

What Did Dr. Rolf Want?

An Exchange Between Certified Advanced Rolfers™

Bob Schrei, Ray McCall, Jeff Maitland and Duffy Allen

Regarding the Energetic Aspect of Rolfing® Structural Integration

In the summer of 2007, an announcement appeared in *Fascial Flashes* concerning a workshop entitled “An Energetic Foundation for Rolfing” offered by Bob Schrei and Ray McCall and based on Schrei’s SourcePoint Therapy system. Within a short time, a heated discussion had appeared on the Rolf Forum and emails were sent to the Board of Directors of the Rolf Institute of Structural Integration® (RISI) decrying the appropriateness of the RISI sponsoring an “energetic” workshop. In light of the objections, the course was voluntarily resubmitted before the Continuing Education Committee, where it was approved for a second time. Despite or perhaps because of this controversy, interest in the class was so great that extra seats were added and additional teaching assistants hired. When the dust has settled, “An Energetic Foundation for Rolfing” was the first completely full continuing education (CE) class offered through the RISI in several years.

At the heart of the debate surrounding this class were the fundamental questions: What did Dr. Rolf want? In what direction should Rolfing proceed? What is the appropriate scope of training and practice for Rolfers? And, is there a place for an energetic taxonomy in both the Rolfing education system and private practice?

We would like to begin by letting Dr. Rolf address these questions with excerpts from her address to members at a RISI annual meeting in 1974:

People so often come to you and ask, “What does Dr. Rolf want?” Here is the answer. With this map in front of you, you tell them what I want. I want to see what happens to the energy fields in and around an individual as you order his structure and what is the change in his behavior that parallels this change in energy. I want to see whether those fields get broader, whether they get brighter, whether

they get more vertical, whether they get more confused. I want to see whether fields interdigitate, etc. These are all directions in which we should and must go if we are to fulfill what I envision as our destiny.

To go on this trip you need to stretch your imagination. This is an important prerequisite. There is no limit to the infinite territory into which this leads. Most important to us as individuals and Rolfers is the exploration of what changes occur in us as human beings coincident with these modifications in energy fields. What is the difference in our behavior?

...We have now come to the point in the history of structural integration where we have to make a comprehensible connection between the real world and the world of ideas; a real world in which a 28 year old woman sits in a wheelchair, never having been really mobile, and in a week gets out of that wheelchair and starts to walk. That real world must be related to the world of ideas concerning magnetic fields – life fields without and within and through an individual.

...Today I hope that among you there are the kind of fish that will go out and bring in another school of fish...not to get their aches and pains taken out, not to have their symptoms removed, but that they may contribute to the understanding of energy in the human universe.

...You, as Rolfers, are dealing not only with the physical levels, the flesh, but with the finer energy levels – the psychic, perhaps the spiritual (I do not consider myself to be an expert in differentiating these latter two).

....And may we end by all going out

and seeing auras.¹

With this in mind, we’d like to share our viewpoints.

Bob: Ray, what was your motivation in offering this workshop?

Ray: After taking the Level One and Level Two SourcePoint workshops with you, and then working with this modality of intervention in my own practice for two years, the results sufficiently impressed me that I wanted to further explore SourcePoint within the context of a Rolfing continuing education class. Specifically, I wanted to see what kind of structural and functional changes would be produced by a group of Rolfers who employed an energetic approach to the classical goals and methods of Rolfing.

Bob: And what was the outcome of the CE class?

Ray: First, let me say that I believe contralateral movement is a primary indicator of integration, so with this in mind, I was amazed at the consistency of what I saw in the post SourcePoint session. Independently of whether the practitioner had years of experience or was newly certified, when the “client” got up off the table and walked, the manifestation of contralaterality in their movement was equal to or greater than what I would anticipate from a traditional Rolfing session.

Bob: So why not just do a traditional Rolfing session. What is gained by adding an energetic perspective?

Ray: When working as Rolfers, we are always faced with three questions: Where do we start, what do we do next, and when are we finished? By doing a manual scan of the energy field of the client, as is done in the SourcePoint methodology, not only can we determine the location of primary blocks or discontinuities, but more importantly, we can determine where the client’s body wants us to start. When this starting place is honored, I consistently find that the session is more effective. This is true whether I am working in the context of a basic Ten Series or doing non-formulaic advanced work.

