The Guide to Self-Care for Massage Therapists: Connect with Yourself & Your Health
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Dietary supplements can nourish and protect you, helping your mind and body adjust to the repeated, daily stresses of your work as a massage therapist.

**RHODIOLA ROSEA,** also known as golden root, has been used as a traditional medicine for centuries. In Russia, Scandinavia and Asian countries, its roots have been used to increase physical endurance, work capacity and productivity, and to treat fatigue and depression. Rhodiola rosea also increases mental performance, especially concentration, and prevents stress-induced burnout, a claim supported by research including “Rhodiola rosea for mental and physical fatigue in nursing students: a randomized controlled trial,” published by *PLOS ONE* in 2014.

Rhodiola rosea exerts these effects by modulating cortisol, one of the adrenal hormones released during the stress response. Beyond preventing fatigue and increasing physical and mental energy, Rhodiola rosea also has cardioprotective benefits, as well as hepatoprotective and anticancer properties.

**ASHWAGANDHA** (*Withania somnifera*) has roots in ayurvedic medicine, where it is used to prolong life, stimulate the mind and enhance vigor. Ashwagandha is calming, effective at addressing anxiety, stress-induced sleep problems and fatigue. The authors of review studies on ashwagandha published in 2014 in the *Journal of Alternative and Complementary Medicine* wrote, “All five studies concluded that [withania somnifera] intervention resulted in greater score improvements (significantly in most cases) than placebo in outcomes on anxiety or stress scales.” Additionally, ashwagandha is high in iron and helps relieve perimenopausal symptoms, benefits thyroid function, and enhances endocrine function.

**PANAX GINSENG** has been used as a tonic in traditional Chinese medicine for nearly 4,000 years. In China, Japan and Korea, people use ginseng root to rejuvenate and revitalize the body and...
mind, and to increase strength and vigor. Ancient Chinese medicine texts describe ginseng as having the ability to “remove toxic substances, brighten the eyes, open the heart and improve thought.”

For massage therapists, who may find themselves on their feet most days, Panax ginseng can enhance circulation and promote the free flow of blood. It also normalizes immune function, whether your system is depleted from long days or hypersensitive because of seasonal allergies.

**MAGNESIUM** works with actin and myosin, proteins found in muscle, to lengthen or relax muscle fibers. Deficiency in magnesium directly affects muscles’ ability to contract and relax properly. Most Americans don’t consume enough magnesium through diet, as many of us don’t eat nearly the amount of fresh veggies and fruits we should; and magnesium is also stripped from food during processing, especially from refined grains.

**NATURAL EGGSHELL MEMBRANE** neatly packages the building blocks of healthy joints: collagen, hyaluronic acid, amino acids, proteins and glycosaminoglycans such as glucosamine and chondroitin. Not only does it have anti-inflammatory properties, natural eggshell membrane begins relieving aches and pains fast—in as little as 10 days—and the 500-milligram dose is small and usually contained in one daily capsule.

Supplements can’t take the place of healthy diet and exercise, but they can provide very specific support for specific issues. Consider using supplements as part of your daily self-care to preserve much-needed balance and create a foundation of health.

Stacey Littlefield is product formulator and research director at Redd Remedies (reddremedies.com), a company that specializes in herbal formulas focused on delivering symptomatic relief today and core issue balance for a healthy tomorrow.
Several essential oils have antibacterial or antiviral properties, including eucalyptus, laurel leaf, lavender, tea tree, sweet orange, Siberian fir and more. Here are some easy ways to use them every day to help you stay healthy.

DIFFUSION: Add 5 to 8 drops of essential oil to 1 cup of water in a diffuser and run for 30 minutes, two to three times a day, to keep your environment healthy and aromatic.

SURFACE SPRAY: Add 60 drops of essential oil, 1/4 cup white vinegar, and water to a 32-ounce spray bottle with a powerful nozzle. Use to wipe down frequently touched surfaces, such as doorknobs and massage equipment. Note: Do not spray near animals or wood furniture due to the strength of the oils.

NATURAL HAND SANITIZER: Add 24 drops of essential oil to 4 ounces organic aloe vera gel. Pour into a pump bottle.

INHALER: Buy an empty nasal inhaler and add essential oils—10 to 15 drops to the wick—to boost immunity or knock out a cold in its early stages. No carrier oil is needed. Keep in your purse or pocket for aromatherapy on the go.

ANTIBACTERIAL HAND SOAP: Add 30 drops of essential oil to 4 ounces organic castile soap in a pump bottle.

Liz Fulcher, R.A. (aromaticwisdominstitute.com), brings 24 years of experience, research and education to her work as a clinical aromatherapist and essential oil educator. She is the Pennsylvania regional director for the National Association for Holistic Aromatherapy.
Mini-Meals on the Run

by Nancy Berkoff, R.D., Ed.D., C.C.E.

Eating several small meals throughout the day can be healthier for your digestive system than eating three large ones, and may help keep blood sugar and energy levels more consistent—all good news when you work a massage therapist's schedule.

