

Bodywork Sampler

Ten Types of Somatic Methods, All Awaiting You

Nora Brunner

A rich garden of bodywork exists, to benefit you at the different ages and stages of your life. Getting the advice of your massage therapist, doing some research on www.massagetherapy.com, and seeking methods to which you are intuitively drawn are your best guides to finding what works for your body and spirit. No need to wait for a medical problem or a new high on the stress-o-meter to get on the table and into the hands of your massage and bodywork therapist.

1. SWEDISH MASSAGE

This technique is typically the starting point for most massage training and client receiving. It involves five kinds of touching and is delivered to soft tissues

2. DEEP TISSUE

Often integrated with other massage methods, deep-tissue work is exactly what it sounds like. Once the outer muscles have been relaxed, the work goes deeper into the fascia, the deep, dense, connective tissue that helps join your body parts together. Deep-tissue work is an excellent remedy for chronic muscular pain, injury rehabilitation, and reduction of inflammation-related pain caused by arthritis and tendinitis.

3. SPORTS MASSAGE

Whether for professional athletes, active kids, or weekend warriors, sports massage has benefits for participants in the active life. For most people, sports massage is handy after muscle exertion



A variety of bodywork methods exist, offering many options to best meet your needs.

by the therapist's hands, which are moisturized with massage oil or lotion. The kneading, rolling, vibrational, tapping, and percussive movements all work inward toward your heart and will stimulate your circulation. Among many benefits, Swedish massage will hasten healing of injuries, reduce swelling, and help dissolve scar tissue adhesions.

to relieve stiffness and soreness. But anyone can borrow from the gym bag of the professional athlete, so to speak, especially if he or she is training for a major event like a triathlon. Sports massage can ease muscles that shorten and tighten to compensate for and protect injured areas. Massage of

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The purpose of life is a life of purpose.

-Robert Byrne

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surrounding areas can relieve ripples of pain that expand from the injury site.

4. CHAIR MASSAGE

Chair massage is provided by a trained professional, with you seated on a padded, ergonomically designed chair and is often delivered in a semiprivate kiosk, fully clothed, without massage oil, and purchased in segments from five minutes to 20 minutes at about \$1 a minute. The focus is applying compression (pressure) to the head, shoulders, neck, back, and arms. Use chair massage for relief from long airplane rides, to relax shoulders weighted down by shopping bags or suitcases, or on your lunch hour.

5. STONE MASSAGE

This modality is truly a hot topic. Stones are warmed and then placed on the body, as well as used as an extension of the therapist's hands throughout the massage. The placement of the stones can be aligned with chakras, meridians, and zones according to the energy system your practitioner follows. Stone work can easily be blended with other kinds of massage and can be a powerful healing and grounding force. It's touted as an effective remedy to ease pain, stress, anxiety, and overactivity. Your therapist may refer to improvements in your flow of earth element or to the function of your root chakra.

6. GERIATRIC MASSAGE

Geriatric massage is a gentle approach tailored to meet the individual needs and comfort levels of seniors. For example, geriatric massage can be done with clothes on and may only address certain parts of the body. Massage for seniors also addresses the need for loving touch, an element that may be lacking in their lives. You can do a favor for the aging members of your family and book a professional massage for them.

7. PREGNANCY MASSAGE

Mothers-to-be can greatly benefit from pregnancy massage. It's worthwhile considering this as a baby shower gift for you or a friend to ease those backaches and swollen ankles. It can help a mother's changing posture and possibly the positioning of the baby in the womb. The beneficial relaxation chemicals a mother's body releases when getting a massage also flow to the baby. And once

the baby is born, massage can help bring mother's strained body structure and physiology back into alignment.

8. BABY MASSAGE

Right after that pregnancy, there's a special way for baby to get started on a lifelong enjoyment of massage. Practitioners can give, and teach parents, baby massage, which provides stimulation to little nervous systems, promoting brain development, and supporting that all-important parent-child bonding.

9. REFLEXOLOGY

Reflexology works with the incredible system of nerves and energy meridians rooted in our feet, hands, and ears, which are connected to corresponding systems and organs. Reflexology is a smart way to work with health concerns not ordinarily reachable through regular massage, such as problems in organs or

internal systems. This also goes for areas too damaged or painful to benefit from direct touch.

