

# Body Sense

summer 2016

## Massage is Healing

What Research Says About  
the Bodywork You Receive

Energy Medicine for  
Health and Well-Being

How Paying Attention  
Can Reduce Stress

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## EDITOR'S NOTE

DARREN BUFORD, EDITOR

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## Beyond “Touch Feels Good”

Massage offers such valuable benefits to so many individuals that it's possible to take it for granted. For many of us, the power of bodywork seems like a given or that it's simply understood that it yields positive results because it feels good or because you feel relief. “Of course massage helps with my low-back pain!” “Of course massage prepares me for my pre- and postsports event!”

So why is massage research important? For the answer to that question, I went to the source—Ruth Werner. Ruth is the past president of the Massage Therapy Foundation, an organization whose mission is to advance “the knowledge and practice of massage therapy by supporting scientific research, education,

and community service.” Ruth is also the author of several textbooks on pathology used worldwide for massage education.

### Q: Darren Buford

Why is research for massage and bodywork so important?

### A: Ruth Werner

A lot of massage and bodywork has evolved out of ancient traditions that build on our experience that touch feels good. It might seem redundant or unnecessary to do high-level research to confirm this basic truth. But research that looks carefully at massage therapy can help us understand *how* it works, and for whom, and what circumstances are likely to give the best results.

Research can help massage therapists be more effective and more accurate—if we know the evidence shows that massage for an hour once a week helps people with knee pain from osteoarthritis (and a study has indeed determined that this is the optimal dose), then we can make that claim and know that research backs it up.

Research allows us to question some traditions that have not served us well. For instance, we used to assume that massage would speed up the process of cancer development, so we were taught, “Massage and cancer don't go in the same sentence.” When some brave researchers challenged that assumption, we learned that massage

Body Sense Editor Darren Buford

therapy has many benefits to offer cancer patients, and many people find that their journey through this condition is made easier because they can receive appropriate, safe, educated massage in this context—something that would have been impossible without research.

Research can also help us avoid making mistakes or making false claims.

And finally, research helps massage therapists and bodywork practitioners build working relationships with other health-care providers; it is the language every person in the medical field uses. When we are able to integrate with your health-care team, you get the best possible outcomes massage therapy can offer.

We hope you enjoy this issue of *Body Sense* magazine dedicated to the value of massage therapy research.



## Body Sense

massage, bodywork & healthy living

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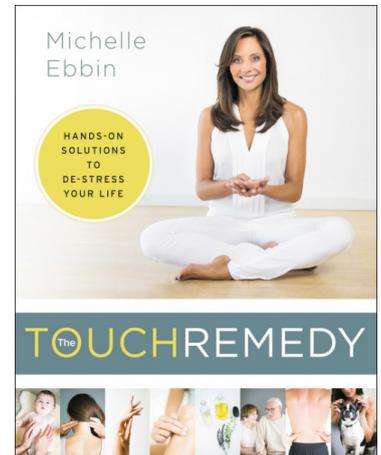


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### THE TOUCH REMEDY

This fresh approach to natural health draws on ancient wisdom and cutting-edge research to bring touch therapy solutions to every member of the family. Embracing time-tested techniques, including acupressure, craniosacral therapy, and reflexology, author Michelle Ebbin shares her invaluable insights and provides clear, quick, step-by-step remedies to relieve a range of stressors—from back pain and headache to anxiety. Available for \$24.99 at [www.harpercollins.com](http://www.harpercollins.com).



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### HEALTHY EATING DINNERWARE

Take the guesswork out of portion control with this stylish dinnerware from Livliga, based in Boulder, Colorado. Reminiscent of a French bistro, each piece of this Celebrate collection features etched illustrations of healthy foods and phrases that motivate users. Inspirations such as “Celebrate Good Food,” “Live Bold,” and “Sip in Gratitude” are inscribed onto each porcelain piece. No two dishes are alike in this 16-piece collection designed for a four-person setting. Available for \$198.95 at [www.livligahome.com](http://www.livligahome.com).



