



Massage Works

by Shoshanna Katzman, L.Ac., M.S

Anyone that has received therapeutic massage on a regular basis knows how powerful it is for helping them feel better. After all, massage provides a quiet time to relax and unwind, while increasing blood circulation, releasing tight tender spots, relieving pain and alleviating stress. In addition, a massage therapist can work on the whole body or target problem areas – with depth of pressure varying depending on one’s individual needs and preferences.

Therapeutic massage can be thought of as a way for maintaining a physical body that is filled with free movement along with an ever-present tranquil mind. This is much needed considering the highly stressful world we live in today. Unfortunately, stress is an inescapable part of life. It is important to find modalities such as massage to soften potentially negative impact of high levels of stress and tension

within the body, mind and spirit.

In fact, research shows that more than 90 percent of illness has its roots in stress. Fortunately, research is substantiating that therapeutic massage provides mental health benefits – including less anxious thoughts and feelings, reduced fight-or-flight reactions, increased calm and reduced mental tension. The positive impact that massage has for decreasing physical and emotional stress is indisputable – just ask a massage enthusiast and they will most certainly agree.

Furthermore, clinical trials being done through the National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health suggest that massage can help relieve depression and may be a viable method to be included in an overall medical treatment plan. This follows the common belief that the experience of touch serves to release hormones associated with a sense of

emotional connection – one that improves mood and calms the mind, while ameliorating physical aches and pains.

Therapeutic massage is thus a much needed remedy, as pain is the most common reason that Americans are seeking health care. According to chair of the Mayo Clinic’s Opioid Stewardship Program Halena Gazelka, M.D., pain is the most common cause of long-term disability. She further states: “Pain affects more Americans than diabetes, heart disease and cancer combined” and that “An estimated 50 million Americans suffer from chronic pain, and for some 20 million, pain significantly impacts their life.”

Massage received by itself or combined with acupuncture treatments provide a significant decrease in pain levels, with benefits increased through their promotion of a calm and rested state of being. As such, massage has been an integral part of numerous Chinese medicine practices in China for over 3,000 years. Of course, one should always consult their physicians for their conditions prior to seeking help from therapeutic massage.

Therapeutic massage is much different than what is typically referred to as “fluff massage” as it is sought as a way

to work through problem areas, rather than a form of pampering. This is because therapeutic massage works on a deeper level as it targets individual muscle groups and connective tissues. Many types of therapeutic massage are available, with the most common forms being deep tissue, myofascial release, trigger point, sports massage and neuromuscular therapy. Most of these modalities are combined with Swedish massage which is known for its long and flowing strokes to soothe the musculature and circulatory system. Each of these methods works by manipulating the muscles through kneading, rubbing, pressing, or tapping.



Many times, a massage therapist will also perform passive stretching of the body – leading to increased flexibility and blood circulation in addition to reducing stiffness and rigidity, which is often at the root of pain and limitation of movement.

It is common for massage to be provided in a healing and tranquil atmosphere, often with the addition of aromatherapy oils and quiet music. The massage experience provides a safe and nurturing place to totally let go and de-compress. It helps one to re-focus and start anew. It is great for people of all ages and is an excellent way to say thank you to one’s body for all it does. Make the time to get a massage and feel the deep sigh of relief that comes from having made the choice to take care oneself in a much needed way – allowing your mind-body connection to soar to its best and highest place.

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