

Rob Rich
Ortho-Bionomy



Exploring the Principles of Ortho-Bionomy®.

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Ortho-Bionomy developed out of Osteopathy in the mid 1970's and has continued to evolve since then. Ortho-bionomy is based on a set of principles rather than techniques. This allows us to work on the different levels of the physical body, for example muscle, ligament, fascia, fluids as well as connecting to the more energetic levels of the body. Ortho-Bionomy is very useful for releasing musculoskeletal conditions as well as increasing range of movement and increasing the awareness in the body. Ortho-Bionomy is therefore a form of body work people learn to work on their own musculoskeletal imbalances as well as to help others. Ortho-Bionomy is also a pathway for personal development that integrates all the levels of the human being, from the physical, mental, emotional to more spiritual aspects. By helping us to be in our bodies (embodied) we are grounded and able to connect to others from a grounded, calm place.

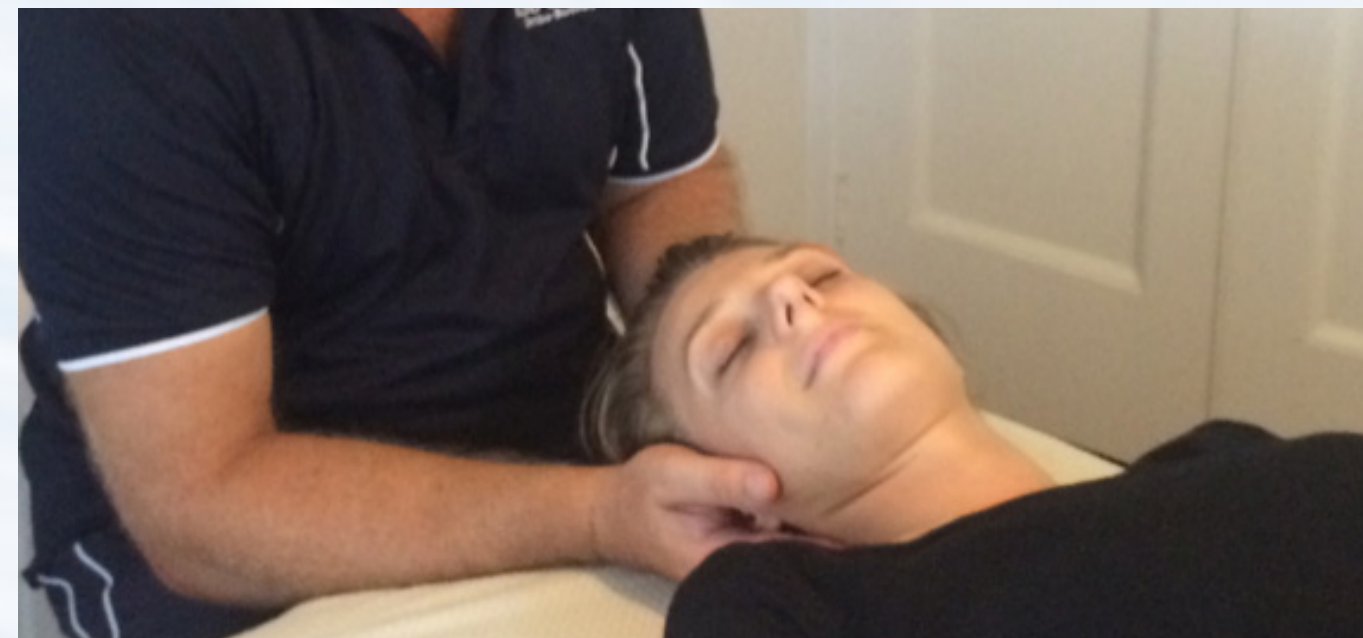
The key to learning Ortho-Bionomy is to learn the principles, this is done experientially during the hands on training courses. This Ebook is designed to introduce students to the underlying principles and how you might apply them to working with your body and your clients as well as in a broader context within your life.

