

Palpation: What Do You Feel When You Touch?

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Though many of us are in the "touch" for health realm, and we do indeed touch, many of us fail to recognize what we are feeling. The purpose of this workshop is to tune in to our sense of touch in order to name what we feel. Our workshop will consist of exercises that question what you have sensed. Our aim is for you to recognize and name your own sensations.

Exercises:

1. (a) Stand behind a partner. Work their shoulders. Notice, feel, sense, know, express.

As babies, we receive and trust the information that comes to us via all 5 senses.

If it smells awful – don't taste it.

If it tastes awful – spit it out.

If it feels awful – move away from it.

After learning all this, we spend the next 20 years or so trying to forget it all. Due to parental pressure, peer pressure, societies' pressure, and the lifestyles we develop, we confuse ourselves. We start to ignore our response to our senses.

We eat what doesn't smell or taste good. We breathe what doesn't smell good. We touch and forget to interpret what we touch. We look at things that don't look good and accept the view. We hear and listen to sounds that might dismay us if we hadn't turned off our hearing.

So, here we are, as adults, not knowing what we feel, most of the time, and unable to express what we feel all of the time!

1. (b) Switch partners. Work these shoulders. Notice, feel, sense, know, express.

What we **feel** is a very important part of our communication, in every aspect of the word, **feel**.

No two people feel the same, not to you, not to themselves. Very few people describe the same feeling the same way; very few people mean the same thing when they describe the same feeling; very few people feel the same feeling when they feel

the same person, or the same part of the same person.

I remember my first months at the Massage College I attended. I thought I had "good hands". After all, I had been working with them in electronics for over 7 years, and in life, for over 30 years.

I found that I could not feel anything in people's muscles. With time and practice, I came to trust the differences I found in people's muscles, but it was still confusing. Each person I worked on felt different, and within each person, their muscles felt different, which confused me.

As classes continued, we were expected to describe these differences. This proved impossible. Differences in temperature were relatively easy, but anything else seemed inconceivable.

Then, one day, we had a new massage instructor. She started our first class by telling us that she never wanted us to describe muscle states by using words like, "crunchy", "gritty", "fluffy" etc. I have been using these words ever since.

- 1 (c) Describe what you feel - as Givers and Receivers.

There are many books available that describe how to palpate joints, ligaments and tendons. (i.e. Hoppenfeld). I have yet to find a book that tells me how to feel, and how to describe what I feel.

2. Describe a pain. Describe a pleasure.

Give it a colour.

Give it a shape.

Give it a depth.

Give it a rating.

Give it a sound.

Give it a taste.

Give it a texture.

3. Rub your hands together. Feel your own energy as you move your hands together away from each other. Feel your partners energy. Describe the feeling.