

Having fun

When was the last time you gave yourself a treat?

All of us have times when we find it a challenge to maintain optimum health, or even sometimes to remain cheerful. It is probably obvious to say that the two are very closely linked, but in craniosacral therapy this link is fundamental to our approach to health.

Our bodies have an amazing capacity to heal. We stub a toe. It hurts, perhaps it bruises, but we take it for granted that as living, sentient beings we will heal. The real contrast would be with a piece of china. Break it and leave it for a bit. I don't think you would find it would have any capacity to heal itself.

We call on this healing capacity all the time. But if we ask too much, the well runs dry.

We speak of our immune system being compromised or, in more everyday speech, we are "run down", "under the weather". (And isn't that literally the case at this time of year?)

So how can we refill the healing bank"?

By having FUN.

By doing the things we most ENJOY.

By taking a BREAK.

By having a TREAT.(Even a little thing can cheer us up)

And the most simple thing of all ---

Breathe.

Totally irrelevant, but did you know that dolphins have to be conscious to breathe?

When they sleep, only half the brain goes to sleep, the other half stays awake to take them to the surface to breathe, then the sides of the brain swap over. Imagine if you had a lazy half to your brain! (And how on earth did anyone find that out?)

We have both conscious and unconscious elements to our breathing, so when we panic we hold our breath; but we also have the capacity to change the pattern deliberately, a fact that underlies a lot of meditation practice.

In order to understand why it can sometimes seem impossible to do any of these things which we all know would help, I would like to go a little into the physiology of stress, and the reason why it becomes increasingly difficult to undo our tension when things get tough.

It has to do with the way our “animal” brain is set up.

Imagine a deer out on the prairie, grazing. She hears a noise, her head comes up, she is fully alert. Internally her body is already preparing for flight or fight; the blood is gathering towards the centre of the body, digestion is shutting down, adrenaline is racing to the muscles to enable them to function even when they run out of oxygen. All the deer’s senses have become hyper-alert as she assesses the situation.

All is quiet. She takes a last look round. Nothing. She shakes herself and snorts- a huge out breath.

These are the gestures that put the nervous system back to “all’s well” mode, enabling all the organs to return to digestion and rebuilding of the body. The breath releases the diaphragm and the shaking releases the last of the adrenaline from the system.

But a deer doesn’t worry! And this is where we humans are at a disadvantage.

With our huge forebrain, we can maintain ourselves in that state of red alert, waiting for the tiger to pounce, in some cases for years.

It is as if we are constantly telling ourselves the story of our lives and we make it a drama.

So the adrenaline filled muscles get stiff and aching, waiting to run from our perceived dangers and sending pain messages back to central control which only serves to confirm to our “primitive” brain that the tiger is probably biting right now.

What to do?

Well that’s where breathing is important. Remember that deep breath that the deer allowed itself when the danger was over? We can do the same:

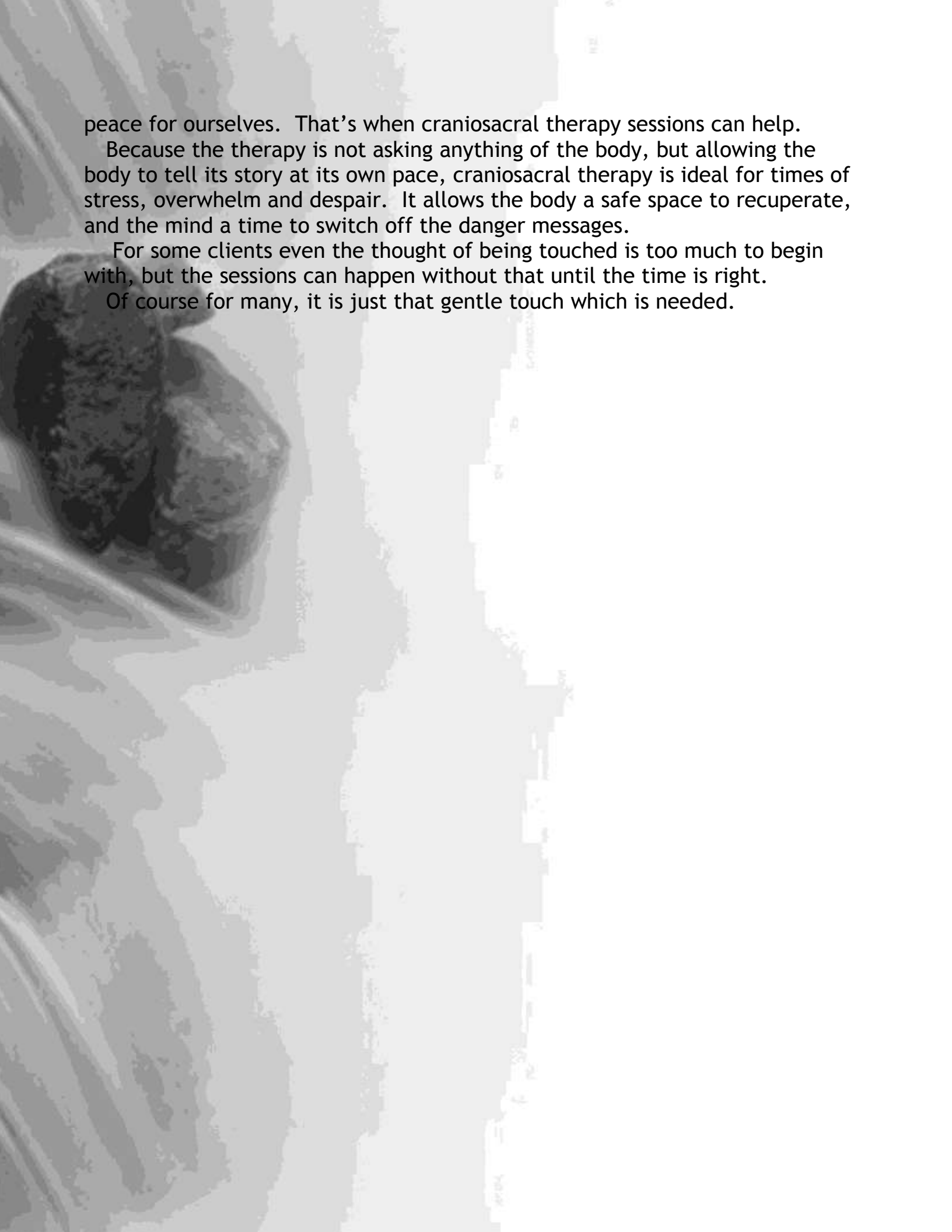
Allow yourself to sigh.

Sing a song. (Doesn’t have to be Pavarotti).

Do something just strenuous enough to get your breath going then stop and enjoy it.

And have fun.

That’s OK until things really get too much, but for all of us there are times when we become overwhelmed and can’t any longer find that space of joy and



peace for ourselves. That's when craniosacral therapy sessions can help.

Because the therapy is not asking anything of the body, but allowing the body to tell its story at its own pace, craniosacral therapy is ideal for times of stress, overwhelm and despair. It allows the body a safe space to recuperate, and the mind a time to switch off the danger messages.

For some clients even the thought of being touched is too much to begin with, but the sessions can happen without that until the time is right.

Of course for many, it is just that gentle touch which is needed.