

# Working with *Ma*

## Further Refinement of the Yielding Approach through Time, Space, and Intersubjectivity

By Hiroyoshi Tahata, Certified Advanced Rolfer™, Rolf Movement® Instructor

### Introduction

The 'Art of Yield' demonstrates that effective structural change can be achieved through gentle and brief, but precisely timed, touch (Agneessens and Tahata 2012, McConnell and Tahata 2015). This approach can facilitate drastic structural change as shown in Figure 1.

'Yielding touch' effectively provides a 'scaffolding' underneath the body, which allows it to yield to gravity – whether into the table or the ground. When the body finds these places of scaffolding, it settles, yielding. I call this settling 'conditioning' and view it as the indicator that the body is ready to change. The concept of this art of yielding places emphasis on conditioning or setting the 'field' as the basis for transformation, rather than manipulation.

When we see conditioning, sometimes in a responsive client whatever process is currently needed will occur as an autonomic response, before the practitioner intentionally touches her/his body. In setting up this field, sessions are done with the sense of 'less is more'. This is a sense I aspire to in all of my sessions.

The Art of Yield is a living practice that continues to develop in refinement. This article discusses a recent refinement – awareness of what we call *ma* in Japanese – that greatly enhances conditioning.

### Further Refinement of the Art of Yield

The first glimmer of insight for this refinement came from noticing that some clients lying on the massage table were

very sensitive to where the practitioner stood. Particular arrangements between the practitioner and the client could result in the client, or both client and practitioner, feeling uncomfortable or unable to settle. Some clients would feel different qualities dependent upon where the practitioner stood, and they would give feedback such as, "too close," "I'm feeling pressure," "[some part] is starting to react," "I'm feeling settled down," "something is flowing," etc., according to the different arrangements. When the client and I could find the specific place that allowed settling into mutual comfort, the client could allow herself/himself to yield into the massage table with ease, even if I remained in my position without making physical contact. I came to realize that this phenomenon is related to *ma*.

### *Ma*

As a practitioner, you may have experienced times when you get more change in a client's structure after you disengage or step back, as opposed to firm touch or further addressing of the same area. As a client in session with your own practitioner, you may have occasionally felt that the practitioner's touch was coercive, compressive, or just too much pressure, and that such conditions disallowed the sense of expansion or of making more space that is frequently a hallmark of our work. In all of these situations, *ma* is involved, as *ma* in the field of bodywork would include timing of interventions, the pacing of touch, titration of intervention, distance from the client, etc.

*Ma* is a traditional Japanese concept that relates to both space and time. Ninia Sverdrup (2006), an artist who went to Tokyo specifically to understand *ma*, gives this wonderful description based on her experiences and perception.

*Ma; the empty space, the in between, the silence, the pause, the emptiness, the interval, the distance, the timing etc. is something that is present throughout the entire Japanese society, but it's predominantly in the traditional arts that you usually refer to the concept of ma.*

Space and time exist in all phenomena in our world, including Rolfing sessions. Considering the concept of *ma*, attending to it, cultivating 'good *ma*' could lead to further refinement in our practice, whether we are working with yielding specifically or any other element of Rolfing SI or Rolf Movement. In fact, a skillful practitioner

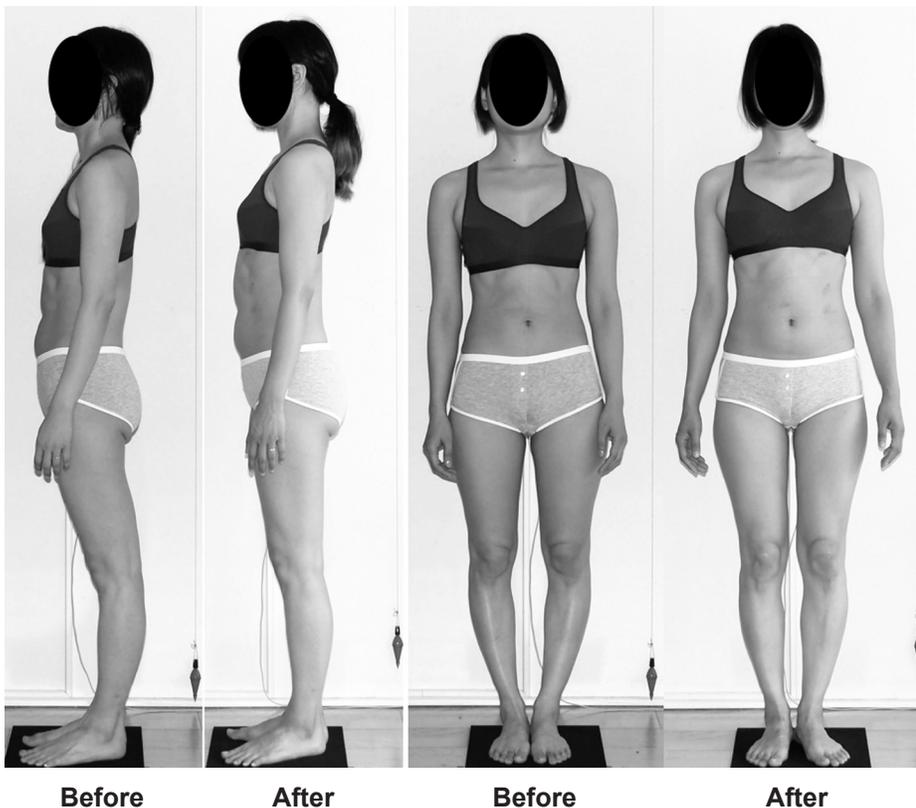


Figure 1: Case study 1 of a Rolfing® Structural Integration series with Yielding. The client had a tendency of hyper-extended knees and O-legs before the series. The body was integrated structurally after the ten sessions, which did not include any myofascial release.

may already have a good sense of *ma*, and therefore be pacing and arranging herself/himself with the client in the session room. This may be conscious or unconscious. (For some people, elements of this are conscious, such as the 'negotiation of space and contact' taught in biodynamic craniosacral work.) My proposition is that there's a greater possibility for enhancing the quality of the session by using *ma* consciously.

