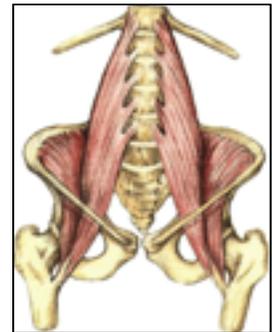




Integral Bodywork® & the Therapeutic Tremors of TRE® by Alex Greene

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As a bodyworker, I most often work with a system of work called Integral Bodywork®¹ which is a method of structural integration in the lineage of Ida P. Rolf.² A distinguishing feature of our “brand” of structural integration work is a detailed and thorough approach to releasing the iliopsoas muscle group deep in the abdomen and pelvis of the body. The philosophy our work is *“the body is only as released and integrated as is the core”*. After several sessions of preparation, deep core work accounts for about thirty minutes of every session we do. We release the psoas body along its length from its interface with the diaphragm at the top of the lumbar spine all the way to its attachment onto the lesser trochanter of the femur on the inside of the leg.



When we work in this way we have our clients lying in a standard supine position with both knees up, feet flat on the table. This position flattens the lumbar curve and is very stable for the spine. A phenomenon I have observed countless times with my clients on the table as well as with myself, sometimes the knees will start to shake and a kind of tremoring will develop in the body. Whenever that has happened to me, it is usually after enough deep work has happened and it feels like my body reaches a certain level of excitement or activation and doesn't know what to do with the heightened sensation running through it. When my legs start to shake, it has always felt good, as it gives some kind of physical expression to the current of energy I'm experiencing. I never gave it a lot of thought and simply urged my clients and myself to go with the experience, that it was perfectly all right, and a natural release response of the body.



I never gave this tremoring phenomenon much further thought until I was asked by friend and colleague and TRE® practitioner trainee if I would be her test subject for a Skype evaluation of her ability to teach the TRE® exercises.³ Not knowing much about TRE® other than that it helps release the psoas, I readily agreed. We did the Skype session at my home and she ran me through the now very familiar TRE® exercise protocol.⁴ When I laid on my back during the final exercise, feet flat on the floor and bringing my knees together, my body started to shake tremendously and I had a very distinct “*aha!*” moment when I realized “*this* is what is happening to me and my clients sometimes during Integral Bodywork® sessions!” I let my body tremor and shake for the recommended fifteen minutes and when my session was over I immediately sprang up from the floor, went to my computer and promptly ordered David’s book, *The Revolutionary Trauma Release Process*,⁵ from Amazon to be delivered two days later. I knew instinctively I had stumbled upon something very important — a method that specifically recognized and worked with this tremoring mechanism⁶ I had been observing as a bodyworker as a therapeutic phenomenon in its own right.⁷

I joined the certification track for TRE®⁸ as soon as I could and moved quickly through the two initial levels of training. I wanted to be able to understand and work with the tremoring mechanism with my clients as soon as possible. I have been teaching TRE® to all of my regular bodywork clients for about a year. Including TRE® within my Integral Bodywork® practice has radically changed what is happening in my treatment room. One of the major things I notice with my clients who have a home TRE® practice is that tremoring is much more likely to show up during regular bodywork sessions. This often occurs not as a sustained tremoring as in TRE® practice, but as a quick and dynamic shaking through the torso or a limb coinciding with the release of tension in soft tissue. The ability to spontaneously release this way through a burst of tremoring is particularly useful for clients who come in with a “*cold*” body, meaning they are using bodywork to relieve chronic pain or structural issues but they have not done much other work that cultivates or maintains body awareness, such as yoga⁹ or Pilates.¹⁰ In my bodywork practice, working with a “*cold*” body can be slow-going because my first job as a bodyworker is to “*wake up*” their tissue so they have more felt-sense of the areas on which I am working. In my experience, only after a person re-learns how to “*feel*” their tissue, am I able to help them

permanently let go of long held tension patterns. Clients of mine who have a TRE® practice, on the other hand, have a huge advantage on “*jump-starting*” their body back to life.¹¹ Because TRE® addresses the *neuro* part of the neuromuscular system, it seems to facilitate the somatic “*waking up*”¹² process much faster in my clients who need to regain a stronger sense of *felt proprioceptive awareness* in their bodies. The net result is that my ten session structural integration sequence¹³ can go much deeper in one cycle of processing with clients who are actively maintaining a TRE® practice. This is a win for both of us, because I am not working as hard and yet I get more penetrating and lasting results with my clients.

