

Massage Therapy

WHAT IT IS *and* HOW IT WORKS

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Dedication

This book is dedicated to:

My spiritual teacher, Robert C. Sohn

My Amma teacher, Tina Sohn

And of course to my wonderful wife of 33 years, Faye

NOT FOR SALE

Table of Contents

Preface | viii

SECTION I Massage Therapy: What it Is

Chapter 1 Introduction to the Three Paradigms of Practice | 1
Chapter Goals | 1
Introduction | 1
Paradigms in Academic and Professional Education and Training | 2
The Three Paradigms of Massage Therapy | 8
Paradigm Competence | 19
The Evolutionary Process of a Massage Therapist | 30
Compassion and the Desire to Help Others: An Essential Ingredient | 32
Summary | 32

Chapter 2 First Paradigm—Relaxation and Stress Reduction | 35
Chapter Goals | 35
Introduction | 35
The Way of the First Paradigm: The Foundation | 37
Relationship between First Paradigm Practitioners and their Clients | 45
The Primary Workplace of First Paradigm Practitioners | 46
The Treatment | 49
Case Histories of First Paradigm Therapists at Work and with Clients | 51
Summary | 55

Chapter 3 Second Paradigm—Remediation, Therapy, and Pain Relief | 57
Chapter Goals | 57
Introduction | 58
The Way of the Second Paradigm | 59
Evolution of the Therapist and Client Relationship into Therapist and Patient | 60
Patient Responsibility: The Education of Both Therapist and Patient | 62
New Responsibilities and The Workplace | 63
The Intake, Assessment, and Treatment Phases | 65
Case Histories | 71
Summary | 79

Chapter 4	Third Paradigm—Holistic Integration 81
	Chapter Goals 81
	Introduction 82
	The Way of the Third Paradigm 83
	An Holistic/Integrative Approach 84
	The Importance of Self-Development 86
	Patient Responsibility 87
	Effective Adjunctive Therapies for the Third Paradigm Practitioner 88
	Asian Bodywork 88
	Acupuncture 88
	Moxibustion 90
	Chiropractic 91
	Chinese Herbalism 91
	Western Herbalism 92
	Diet and Nutrition 93
	Biofeedback 95
	Bach Flower Remedies 96
	Exercise 96
	Hypnotherapy 99
	Guided Imagery 100
	Naturopathy 100
	Aromatherapy 100
	Homeopathy 102
	Case Histories 102
	Summary 106
SECTION II	Massage Therapy: How it Works
Chapter 5	History and Evolution of Massage Therapy and Bodywork 109
	Chapter Goals 109
	Introduction 109
	Prehistoric Origins 110
	The First Civilizations 111
	The Ancient Americas 130
	Europe and Modern Medicine 132
	The Seventeenth, Eighteenth, and Nineteenth Centuries 138
	Massage Today 142
	Summary 143
Chapter 6	The Continuum of the Four Massage Therapy and Bodywork Levels 147
	Chapter Goals 147
	Introduction 147
	The Continuum of the Four Massage Therapy and Bodywork Levels 148
	The Fable of the Blind Men and the Elephant 152

	The Importance of Intention 154
	Modalities of the Continuum of the Four Massage Therapy and Bodywork Levels 155
	Summary 156
Chapter 7	The Somatic Level of the Massage Therapy and Bodywork Continuum 157
	Chapter Goals 157
	Introduction to the Somatic Level of Massage Therapy and Bodywork 158
	Swedish Massage 159
	Deep Tissue Massage, Neuromuscular Therapy, and Orthopedic Massage 166
	Myofascial Release 179
	Sports Massage 188
	Manual Lymphatic Drainage 200
	Summary 209
Chapter 8	Somato-Psychic Layer of the Massage Therapy and Bodywork Continuum 211
	Chapter Goals 211
	Introduction to the Somato-Psychic Layer of Massage Therapy and Bodywork 212
	Rolfing® 214
	SOMA Neuromuscular Integration 225
	Hellerwork 232
	The Alexander Technique 238
	The Feldenkrais Method® 246
	Craniosacral Therapy 256
	Summary 268
Chapter 9	The Bioenergetic Layer of the Massage Therapy and Bodywork Continuum 271
	Chapter Goals 271
	Introduction to the Bioenergetic Layer of Massage Therapy and Bodywork 272
	Energy as a Treatable Dimension of the Human Being 272
	Traditional Chinese Medicine Massage 273
	Tuina 282
	Amma Therapeutic Massage 288
	Acupressure 293
	Shiatsu 296
	Jin Shin Do®: Bodymind Acupressure® 315
	Thai Massage 327
	Summary 336