### Affinity to Space

Rolfing SI is an education process of the body seeking to improve the body's relationship with gravity. The affinity of the body not only to the ground, but also to three-dimensional space, is important for human integration. Many kinds of trauma caused by accidents, injury, and medical treatment can create a deviation in spatial recognition, and such deviations can have an effect on human structure and function. [Hubert Godard notes this in relation to scoliosis in an interview with Caryn McHose (2006).]

A Somatic Experiencing® or EMDR™ session has the possibility of correcting these deviations by working with visual sensation, as vision can be coupled with spatial perception. However, other primitive sensory facilities linked to the perception of space might be available as other avenues for the work. After all, most Rolf Movement practitioners are able to find the boundary around the body called the 'kinesphere', and this capacity may operate independent of sight. No matter how the client regains the missing perception, whether visually or otherwise, we can assume that it would facilitate the body in improving one's affinity to space. Such changes could shift the quality of her/his relationship to the circumstances of past trauma.

For instance, if the client's birth involved delivery by forceps, s/he may sense a lack of safety at the top of the head, and that may affect development or the experience of the space above the head even into adulthood. Because of the trauma, we could say that the head has less affinity to that space. Even commonplace medical treatments, such as vaccinations, could have an impact on the body in relation to space. I observe that many of my clients have less affinity to the space around their deltoid muscles, a common injection site. Thus, for some the experience of vaccinations in this area may set up a sort of psychological boundary. Saleh et al. (2015) have gone so far as to implicate vaccination as a cause of frozen shoulder.

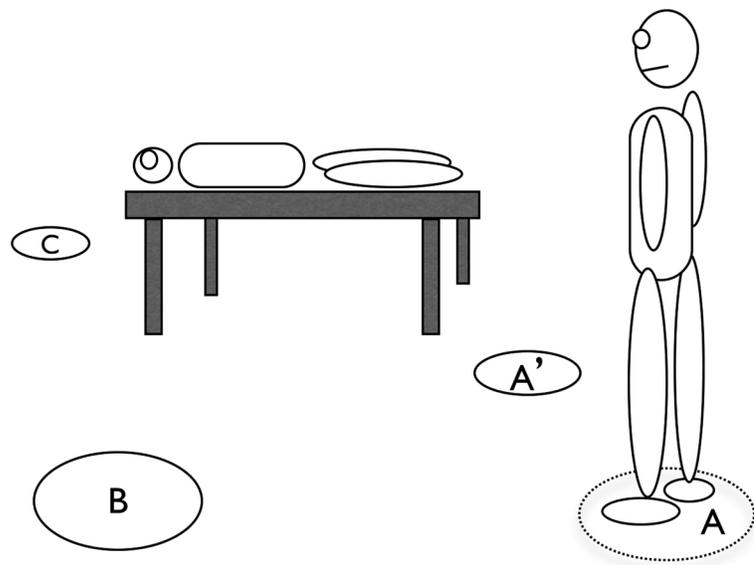


Figure 2. *Ma* is inherent in the relationship between the practitioner and the client in the space. There is a specific arrangement for each session that has 'good *ma*', which I define as both being able to settle, creating 'conditioning'. In the schema of this illustration, the practitioner finds good *ma* standing at location A. In contrast, the client experienced the practitioner standing at A' to be too close; with him in location B, the client felt slight tension in some area of the body; at location C, the practitioner felt reluctant and, similarly, the client felt uncomfortable.

### Application of Ma in Somatic Practice

I have led a few workshops to see the effect of *ma* on structure, without touch. My conclusion is that there are often suitable arrangements of position between practitioner and client that create 'good *ma*', whereby both feel safe and comfortable. Think of it as being like 'good feng shui'. Other arrangements might cause tension or feelings of pressure for the client, and those positions would not be an appropriate place to start (Figure 2). These positionings will be unique to each client, each client-practitioner pairing, or even to each session.

Obviously, a practitioner is not going to be able to do hands-on work from a distance, but this exercise in determining good *ma* indicates that there is some quality related to a sense of space that should underlie the fundamental relationship between the practitioner and the client so that both feel safe and are able to settle. Interestingly, in dozens of workshops, the participants and I witnessed that the establishment of good *ma* could facilitate the client undergoing structural change from a distance, merely through the spatial arrangement of client and practitioner in good *ma*, as shown with the client in Figure 3. This was true even with nonprofessional beginners in the role of practitioner.

Finding good *ma* requires of the practitioner somatic resonance, interoception, and inclusion of the field surrounding both practitioner and client. As most beginners in my workshops could feel qualitative differences standing in various locations, it seems that the ability to sense changes in *ma* must be universal.

### Sustainable Change with Ma

I said earlier that *ma* has both spatial and temporal dimensions, so a natural line of inquiry is whether the changes from working with *ma* continue through time (i.e., are sustainable).

