

Author KG Stiles palpates for tension in the rhomboid area, assessing if further moves should be done. The client is Ezra Kemp.

club who was himself a professional “manipulator.” The two spent many hours exchanging ideas. Ultimately, however, it was Bowen’s genuine desire to be of service and help others that led to the discovery of his technique.

In 1974, Bowen met Oswald (“Ossie”) Rentsch at a conference for naturopaths and natural therapists in Adelaide. Bowen invited Rentsch, a practicing massage therapist, to learn from him. Rentsch traveled with his wife, Elaine, to Bowen’s clinic in

Geelong for a short visit that developed into a two-and-a-half year apprenticeship. Through Bowen’s tutelage, the Rentschs began documenting his technique, diligently taking notes and drawing diagrams to correctly reflect the work they saw being performed. Progress was painstakingly slow. Often, what they thought they had seen turned out to be an inaccurate interpretation of Bowen’s work.

Eventually, all of the moves and procedures were approved and compiled into a manual. Bowen commissioned the Rentschs to teach the technique after his death. After Bowen’s passing in 1982, Ossie kept his promise, teaching the first Bowen seminar in 1986. Since then, trainings have been conducted around the world with more than 10,000 practitioners, representing 25 countries.

Imitation Is The Sincerest Form Of Flattery

During Bowen’s life, he instructed only four other people besides the Rentschs in his technique. All four support Ossie and Elaine’s efforts to bring Bowen’s work to the world, having no interest themselves to teach. A number of Ossie and Elaine’s students, however, have gone on to develop their own interpretation of Bowen’s work. Most purport to teach a more advanced form of

the technique—one has coined the term fascial kinetics—but make no mistake: There is only one original Bowen Technique, and its registered name is Bowtech.

Description Of The Method

The Bowen Technique is not easily described by comparing it with other modalities. It is an entirely unique system of neuromuscular repatterning that works primarily through the nervous system, affecting both structural and energetic levels. A Bowen session consists of very precise and gentle (no more than eyeball pressure) rolling movements on muscle and connective tissue. These gentle moves balance the body and stimulate the energy flow within it. Practitioners must know the correct anatomical positions for each of the moves, as well as develop an understanding of the structures beneath the skin in order to know what areas to treat, and exactly when to make each move.

A Bowtech practitioner must also be able to evaluate tissue tension (the amount of stretch when moving tissues). An interpretation of tension must be evaluated with each move. This is what makes Bowtech a dynamic rather than static form of bodywork. Through the continual practice of sensing with the fingers, Bowen practitioners acquire a depth of awareness about tissue tension. This heightened sensing enables a Bowtech practitioner to coordinate the component parts of a move into a smooth, dance-like rhythm that is soothing and relaxing to clients.

Proper and effective moves, thus, require concentration on the part of the therapist. This requires little

physical energy, but demands conscious intent. The moves, although simple in appearance, must be performed correctly in order to achieve optimal results. Specific procedures must be followed, yet the use of one’s intuition is standard in Bowtech.

General Treatment Protocol

It is highly recommended that a client schedule two sessions initially, a week apart. Typically, a first treatment will focus primarily on balancing the body when only the basic relaxation moves are performed. These moves are the core procedures, and the foundation on which all additional procedures rely for depth of integration. Wait periods of at least two-minutes duration, where the client is left to rest, are given between each series of Bowtech moves. Allowing space for integration of the work is essential. Neuroscience supports the reasoning behind wait periods, especially if there is associated trauma.

Usually the body responds after only one session. Certain exercises may be given to assist the treatment and to involve the client in his or her recovery. Clients are given helpful instructions for making the most of their Bowtech session. For instance, no other form of bodywork is recommended during the next five days, as the Bowen continues to work and be integrated into the body. Daily hydration (a minimum of 2 quarts of water) and gentle walks also are advised.

