

DFA Somatic Pattern Recognition

© Brigitte Hansmann

In this paper I would like to present my understanding of how the Duggan/French Approach (DFA) to Somatic Pattern Recognition fits into the family of Structural Integration and of the aspects that make DFA work different from the original SI as developed by Dr. Ida P. Rolf. I will try to describe our intervention, called *shake-and-bake*¹ by some Structural Integrators of the old school, and outline my hypothesis of how it really works. I will briefly describe the field of the environment we call the container, the space DFA practitioners need to create for their client to be able to accomplish the inner work that needs to be done for them to fully experience their individuality and wholeness within the fields of the multiple archetypes that govern our lives. I will try to make clear how the recognition of patterns organized under the influence of archetypal fields intertwines with the work with patterns organized within the field of gravity. Let me start with a bit of history.

A Bit of History

Annie B. Duggan and Janie French had been on the faculty of the Rolf Institute® teaching movement to future Rolfers for some years, when they met and found out that they had both trained with Judith Aston and been introduced to an intervention which they both had continued to evolve along similar lines. This was different from Rolting® and had a more inclusive approach to the emotional contents of the physical form and the beliefs that shape it. After some years of simply enjoying spending time with each other and playing on the common ground they shared, they decided to work together and create a format that would make it possible to teach this particular way in which they applied the principles of Structural Integration. In the process of developing their approach, they found correspondences in the work of C. G. Jung, particularly in his view of individuation. They also discovered that in his type of body-centered psychotherapy, Hakomi, Ron Kurtz had described some of the techniques of listening and verbal interventions they were using². I had the great luck that the first class Annie and Janie taught outside the Rolf Institute took place in Barcelona, my hometown. Since

then, the training format and curriculum has been evolving and I had the privilege to experience and witness this evolution firsthand and to even participate in it.

I had known about Rolting and Structural Integration because I had trained with a practitioner of Postural Integration here in Barcelona in 1984-85, Juan Porteros, and translated Dr. Ida P. Rolf's big book³ into Spanish. I was thrilled when I saw the announcement of a talk on Rolting in Barcelona. I was familiar with most of what Samy Frenk said, but one word really got my attention: movement. He mentioned Rolting Movement® just as a side remark, but for me it stood out above everything else he said. When I asked him to tell me more about it, Samy sent me to talk to his wife, Noemi. Ten minutes into my first session with her I knew that that was the kind of work I had always wanted to do. Although it meant that I would have to train as a Rolfer and only then would I be allowed to do the Movement training, I was determined to do whatever it took. To fulfill the requirements for training, after several sessions with Noemi I did my ten series with Samy. One day he told me that the women Noemi had trained with were coming to Barcelona to teach the kind of work she was doing. I would not be allowed to call myself a Rolfer, but that didn't matter much to me. I felt like I had won "el gordo," the big prize of the Spanish Christmas lottery!

Dr. Rolf's "recipe" in the Duggan/French Approach to Somatic Pattern Recognition

DFA shares Dr. Rolf's model of how a body that is balanced in the gravitational field organizes around "the line"; and the goals and focus of the physical work with the body as well as much of the movement education we give to our clients derive from that model and, to some extent, from the principles of Judith Aston's Patterning. Due to the fact that the DFA process actively includes work with belief systems and emotional contents, it cannot be limited to a fixed number of sessions. Nonetheless, in my understanding, we do follow Dr. Rolf's recipe of ten sessions as I have experienced it in the work I have received from different Rolfers as well as in

my training of Postural Integration: seven sessions based on the natural way in which a body opens up, to be completed by three sessions of integration. In DFA we follow the same sequence of seven units, leading up to and continued throughout however many sessions of integration. The goals and focus of each one of these units remain at the foundation of all subsequent sessions, leading towards optimal integration in the gravitational field within each individual's circumstances, wherever it is that their process of integration starts and wherever it leads. I will briefly outline the goals and focus of the seven units.

Goals and Focus of the Seven Units

In unit 1 we work mainly in the chest, aiming at facilitating an appropriate function in the ribs; establishing the thorax-pelvis connection; deepening the quality of the exhale; releasing the jaw and identifying the client's primary holding pattern; and recreating the new found options in the vertical.

In unit 2 we work with feet and legs. We work at creating a foundation in the feet; initiating movement and responsiveness through the ankle hinge; horizontalizing ankles, knees and hips; relating chest to legs; and balancing the head in relationship to the feet.

In unit 3 we work with the sides of the body towards establishing movement through the lateral line; freeing and relating the girdles through the lateral line; establishing a balanced midline for each side and a good right-left equilibrium (inner balance).

