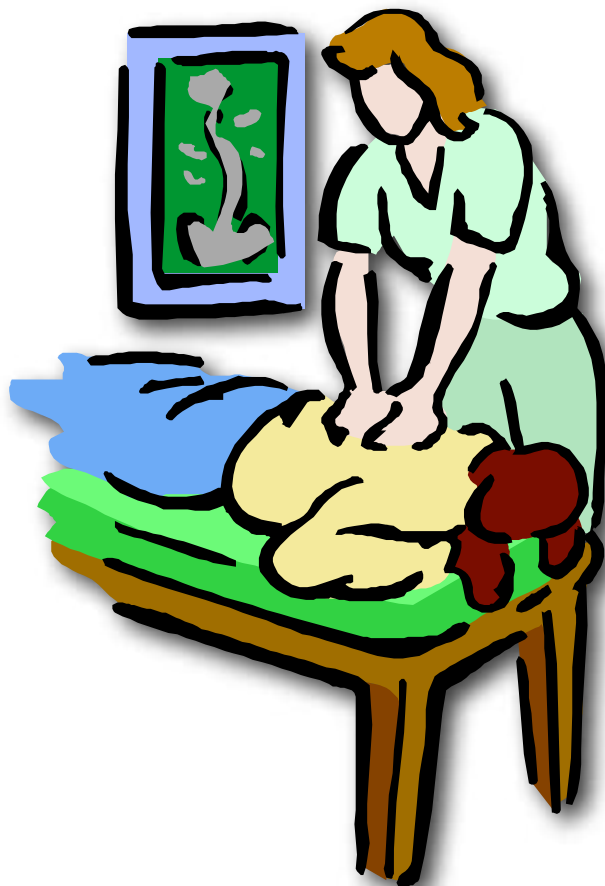

Massage 101

A Training Workshop For Couples & Non-Professionals

with Tanja Barnes, LMT



Introduction

Swedish Massage Primer

What is a Swedish Massage?

Swedish massage is generally regarded as the most common form of massage, Swedish massage involves a combination of five basic strokes and concentrates on the muscles and connective tissues of the body for improved circulation, relaxation, pain relief, and overall health maintenance and well being.

A Swedish doctor, poet, and educator named Per Henrik Ling developed Swedish massage, the style of massage most familiar to Westerners, in the 19th century. His system was based on a study of gymnastics and physiology, and on techniques borrowed from China, Egypt, Greece, and Rome. Physiotherapy, originally based on Ling's methods, was established with the foundation in 1894 of the Society of Trained Masseurs. During World War I patients suffering from nerve injury or shell shock were treated with massage. St. Thomas's Hospital, London, had a department of massage until 1934. However, later breakthroughs in medical technology and pharmacology eclipsed massage as physiotherapists began increasingly to favor electrical instruments over manual methods of stimulating the tissues.

Even so, in Sweden there is no "Swedish massage"; instead, massage is referred to almost universally as "classic massage." And in most of Europe the term classic massage is much more prevalent than Swedish massage. But in America, the term classic massage is used very little, while Swedish massage is considered the classic and most basic of all massage methods.

To professional therapists, "Swedish Massage" refers to a variety of techniques specifically designed to relax muscles by applying pressure to them against deeper muscles and bones, and rubbing in the same direction as the flow of blood returning to the heart.

Benefits of Swedish Massage

Physical Benefits of Therapeutic Massage

(Source: AMTA)

- Helps relieve stress and aids relaxation
- Helps relieve muscle tension and stiffness
- Alleviates discomfort during pregnancy
- Fosters faster healing of strained muscles and sprained ligaments; reduces pain and swelling; reduces formation of excessive scar tissue
- Reduces muscle spasms
- Provides greater joint flexibility and range of motion
- Enhances athletic performance; treats injuries caused during sport or work
- Promotes deeper and easier breathing
- Improves circulation of blood and movement of lymph fluids
- Reduces blood pressure
- Helps relieve tension-related headaches and effects of eye-strain
- Enhances the health and nourishment of skin
- Improves posture
- Strengthens the immune system
- Treats musculoskeletal problems
- Rehabilitation post operative
- Rehabilitation after injury

Mental Benefits of Massage Therapy

(Source: AMTA)

- Fosters peace of mind
- Promotes a relaxed state of mental alertness
- Helps relieve mental stress
- Improves ability to monitor stress signals and respond appropriately
- Enhances capacity for calm thinking and creativity
- Emotional Benefits
- Satisfies needs for caring nurturing touch
- Fosters a feeling of well-being

- Reduces levels of anxiety
- Creates body awareness
- Increases awareness of mind-body connection

Do's and Don'ts

Massage Contraindications

What are the Contraindications to Massage?

Massage is non-invasive, relaxing and natural. It is therefore generally considered a safe treatment for most people. However, there are three types of contraindication:

- Total: when massage should not be performed at all,
- Local: when massage can be performed but not over the contraindicated areas and
- Medical: when massage can only be performed once medical permission has been granted.

The following restrictions are in place to protect your health and well-being.

Total Contraindications

When you have any of these conditions, please do not book a massage:

- Fever
- Contagious or infectious diseases, including any cold or flu no matter how mild it may seem.
- Under the influence of drugs or alcohol- including prescription pain medication
- Recent operations or acute injuries
- Neuritis
- Skin diseases

Local

The therapist can massage but not over any areas affected by:

- Varicose veins
- Undiagnosed lumps or bumps
- Pregnancy
- Bruising
- Cuts
- Abrasions
- Sunburn
- Undiagnosed pain
- Inflammation, including arthritis

Medical

If you suffer from any of the following conditions, massage can only take place once it has been approved before your session in writing by your Physician.

