

Craniosacral Therapy and Tinnitus

By Julian Cowan Hill R.C.S.T.

This section is dedicated to Tinnitus with the clear message that there is something you can do about it! Julian Cowan Hill explains how to let go of tinnitus, having relieved his own symptoms and those of many of his clients.

Tinnitus commonly appears after an intense or long-term period of exertion, excitement, stress, challenge or change. Consequently most people start noticing symptoms after a period of stress, losing a loved one, an operation, working overseas, taking drugs, a long legal battle, etc. (download the paper on tinnitus for more details at the end of the section).

Challenges like these cause your nervous system to go into an adrenal state of red-alert, known as “fight or flight.” This makes your nervous system hypersensitive and causes dramatic changes throughout your body. The way you hear changes radically too. Whether it is skiing, stress, anger, casual sex, exhaustion, or emotional upset, adrenal situations make your ears ultrasensitive giving rise to tinnitus.

To demonstrate this shift in auditory perception, do you remember the last time you woke up in the middle of the night, after a nightmare? There you are breaking out in a sweat with your heart thumping away. You think you can hear someone outside your door. You're frightened. Suddenly there is a creak on the landing. You jump out of your skin.

In this fearful state the tiniest sound like a creak doesn't sound tiny at all, and causes a big reaction. Even though the noise is feint, you perceive it as loud, and it causes your system to jump, breathing to quicken, mind to start racing, etc. This vital survival mechanism can literally save your life. Imagine if it had been a murderer with a knife out on the landing, being able to hear him/her meant you could prepare to fight or take off at top speed in the opposite direction. Your nervous system was doing what it has evolved to do, keep you alive. If there is any danger you need to know about it. That's why in certain situations your hearing needs to become ultra-sensitive, and can be a vital life-saver.

However, everyday things can cause a stress response to occur, such as having a depressing bank balance, or worrying about your next door neighbour. Unlike the noise in the night, these stressors can last months and years, and can eventually lock you into an oversensitive state for much longer.

In this state, ears not only pick up external noise, but now, because they are registering more than normal, they start hearing the nervous impulses along the auditory nerve inside your head. In most cases, tinnitus is nothing more than hearing the noises of your nervous system. It results from hypersensitivity listening in to the inner world of the nervous system. You have become so reactive that you have begun to monitor the background nervous impulses that normally are ignored. People with tinnitus often

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spend months or years in a heightened state of nervous arousal, so that eventually their hearing becomes so sensitive they end up listening to nervous impulses all the time.

So how do you help tinnitus?

Your nervous system needs to come out of "fight or flight mode" and switch off. It needs to feel that there is no danger in the outside or inner world and that there is nothing to worry about. In a nutshell, your system needs to feel safe and secure, without too much stimulation and able to manage what comes its way. When you achieve this, your hypersensitivity will return to normal so you will stop picking up impulses inside your head.

As people let go of tinnitus, what usually happens is that, first you will stop reacting negatively to the tinnitus, ie it will stop getting to you so much. Then you will start forgetting about it, and eventually it will start to subside. It will become easier and easier to pay less attention to it, which is what will allow it to fade into insignificance.

The way to do this depends on what put your nervous system into an overamped state in the first place. The most common culprit is unresolved shock and trauma in your system from an operation, crash, upheaval etc. which will need to be addressed directly with treatment. For more details go to the shock and trauma section. Unfortunately, many people don't recognise that they are in a traumatised state, and stay locked in it for decades. This creates perfect conditions for tinnitus to appear.

Whatever the cause, it will be important to teach yourself to feel your body again, and become aware of where the stress and tension is holding on. You probably cannot relax properly at the moment because you only have a limited sense of what is going on below the neck. If you don't know what's going on in your body, how can you let go of it? Craniosacral Therapy helps you get in touch much more thoroughly so that you can let go and release subconscious tension. It teaches you how to divert the focus away from thinking and into feeling. This is not about generating thoughts in your head, its about lying back and letting the information come from your body back to your head. See the awareness building exercise download below and try it out. Its also quite interesting to try this technique out after you have had a session and notice how things feel different.

Most tinnitus people need a few sessions of Craniosacral Therapy just to start being able to feel again. Chronic stress and overwhelming situations are very good at shutting down the nervous system so that you cannot feel much at all. Part of treating tinnitus comes with opening up your nervous system again so numb areas in your body are replaced with feeling.

Craniosacral therapy is one of the best treatments for easing you out of this heightened state of red-alert, and helping you reconnect with your body. As you start to let go of all the years of built-up overwhelm in your system, you start to feel lighter, carry less baggage and as a result your level of hypersensitivity gradually reverts back to normal. This sends tinnitus on its voyage back to oblivion.