A week later, a second follow-up treatment is scheduled. Usually the client is feeling better and his or her symptoms have altered in some way—perhaps they’ve

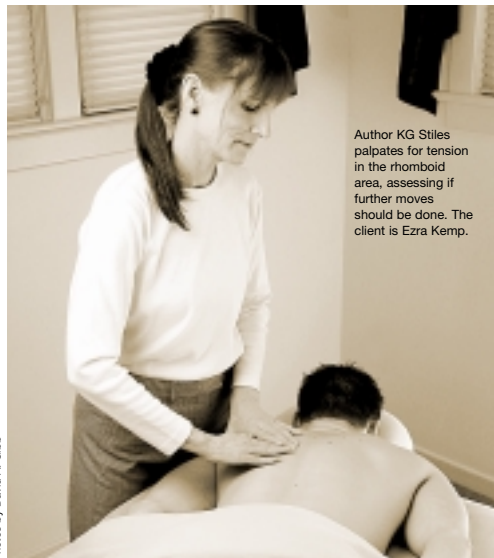
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The author does a basic relaxation move in the upper back.

Bowtech is the registered name for the original Bowen Technique, developed in Australia in the 1950s by the late Tom Bowen. The government-commissioned Webb report in 1975 stated that Tom Bowen had attended to some 13,000 patients annually [incredibly, that’s about 36 people a day] with an 80 to 90 percent success rate, usually in only one or two sessions.

Bowen had the ability to perceive even slight deviations in anatomical structure. Through this ability he discovered relationships at work within the body, and developed moves to effectively stimulate the body to heal itself. His natural gift and abilities enabled him to develop an entire system of movements and procedures to counteract a wide spectrum of internal conditions, as well as musculoskeletal complaints. He often said his technique was a gift from God.

After serving in World War II, he worked at the Geelong Cement Works as a general hand. He was quite athletic and played numerous sports. It was through his love of sports, and regular attendance at sporting events, that he became interested in massage and other soft-tissue manipulation. Bowen had no formal “hands-on” training that is known, but he is thought to have been powerfully influenced by a man at the football



Results Experienced By Clients

1. Misalignments commonly correct themselves.
2. Muscle pain and stiffness are relieved with normal lymphatic flow restored.
3. Meridians show spontaneous improvement.
4. Fascia rehydrates, adhesions release and scar tissue softens.
5. Internal psychological and emotional shifts often occur.
6. Enhanced state of relaxation, heightened sense of well-being and ease.

diminished in intensity, or even resolved entirely. Still, the second session is always recommended, as it sets the foundation of the work for longevity of results.

Again, the basic relaxation moves are performed, along with a few additional procedures that will more specifically address a client's complaints. As a practitioner engages with a client—asking questions and gathering information to assess a treatment protocol—he or she will often discover underlying problems, or conditions beneath the primary reason why a client initially sought care. Some conditions may have persisted for many years before the client sought help. Each piece of information gathered helps a practitioner discern exactly what procedures to employ. In this way, the design for a particular session becomes apparent.

After the session, a client is encouraged to continue with his or her exercise, and may be given additional instruction or exercise as appropriate. At this time, the client's condition is assessed and a treatment protocol discussed. Marked improvement accrues with subsequent treatments. Or, a client may schedule Bowtech treatments for general health maintenance, or as needed.

In most cases, Bowtech produces rapid and lasting results. Benefits are usually apparent within two or three sessions, even when long-standing conditions are being treated. Bowtech is completely safe and appropriate for everyone, from the chronically ill to the highly conditioned athlete, from the elderly to the newborn. There are few contraindications for using Bowen's technique. It is gentle and noninvasive, and can be performed through clothing.

How A Gentle Technique Can Produce Such Profound Results

Recognition of the existence of an innate self-healing intelligence that establishes, maintains and restores

health, given optimum conditions, is a basic premise for all natural therapies. This innate intelligence communicates with the body through the vehicle of the nervous system. When the body experiences stress, trauma or shock, our nervous system gets triggered into "fight or flight." However, when the need to respond is past, the body often gets stuck in its stress response and loses the ability to "rest and relax." In such an imbalanced state, the function of our nervous system is compromised, and its communication obstructed.