- Cardio-vascular conditions (thrombosis, phlebitis, hypertension, heart conditions)
- Any condition already being treated by a medical practitioner
- Oedema
- Psoriasis or eczema
- High blood pressure
- Osteoporosis
- Cancer
- Nervous or psychotic conditions
- Heart problems, angina, those with pacemakers
- Epilepsy
- Diabetes
- Bell's palsy, trapped or pinched nerves
- Gynecological infections

Does a contraindication mean that treatment can not take place?

Not always. In fact, massage can be very therapeutic for many medical conditions. However, in the above cases it is best to have advice from your physician. Massage therapists, unless they are also qualified doctors, may not, under law, attempt to diagnose a condition.

Basic Techniques

The 5 Techniques of Swedish Massage

To give a massage that is both relaxing and therapeutic, you need to learn five basic hand movements: stroking, compression, percussion, friction and pressure. In Swedish massage these techniques are called: *effleurage*, *petrissage*, friction, vibration and *tapotement*.

Effleurage: Gliding strokes with the palms, thumbs and/or fingertips

Petrissage: Kneading movements with the hands, thumbs and/or fingers

Friction: Circular pressures with the palms of hands, thumbs and/or fingers

Vibration: Oscillatory movements that shake or vibrate the body

Tapotement or Percussions: Brisk hacking or tapping

Probably the most basic and well-known massage stroke is effleurage (French for “stroke” or “glide”). When done lightly as in the nerve stroke, effleurage is relaxing. When performed more forcefully, as in the deep stroke associated with sports massage, it enhances drainage of the lymph system and promotes better circulation by opening blood vessels and capillaries.

The effect of compression techniques, including petrissage (French for “knead”) and sports massage compressions is to move the muscle away from or across bone, which improves oxygenation of the muscle, removes metabolic waste by-products and increases circulation.

Friction and both broad and local cross-fiber stroking are movements that work deeply into a joint or muscle to increase flexibility and mobility.

Percussive techniques require gentle striking to a specific area. Because this type of movement contracts muscles and increases their blood supply, it can feel stimulating. But when sustained for more than 10 seconds, it has a relaxing effect. Vibration and jostling, although percussive movements produce similar results: vibration can be either stimulating or sedating, and jostling is soothing.

Effleurage

Most massages begin and end with effleurage, a slow rhythmic stroke that is performed with your fingertips, palms, thumbs or knuckles depending on how deeply you want to work the muscles. Generally, effleurage works from the extremities toward the heart – from the wrist to the shoulder, for example an exception is the nerve stroke, which does not affect blood flow.

Effleurage is an excellent warm up stroke and it is usually used to spread oil or lotion: start with a light variation and gradually work deeper. Conclude your massage of each area with the nerve stroke, which is particularly soothing.

The broad surface of the back is ideal for practicing five effleurage variations. Position yourself at the top of your partner's head and starting at the base of the neck, stroke downward toward the waist. Use the muscles of your upper body, not just those of your hands and arms to apply pressure evenly throughout the stroke. Keep your wrists flexible so your hands can adjust to your partner's changing body contours.

Release pressure at the bottom of the back and bring your hands back to the starting position, maintaining light contact with your fingertips. Stroke three times, moving approximately one to two inches per second and covering 10 and 20 inches for the whole stroke. Do not apply pressure on the spine.

Basic effleurage – Position your hands close together

Hand on hand – Place one hand on the other and glide your hands down the back, near the spine.

Adjacent thumb – For deeper work, place one thumb next to the other and, using your fingers for support, glide down the back.

Knuckling – For deep work on large muscles, make a fist and stroke with the midfinger joints.

Nerve stroke – Brush the skin with your fingertips, or simply move your hands just above the skin without touching it.

Petrissage

A more complex technique than effleurage, petrissage progresses along a particular muscle group – usually on the limbs of a fleshy area where tissue is easily grasped. Like effleurage, petrissage can be performed either deeply or superficially. Deep petrissage is particularly effective at counteracting muscle atrophy, the tendency of muscles to degenerate from disuse. It does this by milking and draining the muscles through manual contraction and relaxation.

Petrissage is commonly called kneading, which aptly describes the way you should approach this movement – alternately tightening and loosening the hands (or fingers or thumbs) as they pick up and release muscle. Variations include rolling and wringing.

Note the changing musculature as you travel from the tendons and ligaments toward the belly, or center of the muscle, which can usually withstand more pressure.

Hand on hand – Use this stroke on broad or taut body surfaces. Place the fingers of your top hand over the bottom hand. Proceed in a clockwise direction, exerting even pressure.

Rolling – Alternately slide your hands firmly back and forth across your partner's back. Start at shoulder level and move slightly lower with each stroke until you reach the waist.

Pick Up – Starting at your partner's waist, squeeze and release the skin first with your right hand, then with your left. Continue to alternate grasping and releasing as you progress up the side.

Heel of palm – Place the heels of your palms next to your partner's spine. Alternately rotating your palms in opposite directions, push the muscle gently away from the spine as you work down the back.

Friction

Movement into the joint is the key to friction. As in petrissage, you move muscle or soft tissue away from bone. But friction is more specific stroke that is applied to a smaller area.

Because they have a relatively poor blood supply, tendons and ligaments are prime targets for injury and the formation of adhesions and scar tissue, particularly during exercise and sports activities. Friction, which increases circulation, works well to restore range of motion to joints by breaking down adhesions and softening scar tissue. For this reason, it is a mainstay of sports massage, where it is referred to as local cross-fiber stroking.

