



What to expect from your Structural Bodywork (SB) Sessions

SB is a wonderful ‘tonic’ for your posture and movement, but it is no panacea. Do not undertake SB without medical permission if indicated, or if suffering from a ‘hot’ (inflammatory) disease. SB can be remarkably effective for chronic pain patterns of a structural nature, but is not designed as a ‘curative’ for any disease, or as a ‘first aid’ remedy for recent injury. Check with your practitioner if you are unsure whether KMI is contraindicated.

You can certainly ‘try out’ a session of SB to see if it suits you, but the best, most permanent and progressive results are obtained by undertaking the whole series. You can do the 3-session series within a week, and spread it out over three. Spacing the sessions too close together does not give your body time to absorb the information, whereas drawing the process out too long means you risk losing the momentum essential to the process.

Different SB practitioners have different styles, so be sure your practitioner ‘fits’ with you, and feel free to bring any issues you have with the work up to your practitioner.

Typically, the SB process will begin with a fairly extensive interview about your history and current habits. Most SB sessions are done in underwear or a bathing suit, without draping. Your practitioner will usually want to observe you standing and walking before the sessions start, in order to assess your current structural patterns. Your practitioner may take photos in order to give you a visual sense of the ‘before’ and ‘after’, since there can be some fairly dramatic changes in your shape.

(And sometimes there will not be dramatic visual changes – judge your SB experience by how you feel rather than how it looks.)

SB work is done on a massage table, or for certain moves on a stool or bench. The practitioner will use his fingers, hands, or arm to contact certain tissues, and then ask you to move in specific ways while he or she opens and repositions those tissues. The process of opening these tissues can involve some burning, like a yoga stretch or exercising some long unused muscles. The pain, if the sensation gets that far, should be short and bearable. Please converse with your practitioner to find the right level of depth for you that allows the maximum value for each session consistent with your comfort. The idea is to achieve a balanced body that is pain-free. You may have to feel some of the stored pain as it leaves your body, especially in traumatized areas.

Traumatized tissue can also contain emotional pain. Although we are not trained psychologists, your KMI practitioner has been trained to sensitively work with you around these issues as they relate to your body structure. Feel free to work with your practitioner again to find the right level of work for you.

Each SB session deals with a different fascial plane or set of relationships in the body, progressively working around the body, and from superficial to deep and back again. Your practitioner may not work where you are reporting the symptoms, as the patterns that feed that problem are body-wide. A whiplash, for instance, is a problem of the neck for some days, a problem of the whole spine within a few weeks, and is linked to a whole body pattern within a few months.

It is not unusual to have odd feelings – physical or emotional – between sessions. Please contact your practitioner if they are cause for concern. Often, old long-forgotten pains will resurface for a time – this is a positive sign that the process of unwinding is well underway. Your practitioner has a short pamphlet, “Getting the Most From Your SB Sessions”, which can be helpful.

View your SB series as a project, with a beginning, middle, and an end; not an on-going and endless therapy. Results will continue to accrue after you have finished your final session.

Clients often return once or twice a year for a ‘tune up’ session, to ease the effects of the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune. Others simply go on to some other maintenance routine such as yoga, Tai Chi, Feldenkrais, a workout routine – whatever is appropriate to them. Still others return periodically for a shorter series of sessions, advanced work designed to take the process deeper into your body and your experience.