

The Art of Massage

by David Lauterstein

INSTRUCTIONS FOR THIS CE:

The Art of Massage is a course meant to stimulate your imagination and inspire you and your massage/bodywork. We recommend not reading it straight through but rather reading just one or more sections each day and thinking about them. Let them resonate and affect your understanding and intuition. After you have done all the reading, to receive the certificate for completing the 3 hours of continuing education – do the exam, choosing the best answer for each question. There is also a required minimum 250-word essay, to help you integrate your own insights and excitements reflecting on what you have read, thought and felt. Both will be graded and require a score of 70% or more. Each essay will be individually graded and commented on by David Lauterstein. We hope that this process will enrich your work and life.

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements	5
Preface	6
Accuracy	13
"Altered" States	15
A Poem About Massage	18
Believing in Touch	20
Body Questions	22
Breath	23
Destiny Made Visible	25
Diaphragms of Life	27
Don't Lose the Music	30
Eternity	32
Evaluation as Act of Mercy	34
Facial Diaphragms	35
Galea Aponeurotica	37
God's First Language	39
Growing New Arms	40
How the Radiologist Changed My Life	42
In Every Pause	43
Is Pain Your Friend?	45
I Saw the Angel	47
In Work We Know	49
Lifting off Your Head	50
Look at Me!	51
Loving Time	53
Massage at the Red Sea	54
Mind-Body Adhesion	56

<u>Nine Ways Time Holds the Key</u>	57
<u>Ode to Piriformis</u>	59
<u>Ornaments and Crime</u>	61
<u>Proust was Wrong</u>	63
<u>Reflections on Fascia and Change</u>	65
<u>Re-making Faces</u>	67
<u>Rhythm's Role</u>	69
<u>Silver Linings and Inner Treasures</u>	71
<u>Social Subluxation</u>	73
<u>Spirit Outlets in Bodywork and Life</u>	74
<u>10 Reasons to Love Gluteus Maximus The</u>	76
<u>Ala, Your Pelvic Wings</u>	78
<u>The Antidote to Pain</u>	79
<u>The Art of Meeting</u>	80
<u>The Calling</u>	82
<u>The Joy of Standing</u>	83
<u>The Lucky 7 on the Bottom of Your Foot</u>	85
<u>The Massage Client Who Didn't Like Touch</u>	87
<u>The Need to Touch</u>	88
<u>The Silent Mind in Massage</u>	89
<u>The Two Mothers of Deep Massage</u>	90
<u>The Wild Client</u>	92
<u>The World Beyond Understanding</u>	94
<u>Touching with Human Presence</u>	96
<u>24 Ways to Say the Heart is My Home</u>	98
<u>What If You Let Go of Every 'Should'</u>	99
<u>What is Better than a Guitar?</u>	100
<u>What the Hands Tell Me</u>	103
<u>Whatever Treasure is There</u>	105

<u>When Clients Disappear</u>	106
<u>When I Touch the Ribs</u>	108
<u>When You Hear Music</u>	109
<u>Where No Words Can Go</u>	111
<u>Who Took the First Breath?</u>	112
<u>Windows of Life</u>	113
<u>Wrestling with the Angel</u>	115
<u>You can't work on the Same Person Twice</u>	117
<u>You Have the Touch</u>	118
<u>Zen of Breath</u>	120
<u>Addendum - "Energy and the Integrative Vision"</u>	122
<u>References</u>	137

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I want to thank my teachers: Keith Kartman, my first guitar teacher, Herbert Brün, my music composition teacher at University of Illinois, Paul Brown, psychotherapist and eventual consigliere, Bob King, my first massage teacher, and Dr. Fritz Smith, the founder of Zero Balancing, with whom I have studied for the past 35 years. I am grateful to the students, staff and teachers at The Lauterstein-Conway Massage School. I am grateful to my parents, Aubrey and Faye, and my Godmother, Millie Barry, all of whom instilled in me a connection and respect for deep learning and soul. I thank my family, Cherry, Katja, and Jake. And to my wife, Julie, most of all, who with her heart and her own art shows me every day how dedicated and creative one can be in this life.

PREFACE

*"A symphony must be like the world
– it must contain everything."*

- Gustav Mahler

Often you hear or read that massage is an art and a science. Massage schools curricula generally cover the science needed to knowledgably do massage. However, that massage is also essentially an art is something which the field has never clearly and fully articulated, tested for or taught.

If a symphony must "contain everything", how much more true is that for the compositions that are our sessions. Our medium - rather than just being notes - is the whole psychophysical human being.

Just as music depends on the acoustical universe, we depend upon the wondrous structures and functions of anatomy and physiology.

Music uses volume, quality of tone, accuracy of tuning and technique, notes' duration, rhythm, and instrumentation. The science-based art of massage uses pressure, quality of touch, accuracy of knowledge and technique, strokes' duration, rhythm, choice of instrument - thumb, palm, fingers - and the harmonious use of two hands, as in a Bach two-part invention for piano.

"The human hand, acting in concert with the heart, mind and spirit, is arguably the most sophisticated tool in the known physical

universe. With its pressure and warmth, guided by intelligence, care and inspiration, we can work with muscles and fascia, literally remodeling the human form and dramatically altering each and every human function.”

-- The Deep Massage Book

Our manual art is applied to the unique themes and variations that constitute every human being. While the overall themes of human life are common – musculo-skeletal structure, cerebral organization of sensation, movement, emotion, and thought – the individual variations are infinite. Each person is a unique symphony of being. When we take a history, we hear a symphony.

The Art of Change

The great movement teacher, Moshe Feldenkrais, said, “A person can not change unless they have a new experience.”

Of all forms of healthcare, massage therapy is the most direct form of new experience – since it takes place in the conscious body. Because of its directness, the new experiences evoked by massage, give clients great opportunities, perhaps the greatest existential leverage they can have.

Therapists help people step out of the field of repeated predictable experience into a new world. To paraphrase the philosopher, Gaston Bachelard, “One would say that touch, in its newness, opens a future to experience.”

What is astonishing is how often clients come to us having completely forgotten or never having known what miracles they are anatomically, physiologically, and psychologically. They have often lost the sense that it is an incredible gift to be alive.

The Role of Beauty, Goodness and Truth

So when giving a massage, the therapist has the responsibility to help reawaken the person to their living beauty; to help them to feel the presence of goodness; and to help them recognize important inner truths.

We respond to the client's accumulations of past stresses and to their uniquely developed virtues. We work attentively in the present, the only time in which we act. And we facilitate a better future by helping them remember and mobilize the incredible capacities they have in body, mind and spirit.

Restoring the important inner knowing - that each being is a miracle - is not hard! All we need do is ourselves work with respect and wonder and the knowledge of anatomy to reawaken the person to the marvel that he or she is! In touch, wonder is coupled with joy.

Simply touching with clarity, we restore the person to the experience of who they most deeply are. As the writer Jacques Riviere said, "This is indeed that unknown person I was - and so close to me!"

So often people are pre-occupied with outer beauty and appearances. But without the experience of inner beauty, of the beauty of life

radiating from within, appearance means little. A good therapist will restore the person's being in touch with being beautiful inside. What 'divine' creations we are!

In the Bible it says that the human is created in the image of God. This has to be more than just a figure of speech! Leonardo took it seriously, so did Michelangelo – so should we!

*"I saw the angel in the marble and carved until I set him free." -
Michelangelo*

We need to recognize and cultivate the wonderful role goodness plays in our work. The direct application of kindness is the essence of massage therapy. Whereas the application of paint to canvas, or pen to paper can have a loving quality – the application of touch to the living body and mind of the client calls upon a kind of kindness that itself we know to be healing.

As therapists we get to do good. We get to put our clients in touch with the beauty that lives within them. We help them to experience more deeply the truth of their aliveness. Each person is a walking miracle. Each person is a masterpiece.

As Dante said, "Nature is the art of God." If that is true, then each person is part of this divine art made from life.

Tips for Therapists

- Get Feedback – unlike paints and notes, our medium is intelligent

and can tell us if our work is inspiring them! Brilliantly eliciting and responding to feedback can almost guarantee that you can optimize the experience in every single session. Every session is a collaborative artwork.

- Listen – with your hands. What is the body is telling you? What accumulated past tensions call for your attention? Make sure you palpate each place with care before choosing and applying techniques.
- Call and Respond. Like a jazz duet/improvisation, two players make the session together. Find important places to pause, giving the client crucial time to do their inner work undisturbed. Don't call without allowing time for the response!
- Accuracy – Enjoy regularly refreshing and refining your knowledge and visualization of anatomy and physiology. The foundation for this art is a deep and thorough understanding of the muscles, fascia, bones, joints and nervous system.
- Find just the right pressures at just the right moments. Take out the looseness – pause – press into the tension – pause – sink in – hold – monitor for response – clearly disengage.

"Time is what we are made of" Ben Franklin

- Be creative in your choice of duration and rhythm of strokes. Slowing down and letting a stroke seem to last forever can give

your client a window into eternity. Take them out of the experience of “chronos”, chronological clock-time, into sacred time – known as “kairos” in Greek. Then, going more quickly through non-problematic areas will communicate a sense of lightness and celebrate the fact that the person is not a problem to be solved, but is fundamentally a healthy being with tensions here or there.

Tips for Massage Clients

- Remember you are more than a body. Be open to receiving in a way that is of optimum benefit to yourself.
- As much as you are comfortable with it, let your therapist know the sources of stress in your life and in your body. He or she can then make emphases that will provide the best benefits for you.
- Most of us are so focused on doing, giving our energy to home and work tasks, that we have lost the healthy ratio of giving to receiving. Feel free to just let go and deeply receive!
- Notice new experience – you are a wonder! Feel how much you learn about your structure, balance, energy. The manipulative effects of massage will last a while; the learning from a massage will last forever.
- Get out of your head! Enjoy the balance that comes from high quality attention to the vastness of life below your mind.

“Love means you breathe in two countries” - *Naomi Nye*

As is the case for all great art, a great massage will have a deep impact on our being. Like a wonderful poem, movie or piece of music, a great massage will re-inspire and empower us to be ourselves creative. It will help us feel more in touch with what is beautiful and miraculous about the remarkable gift that is human life. It will help us receive the good with gratitude - the gift of the caring touch of the creative therapist. It will remind us of deeper truths and important knowledge that reside within.

Andrew Taylor Still, the founder of Osteopathic medicine, said, the body contains all the healing substances it needs. This holds true for more than just body. Each person contains the healing resources in body, mind and spirit that he or she needs.

The art of massage involves helping the person remember that we ourselves are capable of creating ourselves anew. The capacity to self-evolve is unique to the human species.

To practice this level of massage is our honor, our opportunity and our responsibility. To receive this quality of touch, this quality of kindness, changes the world.

ACCURACY *“Art and Science cannot exist but in minutely organized Particulars” - William Blake*

One of the legs we stand on is the knowledge the biological sciences give us. If we can't find a love and fascination for anatomy, we probably have no business being massage therapists.

All the modalities bandied about to great acclaim and profit are mostly simply applied anatomy. All our ideas arise from this great form, the human body.

Therefore, simple accuracy goes a long way in creating therapeutic benefit and the artful experience of touch. This develops in several steps, each of which we repeat when we learn anything new. First comes imitation. We repeat the words our teacher or textbook present us with. We observe and imitate what they show in palpation.

Second comes memorization. I see many students wanting to jump over this step. But the act of placing something like the words and notes of a song in your mind so that they take up residence in your mind, body and soul is a giant step. Placing the visualization and words for each muscle's origin, insertion and action is a sacred obligation.

Third comes embodiment. You know the anatomy so well that you don't have to "think" about it to have accuracy in your touch. Your work has "a hesitant touch which doesn't make mistakes anymore". In other words, some of your anatomical knowledge now resides comfortably within the cerebellum where movement programs are stored.

Fourth comes therapeutic relationship. When we do not need to spend much energy consciously recalling where the muscles are and

what they do, then we are free to let more of our awareness be devoted to understanding this unique person and how we need to touch them to be of optimum service.

Like a muscle – what might be the details of the origin of this individual client’s pain and tension and strength? Now that I can pluck the notes in the sinews with accuracy, what is going to be the healing music?

Each session is a call-and-response. It is this deep listening and nonverbal conversation that provides marvelous therapeutic results.

A study was done of people who improved with psychotherapy. They discovered that it was not correlated with the psychotherapeutic approach – be it gestalt, Freudian, bioenergetic, Jungian, etc. It was directly correlated with this – the quality of the therapeutic relationship of client and therapist.

So, exacting loyalty to the miraculous structure of the human body leads us ultimately to cultivate the optimum quality of relationship to the whole person, that results in the client’s restoring a deep experience of health throughout their own body, mind and spirit.

Are you not a miracle?!

Did You Know: In one square inch of our hand, we have nine feet of blood vessels, 600 pain sensors, 9000 nerve endings, 36 heat sensors and 75 pressure sensors!

Question - Why is it that touch is so powerful?

"No other sense deals as directly with the three-dimensional world or similarly carries with it the possibility of altering the environment in the process of perceiving it; that is to say, no other sense engages in feeling and doing simultaneously."

Charles Moore - Body, Memory and Architecture -Yale University Press

“ALTARED” STATES

I have always enjoyed my massage tables. They are efficient and beautiful tools of our trade.

I recently returned from a weeklong “yoga vacation” at a wonderful center in Tulum, Mexico – Maya Tulum. During that time I received three massages, each excellent. After my first massage, I happened to meet a young, friendly man who introduced himself as Leo. I had heard high recommendations of his work from other people in the retreat – so I decided to sign up for a massage from him as my last session there.

In that session, something happened that may change how I perceive and give every massage from now on. I had signed up for a traditional Mayan “Yoot Keen” Massage.

Leo began with some quite deep and specific abdominal work. It was interesting, as deep abdominal work often seems to bring up survival issues. I believe this is due to its being the largest vulnerable area of the body having little bony protection. And of course it contains our “vital organs.” So Leo’s work here was a somewhat edgy. I had a little anxiety and mild discomfort in a few places, but overall it felt just like good deep abdominal work.

He then continued, working with me in a supine position, expertly covering the legs, feet, chest, arms, hands, neck and head with good, solid very three-dimensional work. Then he asked me to turn over and soon after turning over I had the distinct experience that I was no longer on a massage table.

What I felt then was that I was rather on an altar! The rest of the session I experienced not on a massage table – I felt distinctly that I was on an altar. As such everything he did seemed to have a sacred

context, as well being physically effective. I felt more dramatically the freeing and aligning of my physical structures. I also felt an easy, organic flow of memories – as if past events in my life were circulating through me as well – releasing old no longer useful patterns and amplifying gifts from the past that I could yet own more deeply. So both time and space were being freed within.

Most striking overall though was that overriding experience of being on an altar. And I now realize that there can be, much more consciously than I've previously cultivated, a very natural, yet very sacred aspect to massage. Altars are indeed basically not so different from any other table, study desk, massage table, a dinner table, or otherwise. The main difference is that we place on them objects of reverence, things that remind us of or may evoke a sense of sacredness.

If the client is on the altar, then every stroke has a sacred dimension. This doesn't require any pretense – only the awareness that just as massage affects the body, and sometimes the mind, it can equally affect the spirit. And when the spirit is affected positively, it makes the context "sacri-ficial" (meaning literally "to make sacred"). The table then may function, in such moments, however brief or extended in duration, as an altar.

