

test run

I Tried Craniosacral Therapy

I hoped this hands-on treatment would erase my head and neck tension. Here's what happened at my first session. BY DAPHNA CAPERONIS



Therapist Lissa Wheeler positioned my head.

At a Glance

Daphna Caperonis, 28

THE THERAPY

Gentle manipulation of the membranes and cerebrospinal fluid that surround your brain and spinal cord. Blockages are thought to cause neck and back pain and other conditions.

THE COST: \$80 to \$150 for an hour-long session.

MY MOTIVATION: To ease a cramped feeling in my head and neck.

FEAR FACTOR: None.

A Pain in the Neck

I was suffering from the curse of the editor's posture: a stiff neck and tight shoulders from hours spent at my computer. To compound matters, I'd been straining my upper body while fixing up my new house for move-in day. Craniosacral therapy seemed like it could help because it aligns your spine, releases tight muscles, and

loosens tension around your skull. I called Lissa Wheeler, a certified integrated manual therapist in Bloomfield, Conn., who practices a modified version of craniosacral therapy.

The Diagnosis

In the therapy room, Wheeler wanted to know about previous injuries and medications I'd taken. She then asked me to rate my painful areas from 1 to 10. My neck and head scored the highest—each a 5.

Next Wheeler checked my range of motion. I stood as she urged my head into a nod to see how far it could go. (Not far.) Then she guided me downward to touch my toes. People who have an aligned sacrum (where the spine meets the pelvis) can keep their legs perpendicular to the floor when they bend, but I couldn't.

Then Wheeler told me to lie face-down on a table. In a procedure called mapping, she lightly touched my upper body with her palms, looking for blockages in my muscles, connective tissue, and cerebrospinal fluid. My entire back was taut. I flipped over and she mapped my front, noting tightness in my face and chest.

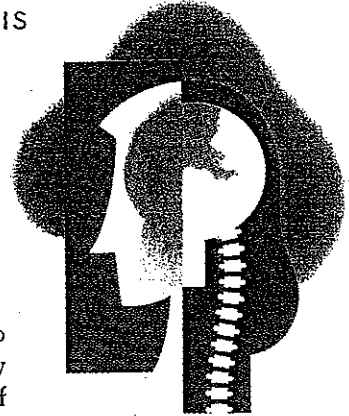
The Treatment

She began by gently pressing her palm into my lower back. Because visualization helps you respond well to the

therapy, she suggested I visualize something releasing so I could "unstick" this bony structure. I pictured a screw coming out of a block of wood.

Wheeler asked me to turn over and she gently pressed on the bony part of my chest above my heart to loosen the surrounding musculature. She was moving so subtly that I imagined I was a giant Ouija board. After 10 minutes, I sensed my body relaxing and my breathing easing.

For the skull manipulation, I lay on my back, eyes closed, as Wheeler's palms lightly cradled my neck and head. As her hands slowly migrated around my cranium, she asked me to picture a freeing image; I thought of my head as a glowing sun. After a few minutes, my head felt incredibly



light and the rest of my body unwound completely.

When I redid the nod and toe-touch tests, I passed easily.

My Verdict

The best part: The manipulation of my head, which freed me of pain and tightness.

The worst part: Insomnia from having so much energy.

Would I do it again? Yes. I'll need it after moving day. ☺

Daphna Caperonis is a senior editor at Natural Health.

Fast Facts

HISTORY: Between 1900 and the 1970s, the meningeal approach to craniosacral therapy evolved. It focuses on the membranes that contain cerebrospinal fluid. Two other approaches also exist: the sutural approach (focusing on the skull bones) and the reflex approach (focusing on nerve endings).

TODAY: Several thousand therapists practice worldwide.

FOR MORE INFO: Contact the Upledger Institute (800-233-5880; www.upledger.com).



Wheeler felt for tension.

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