



I tried it:

Rolfing Structural Integration

Too many long flights, over-packed luggage, not enough sleep, and hours spent at my computer had left me with poor posture and chronic aches in my shoulders, middle back, and hips. I'd heard that Rolfing Structural Integration could relieve my chronic pain and help me improve my posture. Named after its founder, Dr. Ida Rolf, this holistic therapy uses soft tissue manipulation and movement therapy to correct alignment on a structural level. Rolf was influenced by Hatha yoga when developing her methods, which help re-educate the body to move more efficiently.

I sought the help of Duffy Allen, a movement practitioner and certified advanced rolfier in Boulder, Colorado. She spent time with me discussing what I hoped to achieve during the ten-session series of treatments—inquiring about my lifestyle, and past injuries and sports mishaps.

I confessed that I was having some difficulty coming to terms with the effects of aging on my once-athletic body. Until I was thirty, I'd trained hard in equestrian sports with the goal of one day riding in the Olympics, until an accident put me onto a different track. Since then, I've never been quite as flexible, strong, or physically balanced as I once was, and have often found it difficult to be entirely comfortable in my own body.

Allen asked me to disrobe to a point where I was comfortable, then directed me to walk up and down the length of the room while she carefully observed my movement patterns. She had me bend at the knees and raise my arms, watching for areas that were out of balance. Next, she helped me onto a massage table, and spent our first session gently manipulating the fascia (the connective tissue that envelopes muscles, joints, and bones) in various parts of my body. By our third session, I was already walking more evenly, standing straighter, and increasingly aware and mindful of my range of movement.

Though I'd heard that Rolfing could be painful because of the depth of tissue manipulation, I never found it uncomfortable. I left each session feeling noticeably more limber, especially in my hips and lower back. Since my Rolfing sessions, I've felt my range of motion has greatly increased, my stress level has lowered, and my posture has markedly improved.

—Debra Bokur