### MY HEART ROCKS

Imagine finding a perfectly shaped heart rock on the beach, while savoring the simple joys of walking by the water’s edge. Inspired by these wonders of nature, photographer Amy M. Dykens presents 135 beautiful images of heart rocks in their native environment along with her words of calm introspection and an appreciation of generosity and love. Perfect as a gift or for your personal inspiration, this text is available for \$24.99 from [www.schifferbooks.com](http://www.schifferbooks.com).

# Massage is Healing

What  
Research  
Says About  
the Benefits  
of Massage



**For thousands of years,** touch has been used as a therapeutic tool in communities around the globe. Why, then, do we need to conduct research to demonstrate that it works?

A primary reason for massage and bodywork research is to continue to scientifically verify all the good things therapists see happening anecdotally with their clients every day. With scientific validation comes greater acceptance by the medical community and a better understanding of the cost-effectiveness of this preventive care tool. **Ultimately, massage research helps practitioners better serve their clients. And when it comes to pain, massage research continues to show us healthy alternatives for pain management.**

#### **BODYWORK FOR PAIN REDUCTION**

Did you know that “chronic pain affects about 100 million adults in the United States, with an estimated annual cost of \$635 billion,” which includes both direct medical expenditures and loss of work productivity?<sup>1</sup> With that many people in pain, massage and bodywork must come to the forefront.

The reduction or relief of pain is one of the many benefits of massage. Add the effects hands-on therapies have on the immune system (your body’s defense, which can be weakened by pain) and the nervous system (which regulates digestion, sleep, and general outlook on life, and is also challenged when in pain), and massage is a clear recipe for a respite.

Documented research has been conducted on the efficacy of massage and bodywork for an array of pain conditions, including migraines, sports injuries, rheumatoid arthritis, postsurgical scars, and burn injuries. Let’s take a look at a few relevant findings for common pain challenges.

#### **Pain Management**

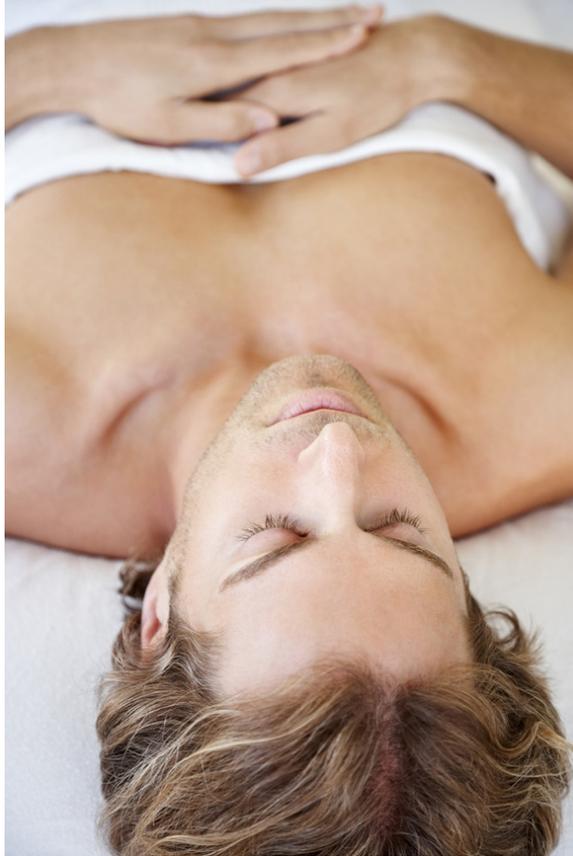
A study at the Flagstaff Medical Center in Flagstaff, Arizona, looked at 65 in-patients who chose to participate in a pain-management study that included documenting pain levels from medical, surgical, and obstetric units before and after treatments using a 0–10 analog pain scale. Patients received a varying number of massage sessions depending on the condition being addressed, with each session averaging 30 minutes in length. Swedish massage, acupressure, craniosacral therapy, cross-fiber myotherapy, and pressure points were the techniques applied. Pain levels were reduced from approximately a 5 on the pain scale to approximately a 2. As a result, researchers concluded that the “integration of massage therapy into the acute care setting creates overall positive results in the patient’s ability to deal with the challenging physical and psychological aspects of their health condition. The study demonstrated not only a significant reduction in pain levels, but also the interrelatedness of pain, relaxation, sleep, emotions, recovery, and finally, the healing process.”<sup>2</sup>

#### **Chronic Neck Pain**

In 2015, a study was conducted on 38 women with chronic neck pain to assess whether integrative muscle movement technique (IMMT) is an effective treatment option for improving cervical range of motion and associated pain. This study specifically



Learn more about the benefits of massage at [www.massagetherapy.com](http://www.massagetherapy.com).



