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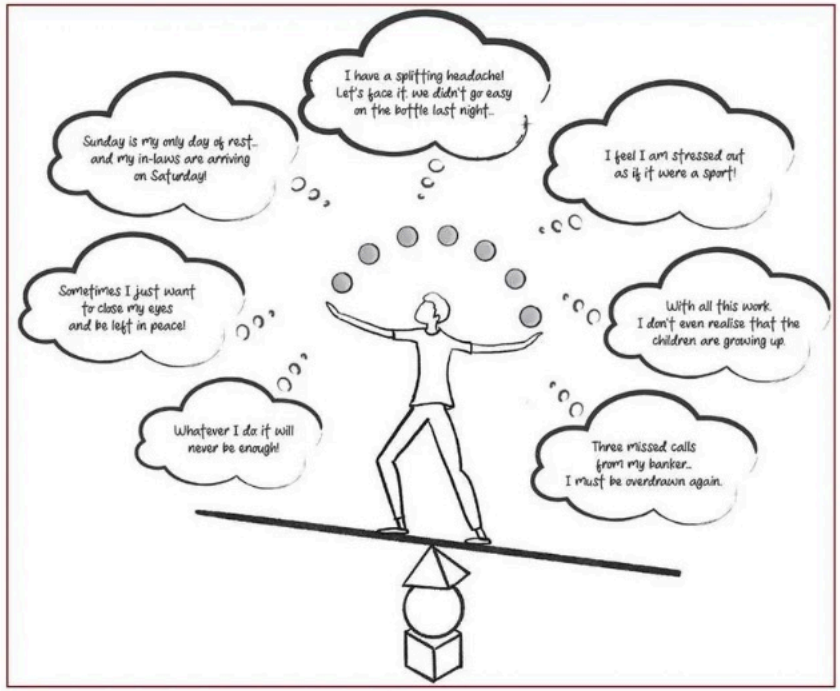
Taking Charge of Our Health

We are passionate about health. It is the departure point for our approach and, therefore, for this book. It is central to our lives every day and at all times. It is our most precious asset on Earth and affects each and every one of us. But what is our relationship with our health? Approaches differ. Some have understood that this asset given to us at birth expects only one thing: that we take an interest in it and that we take health into our own hands. Some people are active, responsible stakeholders in this process. By avoiding chemistry as much as possible, they are moving closer to nature, its rhythms and benefits, by observing simple and sound rules of life. Initially, health depends on the quality of a few ingredients: sleep, food, and air. All we need to do is add a minimum of movement and emotional management to build a solid foundation. Others, however, let themselves be led by the hand. In a way, they have outsourced their health, leaving it to their doctor to look after and decide for them.

They are being managed by a medical system in which science dictates the agenda. To be in good health, all you have to do is fit into the norm of mathematical variables and respond to the injunctions of a system that listens very little to the patients' needs and no longer uses touch to explore the origin of their suffering.

Of course, many people waver between these two extremes. Nevertheless, or

a problem, focusing on pain or on a diagnosis to reveal a pathology, is meaningless to us. We define ourselves as health practitioners. Respecting the Eastern philosophy of care traditions and the osteopathic idea advocated by Andrew Taylor Still, we seek the expression of Life in the body. Where is the resource? How can health be expressed? Where are the light and spark of Life? Our task is to strengthen the resource and then spread this potential throughout the body. We work with the health inherent in every being, with Life. And then,



I am juggling with all of this.
For the time being, my body is still adapting.
But for how much longer? Without ever taking a moment
to pause and reconnect to my resources?



In a healthy body, the Tan Tien is suspended! It is the sum of all the forces applied in and on a body and is both a physical and energetic center of the utmost importance, connecting us to the Earth. The energy we use throughout the day for our various activities is stored here. This is our body fulcrum, our center of gravity.

FINDING THE TAN TIEN

- Once seated, move your consciousness to your lower abdomen, 2 or 3 centimeters below the navel, in the center of the body.
- At this spot, visualize a small pearl, one or two centimeters in diameter. This is your Tan Tien!
- Using a light muscular contraction, compact, compress, and condense this pearl from all directions.
- Relax your muscles, then repeat four or five times to increase the awareness of your center.
- Gently move your body forward, then backward, and finally sideways. Each time, sense the little adaptive movement that the pearl makes.

Reflect

- Do you feel this center's suspension?

From our very first Thai massage classes, and then in Osteothai, we develop awareness of this little pearl through several seated visualization exercises like the one we have just done. These exercises are mainly inspired by the teachings of Vlady and Michèle Stevanovitch and their school, "L'Art du Chi—The Art of Chi."

- Repeat this exercise three or four times to increase your awareness of your Tan Tien.