In unit 4 we start to work with the pelvis to initiate responsiveness through the pelvis; begin accessing the visceral layers; create a deeper midline balance; begin accessing the psoas; horizontalize the pelvis and establish midline balance of the head through the pelvis.

In unit 5 we keep working in and around the pelvis to release the respiratory diaphragm as well as the pelvic diaphragm; create balance in the pelvic floor; differentiation between legs and pelvis; balance and integration of individual lumbar; and midline balance through lumbar from atlas/axis through to the ankle hinge.

In unit 6 we address the balance and function of arms through to the shoulder girdle; integrate arms and shoulder girdle to upper torso; functionally balance neck to shoulders and arms; integrate the upper and lower girdles; and access arm response through to feet.

Unit 7 addresses head and neck, in particular the balance of the head within and to itself. We work on integrating and balancing the atlas/axis relationship to the head and creating response and balance of the head through the whole body.

I believe the goals and focus of these units show their compliance with Dr. Rolf's model and recipe clearly. At the beginning of each session we dedicate some time to creating awareness in our clients of how their bodies relate to the gravitational field, i.e. how the different segments of the body relate to each other and to the gravitational line, of the extent to which the whole body participates in the overall movement or if there are areas that remain still, and maybe how that applies to some aspect of the way they take up space in the world or move in their lives that they may want to work with. The first manifest difference in DFA sessions is that this is done with the client fully clothed, and so they remain for the rest of the session.

A large part of the session takes place with the client lying on a padded table; sometimes we may also work with the client sitting up. At the end of each session, the person experiences the changes brought about on the table in standing and walking. This allows him/her to integrate them as new options of being in relationship to the world around him/her and of moving in it, to contrast these new options with their habitual way of being and moving, and to explore the meaning of these shapes and the possibilities entailed in them. Often it is only through contrast that we become aware of what we are really doing in the shape of our habitual holding.

Going into the Shape, Taking over the Holding and Getting it to Move

With their particular kind of intervention, DFA practitioners follow the direction of the muscular pull and go into the shape traced by the pattern of habitual holding, even slightly beyond the shape of the habitual tension. In this way, the practitioner takes over the holding, thus taking the effort out of whatever it is the client is doing with this contraction of his or her tissues.⁴ This is lowering the "noise" produced by the tension so that the client is in a better disposition to perceive what it is he or she is doing in that shape. It goes along with what is taking place in the body already and so does not confront the

person with anything they would need to defend against.

Often these tensions are part of a mechanism the client has developed to defend against some part of their experience that was intolerable due to one reason or another - because it was too painful, scary, uncomfortable, forbidden, whatever - keeping it out of awareness. Or they may have experienced it as necessary to achieve a certain goal, often even to simply stay alive. The practitioner may ask the client to go into the shape themselves, i.e. slightly exaggerate the tension as if they were trying to deliberately do what a part of their body is doing anyway. Meanwhile the practitioner helps the client, going along with his or her hands, creating a sense of support that was not available before. While the client feels the support and the practitioner takes over the holding, going into the shape it has in the person's body, s/he invites the client to rest into that shape. As they don't have to work quite as much as usual, clients are freer to get in touch with the information they were keeping from themselves, or to get some much needed rest. Mostly this is experienced as empowering and/or a relief; things get back into flow. Emotions that were withheld may become conscious, allowing the person the possibility to learn from them and choose if, when, and how to express them instead of being under their effect and having them burst out when it is least convenient.

Movements that were held back or interrupted can be explored, leading towards a fuller expression of self. Choices about the place one takes up in the world and the way one moves in one's life can thus be re-examined with better understanding, from a new standpoint with more support and a wider perspective.

Annie B. Duggan describes the DFA intervention as follows: "With the physical intervention we use a wave like motion with our hands on the body. This enables both the practitioner and the client to begin to feel the constraints and shapes in the tissue. The motion allows us to bump up against the dominant holding pattern. Then, in order to bring more complexity to that pattern, we introduce a disturbance, a perturbation, by changing the rhythm and variation of the wave to invite new information. At the same time we engage the client by asking questions that keep them in the present experience of the bodily sensation. This

engages them in the feeling of the pattern and allows them to experience how they organized that pattern. When they are in the sensation and feeling of the pattern, they begin to understand how they have organized their beliefs around this particular pattern. Another way to speak about it would be they have collapsed into a singularity of shape around a specific experience. The body's alignment would reflect this shape and over time the person will individually and gradually adjust their experience and physical alignment in a process of internalization. Alignment may be generative or non-generative."⁵

The DFA intervention aims at discovering what is needed for a non-generative alignment to become generative.