Spirit can mean many things, to many people. To me it is connected to the sense that this life is a gift. It is not ego-centered – spirit is not *mine*. It can manifest just as a sense of gratitude. It may be felt as a sense of energy flowing through us. Or it just may be the elation and natural ecstasy explored wonderfully in Robert Johnson's book, "Ecstasy: Understanding the Psychology of Joy." In that book, he talks about the human need for experiences which transcend our everyday reality and these experiences fundamentally nourishing our

being. We all have moments when we feel transfigured by experiencing the beauty of the natural world or of great art. To have the spirit touched awakens us to our own sacredness, our own miraculous nature. It turns the therapist to that extent, without the intention to do so, as well, into a bit of a spiritual guide through the work of his or her own hand, heart and spirit. It should be said Leo said nothing during the massage, so there was no “programming” going on.

Every session is an opportunity to revitalize the body, mind and spirit. If we will recognize that our tables may function as altars, and that we may be contacting the client spiritually, our clients stand then to receive the fullest benefits therapy may offer.

Of course, it is tricky not to impose this vision onto the client. I suggest only that we remember, from the very beginning of meeting the client to the very end of the session, that this spiritual dimension and benefit to massage may accompany the physical, emotional, and mental benefits. That’s just common sense.

This common sense, nonetheless, allows us, from the get go and the let go, to see that we are allowing and inviting gently into every massage we give, to some extent, a dimension in which our clients may experience the “altared state”.

A POEM ABOUT MASSAGE

Hands touching places never touched.
Forearms with a river flowing between two bones.

Panning for the gold in your hands,
I find reflections of everyone you've been –
the heavenly queen,
the knight whose armor shone in the sun,
the sleeping child with hands
like kittens on top of each other,
the serf whose shoulders bore the plow.

"Your feet, my dear," he said, "are alphabetical."
26 ways to say, "The earth is my home."
A bone for each week of the year,
Phalangeal months,
Pedal astrology:
Leo meets the Longitudinal Arches
And Capricorns like hooves.

All the stars make waves everywhere inside of you.

It's not enough to say,
This shoulder is beautiful,
And that hip leaves nothing to be desired.
The ball and socket speak
In an Oriental language of completeness and freedom,
Movement through the union of opposites.

Ribs float in the air,
Summer nights the boughs move
More gently in the breeze
And your breath persuades my heart to love.

It is impossible that hair is not tall grass,
Impossible that wind is not breath,
That your legs are not panther legs,
Your head not a falcon's.

There are too many people in this world
Not to love them all.

Hands alight –
Lotus petals
On the abdomen

Words point to what we can not say,
What we can not speak of, we hope to touch.
Touch the world.

You call it therapy.
I call it love.

BELIEVING IN TOUCH

I have never been a very religious person. My father was an agnostic, who also liked jokes. So, at his funeral, I said, "He didn't believe much in religion but he loved jokes. So, Dad, if you can hear me now, the joke is on you."

From an early age I did have a respect and attraction to the sacred, often through art and music, and also from a deep hope that humans would collaborate in creating a peaceful world.

I was intrigued by the experience of spirit or energy - doing yoga on my own when I was 16, I had a first experience of dramatic sensations of energy flow in my body. Then I spent countless hours listening to and playing music of all kinds, mostly blues and rock and roll - I loved the moments when the guitar seemed to be playing me, not the other way around.

I studied Asian music in Berkeley in 1967 and remember an astonishing concert of a Japanese shakuhachi (bamboo flute) master in which somehow we were all transported into a dense forest with a deer running through it.

I graduated with a degree in music composition, but didn't find that satisfying as a profession. So I got into therapy and read a lot in the realms of psychology and eastern and western philosophy. Eventually I got a job at my favorite bookstore, the Whole Earth Center in Evanston, Illinois.

In 1974 I was at a bookseller's convention in Atlanta and was pleased to meet the people who made the "Dharmaseal" decals that we sold at our center. They were disciples of Richard Alpert "Ram Dass", himself a devotee of an Indian teacher. On the second day, I went to talk with one of the Dharmaseal people, Miribai, but she was

busy with a customer and, touching me on the shoulder, apologized for not being able to talk at that moment. I walked down the aisle a bit disappointed. As I walked, I started to feel better. Then much better. Then incredibly well! I felt that there was a sun inside of me, radiating out from the core of my being. Eventually I was almost surprised that other people couldn't see it. That moment was my first big "crack" in the cosmic egg.

I thought if just a single touch can affect a person that powerfully, I want to learn more about that! That led to me becoming a massage therapist, then a massage teacher, moving to the kinder, gentler community of Austin in 1984, then eventually to starting a school, The Lauterstein-Conway Massage School, in 1989.

I still don't practice a particular religion; the closer I get to the formality of any one, the less I am inclined to proceed. But I have learned from the Jewish, Christian, Sufi, and Buddhist traditions. But probably the most I have learned is from massage therapy. From working with the body and the way it connects to and affects the mind, emotions and the spirit, I have learned most of what I know and value. I am tempted to say I'm a practitioner of Massage-ism.

The insights which come from studying and practicing massage are, to me, the missing piece in our culture and in our education. The value of kindness, the respect for boundaries, the knowledge and valuing of the miraculousness of our anatomy and physiology, the cultivation of clear and high quality relationship within the setting of true health-care for the whole person, the role that healthy touch can play in our world – these are just some of my learnings.

I thank my teachers and lucky stars to have found a path that I can walk with enthusiasm and gratitude – the world revealed to us by our bodies and healthy touch. I believe in touch.

BODY QUESTIONS *The curiosity implicit in the tensions we introduce poses questions*

The brilliant teacher, Seth Godin wrote, "To earn our attention, there needs to be tension. The tension of how it might turn out. The tension of possibility. The tension of change. Telegrams used to charge by the word. Say what you need to say, there you go. But stories... stories work because we're not sure. We're half there, half not. This might work. This might not work. The tension of maybe".

When we contact or introduce tension into the body, it is as if we are asking a question of it, the conscious and unconscious body. When we go to our edge in a yoga pose, we are asking, can you do this? Can you sustain this? Can you be ok with this being your limit? When in massage we press in and with precision contact tension in a muscle or find tension in a ligament through a stretch, we are asking, can you let go here?

And then the body begins to tell its stories in feelings, sometimes in words – I can't let go here because of what the world did to me as a child, because of the news, because of work, my relationship, what I believe about myself, because I don't want to change...

Often we don't hear these actual stories, but we know the body is re-acting them in its response to tension.

The curiosity implicit in the tensions we introduce poses questions and evokes our stories. The question asks us whether maybe we can find new ways to be?

These stories of ours are ongoing and can have different endings in body, mind and spirit.

BREATH *“Everything must touch! Send feelers out, And love is like a vine, it is connecting us.”*

What connects one touch with another? What role does breath play in the art of massage?

In yoga, if we do the postures and movement without full breathing, it is of limited structural and energetic benefit. If we dance and don't breathe fully and naturally, we move in a stilted way, So too if a therapist does a massage without fully and naturally breathing in and out, it's like song without the right rhythm, it feels held back, stilted, you don't feel like singing along. Without the free breath of life, the massage will likely not have a deeper therapeutic impact.

When we do and teach massage, too often the concentration is overly much on what we do with our hands. But - our energy doesn't come from our hands! It comes from breath. Literally and figuratively, breathing fully in and out gives us aliveness in every cell, pulsation, and a sense of volume in our bodies as we move. Breath is the first and last nourishment. It is the breath with which we nurture and nourish our clients.

Plus the only inner rhythm that we have both conscious and unconscious control of is the breath. The brainstem gives us the basic breath but we also have learned habits and voluntary control through the cerebrum, the home of the conscious mind. Thus, through both the medullary and cerebral influence of breath, we access the explicit interface of both the conscious and the unconscious worlds.

Respiration is the deepest physiological and anatomical function over which we have conscious as well as unconscious control.

The slow rhythm of freed, mindful breathing conveys a sense of grace. Just like the most wonderful, the warmest breeze, breath will

convey exquisitely a sense of ease. It will be a slow rhythmic, living vehicle for taking an important vacation from the rhythms and tasks of everyday life.

To find the energy and responsive rhythm in a session with a client, we need to fully inhabit our own breath and be mindful of the depth and rhythm of theirs. Then the massage is a duet of breath. It is the experience of harmony between two people. The philosopher, Krishnamurti, said if six people would totally cooperate, the world would be instantly transformed. Maybe we can say, for the world to be transformed, perhaps first it just takes two.

The art of massage, like life itself, depends on the breath. Every touch, like every note in a song, is strung like a bead on this living bracelet, this miraculous vine of breath that connects us all.

Destiny Made Visible *“We who draw do so not only to make something visible to others, but also to accompany something invisible to its incalculable destination.” ~ John Berger*

For many people, for most of our clients, their deeper nature has become somewhat invisible to them - their dreams, their subtle body inclinations, the slow trajectories of deeper emotion, the perambulations of unconscious mind, the desires of the soul and the choreography of the spirit – all these may have become somewhat invisible and unfelt. The superficial nature of what passes for education, the speed of life, the distractions of popular culture all leave us little time or energy for feeling deeper and slower experiences of being.

So in a bodywork session, I hold open the possibility that people might become visible to themselves anew. They may see and feel deeper thoughts, bodily sensations and movements, emotions, and sense spirit as if for the first time or as if recalling a dream that actually immediately seems more real than what had passed for reality.

“We who draw do so not only to make something visible to others, but also to accompany something invisible to its incalculable destination.”

We who do bodymind work do so not only to make people visible to themselves, but also to empower them, and accompany them for a time. With renewed contributions to the previously invisible self, we accompany our clients to their incalculable destiny.

This art of bodymind work promotes what the writer Jacques Riviere characterized as "sincerity". "Sincerity...following a mysterious necessity composes my soul; with ingenuity, it recognizes the scattered elements of that unedited, strange combination which will be

my natural response. Nothing is more unexpected than myself; I should never have imagined such a face."

We may indeed help people re-introduce themselves to themselves in a way that they had never imagined but cannot now imagine denying. With this new self-knowing, with the sincerity of self-recognition, we see our true selves and the world we want to live in. We then see and can take up our incalculable inner resources to create that world.

DIAPHRAGMS OF LIFE *Bring long overdue appreciation to deeper, unsung heroes within who transmit light, life-giving substances and energy through us*

In Zero Balancing and Deep Massage we concentrate on physical structure and the energy flowing through the skeletal system and its associated soft tissues. The focus is particularly on those joints which are not very active in locomotion, but which are more about the transmission of force through us and therefore balancing us in the gravitational/energy field. We call these foundation joints. The structure and function of joints such as those between the tarsal bones, sacro-iliac joints, all the intervertebral joints, and those between the ribs, spine and sternum all assume great importance in ZB.

Shifting perspective a little, we can see that there are as well key muscle groups that also are more about the transmission of energy through our structure. We can consider them all as diaphragms. In some cases these diaphragms are explicitly acknowledged as sphincters. In others, it is a matter of seeing indeed how force and substance may be transmitted through a certain place. Many of these are organized not along our longitudinal axis, as are our locomotor muscles, but are more or less transverse planes of muscles and fascia.

- The ligaments and muscles of the foot overall contribute to a diaphragm of arches. Like other diaphragms, these operate almost like a drumhead allowing for and transmitting the force and distributing the vibration of each step through the body.

- The pelvic diaphragm and pelvis in general – letting through elimination both from rectum and bladder; the musculature of the genitals associated with sex and with giving birth.
- The navel – our first mouth.
- The various sphincters of the digestive system that move nutrients through and contribute to their assimilation: the esophageal and pyloric sphincters, the ileocecal valve.
- The thoracic diaphragm, which enables our every breath.
- The heart consisting of muscles and valves design to propel blood through us.
- The larynx and the epiglottis being the upper sphincters respectively for the passage of air and food and liquid.
- Of course, we may look at the lips, nostrils and throat each as diaphragms.
- The eyes – diaphragms for light (interesting those same words are applied to the apertures for light through camera lenses).

We focus in exercise mostly on the freely movable joints and their muscles that are involved primarily in locomotion. However, just like our foundation joints and our vital organs, these diaphragms and their “fitness” may be even more critical to our health.

So next time you take in your breath, or focus your eyes, swallow food, or sing a song – think about the amazing roles these diaphragms play in our lives and think about ways you can support their health, not just by concentrating on the muscles we *do* with. Bring long overdue attention and appreciation to these deeper, unsung heroes within who transmit light, life-giving substances and energy through us – they are apertures of being, orifices of life, that enliven the very core of our existence.

DON'T LOSE THE MUSIC *“...I could have turned back and lost the music.” - Phillip Levine*

Each of us at times loses the music of our lives. As Thoreau said, “Dwell as near as possible to the channel in which your life flows.” Well, sometimes I’m dwelling there, sometimes I seem way far away from that channel. Sometimes I’m certain I don’t have “the answer” whatever that is; feel alienated from myself and other people; feel uncreative, unsure of what to do with my life.

And in bodywork too, sometimes we lose the music or feel that a student or therapist has. When we lose the music, our work doesn’t flow, doesn’t feel right. It doesn’t find the right bodily depth with confidence. We might be thinking more about ourselves than our clients, lost in that familiar and useless “am-I-good?-am-I-bad?” debate. The rhythm of our work then loses the organic responsiveness that flows within inspired work.

I have been assuming that we need to teach the “notes”, the strokes, and techniques before we can teach them the music, how to flow it all together. But I’m beginning to see that that may not be the best way to teach. If we cover the notes first, the music second, then music often takes a second place. Some students never learn the notes, because they’re not yet inspired.

Some, like me, might never find the music interesting until they get to improvise. I never liked sitting at a piano and trying to make music out of someone else’s notes on a page staring at me, daring me not to make a mistake.

So what if we taught the music, the love of the dance of massage first? Had some early classes in which students got to focus mostly on their flow? On their breath, overall body movement quality,

on varying tempos, on how they can feel inspired in body, mind and spirit when they work?

What if the teachers worked on and with them more in class? If the teacher gives a beautiful sample of how this work can feel and then calls upon them to enjoy doing something that feels as good – as Martin Buber said, “It is not the educational intention but the meeting which is educationally fruitful.”

What if we feel the love of dance first and the steps later? When we love dancing, love music, love massage, love how we feel when we do it, then our therapeutic results will much more likely result in the changes our clients want to experience. The state of inspiration is natural, if we will just let ourselves be.

Free yourself first. Then free your clients. As ida Rolf said, “If you just free the body, Nature will organize it.”

Don't lose the music. Start with the song. Start with the dance. The rest will follow. Your great love will come back to you.

Here is a beautiful story and poem from The Library of Congress Inaugural Reading by Poet Laureate Philip Levine October 17, 2011: [WATCH](#)

ETERNITY *“Dost thou love life? then do not squander time; for that is the stuff life is made of.”* - Benjamin Franklin

Time is what we are made of – in addition, of course to space.

Ida Rolf noted “gravity is the therapist” – meaning we derive the sense of balance from our relationship to gravity in space.

To say that “time is the therapist” is equally true. Of course we already say “Time is the great healer” – meaning superficially that, given the right amount of time, things will tend to heal themselves.

And what if, more deeply, it was also just like our relationship to space? – meaning, we derive the sense of balance from our relationship to time in life.

