

Chronic Condition Cycles and Craniosacral Therapy

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In order to heal your chronic condition, you have to heal the overstimulation of your survival stress responses in your central nervous system.

There are always medical buzzwords floating around and reports that “I have received this bombshell diagnosis”. Lately in my clinic, I have been seeing an influx of people diagnosed with various chronic conditions including mast cell activation syndrome (MCAS), under-active vagus nerve or (idiopathic) functional neurological disorder (FND). When they ask me, “Do you have experience with these syndromes or disorders, can you help me?” The answer can range from “Yes”, “yes”, and “no never heard of, but yes”.

The diagnosis is not really the point. It is a great starting point, but we have to get beyond the diagnosis in order to heal chronic conditions. The main focus is: what caused your nervous system, immune or hormonal system to (over) react, and what has caused this overstimulation of stress responses in your body? Here is my answer to that question:

Chronic conditions are triggered and held in place by an overstimulation of the stress responses in the nervous system, and a hyper sensitive and hyper reactive brain. Here is the bombshell – this can lie below the level of our conscious awareness.

So yes, we may have symptoms like chronic aching bodies, painful muscles, over-acidic bodies, sleeping problems, high blood pressure, neurological problems, light/noise/food sensitivities, tinnitus, asthma, addiction, auto-immune system disorder, anxiety, depression, neurological disorders or digestive problems, but it is our nervous system and our brain that regulates these physiological changes and symptoms. This fact seems to be overlooked in the medical health model. We need to remember that it is the central nervous system that runs our internal show, sending messages from the body to the brain in a bi-directional communication loop. This drives most of our symptoms on a physical,

mental and emotional level.

Let's have a more detailed look.

Neuroception



The number one priority our body has is our survival and the second is procreation in order to keep the species going. Neuroception means our autonomic nervous system is always scanning our external and internal environment for cues. These can be cues of safety or danger, be it physical, mental or emotional, in the drive to survive and the longing to connect. Neuroception operates below our subconscious mind, meaning it lies outside the realm of our awareness. It accesses information without involving the thinking parts of the brain. When cues are picked up as threats, a cascade of cleverly orchestrated

physiological wired-in stress and survival responses occur in the body. We may become aware of some stress responses in the form of physical symptoms, but others we don't become aware of. They remain below our level of awareness, until overload hits and the body crashes. Neuroception answers the question: "Am I safe or in danger right now?"

Interoception

Interoception means the ability to perceive sensations of the internal state of the body. Interoception helps the brain to identify how you feel both physically and emotionally, as it collects all the feelings from inside the body and uses this information to respond accordingly. This is important for self-regulation. For instance, are you hungry, is your heart beating fast, are you hot or cold or thirsty, do you need to use the bathroom, are you in pain, or are you angry? Some people do not have a clear recognition of their bodily signals and how or what they are feeling. Their interoceptive awareness – the ability to identify, understand, and respond appropriately to their internal signals is off balance and they may not be able to realise that they are anxious or angry. This is because they don't recognize that their muscles are tense, their breathing is shallow or that their heart is racing. Interoception answers to the question: "How am I feeling?"

Brain

Through neuroception, the brain receives signals up the chain of command that there is a threat. This threat can be real or just perceived as real. It can come from people, family members, work stress, pressure, overwhelm, overload, anxiety, or from emotional concepts like loneliness, boredom and abandonment, as those concepts can also threaten our existence, our survival and our social connections. The brain thinks: "what do I need to do

to survive?” and responds by triggering a targeted set of defensive mechanisms in our nervous system, hormonal system or immune system. These counter attack the perceived threat and ensure our survival. The brain answers the question: “What do I need to do to survive?”

Nervous System

The nervous system has 2 branches – the sympathetic (fight and flight) and the parasympathetic (rest and digest) branch. When we

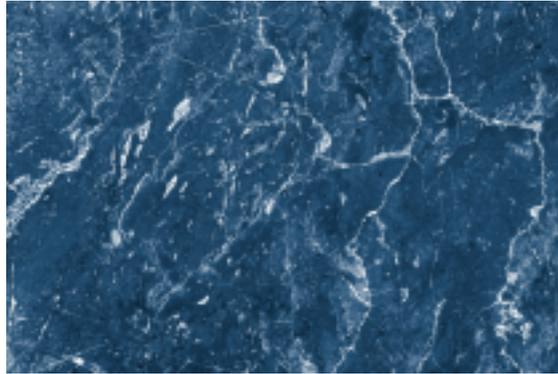
are in a state of stress our sympathetic branch is

activated, we are in fight/flight and respond to

danger. We are ready for action: wired, fearful, and

having a hard time relaxing, as if we are waiting for

something to happen. We are on alert. This can lead



to an over triggering of stress response leading to an over triggering of stress hormones like cortisol and adrenaline and/or an over triggering of the immune response.

