

## **Ortho-Bionomy: a gentle revolution for massage therapists**

Many massage therapists experience discomfort, pain, stiffness and muscle tiredness from working with clients. This is a common experience for many massage and manual therapists. Ortho-Bionomy is an approach to musculoskeletal issues that relieves pain for massage clients while taking care of the therapist's body at the same time. It is also a manual therapy that can not only enhance your ability to help your clients to effectively resolve structural imbalances and pain patterns, but it can also protect your body and extend your working career.

### **What is Ortho-Bionomy?**

Ortho-Bionomy is a gentle, non-invasive form of manual therapy which can be used to address client pain, structural and postural imbalances without force or strain on either the client's or therapist's bodies. Developed by British-trained osteopath Dr Arthur Lincoln Pauls in the 1970s, this unique approach has been taught in the US, Canada, Europe, Australia and New Zealand. In Australia there are practitioners in every state and there are hundreds of therapists who have had training in this modality.

'Ortho-Bionomy' literally translates as "the corrective application of the laws of life". Based in part on osteopathic principles it aims to stimulate the body's self-regulating and self-corrective mechanisms. The practitioner uses a range of techniques including positioning, gentle compression into the joints, exaggeration of preferred postures and postural re-education.

With Ortho-Bionomy the practitioner works *with* the body instead of *on* it, and engages the body in a 'conversation' that allows both the client and the practitioner to discover positions of the body that facilitate ease and comfort. This supports the release of tension and stress patterns bringing pain relief, increased range and ease of movement, better structural alignment, more efficient functioning, faster recovery from injuries and increased physical and emotional wellbeing.

Because we focus on the client's comfort the work is very safe even for those clients who are highly sensitive or experience physical limitations due to age or illness. In addition, Ortho-Bionomy stimulates long-lasting changes by re-educating the client's body so that it can effectively maintain balance and optimal functioning on its own.

### **Using Ortho-Bionomy**

Many massage and manual therapists have discovered using Ortho-Bionomy requires no force or manipulation in order to affect change. It doesn't require any strong physical exertion by the therapist and is not dependent on the strength of the practitioner. Massage therapists report that they have more stamina and greater ease in their own bodies when they use these techniques with their clients. Therapists learning Ortho-Bionomy are taught how to use their own bodies efficiently to avoid tension and strain resulting from their work with their clients.

In addition, Ortho-Bionomy places a strong emphasis on self-care. Practitioners provide clients with exercises and release techniques to use at home to relieve pain and maximise their progress between sessions. The goal is to facilitate a sense of empowerment for clients and engages them more fully in the process of their experience of health and wellbeing.

As an integrative therapy Ortho-Bionomy is fully complementary to other modalities and does not interfere with any medical treatments. The techniques can be incorporated into massage or other bodywork sessions and the approach is also very effective as a stand-alone modality.

The palpation and observational skills that the therapist learns in Ortho-Bionomy training extensively enhances one's ability to address the structural as well as functional issues underlying the client's pain and stress patterns. Clients feel better, recover from injuries more quickly, regain functional efficiency and experience greater structural strength as a result of this work. And all the while protecting the therapist's hands and body so that she/he can work more comfortably and effectively.

### **How can I experience Ortho-Bionomy?**

If you think you might be interested in studying Ortho-Bionomy it's a great idea to have a session and try it for yourself first. Ortho-Bionomy practitioners are available in all states of Australia. You can find a list of Practitioners, Advanced Practitioners and Practitioners in Training on the website of Ortho-Bionomy Australia at [www.ortho-bionomy.org.au](http://www.ortho-bionomy.org.au) under the "Find a Practitioner" tab.

Training is available across Australia. **Ortho-Bionomy Australia** oversees two professional training programs developed by the Society of Ortho-Bionomy International for practitioners and advanced practitioners. Both programs are designed to give students a thorough understanding of the principles and philosophy of Ortho-Bionomy in addition to providing extensive hands-on experience in both seminars and supervised practice.

The Fundamentals/Phase Four course is the foundational course for the training program and is open to all therapists. Ortho-Bionomy courses can also be used for continuing professional education units for massage therapists in Australia.

For more information about training in Ortho-Bionomy, visit [www.ortho-bionomy.org.au](http://www.ortho-bionomy.org.au). If you have some questions to ask, contact Ortho-Bionomy Australia by email: [oba@ortho-bionomy.org.au](mailto:oba@ortho-bionomy.org.au) or phone: (03) 86793355.

### **References:**

Kathy Kain (1997) *Ortho-Bionomy: A Manual of Practice*, North Atlantic Books.  
Luann Overmyer (2010) *Ortho-Bionomy: A Path to Self Care*, North Atlantic Books.