Shake 'n Bake

For our intervention to be effective, we first have to shape our hands to the part of the body we want to access the person's pattern from. This means we have to be able to let go of the way we are used to taking up our own space with our bodies and feel the way our clients are holding themselves. At the same time we have to be able to remain grounded and keep the inner space in our bodies open. So, in a way, we are letting our hands take up the shape of our *client's* body, while our feet find the exact spot from where they can best support *our* body, so that at all times it remains like an open channel through which information from our client's body can flow into the ground like current through an earth wire. While it does so, we get the chance to feel it. Just being touched this way can already be quite healing, as it feels like **being listened to** in a way most people have never experienced before. Most of the time it is very comforting, even when there is pain. At times it may also be experienced as somewhat unsettling, when we are touching something the person is not ready to let into their awareness. At a later stage I will go a bit more into what we do when this is the case.

Once we are in a position from where we can keep this space we occupy between the client's body and the ground open, we move our body, all of it, from the bottom to the top and transfer this motion like a wave through our arms and hands into the person's body. This sinusoidal motion is best arrhythmic so that the person's nervous system cannot anticipate it. Being moved that way feels like **being held and moved by a force that is much greater than us**,

because literally, it is gravity doing the work, while as DFA practitioners we are doing what we can to get into an appropriate relationship with it, so that it can do its work through us.

When DFA practitioners first learn, they often try to do the movement with the upper part of their body, which means that they have to work very hard for far from optimal results. At best, this is then experienced as some kind of sophisticated massage-like work that can be quite pleasant and relaxing; but it does not really get deep enough to allow the unfolding of the person's process that happens when the movement comes from the ground and the container is secure.

The wave motion we send through the tissues of our client's body bumps up against the places where there is holding, tension, be it deep or superficial, closed spaces, etc. Much like the sonar wave emitted by a bat allows it to orient itself, fly safely and catch minute prey even though it is practically blind, this wave motion comes back into our hands and conveys all kinds of information to the skilled practitioner. This information may mainly be sensorial, i.e., about shape, consistency, temperature, energetic charge, relationships, etc. It may also contain emotional aspects relating to feelings, beliefs or situations in the person's life the practitioner may know nothing about. It is not necessary for the practitioner to know the meaning of what it is he or she is feeling to help the client become aware of their own sensations and understand their meaning. It is essential for the practitioner to be able to make a distinction between their client's process and their own. That means that our work has to be grounded in a deep understanding of our own process, because only when we are aware of the way we have organized our experience in our own body, are we able to recognize and go beyond the habitual patterns in which we tend to react to whatever comes from without or within, and respond to what our clients bring to us in a way that serves them best.

A question often asked by other professionals and lay people alike is: "What do you do when you feel the person's grief, sadness, anger, hurt or whatever hard feelings they might have?" What we do is feel it and be with the person, feeling it together with them. We don't have to do anything with it, but we do have to not mind feeling whatever it is, and make sure we are clear about our own feelings as they relate to the client's. Making this distinction is an

essential part of what is taught in DFA trainings. If we are clear on our own feelings, we can use our perception to help the client get clear on theirs. To start with, the practitioner's willingness to be with whatever feeling comes up makes it safe for the client to allow into awareness what habitually is being kept underneath the threshold of consciousness through their somatic pattern of holding.

Although there is nothing we have to do with the person's feelings themselves when they come up, but listen to them and learn from them,⁶ keeping the environment of the session within a secure framework⁷ creates a hermetic container, which C. G. Jung compared to the retort of an alchemist⁸ in which the client's process can unfold.

The Container

I hope that in the near future we will get to write more extensively about archetypal fields and the container. For now, we would like to briefly outline the conditions for a secure container. They date back to ancient Greece in the Aesculapian temples where people went for healing. The conditions are set time, set place, set fee, stone couch, anonymity, and confidentiality.⁹ We have made one concession to modern times and use a padded table instead of the stone couch,¹⁰ but other than that, the closer we stick to these conditions the better equipped we are to help our clients get in touch with those parts of their experience that from the shadow of the unconscious create discomfort, dis-ease and other disorders which keep their lives from being full and satisfying. Once these contents of the person's psyche are allowed to emerge into the light of consciousness, they can be re-examined and metabolized and make their contribution to the full dimension of the person's being.

Even when the person is not ready to let that happen, the container offers a space where it is safe to explore the pattern s/he has created to keep this part outside his/her awareness, without having to touch on it just yet. It allows exploration of all objections there are to letting it come into awareness. It makes it possible to set the stage and prepare the ground for when the time is ripe - much like the retort of the alchemist where experience is being distilled over and over again to ever greater degrees of purity, until its meaning becomes clear.