As described elsewhere (Agneessens and Tahata 2012; Tahata 2014), yielding has a lasting effect. Here, I was curious whether the effects achieved through client-practitioner placement for good *ma* alone – without touch – would last. I was able to make one observation when a participant from a *ma* workshop visited my office four days later to receive a Rolf Movement session. The two photos on the left in Figure 4 show changes that came about in the workshop. The third photo, four days later, shows that the changes are holding. This client had earlier received the basic Ten Series from a Certified Rolfer, and an Advanced Rolfing Series from an Advanced Rolfing instructor, and no doubt

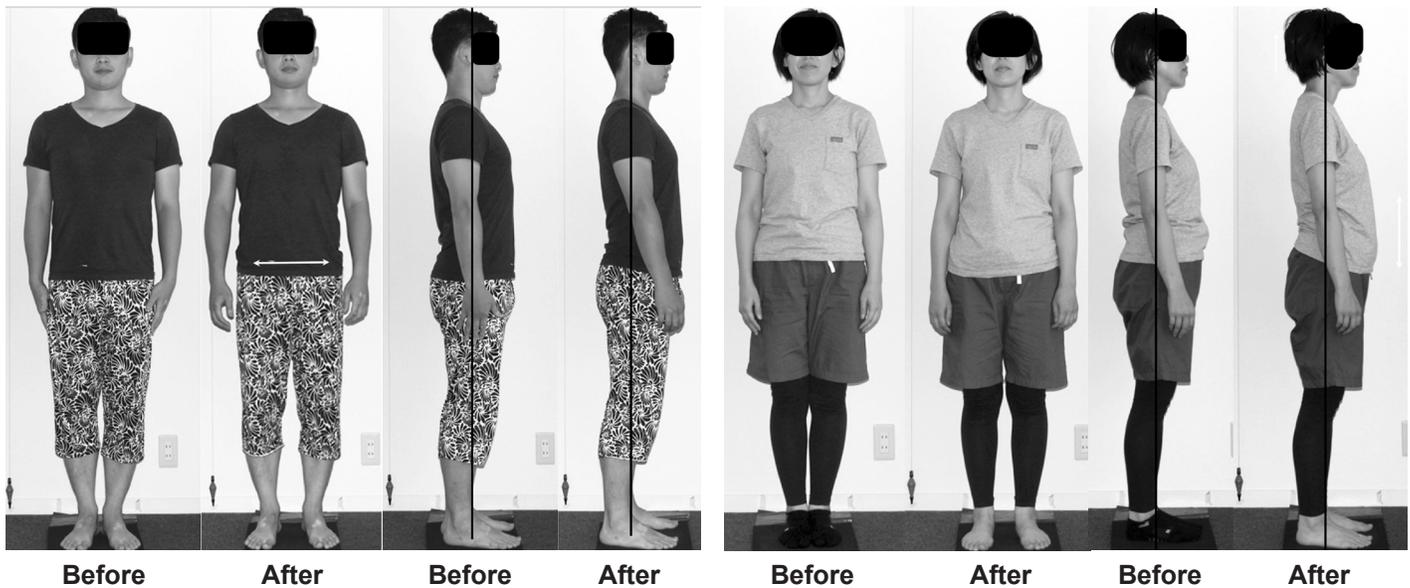


Figure 3: The effect of the work with ma on the body. The sessions were from beginner-level somatic practitioners, yet in both cases the use of the concept of ma had an effect, with the core space in the abdominal area looking more open after the session. The client on the left had no experience of Rolfing sessions. The client on the right had done a ten-session series within the past five years.

those sessions have supported his body responsiveness and resources. The photos suggest that the work with ma was able to build on that, allowing further change, particularly expanding his core space.

### How to Work with Ma

This section will provide some guidelines for working with ma. Initially you will just be sensing ma – what feels good, what feels uncomfortable – and the impact of good ma on structure without any hands-on work. After that exploration, we will discuss incorporating the concept of ma into yielding touch.

#### Exploring Ma in Its Purity

For this first exercise, find a partner to explore with, with one of you taking the role of practitioner and one the role of client. Then change roles, so you each experience ma as both practitioner and client.

1. As the practitioner, explore the space and find an initial comfortable place to be in relation to the client. As a cue to comfort, find a location where it is easy to feel your hara (the movement center in the abdomen, a bit below the umbilicus) and where your hara expands easily into the field, requiring no effort.
2. Explore the space to find other comfortable places, and also note locations where you are uncomfortable and cannot settle. At each location, ask your client how he or she feels in response to the ma of that position. There may be physical sensations, comfort or discomfort

*with the distance, safety or a lack of safety, settled or not settled, etc.*

3. Choose the most comfortable (settled) place ('Location A'). Based on your own sensations and the client's feedback, we will infer it has the best ma. Take time to settle.
4. Staying in this location, with no hands-on contact or other cues, wait for a response in the client's body. Skillful clients can give feedback (e.g., discharge, elongation, breathing with

*more ease). If they do not comment on what is happening, it is usually possible to see a shift in the breath, transmission of micromovements, a motile response in the tissue, joint repositioning, or some other phenomena.*

5. After the client process from this setup of good ma has finished, move to places that you had tried earlier, and ask for feedback at each. The client may now feel differences in the