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Initially, our work as therapists is to develop awareness of this center. Then to establish its connection with our hands so that we can learn to work from it. The extra power thus generated in our touch is phenomenal and effortless.

The Return Movement: Our Physical and Material Reality

This work of reconnecting with the Earth takes us back to the realm of "body-matter," Sat for the Indians, soma for the Greeks. The Earth is visible, perceivable, a physical reality. Reconnecting with the Earth means no longer feeling out of touch. I have come to reinhabit my body; I have regained awareness of what it is expressing and I undoubtedly feel the need to take care of it.

I am living in the tangible, in the real, in the matter. I am keeping a sense of reality, developing objectivity and discernment. I am less distracted and more focused in the present moment. Reconnecting with the Earth means finally recognizing that the Earth is alive. The fertility of the Earth is not an empty word; it is ready to give birth, to grow, and to receive its harvest.

Gravity pulls us down toward the Earth. Once this connection has been established, the Earth returns an upward force to us. This is a law of physics: For every force, there is a counter force. So, against the force of gravity, there is a return movement, a counter force that starts at the center of the Earth and moves upward, giving us verticality. But not just any verticality! Verticality built on the power of support. We are then able to encounter celestial forces.



Earth, I exhale



Andrew Taylor Still

In 1874, during a dysentery epidemic, he uttered the word osteopathy for the first time while treating a child. A few years later, in 1892, he founded the first American School of Osteopathy in Kirksville, Missouri, to teach his art. Among Still's many students were John Martin Littlejohn and William Garner Sutherland, each of whom created a particular branch of osteopathy. Littlejohn brought osteopathy to England from where it gradually spread, first to Europe and then throughout the world.

We should try to define what osteopathy is today. There are three main trends in osteopathic practice, based on sciences such as anatomy, physiology, and biomechanics:

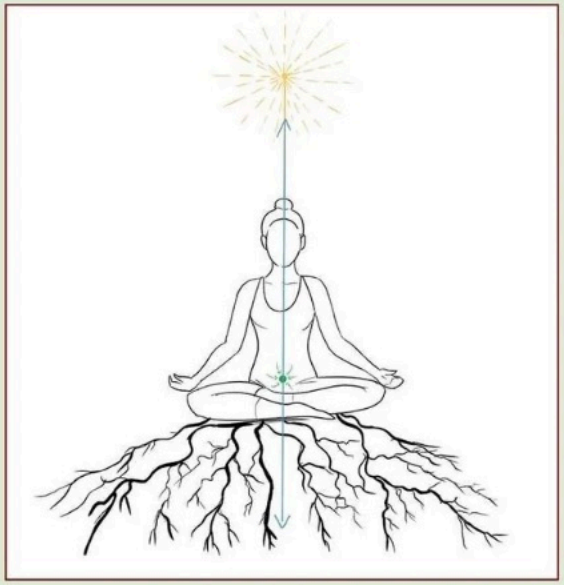
- **A biomechanical approach** that targets the musculoskeletal system
- **A fluidic approach** that focuses on the fascia, internal organs, and cranio-sacral system
- **A biodynamic approach** where listening, the perception of energetic movements, and the spiritual dimension take on even greater importance

While osteopathy is a scientific discipline, it is also a human science, and above all, an empirical one; that is, it is subjective. It relies on a dialogue between two beings called practitioner and patient, giver and receiver. It takes a holistic view of the body and mind and seeks to promote health. Still said, "To find health should be the object of the doctor. Anyone can find disease." Osteopaths seek to restore mobility and allow vitality to express itself freely. They use fine manual perception and precise touch while taking into account the body's self-regulatory capacities.

Working with health is a concept present in Thai massage philosophy and is also clearly stated by Andrew T. Still. Unfortunately, this concept is no longer held in the highest esteem. Pathology takes up more and more space in the Western world of health, a world that does not carry its name well. Most

