

When Gentle Touch Is the Right Tool

Conditions and symptoms where CST offers distinct advantages over massage

Upledger Institute Trained

CST1 · CST2 · SER1

South Orange County, CA

Massage addresses muscle tension through pressure and manipulation of soft tissue. Craniosacral therapy works at a different level — the *central nervous system*, the craniosacral rhythm, and the body's fascial memory. The conditions below respond more specifically to this approach, particularly when massage has plateaued, is contraindicated, or when the nervous system itself is the source of the problem.

NEUROLOGICAL & CNS CONDITIONS

- Chronic migraine & tension headaches
CST addresses cranial bone mobility and dural tension — root causes massage cannot reach
- Post-concussion syndrome
Gentle decompression of the skull and dura; safe when pressure is contraindicated
- Trigeminal neuralgia
- Tinnitus & ear pressure
Often linked to temporal bone restriction
- Vertigo / dizziness (non-cardiac)
Temporal and sphenoid bone patterns often implicated
- Seizure disorder support
- Multiple sclerosis symptom management

TRAUMA & NERVOUS SYSTEM DYSREGULATION

- PTSD & complex trauma
Light touch is tolerable where deep pressure would re-traumatize
- Chronic anxiety & panic disorder
Directly down-regulates the sympathetic nervous system
- Hypervigilance & freeze states
- Emotional dysregulation
SER sessions help integrate stored somatic responses
- Dissociation & disconnection from body
- Chronic stress with physical symptoms
- Burnout with nervous system collapse

CHRONIC PAIN (NO CLEAR STRUCTURAL CAUSE)

- Fibromyalgia
CNS sensitization responds to rhythm-based regulation
- Chronic fatigue syndrome / ME-CFS
- Full-body pain after illness or surgery
Where pressure is still intolerable
- Persistent low back pain after PT plateau
- Pelvic pain (non-gynecological origin)
Sacral and dural restriction often overlooked
- Central sensitization syndromes
- Unexplained referred pain patterns

HEAD, FACE & JAW

- TMJ dysfunction
Sphenoid, temporal, and mandible mobility addressed directly
- Bruxism (teeth grinding) with facial tension
- Sinusitis & chronic sinus congestion
Facial bone mobility can support drainage
- Post-dental trauma or surgery recovery
- Facial nerve pain
- Orbital & eye pressure
Sphenoid restriction common contributing factor

SPINE & STRUCTURAL (POST-ACUTE)

- Whiplash / cervical injury recovery
After acute phase; CST addresses dural strain that persists after tissue heals
- Scoliosis symptom management
- Post-surgical scar tissue & adhesion
Fascial unwinding addresses deep restrictions
- Spinal stenosis discomfort
- Sacroiliac joint dysfunction
- Thoracic outlet syndrome
- Persistent symptoms after chiropractic plateau

INFANT & PEDIATRIC

- Birth trauma recovery
Cranial compression from prolonged labor, forceps, or vacuum
- Latching difficulties & feeding issues
Hyoid and temporal restrictions are common culprits
- Colic & unexplained infant distress
- Torticollis (neck tilt/rotation restriction)
- Plagiocephaly support (flat head)
Cranial bone mobility addressed gently
- Sensory processing challenges
- Developmental delay support

SOMATOEMOTIONAL RELEASE (ADVANCED CST)

- Trauma stored as physical tension patterns
Guided inner dialogue helps integrate body memory
- Somatic barriers to psychological progress
Complements mental health therapy; does not replace it
- Grief held in the body
- Chronic illness with significant emotional component
- Persistent symptoms following resolved injury
Body continues to guard long after physical healing
- Pre/post major surgery (emotional preparation & integration)

POPULATIONS WHERE CST HAS UNIQUE ADVANTAGES

- Those for whom pressure is contraindicated
Cancer treatment, osteoporosis, fragility, acute inflammation
- Touch-averse individuals
Trauma survivors, children, elderly — gentle contact is often tolerable
- Post-surgical patients (recent incision nearby)
Work can be done at distance from surgical site
- Clients who have tried massage without lasting relief
- Hospice & end-of-life comfort care
Profound nervous system settling with no contraindications
- Newborns & medically fragile infants

WHY CST REACHES WHAT MASSAGE CANNOT

The dural system

The meninges (brain and spinal cord lining) extend from skull to sacrum. Tension here cannot be addressed through muscle work.

Cranial bone mobility

Subtle movement between skull bones influences CSF flow and cranial nerve function. No massage technique addresses this.

CNS rhythm

The craniosacral rhythm (6–12 cycles/min) is the body's own signal. CST listens and responds to it rather than imposing force.

Somatic memory

Fascia and the nervous system encode the record of past trauma and injury. CST invites — never forces — that record to release.

This reference is intended for healthcare providers and informed clients. CST is a complement to medical care, not a substitute. Chaos to Clarity does not diagnose or treat medical conditions. Clients with serious medical concerns should consult their physician. CST is generally contraindicated in acute aneurysm, recent cranial fracture, or conditions where intracranial pressure changes are dangerous.

Chaos to Clarity LLC
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