On a physiological level, this leads to:

- Muscular tension - increased muscular aches and pain, joint pain, chronic pain •
- Sleeping problems
- Anxiety, overwhelm, panic attacks
- Depletion - feeling tired, on edge and irritable.
- Neurological problems - headaches, migraines, twitching, pins & needles •
- Digestive problems - decreased digestive function for food- IBS, bowel problems and absorption
- High blood pressure, faster heart rate, cardiovascular problems
- Decreased brain function, brain fog that is living in our survival brain stem - difficulty processing and absorbing information
- Weakening of immune system - increase of colds and flu, slower wound healing, maladaptive cell response
- Freeze response - The body goes into survival mode as a coping system and shuts down, slowing down metabolism, building up acid and inflammation in the body, leading to illnesses like depression and chronic fatigue.

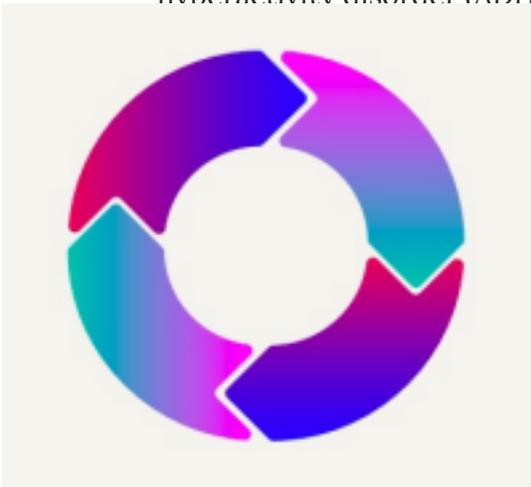
Putting It All Together

Our symptoms are deeply shaped and influenced by our brain and nervous system, due to

acute stress, long term toxic stress or (childhood) trauma. Survival stress is held in our central nervous system, in our physiology, in our tissues and our cells since our reactions to physical, mental or emotional stress are primarily bodily ones. This lies as the root cause behind chronic conditions. When the brain learns to be in long term survival mode, it will operate on a hyper vigilant and hyper reactive level. An over-reactive brain is primed to be on the lookout for danger and in a state of constant lookout for any physical, mental or emotional stress, and the brain eventually gets stuck in that hyper mode.

Due to this activity, people can have faulty neuroception, where they are no longer able to read the cues adequately in their environment. They are unaware of their external and internal triggers which can lead to things like anxiety or depression. We often see this in trauma, as trauma reshapes the body and brain. Trauma leads the brain and nervous system to keep triggering, even when threats are not present.

People can also have a compromised functioning of interoception, where there is a disconnect between the body's signals and the brain's processing of those signals. Here, people are unable to read their own internal cues adequately of how their body is feeling or what their body needs, i.e. not drinking when thirsty, sleeping when tired, or relaxing when wired. This inability to respond can underlie anxiety, depression, panic attacks, addictions, post-traumatic stress disorder, obsessive compulsive disorder and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD).



When an over triggering of responses continues, the nervous system and the brain gets stuck and wired to be in the on-mode and the cycle becomes chronic:

1. The nervous system becomes hypersensitive and over reactive to stimuli from the external and internal environment, there is a continuous over firing to perceived threats;
2. When there is an inability to calm these stress defence mechanisms, then this can lead to a hyper vigilant brain that is always on the lookout for danger;
3. The hyper-reactive brain will continue to easily trigger an overstimulation of stress responses, creating symptoms;
4. These symptoms loop back to the brain, informing the brain that there is still danger. This retriggers the stress defensive responses and loops back into step 1...

The feedback loop is stuck in a vicious maladaptive cycle.

