



The Anatomy of Fascia- Revealed!

a discovery of 3-D continuity for MFR therapists

Tools for fitness • Knowledge for health

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An Intro to Myo-fás-cia

What is fascia? According to Michael Schwahn, CMT, owner of LIFE Rehab Services, Inc., and a full instructor for John Barnes Myofascial Release Seminars, “Fascia is a form of connective tissue which runs from the top of your head to the tips of your toes.”¹ **What is its role in the body?** “It works as a shock absorber and stabilizer, helping your body to stand erect and move fluidly.”¹ With such an extensive presence within our bodies it’s easy to see why myofascial pain is such a prevalent problem. In fact, according to Thomas W. Myers in his book, *Anatomy Trains: Myofascial Meridians for Manual and Movement Therapists*, “Myofascial pain is probably the most common cause of musculoskeletal pain in medical practice.”² And to further support his claim, Myers goes on to give a vivid description of the myofascial network:

“Visualize a gauzelike network that shapes your entire body. Make that network a three-dimensional,

covering your entire interior, and then fill the gauze with structures including blood vessels, nerves, and lymph. Remember to put your organs into this image. ... Then, add your muscles, which are permeated with their own myofascial network. ... And that’s still only part of where your myofascia is.”²

Continuously Connected in 3-D

According to Myers, there are three layers of fascia all connected and three dimensional. They are the superficial fascia, deep fascia, and the subserous fascia. “*Superficial fascia is attached*

*to the underside of your skin. Capillary channels and lymph vessels run through this layer, and so do many nerves.”*² The second layer, the deep fascia, “... is a much tougher and denser material. Your body uses deep fascia to separate large sections, such as the abdominal cavity, from each other. Deep fascia covers some areas like huge sheets, protecting them and giving them shape.”² Myers’ third layer, the subserous, “... is a loose tissue that covers your integral organs and holds the network of blood and lymph vessels that keep them moist.”²

Fascia not only binds and supports, it is the primary communication channel in the body.

-Thomas W. Myers

Importance of Understanding

In a contribution to Carol Manheim’s book, *The Myofascial Release Manual- 3rd ed.*, Sam Kegerreis, MS, PT, ATC, states the importance of understanding the fascial/muscle relationship:

“Muscle represents between 70% to 85 % of one’s body weight and, perhaps more than any other organ, reflects and influences our ability to respond to the world about us. Muscle, with the help of its fascial binding, supplies the tension that gives life to our osseous framework. Muscle and fascia are functionally linked (*myofascia*), combining the properties of contractile and non-contractile tissue. Under load, fascia behaves mechanically with both plastic and elastic deformation, including the ability to change and lose energy when subjected to stress (*hysteresis*).

Fascial function has been largely underestimated. Fascia not only contributes contour to the body, but also provides lubrication between structures for movement (*muscle play*) and nutrition. Vessels and nerves are escorted throughout the body via fascial membranes contributing to metabolic homeostasis. Reflex mechanisms further contribute to neural function and development via receptors in subcutaneous fascia, the skin, and connective tissues.”³

To aid in the understanding of the fascia, Gil Hedley, Ph.D., has developed a *first-of-its kind* DVD series specifically dealing with the anatomy of fascia. The *Integral Anatomy Set* consists of two volumes: Volume 1: Skin and Superficial Fascia, and Volume 2:

Deep Fascia and Muscle. This series gives you an in-depth 'layer-by-layer' look at the fascia through dissection and will increase your awareness of the relationships between layers. According to series creator, Gil Hedley, Ph.D.:

"A comprehensive understanding of the deeper layers requires a thorough understanding of the more superficial ones. ... In Vol. 2, the whole body continuities of deep fascia and muscle are demonstrated in detail and dissected on camera to demonstrate their relationships to underlying and overlying structures."⁴

Effective Treatment: Myofascial Release

According to Myers:

"A small change in the myofascia can cause great stress to other parts of your body. Restriction of one major joint in a lower extremity can increase the energy expenditure of normal walking by as much as 40 percent, and, if two major joints are restricted in the same extremity, it can increase by as much as 300 percent."²

Michael Schwahn explains treating these restrictions with Myofascial Release in the following way:

"Myofascial Release is performed by applying a sustained stretch into a restricted area with your hands. The tissues will stretch slightly and then stop. This is the point when you have hit a restriction barrier. You then continue to hold the stretch for as long as it takes until the restriction softens and releases. You then follow the releasing of the tissues until you hit the next barrier. Hold at that barrier until the release occurs and then move to the next barrier, etc. One technique can take up to 10 minutes to perform.

Myofascial release is effective because it *re-trains* and *re-programs* the tissues to be soft and pliable, instead of hard and rigid. Once the restrictions have been released, and the person's posture is realigned, they are then ready to begin a strengthening program."¹

Product Mentions

All products mentioned in this newsletter can be purchased from OPTP. Shop online at OPTP.com to see all of our Myofascial Release/Trigger Point Therapy accessories & resources, or talk to one of our knowledgeable customer service representatives Monday-Friday from 8AM-5PM CST. Call us today at 1-800-367-7393, and we'll be happy to assist you with all your health and fitness needs.

Myofascial Release Resources

Anatomy Trains: Myofascial Meridians for Manual and Movement Therapists (#8709)

Thomas Myers, LMT, NCTMB, explains the role of fascia in healthy movement, gait, and posture through a "whole systems" view of myofascial locomotor anatomy. Connections between the muscles and fascial net are described in detail with a focus on the structure-function continuum. Illustrated. Softcover, 280 pages.



The Integral Anatomy DVD Set (#908PKG)

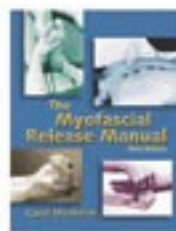
From a whole body perspective, this DVD series systematically documents tissue dissection perspectives missing from other established anatomical texts and videos. Volume One covers the skin and superficial fascia; Volume Two covers the deep

fascia and muscle. All dissections are performed on camera providing the viewer with a first-hand look at the process involved. With its whole body, layer by layer approach, Integral Anatomy stresses anatomical continuities and relationships that too often are overlooked in other regional presentations.



The Myofascial Release Manual (#816-3)

This state-of-the-art manual begins by presenting the basic learning steps of the techniques and then progresses to the more advanced. The third edition contains updated and expanded text with over 350 photographs. Softcover, spiral-bound. 277 pages.



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References:

- 1) Michael Schwahn, CMT, is a full instructor for John Barnes Seminars and owner of LIFE Rehab Services, Inc. in Wayzata, MN. He responded by e-mail.
- 2) Myers, Thomas W. "Anatomy Trains: Myofascial Meridians for Manual and Movement Therapists." Churchill Livingstone, ©2003. Pp. 17-20.
- 3) Manheim, Carol. "The Myofascial Release Manual-3rd ed." SLACK Inc., ©2001. Pp. 3-4.
- 4) Gil Hedley, Ph.D., creator/author of *Integral Anatomy* DVD set.