

What is Network Spinal Analysis? An Interview with Dr. Donald Epstein

By Jenny Thomas

A growing healing technique known as Network Spinal Analysis (NSA) is changing people's lives and health in remarkable ways. This modality, which evolved from the practice and studies of Dr. Donald Epstein, integrates chiropractic technique into a larger whole health matrix that focuses on optimal wellness rather than just the elimination of symptomatic pain. The following is an edited excerpt from an interview with Dr. Epstein.

From time to time an advanced procedure or protocol will arise from an already existing, long established technique. Network Spinal Analysis could be described in this way. Arising as it did in 1982, New York Chiropractor, Doctor Donald Epstein began "networking" various chiropractic techniques. Through careful observation and by comparing the findings and results of one method with another, he began to see the efficacy of combining certain techniques in a manner which enables the practitioner, through the use of light touch to release large amounts of spinal tension from a patient.

This unique approach to health, a synthesis of long standing chiropractic methods, quantum mechanics, neuroanatomy and neurophysiology, acknowledges changing perspectives in health care. In Doctor Epstein's case, these changes involve an expanded interpretation of the concept of 'wellness'.

Dr Epstein: "Network Spinal Analysis sits within a new paradigm which I have been developing internationally and called the Wellness Paradigm. Wellness is not about whether a person has disease. It's about their internal experience of their body, the ability to make constructive healthy choices, and their ability to enjoy life and be well..."

"What we are looking at here is an experience of life beyond the usual form. A more subtle engagement of the parts of the brain that allow a person to express their higher level of humanity and function so that a greater capacity to express more connections of compassion and love arises. I call these 'higher end social changes', because there are spiritual connotations involved. Individuals are different in the way they relate to others and their environment. They can be instrumental in helping create a more compassionately productive community."

To understand the 'mechanics' of NSA, we must first remind ourselves that the spine is composed of bones sitting on top of each other with discs or pads in between. These bones or vertebrae have holes like donut-like holes in them. These holes create a spinal canal for the spinal cord, which extends from the base of the brain to the tail-bone. The central nervous system is comprised of the brain and the spinal cord and is supported by an intricate system of tissues called the meninges. It is

filled with fluid which nourishes and protects the nervous system, all of which sits within the spinal canal, protected by the bony vertebrae. Connective tissue attaches this system to the top and bottom of the spine and is subject to stresses, tension and distortion.

We perceive our world through the nervous system. Also the nervous system coordinates the function of every cell, organ and tissue in the body. Every region of the body and every emotion is expressed through the nervous system. It's the part of us that reasons, and which adapts to stress. It is the vehicle we use to create our conscious reality. When an event occurs that our brain decides is not safe for us to fully experience at that particular time, the energy and information of the event is translated into vibration and tension, which is then stored in the body. This tension begins to distort the spinal system: Spinal bones (the vertebrae) lose their normal alignment and muscles and ligaments strain and pull. Nerves can become compressed or stretched and irritated, which results in abnormal function. As the nervous system is put under pressure, the spine is no longer able to right itself without outside help. Our body then 'closes off' the offending energy and tension, but over time, muscular tightness, spinal distortion, reduced breathing into the area occurs, and consequently reduced movement results. Until it is safe to experience that energy again and digest the information from the trauma, we cannot really feel whole or well.

"This is a very real thing. Anyone who is at the crossroads of life, physically, emotionally or spiritually, or is stuck can benefit from Network care, which helps their brain move from the stress physiology that results in a person's structure being fixed in defence posture. Most of us remain in defence mode throughout our lives and this can retard the higher, area of the brain from developing more unique properties and evolving new strategies for experiencing and responding to life. There are many people whose vertebrae, ligaments and tissues are locked into stress patterns, creating so much tension, that their focus in life is just getting through another day! Network care allows the brain to move from the stress physiology into safety."

Jenny: So how does the practitioner go about relieving this stress?

Dr Epstein: "I found that by using gentle and specific touches in a consistent sequence, where the spinal cord attaches to the spine, a patient's own body learns to release complex patterns of tension and areas of disablement. Once this has been achieved, a further unwinding of deeper spinal tensions occur. These 'touches' consist of gentle finger or hand contacts applied at 'spinal gateways™' or 'access points' along the neck and lower spine. They are applied in such a way as to engage the higher part of the brain, the frontal lobes of the cerebral cortex. This is the most recently developed region of our brain and is the area through which we observe ourselves and make choices regarding our behaviour. This is the area through which we can reach a higher level of humanity, one which embraces spirituality and evolution." During Network Spinal Analysis™ care, two 'healing

waves' develop. One is a breathing wave which releases tension throughout the spine and body and relaxes the person. The other is called somatopsychic (or body-mind) wave™, which is associated with undulation or movement of the spine.

“The mathematics of this wave are unique. The theory suggests that as the individual progresses through levels of care, that wave, or signal along the spine, is organising high levels of complexity. That means there are more letters in the language - more words available and ultimately more information becomes accessible. There is an evolutionary aspect to this in that there is an increase in the ability of the system to self-organise so it can have more appropriate views about the environment and become more energy efficient. Thus an outcome is produced, that is significantly beneficial to the species that was not there before.”

“What we want is for the system itself to reorganise and develop strategies for experiencing and releasing tension on its own. In the first level of care, which may last a few weeks, the person develops a strategy to connect the brain to the body more effectively and to develop a capacity for self-correction of the tension patterns. The care programme encourages the development of spontaneous stretching movements and breath movements which help release tension in the spine. In the second level of care, we are looking for the brain to be aware of the person's tension, and actually temporarily amplify that tension and redirect it so that the tension actually becomes the fuel for further healing and transformation. Tension anchors a person in a position of non-safety. Lack of safety is the basis for all physiological stress and the way we accumulate this stress is directly associated with the way we experience our world.”

“When someone comes to me for care, I do not have to know what it was that caused that person's problem. What I do know, is how to intervene, to help the system to observe itself and to make a change. I have clinically dedicated myself to furthering the knowledge of the biological links which will help us express a greater range of our humanity. I believe that by optimising an individual's biology, Network Spinal Analysis™ will facilitate positive transformation on a global scale, changing the world, one spine at a time.”

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