

Feels Like a New/ Baby

How CranioSacral Therapy can Resolve Birth Trauma

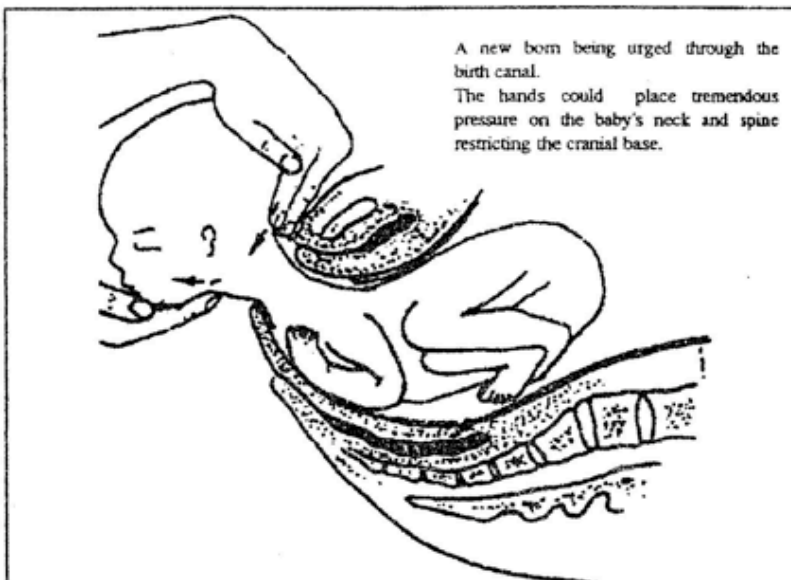
by Stuart Walker

Four and a half years ago, when our eldest was born, I'd been doing CranioSacral Therapy for about a year.

I was just about to do a course which taught the techniques for the different bone structure of infants and children (the cranial bones are designed to fold in order to pass through the birth canal, usually without discomfort and returning to symmetry within 72 hours). I was sitting on a bench seat with my daughter and the house was very quiet. She became restless so I offered her my little finger to suck on and as she relaxed I became mesmerised by the action of that tiny mouth on my finger. I began to sense her cranial rhythm (the cranial rhythm is a subtle movement passing through the tissues of the body in response to the pulse of cerebrospinal fluid down around the spinal chord). Since it was then still two weeks to the relevant part of my training I made sure my intention was purely to notice what was happening and know more. As I watched/felt a remarkable thing happening, something shifted - my daughters cranium relaxed and tensions I hadn't really been aware of became obvious as they melted. Her cranial bones opened like flower petals in the morning sun.

I was awestruck, and not completely at ease, surprise being a completely inadequate word. My daughter, however, stopped her suckling motion, breathed a contented sigh and went to sleep. I have no idea how long it had taken, nor have I any way of telling what a difference it made to her, growing up without those tensions.

We forget how small a newborn baby is. Last week I had the privilege to meet a four day old baby girl named Juliette. Her parents brought her in for treatment, mainly because she was 'clamping on' during feeds. This meant that her mother Susan, was experiencing considerable pain and frustration at a critical time when beginning to breastfeed. It also meant that Juliette was getting a minimum of milk. After 48 hours of labour, Susan's contractions stopped and it was decided to deliver Juliette using a



A new born being urged through the birth canal. The hands could place tremendous pressure on the baby's neck and spine restricting the cranial base.

vacuum cap to grip her head and pull her through the birth canal. This process is probably an improvement over forceps, and may, at times, avoid life threatening situations, but just remember how much care we instinctively take of the head and neck of a tiny newborn.

The important thing, to me, is making absolutely sure that the effects of that experience are minimised and that Juliette's self-corrective abilities get their chance. Following approximately 1 hour's treatment mother and baby fed comfortably for the first time, and Juliette's mother (a chiropractor) was amazed and relieved at how relaxed her daughter became.

I would like to say Happy Birthday to Nicole, who will be three this month. I first met her three months ago, at which time she had little control of her arms or legs, tending to hold her arms close to her body, she spent a lot of time in her own world, and struggled to communicate a few words. Nicole had been diagnosed as having mild to moderate cerebral palsy. After twelve weekly sessions of CranioSacral Therapy, along with the heartwarming dedication of her mother and grandmother, Nicole is cheerful, affectionate, and interacting socially. She is interested in the world around

her, and learning to pull herself up to a sitting position. She is continuing to surprise us with her improvements.

Newborns have several advantages over other humans, therapeutically speaking. The first is this, they haven't yet learned to hold themselves still (something which can keep us on our toes when working with toddlers and younger children, though sometimes adults need to transcend such an ability taking full advantage of the benefits of movement within their bodies!). The second is this, they have not yet learned to co-ordinate movement, so all of the moves they make are exploratory. This is a great way to proceed in creating physical or emotional change. You're much more likely to find something better if you're exploring the possibilities as they present themselves to you. This leads us to another advantage, newborns have not developed nor matured any coping mechanisms which might distract them as they release their tensions or feelings. All these things combine so a newborn child is willing and able to move quickly and intelligently through any tension to a position of release.

As a matter of interest, I found it necessary to describe the advantages a newborn child has over the rest of us

In terms of what they didn't rather than what they do do.

An example of intelligent mover came about when Juliette during session was sucking on my finger she lifted her head slightly and dropped it back onto the (pad table. I thought she was having difficulty holding her head up also made the assumption that was trying to ease tension in neck. She repeated this mover several times until I understood wanted me to follow her lead matched the motion and this she lowered her head onto the table gripped my finger with her jaw make sure it stayed in place arched her neck and released neck tension, relaxing her whole body. I remembered an article saying that babies are astonished that no-one is trying to communicate with them. Juliette repeated communicated to me precisely what it was, she wanted to happen based on what she understood of what was doing, repeating it until understood.

Current scientific data states words are approximately 7% communication, tonality, body language and context being given greater emphasis in this search understanding. Which brings me the motivation for writing this article. We need more people trained skilled in these forms of communication, while, at the same time, being available to newly born children.

This article was written following sequence of (dare I say coincidental events. Juliette's parents told me of the overheard conversation in Limerick Mater Hospital which prompted them to seek me out, and how they eventually found me through a friend who found my ad in a newspaper fished out from the bin. As Juliette's mother said, "She released a huge amount of stress tension—she feels like a new baby."

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The Paediatric workshop held in May extremely well received. Jim Green will be back to instruct another in April in Ennis, Clare. Again the workshop filled up quickly and we have a waiting list for places.