Read the labels

Pack several snacks for your day and treat each as a mini-meal, counting it toward your daily total food intake. Select snacks containing decent amounts of vitamins, minerals and fiber; limited calories from fat—especially saturated fat and cholesterol; and low levels of sodium, artificial colors, flavorings and preservatives.

Examples of such snack foods include fresh and dried fruits and vegetables; whole-grain crackers; unsalted or low-salt pretzels; low-fat baked potato and vegetable chips; low-fat dips such as salsa or hummus; soy, coconut milk or dairy yogurt; baked white and sweet potatoes; and whole-grain bread products. These foods are high in the good stuff such as fiber and vitamins, and low in the bad stuff such as saturated fat and salt.

Make your own

At dinnertime, think ahead and bake an extra white or sweet potato; pop extra popcorn; or thinly slice veggies, such as beets or carrots, and bake them into homemade veggie chips. Take advantage of seasonal fresh or dried fruit, cold cereal and nuts to create your own snack mix.

Quick picks

Look for prepackaged snack items that list no cholesterol or saturated fats, and less than 3 percent of daily values for fat on their nutrition labels. You'll probably find ingredients such as olive oil, nut butters, canola oil, safflower oil, sesame seeds, ground nuts... continued>>
and sunflower oil on lower-fat, healthier foods.

Sodium and preservatives are a bit difficult to avoid with prepared snacks, so sample and select nutrition bars, chips and granola that both suit your taste and keep down the amount of sodium (salt, soy sauce, hydrolyzed yeast or MSG) and preservatives.

Examples of healthy snacks purchased on the go are brown rice cakes with a small container of salsa, guacamole or hummus; ready-to-eat edamame; blue tortilla chips or whole-grain pretzels with a small container of soy yogurt or nut butter; dried fruit mixes; coconut water; fruit leather; and unsweetened applesauce.

TIME WELL SPENT
Eating healthy, especially when time is limited, such as between massage sessions, takes planning—however, this is time well-spent to ensure you provide yourself the best possible nutritional support, which helps maximize and maintain physical and emotional well-being, sharpen the senses, and encourage bone and muscle strength. •

Nancy Berkoff, R.D., Ed.D., C.C.E., is a food technologist, registered dietitian and certified chef. She divides her time between food writing, consulting to the food industry and consumers, and food, nutrition and culinary instruction. She is a freelance editor for the Vegetarian Resource Group (vrg.org).

POP ON
Pop and bag your own seasoned popcorn.

Each recipe makes enough to season about 4 cups:
• Red Hot Chili Popcorn: 2 tablespoons chili powder, 1 teaspoon red pepper flakes, 1/2 teaspoon garlic powder.
• Sweet Spice Popcorn: 2 tablespoons ground cinnamon; 1 teaspoon ground ginger; 2 teaspoons sweetener, such as coconut crystals; 1/2 teaspoon ground nutmeg.
• Curry Popcorn: 2 tablespoons curry powder, 1 teaspoon ground cumin, 1/4 teaspoon dry mustard.
• Pizza Popcorn: 2 tablespoons garlic powder, 1 teaspoon red pepper flakes, 1 teaspoon dried basil, 1 teaspoon dried oregano.
• Power Punch Popcorn: 2 tablespoons nutritional yeast, 2 teaspoons dried parsley, 1 teaspoon onion powder.
1. HANDS MOVE, BODY MOVES.
Get your entire body moving with every motion; visualize a wave of energy and power starting at your feet and moving through your whole body, all the way to your hands. When this is done, effort and strain is absorbed by your entire body, instead of just at the point of contact. This reduces strain on your hands and will improve the quality of your treatment. When you use whole-body movements, clients will notice a difference and experience a more powerful, flowing treatment.

2. KNOW YOUR LINE OF DRIVE.
Analyze where your line of force is going, and use the mass of your body to support that direction. Imagine hitting a nail with a hammer. The best
line of drive is when the hammer strikes the nail parallel to its shank. Know where your force is going, and place your body in the line of that force. This is especially important for therapists who use a lot of pressure.

3. GET CLOSE TO THE POINT OF CONTACT TO IMPROVE YOUR LEVERAGE AND HELP YOU WORK WITH LESS EFFORT. There will be a mechanical advantage if your body mass is close to the point of contact. Practice this when sitting at the head or foot of the table. Make sure either the head or feet are brought to the very edge of the table.

4. FLEX AND EXTEND YOUR SPINE. Think of yourself as a coiling-and-uncoiling machine. This habit can be used throughout your entire session and with every technique, and can be done sitting or standing, incorporated with your breath cycle.

   On inhalation, flex, or coil, your spine; on exhalation, extend and uncoil. When you deliver a stroke while embodying this concept, the up-and-down movement will instantly utilize more power and keep you feeling more energized, compared to just moving forward with a stiff spine.