As we try to keep the container as tight and its parameters as unaltered as possible, we create a field in which the patterns and dynamics of the client's psyche can constellate and go into interaction with our own. It is in this interaction that the issues needing attention become apparent. Much like the way we look at a person's body in terms of how it relates to gravity as a whole, as well as its parts to each other and the gravitational line, the field set by the parameters of the container constitutes a backdrop against which the archetypal field to which the person's life is aligned can be recognized. The same way the gravitational field offers the possibility of support for the body when it is properly aligned, the container of DFA sessions offers conditions that allow an evolution towards greater complexity and differentiation of the psyche when it is kept appropriately aligned. Words being as limited in their meaning as they are, I need to say one thing after the other, but as practitioners of DFA Somatic Pattern Recognition we work with both at the same time.

Fields versus cause and effect

As practitioners of DFA Somatic Pattern Recognition, we recognize the gravitational field as a major organizing force of shape as well as the strong influence of archetypal fields in the organization of experience in body and psyche.¹¹ It is beyond the scope of this paper to go into what we know and don't know about how this influence takes place. For now, let it be stated that it tends to be recognizable at first only in retrospective.

Experience shows that the bodily sensations relating to the tonicity of a person's muscles or a particular shape of his/her body, match the feeling tone of the environment s/he grew up in. It would make sense, then, to consider the emotional tonality the cause and the sensations related to the muscle tonus or the body shape the effect brought about by this cause, or vice versa. Then there are all the events that contributed to causing this particular emotional tone and muscle tonus. Then there are the events that caused the former, and so on. The scope of this view is limited and does not lead anywhere else but to repetitive history, one story after another.

If we consider the feeling tone of the environment the person grew up in as a manifestation of the archetypal field s/he is in alignment with, we can go beyond the stories,

which but illustrate its configuration, and examine this alignment in terms of to what extent it favors or restricts the person's ability to develop his/her skills and talents. In this way, it becomes possible to introduce a perturbation into a restrictive pattern which then allows for a generative evolution towards greater differentiation and complexity.

Let me make this clearer with an example: Gloria has reasons to feel exasperated about a number of things in her present life. When she grew up there also were quite a few things that were exasperating. At present, she has a hard time identifying any sensations in her body. When asked to describe sensations, she usually goes off into stories and reasons why she feels exasperated. She has realized that when she finds a solution to one of the issues that exasperate her, another one comes up. And there is one that does not have a solution. There is nowhere to go but to consider life an exasperating affair.

Seeing the exasperation as a quality of the archetypal field she is aligned with allows her to look beyond the stories and, every time she becomes aware that she is getting caught up in the story, she can look at what exactly the exasperation feels like in her body. Where does she feel it? What consistencies, shape, temperature, color, level of energy, etc., does that part of her body seem to have? How does this part relate to other parts of her body, to the ground, the space around her, to other people in her environment? Is there anything she can do to bring it into a position where it would be better supported by gravity, in a more favorable relationship to other parts of her body or to the world? Can she nurture it in any way? Can she make sure it gets more energy through breathing a different way? Can she remind herself that more important than the exasperation is the part of her that is being occupied by that feeling and look after it? Can she make that part feel welcome through the way she relates to it, in spite of the sensation of exasperation? She can try to be as specific as possible in the adjustments she makes in the relationships between the different parts of her body.

This attention is a perturbation in the pattern of exasperation. It requires determination and a sufficient level of energy to keep up the threshold of tolerance instead of letting herself be carried away by the habitual feeling. Little by little, instead of being inundated and possessed by exasperation, Gloria

starts to own her exasperation and recognize what she does to contribute to the creation of exasperating conditions in her life. She learns how to take care of herself and the people she loves and take pleasure in it. Her exasperation has become like an alarm clock that goes off when she falls into unconsciousness. Life has become interesting; sometimes even fun, with much work that needs her attention but, far from exasperating her, it gives her a sense of fulfillment.

Which Structural Elements Does the DFA Intervention Affect?

“Since the brain works through connections between cells, it is possible to introduce new options by awakening previously silent areas, thus creating new pathways.”¹² This sentence has been intriguing me since I first read it in an article Nicholas French wrote about DFA in the early days, and it has kept its spell. Just what happens in the body when we do what DFA practitioners do? If the scientific information about how things work bores you, please, skip this section.

