

SET TALK

By Don McCann, MA, LMT, LMHC, CSETT

MA3267 MH705 MM3717

(*Massage Message September/October 2009*)

UNLOCKING PERFORMANCE POTENTIAL

People who use their bodies for almost any endeavor are utilizing their performance potential. This applies to everyone from a professional athlete such as a quarter back on a football team who has many levels of performance, to a “couch potato” who does extensive surfing of the internet (as was volunteered by a participant in one of my recent talks.) While this seems extreme to compare these two, both of them would benefit from having their performance potential unlocked.

One important aspect of performance potential is the development phase for tasks that will be performed during a lifetime. An example of this would be an athlete who must develop strength, flexibility, coordination, and mobility in order to become a professional athlete. Most people are born with the muscles, motor pathways, and structure to stand, ambulate, run, write, type, throw, punch, swing arms, and so on. However, some will perform these activities as well as more complicated tasks at a very high level, while others will never be able to achieve this level of activity. Sometimes heredity will play a major role in this where we can see that many talents were passed through many generations in the DNA. In other instances these lines of heredity show no previous talents for the present performance. This opens up the possibility that high levels of physical performance aren't only dependent upon inheritance and can be developed.

In my work I have been fortunate to work with many individuals who seek not only rehabilitation, but also increased performance in their life task. As mentioned before, this also included a “couch potato” who many of us would exclude from the idea of peak performance. This client came for rehabilitation of a nerve entrapment of the thumb. Treating the condition that created the nerve entrapment involved working with the entire arm, not just the thumb. This included the pronation of the hand, the internal rotation of the arm, and the medial rotation of the shoulder. During the process of rehabilitating the thumb, the client's entire body improved in its structural alignment. Not only was the nerve entrapment of the thumb resolved, but there was a marked increase in the strength, flexibility, coordination, and mobility of the entire arm. Even though this individual would never go on to professional

sports activities, the performance potential of this “couch potato” who surfed the internet and TV channels was maximized.

This client had developed the nerve entrapment due to a collapse of his structural core distortion pattern which caused his shoulder, arm and hand to distort to the point of developing a nerve entrapment syndrome. The result of this nerve entrapment syndrome in the hand/arm/and shoulder was at least a 40% loss of muscle strength creating a strain pattern. With this 40% loss of strength there was also a loss of function and coordination which limited the “couch potato's” performance potential dramatically and led to substantial pain and dysfunction. To effectively release these structural distortions in the hand, arm, and shoulder the Cranial/Structural techniques for the release of the core distortion were utilized. After completion of treatment he was able to maintain structural support with additional strength and coordination that allowed him to work pain free and made him more successful in the activities he enjoyed.

Now let's take a look at massage therapists. Massage therapists need to have their bodies perform with strength, flexibility, coordination, and function. Unlocking your performance potential is very important because it will allow you to apply your skills at a higher level resulting in greater relief from pain and dysfunction for your clients. You need to have a stable, supported structure to allow you to apply various types and depths of massage strokes without causing pain, weakness and dysfunction within your own body.

Many massage therapists begin their careers with structural limitations which will create additional problems down the road. These limitations can be a direct result of the basic structural core distortion. Within the core distortion there is an anterior/posterior ilium relationship, a long /short leg discrepancy, a tipped sacrum, a degree of scoliosis, a high/low shoulder relationship, a medially rotated shoulder, an internally rotated arm, a pronated hand, a tilted head and an anterior neck. Within each of these distortions there are muscles and muscle groups that are at best functioning at 40%-60% strength. Now add the challenge of applying massage techniques with requires coordination, strength, flexibility, and function. If beginning massage therapists could have the benefit of structural support and stability, and not be limited by the 40%-60% loss of muscle strength and flexibility, how much easier it would be for them to master the skills needed for massage. Unfortunately, they have to experience learning the skills of massage while operating under the handicap of the core distortion. This ultimately slows down and limits their development of their massage skills.

