

## Working the outside leg lines with your feet - By Paul Fowler, RTT, LMT

When it comes to working with fascia (of which the IT band is entirely composed), it is best to work very slowly. According to John Barnes, founder of the Myo-facial release technique, it takes 90 – 120 seconds for fascia to even begin to let go and soften. This pose is a good example of how to slow down, relax your body while at the same time making profound changes in the fascia.

**To begin:** Sit comfortably, perpendicular to their leg. Your center should line up with their knee. Take a breath and relax your body.

**Your bottom (inferior) foot:** Although it basically remains where it is throughout this pose, your bottom foot is important as it keeps the foot/leg from rolling when you release the pressure from your top foot. When you are engaged into their IT band you do not need to have your bottom foot even touching them. But when you release your superior foot from their IT band, the leg wants to roll out. This is when I gently secure their foot so their leg doesn't roll out. That way, I don't lose the line that I am working on.

**Your top foot:** Walk your top foot up and down between the knee and the greater trochanter (the knob-like bone that signals the end of the IT band) slowly, getting them used to the touch and gently warming the line. You will find this will create a gentle rocking motion. As you are walking the foot up and down, pay attention to the relative tension of the IT band. Does it feel tighter or harder near the knee, in the middle or closer to the hip? After 3-5 times of walking the foot up and down, find a point just above the knee, maybe one that you noticed as being particularly tight, and stay there. Make sure that you feel connected to the tissue.



### Important details for a longer hold

- \* Place your foot flat against their leg
- \* Straighten your leg so you have full engagement
- \* Keep your foot relaxed and don't "push" into them
- \* Remain for a minute and then assess further

If you don't know your client very well or even if you do, you can ask them to tell you where their pain level is. I find that using a scale of 1-10 is helpful. I let them know in advance so that they can just give me a number when I ask. If it is below a 6, I know I need to engage more. If it is 8 or above, I know I need to ease up a bit. I find that a 6 or 7 is a good place to be for most people.

### If your client needs more pressure, here are some options:

- \* Lean your shoulders slightly toward the recipient. This action will bring the *hara* forward and it will connect to your foot. This way you can give more pressure without "pushing" your foot into them.
- \* Use the outer edge of your foot. This concentrates your pressure into a smaller area and has the effect of increasing pressure.
- \* Use your heel. This is usually too strong for many, though for larger recipients, it might be exactly what they need. Make sure you engage the heel on line 2, not line 3.

### Taking time, going deeper

After working for a while, you will find where the IT band is tight and tender. You will also find where their pain threshold is. Compress three or four points up the leg and then down the leg. At a minute or two for each point, you may spend between 6 and 15 minutes here. The time you spend here can be valuable for your client because it takes so much time to get the IT band to truly release. But once it does, it can benefit the knee, the hip and potentially the entire fascial train.

