

Back to Center Massage Therapy

Winter 2011

Member, Associated Bodywork & Massage Professionals

The Implications of Bodywork

Human Touch Has Powerful Results

Cathy Ulrich

Whether in giving or receiving, touch is as essential to human survival as is food. Infants deprived of touch, even when they are getting adequate nutrition, will fail to thrive. Elders isolated by loss of partners and friends become depressed not only because of the absence of social interaction, but also because of the simple loss of physical contact.

We calm our pets by stroking them, we greet each other with a hug or a handshake, and we soothe our children by holding them. No other form of connection is as powerful and universal as touch. Taking a look at how this sensation is connected to the brain provides insight into the significance of bodywork.

because of our skin. Our skin tells us about our environment and ourselves. When we touch something with our fingers, we're not only sensing the object, we're also feeling our own skin, our own boundaries.

In the first few days of an embryo's life, the cells that eventually become a fully formed baby divide into three layers. The brain and skin come from the same layer, and they develop together, not only before birth, but well into the first year of life. When a baby is held, cuddled, and breast-fed, she's getting crucial stimulation to build neural connections between her skin and her brain that will ultimately last her entire lifetime.



No matter the age, human touch plays a significant role in mental and physical health.

Skin and the Brain

The adult human lives inside an envelope of about 18 square feet of skin. Every inch houses thousands of nerve endings and various kinds of sensory receptors, all working to tell the brain about its surroundings. The cold of an ice cube, the softness of a cat's fur, a warm breeze, the caress of a loved one--all of these feelings are possible

Study after study has shown that touch is not only important for development, but is crucial to survival. James H.M. Knox of Johns Hopkins Hospital reported in 1915 that babies left in orphanages and given proper nutrition died at a rate of about 90 percent. Other studies of the same era confirmed

Continued on page 2

*We are not rich
by what we
possess but
rather by what
we can do
without.*

-Immanuel Kant

Office Hours and Contact

Back to Center Massage Therapy
Diana Rarich, MSW, LMT
303-829-4111
Sundays, Mon/Thurs. eve by appt.
www.backtocentermassage.com
www.fb.com/backtocentermassage

In this Issue

The Implications of Bodywork
Lavender
Hibernating is for the Bears

Continued from page 1

these findings and showed that those babies who did survive were often mentally handicapped and stunted in their growth. These valuable studies helped institutions understand the importance of touch. When staff was added to provide enough time for each child to be held, handled, and touched, mortality rates dropped dramatically.

Massage for Children

Those early statistical studies showed how vital touch is to developing infants. Researchers are also finding that giving massage to premature infants can improve their growth and overall health. A study conducted by the Touch Research Institute (TRI) at the University of Miami found that when stable premature babies were given five, one-minute massages a day, they gained 47 percent more weight than their counterparts who didn't get massage.

A 2001 study conducted by TRI showed that when mothers gave their infants a 15-minute massage before bedtime, these sleep-challenged kids went to sleep more quickly and were more alert during daytime hours.

Conversely, clinical research and sociological studies link touch deprivation with aggression. A 2002 study reported that adolescents with a history of aggressive behavior showed less aggression and were less anxious after receiving a 20-minute massage twice a week for five weeks.

Massage also reduces the symptoms of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder so kids can concentrate better, and it's even been found that the right kind of touch can help kids with autism relate better to teachers and family members.

Massage for Adults

Ongoing research by the Touch Research Institute continues to prove that massage is an important therapy for many conditions. After a massage, levels of the stress hormone cortisol drop in saliva tests, examinations show an improvement in alertness and relaxation, depression scores decrease, and mental focus improves.

The exponential growth of the bodywork field is a testament to the value of safe, therapeutic touch. Of course bodywork

can play an essential role in the healing of specific chronic or acute orthopedic conditions, but it also serves as a powerful aide in improving the quality of life for adults.

Stan, a former client, was going through a nasty divorce. He had friends to support him emotionally, but it seemed that the thing he missed most was the nurturing touch of his partner. He credits weekly massage appointments, along with seeing a counselor, to his emotional recovery. Massage can be a healthy way to get that much-needed human contact.

Massage for Elders

People confined to nursing homes rarely get more than daily hygienic care in terms of touch. Yet elders need touch as much as infants; studies show that when they receive regular massage, the elderly have less depression and anxiety,

experience better physical coordination, and show a decrease of stress hormone in their saliva.

Geriatric massage is a growing field requiring specialized training, and many massage therapists offer it in their practices. Some nursing homes now provide massage to their residents. Elders appear to respond as well to bodywork as, if not better than, their younger counterparts.

Contact for All Ages

Before babies learn about their hands and feet, they need the touch of loved ones and caregivers. We retain that need our entire lives. Remember to savor touch the next time you're lying on a massage table. Your therapist is not only working out tight muscles, she's contacting your entire nervous system, calming you through pathways that were put in place before you were born.



Infant massage has shown great benefits in calming babies and helping pre-term infants thrive.