One of the new branches of medical research is "personalized medicine". This has been one of the drivers behind developments such as gene therapy. The aim is that by fine tuning the therapy for the individual you will get better outcomes with less adverse side effects. Ortho-Bionomy has approached the body in this way since the mid 1970's. Many forms of body work attempt to fix something the body is doing, usually by applying force to try and create change. The problem with using force is that the body tries to control the change, so there is an

increase in resistance to change. More force is then needed to overcome this resistance.

In contrast Ortho-Bionomy puts information into the system in a way that the body understands. This helps the body recognise the dysfunction and reorganize itself thus enabling the system to change to a more efficient way of working.

Just as we accept that the body has the capacity to self-regulate biochemical processes (homeostasis) the body has the capacity to do this on a structural



level. The feedback system within the nervous system (proprioceptive reflexes) enable the brain to track where the body is and how it is moving. The proprioceptive reflexes are located in the belly of the muscles, in the joint capsules and in the tendons, from this sensory feedback the brain gets a sense of being embodied.

This feedback is used to locate the bones within the body however this is inaccurate. Often there is a difference between where our bones are and where we expect them to be, we call this a proprioceptive misunderstanding. This difference can be a minor twist caused by a muscular tension pattern or too much movement due to lax ligaments. Whenever there is a proprioceptive misunderstanding there is a greater chance of falls, walking into things and sports injuries.

The bones are a critical element for dealing with the constant force of gravity. A proprioceptive misunderstanding can lead to things like rolled ankles, musculoskeletal imbalances for example lower back or neck and shoulder pain and postural conditions such as scoliosis, sway back etc. The key information the body needs in many cases is

"where are my bones?". On a physical level Ortho-Bionomy answers that question enabling the body's innate ability to self-correct to function.

This helps with many chronic musculoskeletal conditions and the best part is Ortho- Bionomy is gentle, as the nervous system is sensitive no force needs to be applied in order to stimulate change. It is a bit like plugging into the central computer to work on a dysfunction rather than bash away trying to force things to change.

Ortho-Bionomy was developed by a British trained Osteopath, Arthur Lincoln Pauls

D.O. in the mid 1970's and evolved from his martial arts background and osteopathy training. The principles therefore have strong connections to these roots.

OSTEOPATHIC PRINCIPLES INCORPORATED INTO ORTHO-BIONOMY

Structure Governs Function

In Ortho-Bionomy we are interested in the relationships within the structure of the body. Looking at how the body works from a structural perspective brings your attention down to the basic building blocks of the physical system – the bones. The location of the bones and the tension of the ligaments at the joints plays a major role in how the body can move and stabilise itself.

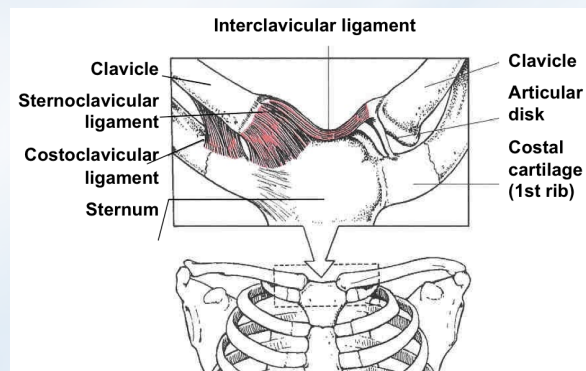


Diagram 1.
Location of the sternoclavicular joint & ligaments

If the ligaments supporting the SC joint are lax (have been distorted by a strong pull or excess load) then joint will feel unstable. The way the body responds to the feeling of instability is to recruit muscles. In the case of the SCJ the Pectoralis minor (see diagram 2) is recruited.

Pectoralis minor rolls the shoulder forward. This reduces the ROM but helps to stabilise the shoulder.

As the shoulder girdle moves forward the rotator cuff (see diagram 3) is recruited to stabilize the humerus in the glenohumoral joint. The upper trapezius and rhomboid muscles also become tight to help stabilise the shoulder girdle (see diagram 4).

Releasing these muscles would create temporary relief from musculoskeletal pain but until the ligaments support the SCJ, the body will continue to feel unstable and therefore return to the same holding pattern. This is what happens when you have pain, get a massage and feel great then over the next couple of days the pain winds up till it is similar to what was there before. If you only work

As an example, let's take a look at the shoulder.