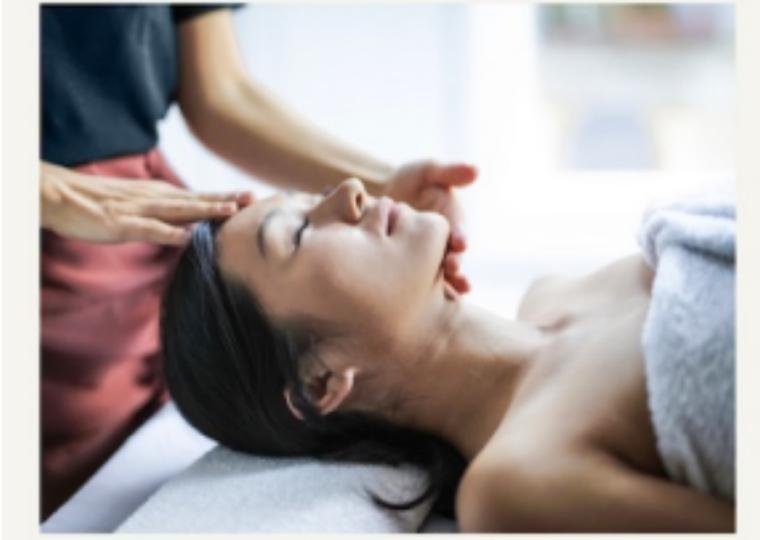
This vicious maladaptive cycle, where the body is caught in a loop and cannot reset or switch off properly, feeds the chronic conditions. The body has upgraded itself in this new stuck position and it may even start to feel normal and part of the fabric of who we are and

perhaps despite many medical interventions, we are just not able to overcome our symptoms or regulate our physiological processes.

How do we solve this vicious cycle? Craniosacral Therapy.

Craniosacral therapy (CST)

Craniosacral Therapy is a powerful physical therapy tool that helps reset your central nervous system. To work with chronic conditions, it works with the brain and the nervous system, as well as enhances your neuroception and interoception - its subtle touch belies its power.



Five core reasons why Craniosacral therapy needs to be included in the treatment of chronic conditions – chronic pain, trauma, addiction, complex illness, and diseases.

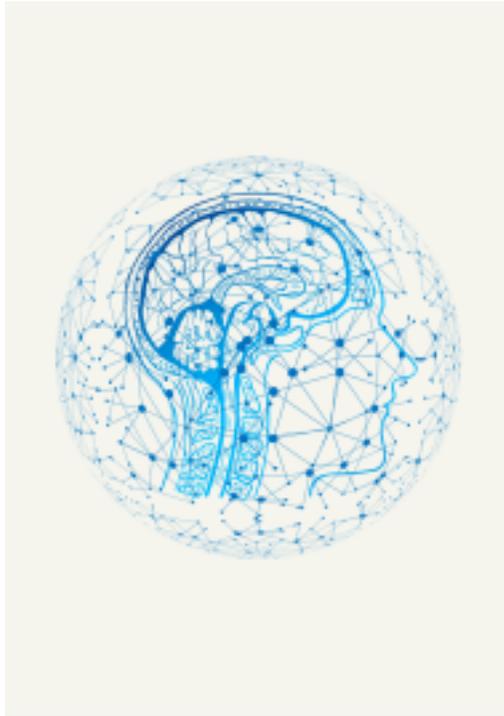
CST is proven to:

1. Decrease any sympathetic nervous system arousal, down-regulating our fight and flight response and calming the hyper reactive stress state. CST works with the biological stress responses of the nervous system.
2. Increase the healthy parasympathetic nervous system, bringing the body and the nervous system back into homeostasis and into a healing state. This enhances the functioning of the dorsal parasympathetic vagus nerve, allowing the body to come out of the freeze response.
3. Calm a hypervigilant, overactive brain by working with the individual brain parts that deal with sensory processing, like the insula and the amygdala. This decreases highly activated beta brain waves.
4. Enhance and restore neuroception and interoception, leading to an increased awareness of the internal state of your body and an increased awareness of your unique triggers.
5. Work with the deep inner physiology of the body, allowing the body to come into a

healing state.

CST is a potent medicine for your central nervous system. In the words of osteopathic physician Dr. John Upledger who coined the term and one of the main founders of craniosacral

powerful
hormonal
body effect.”



Craniosacral therapy: "The system is a functioning physiological system and has a influence over the nervous, and immune system and a total

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