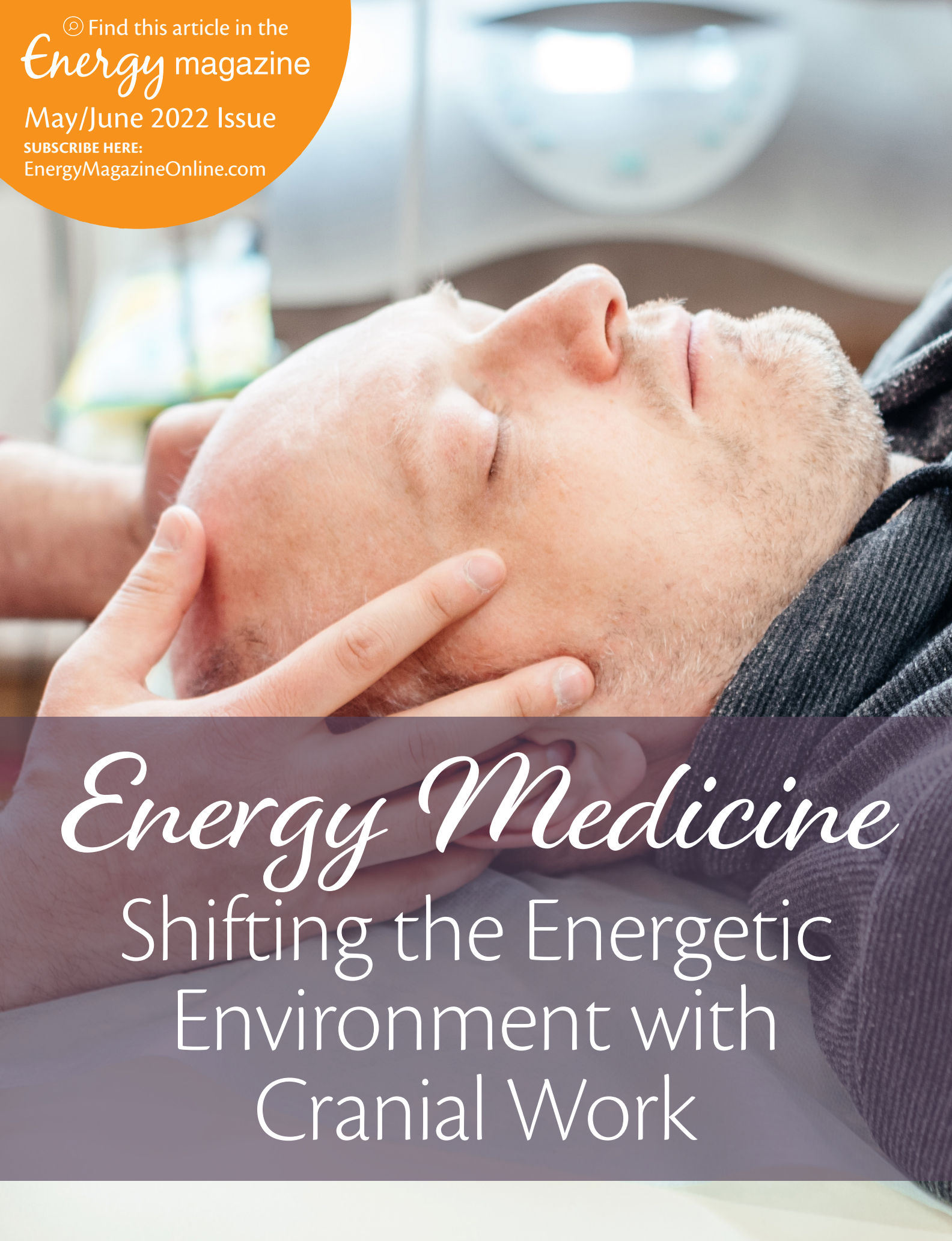


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A close-up photograph of a man lying on his back with his eyes closed. Two hands are gently touching his forehead and temples, performing cranial work. The background is blurred, showing a clinical or therapeutic setting with a circular light fixture.

