



Trauma Release Therapy

An interview with Riccardo Cassiani-Ingoni, PhD

By Sarah Turner, Director of NES Research

Dr. Riccardo Cassiani-Ingoni earned his master's degree cum laude in biology with a concentration in neuroscience from the University of Pisa, Italy, and a PhD in neurophysiology from the Sapienza University of Rome. He worked for six years as a research fellow in the Neuroimmunology Branch of the National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke, at the National Institutes of Health, the most advanced biomedical research facility in the United States. He has trained with experts in the fields of pathology and regeneration of the

nervous system, neuroimaging, bioenergetics, biofeedback and neurofeedback, information medicine, and trauma recovery. In addition, he served as a scientific consultant and researcher in the NeuroLab, Italian National Olympics Committee (CONI). He currently works at the Center for Regenerative Medicine in Barcelona, Spain. While he has been trained in and uses many different conventional and CAM modalities, in this interview he tells us about a therapeutic modality that uses a body-oriented approach to trauma release.

Q Describe TRE and what it involves. How was the technique discovered?

RCI: TRE stands for trauma releasing exercises. This is a unique type of bodywork which involves a short series of painless physical exercises designed to self-elicite neurogenic muscular tremors. Neurogenic tremors are a natural way that our body deals with stress. These tremors, which are of a different kind compared to the ones that we experience when we are feeling cold, are best defined as 'neurogenic' tremors as they represent a physiologic response operated by the nervous systems to help us survive through, and recover from, stressful experiences. TRE aims to discharge chronic tension patterns held in the body that may have built up as a consequence of emotionally charged events. Dr. David Berceci, an international expert in the areas of trauma intervention and conflict resolution, researched the benefits of neurogenic tremors and developed a simple method that anyone can use to tap into their body's self-healing potential.

Q How did you become involved in TRE?

RCI: My healing journey with TRE started after a chance meeting with Dr. Berceci in the United States. He offered to guide me through a private session and I had no clue as to what to expect. By the end of the ninety-minute session I was literally amazed by all the twists and twirls and tremors that my body had spontaneously experienced. I noticed an immediate relief of my chronic backache. I realized right away that there was something uniquely natural and effective about this technique; it also perfectly fitted my background in neurophysiology and alternative medicine.

Q Tell us more about what you mean by 'neurogenic tremor.'

RCI: Tremors have been documented across the whole animal kingdom and thus it should not be a surprise that, as mammals, we human beings experience much of the same response. It is not uncommon in many cultures to hear phrases such as 'I was so frightened my jaw was quivering.' 'My hands were shaking so badly I couldn't calm myself down.' 'My legs were trembling as I gave my speech.' 'I was so angry I shook.' These experiences of shaking or trembling are very commonly experienced during or following challenging life-events, although they have not yet been fully recognised by the medical community for their intrinsic healing potential. Neurogenic tremors are a biological mechanism by which the organism literally shakes off any built-up tension. As a matter of fact, whenever wild animals experience physical injury or are confronted with an inescapable threat situation, there are immediate neurological changes that drive specific kinds of behaviours. The organism is on autopilot and instinctually does what it is genetically encoded to do. When the danger has passed, and the animal has returned to a safe place, the nervous system will shut off the internal alarm and return to homeostasis by means of this generalised trembling reaction.

Q Who benefits from this type of therapy? Who are the exercises aimed at?

RCI: The exercises are designed to safely elicit the trembling reaction in anyone. However, each person will respond differently in accordance with their personal history and their degree of built-up stress and physical tension.

One of the key groups of muscles that is targeted by this method is the iliopsoas, which is also our body's primary 'fight-flight-freeze' muscle. This group of muscles connects the legs with the spine and with the pelvis, and it is engaged while

running, kicking, jumping, etc. It is also sensitive to our emotional state. Traumatic events, such as a car accident or a serious physical injury or the unexpected loss of a loved one, are experiences that can over-stimulate the mind-body and change our ability to function properly or to relax our muscle tissue. In the long run, this can lead to the development of chronic back pain, tightness in the neck and shoulders, breathing problems. I believe that anyone suffering from physical or emotional problems can benefit from TRE. It is also indicated for all those high-pressure professions like professional athletes, emergency personnel, soldiers and war veterans. TRE is particularly effective for anyone suffering from anxiety, panic attacks, low back pain, and post-traumatic stress.

Q *How does this technique differ from other types of body work or psychotherapy?*

RCI: It differs from most other therapies by at least three fundamental features. First of all, it is a method readily accessible to anyone without the need of any tools or machines. You just need your own body, and the exercises themselves can be modified to fit any body-type or physical limitation. The second advantage is that it can be applied with minimal supervision to large groups of people at once. Finally, it targets a fundamental and natural aspect of our neurophysiology that is otherwise difficult to address by external bodily interventions or by psychotherapeutic approaches.

Q *On your website you show a video of a polar bear going into spontaneous muscle tremor after a trauma. Why have people lost or suppressed this natural reaction?*

RCI: They have not lost this natural mechanism but it lies dormant. On an individual basis, there are many factors that since childhood may have contributed to shaping the way we cope with stress and also our ability to fully express basic emotions such as fear, joy, etc. Body and mind are functionally identical, and repressed emotions affect the body and mind by creating chronic

muscular tension and diminishing energy. There are obviously also cultural factors involved. Nevertheless, anecdotal reports of spontaneous shaking after physically or psychologically challenging events are very common still today.

Q *Does this therapy complement other bodywork modalities or spiritual practices?*

RCI: Yes, it will complement all other bodywork modalities and all types of sports and yoga practices. Quoting David: 'In order to be spiritual you first have to be fully human!' Re-connecting to one's own bodily sensation and uncovering suppressed feelings can be an awakening and enlightening journey for many people who are on a spiritual path.

Q *Are you aware of any research being undertaken in this area that our readers would be interested in?*

RCI: There is only a limited amount of scientific research on neurogenic tremors and most of it deals with wild animals. One pilot study about the efficacy of TRE was performed on sixty students at the University of Arizona; it showed that this type of bodywork can have measurable psychological effects since it reduced significantly the levels of anxiety in the participants as quickly as after two weeks' practice. More research studies are currently underway at various sites worldwide.

Q *What is the best way to learn TRE?*

RCI: The best way to learn this is to immerse yourself in one of the intensive weekend workshops. Seminars are taught internationally and all further information and reading material can be found on the official TRE site, www.traumaprevention.com. This method can also be learned effectively from Dr. Berceci's book or DVD, or in a personal session with one of the certified trainers. I encourage everyone to give it a try!

If you would like to contact Dr. Riccardo Cassiani-Ingoni, you may email him at info@bbss.it.

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