

Self Help Cranial Integration Tools

by Mary Louise Muller, M.Ed, RPP, LMT

In this article we are going to discuss some of the interfaces between kinesiology and cranial work. We will also learn simple self-help techniques to enhance cranial function.

Integrating cranial touches and understandings with kinesiology can transform your work. The gentle "five gram" touch empowers practitioners to be present with each individual client's process. The ability to feel release pulses and stillpoints gives immediate feedback and improves the efficiency and effectiveness of the session. Understanding the cranial movement, its significance and how to work with it enables you to directly work with the core energies of the being. Simple self-help exercises can be given to clients to enhance cranial function, thereby boosting thinking abilities, general energy level and overall alertness and body function.

The cranial rhythm has been called the "primary respiration". It is essential to life. It is a core energy system without whose function we would die. When it is dampened and distorted, we may experience symptoms varying from cloudy thinking abilities to a multitude of physical malfunctions.

Cranial Sutures and Neurovascular Holding Points

Learn to tune in and feel what the cranial system is doing as you hold neurovascular holding points (NV's). Six of the thirteen cranial NV's are located on sutures. Sutures are landmark transition areas of the skull where things come together and where things also have the potential to shift. They are like the geographic cracks of the plates of the earth along which movement can occur. It is believed that the sutures can respond to long term structural distortion by remodeling themselves through small islands of bone called Wormian bones.

For many years, British oriented anatomists and physiologists taught that the sutures become solid and rigid by adolescence. This

belief was challenged in the United States by DeJarnette of Chiropractic tradition and Sutherland of Osteopathy who both offered their own teachings based on personal research and experience that worked with realigning the cranial structures.

In the 1970's, Osteopathy decided to either verify or negate their own teachings about cranial work through scientific methods. A research team headed by Dr. John Upledger proved that sutures are filled with vital living tissues. The team also scientifically measured the cranial movement of people and monkeys.

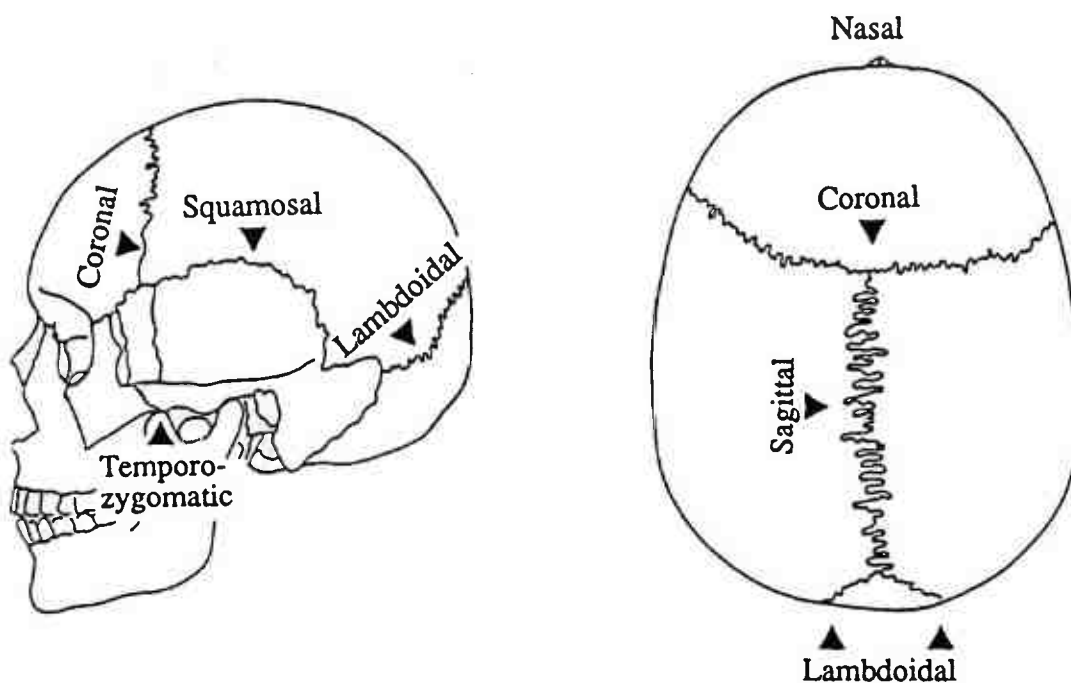
A normal Cranial Rhythmic Impulse (CRI) moves at the rate of 6 to 12 cycles per minute. This corresponds to the filling and emptying of cerebrospinal fluid. It can be felt as an expansion and contraction with hands cradling the skull. The touch used to feel the CRI is a non-intrusive 5 grams, about the weight of a nickel. When the sutures are properly aligned and free to move, the CRI is symmetrical and fluid. When the sutures are jammed or misaligned, there are distortions and sluggishness in the movement.

