

❁ A Rosen Method Session ❁

By Sandra Wooten

The Rosen Method looks like massage in that the client lies on a massage table and is touched by another person. However, no oil is used and pillows can sometimes be used to increase comfort. Clients are partially clothed, always wearing underpants, or if preferred, whatever clothing they feel comfortable with. The client is then covered with a light blanket for comfort and warmth. The session, which lasts fifty minutes, usually begins with clients lying on their stomachs; later they will be asked to turn over.

When I give a Rosen session, I put my relaxed full hand on top of the cover to start. Then as the client begins to relax and become more comfortable, I fold the cover down and work directly on the body, generally beginning on the upper back, but taking time to notice and feel where tension is held. One hand contacts the tension, while the other hand rests and "listens."

Some indications of tension are a reduced movement of the solar plexus or a raised area caused by a contracted muscle. Body temperature, color, and texture also reflect internal tension, constricted movement, and its effects on circulation. Sometimes the tension is not obvious at first. Everything may look just fine on the outside, but gentle exploration uncovers a layer of tension below the surface. The client's position on the table may also indicate that the body is not relaxed. For example, the client's chest may not be resting comfortably on the table, implying tension in the upper chest as well as across the shoulders. One hip may appear higher than the other or legs may be held tightly together. I often share with the client what I'm noticing, sometimes talking about how a particular area of the body would rest or move if the tension wasn't there.

When I am working with a client, I notice the shape and posture of her body. It tells me a great deal about her life experiences and how she presents herself in the world. I watch, feel, and listen to the client while at the same time drawing on my own experience, internal awareness, and knowledge in order to assist in the unfolding of the client's process. The questions that are always in my mind are What hurts? What does the shape and posture of this body tell me? What is the

potential for movement and expression if this muscle relaxes? My attitude is one of not knowing, nonjudgment, and curiosity.

I will often verbally respond to the changes happening in the body in order to increase awareness for the client. I might say, "This muscle under my hand just softened," or "Your shoulder just let go (or tightened). What happened?" I use words sparingly to enhance awareness, not to interpret. If I feel a muscle change, I may simply say "Yes" in a soft voice. This acknowledges that a change has occurred but without interrupting the inner process. The yes is a suggestion that the client notice what else is happening (e.g., a thought, image, emotion, or familiar or unfamiliar sensation). Sometimes a memory or deep insight emerges. Often the client will talk about what she is experiencing at that moment. I listen carefully to what the client is saying while watching and feeling the body's responses to what is being said. At this point, more may be said to continue the unfolding of the inner experience. Often it is clear to me by observing the change in the body or the facial expression that the client has made a connection, something has been remembered, and nothing more needs to be said.

As clients embody the work, they learn about themselves. Often there is an accumulation of tiny changes and the client will simply notice at some point that she is feeling better and that living her life doesn't take as much effort as before.

The Rosen Method is a process that is gently self-revealing for clients, allowing reflection of their true being, recognition of their integrity and aliveness as well as the barriers that restrict these qualities. This in turn allows for awareness and choice. The work provides an environment of self-discovery and profound insight and makes it possible for the client to reestablish a conscious and personal sense of her inner process and a deep connection with self-trust and knowing.

Sandra Wooten has been involved with the Rosen Method for twenty years. She incorporated the Rosen Institute in 1983 and was the founding president of its board of directors. In 1990 she established the Rosen Method Center Southwest. Today she teaches in Santa Fe and is in private practice in Orinda, California. This essay was adapted from her book *Touching the Body, Reaching the Soul* (1995), available from the Rosen Method Center Southwest.