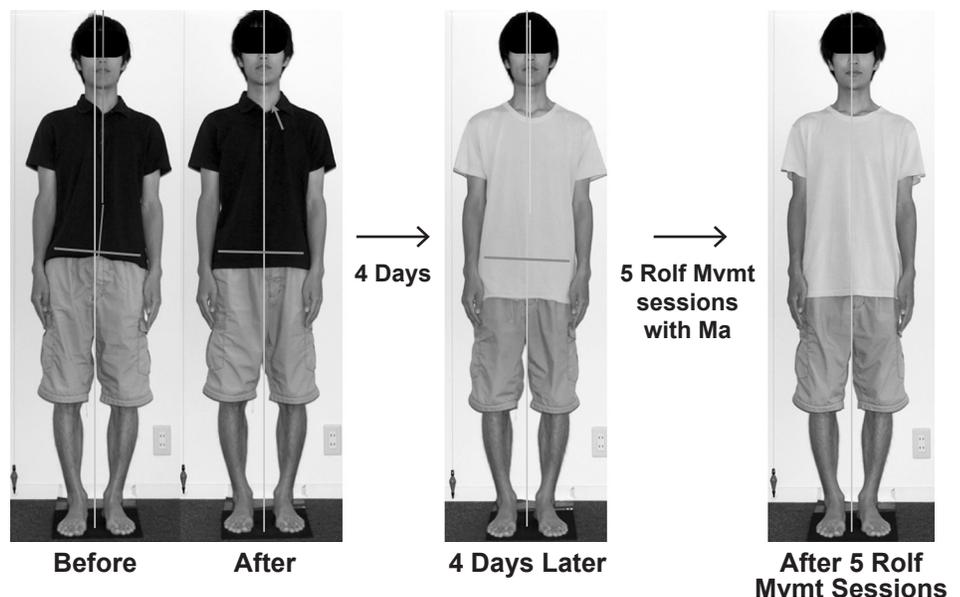


Figure 4: The effect from work with ma alone (no touch) is shown in the two photos at left. The client's abdominal area has opened and there is more side-to-side balance. Four days later, the work is holding, as seen in the third photo. The final photo shows the client after he also completed five sessions of Rolf Movement integration that included the concept of ma in the work.

*ma of these relative positions, in most cases becoming more tolerant of them.*

6. Go back to Location A and settle again, allowing time for the process to feel complete.

### Exploring Ma with Yielding

The first article on yielding (Agneessens and Tahata 2012) gave guidelines for the approach. Please refer to that for the basics of yield touch, so you have a sense of that approach, to which I will now discuss the addition of the concept of ma.

In my initial work with yielding touch, I applied it to the whole of the client's body, working toward the settling we call a state of 'conditioning'. I did not give any particular attention to my feelings as a practitioner – things such as when I would feel a 'reluctance'. My sensing was more attuned to timing around waiting to address the next area, or staying in a place until I had a sense that the space around the client's body gave me permission to approach by coming into some sort of affinity with various vectors in the space.

With ma, the operational principle for the practitioner is to arrange himself or herself in specific positions in the room according to somatic resonance felt in the hara. This kinespheric sensation does not depend on visual orientation; you can perceive differences with eyes closed. This sensation of ma will guide and help you to understand the order of intervention. Keeping suitable ma means maintaining a comfortable sensation. When you feel reluctant to stay or touch, it might be a cue that you should not stay or you should not touch there. By yielding to these guiding sensations, the order of intervention is determined. Moreover, by keeping the sense of ma, the practitioner does not force change on the client, as good ma is always determined by their mutual sensation of agreed comfort.

From workshops, I found that each practitioner-client setup had its own unique position of good ma. We are all unique presences with different perceptions and kinespheres, so it is natural that the ma positional arrangement of the practitioner and the client should be uniquely arising in the moment and fluctuating.

When working with a client who exhibits good responsiveness, you do not have to pay such explicit attention to ma. You could say that you are already 'in the groove' or 'in the zone'. However, if you start to

feels something difficult with a particular client, looking to introduce (or restore) ma might open the way. Similarly, consider the element of time. When you feel difficulty in approaching an area that you recognize as a primary restriction, the ma of the situation might be telling you that the area is not ready to change. One way you may feel this in your interoception is as a kind of reluctance to approach the area.

Again, this is a living dialectic between the practitioner, the client, and the field. Another practitioner might find a different starting location, and his or her approach might be different. All these are closely related with the order of intervention and each practitioner's uniqueness. We do not have to do something the same way as someone else who has a different perceptual system and a different felt relationship in the field with the client.

### A Case Study

Now, to see how ma is brought in, let's look at a case study. I worked on my fellow faculty member Lisa Fairman for a demonstration at the 2017 Rolf Institute® faculty meeting (see Figure 5). I did not expect any particular results from the demonstration. I was motivated to share the concept of ma with my faculty colleagues because, after exploring ma, I considered that perhaps it was a phenomenon inherent to our work, perhaps related to the therapeutic relationship and the nonformulistic approach. Working with ma is a nonlinear model; processes happen according to the body's needs. If ma is not needed, nothing would happen. So my stance in this session was simply to yield to the whole process. I put my body in a position with good ma and then waited with no strategy, no analysis, and no expectations.

Before sharing Lisa's comments about her experience, I'm going to start by giving you some background information – that I myself was unaware of at the time. I only learned this from Lisa in later communications. I will give it to you first, so that you will be able to identify the organic intelligence operating in the field of good ma.