The shoulder is an amazing joint, it has a huge range of movement (ROM) but this necessarily makes it relatively unstable.

On the diagram 1 you will notice the sternoclavicular joint (SCJ) – where the clavicle (collar bone meets the sternum). If you place a finger on one of your SCJ and move your arm in different directions you will notice.

The large range of movement of the shoulder starts at the SC joint.



Diagram 2
location of Pectoralis minor

on the soft tissue and the driving pattern is a misalignment of a joint then this will be an ongoing issue.

With Ortho-Bionomy techniques we can help the ligaments around the SCJ recoil back to the original length, recreating the support around the joint. This enables the body to unwind the muscular holding patterns around the shoulder.

The principle “structure governs function” helps to focus attention on the underlying cause of the misalignment rather than be distracted by the tension/pain in the muscles, which is a symptom rather than a cause.

By working this way muscle spasms release without much effort as the spasm is the body's response to an underlying issue.

One of the common patterns of dysfunction we find in the body is that when there is a slight misalignment in a joint, the body weight falls on the ligaments which supply passive support for the joints. Ligaments are strong when the force is applied in the correct alignment however if the direction of force varies the ligaments distort and the body recruits the muscles as active support for the joints. First the slow twitch muscle fibers are recruited, which is normal and they are designed for this. As the body senses the joint is more unstable the fast twitch muscle fibers are recruited, this is when you start to feel muscle fatigue and pain.

Recruiting muscles to hold the joint is expensive in energetic terms so the body tries to become more efficient by creating holding patterns through the fascia to take the load off the muscles. This shifts a local imbalance to a more global imbalance. The key to unwinding this is finding where the imbalance started which is not necessarily where the pain is.

With Ortho-Bionomy we work with all the aspects of the body in a coherent way which enables the body to self-correct and the compensation patterns to unwind.

Structure governs function can also be used as a guide to learning Ortho-Bionomy (or anything). If you have a structure of how things fit together, the relationship between the parts, then things will make sense and therefore learning and remembering the information becomes easier.

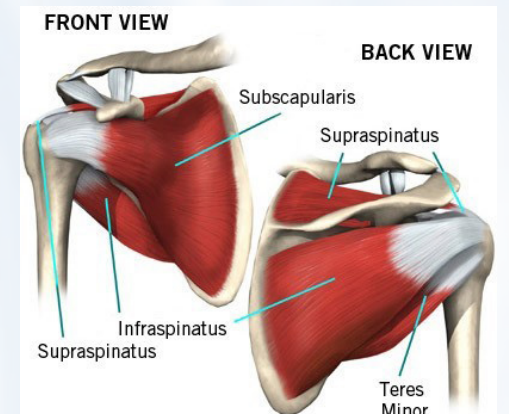


Diagram 3.
Muscles of the Rotator Cuff

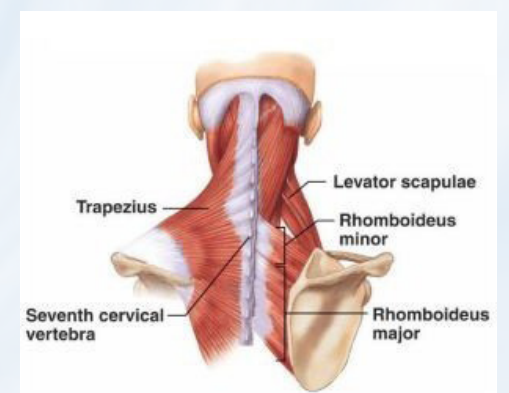


Diagram 4. Location of Trapezius, Rhomboid major & minor

OSTEOPATHIC PRINCIPLES INCORPORATED INTO ORTHO-BIONOMY

The rule of the artery is supreme

This principle dates back to Andrew Taylor Still MD. who in the late 1800's set up the first osteopathic school. Still saw the connection between disease and stagnant fluids such as lymph, blood and life energy. Today, a lack of fluid movement is still a sign of an imbalance in the system. From an Ortho-Bionomy perspective we look at what structures are restricting fluid movement, so for instance tension in the diaphragm can restrict the lymph movement up towards the heart, tension in the fascia can trap fluid in the limbs. By creating alignment throughout the body, the weight of the body is supported by the bones. This reduces the load on the fascia, so there is less tension this allows fluids to move without resistance. Working from a structural perspective changes the underlying cause of fluid flow issues rather than focus on the short-term symptoms of fluid retention.

