

## SET TALK

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### LONG TERM RELIEF FOR TENSION HEADACHES

The last article was devoted exclusively to treating migraine headaches. In this article I will be addressing the most common headache, the tension headache. Billions of dollars are spent on over the counter medications for tension headaches. Even though many of these medications appear to be harmless, they actually have potentially long term negative effects on the body. Many of your clients will seek massage treatment hoping to alleviate the cause of their tension headaches, but most massage will only relieve tension headaches on a short term basis. However, clients are usually seeking long term relief. To accomplish this there are some specific conditions that need to be addressed.

A good example is Jack, a 43 year old CEO of a mortgage company, who was desperate with a severe tension headache. Even with physician prescribed Xanax his headaches had continued to increase in frequency and duration as his business proceeded to lose money and move into bankruptcy.

Jack's headaches began when the real estate bubble burst and his business deteriorated. With each stage of the deterioration of his mortgage business Jack's headaches had increased both in pain and frequency. His physician gave him a prescription for Xanax and a recommendation to see a psychologist to learn to manage his stress. The Xanax had been somewhat successful for several months and then became less effective as the headaches increased. Jack felt the sessions with the psychologist had been a waste of time because the circumstances of his failing business were only getting worse. The business had been Jack's life achievement.

When Jack came in for his session he was experiencing high levels of tension, stress and anxiety that were manifesting in the tightened and restricted muscles and soft tissue in his head, neck and shoulders. Jack stated he had a relaxation massage which had barely touched the tension and stress, and had only helped until he got off the table.

I evaluated his structure using muscle testing (kinesiology). Jack was in the core distortion which included a distortion in the cranium. The muscles and soft tissue of his neck and shoulders were so tight that they pulled his head far forward in front of his shoulders.

He also had a rotation in the hips and pelvis with a long leg/short leg and exaggerated curvatures in the spine, all part of the core distortion.

I began his session by treating a specific series of acupuncture/trigger points using a specialized Structural Energetic Therapy® technique called the Quick Release Technique. This released his current headache along with the tension, energy, spasm, stress, and emotion that was trapped in the musculature of the neck and shoulders which had prevented him from lying comfortably on the table. This technique also initiated normal cranial motion to support efficient body function to help his body cope with the stress.

The next step was the application of the Cranial/Structural Core Distortion Release (CSCDR) to release the core distortion throughout his body so his body would be more balanced and supported through his entire structure including his neck requiring less tension in the muscles to stand erectly. Then a Structural Energetic Therapy® soft tissue protocol was applied to his head, neck and shoulders to further release the chronic tension and stress pattern that had built up over years. By the time the session was over Jack's headache was gone and he reported being significantly more relaxed. He wondered if this would only be effective while he was lying down. I explained that one of the reasons that the previous massages didn't have long term results was that when he stood up the imbalances in the rest of his body from the core distortion would force his head forward creating tension in the neck and shoulders just to maintain standing.

Now that the CSCDR had been applied the pelvis and lower body was brought into support, the exaggerated curvatures of his spine that were one of the principle causes of the tension in his neck and shoulders had been significantly reduced. Consequently the muscles would not need to tighten to the same degree to just hold him erect. In addition, we released the myofascial holding pattern in the head, neck and shoulder which held the chronic tension and governed the shape and contraction of the muscles. The Quick Release Technique which was applied early in the treatment had also drained off a significant amount of emotional stress and tension. This was like peeling an onion with Jack as there were many layers from years of accumulated tension.

The Structural Energetic Therapy® soft tissue techniques were applied to further release the structural imbalances that continued to support the tension patterns. Along with the soft tissue release the emotional tension and anxiety that Jack had been suppressing by tightening his muscles was given a chance to release so

his body would not have to immediately retighten to contain this emotional energy.

At Jack's second session he was still getting headaches but they were not as severe even though he had to file bankruptcy for his business. We again applied the Quick Release Technique, the CSCDR and the Structural Energetic Therapy® soft tissue protocol for head, neck and shoulders to bring increased balance and to peel off more of the layers of tension, stress and emotion out of the soft tissue of the head, neck and shoulder area. Jack reported feeling much better when he left.

Each successive treatment for Jack released deeper layers of chronic tension, stress and emotion and created more structural balance so his head, neck and shoulder area were supported without using the chronically tightened muscles to hold him erect. Jack also continued to release emotional tension and stress in the sessions which further reduced the necessity for the tissues retightening. Even though the stress levels in Jack's life continued to remain extraordinarily high, after five sessions Jack was able to spread his treatments out to once every few months and his tension headaches were gone.

When looking at Jack's case history let's consider the differences between this treatment and his previous treatments. The first difference was the application of the Quick Release Technique that not only released the stress and tension in the muscles but also released ischemia, swelling and inflammation, opened up the flow of energy through acupuncture meridians, released emotions through energetic releases, and mobilized the occiput which allowed the cranial motion to work more effectively.

The second was the application of the CSCDR following structural evaluation. The structural imbalances from the core distortion that resulted in Jack's head being pulled forward by the chronic buildup of tension, and the tightened myofascial holding pattern in the muscles in the back of the neck, were released with the application of the CSCDR. In addition, the CSCDR also brought structural support to the entire spine which allowed the improved structure of the neck and shoulders to be supported long term. Now when Jack would stand his whole body supported the improved posture and the old chronic tension holding pattern no longer pulled his head forward.

An additional benefit was that tension restrictions in the cranial motion were released during the application of the CSCDR that allowed for more complete flow of cerebral spinal fluid leading to homeostasis. The soft tissue releases in the fascia that surrounds the cranium

also took pressure off cranial nerves that were irritated and part of the tension headaches.

The third difference was the application of specialized myofascial soft tissue protocols of Structural Energetic Therapy® to increase the structural balance and release Jack's head back into alignment with the rest of his body. These protocols are designed specifically to achieve the structural balance and release the chronic compensation pattern in the tops of the shoulders and back of the neck. This results in allowing the work in these areas less sensational. The old myofascial holding pattern and the adhesions that had immobilized chronically tightened muscles were compressing many of the nerves in the head, neck and shoulders. The release of the tension in the fascia and the adhesions took the pressure off these nerves resulting in the disappearance of Jack's headaches.

I have found this combination of treatment protocols to be extremely effective for all kinds of tension headaches. Unless the structural imbalances are addressed, tension headaches will continue to recur for clients. When I use the integration of all these techniques my clients are able to experience long term relief from tension headaches.

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