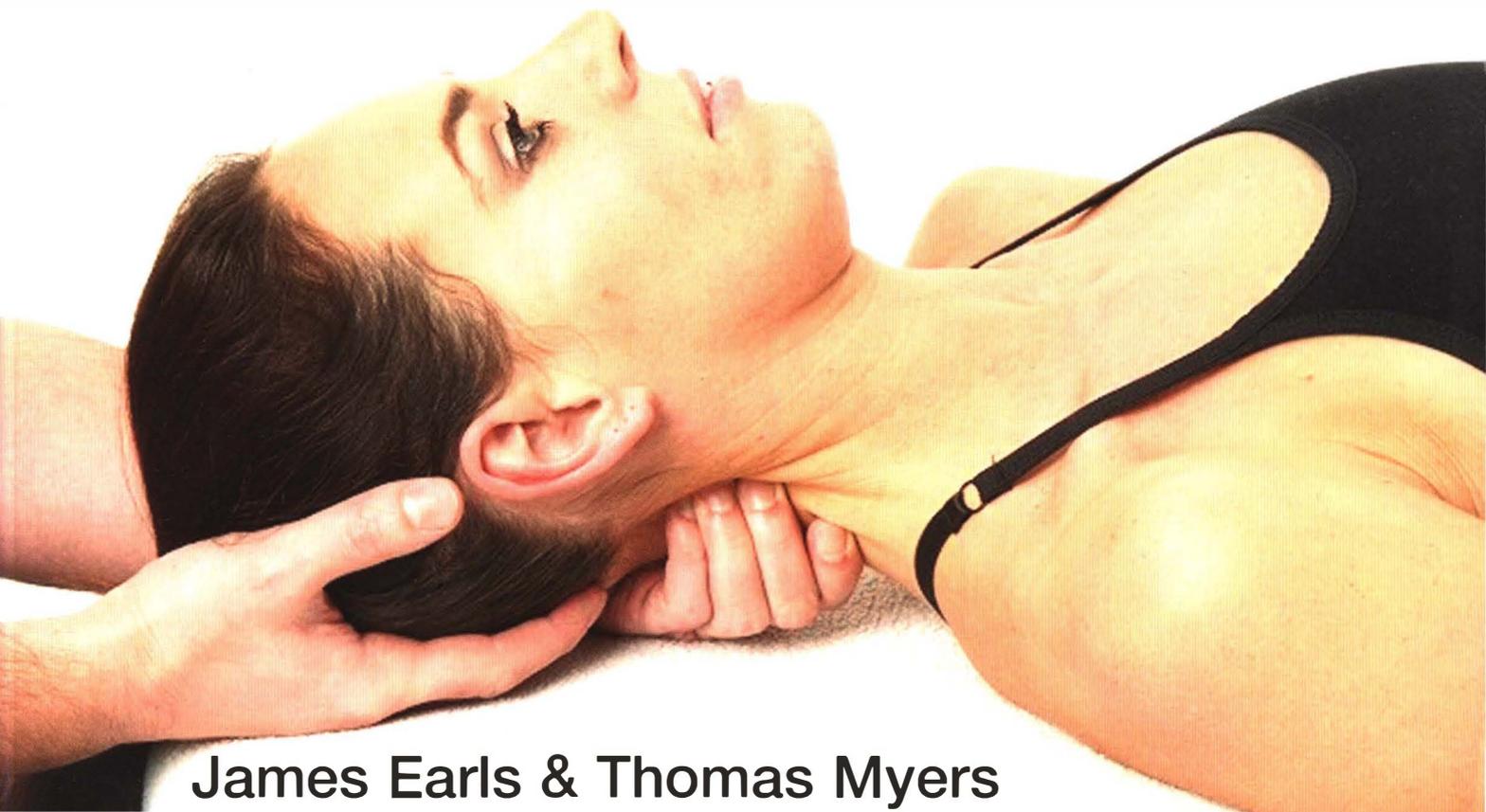


Fascial Release *for* Structural Balance



James Earls & Thomas Myers

Fascial Release for Structural Balance combines manual therapy skills with the exciting new field of structural therapy, which employs the unique and newly discovered properties of fascial tissues. Fascia, our biological fabric, plays a vital role in support, posture, and stability. Through informed assessment and manipulation of fascial patterns, you can help eradicate many of your clients' chronic strain patterns—for good.