All the times we’ve lived are part of us. Yet some of them hold us back and some pull us forward in time – just like body segments being “in” or “out” of place in structural alignment.

To be balanced in the present moment, yet supported fully by all our past and the dreams that give birth to our future – you might say supported by the destiny that lies before us — this is health in time, not just space.

So we are made of time and so is our therapy. The ways we make meaning with time are among the most profound elements of our art.

The magic, as in music, of how long a note or a stroke should last or how long a pause between notes or movements shall be held is

one of the great mysteries we enjoy and explore as therapists each session.

Sometimes I am exploring the iliotibial band. Starting at the greater trochanter, I pause, establishing a clear sense of beginning in time. Then I begin moving down the i.t. band. For the first two-three inches, I may well take three or four seconds. Then I might slow down, going more and more slowly until it seems to the client, by the time I'm three-quarters of the way down this longest tendon in the body, that time itself has come to a standstill. Indeed there I will pause for a few moments — then resume slow, graceful movement finally reaching, after what seems like a long time, the end of the tendon.

I call it the “therapeutic use of eternity”. Because one thing we want is for our clients to step out of the relentless time of chronology, of “chronos” and enter the sacred time of “kairos”. “The ancient Greeks had two words for time, [chronos](#) and kairos. While the former refers to [chronological](#) or sequential [time](#), the latter signifies a time in between, a moment of indeterminate time in which something special happens.”

In Eastern Orthodox Churches, before the service, they invoke “kairos” indicating that this special time is “an intersection with Eternity.” (*Wikipedia*).

Isn't the whole massage indeed a time in between, a moment of indeterminate time in which something special happens?

EVALUATION AS AN ACT OF MERCY

Understanding, like love, is inherently merciful.

I was reading about Collaborative Problem-Solving this morning, motivated by recent national events. It is interesting they say the most time needs to be spent defining and agreeing on the problem. "They take turns working towards a mutual definition of their problem. This definition serves as the basis for entering into the second phase, which is negotiation and problem solving. The first phase generally takes a lot longer than the second."

So when we're doing bodywork with individual humans, when we really take the time to understand the problem and mutually agree on it – then it becomes vastly easier to resolve.

Take the time to interview, to palpate, to assess for movement, to ask for feedback - sometimes this may be the first time the patient will ever have felt truly listened to by a health professional.

Understanding, like love, is inherently merciful. By the time there is understanding, the solution is almost always obvious and accomplished with far greater ease.

FACIAL DIAPHRAGMS *What is your original face before you were born"?*

A very important perspective on the face is to not think of it just as tissues. You can get facial tissues at the store

What's even more incredible are the openings through the face which issue into the outside and inside worlds. Each of these openings are "diaphragms" which can open and close, modulating the substance and energy flowing through us.

The eyes, diaphragms for light; the nostrils and pharynx for aromas and breath, mouth also a diaphragm for breath as well as nourishment, language, song, and intimate connection – leading to the diaphragm of the larynx. The ears - diaphragms for sound leading to that incredible tiny drum conveying the vibrations of air to the nervous system.

So the next time you massage the face – consider honoring the openings to inner and outer worlds. How can you help amplify the person's experience of breath, light, sound, scent, nourishment, word and song?

The tissue is not the issue.

Often you will see a face in which chronically held expressions have caused the facial muscles and skin to assume a habitual tension patterns, sometimes like a mask. Chronically held expressions ultimately affect even the shape of the underlying bones, the joints, the teeth, and the proliferation of neurotransmitters in the brain. As we let go of chronic tensions here, we go back in time - evoking the Zen koan, "What is your original face before you were born"?

Often when observing a client at ease on the massage table as the session ends, I am struck by the restored sense of innocence in

their visage...With Deep Massage of the face, their original face is finally revealed, fully at rest, reveling in turn at new landscapes one may see through new eyes. Their Buddha-nature shines through, clear and beautiful as a new day.

GALEA APONEUROTICA *“To my maestro Pietro.
Sing me a new song: the world is transfigured and all the heavens
rejoice”. – Friedrich Nietzsche*

For its proximity to thought, one muscle in the body might be considered as most reflecting the activity of your mind. It has a variety of names – overall, I like the most inclusive one, the “epicranium”. Fascinatingly, just like the thoracic diaphragm, the epicranium has a central tendon – called poetically, the “galea aponeurotica”.

This central tendon which graces the top of the skull is the origin of two of this muscle’s three bellies. One (“frontalis”) inserts on the skin just above the eyebrows and nose and the other (the “temporoparietalis”) to the auricles of the ears. So those parts lift the eyebrows and the ears respectively.

The exception is the posterior belly (“occipitalis”), which originates from the lateral 2/3rds of the occipital bone at the superior nuchal line and the mastoid process of the temporal bone and inserts into the galea aponeurotica.

When we massage near the brain, because we are creating sensation so close to where we perceive our thinking taking place, it tends to draw attention away from that almost constant and often overly dominating stream of thoughts. It seems to turn down their volume.

On the one hand, I deeply love the process of helpful and creative thinking and, on the other; sometimes the chatterbox of the mind is just exhausting in non-stop, run-on sentences of mental spam. I’m sure you know what I mean!

Relax your mind! More and more research is telling us it is the nervous system that produces changes more than the muscles or

connective tissues. Relax your mind – the body will follow. Or if you prefer another way of saying it – override nervous energy with a clearer, calmer force field and the tensions in the body’s structure will release.

Just as the history of your emotions may be, in some sense, read through the interplay of tensions and freedoms embodied in the skin, muscles and bones of the face, so the history of your thinking and feeling may be reflected in the geography and tension patterns of your cranial bones and the periosteum lying on them, and the surrounding muscles and skin. We’re not talking “phrenology” here, the belief that the head could be read like a palm. But there is no doubt that chronic tension in the realm of thought and emotion often results in physical tension, and here particularly, so near the “home” of thought and feeling.

So when you do Deep Massage for the epicranium, slow down and know that the client’s thoughts may in turn slow down and turn down in perceived volume, with concurrent waves of relaxation flowing throughout the body. Address the full area with semi-circular fulcrums. Into each place you work, imagine, without excessive pressure, that you are contacting not only skin and muscles, but also the periosteum lying on the very surface of the cranium and perhaps in some sense the brain itself.

May it be, through these thoughtful and feelingful fulcrums, that we can convince that restless mind of ours to sing its songs a bit softer and more sweet, with creativity and even more compassion for ourselves and the world in which we all live.

God's First Language *God's First Language is Silence.
Everything else is a translation.” - Thomas Keating*

Sometimes I use music during massage. Often I feel that the most relevant music going on is inside the client, so I don't want to program them from outside. So I'll work with no music, so the inner music can be heard.

One way or another, we need to cultivate silence. In silence we open to a whole world of possibilities. We are most receptive to our greatest gifts when our mind is quiet, when our body is truly at rest, and our spirit at peace.

GROWING NEW ARMS *You will love again the stranger who was your self.* – Derek Walcott

The other day I worked on a woman with chronic complaints in her extremities. As we proceeded, I had a deeper insight into the origins of her pain, tension and discomfort.

Some people are raised to do for others. Their freedom to express and meet their own needs, even as young children, is not welcomed. They learn rather to serve and obey the constraints imposed by one or both parents or other close family members.

In that case, it is common for the person to identify their limbs, which with they do their doing, with the people they are raised to serve. When it comes to their own sense of themselves, they tend to identify as “me” only their axial system – torso, neck and head.

I recall poignantly working on another young woman years ago early on in my practice. As I worked on her arms, she started crying and I was surprised.

“What’s happening?” I asked.

She told me that as a young girl she had broken her arm. Shortly thereafter, she was, with her family, visiting another family. After dinner, the man of that household recruited the kids to wash the dishes. To her surprise, he asked her, with a recent, still painful broken arm, to dry the dishes.

She looked at her father for help to illuminate this man. But her father just shrugged, unassertive, and didn’t protect his child. She helped do the dishes, in pain the whole time.

Then, while still crying, she said to me, “Ever since then these arms have belonged to my father. Today they are mine again.”

With this current client, I am emphasizing the limbs and especially the "girdles" of the shoulder and pelvis. The girdles are the outlets for self-expression through the extremities. I have high hopes for this current client that soon she will say, "These limbs are mine again."

Helping clients re-own parts of themselves is an essential part of deep massage. As the poet Derek Walcott said, in his poem, "Love after Love" -

"The time will come
when, with elation
you will greet yourself arriving
at your own door, in your own mirror
and each will smile at the other's welcome,

and say, sit here. Eat.

You will love again the stranger who was your self."

How the Radiologist Changed My Life *it's all dancing*

I was doing a session on a radiologist and couldn't resist asking him about the many wondrous things he'd seen through MRI's, etc. I asked him, of everything he'd seen, what had he found most fascinating?

He said it was the first time he'd seen a spinal cord inside a living human being. Now I've seen spinal cords in cadaver labs and, with the cranial fascia, and it is wild. It looks just like a jellyfish with tentacles hanging down. So I understood.

But he said no it wasn't its appearance that was so interesting. Then he said something that forever since has changed my entire picture of anatomy and physiology and therapy.

He said, "It looks like they're dancing to the Rolling Stones!"

It turns out, since the spinal nerves are not pinned down and float freely in the cerebrospinal fluid, when the electricity passes through them they wave rhythmically in the canal. Just so, electric wires in your house are nailed down, because otherwise when the electricity passed through them they would undulate and arc.

So in that one moment I learned what I had not fully visualized. We are moving everywhere inside of us. Of course two-dimensional anatomy books don't convey this movement. And we can fall into the habit of forgetting we are interacting with moving, fluid being every time we touch the body.

As a matter of fact, since we, therapist and client, are both mostly water, when we touch, is it flesh touching flesh or, more accurately, water touching water. Are we touching or swimming? One thing for sure.

We are both dancing to the Rolling Stones.

IN EVERY PAUSE THERE'S A ROLE FOR FAITH

It's easy, when you listen to the news, to lose faith in so many aspects of humanity. Yet we can and must re-activate the deep pleasure that comes from having faith in people. And it takes just a little time – just pausing with care during our work and life.

As a teacher in my school and in workshops, each day I have the chance to enjoy the faith that our students and therapists evoke. There are so many bright, caring and interesting people here – it is easy to have your faith restored through contact with them. It's similar in a massage, where every moment you can find a new opportunity for faith in your clients' self-healing abilities.

Andrew Taylor Still, Osteopathy's founder, said that the body contains all the healing substances it needs – showing an abiding faith in nature.

When you put your hands on a person, pause

– have faith in that person's ability to connect with another person

When you find tension in the body, pause

– have faith in the person's nervous system's ability to connect, recognize tension and already begin the letting go process from within

When you press into the tension, pause

– have faith that the client, given the gift of non-manipulated time, will let go more and more deeply

And when the pressures of those points are held with stillness and kindly attention, you pause

– allow time for that person to feel the wonderful pleasure and deep hope that accompanies the restoration of faith in themselves!

Ida Rolf said, "Gravity is the therapist". So true. We also know that "Time is the great healer". Time is the environment for self-evolution; time is the therapist.

And so, often it comes....this gift...from the power of the pause, resting and trusting in the power of sacred time.

WE HAVE FAITH IN EACH OTHER

I BELIEVE IN YOU!

IS PAIN YOUR FRIEND?

In the 60's a young hippie woman came up the philosopher, Herbert Marcuse and said, "Professor, you're always talking about the 'unhappy' consciousness, but I'm HAPPY!"

And he famously answered in his thick German accent, "Young woman, you say you're happy, I say you're not!"

The "unhappy consciousness" he referred is, in part taken from the philosopher, Hegel, who said that the road of new knowledge leads to the overthrow of the old, because as we learn, often we have to painfully say goodbye to our former beliefs. As a result, Hegel called the road of knowledge, sounding a bit like Bob Dylan, "a highway of despair."

In the modern world, we are scared of pain and despair. Just look at Facebook, and the preponderance of the "happy consciousness" posts. I do it too. Now I'm not an advocate for useless pain. But the useful pains, the real despair that accompanies some of our life and the lives of those around us – these give our lives depth and meaning and, yes, nobility. They foster courage. Note how natural disasters generally bring out the best in people.

When you are confronted with pain, you can learn and be encouraged. Walk along the path of knowledge which intersects with the highway of despair. As a therapist, help your clients see their pain as an intense way their bodymind is calling for attention. When we get to know our pain and its sources better, we are in a vastly better position to take action, to take new paths that will help. In some way or another, every pain presents us with an opportunity for self-knowledge and healing.

Every journey they say begins with a single step. Often that first step along the path is taken because it is too painful to just stay where we are.

“Life is suffering” is the first of the “Four Noble Truths” of Buddhism anyhow. Can Hegel and Buddha and Bob Dylan be that far off?

See you on the highway!

I SAW THE ANGEL *“I saw the angel in the marble and I carved until I set him free.” - Michelangelo*

Each person on our table comes in with their own shadows and lights. They come with an injury, with chronic tension, hurt by early life circumstance, or by recent trauma. We live in a restless culture, ever-changing and sometimes not for the better. We live in an environment challenged by global warming, war, and thoughtless excesses of industry. To find the first noble truth of Buddhism – Life is Suffering – we don’t have to look very far!

May this suffering spark our compassion every day! With the spirit of compassion every day we can also see the angelic component in each client and in the world around us. We see the gift of life as expressed uniquely by this individual. The gift of being the angel in the marble, however deeply embedded, is reflected back into their structure through our touch.

Angels sometimes need our help. They can be bound, as Ida Rolf said, “by literal thorns in literal flesh.” The higher self can be bound by old thoughts or beliefs that no longer serve us. We can wrap ourselves up in the emotional atmosphere we grew up in, recreating ancient tensions long obsolete. I recently read somewhere, “We are each perfectly adapted to circumstances in which we no longer live.”

As bodyworkers we get to inhabit the “radical present”. The radical present is one in which we mobilize the magic and power this very moment uniquely holds. Bit by bit, muscle by muscle, joint by joint, in their very bones, I want my clients to awaken to their reality in the present moment, to know how marvelous they are, to know and feel the angel alive in the core of their being.

Each person is a unique miracle of anatomy, physiology, emotion

and mind. If they have forgotten that – and so often they have- it's our job to help lift that veil of forgetfulness – so they can remember who they most truly are.

IN WORK WE KNOW HOW HARD IT IS TO SUCCEED

In work we know how hard it is to succeed
To try to go from dream to the real thing
Like genes express themselves alive in deed -
May all our hopes take flight with soul and wing.

To get from heart to thought to word to act -
Each day a chance for miracles and yet
Sometimes obscured, purposes lost in distracted
Streams of tasks, tasks sunk in seas of regret.

Each step anew must call for clarity
Of soul, of mind and heart, of hand and foot.
We touch, our hands make a solidarity,
Genetics indeed make clear this deep root:

One dream does not have strength to live without
All dreams, connected to things we care about.

Lifting off Your Head

In 1967, the "Summer of Love" I was studying Indian music in Berkeley, California at the American Society for the Eastern Arts. One of my classmates was the obscure, brilliant guitarist, Robbie Basho.

One morning I arrived early and Basho was standing on the front porch. He was slowly bending his knees, putting his arms behind his back, then rising up and, as he did, he took his hands, palms up, behind his back then raised them above his head toward the sky as he straightened his legs. I watched him repeat this over and over for some minutes, my 20 year old eyes and mind wide in wonder.