If you are one of the millions experiencing pain today, be sure to consult with your therapist about the modalities that can best help you. ” ”

focused on comparing IMMT with Swedish massage. The women were divided into two groups. Both groups received two treatments per week over the course of four weeks, with half of the group receiving Swedish massage and the other half of the group receiving IMMT. Pain was measured before and after using a 0–10 analog pain scale, and cervical range of motion was also measured before and after the series of treatments.

The results of this study revealed that IMMT had a more positive therapeutic effect than Swedish massage alone and that cervical range of motion in all planes of movement had increased while pain had significantly decreased.<sup>3</sup>

### Low-Back Pain

In 2011, more than 400 patients with low-back pain received one-hour massage treatments once a week for 10 weeks. Three groups were formed: one group received structural massage, one group received relaxation massage, and one group received usual medical care without massage. At the end of 10 weeks, the participants who received massage reported greater ability to be active and perform activities of daily living, spent less time in bed, and used less medication than the group that received the usual medical care. They also showed measurable improvement in sleep patterns, which has emerged as a common benefit among many participants in hands-on research studies for all types of pain.<sup>4</sup>

### TALK TO YOUR THERAPIST

This is only a small sampling of current research, yet the impact is far reaching and significant. If you are one of the millions experiencing pain today, be sure to consult with your therapist about the modalities that can best help you. Massage can, one body at a time, reduce the unacceptable number of people who are in chronic pain and help them return to a thriving life. 

### Notes

1. Richard A. Deyo et al., “Report of the NIH Task Force on Research Standards for Chronic Low Back Pain,” *Journal of Pain* 15, no. 6 (2014): 569–85.
2. Rose Adams, Barb White, and Cynthia Beckett, “The Effects of Massage Therapy on Pain Management in the Acute Care Setting,” *International Journal of Therapeutic Massage & Bodywork* 3, no. 1 (2010): 4–11.
3. B. G. Rohe et al., “Experimental Integrative Muscular Movement Technique Enhances Cervical Range of Motion in Patients with Chronic Neck Pain: A Pilot Study,” *Journal of Alternative and Complementary Medicine* 21, no. 4 (April 2015): 223–8.
4. Daniel C. Cherkin et al., “A Comparison of the Effects of 2 Types of Massage and Usual Care on Chronic Low Back Pain: A Randomized, Controlled Trial,” *Annals of Internal Medicine* 155, no. 1 (July 2011): 1–9.

*Cindy Williams has served the massage profession as a practitioner, school administrator, instructor, curriculum developer, and mentor since 2000. She enjoys the challenge of blending structure with creative flow to provide balance in her classroom, bodywork practice, and life.*

## ASK THE EXPERTS



Massage Therapist/Educator,  
Kristin Coverly, LMT



### Q. Do pregnant women benefit from massage and bodywork? If so, what type of work is appropriate?

**A.** Pregnancy massage can be incredibly beneficial for moms-to-be! This unique massage modality can help reduce general physical discomfort, as well as pain in targeted areas, such as the low back and hips. It also helps decrease anxiety and promote better sleep. During the session, your massage therapist will use specific techniques and body positions on the table—like lying on your side—to ensure your and your baby's safety. When you're ready to try this incredible form of bodywork, be sure to choose a qualified therapist with training in prenatal massage.