As we look at the neurovascular holding points drawn on skulls on page 25 of the *Touch for Health* book, we note the following NV's are located on sutures.

NV #2 is located at the posterior fontanel, the soft spot in the back of a baby's head. This is where the lambdoidal and sagittal sutures come together. The bones that meet here are the occiput and the two halves of the parietal.

NV #3 is slightly higher on the sagittal suture. It is between the two halves of the parietal.

NV #4 is located at the anterior fontanel, the soft spot on a baby's head in the front where the sagittal and coronal sutures come together. The bones that come together here are the frontal and the two halves of the parietal.



Cranial Sutures

NV #8 is located on the zygomatic arch where the temporal bone and zygomatic bone come together. This is called the temporozygomatic suture.

NV #9 is located on the squamosal suture where the parietal and temporal bones come together.

NV #13 is located on the lambdoidal suture.

As you lightly hold these NV's feel for shifts and stillpoints as well as pulses. Even when you are holding NV's that are not located on sutures, lighten up your touch and feel for stillpoints and shifting of the tissues beneath your hands. The membranes, connective tissues and bones move as the body self-corrects and realigns.

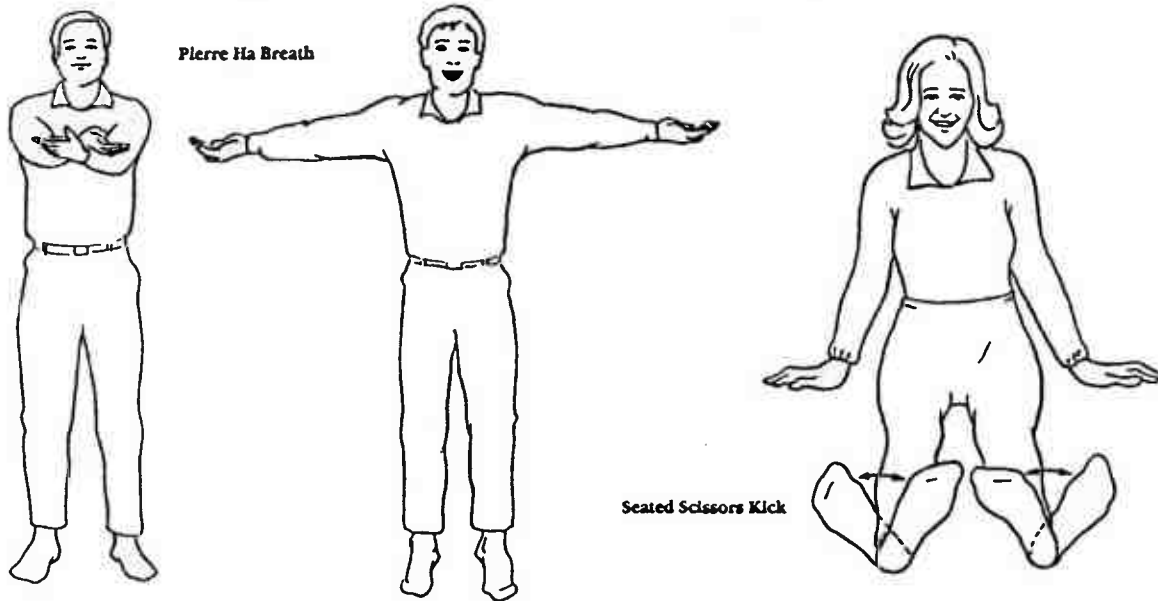
Enhancing the Flow with Self-Help Exercises

The CRI undulates throughout the entire body. In the arms and legs there is a subtle inward and outward rotation. We can use certain exercises to enhance this inward and outward movement. Two of my favorites are "Pierre Ha Breath" and "Seated Scissors".

These self-help exercises are commonly used in Polarity Therapy.

Pierre Ha Breath was developed by Pierre Pannetier. It is an amazingly simple and powerful exercise. Stand in a stable position with feet slightly apart. First practice making a deep and effortless "Ha" sound that comes from the belly. It projects through the throat with a forcefulness that frees the diaphragm muscle. Now place your arms outstretched with palms up. Bring them to cross each other, alternating ways for the count of three. On the fourth count, let them come out and also let out a "Ha". Repeat this 1-2-3-"Ha" cycle over and over. This inward and outward arm movement enhances the vibrancy of the cranial flow. You may also add coming onto the balls of your feet as you do the "Ha". This frees the diaphragm reflex in the foot and works with releasing the tendon guard reflex that may have dampened cranial movement.

