

How would you describe what scar tissue actually is?

Scar Tissue is that replaces normal tissue that has been damaged. A scar results from the biologic process of wound repair in the skin and other tissues of the body. Thus, scarring is a natural part of the healing process.

With the exception of very minor lesions, every wound (i.e. after accident, disease, or surgery) results in some degree of scarring.

How can scars and scar tissue negatively effect an individual?

Scar tissue is not identical to the tissue that it replaces and is usually of inferior functional quality. At best scar tissue is only 70% as functional as normal tissue. Because of changes in the relative amounts, type and structure of collagens. Scar tissue composition and structure are different than those of normal tissue.

Short term effects:

Scars are often considered trivial, but they can be disfiguring and aesthetically unpleasant and cause severe itching, tenderness, pain, sleep disturbance, anxiety, depression, and disruption of daily activities.

Long term effects:

Physiological

Nerve impingement

Pain

Numbness

Limited range of motion and flexibility

Postural misalignment

Muscle atrophy

Tissue Hypoxia

An increase in potential for future injury

Psychosocial

Development of post-traumatic stress reactions

Loss of self esteem

Stigmatization

Most people think of scar tissue forming after a dramatic event like a broken bone, or surgery. Are there more subtle or unexpected ways in which scar tissue can commonly form?

First when bones break there is scarring however that is different than soft tissue scarring. When a bone breaks the body lays down calcium which actually makes the bones stronger. Where as with soft tissue scarring the new tissue as mentioned earlier does not function at the same level as normal tissue.

- Burns
- Deep lacerations from Accidents

- Infection
- Disease: Bacteria, Fungus, or Viruses

- Trauma

- Radiation

- Chronic Posture:

Often associated with or confused as scar tissue are adhesions which develop whenever there is inflammation in the body. Such as a sprained ankle or repetitive movement and or simply bad posture. Which can result in the many of the same restrictions and compensations as scar tissue. You always have adhesions present when there is scar tissue but you can have adhesions develop when there is no scar tissue present.

Some massage therapists and other healthcare practitioners say that they “break down” or “remove” scar tissue. Is this true or possible?

Anyone who claims to breakdown scar tissue does not understand what scar tissue is. Scar tissue replaces normal tissue that is damaged if you break it down you are essentially saying you are causing a new wound. The only person who can remove scar tissue is a surgeon who is literally cutting it out – only for new scar tissue to form.

The goal of working with scar tissue is to release the adhered layers, re-establishing homeostasis, releasing and correcting the compensations from fascial restrictions all the while being acutely aware of possible emotional release.

What are some other common misunderstandings around scar tissue?

The biggest one is that scars are only an esthetic issue. Most people have no idea how their scars and adhesions are affecting their bodies on so many different levels. Or that scars are can be a major trigger for PTSD.

What CAN massage therapists do to effect scars and scar tissue on a physiological level?

Acknowledging that the scar tissue may at the root of the problem is the first step. After that sampling working the affected area bring about change. But that being said I want to caution therapists. You need to thoroughly understand the event which caused the scar ie surgery, accident etc. and all the goes with it. Emotions, all of the physical ramifications for the body, what type of rehab will be need once the massage is done.

I am not saying that one should never massage a scar I am saying that as with all disease & disorders you need to understand what you are working with before you lay hands on someone.

What kind of emotional connections do massage therapists need to be aware of when working with scars?

Physical scars cannot and do not show how much pain or suffering a person has experienced. Every scar has an emotional history surrounding it.

#1: Shock

#2: Guilt

#3: Failure

#4: Loss

#5: Detachment

#6: Trauma

#7: Anger & Resentment

#8: Low Self Esteem

#9: Fear

#10: Hopelessness.

#11: Disgust when seeing or touching the scar

#12: Sadness about the limits the scar places on everyday life

The emotions surrounding the physical scars can leak over into the emotional and psychological and cause people significant self image issues and lower self confidence. A lot of research has been done in this area for the after care of people like burn survivors or those with severe facial scarring. Often in the cases of these patients it can cause them to suffer from depression (between 13-23% of cases) or post traumatic stress disorder (between 13-45% of cases) and this obviously would have a knock on effect to their confidence.

Many studies about scars have focused on facial scars because obviously that is the area where everyone looks first and so they are going to be noticed the most. But it isn't just facial scars that can cause people social discomfort. A survey performed in 2003 found a small but significant correlation between a scar being visible on any part of their body and how they felt they were perceived (Lawrence et al, 2003). More specifically people with visible scars felt that they were stigmatised, that people reacted negatively to their scars and that they were less attractive because of their scar.

Does cupping effect scar tissue? If so in what way?

When a cup is placed on the scar tissue and its surrounding areas, the vacuum lifts the scar tissues above and below the skin, essentially pulling them apart so that fresh blood and lymph can circulate freely through them. This improved circulation in turn makes movement easier and as a result, healing of the scars is induced.

It is a great tool but again you should not just cup over a scar without full understanding of what you could be opening up and how altering that scar will affect the person in the long run.

Can you tell me a little bit about the methodology you created to help people work with scar tissue?

The Scar Tissue Release and Integrated Therapies Method is a progressive therapeutic approach to healing which recognizes the complexity of each individual. Utilizing a whole person perspective, *The S.T.R.A.I.T Method* is a multi-disciplinary approach combining the therapeutic and rehabilitative modalities of Fascial Scar work, Mind- Body Interactions, Body Mechanics (practitioner/client), Therapeutic Stretching/Strengthening , Proprioceptive support to create a balanced treatment session designed to meet each clients' goals and needs. Every person is different and therefore there cannot be a one-modality -fits -all mentality.

Are there any peer reviewed case studies, academic studies, or medical imagery from clients that support your claims around the STRAIT method?

I have been really busy between my private practice and traveling to teach so dedicating the time for research has not been my priority. Dr. Karel Lewit has done some great case studies on the clinical importance of Scar Tissue. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/15319762>

Is there a favorite success story you have from your private client career?

Oh geez there are so many –I am continually amazed and thrilled by the results of this work and my client’s reactions. Everyday there is cause for a happy dance and hugs.

I have a client who started with me when he was ten. Parents brought him in to see me because he strained his Achilles tendon “of his good leg” turned out he had a club foot on the right. He walked in with the right foot locked in inversion which is not the part of the deformity, it was caused by the scar tissue from three corrective surgeries. With a combination of scar work, stretching and body mechanics training we managed to unlock the foot and give it am much mobility as the deformity would allow, balance the rest of his body and avoid future compensations. He is now in college playing football. His father said to me the other day when we were talking about him that if it weren’t for my work none of it would have happened.

If people want to learn more about you or your work/lectures/classes, where can they find out more about you?

My website is www.marjoreibrookseminars.com

Facebook is Brook Seminars Bodywork Education