Bowtech moves are designed to free the body's innate self-healing intelligence—the true healer of the body—by restoring balance and harmony at the cellular level. The precise and gentle Bowtech moves send subtle vibrational messages along the proprioceptive nerve pathways to the brain. These powerful stimulations, when given adequate time for integration by the body, reset and balance the autonomic nervous system, which results in an immediate improvement in all the body's organs and systems. The technique initiates an integrated body response, balancing the body at the cellular level and restoring the energy flow within it. The rhythmic pattern of movements and pauses that continues throughout a session allows for the "sacred space" needed for healing to occur. Treatments are thus directed at normalizing the autonomic nervous system, with concern for establishing and maintaining the normal structural integrity of the body.

Objective Of The Work

The underlying principle behind the technique is that structure governs function, that disturbances of structure in any body tissue will lead to disturbances of functioning in that structure and, in turn, of the function of the whole body. Every organ has a functional dependence on every other organ, either directly or indirectly. This mechanism serves to maintain constancy of the cellular envi-



This photo shows a move in the upper respiratory and TMJ procedure, which is a good way to alleviate headaches, TMJ, sinus pressure and allergies.



The author demonstrates a basic relaxation move for the neck and shoulders.

The body, like any intricate musical instrument, requires adequate tuning for correct function. When tuned properly, the body will resonate to create a distinctive tone and vibrational pattern that correlates with its own unique frequency.



The middle finger of the above hand performs a gliding movement along the lower rib cage, while the middle finger of the other hand holds a point, effectively focusing the energy.

ronment, and when disturbed, results in abnormal cellular function, eventually resulting in a pathological state.

The objective of the Bowen Technique is complete restoration of the body's structural integrity. Bowtech restores joint articulation and structural alignment by providing a powerful stimulus to joint circulation. Concurrently, muscle attachments around a joint relax, taking pressure off the joint so that it naturally realigns into harmonious structural balance. Now, given a structurally sound framework, bodily functions will proceed harmoniously and healthily.

Philosophy Behind The Approach

Exploring some of the philosophical concepts related to the body, we begin to see how the physical form represents a reflection of all levels of the human's subtle energy fields. An understanding of these subtle fields also provides a theoretical basis for understanding Bowtech. Just as one studies anatomy and physiology of the gross human form, so too can we explore the anatomy of the subtle dimensions that link the human form. From both the metaphysical traditional literature and current scientific hypotheses, we understand that the physical form has an underlying energetic form or template, and that this template can be identified, measured and mapped. We also know that certain vibrational patterns correspond to particular areas of the body. As a vibrational or energetic form of bodywork, Bowtech is rather like homeopathy, for a minimal amount of intervention is always thought best.

The body, like any intricate musical instrument, requires adequate tuning for correct function. When tuned properly, the body will resonate to create a distinctive tone and vibrational pattern that correlates with its own unique frequency. All musicians know that locating the exact pitch at which a note is to be held is critical. Any small deviation creates a totally different frequency or tone. Also, the quali-

ty of the tone is affected by the way an instrument is played. The body is as sensitive to touch as a fine Stradivarius (a violin-like stringed instrument). Pythagoras was aware of the relationship between healing and harmonics, and set up a school of healing based on this relationship.