Lisa had a spinal cord injury about eleven years ago: all of her lumbar discs herniated, and the L5-S1 disc shattered and migrated up to push on the spinal cord. From the injury she was not able to walk, sit, or stand for more than five minutes and until she had surgery, a month later, to removed the

impinging disc material, she was not able to use her right leg. The surgery removed approximately 3/4 inch of bone in the right sides of the L3 and L4 vertebral bodies, removed the associated facets on the right side, and parts of the discs. After surgery, neurological flow along the spinal cord returned and she regained partial use of her leg and began to learn to walk again. Because of the surgery, however, there was new instability and different, flatter spinal curves. In the subsequent three years, Lisa gained feeling and strength, but also broke her right leg three different times in three different places.

Now, here's how the session went from Lisa's perspective. From her description, you will see how many of the sensations that occurred seem to relate to her injury history and its sequelae. You will also see that her deep experience has opened some deeper understanding of other dimensions of ma, a word that is so multifaceted as to be untranslatable.

*I am grateful that I stepped forward for the opportunity to be your demonstration client. This was a courageous act for me – sharing myself in this way in front of a group – as I am a rather private individual. My curiosity to understand and experience the work that Hiro brings forward was compelling. I wanted a felt-sense exploration. The session proved to be one of my more profound Rolfing® Structural Integration experiences.*

*As I stood in front of the group at the beginning of the session, I verbally shared that I felt a notable and long-lived discomfort deep in my right hip and that I felt more weight in my left side and through my left leg. When walking, I felt more ease, fluidity, and more anterior-posterior motion of my left ilia relative to my right. There was a 'hitch in my giddy-up' on my right side and my low back ached.*

*While lying supine on the table, eyes softly closed, I gradual became more peaceful and much more aware. The growing rich awareness included the physicality of my body, the spaciousness of my being, and a novel type of dialog. I remember a gentle curiosity as I felt into and within my cells. I noticed the space and texture between cells. There was [a] time of discomfort around the left side of my peritoneal bag – internally with organs and also with visceral*



Figure 5: The effect of working with *ma* on structure. In the before and after photos, we see that from the work her body is more uplifted than before. Her face, after the session, expresses the “joy” she describes feeling. The photo at right shows the session in process.

connections inside and outside of the peritoneal bag. Some time passed and what I remember next were very intense connections and attentions at my right side in and around L3 to L5 and the associated areas of my spinal cord and dural tube. It felt like very specific and refined palpations that keenly invited my attention. The refined ‘palpations’, connections and attention had a quality of accuracy, clarity and refinement that I do not remember ever experiencing before when touched. I recall a feeling of building focus and sense of sorting that brought ease and relief. During this entire time lying supine I believe you physically, hands on, lightly and briefly touched me once on my leg.

The second time I remember you physically touching me was near the end of the session, when you asked me to bend my knees so my feet were on the table. You adjusted the placement of my feet and then touched the bottoms of my feet. What happened then, was an amazing feeling of a flow from my left visceral side, diagonally across connecting with a flow around L3 down the spine and through my pelvis and into my right leg, flowing down and through the entire leg. My lumbar curve shifted, increasing – returning to its more natural way, and with it a beautiful sense of relief, welcoming and ease. I felt more sinuous like a stream in its natural course. I felt very whole and integrated.

Standing, you asked me what I was noticing . . . I mentioned feeling more ease, more anterior-posterior movement of my right illia, more of a lumbar curve, clearer connection to earth, and more open . . . and what was most significant for me was the prominent sense of joy. I clearly remember sharing that I wanted to dance – an expression of my joy. Right then! Dance! The sense of joy was deep, profound, and gentle. It was a sense of joy within me and around me. A feeling of connection and belonging – physically, spiritually, and emotionally.

Months after the session, I continue to play with, embody, and evolve the work. I re-visit that ‘lying supine with knees bent, Hiro touching my feet . . . flow of connection and shift of lumbar curve’. I feel even more the vitality it brought and still brings. I continue to welcome back my lumbar curve. I remind myself of the joy, the letting go, the allowing. Over these months, I notice that a constant systemic static is diminishing. I feel more peaceful. I feel more at ease being seen, being in front of people. I bring into my practice, and into my life in general, the concept of *ma*.

I’d also like to share of how the feelings I experienced during and after our session (those of connection and belonging – physically, spiritually, and emotionally; and the deep, profound sense of joy and peacefulness) were very similar to the

feelings I experienced in a near-death drowning episode years ago . . . when I realized that, no matter how much I struggled, I could not free myself of the ropes that held me under water, I became very clear. I let go. I felt free and fluid. I felt a sense of connectiveness within and around me. A profound sense of joy enveloped me. It was lovely. I do not know how [that] relates to our *ma* Rolfing session. I image it may be in the commonality of fundamentally experiencing profound joy and ease, albeit in different manners. Or perhaps, as I am just beginning to understand, it is *ma* – the pause, the space, the relationship – that is the commonality.

The session with Lisa showed me greater possibilities for working with *ma* – that it has more potential to facilitate transformation than I had thought. While I lacked information about her medical history before the session, nevertheless the area in question around L3 to L5 was ‘palpated’ during the session. Her profound experience of working with *ma* tells us a lot – yet remains mysterious.

### Yielding with Ma Titrates Accelerated Work

Using ‘good *ma*’, it should be possible to design a more intensive series of sessions without risk of too much too fast, because work with *ma* does not force change from the outside. Rather, it can facilitate an

‘autonomic orchestration’ with coherency. In a sense, titration is a built-in feature.

