

Twelve steps to resting easier

BY MARK FINCH

Body workers often say that they expose pain rather than impose pain. This is true. But let's be honest, Kirk LaPointe's series was punctuated by lots of — well, pain!

However, pain is not inevitable. As a practitioner, my job is to match the techniques to the client's needs and tissue. A 70-year-old client is likely to require different attention from that a younger athlete would get.

Kirk has a fibrous, muscular body, and has run more than he has stretched. As his first experience of deep body work, this was set to be an adventure. For me, the goals of this series were to create more space in his body and provide an education about how different parts of his body may relate to each other.

The aim of KMI is to unwind the strain patterns residing in the body's loco-motor system. The first four sessions are focused on opening the sleeve, or outside parts of the body; the next four on opening the core, or middle of the body; and the final four on integrating the "openings."

As Kirk started the series, his willingness to work became evident.

Kirk's experience was clearly intense at times. I carefully matched his motivation to explore tight and forgotten parts of his body with firm but compassionate body work. He seemed to be finding new ways of moving, and his ever-increasing awareness was encouraging.

The middle section of the series seemed the most intense for Kirk. Years of compensated patterns don't change easily, but after each session I noticed small but significant changes



Mark Finch

in Kirk's structure.

The final sessions were less physically intense and more focused on the internal experience. I wanted Kirk to learn as much about his internal awareness and movement possibilities as possible. As one of my teachers once said, "Freedom is resting easily in the harness."

As the last sessions progressed I noticed Kirk resting in his body with a little more ease and moving with a little more fluidity and spring.

In simple terms, the goal of KMI is to maintain the most upright length with the least amount of effort. My hope is that Kirk has both found some new length and is able to rest with a little more ease.

Overcome the pain, and there's much to be gained



KIRK LaPOINTE
VANCOUVER SUN

Managing Editor Kirk LaPointe participated in a 12-session deep-tissue process known as Kinesis Myofascial Integration (KMI), designed to rework the body's major muscle groups and help realign it to work most efficiently. Vancouver body worker Mark Finch (www.thepathyoga.com/markfinch) conducted the weekly sessions. In this final instalment, both men share their perspectives.



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Vancouver body worker Mark Finch unwinds 'strain patterns' in The Vancouver Sun's Kirk LaPointe.

My running had gone stale. My posture was a mid-life mess. My back felt like it was smuggling cargo somewhere.

I am aware that much of this can be ascribed to age. But even so, I needed a serious tune-up.

In my two decades of running a few times a week, I'd read many times about the benefits of deep-tissue work on the system, pioneered by Ida Rolf. (Thus the early technique was known as rolfing.) Committed and recreational athletes alike had testified to profound and subtle changes for the good.

I also knew there was a physical price to pay for those years of gradual slippage, in that the realignment was going to involve pain. I felt old enough to need it, young enough to bear it.

Mark Finch conducts hour-long sessions in Kinesis Myofascial Integration (KMI), one of a few such deep-tissue techniques, in his Vancouver clinic for \$120 an hour. He had spent years watching athletes deal with particular symptoms and giving his clients temporary relief. But he wanted to more effectively treat the body overall and provide longer-lasting effects, so he was drawn to learn KMI under some of the world's leading practitioners.

While the sessions I had aren't for everyone, Mark and his fellow KMI workers customize their approach to the

individual. He refers to the process as a conversation. The more trust we built, the more he could push me. The more I was pushed, the more I could withstand.

Most remarkable was the way the sessions ended each week. My body's natural painkillers, the endorphins, would be coursing through the system (as they do about four or five kilometres into a run). Mark would capitalize on them by working the neck or the back to absorb and apply them. So, even though you can bear great pain in the session, you tend to leave in a state of bliss.

My advice is this:

1. You've got to realize you're not there for a massage; you're there for body work.
2. You've got to be well-rested for KMI. It's no different than working out.
3. You've got to be ready to learn. KMI involves a lot of teaching, and if you're attentive, you can equip yourself to be healthier for life.
4. You've got to be accepting of pain. All those years of misuse have shifted and adapted the body, and even slight readjustment is going to be stressful.
5. You've got to understand how to

breathe to cap the pain. Your first response to stress is the fight-or-flight reflex, and that will only make things worse.

6. You've got to be prepared for the consequences of how body stores memory. Be ready to relive injury, incidents and stressful events of yesteryear when the fingers, forearms or elbows connect with the vital tissue.

7. You've got to be ready to feel new connections in the body. All that deep-tissue work will literally switch on new electricity in the system.

8. You've got to practice between sessions what you've learned about the body's alignment — how to stand or walk or sit or breathe better — in order to make the most serious progress by the end of the process.

9. You've got to accept surprises along the way, particularly the emotions that such physical work can elicit.

10. You've got to recognize your results will be substantial, but they won't be any kind of reversal. KMI is not a cure-all, but its wondrous effect is how it sets you up to take the right path. I would do it again.