

WHAT ABOUT RELAXATION MASSAGE FOR EVERYONE?

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Relax! . . . Hard to do? At one time it was easy. Remember when you were a baby or a young child? How good it felt to stretch? Roll in the grass? Feel that freshly mown grass on your skin?

Our skin is the largest organ of our body. Perhaps one we take the most for granted.

Our skin serves the following important functions:

1. Protects us from bacterial invasions.
2. Warns us of immediate dangers.
3. Maintains our body temperature.
4. Gets rid of body wastes.
5. Protects us from harmful sun rays.
6. Stores water and nourishment.

We also use our skin to take in physical warmth and nurturing, something we all need but perhaps have forgotten how good it feels (or we feel), how much comfort we get from it and that it's very healthy.

Touch watch your cat or dog. They know they need touch. They make sure they get it and they know how to relax.

1. BENEFITS OF TOUCH THROUGH RELAXATION MASSAGE

- A. Massage is a very effective way of quickly encouraging us to let go of stress and tension.
- B. Besides just plain feeling good - it's a mood changer.
- C. It invigorates, tones and softens the skin.
- D. It stimulates the circulation of body fluids.
- E. It promotes the suppleness of muscles, increases their flexibility and reduces soreness.
- F. It can aid in the alignment of the skeletal system.
- G. It helps the nervous system work more effectively.

H. It stimulates the functioning of the internal organs.

I. It reduces pain and fatigue.

J. It increases body awareness, allowing us to "get in touch" with ourself.

This gift to yourself, overall, promotes good physical, mental, and emotional health.

2. TYPE OF MASSAGE

A relaxation massage uses mainly fingers, hands, and forearms with varied pressures. Most firm strokes start from the outer part of the limbs towards the heart. This helps clear out the body's lymph system (our body's waste disposal system).

Long, light strokes are done away from the main part of the body.

Some pressure points are used to release congestion where energy is blocked in the body and toxins build up.

Shaking, kneading, vibrating, percussion, pressing, pulling, stretching and wringing also may be used. One does not have to know the names of muscles or do deep muscle work, as in other kinds of massage, in order to do a relaxation massage. However, it is helpful to follow the contour of the muscles.

3. STEREOTYPES ABOUT MASSAGE

Ask yourself what questions you have about touch or massage and talk about them before a massage. If you are apprehensive, think about your rules around touch. Give yourself permission to change those rules if needed; or not to, if you like.

We know it's OK for children to get their basic

need for nurturing touch met. As an adult, it's helpful to know we also have that need.

Give yourself, friends, and family permission to touch - in a nurturing, OK way. Massage is encouraged during time of stress, healing, emotional distress, and occasions where physical comforting can be nurturing and supportive.

4. SETTING UP A SAFE AND COMFORTABLE ENVIRONMENT

Our bodies take in nurturing touch most easily when:

- A. We are in a quiet place or listening to relaxing music.
- B. We are silent with words or thoughts.
- C. The room temperature and lighting is comfortable.
- D. The person giving the massage keeps as much contact as possible with the other person.
- E. We feel comfortable about nurturing touch and OK with saying "No" if not comfortable.

5. EQUIPMENT SUGGESTED

- A. Folding table, flat surface with padding or a massage table.
- B. Sheets and towels for a complete body massage.
- C. Tape recorder for music.
- D. Vegetable oil or lotion.

FOR THE PERSON GIVING THE MESSAGE

It is helpful to:

- A. Wear loose clothing.
- B. Have short fingernails.
- C. Let receiver know ahead of time;
 1. To remove jewelry for complete body massage.
 2. To say "stop" if an area is painful.
 3. To turn head to prevent stiff neck.
 4. To remain silent during massage.

5. To share which areas are in pain, or are sore or stiff.

6. To get up slowly at end and stretch.

It is also helpful to:

- D. Use a body stance of a triangle base; keep knees bent.
- E. Use all of body's weight, rather than just limbs.
- F. Vary speed, rhythm, pressure and mold hands to body.
- G. Use breath, color and visualization.
 1. Invite your family member or friend to breathe more slowly and from their diaphragm.
 2. Suggest they imagine your fingers as a paint brush with a warm color or your finger tips or visualize a ball of energized color traveling from toe tips to head crown.
 3. Describe a place which feels safe and comfortable where the person can go to be alone, but not be lonely.

USING TOUCH FOR HEALTH

An excellent way to begin or end a relaxation massage is to do a complete 14 muscle test/muscle balance with your friend. Muscle testing may also be used to determine which area of the body and which muscle needs work, and which direction to rub the muscle.

MESSAGE TO FIT YOUR OWN SITUATION

Share a portion of massage that "fits" for your family or friends. In my family of three, relaxation massage has been healthful and unifying, it also helps in communicating with my teenager. When arguments get tiring, 5 minutes on a foot, hand or shoulder rub have often bridged the generation gap.

In a society where our children are overloaded with messages that touch occurs mainly in connection with violence, sex or illness, nurturing touch can be offered as a healthy alternative in a family setting. In a society where pain is often

inflicted in the name of love, nurturing non-sexual touch or massage is a dignified option to violence.

Physical nurturing contact (touch) is a basic human right which needs to be available to people of any creed, sex, race, color or age. Nurturing, non-sexual touch is moral and essential for the development of our whole being and is a part of our human spirituality.

With a few moments of relaxation massage nurturing touch invites us to stop, slow down, calm ourselves and give ourselves permission to feel our feelings and trust someone else to care for us. It literally can get us in touch with that very special safe place inside our self. That place where we allow ourselves to be who we are - our inner self.

When we do this, we not only help ourselves, it rubs off on others! It conveys a feeling of respect and wholeness.

The above information is an excerpt from the video cassette booklet, "Massage for Everyone" authored by Sara Aeikens, M.S.

EXAMPLE OF MASSAGE:

Wake Up Message

1. Stretch, tense body tightly and relax.
2. Sit cross-legged, if possible, and put small pillow under buttocks.
3. Reach for ceiling stretch, and do Arm Activation - 4 ways.
4. Hand Massage – knuckling, thumb fans, spider push-ups, kneading, clam-ups, finger lace, twisting, bending, shaking, and dusting.

5. Belly Breathing and Nostril Breathing (alternate nostrils).
6. Head/Neck - Neck Rolls, 6 way Head Drop, Halfway Head Rotations.
7. Shoulder Rotations - forward, backward, each and both shoulders.
8. Lion's Roar and Energy Yawn.
9. Eye Exercises - 11 ways
10. Face Massage
 - A. Face Envelope
 - B. Forehead Ripple/Stretch, Temple Circles
 - C. Nose Resistive Stretch
 - D. Eyebrow, Eye sockets, Eyes, and Nose Trace, Temple Circles
 - E. Nose Press
 - F. Cheek contours - pressure points and plucking, Temple Circles
 - G. Lips and Chin Trace, Temple Circles
 - H. Inner sunshine with ears
 - I. EARS- Bony Ear Rub, Ear Clip, Ear Bend/Pull, Ear Feather Duster, Temple Circles
 - J. Jaw - knuckling, spider push-ups, jaw probe.
 - K. Neck - spider push-ups, Scalp-scraper (2 ways)
 - L. Shoulder - shoulder knead and Owl
 - M. Arm Meridian Trace
 - N. Body Meridian Trace
 - O. Upward Stretch

The above sequence may be adapted for sharing with someone else. ■