Chapter 10	The Energetic Layer of the Massage Therapy and Bodywork Continuum 339
	Chapter Goals 339
	Introduction to the Energetic Layer of Massage Therapy and Bodywork 340
	Therapeutic Touch 342
	Reiki 350
	Polarity Therapy 358
	Summary 363
Chapter 11	Practice Settings: A Day in the Life of a Massage Therapist 365
	Chapter Goals 365
	Introduction 365
	A Typical Day in the Life of Most Massage Therapy and Bodywork Professionals 366
	Therapist Self-Care 372
	Formulating the Treatment Plan 376
	Pre-Treatment Communication 377
	Altruism and Making a Living 377
	Generating an Income 378
	A Day in the Life of Five Massage Therapy Specialists 379
	Summary 394
Chapter 12	Massage Therapy within the Larger Healthcare/Well Being Team 395
	Chapter Goals 395
	Introduction 396
	Regulation Across the USA: National Certification and State Licensure 396
	Accreditation 398
	Research and Medicine 399
	Demand for Massage Therapy 400
	Spa Industry 402
	Job Outlook and Trends 402
	Baby Boomers Force Market Growth 404
	The Bigger Picture 404
	The Patient 406
	The Family/Significant Others 406
	The Physician 408
	Nurses 409
	Acupuncturists 409
	Chiropractors 411
	Physical Therapists 413
	Psychiatrists/psychologists 414
	Summary 415
Appendix I	Reference List, Bibliography & Additional Resources 417
Glossary	429
Index	437



Preface

THE MESSAGE THERAPY AND BODYWORK PROFESSION TODAY

Not long ago, the field of massage therapy and bodywork was considered to be an “underground mainstream.” When it was finally surveyed, it was discovered that tens of millions of massage therapy and bodywork treatments were being administered by professionals all over the country. They noted that willing consumers, mostly paying one hundred percent out-of-pocket for these services, lined up for treatment and virtually no one was aware of it! These trends have grown stronger still and all the statistics point to continued unprecedented growth. Today it is clear, and no longer any secret, that massage therapy and bodywork has come out from the underground and stepped proudly into the mainstream of our nation’s health care system as one of the fastest growing professions in America.

Over the last 30 years my own experience in different facets of this profession—as a licensed practitioner, instructor, college president, massage therapy state board chairman, founding national certification board member and national association president, has stood witness not only to the exponential growth in the numbers of practitioners but also to the incredible diversity of treatment approaches, enhancement of technical skills and abilities of therapists, and the expansion of the field’s scope of practice.

WHO THIS BOOK IS FOR

When any profession grows and begins to take hold of the minds and bodies of the population as massage therapy has done, a myriad of other related industries that are necessary for the continued development and support of the field (such as manufacturers of massage tables, oils, crèmes and lotions, other equipment and products, text book publishers), develop around it. This creates an important dynamic that serves the greater massage industry, which in turn allows for and even accelerates continued growth and interest by more and more of the population. As the word spreads, there arises a real need for accurate information and improved education, since more often than not, interest grows faster than the information available. There becomes a growing need for schools and instructors to have access to quality information so they can prepare their students with a foundation built on rock and provide an education that stands the test of time, one that serves as a profound context from which to build the most current skills, knowledge, abilities and attitudes necessary for achieving personal success in the field of massage therapy.

