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Is there a place for Intuition and Intention within the practise of Reflexology?

I love feet, feet are my full time work. I am a Chiropodist/Podiatrist, Reflexologist and Foot Reader (also a Practitioner of the Metamorphic Technique & Reiki Master), I offer this contribution for Footprints in response to Diane's request for articles as I value and appreciate Footprints and the efforts made for our benefit.

My professional life has been dedicated to the study of feet, with a willingness to go beyond the scientific tradition. As a podiatrist I studied with the straight line of analytical thought, the medical approach of accepting evidence based research. From the podiatric viewpoint we can marvel at the anatomical architecture creating the strength and flexibility to both balance our bodies and create movement. The knowledge of gait cycles and biomechanics brought a basic understanding of the power of the feet to affect the health and wellbeing of the entire skeletal structure. For example, a Morton's (long 2nd) toe can alter the dynamics of the foot strike and causes medial rotation and adduction (inward movement of the thigh) which puts strain on the periformis muscle and can cause pain which can be mistaken for lumbar problems or hip problems.

However, working with feet on a daily basis I was intrigued that shoe pressure and hereditary conditions were not necessarily accounting for the foot problems that presented in my clinic. I found it interesting that as people discussed their daily lives there appeared to be a link to the feet presented for treatment and the foot problems occurring and it soon became obvious that the personalities and predispositions of the owners were also reflected in the form and structure of their feet and I was pleased to incorporate the insights of Imre Somogyi and later Chris Stormer within my practise. However, I never share my insights (they are not scientifically accurate and could cause offence according to the client's 'lens of perception'), they merely add another depth to the layers that help guide the intuition. As a chiropodist working with corns, callous and similar foot problems it became fascinating to view the location of the problems and link to the conversations held while working in the privacy of the clinic; work was never dull!

I have long held an interest in what may be called 'metaphysics' and ancient mysteries, so it was natural to go beyond the scientific tradition and accept the esoteric interpretation of our feet as representatives of movement and direction for our consciousness within our created reality. Our feet are our link with the earth acting as a contact point between the body/mind/spirit above and the physicality of our planet below. Our feet form our base and foundations for the skeletal frame. Once it is appreciated how honest and truthful the feet can be, we can begin to accept the wonderful opportunity they present for healing. As reflexologists we appreciate the possibilities to awaken self healing mechanisms, not only are the feet the point of contact between human and earth, they can be a vital access point for one human to work upon another.

I feel it was a privilege to be taught reflexology by Nicola Hall, although at that time there were still strong divisions segregating allopathic from complementary medicine and it was hard to integrate reflexology within my chiropody practice. I feel my basic qualification was a starting point and am constantly fascinated by the variety of reflexology charts and maps that can be mentally applied when working with the feet, charts dating back to the 1960s bear little relation to the complexity of those presented at the workshops and courses of the 21st Century. Sometimes the differences between the location of particular reflex points appear quite bizarre and have been cited, along with placebo effect, as a weakness in the theory of reflexology... is the power of intention a valid force at work during the practise of reflexology? These questions never fail to fascinate and perhaps cannot

be answered, yet critical questioning in no way diminishes the outcome of the overall beneficial effects of reflexology and hopefully leads eventually to greater understanding.

How does today's concerned and educated reflexologist cope with these contradictory charts and advice on pressures and techniques? In my case it is by trial, experimentation and observation of effect and I would like to share with you a thought provoking example. The story begins approximately ten years ago when I was introduced to a new location on the feet for working with lower bowel conditions and anal problems such as piles and fissures. At that stage the 'new' reflex point made little apparent sense at all as it did not fit in with my then current mental picture of the human body charted upon the foot, however I did test for tender reflexes with the next appropriate clients and searched for signs and clues that there was justification for introducing this concept, but there seemed no relevance, indeed the 'old' reflex point seemed exceedingly effective. The following year I attended a workshop where we studied the anatomy/somatic reflection with a different approach and I found myself with a new viewpoint on the lower sacral reflex points and full comprehension of the ideas experimented with the previous year. What I found most interesting was that the next client (and all subsequent clients) with lower bowel problems responded fantastically to the 'new' area of focus. Was it necessary for me to feel fully committed to the new reflex position for this to be effective?

Is the power of intention a valid force at work during the practise of reflexology? It seems from my personal viewpoint that individual performance and success rates for ailments by reflexologists appear to be based upon something beyond the academic literature alone. What does make a successful reflexologist? I am reminded here of the old joke regarding a professional golfer who says of his good fortune "it's funny but the more I practise, the luckier I get".

I wish I could retrace some of my clients from fifteen years ago and work on their feet now. I am hugely impressed at the natural ability of some 'new' reflexologists, but in general, constant devotion to the opportunities offered within the scope of reflexology brings marvelous rewards. It seems to me that never have there been so many courses and viewpoints to be studied and considered, and still new ideas pop-up and excite us all. Nicola would still recognise her sound teachings in my method of work, yet every client seems to pull something different out of my mental toolbox to be applied to their particular feet. Each session is different; reflexology can never be boring.

I know many reflexologists talk with their clients throughout the treatment sessions, and some of my clients are like old friends - but once the chatter has calmed, I tune-in and listen to the feet. I quiet my mind, slow my breathing and let the feet speak. Each treatment session is unique, to be treasured and valued. I feel it is an honour to work upon someone's feet, I 'enter a silence' and am guided by a combination of intention and intuition; sometimes I find myself working with a light touch using precision techniques, at others I observe I am guided to work in a stronger 'ART' style. Often I find myself lingering on chinese acupressure, or ayurvedic points (many overlap) and my mind, eyes and fingers work the whole time in a deep exploration of the tissues searching for clues.

If I were to concentrate upon what I felt was best for the client I might make a wrong decision; there are so many factors and intellect somehow interferes with a wiser judgement. I detach from how I feel I should be working and let the reflexology provide the direction, rather than the direction of the ego. Reflexology itself is a direction and provides a ritual. When working with the ego the intelligence is limited. Intuitive reflexology can perhaps only be effective with strong skills firmly in place, combined with lengthy practical experience - but does intuition have a place for most of us practising reflexologists?

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