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Julian Cowan Hill had tinnitus for 16 years himself before it became severe. He knows what it is like to live through the nightmare state of hyperarousal. A course of regular Craniosacral Therapy gradually transformed his own tinnitus to the state it is today – almost imperceptible. It is there but he has to really concentrate in a quiet place to notice it.

He has worked on over 250 people with tinnitus and has gained a lot of experience patterns of behaviour that accompany tinnitus. People in a state of red-alert generally feel a bit driven and unsettled, and as a result are often impatient and unable to follow things through properly. For this reason Julian asks tinnitus people to commit to at least 6 treatments. This allows time for you to actually start feeling the benefit. One session is rarely enough to cause any long-lasting changes.

Please note Craniosacral Therapy tends to work gradually. This is not a quick fix. Most importantly, if you are a person who likes pushing yourself to the limits drinking a lot of alcohol, coffee, driving 150 miles for a game of golf, running two businesses in your spare time, worrying about and looking after everyone else except yourself, then your nervous system is unlikely to let go. Julian can help you each time you see him but he cannot change the way you treat your nervous system in between sessions! If you really want to let go of your tinnitus do follow some of the guidelines on how to manage your tinnitus at the end of the paper on tinnitus, below.

How to Improve your Tinnitus by Reducing Adrenaline
By Julian Cowan Hill R.C.S.T

What is tinnitus?

Most people get tinnitus if you put them into total silence! Heller and Bergman proved this back in 1953 when they found 93% of people taking part in a test reported hearing noises, even though they were in total silence.

Ears work all the time and only relax as long as they have latched onto a harmless background noise. So if you put people in silence, their ears will listen out harder and harder until they find something else to pick up. If there is nothing there, ie silence, most people's sense of hearing will intensify until it becomes so sensitive, it starts picking up internal nervous information. That's what tinnitus is- hypersensitive listening that detects the noises of the brain. Your ears have become too sensitive.

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If you have tinnitus, the first message is to AVOID SILENCE. It activates a stress response in your system, and increases your internal auditory sensitivity.

So why are you listening constantly to your tinnitus when most of the population is blissfully unaware of it? Why has your hearing become too sensitive and latched onto the noises of your brain?

The answer is because, behind the scenes, your central nervous system is idling in a constant state of red-alert. For some reason your whole system has locked itself into a state of emergency, as if it senses that there is some threat or danger there all the time, even though you know mentally that things are OK. Adrenaline* is the hormone that keeps your system locked into this state. (NB I use the term adrenaline to refer to a group of hormones released by the adrenal glands, eg cortisol, adrenaline, noradrenaline, etc.)

Below I will explain how your system gets into this state in the first place and how to recognise this pattern in yourself. The key to understanding tinnitus is adrenaline. If you have high levels of adrenaline coursing through your body, this prepares you for emergency. Your heart beats faster, your oxygen intake goes up, your senses become alert and specifically for tinnitus, your sense of hearing becomes acute.

On adrenaline you become much more reactive to the world around you and are constantly ready for action. The adrenal/stress response is purely and simply a survival mechanism that has evolved into our nervous system. When danger appears, we don't have to think about it, we just automatically go into emergency mode, or the "fight or flight" response as it is called. To get out of danger we need to see, smell, feel and hear the slightest thing at lightening speed because it can save our lives. When the lion appears, if we notice it in time we can run away!

Tinnitus is bound up with this response. This is why most people start complaining about noises in the head after periods of high levels of adrenaline. (More later) Too much adrenaline over a long period of time gives you tinnitus.

Listening sensitivity can be heightened by other things too. If you are hard of hearing or deaf, every time you strain to hear you are heightening your sensitivity. As you can no longer get enough information from the external world, your brain tries harder to increase its receptivity by turning up the inner recording volume. This is why many people with hearing loss often experience tinnitus.

Tinnitus reminds me of an old fashioned tape-recorder when you set the recording volume too high. As a result, you not only hear the intended noise, but you also pick up masses of buzzing and humming coming from the machine itself. Tinnitus is where you hear the noises of the brain on top of sounds coming in from the outside world.

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For those of you who are deaf, don't strain to hear. This only makes your listening even more sensitive and prone to tinnitus. Get the appropriate hearing apparatus so your internal hearing sensitivity can relax and calm down.

You can also make your ears sensitive by sticking things down them. Because they are one of the most delicate parts of the body, just thinking about a doctor sticking a cold, metal implement down there can make you wince. If you have experienced syringing, you don't need me to tell you how hyper-aware your ears become as you monitor every tiny movement and feeling. Even though you trust the doctor, a part of you becomes very wary. You feel every movement, and hear the tiniest noise. This intense focus is ideal for generating tinnitus sensitivity. So avoid physical contact with the ear canal as much as possible.

How to get tinnitus!

