



Clinical Somatics

The term somatic is used in many health care practices nowadays. Indeed Structural Integration, another modality I practice, would fall under the banner of a somatic based therapy because during a session as the therapist applies their touch the recipient moves and conscious attention of what sensations are being felt is brought to the part of the body being attended to and to the body as a whole.

However, the term Clinical Somatics refers to a movement based practice that uses specific types of movement sequences to help retrain the nervous system. The movements bring about change by calming the nervous system, increasing interoception, which is the sense of internal awareness, and by reducing or resetting to its optimum length, the tension of the muscle during its rest phase.

Posture or Structure

We often talk about our posture being poor or unbalanced. However, give yourself a moment to think about what you do with your body if someone says stand up straight whilst I look at your posture. We all think we know how to stand and will often attempt to straighten up when we are assessing our posture or being assessed. I prefer to use the term structure because it takes into account the shapes that have been set into our system that we can not consciously change or if we can we can not maintain that change just by attempting to 'stand properly'. Our body's structure is shaped by a myriad of life events from the very beginnings to the very end. From our genetics, the way we lie in our mothers womb, a fall off a bike, a comment that someone makes about our appearance or mannerisms, anxiety, positions we adopt to cater to our occupations whether it be work or play or the way we adapt to a pain. Sometimes these events have created areas of stress that may not be able to be changed so easily, for instance if someone has had to have pins due to a fracture. But often we can still change other areas that have adapted to hardware or we can change our structure because the patterns we have adopted no longer serve the purpose for which they originally came about.

Changing habits, re-learning and re-remembering

To be efficient the nervous system recognises repeated movements and creates unconscious movement or habits so that we are not having to think everytime we action something that happens on a regular basis. This is a very energy saving strategy, however, where unhelpful or unhealthy habits of movement have formed for one reason or another we need to work with the nervous system to reshape our patterns or structure to ones that help us move with more ease, efficiency, flow and without pain. Clinical Somatics is one way of doing this and once you have had a few sessions we can work out the best sequences for you to continue with at home, thereby giving you the means to continue on with maintaining your new found pain free



movement and because the sequences are pleasurable to do you are more likely to continue on with your self care.

The movement sequences used in a Clinical Somatics session are slow and gentle and most people find them very relaxing to do. More often than not they are performed whilst lying down however it is possible to adapt if you need to be seated and sometimes we do actually do some of the movements in front of a mirror either seated or standing. Focus is on the way in which you move your body during the sequence, not how many repetitions you do. I will often say to my clients I would rather you do 3 of these with slow speed and attention to your body than 6 of them where you just go through the motions. The slow speed and attention to sensation, the difference of how it feels from first to last and indeed how it feels from the last time you practiced are ways in which your nervous system re-learns, or re-members more efficient ways of moving.