5. BE AWARE OF YOUR BREATH. On inhalation, expansion takes place in our chest and rib cage, and our spine extends as

On inhalation, expansion takes place in our chest and rib cage, and our spine extends as our torso elevates.

our torso elevates. When you breathe in, visualize movement and expansion occurring everywhere. On exhalation, more movement occurs as the body returns and collapses back to the starting position. Inhale as you coil and flex your torso; exhale, uncoil and extend into the point of contact. This mindful breathing will enhance your treatment and improve everything you do in life.

David Allan, D.C. (dagiit.com), is an international educator with more than 30 years’ experience as a master bodyworker, movement therapist, embodiment therapist and chiropractor.
A few years ago, a student enrolled in my tai chi class with the intention of learning tai chi to remedy her stress-induced insomnia. “Jennifer” was a high-powered businesswoman who was very attached to achieving her goals. Her hard-charging style worked well for her in the business world, although with some cost to her health and wellness.

She asked me many pointed questions about how tai chi could help her overcome her chronic sleep problem. She was understandably very focused on the distress associated with her sleeplessness. My response to her urgent situation was to gently direct her back to practicing the slow, repetitive movements of tai chi with focused awareness.

In time, she mastered the art of slowing down, which had a positive impact on her sleep.

Jennifer’s story reflects the situation of many people who are swept up into the fast pace of modern society: We live in a hyper-aroused culture that prides itself on speed, with an emphasis on rapid results and achieving goals as fast as possible.

Of course, there are clear benefits to being goal-oriented. The question is: Are your goals driving you toward greater health and wellness, or are your goals driving you into stress, distraction and other impediments to your health and wellness?

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STOP SIGNS

Dysregulation—physical and emotional instability—can occur when your ability to create a sense of stability becomes disrupted. During such times, you may notice a variety of signs from your mind and body that tell you where you’re going. When those signs frequently flash upon potentially hazardous conditions such as stress, pain, worry, anxiety, distraction, insomnia or tension, it is time to pay attention to the one sign that many individuals are not used to heeding: STOP.

The ancient Chinese practices of tai chi and qi gong provide a vehicle for slowing down and ultimately stopping the habitual patterns that take you for a ride that can be out of balance or even out of control.

Have you ever been in the presence of someone who was rude or insulting? To this type of person, a dysregulated reaction might look like anger expressed in the form of “Now let me tell you a thing or two!” Such a reaction is likely to result in an escalation of stress that leads to more dysregulation.

The practice of mindful movement can train you to respond to stressful situations with intention and without reactivity, which is a sign of self-regulation.

GO SLOW

Although tai chi can be formally classified as a martial art and qi gong as a method of Traditional Chinese Medicine to balance energy, both practices can also be regarded as forms of mindful movement.

Mindful, or meditative, movement is a form of exercise incorporating slow, repetitive movements, as well as a focus on the body and breath, with the intention of deep relaxation. (This definition comes from “Meditative movement as a category of exercise: Implications for research,” published in the Journal of Physical Activity and Health in 2009.)

Present-centered awareness is what makes movement mindful. While it’s normal for the mind to wander away from the present, mindful movement is a method of training your mind to come back to the present while enjoying the benefits of exercise. The practice of mindful movement attunes you to the state of your mind and body in everyday situations.

For example, this practice can train you to easily sense the tension in your shoulders as you wait in a long line to purchase your groceries. That can be an opportunity to move and breathe slowly, relax and pay attention to the present moment without getting caught up in your stories and judgments about the present moment.

The health benefits of mindful movement include increased cardiopulmonary fitness, reduction of anxiety and depression, lowered blood pressure, improved bone health and balance,
decreased cortisol (stress hormone) levels, and enhanced immune system functioning, according to R. Jahnke, et al., in “A Comprehensive Review of Health Benefits of Qigong and Tai Chi,” published in the American Journal of Health Promotion in 2010.

SELF-REGULATION
Over time, the practice of mindful movement trains the mind and body to respond to challenging people and situations with equanimity by being relaxed, aware and stable, despite the nature of the external conditions you’re faced with.

One classic teaching from tai chi is “soft overcomes hard.” Being soft is not about being weak or passive.

If you harden in the face of stress, you will create additional stress, which can actually weaken your resilience to handle the common stressors of everyday life. The ability to relax your body, be present, and flexibly adapt to challenging situations are characteristics of self-regulation.

THERAPEUTIC PRESENCE
As every massage therapist knows, slowing down and relaxing are necessary for healing to occur. You can support the healing process of your clients by slowing down, relaxing, paying attention to the body and breath, and staying aware of what’s happening in the present moment.

When the therapist is relaxed, centered, calm and present, the client is more likely to resonantly feel the same. By being mindful, your therapeutic presence is enhanced. As the practice of massage therapy involves movement, massage therapy can be regarded as a form of mindful movement when the practitioner is fully present.

