



“I feel so  
perfectly  
balanced.  
It’s almost  
like I am  
zero balanced.”

— an original Zero Balancing client

# Going Home

By Karrie Osborn

## Zero Balancing takes the body back

**W**hat would happen if our bodies got to “start over” again? What if our physical self got “do-overs?” Is it a pipe dream, or can we really take our bodies backward and undo the damage that’s been done over time?

In the world of Zero Balancing, it’s believed the body can be brought back to the starting gate. In fact, being “perfectly balanced” and finding the body’s original state of harmony is how some describe their experience with Zero Balancing, including the client who helped name the modality after her first session.

### Back to Zero

**A**n intentional union of energy and structure, Zero Balancing (ZB) is a hands-on modality that seeks to incorporate Eastern and Western healing philosophies in an attempt to help clients find a vibrational balance. Created in the early 1970s by Fritz Smith, M.D., ZB can most simply be defined as balancing body energy and body structure through touch.<sup>1</sup>

“The working focus in Zero Balancing is the interface between the structure of the bone, joints and soft tissues and the energy flowing through our skeletal system,” writes Paul Cohen, a New Zealand-based Zero Balancer and acupuncturist. “It uses specific finger pressure and held stretches, called fulcrums, that provide a point of stillness (a stationary point) around which energy and structure can reorganize.”<sup>2</sup> The ensuing result, he says, is the release of held tension and pain and the healthy discovery of a new level of integration.

Says Tim Newman, an acupuncturist and Zero Balancer from Cornwall, England, “In Zero Balancing we engage both aspects (energy and structure) simultaneously and deliberately and work the overall relationship ... rather than with specific pathology. This can appear vague in theory and amazingly precise in practice because it truly makes no division between body/mind/spirit and engages the receiver in the undivided experience.”<sup>3</sup>



**Fritz Smith, M.D., applies a fulcrum to the rib cage.**  
*Photo courtesy of Zero Balancing Health Association.*

## Evolving Zero

When Smith began creating ZB, he wasn't exactly sure what he had or where it was going. "It was an evolution," he says. The evolution began with his osteopathic training, and later a medical degree earned in 1961. When he came upon acupuncture training in the early 1970s, it broke his medical model. "Studying acupuncture meant that some things in [the world of] medicine were not complete." It meant there were worlds to still be discovered.

With his clinical experience in acupuncture and strong training in bodywork, including a Rolfing certification, the medically-trained Smith could no longer deny the Eastern door of health that was open to him. "It gave me glimpses of other possibilities."

Acupuncture was also Smith's window into what would later become ZB. In doing a project of excellence for his master's degree in acupuncture, Smith chose to show his colleagues how to evaluate the physical body and read body structure. At the same time, Smith was involved with Eastern thinking, meditation and personal experiences of energy. Unbeknownst to him, a foundation for his future was already set.

"I began to find acupuncture worked better when the physical structure was open," Smith says. "It became apparent there was a relationship between energy moving through structure and how successful acupuncture was." When energy would get stuck in structure, the acupuncture didn't "take" as well. It became obvious to him that energy and structure worked in juxtaposition, a notion that helped ground his thinking.

## Possibility

By Jim McCormick

As possibility, ZB is very hopeful. Hopeful that solutions to difficult problems can be found; hopeful that individuals can find meaning and purpose and richness in their lives; hopeful that individuals can find their way to their true selves and stay there more of the time; hopeful that individuals can clear away more of their past conditioning and live from their core.

- ZB opens up and keeps alive the possibility that we can be perfectly balanced and unified in body, mind and spirit.
- ZB keeps alive the vision of a unified life — where we feel unified with our beings, bodies, minds, spirits, emotions, communities, nature, etc.
- ZB stands for the possibility of continual learning and exploration.
- ZB stands for always having the world work as a conscious part of our work.
- ZB stands for the possibility of having your life purpose always part of your work with your hands.
- ZB stands for the possibility of viewing the whole world (universe) as an interconnected and meaningful web.
- ZB stands for the possibilities of living at interface.
- ZB is the possibility inherent in relationship (of energy and structure, East and West, body and mind, yin and yang, etc.).