MASSAGE THERAPY: What It Is and How It Works is an excellent text that fills this need. After an extensive review of other massage therapy and bodywork materials, it became evident that although the amount of published resources now available has grown exponentially, there is little that has been written specifically for students and practicing therapists, (even for the lay public as a resource) that presents a comprehensive perspective and overview of this field. The student needs a context from which to help envision the true potential of what is possible to attain in this profession as they begin the journey of a school program. The professional therapist needs to be shown the possibilities of other levels of practice beyond what they may be doing in the present so new pathways of evolution may open before them. And for members of the public looking to understand what they may gain from seeking out a qualified massage therapist, this book can serve as a resource from which to obtain the information they need or desire.

Although not intended to serve as a “career guide,” *MASSAGE THERAPY: What It Is and How It Works* can also help to educate and pique the interest of its readers enough to seek training in massage therapy as a full-time or adjunctive career path. This book provides these potential students with a broad perspective of the field helping them to garner the information they need to make an informed decision as to whether or not pursuing a career in massage therapy is right for them.

ABOUT THE BOOK

Due to the growing complexity and widening scope of the field, it is becoming more and more important to have a text that provides an accurate roadmap of possible practice beyond the idea of what hands-on modality or modalities a therapist performs. There was a need for a book that boldly defines the levels and extent of existing and potential practice. Just how far can massage and bodywork therapists take their profession? What are the limits of possibility when it comes to treating and healing using massage therapy? What do practitioners need to know and do to go beyond where they find themselves today?

Section I

Section I of *MASSAGE THERAPY: What It Is and How It Works* elucidates this important discussion in its first four chapters on the “The Three Paradigms” which are: 1) Relaxation and Stress Reduction, 2) Remediation, Therapy, and Pain Relief and 3) Holistic Integration. The Three Paradigms form a continuum of possible practice beginning at the most basic levels of touch leading to the most advanced levels of practice and holistic care. These chapters also include numerous interesting and relevant case histories that showcase, demonstrate and differentiate massage therapy and bodywork practice by First, Second and Third Paradigm practitioners.

Also presented in Section I is another new concept that introduces and explores the idea that there exist Three Levels of Competence that define a practitioner’s relationship to their paradigm of practice. The book demonstrates how competence is not simply a product of a therapist’s effort to practice their modality but rather shows it to

be a direct reflection of *how* they practice and their ability to control attention and stay fully focused and concentrated during treatment - a feat not so easily accomplished.

Whereas the Three Paradigms define and describe the possible scope and extent of therapeutic education, training, and practice that exist within the field, the Three Levels of Competence define and describe the level of depth, skill, and overall ability with which massage therapists perform their work, regardless of paradigm.

MASSAGE THERAPY: What It Is and How It Works lays the foundation for students to begin creating their future by providing an understanding of the realm of possibilities in the field. It helps them to envision how far along they may want to go on this path of possible practice. This roadmap also serves as a mirror for therapists enabling them to reflect upon what they have or have not achieved as professionals, what they can still achieve if they wish, and what they need to do to achieve it.

Section II

MASSAGE THERAPY: What It Is and How It Works then moves into a brief history highlighting the beginnings of massage during major historical time periods in different countries or regions of the world up until the present time. This chapter provides a context for understanding the evolution of the important ideas and principles set forth next in the following five chapters of Section II.

Following the history, a new and unique model of the scope of the profession is included to provide an in depth analysis of the existing spectrum of massage therapy and bodywork modalities. It is called "The Continuum of the Four Massage Therapy and Bodywork Levels." When analyzed, the main *intention* of each modality is shown to primarily affect one of the four levels or layers of the energy/matter continuum of a human being. The Continuum of the Four Massage Therapy and Bodywork Levels are 1) Somatic, 2) Somato-Psychic, 3) Bioenergetic, and 4) Energetic.

Within these five chapters 26 of the most popular and effective forms of touch practiced today and generally representative of the field, are detailed and shown to fall within one of the four levels of massage therapy and bodywork. These discussions include a history of the modality and its founder, principles and theories, hand techniques, benefits and contraindications followed by the major underlying principles of assessment used in treatment planning and some of the mechanisms responsible for each modality's efficacy. At the end of each massage therapy and bodywork modality there is information regarding the requirements for practitioner education, licensure, and certification.