Ray: Bob, I am curious to know how SourcePoint evolved and also how you use it within your Rolfing practice?

Bob: When I did my Advanced Training many years ago with Michael Salvesson and Jeffrey Maitland, one of the ongoing

conversations in the class was how Rolfers tend to use other energetic systems to frame their Rolfing® work, whether it be acupuncture, chi gung, chakras, biodynamics, whatever, and how grabbing at a dozen different energetic approaches doesn't really serve our work as Rolfers. That led to a conversation about how Rolfing needed an energetic foundation, or energetic taxonomy, which was unique unto itself, in order for Rolfing to truly be a third-paradigm (holistic) approach. This became part of my challenge and inquiry over the years.

Ray: Do you feel that SourcePoint makes traditional Rolfing unnecessary?

Bob: Not at all. My own work on a daily basis still primarily employs hands-on manipulation of connective tissue in order to evoke change in structure and function. But this is done within an energetic context. In order for an intervention to be truly integrative, it has to include or address the energetic reality of the individual. It's a common misconception that an energetic approach means extremely light or off-body contact. I am always looking at what level of touch is required to evoke the necessary change. That may be light or extremely deep. SourcePoint gives the practitioner a tool to evaluate whether or not the intervention has been successful and whether or not s/he has been working at the most appropriate level to bring about a higher level of order.

The structural and movement analysis we are trained to use as Rolfers do not always give us the most reliable information. Remember, from the viewpoint of energetic medicine, energy always precedes structure and function. An energetic blockage in the interosseous membrane of the forearm may very well be responsible for the movement pattern we see in the foot and lower leg or the scoliotic pattern we are witnessing in the spine and ribcage or the inhibition of kidney function. It could be argued that the structural, functional, and physiological patterns that we see are simply symptomatic responses of the organism to energetic phenomena. Acupuncturists and other healing traditions have known this for several thousand years. SourcePoint is a simple effective means to gather similar information. To use SourcePoint is to truly understand what it means "to work where it isn't".

Ray: Can you briefly describe what SourcePoint actually is?

Bob: Energetic approaches to healing have been a long-term interest in my life over the past forty years. One of the common elements in many forms of energetic healing is the notion of a "blueprint" or template as an organizing reality for the physical form. Dr. Rolf had an abiding interest in the energetic nature of our work. In her book, *Structural Integration*, she states in the very beginning that "A joyous radiance of health is attained only as the body conforms more nearly to its inherent pattern. This pattern, this form, this Platonic Idea, is the blueprint for structure."²

There it is, right there, from the very beginning, the notion of an energetic pattern or Platonic Blueprint that activates structure. A good case could be made that the book is simply a presentation of Dr. Rolf's view of what that pattern looked like in the flesh and that the Ten Series is nothing more than a brilliant approach to achieve resonance between the body and that blueprint for structure and function. Later in the book, Dr. Rolf states it even more clearly: "...Is "balancing" actually the placing of the body of flesh upon an energy pattern that activates it? The pattern of this fine energy would not be as easily disrupted and might well survive, relatively intact, traumatic episodes that distort the flesh."³

With SourcePoint, we are working directly with this pattern and are also identifying and releasing blockages that inhibit the body from being congruent with this pattern.

Ray: How does SourcePoint allow or enable one to interact at the level of this pattern or "blueprint"?

Bob: At its simplest level SourcePoint acknowledges that this "blueprint" exists and is the primary organizing reality. As Jim Oschman said in his address to the International Association of Structural Integrators conference two years ago, we know the "blueprint" exists, we just don't know where it is located. SourcePoint works with the premise that this information can be accessed through points in the energetic field surrounding the body. Then the question becomes what keeps this information from manifesting as order in the physical form, which brings us back to the basic question of how we can most effectively evoke a higher level of order and function in the physical body.

Bob: Ray, how do you perceive working at the level of the blueprint evokes greater

organization and function than simply working with fascia and connective tissue?