SELF-CARE
Mindful movement trains you to deeply relax, move and breathe slowly, calm your mind, and fully attend to the present moment. More than an isolated technique of stress management, it’s a powerful self-care skill that can become integrated into everyday life to support your health, wellness and professional development. Mindful movement is a way of cultivating peacefulness, joy, and presence in relation to self, others and the world.

Larry Cammarata, Ph.D., is a licensed psychologist and instructor of qi gong and tai chi. Through his company, Mindfulness Travels (mindfulness Travels.com), he provides continuing education training to massage therapists and psychotherapists. His work on mindfulness and mindful movement has been presented at international conferences and retreats.
As therapists, we see the result of tensional imbalance every day with our clients. They come to us to open up their locked tissues and help them to relax. While we are working with our clients, leaning over our tables day after day, we create tensional imbalance in our own bodies. The torso, the front of the upper body—especially *pectoralis* major and minor—and the belly, become short and tight over time. The back and posterior shoulders, generally speaking, become long, tight and weak. In the arms, often the biceps become short and tight, while the triceps become long and weak. The wrist flexors and extensors become dysfunctional as we hold our wrists in an extended position and then load our weight on it, using the heel of the hand for the

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**6 WAYS TO ROLL AWAY PAIN & TIGHTNESS**

BY CAT MATLOCK, L.M.B.T., R.Y.T.

Pain in the body is always a result of some kind of imbalance. This imbalance can be due to disease, injury, structural limitation, or muscular and fascial tension. When you experience pain in your body, your body is trying to tell you something is wrong, out of balance or at risk of injury.
pressure of the strokes. Even as we try to keep our backs straight, we still lean over a table, putting our erector bundles under constant strain.

Add this all together, and you’ve got a lot of therapists working with chronic tension and often wrist, shoulder and back pain. This is why self-care is so critically important in our profession.

Enter self-massage—with therapy balls and foam rollers—and effective stretching techniques to restore balance. Studies are indicating that the use of foam rollers and therapeutic rolling with balls increases flexibility and range of motion, and decreases pain faster than stretching alone.

**BREATHE AND BRAIN**

It is helpful to recognize that tension in our bodies is also a result of stress in our modern lives. Chronic pain is stressful. Our lives, our busy-ness, driving and traffic and work all add stress to our lives.

Unfortunately, if we are under chronic stress, as most of us are, it means we regularly engage the sympathetic nervous system—fight, flight or freeze—which feeds muscular tension. Using the breath as a bridge into the nervous system to shift into parasympathetic mode—rest, digest and heal—is invaluable in reducing muscular tension.

As you roll around on your foam roller and balls, you will want to use long, deep breaths; breathe into your belly with diaphragmatic breathing; and sink your body on the exhale to foster a shift in the nervous system.

**BEGIN WITH MOVEMENT**

I recommend starting with some movement of the parts of the body you will be rolling out. Begin with standing up and rolling your shoulders up and down while taking some deep, sighing breaths. Breathe in and lift your shoulders up to your ears, breathe out with a sigh and drop shoulders away from the ears. Do this several times. Then swing your arms around in big circles and in both directions. Next spend a minute or so just shaking your arms and hands in the air.

**GET ON THE BALL**

The first thing you will need is a ball, or a few balls. I like to have an assortment of balls available, as some areas respond better to a softer ball and some areas need a smaller and firmer ball to get into the deeper layers, especially in the forearms. A few good balls to have are a tennis ball; a toy play ball with air inside that is about 4 inches in diameter and has some give to it; and a ball about the size of a golf ball, but softer. A handball works great for this size; a super bouncy ball can work, too.

You can do an Internet search for therapeutic and physical-therapy balls as well, rather than gathering sports balls.

**BREATHE INTO THE BELLY**

Stand and breathe, letting your belly get really big on the inhale and softening on the exhale. Do this four times. You will return to this breath as you roll out your tissues.

Roll around on the tissue for about a minute to loosen the fascia, then hold for a couple of breaths on tender

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Studies are indicating that the use of foam rollers and therapeutic rolling with balls increases flexibility and range of motion, and decreases pain faster than stretching alone.
spots to release the trigger points in the muscles. Step closer to the wall for more pressure, and farther away from the wall for less pressure. If you feel like you are bruising yourself, back off and use a softer ball. My motto is, “No pain ... no pain!”

Don’t try to get every single tender point. When you begin, you will be surprised at how many tender points there are. Just do a few in any given area so you’re not sore the next day. Remember to breathe deeply and keep relaxing as much as possible. Be kind to your body. Err on the side of too little pressure.

Following is a short practice to release the chest, shoulders, upper back, and wrist flexors and extensors to help you care for yourself and keep you doing the work you love.

1. ROLL THE PECTORALIS MAJOR AND MINOR. Releasing the pecs should come first and is critical to releasing the upper back and shoulders. Our pectorals tend to be very tight, so use the softest ball you have at first. Using your larger air-filled toy ball, step up to a wall and place the ball between your chest and the wall. Place the ball at the top of the pecs just under the collarbone. Rock your body side to side, rolling the upper pecs. Roll around a while, then find some tender spots, just one or two, and pause, sink your body and relax, take a couple of breaths, release and move on.