Finally I said, tentatively and softly, "What are you doing?" He said, in his serious and stentorian voice, "I'm lifting the top of my head off!"

Needless to say, I was still a bit mystified. But it sure stuck with me.

Now years later, teaching and practicing Zero Balancing and cranio-sacral work, a profound part of my vocation is lifting off the tops of people's heads! Putting fingers gently on the occiput or parietal bones and lifting, we can give the bodymind room for freer thought and feeling, and a sense of connection with the worlds around us that are so much more vast than ourselves.

Emily Dickinson said it too,

"If I feel physically as if the top of my head were taken off, I know that is poetry."

LOOK AT ME! *allow people to thrive by giving them the quality of touch and attention they need*

We all know how sweet it is when our kids first learn things and then share the thrill, saying, "Look at me! Look at me!" Circling around the driveway again and again, sledding down the snowy hill, doing a pirouette or playing a tune on the piano, they say, "Look at me! Listen to this!"

It can remind us in another context of the African or Sufi dance traditions or even some rock and roll dances where there's a similar feeling. "Look at me, God! See how free and happy I am, how grateful and alive."

As we get older, it becomes considerably more awkward to say, "Look at me!" We're not supposed to be so naively self-centered, nor to call people's attention so much to ourselves.

But how many of us indeed still are thrilled to have people say, "That's beautiful! How exciting!" How many adults are still circling around the driveways of their lives, wanting to say with their triumphs, "Look at me! I just raised two children! I just got a big paycheck! I just got over my cold!"

In some ways we can see that Facebook and other social media contexts, however varied in quality of posts, do have a lot of that look-at-me characteristic. Look what I'm thinking, look what I just ate, look at this neat article I found, the new song I sing.

Perhaps we can all more fully accept the need and the deep pleasure we receive when people do look at us and share in the excitement of our lives.

Go ahead say it, "Look at me!" It's only natural.

As massage therapists we see that our bodywork clients also, want to be truly seen for who they really are. In some ways, as therapists, we just allow people to thrive by giving them the quality of touch and attention that we all need. It's the experience of actual (not virtual) reality that is healing.

LOVING TIME

Last night I was teaching a business class on time management, office design, policies, procedures, etc.

We had talked about the Buddhist concept that 60% of healing is environment. Some spaces you walk into and immediately feel healthier and more energized. Some spaces you walk into and feel the energy sucked out - like going to some government buildings, where clearly no one seems to care how you feel. So the students and I discussed creating a healing space; how great it is to create for your therapy-space one that you love, one that adds energy and joy to you each time you enter it.

Then we collectively came up with something new to all of us. We began to discuss time in a new way. I said, "How could organize your TIME so that you could love it too?"

I asked, "How many of you LOVE the way you use time?"

Unsurprisingly, no one hands went up. So many of us are a little bitter at not having enough time. People almost reflexively feel the victim relationship to time - not organizing it well; there's not enough of it; it's finite, we don't have enough time to get everything done that we want to do; shit happens then you die.

Then we had a beautiful discussion about ways you could love your time as well as your space.

MASSAGE AT THE RED SEA *God doesn't mess up!*

The other morning, I was obsessing and upset about developments in the massage field and how those affected my future and that of our profession. And I naturally am upset about recent events in the U.S., Europe, and around the world. Then I tuned on the radio, just wanting to listen to some calming music. But instead a man was shouting real loud...something about the Red Sea!...Well, I realized it was Sunday morning and the radio happened to be tuned to KAZI, the African American public radio station in town. Now I am not particularly religious but I'm open to learning from anywhere. And the minister was shouting about God and the Israelites at the Red Sea. And he shouted about that situation over and over in a variety of ways – both rhythmic and sensical.

He said we all get to really tight places in our lives. We all get a number of times to our "Red Sea".

He said, when the people of Israel got to the Red Sea and couldn't go any further, the people blamed Moses. He'd made, they said, a horrible mistake and mislead them. They'd be better off if they'd stayed in slavery in Egypt! And through him they blamed God. But God, the preacher said, had led them to this very place...as a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night. God didn't, the preacher said, "MESS UP!"

Moses then said, "STAND STILL." And then he "stretched out his hand" and sure enough, the story tells us, the Israelites survived and this challenge further empowered their faith.

So it does help to know – when we get to a tight place, at the very least our decisions and circumstances, both mundane and sacred, have brought us there. Then if we will stand still and have faith in ourselves or whatever we believe in and then take action, we can make it through. We have made it through before and we will again.

Standing still, then moving forward. Perhaps first adding calmly some knowledge, research and contemplation about our situation. We will then know what to do much better. And then we can act.

In every massage session, we give our clients a chance to stand still. May this time of non-action, give them the time and space in which to rest, to strengthen their resolve, to have more energy to act and, if they happen to be at their Red Sea, to make it through with a deepened faith in themselves and the forces, known and unknown, that help each of us through difficult passages in life.

Mind-Body Adhesion *Open up to beautiful worlds*

We hear a lot about mind-body connection. And yet, a little breathing room between the body and the mind is sometimes equally desirable.

Humans are capable of living in so many worlds, but most days we live in just one. So there is naturally a profound reality fatigue of feeling that we live just in this one world we have to live in.

So we place our fingers, making bone-to-bone contact with the bottom of the occipital ledge, then pause. We then gently bring the spine into length. Pause. Then gently we introduce a shallow curve and opening by bringing our fingertips just a little closer to ourselves.

Then we hold that fulcrum and let the person rest into the spaciousness between the mind and the body. Reality dissolves. We go into a state of reverie.

The French philosopher, Gaston Bachelard, describes this as "a cosmic reverie, an opening to beautiful worlds."

To paraphrase him, 'Reverie puts us in the state of a soul being born. In the simplest of touches, our ambition is great. It is to prove that an effective fulcrum bears witness to a soul which is discovering its world, the world where it would like to live and where it deserves to live.'

NINE WAYS TIME HOLDS THE KEY TO THE ART OF MASSAGE THERAPY

1. How long should you hold a point? A stretch? A resting hand? What's the right "duration"? Not just how much pressure, how much time?
2. How fast or slow should we move? In a curve or straight? Tempo is the orchestrator of mind, body, and soul.
3. Should we breathe in synchrony with our clients? What rhythms should we embody in our work? What rhythms should we be observing in our clients? It don't mean a thing if it ain't got that swing.
4. Presence could be 50% of the effectiveness in massage. There is no time like the present. There is no time BUT the present! How can more of you be present in your touch?
5. A healthy relationship to time in your work means that some moments during the session will "stop" time. I call it the therapeutic use of eternity. Challenge the relentlessness of chronology, the line from past through the present to the future. See how you can make circles with time through well-timed, meaningful repetitions; then the same thing seems to happen at two different times, like a rhyme.
6. When your heart is in your work, you leave hurry behind. The heart has its own tempo. Slow, steady and full of care – wild and

free – and always with feeling, once more, again and again we work with feeling.

7. Understanding takes time. Do you understand yourself? Do you ever understand anything 100%? The miracle of human understanding is we can put the miracle of logical and creative thinking in the service of our clients. And understanding is never complete – so ideally it generates a healthy humility as we work.
8. What waves in their life time are you "riding" in on? What corners are they just turning? Their momentum will be positively assisted by your being there with the right touch at just the right time. And it's a whole lot less effort when you ride their momentum.
9. Can you make anything happen right now? Things take time. And the time they will happen in is up to them; it is always a fascinating mystery. We all have limited control over outcomes. Rather than worrying us, maybe that can help us feel even more free.

"Dost thou love life? Then do not squander time; for that's the stuff life is made of." ~ Benjamin Franklin

ODE TO PIRIFORMIS

(from Latin *piriformis* = "pear shaped")

Like a pear in underwear,
I run from spine to thigh.
Wondrous sacrum to greater trochanter go I.
Normally, no one knows I'm there.

From the sacral plexus' braid
Nerves come and make my life exciting -
Don't be afraid,
There's no pain I'm inviting.

But once in a great while
When nerves running around, above or below me
Cry out, "Sciatica!" It's wild!
Like they were imprisoned in Attica!

Then cry my rotating brethren,
"Free the prisoners of the piriformis!
Give us back our mild life!"
To all else their cries deafen.

Until, with God's grace and intelligent touch,
It doesn't take much -
I return to Eden and my secret life.
Aligning pelvis and thigh, no more strife.

Again I am a silent partner

to Gluteus Maximus and Obturator
and those other deep ones who rotate the world through the thigh
Oh my Oh my go I
Silent, yet beautiful - like a pear in underwear.

ORNAMENTS AND CRIME *“Ornamentations add important, fresh, and unpredictable elements of flow to our work.”*

Got your attention? Well I’m not really going to write about that. However, that was the title of a famous essay written by the architect, Adolf Loos, in 1908. He was a founding member of the “Bauhaus,” a modern movement that approached design with a heightened sense of the beauty and efficiency of things designed quite simply and thoughtfully for use.

Proclaiming, “No ornament can any longer be made today by anyone who lives on our cultural level ... Freedom from ornament is a sign of spiritual strength,” Loos wielded the sword against ornamentation in design. It is almost funny how he cites the preponderance of tattooed people in prison as proof that he is right. Well, he would be floored by the renaissance of body ornamentation in our age!

For now though let’s just explore Ornamentation and Massage.

Like a building needs clear lines of structural support, we need a “superstructure” of techniques that home in on problems as manifest by the myofascial, and ultimately, nervous systems. However, regardless of the modality, our bold strokes, to be truly effective, periodically call for added ornamentation. After, for instance, a deep stroke down a hamstring, it may leave the client with a more integrated feeling to add a little rocking or a single petrissage or a nerve stroke. These ornamentations add a fresh, unpredictable element to the flow of our sessions. They are very much part of the art because when it comes to being unpredictable, the massage therapists/artist must be creative and judicious – deciding just which

additional strokes or therapeutic “gestures” to add to provide a deeper, more integrated experience for the receiver.

These ornamentations in touch are, of necessity improvised, – as were for instance the ornamentations added by individual instrumentalists in Bach’s day. Trills, “turns,” and “grace notes” added to clear melodies go by so fast that the listener’s left brain can’t follow them. So it gives up, affording the listener the opportunity to experience the music more with their whole self.

Equally and often as integrating are well-timed pauses in massage in which one can imagine clients themselves are being given the gift of silence and open time during which they may explore their inner world without further input. It’s almost like giving the receiver time for inner ornamentation, reflection, and re-arrangement. So this tapestry of bold strokes, pauses, and timely ornamentations are what facilitate the possibility that we can help create what William Blake, that great artist of words and pictures, meant when he spoke of holding “Infinity in the palm of your hand And Eternity in an hour.”

When therapists first start doing massage, they are often challenged to fit everything into an hour. As more seasoned therapists, more deeply familiar with both the science and the art, it is a fascinating challenge to continue to at least touch everything briefly, while combining, in a seamless therapeutic design – our bold strokes, well-timed pauses, and beautiful touch ornamentations – that result, like all great art, in the recipient’s opportunity to see and make their world anew.

PROUST WAS WRONG *”the magic of temporal integration through bodywork*

“I would describe men, even at the risk of giving them the appearance of monstrous beings, as occupying in Time a much greater place than that so sparingly conceded to them in Space, a place indeed extended beyond measure because, like giants plunged in the years, they touch at once those periods of their lives – separated by so many days – so far apart in Time.” - Marcel Proust

Was Proust right? Not really. Because we occupy in fact only the present moment, which is an instant. We occupy in space about 2-5 cubic feet.

Not only that, the window through which we can access the “Time” Proust was speaking of is that jewel case of fascia, liquid and neural tissue we call the brain.

And the way we access the brain and its store of memory as massage therapists/bodyworkers is through the body’s space. We can’t touch the brain directly. Yet each space we touch can open a window not only into a deeper experience in the present moment, but, through the miracle of conscious and unconscious memory being linked to the parts that were involved in past experience, we evoke moments from the past - ones that were so beloved by Proust who can thank his body for the taste and aroma of a cup of tea that opened a window for him

that ultimately gave rise to the 3,900 pages of "Remembrance of Things Past"!

Another writer, Walter Benjamin, said, "only a redeemed mankind receives the fullness of its past." The same holds true for an individual affected by significant touch (what I call Deep Massage). There are times in our lives from which we haven't fully learned the lessons; others we haven't fully experienced because we didn't know how to process them at the time; and others still lay forgotten, but with the insight and power that often populate our dreams.

Massage touches those times in our lives that, when activated consciously or unconsciously, infuse our lives with deepest meaning. For a redeemed person, all the moments of his or her life are accessible, the present receives all the fullness of its past, and that contributes to the fulfillment of destiny.

So we are not just structurally integrated with all our segments aligned – we are also aligned in time with all our past moments contributing to the magic of this both infinitesimal and yet vast present moment and the 2-5 cubic feet of space through which we are connected to all the space around us and in which our whole life is lived.

REFLECTIONS ON FASCIA AND CHANGE

the more attention we give to something, the more fluid it becomes

Fascia, the primary connective tissue in our bodies, is "thixotropic". This is the chemical property of certain natural substances (such as some clays in the soil, paints, some condiments) such that, when we add activity to them (such as pressure, heat, movement), they become qualitative softer and more fluid.

A reader of [The Deep Massage Book](#) and graduate of our school, Kaia Tingley, writes, "We live in a kind of 'thixotropic' world - where the more attention we give to something, the more fluid it becomes - leading to the manifestation of change, right? As above, so below... The word "thixotropic" itself has stuck with me since I first learned it actually - such a cool concept. In your book you described any substance with thixotropic properties, when stirred, shaken, squeezed, or moved in any way as becoming "more fluid." And you said that "the energy of the therapist's touch... also plays a role in increasing fluidity."

"Drawing on my reading of the Toltec teachings, the Abraham Hicks premises, and loosely several other sources - it struck me as kind of a fractal equivalency. Energy applied to structure in the context of bodywork creates this tendency towards increased fluidity of the fascial tissue, and that with greater fluidity comes movement and change."

"Energy (in the form of attention) applied to anything else in just about any context - activates a sort of fluidity of material manifestation and change that arises from vibration."

Thank you, Kaia. For readers to build on this book and take it

further making it even more useful and powerful - is a dream come true. May it be so - that "the more attention we give to something the more fluid it becomes - leading to the manifestation of change."

"Knowledge of the world means dissolving the solidity of the world".

Italo Calvino

RE-MAKING FACES...*and minds*

The face is the most expressive part of the person. That's partly due to our anatomy. The face is the only place in the body where muscles and their tendons do not attach to bones! Unlike other voluntary muscles whose insertions and origins are on bone, the facial muscles insert into each other's fascia!

This means the "insertions" and "origins" of the facial muscles are basically other facial muscles. The fact that the facial muscles insert into each other is what gives faces their incredible plasticity. Through their impact on the superficial fascia and the skin overlying it, we get all our expressions - anger, sadness, doubt, joy, fear, and their infinite variations - communicating our feelings in ways far more subtle and articulate than words.

These expressions of course don't originate with the muscles. Our feelings and expressions are a result of brain activity and the nervous system's activating certain facial muscles.

Did you know though, that your brain's activity is also a result of your facial expressions?

In a research in Germany, the subject was told to hold a pen between his teeth, because the facial expression produced actually resembled a smile and a grin. It affected the neurotransmitters in the brain, and produced certain happy chemicals which helped to change the mood state. In contrast, when they asked the subject to hold the pen in his mouth, which mimics a serious expression, there was no change in the mood state.