### Q. What is hyperpigmentation, and how can I treat it?

**A.** In simplest terms, hyperpigmentation is the overproduction of melanin, and it's often visible as blotchy dark spots and splotchy, uneven skin tone. Ultraviolet rays from sun exposure are the most common melanocyte stimulant and also the biggest contributor to hyperpigmentation issues. Hormones, inflammation, and skin injuries can also cause hyperpigmentation.

Signs of hyperpigmentation include liver spots, melasma (splotches that occur around the mouth and cheeks), mottling (speckling of darker color), and freckles.

Properly addressing hyperpigmentation depends on the cause and involves a carefully planned program of topical skin treatment and lifestyle adjustments, all of which can be crafted by a skin care professional. In addition to doing so, the following are staples of home-care treatment for hyperpigmentation: avoiding sun and heat sources; reducing sources of inflammation, including picking pimples; using broad-spectrum sunscreen every day; and using a daily chemoexfoliant such as alpha hydroxy acids (AHAs).



Skin Care Educator/  
Product Developer/  
Therapist/Author,  
Mark Lees, PhD,  
MS, CIDESCO



# Embodied Awareness

## How Paying Attention Can Reduce Stress

By Amy Andrews McMaster

Most Americans have a long-distance relationship with their bodies. They pay the most attention when they are in pain or when something goes awry. If we try to reduce the disconnect between our minds and our bodies, however, we can reduce the stress in our lives and increase well-being instead.

The body constantly offers us valuable information in the form of sensations, feelings, and intuition. But we are so busy thinking and digesting all the stimulation outside our bodies that we habitually forget to go inward, to turn down the volume of the world around us, and to turn up the volume of the awareness within us. One of the best tools we have for managing and reducing stress is listening to our body.

Let's face it, stress happens. It's part of being human. In today's PADI (Pressure, Always On, Distraction, and Information Overload) culture, it requires effort and skill to take care of ourselves in ways that minimize stress, ensure we truly enjoy our precious free time, and enable us to make and maintain meaningful relationships with friends and family. When we experience stress—including acute stress such as

important work deadlines, being stuck in traffic, or suddenly slamming on the brakes to avoid an accident—our brains trigger the release of stress hormones into our bloodstream. After a stressful situation, it can take anywhere from half an hour to a couple of days to return to a normal resting state. Chronic, elevated levels of stress hormones can lead to serious issues. For example, too much cortisol can suppress the immune system, increase blood pressure, decrease libido, produce acne, contribute to obesity, and more.<sup>1</sup>

### LEARNING TO LISTEN

How can we reset our body and return to the desired resting state, free of stress hormones? Embodied awareness is the first step. Our body can give us signs right away that our

physiology has changed. Often, our heartbeat and breathing changes; we can feel heat in our body or sweaty palms. Eating and drinking patterns can change when we are stressed. We may feel the fight-or-flight response. Our body is our best ally. Learning to listen is a practice. An easy way to start is simply to slow down.

Meditation is one great way to slow down. But if that's not your thing, no worries. There are plenty of other ways to slow down, reset, and recharge your body and nervous system. Here are a few ideas: a saltwater bath, journaling, a peaceful walk engaging the five senses, gardening, a heartfelt talk with a friend who is a good listener, listening deeply to your favorite music, playing music or singing, hiking somewhere beautiful, or taking time to prepare a special meal. We can slow down just about anything we do so we are doing it more mindfully, with deliberate focus.

Take eating as an example. Many times we rush a meal or multitask while we eat. What if we slowed down and noticed, savored, and appreciated our meal, smelled the aroma, and noted the colors on the plate before even taking a bite? Explore simple ways to incorporate mindfulness and a sense of ease into your day.

By practicing embodied awareness when we are not stressed, we become better at detecting when stress arrives. When we acknowledge what is happening in our body, we can stop those stress hormones sooner. Movement, exercise, and drinking plenty of water are critical when we are stressed. Shake it off, literally. Shift the state in your body by interrupting the stress pattern so the chemicals stop being produced. Find a way to stop thinking about the stressful event; even thinking about it once it's over can continue the stream of stress hormones.

Movement, like dance, yoga, or tai chi, can help. Running or biking, as long as you can clear your mind while you do it, are beneficial. Play Frisbee, soccer, tennis, or basketball. If you have a family, get them moving with you. It will be great for everyone.