Use your fingertips and thumbs to perform friction. Ask your partner to tell you how the friction feels; lighten pressure if they experience undue discomfort. Friction should not be used on any recently injured tissue.

Transverse – Place your thumbs parallel to each other where the shoulder and chest meet. Rapidly move them back and forth in opposite directions.

Circular fingertip – place the fingertips of one hand next to the spine. Put your other hand on top of the first and rotate your fingertips.

One thumb – Locate the ropelike tendons that join the shoulder to the back. Bracing your hand with your fingers, place your thumb on the tendons and rotate it in small circles.

Vibration and Jostling

These two techniques produce effects similar to percussion: they either stimulate or relax body tissue. Both strokes are particularly effective on the limbs and fleshy areas. Vibration does not proceed in any specific direction. Jostling, however, works up and down a particular muscle.

Vibration is tiring to perform since it requires rapid contraction and relaxation of your own muscles. This is why some professional massage therapists use mechanical vibrators. You can either follow their lead or keep vibrations to a minimum when you give a massage.

Jostling, which is not as strenuous to execute, plays an important role in sports massage, especially in treating sore muscles. While you are using other massage techniques, you may find your partner's muscles tensing up. This is called splinting and it is a protective muscle reflex in response to pain or anticipation of pain. If this occurs, you can interrupt your sequence and relax the muscle area by jostling it for five to ten seconds; then return to your routine. You can insert jostling into a massage as often as you need or want.

Jostling – Place your hands on either side of the biceps near the shoulder. Shake back and forth in a wave-like motion, progressing down the muscle.

Vibration – Grasp your partner's hand firmly between your hands. Move far enough away that the arm is fully extended and shake the arm by repeatedly tensing and relaxing all of the muscles of your arms and hands to produce a vibrating movement.

Percussion

Percussion strokes, also called “tapotement” (French for “tapping”), are alternate hand movements performed on broad areas of the body, particularly the back. There is some debate as to the deeper muscular benefits of percussion, but it is clearly beneficial in increasing surface blood circulation.

When performing percussions, keep your wrists relaxed and elbows flexed. Strike the skin with alternating hands, moving rapidly over the surface you are working on. You should strike firmly, but never so hard that you come to blows and cause pain. And because even light percussion may cause discomfort to internal organs, you should not apply it on the lower abdomen, the lower back near the kidneys, or the spine.

Beating – form a loose fist and strike gently with the outside surface. Beating works best on the fleshier areas of the body, such as the shoulders, waist and thighs.

Cupping – Strike with your fingertips and the heel of your palms.

Hacking – With the outer edge of your hands, perform light, rapid karate chops on fleshy areas like the upper shoulders.

Set Up

A full body massage takes between an hour and an hour and half, if you include the face and head. If your time is limited, concentrate on just one or two areas rather than rush through the whole body. A quick way to relax someone is to give a neck and head massage for about 10 to 15 minutes. A foot massage takes about 10 minutes per foot and is also deeply relaxing. A whole back massage, the easiest kind for a beginner to give, should take 20 minutes.

Create The Mood

Prepare the massage area to make it welcoming and comfortable. Remove clutter, and make sure there is plenty of space to move freely around your massage partner. Ensure privacy and try to prevent any unnecessary interruptions. Avoid harsh, bright lighting.

Place cushions, pillows or even rolled up towels as props under your partner's body. This aids posture and helps relaxation, eases tension from various parts of the body, and loosens tight muscles. Put folded towels at the back of the head to take the strain off the neck.

Your partner must stay warm. Preheat the room and maintain the temperature. Open fires are particularly relaxing. Maintain room temperature at least 70° F (21° C).

Tools & Equipment

Find a suitable surface on which to work, such as a futon, a foam rubber base, a thin mattress, or a massage table. Prepare an adequate supply of freshly washed sheets and towels. You will need a selection of large and small towels for use as coverings, plus some cushions. Keep carrier oil or lotion in a small bottle or pour some into a saucer. Have tissues on hand to wipe away excess oil. Organize the room in advance and have everything you need close at hand.

Massage Oils & Lotions

Oils are a necessary lubricant to prevent massage strokes from causing friction against the surface of the skin. They contain nutrients that are beneficial to the skin and tissue. Choose a carrier oil that is not sticky, and has not strong odor. Suggestions: grapeseed, safflower, sunflower, soya, coconut, and apricot kernel.

- Enrich your mix with luxurious peach, avocado or almond oils.
- Use talcum powder instead of oil if necessary, but always use oils for long, continuous strokes.
- Add drops of wheat germ oil to help prevent the carrier oil from going rancid.
- Add a drop of essential oils. Popular scents include: lavender, eucalyptus.

For initial application, pour about a quarter size amount of oil onto your hands for spreading on the body. You will need about 1 fl oz (30 ml) for a whole body massage. There should be enough oil on the skin to ensure a smooth stroke. Note: too much oil will make the skin sticky.

Squeeze or drip the oil onto the palm of one hand. Be careful not to drip the oil onto your partner's body. Rub the oil into your hands to warm them and spread the oil over the body with smooth, flowing strokes. Do not use too much oil to begin with. It is better to add more if you need it rather than have to wipe away the excess from the skin surface.

An oiled body loses heat quickly, so always put towels over exposed areas. Do not let the relaxing effects of your massage go to waste by letting the body temperature drop. Cover the area of the body you are not working on.