The Reader's Digest, July 2007 also carried an article substantiating the same theory. Putting on a happy face not only helps us to make friends. It translates into a brain chemistry that makes us

feel better. Ekman and University of Wisconsin neuroscientist Richard Davidson used brain scans to show that even an artificial smile activates some parts of the brain associated with pleasure and happiness.

Finally, we can note that the primary source of information we have as people and as therapists about the emotional states of our clients is through their facial expressions. The face holds a treasure of information for us.

And of course what a pleasure it is, for us and our clients, at the end of the session to see their beautiful smiles and know that we have made a difference in their faces, their bodies, their minds and hearts.

Rhythm's Role *“To everything, turn, turn, turn...there is a season and a time.” – Ecclesiastes*

Moving, fluid-filled joints between the bones play a crucial role in making the skeletal system work, helping to organize our bodily space. So the pauses between moments and events of life help to organize our time, almost like joints in time.

The ancients postulated celestial rhythms and frequencies in the harmonic relationship of planets and stars across the vast reaches of the universe – the so-called “music of the spheres”.

“To everything, turn, turn, turn...there is a season and a time for every purpose under heaven.” – Ecclesiastes

The recurring rhythms of night and day, the seasons, the moon, the tides – all play a role in our inner and/or outer environment.

Entrainment – variously defined – by its medium

Air – the intentional creation of tiny air bubbles in concrete

Brainwaves – the practice of entraining one's brainwaves to a desired frequency

Music – the synchronization of organisms to an external rhythm

Chronobiology – the alignment of a circadian system's period and phase to the period and phase of an external rhythm

Hydrodynamics – the movement of one fluid by another

Meteorology – a phenomenon of the atmosphere, when a turbulent flow captures a non-turbulent flow

Physics – the process whereby two interacting oscillating systems assume the same period

All these forms of entrainment – many both metaphorically and literally – happen in the rhythmic relationship of therapist and client.

We entrain in three obvious ways.

- Moving in unison with a body rhythm – such as the client’s breathing.
- Moving in “synchronization” – whole number ratios to the client’s rhythm – for instance, if one effleurage took precisely four heartbeats
- Moving in syncopation with rhythms of the client. In syncopation there is a sense of an underlying rhythm but both people can depart from it without losing the underlying sense of beat.

In other words, “it don’t mean a thing if it ain’t got that swing.”

And let us not forget the immortal words of Homer or was it Johnny Cash? who said, “GET RHYTHM, WHEN YOU’VE GOT THE BLUES.”

Silver Linings and Inner Treasures *Not only every cloud, but also every bone, has a silver lining.*

This is the translucent, silvery, dense, irregular connective tissue called “periosteum”. Basically the skin of your bones, the periosteum entirely envelops them except at the ends of the joints.

The periosteum is a living layer inside of you, actually two layers of life! The outer “fibrous” layer is connective tissue – “fascia.” Like fascia elsewhere in the body, it contains living cells, fibroblasts, that produce fibrous tissue, particularly here irregularly woven strands of collagen that interweave, giving strength and flexibility to this outer covering of every bone. Yet deeper, living on the very surface of the bone, we discover the “cambium” layer, coming from the Latin “cambiare” which means “to change”. Indeed it is this cambium, “osteogenic” layer which changes our bones, helping them to grow and repair. The cambium layer produces progenitor cells, which become osteoblasts, which in turn make bone.

The periosteum is vital to our life as it also conveys blood to the bones. Sometimes we forget the vital role of bone in the circulatory system. The inside of bones are so alive with circulation that people receiving transfusions, if an obvious vein can’t be found, can be fed directly through the inside of the bone.

Periosteum also contains extremely sensitive nerve endings. Thus, when we bruise the periosteum, called a “contusion”, the pain is distinct and easily located. Bones themselves do not usually contain pain sensitive nerves, so it is the job of the periosteum as well to provide us this valuable intelligence.

In Zero Balancing we use the term “bone gold” to describe a place where we feel an unusual thickness in bone and its periosteum. Just as

releasing tension from the neuromuscular system gives us more energy for life, so the discovery of bone gold excites us as its release also contributes to an awakening to the incredible inner resource that is our skeletal system and its miraculous skin, the periosteum.

Even gold, it turns out, has a silver lining – your periosteum, this deep living treasure inside of you!

SOCIAL SUBLUXATION

As bodyworkers, we naturally want to help with misalignment. Slight dislocations of the sacroiliac joint, the tarsal bones, the suboccipital region – addressing these well can rebalance the entire system.

Yet sometimes we feel the enormity of the world around us – in space as well as time. Consider all that is beneath, behind, above, and to the sides of us; and all that happened before and all that will come after us in the future. Perhaps internal misalignments are just reflections of ones in the larger world in space and time.

There are disjunctions between nationalities, races, generations (is the “gap” a joint in time?), between our neighbors, between family members.

Disjunctions from our ancestors - the great Walter Benjamin said even the dead would not be safe if disjointed views of life predominate.

So maybe we need some social chiropractors and social bodyworkers to re-align the larger world!

These intelligent pieces of space and time – they’re out! Who will put them back in? Maybe every time you put your hands on your clients, you can support not only their internal alignment, but also their connection to the life around, before and beyond them.

Health ultimately is a function of community, not immunity. And our actual community extends far back and far forward in time.

It is said Native Americans, when faced with an important issue, would ask, how might this affect people seven generations from now, before making their decision.

Now there’s alignment in action!

SPIRIT OUTLETS IN BODYWORK AND LIFE

Last night in a yoga class our teacher, Camilla Figueroa, illuminated and elevated our appreciation of imperfection. She read a passage that profoundly affected our practice. This is from "Blood and Thunder" by Hampton Sides.

In describing the Navajo Indians, Sides writes, "...And they were never finished. Navajos hated to complete anything - whether it was a basket, a blanket, a song, or a story. They never wanted their artifacts to be too perfect, or too closed-ended, for a definitive ending cramped the spirit of the creator and sapped the life from the art. So they left little gaps and imperfections, deliberate lacunae that kept things alive for another day. To them, comprehensiveness was tantamount to suffocation. Aesthetically and literally, Navajos always left themselves an out.

Even today, Navajo blankets often have a faint imperfection designed to let the creation breathe - a thin line that originates from the center and extends all the way to the edge, sometimes with a single thread dangling from its border; tellingly, the Navajos call this intentional flaw the "spirit outlet".

In the Alchemy of Touch Zero Balancing class I teach we explore that each fulcrum (high quality held touch) can act as a container for a transformative experience. Each experience we facilitate as therapists is a "made place" (ultimately made by the client). Like a rug or a sand painting, it is created out of natural materials. In the case of bodywork/art, this natural material is the living bodymind.

As such, like the Navajo, we need to welcome this work not being "too perfect, or too closed ended" so we don't cramp the spirit or sap the life from our own or our client's experience. Every time I find

myself expecting perfection, I notice I'm not breathing fully!!

Imperfection gives us the breath we need - spiritus.

Therefore, in the facilitation of this living art, we need to not be too together for our own sake as well as for our clients.

- If we try to be perfect, we will work too hard. "There is no effort in what is divine," said the philosopher, Simone Weil. Perfectionism is a problem, not an aspiration.
- If we welcome imperfection in what we do, into these enhanced containers for experience we facilitate, then there will indeed be a spirit outlet.
- When we embody healthy imperfection, it sets a therapeutic example for your clients. They may then experience a profound relief from the pressures of perfectionism.

When we're too "together", there's no room for spirit to get in or out!

IO REASONS TO LOVE GLUTEUS MAXIMUS

1. It gives us forward propulsion – think of the rear of horse or lion or a great sprinter. With gluteus maximus, the FORCE will be with you!
2. It is, in many cases, a wonderful, captivating shape! This should not be controversial to say!
3. It holds tension that, when we let go of it, allows us to feel more grounded in our legs, more self-confident on the earth.
4. It lies immediately below the lower back and therefore underlies all low back tension. Back tension needs an “exit strategy”! Let it flow through your pelvis and out through your legs!
5. It may have awkward or negative associations – often has been a locus of punishment as children. That adds to your compassion. The gluteus maximus may afford access to the inner child.
6. It can be a repository of negative associations because of the proximity of the poop function. This adds to your compassion and sense of irony. It’s been the ‘butt’ of many a joke, yet continues to play its powerful and positive role in our lives. And, needless to say, where would you be without pooping?
7. Massage done here, in the appropriate spirit, can remove negative associations; amplifying health and more positive self-image to this important part of us.
8. The associated soft tissues and bones from the bottom of the ischial tuberosities (sitz bones) to the top of the iliac crest span the 1st, 2nd and 3rd “chakras” – helping us integrate grounding, sexuality, birth, excitement, generosity, and power.

9. We spend hours a day sitting on it! No other part has had to endure so much psychophysical discrimination as gluteus maximus. Again this greatly increases my compassion and appreciation.
10. As a result of all the roles gluteus maximus plays in our world, it can manifest, much as does the jaw, a tremendous amount tension. When we release these tensions, we dramatically add to the sum total of accessible energy, strength and power in our lives.

So let us bring a clear, strong and compassionate spirit into our relationship to gluteus maximus!

THE ALA, YOUR PELVIC "WINGS" *"Your deepest presence is in every small contracting and expanding, the two as beautifully balanced and coordinated as birds' wings."* - Rumi

"Ala" means wing in Latin. From it, we have gotten the naming of the "ala" of the ilium - the winging out structure of our pelvis. This is perfect because we already call the shoulder blades, the scapulae, wings - appropriately so because they are part of the structure of wings in birds.

But when we consider the similar structure of the pelvis, it gives an exciting window into the nature of pelvis as well. Because these also function like wings, in that the movement of the pelvis and its associated hip is the source of our forward propulsion.

The center of the ala of the pelvis is so thin that you can shine a light and see through it. So let this image and the actual lightness of your pelvic wings affect your sense of levity and grace as you walk and move in every step through your life.

THE ANTIDOTE TO PAIN *“could it be pleasure!”*

The other day I was invited to speak at a pain summit at a local hospital. They wanted to dramatically improve their pain management. After hearing from a variety of staff members - and they were extremely informative, brilliant and committed - I started to hear something missing.

So I got up to speak. And I noted that the commitment I was hearing to improved pain management was wonderful. However, the autonomic nervous system teaches us one vastly relevant thing. And that thing is perhaps the most important in the relief of pain. PLEASURE. The sympathetic part of the autonomic nervous system is there to respond to pain, real or imagined; parasympathetic system is the relaxation response triggered by pleasure.

Then I noted that, though we don't often think of hospitals as places where we'd go for pleasure, nonetheless wonderful pleasures take place there all the time. The deep pleasure of receiving kind words, gentle touch, and attention from some nurses and other staff members. The deep pleasure that comes from having one's disease or injury healed or treated knowledgeably. Even the deep pleasure of taking a medication that effectively addresses our symptoms. Sometimes we fall prey to the cynicism that ignores the many miracles and pleasures the medical industry does provide! Or we completely space out the role of pleasure in healing. Or we just get so busy focusing on our caseloads, that pleasure is the last thing on our minds.

If we remember more often, whether we are working in hospitals or in massage rooms, that pleasure is perhaps the most important ingredient of health, then we may find peace as well. Instead of just searching out and destroying pain, we invite healthy pleasure and peace of mind, body and spirit into the lives of our patients and communities.

THE ART OF MEETING *“This is indeed that unknown person I was – and so close to me!” – Jacques Riviere*

Today I took a walk at dawn. I took a walk just where the night meets the day.

The philosopher and teacher, Martin Buber, said it is *not the educational intention* but it is the *meeting* which is *educationally fruitful*. In therapy we can say also it is not the therapeutic intention, but it is the *meeting* which is therapeutically fruitful. Indeed studies have shown it is the client-therapist relationship quality that is the best predictor of positive therapeutic outcomes.

Each sense has a place of meeting – the place where the sound can first be heard, the place where we first see something illuminated by light – and every time we’re met, whether by sound, smell, light, or touch, we come to a point of awakening – with conscious contact we wake up. We come to the meeting point where we identify the smell, the taste, the voice, the touch.

When the moon hits your eye like a big pizza pie that’s Amore. Well, we’re not precisely looking for *amore*, but it is certainly common to see the restoration of self-appreciation, of *self-love* as the client meets him/herself again through our touch-reflection.

“This is indeed that unknown person I was – and so close to me!” – Jacques Riviere

It is said that the Buddha upon being asked if he were enlightened, refused all claims except to say “I am awake”.

Experimentally finding just the right pressure is a large part of the art of massage – whether it be the right touch quality for this person here of a butterfly or a gentle wave or a paw or a pointer or a fist – everything we do becomes a call to consciousness. Everything we do becomes an opportunity for awakening.

Soft tissue manipulation has its limits as our definition; rather what if we were just pointing, pointing the way here, here, here, we meet.

The poet Issa said, “The man pulling radishes, points the way with a radish.”

We point the way with our carefully chosen pressures.

The Calling *We want this touch to lift the human spirit*

There are those people who are drawn to play music, and they cannot go a day or two without wanting to pick up their instrument. There are those who love writing. Finding words for their experiences gives their lives an essential, deeper meaning.

Similarly there are those who are drawn to touch. Touch is more universal than music or writing because, in some manner or other, everyone wants to touch and be touched. It is an essential way to know we are not alone.

However, those who are drawn to touch in quite the same way as the musician or writer are drawn to their arts, feel the need to touch in a way that is not self-centered. We want this touch to lift the spirits of those around us. Just as the musician dreams of a people being transported to dance through their music, we dream of people's pain and suffering being relieved and creating a level of health and healing that positively spreads throughout the world.

Whether you are a therapist or just a person drawn to the realm of touch for the wisdom it can bring, welcome.

May we dedicate ourselves to the important knowing that deep massage and ultimately all profound touch therapies are helping the body, emotion, and spirit "catch up" with the mind that has been for way too long the almost exclusive focus in our education.

This incredible art and science, in the most immediate way - body to body, mind to mind, and heart to heart - makes this world a better place. May the "massage movement" fulfill its destiny, helping each of us and the world as a whole manifest more peace, love, health and sanity.

THE JOY OF STANDING *the state of sublime*

abiding

Today we began a new class. Something my Co-Director, John Conway, said at the orientation introduced an idea that I had never quite as precisely verbalized.

He was beginning to guide the new students in an exchange of shoulder massages. He was talking about what to do as we stood there, even before we put our hands on.

He said that just as we get pleasure out of lying down, sometimes from sitting down, we can have an equal pleasure in standing. If we stand with the right posture, gracefully, with a calm mind, standing itself can become a wonderful experience.

I'd never thought of that so clearly – had you? We spend so many hours standing that of course we might as well find a way to enjoy it!

Standing with some relaxation in one's legs, feet; pelvis and abdomen at ease; healthy alignment and gentle movement through the back, spine, arms, neck and head. The human ability to stand in an upright posture is an evolutionary giant step. And now really to own even the joy in that – how unique!

Then of course when we massage with that positive experience of standing, it feels really good for us as givers and it also feels even better for receivers, to be touched by someone who embodies the pleasure of standing.

What joy as a teacher to keep on being reminded of the very deep things we learn here. Today from my school Co-Director I learned to stand!