The body has the inherent capacity to heal and balance itself

This again comes from AT Still. In the 1800's this realization was amazingly advanced. Today we call this homeostasis. The body is able to maintain its internal environment within set parameters, for instance body temperature, pH of the blood, wound healing. Once we acknowledge that the primary reason we get better is the body healing itself and the most effective modalities are those that help the body with this process, rather than trying to fix the body, then we can play an active role in supporting the body to heal itself.

The self-corrective process also works for structural misalignments.

Have you ever gone to bed after working hard with lower back pain and woken up the next morning free of pain?

Overnight your body has worked out the dysfunction and self-corrected. This is how the body is meant to function.

So, what happens when this doesn't work?

Why doesn't your chronic lower back pain or joint pain just disappear?

As mentioned above, the ability of the body to self-correct relies on having the right information. Often with chronic conditions, the system can change rapidly when the body gets the information it needs.

The testimonial below is an example of what can happen when the body gets the information it needs and can self-correct. Other Ortho-Bionomy practitioners will have similar results as what we do is to meet the body where it is and work out what information the body may need in order to self-correct.

The skill is in helping the body recognise the dysfunction and to stimulate the self- corrective process. Therefore, we see Ortho-bionomy as re-education or rediscovering rather than fixing.

ACUTE LONG-TERM SHOULDER PAIN

Approximately 16 years ago I received an injury to my right shoulder from an awkward landing playing touch football. I was immediately referred to a physiotherapist for treatment which lasted several months, on and off with little improvement. As I rely on my shoulder heavily to carry out my job as a carpenter, I was advised the only real solution to the pain and discomfort was surgery. This was not an option in my eyes. So I learnt to live and deal with it for 15 long years. The last 12 months prior to receiving treatment from Rob was almost unbearable. Even to sleep on my shoulder for more than 15 minutes would cause excruciating pain and freezing up of the shoulder joint.

Upon receiving my first one hour treatment from Rob, I noticed a massive difference in pain, discomfort and range of movement – almost a numbing, buzzing feeling had taken over my shoulder. With two more sessions and some simple exercise the pain had reduced from a constant 7/10 to zero pain within a few weeks.

It has now been around 10 months since receiving treatment from Rob and my shoulder has still zero pain. It truly is an amazing, gentle, relaxing treatment that Rob practices and I have no hesitation in recommending him to anyone.

He has truly changed my life. Thanks Rob.

Larry Thompson (Hervey Bay)



MARTIAL ARTS PRINCIPLES

Developing balance and a strong base

In martial arts, a strong base is the core of most techniques, being stable allows you to move efficiently. In Ortho-bionomy a strong base allows you to be stable in your body so you can notice more of what is happening for your client.

Ortho-Bionomy works more efficiently when we can tune into the subtleties of the structure of the clients body. In order to be able to do this the practitioner needs to be comfortable. If you are in pain you will not be able to feel what is happening for someone else. So, creating habits that help you be comfortable while lifting a limb is essential to a long career as an Ortho-Bionomist.

One of the most common reasons people stop doing massage as a career is the strain on the body. However, Ortho-Bionomy is gentle and if you cultivate a strong base you can expect to do this form of body work for many years.

This can also be seen as referring to how you respond to different people, being consistently yourself even when you come across a person who tries to dominate or manipulate. The principles of Ortho-bionomy can be applicable to many different levels which is why learning Ortho-bionomy is a journey of self-development. The more you recognise how the principles work within your life the more you will change how you interact with others.

Following or joining another person's energy while maintaining your own balance

This principle can be seen as viewing the world as the other person does, while remaining yourself. This then helps you find the piece of information that the other person's body needs in order to change.

To find where to start working we pay attention to how the client moves, their posture and the location of the pain/tension.