In addition, the reader will get a good taste and enjoy a detailed description of what it would be like to experience a treatment in each of the 26 modalities presented. All of this provides the reader with an understanding as to how and why manipulation of the body's tissues and/or energy by the touch of a professionally trained therapist practicing any of these disciplines within the continuum, can garner such positive and healthful responses on so many levels.

After the Continuum of the Four Massage Therapy and Bodywork Levels, a view of the primary practice settings that therapists work in today is included. This chapter takes a good look at employment in private practice, clinics, hospitals, spas, athletic facilities, and in corporations by providing a detailed look at *a day in the life of a massage*

therapist in each one of these settings. This true taste of what it's like to actually work in these environments offers students, and practitioners who may be considering changing employment tracks, a real sense of the choices and opportunities available. This chapter also helps the reader to understand the scope of what this field offers in the way of professional services on many levels.

An additional chapter includes the growth, highlights and challenges of the profession and the role of a massage and bodywork therapist within the context of the entire realm of health care today. This important chapter discusses the relationship between the massage and bodywork therapist and the other members of the health care team, including: the patient, the family and significant others, physicians, nurses, acupuncturists, chiropractors, physical therapists, psychiatrists and psychologists.

In this book there is also a glossary and an appendix that includes a detailed reference list, bibliography and additional resources that provides information for those readers who are interested in more in-depth research and study on massage therapy and bodywork.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Steven Schenkman, a licensed New York State Massage Therapist since 1984, is an established leader in the field of Complementary and Alternative Medicine. He served as President of The New York College for Wholistic Health, Education, and Research (now known as the New York College of Health Professions) from 1989 through 2001. The college offers associates and bachelor's degree programs in massage and bodywork therapy, master's degrees in acupuncture and Oriental medicine, certificate programs in wholistic nursing and physical arts. Under his leadership the Institution evolved into a premiere college for wholistic education and developed the first associate's degree program in massage therapy in the United States in 1996 and a bachelor's degree in amma therapeutic massage in 1999, the nation's first bachelors degree in bodywork.

Since 2001 Mr. Schenkman has been a consultant and curriculum specialist to career colleges, allied health and business schools and schools of massage therapy. As a consultant he specializes in assistance with accreditation and administration, licensing, internal consulting, reorganization, curriculum and new program development, new business development, marketing & advertising and strategic planning.

Steven Schenkman has also demonstrated leadership and commitment to the profession of Massage Therapy as a founding member of the National Certification Board for Therapeutic Massage and Bodywork (NCBTMB) whose examinations are now used or recognized in statute or rule in 33 states and the District of Columbia. Steven spent five years on that Board. He has also served as Chairman of the New York State Massage Therapy Board for six years and was a member for 10 years. Steven was also a founding member and served as the first President of the American Organization for Bodywork Therapies of Asia (AOBTA) for five years.

Most recently in 2009, Mr. Schenkman has been appointed to the Massage Therapy Body of Knowledge (MTBOK) Project Task Force. This national effort is under the direction of the MTBOK Stewards, representatives from the American Massage

Therapy Association, AMTA-Council of Schools, Associated Bodywork & Massage Professionals, Federation of State Massage Therapy Boards, Massage Therapy Foundation, and National Certification Board for Therapeutic Massage and Bodywork. The Task Force is responsible for defining, developing, and articulating a massage therapy body of knowledge (MTBOK) for the profession. Mr. Schenkman is also a member of the Cengage Learning (formerly Thomson Delmar Learning) Massage Therapy Advisory Board, the Books of Discovery Advisory Council and he writes a blog for Massage Magazine's web site found under its 'Expert Insights' section.

He has studied and practiced Advanced Amma Therapeutic Massage and was a certified biofeedback specialist and stress management consultant. In addition, Mr. Schenkman was trained in acupuncture using the apprenticeship model and is a master tai chi practitioner and instructor.

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