I have already held several Rolf Movement workshops with yielding where the participants received daily sessions (Fourth, Fifth, Sixth, and Seventh Hours) over four days, and even some workshops where they received eight sessions over ten days. I witnessed that all participants had the necessary adaptability to receive those interventions without becoming overloaded. In contrast, when I used fascial release technique for the Rolwing series in the early days of my practice, I experienced that the tissues of the client’s body seemed to resist my intervention the day after a session had been received. From this, I understand the reason behind the recommended Rolwing scheduling standard ranging from one session every two weeks up to two sessions per week: the client can only digest so much input and have time to integrate the work in her/his body and its process. On the other hand, long intervals may add extra stress for some clients. If they already have enough adaptability for an intensive series, there is the possibility to minimize the period of suffering or rehabilitation, e.g., for injured athletes. So an intensive schedule that relies on yielding with ma as its foundation might be an option for these clients.

The client you see in Figure 6 came for sessions with the request to improve her

condition as soon as possible in preparation for trying to become pregnant. Her own birth had been difficult, and she had a history of whiplash from a car accident, so she had chronic neck and upper and low back pain for twenty years. I decided to adopt a more intensive schedule for her series, as follows: session one, followed by five days off; sessions two through five over the course of four days, then two days off; sessions six through ten over four days. In this way, she completed ten sessions in roughly two weeks. The work was done entirely through yielding touch and ma, with no fascial release.

We see that her cervical spine is decompressed after the Ten Series. She reported that the series released most of her pain, especially in her neck, and that she did not find the schedule to be too intense or too much in any way. She visited my office one week after completing her series, and we see that her cranium has become even more aligned on the midline, suggesting that the changes are sustainable. Her reason for coming in again was that she was getting spontaneous movements in her shoulder during her daily meditation, suggesting that her body had become more responsive. I advised her to find resource by focusing on her hara rather than on any negative sensation. This helped her to not worry about residual discomfort in her shoulders

and neck, and it also ended the spontaneous movement of the shoulder.

This case study seems to confirm my view that it is possible to accelerate the series when the approach is yield in a context of ma. Similarly to Somatic Experiencing practitioners, who sometimes give sessions on successive days, it seems possible to do an intensive series where the intervention has sufficient built-in titration for there to be a safe matrix. If appropriate, this type of accelerated series could be particularly beneficial to an injured athlete wanting to get back in form as quickly as possible, or to a client who comes from out of town to receive work.

The one element that I would watch for in an intensive series is whether it might be necessary for the client to balance his or her perception of convergence and expansion. Working with ma seems to make clients more aware of space around the body (expansion preference), which then calls forth the need for more containment to maintain palantonic harmony of spacious perception. For the practitioner, it is important to utilize dynamic perception – perception that includes both interoception, exteroception, or what we could call perceptual palintonicity. This can be enhanced by orienting from one’s surroundings to the hara convergence point, and from the hara into three-