# *Energy Medicine*

## Shifting the Energetic Environment with Cranial Work

*“Cranio-sacral Integration engages with the deepest healing forces, both within the body and in the surrounding matrix, in order to enable re-organization and re-integration of mind, body, and spirit.” —Thomas Attlee, teacher and practitioner*

Merrill Page, RCST, MA

*In her new book, EARTH MEDICINE : A FIELD GUIDE, healing in seasons and cycles, contemporary mystic and author, Merrill Page, shares how Craniosacral therapy is used to shift an energetic environment, helping to improve not just mood and sense of well-being, but biological systems and health ecology as well. Here is an excerpt from her book:*

**A**fter Chalita's Acupuncture treatment, I later received a Craniosacral treatment. With it, all of my longing went away. That was what I noticed most when I got up off of the table. That feeling that haunts me of wanting something more than what is. When it lets go, I feel ease and fullness. As if everything that was holding in my body or clenched in my jaw has let go. I don't even notice the holding or clenching until it has been removed. But once it's gone, my feet feel different on the floor. My face feels softer and my skin more supple. My ability to be complete where I am is easy. I'm reminded of a word I learned in the years I danced tango: surrender.

The session started with a simple question, “What are you needing?”

“Well, I reached out because my right eye was twitching. It's better now, after an Acupuncture treatment. Chalita treated my spleen and did some liver points,” I told him.

“Mmm,” Jonathon nods. He is no stranger to this language, having just completed a full degree at the College of Acupuncture in Oakland. “I am noticing perhaps a twist in your sphenoid,” he adds. He's looking at my forehead and the bone behind my eyes. With his eyes, sensitivity, and years of cranial study and practice, he can assess my body physiology for balance and energetic tone.

“Ok. Could be. I've been well, but tired. And we are going through so many transitions here at home,” I said.

We talk another minute before I climb onto the table,





fully clothed, as is done in Craniosacral work, and lie down, face up, on top of the sheets of a massage table.

He starts with a gentle touch at my shoulders, then moves down to my feet and ankles to see if they are even and to assess for tension and fluidity. The touch is gentle and, like Acupuncture, assessment is part of the treatment. It's his ability to see inside of me, my energetic field and my body physiology, that begins to effect change. It's quantum physics. Matter changes when it's observed.

Now Jonathon, he has a magic way where he offers up what he sees/or feels/or hears. It's what we are taught in our Milne Training for Visionary Craniosacral Work®. "Don't miss the chance to tell your client/patient what you see," Hugh tells us. Your observation and insight may change his/her life. So today, Jonathon, in a language he knows that I speak, says to me, "It feels like maybe the left temporal bone is stuck or blocked. As if there is something you don't want to hear." Or the last time he worked on me, "I get the feeling you are a castle filled with treasures and not yet convinced the world is worth sharing them with." These are the kind of morsels that torture and delight a patient like me, leading my vision inward, to inquiry, where it belongs. This is part of finding peace.

Like that time when Hugh Milne was teaching us to work with mandibles and teeth trauma through contacts inside of the mouth. He had his gloved hands, or fingers to be precise, resting on the tops of the teeth in my lower jaw.

"I get the sense you love to be kissed," he offers up. These sorts of insights are, after all, the key to the magic.

"Ha," I express, as well as one can lying supine with gloved hands in their mouth. But then I can't stop. I am giggling and giggling, as quietly as possible because of the other 50 students and teacher/practitioners also working in the room. The more I realize what he just said, and that it is true, the more I laugh. I love to be kissed. I guess I hadn't realized that about myself. Until Now. Yes. It is true! I do love to be

kissed, I think to myself, then struggle to direct my mind to another thought that will release me from the delight of hearing, and now knowing, this.

*"Cranio-sacral Integration engages with the deepest healing forces, both within the body and in the surrounding matrix, in order to enable re-organization and re-integration of mind, body, and spirit, overcoming the depleting effects of trauma, injury, disease and stress and enabling profound transformation in health and wellbeing."* —Thomas Attlee, teacher and practitioner.

So there are many layers and many possibilities within this discipline called Cranial Work. Its efficacy depends on one's willingness. Willingness to be seen. Willingness to surrender. Capacity to trust that they are safe, in present time, to feel whatever it is that is offering itself up to be felt.

"You can pay now. Or you can pay later," Sofia Diaz, my beloved Yoga teacher used to tell us. "But either way, you have to pay. You have to feel the pain for it to leave your body. There is no other way."

This is what I mean by willingness to feel. It's like our willingness to be held. And loved. If we can't let ourselves be held and loved, we are not able to be nourished the way a full-fledged human needs to be nourished. That's just how it is.

Lying on the table with Jonathon saying nothing now, my body reorganizes itself around the midline. This is what we call it in cranial work. It is the center place occupied by the spinal column. A practitioner's touch is supposed to help regulate the fluid bathing the spinal column, the craniosacral fluid. It flows at a slow and rhythmic pace that nourishes the nerves and helps regulate the nervous system. It is also called the breath of life.

