

the body eclectic

IT'S DURING OUR very first Rolwing session, as we are standing in a fluorescent-lit room in our underwear having our posture scrutinized, that we learn the first—and perhaps most important—rule of Rolwing: never turn up at an appointment wearing your leopard-print, rhinestone-encrusted thong. This isn't, we quickly realize, a spa. There is no Enya. No essential oils. No 12-wick candles. There is, however, a guy grunting loudly while lifting weights in the private gym in the next room and a white-haired man with a full beard sitting in front of us, grinning.

The man in question, Chuck Carpenter, boasts one of the best job titles we've ever heard of: certified advanced Rolfer (it's on his business card), and he is here to "structurally integrate" us. The practice of Rolwing (it's actually a nickname, the official term is "Rolwing Structural Integration") was started by Dr. Ida P. Rolf (!) in 1971 and concerns the reorganization of fascia, the body's connective tissues which surround all muscles, bones, nerves, and organs, by means of some very hands-on, and often very painful, pressure. Make no mistake, this is not a massage. It's so intense, in fact, that during the initial session, Carpenter asks us to imagine a "pain scale" ranging from one to 10 and to let him know if he ever goes above eight. As it turns out, eight is most certainly enough.

Also, it is advised that you get Rolfed (!) at least three times, no less than a week apart. Considering each session costs \$130–200, this particular brand of discomfort does not come cheap.

Why then, would two normal, relatively healthy people decide to do it? Well, one of us has an old, slight lower-back

when it comes to **rolwing**, we discover, it's no pain, no gain. by luke crisell and holly siegel. illustrated by fumi mini nakamura

problem that's been a bother for years. The other sits next to her in the office and decided to go along for a laugh. (Of course, the sessions are conducted separately—hopefully you can guess who was wearing the thong—but it was nice to drink away our pain and humiliation together afterwards.) Over the course of an hour, Carpenter performs wonders—the goal of the first session is to free the superficial fascia so that deeper muscle-work can be done. A favorite trick of his is to work on one half of the body (wow, does that man have some crazy-strong hands); then he makes you stand before him and points out how, for example, one of your arms is now hanging lower than the other or how one foot rests flatter on the floor. Beyond these short-term feats, though, Rolwing has some serious and highly valued benefits: a lot of Carpenter's clients are performers or athletes who are suffering from varying forms of Repetitive Strain Injury (RSI) and for whom massage is simply not enough. Not only can Rolwing make you more flexible, alleviate stress, and increase energy levels, it can recalibrate your whole body. Show us a spa that (really, truly, actually) does that.

After each session and lots of yelping "Chuck, that's an eight!" we immediately and surprisingly feel these benefits (we practically skip to the Oak Room afterwards), and after three visits, we are pretty certain an extended course of treatment would continue to yield positive results. Which is something to smile about.

physique57.com, hellskitchenrolwing.com