The book is designed for any bodywork practitioner using manual therapy. Physiotherapists, osteopaths, chiropractors, and massage therapists can help their current and future clients by giving them a structural analysis and creating a treatment strategy using the techniques included in this book. The authors bring together a unique introduction to fascially informed structural anatomy with a method for postural analysis and detailed and easily applied techniques.

James Earls first trained in bodywork in 1991 before studying with Thomas Myers in 2000. He now practices Structural Integration and massage therapy in Belfast and is the director of Ultimate Massage Solutions and Kinesis UK, which bring high-quality training in the Anatomy Trains approach, Fascial Release Technique, and Structural Integration throughout Europe. Earls is a popular presenter and writes regularly for a range of bodywork magazines.

Thomas Myers has practiced integrative structural therapy for over 30 years in a variety of clinical and cultural settings. He is the author of *Anatomy Trains* (Elsevier 2001, 2009) and numerous collected articles for journals and trade publications. Myers directs Kinesis, Inc., which offers certification in Structural Integration and continuing professional development courses worldwide for manual and movement therapists from many professions.

“What a great idea to combine James Earls’ expertise and philosophy with Tom Myers’ classic contributions to structural bodywork. This is the long-awaited expansion of the Anatomy Trains theoretical concepts into a clearly written, functional ‘how to’ manual that is a must-read textbook for all bodyworkers of all ranges of experience – not just structural integrators.”

Art Riggs, Certified Advanced Rolfer® and massage therapist, author of *Deep Tissue Massage: A Visual Guide to Therapy Techniques*

“Fascial release has never been made more understandable and achievable – a well illustrated and excellent read.”

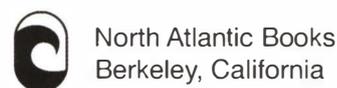
Leon Chaitow, ND, DO, Honorary Fellow, University of Westminster, London. Editor-in-Chief, *Journal of Bodywork & Movement Therapies*

“This book is a thorough and refreshing

Erik Dalton, PhD, author of *Myoskeletal Alignment Techniques®*

“With a wonderful blend of art and science, this text brings together many aspects of structural change grounded in anatomical precision. It lets you see the relationships surrounding the body and how they link to produce the various patterns you will see in your clients; equally importantly, it gives you the strategies to address them.”

Robert Schleip, PhD, MA, Director of Fascia Research Project, Institute of Applied Physiology, Ulm University. Research Director of the European Roling Association



Bodywork/Massage
www.northatlanticbooks.com

US \$29.95 / \$34.00 CAN
ISBN 978-1-55643-937-7

5 2995

9 781556 439377

Fascial Release Structural Balance

James Earls & Thomas Myers



Lotus Publishing
Chichester, England



North Atlantic Books
Berkeley, California

Copyright © 2010 by James Earls & Thomas Myers. All rights reserved. No portion of this book, except for brief review, may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means – electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise – without the written permission of the publisher. For information, contact Lotus Publishing or North Atlantic Books.

First published in 2010 by
Lotus Publishing
Apple Tree Cottage, Inlands Road, Nutbourne, Chichester, PO18 8RJ and
North Atlantic Books
P O Box 12327
Berkeley, California 94712

Anatomical Drawings Amanda Williams
Text and Cover Design Wendy Craig
Printed and Bound in the UK by Scotprint

Fascial Release for Structural Balance is sponsored by the Society for the Study of Native Arts and Sciences, a nonprofit educational corporation whose goals are to develop an educational and crosscultural perspective linking various scientific, social, and artistic fields; to nurture a holistic view of arts, sciences, humanities, and healing; and to publish and distribute literature on the relationship of mind, body, and nature.

