

## What Is Touch?

"The touch (Creation of Adam), as painted by Michelangelo, also exemplifies the meaning of innate."

Touch is essential to chiropractic. Touch is what we do best. Touch is the way we complete the connection between the chiropractor's innate and the patient's innate. Innate is that elusive yet permeating intelligent energy that is "everywhere if could but perceive."<sup>1</sup> Touch means so much.

### The Five Senses

Within the complex human structure we have what we call the five senses. They are:

Sight: The act or faculty of vision, a thing seen.

Sound: The effect produced on the organ of hearing by the vibrations of the air or other medium.

Smell: To perceive the odor or scent of through the stimuli affecting the olfactory nerves.

Taste: The peculiar sensation caused by the contact of soluble substances with the tongue.

Touch: The sense by which contact with objects gives evidence as to certain of their qualities.

We see the world in these five different ways, but it should be obvious to any intelligent person that these are five ways of feeling. All are based on one common sense: the sense of touch.<sup>2</sup> Touch is the most simple fundamental basis of our awareness of being alive.

### Touch Is a Very Important Sense

The eyes are very sensitive touch organs that are aware of diaphanous vibrations of light. We may not have sight, yet a human can function without sight. Without sight, a red tipped cane becomes an extension of the hand for the purpose of "feeling" for the uneven sidewalk, a post, a step or any other obstacle.

The ear drum receives the grossest vibrations. One may not be able to hear, yet survive. A deaf person can "hear" music by feeling the vibrations in their feet coming from the floor or by placing their hands on the speakers. Touch has assisted the unhearing with sign language; again the hand and the touch working in unison. Touch is not direct in this case, but by the usage of the instrument of touch, there is communication via the special configurations the fingers make.

And what if a person is both unsighted and deaf? If you've seen the "The Miracle Worker," you'll remember the scene in which Helen Keller (Patty Duke), being instructed by Ann Sullivan (Anne

Bancroft), finally realizes that she could now communicate. I still tear up when Helen runs around and touches everything, wanting to know the names, wanting all that input. It was all done with the hand, the touch, the feeling.

One may not have smell, yet survive. The chemical particles of frying bacon mix with the air touch the very fine processes of the olfactory receptors, and thus we perceive an odor. The chemicals touch the hair. We don't smell to confirm if our hearing aids are in place; we feel for them.

One may not have taste, yet survive. Life would certainly be less interesting if we could not taste food. Taste occurs when minute particles touch the taste buds. We then can perceive and differentiate the subtle differences of the four tastes: sweet, sour, bitter and salty. We don't taste to confirm if our checkbook is in our vest pocket; we feel.

Smell and taste are very closely integrated, as I am sure you'll agree and have experienced. I know that you have smelled something so strong that you actually "tasted" it.

If we don't have touch, we and our patients would have great trouble surviving. I vaguely remember a study about the marked differences in behavior of newborns who were stroked or touched, and those who weren't.

We are "touched" in our hearts by many things -- a rose, a sunset, a new born baby, or love, for example. We have all seen movies or personally experienced where the unsighted person feels the face of another person. We have all touched a loved one with a caress, a subtle squeeze of the hand or a gentle stroke. We have all held patients in compassion as they tell of the death of a loved one. We also have been touched by the joy of patients.

Where Did We Humans Get This Touch, and How Important Is it, Anyway?

Michelangelo painted the Creation of Adam on the ceiling of the Cistine Chapel, and then painted everything else around that one concept. The concept that a more powerful force "touched" man suggests that an energy came from an intelligence down to man through the sense of touch. Above-down, inside-out. Hmmm, I've heard that before. The Creation of Adam exemplifies the meaning of innate. The touch, as painted by Michelangelo, also exemplifies the meaning of innate.

So what really happens when we touch a patient? Are we a conduit for the energy of innate to reach the human? Do we complete the cycle of above-down, inside-out, then out-inside, down-up?

I remember from embryology class that the skin and the nervous system develop from the same tissue, the ectoderm. Is this just happenstance, evolution or design? Is touch the part of the continuum by which we are all connected?

Why do humans, perfect strangers included, want to touch the abdomen of a pregnant woman? Is it for good luck? Is it a sign of species continuation? Are we welcoming a new member to the cave, the clan? Or are we showing our appreciation of the miracle of the birth process? It is really all of the above, of course. Again, it is touch that binds man. It is by touch that intention is relayed. It is touch that recognizes the innate. It is touch that is the principal sense.

We touch our patients. MDs anesthetize them, which deadens the touch that they receive and perceive. It blocks innate. When patients are handed an Rx, that puts distance between you and the

patient, hence no touch. Without touch, there is no healing and no innate. No innate -- I can't even imagine that one.

We chiropractors, most of all, should realize the potential power of touch. We should also realize the fusion of man and innate. Indeed, touch means so much. I hope that I have touched you with this article. And, as a great friend and colleague says, "'nuff said."

### *References*

1. Moody Blues. "In Search of The Lost Chord."
2. Alan Watts, selected readings.

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