



Hands of Health Newsletter

July\August 2007

Hello, again:

Summer is in full swing. What else is new? I hope everyone has kept up and been in full swing with your massage routine. Some of you have been slipping; better get back in here. ??? seriously, it's as important to keep consistent with your massage schedule as it is your job, your automobile maintenance and your relationships. I've said it many times before and you may be tired of hearing it, reading it, but it's true and many of you have seen it proven. And so, this issue of my newsletter will be on massage and only on massage. I couldn't have said it better than what I found in Body Sense magazine. In a section compiled by Jenny Good she made some great points directed at women. Hey, I've said this, too.

SOME SERIOUS BAGGAGE

A lipstick - or two or three. A book. A phone. A snack and a water bottle. Maybe even a change of clothes. On a daily basis, many women carry this and more in their handbags. Bags are getting bigger, and they're just as jam-packed as ever. Carrying all of this weight on one shoulder is leading to stiff necks, shoulder pain, and even headaches. Increasingly, massage therapists, chiropractors, and doctors are being called upon to treat the symptoms of women who have been carrying around too much for too long. If you're among those who need to downsize, consider doing a bit of math: the American Chiropractic Association (www.amerchiro.org) suggests that your bag contain no more than 10 percent of your body weight. Alternating shoulders and carrying a backpack, worn on both shoulders, are other options to reduce muscle and joint pain.

And kudos to Karre Osborn for these excerpts.

REINFORCED BY RESEARCH

Research is showing us the enormous benefits of touch - benefits ranging from treating chronic diseases and injuries to alleviating the growing tensions of our modern lifestyles. Having a massage does more than just relax your body and mind - there are specific physiological and psychological changes that occur, even more so when massage is understood and utilized as a preventative, frequent therapy. Massage not only feels good, but it can cure what ails you.

From the cradle to the nursing home, tactile stimulation and the emotional assurance of caring touch bring about a sense of well-being and security. In numerous studies conducted on massage for infants at the University of Miami's Touch Research Institute (TRI), researchers have found improved weight gain and development in preterm infants and improved weight gain and decreased stress behavior in HIV-exposed infants. Full-term infants who receive massage also benefit with increased alertness and social behavior, less crying, and increased weight gain.

With more than one hundred research studies completed, TRI has also found massage to have positive effects on children with asthma (improved pulmonary function and less stress), arthritis (decreased pain), burn injuries (reduced pain and anxiety during wound dressings), cerebral palsy (decreased spasticity), Down syndrome (improved muscle tone), and leukemia (white blood cells increased), to name just a few.

STRESS LESS

One of the most valuable aspects of massage is its role in reducing stress. Experts estimate that upwards of 90 percent of disease is stress-related. Massage and bodywork combat that exorbitant number by helping us remember what it really means to relax.

Relaxation is more than just the body unwinding; it's also allowing the mind a chance to quiet itself and go inward. It's what causes some clients easily fall asleep on the massage table, while helping others "see" more clearly afterward. Finding a relaxed state lets the body slough off the shoulder-bearing burdens of the day, while letting the mind take a romp in the park, if you will. And that's exactly what massage does.

Besides decreasing anxiety through relaxation, massage also lowers your blood pressure, increases circulation, helps you sleep better, and increases concentration. Like exercise, massage reduces fatigue and gives you more energy to handle the day's stressful situations.

Massage is a perfect elixir for good health, but it can also provide an integration of body and mind, a valuable tool for our often desperate lives. By producing a meditative state or heightened awareness of living in the present moment, massage can provide emotional and spiritual balance, bringing with it true relaxation and peace.

SO, PAMPER ME

While we often downplay the pampering nature of massage in favor of its medicinal value, there is great benefit in treating ourselves to some self-care on this level. In fact, self-care plays a huge part in how healthy we'll be with each passing year. Father Time can devour us quickly if we sit back and offer no sort of healthy defense to his ravages. Massage offers that defense in so many ways.

Taking care of ourselves can never be a bad thing, whether it be eating a diet filled with fresh, unprocessed foods, taking a week's vacation, or bathing in a hydrotherapeutic tub of skin-enriching oils and scents. Massage is no different. In fact, there's simply no way to separate the luxury or pampering from the healing and therapeutic, because they are one in the same.

MORE IS MORE

Experts say the incredible benefits of massage are doubly powerful if taken in regular "doses." Dr. Maria Hernandez-Reif - one of the lead researchers at TRI who, along with colleague Tiffany Field, has been proving the efficacy of massage for years - says massage is not a "drug" on which you can overdose.

While the TRI studies have shown we can benefit from massage even in small doses (fifteen minutes of chair massage or a half-hour table session), Hernandez-Reif says they know from their research that receiving bodywork two to three times a week is highly beneficial. And if resources of time and money weren't an issue, Hernandez-Reif has the ultimate prescription: "I feel a daily massage is optimal."

In a touch-deprived society, there's no denying the power of healthy, therapeutic touch. Regardless of the adjectives we assign to it - luxuriously pampering or medically therapeutic - or the reasons we seek it out, touch therapies can be powerful allies in your healthcare regime.

As you know what else? They simply feel good.

I've said it all before. Maybe everyone needed to hear it from someone else. So if you've been remiss about getting in for your massage there's no better place than here; no better time than now. Call me; you've got my numbers. Have a safe and healthy summer.

Until next time,

Stay healthy, stay well,



*If women ruled the world and we all got massages,
there would be no war.*

-Carrie Snow, comedian

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