

Entrainment and the cranial rhythmic impulse.

[McPartland JM](#), [Mein EA](#).

Vermont Alternative Medicine, Middlebury, USA.

Abstract

Entrainment is the integration or harmonization of oscillators. All organisms pulsate with myriad electrical and mechanical rhythms. Many of these rhythms emanate from synchronized pulsating cells (eg, pacemaker cells, cortical neurons). The cranial rhythmic impulse is an oscillation recognized by many bodywork practitioners, but the functional origin of this impulse remains uncertain. We propose that the cranial rhythmic impulse is the palpable perception of entrainment, a harmonic frequency that incorporates the rhythms of multiple biological oscillators. It is derived primarily from signals between the sympathetic and parasympathetic nervous systems. Entrainment also arises between organisms. The harmonizing of coupled oscillators into a single, dominant frequency is called frequency-selective entrainment. We propose that this phenomenon is the modus operandi of practitioners who use the cranial rhythmic impulse in craniosacral treatment. Dominant entrainment is enhanced by "centering," a technique practiced by many healers, for example, practitioners of Chinese, Tibetan, and Ayurvedic medicine. We explore the connections between centering, the cranial rhythmic impulse, and craniosacral treatment.