

## Trager Work - Description and Benefits

Trager work, also called psychophysical integration therapy, was developed by Milton Trager, MD in the 1970s, but it was based on the work he had been doing for his entire life. Dr. Trager was born with a spinal deformity, but managed to relieve its effects with a program of exercises that he developed. He was training as a boxer when he started using his techniques on his manager, his father and others. His work was so helpful that he eventually began a practice as a physical therapist, which itself led to his obtaining a degree in medicine so that he could teach his methods to other health care practitioners. Dr. Trager believed that the body is meant to move freely and easily, but that, when subjected to physical or emotional stress, people can teach themselves - sometimes without realizing it - to move or hold themselves in certain ways, or to not move at all. He based this belief on many observations, not the least of which was the reaction of a patient he encountered during his internship. This man was so stiff that he could barely move, but when he was given anesthesia for a surgical procedure he became extremely limp - until he woke up, when he resumed his former posture. This led Dr. Trager to formulate the theory that stiffness is a learned response which, even though it can become a habit, can be "unlearned". The formal name of his work is "psychophysical integration therapy" because it helps the mind communicate better with the body. Trager work is a movement-based form of bodywork which has two components. The first is a passive session, called tablework, in which the practitioner takes each part of the client's body through its normal range of motion, but does it so gently and rhythmically that the client eventually relaxes deeply enough to let go of their habituated patterns of stiffness and become more flexible. This sounds like it would be a lot of work for the practitioner, but it is not, mainly because the practitioner prepares for the session by practicing mental clearing techniques. These techniques help the practitioner achieve "hookup", in which energy - which Dr. Trager believed is all around us - flows through the practitioner to the client, facilitating the relaxation process. The second component is called Mentastics and involves movement techniques which the practitioner teaches the client to use on their own. In this way the relearning process begun in the tablework session can continue and the client can learn how to move without tensing up. Dr. Trager originally worked with patients who had contracted polio; some of them actually recovered from the paralysis brought on by the disease. He also treated patients with muscular dystrophy, Parkinson's Disease, multiple sclerosis, strokes and even psychiatric disorders. But Trager work has also been helpful to people with breathing problems like asthma and emphysema, back and leg problems (including sciatica) and athletes who are in good health but looking to prevent injury and improve their attitudes. In fact, it can be useful for anyone who experiences pain (severe or slight) with movement. A passive Trager work session usually lasts from 60 to 90 minutes and is done on a table (like a massage table). During this time the client stays dressed and is covered. There is no effort needed on the part of the client and the session should not be painful. The Mentastics part of Trager work should also not be painful, as clients are taught how to "let go" so that they can move more easily and freely. There is no minimum number of sessions either required or recommended. Some people experience relief right away; others take longer. But in any case, the results of the treatments - and the Mentastic education - should be long-lasting. Dr. Trager intended the effects of his work to be permanent.

## About the Author

A new understanding of how plants manage their internal calcium levels could potentially lead to genetically engineering plants to avoid damage.

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