10. ENERGY WORK

Receiving energy work may mean never being physically touched, keeping all of your clothes on, and remaining seated or standing. Despite this hands-off approach, recipients of energy work often report dramatic reorientations in how they feel and move in the world. Some of the more prominent methods are shiatsu, reiki, Zero Balancing, jin shin jyutsu, and Insight Bodywork.

There are new discoveries every day in the complex relationship between body, mind, and spirit. Whatever your path, keeping an open mind and listening to your body are the guides to your unique situation. Your health and wellness are up to you, so relax and let go of your stress. You deserve it.



Massage is for all ages, including infants, who are often calmed by bodywork.

Massage for Your Teenager?

Bodywork Can Ease Adolescent Angst

While teens may be less likely than their parents to go to a massage therapist, there are plenty of reasons why this age group should be encouraged to give it a try. The benefits of massage are well documented, among them relief of muscle tension, lowered stress hormones, increased sense of relaxation, improved immune function, and even a heightened ability to concentrate, according to studies conducted by the Touch Research Institute at the University of Miami School of Medicine. But for teenagers, there's an additional payback.

The teenage body is in the midst of transformation -- exponential growth and development in a rapid period of time. On the physical side, teens may be at increased risk for aches, pains, and injury. Many teens strain their bodies with competitive sports, get erratic sleep, and consume a less-than-optimal diet. Massage can help muscles recover from overuse, and help balance the body and maintain that stability.

Perhaps even more crucial, teen massage can help improve body image and sleep patterns, and contribute to decreased depression, anxiety, and stress. This keeps a teen connected to her body, even as it morphs in confounding ways. "Many teens are self-conscious, and not happy with their bodies," says Eeris Kallil, massage therapist and shiatsu instructor at the Boulder College of Massage Therapy, in Colorado. "Massage can help teens stay grounded." Bodywork has also been reported to help mediate eating disorders, a growing concern among teens.

Another potential plus: A beneficial, therapeutic relationship can develop between bodyworkers and teenagers during the years when adolescents need adult confidantes, but keep parents at a distance. The practitioner can become a supportive, trusted adult in a teen's life. And the session itself, according to Kallil, can be a way to deal with all the physical and emotional turmoil of this tender age.



Massage eases teen depression and anxiety.

Hot or Cold for Injuries?

How to Know Which is Best for You

Art Riggs

We all know that treating an injury immediately after it happens can help minimize the pain and damage as well as facilitate recovery. But after rolling your ankle in a soccer game, or hurting your back when lifting your toddler, or tweaking your knee when stepping out of your car, what's best? Should you ice it to try to control inflammation, or would heat be better to promote circulation?

While it's difficult to establish a fail-safe rule for when to apply ice or heat, the general directive is to use ice for the first forty-eight to seventy-two hours after an acute injury and then switch to heat.

It Depends

The reality is that many conditions are not necessarily the result of a specific

injury. I call these conditions "recurrent acute" and find them by far the most common: sciatica that occurs when you drive a car; a back that flare up every time you garden; or tennis elbow from intense computer work. In these cases, consistent and frequent applications of ice may prove very helpful over long periods of time, particularly immediately after experiencing the event that causes problems.

Conversely, back or other muscle spasms caused by overexertion rather than injury may benefit greatly from heat immediately upon the onset of symptoms or immediately after exercise in order to relax the muscles and increase circulation. Also, muscle belly pain not resulting from acute and

serious trauma generally responds well to heat, which can break the spasms and release the strain. On the other hand, nerve and tendon pain--regardless of the duration of symptoms, even if you've been experience them for months--benefit from ice.

What Works for You

The bottom line: different individuals will constitutionally vary greatly in their reactions. Some people are more prone to the types of inflammation exacerbated by heat, while others find their bodies contracting and tightening at the mere mention of ice. Try each option and pay close attention to how your body and mind respond, and let your gut be your guide. Ultimately, what works best for you is, well, what's best for you.

*Everyone must
take time to sit
and watch the
leaves turn.*

-Elizabeth Lawrence

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