What to Wear Before You Begin

Ease of movement should be the main factor when choosing what to wear to give a massage – any comfortable, washable clothes will do. You need to be able to stretch with ease across the body and sit or kneel, as the stroke requires.

- Wear comfortable, flat shoes or go barefoot – whichever you prefer.
- Remove any jewelry that may catch on the skin, and ask your massage partner to do the same.
- Keep your nails trimmed short. Long nails make strokes more difficult.

Hands On

- Massage For The Supine Position (Face Up)
 - Massage For The Prone Position (Face Down)
-

Only when you are sure that your partner is relaxed and comfortable should you make the initial contact. Approach the body slowly and sensitively. Begin the massage with an energy balancing hold. A still hold over the spine is deeply relaxing. Let your hands rest there a while before continuing.

Different parts of the body require strokes of varying strengths. Increase the pressure by leaning your weight into the flat of your hand. Deepen the pressure further by placing the other hand on top. Apply deep, firm strokes to muscle-bound areas like the back but use gentle effleurage strokes on bony parts such as the rib cage.

If your partner has a ticklish spot, it is probably because he or she is nervous or tense. Take the stroke away from the ticklish area. Return to it later on in the massage when your partner is more relaxed.

MASSAGE FOR SUPINE POSITION (FACE UP)

THE BACK & SHOULDERS

Effleurage

Relax the back with a sequence of smooth flowing effleurage strokes, the principal strokes of Swedish and Esalen massage. Use them on the back to stretch the muscles and to boost the cardiovascular system. Rest your hands on the opposite sides of the spine, then slide them down the long muscles of the back, as far as you can reach comfortably. Fan your hands to the sides of the body. Mold them around the contours of the rib cage, and draw them around the shoulder blades and out to the shoulders in one continuous movement. The continuous, rounded movements are psychologically and physically soothing; they benefit the nervous system and reduce stress.

- Apply effleurage to the back using the flat of the hand at a constant pressure. Use before and after deeper strokes to prepare the body beforehand and to soothe it afterward.

- Effleurage can be use all over the body, not just on the back, to prepare the area for subsequent techniques. Never end effleurage strokes abruptly. Round them off gradually or draw them out of the body. Ask your partner to advise you on the pressure of the stroke.
- To complete this effleurage stroke on the back, continue by pulling your hands across the tops of the shoulders to the base of the neck. Don't drag on the shoulders. When your hands reach the neck, sweep them up and over the neck and right out over through the head. Repeat the stroke several times.
- Use this effleurage stroke to relax and lengthen muscles after the main strokes and before deeper work. Place your hands flat on the back at the base of the spine. Glide them gently up the back and then fan them out to mold over the sides of the body, and pull down. Turn your wrists out, and glide your hands back to the source of the stroke. Let each stroke flow into the next.

Circular Strokes

The trick of this more complex stroke is to achieve an unbroken circular motion. Place both hands parallel on the lower side of the body and start to slide them in a circular motion. Then lift your right hand off the body to allow the left hand underneath to finish it's full circle before dropping the right hand back down. Cover the surface of the back. Use circular strokes to loosen and relax muscles on the back, belly and sides of the rib cage.

Side Strokes

Use side strokes (or crossover strokes, as they are also known) to work the superficial tissue of the muscles. Take the strokes along from the lower back, up to the shoulder blades, and back down again. This will lengthen the back muscles and create gentle friction on the base and middle of the back.

Begin by positioning yourself comfortably by your partner's side. Mold your hands, with your fingers pointing away from you, over both sides of the back. Let your fingertips slip just below the front of your partner's body on the opposite side. Apply firm, but gentle pressure with the palm of the hand and the length of the fingers.

Slide your hands past each other to the opposite sides of the back. Glide the heel of your hand firmly down the side nearest to you to meet the edge of the table. Repeat this movement continuously, swapping hands from one side to the other. Move your hands up and down your partner's body as you go, a little at a time.

- Do not interrupt the stroke – it should be continuous and flowing.
- Focus on the areas of the lower back that is tense and contracted.
- Keep your own posture in mind, particularly when leaning across to reach your partners far side.

- Change the pace of your strokes. Start slowly, and then increase your speed.

Stretch the Back

Stretches are firm, sliding movements that promote a feeling of length and breadth in the body. Give them to relieve tension in the back. They can also be used on the sides of the body, and the arms and legs. Spine stretches feel good since they bring a feeling of relief.

- Place the flats of your hands side by side in the center of the back. For maximum effect, slide them in opposite directions using slow, steady pressure.
- Glide your right hand from the center of the back to the base of the neck. Draw your left hand down the lower back to the sacrum. Let your hands rest in an energy balancing hold.
- Do not press on the vertebrae when applying a stretch.

Feathering

Trace the tips of your fingers lightly down the surface of the skin in a flowing, unbroken movement. Use this delicate action to create a tingling sensation, or apply feather strokes to end a massage following effleurage strokes.

Knead the Back

Kneading is the second stage of massage. Apply it only when the muscles have been warmed up with soothing strokes. Lift and squeeze a portion of flesh in one hand and roll it toward the other hand. Repeat the action, back and forth. Knead the flesh on the buttocks along the side of the body, and over the outer edges of the shoulder blades. Then knead thoroughly over the shoulders to the base of the neck.

Knead a Tight Spot

Apply firm kneading strokes along the top of the shoulders. Focus the action on the narrow area of flesh in between the top edge of the shoulder blades and the base of the neck. Roll the muscles from one hand to the other to release pent-up tension carried in the neck. Without relief, this tension can lead to stiffness.