The Publisher has made every effort to trace holders of copyright in original material and to seek permission for its use in *Fascial Release for Structural Balance*. Should this have proved impossible, copyright holders are asked to contact the Publisher so that suitable acknowledgment can be made at the first opportunity.

In memory of Stephen Stevenson, a friend, a colleague.
With my sincere thanks to his family for permission to use his images within this book.

British Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data

A CIP record for this book is available from the British Library
ISBN 978 1 905367 18 4 (Lotus Publishing)
ISBN 978 1 55643 937 7 (North Atlantic Books)

Library of Congress Cataloguing-in-Publication Data

Earls, James.

Fascial release for structural balance / James Earls and Tom Myers.

p. : cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

Summary: "Fascial release for structural balance is a fully illustrated introductory guide to structural anatomy and fascial release therapy"--Provided by publisher.

ISBN 978-1-905367-18-4 (Lotus Pub.) -- ISBN 978-1-55643-937-7 (North Atlantic Books)

I. Manipulation (Therapeutics) 2. Myofascial pain syndromes. 3. Fasciae (Anatomy) I. Myers, Thomas W., LMT. II. Title.

[DNLM: 1. Fascia--anatomy & histology. 2. Massage--methods. 3. Musculoskeletal Manipulations--methods. WE 500 E12f 2010]

RM724.E17 2010

615.8'2--dc22

2010014999

Contents

Introduction/How to Use This Book	4
Chapter 1: An Introduction to Fascial Release Technique	7
Human Patterning	7
Introduction to the Fascial Webbing	9
Tensegrity	16
Chapter 2: Fascial Release and Developing Your Touch	21
DASIE: Development, Assessment, Strategy, Intervention, Ending	22
Fascial Release Technique	27
Body Mechanics	29
Questions of Direction	36
Designing a Session	39
Chapter 3: BodyReading	43
The Five Stages of BodyReading	44
The BodyReading Process	50
Chapter 4: The Foot and Lower Leg	53
The Bones of the Leg: As Easy As 1, 2, 3...4, 5	54
The Joints: Hinges and Spirals	55
The Arches as a 'Secondary Curve'	57
The Bones of the Arches	58
The Plantar Tissues	59
The Calf Muscles	61
BodyReading the Foot and Lower Leg	66
Foot and Lower Leg Techniques	68
Chapter 5: The Knee and Thigh	87
The Knee Joint	88
The One- and Two-Joint Muscles of the Thigh	92
BodyReading the Knee and Thigh	99
Knee and Thigh Techniques	101
Chapter 6: The Hip	111
The Bones	114
The Ligaments	118
The Muscles	121
1. The Trochanteric Fan	122
2. The Ramic Fan	126
3. The Inguinal Fan	129
BodyReading the Pelvis	132
Pelvic Techniques	137
Chapter 7: The Abdomen, Thorax, and Breathing	155
The Abdomen and Ribs: Support for the Ventral Cavity	155
The Rib Basket	164
Accessory Muscles of Breathing	166
The Diaphragm	169
BodyReading the Abdomen, Thorax, and Breathing	172
Abdomen and Thorax Techniques	174
Chapter 8: The Spine	183
The Pattern of the Musculature	189
The Neck	192
BodyReading the Spine	200
Spine Techniques	202
BodyReading the Head and Neck	214
Neck Techniques	216
Chapter 9: The Shoulder and Arm	225
The Shoulder	225
The Arm Lines	235
BodyReading the Shoulders	242
Shoulder and Arm Techniques	246
Rotator Cuff Techniques	254
Integration	266
Appendix 1: The Anatomy Trains Lines	267
Appendix 2: Contraindications	275
Bibliography	281
Resources	284
Index	285

Introduction/How to Use This Book

Each person's structural pattern is unique – an expression of the many variables that combine to create the shape in each of us. Thus any analysis of structure is necessarily limited. Whether by conscious or unconscious choice, by inherited design or learnt habit, through physical or psychological trauma, we shape our body and therefore the tissue that supports it into one of the six billion possibilities that is you or your client. To cover each and every of the possible vagaries of shape would require a tome many times larger than this one.