*Jim McCormick began his Zero Balancing training in 1974 with Dr. Fritz Smith, and became the first teacher of ZB after Smith, in 1979. A licensed acupuncturist, McCormick is the Zero Balancing Health Association Board of Directors chairman and president of Cambridge Health Associates, a holistic health center in Cambridge, Mass.; info@cambridgehealthassociates.com.*

“The fascinating thing to me is there is a relationship between energy and structure, between vibration and structure.”

— Fritz Smith  
founder of Zero Balancing





**Smith gives a half-moon vector at the feet.**  
 Photo courtesy of Zero Balancing Health Association.

A Zero Balancing session usually lasts 20–40 minutes and is performed with the client fully clothed. The client will typically begin seated on a massage table during an initial evaluation and then lie supine for the remainder of the session. A minimum of three sessions is recommended as each session builds on the last. If needed, maintenance sessions are helpful every two to four weeks.

Smith's osteopathic work began to improve as he quietly started adding energy to the equation. Most of the patients he was seeing and the neurologists who were referring their worst cases to him didn't know exactly what Smith was doing, just that it was working. The continued success with these difficult cases only helped solidify his thinking that there was a strong relationship between energy and structure. He continued to work, seeing greater evolution along the way.

Smith experienced an epiphany in 1978 when all the pieces came together. The medicine, the acupuncture, the osteopathy, the meditation all presented themselves to Smith in a new model. "Everything became very clear and I had a whole new vision of how everything worked," he says.

That vision was a marriage of Eastern thinking and Western science — Zero Balancing.

### Laws of Nature

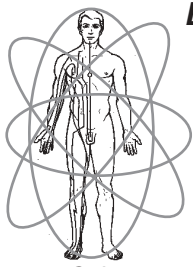
Smith says one reason ZB works so well is because it's based on the laws of nature. "First, energy does exist as a force in the universe, and in the body. Every culture has a name for it — chi, prana. In my view, it's vibration. We are a vibrating entity and that is a system different than the physical body. The body is the container for the vibratory field." He explains that illness and discord happen when we move out of step with our

own vibratory fields. By bringing them back into harmony, clients are in tune and feel better.

Unlike some energy therapies, Smith says ZB is based on science. "It's based on principles of nature and it's based on quantum physics." Its foundation may be Eastern principles of health, but it is scientifically based.

"The fascinating thing to me is there is a relationship between energy and structure, between vibration and structure," Smith says. "It's the same principle in quantum physics — subatomic level, atomic level. It's the same principle all the way through. For example, if we look at shoulder pain, we ask where is the energy of the shoulder not in harmony with the structure of the shoulder? Where is there disharmony? Where is the particle wave not in harmony? We're dealing with a solid principle of energy and structure."

When looking at ZB, there seem to be commonalities with other modalities. Are they akin? "No, but we're all in the same ballpark," Smith says. "When you look at alternative medicine, the big variable is energy. That's what makes them alternative. It's the belief that energy exists in the body." It's how that energy is moved, used and balanced that make all these therapies unique. "Most of us are in the realm of energy," he continues. "Things like reiki are pure energy, where osteopathy is structural energy." →



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Reader Forum continued from page 7

Grimshaw gave the full story on microdermabrasion. We offer the treatment at our spa and did extensive research prior to adding the treatment. We focus on natural/holistic treatments and were excited about microdermabrasion. The area that Grimshaw missed was the extensive benefits to the skin from the micromassage that happens during the treatment. This micromassage lifts and lays down the skin. This action increases the flow of fresh blood and lymphatic fluid to the skin and muscle tissue in the face. This action has been proven to increase dermal collagen in the face.

Your article almost made microdermabrasion sound somewhat unsafe. We have a high standard of training in our facility. We have the product representative here to train. We have a skin care company also train our staff on the treatment, and our staff has to do extensive "practice treatments" prior to serving our guests. I hope this information is somewhat useful to you.

