



*Trager*® Psychophysical Integration and *Mentastics*® movement education, more generally known as "The *Trager Approach*," is the discovery of Milton Trager M.D., who first encountered its principles somewhat serendipitously, at the age of 18. He then spent the next 50 years, as a lay practitioner and later, as a medical doctor, refining and expanding his discovery. With a long and successful career as a therapist behind him, Milton Trager embarked on the new venture of teaching his work at an age when most others are thinking of retirement. There are now thousands of Certified Practitioners throughout the globe; in the United States, Canada, Europe, Australia, and Japan. He passed away in January 1997, at the age of 88, after over 20 years of teaching others his innovative approach to movement education.

Born in Chicago, in 1908, with a congenital spinal deformity, Milton Trager overcame a weak and rather sickly childhood through practice and patience, until he achieved the athletic, graceful body of a dancer and gymnast. In his late teens his family had moved to Miami Beach and he was training to be a boxer. His trainer, Mickey Martin, used to give him a rub down after each boxing session. One day, when Mickey was looking particularly tired, young Milton offered to do it on him. The trainer was astonished at what he felt from the young man's hands. Milton, surprised and encouraged at the result achieved, went home and applied it to his father who had been suffering from sciatica, a chronic complaint that cleared up after two sessions from Milton.

So began the exploration that lasted a lifetime. Milton would apply his approach with everyone who was open to experiencing it. People with emphysema, asthma, multiple sclerosis, muscular dystrophy, polio and thousands of painful backs--all responded to his touch with degrees of benefit ranging from greater ease to the miraculous. Early on in his development, Milton applied his approach to a friend of his who was 19 at the time, with polio, and confined to a wheelchair. Milton's approach helped him walk again after four years of paralysis.

And yet Milton always denied that he was a healer. His favorite comment was "I have this thing and it works...". He would always add, "We're all healers". Dr. Trager was no stranger to challenge and determination, having surmounted obstacles both physically and educationally, that would have seemed daunting to many of us. Years of working with people with all kinds of neuro-muscular complaints convinced him that he had something to offer the medical profession, and after the Second World War, he applied to seventy medical schools in the United States, but was refused by all of them because of his age (42). Dr. Trager says of this time, "My big aim was to teach registered physical therapists my work, because of the results I was getting in comparison with the results they were getting." He persevered and was accepted into the Universidad Autonoma de Guadalajara in Mexico, not knowing a word of Spanish at that time! They set up a clinic for him to continue his work in psychophysical integration, and six years later in 1955, he received his M.D.

Milton continued to work with clients within his practice for the next 20 years. He was frustrated that it had never been possible for him to teach his work, until he was invited to Esalen Institute in Big Sur, California, to give a demonstration. Betty Fuller (who was also instrumental in bringing Moshe Feldenkrais to th



e United States) was teaching at Esalen at the time and having tremendous problems with her

neck. Milton offered to see what he could do for her neck, and after a few minutes her neck was no longer in pain. Betty was instantly "hooked", and went on to co-found with Dr. Trager The Trager Institute in 1980. Shortly thereafter a certification program was established to train and certify people in his approach.

Forty years after Milton's determined efforts to reach the medical profession, he was gratified by the interest of an increasing number of holistically-minded doctors, nurses and physical therapists who make use of the *Trager Approach* in their practices.

For a more comprehensive history of Dr. Trager and his life, see the biography entitled "Moving Medicine", by Jack Liskin. The book is available from the United States *Trager Association*.