In this book we have therefore guided you to see many of the common tendencies, with visual examples where possible. Each chapter gives you an introduction to the structural anatomy of a portion of the body, followed by hints and ideas on what to look for when analyzing clients, rounded off with strategies and tools to address the fascial sheets and guy ropes within it.

Due to the holistic nature of human patterning, it is difficult to give a linear and methodical analysis of each and every possibility, and it would bore the reader to do so. Where the logic behind a technique was not clearly covered within the anatomical or BodyReading introduction, we have given structural examples alongside the technique.

In some cases only one example is given, as it would again tire the reader to be constantly reminded that 'if the opposite pattern is present then the tissue relationship will be reversed'. A simple understanding of the antagonistic relationship of muscles is presumed. Although this book can stand alone, many of the techniques presented here draw on the Anatomy Trains theory set forth in *Anatomy Trains: Myofascial Meridians for Manual and Movement Therapists* (Myers 2009), and we have not repeated all of the detail of each Anatomy Train. That information is readily available in other sources should you wish to research it further, though a summary of each is given in the appendix for easy reference. Nevertheless, readers unfamiliar with 'Anatomy Trains' will still find in this manual many of the necessary tools and much of the understanding needed to start making changes with their clients' structures.

The techniques are given in a roughly anatomical sequence rather than according to the Anatomy Trains theory; though where the target area does belong within the territory of a Train it is referenced for your convenience. This allows the practitioner to take advantage of the fascial continuities by extending the release of one area by working on adjacent elements of the same

line. So, for example, if the hamstrings seem reluctant to release or lengthen, then following the Superficial Back Line of which they are a significant element we may achieve further release by working with the gastrocnemius or sacrotuberous ligament. A key for the abbreviations of the lines is given at the end of this section.

BodyReading does take practice and we have a number of other resources to help you with it should you wish to take it further; for more details, see Resources. Likewise, we run a number of workshops throughout the world in which we combine the Anatomy Trains theory, BodyReading, and Fascial Release Technique (FRT).

The techniques that are listed are not complete. Certain areas have been omitted because their intimacy or their delicate nature does not lend itself to learning without the practical guidance available in a workshop or mentoring relationship. These techniques can be creatively adapted to individual patterns in terms of direction, depth, and choice of your body position and applicator tool used – fingers, palm, knuckles or elbow. What is important is your understanding of what you are trying to achieve and the nature of the tissue you are working with. Much of this will depend on palpatory feedback, something that can be learnt only through practice and with a certain amount of guidance. But the reflective practitioner will be well equipped to face a wide range of clients with confidence after working through the many aspects of this book. We hope to encourage the reader to see the techniques as templates and ideas that are malleable to fit the needs of the client and their individual tissue. Working with the idea of each intervention being a ‘communication between two intelligent systems’ and achieving and maintaining the lock in the tissue are two of the most important elements of this approach. We therefore recommend even the seasoned practitioner to spend time with the introductory sections of the book.

Most anatomy taught today uses the traditional elements of the body, generally ignoring the important qualities of the fascial webbing and, in particular, the myofascia which this book addresses. Using the names of individual muscles can give the impression that they are discrete, separate entities in their own right, but several lines of current research are showing the limitations of this way of thinking (Myers 2009, Huijing 2008, Stecco 2009, Van der Wal 2009). In order to describe the mechanics of each of the techniques within this book we have used familiar muscular terminology. But each time we name a muscle we hope to bring to mind the idea of continuous sheaths and planes of strong elastic tissue in which are contained the contractile elements that we call muscles. When we refer to any muscle within this text, please realise that we consider it to have wider connection in the body beyond its traditional origin and insertion.