Whether standing or walking, sitting or lying down, during all one's waking hours, tend this mind of goodwill, which is called the state of sublime abiding.

The Buddha, Sutta Nipata

The Lucky 7 on the Bottom of Your Foot *and nostalgia for life in the trees*

If you will take your left leg up, placing the ankle on your knee and look at the bottom of your foot, there is a number 7 in the sole of your foot, looking back at you!

When, about six million years ago, our ancestors descended from the trees, more and more distinctness began to grow between the structure and roles of the feet and hands. Hands retained and refined the actions of grasping that had been used in climbing. The feet took on more the role of support, thickened and lost some of their articulate grasping action.

In primate feet and hands there are a series of little muscles called the "contrahentes". They insert onto digits I, II, IV and V and pull them down and together. Wikipedia says, "They facilitate convergence of the digits." I love it - the harmonic convergence of the digits.

In humans there is still an important and vestigial remnant of the contrahentes. That is the "adductor hallucis". The adductor hallucis has two heads which together form the number "7" in your foot. One, the transverse head, arises from the plantar metatarso-phalangeal ligaments of toes 3, 4, and 5.

The other head, the oblique head, occupies the hollow space under the 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th metatarsals. It arises from the bases of the second, third and fourth metatarsals and the tendon sheath of peroneus longus.

Both heads insert on the lateral side of the base of the first phalanx of the big toe.

Together this clever and important muscle simultaneously pulls

the toes down and together, much as you see especially in a baby's inclination to grasp your finger with its foot.

The adductor hallucis is the only muscle that reminds us explicitly of the grasping role of the foot earlier in evolution.

Even today, through the important function of the transverse arch, we grasp the ground more or less with each step. With the help of the bones' shape, the ligaments' tensile integrity, and, to a large extent as well, the adductor hallucis, we carry out our unconscious articulate conversations with the shapes we encounter, especially when barefoot.

And it is to the transverse head of adductor hallucis, as well as the tendon of peroneus longus, that we owe, in part, the origin of the spring in our step.

So when you are working with the foot, don't forget to deeply explore and massage into the lucky number 7! Adductor hallucis unites you with your early animal ancestors – in a kind of harmonic convergence of species as well as digits, reminding us that we have in some respects not come all that far. And it enables you to have both a more grounded and more buoyant relationship to Mother Earth.

And maybe even a little nostalgia for life in the trees.

The Massage Client Who Didn't Like Touch

I once had a person come to see me who calmly told me, "I don't like to be touched."

Of course I told her maybe she had come to the wrong place! – since that's what I did. But she said she was aware of it as a problem, had seen my face on my flyer, and I looked like a nice person. So we talked for quite a while and we did decide to do that first session. As we worked, I was naturally anxious to do no harm, checked in often, and at the end asked her how she liked it.

"Like?" she said in disbelief. "You mean how much of a torture was it?"

So I asked on the torture scale where was it.

She said "About an 8."

However, she scheduled another appointment. And we proceeded to work every week or two. I spent up to a half hour talking each time before we did the table work. I wanted to better understand her because her negative reaction was so challenging for both of us. She was quite depressed, negative and somatically so uninhabited.

There was no place in her body I could touch that felt even o.k. Eventually I found an entryway. She began to find she could tolerate work on her feet. With the feet as our starting point, I then had an opening to her body and awareness. Little by little, things began to change; or at least I hoped so.

We worked every week for months. Each session was extremely challenging for both of us. After about three months, she told me that she thought we were making some progress.

"How's that?" I asked.

She said, "For the first time in my life I know why someone might want to live."

THE NEED TO TOUCH

As therapists everyday we see our clients' need for touch, and people's in general. What we do not recognize nearly as often is "the need TO touch".

In Harry Harlow's famous experiment with nursing primates, he found that they consistently choose a soft figure to touch over their food source. And, equally striking is he found that the mother's need TO touch was even greater than the baby's need FOR touch.

We need to touch, to give it, maybe even more than to receive it! Touch today – realize how nourishing that is for YOU.

Everything we touch is grounding to us. Even my hands on this desk that I'm at...it's so comforting to feel touch, to be in touch. And to touch another living being with consciousness and heart – out of all the matter and energy in the universe that one life should exist and consciously touch another – what a miracle!

The need *to* touch is as deep as the need *for* touch.

THE SILENT MIND IN MASSAGE *The only mind you can read is your own.*

I wake up early in the morning and one of reasons I do is I like the general calmness and silence of that time.

A few years ago I started listening more deeply to the “voice” in my head. For many years before that, I felt that that voice was often talking too loudly and too much, often shouting. I certainly had noticed that good massage really helped turn down what I thought of as the volume of thought. Then I really listened and had to admit – there is no volume to thought! The “voice” in the head is silent. Now, I know sometimes thoughts follow each other fast, sometimes they are expressing conflicting emotions, and sometimes I imagine I am yelling inside. But the truth is thought has no volume. Listen to it. It’s like telepathy. It IS telepathy. Except the only mind you can ordinarily read is your own.

When we do Deep Massage, we monitor for change. One change I am looking for is for the person to relax into the silence of their mind. How do we know they’re there?

Here are some signs that occur to me:

- They stop talking.
- The everyday micro-expressions they usually have on their face disappear.
- Their breath becomes more relaxed in rhythm and movement.
- They go in and out of altered states during the session.
- They arise from the sessions with a sense of wonder.

The Two Mothers of Deep Massage *This whole planet needs to be smoothed and stretched with humanity and kindness, restored to sacred flexibility.*

*the skin of this planet must be stretched,
the sea of its whiteness must be ironed
and the hands go and go,
the sacred surfaces are smoothed
and that's the way things are made:
hands make the world each day.*

Pablo Neruda

My mother, Faye Markin, was a deep thinker and feeler, and brilliant classical pianist. Like many pre-feminist women artists in her day, she had a particularly difficult road, was often troubled and distracted in her life. Sad to say, she died quite young, at age 47.

So I am equally grateful for the other center of my early world, Millie Barry, who began basically as our nanny and ended up being my Godmother. She modeled for me many, many things.

How to have joy. How to have an open heart. How to be down to earth and, at the same time, inspired and responsible to a higher vision of earthly and heavenly life. I so identified with Millie that when I meet African Americans I am surprised if they speak of me as a white guy. My heart is white and black.

Millie touched not only us kids, but everything in the house with a delicate, clear touch that was equally artful as the way my mother touched our Steinway piano's keys playing Bach and Chopin. Millie taught me how to iron. How to show care, to smooth out the wrinkles of life from the fabric, and to bring heat and pressure to bear

and to pay clear attention to these second skins we choose.

To this day, I am grateful to her as I “iron up the erectors” doing deep massage. Those backs of our (and hers – I was privileged to work on her during the last years of her life) get so bent out of shape, at the end of each day we often need to be smoothed out literally and figuratively. The “tracks of our tears”, fears, and life tensions, go not only down our face, but also our backs.

Perhaps this whole planet, as Neruda suggests, needs to be smoothed and stretched – with humanity and kindness, restored to the sacred flexibility that all of nature needs and deserves.

THE WILD CLIENT

“In wildness is the preservation of the world”. These words by Henry David Thoreau are ones that stuck with me from the very first moment that I read them.

Some months ago I read a note on giving massage from therapist/poet, Dale Favier, in Portland, Oregon.

“It feels sacred to me, in the same way that wilderness feels sacred to me”.

It is so true that getting masterful at doing massage and bodywork involves being willing to encounter the wildness of nature. Every person is so amazing. You’d think after 35 years in this field I would understand more about people. But sometimes I feel like I know less than when I started. Because people and nature are so wild, so endlessly deep – I tell students, I’ve just been lost and found in these forests a bit longer than you.

What do I know?

Pain seems to come more from life stresses and being disconnected from oneself than from structural compromise. I once read that the most unbearable pain is the separation from God. Now, I don’t aim to advocate a religious approach to massage. But I will say – when people lose the appreciation for how wild and how sacred they are, they start to get sick.

It is perhaps the greatest of human tragedies that most people are not educated to celebrate and take maximum advantage of their incredible minds and how they relate to spirit, feelings, their bodies, and actions.

When we lose touch with seeing ourselves as natural wonders, that’s when we begin to lose life force. Each person is a wonder of

nature and if they don't know that – they have forgotten perhaps the most important thing in their lives.

So as a teacher, I just keep on thinking up the wildest and truest things I can say! To wake people up. Because truth has to delight and surprise us. Sometimes I just want to shake the person (perhaps that's the idea behind Tragerwork) and say, "Just look at yourself! Look how incredible you are!"

This person in the mirror is a wild person!

Working in the wilderness of the experimental species that is the human being is one of the most profound ways we encounter nature. We know this voyage of therapists' and clients' discovery of the deepest truths and fundamental enlivenment is the most important one we can take.

Then that incredible living landscape, that miracle, that person looks back at you and smiles, and says, "Thank you so much for the massage! That was wild!"

The World Beyond Understanding *“In my room, the world is beyond my understanding; but when I walk I see that it consists of three or four hills and a cloud.” – Wallace Stevens*

In my treatment room, I sometimes wonder if I can really help someone and how. But when the session begins, the client prone, I reassuringly see the familiar vista of three or four hills, a few valleys and the breath moving through the landscape.

I remember the first massage I ever gave. I had George Downing's Massage Book and my first bottle of oil lying alongside my friend, David, who was facedown on my new massage table.

I remember looking from the foot of the table and seeing David's body like a landscape from the old West. First, the hill of the gastrocnemius and soleus, then a little popliteal valley, the hamstrings rising up to the gluteal promontory, then the valley of the lower back sweeping way up to the thorax, then the curving neck and the head far off in the distance. It seemed to me like a vast journey about to be made, the feeling of distance amplified by the delicacy of that living territory to be traversed.

I warmed the oil in my hands, then made contact with the Achilles tendon and began moving both hands up the leg, and knew I was beginning a new journey in my life. Perhaps I might even help my friend begin anew.

Every true journey is a journey to the center of the self. Jules Verne imagined it under the earth. But we therapists don't just imagine it. We get to take a real journey over this living surface, affecting what's underneath, the subterranean flows of muscle, bone, emotion, thoughts and breath.

Each session we do is an adventure story and an interface of biographies. Who could not be fascinated with this journey?

Take a walk with me and we can see everyday wonders wrought by creation. We need not spend another day without the sense of awe and gratitude for the gift of life and touch. There we find all our answers. There we find infinite new questions. There we encounter who we most truly are.

TOUCHING WITH HUMAN PRESENCE

The thing that brings human value back to experience is the touching of it with human presence. – Steve Gilligan

Is it any wonder why I and others are so insistent on our field not dismissing the energetic as well as the physical effects of massage. During the recent world events, it's become clearer than ever that man's inhumanity to man and nature is the central problem of our time – not because it didn't exist before, but because there are now so many of us that our impact on the world is amplified.

So an over-emphasis on massage as a form of physical therapy misses part of the precious birthright, opportunity and responsibility of human touch. Of course, we need to continually advance the medical efficacy of massage and the science underpinning that. Yet, equally in this troubled world, we need the power of touching with human presence to bring human value back to our own experience and to those around us.

As we address the issue of self-destruction as it manifests in individual and social dis-ease and dispositional challenges, through the application of this most direct form of compassion, may we help humankind fulfill its important destiny – to consciously manifest love and kindness in our inner and outer world.

I was just thinking also about the so-called "humanities" in education. Today there is an over-emphasis on technology, computers, science and math and a corresponding discount of the importance of the humanities. People, it's called "Humanities" for a reason!!

We ignore the humanities at our peril. Only in a world where humanities and science proceed hand-in-hand can we proceed as individuals and as a society.

Massage is a field that uniquely supports that knowledge – what Aldous Huxley called “the non-verbal humanities”. Every touch that embodies humanity and science helps build a world that is trustworthy, open and clean.

24 WAYS TO SAY THE HEART IS MY HOME

Each one of the 24 ribs articulates with the spine in three ways. It has a joint with the body of the vertebra above the disc, a joint with the vertebra below the disc and with the transverse process of the vertebrae below. These three articulations then make a triangle of support – the strongest shape in nature.

Then the rib takes a long journey around the circumference of the body. There is the “head” of the rib, which is that part articulating with the vertebral bodies. Then the “neck”, the beginning of which articulates with the transverse process. The “body” of the rib extends to the “angle” where the iliocostalis muscles attach. At this point the rib twists and begins its journey around the side and front of the body. The anterior extremity is flattened and presents an oval depression which articulates with the costal cartilage. The cartilage proceeds to articulate with the sternum.

Each rib plays a function in inhalation, exhalation, protection of the heart, lungs and other tissues and vessels in the thorax. The ribs have up to 18 muscles attaching to each – so their individual and collective movement potential is, though largely unconscious, incredibly complex.

Next time you put your hand on a rib, expand and deepen your awareness and appreciation for its wondrous structural complexity, movement, and its animating role in the life in the heart, the lungs, the breath, and all of you.

Twenty-four ways to say my heart is my home.

WHAT IF YOU LET GO OF EVERY “SHOULD”?

What would you choose to do? What new life and expression would you give birth to?

The shoulders so often seem to contain our sense of burden. Aptly named, we can feel that many of our “should’s” seem to reside here, in “should-er” tension. The more should’s we live with, the more tension in our shoulders; the more we feel the weight of “the world”, the more we bend forward, the neck and head straining without the support of a healthy shoulder girdle and thorax upon which to rest. How can we affect this sense of burden? The ancient roots of the word “burden” give us a clue to a critical choice we each have. Its root is from “bher”. “Bher” can mean to “bear, carry” or it can mean “to give birth”.

What if you gave birth, instead of sustained burden, through your shoulders? After all, this fascinating place in us sets the stage for the voice, for the so-called fifth chakra through which we issue forth our creativity through song and speech.

What if you let go of every single should that’s been living in your shoulders? What if you replaced the yoked feeling with a freedom of expression and a posture that allows you a feeling of this part of you to be wingéd?

“Should” by the way comes from the root “to owe”. What if you let go of all sense of owing? And, while you’re at it, all sense of “OW!” too – particularly in your shoulders.

WHAT IS BETTER THAN A GUITAR? *“The human hand, in concert with the mind and heart is the most sophisticated instrument in the known universe.”*

For the first thirty years of my life, I was a musician and composer. Among my first loves was the guitar and its music made through the wonderful composition of metal strings, wood, and open space. I am still thrilled with the sight and sound of the guitar and all the variants that have been made over time – the lute, lyre, harp, mandolin. Imagine a beautiful guitar that could change into a flute and then become a piano and then a wonderful drum.

The love of music led me almost simultaneously to the love of the human hand. As a child, I saw an illustration in the book, *The Family of Man*. It was a picture of an old woman’s hands. You could just feel all the things she had done with them over the course of her life – cared for loved ones, helped feed them, cleaned the home, worked in the fields, facilitated birth, consoled people through sickness and even death.

The use of the hands unites us with the labors of all humankind through time. Ever so gradually, our hands evolved over hundreds of million of years; freed from having to support us on the ground; freed to grasp and manipulate; thus, freeing our mouth from the grasping function, and so giving us the capability that became speech and song.

With the role of the hand in articulate action, the mind was freed further to allow the development of new structures and functions making possible more and more complex interactions with the environment and with each other.