Lavender

An Essential Oil for Fundamental Health

Laurie Chance Smith

Lavender essential oil is a one-stop medicine chest, helping to reduce anxiety, fatigue, and stress and balance hormones, increase the immune response, lower blood pressure, and relieve pain. To utilize lavender's healing benefits at home, mix five to 10 drops of lavender essential oil in one ounce of jojoba oil or unscented lotion. (Essential oils shouldn't be applied directly to the skin; it's best to partner them with a carrier oil, liquid, or lotion.)

EARACHES

For earaches, dab one drop of lavender massage oil behind the ear and rub gently. Alternatively, place one drop of lavender oil on a cotton ball and carefully place inside the outer ear.

HEADACHES

Inhaling lavender is also effective for headache relief. Add a few drops to a bowl of warm water and breathe. Gently rub lavender massage lotion on the temples, forehead, and base of the neck.

COLDS

Lavender oil can also help break up coughs and clear sinuses. Colorado-based holistic aromatherapist Nicola McGill suggests the regular home-use of antiseptic essential oils such as lavender to help avoid colds and other infectious diseases. Add a few drops to a vaporizer to help clear colds and infuse the home with lavender's scent.

STRESS

At night, six to eight drops of lavender added to a warm bath helps melt away stress and relieve fatigue. Blend a footbath by adding three drops of lavender to a bowl of warm water, sink your feet in, and relax. For help inducing sleep, add two or three drops of lavender essential oil to the underside corner of your pillow.

TRANQUIL AROMA

A human takes 23,040 breaths a day, and each inhale floods the system with scent. Rely on lavender's tranquil aroma to clear the way toward peaceful days.



Lavender is loaded with wellness properties.

Hibernating is for the Bears

Plan to Stay Fit This Winter

Winter's here, and you've moved your running shoes to the back of the closet until April. Yet that piece of pumpkin pie has your name on it.

With the onset of colder weather, shorter days, and snow-covered streets, we eat more and exercise less, waiting for the spring thaw to get back in shape. Instead of having to make New Year's resolutions to lose holiday weight and join a health club, why not set goals to stay fit this winter?

MOVE FITNESS INDOORS

Winter is the perfect time to start a weight-training program. When it's sunny and warm in summer, you'd rather be outside cycling or rock climbing. When it's snowing, why not

lift weights for 30 minutes during lunch? Statistics show that more people suffer heart attacks in winter from shoveling snow, often because they're out of shape. With regular strength training, you'll be able to shovel that snow and get a head start with outdoor sports when spring comes around.

WALK OUTSIDE ON WEEKENDS

Going for a jog or walk during mid-day when the sun is high is a great time to get outside and catch a few rays. Be sure to dress warmly, wear sunscreen, and drink plenty of water. Dehydration is most common in colder months when you're less aware of fluid loss.

TAKE A DANCE CLASS

Accept that invitation to the New Year's

Eve celebration and take a class in ballroom dancing. While you're dancing, you're not hanging around the buffet table or the bar, and your waistline will thank you for it.

REDISCOVER ICE SKATING

Whether it's on a frozen pond or at a rink, ice skating provides seasonal exercise opportunities, especially good for the legs. And it's great fun, bringing out the kid in all of us.

CONSIDER SNOWSHOEING

Snowshoeing is just a matter of strapping snowshoes onto your boots and walking. Snowshoes make hiking trails and snowy city parks accessible and can be rented from sporting goods stores at a relatively inexpensive price.

*The work will
wait while you
show the child
the rainbow, but
the rainbow
won't wait while
you do the work.*

-Patricia Clafford

Happy New Year to you and yours... The year has started off with great excitement and possibility. Back to Center is pleased to announce the beginning of regular massage volunteering at the Denver Safehouse. It is a powerful time of providing safe touch to survivors of domestic violence and their children. This first month we worked on 10 residents, 2 staff, and 4 children. We look forward to continue to help these women in their healing journey (only 2 of them had ever had massage before!). What an honor to share the power of touch!

Speaking of the power of touch, Back to Center Massage Therapy is pleased to announce couples massage coaching.

For just \$128 (\$64/person), you get 1 on 2 attention (one therapist with you and your friend, partner, or training buddy). Whether you are looking to improve your active body's flexibility, deepen your relationship, or just work out a few knots--I will show you some basic techniques and approaches and you will each provide and receive an hour and a half massage (class is 3 hours) to and from your partner! Normally, this would cost \$85 each--with no techniques to take away. We will be using a massage table, so you will receive tips for good body mechanics (versus working on a floor or couch) as well as specific massage techniques.

BTC Massage

1880 S Pierce St., Unit #4
Lakewood, CO 80232

Remember: You get \$10 off your next session for each referral who mentions you. If you want to send a valentine greeting, send one courtesy of BTC Massage, at www.sendoutcards.com/drarich. I look forward to seeing you on the table soon :-). Feel free to schedule online at: www.backtocentermassage.clickbook.net



Member, **Associated Bodywork & Massage Professionals**