

# True Tales

## Bowenwork for Migraine Relief

A 66-year-old woman suffering from debilitating migraines since the age of nine had already seen some success with Bowenwork when she was referred to Sandra Gustafson. “She presented with a longstanding history of migraine—three to four episodes per week—that didn’t respond to medical treatment,” Gustafson says. “Additionally, she’d had two car accidents that resulted in thoracic outlet syndrome, cervical spine and jaw injuries, and severe neck pain.”

The client described the migraine pain as starting in her right mid-back, progressing to her neck, head and into her right eye, with accompanying right arm and thumb pain.

“She reported self-medicating with between 10 and 12 Ibuprofen daily, applying ice packs to her forehead and neck, and lying down in a quiet, darkened space until symptoms abated,” Gustafson explains. “The frequency and intensity of these episodes limited her activities of daily living, **as well as her quality of life. So, she was eager to find relief.**”



### THE PLAN

As a gentle, soft-tissue relaxation technique, Bowenwork is helpful for many musculoskeletal problems, stress reduction, and acute and chronic pain relief, according to Gustafson. “I initially recommended trying three Bowenwork sessions,” she explains. “Each session was approximately 45 to 50 minutes long, one week apart.”

Sessions consisted of core Bowenwork procedures for the lower back, upper back and neck. More focused work addressing the soft tissues of the head and neck was also done. “On assessment in each session, the client often complained of additional pain in the lower- and mid-back, feet and right thumb,” Gustafson adds. “So, procedures for those areas were used intermittently, as indicated.”

Between sessions, Gustafson encouraged the client to walk daily, when possible, limit overexertion when doing gardening or household activities, and not sit for prolonged periods in front of her computer.



### THE RESULTS

Outcomes were gauged using the Measure Yourself Medical Outcome Profile version 2, which is a patient-centered assessment tool designed to measure perceived changes in symptoms, quality of life and activities of daily living.

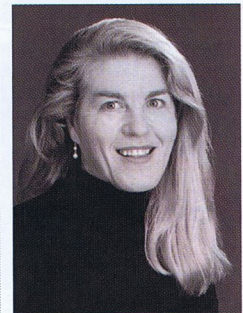
“After the first, second and third session, **the client noted a significant decrease in her symptoms, particularly in neck pain.** She also reported using less Ibuprofen,” Gustafson explains.

BOTH THE CLIENT AND GUSTAFSON WERE ENCOURAGED BY THESE RESULTS, AND SO DECIDED TO CONTINUE WORKING TOGETHER FOR A TOTAL OF 14 SESSIONS.

“By session 13, she reported being free of neck pain and migraines, as well as improved quality of life and activities of daily living. She also wasn’t using Ibuprofen any longer,” Gustafson says. “**At the final session, four months after we started working together, the client remained migraine and neck-pain free.**”

### WORDS OF WISDOM

Especially for people seeking relief from chronic pain, Gustafson advises moving slowly. “It can be very challenging for practitioners to find a balance between applying massage therapy techniques and not aggravating symptoms,” she says. ■



Sandra Gustafson is a registered nurse and Bowenwork practitioner in Santa Rosa, California. She was the 2014 Bronze Award winner in the Massage Therapy Foundation’s Practitioner Case Report Contest for “Bowenwork for Migraine—Is it All in the Head?”