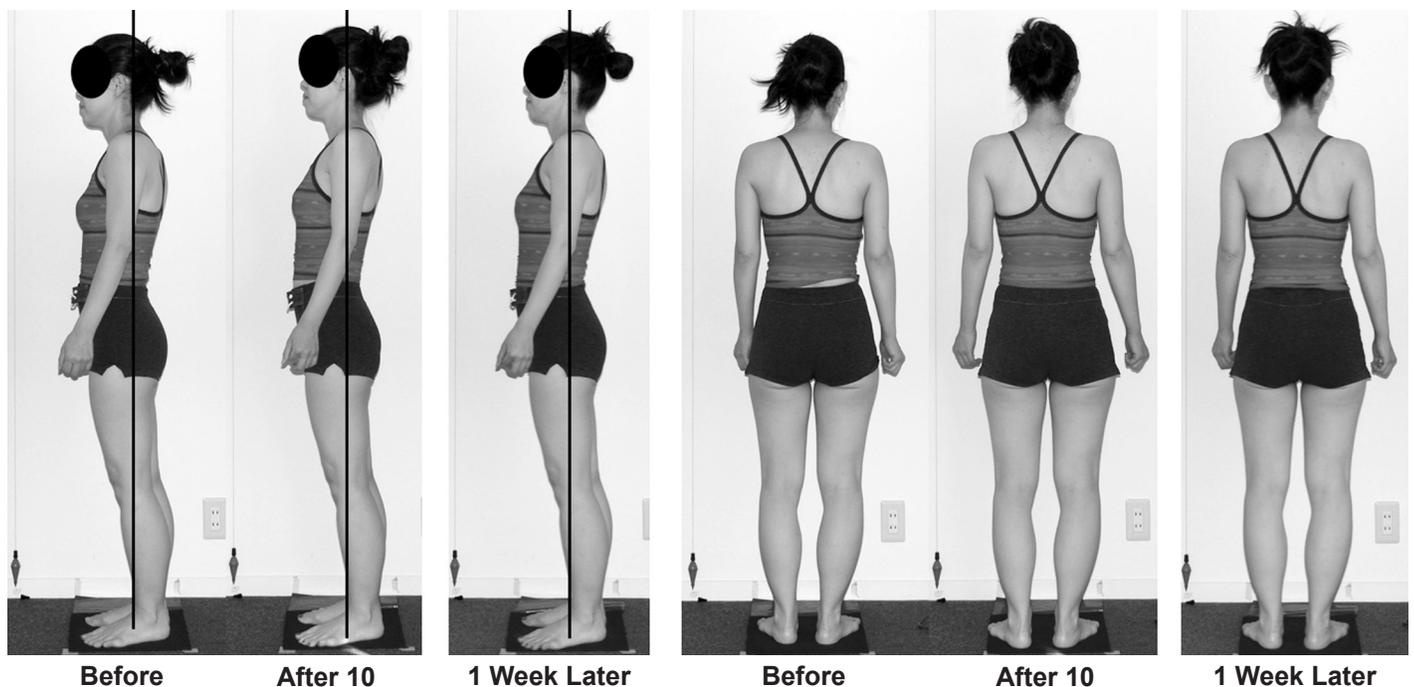


Figure 6: Sustained effects on structure of an intensive Ten Series over sixteen days, based entirely in yielding and ma.

dimensional space, thus both containment (convergence) and expansion (divergence).

**Hypothesis for the Ma + Yield Process**

These case studies suggest that good ma creates a condition of safety that enhances body responsiveness, thus facilitating structural change. My hypothesis for the mechanism of the process, where good ma is added to the components of yield, is shown in Figure 7. The downward arrows show the basic cascading flow of the process. The upward return arrows indicate the augmentation that happens at each stage. The movement is not just one way, it is always interrelated. A discussion of the elements of yield (scaffolding, motility, etc.) can be found in the original yield article by Agneessens and Tahata (2012).

**Key Points for This Work**

Looking back to the guidelines for working with ma (page 46), step three, choosing the single most comfortable place in which to settle – based on your own sense as well as the client’s feedback if he is sensitive to his felt sense and kinesphere – is the most important element for this work. This may initially go against the grain as most Rolfing practitioners tend to be off and running once they find a strong response to work with, but I encourage starting with this step, and taking the time to settle in the good ma, even if it seems more elusive. This creates the state of conditioning, settling in both you and the client, that is one important piece of the jigsaw puzzle fitting together.

When you find just the right place for good ma with that client, in that moment, neither too close to the client nor too far away, both you and the client should be able to yield and settle into a state that is neither driven by excitement nor sunk in boredom. It is similar to the famous Zen rock garden at Ryoanji Temple in Kyoto, where the ma is such that each rock fits in the space in which it sits. This is a reminder that good ma is akin to feng shui, where the arrangement of elements in and around a house is critical for the flow of energy.

Another point is that the practitioner must relax as much as possible. If you cannot relax, you are not in the right location to be able to settle. There will be an appropriate interval of time for each location – remember that time is a component of ma, equal to space. In the practice exercise, you stayed in your best ma location, then tested to see if

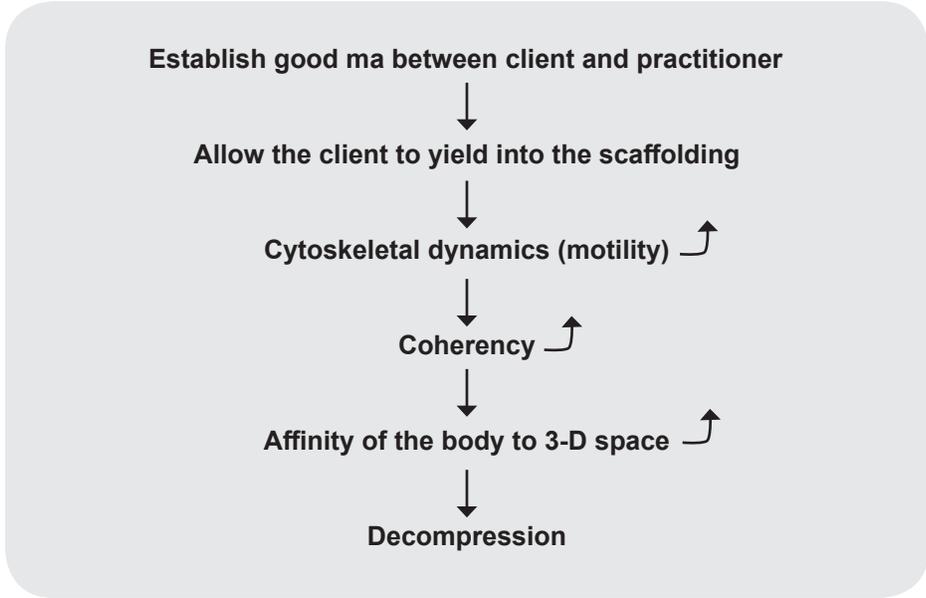


Figure 7: It is hypothesized that yielding in conjunction with good ma allows a sequential yielding response. Good ma creates the condition where there is safety to transform.

other locations had shifted in tone. Consider those other places, the ones that are not initially the best, to be ‘reluctant’. When it is time to go to one of them – when it is able to accept the next intervention – then its ma will have changed and it will no longer seem reluctant. So you are waiting for the field to become more tolerant for the next intervention before you move into it.

Until you become familiar with the sense of ma, I recommend that you ask the client if she/he also feels an internal settling. The first positioning may determine the context and flow of the session. Besides the client’s feedback, you may notice there are some places where your body feels reluctant to orient or move. Asking the client about his or her different perception of these places can give you feedback. Try to find matched places where you both feel good ma.

