

Ready, SET, Go Pain-free

Structural Energetic Therapy (SET) bodywork

by Sallie Preston

When 30-year pain veteran Jack Curtis left his home in Burgaw one morning for an appointment with Bridget Gray-Todd of Helping Hands Massage, he never suspected the trip would be a life-altering experience. Curtis has suffered multiple accidents and falls during his life, and his left leg is a tad shorter than the right one. He'd tried chiropractic care and many types of bodywork, including Rolting, but still, his pain persisted.

Hearing that Bridget specialized in relieving pain, Curtis figured he had nothing to lose. "I still can't believe it," he says. "After the first session, there was an incredible difference, and after only three sessions, I was

able to play golf without cringing every time I teed off. I could actually bend over and not feel pain. Bridget's work released the tension between my lower back and hip."

The tension he refers to, between the sacrum (large heavy bone at base of spine) and ilium (the "hip-bone" that forms the socket which holds the leg bone), indicates that the relationship between these areas is not stable. Long-term stabilization of this relationship is the goal of Structural Energetic Therapy® (SET), a specialized therapeutic bodywork technique that Bridget has been studying. Bridget's expertise for years has been neuromuscular massage for acute and chronic pain conditions, which is why she sought training in the technique. SET is a bodywork technique with an end in mind – an end to SET sessions and an end to pain.

SET's basic premise is quite simple. In order to be physically balanced, the human body must be stable in the core area where the sacrum and ilium (sacroiliac joint) meet to form the pelvis. Instability in the pelvis throws off the rotation of the hip. To compensate, the rest of the body develops patterns of imbalance in soft tissues and muscles, as well as curvatures. Termed core distortion, this condition causes pain. The goal of SET is to achieve long-term stability in the pelvic area, thus eliminating core distortion and the pain that comes with it. How? Through a technique that massage therapist and SET founder Don McCann has been developing for more than 30 years.

Releasing the body's old holding patterns and replacing them with balanced patterns, SET is designed to achieve fast initial results. To get the whole body working toward a state of "readiness and acceptance," each SET session begins with cranial/structural soft tissue release. Cranial/structural release at the beginning of each session helps release the day's tension



Here, the client is controlling how fast the session moves. Bridget patiently maintains pressure while waiting for the soft tissue to indicate that it has released before moving forward.

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and, more importantly, initiates a release of core distortion throughout the body. When McCann introduced cranial work in the '80s at the start of each session, it was this evolutionary step that brought SET to the technique it is today.

While sharing clients with Dallas Hancock, McCann learned that the torsion pattern found in the sacroiliac joint was repeated in the joint where the spinal column and cranium meet (cranio-cervical joint). Not only had Hancock observed this in his clients as he developed his Craniostuctural Integration technique, but also observed that when the soft tissues holding the torsion in the cranium area were released, the torsion in the pelvis was released as well. Just as important, the rest of the body followed, all moving into balance. This was a huge evolution in the development of SET. By starting each session with cranial/structural work, McCann was initiating a total energetic release of core distortion throughout the body as it began to mirror the now-released cranium soft tissue. His clients were also mentally relaxed. A state has been achieved that needs to be taken advantage of quickly.

The three-step approach to get things ready for deeper muscle work now begins. Using tolerable strokes to clear surface and intermediate tissue layers, SET reduces immediate pain so that deeper work can begin without the body tensing and resisting. Unwinding myofascial tissue below the surface comes next. Heavier strokes applied in specific directions to facilitate precise release into structural balance are applied to the fascia, releasing the old holding patterns and activating new patterns. With individual fibers being the only tissue resistant to change left before going deep into muscle, its release work then follows. This three-step approach, before getting into deeper muscle work, is instrumental in SET's fast initial results.

As does the entire body, all of the soft tissue holding the



Known as the “handles” for releasing cranial/structural soft tissue restrictions, SET sessions begin with the therapist placing hands on the occiput and sphenoid bones of the cranium. This work alone begins the holding pattern release process.

Sub-patterns of imbalance are truly unique to each individual client and are related to things such as body personality characteristics, strength and development of the musculature based on previous physical activities, and general physical and emotional health. Once disguised by the overbearing pattern of core distortion, the SET technique is now directed to release and balance these individual sub-patterns. Through integration of cranial/structural techniques and specialized soft-tissue protocols, each of the individually unique sub-patterns is addressed, with SET sessions ending when sub-patterns are balanced.

Although a client may wish to continue a massage routine in the future for its many general health benefits, the SET technique is designed with an end in mind – an end to SET sessions and an end to pain.

To learn more about SET, go to StructuralEnergeticTherapy.com. To make an appointment with Bridget Gray-Todd, call 910-231-4443. Helping Hands Massage is located at 3420-A Wrightsville Ave. in Wilmington. HelpingHandMassage.com. See ad below.

old patterns of distortion shares the same systems of air and fluid delivery and nerve communication, all dancing and vibrating to the same beat. Each vibrating in a pattern that has developed over time to compensate for instability in the pelvis, these layers of tissue are resistant to change, if for no other reason but the mere time they have been compensating for imbalance. With each SET session beginning in cranial/structural soft tissue release, which in turn begins core distortion release and balancing within the entire body, a new pattern begins to form. Following with the three-step approach, SET creates an ideal situation for muscle balancing work to begin. The rest of the body has released old patterns and has begun vibrating to a new pattern, which means the underlying muscles are now surrounded by tissue that is no longer resistant to change. Because of this state of “readiness,” the muscles are able to “remember,” maintain, and hold onto this new balancing pattern. This in turn means that the body will be able to maintain structural stability in the pelvis, thus eliminating core distortion. Unless sub-patterns of imbalance, which are unique to each individual, become visible now that core distortion has been released, SET sessions come to an end.

YOU DESERVE A PAIN FREE LIFE

The only massage therapist in the area
with Structural Energetic Therapy (SET) training
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I was in pain for 30 years, and have been to many massage therapists and chiropractors. It wasn't until Bridget released the tension between my hip and lower back that my life changed. I no longer cringe when I swing a golf club and I can bend over without pain. Thank you Bridget.

*-Jack Curtis, Burgaw
57 years old*

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