



## BRACE YOURSELF:

### How Orthodontics Can Put A Strain On Your Whole Body

*by Cheryl Lombardi*

I would like to offer you some information and thoughts regarding orthodontics, which is tooth movement, and the practice of CranioSacral Therapy, which I have fallen in love with!

They have made great advances in technology overall and even in the field of orthodontics. Have you heard the latest? Retainers with computer chips that can tell how much your child has been wearing those retainers since the last visit to the orthodontist. Readouts that tell how compliant your child or you have been so that those teeth stay where they were put.

I have seen many mouths with braces. As a dental hygienist in practice for 32 years, I saw lots of bands and wires and appliances that accomplished the goal of making people's bites work better, their confidence improve with their new smiles, and some TMJ problems resolved. I also saw some TMJ problems come about after getting the braces off. Being a product of earlier treatment of orthodontics as a child, I needed major corrective orthodontics again in my 40's, including upper and lower jaw surgery. It did correct my bite, but did not solve all my TMJ problems. Soon afterward, I started pursuing alternative modalities, which led me to CranioSacral Therapy. It opened up my eyes to many new and exciting ideas about how this "miracle" body of ours works.

CranioSacral Therapy is body movement also. I listen to what people's bodies are saying with my hands and know when some bone or tissue area isn't performing to its potential.

I have come to understand that when one part of the body is under stress, it affects adjacent areas of the body, and they affect other connecting areas. Have you ever stubbed your toe and because you adjust the way you walk, your gait shifts, causing your knee, then your hip or the other leg to ache because of the shift your body has had to make? Well, we don't walk on our hands, but our head (cranial) bones can compensate for the movement that is being initiated in our mouth as well. I have had my hands on orthodontic clients and felt the strain and lack of optimum function. It may not be as obvious or even recognized, but headaches, TMJ discomfort, and even personality changes can happen as a result of the ongoing tension from orthodontics.

The cranial bones remind me of a jigsaw puzzle. If you change the position of one, the others won't fit the same. In changing the way the upper and lower jaw come together, you alter the connecting bones and tissues. CST helps the body and its tissues adjust to their new environment.

It can accomplish three things:

1. Provide less stress on the body
2. Reduce possible side effects like headaches and TMJ discomfort

3. If approached early enough, reduce the time in orthodontics or the need for traditional orthodontic treatment

One of my CST clients found she was having head and neck pain during orthodontic treatment. She found CST to be a relief while her teeth were being moved into different positions after 40 years.

Young people's bodies respond much quicker and easier to CST. I remember a dental patient of mine who brought her 5 year old twins in for checkups. One child had a normal dentition while the other had a severe misalignment on one side when he brought his teeth together. Responding to my question regarding an orthodontic consultation, she said when she told the doctor about how he needed physical therapy soon after birth due to torticollis, if that would contribute to his bite problem. The orthodontist didn't feel that was necessarily so. In CST, we look at all contributing factors for body struggles and approach the whole person life experiences.

Dr Gillespie was a dentist who was drawn to the healing profession of CST. He saw the effects of doing this work and is now working with others to help challenged children deal with chronic conditions at the Hope Center for Children in Plymouth Meeting, Pa. In attending a course taught by him to myself and the parents of these children, I heard many heart warming stories about their progress with his and other practitioners at the Center. They moved beyond the expectations of the medical community.

I am devoting time to promoting awareness through my own experiences to a holistic approach of treating adults and children. I believe any change that is made to the body physically affects the whole being. I hope to be able to assist in helping people's bodies achieve better health through the light touch of CST.

I have touched on different aspects of traditional orthodontics and advantages of CST. There are good reasons for getting orthodontics – creating a nice smile providing improved self esteem, establishing an easier way of chewing, and to help with TMJ discomfort. I would like to see more awareness in the whole body approach.