

# THE BOWEN TECHNIQUE

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## 10 years!!!!

Hard to believe, but I have been in practice as a Bowen Technique practitioner for 10 years now! I have been so privileged and delighted to meet so many wonderful people and be able to offer a gentle, effective therapy that has brought relief to the vast majority of complaints and problems that have been presented.

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## Sciatica meets Bowen

When someone has pain radiating down a leg, often in shifting patterns—sometimes the front of the leg and into the shinbone and the outside edge of the foot, sometimes right down the back of the leg with a point of origin seeming to be in the buttock—the name commonly given to the problem is 'sciatica'. There may also be weakness on straightening the knee or bending at the hip.

There are a number of possible causes of this sort of nerve pain but a very common cause of 'sciatic' pain is due to the piriformis muscle, which is deep in the buttock and runs from the sacrum bone (mid-line base of spine) to the outer hip bone. The piriformis muscle can really take a beating as its neighbours, the gluteal muscles, hammer it as they are constantly contracting, trying to support the back. The big sciatic nerve passes virtually through it and if it is tight or in spasm, the pain generated as it pinches the sciatic nerve can be awful. 'Piriformis Syndrome', as it is called, accounts for the vast majority of what is often referred to as 'sciatica'.

Happily, the Bowen Technique can be an excellent antidote to this painful problem for most people. A set of the regular Bowen moves target this muscle very accurately and if piriformis is in spasm, these moves will take the spasm out, releasing the sciatic nerve and thereby removing the pain. In addition, the Bowen Pelvic Procedure will add some bonuses to the treatment. This is one of the most dynamic and remarkable of the Bowen procedures. It is used in pain presentations such as described above, as well as to correct pelvic imbalances, torsions, rotations, leg length discrepancies, etc.

As with all Bowen treatment, the moves are gentle and the whole of the Pelvic Procedure takes less than two minutes to perform. Two case histories illustrate the dramatic effects this procedure, together with some specific moves over the edge of the piriformis muscle, can achieve:

### Classic sciatica

Peter was unable to put weight on his right foot and the therapist paid a home visit. He was in severe pain and had been all day, from the buttock right down the leg. He was extremely tense and tight. The therapist gave him one treatment and was able to observe his

body relaxing during the 40-minute session.. He was virtually pain free when he got up and was walking normally. Two years later, the therapist reports that the problem has not returned.

### Prolapsed disc and sciatic pain

33 year old Jennifer had 'put her back out' about 5 years previously using a hula-hoop. A sports physio had successfully cleared the pain after the initial injury, but the pain had come back seven months later. At this point she had an MRI scan which revealed a prolapsed disc. Nothing was relieving the pain Jennifer was suffering – not even the variety of 26 (yes, 26!) painkillers she was taking daily. An epidural had not relieved the pain either. She was very apprehensive about being on such a great amount of medication but was afraid to cut it back in case the pain was even worse.

Very happily, three Bowen treatments (one week apart), made a stunning and welcome difference to Jennifer's situation. After the first treatment her left leg played up for 2 – 3 days and then definitely got better and had been quite pain free in the 2 days before her second appointment. She had virtually forgotten about it at work.

When she came for her third treatment, she reported that she had been doing very well – no sharp pains or stabs in the leg – and the point of pain on the lower back/sacrum was fine too, with no shifting and stabbing sensations in it, just a mild, dull ache now. She would also have a small ache on the outside of her left calf that would come and go. She had had a few short episodes of pins & needles when walking a notable amount, but no pain. At this point, she had cut her medications back but had found she couldn't go off them completely due to the withdrawal reactions she was having, so was, in effect, taking longer to reduce the medications due to the side effects than it had taken to clear the long-standing pain.

**VOLUNTEERS NEEDED for  
BOWEN KNEES & ANKLES  
STUDY**

## Children, anxiety & Bowen

It is always very upsetting to see children struggling with anxiety, panic and worry, often expressing their turmoil through difficult behaviour. This only compounds their problems as it alarms and annoys those around them and they are often excluded from peer groups. There can be many causes for this state of affairs from undiagnosed physical illnesses or conditions, family tensions or break-up, bullying, school or performance pressure, abuse, etc.

It has become very clear over a large number of cases from many practitioners that the effects of Bowen on the emotional level can be very marked indeed, and last for a long time. One of the most common statements adults make after their first or second Bowen treatment is that they may have suffered the same levels of stress or anxiety during the week but they had been able to cope much better and could "see what had to be done and did it" whereas the usual previous pattern had been to do nothing about stressful, worrying or difficult situations and therefore experience them as anxiety with all its physical and psychological symptoms.

There has been a great increase in the use of The Bowen Technique to address these problems in children with some very good results. Children are very open to Bowen because it is gentle and non-invasive and the experience of a treatment is very calming and relaxing to receive – and if a child is very agitated and restless, it has been shown that Bowen can be adapted to still give an effective treatment.

Bowen practitioner Angela Casey has treated a number of children with these problems. 11-year-old 'James' improved dramatically in four treatments. About a year previous to his Bowen treatment, around the time of his SATS exams at primary school, 'James' changed from an easy-going relaxed boy to feeling generally anxious and panicky, sleeping poorly, with attacks of claustrophobia. He found himself getting very anxious being left with a sitter when his parents went out, worrying about accidents, illness, germs and other disasters. School assemblies and church services became an ordeal, and he had to sit near the door to lessen the feelings of panic. His parents had been worried enough to ask their G.P. for a psychiatric referral, which was in the pipeline at the time he started Bowen treatment. After the first treatment he felt an increase in energy and released a lot of anger. A similar picture followed the second treatment. During these two weeks he had no panic attacks, and felt a reduction in anxiety about being away from his parents. Assembly had become less of an ordeal, and after the second treatment his parents were aware of much improvement on an emotional level. After the third treatment there were only small pockets of anxiety remaining, and when 'James' came for his final treatment, his mother said he was so much improved she had decided to cancel the psychiatric referral.

Another child who benefited greatly from Bowen treatment was 9-year-old 'Anne'. She was feeling anxious about school, having nightmares, difficulties with concentration, and making odd repetitive movements with her arms which other members of the

family were finding irritating. Sessions one and two produced considerable improvement in general anxiety and behaviour. By the third session she looked much happier and more relaxed. School friends commented on how much better she was concentrating in class, and she herself found she was able to get on with schoolwork much faster. After five sessions, all odd arm movements had stopped; she was sleeping well, rarely having bad dreams.

Bowen is best known as a treatment for musculo-skeletal problems but this consistent reaction to Bowen in the emotional area has to be taken on board. We don't doubt there is a mind-body connection when someone blushes, for instance, and treating the body as a way into an emotional blockage or problem appears to be valid in the clinical experience of many Bowen therapists – and other therapists too, of course. In 1997 the book entitled Molecules of Emotion: the Science behind Mind/body Medicine was published. Its American author, Candace Pert, Ph.D. researched "new paradigm" healing at the Georgetown University Medical School where she was a professor of Physiology and Biophysics. Her research reveals how the "bodymind" functions as a single psychosomatic network of information molecules which control our health and physiology. It is a fascinating book and connects the biochemistry of the body with the mind/emotions very clearly. Reading her conclusions, it is no wonder that in treating the body, where anxieties, fears and traumas can become lodged, the effect can ripple through to the non-physical source of these problems and effect a change in the way they are perceived and dealt with.

## The Bowen Technique

sort out old problems  
prevent new ones developing

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