Seated Scissors is more quiet and gentle, yet also deeply effective. Sit with your legs reaching out in front of you. Support yourself with your hands behind or lean



against something firm. Allow your feet to rotate inward and outward in a steady rhythm, somewhat like 'windshield wipers'. (This is an alternative name for this exercise which children seem to like.) This mimics the internal and external rotation pattern of the cranial rhythm and it enhances flow. Children often do this naturally while seated on the floor with legs outstretched. Older children and adults often do a variation seated in a chair. They cross one leg over the other and then swing the upper leg. This pumping motion enhances the pumping within the craniosacral system. It helps bring energy to the brain for integration and clear thinking.

Creating Stillpoints for Self-Correction

The cranial rhythm has a way of balancing itself and other body issues by "stillpointing". This means that the rhythm stops for a moment as if to build up pressure and then uses the extra force to balance. When it is done, the movement resumes. Stillpoints do happen naturally. However, we can also create them.

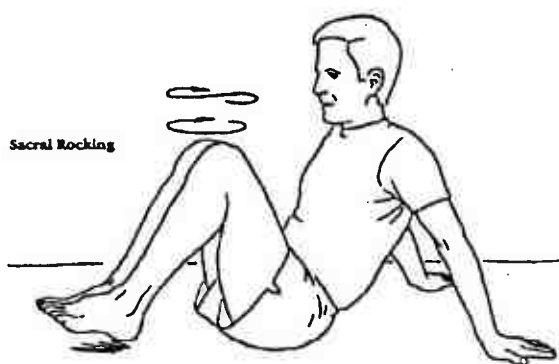
One way is to use two tennis balls in a sock. Tie the sock so the tennis balls are snugly resting against each other. Now lie down and place the two tennis balls at the back of your head midway up the skull, about an inch above the occipital base. One ball is under each brain hemisphere. Rest your head on the balls. As you do this, they create a natural

barrier to the expansion and the rhythm will eventually stillpoint for self-correction. The body will go into and come out of stillpoints. Do this as long as it feels appropriate. This is similar to a hands-on technique called the CV-4 where the practitioner consciously creates a passive barrier to the expansion phase of the CRI in order to initiate a stillpoint.

Another technique, I call "Healing Hugs". This can be done anywhere on the body. Gently cradle two arms, two feet, two shoulders, two sides of the hips or some similar option. As you rest your hands, bring them closer together until you feel the least resistance. Stay there and wait and once again follow in when you feel a slacking of resistance. Continue this gentle hug until you no longer sense it being able to follow inward. Wait. Things may be quiet for some time. When you feel the body symmetrically pushing you out as if it wants to expand out of the hug. Then expand with it. This is all with a very light, gentle touch.

Freeing the Sacrum

Another issue related to craniosacral function that we often work with in kinesiology is the relationship of the sacrum to the two hip bones. When peoples' backs hurt, the sacrum is often seated improperly. In a typical Touch for Health balance, this may shift back into place when we restore balanced muscle function.



The Sacral Rock is a self-help way to free up the sacrum. This exercise is in Paul and Gail Dennison's *Brain Gym* book and Frank Mahony's *Hyperton-X*. Sit on the floor with your legs bent at the knees and your feet resting flat. Your hands rest behind your hips so your arms help to support you. Begin to gently rock. Feel for movements that may be stiff and gently work into them. Do small circles and figure eights. Breathe and relax.

As practitioners, we can assist the sacrum in natural self correction by helping to create space through a process called "gapping". Lightness of the touch, sensitivity and pacing allow for self initiated shifting.

Have the client lie on their back. Place one hand cupped under the sacrum. With the other hand, find the two ASIS's (the knobby points as the hip crest comes down in front into the pelvic area). Place your elbow on one ASIS and your fingertips on the other. Over time you will develop sensitivity and expertise at doing this effectively. Very gently use the fingertips and elbow to bring the ASIS's closer to each other. This is a five gram touch. Wait until you feel the sacrum begin to move in your bottom hand. Follow it wherever it goes. Continue until it stops moving and feels settled.

There is a self help option to this where you lie on your back, cradle your two ASIS's and very gently push them toward edge other.

Conclusion

These are simple ways to help improve craniosacral function. I hope you find them

helpful. The references below will give you further information. If you have any questions, feel free to contact me. Mary Louise Muller, 39582 Via Temprano, Murrieta, CA 92563, (714) 677-0652.

Illustrations of exercises by Mark Allison from *Energy Exercises*, courtesy of Polarity Press.

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