

From Tissue to Soul to a Purpose: A CranioSacral Case Study on Healing PTSD

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At 32 years old, Mary* is a fully disabled veteran suffering from PTSD. Her PTSD was not brought on by combat as one may expect, but as a result of being drugged and raped by a fellow officer. It took her three months to remember, acknowledge and report the incident, after which she was embroiled in nine years of therapy through the Veteran's Administration. Her VA therapy included talk and drug therapies. She developed migraine headaches, heartburn, digestive problems, and sinusitis during this time. As years went by, she and the VA struggled to cope with her increasingly diminishing capacities. By the end of her VA therapy, she had been classified as "fully unemployable with an inability to be retrained."

Despite the bleak outlook from the VA, Mary always knew deep inside that drug therapies were not right for her. She felt insulted and abandoned with the label "unemployable." She is an extremely bright woman with a strong desire to heal herself and become a contributing member of society again.

So she embarked on a self-healing journey that included getting off the VA-prescribed drugs, making dietary changes, getting massage and bodywork, learning meditation, and doing lots of personal growth work. She was able to rid her body of the migraines and digestive problems,

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but she still suffered lingering effects of the PTSD.

Mary sustained neck, back and shoulder injuries in a car accident that preceded the rape by one month. Ten years later she still had trouble with this part of her body, which led her to a neuromuscular massage therapist in 2010. That therapist had taken CST I and recognized Mary's need for advanced-level CST and SER. The referral came my way.

Mary and I embarked on an intensive treatment program in which she received three hour-and-a-half CST treatments each week for about three weeks straight – 10 sessions total. Our first session began with structural work to address shoulder and neck pain, and she revealed that the pain in her shoulder held memories of the rape and that there was deep sadness in her sternum over the PTSD and her VA experience.

The sadness continued to rise over the next couple of days, and Mary worked at home doing meditations and journaling to process those feelings. She began to recognize an internal conflict: she was completely detached from the body that had been raped yet was struggling to get into her "new body" that she had been working so hard to heal.

Her third CST session began with continued stillpoints to help her body move into a deep parasympathetic state. Here, she embarked on an SER in which she saw herself in her body – a new

experience for her -- and her body was a landscape. The landscape was unfolding, revealing the division between her body and her thinking frontal lobe. As her imagery progressed, this landscape transformed into a white light and her left hand became very cold. When we checked in with her hand, it revealed that it represented the proverbial "handwriting on the wall," that which was going to unfold.

When Mary arrived for her fourth session, she reported a deep sense of peace within despite some anxiety that surfaced periodically during the day. She almost immediately dropped back into the deep healing place she visited in her previous session. Here, as I worked an energy cyst in her injured shoulder, she came to the realization that she had lost her "story" – the story of the rape and the PTSD – and that it was no longer important or relevant to her healing process. What was important was that she reconnect and become one with her body again. We finished the session by working with the thalamus to imprint this new sense of embodiment.

The next few sessions focused on helping Mary continue to stay embodied. We helped her get into her body –and stay in it -- using some of Full Body Presence (FBP) techniques. She learned how to ground herself and access universal energetic fields to replenish her internal resources. When she left her body during treatments, I would gently ease her

back in, encouraging her to feel her body from the inside out as I relied on her significance detector to guide the work.

Her SERs revealed numerous traumatic events in her lifetime. It was not always pleasant as she faced details and processed those events, but they were always incredibly significant to her therapeutic process.

She came to realize that an incident with her mentally unstable mother when she was five years old set the stage for her strong sense of duty to all those around her – except herself. It was also the incident in which she became disembodied for the very first time, and the pattern was set in motion. This pattern – taking care of others, being dutiful to them, and discounting her own experience -- dominated her early life. It was her sense of duty that led Mary to serve her country in the first place. And it was also what kept her from reporting the rape initially upon remembering it. But Mary learned in this session that she needed to cut the ties to the sense of duty and let her voice be heard so that she could achieve her goal of working with other military women who experience sexual harassment, abuse, or assault.

Her eighth session was one of those sessions we're used to reading about in one of Dr. John's books. Mary had an amazingly profound experience that I was humbled and awed to be a witness to. I began the session with a stillpoint at her feet plus some FBP grounding and filling. She had a hard time taking her awareness to her feet because there were "cement blocks" covering her legs and keeping her from moving forward. Dialog with the blocks revealed them to be protection that

kept her in her healing space and kept her from moving forward hastily before healing was complete.

That dialog led to the revelation that her mind was fearful and doubtful of the future, so Mary created a bubble that was anchored by the cement blocks of protection. She brought the word "fear" into the bubble and it dissipated, integrating safely into her tissue. She repeated the process with the word "doubt." She did the same thing with the word "duty." Then she went silent for a very long time.

And this is where things got interesting.

By this time, I had moved my hands up to her respiratory diaphragm as I supported her solar plexus chakra. She was deep in her body and deep in her process. Finally, she uttered four words: "I feel my tissue."

"Bingo!" I thought. "Good for you!" She was so deep in a significance detector, any response from me would either have fallen on deaf ears or completely brought her out of her process. So I just hung out and waited. I hung out there with this woman, in awe of her and the remarkable work she had done on herself to bring herself to this fantastic place of awareness.

I sat for a few more minutes, feeling her tissue between my hands as it melted and morphed. Then, another four words: "I found my soul."

Chills ran through my body at the level of depth this session was taking on. Here was a woman who, 16 days earlier, came into my practice with PTSD, in physical

pain yet emotionally numb, disembodied and disconnected from her *self*.

I continued hanging out. Where could this possibly go from here, I thought?

Finally, after a few more minutes, she said, "I've found my purpose."

I let out a deep sigh, knowing this was the culmination of her process for the day. I felt like I was holding a baby that had just given birth to itself.

As her awareness started coming back to the room, she shared what that was like for her. She said she realized that her tissue is the place of truth, and that any negativity from the mind could be verified within the tissue.

Mary's final two sessions focused on further integration of the work we had done in the past few weeks. Her shoulder, back and neck pain were gone, but she felt a little nagging strain in her head. I arced to an energy cyst in the back of her throat during our final session, which, upon release, led to some cranial base work and mouth work to fully open her avenue of expression and let her voice be heard.

Mary had been struggling with finding her purpose in life since being declared "unemployable" and "untrainable" by the VA – an experience that stripped her of any meaning and purpose to her life. But she was able to reconnect to her life's purpose once she got back into her body, reconnected to her soul, and then found the truth that had eluded her for so many years.

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