Now move the ball lower an inch or two and repeat the process. You will roll side to side for about a minute, find a tender spot or two, sink in, breathe deeply, then move on.

As you get to the central area of one side of the chest, you will find you are going over what feels like a speed bump. This is pectoralis minor. As you find this typically tender muscle, carefully sink into the tenderness there, breathe, then release.

Now turn your body so that the ball can work into the front of the armpit, the intersection of the chest and anterior shoulder. You can roll or pin and stretch; sink into a spot and then do some arm movement while pinning the spot under the ball.

2. ROLL THE UPPER ARMS. Using a smaller, firmer ball, begin to roll down the biceps and triceps. Some spots will be very tender.

3. ROLL THE FOREARMS. To roll the wrist extensors, place your hand along the outer thigh and trap a small ball between your forearm and the wall, halfway between elbow and wrist. Lean in and bend your knees up and down to roll the ball up and down. You will typically find very tender spots in the upper third of the forearm near the elbow.

To roll the wrist flexors, you can place your hand behind your back and trap the ball between your arm and the wall. Then rock side to side for your rolling. Again you will find most of the tender trigger points in the upper third of the forearm closer to the elbow. Find, pause, sink, breathe, release.

4. ROLL BETWEEN THE SHOULDER BLADES. With a tennis or similar ball, turn your back to the wall, then drop the ball between the shoulder and the spine near the bottom corner of the shoulder blade. Bend and straighten...
your knees to glide the ball up and down. You are treating the trapezius, rhomboids, and even some erector muscle tissue. The middle trapezius will have tender spots on the central line between the spine and the scapula. The rhomboids will hold their spots closer to the scapula. Be gentle in this area. It’s often stretched out long and tends to be very sensitive.

5. ROLL THE UPPER TRAPEZIUS AND LEVATOR SCAPULAE. Roll the ball up to the lower attachment area of levator scapulae. You will have to arch your body forward to angle your body so that you can get into this area. Tilt your body slightly toward the side that you are rolling. Rock side to side, bend and straighten the knees, and roll the ball all around this upper area of the shoulder, above the shoulder blade. Work across the top and out toward the outer upper corner of the scapula to get all along the top of the upper trapezius.

6. STRETCH IT OUT. Once you have done the rolling work, you will want to stretch. Place your hand on the wall behind you and turn away from the wall, pressing your hand into the wall, and stretch the pecs. Do some shoulder shrugs and circle your arms as in the beginning of the practice. Cross your right arm over the front of your body and pull across to stretch the rhomboids and middle trapezius.

   Face the wall and bring your palm to the wall at shoulder height, then slide your hand down the wall to increase the stretch in the wrist flexors. Flip your hand over and place the back of the hand to the wall, gliding the hand up the wall to increase the stretch in the wrist extensors.

   Shake out your hands and arms for a full minute. Take some deep breaths.

BE YOUR BEST

Sometimes stretching a tight area can make it worse—but just a little bit of targeted rolling and stretching each day will keep you feeling good so you can be the best massage therapist possible.

Cat Matlock, L.M.B.T., R.Y.T. (catmatlock.com) has been a trigger-point therapist specializing in chronic pain since 1993. She instructs in anatomy and kinesiology, and offers continuing education for massage therapists in trigger-point therapy and self-care with therapeutic rolling. She runs a yoga studio in Asheville, North Carolina, where she offers group rolling classes. Check out her new YouTube channel with rolling videos.
THE ART AND SCIENCE OF KINESIOLOGY TAPING

BY STACEY THOMAS

To complement the article “Expert Advice: How can I add kinesiology taping to my massage sessions?” in the July 2014 issue of MASSAGE Magazine. Summary: Kinesiology tape has many benefits and potential uses in a massage therapy practice. The author discusses how the tape works, the effects it produces and contraindications for use.

It was difficult to believe all the colors that converged in rainbow hues on the back of my client’s leg. It was as if a box of crayons had been strategically melted to form a Picasso interpretation of a high hamstring pull. She was a highly competitive athlete in my gym who had sustained what she thought was a minor muscle strain over the weekend during sprint training. On Monday morning, she stood in my office with a look of desperation and pain on her

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face—and one gnarly bruise spanning the back of her thigh.

Due to the obvious acuteness of her injury, my immediate treatment plan was to facilitate pain reduction and increase blood and lymph flow to the area by way of decompression, without applying any type of manual therapy. I reached for kinesiology tape.

My client wanted the pink tape with black skulls to adorn her battle scar. I happily obliged with a finger-taping pattern that would aid in increasing circulation and removing cellular waste products from the area. In a few days, my client came back with a much lighter bruise than the crayon-like meltdown she had been sporting before. The lifting effect of the tape had increased fluid flow and acted as a decompression agent, resulting in faded channels within the bruise. Her pain had diminished and she was now ready for more direct manual treatment therapy.

