

The language our hands speak

Hilary Taglio

'One day, when our adjusting days are over, may the language our hands spoke continue to be heard in the lives of those they touched'

Introduction

Is it possible to know a man you have never met? Many of us have never met Dr Gonstead, yet in many ways we know him. We know him because the language of his hands is still spoken.

It has been passed from one doctor to another, from one generation to the next. Every adjustment we deliver carries something that is not entirely our own, but our hands speak a language shaped by those who came before us and refined by our experiences and the lives we have lived.

... Gonstead's hands no longer adjust, yet the language they spoke has never fallen silent ...'

Our hands speak for us

We often think we adjust with our hands, but perhaps we also adjust with who we are and the people we have become through the years. We all can remember the moment an adjustment changed us. We remember the hands that taught us, the doctors who believed in us, the mentor who critiqued our technique and corrected our analysis and the memorable adjustments we received. Those experiences became embedded within us.

We did not necessarily consciously copy them, but over the years, we were formed by them. Our hands remember and reveal what has formed us. We have inherited not only Gonstead's teachings, but the wisdom of every doctor who carried them forward. We did not invent any of it, we had the fortune of inheriting it. The art of Gonstead Chiropractic is not just preserved in books or seminars but through the embodied knowledge passed from one pair of hands to another. Our patients receive



far more than the skill of one doctor; they receive the accumulated knowledge of the doctors who helped shape us. This is not in a mystical or sentimental way, but in a tangible way. Our hands simply reveal what years of study and practice have formed within us.

Knowledge isn't merely learned; it becomes a part of us. Our experiences have not only shaped our minds, but they have also shaped our hands, eyes, ears, and our character. We have each been influenced and inspired by teachers and doctors who have left great impressions on us.

Why is it that I can still feel the first life-changing Gonstead adjustment I was ever given by Claudia Anrig? I doubt she remembers that day. To her, it may have been an ordinary Monday morning. Was she aware at that moment that her hands would dramatically change my life, or was she just doing what she does every day, adjusting with intention, focus, specificity, and love?

Our patients listen to our hands

Why is it that I can still feel Dr Charles Nelson's powerful knee chest adjustment? This was one of the most memorable adjustments I have ever received, an adjustment that I still try to emulate. Why do I still remember the perfectly precise scaphoid adjustments Jason Thornton delivered to my wrist after a bike accident, the adjustments that made it possible for me to return to practice? What is it that makes me still remember Dr. Richard Thornton's incredibly soft, gentle hands and the immense trust I felt when receiving an adjustment from him? Why could I relax for an upper thoracic chair adjustment with him but few others? What made his hands trustworthy? It wasn't Dr Thornton's credentials or his reputation, it was a presence about him, a gentle confidence, knowledge, and art that was beautifully expressed in how he adjusted.

Why do some adjustments stay within us for decades? What exactly are we transmitting, is it technique? Is it confidence? Compassion? Presence? Not only do our hands tell our story, but they communicate something each time we touch a patient. Long before an adjustment is delivered, our patients are already reading our hands. Patients cannot explain why they trust one doctor immediately and another only after months of care, yet we have all observed this. We may introduce ourselves to our patients, but our hands are truly what acquaint us. There are doctors whose hands are technically gifted but hurried. A hurried doctor cannot fake calm. There are hands that are confident but aggressive and rough. There are hands that are uncertain and weak. An arrogant doctor cannot mimic humility. An inattentive doctor cannot pretend to be present. Some hands are able to communicate safety and trust before they ever deliver an adjustment.

What are your hands conveying when you place them on your patient?

Technique and character

Technique eventually exposes character. Great doctors don't simply develop skilled hands; they become people whose character, curiosity, gentleness, and pursuit of excellence are so deeply formed that those qualities become inseparable from the way they touch their patients. The language of our hands continues to be refined on ordinary Tuesday afternoons, when no one is watching. It is refined in the moments when we choose to slow down, study an x-ray a little closer instead of making assumptions, to listen to a patient a little longer, and serve them with the same focus and intention we did on the first day we fell in love with chiropractic. Our patients may never know about those quiet decisions and may forget the specifics of an adjustment, but they never forget how our hands made them feel.

Gonstead's hands no longer adjust, yet the language they spoke has never fallen silent. It continues whenever we experience successes and failures, whenever we search harder for answers when it seems like we've done everything, or when we place careful hands on a patient with humility and

intention. Dr Gonstead was formed by his patients and every case shaped and taught him. Every adjustment shapes not only the person on the table, but the doctor standing beside it, like iron sharpening iron. Every successful result, every patient not responding to care as expected, every missed or corrected listing, every ordinary Tuesday afternoon ... all of it forms and develops us to be better for the next patient we care for.

While we are always working to perfect our hands, consider that we should also be continually forming the person behind those hands, being the doctors whose hands carry integrity as faithfully as they carry expertise. The language of our hands isn't fixed; it is still being written every day we are in practice. Our greatest work is not only in the adjustments we deliver but who we have become while learning to deliver them. Spoken languages have their own accent. An accent reveals something about where a language was learned. Perhaps our hands are no different. Our teachers and experiences don't take away our individuality. They become part of the "accent" our hands carry. With time, that language becomes unmistakably our own, yet still bears echoes of those who taught us. Our patients may never know the doctors who influenced our lives and all that went into the shaping of our hands, yet every time we serve them and deliver the best adjustment, we know how to give, a piece of those doctors and Dr. Gonstead lives on

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About

Dr. Hilary Taglio graduated from Life Chiropractic College West in 2002 and also holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Kinesiology/Exercise Physiology. While attending Life West, she was heavily involved with the Gonstead club, serving as an officer during most of her time there.

After graduation, she moved to Roseville with her husband, Lane, to begin practice and start a family. She became the mother of 2 amazing sons, and they are her biggest joy and blessing in life.

She earned her Gonstead Diplomat with the Gonstead Clinical Studies Society in 2017 and has gone on multiple Chiropractic mission trips and continues to do service/mission trips yearly with her family.

During her free time, she enjoys traveling with her family, cycling, gardening, and playing the piano. The results she has seen using the Gonstead technique in practice have reaffirmed her long-standing commitment to mastering it.