So, for instance, if a client walks in bent to one side (lateral flexion), we would see this as an expression of what is happening (eg possibly a contraction in the Psoas muscle). Once they are lying on a massage table fully clothed we bend the client slightly more in the direction of the contraction. This takes the load off the system and allows the body to relax. By exaggerating the position of the body, the nervous system starts to recognise what is happening.

Being able to maintain your sense of self while working energetically helps avoid resonating with the emotional issues of your clients.

If you have ever spent time with a few depressed people, you can really tell how well you can maintain your own emotional equilibrium.

The feeling of being drained when you have been with a particular person/client could be helped by working with this principle.

Flowing with force, not resisting it

In order for the body to self-correct the nervous system needs to recognise the dysfunction. This occurs when the body feels safe and supported. When we force the body, we are trying to force the body to change without allowing the system to recognise where it is. This threatens the system and leads to resistance.

Once the body has become aware of itself it will naturally start to change. Our job is to not get in the way of this process. Flowing with force not resisting it is essential for that to occur.

For example, the traditional approach for dealing with a contracted muscle is to apply force, to stretch it out, or use trigger points or manual force such as massage. In Ortho-bionomy, we would compress the muscle, bringing the attachments closer together. This stimulates the sensory spindles in the muscle fibers which stimulates the proprioceptive feedback the muscle then releases. The advantage of working on the nervous system level is that there is no risk of injury to the client, and little impact on the practitioner's body and this significantly extends your bodywork career.

This principle can be used as a way of dealing with conflict, for example resisting as someone pushes you creates a point of physical conflict. If the force is strong enough, you will be pushed off balance in the direction of the force. If, however you step in the direction of the push and pull on the arm of the person doing the pushing, you remain balanced and use the force generated by the other person to throw them off balance.

ORTHO-BIONOMY PRINCIPLES

Exaggeration of the preferred position

When there is musculoskeletal pain the body responds by bracing the area. This reduces movement and helps limit the pain. The reduced movement also reduces the amount of information flowing from the affected area through the proprioceptive reflexes. This limits the ability of the body to find the bones, recognise the pattern of dysfunction and self-correct the imbalance.

The bracing muscles around the dysfunctional area are contracted concentrically (shortened). The body has a chance to relax if it is moved into a position that reduces the load on the muscles. This position is a slight exaggeration of what the body is already doing. This feels comfortable and makes the body feel safe. When the body feels safe it can start to unwind the tension bracing the area.

As the body relaxes the body starts to recognise the dysfunction and self-correct.

Less is more

By working through the nervous system, we can access the body in a way that makes change effortless however the nervous system can only handle a limited amount of information at one time, particularly from an area of the body that is painful, dysfunctional and traumatised.

When we meet the body, and find the right combination of position, alignment and gentle traction or compression it is like dropping a pebble in a pond. The nervous system gets to experience where it is and recognizes the tension patterns within the imbalance. If we do too much the nervous system can become overwhelmed. This is similar to throwing a handful of gravel in the pond, chaos occurs, which can lead to the body tightening up. When we do too much the client can experience overwork symptoms such as aching or pain after the session. Learning to notice when the body has had enough information for the moment and needs time to integrate comes with experience and training. The phase 6 course helps you tune into your client's body in a way that can assist in feeling when a person has had enough.

No pain to release pain

The body has an inbuilt guarding response to pain, muscles tighten protecting the body. The body's natural instinct is to resist force. This means more force must be applied to overcome this response. Because Ortho-Bionomy works through the nervous system we do not need to apply force to facilitate change. Therefore, the body can relax, this makes it easier for it to get the information it needs in order to self-correct.

As pain receptors (nociceptors) are much louder than proprioceptive reflexes the less stimulation of the pain receptors the more clarity the body will get about the information coming through the proprioceptive reflexes.

Finding a position of comfort for your client (or yourself) can give you valuable information about the tension patterns running through the body. This can be the starting place for releasing complicated postural patterns and patterns that have resulted from impact injuries such as skiing injuries, car accidents and falls.

By working in a position of comfort there is no risk of further injury to your client and as there is no force needed there is little impact on the practitioner's body.

