



Getting The Most From Your ATSI Sessions

Now that you are starting your ATSI sessions, here are some suggestions for making the most of the experience. The ATSI series is a project, a project of realigning your body, educating your kinesthetic sense, and reclaiming your whole bodily self from the many alienating influences we have in our culture. You may find that some of the following ideas are more to your liking, while others do not fit your situation – consider them all, and then take what you like.

- It is recommended that you keep a journal during the process – you may be surprised at the changes as evidenced by your sensations, dreams, attitudes, or experiences. Start by standing in front of a mirror, and writing down everything that you can see, think of, or feel about your body. Be as honest as you can, noting areas you like, ones you do not, the areas that give you pleasure, and any chronic aches or pains. Think back to the things that have affected your body shape and body image – accidents and surgeries, incidents and imitations, your parents and your heroes. Try to make an entry just after and just before each of the sessions in the series, as well as any other time you are so moved.
- Leave time for a walk before and after your session – this will give you a chance to feel the 'before' and 'after' in your body, and in the familiar kinesthetic experience of walking. The walking will help you integrate the changes from the session as well, and give a chance for your head to clear before returning to the everyday absorption of driving and the rest of it. You could, for instance, simply park your car several blocks from the office.
- During the session, the most benefit is derived from letting your practitioner in. It is common to react by tightening or pulling away. If your practitioner is creating too much sensation with their pressure or speed, let him or her know that they should lighten up, or slow down, or get out. While your practitioner knows what he or she is doing, you know you the best. This is your session, and the best results come with your ability to stay with the work and let go with it.
- People have different ways of opening up to the work. It is voluntary but subtle - bring your awareness to the part that is being worked, and accept the pressure. But if the pressure is so much that you have to mentally 'leave', then the work is too hard, and probably less productive. The exception to this can be an area that was physically traumatized and is still storing a lot of pain. Here, the pain can be intense, but it is pain leaving your body. In any case, develop a dialogue with your practitioner about how they can best work with you.
- Between sessions, listen to your body. We are accustomed to dictating to our bodies from above. During the series is a time to listen for the messages coming up from below. Your body may want you to use it more – you may feel restless, for instance, so go with it: dance or do some stretching. Your body may give you signals of needing more rest as it repairs itself – go with that if you can.

- Break up long periods of sitting with movement. Give yourself a few minutes break during every hour of driving, for instance, or do some stretching during long bouts with the computer. Long-held patterns of sitting can be very damaging to our structural integrity.
- A warm bath on the evenings after a session is often a treat, and adding Epsom Salts (magnesium sulfate) to the bath will reduce any residual soreness.
- You may notice odd stresses and strains in your body in the days following a session, as your body readjusts its tissues to the changing forces. This is normal. These feelings or pains should be passing – your practitioner will want to know about anything that lasts more than few days, or anything severe or worrying.
- Likewise, you may feel odd emotions between sessions, coming seemingly from nowhere. This is normal and these too should pass. As much as you can, just accept and watch them happen. Again, anything lasting should be reported to your practitioner.
- Avoid imposing an ideal on your body – holding yourself into what you think of as a ‘proper’ posture. The sessions are designed to bring you toward a better balance without effort. Pinning your shoulders back or tucking your tail under to where you think it ‘should’ be will only get in the way. Your body has its own wisdom - allow it to unwind toward its own natural length and balance. In the end, this may conform to some plumb line or grid, but it very well may not. To thine own self be true.
- Your ATSI practitioner may give you exercises or awareness designed to help overcome old habits between sessions and bring in the new, but this awareness should be tried on gently and frequently, not imposed or held for long periods of time. Holding someone’s (even your own) idea of ‘good’ posture will only substitute a new set of strains for the old ones you left behind.
- Many times, the most helpful thing that the client can do is to notice when old patterns of holding are creeping back in and drop them. Noticing them as they reassert themselves is easier after they have been released in the sessions, but they do have a way of creeping back in. Your job as a client is to notice these holding patterns and just let them go, as often as necessary. After a period of watching the tendency come and go, it will simply relent and the new position will be your ‘natural’ place. Remaining gently sensitive to what your body is doing is your chief responsibility in this process.
- Your body will also give you messages about your environment. Your way of standing over the sink, or, as mentioned, sitting at your desk may need to change to be consonant with your ‘new’ body. Your practitioner can help you with these adjustments, but you can also stay alert to when you are using yourself in way that no longer works.
- You can expect that the novelty of the changes you feel right after the session will feel less pronounced toward the end of the week. They are still there – it is just that your body has become more used to them and integrated them. The ATSI series is carefully worked out in a sequence that is designed to prevent you from regressing. In fact, you can expect positive changes to keep developing in the months following the end of the series.
- Finally, enjoy yourself! The ATSI series is a wonderful way to explore your body posture and movement. It was so important and positive for your practitioner that he or she took it up as a career! We look forward to sharing this voyage of discovery, healing and ease with you.