Ray: Currently, Rolfers are taught to evoke order in structure through the lenses or perspective of the taxonomies: structural/geometric, functional, energetic, psychobiological. However, there has never before been a coherent, accessible, effective way of teaching how to work with the energetic phenomena that we experience during our Rolfing. The SourcePoint approach addresses this need.

As I have already stated, one thing that impressed me during the recent six-day class "An Energetic Foundation for Rolfing" was the contralateral movement expressed by clients. One important contribution to this expression of integration was the ease in which the SourcePoint work allowed all students to accomplish an energetic assessment and then use that information to strategize and effectively do a non-formulaic three-series. Thanks to the information made accessible by SourcePoint, students reported that they were working more deeply and more effectively in the physical body than they had anticipated, and the client's expression of contralateral movement supported the practitioner's sentiments.

Bob: Why do you think that happened?

Ray: Because including the information found in the energetic aspect enables the work to be truly holistic. We are relating the body to order and health rather than trying to make better relationships between symptoms.

Bob: Some people object to an energetic approach because it is not scientifically verifiable. What is your response to this view?

Ray: There are many forms of research. A phenomenological approach is to have a skilled group of practitioners explore phenomena and report the results of their experience. This is what we did in the six-day and the results were overwhelmingly consistent and positive.

What I saw was that no matter who was using the methodology, the findings were similar. If a student did an assessment and then had the instructor independently perform the assessment, they both came up with the same findings. This points back to the idea that the SourcePoint methodology has a high index of inter-observer reliability.

This is a term that comes from research methodology and is simply a measure of how consistent observations are from observer to observer. This is an important element of building any kind of research design to test whatever aspect of a treatment intervention.

Ray: Lets hear from Jeff Maitland about this issue.

Jeff: Isn't it ironic that the people who won't accept energy work until it is "scientifically verifiable" go about their life accepting all kinds of odd phenomena that they cannot verify scientifically? I'm thinking of Jung's archetypes or his concept of synchronicity, for example. There are Jungian therapists who insist on scientific verifiability for energy work, but psychologically assess their clients through the interpretive lens of an archetype without giving a thought to whether archetypes can be scientifically verified. It seems to be assumed that everyone knows just exactly what scientific verifiability is, and once you claim that a phenomenon needs to be verified scientifically, there is no need for further discussion. I wonder how many Certified Rolfers™ there would be today if everyone had waited to become a Rolfer until Rolwing® was scientifically verifiable. There needs to be a clear conversation about different ways of knowing, the nature of science, and the concept of verifiability. One thing that should be pointed out here is that if a phenomenon is perceivable, then it is open to scientific scrutiny. The energy work we are talking about here is, in fact, perceivable, and people can be trained to perceive it. As a result, it can be investigated scientifically. In point of fact, it has been and is being investigated scientifically. And let's not forget about Valerie Hunt's and Dr. Rolf's research on energy and auras.

As Ray pointed out, if you have a group of well-trained practitioners who are in agreement as to what they perceive, this is a kind of verifiability worth having. In fact, this kind of agreement is just what you find when you dialogue with and check your perceptions against a group of well-trained practitioners. Just as you need to be trained to see the organisms that are revealed by a microscope, you need to be trained to perceive energy. You can't scientifically verify the dry fruity taste of a fine wine. But this limitation does not mean that wine tasters with exquisite palates can't find agreement in their perceptions. I am reminded of something Goethe said

that is relevant to this discussion: "The human being in himself, when he makes use of his healthy senses, is the greatest and most precise physical instrument that can exist..."⁴ Wilhelm Reich said essentially the same thing. It's too bad that those who object to energy work don't know a little more about phenomenology.

One of the things about energy work that interests me a great deal is the way it teaches you to listen to the body. Although it's an exaggeration to say that perception is everything, it's not much of an exaggeration. Energy work sharpens your perceptions. As most Rolfers know, the better your ability to evaluate your client's needs, the more effective your work becomes. As it turns out, a thwart in any assessment taxonomy will show up as a thwart in all. That means that your work will be less effective to the extent you cannot read or manage your client in each of the taxonomies (structural/geometric, functional, energetic, and psychobiological orientation). Energy work is a fabulous way to train and enhance your perceptual vitality. It also sometimes has tremendous results. I have done an entire hour's worth of energy work without ever touching my client once and have been amazed to see how well the goals of Rolwing had been achieved. Of course, not every energy session is spectacular, just as not every Rolwing session is spectacular. But what you can count on is enhancing both your perceptual skills and your Rolwing ability. Plus, it's downright mind-boggling fun to work at this level, because as your client's being opens, so too does yours.