As a licensed massage therapist with a background in strength, conditioning and biomechanics, and with a focus in athletic performance, I see this sort of presentation commonly. Over the last 17 years in practice, 10 of those spent as a licensed massage therapist, my continued education has been largely in understanding the movement and modalities that best serve this population. While I stock many tools in my toolbox, I consistently reach for kinesiology tape. Whether I use myofascial release techniques, Active Release Technique, active isolated stretching or neurokinetic therapy, kinesiology tape complements, reinforces and in many ways strengthens my work.

ART AND SCIENCE

Kinesiology taping has been around for more than 35 years. Chiropractors, physical therapists, athletic trainers and massage therapists have used it for decades, and for many good reasons—all of which apply to the realm of massage therapy.

Kinesiology tape has been shown to reduce pain; positively affect fluid mechanics; improve posture and muscle function; speed recovery; and improve sporting performance.

Kinesiology tape has been shown to reduce pain; positively affect fluid mechanics; improve posture and muscle function; speed recovery; and improve sporting performance. That's a giant basket of good reasons, if you ask me. Today, you'd be hard-pressed not to see the colorful, cool-looking tape on amateur and pro athletes in various sports, as well as folks leaving physical therapy appointments at which they've been treated for common ailments such as knee replacements, shoulder injuries and low back pain.

Not all tape nor taping education programs are equal, however. There are many brands: RockTape, Spider Tech, and Kinesio Tape, among others, and a few schools of thought on how to apply it. Thanks to some forward-thinking folks, the evolution of application and successful client outcomes have led to a more global and more effective method of taping.
Pain is not the only player in the game of dysfunction. Those of us who apply tape in our practice are also able to invoke positive changes in biomechanics, performance, posture, awareness and neuropathies. If you’ve read Anatomy Trains by Thomas Myers, or Movement by Gray Cook, you understand the importance of visualizing movement patterns and treatment along the kinetic chain.

Once a breakdown is identified in a movement pattern, tape can be applied to facilitate awareness and better biomechanics. This is contrary to the old method of taping muscles or joints in isolation. Nothing about the human form is static or isolated when it comes to function. Our client population is much better served when our methods of healing are dynamic. The ability to couple knowledge of movement with an effective toolbox of treatment modalities will set you apart from other providers.

Tape movement, not muscles. This is brilliantly simple and enormously effective. This ideology has resonated with me from the very moment it was taught during my education in taping, and it has proven itself every time.

Why tape? And, more importantly, how can tape benefit our work as massage therapists and benefit our clients? If you’re in the field of manual therapy, you already have a grasp on the benefits, the whys, and the how-tos of moving tissues, fluids and fascia, while increasing range of motion. The power of touch is remarkable. That’s why we do it. But how many times have your clients left your office and said, “I felt great for a while, but the pain came back”?

If you understand the role of stability, synergists and compensation patterns, you understand that a returning symptom points to the fact that the site of pain isn’t necessarily the root of the issue and other contributing factors need to be addressed. Once these underlying issues are discovered, kinesiology tape can reinforce therapies to more properly address not only the site of discomfort but also the cause. With taping, you can send clients out the door with the benefits of movement feedback, postural awareness and correction, stabilization and pain reduction. That’s super for your clients—and even better for your business.

**MOVEMENT RE-EDUCATION**

Considering that the skin contains more mechanoreceptors than any other part of our body, it should come as no surprise how combining manual therapy with a tactile feedback mechanism

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like kinesiology tape can have incredible results that last long after our clients leave our treatment tables. When taping athletes, I can literally invoke movement re-education—think posture correction, patterning corrections, and muscle activation; reduce pain and inflammation; and increase sports performance and recovery, all while reinforcing the work done during manual therapy. All of this can be accomplished without restricting range of motion, and in about five minutes or less. Common ailments we see in our offices, such as rotator cuff injuries, whiplash, shin splints, knee issues, low back pain, upper trapezius pain and plantar fasciitis all can benefit from kinesiology taping.

We all want solid research and evidence to support a treatment modality before we go experimenting on our clients. Paul Coker, P.T., medical director for RockTape, based in the United Kingdom, offers key scientific points for the role of kinesiology tape in treatment. According to him, the decompressive properties of tape provide three key effects to consider: the fluid effect, the mechanical effect and the neurological effect.

**FLUID EFFECT**
The fluid effect is induced by the elastic properties of the tape, which produce a vertical lift of skin from the underlying tissue, thus decompressing the space between skin and muscle. Understanding fascia, you get the importance of this. This direct effect on the subcutaneous layer promotes improved blood and lymphatic flow in the area where you apply the tape, thus creating speedy removal of injury waste products and pain-generating chemicals, which in turn promotes healing. This sounds strangely like the changes we aim to create through massage.

**MECHANICAL EFFECT**
If I had a dollar for every time the word awareness was used in movement and massage settings, I would own movement labs all over the universe. We all know that body awareness is critical for numerous reasons, and tape is the superhero of awareness.