The message of touch with clear intention is basic to Bowen therapy. It is a two-way channel, a loop of communication—musical alchemy, if you will. To work effectively with the body, a depth of sensitivity must be developed to the subtle aspects of a client's being. A first touch that is too fast or too deep can be overwhelming, negating the safe space required for working with the body. The other major ingredient is waiting for each response to be fully processed. This way of working adds depth, wisdom, compassion and healing to our lives as healing artists, and to those whom we touch. ❧

KG Stiles, LMT,RBT,NCTMB, has been a healing arts practitioner for 23 years, and has trained in a variety of bodywork techniques. She has a private practice in Ashland, Oregon, where she specializes in the Bowen Technique. Her clients have included such well-known personalities as Yo Yo Ma, Charles Barkley, Sala Ward, Peter Weller and Louis Rukeyser. Stiles has published numerous articles in both national and regional publications, and is an award-winning children's author and poet. She can be contacted via E-mail at: kgstiles@charter.net; or at: www.kgstiles.com.

Sources of Information

1. Schneider, Ernst. *Bowtech Inside Out*. E-mail contact: schneider@internetexpress.net.au.
2. *Bowen Hands*, The Journal of Bowen Therapy Academy of Australia. E-mail contact: Bowtech@h140.aone.net.au.
3. Official Web site: www.Bowtech.com, includes a registry of instructors and practitioners.

To see how Bowtech helped five different people, continue to next page. >>

5 case histories

These clients showed marked improvement after several Bowtech sessions.

Case History 1 (Annika, age 36, new mother)

First Visit Assessment:

Annika had a prolonged and difficult 30-hour labor that resulted in a C-section. Her primary complaints are irregular and sluggish milk supply, left-sided tinnitus and sore throat, small hemorrhoids from prolonged bearing down during labor, stress, and an inability to sleep well. Her bladder is distended, and she's on a catheter. She also suffers from postpartum depression, and her shoulders are beginning to ache from holding her baby.

First Visit Treatment:

I perform basic relaxation moves to balance and energize all of her body's organs and systems. I also perform kidney procedure to aid recovery of her bladder; breast procedure to stimulate milk flow; and frozen shoulder to help relieve her shoulder tension, and prevent a chronic overuse pattern that's common to nursing mothers.

Annika is instructed in exercises to strengthen and balance her shoulders, and taught the breast procedure, which she can perform on herself as needed. I give her handouts with diagrams and instructions for exercises and making the most of her session. We schedule a follow-up visit in three days.

Second Visit Assessment:

Annika reports feeling much better. She's less stressed and sleeping better. Her left-sided sore throat and tinnitus symptoms have resolved, as have her small hemorrhoids. Her milk flow is better, though still somewhat sluggish. She expresses concern about her postpartum depression.

Second Visit Treatment:

I perform basic relaxation moves and notice a considerable lessening in muscle tension. I also perform the coccyx procedure to help with puerperium, the six-week period when involution of the uterus occurs after birth.

This procedure helps to balance hormonal levels and relieves postpartum depression. Two additional procedures are performed: breast procedure to stimulate milk supply; and knee procedure to boost her energy level and balance shoulders and kidneys.

We review exercises and instructions, and schedule a follow-up visit in one week, unless she feels the need for care before then.



In-home postpartum care for new mother Annika. KG Stiles is performing a kidney procedure move to aid the client's recovery from a bladder infection.

Third Visit Assessment:

Annika reports tremendous improvement. Her postpartum depression lifted immediately after her last session and has not returned. Two days after her session she came off the catheter. Her milk supply is ample and regular. Her only complaint is that her arms ache a little.

Annika now considers Bowtech invaluable to her postpartum recovery, and will continue having a weekly session through most of her six-week puerperium period.

Case History 2 (Misha, Annika's son, newborn baby)

First Visit Assessment:

Misha experienced a tremendous amount of twisting and torsion in utero during his mother's labor. Fortunately, he is not suffering from symptoms of colic. His coloring is high toned and somewhat uneven. He seems peaceful and easygoing. He's lost weight since birth.

First Visit Treatment:

I perform the neonate procedure to promote balance and wellness. I notice Misha's muscles are extremely tense, and he seems even sensitive to the gentlest touch.

Second Visit Assessment:

Misha is now one week old. He seems a little more open and relaxed. His skin coloring is less high toned and more even. His weight has stabilized.