*Barry Eichner, general manager, 3000BC Day Spa — Philadelphia, Penn.*

**New Spa Country**

I wrote to you some time back when I read an article on Watsu ("Sea of Calm: Water therapy touches young spirits," by Karrie Osborn, page 44, February/March

2003) in *Massage & Bodywork* that I bought off the newsstand. I now have a subscription, and it is to date the only magazine I have ever read from cover to cover. I'm not talking hopscotch cover to cover either. I start by opening the front cover and read as long as I can until I am interrupted by life. The articles I have read show me where I am going as an energy massage therapist, though the people of the city I live in are slow to realize that massage has benefits, let alone comprehend energy therapy. Money is also real tight here and the foundry where my day job is filed bankruptcy last summer and is in the process of being bought. I still want to live here because of what I know is coming to this area in the future. This city will become the Sedona, Ariz., of Kansas sometime in the future. But it is not that way yet. Till then, I'll wait and keep learning, teaching and reading *Massage & Bodywork*. Thanks, and keep up the good work.

*George Thompson — Atchison, Kan.*

**Correction** — In the December/January 2004 *Massage & Bodywork* publisher's statement of ownership, management and circulation, page 130, we incorrectly listed the December/January 2002 issue under No. 15, *Extent and Nature of Circulation, Actual Copies*. The correct issue was December/January 2003.

## Differences and Distinctions

Just as there are some common traits between ZB and other therapies, there are many more distinctions, including the principles of interface, skeletal energy and mind/body health.

“We work with the clients’ own energy within themselves — your energy, your body,” Smith says. “I don’t add to it and I don’t take away from it.” To do that, ZB uses a principle called interfacing, where boundaries between client and practitioner are very clear and separate, and there is no melding of energies. “I work with your energy using my energy,” Smith says.

Another important principle with ZB is that practitioners focus on the bone more than a lot of other systems. “Bone is the armature of the body,” Smith explains. “It’s the deepest tissue of the body and holds the deepest currents of the body.” He explains that bone and the energy coursing through it is a powerful current often overlooked in bodywork. Like a 220-gauge wire versus a 110-gauge wire, “the deepest currents go through our bone.”

ZB practitioners access bone energy in the joint where energy “rounds the corner.” Smith says foundation joints, like sacroiliac joints and the articulations between the tarsal bones of the feet, are where ZBers put most attention. “Those joints have more to do with balance than locomotion,” he says. Cohen explains that we’re often unaware of the imbalances at these joints “because they lack the proprioceptive input from the muscles” and are therefore below our level of consciousness.<sup>4</sup>

As a modality of structure and energy, Smith says ZB is “true body/mind work, not just bodywork.” Where some therapies focus mostly on structure, ZB can access old behavioral problems, release tissue-held memories and organize vibratory fields. Smith says there really is no separation between mind and body, so ZB doesn’t treat them separately either. “The focus of interest in ZB is where these two bodies meet and how they are interrelated,” Cohen writes.<sup>5</sup>

Creating stationary states is a primary aspect of ZB. This is accomplished using a fulcrum, which is a complex type of acupressure hold that seeks to affect the client energetically. “Our brain works on a binary system,” Smith says. “If you can hold a constant stimulus, you can bypass that binary system ... and the body has to go into an altered state. That’s where healing occurs faster.”

By helping clients reach an expanded state of consciousness, Smith says, they become less held to their illness and less attached to it. Reorganization of the systems can occur more readily in this environment and balance can be obtained. Many practitioners, in fact, utilize ZB as a way to prepare and “open” their clients for additional bodywork to come.

So how do practitioners know when an internal change is taking place, or when an altered state is in play? “We teach them how to read body signals,” Smith says. “We look for eye

“I find ZB to be one of those modalities perfect in and of itself.”

— Judith Sullivan,  
Charlottesville, Va.  
Zero Balancing practitioner



signals — blank stares, rapid eye flutter, glazed eyes. And we see levels of vitality change and breath patterns change.” Once this door is open, vibratory alignments can occur and healing can begin.