Our main aim is to encourage you to think and analyze in a different way: rather than being drawn by the client's story of their pain, look further afield and build a story of their structure, work with them to explore it, develop an alternative strategy and experiment with a structural approach using fascial release. This book provides an introduction to this exciting and rewarding approach to bodywork. We encourage you to take it further by attending any of the increasing number of workshops available worldwide. We look forward to meeting you in person one day soon.

We wish you every success.

Thomas Myers & James Earls

Key to Anatomy Trains Abbreviations

SFL – Superficial Front Line

SBL – Superficial Back Line

LTL – Lateral Line

SPL – Spiral Line

DFL – Deep Front Line

SFAL – Superficial Front Arm Line

DFAL – Deep Front Arm Line

SBAL – Superficial Back Arm Line

DBAL – Deep Back Arm Line

FFL – Front Functional Line

BFL – Back Functional Line

An Introduction to Fascial Release Technique



Human Patterning

All therapists of whatever method, but especially manual therapists, are seeking greater order in human movement patterning, making forays into the porous border between structure and function. Any change of behavior is a change of movement. But for sustained change in the postural basis of movement, attention to the fascial tissues and their properties is essential.

Every tangible structure in the real world is a compromise between the need for stability – necessary to maintain a coherent structure so that repetitive processes can happen easily and reliably – and mobility, which allows the structure to deal with all kinds of environmental novelty responsively and without ‘breaking’ essential parts.

While banks and mountains lie at the stability end of the spectrum, living creatures tend to lean toward the mobility end. Plants, mostly anchored, have settled on fiber made from the carbohydrate cellulose as their main structural element. Large land animals, including humans, primarily use the pliable protein collagen fiber for creating structures that are stable enough to be physiologically viable and at the same time thoroughly mobile in their ability to move through the environment and manipulate it to their own ends.

Thus, a thorough familiarity with the properties and positioning of collagenous tissue – which makes up most of the tendons, ligaments, aponeuroses, muscle envelopes, organ bags and attachments, and sheets of biological fabric – is vital to successful manual therapy and physical training. Understanding muscles and nerves – though essential – is not enough. Approaching the fascia requires a different eye, a different touch, and tissue-specific techniques.

This stability/mobility compromise can lead to ‘compromising’ situations at both ends of the spectrum. On the stability end, parts that should stay mobile relative to other parts can become fascially or neurologically stuck together and unable to move differentially. This results in congestion and mechanical strain locally, or additional loading in linked – but sometimes quite distant – ‘elsewheres’ (figure 1.1).



Figure 1.1: The Anatomy Trains Myofascial Meridians constitute one map of how compensation can be shifted from one part of the body to another, quite distant part.

On the other side, sometimes parts that should stay closely bound become too movable relative to each other, and this hypermobility can cause friction (and thus inflammation and its aftermath). This excess movement also necessitates either muscular or fascial compensation (read: contraction or binding) somewhere else to create enough stability for function (like walking, standing, sitting, work or sport) to continue without breaking down.

Muscle ‘knots’, spasms, long-term tension in trigger points, less-than-efficient movement patterns, thickened or glued fascia, ‘dead’ areas of sensori-motor amnesia and, of course, tissue pain are all ultimately sequelae of the body’s attempt to deal with these stability/mobility issues as best it can under the available circumstances.

So, as therapists seeking to restore structural integrity and balance for our clients, we address ourselves every day to this complex array of adaptations in the ‘neuro-myofascial’ web. Welcome to a practical guide to negotiating these patterns via manipulative interventions in the highly innervated muscle and connective tissues.