Principles of ATSI

Structural Integration (SI) can be defined at various levels. Here we list the progression of principles from which the Anatomy Trains Structural Integration (ATSI) programme derives its goals, objectives, strategies, and tactics.

Goals for SI are listed elsewhere. The 3- and 12-session recipes describe objectives, BodyReading and session plans ('launches') provide strategies, and the Fascial Release Techniques in our books and videos form a basis for sequential tactics.

Each principle can be framed as a question. These principles are not unique to SI, and could be re-jigged to derive nearly any therapeutic approach. They also apply, in a sense, to each intervention, each move, or each session, as well as the overall strategy for a series of sessions.

1) Energy - Is there sufficient available energy?

In the first interview, you and the client mutually determine your goals for the course of the therapy - however specific or 'blue sky' they may be. Is there sufficient energy within the client to accomplish those goals?

If the answer is yes, proceed to the next step. If not, you have a choice: either a) revise your / their goals to be within the range defined by the client's capacity, or b) find some more energy.

A change of diet, exercise, psychotherapy, epigenetics, or spiritual state might provide that energy, but it is counterproductive bordering on unethical to undertake a goal you know the client cannot attain. If neither a) nor b) are available, consider referral.

2) Adaptability - Where can we increase adaptability?

Given available energy, your first task is to increase adaptability in the organism. This phase is referred to by Rolf, Feldenkrais, and others as 'differentiation'. This denotes getting structures and tissues which are stuck together - either fascially or neurally - to work independently.

Getting muscles to let go of constant co-recruitment, joint tissues to relent, glued layers to slide on each other, breaking the sensori-motor amnesia cycle, and freeing neural, cranial, visceral, and myofascial restrictions - all these fall into the realm of increasing adaptability.

Often the first increase of myofascial adaptability is in opening the breath movement, which leads to a concomitant increase in physiological adaptability. Increasing motor and physiological adaptability via differentiation is usually the domain of the first four 'superficial' sessions of the ATSI 12-series.

3) Support - How can we increase support?

Use the increased adaptability to improve support. In bodywork terms, this means using the newly available movement to change the segmental relationships in favour of better alignment and sound functional movement. This is an essential step to take the client to a new 'home' posture for their

somatic self. Just stretching or opening tissue is not sufficient in itself to make a deep change. They must be a real change in support for them to be able to 'land' in a new place, with new capacities.

This process may begin within the superficial sessions, is definitely a goal of the middle 4 'core' sessions, and often continues into the integration portion, the last 4 sessions of the 12-series.

4) Release - What patterns can be released?

Once support is improved and the body is literally more centred and aligned, we search for the overall patterns that are available for release. The quest for better adaptability and support involves the 'release' of individual structures or fascial sheets, but this fourth principle asks for release in a different sense, release of an overall, body-wide pattern.

Such a release often involves a somatopsychic component. The timing of such an overall release of a pattern cannot be forced or often even predicted, but it can be facilitated and attended to, or it can be blocked by inept handling.

Whatever precipitates it and however 'emotional' it is or is not, pattern releases lead to a fairly radical re-ordering of inner relationships and priorities. Releases can sometimes be accompanied by discomfort and 'teething problems' as the new pattern is adopted, or by a simple sigh of contentment as the body comes back to its new 'home'.