**Conclusion**

As I learned from my workshops with nonprofessionals, most people have an innate ability to perceive ma and recognize where it is optimal. Further, in my experience, most people receiving this work are responsive to it. This indicates that what happens under conditions of good ma is reproducible in most circumstances. Perhaps the sensing of ma is derived from primitive biological sensations related to the ability to locate predators, making it directly connected to survival. Where the organism puts down roots can make the difference between life

and death, or at the least have a substantial impact on the quality of life.

Ma is already in our lives in many ways, just look for it, where it is implicit or explicit. In Japanese culture, we see it in the practice of martial arts, or in flower arrangement. Our sense of movement in space, our sense of aesthetics, and many other domains of life, are governed and influenced by our perception, our kinesphere, and our interaction with others and our environment.

In the application of ma to bodywork, we are looking to our perception through the somatic resonance of the hara to guide us in our particular position in the room to set up conditioning, and in our sense of location and timing for the order of intervention. I believe each practitioner finds his or her own sense of good ma and can create good ma that is flexible to different clients. If you want to explore both your own interoception (subjectivity) and the intersubjective field, the concept of ma could be instrumental for your practice. Working with ma is the art of seeking coexistence with each other, finding harmony in time and space.

*Acknowledgements: A number of individuals were inspirational in my developing the work with ma. My perception of space has been cultivated by studying with Rolf Movement instructor Carol Agneessens. My demonstration with Kosei Hayashi as the model in the class I taught, assisted by Carol, in 2016 inspired me to further exploration of ma. Yojiro Katayama,*

founder of Migamama Seitai, a modality of Japanese bodywork, gave me clues to explore the dynamic perception of space in our collaborative workshops. Kathy McConnell shared with me Sverdrup's article on Ma, and her own article about "Intuition and Intention" invited me to start writing this article. Special thanks to Rolfing instructor Lisa Fairman for sharing her experience of our session in 2017.

Hiro Yoshi Tahata has worked as a Rolfer since 1998. He joined the Rolf Institute faculty in 2009. As a Rolf Movement Instructor he brings to this work a depth of creativity and understanding that integrates the principles of structure and function through a gentle and non-invasive approach to transformation. His background in biochemistry clearly bridges the inquiry between science and art. Hiro's work is grounded through experience and enriched by a thriving practice. His unique approach promotes profound experience and physical geometric balance. He was certified as a Master Healer by Dr. Ken Kobayashi, a master healing minister living in New York.

Hiro offers workshops on yielding and ma in Japan, which provide credits toward Rolf Movement certification. Details are at <https://yielding.work/workshop.html>. He and Yasushi Fujimoto will also be assisting Carol Agneessens in an upcoming class in Kyoto, Japan November 2-4, 2018, which will be a great opportunity to cultivate spacious perception and embryological understanding in relation to ma.

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# Fascia Without Gravity

## An Interview with David Lesondak, Author of *Fascia: What It Is and Why It Matters*

By Szaja Charles Gottlieb, Certified Advanced Rolfer™ and David Lesondak, BCSI

*Author's note: This interview took place on February 11th, 2018. My review of David Lesondak's book Fascia: What It Is and Why It Matters was completed and the author given the courtesy of reading it. I suggest you read the review first (see page 54), then the discussion dominated by the role of gravity in structural integration (SI) is more comprehensible.*

**Szaja Gottlieb:** So David, I have done a number of book reviews for *Structural Integration: The Journal of the Rolf Institute*®, and I try very hard to get the author's view from inside out. Like Guimberteau's book, he writes as a surgeon, and the chapters I've read by Robert Schleip, he writes as a fascia researcher. Your book kind of threw me because I expected a book about fascia written by a structural integration (SI) practitioner, since you are an SI practitioner.

**David Lesondak:** Yeah, I could sense that you were expecting something . . . I was thinking about people who were disappointed in *The Last Jedi*. They went in expecting one thing and got something very different.

**SG:** I thought to myself as I was reading your book, maybe I'm coming at things from what you might call a classical SI point of view, and you have been exposed to this huge amount of research, in terms of fascia, and perhaps things have changed in a way, in the process for you, or your point of view has changed. How has your experience of this research has affected your practice?

**DL:** That's an excellent place to start. When I set up to write this book, I felt I had to be Switzerland as much as possible.

**SG:** Neutrality – I get that.

**DL:** Yes, because you are going to have your viewpoint from the Rolf Institute, the Barnes people are going to have their point of view, and so on and so forth. I felt like it was the

old Sufi story about the elephant inside the dark tent and they all have their hands on one part of the elephant but no one knows that it is an elephant. Sometimes, I think, collectively, we don't realize we are in the same tent. So, I felt I really had to take that part of my brain and push it to the side so that I could write from a global perspective.

To the question of how it affected me and my practice, I came to this work looking for a more effective way to treat people who were in pain. I discovered this work through a Hellerworker, and it was an immediate firework in my brain and body, saying this is exactly what my body needs. This is what I need to learn next. I thought sometimes that I'm doing this without really knowing what I am doing, because the feeling just seemed to be, "Yeah, I felt this before when I was working on people as a clinical massage therapist."

**SG:** So David, you said global perspective. I understand that. But don't you think – and obviously this is my opinion, a Rolfer's opinion – the subject of gravity has to be broached in a book about fascia?

**DL:** I've been thinking about this subject a lot since [reading] your review. I do mention gravity on page 135. The truth is that if we look at gravity according to Einstein, space is curved, and therefore gravity pushes us down. And while writing this book, they finally discovered a way to measure gravitational waves. So, the body in gravity could have been a whole separate chapter,