Craniosacral therapy can be described in so many ways, from esoteric and metaphysical terms, like "breath of life," to osteopathic or scientific terms, like "torsion in the sphenobasilar joint." And the shape and condition of the bones within themselves and



in relationships to each other impact us on both a physical and a metaphysical level. So, when we touch or receive touch with this level of awareness, we have the ability to alter reality within the physiology and beyond. That's just how it is. Then it's up to the patient to perceive and choose to embody the changes in his/her life.

Jonathon continued the treatment with a contact at my sacrum, or tailbone. Here, with his hand, he can unwind any tension or compression along my spinal column, alleviating pain or discomfort along a vertical axis up into my occiput, which is the bone at the back of my head said to be a mirror to the sacrum. His contact feels gentle and kind, but also clear and safe. There is "a listening" to it. We are taught to listen to the bone and how it is in relationship to the other bones it is touching. To listen to the fluid and how the cranial tide moves or doesn't move along the spinal column. To the energy and how it expands or contracts, expresses or doesn't express, through the immediate bodily systems and beyond. It is slow work. It takes time.

Listening takes time. But it's just like talk therapy or counseling where once somebody has expressed themselves and feels heard, they can let go. They can move out of the narrative that has them trapped in repetition or some contracted state and expand into present time. The body is like this: it wants to be heard. Seen. Received. Understood. Nudged in just the right way where it can release what it is holding and move on. A good practitioner does this. We finish with a contact at my head. His hands are over my ears listening into the many expressions there, from the state of the temporal bones to the health and plasticity of the cranial nerves that have pathways into the ears. Entire treatments can be done simply with a contact at the ears, listening and directing intention to clear blocks and resolve issues from tinnitus to headaches, a twitching face, to grinding teeth. The implications are infinite, and the treatment so subtle.

I have to get right up off the table when we are done and dart off to school to pick up boys. But I don't

forget to notice the contact my feet make with the ground when I get up off the table, so solid and clear. Or the feeling in my face, that is let down and tired, like after a good night's sleep. The heaviness in my body is indisputable and delicious. The fatigue I can actually feel now is rich and re-centering. I couldn't feel it before.

It's easier to sit that evening outside and watch the boys hit baseballs in the backyard and jump on the trampoline. I sit easily there and feel a togetherness with them that I do not have when I am not cared for in these intimate and gentle ways.

## HARVESTING TREASURES FROM WITHIN

"These are the kind of morsels that torture and delight a patient like me, leading my vision inward, to inquiry, where it belongs."

As an adult, I have come to truly savor the moments of surrender, when I can let go of how I think things need to be and simply feel what is. There, when my body is at ease, and my mind lets go, is the moment of grace. It's where our vision can turn inward, to inquiry and observation. Such is the lesson of the Western shield, and the requirement of an adolescent.


At first though, it's torture. Who really wants to let go of that ecstatic moment of movement, engagement, and sensual fulfillment to pause and look inside? Unless we are guided and taught to notice the treasures of an internal, self-reflective practice, the idea is anathema, and the exercise is impossible. It is the job of a culture, and the adults who inhabit it, to teach their young to do this. When we do not, they cannot harvest the gifts that they bring to us.

It's that simple, but the ritual practices required to really teach our adolescents how to look in, to feel, to notice, and to bring out the gifts hiding there inside of them are not laced into our cultures the way they were in older, earth-based cultures. Luckily, new forms of earth-centered therapies are reclaiming them and offering outdoor programs with supervised camping solos where our youth can discover, in an embodied



way, what “old” cultures used to know.

As a mother and a practitioner of Craniosacral Therapy, I have come to understand in every cell of my body that what we feel and how we feel is as central to our health and well-being as what we eat and what we do. What we feel is informed by what we think and believe to be true.... Here at the threshold of a new era in health and medicine it is time to open our minds to the expanding awareness of who we are and how we actually work. Ancient systems of medicine, including Chinese Medicine, Ayurveda from India, indigenous Shamanic Medicine practiced in discreet tribes have known this. Their systems

thoroughly address the intimate relationship between our minds, bodies, and spirits - and how they work in the context of place and culture. If we dip back into this ancient wisdom and learn to apply them to our current models for health, as is done in Craniosacral therapy and in Earth Medicine, we have hopes for resetting the entire energetic environment in which we exist. The promise of health unfurls from here. 



Learn more about author Merrill and her book visit [www.EarthMedicineTaos.org](http://www.EarthMedicineTaos.org).