Knead Both Shoulders

Hook your fingers over your partner's shoulders, scoop the flesh with your heels and thumbs, then alternately squeeze and release the flesh. Continue kneading well.

- Warm the muscles with soothing strokes before you begin to knead.
- Manipulate the flesh until you feel stiff shoulder muscles loosen.
- Follow up with effleurage.

Petrissage On The Back

Petrissage is a deep stroke used for pushing areas of the tissue toward the bone. Prepare the back with effleurage and kneading.

- Sink your fingertips, thumbs, or heels into tissue and make small circles or firm short slides.
- Apply pressure sensitively.

Work The Spine

Apply petrissage strokes to relax the spine and bring relief to the whole body. Petrissage on the back corrects the posture by easing tension from the length of the spine, bringing relief to stiff ligaments, and increasing flexibility in the muscles that support the spine. These deep, penetrating strokes will also serve to disperse toxins and trapped waste products into the circulatory system for elimination from the body.

- Facing the direction of the stroke, press your thumb pads firmly into the grooves on either side of the vertebrae, while resting your hands at an angle.
- Work your thumbs from the base of the spine in a single long smooth movement. At the shoulder blades, glide your hands over the shoulders and down the sides of the body.

Work The Sacrum

The sacrum is a large bony prominence at the base of the spine that also forms part of the pelvic girdle. Day-to-day poor posture and muscular strain create a buildup of tension in the sacrum and the lower back. Massage to this area feels deeply satisfying.

Stand by your partner's side, with your hands facing away from your body. Press firmly against the bone with your thumb pads. Rotate your thumbs in tiny alternate circles. Move one thumb rapidly in a clockwise direction and move the other counterclockwise. Cover the entire surface of the sacrum.

Place your right hand above the sacrum with your thumb at an angle, pointing away from your fingers. Push it firmly toward your left hand to create a degree of slack in the muscles surrounding the sacrum. Carry on making small, grinding circles against the bones using the thumb pad of your right hand.

Use your left hand to push up against the sacrum. Swivel your right wrist so that your fingertips point up the back. Cup your hand over the buttocks and apply steady pressure on the sacrum with your fingertips. Make small circles over bone.

Stand at the side, facing the head in order to continue the massage farther up the back. Apply pressure with the sides and heels of the thumbs to make alternate fan strokes. Start off at the sacrum and move up the back. Apply pressure in an upward and outward continuous motion, one hand following the other.

- Relax the sacrum before and after petrissage with soothing strokes.
- Do not apply too much massage oil since this prevents your fingers from penetrating the muscles.
- Massage round this area to give comfort and to relieve stress.

Relaxing The Spine

Place your hands at a slight angle on both sides of the spine and apply pressure with the thumbs. Slide your thumbs down the back as far as you can reach. Sweep your hands up around the sides of the body and over the shoulders. Repeat the stroke at least twice.

- Use to relieve tight ligaments, to release tension, and to bring extra flexibility to the supporting muscles.
- Apply only after effleurage strokes.
- Never push on a muscle area too quickly, or the body will contract.
- Increase the pressure gradually with each repetition of the stroke.

Spinal Hold

On a physical level, an energy balancing hold links different parts of the body; on an emotional level, it encourages a feeling of security and integration. A connection hold to the back serves both purposes by promoting a sense of unity from the top to the base of the back and by releasing tension held in the spine.

Place one hand on the top of the neck so that it rests on the vertebrae responsible for movement of the head. This will feel deeply comforting for the recipient. Create a feeling of balance the spine by gently laying the other hand at the base of the neck over the sacrum

Hold your hands just above the center of the spine, and slowly and gently lower them on the vertebrae. Try to imagine your breath flowing like an energizing electric current from your hands to your partner's body.

MASSAGE FOR THE LOWER BODY

THE BACK & SHOULDERS

Stroke The Legs

There are many extra benefits to a soothing leg massage. It can lift strain and tension from the lower body, and this brings relief to a tight, sore back. The main stroke warms, soothes, and stretches the whole leg and will invigorate a sluggish circulation with its upward action. Begin by applying oil to the legs.

Place your hands parallel over the back of the ankles. Glide the hands smoothly up over the contours of the calf. Adjust your position as the stroke demands. Emphasize the contours of the leg with the stroke.

Lean your weight into the stroke as you slide your hands up the leg. Lessen the pressure from your hands as you pass the back of the knee. Lean forward to slip your leading hand around the buttocks and the other hand to wait on the inner thigh.

When both hands are placed equally on the thigh, slide your fingers under either side of the leg. Support the leg with your hands and pull firmly down the ankle. Lean back to create a gentle but firm stretch in the hip and groin region.

When you reach the ankle, slide one hand under the upper foot and the other over the sole. Lean back and gently pull on the leg, and take the stroke out of the ends of the toes. Repeat all strokes on the other leg. This is a very satisfying conclusion to the massage session for the lower area of the body.

Knead The Calves

Sit at your partner's feet. Place the heels of your hands and thumbs in the center of the calf, with the fingers wrapped lightly around the front of the leg. Move your hands up the leg, one after the other, in a continuous, circular action. Work your hands up to the back the knee and glide down.

- Precede and follow up kneading strokes with main strokes to warm up and relax the calf muscles.
- Squeeze the flesh with each outward movement of the circle.
- Apply pressure gently since the calves are highly sensitive.
- Repeat the entire sequence of strokes on the other calf.
- Make sure excess oil has been rubbed in by the main strokes before you start to knead.

