates momentum; each session builds on the previous sessions for a cumulative effect. Also, there is an end-point, where the client is empowered to incorporate the changes into her life and therefore will need future sessions only after an accident, for occasional tune-ups, or for advanced work at a later date.

## Depth of Touch

SI is known for releasing locked places in the body. When the practitioner has her hands on one part of the body, she is accessing many different places that are connected throughout that layer. It is that connection that is felt so deeply, because it creates lasting change. That does not mean it must be painful. The client is always able to direct the practitioner's depth and intensity.

## Movement Education

SI helps you to become more aware of the way you use your body, so that you can discover easier, fuller ways of moving in everyday activities such as sitting, standing, and walking. Movement is how you can change the patterns that caused your tissue to rigidify in the first place. If you continue to use the movement education from your sessions, you can expect your realignment to continue beyond your appointments and for years to come.

## Practitioners

SI practitioners have graduated from schools that specifically teach the fundamentals of realigning the body in the gravitational field and the protocol for achieving balance, as originally conceived by Ida Rolf and as developed by her successors. SI is a field into itself, not a specialty of massage or another therapy. The International Association of Structural Integrators is the professional association of SI practitioners worldwide.