Second Visit Treatment:

Misha's muscles are noticeably less tense. He's very sensitive and fusses a little when I perform the gentle neonate moves.

Third Visit Assessment:

Misha, two weeks of age, has even skin coloring—a healthy deep pink glow. He looks open and relaxed. He's gained 8 pounds since birth.

Third Visit Treatment:

Misha continues to sleep as I perform the neonate procedure. His muscles are supple. He shows no sensitivity to my touch as I perform the moves.

Annika is instructed in how to perform the neonate procedure on Misha. She may perform the procedure weekly until Misha is three months of age for general well-baby care, or as needed. Misha began smiling, babbling and interacting with people early at just four weeks of age. Perhaps Bowen played a part in his early development?

Misha lies on his back while Stiles performs a neonate move to balance and support healthy growth and development.



Case History 3 (Kirsten, age 34, chronic migraines)

First Visit Assessment:

Kirsten fell from a bus at age nine, spraining her coccyx (tailbone). Since then she has experienced chronic and severe migraines. She has varicose veins and a persistent heaviness in her legs and feet. Her sacroiliac (SI) joints are chronically tight and painful, and her energy level is low. She's the natural mother of four children, ages 3 to 11.

First Visit Treatment:

I perform basic relaxation moves to balance and energize her entire body, and kidney procedure for headache relief.

I give Kirsten instruction for her kidneys that includes drinking distilled water and eating a bit of raw beet to flush and tonify her liver and kidneys. She's given instructions for how to make the most of her session, and scheduled for a one-week follow-up session.

Second Visit Assessment:

Kirsten reports fewer and less severe headaches. She feels things have shifted. She noticed little twinges and aches that came and went throughout the week. Her energy is a little better. Her SI joints are still tender.

Second Visit Treatment:

I perform basic relaxation moves to balance and energize, kidney procedure for headache and coccyx procedure for migraine and premenstrual tension. Kirsten reports that her migraines intensify just before her menses. When performing coccyx, I notice her tailbone is curled excessively under; the left side seems especially impacted, and the skin is warm to the touch. In questioning her I discover that her symptoms are worse on the left side, and she considers her left side to be weak. I also perform pelvis procedure to ease premenstrual tension and to balance her pelvic girdle.

Kirsten is instructed in an exercise to stabilize and strengthen her pelvis, and reminded about instruction for getting the most from her session. We schedule a follow-up visit in one week.

Third Visit Assessment:

Kirsten reports only one headache this week, and it was a left-sided headache, which was unusual as she usually has right-sided

headaches, or on both sides, but never just on the left. She feels her energy level is somewhat better and more constant. Her SI joints are less tender. She again states that she feels her body is shifting.

Third Visit Treatment:

I perform basic relaxation moves to balance and energize; kidney procedure for headache; upper respiratory and TMJ for migraine; and sacral procedure for SI joint pain.

Kirsten is instructed to continue with pelvis exercise, and given instruction for making the most of her session. We schedule a follow-up treatment in one week.

Fourth Visit Assessment:

Kirsten reports no headaches. Her energy was much better this week. She experienced less heaviness and aching in her legs and feet, and her SI joints were noticeably less tender.

I see Kirsten for three more sessions, and she continues to improve. Her condition requires more long-term treatment than is usual. Still, we are satisfied with the results she's received in a relatively short period of time.



The author does a respiratory procedure move on Kirsten. This is a good method for easing lung congestion, hay fever and allergies.

Case History 4 (Margaret, age 83, frozen shoulder)

First Visit Assessment:

Margaret's husband recently passed away. She's suffered from chronic shoulder girdle pain for many years. Caring for her bedridden husband has taken its toll. She has limited range of motion in her shoulder joints and suffers unbearable pain.

She also has restricted lung capacity and suffers from chronic shortness of breath after having pneumonia several years ago. Her knees ache terribly, and she's unable to go on her daily walks.