This step occasionally happens early in the series if the person was pre-prepared; it often happens during the middle core sessions or the integration sessions. In some cases, it simply never happens, if the person is not ready for such an inner change.

5) Integration - Where can we integrate changes into functional movement?

Once release is achieved, the final stage or principle in SI is that of integration - the blending of the new pattern into daily movement, life demands, and unconscious posture. Where are the old pattern and new pattern colliding? Where is the old pattern seeking to reassert itself or subverting the new programming?

In this phase, you are assisting the client into living into the new pattern and cleaning up the old, in search of a coherent, sustainable movement pattern that sits easily 'within the skin'.

This is often the most relevant task in the integration sessions, sessions 9 - 12 of the ATSI series.

Weaving these principles in the daily tasks of a session series is complex and manifold, and varies with each client, but it is a recognisable progression.

Working on the 'Support' phase without first increasing adaptability, as in some personal training programs, dramatically slows the rate of change.

Body-centred psychotherapeutic approaches often leave out the 'Support' principle by proceeding directly to 'Release'. Without a new support structure, the new patterning is often lost within a short time and is often confusing to the body.

Release without integration - which can happen with random deep tissue and myofascial release methods - is likewise confusing for the client and sometimes leads to the loss of the new pattern.

Anatomy Trains Structural Integration (KMI) Sessions

Experiencing Anatomy Trains Structural Integration (KMI) Sessions

Anatomy Trains Structural Integration (KMI) sessions can be used to resolve particular problems, as a “tonic” for your posture, movement, and what used to be called “carriage” – how you carry yourself through the world. Your body is your most proximate tool. How do you use it? KMI structural integration can be seen as an extended course in reacquainting yourself with your body in motion, whether you are a finely-tuned athlete, or a computer-bound couch potato.

Most of us have collected extra tension through the course of our lives, either from injury or surgery, imitation of our parents or heroes, from our repetitive activities, or attitudes we’ve acquired along the way. These injuries and tensions form a pattern in our bodies. Exercise, and our mother’s nagging to ‘Stand up straight!’ may help, but most of this patterning happens below our conscious awareness and becomes part of “who we are”. These patterns become written into our muscular tensions, or skeletal form, and into the tissues that go between: the connective tissues.

The Anatomy Trains SI approach is to free the binding and shortening in these connective tissues, what we refer to as the “fascial network”, and to re-educate the body in efficient and energy-sustaining (as opposed to energy-robbing) patterns.

This process happens over a series of sessions. The Anatomy Trains Structural Integration process has 12 separate and progressive sessions, although the actual number you need may vary. To begin these sessions, your practitioner will talk over your history and help you set realistic goals for the process. He or she may take pictures of your body posture to have a record of where you started or may just examine your postural pattern with you in front of a mirror.

Most structural integration sessions are done in underwear or a bathing suit. Your comfort is paramount, but we need to get directly to the tissues that are restricting the free flow of movement. Much of the session work is done on a treatment table, though some moves are done on a stool or even standing.

The practitioner will contact tissues and ask you to move, thus freeing old restrictions and encouraging the tissues back to a freer place called for by your body’s inherent design. You and your practitioner can work out how deep or how gentle you want the progression to be.

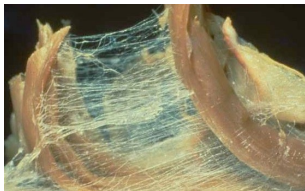
The sessions progress through the body: the first four sessions are generally more superficial, freeing the tissues on the front, back, and sides of the body and freeing the shoulders and arms from any binding to the trunk. The middle four sessions address the “core” of your body, working into the central stabilization muscles closer to the spine. The last four sessions integrate “core” and “sleeve” into your habitual movement (and address specific problems you bring to the table), leaving you with a lasting and progressive change that will echo throughout the rest of your life.

Anatomy Trains Structural Integration springs from the pioneering work of Dr Ida P Rolf, as developed, by Thomas Myers. ATSI consists of a multi-session protocol (usually 12) of deep, slow fascial and myofascial manipulation, coupled with movement re-education. ATSI is one of a number of schools that train practitioners in 'Structural Integration', Ida Rolf's name for her own work. Structural Integration is practiced as an old-world craft with a 21st century comprehension of how your body structure works.