Knead The Legs and the Glutes

Place both your hands on your partner's thigh, with your fingers facing away and the thumbs at an angle. Anchor the hold with your thumbs and scoop the flesh with one hand, squeeze it between the thumb and forefingers, and roll it to the other hand. Create a wave of flesh moving both hands.

- First apply effleurage strokes.
- Use kneading strokes on both legs to boost the blood supply and to increase the exchange of tissue fluid.
- Incorporate the buttocks in a massage to the back or to the leg.
- Use kneading on the buttocks to relieve emotional, physical or sexual tension held in the muscles.

Finish Off

Follow up kneading strokes with effleurage, and then conclude the massage to the lower body with invigorating percussion strokes. From a position beside your partner, strike the buttocks and the backs of the legs with the sides of your hands. Try to maintain a rhythmic, brisk action, keeping your hands, arms and shoulders as relaxed as possible. If your hands become tense, then the strokes will feel like karate chops. The rapid action of the hands bouncing against the body improves muscle tone, stimulates the nerve endings, and draw the blood supply up to the skin.

After giving percussion strokes, link both halves of the body by placing one hand on the soles of the feet and the other on the sacrum in a Connection Hold. Hold your hands in position for one minute.

Turn Over

Your main consideration when helping your partner to turn over should be to avoid disturbing the atmosphere of calm and wellbeing that you have established during your back massage. Your partner will be feeling deeply relaxed, so give verbal instructions in a gentle tone.

Ask your partner to turn slowly and gently onto their back. If you feel it is appropriate, hold up the towel to act as a “modesty screen” between you and your partner.

When your partner has settled into position, cover them with a towel and rest your hands on their chest and belly in a reassuring energy-balancing hold.

The front of the body loses heat faster than the back, and so your partner may feel more exposed and even vulnerable. Cover up with plenty of towels.

MASSAGE FOR SUPINE POSITION (FACE UP)

THE HEAD & FACE

Neck Extension

Use this stroke to bring alignment to the neck, to relieve tension caused by contracted muscles and to help the neck extend away from the shoulders. Allow sufficient time for your partner’s neck to relax into your hands before you begin the stroke.

- Scoop your hands underneath your partner’s shoulders and rest them, with the palms facing upward, on either side of the spinal column
- As the neck relaxes, glide your hands toward you, ensuring that the neck is fully supported by them. Lift the head as your hands pass under the hairline.
- Draw your hands steadily under and out of the head, extending the stroke away from the body. Repeat until the head feels completely loose and relaxed.

Crown Holds

These still, relaxing holds will soothe an overactive mind, relieve stress, and alleviate physical tension. Use them to bring calmness and integration to a massage. They can be given at the beginning or the end of a whole-body massage, or used to start off a massage to the head and face, or neck and shoulders.

- Slide your hand under the neck and rest your left hand, facing the other way, on the forehead. Hold.
- Place your thumbs in the middle of the forehead and wrap your fingers around the crown. Hold the position.
- Focus attention on your breath. Imagine it sending warmth and vitality to your hands and fingers.
- Keep your eyes closed to help focus and maintain concentration.
- Spend about 30 seconds per hold, longer if your partner seems restless.
- Try to convey a feeling of calm and attentiveness with your hands.

Release The Head

Induce a feeling of relaxation, security, and relief by supporting the weight of your partner's head in your hands and lifting and rolling it. Pause at any point if you can feel resistance against the movement of your hands. Find the pivotal point at the top of the spine from which to turn the head from side to side.

- Cup the back of the head and, keeping it inline with the spine, lift it up and stretch the neck. Lower it to let the weight drop gently in your hands.
- Lift the head, and turn it to rest in your left palm while supporting it with your other hands. Then roll it to lie facing in the opposite direction.

Stroke The Brows

Use this soothing stroke to relax the forehead. Place your thumbs just above the brow bone. Apply gentle pressure with the thumb pads. Glide your thumbs steadily outward from the center to the outer sides of the brow, and complete the stroke with a sweep of the temples. Move your thumbs up a little to stroke in a similar way over the whole area. Withdraw your thumbs smoothly and gently from contact with the face.

Stroke The Eyes

Give an eye massage to ease tension and headaches, to help clear sinus passages, and as an effective way to relieve stress and lift away tiredness from the eyes and body.

- Contact lenses should be removed before massaging the eye area.
- Enclose the temples with your fingers and press the thumb pads into the pressure points at the edge of the brows.
- Slide your thumb pads firmly along the eyebrows as far as their outer corners. Keep your pressure steady.
- Press gently into the pressure point on the outer edge of the brow. Follow with a sweep around the temples.
- Rest your palms over the eye sockets without applying pressure. Allow the eyes to feel the warmth of your hands.
- Never press on the sensitive eye socket area or drag the delicate skin.

Loosen The Checks

People often disguise their feelings by unconsciously tightening their facial muscles, particularly around the cheeks and mouth. This muscular tension leads to a visible mask like effect. Apply circular petrissage strokes with the tips of your fingers over the cheek area to loosen the muscles and to alleviate the discomfort of facial tension.

- Glide your thumb pads down from the bridge of the nose and slide them into the muscle below the cheekbone.
- Apply firm, even pressure as you draw your thumbs underneath the cheekbones and outward toward the ears.
- Take the stroke to the sides of the head and sweep your hands out over the scalp to the ends of the hair.
- Press your fingertips into the fleshy areas of the cheeks and make several small circles, one area at a time.

Knead The Jaw

The jaw muscles are among the strongest muscles in the whole body. However, as with all parts of the face, you must still use a steady but sensitive touch. Apply circular, kneading strokes outward from the chin along each side of the jaw.