Of course, another helpful way to manage stress is with massage and bodywork. I have a massage therapist, a chiropractor, and an acupuncturist to help support my wellness. These bodyworkers are healers, as they support my body's natural ability to recover from the stress of being human.

**There are so many benefits. Bodywork helps me manage headaches, reduce muscle tension, and relieve stress. It is easy to feel the difference in my body and mind after a session of bodywork. I think of it as a wise investment in my health.**

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*Amy Andrews McMaster offers integrated mindfulness programs through Conscious Time ([www.conscioustime.com](http://www.conscioustime.com)). She is dedicated to helping people reduce stress, improve relationships, and live empowered lives.*

## CHECKING IN TO WELLNESS

Some people are good at treating their body like a temple, but most of us need practice. We only receive one body in this lifetime. We don't need to wait until we are stressed or in pain to take care of it. Instead, we can learn to check in with, rather than check out of, our bodies. Increase the body's awareness by slowing down, moving, exercising, and including bodywork in your health-care plan. Cheers to wellness! 

### Note

1. Sarah Klein, "Adrenaline, Cortisol, Norepinephrine: The Three Major Stress Hormones, Explained," accessed June 2016, [www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/04/19/adrenaline-cortisol-stress-hormones\\_n\\_3112800.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/04/19/adrenaline-cortisol-stress-hormones_n_3112800.html).

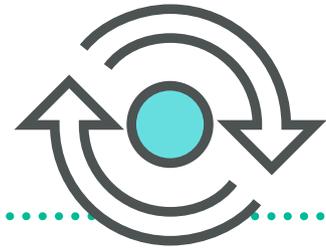


# Energy Medicine for Health and Well-Being

By Karin Ogren

Each one of us is a dynamic and beautiful tapestry of interwoven energy. This energy flows through and around our bodies, impacting our health and well-being, as well as connecting us to all of life. It goes by varying names such as *Life Source*, *prana*, *chi*, *Higher Power*, or *Universal Energy*. This is a basic tenet of all energy medicine modalities, whether Healing Touch, medical qigong, reiki, polarity therapy, Zero Balancing, or others.





## CASE STUDY #1

*Rebecca,\* a serious runner, came to see me for sciatic pain that prevented her from running or even touching her toes—something she could do easily before being injured. She rested on the treatment table while I lightly placed my hands on her body, holding them in various positions to balance her energy for about 30 minutes. After one session with specific focus given to her lower back, she was able to bend over 4–5 inches farther than at the beginning of the session and touch her toes without pain.*

## CASE STUDY #2

*Kaitlyn\* requested Healing Touch before and after her wisdom teeth were extracted. When she returned home from the surgery, I gently placed my hands on her cheeks and also brushed my hands in a sweeping motion a few inches above her face to clear energetic congestion. The work reduced her pain to a zero (representing no pain) from a 5 on a pain scale (with 10 being highest) in a matter of minutes. She also experienced no swelling.*

How are results like this possible? Energy medicine. As Albert Szent-Györgyi, winner of the Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine for his work in discovering vitamin C, said, “In every culture and in every medical tradition before ours, healing was accomplished by moving energy.” With

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Healing Touch—[www.healingtouchprogram.com](http://www.healingtouchprogram.com)

American Polarity Therapy Association—[www.polaritytherapy.org](http://www.polaritytherapy.org)

The International Center for Reiki Training—[www.reiki.org/faq/whatisreiki.html](http://www.reiki.org/faq/whatisreiki.html)

Zero Balancing—[www.zerobalancing.com](http://www.zerobalancing.com)

To find a practitioner near you, visit [www.massagetherapy.com](http://www.massagetherapy.com) and search by modality in the To Find a Practitioner box.

training, we can influence our own or others’ energy systems in positive ways.