Research has shown us that connective tissue, beyond its function as a structural organizer, or the organ of form,¹³ allows for ultra-fast transmission of information close to the speed of light through what has been called the living matrix¹⁴ or liquid crystal¹⁵ and may be considered a body-wide signaling system.¹⁶ Contrasting research data with hands-on experience, we believe the wavelike motion of DFA to enhance a more orderly organization of the pathways along which information travels, allowing for faster and clearer transmission.

We suppose that the DFA intervention acts on the ubiquitous free nerve endings or interstitial receptors which have been found to have an importance in the generation of patterns through a “wide range of influences on the terminal endings of nociceptors that can directly activate and/or sensitize its neural response, and may cause primary nociceptors to function as pattern generators (i.e., [they do] more than just relaying the intensity of a noxious stimulus).”¹⁷ On one hand, going into the shape, taking over the holding and getting it to move seems to balance the water content of the ground substance, re-moisturizing overly dry and fibrous tissues and evacuating excess liquid from edematous tissues. On the other hand, engaging the client in feeling and describing sensations

seems to boost the sensorial nature of those nerve fibers and counteract the reflex that tends to turn these originally afferent fibers efferent, when the noxious information they convey is not being received. The substances which ended up sensitizing the neural response have a better chance at being washed out when liquids return to flow through the motion of the DFA intervention. This facilitates the recovery of an afferent flow of information through interstitial receptors as well as reception of this information in the higher centers.

As we go into the shape and take over the holding, we help myofibroblasts, which contract connective tissue in a manner similar to smooth muscle cells,^{18 19 20 21} go in the direction they are pulling. The wavelike, arrhythmic DFA motion may pleasurably rock them into letting go and resting. Imagine how a greater force takes the effort out of the stress lines of contractile matter generated by the fibroblast and makes them give in to the pleasure of being rocked, so that they can go about their business of making and repairing fibers without having to work so hard to make them contractile.

Numerous mechanoreceptors have been found in connective tissue, like Golgi receptors in the tendons, which respond mainly to active stimulation,^{22 23 24 25} so we affect them when we ask our clients to mobilize joints a certain way or allow certain movements that want to occur. The sinusoidal motion of the DFA intervention creates the kind of fast vibratory shifts in pressure that Pacini receptors respond to,²⁶ allowing for an improved proprioceptive feedback and motor control. When we go into the shape, take over the holding and do the wavelike motion, apart from the fast vibratory shifts in pressure, or in some instances a more constant type of pressure, the intervention also creates tangential forces, all of which Ruffini receptors respond to by lowering sympathetic activity.²⁷ Clients report their muscles feel more relaxed because the tonus has lowered; they have greater body awareness and more precision in their movements, hence improved proprioceptive feedback and motor control; they feel calmer, because sympathetic activity has decreased.

We believe that the DFA intervention also has a direct effect on muscle spindles. When the practitioner goes into the shape and takes over the holding, a passive shortening of muscles is achieved in a very brief length of time without

any effort from the client, bringing about an inverse myotatic reflex of sorts. On registering their intrafusal fibers shorter than habitual, the muscle spindles stop sending the signal, which stimulates the extrafusal fibers to keep their tonic contraction, so they relax. The gamma motor system is incapable of anticipating the non-linear, arrhythmic motion of the intervention and cannot adapt the tonus back to what is habitual.²⁸

In a second phase of the intervention, the new, more relaxed tonus makes it possible to “come out” of the shape, slowly lengthening and extending the tissue without stretching the fibers of the muscle spindle. As the gamma motor system does not register any quick stretching of the intrafusal fibers it would have to resist, it cannot stop the extension of the tissue through the spindle reflex arcs.²⁹

An important factor throughout both phases of the intervention is the verbal interaction with respect to the sensations being perceived in both positions. In DFA Somatic Pattern Recognition, this exchange aims at having the client become aware of sensorial perceptions, as well as the emotional and mental contents associated with those perceptions and any meanings they may have attributed to his/her experience in the past, or be attributing to it in the moment. While the DFA practitioner is taking over the holding and staying in the shape, s/he leads the client’s attention towards the sensations that appear in relationship with that shape. With questions and contact statements s/he helps the person to recognize the sensations, which habitually remain outside their awareness, being considered simply “normal”.³⁰

The contrast between the shape of the contraction and the new, more extended and relaxed shape makes it possible to gather more differentiated sensorial information and describe it. The attention and time dedicated to describing sensations and finding or creating the words for that, are important: the complex circuits of the interlinked systems of the older and newer parts of the brain need both, time and attention, to be able to register the new tonus as a possible option which can be recognized, remembered and repeated. With time, practice will make it possible to include this option into the range of what is “normal” - a “normalcy” which is freer and richer, more differentiated, variable, complex, modest and

beneficial than the “normalcy” of restrictive patterns and defensive habits. Both body and mind become better equipped to respond adequately to whatever situation they find themselves exposed to.³¹