- Grip the chin with your thumbs and forefingers. Make small, circular strokes, one thumb following the other.
- Knead along one side of the jawline, with sliding strokes, moving up toward the ear. Repeat on the other side.

Stroke The Jaw

After kneading, apply gentle, soothing strokes that follow the contours of the jawline. The action of these strokes, combined with the warm and comforting touch of your hands, will cause your partner's face to soften and relax noticeably.

- Very lightly stroke the throat with your fingertips. Then use the flat of your hands to stroke the jaw and chin.
- Use alternate hands to make outward, sweeping strokes under both sides of the jaw. Apply firm but gentle pressure.

Rub The Ears

A massage on and around the ears has a surprisingly relaxing effect on the whole body. Take hold of each ear between your thumbs and your fingertips. Make tiny circles, squeezing gently as you go. Work on both ears simultaneously.

- Work carefully over the earlobes in a continuous, circular action. Press the thumbs gently over the rim of the ears.
- Lightly stroke inside the folds of both ears, and the area surrounding, with the tips of your middle and index fingers.

Scalp Massage

Make brisk, petrissage strokes with your fingertips from the base of the neck to the crown to loosen the thin layer of muscle over the skull. Rub the scalp as if shampooing the hair.

Draw Hands Out

Bring a face, head, and scalp massage to a relaxing and hypnotic conclusion by combing your fingers through the ends of the hair. Release the last traces of tension.

MASSAGE FOR THE CHEST & NECK

Relax The Neck

To ease taut neck muscles, place one hand beneath the base of the neck and squeeze the flesh. Pull your hand toward you, and as it leaves the body, bring in your other hand so that the stroking motion is continuous, like pulling on a rope. This milking action increases the circulation of the blood to the brain, thus relieving tension headaches.

- Slide your left hand under the neck. Squeeze the flesh as you lift and draw up and out of the back of the neck.
- As the left hand leaves the body, repeat the action with the right hand.

Connect With The Chest

Before moving onto the chest strokes, make a link between the head and chest. This will draw your partner's attention to heart area. With your fingers straight, place the palm of your left hand against the temple, your thumb resting on the forehead. Rest your right hand on the chest. Hold for a few moments. This hold has a sensitive effect.

Work The Rib Cage

The chest harbors vulnerable feelings, and a massage here will make contact with these emotions. These strokes ease tension by relieving muscular constriction. As the muscles relax, so breathing becomes deeper. Repeat each sequence three times.

- Slide your hands down the chest; fan out to the ribs, up into the armpits and back to the chest. Repeat twice more.
- Relax the chest with shorter fan strokes. Glide both hands down, then outward. Draw your hands up the sides of the rib cage and into the next stroke.

Press On The Shoulders

Loosen up and expand the upper chest by pushing your own weight down through your hands onto both shoulders. Place a cupped hand on each shoulder and apply a steady, downward pressure. The chest will open and rise up while the shoulders will drop down to the table. Hold for a few seconds, and then release the pressure slowly. This stroke relaxes hunched or stiff shoulders.

Pectoral Massage

Pectoral muscles are responsible for the movement of the shoulder blades and arms. The release of physical tension from the pectorals through massage brings a feeling of width to the shoulders. Be aware, however, that physical tension held in this part of the body may be rooted in emotional stress, and its release may cause the release of suppressed feelings.

- Hook the fingertips of both hands round the pectorals, and push the heel of your right hand firmly from the collarbone out to the armpit. Lean your weight into the stroke. Keep your left hand anchored in place on the other side.
- Once your right heel has reached the armpit, lift it off the body and push down with the left hand. Don't let both hands leave the body at the same time. This stroke is known as the "cat paw" due to its rhythmic, pawing action.
- Anchor your fingertips around the armpits and knead the muscles above the breast area by making simultaneous circular strokes with the heels of both hands. Apply greater pressure on the outward slide and less on the return.
- Finish off the pectoral massage with spreading strokes. Place your hands together on the breastbone. Draw them up toward you and then out toward the shoulders. If necessary, use extra oil to avoid painful dragging on the chest hair.

THE ARMS & HANDS

Concentrate On The Arms

A comprehensive massage of the hands and arms should include a range of strokes, including passive movements, effleurage, kneading and petrissage. When all the stroke are completed, finish with delicate, featherlike touches down the arm using the fingertips of one hand then the other. Repeat the complete sequence of strokes on the other arm.

Lift And Stretch The Arms

Start off with passive movements to release tension from the joints and muscles of the arm. Take hold of your partner's hand in one hand and support the elbow with the other. Lift and lower the arm several times. When raised, give the arm a light pull to stretch the shoulder joint. Lower the arm and clasp the wrist with both hands. Lean back and pull to create a gentle arm stretch. Release the arm back into a relaxed position.

Flex The Wrists

Use this stroke to increase mobility in wrists that have become stiff as a result of repetitive movements. Take hold of your partner's arm just above the wrist and hold on to the hand. Extend and flex the wrist by gently bending the hand back and forth. Conclude by rotating the hand gently left and right around the joint. Never push the wrist beyond the extent of its natural motion.

Stroking

Gently take one of your partner's hands in yours. Slide your other hand firmly up the arm and glide up and over the shoulder with both hands, one below and one above, and pull down the length of the arm. Pull in a firm stretch toward your body. Glide the stroke out of the hands and fingers.