Tape has longitudinal stretch properties of about 140 to 180 percent. These stretch properties are similar to those of skin, muscle and connective tissues. Tape taps into the body’s stabilization system like a metaphorical tap on the shoulder. By giving your clients a tool that provides a little extra spring and awareness of stretch to the muscles, ligaments, tendons, and joints, you’ve given them a tactile, mechanical feedback mechanism. As a bonus, it just might also play a role in restoring normal slide-and-glide mechanics between layers of tissue. That’s awareness wearing a cape.

**NEUROLOGICAL EFFECT**
The neurological effect of tape is impressive, but again, not surprising. The decompressive properties of tape reduce pressure and compression on nerve endings just under the skin, making nerves fire less, thus having a direct effect on the pain gate. Do you have a client with really tight muscles? Tape the area...
to reduce the response to being stretched, and you’ve helped create a less sore and tight muscle. Do any of your clients have weak, sore and injured tissue? Taping will help the body’s active stabilization by altering the activity and feedback from nerves in the skin and underlying tissue. Research indicates kinesiology tape improves power and strength in uninjured muscles; reduces pain and improves function in painful conditions like plantar fasciitis and patellofemoral pain; improves pain, range of motion and function in people with shoulder impingement; and raises the anaerobic threshold of muscle during endurance activity.

WHEN NOT TO TAPE

It is imperative to understand when not to use kinesiology tape. Tape’s benefits can cause complications in some instances. There are five conditions in which tape would be considered contraindicated, which is where a thorough client medical history is essential. Those conditions are: deep vein thrombosis; kidney problems and renal insufficiencies; active cancer; infection; and congestive heart failure. Avoid these five conditions with your tape and be thorough with your intakes.

TRY TAPE

Tape doesn’t discriminate. The benefits of taping reach far beyond athletic settings. Whether your work environment is in a spa or doing lymph drainage work, pregnancy work, pediatric therapies, neuropathy issues or equine massage, taping can make a dramatic difference for both you and the clients you serve. Right after I worked on my athlete with the pulled hamstring, I saw another client that day. He is a 75-year-old post-heart-transplant patient with a 10-inch scar down the center of his chest. Right after I did manual scar tissue release therapy, I reinforced my work with kinesiology tape on him, too.

The decompressive properties of tape reduce pressure and compression on nerve endings just under the skin, making nerves fire less, thus having a direct effect on the pain gate.

He asked for the tiger stripe print. (His wife liked it.)

Stacey Thomas is the owner of Altitude Aptitude in Evergreen, Colorado, a manual treatment and performance training clinic where she works with athletes of all levels in a multitude of sports, ranging from CrossFit to mountain biking. She is a certified personal trainer through the National Academy of Sports Medicine, a CrossFit Level 1 coach, and a licensed massage therapist, specializing in Active Release Technique. Stacey is a Performance Movement Taping Instructor for RockTape Kinesiology Tape (www.rocktape.com).
HOT AND COLD STONES FOR BACK AND NECK SELF-CARE

BY PAT MAYRHOFER

Massage therapists, even those who practice ideal body mechanics, often experience pain and discomfort in the upper back and neck, caused by the way we use our arms in forward motions involving the pectoralis muscles.

Here are six simple steps to using your massage stones for relieving pain in these areas:

1. Roll a large hand towel and place it lengthwise on your massage table.

2. Prepare three large, hot stones in a stone wrap or use another hand towel to fold as an envelope to hold them. (Don’t place hot stones directly on your skin.)

3. Place a cold marble stone at the head of the massage table.

4. Lie back on the table, with the cold stone under your neck and the rolled towel along your spine.

5. Place the wrap or towel containing the warmed stones on your chest.

6. Relax while the stones work their magic, until the hot stones are cool and the cold stone is warm.

TRY A V-WEDGE STONE

If you need additional neck work, you can use a V-wedge stone shaped with indents on the side so it fits comfortably between your finger and thumb, which allows you to release trigger points in attachments at the occipital ridge.

For self-treatment, use a hot basalt V-wedge stone to release trigger points at the occipital ridge by placing the stone on the trigger point and holding static pressure for seven to 10 seconds. Then, repeat with a cold marble V-wedge. The hot-and-cold combination is very effective in relieving pain.

This technique may also be applied to the upper trapezius and supraspinatus, holding the V-wedge between your thumb and finger as you apply pressure to trigger points.

Pat Mayrhofer is a massage therapist with more than 18 years’ experience. She is president and founder of Nature’s Stones (naturestonesinc.com), an international massage-stone and supply.
As helping professionals, massage therapists can be particularly vulnerable to the habit of taking care of everyone else, before tending to our own needs. By creating even a brief opening in the day to pause and reflect on thoughts and feelings in a journal, we establish a rich connection with ourselves, develop self-awareness and enhance intuition, paving the way to deeper connection with clients.