In this book we concentrate especially on the fascial/connective tissue part of this patterning troika. Everyone knows their muscles and bones, and much study has gone into them. The connective tissues that mediate between the two have received less focus and are thus less well understood. It is to the properties and disposition of these adaptable tissues that we now turn our attention.

One caveat: Any linear presentation, e.g. this book, must necessarily present the approach in terms of individually named ‘parts’, but the challenge for any therapist is to assemble such piecemeal ‘techniques’ into an artful and holistically comprehensive approach to the client’s unique overall pattern. Chronic problems especially involve diverse tissues over wide areas of the body, and cannot be dealt with effectively solely by local treatment at the site of pain or dysfunction.

Developing the visual and palpatory assessment skills to create such bodywide session or series strategies with techniques such as these is the goal of our short courses and longer trainings (see Resources).

Introduction to the Fascial Webbing

Fascia is the missing element in the movement/stability equation. Understanding fascial plasticity and responsiveness is an important key to lasting and substantive therapeutic change.

Although anatomy books and technique libraries (including this one) are quick to label and identify these discrete bits, it is important to remember that humans are not constructed from parts like an automobile or computer. No ‘part’ of a biological creature could exist without constant and unbroken connection to the whole.

All One Net

Your fascial webwork began as a unified whole about the second week of your development, and will remain a single connected web from top to toe and from birth to death. From the moment of its inception, it has been folded and refolded in the complex origami of embryological development into a human who can stand, eat and read on its own. When we identify the different parts of this webbing – your dura mater, lumbar aponeurosis, mesentery, iliotibial tract or plantar fascia – we need to remember these are man-made names for subsets of your indivisible whole.



While every anatomy lists around six hundred separate muscles, it is more accurate to say that there is one muscle poured into six hundred pockets of the fascial webbing. The ‘illusion’ of separate muscles is created by the anatomist’s scalpel, dividing tissues along the planes of fascia – and in the process obscuring the unifying element of the fascial webwork (figure 1.2). Of course these distinctions are useful, but this reductive process should not blind us to the reality of the unifying whole.

After birth, this single ‘organ’ is subject to the shadowless force of gravity – perhaps the largest force in shaping it, for better or for worse – interacting with the possibilities offered by our genes and the opportunities (or lack thereof) offered by our environment. It can be torn by injury or cut with a surgeon’s blade, and it will do its best to self-repair. It shapes itself around our patterns of movement in breathing, walking, occupation and avocation. It is shaped by our psychological attitudes, by the movements they allow and do not allow. Finally, it is subject to the inevitable depredations of aging – degeneration, fraying and drying out – until we are finally ready to leave it behind.

Figure 1.2: The Superficial Back Line in dissection. Turn the scalpel on its side and you can readily see the fascial connections which link muscles in longitudinal series – part of the single net of fascia that runs from the toes (bottom) to the nose (top).

Through all of this it will remain a single, unifying and communicating network, holding us in a characteristically recognizable and physiologically viable shape, turning the contraction of the muscle tissue into sensible movement by transmitting it to the bones and joints, and in concert with the nerves and muscles generally managing the constantly changing mechanical forces that impinge on us via our contact with the rest of the world.

You cannot remove a cubic centimeter from the body’s meat without bringing along some of this fascial net. This fascial system, which combines tough fibers with an amorphous gel of gluey proteoglycans (ground substance) in an aqueous medium, provides the environment for each and every cell, invests every tissue, surrounds every organ and binds the whole system into shape. With its intimate connection to every tissue structure, it also has a large role in physiological maintenance and immunity, but we will leave these roles for others to explain and focus on its mechanical functions.

Fascial Elements

To deal with this wide variety of forces, our connective tissue cells create an equally wide array of building materials by modifying a few surprisingly simple elements. Bone, cartilage, tendon, ligament, heart valves, sheets of tough fabric that surround the muscles, delicate gluey webbing that supports the brain, the transparent cornea of your eye and the dentin in your teeth – all of these and many other structures are made by connective tissue cells (figure 1.3).