Kneading

Apply kneading strokes to ease tension in the arm muscles. Cup the arm with one hand, supporting it with the fingers. Work both thumbs along the muscles of the arm in circular motions. Apply added pressure around the outward half-circle of the stroke and squeeze the flesh with your heels and thumbs.

Petrissage

Take hold of your partner's hand in yours and raise their forearm a little distance from the table. Glide your thumb pad slowly but firmly up between the two long bones of the forearm, the radius and the ulna. Take the action up as far as the elbow joint. Follow up with effleurage strokes to the lower arm.

Hand Massage

Give a hand massage before or after an arm massage for added relaxation and suppleness. A hand massage is simple and quick to give, requires minimum preparation, and can take place anywhere. Hands are hard-working parts of the body, so it is deeply comforting to them to be pampered for a change. Massage one hand at a time, keeping your wrists relaxed. Repeat the sequence of strokes on the other hand.

- Begin with a simple handhold to comfort and reassure your partner. Support the hand as you work. Massage to stimulate the nerve endings in the fingertips and palms.
- Lay your hands in between yours and hold it gently for a few moments. This is a very calming action. The warmth of your hands will release tension and give a feeling of tranquility.
- Manipulate the bones and tendons of the hands to make it suppler. Supporting the palm with your fingers, make circular motions with your heels and thumbs, from the base of the fingers to the wrist, one hand after the other.
- Remove tension from your partner's hand with a stretching stroke. Slide your thumbs and the heels of your hand from the center to the sides of the hand. Support the palm with your fingers as you stretch across the upper hand.
- Support your partner's hand with the palm facing downward. Use your thumb and index finger to pull along the length of each finger, right down to the tip. Squeeze the end of each finger.
- Take hold of your partner's thumb between the thumb and forefinger. Pull and squeeze as you did with the fingers. Massage the base, using your heel and fingertips. Press into the web of flesh between the thumb and forefinger.

THE LEGS AND FEET

Cradle The Foot

The soles of the feet hold thousands of nerve endings. Use foot massage to stimulate the physiological system and to ease postural tension in the feet and legs.

Position yourself at your partner's feet. Start off a foot massage by cradling the foot between your hands. Focus on your breathing, and concentrate on the soothing quality of your touch. This initial simple action will calm the whole person by drawing attention from the busy, over-stimulated mind, down the body, to produce a highly restful effect.

Stroke The Foot

Place both hands parallel on the foot, little fingers leading. Glide your hands down from the toes to the ankles. Draw your hands out around both sides of the anklebone and stroke your fingers along the sole. Repeat this action several times. Let the little fingers lead the stroke.

Spread The Foot

Hook your fingers around the sole of the foot, and slide your heels and thumbs out to both edges of the instep. Work the stroke up toward the ankle. This outward stretch will create a pleasant feeling of width and space in the foot.

Work The Sole

Use the broad surface of the heel of the hand to make circular strokes along the sole, up on the sides of the foot and the arches, and over the instep. This will help to improve the entire body posture and revitalize the blood supply to the foot.

Work The Ankle

Raise the foot with one hand, and stroke around the outer area of the anklebone with the fingertips of the other. Apply gentle petrissage in small circles near the bone, one part at a time. Manipulate the tissue in the same way on the inner bone.

Stroke Between The Tendons

Raise and support the foot with one hand, and use the heel of the one hand and then the other to rub both sides of the Achilles tendon. Gently lower the foot and move your hands around to work on the tendons on the instep. Slide your thumbs around the grooves between each tendon, from the base of the toes along the length of the instep of the ankle.

Massage For Toes

The toes store a surprising amount of tension, which is why passive movement and massage of each toe has such a beneficial effect on the whole body. Support your partner's foot with one hand, and use the other hand to work along from the big toe to the little toe. Change hands as necessary.

- Hold the upper foot and grasp the big toe between the thumb and the forefinger. Pull along the toe steadily from base to tip and squeeze the tip.
- Stroke along the sides of the toe by clasping the base between your forefinger and middle finger and pulling the toe toward your body.
- Hold the end of the toe between your fingertips and wiggle the joints up and down. Rotate the toe and squeeze gently along its length.
- Poor posture sometimes causes tension in the toes. This is because the body weight is not evenly distributed across the feet.
- The soft skin between the big toe and the second toe is particularly sensitive to touch, so be careful not to tickle your partner.
- Don't pull the toes too hard.

Shin Slide

Begin by oiling the leg and relaxing it with long, flowing strokes followed by fan strokes. To release tension from the lower leg, apply a deep petrissage stroke between the shin bones. Sink your thumb pad into the groove between the two long bones and glide it smoothly from the ankle to knee.

Relax The Knees

Slip your fingers underneath the knee for support and use your thumb pads to glide around the circumference of the kneecap, from the top to the base and back up again. Repeat several times. Then make small rotations above the kneecap with your thumb pads. Apply firm but gentle pressure.

Long Leg Stretch

Warm the thigh with fan strokes, circle strokes, then kneading. Continue with main effleurage strokes that glide from foot to thigh before sliding down each side of the leg and drawing out the foot. Repeat all strokes on the other leg.

Final Hold

A good massage deserves a fitting conclusion. Try to make as much effort with the closing stages as with the rest of the massage sequence to leave your partner feeling comfortable and relaxed. After becoming accustomed to your touch, they may feel abandoned if you end the session too abruptly.

Choose any part of the body for a final energy-balancing hold. The soles of the feet or crown of the head are best for achieving a sense of balance and bringing about a feeling of rest. Keep your hands in place and focus your attention on your partner for at least one minute. Withdraw your hands slowly.

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