



## Massage Self-Care Corner

# Inspire to Be Higher

By Mike McGillicuddy, LMT, NCTMB

I have been a part of the massage therapy profession for 24 years. Like most therapists, I entered the profession because I find joy in helping others feel good about themselves. Consequently, massage therapists often succumb to the demands of caring for everyone else and neglect taking care of themselves. My goal is to inspire you, the massage therapist, to reach higher than that.

One of the most important choices an individual must make in their life is to take complete responsibility for their own well-being. It's the core of developing high self-esteem and strong self-worth. Most therapists learn the importance of teaching their clients to stay healthy in body, mind and spirit. However, are they inspired enough to live that lifestyle for themselves?

Therapists tend to sleep less than the recommended eight hours their bodies need to re-energize each night. They disregard their nutritional needs and avoid the proper amounts of stretch and exercise needed to stay strong enough to do the job. In general, they work too hard and play too little.

"Where and how do I start?" might be the question running through your mind right now. Start at the beginning. Be kind to your



body and begin a self-care program.

As massage therapists, we need to target specific muscles to stay healthy and active, and prevent injuries. If we neglect to do this, we run the risk of ending our careers much sooner than needed. The abdominal and lower back muscles always are a good place to start, as they are largely over-used in this profession. Unless you have a medical condition that would contraindicate such exercise, I recommend an exercise ball.




This is a great tool to assist in doing crunches and keeping the core muscle groups strong. Some therapists like to replace their chair with a ball to sit on because it makes you use your core muscles without even thinking about them. I stretch my back using the exercise ball by laying on it and gently rocking myself back and forth.

For the mid-back, I like to stretch the pectoral muscles in three planes. Place arms straight out in front of you, palms together at chest level.

Bring the arms behind you as far as is comfortable. Then repeat the stretch at a 45-degree angle above your shoulders and then at a 45-degree angle down by your waist. I like to use an exercise band to strengthen my trapezius and rhomboids by hold-

ing the band in front of me and contracting my muscles, bringing my shoulders toward my spine.

Remember, if you look in the mirror and don't like what you see, don't feel bad – get inspired. Become higher in body, mind and spirit. 

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