### Putting to Practice

Physiotherapists, homeopaths, acupuncturists, chiropractors and massage therapists are just a few of the disciplines whose members have sought out ZB training. Although ZB was designed as a stand-alone treatment, those who have studied the work find it melds seamlessly with their primary modality.

While not necessarily a purist, Smith says he appreciates when those new to ZB spend a good portion of time really understanding the work. “In learning ZB, first you need to understand that energy exists. Then understand that energy and structure co-exist. Then you need to be able to understand when you’re touching energy and when you’re not; and particularly when you’re touching energy and structure simultaneously. When you begin to understand all that, then you have an idea how it works.” Smith is concerned people will too quickly incorporate ZB into their toolbox without really understanding what it is they’re doing or how powerful the work really is. “I suggest learning it as an individual system first.” After some mastery, then put it to work with other aspects of your professional tools, he adds.

Judith Sullivan of Charlottesville, Va., first began studying ZB in 1983. Today, she considers it her core work. “I find ZB to be one of those modalities perfect in and of itself,” she says. “It is a fast and deep treatment that leaves you feeling like you’ve been touched deeply.”

Yet, while ZB is her primary focus, Sullivan says she listens to the whole body to see what it needs and then incorporates a host of other therapies, too. “For any other bodywork I incorporate, ZB wakes the body up and makes the energy much more available,” she says. If working with cranial sacral (Sullivan taught it for John Upledger for 13 years), she’ll incorporate ZB to get things moving. A cranial hold can take a long time without warming up the body first, she explains. But warming up the energy of the bone with ZB can be like “dealing with someone who’s had a shower and a cup of coffee versus going into someone’s bedroom and waking them up.” ZB, she says, enhances every other modality she uses.





**Smith applies a half-moon vector at the neck. Photo courtesy of Zero Balancing Health Association.**

### Hallmarks of Zero Balancing

- Integration of clients' body energy with their body structure.
- Creating clearer, stronger fields of energy in the body/mind.
- Balancing energy in the densest tissues of the body, the bone and skeletal system.

— from Zero Balancing Health Association,  
[www.zerobalancing.com](http://www.zerobalancing.com)

David Conti, from Boxford, Mass., concurs. After experiencing the work first-hand, he decided to pursue it in his bodywork practice and has been doing so now for eight years. "I also do some Asian bodywork therapy, but Zero Balancing is the primary modality I use. It's an excellent protocol that can easily be combined with other modalities." Conti says ZB has proven to be an ideal way to begin and end sessions. "ZB is a great way to align body structure and body energy and get a person centered for the session. It gives them a better sense of what's going on in their body."

Outcome goals with ZB are typically set in the initial session. Once the goal is in place, it's ZB's job to find the balance again. Results of the work have proven to offer all sorts of benefits including stress reduction, increased flexibility, pain relief and help through transitional periods of life, to name but a few.

There are, however, some clients for which ZB is just not appropriate. "We don't work on newly pregnant women and it's not the best thing to use with those in an active cancer process," Sullivan says. "Though we consider ZB extraordinarily safe, it's also very powerful." She says because you're working with energy, it's important to be

mindful of someone with a serious immune condition. "You have to be careful not to overwork people because it is hard to process all the change."

Even with that caveat, ZB has been called an astounding therapy that can take people to the edge of enlightenment. "It's a wonderful thing as a practitioner who's experiencing the work," Conti says. "It takes you to the next level of exploration. After you come off the table, you have a great feeling of empowerment. You have a feeling you can go out and do what you want to do, and there is a great, centered feeling that I've not experienced with other bodywork. It's tough to describe, but easier to experience."

Sullivan says being Zero Balanced is much like that early client described — a place of perfect balance. She sums it up this way: "It takes you to a relaxed place of neutral where you see the world from a fresh perspective." **M&B**

### References

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- 3 Newman, Tim. Zero Balancing — A Case History. [www.webhealth.co.uk/Complementary\\_Health/Case\\_Histories](http://www.webhealth.co.uk/Complementary_Health/Case_Histories). Accessed October 2003.
- 4 Cohen, Ibid.
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