Developmental Approach

One of the tasks of DFA practitioners is to help their clients understand that they had an active part in creating the patterns which shaped their body and movements, and organized their experience of being alive in their particular circumstances. They help clients explore how they did that and discover that this process of creation is still going on, coming to an end only when life ends. As a matter of fact, our gestation is far from over when we are born. We might say it has barely begun. When we come into the world, we don’t know anything. We don’t even know that we exist as an individual. We do know how to distinguish pleasant sensations from unpleasant ones though. And it is through these sensations and our responses to them that, over time, we become aware of ourselves in relationship to the world.

From the beginning, our brain makes groups of sensations that are alike within the greater categories of pleasant, unpleasant, and neutral. In and of themselves, sensations do not have any particular meaning. It is within the specific circumstances of the moment that they may take on a meaning for us, as perceived from our particular standpoint. For someone else, in the same circumstances, the same sensation may have another meaning. Thus, meaning is utterly personal and circumstantial. In any case, it is only as we acquire language that we start to be able to associate meaning to our experience. Although, mostly, the meaning we associate with these sensations remains underneath the threshold of consciousness, it contributes to the shapes and ways in which we organize our behavior and movement in response to those sensations; and it makes up the beliefs we have about ourselves, about life, about the world, about our place in it, about what we believe we are able to achieve in life. Once encoded in our body, so to speak, when similar sensations are brought about by something, they usually go by as unnoticed as the meaning we have associated with it. They set off a reaction which is fast and automatic, almost like a reflex arc. In order to be able to perceive the pattern we have to pay close attention.

Early in life, we discover that we are able to use the physical tension in our muscles to interrupt unpleasant feelings and produce pleasant ones. On the positive end, this leads us to develop motor skills, i.e. we learn how to tense and relax muscles in just the right amount for a particular coordinated series of movements to take place. As these become habitual, we don't have to pay much attention anymore to the precise execution of them, because once we have learned them, they fade away into the background of our conscious awareness. Our attention is then free to concentrate on the achievement of whatever it is we have set out to do while crawling, sitting, standing, walking, talking, drawing, dancing, typing, riding a bicycle, playing an instrument, driving a car, baking a cake... and often several things at the same time. On the negative side, when the tension we use to stop an unpleasant feeling becomes habitual, and thus unconscious, it may be relatively successful in keeping the sensations of that feeling outside our awareness, but it doesn't make them go away. Often these tensions make us move and behave in a particular way that brings about situations which, again and again, lead to that unpleasant feeling we wanted to avoid. So, in trying to keep the sensations we don't want outside our awareness, we hold on to them. Because of this, we cannot learn from them.

If all is well, our body is like an ever fluctuating field of sensations. Most of these sensations are neutral, some pleasant, others unpleasant. They are related to the ongoing processes of being alive: breathing, liquids and electric impulses flowing, ingestion, digestion, evacuation, moving, playing, working, relating... If we are aware of unpleasant sensations and heed them, they inform us of actions that can be taken to look after whatever it is the unpleasant sensation informs us of. It may be something as simple as drinking some water. When our mouth is dry, we are actually already quite dehydrated. If we had paid attention, we could have noticed a certain taste and viscosity of our saliva telling us that we were running low on water and acted on it earlier, before dehydration set in. Our general state of health and emotional well-being would be more stable. It may be something as far-reaching as noticing an unpleasant sensation in our throat and, when we pay attention to it, understanding that it is telling us that there is

something that needs to be said. From there we may find what it is that needs to be said. Once we understand that, we may discover to who this needs to be said. We may even start to understand the situation in which it would have needed to be said and the reasons why we were not able to say it at that moment. As we experiment with saying it, often, life presents us with manifold opportunities to say it and get more skilled and refined at it. Sometimes we even get the chance to say it to the person we originally needed to say it to and, when communication starts to go back and forth once again, love can flow where there was pain, anger and misunderstanding.

In the process of DFA Somatic Pattern Recognition, clients learn to feel their sensations and to relate to themselves in a sensitive way. They learn to enjoy and appreciate pleasant feelings and nourish themselves with them instead of chasing after them and getting stuck in addictions. They learn how to relate to unpleasant feelings, to understand the information they relay, to explore possible responses to them and discover which will be effective instead of reacting against them in habitual patterns. However early in life development was stalled, and however traumatic circumstances may have been, men and women alike, can learn to be the kind of mother or father to themselves that knows how to treat their child appropriately. They know because they learn to observe and understand the sensations related to the part of themselves that was caught in the past outside their awareness through habitual tension, and they can now allow the flow of feeling to take its course. They can even learn to be pregnant with themselves and, after due time, bring forth new life.

