

Massage Self-Care Corner

How Often Do *You* Get A Massage?

By Sharon Puszko www.daybreak-massage.com

When was the last time you received a massage? This is not a rhetorical question; I really want you to answer this question for yourself. If you have to pause to think about the answer, then chances are you have gone too long without one. I know our lives are rather full between tending to clients and family, running errands, paying bills, and everything that comes with managing a household. But, as the saying goes, *one cannot heal others unless they first heal themselves*. Taking care of yourself is just as important (for you the practitioner) as taking care of your clients.

Remember all the reasons massage is valuable for your clients? You share with them how massage can help to alleviate joint and back pain, manage fibromyalgia and migraines, speed recovery from injury, increase blood circulation and manage stress, etc. Well, all of these reasons apply to you as well. While we all enjoy the laying on of hands, we can't experience all the benefits of a massage vicariously through our clients: we must lay our hands down once in a while and let someone else do the work so we can practice what we advocate.

In order to best serve your clients, it is important to keep in touch with how receiving massage feels to you. Without regular massages, we can easily lose perspective on how issues of touch affect a client in terms of pressure, temperature, and



the frequency of repetitive strokes. Weekly or monthly massages allow us to experience new techniques or ways to modify existing ones for a certain group of clients. For example, as a specialist in geriatric massage, I find it helpful to trade massages with colleagues who work with other modalities.

Getting a massage is also important for us as practitioners because it helps prevent injuries common to the profession, such as repetitive stress injuries, muscle strains and carpal tunnel. This advice sounds familiar, doesn't it? I am sure you have mentioned this to more than one of your clients in the past several months. Now it is time to listen to your own advice! Just like athletes, our body is our

tool and our work depends on it functioning well. It is for this reason that we must care for our bodies/tool with the same degree of intensity that dancers, swimmers, and runners do.

In a recent survey, I gave to students at the Daybreak Geriatric Massage Institute, only 6 percent reported that they receive a massage once per week with the majority responding that they receive a massage 6 times per year or less. The main reason respondents gave for not receiving regular massages was that they cannot afford it more often. Ideally, we should be receiving a massage weekly; if that is not possible than we should strive for a massage every other week. Here are some common reasons given for not receiving

regular massages, as well as some suggestions for overcoming these obstacles:

I do not want to spend the money. I have to respect this response. Many of us may have experienced a change in our clientele recently, and we must adjust the way we manage our finances accordingly. If you do not feel comfortable spending money on a massage, please consider trading with someone. Probably the most common person to trade with would be another massage therapist. However, if that is not an option for the therapist you like (e.g. he or she only accepts cash), perhaps another form of trade would free up some money to get a massage from the person you prefer. For example, maybe you could trade a massage for a haircut, yard work, babysitting, marketing opportunities, or something else. By not spending money on these other things, you would be

able to put aside the money needed for a massage.

I have not found a practitioner with whom I want to trade/pay. The Internet is a wonderful tool for finding people with similar interests. Visiting local massage schools is a great way to connect with fellow practitioners. Check the free daily papers for events related to massage, or postings from local massage therapists. Word-of-mouth also goes a long way, so the more people you talk to, the better chance you have to meet other thera-

pists. Once you start finding people, it is simply a matter of trial and error until you find a practitioner whose work you enjoy, and with whom you can arrange a form of payment.

I do not have the time. Really? I believe we all have time for what is a priority to us. Yes, we are all busy, especially those of us who are caretakers of young children, aging parents, or other family members. What rings more true is to say "I do not believe receiving a massage is a priority in my busy life right now."

I urge you to reconsider, for all the reasons mentioned. Every massage therapist can find one hour (one and a half, including travel time) each week, or every other week, for something that is a priority. Your challenge, therefore, is to re-categorize massage as a priority in your life.

The bottom line is this: We cannot be an effective massage therapist if we do not take good care of ourselves. It is imperative that we listen to our bodies and respond accordingly to its needs. So

please, try turning off your ringer, take a deep breath, lay yourself down on the massage table instead of standing by it, and let someone take care of you for a wonderful change of pace towards self-care and being the best therapist you can be.



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