First Visit Treatment:

Margaret is short of breath just from getting on the table. We have to wait several minutes for her to catch her breath. I perform basic relaxation moves to energize and balance her entire body; respiratory procedure to balance and aid her lungs; knee procedure for her painful knees; and shoulder, elbow and wrist, and carpal tunnel procedures for the chronic pain and limited range of motion in these areas.

After her session Margaret reports that her breathing is much better. I show her a breathing exercise for increasing lung capacity. She's also shown an exercise to strengthen and increase range of motion in her shoulder girdle. I give her handouts with diagrams explaining exercises, and tell her how to make the most of her session. We schedule the recommended one-week follow-up visit for her shoulders and knees.

Second Visit Assessment:

Margaret reports that she did her exercises faithfully and is feeling much better. The day after her treatment she felt things shifting in her body and was a little sore. She now has only slight pain in her shoulders, and is able to lift her arms above her head with only slight pain and restriction. She's able to take daily walks, and her breathing is significantly improved.

Margaret feels even more improvement after her second treatment. I encourage her to continue with her exercises, and remind her how to make the most of her session. She schedules a treatment in one month for routine health maintenance.



Stiles performs the frozen shoulder procedure, effective for any complaint of the shoulder girdle area, on Ezra Kemp. The same method was used on her client, Margaret.

Case History 5 (Cathy, age 49, chronic tendinitis)

First Visit Assessment:

Cathy looks healthy, though stressed. She's a professional massage therapist, and suffers chronic pain in her shoulders, elbows and wrists. She has tried many modalities for relief of her condition, but with no lasting results.

During her first visit, she complains specifically about the following: 1) upper back pain and discomfort; 2) shoulder girdle pain; and 3) persistent pain in her elbows and wrists.

First Visit Treatment:

Cathy has tight mid- and upper thoracics, hypersensitive to moves; her shoulders are high and tense; the length of erectors flushes deep red with blood after moves. She has restricted range of motion (ROM) of both rotator cuffs.

The following Bowen procedures were performed: BRM lower back, BRM upper back, BRM neck and shoulders, frozen shoulder, elbow and wrist, and carpal tunnel work.

The following changes were observed during treatment: good response; felt moves very deeply; experienced rushes of energy and tingling with resultant releases.

After the session, Cathy says she feels very relaxed, and much better. She is given distilled water to help flush toxins, and encouraged to walk and perform shoulder exercises daily. Seven days are suggested before the next treatment.

Second Visit Assessment:

Cathy experienced tremendous relief after her first session. She was sore that night, but said she felt great the next day. She was positive about the results, and is enthusiastic and hopeful. However, she still complained about shoulder girdle discomfort, and chronic wrist and elbow pain.

Second Visit Treatment:

After the first visit, ROM rotator cuff are improved; elbows and wrists are less painful; and mid- to upper thoracics are less hypersensitive to moves.

The following Bowen procedures are performed: all the basic relaxation moves, frozen shoulder, elbows and wrist, and carpal tunnel work.

Cathy reports experiencing energetic shifts and deep releases during her treatment. She said she feels good, energized, relaxed and a little light-headed afterward.

Third Visit Assessment:

Cathy came in 18 days after the second treatment. She says her shoulders feel better, but that things are beginning to tighten up. She expresses concern about her condition, and seems somewhat stressed.

Third Visit Treatment:

ROM rotator cuff continues to improve; elbows and wrists are less painful; and mid- and upper thoracics are less hypersensitive to moves.

Bowen procedures performed included all the basic relaxation moves, frozen shoulder, and other advanced shoulder moves.

In summary, Cathy shows significant improvement after the three sessions. In late 2002, she visits me for a three-month tune-up. In the six months since then, she continues to walk daily, do her shoulder exercises, and is able to enjoy her growing massage therapy practice.



The author is performing a knee procedure move to stimulate energy flow and complement the frozen shoulder procedure. This is a good method to use on runners.