



**K**imberly Richey knows that before she can recruit Rolfing clients in the Columbia area, she's going to have to explain to folks exactly what it is. And for some people who have heard of the massage-like technique, she's going to have to explain that what they've heard isn't true.

"If people have heard of Rolfing, their response is usually, 'Ouch! Doesn't that kind of massage really hurt?' Not if it's done right," says Richey, who recently moved to Columbia and is now one of about 10 certified Rolfers in South Carolina. "This is the reputation Rolfing has from the 1960s and 1970s. I'm quick to say that we know lots more about the nervous system now than we did 30 years ago. Rolfing can have moments of being intense, but overall, it is not meant to be painful. My goal is to be a painless Rolfer."

Most who have actually experienced Rolfing share how effective it was for them, she says. But usually, she finds herself explaining her profession. "Most folks don't know what Rolfing is so I have to cover the basic definition and say that it has the funny name because the work was developed by Ida Rolf," says Richey, who worked in Charleston, SC, before moving to Columbia in September.

Richey explains Rolfing as a bodywork technique and system that focuses on the myofascia, or connective tissue. Think of connective tissue as a spider web: When a bug flies into the web, the entire web moves and re-

sponds to that action. The body's connective tissue is like that, too, and is continuous throughout the entire body. "When a person has pain or tightness in one area, it's critical to look at the whole body to see what might be happening to cause the discomfort," Richey explains. "This is what Rolfing does—takes a look at the whole system, not just the area where there is pain. Rolfing realigns the body by using the hands to apply deep pressure and friction to the connective tissue. This allows for more efficient posture and movement."

While most liken Rolfing to a massage, the only similarity is that both massage and Rolfing practitioners touch the skin. "Otherwise, the actual technique and philosophy are very different," Richey says. One difference between massage and Rolfing is that clients stay partially clothed.

When people initially seek out Rolfing, they come for what is called "the Ten Series." This series of 10 sessions is the bedrock of Rolfing. Each session has diagnostics and specific parts of the body that are the focus. And each session builds on the last and provides the stability for the next session. The series allows the Rolfer to work with each part of the body on a number of occasions and to look at the biomechanical relationships that emerge throughout the series. It also allows the client to integrate the changes he or she is feeling and to provide feedback about what he or she notices. Clients are also often given ac-

tivities so they can begin to notice how their body parts are working together.

"This is a big part of the empowerment piece," Richey says. "The whole body is given full consideration." For example, a client comes in with shoulder pain. "I'd follow the protocol of the sessions, but always spend some time looking at what is going on with the shoulders and how they relate to each part of their body. It may be that their chest and arms are really tight. And I'd start to talk to them about how they sit at their desk, and talk about how that could be modified in small ways to help their shoulders. I'd give them some stretches to do throughout the day. I'd also keep talking to them about their body's history. Perhaps there is an important piece of the puzzle there for what is going on now."

Rolfing can be intense, but it is not meant to be painful as a whole, Richey says. "We only work on a few areas during each session. It is much slower paced than massage, and we use very little lubrication [oil, lotion] so that we can work at the pace of the individual's connective tissue and apply pressure when needed." Clients are often asked to make small movements during the sessions to help the connective tissue to unbind and the nervous system to adjust to this change in the tissue. Rolfers also seek feedback throughout the session. "We want people to really be 'in their bodies' and tuning in to what is happening," Richey explains.

Richey says that anyone can ben-

efit from Rolwing. People who typically seek out Rolwing are those who have various types of chronic pain (from previous injury/surgery, fibromyalgia, chronic fatigue, connective tissue disorders, repetitive motion injuries, etc.), athletes or people who have physically demanding jobs or hobbies. Often clients have tried other options without success. "All these groups benefit from the way Rolwing helps to unbind the connective tissue that can keep the body from functioning efficiently," Richey says. "Rolwing helps not only with the pain, but also gives people a sense of there being more space and length in their bodies."

Back to the person with shoulder pain: Say he works at a desk all day, and when he gets a massage he feels better for a day or two. But the discomfort in his shoulders always comes back. "When this person comes to me, I'm going to look at how their entire body feeds into the pattern that causes the shoulder pain," Richey says. "I'd bet that they have several other factors going on: previous injury, their working position, etc., that are going to be a part of the cycle."

Richey was in massage therapy



school when a Rolfer spoke to one of her classes. "I thought this was interesting and sort of catalogued the story." About four years later, she was working in a medical setting and started having a thumb pain—obviously a worrisome situation for a massage therapist. She remembered the Rolfer, and decided to try it. "I was so impressed that after the third session I knew I had to do the training to become a Rolfer," Richey recalls. "And it wasn't just because I was feeling better. It also had a lot to do with timing. I was seeing people week after week with the same complaints and not getting long-lasting results. I saw how effective Rolwing was and knew I had to figure out a way to go out to Boulder and train."

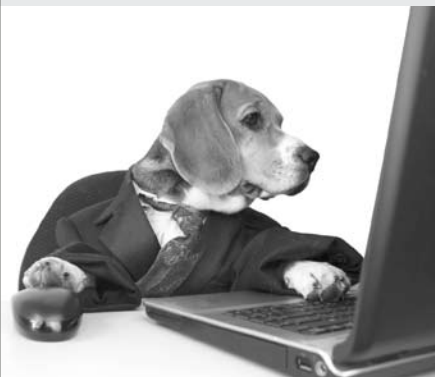
There are about 1,700 certified Rolfers worldwide. The only place available to train to become certified in the United States is at the Rolf Institute in Boulder, CO. The profession has seen a surge in popularity within the last decade. Unfortunately due to this increase in demand, there are those who advertise themselves as Rolfers, but are not certified and have not completed comprehensive training.

"Rolwing has a strong client-empowerment component," Richey explains. "Clients don't just get to lie on the table and tune out during a session. They are required to take ownership of their bodies. People have to think about and connect how their body's history and their daily activities affect how they feel. They have the power to make small changes that have a huge impact. I often tell people that the time I spend with them can help send them on a path of feeling better, but it is what they do on a daily basis that is the most powerful catalyst for wellness."

To learn more about Kimberly Richey and Rolwing, visit [KimberlyRicheyRolfing.com](http://KimberlyRicheyRolfing.com). See ad page 7.

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