I was the perfect candidate for developing very severe tinnitus. My childhood was full of stress, ear-infections, grommets, antibiotics and hearing loss. By adulthood I was moderately deaf, straining to hear as a result. Further stress and the onset of candidiasis (from the antibiotics) made things worse. I had my ears syringed a couple of times and used to use cotton buds to clean them. (NB Earwax is the very antiseptic substance needed to protect your ears from infections!) On top of that I drank stimulants like coffee and alcohol that sent my adrenaline levels into orbit, thus heightening my sensitivity. Every one of these factors contributed to developing tinnitus. There are many other factors that contribute, not mentioned here.

I converted my own tinnitus from a devastating, sleep-disturbing level to almost imperceptible and irrelevant one by reducing all the factors that have led to hypersensitivity. I have reduced stimulants, and a couple of years of craniosacral therapy have helped stabilise my adrenaline levels. If you can reduce your adrenaline levels you will be well on your way to mastering your own tinnitus.

Rather than wait for a magic pill to arrive, (I wish the researchers every success), I have got on with letting go of the tinnitus pattern with a great deal of success. I have learnt, after 20 years of personal experience, how to undo this pattern. This is why I want to share this with you. I know what it is like to be bugged all the time by noise.

Why is adrenaline so important to undoing tinnitus?

Adrenaline helps us survive in dangerous situations. As I mentioned above, a heightened sense of hearing will very often save our lives. Think of a shooting scene in an action film. The villain is just out of sight. He's got a gun. The hero is bracing himself for attack. All the loud music has suddenly gone quiet. All we can hear is breathing. Everyone in the cinema is listening to the tiniest sound. A crunch of gravel under foot, a sudden gasp just out of sight. The film direction is imitating exactly what happens to our

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own perception under stress. Our focus intensifies and locks onto the slightest piece of information.

Suddenly the villain knocks into something. Everyone in the cinema jumps out of their skin. The hero in a split second, on the strength of this tiny piece of auditory information, will either attack or run for his life. His ears will literally determine whether he lives or dies. This is the classic fight or flight response of the nervous system that is hardwired into each one of us. It has survived millions of years of dangerous situations to create the body you are alive in right now. It is this survival response that causes you to start tensing up with suspense as you watch the film. The adrenaline makes your ears hyper-vigilant.

The best way to make a film less scary is to turn off the sound. Your ears play an enormous part in the stress response. Stress plays an enormous role in the way you hearing. This explains how you can fall asleep in the middle of a noisy party one day, and yet be woken up by a feint tap at the window in the middle of the night.

Research shows that acute stress and adrenaline can literally divert blood flow from the cochlea and make you deaf! At a minute level, the expression “too much sex makes you deaf” is certainly true if you indulge in highly exciting, adrenal charged interactions!

Adrenaline causes you to become sensitive to nervous impulses that you normally would not pick up. This is the inescapable fact that everyone with tinnitus needs to understand. I have yet to meet someone with tinnitus who is not running on high adrenaline levels.

If your adrenaline levels drop, your sensory perception will become less acute, and your tinnitus will ease.

What Tinnitus People Have in Common

Analysing the case histories of over 200 people, tinnitus is closely linked to an “adrenal” lifestyle, and emerges shortly after dangerous, challenging or overstimulating events. I have written a list below of the common situations in life where tinnitus tends to emerge.

Think about your life. When did you first notice tinnitus? Which of the following situations was the trigger for your tinnitus?

- Physical trauma, e.g. car crash, broken bones
- ‘Upheaval’ in your personal life, e.g. splitting up, divorce
- Spending time abroad in unfamiliar surroundings
- War, fighting, struggle or combat of any kind- court cases
- Surgical procedures and/or anaesthetics
- Major dental intervention
- Frequent/persistent drug use – recreational or medical (particularly aspirin, amiltryptaline and

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commonly prescribed benzodiazepines)

Hearing loss, ear infections or syringing

A severe impact to the head or jaw problems

Chronic worrying

Motherhood stress- listening out for a baby crying for months on end

Overwork, tiredness, exhaustion

Extreme physical exertion, too much exercise etc.

Too much excitement or stimulation

Consider that symptoms may appear months after the challenging situation...

Tinnitus is a symptom that your nervous system is overexerted. The alarm bells are ringing for a reason. Take away the reasons and your alarm bells will stop ringing. If you get a pill which switches off the alarm bells, this is as useful as putting a muffler over a burglar alarm. Its great for not hearing the alarm, but what about the problems in the first place that are causing the alarm to ring? Tinnitus often won't let go of you until you let go of some major patterns in your life. I can help you discover how you are holding onto patterns of imbalance and help you let go of them. However if you continue to drive your life in the adrenal lane then you will have to continue to live with your tinnitus for the time being!

How adrenal are you?

The best way to start helping yourself is by recognising all the tell-tale signs that things are not happy or comfortable behind the scenes with your central nervous system. Clients are not usually aware of how hyped-up they are. Becoming aware of this is very important.