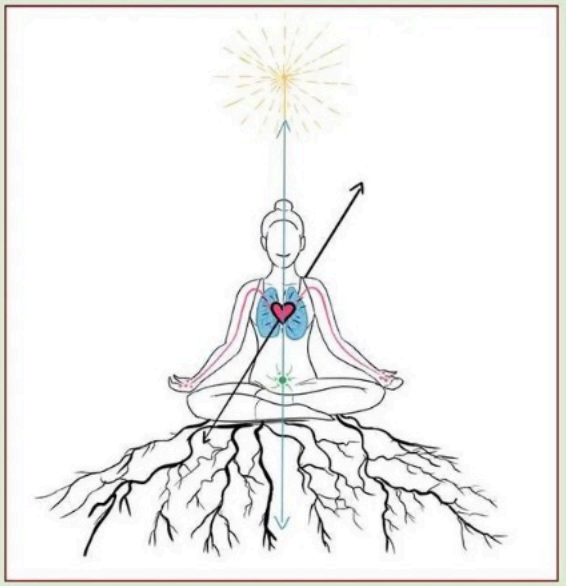


Sacrum listening



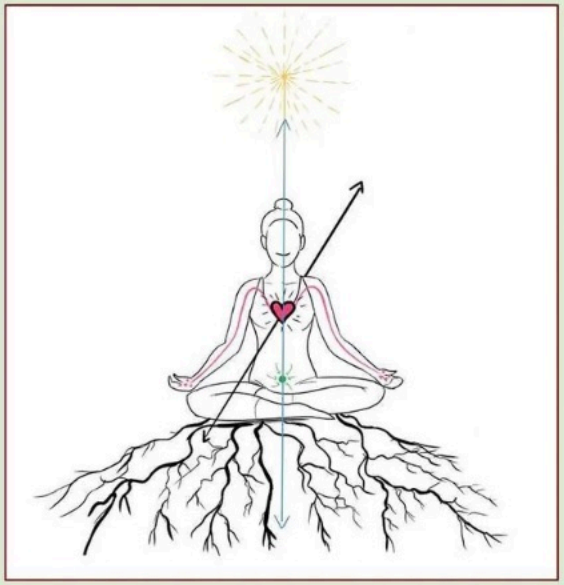
Gravity pulls us down toward the Earth. Once this connection has been established, the Earth returns an upward force to us.

Sky, I inhale
Earth, I exhale



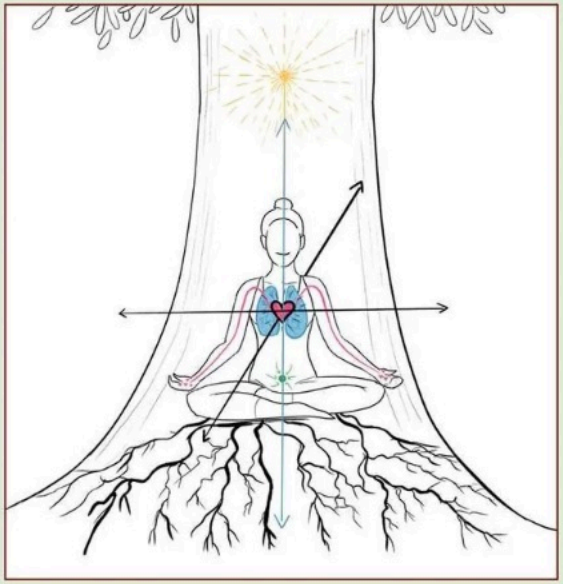
After the vital center (the Earth and tan tien) and the spiritual center (the Sky and the head), we now turn to our emotional center. The Heart is its center, its symbol.

Sky, I inhale
Earth, I exhale



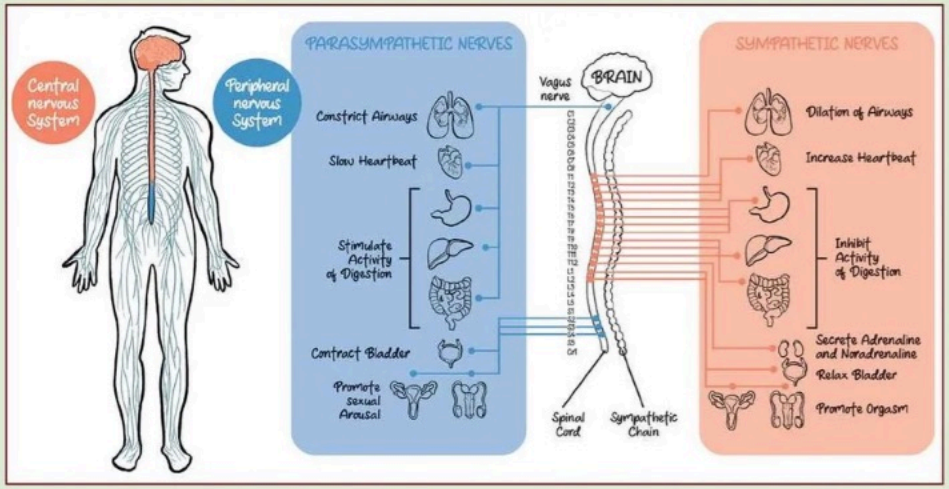
The beauty of this rootedness is that it is vertical.

