



CRANIOSACRAL THERAPY

By: Judy Stone

Mindy tightened her grip around the bundled package in her arms. She pressed her nose into the angelic face of the child that slept obliviously in her arms.

“Never” she whispered into his face, “Never, my dear child, will you sleep on your stomach. Did you just hear what the nurse said? She said it is

dangerous; it can cause SIDS, and I only want the best for you, my dear child. Therefore, I will listen to the nurse’s warning, and guard you night and day to protect you from that scary monster called SIDS.”

True to her words, Mindy never put her child on his stomach. Since the day she left the hospital the

fear of finding her baby dead in his crib never ceased. She hovered over him like a hawk, and had no peace of mind. For additional protection she surrounded him with cushions and pillows to prevent him from rolling over.

As her baby grew older, Mindy's worries began shifting to other areas. Her child did not roll over yet, never mind crawl, and when placed on the floor he would cry until she picked him up. She also noticed that his head was misshaped, with the back of his head being flat instead of round. During her next visit to the pediatrician, she raised her concerns. He referred her to a pediatric neurosurgeon to fit a helmet for her child. Mindy was beside herself; a helmet for her precious little baby?! She winced at the thought of it.

When she unburdened her distressing situation to a close friend, her friend shared with her interesting information she had read

in a pamphlet at a doctor's office. The pamphlet offered a short glimpse into the world of craniosacral therapy, and included the condition of a baby's flat head.

Intrigued by the idea, Mindy did not waste any time, and immediately did some research on craniosacral therapy. She chose a practitioner close to her home, and scheduled an appointment for her son. The DO assured her that after a few sessions her baby's head would return to normal. Mindy was skeptical, but nevertheless felt that it is worth a try. She never regretted her decision. After 6 sessions of therapy, her baby's head was nice and round. The DO explained to her that her baby's head did not flatten. In fact, the position he was laying in, indented his occiput (back portion of the skull), and spread it outward, giving it an appearance of a flat pumpkin head. By treating it with craniosacral therapy, he was able to return the occiput to its normal round shape.

IN THE NEWS

In an interview with Aetna Insurance Company, the CEO revealed that after suffering an injury from a ski accident, he was prescribed seven medications. When incorporating yoga and craniosacral therapy in his healing plan, he was able to discontinue all his prescription drugs. Aetna is now considering offering a low cost health plan to people who use these alternative treatments for preventive healthcare.

Craniosacral therapy is not only utilized among alternative practitioners. In a recent news report Dr. Andrew Fryer M.D., a board certified pediatric cardiologist and surgeon, noted that by integrating craniosacral therapy into his practice, the cases of pediatric open-heart surgery were reduced by sixty percent!

Dr. Fryer was also involved in an interesting case of Siamese twins. The twins had a strong desire to be surgically disconnected, however, one of them relied significantly on his twin for his own nourishment by absorbing the nutrients in their shared blood supply. Dr. Fryer's wife, who is a craniosacral therapist, encouraged him to integrate craniosacral therapy in order to improve the twins' chances of being successfully separated. Together with Dr. John Upledger, the founder of the Upledger Institute, they provided many sessions of craniosacral therapy to the twins. As a result, the surgery was extremely successful and both twins survived.





What is Craniosacral therapy? How is it done? What are its health benefits?

In order to understand the method of craniosacral therapy, one must first be knowledgeable about the structure of the skull and spine.

The cranium, another term for skull, contains eight bones. The most important among them is the sphenoid, because all the bones are connected to it. If the sphenoid, or any other bone, shifts even a tiny bit, it may cause restrictions on the underlying nerves; the main nerves controlling the central nervous system. Most of the cranial bones are connected by sutures, similar to calcified joints, which assist the skull in absorbing subtle motion.

(When a baby is born the sutures are not completely calcified. It is comprised of cartilage, and slowly calcifies until it gradually becomes bound together between the ages of two months and three years. If the sutures close prematurely, a condition of microcephaly, otherwise known as a small head, may develop.)

The cranial bones continuously produce small, rhythmic motions attributed to cerebrospinal fluid pressure.

Craniosacral therapy is a form of alternative therapy that focuses primarily on regulating the flow of cerebrospinal fluid. It does so, by utilizing therapeutic touch of the therapist to manipulate the cranial bones of the skull and the sacrum/pelvis. At a craniosacral therapy session the practitioner applies light touches to the patient's skull, spine and pelvis; an introductory method which allows the therapist to tune into the patient's craniosacral system. The practitioner gently follows the motion of the bones, and loosens restricted pathways of spinal fluid, thereby enabling the practitioner to achieve a therapeutic result.

This therapy assists in clearing restrictions found in the nerve passages. The cerebrospinal fluid can then flow properly through the spinal cord, brain stem and brain. In addition, craniosacral therapy strengthens the blood flow to the brain which can be inhibited by tiny blockages on the cranial nerves.

Craniosacral therapy has been a proven healing alternative for various ailments. Many conditions



that have been associated with the cranial bones include microcephalus, hydrocephalus, sensory issues, abnormal or stunted growth, digestion issues, drooling, TMJ and migraine headaches. A physical shift in the cranial section of the brain can also be caused by a blow to the head or spine, or a bad accident. Currently, researchers are still studying what other illnesses may be caused

by the misalignment of the cranial bones, and which other conditions can benefit from craniosacral therapy. Recent studies have confirmed that craniosacral therapy can be helpful for people suffering from dementia and migraine headaches. ★

The initial discovery of motion in the cranial bones and sutures is credited to Dr. William Sutherland, an osteopathic physician. Sutherland was struck by the idea that the cranial sutures of the temporal bones that connect it to the parietal bones, were beveled like the “gills of a fish”, indicating a mechanism of mobility. He continued investigating the structure and its strengths, and eventually integrated the approach into his practice and teachings.

Dr. John Upledger, was a neurophysiologist who refined craniosacral therapy by further studying Sutherland's theory of cranial bone movement. During a surgical procedure on a patient's neck, Upledger observed a slow pulsating movement within the spinal meninges. He attempted to hold the dural membrane still and found that he could not, due to the strength of the movement. This discovery led him to refine the craniosacral method by incorporating other skeletal bones, too. Along with a team of researchers, physicists and anatomists he worked for a period of eight years to develop the craniosacral program that is mostly used by practitioners today.

Cranial Therapy Centers can be found in many locations throughout the USA, and the therapy is becoming more popular among physicians. Since cranial therapy is a highly sensitive method which includes manipulating areas of the brain and spine, it is recommended one uses only a physician that is licensed in craniosacral therapy.

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