It entails being willing to give some space and time to the feelings and sensations which had been kept outside conscious experience. It also entails being willing to take on the responsibility to protect, nurture and educate the part of the soma-psyche continuum involved in these feelings, which had been deprived of the possibility to participate in the process of growth and learning. In this way, parts that have been stuck in earlier stages of life can grow, complete their development and contribute to the fullness and health of the individual's life, and of life as a whole³².

An ongoing process of development...

DFA Somatic Pattern Recognition itself is in an ongoing process of development. Over the years, more is known about the intangible aspects of what causes DFA to bring about the deep and life-changing effects practitioners and clients report, and is being included in the practitioner training. At present, candidates are required to have been in process with a certified DFA Practitioner of Somatic Pattern Recognition for at least a year before admittance into the training program which consists of four phases of four weeks each, four days of class a week. The phases are spread out over a period of two years. As of the next training, the curriculum will go up to five phases, as more of the material is being organized for teaching.

...Of Structural Integration

There is one more thing that needs to be made clear: In the beginning of this article I wrote that ten minutes into my first session with Noemi Frenk I knew that what she did was the kind of work I had always wanted to do. That was Roling Movement. What I learned when I trained as a DFA practitioner and teacher goes beyond the work I received from Noemi. Although movement education definitely plays an important role in DFA Somatic Pattern Recognition, Structural Integration is by far the more prominent factor in what brings about the changes which people observe in their bodies, in their relationships and in what becomes possible in their lives. The structures being integrated through DFA Somatic Pattern Recognition are not only the physical ones of the body but also those of the psyche. Anyway, Structural Integration it is.

When someone stands up after a powerful session, you can almost hear a click as they simply rest into the space of the world which is theirs beyond any doubt, and always has been. "I have never felt so real before. And it is only now, as I say this, that I realize that before I did not feel real. Wow! The implications of this...!" It is

true, after a client has had a monumental revelation like this, we might do a bit of movement education in the sense that we may ask him or her to contrast the "integrated" shape with the way they habitually take up their space and move. We help them identify in standing and moving what it is they tend to do in their body to keep themselves away from fully taking their space in the world, and what it is they can do (or stop doing) to experience integration in the gravitational field. Clients come to this realization through the integration of the structures of their bodies and minds. And this occurs by "going into the shape, taking over the holding and getting it to move" at the physical level; exploring the beliefs and emotional contents of the physical shape and the archetypal alignments these may be revealing; and educating the client not only in terms of movement in relationship to gravity, but also about how we organize experience in the body and how any system we belong to has a bearing on how we do that; all this within the framework of a secure container.

I don't know if DFA Somatic Pattern Recognition goes beyond what Dr. Ida P. Rolf had in mind for Structural Integration, but I do know that putting it into the category of Movement Education is not giving it the space it deserves. As a younger member and representative of a different approach to Structural Integration, I am grateful to all those that have come before me, personally, and before us, as DFA practitioners, for the experience and contributions that have made the development of DFA Somatic Pattern Recognition possible, particularly to Annie B. Duggan and Janie French for everything they did to teach me. I consider it an honor and a privilege to be in a position to offer the service of this kind (of) work, a privilege to be updated through integration of the requirements belonging to each stage of development of life and the work as we go along.

Endnotes

¹ Foster, Mary Ann, "Let's Grow Structural Integration – An Opinion Editorial", *The 2007 Yearbook of Structural Integration*, IASI, Missoula, p. 74-75

² Kurtz, Ron, *Body-Centered Psychotherapy – The Hakomi Method*, LifeRhythm, 1990

³ Rolf, Ida. P. *Rolfing: The Integration of Human Structure*, Rochester Healing Arts Press. 1977