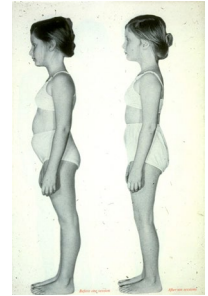
The ATSI 'brand' of structural integration concentrates on doing deep, lasting, and significant work, with anatomical precision, blended with movement and sensitivity to the unfolding individual experience. The ATSI 'recipe' for structural integration is based around the "Anatomy Trains Myofascial Meridians" concept, which are explored in the book written by Thomas Myers, published by Harcourt Brace (Elsevier) in 2001 and a 2nd edition in 2008.

The design of ATSI is to unwind the strain patterns residing in your body's locomotor system, restoring it to its natural balance, alignment, length, and ease. Common strain patterns come about from inefficient movement habits, and our body's response to poorly designed cars, desks, telephones, and airplanes, etc. Individual strain patterns come from imitation when we are young, from the invasions of injury or surgery or birth, and from our body's response to traumatic episodes. Beginning as a simple gesture of response, movements can become a neuromuscular habit. The habitual movement forms one's posture, and the posture requires changes in the structure – the body's connective tissue 'fabric'. In other words, a gesture becomes a habit becomes a posture and eventually lodges in our structure. These changes are rarely for the better – anything that pulls us out of alignment means that gravity works on pulling us into more misalignment or increased tension to counteract the force. Compensation begets compensation, and more symptoms. ATSI is designed to unwind this process and reduce structural stress. The method depends on a unique property of the body's connective tissue network.

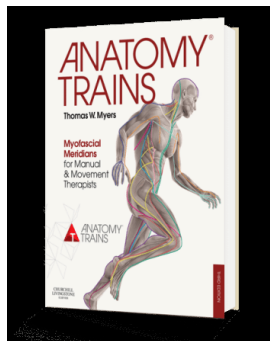


Connective tissue is a remarkably versatile bit of biology. It forms every supportive tissue from the fluid blood to the solid bone, and a host of sheets, straps, and slings in between. The muscular tissue moves us around, but it works through the connective tissue fascia, tendons, and the ligaments at every turn, and it is the connective tissue complex that holds us in the shape we are in. When we are injured or stressed, no matter what the source, there is a neuromuscular response – usually involving some combination of contraction, retraction, immobility, and often rotation. These patterns put some muscles under strain (where they develop painful trigger points) and also pulls at this fascial fabric, requiring it to shift, thicken, glue itself to surrounding structures, and otherwise compensate for the excess sustained muscular holding.

Especially for chronic and long-held patterns, it is not enough to release the muscular holding, though that is definitely a good start. Freeing and repositioning the fascial fabric, along with re-integrating the movement patterns so that they stay easily in their proper positioning, is the job of ATSI. In this sense, ATSI could be seen as a companion to osteopathic or chiropractic care, but instead of thrusting the bones back into place, we adjust the fascial 'guy-wires' so that they *stay* in place – the new alignment simply becomes part of who you are, not something you have to work at or repeatedly see a practitioner to maintain.



The ATSI “brand” of Structural Integration is different from other comparable trainings such as those offered by the Rolf Institute, Hellerwork, or the Guild for Structural Integration.



- ATSI uses a wide “vocabulary” of touch, not just deep work, to evoke lasting and progressive change in body pattern.
- ATSI’s method of “bodyreading” (visual analysis) is logical and coherent, unfolding the skill step-by-step.
- ATSI’s “recipe” for the unfolding of the sessions is based around the Anatomy Trains Myofascial Meridians.
- ATSI proceeds from a deep understanding of “issues in tissues” (the emotional underpinnings of patterns in body carriage and tension), hence our tagline, “Map the pattern, shape the change”.

Basing the sessions around the body’s myofascial continuities ensures that 1) the entire body is covered through the series, 2) clear session strategies allow for individual patterns and preferences, and 3) our work is easily explainable to other health professionals. The ATSI training has the same “open inquiry” ambience that characterizes the Anatomy Trains weekends and unfolds as a “relaxed intensive.”