

Emotional Themes Addressed in the Ten Sessions of Structural Integration by Jean Louise Green, CMT and Certified Rolf Practitioner

While Structural Integration is primarily concerned with physical changes in the body, it affects the whole person. We are made up of attitudes, emotions, memories and behavior patterns that affect our physical being. Ida P. Rolf, Ph.D., stated that during the ten sessions of Structural Integration, *“there is an ongoing psychological change toward balance, toward serenity, toward a more whole person. The whole person evidences a more apparent, more potent psychic development.”* When our bodies are well aligned and we are freed from the constrictions of pain and inflexibility, we have more energy to realize our potential. Clients from all age groups have reported positive changes from Structural Integration, stating that they felt less stress, greater self-confidence, and an improved ability to handle life’s changes.

Joseph Heller, a student of Dr. Rolf’s, and former Rolf Institute president, addressed the psychological changes evidenced in Rolfing through the recognition of specific emotional themes or metaphors that are associated with each unique session of Structural Integration. Emmett Hutchins, a teacher of mine, considered this body of Hellerwork knowledge, to be a “cousin of Rolfing.”

In the first session, the theme is “Inspiration.” The meaning of the word “inspiration” is “to draw in spirit. Inspiration is not only to inhale oxygen by increasing the breathing capacity, but it is also to be filled with or to be in touch with spirit.

The theme of the second session, where the feet, ankles, lower legs, and knees are addressed, is “Standing On your Own Two Feet.” This session is about self-sufficiency and being grounded on your own two feet.

The theme of the third session, which addresses the arms and the sides of the body, is “Reaching Out.” The context of this session includes making contact with people, giving and receiving, asserting yourself, and asking for what you need.

Session four, which addresses the bottom of the pelvic floor and the inside line of the legs, has as its theme, “Control and Surrender.” This session explores the delicate balance of healthy control and healthy surrender. Healthy control involves sensitivity to feedback, and a willingness to be flexible, creative, and decisive. Healthy surrender involves letting go, trusting your environment, your self, and relaxing about your destiny.

Session five lengthens the front of the core and balances the muscles of the rectus abdominis, psoas and iliacus. The theme of this session is “The Guts,” which may include issues and relationships with food, love and our gut-level feelings.

Session six, which lengthens the back of the core including the legs, hips, and spinal erector muscles, has as its theme, “Holding Back.” As the back releases whatever has been held back—love, anger, joy, sadness—these feelings can emerge, giving one a new opportunity to express and communicate more freely.

Session seven releases tension in the head, face, and neck, aligning the head over the torso. The theme is “Losing Your Head,” which means to release excessive focus on the analytic, and mental processes. This session facilitates a more balanced relationship between reason and feeling.

Session eight releases rotations in the lower half of the body, including the legs, hips and pelvis. The theme is “The Feminine.” The feminine way manifests through the medium of intuition and receptivity, rather than form and activity.

Session nine releases rotations in the upper half of the body including the arms, shoulders, chest, back, head and neck. The theme is “the Masculine.” The masculine principle is the path of initiation, penetrating force, insight, and action.

The tenth session establishes overall integrity of the body through working with the joints. The theme is “Integration.” The focus is on uncovering the natural integrity of the body, its wholeness, completeness and totality.