Sky, I inhale
Earth, I exhale

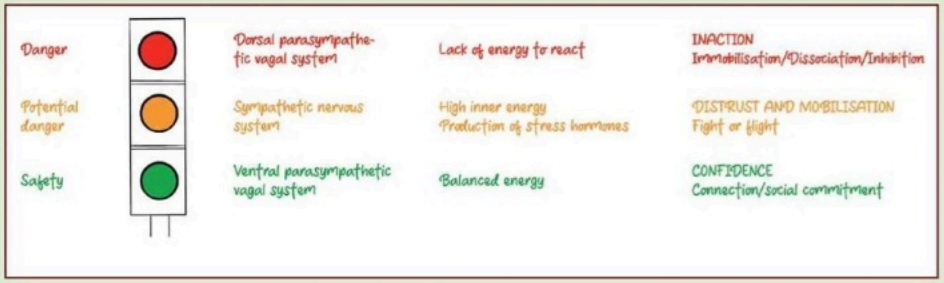


Presence is a state of Mindfulness expressed by the following qualities of Being: Rooted deeply in the Earth, I receive its grounding, stability and power. Connected to my Verticality and to the Sky, I am open to silence, to my intuition and to the flow of information. Centered on my Heart center, I encourage and feel loving kindness, compassion, joy, equanimity, tenderness and calm. Conscious of my breathing, I am fully present in the Here and Now. I am oriented, in a state of receptivity, in communication with myself, listening to others and to the Universe.

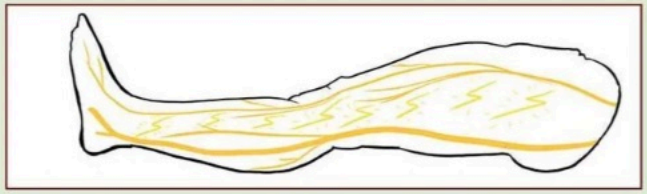
Sky, I inhale
Earth, I exhale



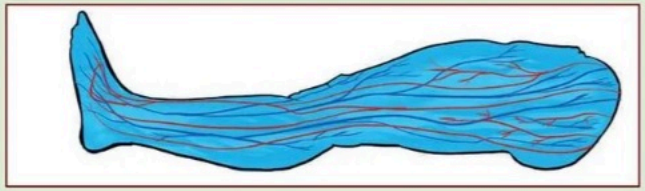
Human nervous system. The parasympathetic system is located in both the cranium and sacrum, hence the importance of the cranio-sacral techniques in osteopathy. The tenth cranial nerve, the famous vagus nerve, is primarily responsible for the parasympathetic system.



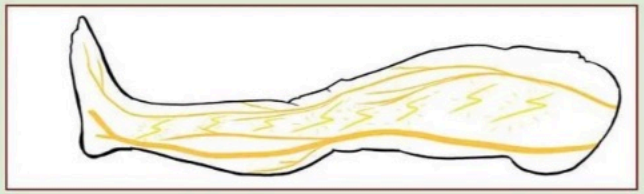
Polyvagal theory shows that, in short, if the individual's ventral parasympathetic vagal system (shown in green) is intact and slightly dominant, their ability to adapt is effective. Stress lasting more than three months will establish a dominance of the sympathetic system and reduce the individual's ability to adapt. If our nervous system perceives that it is unable to manage the situation, the danger becomes a threat to our lives. This leads to hypoactivation of the dorsal parasympathetic vagal system (shown in red), which triggers immobilization.



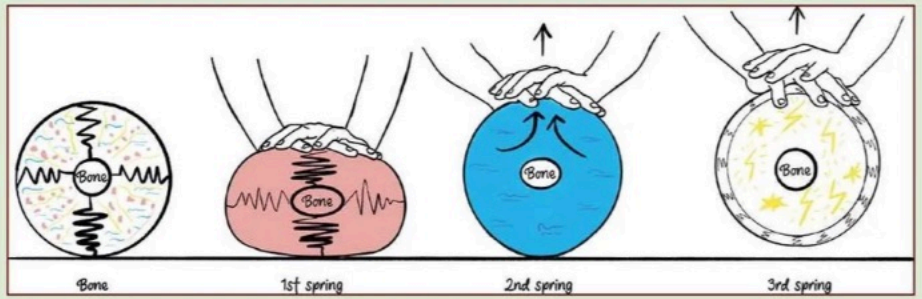
Visualizing the lower limb through the first spring's structural reality: the musculoskeletal system (bone, muscles, tendons, and ligaments)



Visualizing the lower limb through the second spring's fluid reality: fluids (blood, lymph, intracellular, and interstitial fluids) and the fascia



Visualizing the lower limb through the third spring's energetic reality: nerves and the body's electrical reality



Soon we will be able to . . .
mobilize the structure in the first spring
move fluids in the second spring
allow the potency to express its natural movement
impact the speed of circulation of energy in the third spring