## BODY, MIND, AND SPIRIT

The human energy system is comprised of energy centers (*chakras*), energy fields (*auras*), and meridians (*energy channels*). Our energy systems are influenced by the environment and our own thoughts, emotions, and actions, as well as the people around us.<sup>1</sup> When energy becomes congested, or blocked, in any of these parts of the system, we experience “dis-ease.” This can look like physical disease or pain, emotional reactivity, mental cloudiness, or spiritual turmoil. In other words, a disruption in our energy system can affect our whole being—body, mind, and spirit. Imagine a stream flowing through the forest. When it flows unobstructed, it is a source of power and energy. But if

it becomes blocked, it can form a stagnant pool, lose its strength, and even start breeding mosquitoes that carry disease.

When our energy is balanced and flowing, we feel grounded, calm, vitalized, and ready to handle whatever life throws our way. This balanced energetic state encourages self-healing. In fact, another tenet of energy medicine is that all healing is self-healing. Although a doctor may stitch up a deep cut on your arm, it is your own body that heals you, building new tissue to replace that which was damaged. You may use other tools to support the process, such as prescriptions, ointments, or other remedies, but the actual healing occurs from within the body itself. This is where energy medicine plays its most vital role—encouraging the natural healing ability of the body, mind, and spirit.



**Energy medicine integrates well with other health and wellness modalities such as massage, physical therapy, hospice work, social work, nursing, and more.**

These claims of healing may sound outlandish or overinflated, but consider this: the modality Healing Touch, for example, comes out of the nursing world and, as such, places a high value on evidence-based research. Quantitative and qualitative research suggests that Healing Touch:

- Eases the effects of trauma and posttraumatic stress disorder.
- Facilitates wound healing.
- Improves immune function in cancer patients.
- Improves sleep.
- Reduces anxiety, tension, and stress; fatigue; and pain.
- Reduces length of hospital stays.
- Supports illness prevention and promotes health.

These benefits do not magically happen. Skilled practitioners create the healing environment through their own “being.” They are grounded, work to foster a connection with a client, and exude a sense of unconditional love and acceptance. **Energy medicine is not so much about where a practitioner places her hands, but about the healing intention behind the hand placements. This means the client-practitioner relationship is of paramount importance and finding a qualified practitioner is essential.**

## HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

To quote dance pioneer Martha Graham, “The body says what words cannot.” Because the human energy system interfaces with



all aspects of our being, Healing Touch practitioners start by assessing the client’s physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual well-being. Then, practitioners move on to assessing the energy system itself. This is done by “scanning” with their hands above the body to determine areas of

energetic blockage, congestion, or depletion. They may also use a pendulum to assess the health of the energy centers. This assessment is then documented on an intake form.

Then, the work of moving and balancing the client’s energy begins. Energy healers may use light touch or place their hands above the body for various techniques that open, clear, and balance the energy system. The end goal is energy flowing freely throughout the system. A postassessment determines the effectiveness of the techniques and guides the next steps.

The more we learn about energy medicine and/or experience the results, the more we realize that energy is integral to our bodies and, therefore, is integral to our health and well-being. As such, energy medicine belongs side by side with traditional medical practices and other wellness modalities. <sup>15</sup>

*\*Names were changed to protect clients’ privacy.*

## Note

1. Cynthia Hutchison et al., *Healing Touch Workbook* (Boulder, CO: Sounds True, 2013).

*Karin Ogren is a Healing Touch Certified Practitioner.*

## Massage Soothes Babies Born with Birth Defects from Zika Virus

Mothers of babies born in Brazil with microcephaly are turning to alternative means of treatment for relief for their children, who are typically very sensitive to stimulus and are highly irritable. (Microcephaly is a birth defect thought to be linked to the Zika virus.)

A parental therapy group called Room to be a Mother is providing free workshops in which they teach natural techniques to soothe infants. **The techniques include a traditional rhythmic Indian massage for the babies**, a sling that keeps them tightly held to their mother's chest for comfort, and the use of a specially shaped bucket for warm baths meant to mimic the womb.

Therapist Rozely Fontoura says massage therapy is particularly helpful for the babies. "The production of endorphins and the reduction of cortisol helps a lot," she says. Read more at <http://fxn.ws/1M3qQCR>.

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