“...the hand is not only the organ of labor, *it is also the product of labor*. Only through labor, through constant adaptation to new operations, through inheritance of the special development thus acquired of muscles, ligaments and, over longer periods of time, bones as well, and by the ever renewed use of this inherited refinement in new, increasingly complicated operations, has the human hand attained that high degree of perfection that has enabled it to conjure into being the paintings of a Raphael, the music of a Paganini.” – Friedrich Engels

The human hand, in concert with the mind and heart is the most sophisticated instrument in the known universe.

In the art and science of massage, we have the privilege to use this greatest of all instruments. An evolved miracle is brought to bear every time we touch in a thoughtful, heartfelt manner.

This instrument indeed is self-transforming through the use of knuckle, fist, fingertips, pads, heel of hand, and palm. It is guided through the imagination and conscious thought of the cerebrum, the emotional intelligence and passion of the limbic system, supported by body movements coordinated with the cerebellum and the incredibly

complex development of proprioception through each muscle, tendon and joint.

With our continually renewed appreciation for the miracle of the hand, we know we touch using a miracle of mind and body, united through all of human history with the common and extraordinary labors of our ancestors. We all are the receivers and givers of this blessing conveyed in space and through the vast reach of time that is the human hand.

WHAT THE HANDS TELL ME *“A Symphony must be like the world – it must contain everything”. – Gustav Mahler*

Gustav Mahler, in his Symphony #3, gave titles to the various movements:

- “What the Flowers in the Meadow Tell Me”
- “What the Animals in the Forest Tell Me”
- “What Man Tells Me”
- “What the Angels Tell Me”
- “What Love Tells Me”

When we perform our science-based art of massage, we must hear what our client tells us.

Each person’s life is symphony of themes and variations – so many voices, movements, dreams and reflections.

What the bones tell us – through their eons-long evolution of form and function – about how we relate to gravity, how we reach up to heaven.

What the muscles tell us in their interface with the nerves, the capacity for efficient, beautiful, purposeful, life-sustaining movement.

What the systems of the body have to tell us – about how water and air is our essence, and how it’s directed rhythmically as nourishment throughout our being.

What our emotions tell us about times in the jungle and in the plains, about what we love, hate, desire, care about.

What our mind tells us about the virtues and challenges of self-reflection. How to consciously dream and how to fulfill dreams through the coordination of thought, feeling and action.

Deep down the themes are common. We have this common miraculous substrate – the “same” bones, muscles, tissues, etc. When

we help the person remember this archetypal layer of themselves – how they share in the wisdom of millions of years of evolution and bodymind creation – they feel reconnected to the nourishment flowing through this tree of life that we are all a part of.

Then there is the sense of what just this one client here tells me – his or her story – how life’s stresses, successes, and surprises have accumulated into just this body of strength and weakness, just this heart’s hopes and despairs, just this mind’s answers, questions, and confusions.

What themes is this person living out? What variations provide the counterpoints within their living polyphony? How can we help harmonize these melodies of being so that person can fully hear themselves again?

What the client tells us, what our hands tell them; these constitute the profound on-going story of the role of touch throughout human evolution – What Touch Tells Us. What does touch tell you?

WHATEVER TREASURE IS THERE

Whatever treasure is there but oneself?

No one can give you this.

What you want you already are.

Just lift the curtain,

The play has begun.

Rio Caliente, 1996

When Clients Disappear - *no one knows*

I have received student sessions for years – it’s a requirement at our school (I know – tough life for us teachers!) I commonly have the experience that, in the best sessions, one forgets the therapist is there. The touch feels so trustworthy and clear that the focus is not on the therapist’s touch, but rather on the experience in one’s own body (or mind or heart).

Years ago I mentioned this to my mentor, Dr. Fritz Smith, the founder of Zero Balancing. I asked, “Have you noticed that in really good sessions, the client has the experience that the therapist kind of disappears?”

He said, “Yes.” and thought about it for a moment.

Then he asked me, “But what happens when the client disappears?”

I was speechless. What did he mean? For many years now I’ve puzzled about this question which I barely understood. What happens when the client disappears? This week I started to get an answer.

I was receiving a session from a student. His touch was quite reliable and there were moments in which I didn’t experience him as being there. However, the session wasn’t as effective as either of us hoped. Afterwards as we talked and I had a rather suddenly deepened understanding of three distinct levels of touch and client experience.

Level One – You experience the touch of the therapist. You feel their hands, their warmth, and infer their knowledge of anatomy and technique as they work. You are more or less pleasantly touched by them. This is the level of most massages.

Level Two - You do not mostly experience the touch of the therapist. The foreground of your experience is not your experience of

them; it is the experience of yourself. You feel yourself deeply relaxing. You may see visions, colors, have new thoughts, restored hope, feel “energy” flowing more freely and abundantly through your body, etc.

Level Three – You do not even experience yourself. You, the client, as the consciously experiencing subject, have disappeared. Some of our most profound touches result in the client going deeper than self-consciousness. The sense of self, the consciousness of being separate from the rest of nature, disappears. Clients may experience relevatory moments or periods of what is call unity-consciousness.

I’m reminded of a book whose title I’ve always enjoyed (even more than the book) – “Philosophy of Consciousness Without an Object” by Franklin Merrell-Wolf.

At our best, we humans are not self-centered beings. During a great massage and at other transcendent moments, often those created by art or spiritual practices, we experience ourselves as part of a larger whole.

This leads to profound relief from what I call “reality fatigue”. We, as our dreams show us each night, are capable of imagining and, history has shown us, of living in many realities. It is fatiguing to live just in this one time and space, this waking world of 2018. How refreshing and necessary to disappear into the space and time of more infinite possibilities! Letting go of the present, letting go of the self, we all have the opportunity for rejuvenative participation in the wholeness of time and space.

I am enthusiastic that skillful therapists provide so many opportunities for people to creatively disappear and then to re-appear with renewed enthusiasm for life!

What happens when the client disappears? Who knows? ☺

WHEN I TOUCH THE RIBS

When I touch the ribs of time in your life
Arising from your lovely chest, church's eaves
Sing to the sky, ascending birds free of strife
Sunward heart's hope, updraft of colored leaves.

Down deep in the bottom the boat's ribs lie.
Forming the self's hull, pine beams in the back
Bearing grand biography's traces until we die.
Life's sonata, ribs' keys, they're white and black,

Yellow, green and red, the curves of the ribs' health.
Rainbows around your lungs with inscriptions.
Messages for all to hear, about the wealth
Given by air, wood and blood's solutions.

Thus and this our gift to all time and space,
Loving ribs freed, looking up with a smiling face.

“WHEN YOU HEAR MUSIC, AFTER IT’S OVER, IT’S GONE, IN THE AIR. YOU CAN NEVER CAPTURE IT AGAIN.” – ERIC DOLPHY

Some of the beauty of music is just this, the magic of not being able to capture it. It’s invisible. It’s evanescent. It’s just vibrations of air that touched you, vibrating your ear drum, the tympanic membrane, and have dissipated into thin air.

Your client’s whole body is like a membrane through which they feel the way the pressures and the pauses of touch result in meaningful and helpful experiences.

Yet the poignancy of “you can never capture it again” remains. As a therapist at the end of each session I always feel a singular combination of joy and sadness. The direct experience is gone – or it’s still being integrated by the client - I hope the effects have helped that person change at least a little – perhaps on an unconscious level. After all why would music and art be so important to us if it didn’t add to or change our lives?

Nonetheless all of our experiences come and go. We ourselves come and go. The music we made, the melodies of our experience, the harmony and lack thereof in our relationships, the counterpoints of personalities – gone, gone, gone.

The reality of impermanence is something we can feel at each moment. And rather than making everything seem futile, it helps us treasure and feel the poignancy of each moment because it will never be here again.

The great piece of music, the blossom of this flower, this day, this life, this wonderful massage – it will never be here again. But its effects may resonate deep down in our soul and body, it keeps nourishing and informing us and reminding us for our whole lives,

what a richness we get to experience in and only in this present moment of music, of massage and of life.

WHERE NO WORDS CAN GO *“Whereof one cannot speak, thereupon one must be silent.” - Ludwig Wittgenstein*

The great philosopher Wittgenstein worked with verbal language to try to say in words as much as he could that was philosophically true. He also had the courage to say that beyond what one could say, there was a vast realm that language cannot touch.

Among realms that can express the world beyond language are those fields cultivated by art. Logical speech can take us only so far. Poetry, though, can take us way beyond that. Music, while making no ordinary “sense”, brings a new kind of sense to the world. It takes us mercifully and wordlessly to important heights. The ancients spoke of music as evoking the harmony of the spheres. The rhythms, melodies and harmonies reveal beauties, truths and goodness that somehow make life meaningful and even more fully worth living.

And touch, the first sense to develop in the embryo and last to go when we die – takes us yet to the deepest levels of experience, where no words can go or suffice. I am so happy to explore this deep world of touch with you and your clients with you. In this realm, whereof we cannot speak, we inhabit this silent, sacred world together. Philosophizing with our fingers, minds, our hearts, and spirit - wordless poetry, note-less music, through “silent” touch.

“We need to refrain, as Walt Whitman does, from speaking of mind as though it were somehow opposed to body, or of spirit as though it were somehow superior to mind. In my philosophy, all three – body, mind, spirit – are merely stages of incandescence or awareness, in the same living organism. As the lights go on within, we begin to see everything that is, everything that happens, impinging on us. Our most sublime thoughts have their feet planted in clay, our best songs are body-songs.” – Stanley Kunitz (1905-2006).

WHO TOOK THE FIRST BREATH?

Who took the first breath?

And who the last?

Who knew first the plants' generosity

Enlivening the animal world?

Like Noah's ark made of wood,

The earth is made of green things

And all the animals mothered by the breath of its greenness.

The green world patiently takes in our exhales;

Every word you speak is appreciated by the trees.

We owe our lives to all the worlds – seen and unseen.

Every breath is taken against the background of

Worlds feeding worlds feeding worlds.

The deeper language of being riding in and out with every breath.

The grandeur of planetary gas exchange

The ground of being passing in and out, through and through,

This life of air is the life we share.

Windows of Life *When we pause near origins and insertions, the client has the experience of where doing ends and being begins.*

When we do our strokes in Deep Massage, when we pause, particularly at the beginning or the end of a stroke, it creates a kind of “window”. These pauses naturally occur at the beginning and near the end of the muscle – at the origin and the insertion.

As in most stories, beginnings and endings have a special power. The origin and insertion are where the muscle’s tendon attaches to bone. Pausing particularly at the end of a stroke at the interface of muscle and bone gives the person an important moment to feel their full length. It also gives a moment to experience the transition from muscular structure and energy to bone structure and energy.

We “do,” we take action with our muscles, with our will. The window from muscle to bone is a way to see beyond of the world of “will”. Bones, however vital and alive as they are, subside and live underneath our will. They form a living substrate underneath all our efforts.

When we pause near the origins and insertions, the person has the experience of where doing ends and being begins. Underneath all our efforts, there is this energy which abides, like a stream constantly running through us. In acupuncture theory, it’s known as “ancestral chi”, in jin shin do it’s called “universal life flow”, in Reichian bioenergetics it’s known as orgone, in French philosophy as élan vital. In Deep Massage and Zero Balancing we note, whatever you want to call it, we have within us a deep source of energy which feels to reside in our bones. When we say, “I just know that in my bones”, that is the place we are talking about – the deepest part of us.

The skeletal system has its own unique oneness that extends bone-by-bone through our very center from heaven to earth.

When we pause as life turns from muscle to bone, we see the light in the window, experience calm being within; connecting us to heaven, to mother earth, and to the source energy and core structure of who we most deeply are.

WRESTLING WITH THE ANGEL *“May this wrestle and dance we do with dis-ease, with dis-position, and with destiny help people smile with joy at the music they can make of their lives.”*

Having been an artist, working first in music, then in bodywork, for now for over 50 years, I have met many wrestlers – clients wrestling with their lives, students, teachers, and therapists. And I’ve been fighting the good fight myself these years as well.

The first person I ever saw wrestling artistically with desperation and delight was the great bluesman, Big Joe Williams.

First Big Joe had invented a one-of-a-kind 9-string guitar that itself was an unruly version of an instrument - with odd tuning pegs and ends of strings flying off in all different directions.

He played the nine-stringed guitar with ferocity. When he would begin to play he would grimace and fret. None of his parts seemed to cooperate. His fingers, his right and left hands, the strings, the whole instrument, and the sound would be at odds with each other. No doubt his mind and emotions were also in some kind of creative turmoil wrestling with the angel or maybe with the devil – who knew?

But after a while, Big Joe’s struggles would ease up some. You’d see a hint of a smile pass over his face. Slowly things came into focus. You almost could see the fingers of his two hands beginning to have a creative relationship. The guitar would move with his body in a more rhythmic way. Finally he would look up and share his success with audience members.

He’d smile at them and then he would smile at his fingers and his guitar. It was strikingly like someone proud of the woman he was with. You could see that he somehow did not fully identify with the music he was creating. It was arising of its own accord – like watching

one's child dance beautifully – there is a reflected pride, but it's not you.

When Big Joe played great, he was as much the pleased witness to that as were his listeners.

When I'm doing a session of deep massage, sometimes the image of Big Joe floats into my mind and as well as that of Jacob wrestling with the angel.

This struggle to tap into the goodness, truth and beauty of ourselves, our instruments, these miraculous hands, and the ultimate wild medium, this living, naturally self-transcending human who is our client – this is the struggle that makes us therapists grimace and delight. The client's destiny is out of our hands – but maybe this wrestling and dance we do with dis-ease, with dis-position, and with destiny helps this person smile with joy at the music they can make of their life.

..and maybe right then the angel of Big Joe Williams is smiling down at you both...

YOU CAN'T WORK ON THE SAME PERSON TWICE

When you lay your hand on a body, please don't think you know it already and just get to work doing massage. This person is like a whole new planet you are landing on – tremendously complex, with her or his own unique history, desires, habits, plans, memories and dreams. Begin interfacing, just meet with each person like it's the first time. It is. Because we are changing all the time and you can't step into the river twice - just each first time. So when you land on this mysterious person, pause and take a look around before you go exploring.

YOU HAVE THE TOUCH - *"So before a question, so before a doubt, my hand moves out and ... I have the touch"*

Peter Gabriel

Before every question and before every doubt, one thing is so obvious we rarely notice it. As Peter Gabriel says in his chorus, "I want contact." The fundamental need of humans, perhaps all animals, for contact is so deep as to get overlooked.

Each day, if we will remember how much we need and want connection with other people and things in general - then we can see our whole day as more or less meeting that need. As a massage therapist especially that need is so fulfilled for both the giver and the receiver, that often therapists will say getting paid feels superfluous. Because the satisfaction that comes from touching someone else, from making a positive difference in his or her life, that makes a positive difference in the life of the therapist as well.

We make contact with our eyes, with listening and speaking. Nearly every moment we are contacting something, even if it's our own thoughts. When we can feel this miracle of conscious (and unconscious) connection, we can see how every moment is contact is happening.

Yet there is something special about touch. With touch we are making a kind of contact that you cannot make any other way!

Because seeing and hearing don't require direct physical contact with someone or something - I can look at a movie, listen to my phone. But I can't really touch without the person or thing being right

there. I can't touch without contacting the physicality of the person, animal, or thing. When we are not in contact with physicality we might say we are not in direct contact with structure but we are with energy. We respond to vibrations of light, to the meanings in conversation, vibrations in air.

