

What is Structural Integration?

Named after its founder Ida Rolf, *Rolfing Structural Integration* can improve posture, correct inefficient movement patterns, and ease chronic pain. For many people, it can be more effective than relaxation massage. Techniques include lengthening tendons and entire muscles by contracting and relaxing during stretches; holding or moving limbs during motion; and sliding the superficial fascia between the muscles and the skin. Movements are slow and deliberate. There is no pain.

Some practitioners believe that manual therapy can significantly lengthen and repattern fascia. But collagen is extremely resilient material — it has to be, given the huge stresses of pressure and tension placed on tendons. It's unlikely that any real change could be effected in the structure of the body without aggressive work, like the stretching routines of a dancer or gymnast. Rather, benefits of Rolfing are from *neuro-muscular proprioception*, which just means our body's sense of itself. Pain sometimes has a physical cause in the muscle, like a trigger point, but most tension has a different cause. It is set by the nervous system. The brain itself decides how short and tight, or how long and loose, each muscle is. When we do a daily stretching routine we might be lengthening the collagen networks a tiny amount, but mostly we're retraining our brain to accept a longer length for that structure. Tiny sensors in our muscle called Golgi Tendon Organs gradually allow us to stretch more without triggering pain and the sense of "that's as far as it'll go!"

Another factor is warming up the tissue. Collagen has a property called *thixotropy*, which means that it resists change while it's cold, but gets pliable when it's warm or moved slowly. Warming the soft tissues (layers, skin, muscles, tendons) through Swedish massage, hot stones, or slow lengthening induces the sense of release. Once the muscles are in their new position or fascia has repatterned, the brain remembers this new sense of length and ease. It's a *neuro + muscular* change.

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Services

Massage, at the Spa or at my home studio

60 min	\$80
90 min	\$110
120 min	\$140

Structural Integration

\$110; sessions last about 90 minutes

24-hour cancellation required, or missed appts.
charged at 50%. Cash and cheque accepted.

Jonah Winters

RMT, MA

Structural Integration
Registered massage therapist
Certified spa therapist



structuralintegrationniagara.com
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What is Massage Therapy

Massage therapy is the assessment of the soft tissue and joints of the body and the treatment and prevention of physical dysfunction and pain of the soft tissues and joints by manipulation to develop, maintain, rehabilitate or augment physical function, or relieve pain.

This can be quite different from both relaxation massage and Rolfing Structural Integration. While *massage therapists* are trained to treat and alleviate specific physical conditions, *Rolfers* organize the entire body to achieve free movement in the face of gravity and release chronic imbalances, and *spa therapy* brings pleasure and calm relaxation. I am certified in all three styles.

What to expect

Relaxation massage is done on a massage table, using oil on skin, undressed with draping, in 30-up to 120-minute sessions. It relieves pain and relaxes tight muscles, and can be deeply calming.

[see more at wintersbodyworks.com](http://wintersbodyworks.com)

Structural Integration and *myofascial therapy* can be done with some clothing on (like swim trunks and a sports bra), includes some standing and seated positions, and is done in roughly 90-minute sessions. *Myo-* is simply Greek for muscle: myofascial work manipulates both muscles and their connective structures to “release” restrictions and achieve long-term improvement to a body’s functioning. It can treat chronic pain, overuse injuries, postural imbalances, or tight athletically-conditioned muscles.

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Styles and Techniques

When people think *massage* they may picture Swedish or spa massage, the traditional method of rubbing the skin for affecting muscle tone and relaxation. But my spa style is like Esalen, or “deep flow,” which emphasizes whole-body integration through long strokes to slow the heart, and gentle stretches. It can include sensory experience like soothing aromatherapy (essential oils from flowers and plants to balance energy, promote healing, or simply for a pleasing sensation), hot stone (heat melts tight muscles like butter), Trager (rocking “joint release”), Shiatsu pressure points, deep breathing, and music to alleviate stress and relieve pain. These lower the resting tone of sore muscle and induce a feel-good relaxation.

But this is just one of many different types of bodywork, some of which don’t look anything like traditional massage. My *deep tissue* or *Structural Integration* therapy uses less oil and slow contact to reach deeper layers of the body. It can prevent and heal injury and improve posture by lengthening tissues. Therapeutic massage doesn’t necessarily follow a pleasing flow, but rather, just fixes things. It focuses on systemic imbalances, shortened muscles, and restrictions like old scars. It treats not just muscles or skin, but entire structures to separate or reposition them relative to other parts. It uses little or no oil to get a better grip on the tissues and transmit forces through the skin.

Fascia is a network of collagen fibers that connects every part of our body, from the largest muscles to the smallest arteries, and even cell membranes. Like a high-tensile plastic wrap, it both separates everything in our body, and then holds it in place. Ligaments and tendons are also made from collagen; all three are connective tissue. Ligaments join one bone to another, tendons join muscle to bone, and fascia connects muscles to other muscles and to the skin.

Bio

I’m a graduate of Vancouver School of Bodywork and Massage, Ontario College of Health & Technology, and a certified Structural Integration therapist.



I was licensed by the City of Vancouver to practice mobile therapeutic massage, and now work in various locations around Niagara and St Catharines, including *The Spiritual Spa*. My approach is evidence-based, meaning I study and follow the science of massage and healing.

Originally from San Francisco, I grew up near the mountains in Oregon, have lived many places across Canada and the States, and settled in the Niagara region in 2010. I’ve been practicing bodywork informally since about 1988, and professionally since 2007.

My past training includes Buddhist philosophy, music history, Islamic and Baha’i studies, and internet technologies. After short-lived careers in restaurant work and teaching religious studies, I began my life-long project: building a large online library for my field, bahai-library.com. In my next career I began designing and programming websites. Now my main focus is massage therapy practice and research.

See also “My story: how I came to *Rolfing*” at www.structuralintegrationniagara.com/faq
