

Zero Balancing : A Mind-body Work That Takes You Home

By Dorsett Edmunds

Zero balancing works at the level of bone and is based on the premise that we are innately well at our core, and the ability to live from this core well-being is dependent on the harmonious relationship of energy and structure.



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*What works reliably is to know the raw silk,
hold the uncut wood... Lao Tzu*

The words of Lao Tzu 2500 years ago capture the essence of Zero Balancing, a mind/ body work that is relatively new in the world of healing arts, but draws upon ancient principles of nature with often profound effects. Whether receiving a Zero Balancing (aka 'ZB') session or giving one, the feeling of

returning to one's center, of feeling whole and at home, is common. When I received my first ZB eighteen years ago from Dr. Fritz Smith, the originator of Zero Balancing, after a recent thyroidectomy, I knew healing at a deeper level had occurred. Even more significant was the experience of wholeness and integration - as if I had been returned to myself. It was one of those indelible moments after which I experienced more integrity and authenticity in my work, my relationships and my life. I decided I had to learn Zero Balancing, 'to know the raw silk, hold the uncut wood' in my own hands.

Origins

Founded by Fritz Smith, an osteopathic medical doctor who studied Rolfing, and acupuncture in the 1970s, zero balancing grew out of his understanding that all beings are a combination of structure and energy. Smith developed a gentle therapeutic system that addresses both the energetic and structural components of the body at the same time, making Zero Balancing distinct from healing systems that focused on either structure or energy. A pioneer in the field of integrative medicine, Smith merged western anatomy with eastern concepts of energy and healing in a system that supported the body's innate ability to balance through informed and skilled touch. Zero balancing works at the level of bone and is based on the premise that we are innately well at our core, and the ability to live from this core well-being is dependent on the harmonious relationship of energy and structure. The term Zero Balancing actually came from a client of Dr. Smith's who reported after a session that she felt 'balanced to zero', indicating a state of inner harmony and peace with no negatives, no plusses.

According to Smith, illness, pain, and discord occur when we become out of step with own vibratory fields contained by our body. The eminent physiologist and researcher in the human energetic system, Dr Valerie Hunt, validated this premise with research that demonstrated changes in a person's electromagnetic field preceded disease. By developing a technique that facilitated the natural alignment of the body's structure and energetic fields, Smith created a bodywork that is prophylactic with respect to disease, and promotes self-healing and the experience of well being.

The Technique

How do we access energy and structure at the same time, and how do we know that we are doing so? Eastern philosophy tells us about the various levels of energy flows in our body, the deepest being in the densest tissue of our body: bone. When touched at the level of bone, there is a clarity and quieting of the mind which is unmistakable. If we gently touch the sternum of a crying infant, or the shoulder of an excited pet, for 10-20 seconds the response is a clear, and often quieting effect. This is because we are touching both structure and energy at the same time.

Energy flows through bone and across joints where it can be accessed in the structure through touch. Joints that have to do with the transmission of forces rather than locomotion, such as the sacro-iliac joint, tarsal joints, intervertebral, costovertebral, and cranial joints are the body's foundation and semifoundation joints. They provide an easy access to both structure and energy at the same time. Because of the wide broadcast of influence of these joints, the effects of working here are more efficient, lasting, and often profound. By accessing structure and energy together at these key joints, blockages are often dispelled, and a sense of balance and natural reorganization of the whole body takes place. It is as if the wind (or energy) suddenly meets our sails (structure) in just the right way, and the sailboat moves through the water almost effortlessly. Holding the energy and the structure of the body with the right touch supports their natural harmonious and allows the body/mind to feel fully alive and present.

If you can balance something to neutral by holding it in its own space, without judgment or comparison, it will naturally move to its highest

possible potential.

So what is the right touch? How do we tack our sails into the wind just right, paying attention to the current as well, and allowing a positive shift to happen?

In Zero Balancing, or 'ZB,' we do this in two ways. First, we touch at interface with high regard... that is without judgment and with keen attention to the boundary between client and practitioner, to the place where my fingers end, and my client's structure and energy begin. We work at this 'interface' throughout the session. There is no exchange of energy either way, no blending, no streaming, no channeling. It is not necessary. We simply use our hands to help the client's energy—the resources of his or her core well being—actually be more available.

Secondly, we create fulcrums with our hands at key places described above, according to a general protocol. A fulcrum is a balance point, a point around which one can reorient, or reorganize oneself. Fulcrums introduce a clearer stronger force field into the body which helps dissipate or override weaker fields that are not serving the client. In ZB these fulcrums are created gently with our hands or fingers in ways that are determined by the anatomy of the area being addressed. Energy follows form, or structure. The fulcrum is held for a few seconds - without judgment or intention - until there is a non-verbal sign of a shift - maybe from the breath, or the eyes, or the tissue itself. This work requires our full and mindful attention each moment to the client.

Zero Balancing can stand alone as body/mind therapy, or it can complement many other therapies, be they structural or energetic in emphasis. All practitioners are required to have a license to touch before certifying in Zero Balancing, a process that requires a period of study and practice, working with a mentor, and usually takes one to two years to complete.

Each session takes about 30-40 minutes and the client is fully clothed, while the practitioner evaluates, and offers fulcrums as needed. By supporting the natural balance and healing process of the body and focusing on aligning our structural and energetic anatomy, ZB has become a valuable tool for relieving the symptoms of stress, musculo-skeletal tension, for reducing physical and emotional pain, facilitating transitions in one's life, and overall enhancing wellness and self-actualization. Essentially, by holding our clients in high

regard at the level of bone, where the deep currents of well energy flow, one's true and good nature is experienced and restored. "What works reliably is to know the raw silk, hold the uncut wood."

Resources:

Smith, Fritz, M.D., *Inner Bridges: A Guide to Energy Movement and Body Structure* (Humanics, Atlanta, 1987)

Hamwee, John, Lic. Ac., *Zero Balancing: Touching the Energy of Bone* (Frances Lincoln, London, 1999)

Smith, Fritz, M.D., *The Alchemy of Touch* (Complementary Medicine Press, Taos, N.M., 2005)

Becker, Robert, M.D., and Gary Seldon, *The Body Electric* (Morrow, NY, 1985)

Hunt, Valerie, Ph.D., *Infinite Mind* (Malibu, 1989, 1996)

Lauterstein, David, "What is Zero Balancing?" *Massage Therapy Journal*, 33, 1997

Jerome, Tom, "Zero Balancing: The Bodywork of Relationship," *Massage*, 1997

Barnett, Janice Willis, "Zero Balancing: Step outside the Frame," *Massage Therapy*, Summer 2002

Edmunds, Dorsett, and George Gafner, "Touching Trauma: Combining hypnotic ego strengthening and Zero Balancing," *Contemporary Hypnosis* (v. 20,4, 2003, London)

Further reading about Zero Balancing and information on local and national classes and practitioners can be found on the website: www.zerobalancing.com or by contacting the author, Dorsett Edmunds, at dorsette@gmail.com

Dorsett Edmunds is a licensed physical therapist who has been practicing Zero Balancing for more than 17 years and teaching it for 10 years in the southwest and northwest. Her goal as a teacher and as a clinician is to empower the self-healing process and awareness in her clients and her students so that they can live and practice from their own core well-being.

Please see Dorsett's directory listing on page 22.



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