Tick how many of the following adrenal symptoms apply to you:

Wake up early feeling groggy and not refreshed

Wake up frequently during the night

Burn brightly outwardly, but you are constantly tired inside

Easily activated, irritable, reactive, oversensitive

Impatient

Easily distracted

Cerebral and analytical

Prone to anxiety

Controlling

Driven, over-ambitious, always do too much, action orientated

Tend to bite off more than you can chew

Short-tempered

Sensitive digestive system, bowel movements from one extreme to another

Crave sugar, or need sugar boosts throughout the day

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Sensitive or Dependent on stimulants like coffee, alcohol, chocolate
Run at high speed - deadlines dominate
Always on the go - get bored easily - can't bear 'nothing to do'
Never satisfied: "grass is greener"
Doing too much for no apparent reason – hate being "left out"
Never have enough time
Poor circulation in extremities
Stiff neck and shoulders - tingling hands and wrists
Low energy and tired – crave mindless distraction
Keep on going, collapse in a heap, out like a light
Poor sleeper – should have had a sleep during in the day

Does this sound like you? If some of these resonate with you, then you are likely to be highly adrenal, and will need help to let go with cranial work. At first it is much easier to let go with someone else's help.

How do you reduce your adrenaline level?

Most people with tinnitus have a system in overwhelm. By that I mean, at some stage along the line, their life experiences have been too much for their nervous system to cope with. This experience doesn't just vanish into thin air. It gets stored up in the nervous system as "shock". Unresolved shock and trauma from overwhelming past experience is the most common cause of high adrenaline levels/tinnitus in all my patients.

In any overwhelming situation the central nervous system invests a lot of energy in managing 'traumatic history'. It could be something that happened in childhood, it could be a car crash five years ago. You won't be aware of this because patterns of shock and trauma are managed at a subconscious level. The way you feel will be normal to you.

In fact most people feel more or less OK. Our nervous systems do a very good job of managing unprocessed trauma in the background. You may have an easy life, and yet still have adrenal symptoms outlined in the list above. You may just have moderate to low energy or the odd nightmare, or some inoffensive symptom, but there is still a sense of not being quite right.

Cranial contact can help develop your sensitivity and put you in touch with what is going on behind the scenes. A common symptom of trauma is that people will not be able to feel certain parts of their body. They may develop hot and cold areas, numbness, tingling, or a sense of expanding and contracting. Sometimes they can feel very disconnected or shaky.

The moment you slow down, and start paying attention to how your body feels, this is where transformation can take place.

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It is vital for you to get in touch with the felt sense of your body. You need to stop spending so much time in your thoughts, analysing everything, and start learning to feel. Most tinnitus people are out of touch with their bodies which is the only place where stress etc. can be discharged from.

At first it can be a challenge to slow down sufficiently to feel what is really going on inside. To let go of your tinnitus start focussing more closely on how you feel. Cranial work is excellent at putting people back in touch with how they feel.

When you release a pattern of trauma this can relieve the need to be pumping so much adrenaline into your system. In turn this can lead ultimately to switching the alarm bells off!

Cranial work is one of the best ways of getting in touch with how you really are. You can build up the sense of internal security and comfort in your nervous system. As each pattern is digested and processed freely by the nervous system, you become more able to just be who you are without needing to process so much in the background.

Your alarm bells are ringing. Your body is trying to get you to listen to it. You can't let go of what you don't know about!

Advice on how to manage your tinnitus

Reduce stimulants like coffee, chocolate, tea & alcohol. These all raise your adrenaline levels – and therefore make you more sensitive to tinnitus!

Use craniosacral therapy as a means of monitoring your own process and getting in touch with what you need to let go of.

Start becoming aware of physical sensations and emotions in your body by learning yoga, meditation, tai chi etc. Try and get out of the thinking part of your brain, and connect with the information your body is giving you, ie the feeling part of your brain. Tinnitus people tend to be very out of touch with this.

Bring in as much peace, comfort and physical relaxation into your life. Put your central nervous system first for a change. If your tinnitus is bad, do something to relax yourself, and take your focus away from it.

Take responsibility for your own symptoms. Start being honest and use your tinnitus as a "healthometer". It will soon tell you if you are doing the right thing because it will calm down.

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Take a long-term view. Don't expect to change the way you are overnight.

Avoid silence or anything that makes you focus on your hearing in a negative way. Listen to pleasant sounds.

Start becoming aware of your adrenaline levels. Learn to lower it and you will be well on your way to improving your health overall, as well as your tinnitus.

Be wary of complaining about tinnitus with others. Grumbling only strengthens the emotional grip tinnitus has over you and can heighten your sensitivity to it. Whenever you catch yourself grumbling, replace it with a constructive relaxation exercise.

<http://www.cst.eu.com/tinnitus.html>