No attachment to outcome

This is the hardest principle to learn but also one of the most important.

The body is a complex dynamic structure, and we will never know the full extent of the compensation patterns running through someone else's body. It is fairly common in an Ortho-Bionomy session for a client to observe releases happening in areas that are often at the other end of the body from where we are working. For example, releasing tension patterns in the neck can release holding patterns in the limbs and lower back. Because we are assisting the body to recognize the whole pattern rather than focusing on one joint we need to take into account that the issue may be in another part of the body from where the pain is manifesting. If we become attached to a particular outcome, for example "I will get this shoulder to release today," we may aggravate the nervous system and limit the ability of the body to self-correct. Having a fixed view of what should happen in a session will make it far more likely that you will overwork a dysfunctional area which at this point cannot respond, and miss where the body has the capacity to respond.

By remaining open minded and following the body, you can find the place that has the capacity to change, and give the body the information it needs to self-correct.

With Ortho-Bionomy, we will do a session for about an hour, but it will take about 3 days for the body to integrate the changes. This means, a client may leave with some residual pain and as the body integrates the pain changes. So as practitioners we won't know how the body has responded till the client returns.

ORTHO-BIONOMY PRINCIPLES CONT.

All levels of the work embody the philosophy

As Ortho-Bionomy approaches the body differently from other modalities, there can be a temptation to become more forceful when the body doesn't appear to be responding. This shifts from working with the nervous system to forcing a particular outcome. There is also a tendency where a practitioner has training in multiple modalities to hop, say, from Ortho-Bionomy, to Bowen, to kinesiology to deep tissue massage in order to get an expected result. The other way to approach this is to get lighter in your contact. If the body doesn't have the capacity to respond where you are working, where does it have the capacity to respond? What can release? For example, releasing the Psoas muscle can reduce the tension through the spine which allows the thorax and neck to start to relax. So, if the muscles up the posterior of the neck are tight and unresponsive, the Psoas might be the place to start.

By relaxing our need to get a particular outcome we can meet the body as it needs to be met in order to self-correct.

As Ortho-Bionomy includes work on the physical level with muscles, fascia, ligaments and fluids as well as working on the reflexes and energy work on the higher levels of consciousness we utilize the same principles of how we work regardless of the level.

This way of working is respectful of the body and the being that inhabits it.





SOME NOTES ON CLIENTS WHO USE ORTHO-BIONOMY

There are a few ways people use Ortho-Bionomy. Some clients will come and get sessions when they are in pain, and if the practitioner educates them as to the impact of their posture on their health they will continue treatment as long as they feel the benefit from the sessions. Other clients are more interested in pain relief and will only return when they are in pain.

There are also athletes who find that Ortho-Bionomy can increase their performance by making movements more efficient, as well as educating their nervous system, so the tracking of their limbs is more accurate. This reduces the likelihood of a sports related injury.

Then there are the people who value the increased awareness and grounding that you get from a session and return over extended periods for self- development.

With Ortho-Bionomy, our focus is on empowering clients, supporting the integration of the limitations they are dealing with by finding what information the system needs and supplying it in a way the body understands. Using comfortable self-care exercises enables clients to continue to progress between sessions.

Ortho-Bionomy for self-development

If you had got a manual when you were born for how to get the most out of having a body, it would have included working with the principles of Ortho- Bionomy.

The first step in changing anything is becoming aware of what the existing situation is, and taking responsibility for it. The more clarity you have, the easier change becomes. Resistance and denial cloud the situation, making it harder to integrate and change.

Because Ortho-Bionomy brings awareness gently without force, it doesn't create resistance, it's like you discover your own truth and the system recognizes where it is and changes (rather than someone telling you what you're doing wrong).

Ortho-Bionomy takes a holistic approach with techniques that align with the principles for working on physical, mental, emotional, personality, soul and spiritual levels of your being. The more you experience the ease of integrating limitations the more present and grounded you become.

So, if you are after some elegant tools to help with your personal development check out Ortho-Bionomy training in your area.

If you have any questions or comments about the principles of Ortho-Bionomy or would like to know more about Ortho-Bionomy training please email Rob on rob@ob.net.au



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