Bob: Jeff, I agree that one of the most important aspects of working in this manner is that you learn to listen to your client at a much deeper level. That alone in our culture has a profound therapeutic value. The body responds with much greater attention when it realizes, for instance, that you are listening to where it wants you to begin the dialogue of a session, whereas what we normally do is impose the rules of a belief system when strategizing where and how to make first contact. The importance of listening is nothing new, the musician/composer Pauline Oliveros has for many years been teaching retreats in "Deep Listening." An energetic perspective facilitates a much deeper listening to the body/mind of the person you are working with. The session opens up before you in unexpected ways.

I would also say that every session is entirely

unpredictable. That is certainly a significant piece of what keeps me interested in this remarkable work. Every session is entirely unique and unpredictable. What is predictable is that when working from the standpoint of the energetic taxonomy, you will be able to more effectively tailor each session to achieve the goals and principles of Rolwing with the unique individual before you. "Fix-it" work also becomes much more effective, as does one's ability to work more precisely across all of the other taxonomies. The reason we were able to achieve contralateral movement so readily from this perspective is that the primary thwart to movement is often neither fascial, bio-mechanical or neurological, but energetic.

Your response also brings up another interesting question which relates to the inquiry that is at the forefront of our community right now: "What is our scope of practice?" You mention doing an hour's worth of energy work without ever touching someone and achieving the goals of Rolwing. There are two implications. One, that Rolwing is not just a biomechanical, myofascial or manual therapy approach to the body, and two, that it is the goals and principles of our work that define who we are as Rolfers and not how we touch someone, nor whether the goals are accomplished through hands-on myofascial work, a laser or percussor, a particular technique, or working in the field around the body.

Jeff: I couldn't agree more. It's not our techniques that define our practice; it's the goals and principles that do. Do you remember that story about Dr. Rolf being asked whether it was still Rolwing if a practitioner did the work from across the room and achieved the goals of Rolwing without ever touching the client? She replied yes, it was still Rolwing as long as you didn't leave gravity out of the picture.

Ray: When individuals were objecting to the workshop being sponsored and given continuing education credit by the Rolf Institute of Structural Integration®, they said that their concern was that Rolwing would be discredited and therefore dismissed by the scientific community. In order to be accepted by the scientific and medical community, osteopaths disowned the energetic, spiritual aspect of their heritage. Many of them think that it was an unwise, limiting decision. I don't see it as an either/or. I think that those in our

community who want to do “hard science” research can and should. It is important. It is equally important to acknowledge, explore and research the energetic reality of our work. To not do so would be to disown a rich and essential aspect of Rolwing®, and without the energetic, it would not matter whether we were accepted by the collective or not – we would no longer be practicing the holistic art of Rolwing; we would have reduced it to yet another mode of manual medicine. Our culture is primarily materialistically oriented. I think that part of our responsibility as Certified Rolfers is to educate our clients and the public to a larger perspective. There will always be a tension between the material and the transcendent – each informs and balances the other. We have the challenge and responsibility to not try and eliminate one or the other, but to hold the tension of both so that what is next can emerge.

Bob: Duffy, not only do you use SourcePoint in your Rolwing practice, you are a faculty member of the RISI and also served as an assistant instructor during the recent “An Energetic Foundation for Rolwing” workshop. This puts you in a very unique position. Do you have anything to add?

Duffy: Yes, jumping from the SourcePoint workshop into a basic Rolwing classroom in less than forty-eight hours was an interesting transition. During the workshop, I was astounded by the high perceptual capacity the students, all trained Rolfers, brought to the table. With these skills, the workshop participants were able to perceive and interact with the SourcePoint material immediately. I noticed how you, in particular, Bob, held the container for the workshop with the expectation that every person is capable of working with these energetic constructs. What I then saw was a roomful of practitioners immediately using SourcePoint with both precision and decisiveness.