And so the special fulfillment of touch arises from the fact that we are now not only connecting with the energy of something, we are also connecting with its structure.

Touch is the only sense that connects the worlds of energy and structure.

While we live our lives in search of answers to deep questions, often struggling with self-doubt, we can remember how everyday we have so many opportunities to make positive contact. And that makes us part of the community-as-a-whole.

In so far as, we all share in the need for contact, we are akin. Touch is the tangible experience of this kind-ness.

We need not doubt or question this. Every day, we can savor the deep nourishing experience that being in touch brings us - of connection and kindness.

Every day, especially as a therapist, you get to experience the joy of uniting the worlds of structure and energy in your work.

You have the touch.

ZEN OF BREATH ~ THE DIAPHRAGM – *what makes the body go up and down at the same time?*

The diaphragm is an embodiment of Zen. It is a musculo-tendinous koan like “what is the sound of one hand clapping?”

Most muscles “insert” into bone. The diaphragm inserts into itself! It originates on the lower vertebrae, the lowest ribs and the inside of the lower sternum. Yet it inserts into the “central tendon” – think of that as if it were a disc in the center of a muscular parachute, with the muscle fibers leading to that disc.

The koan is then - what muscle is its own origin and insertion? When we breathe in, our inner body goes down - the diaphragm contracts, pulling the central tendon down upon the abdominal organs (This downward movement thus, when we breathe fully, widens the pelvic floor). The center of the diaphragm going down, creates more room for the lungs, into which air rushes.

At the same time, when you breath in, to accommodate the expanding lungs and the resistance of the abdominal organs to compression (these are essentially filled with water, which resists compression), the abdomen and ribcage expand to allow more room and the shoulders rise up, creating more room from above as well.

So when you breathe in, your body’s “sleeve” ascends, as the “core” descends.

When you breathe out, your sleeve descends, as your core ascends.

When we exhale, unless it’s forceful, the diaphragm relaxes and the abdominal organs, now decompressing, float the diaphragm up. Breathing in requires muscular effort, but exhaling ordinarily arises

from relaxing.

The koan is then - what muscle makes the body go up and down at the same time?

Its rhythm is deep and ordinarily automatic, but we can consciously control breath as well. No other function vital to every bodily process is also subject to the control of the conscious mind. This helps account for the conscious and unconscious existential leverage conveyed through breathing meditation.

The koan - where does your spirit end and your body begin? Some say plants were here first. They produced oxygen; animals came latter exhaling carbon dioxide, which the plants "breathe" in.

- What innermost part of you is controlled by the atmosphere of the entire planet?
- Are you breathed or breathing?
- How does the conscious mind contribute to the nutrition of every cell?
- Where does spirit end and body begin?
- Are we just intelligent plant food? ☺

AND KEEP BREATHING!

"I have grown to love that place between stimulus and response where, if you remember to breathe, you can change." - Julie Reynolds

ADDENDUM

ENERGY AND THE INTEGRATIVE VISION

Energy

1590s, "force of expression," from M.Fr. énergie (16c.), from L.L. energia, from Gk. energeia "activity, operation," from energos "active, working," from en "at" + ergon "work, that which is wrought; business; action". Used by Aristotle with a sense of "force of expression;" broader meaning of "power" is first recorded in English 1660s. Scientific use is from 1807.

-Wikipedia

Energy and Integrative Massage in Recent History

When I began as a therapist in 1977 in Chicago, Swedish massage, Shiatsu, Rolfing, Aston Patterning, Reiki, Feldenkrais, Alexander work, Polarity, and Cranio-sacral therapy were what one mostly encountered. There was a broad umbrella under which they all easily co-existed.

As the massage and bodywork field grew, its proliferation gave rise to new modalities, new educational standards, more schools, organizations, and various interest groups. It has been sometimes difficult to see the forest through the trees; but it's still there!

Lately the tree of science or evidence-based massage has been somewhat overshadowing other approaches. We have seen an emphasis on science and evidence-based massage and a relative de-emphasis on the artistic and the energetic side of bodywork. This is partly due to the excitement the field has had to attain clinical competence and get respect from the medical industry. In addition, through more than just national interactions, massage in the U.S., which has traditionally been accepting of an eclectic mix of therapies, has been confronted with, for instance, the Canadian model, which is more of a European physiotherapy, allopathic model of massage.

Another influence is that of testing, national certifications, and licensing. It is vastly easier to test for scientific knowledge, than for art and hands-on skills. National exams in the U.S. do not include demonstrations of hands-on skill, energetic sensitivity, palpatory literacy, or actual therapeutic benefits – because it is recognized as nearly impossible and not cost-effective to objectively judge each individual's hands-on work. But the deeper insight here is that what constitutes the highest skill level in our field is indeed something that has as much to do with art as with science. We just don't test for the art. That doesn't mean it isn't of equal or greater importance.

Progress in both the art and science, both energy and structure, is a precious legacy of modern massage therapy. Of late the scientific perspective has been wonderfully emphasized. It is the purpose of this article to contribute to balancing this emphasis with an understanding of the essential role energy, art, and integration play in our knowledge and therapy.

Energy Work Defended Against its Devotees and Detractors

Energy is too important a subject to be, on the one hand, defined only by its devotees – some of whose ideas or practices have been shown to be false or dangerous or with claims made for scientific validity where there is insufficient scientific evidence or disproof.

I think much of use of the term energy is subject to what the philosopher, Alfred North Whitehead, called “the fallacy of misplaced concreteness”. I personally don’t think chakras exist in the sense of wheels or spheres of energy spinning in a certain direction. However, I find them very useful as a language for talking about the role different parts of our body play in our lives. I have had experiences of energy flow or kundalini that I have no doubt were real experiences. I treasure some of these experiences and learn from them to this day. I have found no way more clear than speaking of them as experiences of energy flow in the body.

On the other hand, energy and energy work has been negatively defined by its detractors, who act as if anything that is not scientifically proven or evidence-based is false and/or offensive.

It seems energy and energy work, to some extent, must be defended from both its devotees and its detractors!

In this article, though we primarily explore the energetic standpoint, we will be often reminded that “both-and” thinking, integrating both structure and energy, is more accurate than describing something as structure or energy alone.

There is so much polarization these days in politics and in healthcare. But health means whole. If we honor the whole, all sides benefit. Let us see how we can cultivate a more inclusive vision, not take sides.

The Union of Energy and Structure or Massage Therapy with Two Eyes

From the start, let us note that energy work and structural work are two sides of the same coin. Most likely, the most effective therapy will arise from an approach that respects and unites the structural and energetic aspects of both therapist and client. The various arguments for and against energy work, for and against excessive insistence on evidence-based therapy are certainly passionate.

But the best answer to most passionate debates is often a more overriding vision. The assumption that the scientific/structural view of massage is the correct one is as one-sided as the assumption that the artistic/energetic approach to massage is correct.

It is like arguing which one of your two eyes you ought to see out of.

Each person is both physical and more than physical (e.g. having also mind and emotions). Therefore, an approach which is most likely to foster the deepest experience of health will be one which takes the whole person, physically and more than physically, into account.

So, as we explore the realm of energy below, please note: the goal, at least my goal, is to clarify the energetic realm and to make it more likely that massage therapists and bodyworkers² be even more empowered to join art and science in their work. The separation or antagonism between energy work and structural work often seems a waste of time and at worst a real tragedy. It would be like separating health from care. We practice healthcare. We are responsible both for caring which is energetic and for being skilled in promoting health through soft tissue manipulation.

The union of art and science, of energy and structure, of health and care is a triumph of historical proportions. Our field and the whole world need this triumph in the realm of the union of clinical excellence with palpable care for life on earth.

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Energy in Physics

The concept of energy in bodywork has historically, and I think wisely, had a wide definition.

In physics it is understood that phenomena can be looked at in terms of being particles or matter vs. waves or energy. Energy, to some extent, can be measured. It is commonly defined as “work done.”

In general this view leads us to say that energy is more connected to action, waves and movement, than to particles, and matter.

Commonsensibly, since mass and energy are in fact a unity – and no-thing would exist without both - we can see that they are simply two ways of looking at or describing the same thing. You may look in the ocean and say, “Look at that wave!” or you can also say, “Looking at the water waving.” So is the wave a thing or a process, a noun or a verb? Well...it is both-and, not either-or. When we think we see a thing, we are looking at the phenomenon from the particle standpoint. When we think we are looking at a process or motion, we are looking at it from an energy standpoint.

Energy in Bodywork

The broadest use of the term energy in bodywork has been applied to bodywork that consciously aims at more than just soft tissues.

The scientific method is empirical. It looks at and works with what is there. In the case of a human, what is there is a body, and certainly mind and emotions as well. Many people include soul and spirit as well – though some find their existence somewhat less obvious.

Generally a consummate physician or therapist who consistently earns the trust of his or her patients will be someone who relates not just to the anatomy and physiology of the patient/client, but also their personhood. They care about their patients/clients – how they feel, what stresses they are under, what knowledge they have about what’s going on with them – in addition to having great skill in effectively addressing disease and injury.

Another way to say this is that they consider both structure and energy in their practice.

What is Structure? What is Energy?

When we think about structure, it includes:

Particles

Matter

Mass

Anatomy

Physiology

Generally, the physical aspect of the person

Structure may also be thought of as objective, tangible, palpable, and visible.

Energy, most broadly defined, is the entire realm of experience beyond just the physical. It may be thought of as subjective, intangible, not necessarily palpable, and not necessarily visible.

Energy includes then:

Waves

Action

Vibration

Movement

Force

It also includes the realm of sensation, emotion and mind:

Consciousness

Sensing

Feelings

Beliefs

Thoughts

And the realm of spirit:

Soul

Spirit

Some of these of course can be described in the language of neurological and endocrine processes. The autonomic nervous system is in many ways an energetic system, responding to feelings, thoughts, sensations, etc. by changing the overall energetic and physical state of the organism. Other energetic phenomena, particularly associations we may have with given sensations, may be described in terms of activities within the brain's limbic system, the diencephalon, and through them, then affecting the whole person through neuro-endocrine response.

The Languages of Energy

Certainly languages other than physiological have been used, often fruitfully, to describe energy:

Kundalini

Nadis

Chi

Prana

Meridians

Bioenergy

Élan vital

Chakras

Fields

The language of psychology

The language of beauty & aesthetic philosophy

Poetry

Each of these are like lenses we may choose to use or not, in order to see our clients more clearly. In that sense each way of describing energy uses – like language itself – metaphors to try to capture the facts and feel of reality.

Energetic and Integrative Modalities

Some of the many bodywork modalities that explicitly use energetic lenses as part of their theory include (in no specific order):

Thai massage
Reiki
Therapeutic Touch
Chi Nei Tsang
Chakra balancing
Acupressure
Cranio-sacral Therapy
Shiatsu
Acupuncture
Deep Massage
Reichian Bodywork
Polarity therapy
Zero Balancing
Hakomi Bodywork
Lomi Lomi
and many others

Some of these are more “pure” energy works. Others – such as the Deep Massage that I teach and Zero Balancing – are more explicitly integrative bodyworks that fundamentally link structure and energy in their practice. This is NOT an exhaustive list of all the bodywork forms claiming an energetic component; that would be very long indeed!

Many primarily structural modalities also acquire an energetic dimension when a practitioner aims at helping the client in ways more than just physical.

The Limits of Provability and Evidence

Many of these bodymind works have been questioned as to how much of their success is due to the placebo effect, how much actual therapeutic efficacy. Certainly the offhand dismissal of the placebo effect, the power of belief, and the power of suggestion is too extreme. Many studies have shown that belief plays a powerful role in health and healing.

Some subscribers to evidence-based therapy claim that many energetic practices have been disproven because their good results may not be objectively demonstrable, consistent or reproducible. When we are looking at the art of massage (not just its science), we are looking at a more subjective realm. Just as a piece of music or painting may have a life-changing impact on one person and not on the next – so a given massage session may have similarly unpredictable and irreproducible results. This doesn't disprove its premise – it just goes to show that actual therapeutic results are not always predictable.

Saying that a therapeutic result should be reproducible or the method is false, wrongly applies objective standards to a situation that is both objective and subjective – the way the client integrates the therapist's input.

To paraphrase the philosopher, Martin Buber, it is not the therapeutic intention that is fruitful, but it is the meeting that is therapeutically fruitful. Every session is an improvisation in the moment – naturally guided by forethought, prior study, intuition, taking a good history, session design. However, the proof is in the putting and the art is in

the fascinating moment-to-moment improvisation that constitutes the therapy session.

Research and logic is valuable for guidance - so is imagination! If we weren't meant to combine the logical and the imaginative sides of ourselves, nature wouldn't have given us the two cerebral hemispheres!

Therapeutic Model

In most US states' laws, it is explicitly stated that massage is not the practice of medicine and does not involve diagnosis or treatment. Rather than being a limitation, we can see this as an enormous opportunity. In the U.S. and in many countries around the world, massage therapists practice as health-care professionals; not disease-care professionals (of course unless you have dual licensure as a medical professional and massage therapist). We are required to look at health and what promotes it especially through the physical and energetic effects of touch. There are very few therapies whose mission explicitly is health promotion.

Years ago, Jeff Maitland, former Faculty Chairman of the Rolf Institute, proposed a model of the levels of healthcare in our field. I think it very helpful to be reminded of these. I've reworded them somewhat:

1. Wellness – this includes the basic and powerful effects of caring touch as manifest in Swedish massage, spa massage, etc.

2. Orthopedic – this includes skill in understanding injuries, postural issues, and the ways massage/bodywork may help or not with various diseases. Orthopedic massage ideally includes a respect and knowledge of wellness massage.

3. Holistic/Integrative – this includes an understanding of psychology as well as anatomy and physiology; a unified therapeutic approach that addresses the whole person. This ideally includes. of course. excellence with respect to wellness massage, orthopedic massage, and skills in touch that contact and positively affect energy as well as structure.

Next Steps

There is no debate about the usefulness of making progress in research and in clarifying the science that underlies massage and bodywork. It is important and intoxicating. The Massage Therapy Research Foundation, Tiffany Fields, and many others in our field are helping take our work to a whole new level of credibility and therapeutic efficacy.

An equally important question is - what next steps can our field take to match the momentum in the science of massage with a balanced progress in the art of massage?

- Define more clearly the realm of energetic work and integrative work.

- Define more clearly what constitutes the art of massage. People commonly say massage/bodywork is an art and a science, but almost never explain in any detail how or why is it an art.
- Utilize research to ground energetic and integrative work, in so far as it is possible or appropriate, in science.
- Recognize that, likely, the most effective therapy will combine a knowledge and attention to the energetic as well as the structural aspect of the client.
- Encourage massage education to take the whole more into account – and resist the tendency to be subsumed under a reductionist version of medicine practiced by the medical industry and insurance companies.
- Provide more clear guidelines for the teaching and practice of energy work, the art of massage, and integrative bodywork that unites structure and energy.
- Add questions regarding energy, energetic and integrative bodywork, and the art of massage to school and national exams.
- See a greater commitment among therapists, educators, and organizations to a re-vision of massage that explicitly honors art as well as science and commits equally to making progress in the art as much as in the science.

It is time for the field to recognize, rejoice in and welcome our next steps. It is high time is to proceed in a balanced way, honoring the legacy of massage therapy as the explicit union of care and knowledge, art and science in touch.

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