THE DIARY
Like an explorer’s log, a diary captures the details of your experience—thoughts, observations, daydreams, conversations and ideas that mark your daily journey. Keeping a detailed and vivid account of your life allows you to savor and relive moments that might otherwise disappear from memory. Over time, you can trace the path of your personal development and see the patterns that emerge.

FREEWRITING
Freewriting, a loose, unstructured, fluid form of writing, can help develop self-understanding and tap into thoughts and feelings that often lie beneath the surface, outside normal awareness.

The key to freewriting is writing quickly, recording whatever comes to mind, following the train of your thoughts wherever it leads. Your goal is to keep the pen moving, without censoring your words or worrying about spelling, grammar or handwriting. Freewriting is about being immediate, authentic and uncensored.

Your goal is to keep the pen moving, without censoring your words or worrying about spelling, grammar or handwriting. Freewriting is about being immediate, authentic and uncensored by the critical part of your mind.

Take a notebook and pen, settle into a comfortable spot and give
yourself a few minutes of uninterrupted time. Write whatever words come into your mind; if it helps, start by describing what you notice in your immediate environment, using all your senses. What captures your attention?

Continue recording your thoughts as they arise, without regard for order or clarity. Your entries may sound nonsensical, fragmented and disorganized. That’s fine. Keep going. By writing quickly and freely, you keep a few steps ahead of the conscious, rational mind, out of reach of its critical and self-defeating commentary.

DIALOGUING

Dialoguing is an imaginary conversation between you and another element in your life—a person, part of your psyche, even a body part you want to understand—written in the form of a script. It is one of the best ways to become acquainted with, and disarm, your inner critic, that cruel commentary that pops into your head when you make a mistake, contemplate a change or take a creative risk.

When addressing your inner critic, pose a few questions to it in your journal: “What is your positive intention? What are you trying, in your own misguided way, to protect me from? What would happen if I chose not to listen to you?” Pause and listen for an answer. Then reply. Dialoguing can help relieve the critic of its long worn-out duties as your inner saboteur.

WRITE ON

Keeping a journal offers the promise of a deep and rewarding relationship with the most important person in your life: yourself. By writing to enhance your self-acceptance and compassion, you can build more ease in your emotional center, your mind, and the work you share with your hands.

Ann Hawkins, M.F.T., is a marriage and family therapist and a former massage therapist for 13 years. She uses personal writing with clients in her psychotherapy practice, and teaches journal-writing classes through her company, The Journal Workshop (thejournalworkshop.com), in the San Francisco Bay area.
TOP 10 TIPS FOR CAREER LONGEVITY

Massage has the potential to be an incredibly enriching and rewarding profession—but it can also be hard on your body and emotionally draining. If you love your work and still want to be doing it 10, 20, even 30 years from now, take some advice from these experts.

1. **USE YOUR BEST BODY MECHANICS.** If you adopt a one-size-fits-all approach, you make a conscious choice that may go against what your brain has already figured out.

2. **GET AND KEEP A STRONG BACK.** Between sessions, take a few minutes to do lat pull-downs, or squeeze your shoulder blades toward your spine.

3. **STRENGTHEN YOUR FEET.** Choose high-quality, supportive footwear that is lightweight and flexible.

4. **BUILD LEG MUSCLES.** Use different muscles during sessions, moving side-to-side or forward and backward, so your legs and feet won’t tire as quickly.

5. **TAKE CARE OF YOUR THUMBS.** They’re not windshield wipers; during sessions, use the thumb as an extension of your arm by keeping it in a straight line with your arm. continued>>
TRY TO WORK WITH YOUR NATURAL RHYTHM. If you prefer afternoon and evening hours, plenty of clients will appreciate your ability to accommodate their after-work schedule.

IDENTIFY YOUR WHY. It is extremely important to know the bigger why behind your work—it can make a tremendous impact on the quality of your massage.

LEARN A LOT! The more CE classes you take, the more tools you have to use with clients, and your body will thank you for using different muscles instead of the same ones over and over.

ENJOY BEING A MASSAGE THERAPIST. It’s never about the money, it’s about the work—love what you do.

STRETCH YOUR FRONT MUSCLES. Your back muscles are complaining because they’re overstretched—so between clients, stretch your pects, biceps, abdomen and thighs.

Kathryn Merrow is an author and pain relief coach (trentonmasagetherapy.com); Charles Wiltsie, L.M.T., is a National Certification Board for Therapeutic Massage & Bodywork-approved CE provider and the creator of Lypossage (lypossage.net); Rick Merriam is a massage therapist (engagingmuscles.com) and instructor at Parker University School of Massage Therapy.
About RockTape Inc.

RockTape is a global leader in sports medicine products and education. Located in Silicon Valley, RockTape helps patients and athletes “go stronger, longer” with the world’s strongest brand of kinesiology tape, powerful pain-relieving topicals, unique evidence-informed education seminars, mobility tools, and joint support accessories.

RockTape’s products are proudly designed in the United States of America.

For more information, visit: rocktape.com

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