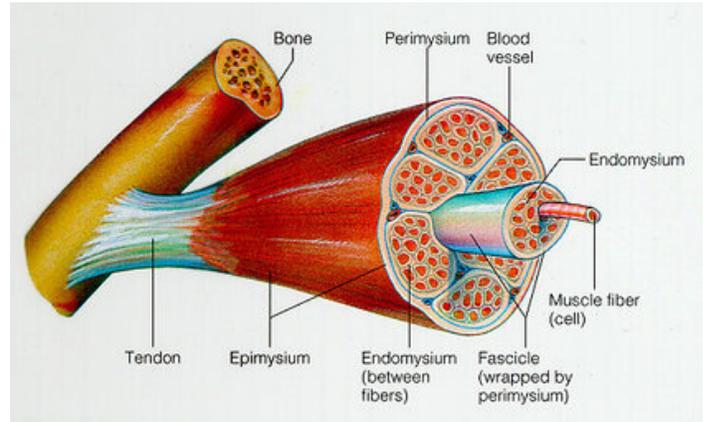


# Myofascial Release

By Jonathan Tripodi

“Myo” refers to muscle and “fascia” refers to connective tissue that surrounds muscle. Myofascial Release is a hands on therapy that supports the release of both muscle tension and fascial restriction. Too often fascia is overlooked and untreated and yet it is the largest tissue system in the body. It extends from head to toe - surrounding and interconnecting muscles, bones,

nerves, organs and cells in an uninterrupted web-like network. All the fibers that make up fascia are interwoven much like a sheet. If you were to take your hand and “scrunch” the middle of a sheet, you would create a tension throughout the sheet extending into all four corners. Like the sheet, fascial restrictions anywhere in the body distribute tension throughout the body.



People have developed fascial restrictions throughout life, beginning with the trauma of birth and accumulating from injuries, surgeries and unresolved or suppressed emotional stress - all of which cause muscles to tense and fascia to restrict & harden. Fascial restrictions pull bones out of their ideal alignment, cause muscle spasm and trigger points. Over time, untreated fascial restrictions accumulate and cause chronic muscle tension and pain, arthritic conditions, headaches, TMJ, fibromyalgia, just to name a few. Because the medical and therapeutic community are not well educated about the fascial system, it is often misdiagnosed and untreated. Most of us have untreated fascial restrictions that have accumulated for years. This is one big reason why so many individuals experience chronic symptoms that never fully resolve despite good medical treatment and therapy.

Myofascial Release (MFR) is a hands on therapy that is considered to be the most effective and efficient approach to release both muscle tension and fascial restrictions. MFR is founded, in part, on early approaches in connective tissue therapy dating back to the early 1920's. Collectively referred to today as Soft-tissue Mobilization, these techniques applied deep pressure deeply and quickly into the body which produced friction and heat to release fascial restrictions. Although Soft Tissue Mobilization produced results, it was often too invasive for many individuals and caused them to reflexively guard and protect - limiting a complete release.

Myofascial Release represents an evolution and refinement of Soft-tissue Mobilization, largely due to the pioneering work of John F. Barnes, PT. He recognized how fascial restrictions (1) stabilize a part of the body that is out of alignment, (2) harden and restrict in response to inflammation, poor posture, stress & pain, and (3) contain emotion and memories from the past - a phenomenon referred to as Body Memory. As Barnes developed his MFR approach to releasing fascial restrictions, he replaced the use of force (used in other approaches) with “unwinding.”

Unwinding refers to the the natural, self-correcting movement of fascia as the mind and muscle release as a single unit. A therapist begins by gently laying his hands on the area of your body to be treated until he feels barriers of muscle tension begin to soften and release. This feels like butter melting. The therapist gradually adds pressure and stretch to lengthen muscle and engage fascial restrictions. Pressure is maintained with force until a release occurs (usually within 3-5 minutes). Layers of accumulated stress, tension and restriction unwind over time and with frequent treatment. This patient but persistent approach provides individuals with the opportunity to release tension and restriction that has accumulated for years!