- (Unfortunately the publisher, who I had informed of my endeavor, forgot that I had already translated the book when Urano finally decided to publish it in Spain... oh well, I did it because I had wanted to -and I learnt a lot from doing it...)
- ⁴ Hansmann, Brigitte, *Con los pies en el suelo, Forma del cuerpo y visión del mundo*, Icaria, Barcelona 1998
 - ⁵ Duggan, Annie B., Class materials 2006
 - ⁶ Casement, Patrick, *On Learning from the Patient*, Tavistock/Routledge, 1985 and *Further Learning from the patient – The Analytic Space and Process*, Tavistock/Routledge, 1990
 - ⁷ French, Nicholas, Class notes from advanced training 1992, and Robert Langs, *The Therapeutic Environment*, ed. Jason Aronson, 1979
 - ⁸ French, Nicholas, Class notes from advanced training 1992, and “On the Need of a Coherent Psychological Perspective for Structural Integration”, *The 2007 Yearbook of Structural Integration*, IASI, Missoula, 2007, p. 36-43
 - ⁹ Duggan, Annie B., Teaching materials 2002
 - ¹⁰ Duggan, Annie B., Keynote speech at the IASI Symposium, Boston, 2007
 - ¹¹ Conforti, Micheal, *Field, Form and Fate, Patterns in Mind, Nature and Psyche*, Spring Publications Inc., Woodstock, 1999
 - ¹² French, Nicholas, “DFA”, Original article in English available at www.ermic.net, published in Spain in *Cuerpamente* n° 23, March 1994
 - ¹³ Varela, Francisco and Samy Frenk, “The Organ of Form: Towards a Theory of Biological Shape”; *Journal of Social and Biological Structures*, 1987, n°10.
 - ¹⁴ Oschman, James, *Energy Medicine in Therapeutics and Human Performance*, Butterworth Heinemann, 2003
Oschman, James, “The Biophysics of Integration”, *2006 Yearbook of Structural Integration*, IASI, Missoula, 2006, p. 17-29
 - ¹⁵ Wan Ho, Mae, *The Rainbow and the Worm*, World Scientific, Singapore, 1998
 - ¹⁶ Langevin, Helene M., “Connective Tissue: A body-wide signaling network?”; *Fascia Research*, T. W. Findley and R. Schleip, ed.s, Elsevier, Munich 2007, p. 260-262
 - ¹⁷ Khalsa, Partap S.; “Biomechanics of musculoskeletal pain: dynamics of the neuromatrix”; *Fascia Research*, Findley and Schleip, eds., Elsevier, Munich 2007, p. 162-173
 - ¹⁸ Schleip, Robert, Adjo Zorn, Frank Lehmann-Horn, Werner Klingler, “Active fascial contractility: an in vitro mechanographic investigation”, *Fascia Research*, Findley and Schleip, eds., Elsevier, Munich 2007, p. 82
 - ¹⁹ Schleip, Robert, Frank Lehmann-Horn, Werner Klingler, “Fascia is able to contract in a smooth muscle-like manner and thereby influence musculoskeletal mechanics”; *Fascia Research*, Findley and Schleip eds., Elsevier Munich, 2007, p. 76-77
 - ²⁰ Hinz, Boris, “Masters and servants of the force: The role of matrix adhesions in myofibroblast force perception and transmission”, *Fascia Research*, Findley and Schleip, eds., Elsevier, Munich 2007, p. 60-66
 - ²¹ Hinz, Boris, Giulio Gabbiani, “Mechanisms of force generation and transmissions by myofibroblasts”; *Fascia Research*, Findley and Schleip eds., Elsevier, Munich 2007, p. 67-75
 - ²² Schleip, Robert, “The Golgi Tendon Reflex Arc As a New Explanation of the Effect of Rolfing”, *Rolf Line,s* Winter 1989, The Rolf Institute of Structural Integration, Boulder, p. 18-20
 - ²³ Alter, Micheal J., *Los Estiramientos, Bases Científicas y Desarrollo de Ejercicios*, Ed. Paidotribu, Barcelona, 1990
 - ²⁴ Cornelius, William L, "Sports Medicine: Stretching technique maximizes range of motion", *BioMechanics: Sports Medicine* 1999, 9902 sports 39-44
 - ²⁵ Fucci, S., M. Benigni, V. Fornasari, “Biomecánica del aparato locomotor aplicada al acondicionamiento muscular”, Mosby/Doyma Libros, Barcelona 1995
 - ²⁶ Compare: Schleip, Robert, “Faszien und Nervensystem”, *Osteopathische Medizin* 1/2003.
 - ²⁷ *ibid*
 - ²⁸ Hansmann, Brigitte, “Pattern recognition and modification through DFA or the Duggan/French Approach”, available in English at www.ermic.net, published in Spanish in *Medicina Holística - Medicinas Complementarias* n° 70 Madrid, 2003.
 - ²⁹ *ibid*
 - ³⁰ *ibid*
 - ³¹ *ibid*
 - ³² For an in-depth discussion of the stages of archetypal development see: Erich Neuman, *The Origins and History of Consciousness*, Princeton University Press, 1993