



## Rosen Method Bodywork

January 18<sup>th</sup>, 2012, **Marion Rosen**, the founder of Rosen Method Bodywork, passed away in her home in Berkley, California. At 96 she was seeing clients and teaching out of her home, until December 8<sup>th</sup>, 2011, when she suffered a small stroke. Marion's passing was with the same grace, courage, wisdom and insight as she lived.

*When Marion came home from the hospital, her daughter Tina arranged her mother's care so there was always someone in the room with her, day and night. The care providers wondered, "Who are you people?" They had never seen anything like it in the hospital or the homes they worked in. Sometimes 3-4 friends were sitting with Marion, attending to what she was needing, talking with her, singing/humming to her, stroking her head or hand gently, listening in silence, just being there as she rested or slept. When she could, she loved to hear the worldwide messages of gratitude and appreciation. After all, she had touched a lot of people internationally with her work. Even in her final days she was the teacher, sharing new insights about the body saying; "I have realized that it is when we really relax and let go that we can access our true power and aliveness." As she took her final breath, one small tear appeared in her right eye. She was peaceful, surrounded by those who loved her and the love and prayers from around the globe. Her true hope was that all who had gained something from The Rosen Method would share this in the world to do good, to work for peace.*

I personally feel an enormous gratitude for what I gained from Marion Rosen's offering to the world. Without Marion's gift, I know I would be a different, less open person today. I have learned that trying to be anything or anybody other than I really am, eats up a lot of energy that could be used more creatively. Resisting what is, or what was, numbs us out and builds walls that isolate us from others. Those walls show up in the body as chronic tension. When we relax and accept our humanity that tension melts and we get in touch with what is possible. We find the unique person that is us. We discover what we can create and express and how deeply we can love. Marion Rosen once said that when she met a new client she did not always like them right away, but as soon as she put her hands on them she felt a love for them. Rosen work connects client and practitioner via an unconditional presence. It is a profound meeting human to human, beyond personalities, beyond right and wrong, good and bad.

The main component of Rosen Method bodywork is touch. Rosen workers touch with curiosity, presence and a willingness to meet the client in whatever is coming up for them. There is this delicate balance of showing up fully for the client and simultaneously getting out of the way. What is emphasized is empathy, spaciousness, authenticity. The words used in the session are there to deepen the work, to find new levels of truth. More than anything else it is about creating a safe space, where unexpressed human emotions, and unmet human needs, long ago buried under physical tension, can surface. This is intimate work. Touch and truth in combination makes it so. As a Rosen worker I often tell new clients that this can be extremely intimate work where clients often hear themselves share things they have never told anyone or have had the courage to face alone before.

***"There is something in you that has never been expressed before. There is a unique style, a huge love, a wonderful creativity and something eternal within you. Don't ruin this precious gift by thinking you should be a carbon copy of someone else. Be you and you will have all the protection and happiness you can imagine." - Jackson Kiddard.***

I remember how, on the second day of attending my first Rosen workshop in Stockholm 1988, I noticed a burning sensation in and around my heart. I asked one of our teachers, Sarah Webb, what was going on with me. She answered that she was familiar with the sensation even if she could not explain in physical terms what was going on in my chest. "I have a sense it is related to your heart opening, through this work," she said. Her answer resonated with my own intuitive hunch, and just knowing that other people also had had this feeling helped me to be more at ease.

Growing up I had sometimes felt I was too sensitive for this world and had, like many of us, built an insulating layer around my heart. But being around the people in this workshop, several who were vulnerable enough to share their feelings much more openly than I was, activated my compassion and awakened something deep and forgotten that now burned within my chest. In a way it felt similar to what I had experienced in my body at other times in my life when someone had been exceptionally kind to me or when I had been touched by a magnificent landscape. Beauty, kindness and gentleness can often burn away defensive layers that no pushing, forcing or analyzing ever could.

Besides the powerful combination of truth seeking and compassion I found in the Rosen method, it was also the strong emphasis on relationship that beckoned me to want to take the training and become a Rosen Method Practitioner. In my worldview everything is about relationship. To self, to others, to nature, community, creativity and to the energy that connects us all.

I know many Rosen Practitioners who feel that they are working for a more peaceful world, one person at the time, and when it comes to the hope of bringing more peace in the world via our own emotional systems, a demonstration study done in 1993 is encouraging.

4000 participants in Transcendental Meditation and TM – Sidhi programs gathered in Washington Dc June 7-July30th. They wanted to demonstrate scientifically that their focusing on feeling peace and love would create greater coherence in the collective consciousness of the district. They felt confident in doing so since they had already seen that take place in 24 US cities in 1972. The only difference was that they now had a 27 member project review board comprising independent scientists and leading citizens who approved the research protocol and monitored the research process. The effect is called the “Maharishi effect” in honor of Maharishi Mahesh Yogi who stated that when 1 percent of a population practiced the techniques of meditation he offered there would be a reduction in violence and crime for that population.