There is another more insidious side to massage for the therapist. Massage therapists spend long hours leaning over a table. Even with the best body mechanics you will slowly but surely collapse further into the core distortion pattern. This can show up in many ways. Some therapists will have painful symptoms in their feet from being on their feet all day with arches that are not supporting them properly due to the imbalances from the core distortion. Others will experience painful symptoms in their legs due to the degeneration of their joints and further weakening of their muscles caused by the uneven wear and tear on their joints from the imbalance of the core distortion. For others it will be felt in the pelvis where again the physical usage of the muscles and joints will overwhelm the weakened muscles from the anterior/posterior rotation relationship of the iliums in the core distortion, further increasing the structural imbalances.

For almost every massage therapist, the scoliosis of the spine from the core distortion and the pelvic distortion will continue to deteriorate and increase with constant bending over the table as well as carrying and moving massage tables. The cervical spine that originally was curved and forward will only increase in distortion with the head further out in front of the body. Arm and shoulder problems will start to develop from the rotations and pronations of the arm, hand and shoulder.

When I see massage therapists leaving the field with short careers not only due to the difficulty of maintaining a business but also due to their bodies giving out and the work being too hard, I'm saddened. The good news is that the scenario described above can be prevented by correcting the structure. This is accomplished with release of the cranial core distortion and myofascial restructuring to release the old structural misalignments. If massage therapists receive treatment that unlocks their performance potential they will develop skills more quickly, maximize their abilities, rehabilitate from old injuries, and extend their careers. Not only will they be happier, but so will their clients, now and in the future.

One of the reasons many therapists have continued in the field is that they continue to develop skills that excite them. When you can make a significant impact in a person's life by assisting them in maximizing their performance potential it is easy to be excited about what you have to offer. This excitement is contagious when you are describing your therapy to potential clients making it very attractive for these clients. The result could well be having more clients who are excited about massage treatments they are receiving. Success is measured by the difference you make in your client's lives. Success is also measured by personal satisfaction

in knowing you have done your best with the effective skills you have learned. Financial success follows.

Jim, a 33-year-old professional baseball pitcher, came for rehabilitation of a rotator cuff that was keeping him on the disabled list, and limiting both the speed and effectiveness of his pitches. He had been in the big leagues for 6 years. The younger pitcher who was called up to take his place had a faster pitching speed, greater effectiveness and more durability.

Jim's rotator cuff problems related directly to a medially rotated shoulder, and internally rotated arm which was all part of the core distortion affecting his whole body. He had been functioning with a 40%-60% reduction of strength and flexibility in the muscles of the rotator cuff as well as other key muscles in his body from head to foot. The application of the Cranial/Structural Core Distortion Release, along with specific myofascial techniques, released and rehabilitated the collapse of the core distortion, which not only rehabilitated his rotator cuff, but also restored his range of motion, strength and flexibility beyond where it had previously been. Jim was able to start pitching within 4 weeks, and the speed of his fast ball increased from 91-92 mph to an amazing 95-96 mph. He also reported more endurance and arm strength.

Even more surprising was the improvement in Jim's fielding. He was moving more quickly to the ball, and turning and throwing faster. These improvements had actually unlocked pitching potential that Jim had never been able to access throughout his career. Every aspect of his game had greatly improved. His potential was expanded and he was able to surpass previous levels of performance. In addition, when he was being compared to the younger pitcher who had taken his place, Jim was performing at a much higher level and was given a new contract with an extended career.

The professional athlete is very visible when we look at the performance potential. However, everyone has potential regardless of what they do in life, and everyone can benefit from having the restrictions to their performance potential released. Cranial/Structural Core Distortion Releases are the most direct and effective way I have encountered to accomplish this. They have become the foundation for all other soft tissue work I apply with my clients, whether it be rehabilitation from pain, unlocking performance potential for peak performance, or extending ones abilities to perform.