

Gentle treatments aim to restore cranial sacral rhythm

BY MERRY MACKINNON | contributing writer

Mention cranial sacral therapy and it's not unusual for some wellness practitioners to admit they don't know much about it.

But two metropolitan area massage therapists, who do practice the therapy, swear by it.

"It's good for reducing pain, stress, tension, whiplash, headaches, jaw disorders and reduced range of motion," said Hamid Shibata Bennett, a massage therapist who works at his Gresham home, as

well as at a Northeast Portland studio.

"It can be very powerful for some people," Bennett said. "Sometimes people have profound revelations or childhood memories. Sometimes they become very meditative and go right to sleep."

What also makes cranial sacral therapy remarkable is how gentle it is.

Bennett blends cranial sacral therapy with other massage techniques, like Swedish, but he always starts his ses-

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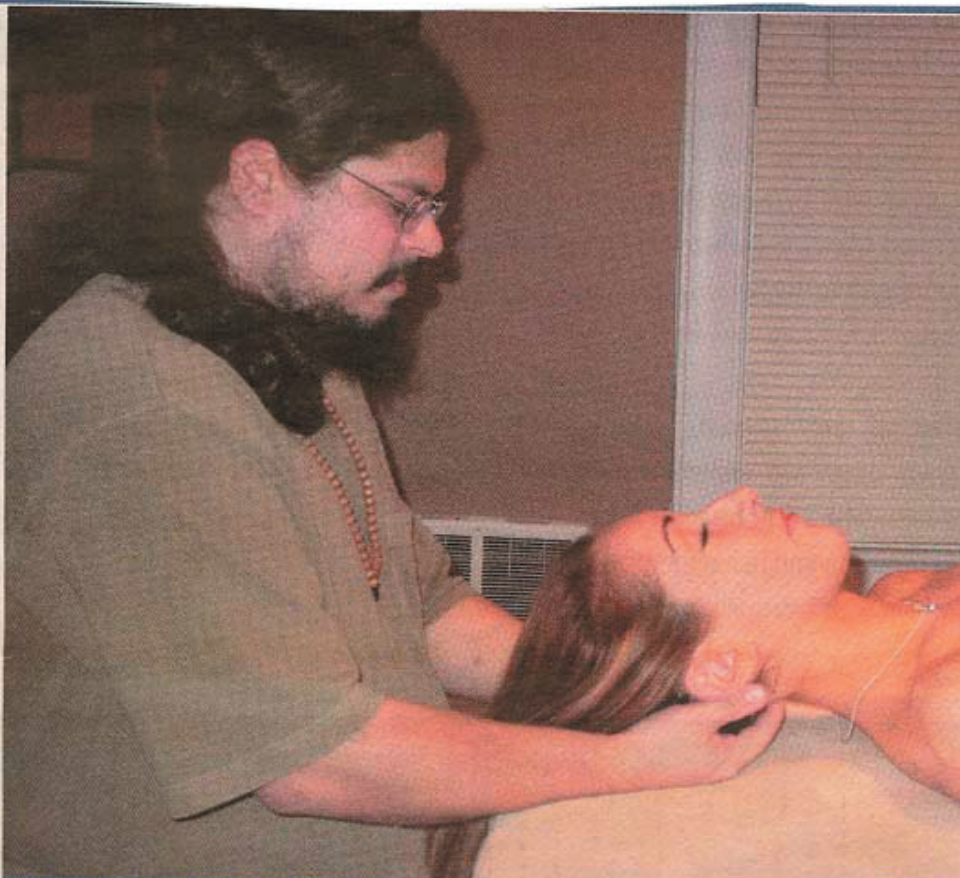


PHOTO BY MERRY MACKINNON

Cranial sacral treatment is a main part of Hamid Shibata Bennett's approach to massage therapy. Here, Bennett, who lives in Gresham, is doing cranial sacral work on client Pilar Millhollen

sions with cranial sacral, quietly cradling the back of his client's head, as he or she lies prone in front of him. Then, he feels for the subtle rhythm of the cerebral spinal fluid pulsing along the spinal cord to and from the skull where it cushions the brain.

"I listen with my hands to feel the cranial sacral rhythm," Bennett said. "I may find less movement on one side of the head than the other. Ideally, we want both sides to be equal."

Jim Templeton, a massage therapist in Vancouver, Wash., learned cranial sacral therapy after a mentor in Europe made a transition from Rolfing to cranial sacral treatments, which, as anyone who has ever had Rolfing's typically deep massage knows, is a radical transition.

"With cranial sacral treatment, less is more," Jim Templeton said. "It's light touch. If you use too much force, the body will subconsciously guard against it."

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Like Bennett, Templeton starts out on a client by feeling and observing the cranial sacral rhythm.

"Sometimes, it's quite weak and I carry out several moves, the twisting of the head in different manners and applying the lightest of pressure," he said.

Each client reacts to the work differently, according to Bennett and Templeton, but often the results are extraordinary. The most striking experience Templeton recalled was when he worked on a man with anxiety, headaches and insomnia.

"I was all gung-ho to try out my newly learned techniques. So I did a frontal lift and ear pull," Templeton said. "And he had some pretty strong changes take place, among other things he had a hearing awakening."

Though no one has taken him up on the offer yet, Templeton will give a series of three free treatments to returning veterans from Iraq and Afghanistan.

"I can promote the circulation of blood and cerebrospinal fluid, most important, to the brain, because these guys have been near explosions, and suffered psychological stress, and may have impingement of circulation and impingement of nerves, which could cause tingling numbness and pain," Templeton said. "They're probably in dire need of treatment."

For more information, visit Jim Templeton's Web site at www.jimivories.com or Hamid Shibata Bennett's Web site at www.transcending-touch.com.