Even though the police had laughed at this experiment and said it would take a major snowstorm in July to lower the violent crime rate in Washington, the results were that homicides, rapes and assaults (HRA) dropped significantly just as the meditation group had predicted. They learned that the effect of the experiment was accumulative. The last week there was a 23.3 percent fall of HRA in Washington DC and it persisted after the project ended. There were predictions that a permanent group of 4000” coherence experts” would have a long term effect.

Peaceful emotions are clearly contagious. All living beings are much more connected than we probably ever will realize with our minds alone. We touch and are touched by each other in so many ways. Marion Rosen made a huge difference in the life of so many, but we all make a difference through our sheer existence. The real question is what kind of difference we make by how we live. How much love can we allow ourselves to give and receive.

Researcher Robert Nerem stumbled in the late 1970’s by chance into a territory where the power of human touch was revealed to him. He was originally not really interested in touch or love, but was simply focused on finding out to what extent high cholesterol diets cause arterial blockage around the heart. He took a large group of genetically similar rabbits and put them in cages one by one, along a wall. After feeding them the same high fat, toxic diet he confirmed upon autopsy that most of the rabbits had what he expected- a significant amount of blockage. (Poor rabbits!) However, one particular group of rabbits showed virtually no blockage. What made it more puzzling to Nerem was that all the rabbits who had very little blockage were in the bottom cages.

On further investigation he discovered that his lab assistant, a short woman, loved rabbits and would pet and cuddle the ones in the lower cages when she was feeding them because she could reach them. When she fed the rabbits in the top cages she could only reach high enough to give them their food and water so they were isolated and relatively ignored.

Nerem was skeptical about the supposed cause of the difference in disease so he repeated the study, this time making sure the only difference between the groups was touch. He reproduced the same results and reported in the reputable Journal Science that there was more than 60 percent less blockage and significantly less arterial damage in the rabbits that were touched and cuddled compared to those that were not. Compassionate, loving touch is powerful as a healing agent.

Kerstin Uvnas- Moberg, a researcher from Sweden has published a book called "The Oxytocin Factor: Tapping the hormone of calm, love and healing". Oxytocin has been commonly referred to as the Love hormone. Beyond its well know function in bonding mother and child and the high amount of this hormone found in lactating mothers, there is recent evidence indicating that this hormone is also involved in cognition, tolerance, adaptation, complex sexual and maternal behaviors as well as learning and social cues and the establishment of enduring pair bonds.

Knowing that Oxytocin was stimulated by touch, Moberg used Massage practitioners in her research. Some of those were also trained as Rosen Method Practitioners even though they did not practice Rosen, per se, in the studies that were in the research. Moberg's research shows that Oxytocin is elevated after 1 session of touch therapy, but goes back down. After 4 sessions, it tends to go up and stay elevated. After 7 sessions, it tends to stay elevated for longer periods. The research also shows that Oxytocin is best stimulated by gentle touch, not heavy, deep tissue work, and especially by stroking on the belly"

I find this fascinating. It has also been my experience, both in giving and receiving Rosen work, that there is a cumulative effect of coming to peace and acceptance within, that we eventually can hold on to for increasingly longer periods after a session is over. Eventually we can take this inner freedom with us out of the treatment room and into our other relationships and our world.

There is something very grounding about conscious touch for both the giver and the receiver. Being with the substance that emerges when a person is willing to take time out to look at him or herself deeply and work through the difficult parts is immensely rewarding. We live in an era where many people get caught up in the appearance of things and run at top speed much of the time to the point that there is no time for our human emotions. We humans do not know what we feel until we slow down and inquire into the deeper layers of our being and take time to listen to the language and melody of the body. And touch is a two way street. When I wash my hands after giving a Rosen session and look in the mirror I can often tell that something shifted in me as well. In order to do the work I have to be focused and fully present myself. There is more color in my face. I feel more "landed" within my own body. How precious it is to be part of the instance when he or she finds the courage to face and move through something that was held in for a long time and very hard to express. The wave of free breath in the body afterwards, the spaciousness and a lightness of being under my hands feels sacred. It feels like grace.

As I sit with clients I remind myself that I am not there to “fix” anyone. All I need to do is love the men and women who find their way to my door. For those of my clients who struggle to accept themselves I do my best to communicate with my hands and my presence that they are loveable, and also worthy of having their boundaries honored. I hold this possibility for them until they are ready to claim that for themselves. That is my only intention. If I would get too caught up in achieving “results” my clients would feel my unspoken impatience and silent expectancy and it is not about them performing well for me or for anybody else. The most healing moments tend to take place when we manage to go beyond any rigid grips on our own egos and flawed personalities and give ourselves space to just be people together. Then we enter that wonderful space of connection where we are like tuning forks for each other.

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