Another major advantage I’m noticing by incorporating TRE® into my bodywork practice, is that it lets me visually assess my clients with a whole new dimension of seeing relationships in their structure. As a bodyworker, I am trained to evaluate the body for structural balance and aberration both standing and lying down on my table. I can also use gait analysis to see their body in movement to look for areas of integration or lack thereof. But now I have a whole different way to view their body — while they are tremoring. When my clients come in we will periodically dedicate a whole session strictly to TRE® so I can evaluate how the process is going for them. I also get information about our progress with the structural integration goals. Often, seeing a person tremor will allow me to see areas that are not yet integrated into the body that visually stand out by their lack of involvement with the tremoring mechanism.¹⁴ I can use the session to do specific manual interventions as well, and get the visual feedback of the tremoring to help me know if I’m on the right track with tissue release.

Recently, I have been experimenting with an approach more directly involving the use self-induced therapeutic tremors (SITT) activated in the TRE® process into my bodywork sessions. When a client comes in, we begin our sessions by allowing him/her to build up a healthy active tremoring using whichever of the TRE® exercises we need. Then I allow my client to continue tremoring on the table while I begin hands-on work. Unlike a facilitated TRE® session where I take a more observational role only occasionally providing intervention to assist the tremors, in my Integral Bodywork® practice I take a much more active bodywork approach. What I am finding with clients who have established a solid TRE® practice and are familiar with bodywork is that they are able to sustain a baseline tremor while I do tissue release. I use one or more of

several modalities of bodywork while they are trembling. If I am doing deep work for maximum tissue release I'll use the structural integration techniques from Integral Bodywork®. This work, which often involves discomfort as we actively release muscle and fascia, seems to be less painful for the clients if they are trembling at the same time. The reason is that much of the energy of release of the tissue gets directed and “*let go*” through the trembling process rather than as resistance to the release that usually includes pain. So, the trembling appears to give a different possibility for the body as it lets go of tension where it can be re-directed and shaken out rather than showing up as pain.

Another technique I am having exceptional results with is from a system of bodywork called Zero Balancing®.¹⁵ Zero Balancing® is a modality that uses precise touch at the level of a person's bone and addresses both structural issues and energetic issues at the bone level of a person's body. The Zero Balancing® protocol is performed entirely with a person lying supine with clothes on, and so it is easy to perform the sequence on a person actively trembling (making some adjustments for the fact that their knees are up with flat feet). This style of work is not soft-tissue oriented and therefore involves less discomfort for the client. Combined with the active self-induced therapeutic tremors of TRE®, these two techniques bring awareness to and release tension and energy from bones. This has a very clear effect on the trembling process. Just as soft tissue release has the “*new direction*” of traveling out of a person's body via the trembling, so too, held bone energy alters and usually increases the visible trembling response as energy is being “*let go*”. Clients who are adding trembling to their Zero Balancing® sessions are experiencing release and felt benefits greater than they typically do after one session of one or the other. This suggests that the combination of both modalities produces an enhanced therapeutic approach in some cases.

A third set of manual bodywork tools that seem to fit very well with clients who are actively trembling are myofascial release¹⁶ and unwinding techniques. A slower approach to tissue release than most structural integration techniques, myofascial release work tends to use long holds with very gentle traction on tissue with the practitioner feeling successive stages of fascial release. Similar to the structural integration and Zero Balancing® work, doing myofascial release performed on a trembling body clearly alters their trembling process and helps guide my

touch. Myofascial unwinding techniques involve gently supporting a portion of the body making it easier for subtle movements to be amplified into bigger more dynamic movements. We see myofascial unwinding patterns all of the time with TRE® clients generated through the tremoring mechanism alone. However, when combined with specific myofascial unwinding techniques, tremoring appears in some cases to accelerate the unwinding process.

Without a doubt, the self-induced therapeutic tremors tremoring process elicited during TRE® has become a cornerstone of my approach to bodywork. It is the primary self-care tool I now recommend to clients in terms of supporting their healing and progress in bodywork on their own. For those that have an active home practice, we are finding that it greatly accelerates and deepens their experience going through the structural integration sequence and gives them a tool to continue to release and integrate at home on their own. For those clients who we are actively engaging the tremoring mechanism during the bodywork session, we are seeing very dynamic sessions where the tremoring becomes a way for them to more easily release held tension and energy and serves as visual guide to inform and direct my hands-on work. I am excited to continue to explore and develop integrated approaches of combining self-induced therapeutic tremors and bodywork in my professional career.

References

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¹⁴ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vHDolK6Qdcw&list=UU-enkSYYJnpkBcEpc7qDqQg>

¹⁵ <http://www.zerobalancing.com/>

¹⁶ <https://www.myofascialrelease.com/>

Biography

Alex Greene is a licensed bodyworker based in Madison, Wisconsin. He is a Certified TRE® Provider and Mentor offering regular group and 1:1 sessions. He is also a practitioner of Integral Bodywork® developed by Everett Ogawa of Chicago, IL. He is also in the certification program for Zero Balancing® under the mentorship of David Laden. Find him on the web at www.redbeardbodywork.com and www.TREbySkype.com.