I took this concept into the basic Rolf training I taught immediately following. I found that by acknowledging that entry-level students are hardwired to recognize patterns of order, we were able to work from a principles and goals orientation and apply it to the Ten Series quite quickly.

What I often hear from students is that they “don’t see.” My contention is that students do see – they see a lot, they just need to refine their perception to the specific principles and goals of any given session. I found

that when I approached a student session with this in mind, the level of overwhelm experienced by the practitioner (and myself) was reduced. I did not explicitly teach any of the elements of SourcePoint Therapy; I relied on the underlying common tenet, that an energetic template for humans exists, is readily accessible, and includes the goals and principles of Rolwing.

I would love to see a faculty-wide conversation about this level of our pedagogy take place. As each of you have mentioned, the paramount features of Rolwing are the principles and the goals of the sessions. Therefore, I step out of my private practice and enter the classroom with great care to pay attention to the particular biases I and my students may bring, thus helping to ensure no principles or goals are corrupted.

In my private practice, I find that the SourcePoint energetic framework allows me to work within the principles and toward the goals of each session more efficaciously. SourcePoint can be easily used in accordance with the construct of the Ten Series or during non-formulistic advanced work. In fact, the practical perceptual skills required for SourcePoint could be laid down and reinforced during basic Rolf training. These energetic skills would be an asset for students as they work their way through school and eventually head into private practice. SourcePoint has equal or perhaps more relevance for Advanced trainings, and especially so for those who might be fortunate enough to have been exposed to the work early in their Rolwing education.

Bob: Thanks, Duffy, Jeff and Ray. I deeply appreciate all of your input and hope that future conversations about the energetic taxonomy can and do take place. I agree completely with Jeff, that a thwart in one taxonomy shows up as a thwart in the others. Years ago, when ignoring the energetic taxonomy, I missed a significant causative factor of my clients’ structural and functional disorders.

Ray: It’s an honor and privilege to be participating in this exploration. I look forward to more.

Bob: In closing, I would like to remind all of us that Dr. Rolf stated very clearly that there was an energetic basis to our work and that as Rolfers we were much more than just manual therapists or bio-mechanics. She

called for us to be a new kind of therapist, saying “One of the things that you as Rolfers must always emphasize is that you are not practitioners curing disease: you are practitioners invoking health. Invocation is possible by an understanding of what the pattern is...This is what makes a Rolfer a new kind of therapist...”⁵

CAST OF CHARACTERS (in alphabetical order)

Duffy Allen, M.S., is a Certified Advanced Rolfer trained in 1995. She became a member of the Basic Training faculty at the Rolf Institute of Structural Integration® in 2006.

Jeff Maitland, Ph.D., is a Certified Advanced Rolfer trained in 1979. He became a member of the Basic Training faculty at RISI in 1988 and the Advanced Training faculty in 1993.

Ray McCall, M.A., is a Certified Advanced Rolfer trained in 1978. He became a member of the Basic Training faculty at RISI in 1997 and the Advanced Training faculty in 2006.

Bob Schrei, B. Arch., MFA, is a Certified Advanced Rolfer trained in 1985. He has been approved by the Continuing Education Committee of the Rolf Institute faculty to provide continuing education classes for manipulation and elective credit. He is the founder of an energetic healing system, SourcePoint Therapy.

Note: The details and dates of the next SourcePoint workshop can be found in Fascial Flashes and on the continuing education section of the Rolf Institute website at www.rolf.org.

NOTES

1 Rolf, Ida P., “Address to the Rolf Institute of Structural Integration® Annual Meeting, 1974”, *Structural Integration: The Journal of the Rolf Institute*, June 2003, Vol. 31, No. 2, p. 15.

2 Rolf, Ida P., *Rolwing: The Integration of Human Structures*. Dennis-Landman, 1977.

3 Ibid.

4 Naydler, Jeremy, *Goethe on Science: An Anthology of Goethe’s Scientific Writings*. Edinburgh: Floris Books, 1996, p. 29.

5 Feitis, Rosemary (ed.), *Ida Rolf Talks About Rolwing and Physical Reality*. Boulder: Rolf Institute of Structural Integration, 1978.